

A phenomenology of kenosis

Jean-Luc Nancy after the theological turn

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Short abstract

This study outlines what Jean-Luc Nancy can offer the phenomenology of religion by reading his deconstruction of Christianity in the context of the so-called 'theological turn' of recent phenomenology. Following Derrida's treatment of Nancy, it intends to think 'after' the theological turn by achieving a deconstruction of phenomenology's inherent theological structure which made that turn possible: *starting from* the theological turn phenomenology was structurally inclined to produce, this study tries to move *beyond* it (i.e., to 'de-theologise' phenomenology). The engagement with phenomenology's turn towards theology therefore parallels Nancy's engagement with Christianity: he draws on the theological notion of kenosis—according to which God empties himself of his divinity in the Incarnation (Philippians 2:7)—to understand Christianity as deconstructing or de-theologising itself. This study therefore frames Nancy as providing a phenomenology of kenosis: in turning to theology, phenomenology is able de-theologise itself, comes into its own as phenomenology, for the God encountered there itself consists in the self-effacement of divinity.

Specifically, each half of the study critically engages the theologisation of respective aspects of Husserl's *leibhaftige Gegebenheit* of phenomena: part I considers Jean-Luc Marion's identification of givenness (*Gegebenheit*) with revelation, whilst part II considers Michel Henry's identification of embodiment (*Leibhaftigkeit*) with incarnation. Each time, I show how Nancy provides reasons to question this identification, illustrating how philosophy and theology diverge rather than converge in matters of phenomenological analysis: i.e., givenness does not equal revelation, nor does embodiment equal incarnation. Moreover, I argue, an accurate understanding of the theological terms (revelation and incarnation) would itself indicate their divergence from the philosophical ones (givenness and embodiment). In short, only by turning to theology, can phenomenology come into its own as philosophy: by exploring the theological dimension, we can correct phenomenology's structural theological inclination; only by passing through the theological, can phenomenology be de-theologised.

Long abstract

This study outlines what the work of Jean-Luc Nancy can offer the phenomenology of religion by reading his deconstruction of Christianity in the context of the so-called 'theological turn' of recent phenomenology. In doing so, and following Derrida's treatment of Nancy, it intends to think 'after' the theological turn by achieving a deconstruction of phenomenology's inherent theological structure that made its theological turn possible: *starting from* the theological turn phenomenology was structurally inclined to produce, this study tries to move *beyond* it (i.e., to 'de-theologise' phenomenology). The engagement with phenomenology's turn towards theology therefore parallels Nancy's engagement with Christianity: he focusses on the theological notion of kenosis—according to which God empties himself of his divinity in the Incarnation (Philippians 2:7)—to understand Christianity as deconstructing itself, emptying itself of itself, de-theologising itself. This study therefore frames Nancy as providing a phenomenology of kenosis: in turning to theology, phenomenology is able de-theologise itself, comes into its own as phenomenology, for the God encountered there itself consists in the self-effacement of divinity. This de-theologised phenomenology is better equipped to account for religious experience, precisely because it sticks closer to a phenomenological register and avoids being confused with theology.

Phenomenology's inherent theological structure is made evident most clearly by how French authors have understood Husserl's *leibhaftige Gegebenheit* of phenomena, i.e. phenomenological philosophy's field of inquiry, along the lines of 'incarnation' (Michel Henry) or 'revelation' (Jean-Luc Marion), i.e. theology's field of inquiry: philosophical and theological terms are understood to converge as a matter of phenomenology. However, exploring these phenomenologies against the horizon of Nancy's kenotic understanding of Christianity, I show how this phenomenological coupling of theological and philosophical terms proves to be unsustainable—i.e., deconstructs or de-theologises itself—, as evidenced by the fact that it cannot satisfactorily account for the phenomena it analyses.

To that end, this study is divided into two parts, each of which deals with the theologisation of respective aspects of Husserl's *leibhaftige Gegebenheit*. Part I considers Marion's identification of givenness (*Gegebenheit*) with revelation, whilst part II considers Henry's identification of embodiment (*Leibhaftigkeit*) with incarnation. Each time, I show how Husserl's philosophical terms are not coextensive with their theological appropriations, and thus that philosophy and theology diverge rather than converge in matters of phenomenological analysis: i.e., givenness does not equal revelation, nor does embodiment equal incarnation. Moreover, I argue, an accurate understanding of the theological terms (revelation and incarnation) would itself indicate their divergence from the philosophical ones (givenness and embodiment). In short, only by turning to theology, can phenomenology come into its own as philosophy: by exploring the theological dimension, we can correct phenomenology's structural theological inclination; only by passing through the theological, can phenomenology be de-theologised.

So, against Marion, part I argues that givenness does not equal revelation. Put otherwise, since Marion understands revelation as religious or theophanic experience (i.e., the phenomenon of Jesus Christ), religious experience cannot be accounted for solely in terms of givenness. Indeed, something else entirely is in play, namely: faith, the particular orientation of intentionality that allows what gives itself to us to be experienced by us as revealing God. To that end, the first chapter introduces phenomenology's theological turn in its relation to Husserl. I frame this discussion around the question of whether a distinctly philosophical phenomenology of religion is possible without turning into theology. This is the terrain of the heated debated between Marion and Dominique Janicaud: does the turn to religious phenomena constitute an abuse of phenomenological reason (Janicaud) or rather its due radicalisation (Marion)? Indeed, Marion argues that Husserl was not sufficiently radical in executing his own method of reduction, therefore suggesting a further reduction which brackets intentionality until the mere givenness of phenomena to consciousness remains. When this givenness is so complete that it overwhelms any possible intentional horizon, Marion will speak of a 'saturated phenomenon' that he identifies with

the Revelation of Christ: a phenomenon unconditionally and absolutely given to be seen. However, because this phenomenon supposedly gives itself unconditionally to a passive subject, irrespective of how that subject intends what is thus given, Marion is unable to provide a convincing answer to those atheist critics—including Nancy—who claim not to see God in what thus gives itself: the religious specificity of religious experience, i.e. its theophanic character, cannot be established solely in terms of givenness. Comparing Marion and Nancy's respective treatments of revelation, I suggest that closer attention therefore needs to be paid to the subject of Revelation, the orientation of its intentionality which cannot be reduced: faith allows the believer to see God where the atheist does not. As a result, I conclude that in the theological turn, phenomenological reason is neither abused nor radicalised, but rather situated existentially in a particular way: Marion provides a perfectly valid analysis of experience, provided that this is the experience of the believer, that this phenomenology is operative within a logic of faith. Consequently, it is that specific existential situation, in which givenness takes place without itself being given, that must be the object of a phenomenology of religion as the condition of possibility for religious experience. Otherwise put, against Marion, the role of intentionality in the constitution of religious phenomena must be recovered.

The second chapter explores this existential situation of (phenomenological) reason by providing an anthropological reading of Nancy's deconstruction of Christianity. This is achieved by fitting Nancy's project in a methodological framework provided by Emmanuel Falque: namely, what he calls the 'kenotic ambition' of phenomenology, which indicates how phenomenality, too, exists in a descent into its own 'underground', into what makes phenomenality possible whilst itself remaining extra-phenomenal. This study is interested in this underground of phenomenality as the extra-phenomenal outside delineating and therefore making possible the phenomenal inside. Chapter 2 explores it in terms of Nancy's analysis of what constitutes the humanity of man, namely: reason. Specifically, by reading various giants of modern thought on reason, he shows how reason is grounded in—or, rather, undergrounded by—something that itself remains extra-rational: faith

(Kant), groundlessness (Heidegger), and value (Marx). Nancy argues that when we descend towards the underground of reason, we find that reason is made possible by a particular experience irreducible to reason, namely that of existence: the experience of a particular way of being-in-the-world that values reason, that has faith in its ability to give reasons. Here, again, when we are interested in the reason or ground for (phenomenological) reason, it is existence—specifically, the existence that has faith in it—that we should look at.

The third chapter examines this phenomenological relevance of existence, and especially existence in faith. Specifically, Nancy's account of faith is used to articulate a phenomenological reading of Søren Kierkegaard's *Fear and Trembling*. I argue that Abraham's life lived in faith equally entails an experience of faith. However, this experience is not a phenomenon, not what phenomenology considers a lived-experience; rather, it is an experience of life, the experience that comes with having lived-through something (e.g., the ordeal God puts Abraham through). This experience of faith subsequently informs all lived-experiences, determines how things are lived in experience, sets the terms on which they are experienced: in short, this experience undergrounds phenomenalisation. Put otherwise, the experience of a life of faith sets the horizon against which things appear, orients intentionality in a particular direction, and thereby makes religious experience possible (e.g., it explains why Abraham sees divine promise where the pseudonymous author sees only a horrifying paradox). Yet, this experience as such remains outside the scope of a phenomenology in Marion's sense: it does not concern something given for all to see, but a singular event of Abraham's life that only he has lived-through and on the basis of which he therefore envisions or experiences everything else. Part I has therefore argued, against Marion, that givenness does not equal revelation (i.e., religious or theophanic experience), precisely because what is given must be intended through faith in order to be recognised as referring to God.

Having recovered a role for intentionality in part I, part II further describes it as embodied. Or, otherwise put, if part I presented phenomenological reason as existentially situated, part II considers that situation in terms of certain material conditions: the materiality of the body (i.e., the

fact of our embodiment) engenders our being-in-the-world (i.e., our finitude), and thereby determines our experience. Whereas part I argued against Marion that givenness does not equal revelation, part II argues against Henry that the phenomenological understanding of embodiment (*Leiblichkeit*) does not equal theological Incarnation. To that end, chapter 4 gives a critical summary of Henry's theologisation of Husserl's account of the body. Husserl distinguishes between the lived-body (*Leib*, *chair*, flesh) as given in our own lived-experience and the material body (*Körper*, *corps*, body) as inert and transcendent worldly object. Phenomenology's field of study extends only to what is lived in consciousness as my own, thus only to the flesh—what Didier Franck calls 'incarnate givenness'. In other words, the body-as-body remains what Franck calls 'outside-the-flesh' (*hors-chair*), or what Falque calls 'extra-phenomenal' (*hors-phénomène*): it cannot be accounted for phenomenologically, for it is not a lived-experience, not a phenomenon. Henry embraces this identification of phenomenality with flesh, producing a philosophy of the flesh that doubles as a phenomenology of Incarnation (i.e., salvation in the Christian sense). Here, flesh is identified with the auto-affective impressional substrate of phenomenalisation characteristic of man (i.e., self-consciousness), that has nothing to do with the body's worldly extension characteristic of things (i.e., materiality). As a result, Henry identifies Incarnation with dis-embodiment: the human condition assumed by God is understood simply as phenomenological flesh, to the exclusion of a worldly, historical and material body. Indeed, the flesh is understood as the very place of divinity altogether, i.e. divinity and phenomenality are one as flesh: theology (*sarx*) and philosophy (*chair*) converge as a matter of phenomenology (incarnation as phenomenalisation). With Falque, I criticise this conception on both phenomenological and theological grounds as an account of incarnation that lacks any notion of kenosis. Phenomenologically, a 'kenosis of the flesh' (i.e., of phenomenality) is required: since the lived-experience of the flesh presupposes a material body to live in experience, the phenomenality of flesh empties itself into the extra-phenomenality of the body. Theologically, a 'kenosis of Christ' (i.e., of divinity) is required: God empties himself of the divine form in favour of the worldly and historical form of the human servant precisely for the

sake of our salvation. Put otherwise, theological Incarnation is different from phenomenological incarnation, indeed concerns an incorporation: God comes among us by assuming our human condition, namely a historical, material and worldly *body*. Philosophy and theology therefore diverge concerning incarnation (coming-into-the-flesh): philosophically, it means coming-into-the-self (phenomenalisation); theologically, it means self-emptying (externalisation).

Chapter 5 considers this incorporation phenomenologically by showing how Falque relates the flesh to the body, phenomenality to extra-phenomenality, or phenomenology to its limits. Specifically, it argues that the extra-phenomenal body sets the terms on which things are lived as flesh: as a whole of organic passions and drives, the body orients the intentionality of consciousness in a particular direction. The chapter first introduces Falque's framework theologically by setting out what he understands as the fundamental problem with Henry's account of the human condition: in defining man as disembodied (i.e., unworldly) flesh, he precludes an understanding of man as created, for creation means precisely 'enworlding' (i.e., embodiment). Subsequently, I outline the phenomenological consequences of this theology. Or, as Falque puts it, I make felt the 'backlash' of theology (of the body) on phenomenology (of the flesh): having criticised the phenomenological account of embodiment in terms of incarnation (*Leib*) by way of a theological account of the Incarnation (*sarx*), a more appropriate phenomenological account of the body is developed. Put otherwise, once this backlash has been made felt, once we have passed through theology, phenomenology has been 'de-theologised': by exploring the theological notions phenomenology's inherent structure drives us toward, we can better appreciate their properly phenomenological meaning (e.g., *Leibhaftigkeit*) stripped of all theological connotations (e.g., Incarnation). I do so in two steps: first, by elaborating how Falque sees this theology as exposing the limits of phenomenology; secondly, having exposed those limits, by constructing an account of embodiment conscious of them. Falque will therefore speak of the *spread body*: a body precisely spread-out between, underlying the difference between, phenomenology's subjective body (*Leib*)

and physics' objective body (*Körper*), as the corporeal reality (*Leibkörper*) that makes them both possible whilst resisting reduction to either one.

The sixth and final chapter fits Nancy into Falque's framework in order to spell out its implications both for theology (incarnation) and phenomenology (experience). First, I show how Nancy, too, understands embodiment as an intermediary zone between the subjective and the objective body: namely, the extension of the soul. Theologically, he therefore understands Incarnation as the opposite of phenomenological incarnation: namely, the ex-position of divinity (its externalisation in a human body), rather than in-carnation (its auto-affection in a spiritual flesh). Phenomenologically, Nancy develops this exposition in terms of a phenomenality of skin or ex-skin-hibition (*ex-peau-sition*): skin is that part of the body which facilitates experience, touching, without itself being available to experience, to touch, since experience and touch proceed *through* the skin as its medium. I argue that this phenomenality of skin provides a better understanding of experience as embodied: just like intentionality makes all phenomena possible without itself being a phenomenon, except as phenomenalisation itself (intending); as skin, the body is the medium of experience without itself being experienced, except as the mediation itself (touching).

As a whole, this study is therefore concerned with the relation of the outside to the inside, of the body to the flesh, of the extra-phenomenal to the phenomenal, of the human to the divine. Each chapter thus considers the extra-phenomenal somehow: the existential situation in which reason finds itself but for which it cannot account in terms of itself (chapter 1); the underground upon which reason is built but which it cannot recover in terms of itself (chapter 2); faith's inability to give reasons for itself (chapter 3); the body, which is lived as flesh in experience yet resists reduction to the flesh (chapter 4); the intentionality of the body which is not a given of the lived-experience it makes possible (chapter 5); until the relationship between the phenomenal inside (flesh) and its outside (body) is finally conceived in terms of touch as mediating between the two (skin) (chapter 6). The insight offered by Nancy to the phenomenologist of religion is then that God is transcendent, extra-phenomenal, yet we can talk phenomenologically about him in terms

of the mediation of Jesus Christ, his phenomenal manifestation *in* his descent towards man and *as* his self-emptying of divinity, namely his going-outside-himself, externalisation, exposition, *ex-peau-sition*: God becomes available to touch (i.e., experience) only in his kenosis.

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Abbreviations

Works by Jean-Luc Nancy

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AF	*After Fukushima: The Equivalence of Catastrophes*, trans. by Charlotte Mandell (New York: Fordham University Press, 2014).
BP	*The Birth to Presence*, trans. by Brian Holmes et al. (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1994).
BSP	*Being Singular Plural*, trans. by Robert Richardson and Anne O'Byrne (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2000).
'CCC'	'Critique, Crisis, Cri', trans. by Patrick J. Lyons in *Qui Parle: Critical Humanities and Social Sciences*, 26.1 (June 2017), 5-18.
Coming	*Coming* (with Adèle van Reeth), trans. by Charlotte Mandell (New York: Fordham University Press, 2016).
Corpus	*Corpus*, trans. by Richard A. Rand (New York: Fordham University Press, 2008).
Corpus II	*Corpus II: Writings on Sexuality*, trans. by Anne O'Byrne (New York: Fordham University Press, 2013).
CW	*The Creation of the World or Globalization*, trans. by François Raffoul and David Pettigrew (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2007).
Dis-Enclosure	*Dis-Enclosure: The Deconstruction of Christianity*, trans. by Gabriel Malenfant, Michael B. Smith and Bettina Bergo (New York: Fordham University Press, 2008).
EF	*The Experience of Freedom*, trans. by Bridget McDonald (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1994).
ES	*Ego Sum: Corpus, Anima, Fabula*, trans. by Marie-Eve Morin (New York: Fordham University Press, 2016).
FT	*A Finite Thinking*, trans. by Simon Sparks et al., ed. by Simon Sparks (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003).
IC	*The Inoperative Community*, trans. by Peter Connor, Lisa Garbus, Michael Holland and Simona Sawhney (Minneapolis: Minnesota University Press, 1991).
'IV'	'The Insufficiency of 'Values' and the Necessity of 'Sense'', trans. by Steve Bastow in *Journal for Cultural Research*, 9.4 (October 2005), 437-441.
Logodaedalus	*The Discourse of the Syncope: Logodaedalus*, trans. by Saul Anton (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2007).

MA — *Multiple Arts: The Muses II*, trans. by Simon Sparks and others, ed. by Simon Sparks (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2006).

NMT — *Noli Me Tangere: On the Raising of the Body*, trans. by Sarah Clift, Pascale-Anne Brault and Michael Naas (New York: Fordham University Press, 2008).

SW — *The Sense of the World*, trans. by Jeffrey S. Librett (Minneapolis: Minnesota University Press, 1997).

TD — *The Truth of Democracy*, trans. by Pascale-Anne Brault and Michael Naas (New York: Fordham University Press, 2010).

TM — *The Muses*, trans. by Peggy Kamuf (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997).

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B&T — Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. by Joan Stambaugh, rev. by Dennis J. Schmidt (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2010).

MFL — Martin Heidegger, *The Metaphysical Foundations of Logic*, trans. by Michael Heim (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984).

PR — Martin Heidegger, *The Principle of Reason*, trans. by Reginal Lilly (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1996).

PRL — Martin Heidegger, *The Phenomenology of Religious Life*, trans. by Matthias Fritsch and Jennifer Anna Gosetti-Ferencei (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2010).

T&M — Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, trans. by Joel Weinsheimer and Donald G. Marshall (London: Continuum, 2004).

PP — Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, trans. by Colin Smith (London: Routledge, 1958).

S&N — Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Sense and Non-Sense*, trans. by Hubert Dreyfus and Patricia Dreyfus (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1992).

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'AEF' — Michel Henry, 'À Emmanuel Falque' in *Phénoménologie et christianisme chez Michel Henry*, ed. by Phillipe Capelle (Paris: Cerf, 2004), 168-182.

'FPP'	Michel Henry, 'The Four Principles of Phenomenology', trans. by Joseph Rivera and George E. Faithful in *The Continental Philosophy Review*, 48:1 (March 2015), 1-21.
Incarnation	Michel Henry, *Incarnation: A Philosophy of Flesh*, trans. by Karl Hefty (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2015).
'Incarnation'	Michel Henry, 'Incarnation and the Problem of Touch', trans. by Scott Davidson et al. in *Carnal Hermeneutics*, ed. by Richard Kearney and Brian Treanor (New York: Fordham University Press, 2015), 128-144.
BG	Jean-Luc Marion, *Being Given: Toward a Phenomenology of Givenness*, trans. by Jeffrey L. Kosky (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2002).
BOS	Jean-Luc Marion, *Believing in Order to See: On the Rationality of Revelation and the Irrationality of Some Believers*, trans. by Christina M. Gschwandtner (New York: Fordham University Press, 2017).
IE	Jean-Luc Marion, *In Excess: Studies in Saturated Phenomena*, trans. by Robyn Horner and Vincent Berraud (New York: Fordham University Press, 2004).
G&R	Jean-Luc Marion, *Givenness and Revelation*, trans. by Stephen E. Lewis (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016).
V&R	Jean-Luc Marion, *The Visible and the Revealed*, trans. by Christina M. Gschwandtner and others (New York: Fordham University Press, 2008).
PTE	Dominique Janicaud, *La phénoménologie dans tous ses états* (Paris: Gallimard, 2009).
TTFP	Dominique Janicaud, 'The Theological Turn in French Phenomenology', trans. by Bernard G. Prusak in *Phenomenology and the 'Theological Turn': The French Debate* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2000), 1-103.
C&R	Jean-Louis Chrétien, *The Call and the Response*, trans. by Anne A. Davenport (New York: Fordham University Press, 2004).

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AG	Jean-Yves Lacoste, *The Appearing of God*, trans. by Oliver O'Donovan (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018).
E&A	Jean-Yves Lacoste, *Experience and the Absolute: Disputed Questions on the Humanity of Man*, trans. by Mark Raftery-Skehan (New York: Fordham University Press, 2004).
AE	John D. Caputo, *Against Ethics: Contributions to a Poetics of Obligation with Constant Reference to Deconstruction* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993).
'HP'	John D. Caputo, 'The Hyperbolization of Phenomenology: Two Possibilities for Religion in Recent Continental Philosophy' in *Counter-Experiences: Reading Jean-Luc Marion*, ed. by Kevin Hart (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2007), 67-94.
PT	John D. Caputo, *The Prayers and Tears of Jacques Derrida: Religion without Religion* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1997).
RH	John D. Caputo, *Radical Hermeneutics: Repetition, Deconstruction, and the Hermeneutic Project* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1988).

GD Jacques Derrida, *The Gift of Death, Second Edition & Literature in Secret*, trans. by David Willis (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2008).

ON Jacques Derrida, *On the Name*, trans. by David Wood, ed. by Thomas Dutoit (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1995). `

OT Jacques Derrida, *On Touching—Jean-Luc Nancy*, trans. by Christine Irizarry (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2005).

E&T Claude Romano, *Event and Time*, trans. by Stephen E. Lewis (New York: Fordham University Press, 2013).

E&W Claude Romano, *Event and World*, trans. by Shane Mackinlay (New York: Fordham University Press, 2009).

TI Claude Romano, *There Is: The Event and the Finitude of Appearing*, trans. by Michael B. Smith (New York: Forham University Press, 2015).

CR Emmanuel Falque, *Crossing the Rubicon: The Borderlands of Philosophy and Theology*, trans. by Reuben Shank (New York: Fordham University Press, 2016).

CRV Emmanuel Falque, *Ca n'a rien à voir: Lire Freud en philosophe* (Paris: Cerf, 2018).

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Other

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F&T Søren Kierkegaard, *Fear and Trembling*, trans. by Alastair Hannay (London: Penguin, 1985).

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* indicates that the translation has been modified

Introduction

When Zarathustra was thirty years old he left his home (…) and went into the mountains. Here he enjoyed his spirit and his solitude and for ten years he did not tire of it. But at last his heart transformed, — one morning he arose with the dawn, stepped before the sun and spoke thus to it:

'You great star! What would your happiness be if you had not those for whom you shine?

For ten years you have come up here to my cave: you would have tired of your light and of this route without me, my eagle and my snake.

But we awaited you every morning, took your overflow from you and blessed you for it.

Behold! I am weary of my wisdom, like a bee that has gathered too much honey. I need hands that reach out.

I want to bestow and distribute until the wise among human beings have once again enjoyed their folly, and the poor once again their wealth. For this I must descend into the depths, as you do evenings when you go behind the sea and bring light even to the underworld, you super-rich star!

Like you, I must *go down* (*untergehen*) as the human beings say, to whom I want to descend.

So bless me now, you quiet eye that can look upon even an all too great happiness without envy!

Bless the cup that wants to flow over, such that water flows golden from it and everywhere carries the reflections of your bliss!

Behold! This cup wants to become empty again, and Zarathustra wants to become human again.'

— Thus began Zarathustra's going under (*Untergang*).

— Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, 3.

One day, the gods withdraw. Of their own volition, they withdraw their divinity, which is to say, their presence. They won't simply leave, they won't go somewhere else, they'll withdraw their own presence—they'll disappear within it.

— Nancy, *Expectation*, 25.

1. Context and aim of the study

a. Context: The return of religion

This dissertation engages the work of the French atheist philosopher Jean-Luc Nancy in the context of the interaction between phenomenology and the broader 'return of religion' in contemporary philosophy. With philosophers from different traditions and religious backgrounds collectively turning to religious themes and language, religion's return is a widely *observed* fact that has nevertheless been *described* rather inadequately. This is partly due to 'religion' inevitably proving impossible to define, though I understand this return here as the use philosophers make of theological texts and language. However, more importantly, scholarship has generally insufficiently recognised that this 'return' is made up of two distinct 'turns' to religion, two different ways of making philosophical use of theology.

First, there is the movement known as the *theological turn*, comprising a set of prominent French religious thinkers of the 1980s and 1990s (Emmanuel Lévinas, Jean-Luc Marion, Michel Henry and Jean-Louis Chrétien) who placed experiences that can be considered 'religious'—or, better, 'theophanic' (i.e., referring to the transcendence of divinity)—at the centre of the phenomenological investigation into the general structure of experience.[1] This immediately drew accusations of an unwarranted theologisation of philosophy that have not died down since.[2] In the English-speaking world, it shares this attempt at grounding all thought in the religious or theological dimension with so-called 'radical orthodoxy'.[3] Meanwhile, in parallel though ostensibly unconnected, a broader set of apparently atheist thinkers (e.g., Jürgen Habermas, Alain Badiou, Slavoj Zizek, etc.) began unearthing the roots of Western modernity in the theological structure of the Christian religion in what has become known as the *post-secular turn*.[4] Nancy, with his two

[1] See Courtine (ed.), *Phénoménologie et théologie*.

[2] See Janicaud, *TTFP*.

[3] See Milbank, Pickstock, Ward (eds.), *Radical Orthodoxy*.

[4] For examples, see: Habermas, *Between Naturalism and Religion*; Badiou, *Saint Paul*; Zizek, *The Puppet and the Dwarf*. For an overview, see: McLennan, 'The Postsecular Turn'; Latré, van Herck and Vanheeswijck (eds.), *Radical Secularisation?*; de Vries and Sullivan (eds.), *Political Theologies*. On these approaches in relation to Nancy as "implicit variations on a

volumes dedicated to 'the deconstruction of Christianity', is generally thought to be part of the latter. These two movements, which together comprise philosophy's 'return to religion', nevertheless 'turn' to 'religion' in very different ways: whilst the theological turn grounds philosophical reflection in a theological dimension, the post-secular turn uncovers to what extent modern thought remains innervated by theology in an attempt to articulate a more authentic atheism.[5] In short, one is theological, the other (aspires to be) post-theological: the first *returns* to religion in order to *turn towards* the theological dimension, the second only does so in an attempt to *turn away* from it.

Existing scholarship has neglected this split in the 'return of religion', often focussing exclusively on the post-secular turn insofar as its insight are useful to cultural theory. For example, in *Return Statements: The Return of Religion in Contemporary Philosophy*, Gregg Lambert speaks casually of the "theological and/or post-secular turn,"[6] and focusses—despite the title of his book—on "the 'post-secular turn' (…), even though there is a tradition that dates to a much earlier period in French phenomenological circles, namely from the early 1980s."[7] Hent de Vries, in *Philosophy and the Turn to Religion*, likewise distances his inquiry from Marion or (parts of) Lévinas, who "opt for a purely theological (…) discourse."[8] Instead, he is interested in authors like Martin Heidegger or Jacques Derrida, whose "turn to religion (…) does not signal a return to theology or religion per se," since "religion is never conceived of as the hidden meaning of a secular historical or anthropological truth," but who rather "show that citations from religious traditions are more fundamental to the structure of language and experience than the genealogies, critiques, and transcendental reflections of the modern discourse that has deemed such citations obsolete."[9] Yet,

deconstruction of Christianity," see Alexandrova, Devisch, ten Kate and van Rooden, 'Re-opening the Question of Religion', 37-40.

[5] Of course, this leaves undecided whether they are successful in articulating this more authentic atheism, see Watkin, *Difficult Atheism*.

[6] Lambert, *Return Statements*, 6.

[7] *Ibid*., 1.

[8] de Vries, *Philosophy and the Turn to Religion*, 26.

[9] *Ibid*., 2.

in the theological turn, theology and religion are very much returned to: religious or theophanic experience becomes the touch-stone for the phenomenological analysis of experience more generally, and Marion in particular identifies this experience—rightly or wrongly—with the Revelation of Christ.

The scholarship of philosophy's return to religion has thus been confused on two levels. Firstly, it neglects the difference between authors who (re)turn to theology and those who try to think beyond it.[10] John Caputo is one of the few scholars escaping this charge, recognising this difference as the one between phenomenological (e.g., Marion and Henry) and deconstructive (e.g., Derrida and Nancy) approaches in recent philosophy of religion: "if deconstruction has taken a 'religious' turn, this is a religion without theology, representing (…) a religious but 'a-theological' turn (…), while the new phenomenology has taken a decidedly 'theological turn'."[11] In short, they (re)turn to religion in different ways: "it comes down to the difference between a *theological* and an *atheological* religion," and thus two distinct (re)turns, "the one with and the other without attachment to a determinate theological tradition."[12] Implicit in Caputo's formulation also lies the second confusion of the existing scholarship, namely that the atheological turn to religion would be but an exposition of the 'post-secular' condition: a philosophy of culture, rather than a philosophical style as such. Nancy's deconstruction of Christianity, in particular, suffers from this superficial reading as yet another discourse on the post-secular.[13]

The phenomenological reading suggested here intends to show how the scope of Nancy's deconstruction of Christianity nevertheless extends far beyond Christianity, modern society or even metaphysical reason. I therefore suggest reconceiving the 'post-secular' turn by way of a

[10] Other works that fail to make this distinction include: Blond (ed.), *Post-Secular Philosophy*; Smith and Whistler (eds.), *After the Postsecular and the Postmodern*. A possible exception, insofar as it at least recognises the distinction, is Staudigl and Alvis (eds.), *Phenomenology and the Post-Secular Turn*.

[11] Caputo, 'HP', 69.

[12] *Ibid*., 89-90.

[13] For examples, see: Hutchens, *Jean-Luc Nancy and the Future of Philosophy*, 85-102; van Rooden, Alexandrova, Devisch and ten Kate (eds.), *Re-treating Religion*.

theological figure many of its authors—and Nancy in particular—draw on: namely, what Paul describes as the *kenosis* of Christ, or God's self-emptying (*ekenosen*) of divinity by assuming the human condition in the Incarnation (Philippians 2:7). This dynamic, characteristic of the Christian God, becomes characteristic of Christianity as such in the authors of the 'post-secular' turn: Christianity is the religion that empties itself out of its religious or theological character into secular modernity. In Marcel Gauchet's famous phrase, with which Nancy signals his "overwhelming agreement," Christianity is "the religion of the egress (*sortie*) from religion."[14] Yet, as the implications of this philosophical gesture exceed the question of the relationship between Christianity and modern society, I would suggest that philosophy's return to religion is comprised by the *theological turn*, on the one hand, and the *kenotic turn*, on the other.

I will further describe these two turns shortly. For now, it suffices to emphasise that the authors of the kenotic turn are not interested in theological notions like kenosis for Christianity's sake, as a theologian would be; they only explore them to the extent that the 'death of God' (Nietzsche), the 'de-theologisation' (Heidegger),[15] or 'de-Christianisation' (Derrida)[16] characteristic of modern thought is itself a product of Christian theology's self-effacing (kenotic) structure: the *turn towards* Christian 'theology' (its language and texts), paradoxically serves the distinctly philosophical purpose of *turning away* from 'the theological' (Derrida's metaphysics of presence or Heidegger's onto-theo-logy). Nancy's 'deconstruction of Christianity', for example, describes how, as theological-metaphysical construct, Christianity equally de-theologises or deconstructs itself as Christianity: due to its characteristic kenotic doctrine of God (divinity's self-effacement), it sets in motion its own de-theologisation or secularisation (Christianity's self-effacement). The divine self-emptying denoted by the theological notion of kenosis thus serves only as the means for elaborating the implications of the death of God, for thinking 'atheologically'. This study therefore

[14] Gauchet, *The Disenchantment of the World*; Nancy, *Dis-Enclosure*, 142.

[15] Heidegger, *B&T*, 49/45; Franck, *Nietzsche and the Shadow of God*, 21-23.

[16] Derrida, *OT*, 54.

does not primarily understand kenosis theologically, but articulates what it might mean once pushed—according to its proper logic—towards its own de-theologisation.

b. Aim: Nancy's relation to the theological turn

This split or divergence in the return to religion is made evident by relating Nancy's kenotic or deconstructive turn to religion to phenomenology's theological turn. Specifically, it draws from Nancy's writings what I call *a phenomenology of kenosis* in order to think *after the theological turn*. Both of these phrases require clarification.

i. Thinking after the theological turn

Nancy, like the other authors of the kenotic turn, is not usually connected to the theological turn, presumably because these respective movements proceed in opposite directions. The question therefore arises whether the return of religion really is a unified phenomenon. Assuming it is, as the scholarship does, an account of how the theological turn relates to the kenotic turn is required: what do these two diverging movements, *taken together*, give us to think? I argue that it allows us to conceive of phenomenology in new ways that are especially useful to the phenomenology of religion. I do so by relating Nancy's work to Marion's (part I) and Henry's (part II), offering a phenomenological reading of the deconstruction of Christianity. In doing so, the following hypothesis is tested: if the *theological turn* exemplifies how philosophy (and phenomenology in particular) turns (in)to theology (e.g., by taking the revelation of Christ as paradigm for experience generally); and if the *kenotic turn* shows how Christianity itself exists in a movement of self-effacement or de-theologisation (e.g., by depicting God's self-emptying of divinity in the Incarnation as setting in motion Christianity's self-deconstruction); then the *return of religion* is the movement in which philosophy (and phenomenology in particular), precisely in and only by turning to theology, de-theologises itself. If the Word must assume a condition foreign to itself (humanity) in order to come to itself (Jesus Christ as incarnate divinity), then philosophy must turn to theology in order to properly understand itself in its atheological bearing. In short, by thinking *after the theological turn*, I mean a deconstruction or de-theologisation of phenomenology's inherent

theological structure as a movement *beyond*, though *starting from*, the theological turn it facilitated: a phenomenology that does not straightforwardly turn into theology, that has been de-theologised, is best equipped to account for religious or theophanic experience *phenomenologically* (i.e., an account that is not 'theological').

This parallels the project Derrida undertakes in his final book, *On Touching—Jean-Luc Nancy*, an extensive study of his friend's work: reprising his earlier critique of phenomenology as always oriented towards an impossible immediate and auto-affective presence by way of a comprehensive deconstruction of Husserl's 'principle of all principles', he suggests that phenomenology's structural problems are exacerbated when it comes into contact with Christianity, as it does in phenomenology's theological turn. Whereas Derrida concerns himself primarily with Husserl; here, I to take up that same deconstruction in reference to Husserl's theologising French interpreters by way of a phenomenological reading of Nancy's deconstruction of Christianity: if we should understand Derrida's 'deconstruction' against the backdrop of Husserl's phenomenology, it is worth reading Nancy's 'deconstruction of Christianity' in light of phenomenology's theological turn (even if that is not its stated foil). However, here too, everything still depends on what Husserl understands as the principle of phenomenology, namely that its field of study is intuition as it is *leibhaftig gegeben* (literally 'bodily given'), or 'given in its personal actuality' (its usual English translation).[17] Phenomenology is the study of the appearance of things *in propria persona*, letting them appear as they give themselves out to be: "to let what shows itself be seen from itself," Heidegger says, "just as it shows itself from itself."[18] Yet, everything turns on how the German is translated. In France (and Italy), the translation lends itself easily to theologising: namely, *givenness in the flesh* (*en chair*, *in carne*). This Gallicism inscribes the potential for a theological turn within phenomenology from the outset, allowing Didier Franck to speak of *incarnate givenness*, which Marion identifies with *revelation*. Take the opening lines of Marion's Gifford lectures, entitled

[17] Husserl, *Ideas I*, 43/44; Heidegger, *B&T*, 346/318; Derrida, *OT*, 236.

[18] Heidegger, *B&T*, 34/30.

Givenness and Revelation: "this title may (…) surprise," he says, "nothing seems to join an apparently old and steadfastly theological notion together with a philosophical concept drawn from the most recent phenomenology. However, if we want wanted to consider better their respective features, the two terms could instead converge."[19] For Marion and his colleagues, the philosophical and theological converge in or as phenomenology, in philosophy's (re)turn to religion.

In short, phenomenology facilitates a *theologisation of philosophy* by placing the terms proper to each discipline on the same axis as *phenomenologically* synonymous. Specifically, the theological turn understands: (1) givenness (*Gegebenheit*) along the lines of revelation; (2) embodiment (*Leiblichkeit*) along the lines of incarnation; and (thereby), (3) phenomenological philosophy along the lines of revealed theology. Derrida observed that this is due to the structural tendency of phenomenology itself, which makes its turn to theology possible in principle; yet, these structural tendencies are exacerbated, and manifested particularly acutely, when phenomenology explicitly entertains the Christian understanding of Revelation or Incarnation, as it does in its actual theological turn.

Proceeding along the path cleared by Derrida's study of Nancy, my phenomenological reading of the deconstruction of Christianity (published in full only after Derrida's death) therefore claims the following: when exploring philosophy's theologisation in phenomenology's theological turn, facilitated by the *apparent* convergence of philosophical and theological notions in the basic terms of phenomenology; we discover that these notions *in fact* diverge in the way they expose phenomenology's structural problems, thereby de-theologising philosophy and even de-Christianising phenomenology (i.e., making evident the divergence). Specifically, I do so by engaging Nancy in light of the authors of the theological turn in order to show how they incorrectly place philosophical and theological terms on the same axis, regarding them as phenomenologically synonymous: (1) givenness cannot be thought along the lines of revelation (part I's dialogue with

[19] Marion, *G&R*, 1.

Marion); (2) embodiment cannot be thought along the lines of incarnation (part II's dialogue with Henry); and (therefore), (3) phenomenological philosophy cannot be thought along the lines of revealed theology (implicitly throughout). Only once established that *Gegebenheit* does not mean the Revelation of Christ, and that *Leiblichkeit* does not mean the Incarnation of God (i.e., only once phenomenology is de-theologised), can we appreciate the properly *phenomenological* meaning of these terms (i.e., as distinct from their theological resonance).

This is not a critique coming from without, but a deconstruction going on within: I explore the details of the phenomenological accounts offered in order to show how they cannot in fact account satisfactorily for the experiences they analyse, drawing both on phenomenological and theological registers where appropriate. In short, *thinking after the theological turn* means showing how the *phenomenological coupling* of philosophical (givenness and embodiment) and theological terms (revelation and incarnation) *deconstructs itself* within that turn. Only by delving into phenomenology's turn *towards* theology (the texts and language of the Christian tradition), does Nancy's kenotic turn shows us how to turn *away* from 'theology' (the metaphysical priority of transcendence): to de-theologise philosophy. Thinking *after the theological turn*, purging philosophy of 'theology', can only be done by exploring its inherently theological structure, precisely by taking a *kenotic turn*.

Of course, in Derrida's analysis, the theological turn's problems are but the superficial manifestations of phenomenology's structural problems as such. Moreover, like Derrida, Nancy is not himself committed to a phenomenological register, though their thought undeniably articulates itself in relation to phenomenology.[20] The account I offer is therefore primarily concerned with the limits of phenomenology, with what remains extra-phenomenal: indeed, as transcendent, the divine is by definition foreign to phenomenality. Yet, I nevertheless remain committed to speaking 'phenomenologically' broadly understood: my criterion is experience, since Nancy (like Derrida)

[20] See Watkin, *Phenomenology or Deconstruction?*.

arguably remains a thinker of experience. It will, however, be a matter of developing an understanding of experience (*Erfahrung*) different from the lived-experience (*Erlebnis*) of classical phenomenology and conceiving of the latter's dependence on the former. This may no longer correspond to a strict definition of phenomenological philosophy descending from Husserl, but I do not consider this to be an obstacle: "phenomenology is not a school," Heidegger reminds us, but merely denotes "the possibility of thinking" as "corresponding to the claim of what is to be thought."[21]

Nancy's work is therefore inscribed within the methodological framework provided by other (post-)phenomenological authors. This collection of authors might seem eclectic, but they are all inheritors, directly or indirectly, of Derrida's critique of phenomenology: this study's primary object, Nancy, was a close friend and interlocutor of Derrida's; its main foil, Marion, is a former student of his; its method is borrowed, primarily, from Emmanuel Falque, who is a former student of Marion's, and, secondarily, from Caputo, who is Derrida's main theological interpreter. Specifically, Falque's methodological framework will be superimposed on Nancy's writings: like Nancy, he interrogates the limits of the phenomenological conception of experience in the context of Christian theology; yet, unlike Nancy, he remains committed to the vocabulary of both traditions. It is hoped that some (phenomenological) method may thereby be imposed on the madness, rendering Nancy's often highly obscure writings more accessible. However, that equally means that I do not intend to provide an exegesis of his writings in terms of its own concerns and language. Instead, I intend to wrest Nancy's thinking out of its proper preoccupations and make it speak in the language of contemporary phenomenology: this study aims to show what Nancy's thought can offer the 'phenomenology of religion'.

[21] Heidegger, *On Time and Being*, 82; *B&T*, 38/34.

ii. A phenomenology of kenosis

Though I will detail its use in theology and philosophy in the next section, it is clear by now that I understand kenosis as embodying what thinking 'after theology' means: thinking *from* theology (the theological notion of kenosis), *beyond* 'theology' (the *theos* effacing itself within that notion); 'the theological' deconstructing itself (self-emptying). However, what do I mean by making its *phenomenology*?[22] Kenosis is understood broadly, even philosophically, but without abstracting from its theological significance and context. I will think with Nancy, *starting from* its theological significance and context, how kenosis embodies a gesture that demands to be applied *beyond* it. That gesture is self-emptying, self-effacement, or, as Nancy speaks of it most often, withdrawal: for him, the self withdraws from its-self in order to be, properly, itself; just like the Christian God withdraws from divinity in order to be, properly, himself in the human being that is Jesus Christ. So, the theological figure (kenosis) allows us to conceive of a broader philosophical dynamic (withdrawal or self-effacement), and precisely in that sense de-theologises itself, withdraws from itself, or deconstructs itself.

Schematically, the notion of kenosis will be operative on four levels, moving from the theological to the philosophical and ultimately the phenomenological. First, there is (1) *kenosis as the self-emptying of divinity*: this is the Pauline understanding of the Incarnation wherein God takes leave of his divine form in order to assume the human or servant form. It emphasises God's complete assumption of the human condition in the Incarnation, including its 'lowly' elements: his exaltation is his humiliation on the cross, his power is the weakness of the servant, his divinity lies in voluntarily suffering human finitude. In short, the relevant theological implication is that divinity takes place 'here below': in the world, in a human being just like us, in finitude and historicity, suffering and embodiment. Secondly, this becomes (2) *kenosis as the self-emptying of Christianity*: in

[22] My proposal should be distinguished from Wells' *The Manifest and the Revealed: A Phenomenology of Kenosis*, which moves in the precise opposite direction (i.e., conceiving the Incarnation as Fink's *Entmenschlichung*, rather than Falque's *Menschwerdung*). For a detailed comparison, see my review essay 'Radicalisation as *Entmenschlichung*'.

itself producing secular modernity by effacing itself, Christianity takes place in and as the secular modern world, instead of being bypassed as its opposite. This is kenosis as understood by the authors of the post-secular turn strictly conceived: the self-emptying or self-effacement characteristic of the Christian God becomes characteristic of the Christian religion as such, resulting in an understanding of modernity as Christianity-after-Christianity, a de-theologised Christianity stemming directly from Christianity itself (of "Christian provenance," as Nancy's puts it).[23] Clearly, (2) can be concluded from (1): if the Christian God is only God insofar as he empties himself out of his divine form; then Christianity is only Christian insofar as it egresses its religious or theological mode, de-theologises itself by making way for concrete action in the world (e.g., Bonhoeffer's "religionless Christianity").[24] Thirdly, we have (3) *kenosis as the self-emptying of God's phenomenality*: God does not appear, or is not revealed, *as God*, but *as a man*, a historical, finite and embodied human being; thus, God *empties himself out* of his own divinity, of his phenomenality as divine, insofar as he appears or becomes phenomenal. Put otherwise, divine transcendence, by definition, cannot appear, except insofar as it assumes the human and historical condition, becomes immanent to the world, empties itself of that transcendence and thus of itself. This, too, follows from (1), since if there is only Revelation insofar as there is Incarnation, there is equally only Revelation insofar as there is kenosis: *in* appearing, God's divinity *withdraws from* appearing. We find this understanding of kenosis in certain theologically interested French phenomenologists who nevertheless do not belong to the theological turn strictly conceived (e.g., Falque and Jean-Yves Lacoste). Finally, we have (4) *kenosis as the self-emptying of phenomenality generally*: all appearing depends on an element that itself does not appear, meaning that appearing therefore necessarily *withdraws* into or gives way to the extra-phenomenal element that makes it possible. If (2) is concluded from (1) as its general implication, or (2) understood as the de-theologised version of (1), then the same is the case with (4) in relation to (3): divinity's self-emptying in appearing, the

[23] Nancy, *Dis-Enclosure*, 140.*

[24] Bonhoeffer, *Prisoner for God*, 122-123.

kenosis of God's divinity in coming to phenomenality, becomes the model for thinking all appearing, for the kenosis of phenomenality and kenosis as phenomenality more generally. Put differently, just as God's phenomenality depends on an extra-phenomenal element, so too, I argue, does all phenomenality depend on an extra-phenomenal element: the phenomenal always withdraws into something that does not belong to it, yet that nevertheless makes it possible. This, I argue, is kenosis as it appears in Nancy. However, (1-3) will be useful in illustrating both (4) as well as how the de-theologising movement from (1) to (4) is inherent to and set in motion by (1).

A phenomenology of kenosis then describes two things: (a) the *kenosis of God*, or how God appears by withdrawing from appearing since he transcends appearance by definition (beyond phenomenality); (b) the *kenosis of phenomenality*, or how phenomenality itself withdraws or descends into something that makes it possible whilst nevertheless remaining extra-phenomenal (below phenomenality).[25] Put otherwise, we can only speak phenomenologically about what transcends phenomenality (the experiences believers recognise as theophanic) by descending below the phenomenal into what makes that phenomenality possible (the faith that conditions experience as theophanic). Strictly speaking, the phenomenology of kenosis does not deal with a 'phenomenon' and therefore cannot properly be conceived of as a phenomenology, but instead thematises God's withdrawal from phenomenality, precisely because he can only become phenomenal by emptying himself of his divinity. This study is therefore concerned with God's phenomenality as its retreat, as well as more generally with phenomenology's retreat from itself. In other words, divinity is discussed phenomenologically by relating what transcends or withdraws from phenomenality to the phenomena we do have access to. Consequently, this phenomenology offers a way of speaking phenomenologically about Incarnation and Revelation, without insisting with the theological turn that these theological notions are coextensive with those of phenomenological philosophy.

[25] See further my 'Kenosis and Transcendence'.

In that sense, both Nancy and the authors of the theological turn are engaged in a critical interrogation of what transcends the limits of phenomenality. As the editors of a major volume on the deconstruction of Christianity put it: "Nancy, together with those advocating a 'theological turn,' does not disagree with phenomenology itself. Rather, they seek to establish a turn within phenomenology, bringing it toward and maybe even outside its limits." However, they do so in different directions:

> Nancy disagrees at a fundamental methodological level on (…) how to deal with the *theological* in that turn. Those who advocate the theological turn are dealing, broadly speaking, with the nonapparent (…) as belonging to the realm of phenomenality. (…) According to Nancy, however, the nonapparent (…) can never end in a reconciliation (…) with phenomena. Absence can never stop being the blind spot of presence, of phenomenality, and thus of phenomenology. In other words, phenomenology cannot be 'improved' or 'completed' by making it theological.[26]

In short, whereas the theological turn assumes the existence of theological phenomena, I contend with Nancy that this theological qualification is rather made up by a persistently extra-phenomenal element in which divinity's supposed phenomenality therefore withdraws. It is in this way that I will use the figure of kenosis to think after the theological turn: in turning to theology, phenomenology de-theologises itself, makes evident how its basic notions diverge from their theological appropriation.

2. The kenotic turn

Whereas the theological turn will be discussed throughout, it is worth introducing what I have been calling the 'kenotic turn' and in doing so spelling out what I understand by kenosis and its recent philosophical appropriation.

a. Kenosis in theology

Pivotal to the Christian faith is a conception of God as self-emptying or condescending to humanity in Jesus Christ for the sake of its redemption: the world is saved because God voluntarily assumed the limits of finitude, human existence in the world, including its suffering and death (i.e., embodiment). However, in this free act of self-limitation, through which God empties himself of

[26] Alexandrova et al., 'Re-opening the Question of Religion', 35.

himself in order to become fully human, God nevertheless equally remains fully God: the self-revelation of God takes places precisely *as* the human life of Jesus Christ. Rather than bestowing it on a spiritual elite as a mystical vision of his glory, God makes his saving revelation available to all by giving it in the form of a humble human servant: only by sharing our human condition, does God reveal himself to us. Without ceasing to be God, he therefore emptied himself of his divinity for the sake of humanity, namely so that it might receive his revelation and be saved thereby.[27]

It is this dynamic of divine self-emptying—which ties together revelation, salvation and incarnation—, that Christianity understands with the Greek word *kenosis*. It originates in Paul's recitation of a supposedly early Christian hymn in the Epistle to the Philippians (2:5-11):

> Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form he humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even death on a cross. Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

It is not my intention to provide this passage with a rigorous exegesis or a history of its theological development, but merely to highlight a few relevant theological aspects to prepare the phenomenology developed by this study.

i. Kenosis as a statement about God

Though otherwise not averse to high-flying theologising; here, Paul opts for a pre-existing Christian hymn. This immediately serves to indicate that Paul is not providing us with a treatise in systematic Christology or a metaphysics of the Incarnation: i.e., an account of how the divine and human natures of Christ are conjoined, or of the ontological change divinity would supposedly undergo in entering into humanity. Such a highly metaphysical account of kenosis is provided by the so-called 'kenotic theology' of mid-nineteenth century Germany and early twentieth century Britain.[28] Its most famous exponent is Gottfried Thomasius, who uses the kenotic motif to

[27] Dawe, *The Form of a Servant*, 13-14.

[28] The term *kenotic theology* or *kenoticism* primarily denotes a group of early-twentieth century Anglican theologians (e.g., A.B. Bruce, Charles Gore, Hugh Mackintosh, P.T. Forsyth and O.C. Quick), following in the path of mid-nineteenth

conceptualise the Incarnation as an ontological change in God: though divine, Christ is not omniscient or omnipotent on his account; because, in becoming human, divinity divests or empties itself of certain attributes.[29] Yet, the genre of the text really pre-empts the idea that we are dealing with such deeply metaphysical concerns: due to its poetic form, the New Testament scholar Michael Gorman suggests, 'emptying' "should not be read as a reference to the divestiture of something (whether divinity itself or some divine attribute) (…), but 'figuratively,' as a robust metaphor for total self-abandonment and self-giving."[30]

Looking at the specific wording of the hymn, T.F. Torrance agrees that it provides "no ground for any theory of *kenōsis* or *emptying* as that has been expounded in the 'kenotic theories' of the incarnation," according to which "in becoming man the eternal Son emptied himself of some of his divine properties or attributes in order to come within our human and historical existence."[31] The hymn, Torrance emphasises, speaks of God's self-emptying of the divine *form* (*morphe*) into that of the human servant: in taking-on the servant form of humanity, God humbles himself by taking-leave of the majestic and glorious form of divinity, yet without ceasing to be God. Indeed, paradoxically, God is fully God precisely in emptying himself out in the human.[32] On this account, kenosis serves to indicate precisely that a metaphysical theory of the Incarnation is ill-advised if not impossible, since it does not concern a change in God's way of being but only in his form of manifestation: in emptying himself of divinity, God is God; in assuming humanity, God is God. This paradox is not presented to reason to be accounted for, but only to faith to be believed:

> It is God himself, he who was in the form of God and equal to God, who *condescended* to be very man of very man. Nothing at all is said of *how* that takes place. All kenotic theories are attempts to explain the *how* of the incarnation in some measure: *how* God and man are united in one Jesus

century Lutheran ones (e.g., Thomasius, but also Wolfgang Gess, Hans Lassen Martensen and F.H.R. Frank). On this movement, see: Law, 'Kenotic Christology'; Breidert, *Die kenotische Christologie des 19. Jahrhunderts*; Brown, *Divine Humanity*; Thompson, 'Nineteenth-Century Kenotic Christology'; McCormack, 'Kenoticism in Modern Christology'; McCormack, 'Scottish Kenotic Theology'; Macquarrie, *Jesus Christ in Modern Thought*, 245-250.

[29] See Thomasius, 'The Person of the Mediator', 73.

[30] Gorman, *Inhabiting the Cruciform God*, 21. In this regard, he further refers to: Silva, *Philippians*, 114; Hawthorne, *Philippians*, 86.

[31] Torrance, *Incarnation*, 76.

[32] *Ibid*., 75.

> Christ, *how* the Word has become flesh. All that is said is that this union is a way of incredible humiliation and grace.[33]

By kenosis (and Incarnation generally), we should therefore not understand the *indwelling* of a foreign substance, or the *diminution* of essential attributes; but rather the constitutive movement of the self's *descent* (self-effacement, self-humiliation) that simultaneously forms its coming-into itself.

This same idea is expressed more vividly, more paradoxically, by Sergei Bulgakov: the Incarnation, he says, expresses "an unfathomable mystery," namely that "God 'was made (*egeneto*)' a creature, 'flesh'," meaning "that God became *not* God without ceasing to be God." In short, "flesh is *not* God," and consequently "the Word-God (without ceasing to be Word and God) became not-God; *the Creator became a creature*."[34] Like Torrance, Bulgakov understands this not as a change in God's being, but as a descent to the historical and worldly *form* of humanity:

> God left the supramundane absoluteness of His being and became the Creator; but the Creator, the Word (…), Himself became a creature. From His absoluteness He descended into creatureliness. (…) Here, God the Word *leaves* heaven with its unperturbed tranquillity of blessed divine being and enters *inside* creaturely cosmic being, 'becomes' a creature.[35]

Note here that insofar as Bulgakov speaks of different kinds of being, these do not concern a change in God himself, but rather his movement between ontological realms: God *leaves-behind* divine being (kenosis of absoluteness) and *enters-into* creaturely being (Incarnation into creatureliness), without ceasing to *be* God. As he puts it: "In becoming man, God does not stop being God; even after descending from heaven, He remains in heaven."[36] Bulgakov therefore places a robust "kenotic principle" at the centre of his theology: though noting his appreciation of the kenotic theologians, who have "done a great deal to advance this principle (first in Germany, then in England)," they only did so "in a one-sided manner."[37] First of all, they limit the question of kenosis to Christology, and the Incarnation specifically, instead of understanding it as

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[33] *Ibid*., 76.

[34] Bulgakov, *The Lamb of God*, 213.

[35] *Ibid*., 214.

[36] *Ibid*., 220.

[37] *Ibid*., 220-221. For a comparison between Bulgakov and the kenoticists, see Gavrilyuk, 'The Kenotic Theology of Sergius Bulgakov'.

comprising the whole relation of God to the world (e.g., creation): "The kenosis of the Absolute in the world and for the world is a basic, unifying idea for theology."[38] Kenosis is therefore at the core of how we conceive of God, and not just Christ. Secondly, their metaphysical account insufficiently appreciates the paradox and mystery of the Incarnation: "Without ceasing to be God, God ceases to be God (even though that is inconceivable and impossible), and He becomes man; that is, He enters human life in the most real sense, and He makes this life His own."[39]

These two criticisms can be combined by saying that kenosis does not primarily concern Christ, in his human and divine natures, but God, who voluntarily descends towards man and humbles himself. This is crystallised in Hans Urs von Balthasar's criticism of the kenotic theologians: identifying kenosis precisely "with the divine *freedom*, over against every way of thinking that would posit here a process of a natural (Gnostic) or logical (Hegelian) character," he sees "in the powerlessness of the Incarnate and Crucified One the shining forth of God's *omnipotence*."[40] This means that kenosis does not concern what happens to God's freedom and omnipotence in the Incarnation, but rather how these 'attributes' are understood in the first place: kenosis concerns the doctrine of God, rather than Christology narrowly conceived. For example, the fact that God is God in his self-abasement shows that "the divine 'power' is so ordered that it can make room for a possible self-exteriorisation, like that found in the Incarnation and the Cross, and can maintain this exteriorisation even to the utmost point."[41] So, God's self-humiliation *in* Jesus Christ (Incarnation) and *as* Jesus Christ (passion and crucifixion) does not indicate a diminution of his omnipotence and thus a change, but rather serves as the model for understanding it: "the whole affair proceeds in the sovereign freedom (and so in the power and majesty) of the God who has the power to 'empty himself', in obedience, for the (eventual) taking of the form of a servant, and from out of the divine form itself. And so God, whilst abiding in himself (for

[38] Bulgakov, *The Bride of the Lamb*, 230.
[39] Balgakov, *The Lamb of God*, 221.
[40] Balthasar, *Mysterium Paschale*, 34.
[41] *Ibid*., 29.

everything happens in his sovereign power) can yet leave himself (in his form of glory)."[42] What marks out God's omnipotence, his divinity, is that he did not consider it as "a thing to be grasped," something to cling or hold on to; but, instead, "emptied himself" of it (Philippians 2:6-7). Whereas man, if he found himself equal to or in the form of God, would eagerly exploit this for his own advantage; God *voluntarily* takes leave of his divinity in the human being, Christ *freely* humbles himself on the cross: precisely this free action is incomprehensible to man and thereby marks out God as divine, paradoxically constituting his divinity as its effacement.[43] God is God in his incredible choice for the human, the world and the finite as the site for divinity's self-manifestation through self-effacement. This understanding of kenosis is summed up by the following phrase from Bonaventure, which Falque—who did his doctoral work on the Franciscan—likes to cite: "The depth of God made man, that is, the humility of God, is so great that reason fails before it."[44] In short, the kenosis hymn describes God's glory metaphorically as humiliation.

These theological arguments for reading the kenosis hymn as concerning God's divinity metaphorically rather than Christ's divinity metaphysically are supported by Gorman's exegesis: in the hymn, Gorman says, "Christ's divinity, and thus divinity itself, is being narratively defined as kenotic and cruciform in character."[45] He continues: "God (…) is essentially kenotic, and indeed essentially cruciform. Kenosis, therefore, does not mean Christ's emptying himself of his divinity (or of anything else), but rather Christ's *exercising* his divinity, his equality with God."[46] So, when Paul speaks of God's self-emptying of divinity, he is not describing what actually happens to God's

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[42] *Ibid*., 26-27; Bulgakov, *The Lamb of God*, 216-217.

[43] See Gorman, *Inhabiting the Cruciform God*, 25-27.

[44] Bonaventure, *Collations on the Six Days*, 124*; Falque, *MF*, 20; *LS*, 102.

[45] Gorman, *Inhabiting the Cruciform God*, 25.

[46] *Ibid*., 28. Gorman indicates that other major commentators come to the same conclusion. For example, in *The Climax of the Covenant*, N.T. Wright writes that the "real theological emphasis of the hymn (…) is not simply a new view of Jesus," but "a new understanding of God" (84). Richard Bauckham, in *God Crucified*, furthermore argues that this text suggests that "humiliation belongs to the identity of God as truly as his exaltation does" (61). Finally, in their *In Search of Paul*, John Dominic Crossan and Jonathan Reed ask rhetorically "Is kenosis not just about Christ, but about God (…), not a passing exercise in ultimate obedience, but a permanent revelation about the nature of God?" (290). In the context of a broader systematic theology, this means conceiving of Jesus' death and humiliation on the cross as enacting what Moltmann calls a "revolution in the concept of God," as for example in: Moltmann, *The Crucified God*, 201-206; Rahner, 'On the Theology of the Incarnation'.

divinity in the Incarnation (it being left behind), but rather offering a metaphoric illustration of how it should be understood (as a profound and incredible humiliation).

I stress this non-metaphysical character of kenosis, along with its centrality to the Christian doctrine of God, to pre-empt the criticism that Nancy's emphasis on kenosis in conceiving of Christianity would somehow be inappropriate. For example, accusing Nancy of placing "the apparently marginal doctrine of kenosis at the heart of Christology,"[47] Ian James writes:

> This doctrine has a rather marginal and disputed status within Christology and Christian theology more generally. Far more orthodox is the doctrine of hypostatic union, according to which divine spirit and mortal flesh are conjoined in the body of Christ in a manner that affirms their shared essence (*homoouisia*), or consubstantiality.[48]

Yet, in conceiving the doctrine of kenosis as in competition with that of the hypostatic union (i.e., the union of human and divine natures in Christ's individual existence), James understands kenosis in an inappropriately metaphysical way (i.e., leaving behind the divine nature). Since kenosis concerns form (*morphe*) and not nature (*ousia*), it is not in competition with the hypostatic union. In short, the two doctrines concern different things: hypostatic union describes what *constitutes* God *as* paradox (the union of human and divine natures), whilst kenosis describes how God *appears in* the paradox (the exercise of divinity thus unified with humanity). In other words, if hypostatic union belongs to metaphysics (with its talk of 'natures' and 'existence'), kenosis belongs to phenomenology (the 'form' of manifestation). Kenosis, as primarily a statement about God, should consequently be understood as a *phenomenological* statement about God, articulating both: (1) his mode of phenomenality (i.e., his revelation *as* God); and, (2) the phenomena he is to be found in (i.e., his incarnation *in* the human servant). Stanislas Breton sums this up as follows: "we must adhere to that which Paul so energetically asserts," namely that "the new god, signalled by the Sign of contradiction reflected in the Logos of the Cross, is manifested to us in the destitution of infirmity and folly, as if he had chosen this double 'nothingness' to attract all to itself."[49]

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[47] James, 'Incarnation and Infinity', 255.

[48] *Ibid*, 254; *The New French Philosophy*, 57-60.

[49] Breton, *The Word and the Cross*, 66.

ii. Kenosis as a statement about revelation

Starting with kenosis as it relates to revelation, Torrance suggests that the "whole movement of humiliation and incarnation is related to revelation as much as to reconciliation." He explains:

> Jesus veils his glory under the form of a servant, in order to get near man for revelation and reconciliation, but in this, the veiling of the Son is a necessary part of his future unveiling for it is a means to its fulfilment, and so to achieving a reconciliation that is not only from the side of God to man but from the side of man to God.[50]

Two things should be noted here. First of all, Torrance echoes Heidegger's description of the dynamics of phenomenalisation (*Offenbarung*), in which a being-veiled (*Verdecktheit)*, understood as "the counterconcept to 'phenomenon'" or the concealment of what is about to appear (*phanein*), precedes the appearing.[51] However, rather than the veiling preceding the unveiling, I would suggest that kenosis shows how one is only realised in and as the other: God reveals himself *as* himself only by emptying himself *of* himself, and thereby veiling himself, in the human being that is Jesus Christ. Søren Kierkegaard was perhaps the first Christian thinker to conceive of kenosis in this way—i.e., phenomenologically, in terms of appearing—, through his emphasis on the fact "it was Christ's free will and determination from all eternity to be incognito,"[52] to appear in such a way as to not be directly recognisable as God. Kierkegaard explains:

> The God has thus made his appearance as Teacher (…), and has assumed the form of a servant. (…) The God's servant-form however is not a mere disguise, but is actual (…). He cannot then betray himself. There exists for him no such possibility as that which is open to the noble king, suddenly to show that he is after all the king.[53]

The servant form is not a disguise, in which case the revelation would consist in God dropping the veil of the servant form; rather, veiling is the mode of God's self-revelation (paradoxically): as and in the human servant. Here, the emphasis is on appearing rather than being: the incognito means "not to appear in one's proper role,"[54] in the form of the human servant rather than the

[50] Torrance, *Incarnation*, 76.
[51] Heidegger, *B&T*, 36/34.
[52] Kierkegaard, *TC*, 128.
[53] Kierkegaard, *PF*, 68.
[54] Kierkegaard, *TC*, 127.

divine lord.[55] In short, the revelation takes place in the veiling, the appearing (of God) in the disappearing (of divinity), the self-emptying of appearing as the disappearing of what appears (divinity) in its appearing (as humanity)—this is what I will call *appearing kenotically*.

This brings us to the second point, namely that kenosis allows God to get near to man for revelation. Just like Christ voluntarily humbles himself by dying on the cross, not just for any reason, but in atonement for our sins; God voluntarily humbles himself by assuming humanity in order to reveal himself to us, so as to make possible our salvation. In revealing himself, God *descends* towards man. As Athanasius, the third century bishop of Alexandria, puts it: "He [God] deals with them [men] as a good teacher with his pupils, coming down to their level and using simple means."[56] As necessitated by the rift between man and God caused by original sin that distracted man from God in favour of the sensible world, God comes down to our level, meets us where we are. Athanasius' point is therefore that by "stooping to our level in His love and Self-revealing to us,"[57] God not only reveals himself *to us* and *on our terms* in the Incarnation (as a sensible object, a human body), but also *for our sakes* (reconciliation between man and God, salvation): "it was our sorry case that caused the Word to come down, our transgression that called out His love for us, so that He made haste to help us and to appear among us. It is we who were the cause of His taking human form, and for our salvation that in His great love He was both born and manifested

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[55] Nevertheless, though it strikes me as bizarre based on the textual material, Kierkegaard is often associated with the Lutheran kenoticists by many scholars, see: Macquarrie, *Jesus Christ in Modern Thought*, 241-245; Westphal, 'Kenosis and Offense'; Law, *Kierkegaard's Kenotic Christology*. Yet, such a metaphysical kenoticism is precisely associated with Kierkegaard's nemesis (Martensen), and indeed an example of the very style of thinking he reacts against (making paradoxes intelligible), as pointed out by Tim Rose's *Kierkegaard's Christocentric Theology*, 111-114. An exception to this trend is Daw, *The Form of a Servant*, 160:

> Kierkegaard's position on kenosis had wrought a revolution. For as the kenotic motif entered the contemporary theological scene through his writings, its whole function and meaning were changed. It is no longer a principle of intelligibility. It is the paradox of grace. Its importance derives from its central place in revelation rather than its value in solving intellectual problems. There is in Kierkegaard no pondering about the loss or change of divine attributes. He does not speculate about the divine-human consciousness of Christ. Instead, he makes of kenosis the bold paradoxical assertion of God's sovereignty, which brings all speculation to an end. He had taken the kenotic motif from the hands of his opponents to use it against them.

Contemporaneously with the Lutheran kenoticists, Kierkegaard rejects their metaphysical interpretation of kenosis focussed on Christ in favour of a phenomenological one focussed on God. For a more fruitful understanding of Kierkegaard's Christology as 'kenotic', see: Vos, *De troost van het ogenblik*; 'Working Against Oneself'.

[56] Athanasius, *On the Incarnation*, 15/43.

[57] *Ibid*., 8/33.

in a human body."[58] Its kenotic doctrine of God makes Christianity—the story of God's revelation through Incarnation—anthropocentric rather than theocentric, or anthropocentric *as* theocentric: focussed primarily on humanity insofar as the Christian God's divinity exists in its self-emptying in humanity (Jesus Christ). Even though "He could have revealed His divine majesty in some other and better way," one more befitting that majesty (the divine form); "moved with compassion for our limitation" or "out of sheer love for us,"[59] Athanasius says, God instead took on a visible and mortal body like our very own (the human form) to ensure that his message would be received:

> Men had turned from the contemplation of God above, and were looking for Him in the opposite direction, down among created things and things of sense. The Saviour of us all, the Word of God, in His great love took to Himself a body and moved as Man among men, meeting their senses (…) halfway. He became Himself an object for the senses, so that those who were seeking God in sensible things might apprehend the Father through the works which He, the Word of God, did in the body.[60]

God does not reveal himself in his divine form, of which he has emptied himself, but in human form, which he has taken on. Put phenomenologically, divinity remains transcendent to experience, God therefore only reveals himself insofar as he becomes immanent to the sensible world (Incarnation), takes leave of his divinity (kenosis).

In his reading of the kenosis hymn as a statement about God rather than about Christ, Gorman then concludes that "for Paul true humanity and true divinity are analogous at the most fundamental level,"[61] since the divinity exists only in (emptying itself out into) humanity. Gorman therefore considers the cross to be theophanic: namely, the paradoxical culmination of God's descent in the Incarnation and thus his revelation in the humiliation of a decidedly human suffering.[62] Indeed, not only is the cross theophanic, but, as the culmination of his self-emptying or humiliation, it is the humanity that reveals the divinity on the cross: "Kenosis is thus the *sine qua non* of both divinity and humanity, as revealed in the incarnation and cross of Christ, the one

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[58] *Ibid*., 4/29.

[59] *Ibid*., 8/34.

[60] *Ibid*., 15/43.

[61] Gorman, *Inhabiting the Cruciform God*, 35.

[62] *Ibid*., 27.

who was truly God and became truly human. (…) To be fully human is to be Christlike and thus Godlike in this kenotic and cruciform sense."[63] What is truly human is equally truly divine: namely, the suffering or the finitude in which both humanity (being-in-the-world) and divinity (passion) deploy themselves, in which they meet, and through which they are reconciled. The revelation of divinity thus proceeds entirely through its humanity: since God came to share it in Christ's passion, our own suffering marks our way to God through Christ's suffering.[64]

This opens up the soteriological and ethical meaning of kenosis: since the example set by Christ on the cross is distinctly human, reconciliation with God is within the reach of human action; in meeting us halfway by dying on the cross, in showing man the way as the example set by Christ, God calls upon us to return to him by following that example. Gorman calls this mode of existence "cruciformity."[65] Consequently, given our reading of kenosis in terms of the passage from the human to God, "cruciformity is theoformity, or theosis," in the sense that "kenosis (self-emptying) reveals the character of God, summoning us to cruciformity understood as theosis."[66] *Theosis* means divinisation or deification in the sense of the transformative process in which man is returned to union with God.[67] Kenosis is thereby inextricably linked to the theosis it makes possible: only because of God's humanifcation (kenosis), can there be a deification of man (theosis); only because God descended towards man (kenosis), can man be raised up towards God (theosis). Like the teacher in relation to his pupils, God comes down to our level in order to raise us up towards his. Indeed, we find this idea in Athanasius, for whom God "was made man so that we might be made God,"[68] but also in plenty of modern authors. For example, in *The Crucified God*, Jürgen Moltmann writes: "The human God who encounters man in the crucified Christ thus

[63] *Ibid*., 36.

[64] Falque develops this phenomenologically in *GG*.

[65] See Gorman, *Cruciformity*.

[66] Gorman, *Inhabiting the Cruciform God*, 2.

[67] More technically, see *ibid*., 7: "Theosis is the transformative participation in the kenotic, cruciform character of God through Spirit-enabled conformity to the incarnate, crucified, and resurrected/glorified Christ."

[68] Athanasius, *On the Incarnation*, 54/93.*

involves man in a realistic divinization (*theosis*)."[69] Bonhoeffer, meanwhile, emphasises its link with kenosis more forcefully in the final pages of *The Cost of Discipleship*: "Christ took upon himself this human form of ours. He became Man even as we are men. In his humanity and his lowliness we recognize our own form. He has become like man, so that men should be like him."[70] Torrance likewise states: "From seeing him in the form of a servant we are carried with the lowly Jesus up to his glory."[71] As a consequence of this link between kenosis and theosis, humanification and deification, Incarnation and revelation, this study argues that divinity must first of all be sought in humanity; insofar as it considers any phenomena, these are instances of human existence as theopoetic acts (e.g., faith). As Gorman puts it:

> In Christ's pre-existent and incarnate kenosis we see truly what God is truly like, and we simultaneously see truly what Adam/humanity truly should have been, truly was not, and now truly can be in Christ. *Kenosis is theosis*. To be like Christ crucified is to be both most godly and most human. Christification is divinization, and divinization is humanization.[72]

Does that mean, as for example Marion suggests, that the language of kenosis ultimately resorts to anthropomorphism?[73] Nothing could be further from the truth, precisely because—once again—kenosis does not describe the Incarnation metaphysically but phenomenologically: "The incarnate God," as Moltmann suggests, "is present, and can be experienced, in the humanity of every man, and in full human corporeality."[74]

ii. Kenosis as a statement about incarnation

Having come down to the level of man to reveal himself, how does God actually reveal himself? How can the invisible enter visibility without ceasing to be invisible? According to Athanasius, in revelation, God not only comes down to our level, but does so "using simple means."[75] Incarnation

[69] Moltmann, *The Crucified God*, 277.

[70] Bonhoeffer, *CD*, 341.

[71] Torrance, *Incarnation*, 77.

[72] Gorman, *Inhabiting the Cruciform God*, 37.

[73] See Marion's contribution to the television programme 'La foi prise au mot', broadcast by KTO on 5 February 2011, quoted by Vial, 'Dieu jusque dans le néant', 353.

[74] Moltmann, *The Crucified God*, 276.

[75] Athanasius, *On the Incarnation*, 15/43.

is thus not only the mode of Revelation (God's descent), but also its means (God's lowliness): *by* assuming the human condition, God reveals himself *in* Christ's eminently human suffering on the cross; *by* humbling himself, God reveals his divinity *in* that humiliation.[76] Consequently, if "the incarnation of the Logos is completed on the cross," as Moltmann suggests, then "the death of Jesus on the cross is the *centre* of all Christian theology," i.e. God's lowly and humble humanity forms "the entry to its problems and answers on earth."[77]

Gorman therefore concludes that kenosis—first as God's self-humiliation by assuming humanity, then as Christ self-humiliation by suffering and dying on the cross—confirms the "idolatry of 'normal' divinity."[78] God does not reveal himself in a way that we, ordinary humans, would expect him to: not by a spectacular show of divine force, but with the humble means of an ordinary human being. Indeed, if the cross is the primary theophany, his glory is precisely revealed—most counterintuitively—in a profound humiliation. When Paul then speaks of Jesus' self-emptying of the 'form of God', he means that God revealed himself in a way unbefitting of divinity. As Gorman puts it: "such a form of God (and thus also essential divinity) is *in normal human perception* one that would never condescend to incarnation and crucifixion. Normal human perception of deity is such that the story of Christ is counterintuitive, abnormal, and absurd as a story of God."[79] It is counterintuitive to us, human beings, that God, the divine majesty for whom nothing is impossible, would reveal himself in a humble servant, a weak human being easily crushed by a worldly empire, rather than displaying his glory for all to see. As Marc Vial puts this eloquently:

> It is precisely *in abasing himself* that Christ *confirms his divinity*, to the degree that he thus manifests the fact that it is precisely *in this way* that God is God. God is God *in* the most total abasement of the Son. God is God *in* in the death of the Son. God is God *in nothingness*.[80]

[76] Moltmann, *The Crucified God*, 205.

[77] *Ibid*., 204.

[78] Gorman, *Inhabiting the Cruciform God*, 34-35.

[79] *Ibid*., 27.

[80] Vial, 'Dieu jusque dans le néant', 349.

Kenosis therefore does not imply a straightforward anthropomorphism, he concludes, for what remains at issue is God:

> The 'humanity of God' does not mean the fact that God *is but a man*, but that God is only God in being it *for man*. This is what the language of kenosis aims to make understood: the fact that God is *even more human* than we could ever be, and, precisely to this extent, that God is *even more God* than we could ever conceive of.[81]

As limited human beings, we cannot conceive of a God who is so profoundly human (i.e., humble), and this is what constitutes his divinity (i.e., distinction from humanity). In that sense, Bonaventure is right that "the humility of God, is so great that reason fails before it."[82]

Caputo has developed this idea admirably in his *The Weakness of God*. It likewise starts with Paul, for whom the crucifixion, as culmination of God's incarnation and kenosis, confirms this idolatry of ordinary divinity:

> God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong. God chose the lowly things of this world and the despised things—and the things that are not (*ta me onta*)—to nullify the things that are, so that no one may boast before him. (1 Corinthians 1:27-29)

God is found in unexpected places—namely, *the things that are not* (*ta me onta*): lowly and weak things rather than strong and glorious ones (a humble servant), what appears as foolishness to the world rather than common sense (a God made man). Kenosis is meant to make us second guess how we ordinarily speak about God: rather than divesting himself of his omnipotence, kenosis means that God's power appears precisely in his weakness on the cross. "God crossed out by the cross,"[83] as Caputo puts it, he "withdraws from the world's order of presence, prestige, and sovereignty in order to settle into those pockets of protest and contradiction to the world."[84] Or, as Gorman puts it: "The counterintuitive God revealed in Christ is kenotic and cruciform (…), the God of power-

[81] *Ibid*., 355-356.

[82] Bonaventure, *Collations on the Six Days*, 124.*

[83] Caputo, *The Weakness of God*, 42.

[84] *Ibid*., 45.

in-weakness."[85] God's power is his weakness, his resistance to the world's logic, his dwelling amongst the nothings of the world.

What does this mean concretely? Where are we to look for God? For this, we may return to Athanasius. He, too, starts by affirming the idolatry of normal divinity:

> Now, (…) we must (…) consider also the Word's becoming Man and His divine Appearing in our midst. That mystery the Jews traduce, the Greeks deride, but we adore; and your own love and devotion to the Word also will be the greater, because in His Manhood He seems so little worth. For (…) the more unbelievers pour scorn on Him, so much the more does He make His Godhead evident. The things which they, as men, rule out as impossible, He plainly shows to be possible; that which they deride as unfitting, His goodness makes most fit; and things which these wiseacres laugh at as 'human' He (…) declares divine. Thus by what seems His utter poverty and weakness on the cross He overturns the pomp and parade of idols, and quietly and hiddenly wins over the mockers and unbelievers to recognise Him as God.[86]

How does God make his divinity evident in a form unbefitting of him? It is not that the weakness of the human condition itself is identified with divinity (that would be anthropomorphism); but rather, Athanasius suggests, that divinity is manifested by the man seen to be doing things that are only befitting of God:

> When, then, the minds of men had fallen finally to the level of sensible things, the Word submitted to appear in a body, in order that He, as Man, might centre their senses on Himself, and convince them through His human acts that He Himself is not man only but also God the Word (…); and, invisible and imperceptible as in Himself he is, He became visible through his works and revealed Himself as the Word of the Father.[87]

It is thus not the case that God never becomes visible, but simply that he does not become visible as divine, in his proper form; his divinity can be seen only indirectly in the works of the human being: a man doing things no other man would do (e.g., turning the other cheek). Athanasius therefore concludes that "he who desires to see God Who by nature is invisible and not to be beheld, may yet perceive and know Him through His works."[88] Precisely this constitutes the paradox and the incomprehensibility: that it is a human being doing these things, that the Word became flesh.

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[85] Gorman, *Inhabiting the Cruciform God*, 32.

[86] Athanasius, *On the Incarnation*, 1/25.

[87] *Ibid*., 16/44-45.

[88] *Ibid*., 54/92.

b. Kenosis in philosophy

The previous section really already summarised the 'theological' results I am aiming to achieve (a phenomenology of kenosis *sensu stricto*). However, my aim is primarily philosophical rather than theological. I will therefore seek to translate these theological ideas into the language of contemporary philosophy, particularly Nancy's, where a similar kenotic dynamic is used to think a broader set of problems (a kenosis of phenomenology *sensu lato*). This exercise goes back to Hegel, who gives kenosis its philosophical reach by understanding the whole of reality—not just Christ's humanity—in terms of Luther's German translation of the Greek word (*Entäußerung*), namely as the externalisation of Absolute Spirit.[89] It is Hegel's more general *philosophical* analysis of reality that the nineteenth century kenoticists will employ in their *theological* analysis of the Incarnation, meaning that "Hegel thereby returned to theology what he had borrowed from it"[90] in a way that perfectly befits its secularising-theologising logic (and, indeed, Hegel's own dialectic). This philosophical appropriation extends up to Derrida, who latches onto negative theology as operating a 'kenosis of discourse', like the one performed above (e.g., weakness-in-strength).[91] This has resulted in several recent studies applying the kenotic motif to a range of philosophical problems (e.g., subjectivity, experience, language).[92] The philosophical interest is crystallised in Onno Zijlstra's 2002 edited volume *Letting Go: Rethinking Kenosis*. In his introduction, Zijlstra frames his question as that of "how one should interpret Jesus' kenosis, the way God has chosen the limits of human existence in the incarnation, and, more implicitly, how we should interpret that human existence."[93] Precisely that implicit dimension will prove to be most philosophically fruitful. With Zijlstra, we can therefore list four possible meanings of kenosis: (1) strictly

[89] Hegel, *The Phenomenology of Spirit*, 755/457. For commentary, see: Dawe, *The Form of a Servant*, 104-126; Dubilet, *The Self-Emptying Subject*, 92-122; Malabou, *The Future of Hegel*, 82-127 (including Derrida's preface, 'A Time for Farewells', xli-xlv).

[90] Brito, 'Kenosis', 855.

[91] Derrida, *ON*, 71. For commentary, see: de Vries, *Philosophy and the Turn to Religion*, 305-358; Caputo, *PT*, 1-68; Sneller, *Het Woord is schrift geworden*.

[92] See, for example: Dubillet, *The Self-Emptying Subject*; Wells, *The Manifest and the Revealed*; van Riessen, *Man as Place of God*.

[93] Zijlstra, 'Introduction', 8.

theological (Incarnation); (2) strictly philosophical (deconstruction of metaphysics); (3) ethical (humility and charity); (4) cultural (secularisation).[94] The phenomenology of kenosis proposed here fits into this framework in two ways: (a) by providing a phenomenological reading of the deconstruction of Christianity, it describes these four meanings with the tools of phenomenological philosophy (the phenomenon of kenosis); (b) by relating Nancy to phenomenology's theological turn, it adds a fifth meaning, itself inherently (5) phenomenological (the kenosis of phenomenality). Moving beyond theology, I will now consider how some philosophers have made use of kenosis in order to contextualise Nancy's deconstruction of Christianity.

i. Lévinas

Lévinas is difficult to categorise in my theological-atheological (or kenotic) schematisation of contemporary philosophy: though his phenomenology of the infinite undeniably makes it possible, Lévinas himself refrains from Marion's (revelation) and Henry's (incarnation) overt theologising.[95] Obviously, Lévinas is not a Christian, and is therefore far less eager to identify the key notions of phenomenology (givenness and embodiment) with those of Christian theology (revelation and incarnation). When it comes to the appropriation of the concepts of Christian theology, such as kenosis, Lévinas therefore finds himself in the same position as the authors of the 'kenotic turn': namely, drawing on the language of a tradition he remains outside of in order to think broader philosophical problems.

When invited to speak about the Incarnation, Lévinas admits as much: "I do not have the effrontery to enter an area forbidden to those who do not share the faith, and the ultimate dimensions of which no doubt escape me," instead he merely wants "to reflect" on "the multiple meanings suggested by the notion of Man-God."[96] This includes kenosis as "the idea of a self-

[94] *Ibid*., 9-10.

[95] As illustrated, for example, by Lévinas' highly cautious approach when he does address God directly, but precisely only insofar as God gives himself to thought (*vient à l'idée*), in *Of God Who Comes to Mind.*

[96] Lévinas, *Entre Nous*, 53

inflicted humiliation on the part of the Supreme Being, of a descent of the Creator to the level of the Creature."[97] Of course, Lévinas does not believe that God humbled himself in Christ, his interest in this notion is therefore not that of the theologian. Instead, he wants to explore "to what extent these ideas, which have unconditional value for the Christian faith, have philosophical value, and to what extent they can appear in phenomenology."[98] This is also the approach taken by the authors of the kenotic turn: namely, investigating what Christian theological notions mean outside of or beyond their immediate context. Their philosophical and theological meanings cannot straightforwardly be identified. Lévinas therefore cautions: "I ask myself to what extent the new categories we have just described are philosophical. I am certain that this extent will be judged insufficient by the believing Christian."[99] This apparent insufficiency for the theologian of the philosophical treatment of Christian concepts is not due to the limitations of philosophy's perspective compared to theology's, but to a divergence in the respective concerns orienting them. This distinction is what, for example, the Anglican theologian Graham Ward fails to recognise when, himself tracking the philosophical appropriation of the kenotic motif since Hegel, he complains that "what is absent from modernity's concept of kenosis is the role played by theological discourse as response to a reception of and participation in the divine."[100] Yet, to appropriate the concept of kenosis philosophically means precisely to expropriate it from theological discourse: it is articulated by people who do not recognise the divinity it is supposedly participating in. Ward's complaint presupposes that the Christian theological viewpoint has both priority and ultimate authority, ruling out from the start that an outside or philosophical perspective on its concepts might be useful to that theology (in phenomenology's appropriation), or that its concepts speak beyond their immediate religious context (in Christianity's self-

[97] *Ibid.*

[98] *Ibid*, 54.

[99] *Ibid.*

[100] Ward, *Christ and Culture*, 189-198 (196).

deconstruction). Lévinas' goal, like my own, is not to satisfy the theologian, but to interest the philosopher.

What Lévinas finds philosophically interesting about kenosis is that, as "the humiliation of God," it "allows for conceiving the relationship with transcendence in terms other than those of naiveté."[101] Christianity's innovation is that, compared to the pagan religions where the gods likewise manifest themselves among men, the Christian God manifests its divinity precisely in its humiliation in humanity:

> The appearance of man-gods, sharing the passions and joys of men who are purely men, is certainly a common characteristic of pagan poems. But in paganism, as the price for this manifestation, the gods lose their divinity. Hence philosophers expel poets from the City to preserve the divinity of the gods in men's minds. But divinity thus saved lacks all condescension. (…) Infinity then manifests itself *in* the finite, but it does not manifest itself *to* the finite.[102]

In paganism, the gods either remain entirely transcendent to the concerns of man or lose their divinity in being rendered immanent to world of men (the city). This maintains the order of man, placing divinity either firmly outside the city as divine or inside as just another man, which precludes the possibility of divine revelation to man. The Christian doctrine of kenosis, meanwhile, disrupts this order by providing a new way of relating to transcendence: a god who is God precisely in being man, whose transcendence lies in condescension, whose glory exists in humiliation. God's humiliation—his coming down to our level in order to raise us up to his—allows us to conceive of transcendence, not as what *breaks-into* immanence from *beyond*, but as what *opens-up* immanence from *within*:

> The idea of a truth whose manifestation is not glorious or bursting with light, the idea of a truth that manifests itself in its humility, like the still small voice in the biblical expression—the idea of a persecuted truth—is that not henceforth the only possible modality of transcendence? (…) To manifest itself as humble, as allied with the vanquished, the poor, the persecuted—is precisely not to return to the order. (…) To present oneself in this poverty of the exile is to interrupt the coherence of the universe. To pierce immanence without thereby taking one's place within it. Obviously such an opening can only be an ambiguity.[103]

[101] Lévinas, *Entre Nous*, 54.

[102] *Ibid.*

[103] *Ibid.*, 55.

The ambiguity is the paradox of God's power-in-weakness, transcendence-in-immanence, divinity-in-humanity: "The ambiguity of transcendence," Lévinas says, is not "a failure of the intelligence that examines it" or "the feeble faith surviving the death of God," but "precisely the proximity of God which can only occur in humility" as "the original mode of the presence of God, the original mode of communication."[104]

An example of the fact that Lévinas sees Paul's kenosis as speaking to a set of problems far broader than Christology—i.e., our relationship with transcendence rather than Christ's humanity—is his remarkable essay 'Judaism and Kenosis'. It uncovers Lévinas' understanding of kenosis in the Kabbalistic cosmology of the nineteenth century Lithuanian rabbi Chaim of Volozhin. The rabbi presents God's reign over creation as requiring ethical mediation through human action: "God associates with or withdraws from the worlds, depending upon human behaviour. Man is answerable for the universe! Man is answerable for others."[105] Or, more specifically:

> This is the ethical meaning of human activity: (…) God's reign depends on me. (…) God reigns only by the intermediary of an ethical order, an order in which one being is answerable for another. The world *is*, not because it perseveres in being, not because *being* is its own *raison d'être*, but because, through the human enterprise, it can be justified in its being. (…) More important than God's omnipotence is the subordination of that power to man's ethical consent. And that, too, is one of the primordial meanings of kenosis.[106]

Lévinas sees this as kenosis because it understands God in terms of weakness, unequal to divinity, emphasises the order of the finite human being's actions in the world down below: "this God, master of power, is powerless to associate himself with the world he creates (…) and maintains in being by that very association, without a certain behaviour of man," which consequently ensures that "everything depends on man," for "the vocation, or *raison d'être*, of humanity is precisely to provide the necessary conditions for the association of God with the worlds, and thus for the

[104] *Ibid.*, 56.

[105] Lévinas, *In the Time of Nations*, 125.

[106] *Ibid.*, 126.

being of the worlds."[107] Likewise, in Christianity, God becomes human for the sake of his revelation to and reconciliation with humanity, passes through kenosis for the sake of humanity's theosis: the divine plays out entirely in the lowly human and worldly sphere. Kenosis thus emphasises man as what Renée van Riessen, in her study of the kenotic motif in Lévinas, has called "a place of God"—which we will see Nancy elaborate on with his notion of being-unto-God (*être-à-Dieu*) as a divine place. Van Riessen explains:

> Kenosis is the event in which God makes room for human action. Conversely, for Levinas, the human being is 'a place of God.' Its existence is meaningful as a reference to the kenotic God, in the devotional movement of 'À Dieu.'[108]

Since God, in his kenotic revelation, has come down to the level of humanity, the human being, in his theopoetic act, becomes the site where divinity takes place as (indirectly) recognisable. "Paradoxically," Lévinas therefore concludes, "everything depends on him—he whose body is at the lowest level, located within the order of action and work, at the level of matter. Everything depends on him, even the outpouring of God,"[109] since "to some degree, in relation to the human will, the Divine is then subordinate. There is kenosis in this 'sub-'."[110]

ii. Vattimo

Lévinas still understands his philosophical analysis of kenosis as ultimately being completed by a theological one: he merely wants "to show the points beyond which nothing can replace religion."[111] However, in his *Belief*, Gianni Vattimo proposes something far more radical: by centring its theology around kenosis, Christianity de-theologises or secularises itself in a movement he calls *weakening*. Like Lévinas, he starts off by tying humility to charity, or kenosis to theosis: "The guiding thread of Jesus' interpretation of the Old Testament is the new and more profound relation of charity established between God and humanity, and consequently between human

[107] *Ibid.*, 122.
[108] van Riessen, *Man as a Place of God*, 12; 'An Empty Place of God', 170.
[109] *Ibid.*, 124
[110] *Ibid.*, 122.
[111] Lévinas, *Entre Nous*, 54.

beings themselves,"[112] meaning "that the 'kenotic' interpretation of the articles of faith goes hand in hand with the life of every person," namely "the commitment to transform them into concrete principles that are incarnate in one's own existence, and irreducible to a formula."[113] For Vattimo, too, kenosis introduces a new relation to transcendence, namely as to be found down below within, rather than beyond or above, the world.

However, Vattimo goes further and suggests that the kenotic doctrine of God actually effaces theological transcendence altogether: "The only great paradox and scandal of Christian revelation is the incarnation of God, the kenosis—that is, the removal of all the transcendent, incomprehensible, mysterious and even bizarre features," at least when this transcendence is understood in "a naturalistic, human, all too human, ultimately unchristian" way (i.e., metaphysically).[114] Transcendence is thus not merely related to differently, it is understood differently, namely kenotically. However, crucially, it is Christianity itself, with its kenotic doctrine of God, that establishes this understanding of divine transcendence as its own effacement: the gesture characteristic of Christianity is to efface divine transcendence, what Nancy calls 'de-theologisation' and Vattimo calls 'secularisation'.

Vattimo then presents us with a "Christianity recovered as the doctrine of salvation (namely, secularizing kenosis)."[115] He explains:

> Salvation is an event in which kenosis, the abasement of God, is realized more and more fully and so undermines the wisdom of the world, the metaphysical dreams of natural reason which conceive God as absolute, omnipotent and transcendent, *ipsum esse (metaphysicum) subsistens*. In this light, secularization—the progressive dissolution of the natural sacred—is the very essence of Christianity.[116]

De-theologisation or "secularization as the essence of modernity and of Christianity itself," thus means a weakening of the metaphysical structures in which Christianity articulated itself along with

[112] Vattimo, *Belief*, 49.
[113] *Ibid*., 72.
[114] *Ibid*., 55.
[115] *Ibid*., 62.
[116] *Ibid*., 49-50.

its theology—i.e., their self-effacement or self-emptying—, since at its core sits the secularising "feature of kenosis in which the history of salvation is realized" and "must be attributed to this whole experience of 'dissolution', or the weakening of strong structures."[117] This gesture does not oppose itself to 'Christianity' or 'theology', but instead opens a new Christianity or theology, wrests itself away from a supposedly contingent metaphysical framework. Crucially, however, this movement beyond 'Christianity' (onto-theo-logy) is instituted by Christianity itself (the kenosis of God). Tracing this movement is precisely the task Nancy's deconstruction of Christianity sets itself.

iii. Nancy

In the preamble to his two-volume project entitled *The Deconstruction of Christianity*, Nancy states his intentions: "It is not our concern to save religion, even less to return to it. The much discussed 'return of the religious,' which denotes a real phenomenon, deserves no more attention than any other 'return.'"[118] According to Nancy, any religion that can 'return' was never properly 'gone'. He has no interest in a positive religious thinking, but instead desires a genuine atheism.[119] However, neither does he share his philosophical contemporaries' overt hostility to religion: "The ever-rehashed condemnation of Christianity by philosophers (…) can only leave us perplexed," for "it is highly unlikely that an entire civilization could be affected by a serious congenital disease."[120] In short, if Nancy's deconstruction of Christianity forms his own turn to religion, it does not aim at a return to the religious or theological mode of thought (either by embracing Christianity or by straightforwardly condemning it); his question concerns something entirely different:

> It is thus important to discern in what sense the West is Christian in its depths (…). And thus, we must ask ourselves anew what it is that, without denying Christianity but without returning to it, could lead us toward a point—toward a resource—hidden beneath Christianity, beneath monotheism, and beneath the West, which we must henceforth bring to light, for this point would open upon a future for the world that would no longer be either Christian or anti-

[117] *Ibid.*, 52.

[118] Nancy, *Dis-Enclosure*, 1.

[119] *Ibid.*, 17.

[120] *Ibid.*, 9.

> Christian, either monotheist or atheist or even polytheist, but that would advance precisely beyond all these categories (after having made all of them possible).[121]

Nancy is interested in a resource, found *within* Christianity, carrying us *beyond* Christianity: as the religion of the egress of religion, Christianity carries within itself the gesture of its own self-surpassing. The deconstruction of Christianity concerns itself with precisely that gesture:

> My question will be very simple, naïve even, as is perhaps fitting at the beginning of a phenomenological procedure: How and to what degree do *we hold* to Christianity? How, exactly, are we, in our whole tradition, held by it? (…) Christianity itself, Christianity *as such*, is surpassed. That state of self-surpassing may be very profoundly proper to it; it is perhaps its deepest tradition (…). It is this transcendence, this going-beyond-itself that must therefore be examined.[122]

This gesture of Christianity's self-surpassing—a movement *from* Christianity *beyond* Christianity—is envisioned by Nancy's deconstruction of Christianity as "the operation consisting in disassembling the elements that constitute it, in order to attempt to discern, among these elements and as if behind them, that which made their assembly possible,"[123] in order to "go back to (or to advance toward) a resource that could form at once the buried origin and the imperceptible future of the world that calls itself 'modern.'"[124] If we understand deconstruction as the gesture of taking apart a complex whole in order to discover what makes it fit together, only to find that once taken apart it cannot be put together anymore—i.e., every construction is itself always inhabited by the threat of its own infinite deconstruction—, we find that, on Nancy's account, deconstruction is identified with Christianity itself in its movement of self-surpassing: what is characteristic of Christianity moves us beyond Christianity as the agent of its own secularisation or de-theologisation. Indeed, "the gesture of deconstruction," Nancy says, "is itself shot through and through with Christianity," and is therefore "only possible within Christianity."[125] Consequently, the deconstruction of Christianity, like any deconstruction, is a self-deconstruction: deconstruction

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[121] *Ibid.*, 34.

[122] *Ibid.*, 139-141.

[123] *Ibid.*, 32.

[124] *Ibid.*, 34.

[125] *Ibid.*, 148.

is not something done to Christianity from without, but something going on within the Christian religion as its very Christianity. Nancy's core claim is that Christianity *is* nothing but this movement, this deconstruction, this de-theologisation or secularisation, of itself as itself.[126] In short, Christianity is Christian in its own 'de-Christianisation' or self-deconstruction: "deconstruction (…) is itself Christian (…) because Christianity is, originally, deconstructive (…). *The structure of origin of Christianity is the proclamation of its end.*"[127]

We can already anticipate where in Christianity Nancy will find its self-deconstructive agent—the origin that proclaims its end—, namely its kenotic doctrine of God: like the Christian God is only God in his self-effacement as 'God' (the form), Christianity is only Christian in its self-effacement as 'Christianity' (the religion). However, before exploring Nancy's treatment of the kenotic motif and his development of the deconstruction of Christianity, it is worth contextualising this project. We should understand it in the context of an essay by a friend and collaborator of Nancy's, namely Jean-Christophe Bailly's *Adieu: Essai sur la mort des dieux*. In his meditation on the meaning of the death of God, Bailly insightfully remarks that "farewell (*adieu*) has not really been said to God (*à Dieu*). He is no longer there, that's all."[128] Specifically, "modern Western man did not really want the death of God, he has simply lost God along the way (*en route*), and in such a foolish way that he has not even realised it yet."[129] This is a perfect summary of Nietzsche's development of this idea, where a "madman" (who nevertheless "lit a lantern in the bright morning hours"), urgently proclaims the death of God, not to the believers, but to the cultured despisers who think to have no need of him. Yet, they do not listen for they do not understand what they have done, they do not comprehend the consequences of this death they themselves nevertheless accomplished:

> Here the madman fell silent and looked again at his listeners; and they, too, were silent and stared at him in astonishment. At last he threw his lantern on the ground, and it broke into

[126] *Ibid.*, 35.

[127] *Ibid.*, 149.

[128] Bailly, *Adieu*, 16.

[129] *Ibid.*, 33.

> pieces and went out. 'I have come to early,' he said then; 'my time is not yet. This tremendous event is still on its way, still wandering; it has not yet reached the ears of men. Lighting and thunder require time; the light of the stars requires time; deeds, though done, still require time to be seen and heard. This deed is still more distant from than most distant stars—*and yet they have done it themselves*.'[130]

It is with this tremendous, and indeed still ongoing, event that Bailly wants to come to grips by making its extensive reverberations felt. Or, as he puts it: "Truly saying farewell (*adieu*) (…) to God (*à Dieu*)."[131] This cannot be done in an instant, merely noting the death is insufficient; it requires a laborious effort of bidding God farewell: not merely writing his obituary, but clearing out his house and selling off his possessions. In other words, we need to perform the work of mourning his death: "I propose that thinking what 'God is dead' means and doing the work of mourning are one and the same thing."[132] The work of mourning God's death is an intellectual labour: thinking through the effects of the death of God, the erasure of the horizon, the unchaining of the earth from its sun. It means considering the meaning of a *genuine atheism*, which is not merely a denial of God (anti-theism), but something much more difficult: ceasing any reference to God (a-theism). Atheism, Bailly suggests, means "saying simply that which is, the world shines in the absence of God, any god, it shines *divinely* in this absence."[133] Atheism is a thinking of the world on its own terms, without reference to a God who would supposedly give it meaning. As Bailly explains:

> The appearance of sense: that there is but it, coming-about, to come, without prior organisation, just like that, flowing from the plane of immanence, not even from a whole without a reconstituted end but pure emergence, pure effacement too—such would be the end word, without words (silent, dazzled) of atheism.[134]

Or, put in a way more befitting of my approach, atheism means "a complete adherence of experience to itself."[135] Atheism means sense referring only to itself as sense (sensing), the world referring only to itself as world (worlding), experience only referring to itself as experience

[130] Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, 181-182.
[131] Bailly, *Adieu*, 10.
[132] *Ibid.*, 17.
[133] *Ibid.*, 18-19.
[134] *Ibid.*, 7.
[135] *Ibid.*

(experiencing). That is the *challenge* the death of God poses to thought, to be met only in the intellectual labour of mourning this death.

Nancy's deconstruction undertakes the work of mourning the death of God: it is not an accomplishment (i.e., achieving a 'deconstructed Christianity' resembling C.S. Lewis' 'mere Christianity'), but the project or endeavour of *bidding farewell to God* (i.e., tracking Christianity in its self-deconstruction). Rather than Christianity, Nancy's question therefore concerns the possibility of a genuine atheism: thinking in the wake of the death of God. He nevertheless finds the answer in Christianity, precisely because it has made the death of God into a religion: "Only an atheism that contemplates the reality of its Christian provenance can be actual."[136] That Christian provenance points the way towards a genuine atheism, namely a world without any reference to God, a world without given meaning other than its own being-world:

> Christianity is by itself and in itself a deconstruction and a self-deconstruction. (…) Christianity indicates, in the most active way—and the most ruinous for itself (…)—how monotheism shelters within itself (…) the principle of a world without God.[137]

Thinking this world without God, thinking atheologically, is Nancy's project. Yet, he says, it must be done precisely by thinking *through* Christianity itself, the de-theologisation going on within it, the self-deconstruction it is. This is what it means to bid farewell to God, to carry out the work of mourning his death, to de-theologise thought—indeed, to deconstruct Christianity.

How Nancy does this—i.e., the deconstruction his texts document—can then be read in three different ways. The first two are the most obvious, namely: as (1) a critique of metaphysics (a discourse on the death of God), or (2) a philosophy of culture (a discourse on the post-secular condition). As in Vattimo, these are two sides of the same coin: secularisation means both Christianity's own de-theologisation (its effacement of God as *ipsum esse subsistens*) and the weakening of the metaphysical structures it introduced more generally (the deconstruction of the metaphysics of presence or onto-theo-logy). However, this is perhaps the least interesting way of

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[136] Nancy, *Dis-Enclosure*, 140.*

[137] *Ibid.*, 35.

reading Nancy's project, as these ideas are well-rehearsed and arguably put forward more eloquently by others. Though I will summarise these readings briefly below, the remainder of the present study reads Nancy's project (3) phenomenologically (a discourse on phenomenality): if Bailly understands atheism as the adherence of experience to itself, then Nancy likewise wants to think how "experience simply (…) 'events' (*s'évenir*), 'comes forth of itself.'" It is as this dynamic of experienc*ing*, experience without reference to anything transcending the experience, that an atheological thinking of the world becomes possible according to what he calls its open*ing*: "This *évenir* opens *within* the world an *outside* that is not a beyond-the-world, but the *truth* of the world."[138] This will be unpacked in the following chapters.

Let us first explore the superficial reading of the deconstruction of Christianity as a critique of metaphysics and secularism. It can be summarised as follows: Nancy understands atheism as a fundamentally Christian or monotheist option.[139] On his account, all monotheism, including Christianity, carries an atheism at its core as its characteristic gesture: "the invention of 'atheism' is contemporaneous and correlative with the invention of 'theism.'"[140] Think here of Xenophanes, who observed that the respective pantheons of various pagan peoples all happened to resemble them: if cows and horses were able to produce paintings and sculptures, he observed, they would depict their gods as cows and horses! Instead, Xenophanes suggests, for the divine to be divine, it must be one (*heis theos*).[141] Here, monotheism is born out of a moment of atheism: the rejection of the pagan pantheons, specifically, and the polytheistic conception of divinity, generally. According to Nancy, the revolution in the conception of divinity wrought by this atheism is profound:

> I would state it thus: monotheism is in truth atheism. In effect, its difference from 'polytheisms' is not due to the number of gods. In fact, the plurality of gods corresponds to their effective presence (in nature, in an image, in a mind possessed) (…). The unicity of god, on the contrary, signifies the withdrawal of this god away from presence.[142]

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[138] *Ibid.*, 79.

[139] Nancy, *Adoration*, 28.

[140] *Ibid.*, 15.

[141] See further: West, 'Towards Monotheism', 32-36; Nancy, *Dis-Enclosure*, 14-16.

[142] Nancy, *Dis-Enclosure*, 35-36; see also 22, 32.

Monotheism is not simply the denial (atheism) of the polytheistic conception of divinity, but the denial (atheism) of any determinate conception of divinity (e.g., Islamic aniconism or Christian *apophasis*): as unique, unlike anything else, God's divinity becomes transcendent to the world and human reason. As Nancy puts it: "the unique *theos*, deprived of appearance (*figure*) and name, really represents an invention, even the invention, of 'god' in general."[143] The God of monotheism is primarily characterised by his withdrawal from and self-effacement in the world.

This has the curious consequence that a genuine atheism—what Nancy calls "absentheism,"[144] namely a de-theologised world, without reference to God, without principle or reason, without origin or end—is Christian, precisely because Christianity is an atheism: "the Christian 'god' is atheist. In fact, 'atheist' signifies the nonpositing of 'God.'"[145] In this sense, the origin of Christianity (its provenance (*pro-venance*)) is likewise the proclamation of its end (its future (*a-venir*)), namely: the atheism out of which Christianity is both born as monotheism and in which it ends up as monotheism. This historical movement of de-theologisation is what Nancy's deconstruction of Christianity tracks (as a discourse on the post-secular condition), but not what it aims at. Nancy is interested in it only for the sake of understanding its endpoint and the work it saddles us with, namely bidding farewell to God:

> At the end of monotheism, there is a world without God, i.e. without another world, but we still need to reflect on what this means, for we know nothing of it, no truth, neither 'theistic' nor 'atheististic'—let us say (…) that it is *absentheistic*.[146]

The deconstruction of Christianity thus forms an attempt at thinking the meaning of the death of God (as a critique of metaphysics). However, this must be understood as the project of experiencing the world on its own terms without reference to an otherworldly God that gives it meaning (and hence I suggest reading it phenomenologically).

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[143] *Ibid*., 15.

[144] *Ibid*., 18, 88.

[145] Nancy, *Adoration*, 31.

[146] Nancy, *CW*, 50-51.*

Nancy develops this deconstruction of monotheism in the form of a deconstruction of Christianity, simply because it is the monotheism "of which I am the least incapable of speaking."[147] The self-deconstructive agent Nancy then locates in Christianity is its kenotic doctrine of God according to which God is a God who descended towards human beings and the created world: "Christianity is inaugurated in the affirmation of the presence 'down here' of divine otherness," and its gesture therefore "is 'of here' and opens the *here*—onto no elsewhere."[148] Or, more explicitly:

> With the figure of Christ comes the renunciation of divine power and presence, such that this renunciation becomes the proper act of God, which makes this act into God's becoming-man. In this sense, the god withdrawn, the god 'emptied out,' in Paul's words, is not a hidden god at the depths of the withdrawal or the void (a *deus absconditus*): the site to which he has withdrawn has neither depths nor hiding places. He is a god whose absence in itself creates divinity, or a god whose void-of-divinity is the truth, properly speaking.[149]

God's self-emptying of the divine form in favour of the human servant form—his kenosis—is therefore the prism through which Nancy understands Christianity, setting in motion its self-deconstruction precisely as its Christianity, or the movement of God's self-effacement as his divinity: "the Christian (…) god is the god who *alienates himself*," "who *atheizes himself* and who *atheologizes himself* (…). Atheology as a conceptualization of the body is the thought that 'god' made himself 'body' by emptying himself of himself (another Christian motif, that of the Pauline *kenosis* (…))."[150]

3. Structure of the study

Seeking to think 'after the theological turn' by relating Nancy to its authors, this study reads the deconstruction of Christianity phenomenologically, painting it as a deconstruction of phenomenology's inherent theological structure: *starting from* the theological turn phenomenology was structurally inclined to produce, it tries to move *beyond* it. Phenomenology's inherent

147 Nancy, *Dis-Enclosure*, 33.

148 Nancy, *Adoration*, 28.

149 Nancy, *Dis-Enclosure*, 36; *Adoration*, 29-30.

150 *Ibid.*, 82-83; 'Entzug der Göttlichkeit', 78.

theological structure is evidenced by how French authors have understood Husserl's *leibhaftige Gegebenheit* of phenomena as the incarnate givenness of revelation: philosophical and theological terms are made to converge in phenomenology. However, exploring these phenomenologies in light of Nancy's kenotic understanding of Christianity, I show how this phenomenological coupling of theological and philosophical terms proves to be unsustainable—i.e., deconstructs or de-theologises itself—, as evidenced by the fact that it cannot satisfactorily account for the phenomena it analyses. Here, phenomenality is understood in Marion's terms, namely as what gives itself to consciousness. Hence, the critique is the following: religious or theophanic experience cannot be accounted for exhaustively in terms of givenness; it requires a non-given, and therefore extra-phenomenal, element (e.g., faith).

The phenomenology of kenosis suggested then provides an alternative in two distinct ways: (1) concerning the phenomenology of religion, I argue that God's phenomenality is kenotic (i.e., he appears or gives himself only insofar as he withdraws from appearing or givenness as divine, since the transcendent God can only appear by emptying himself out of that transcendence); (2) concerning phenomenology as such, I use the figure of kenosis to thematise the limits of phenomenology by indicating that phenomenality always relies on an extra-phenomenal element that must therefore be accounted for phenomenologically (i.e., all appearing withdraws into something that does not itself appear, yet makes appearing possible nevertheless). Tying these two together, I argue that God's phenomenality presupposes an extra-phenomenal element into which his givenness withdraws itself: the appearing of God, the recognition of his self-givenness, relies on something that does not belong to what gives itself to consciousness (specifically, faith as a particular orientation of intentionality). God's phenomenality is then kenotic in the double sense that the possibility of religious or theophanic experience, precisely because God empties himself of or withdraws himself from himself when giving himself in revelation, relies on how what gives itself to me is received by me through an intentionality that is itself not given. His kenotic appearance would then explain why believers see God where atheists do not,

precisely because they intend what gives itself to be seen differently and therefore see or phenomenalise different things. To say that God appears kenotically, that his phenomenality is kenotic, is thus to say that the determining factor of religious or theophanic experience (i.e., what qualifies the experience as referring to God) is extra-phenomenal (i.e., not-given). Like Nancy, who is not a phenomenologist, this study is therefore primarily interested in the extra-phenomenal element that nevertheless makes appearance possible, the outside delineating phenomenality's inside, which is therefore already implied within it. This attempt at speaking phenomenologically about the extra-phenomenal, without reducing it to phenomenality, is captured by Nancy's dictum that "the outside is inside,"[151] but only ever as its outside.

To that end, this study is divided into two parts, each dealing with the theologisation of respective aspects of Husserl's *leibhaftige Gegebenheit*. Part I considers Marion's identification of givenness (*Gegebenheit*) with revelation, whilst part II considers Henry's identification of embodiment (*Leibhaftigkeit*) with incarnation. Each time, I show how Husserl's philosophical terms are not coextensive with their theological appropriations, and thus that philosophy and theology diverge rather than converge as phenomenology: givenness does not equal revelation, nor does embodiment equal incarnation. Moreover, I argue, an accurate understanding of the theological terms would itself indicate their divergence from the philosophical ones. In short, only by turning to theology, can phenomenology come into its own as philosophy: by exploring the theological dimension, we can correct phenomenology's structural theological inclination; only by passing through the theological, can phenomenology be de-theologised.

So, against Marion, part I argues that givenness does not equal revelation. Put otherwise, since Marion understands revelation as 'religious' or theophanic experience (i.e., the phenomenon of Jesus Christ), that experience cannot be accounted for solely in terms of givenness. Indeed, something else entirely is in play, namely: faith, the particular orientation of intentionality that

[151] Nancy, *BSP*, 13; *Corpus II*, 84.

allows what gives itself to us to be experienced by us as revealing God. To that end, the first chapter sets out phenomenology's theological turn in its relation to Husserl. Specifically, I frame this discussion around the question of whether a philosophical phenomenology of religion is possible without turning into theology. This is also the terrain for the famously heated debated between Marion and Dominique Janicaud: does the turn to religious phenomena constitute an abuse of phenomenological reason (Janicaud) or rather its due radicalisation (Marion)? Indeed, Marion argues that Husserl was not sufficiently radical in executing his own method of reduction, therefore suggesting a further reduction which brackets intentionality until only the mere givenness of phenomena to consciousness remains. When this givenness is so complete that it overwhelms any possible intentional horizon, Marion will speak of a 'saturated phenomenon' that he identifies with the Revelation of Christ: a phenomenon unconditionally and absolutely given to be seen. However, because this phenomenon supposedly gives itself unconditionally to a passive subject, irrespective of how that subject intends what is given, Marion is unable to provide a convincing answer to those atheist critics—including Nancy—who claim not to see God in what thus gives itself: the religious specificity of religious experience (i.e., its theophanic character) cannot be established solely in terms of givenness. Comparing Marion and Nancy's respective treatments of revelation, I suggest that closer attention therefore needs to be paid to the subject of revelation, the orientation of its intentionality which cannot be reduced: faith allows the believer to see God where the atheist does not. I therefore conclude that, in the theological turn, phenomenological reason is neither abused nor radicalised, but rather situated existentially in a particular way: Marion provides a perfectly valid analysis of experience, provided that this is the experience of the believer, that this phenomenology is operative within a logic of faith. It is then that specific existential situation, in which givenness takes place without itself being given, that must be the object of a phenomenology of religion, for it is the condition of possibility for religious or theophanic experience. Put otherwise, against Marion, the role of intentionality in the constitution of religious or theophanic phenomena must be recovered.

The second chapter explores the role of the existential situation of (phenomenological) reason by providing an anthropological reading of Nancy's deconstruction of Christianity. It does so by fitting Nancy's project into a methodological framework provided by Falque, namely what he calls phenomenology's 'kenotic ambition' and serves to indicate how phenomenality, too, exists in a descent into its own 'underground', into what makes phenomenality possible whilst itself remaining extra-phenomenal. This study is interested in this underground of phenomenality as the extra-phenomenal element delineating, and therefore making possible, the phenomenal inside. Chapter 2 explores it in terms of Nancy's analysis of what constitutes the humanity of man, namely: reason. His analysis interrogates the fact that there is no reason for reason, that the practice of giving reasons is an infinite regress. Specifically, by reading various giants of modern thought on reason, he shows how reason is grounded in—or, rather, undergrounded by—something that itself remains extra-rational: faith (Kant), groundlessness (Heidegger), and value (Marx). With Nancy, I argue that when we descend into the underground of reason, we find that reason is made possible by a particular experience irreducible to reason, namely that of existence: the experience of a particular way of being-in-the-world that values reason, that has faith in its ability to give reasons. Here, again, when we are interested in the reason or ground for reason, it is existence—specifically the existence that has faith in it—that we should look at.

In chapter 3, the phenomenological relevance of existence, and especially existence in faith, is therefore examined. Specifically, Nancy's account of faith is used to articulate a phenomenological reading of Kierkegaard's *Fear and Trembling*. In it, I argue, Kierkegaard describes Abraham's life lived in faith as equally entailing an experience of faith. However, this experience is not a phenomenon, not what phenomenology calls 'lived-experience'; but, rather, the experience of life, the experience that comes with having lived-through something (e.g., the ordeal God puts Abraham through). This experience of faith subsequently informs all lived-experiences, determining how things are lived in experience, setting the terms on which they are experienced: in short, this experience of existence undergrounds all phenomenalisation. Put otherwise, the

experience of a life of faith sets the horizon against which things appear, orients intentionality in a particular direction—namely, towards God (*à Dieu*)—, and thereby makes religious experience possible (e.g., it explains why Abraham sees divine promise where the pseudonymous author sees only a horrifying paradox). Yet, this experience as such remains outside the scope of a phenomenology in Marion's sense: it does not concern something given for all to see, but a singular event of Abraham's life that only he has lived-through, which therefore determines his existence as the basis on which he envisions or experiences everything else. This is why Kierkegaard speaks, controversially, of faith's 'teleological suspension of the ethical': rather than suspending morality, faith suspends ethical reason as Abraham's ability to justify his actions by giving reasons that transcend the singular predicament he finds himself in. I therefore suggest that faith cannot be thought ethically (i.e., justifying Abraham's actions) or phenomenologically (i.e., giving reasons for his seeing), but must rather be thought poetically (i.e., in-forming how he sees things): like any other way of being-in-the-world, faith sets the terms on which the world is disclosed as the form of experience.

Part I can therefore alternatively be understood as inquiring into the relationship between faith and reason: chapter 1 deals with faith as the existential situation of reason (phenomenologically); chapter 2 deals with faith as the underground of reason (metaphysically); chapter 3 deals with faith as resistance to reason (ethically). Put otherwise, each time faith is shown as short-circuiting our ability to *give reasons*: for our experience, for ourselves, for our actions. None of these can be accounted for simply in terms of givenness without reference to its reception. By conceiving it in terms of *givenness*, Marion tries to give a (phenomenological) *reason* for religious experience, to justify its theophany. Yet, in doing so, he neglects the role of faith, for faith means precisely that no reason for its seeing can be given, that religious experience cannot be justified, that revelation's theophany cannot be grounded in the logic of the world: one has no reason for one's seeing, since one is seeing more than one has *reason* to see, more than one is *given* to see. The revelation of God is thus not a question of givenness, but of how it is intended: the intentionality

of faith. Proposing what Nancy calls "a phenomenology that is theological, but not theophanic,"[152] chapter 3 therefore provides an alternative account of saturation: not a surplus of givenness (there being more to see than I can comprehend), but of intention (seeing more than I can justify in terms of givenness).

Having established the role of intentionality in part I, part II further describes it as embodied. Or, put otherwise, if part I presented phenomenological reason as existentially situated (finite existence as the form of experience), part II considers that situation in terms of certain material conditions (embodiment as the form of existence): the materiality of the body (i.e., the fact of our embodiment) engenders our being-in-the-world (i.e., our finitude), and thereby shapes our experience. Whereas part I argued against Marion that givenness does not equal revelation, part II argues against Henry that the phenomenological understanding of embodiment (*Leiblichkeit*) does not equal theological Incarnation. To that end, chapter 4 gives a critical summary of Henry's theologisation of Husserl's account of embodiment. Husserl distinguishes between the lived-body (*Leib*, *chair*, flesh), as given in our own lived-experience, and the material body (*Körper*, *corps*, body), as inert and transcendent worldly object. Phenomenology's field of study extends only to what is lived in consciousness as my own, thus only to the flesh defined as 'incarnate givenness'. In other words, the body-as-body remains what Franck calls 'outside-the-flesh' (*hors-chair*), or what Falque calls 'extra-phenomenal' (*hors-phénomène*): it cannot be accounted for phenomenologically, for it is not a lived-experience, not a phenomenon. Henry embraces this identification of phenomenality with flesh, producing a philosophy of flesh that doubles as a phenomenology of Incarnation (i.e., salvation in the Christian sense). Here, flesh is identified with the auto-affective impressional substrate of phenomenalisation characteristic of man (self-consciousness), radically distinct from the body's worldly extension characteristic of things (materiality). As a result, Henry conceives Incarnation as dis-embodiment: the human condition assumed by God is understood simply as

[152] Nancy, *Dis-Enclosure*, 49

phenomenological flesh, to the exclusion of a worldly, historical and material body. Indeed, the flesh becomes the very place of divinity altogether; divinity and phenomenality are one as flesh: theology (*sarx*) and philosophy (*chair*) converge as a matter of phenomenology (incarnation as phenomenalisation). With Falque, I criticise this conception on both phenomenological and theological grounds as an account of incarnation lacking kenosis. Firstly, phenomenologically, a 'kenosis of the flesh' (i.e., of phenomenality) is required: since the lived-experience that is my flesh presupposes a material body to live in experience, the phenomenality of flesh empties itself into the extra-phenomenality of the body outside-the-flesh that makes it possible. Secondly, theologically, a 'kenosis of Christ' (i.e., of divinity) is required: as discussed, precisely for the sake of our salvation, God empties himself of the divine form in favour of the worldly and historical form of the human servant. Put otherwise, theological Incarnation is different from phenomenological incarnation—indeed, concerns an incorporation: God comes among us by assuming our human condition, namely a historical, material and worldly *body*. Incarnation (coming-into-the-flesh) is therefore precisely where philosophy and theology diverge: philosophically, it means coming-into-the-self (phenomenalisation); theologically, it means self-emptying (externalisation). In short, Falque's critique of Henry is the following: phenomenality, like divinity, implies an outside. As a result, phenomenological flesh is undergrounded by the material body, which therefore also requires an account even if it remains extra-phenomenal or outside-the-flesh: as what is lived in it, the materiality of the body (in)forms the lived-experience of the flesh. How this works should interest the phenomenologist.

Chapter 5 therefore sets out how Falque relates the flesh to the body (as its object), phenomenality to extra-phenomenality (as its form), or phenomenology to its limits (which delineate it). Specifically, I argue that the extra-phenomenal body forms or shapes the lived-experience of the flesh by setting the terms on which things are lived in experience: as a whole of organic passions and drives, the body orients the intentionality of consciousness in a particular direction. The chapter first introduces Falque's framework theologically by expounding what he

understands as the fundamental problem with Henry's account of the human condition: in defining man as disembodied (i.e., unworldly) flesh, he precludes an understanding of man as created, for creation means precisely 'enworlding' (i.e., embodiment). Subsequently, I outline the phenomenological consequences of this theology. Or, as Falque would put it, I make felt the 'backlash' of theology (of the body) on phenomenology (of the flesh): having criticised the phenomenological account of embodiment in terms of incarnation (*Leib*) by way of a theological account of the Incarnation (*sarx*), a more appropriate phenomenological account of embodiment is developed. Put otherwise, once this backlash has been made felt, once we have passed through theology, phenomenology has been 'de-theologised': by exploring the theological notions phenomenology's inherent structure drives us toward, and observing that these are not in fact coextensive with phenomenology's, we can better appreciate the properly phenomenological meaning of phenomenological notions (e.g., *Leibhaftigkeit*) stripped of all theological connotations (e.g., Incarnation). I do so in two steps: first, by elaborating how Falque sees this theology as exposing the limits of phenomenology; secondly, once those limits have been exposed, by constructing an account of embodiment conscious of them. Specifically, Falque speaks of the *spread body*: a body precisely spread-out between, underlying, the difference between the subjective body of phenomenology (*Leib*) and the objective body of physics (*Körper*), as the corporeal reality (*Leibkörper*) making both possible whilst resisting reduction to either. This is the body, not as phenomenal (flesh), nor as obscure to consciousness (body); but insofar as it is experienced implicitly as the way in which things are lived in experience, the way in which objects are intended. Take, for example, the experience of being under the influence of psychedelic drugs: there is no experience *of* this influence (i.e., it has no phenomenal object of its own), but it is precisely experienced in the way it colours all particular experiences (i.e., the way in which other things are brought into view). What we experience is the interference of the physical body (neurochemistry) with the lived flesh (consciousness). The body-as-body is thus an example of 'kenotic' phenomenality: not being phenomenal itself, embodiment withdraws into how the flesh

experiences itself, is experienced only in how it sets the terms on which everything else is experienced (kenosis of phenomenality); just like divinity withdraws into how humanity lives its life, is experienced only in the existence that orients itself towards God (*à Dieu*) through faith (phenomenon of kenosis).

The sixth and final chapter fits Nancy into Falque's framework, spelling out its implications for both theology (Incarnation) and phenomenology (experience). First, drawing on his early work on Descartes and reflections on his own heart transplant, I show how Nancy, too, understands embodiment as an intermediary zone between the subjective and the objective body: namely, the extension of the soul. Subsequently, I outline the consequences he draws from this. Theologically, he understands Incarnation as the opposite of phenomenological incarnation: namely, the ex-position of divinity (its externalisation in a human body), rather than in-carnation (its auto-affection in a spiritual flesh). Phenomenologically, Nancy further develops this exposition in terms of a phenomenality of skin or ex-skin-hibition (*ex-peau-sition*): skin is that part of the body facilitating all experience, all touching, without itself being available to experience, to touch, precisely because experience and touch proceed *through* the skin. Drawing on Aristotle's account of the skin as the medium of touch and therefore all sensing in *De anima*, and assisted by Derrida and Chrétien's readings, I argue that this phenomenality of skin provides, not only a more profound phenomenology of the body, but also a better understanding of experience as embodied: just like intentionality makes all phenomena possible without itself being a phenomenon, except as phenomenalisation itself (intending); as skin, the body is the medium of all lived-experience without itself being given or lived in experience, except as the mediation itself (touching).

As a whole, this study is therefore concerned with the relation of the outside to the inside, of the body to the flesh, of the extra-phenomenal to the phenomenal, of the human to the divine. Each chapter considers the extra-phenomenal somehow: the existential situation in which reason finds itself but for which it cannot account in terms of itself (chapter 1); the underground upon which reason is built but which it cannot recover in terms of itself (chapter 2); faith's inability to

give reasons for itself (chapter 3); the materiality of the body, which is lived as flesh yet resists reduction to it (chapter 4); the intentionality of the body, which is not itself given in the lived-experience it makes possible (chapter 5); until the relationship between the phenomenal inside (flesh) and its outside (body) is finally conceived in terms of touch as mediating between the two (skin) (chapter 6). The insight offered by Nancy to the phenomenologist of religion is then that God is transcendent, extra-phenomenal, yet we can talk phenomenologically about him in terms of the mediation of Jesus Christ, his phenomenal manifestation *in* his descent towards man and *as* his self-emptying of divinity, namely his going-outside-himself, externalisation, exposition, *ex-peau-sition*: God becomes available to touch (i.e., experience) only in his kenosis (i.e., withdrawal from experience).

PART I. GIVENNESS AND REVELATION

The 'kingdom of God' is not something that you wait for; it does not have a yesterday or a day after tomorrow, it will not arrive in a 'thousand years'—it is an experience of the heart; it is everywhere and it is nowhere…

— Nietzsche, *The Anti-Christ*, 32.

This affirmation that existence is experience: that it does nothing else, cut loose from the goal or the project of the will—does nothing else but expose itself to the unforeseeable, the unheard of of its own event. Experience simply—we should say—'events' (*s'évenir*), 'comes forth of itself.' This *évenir* opens *within* the world an *outside* that is not a beyond-the-world, but the *truth* of the world.

— Nancy, *Dis-Enclosure*, 79.

Chapter 1. The phenomenon of revelation: Marion and Nancy on the possibility of theophanic experience

> Talk of revelation betrays and understanding of *Dasein* as aware of its limit and wishing to exceed it. The question is (…) how are the human limit and exceeding that limit by revelation seen.
>
> — Bultmann, *WIT?*, 77.

"Can phenomenology contribute in a privileged way to the development of a 'philosophy of religion'?" Put differently, "can 'philosophy of religion' become a 'phenomenology of religion'?"[1] With this question Jean-Luc Marion opens his 1988 essay 'The Possible and Revelation', setting off a heated debate over the relationship between phenomenology and theology, and the place of 'religious' experience within phenomenology. Here, we also find the first formulation of Marion's ground-breaking *saturated phenomenon*, where "instead of common phenomenality striving to make intuition adequate to intention, and usually having to admit the failure in givenness of an incompletely intuited though fully intended object, revelation gives objects where intuition surpasses the intentional aim."[2] Marion thus introduces a new understanding of phenomenality, characterised by superabundant intuitive *givenness* which overwhelms every possible intentional horizon. Controversially, he further identifies this new mode of phenomenality with "the regime of revelation,"[3] and Christ's revelation with "the preeminent saturated phenomenon."[4] By placing religious experience—understood as the *theo*phany that is the experience of God through the phenomenon of Christ (revelation), in contrast to the less theologically determined sense of the numinous (Otto) or feeling of absolute dependence (Schleiermacher)—at the heart of

[1] Marion, *V&R*, 1.

[2] *Ibid.*, 16.

[3] *Ibid.*

[4] Marion, *BOS*, 142; *G&R*, 77.

phenomenology, "phenomenology would be the method par excellence for that manifestation of the invisible," according to Marion, "hence also the method for theology."[5]

Some see this as a derogation of the phenomenological method, most famously Dominique Janicaud: he entitles his 1991 report on the state of French philosophy *The Theological Turn in French Phenomenology*, observing with dismay that Marion is part of a larger movement, including Emmanuel Lévinas, Michel Henry and Jean-Louis Chrétien. They would all abandon the phenomenological method, characterised by the exclusion of transcendence: Janicaud speaks of a *veering* of phenomenology, off the road of philosophy into the ditch of theology.[6] This chapter explores the possibility of a *philosophical* phenomenology of religion, rather than a phenomenological *theology*, by drawing on Marion's early essays and staging a confrontation with atheist critics like Nancy.[7] In other words, I will explore to what degree it is possible to speak phenomenologically about theophanies, i.e. experiences that purport to be *of God* (and only in that sense 'religious'). I first set out why this question is so contentious by summarising the phenomenological method in the context of the polemic surrounding French phenomenology's theological turn. Subsequently, I present Marion's argument for the theophany of revelation, i.e. the saturated phenomenon, as the model on which to conceive of appearance generally, i.e. absolute givenness. However, in doing so, it will immediately become evident that this account fails to meet the expectations set by Marion: the theophanic character of 'religious' experience cannot, in fact, be accounted for entirely in terms of intuitive givenness. Put otherwise, givenness does not equal revelation. Indeed, something that is itself not given, yet constitutes the experience of the given as theophanic, turns out to be necessary: namely, the intentionality of faith through which what gives itself is received. Finally, I will therefore offer an alternative phenomenology of

[5] Marion, *V&R*, 7-8.

[6] *Ibid.*, 50-69. Mikel Dufrenne's *Le poétique* anticipates this, outlining the suspiciously (negative) theological modes of Heidegger's (being) and Derrida's (*différance*) investigations.

[7] Christina Gschwandtner has also read (some) of these essays together in *Marion and Theology*, 64-69.

revelation with Nancy, one that focusses on that intentionality of faith rather than intuitive givenness. Or, as Nancy puts it: "a phenomenology that is theological, but not theophanic."[8]

1. The phenomenological conception of reason in the polemic concerning the 'theological turn'

Much scorn has been poured over the theological turn: philosophers like Vattimo warn of a "return to reality," or to foundations; whilst theologians like Joseph O'Leary accuse its authors of presenting "philosophy as a pouting servant girl, the *ancilla theologiae* who would like to climb into her master's bed."[9] Indeed, the theological turn might simultaneously be both *too* theological to be convincing philosophically, whilst not being theological *enough* to be convincing theologically. Yet, its authors would reply that what matters is to be phenomenologically convincing, that "phenomenology is frontier-free."[10] Nevertheless, in that case, equal degrees of theological *and* philosophical sophistication would be required. Whilst part II pursues a theological critique of the theological turn with Falque, part I examines this movement in terms of Janicaud's philosophical critique: though his book is often dismissed as overly polemical—which, he admits, it was intended to be—,[11] its critique must nevertheless be taken seriously.

a. The debate between Janicaud and Marion

Recently, Janicaud observes, "phenomenology has been taken hostage by a theology that does not want to say its name."[12] There is nothing wrong with theology, but Janicaud feels it simply does not belong within phenomenology: theologising is incompatible with the phenomenological method as set out by its founder, Edmund Husserl.[13] Its first gesture is *phenomenological reduction* (*epoche*) or "a certain refraining from judgement,"[14] equivalent to Cartesian doubt: naturally, we

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[8] Nancy, *Dis-Enclosure*, 49

[9] Vattimo, *Of Reality*, 14; O'Leary, 'Phenomenology and Theology', 107.

[10] Lacoste, *AG*, xi/11.

[11] Janicaud, *PTE*, 25-26, 157-162. See further Jocelyn Benoist's historiography in 'Vingt ans de phénoménologie française'.

[12] Janicaud, *TTFP*, 43.

[13] *Ibid*., 51; *PTE*, 23-24.

[14] Husserl, *Ideas I*, 55/59.

assume that our experience is tied to a world existing independently of it; however, this assumption is without foundation, so we must reduce or bracket it ("put it out of action") until we find one.[15] This is the first step towards fulfilling Husserl's battle-cry for philosophy to be a rigorous science by going "back to the 'things themselves'",[16] namely "to experience, to seeing, which alone can give to our words sense and rational justification."[17] By bracketing our presuppositions (the 'natural' attitude), we achieve a level of cognition with the *right* to be recognised as *certain* starting-point, namely apodictic evidence delivered through lived-experience (*Erlebnis*). This criterion, which Husserl calls the *principle of all principles*, guarantees philosophy's scientific rigor: "*that every originarily giving intuition is a source of right* (*Rechtsquelle*) *for cognition*, that *everything originarily* ((…) in its 'personal' actuality (*leibhaften Wirklichkeit*)) *offered* to us *in 'intuition' is to be accepted simply as what it gives itself out to be* (*als was es sich gibt*), but also *only within the limits in which it is given there.*"[18] The judgements bracketed in anticipation of their justification can then ultimately be readmitted because of a fundamental characteristic of consciousness: *intentionality*, or the fact that consciousness is always "consciousness of something."[19] Phenomenology thus starts from a position of radical immanence, allowing transcendence only insofar it appears within the immanence of intentional consciousness.

Bruce Ellis Benson summarises the phenomenological attitude succinctly as "an orientation in which the object is immanently given to a neutral consciousness."[20] This definition captures two ideas Janicaud considers obstacles to a phenomenology of religion (i.e., of theophanic experience): first, the exclusion of divine transcendence from phenomenality; second, the neutral description of experience.[21] For example, experientially, theophanic experience might be

[15] *Ibid.*, 54/59.
[16] Husserl, *Logical Investigations*, vol. 1, 168.
[17] Husserl, 'Philosophy as Rigorous Science', 96-97.
[18] Husserl, *Ideas I*, 43-44/44.*
[19] *Ibid.*, 65/75.
[20] Benson, 'Introduction', 2.
[21] Janicaud, *PTE*, 179-183.

indistinguishable from a delusion, even though only one is qualified ontologically as referring to God. That ontological qualification, however, should be reduced because it refers to a transcendent reality outside lived-experience: God is not given in experience, he does not appear.[22] By recognising certain experiences as revelation (i.e., as theophanic), Marion thus commits "strict treason of the reduction," Janicaud feels, imposing an ontological assumption (reference to God) or a personal attitude (faith) on experience "to render phenomenological what cannot be."[23] Yet, he asks, "in virtue of what experience?"[24] Does Marion have a *phenomenological* criterion to recognise saturated phenomena as revelation (i.e., as theophanic), as opposed to a *theological* one? Janicaud believes the latter to be the case: as the phenomenon of revelation, "theology (…) installs itself at the most intimate dwelling of consciousness, as if that were as natural as could be. Must philosophy let itself be thus intimidated?"[25]

Janicaud is bewildered by his colleagues' "strange stubbornness"[26] to do what cannot be done: "Between the unconditional affirmation of Transcendence and the patient interrogation of the visible, the incompatibility cries out; we must choose."[27] Marion knows this: in tackling 'religious' experience phenomenologically, he says, "it would be a question either of addressing phenomena that are objectively definable but lose their religious specificity or of addressing phenomena that are specifically religious but cannot be described of objectively."[28] Experience is either 'religious' (i.e., theophanic) or analysed scientifically, but cannot be both. For Janicaud, their supposed ignorance of this dilemma makes the protagonists of the theological turn guilty of "methodological slacking off," caused by a religious zeal that "made them neglect what there was

[22] Husserl, *Ideas I*, 110-111/133-134. See nevertheless: Husserl, *Ideas I*, 97/117; Housset, *Husserl et l'idée de Dieu*; Benoist, 'Husserl: Au-délà de l'onto-théologie?'. I agree with Benoist, however, that "within the published works, phenomenology's methodological atheism presents itself as self-sufficient" (434).

[23] Janicaud, *TTFP*, 27, 62.

[24] *Ibid*., 27.

[25] *Ibid.*

[26] *Ibid*., 33.

[27] *Ibid*., 26.

[28] Marion, *V&R*, 18.

to respect in the Husserlian concern for rigor."[29] As Janicaud fondly declares: "phenomenology and theology make two," and one must choose.[30]

Yet, Janicaud's suggestion that these phenomenologies are an "expropriation of the phenomenological house and its methodological instruments,"[31] unfairly misrepresents them: as has been repeatedly pointed out,[32] the interest in religious phenomena derives from a desire for phenomenological radicality, rather than theological biases. The religious phenomenon supposedly pushes phenomenality to its limits (and its heart), generating new phenomenological insights. The theological dimension would thus fulfil a heuristic, rather than teleological role. Marion himself sets up his project thus, suggesting that "the religious phenomenon poses the question of the general possibility of the phenomenon."[33] It offers a hitherto overlooked yet primordial form of phenomenality that the phenomenological ethos—openness to whatever shows itself—, requires us to pick up: "more than posing a question *for* phenomenology," Jeffrey Kosky explains, the religious phenomenon "poses the question *of* phenomenology itself—of its limits and the criteria it uses to determine phenomenality."[34] The new phenomenology has therefore also been called *radical phenomenology*: phenomenology of religion, rather than abandoning phenomenology's method, would constitute its most profound realisation.[35] Hence, Marion suggests, "the question of the possibility of a phenomenology of religion," is now "posed in terms that are simple if not new (for it is only a matter of pushing the phenomenological intention to its end)."[36] He thus agrees with Janicaud that phenomenology and theology make two: the saturated phenomenon of revelation is primarily to be studied phenomenologically, which need not involve any theology.

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[29] Janicaud, *TTFP*, 91.
[30] *Ibid*., 99-103.
[31] *Ibid*., 33-34.
[32] Welten and Jonkers (eds.), *God in France*; de Vries, *Philosophy and the Turn to Religion*.
[33] Marion, *V&R*, 18.
[34] Kosky, 'Translator's Preface', 113.
[35] Holzer, 'Phénoménologie radicale et phénomène de révélation'.
[36] Marion, *V&R*, 48.

Yet, Janicaud nevertheless accuses Marion and his colleagues of the exact opposite. Who are we then to believe when it comes to the relationship between phenomenology and theology within phenomenology's theological turn?

b. Revisiting the debate

Aaron Simmons provides a more balanced account. First, he says, Janicaud's critique is hypocritical: in speaking of the theological intimidation of phenomenology, Janicaud himself abandons the phenomenal field, for "to delimit the domain of phenomenological inquiry from the outset is to already resist the supposed neutrality of the phenomenological method."[37] Janicaud's neutrality is really an arbitrary restriction of the phenomenal field, a phenomenologically illegitimate presupposition: the principle of principles requires the recognition of religious phenomena *if* they actually do appear.[38] He arbitrarily decides what of Husserl counts as phenomenological orthodoxy (God's exclusion) and what does not (the principle of principles' radicality).[39] Janicaud's "denunciation—more virulent than argued," Marion likewise complains, dogmatically presupposes a phenomenological orthodoxy coinciding with Husserl's transcendental period: "None of these points is self-evident," he points out, "especially insofar as it belongs essentially to phenomenology that the a posteriori render it possible and therefore that no a priori prohibition predetermine it."[40] Marion is thus "interrogating phenomenological orthodoxy, but (…) in (…) an attempt to be orthodox."[41] These phenomenologies must therefore *prima facie* be considered phenomenologically legitimate, rather than an abuse of phenomenological reason, exactly because Janicaud forgets that "phenomenological heterodoxy is still not to be confused with theological orthodoxy."[42]

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[37] Simmons, 'Continuing to Look for *God in France*', 18.

[38] Janicaud nevertheless knows this, admitting that "dogmatic atheism" must be rejected for the same phenomenological reasons, see *PTE*, 178.

[39] Simmons and Benson, *The New Phenomenology*, 101.

[40] Marion, *V&R*, 59-60.

[41] Simmons and Benson, *The New Phenomenology*, 133.

[42] *Ibid*., 131.

Yet, Simmons is also surprised by the eagerness of some to consider these phenomenologists to be philosophers and not theologians, thereby implying that theology is foreign to phenomenology: "must it be the case that phenomenology can't be theologically concerned precisely as phenomenology?"[43] Why take these phenomenologists on their word when they say no theology is involved? Is *theo*phanic experience really as universally available as they claim, supposedly from a neutral position, without reference to its *theo*logical content? Have we no need of theology to understand revelation and do these phenomenologies teach us nothing about what it means for God to reveal himself?

For Simmons, it is not an either-or situation: though these phenomenologists' prime concern is "the general possibility of the phenomenon,"[44] these insights are relevant to theology too, for that general possibility rests on the particular possibility of the theophanic or religious phenomenon. The idea that any position could be neutral and devoid of presuppositions, as Janicaud and Marion both claim, is itself an extra-phenomenal presupposition requiring reduction.[45] The neutral and presuppositionless point of view is never itself phenomenally given: I never experience the world from a transcendental perspective that isn't one; yet, I am intimately familiar with *my own* perspective that brings the world into (a) view. Caputo captures this well: "the truth is gained not by approaching things without presuppositions—can you even imagine such a thing?—but by getting rid of inappropriate presuppositions (frame) and finding appropriate ones, the very ones that give us access to the things in question."[46] Phenomena appear, not by bracketing all presuppositions, but by only admitting those allowing them to appear *to me*.[47]

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[43] Simmons, *God and the Other*, 158.

[44] Marion, *V&R*, 18.

[45] Simmons, 'Continuing to Look for *God in France*', 24.

[46] Caputo, *Truth*, 182.

[47] See Falque, *CR*, 80-88. The phenomenological approach always runs into an irreducible *faith*, whether philosophical or religious, as what Heidegger calls a "primordial *doxa*, toward which the others are referred back *in a certain way*" (*PRL*, 248).

Simmons suggests that theology and phenomenology are distinct because they rely on different sources; yet, neither being neutral, they share a "deep situatedness of rationality itself," a reliance on presuppositions forming a particular discourse or discipline by giving it its distinctive perspective.[48] For him, this situatedness reflects the community of discourse in which reason operates and by which it is determined. This community institutes itself by means of a decision that determines what counts as rational within that community. Crucially, an extra-phenomenal (extra-rational) element thus constitutes phenomenality (rationality): when phenomenology is but a particular rational method, religious or theophanic phenomena are perfectly commonplace amongst theologians, in virtue of the biases reason needs to operate in that community; whilst recognising such phenomena might be the height of irrationality, treason of the reduction, when that same reason operates within the philosophical discourse community, according to different biases. Yet, reason cannot operate in a void: something only appears *as* rational in relation to something else; nothing is rational *in itself*. This question of biases, of what constitutes *appearance as* (*als*), is the phenomenological one, even if it is not a question of anything phenomenal: reason's situatedness is phenomenologically relevant. However, Simmons' discursive situation of reason risks overemphasising the different sources or authorities of philosophy and theology, rather than their respective ways of experiencing the world. The world is experienced in terms of my being-in it: as a finite being, how my finitude is structured determines how the world is disclosed *to and by me*. "We are always 'situated', and that situation imposes a limit on us," Caputo explains, "but that limit also gives us an angle of entry (…). God doesn't need an angle, but we do. Having an angle is the way truths open up for us mortals."[49] Thus, (phenomenological) reason is always *existentially situated*: the world appears only in terms of our being-in it. Hence, neither Marion nor Janicaud have abandoned phenomenological reason; it is merely situated differently. Comparing these different existential situations is a question—*the* question—of phenomenology (of religion): it

[48] Simmons, 'Continuing to Look for *God in France*', 27-28; *God and the Other*, 153; *The New Phenomenology*, 109-111.
[49] Caputo, *Truth*, 13; *The Insistence of God*, 207-208.

comprises the condition of possibility for the constitution of experience (as religious or theophanic).

Phenomenology is then an appropriate method for theology, since it is just that: *a method*, a specific deployment of reason. Not all philosophy is phenomenological, nor all phenomenology philosophical. There is no (phenomenological) reason to exclude *prima facie* the possibility of a phenomenological theology. This is Marion's approach too:

> Some would like to leave a choice only between philosophical silence and faith without reason. (…) Yet (…) there is no reason to prohibit reason—here, philosophy in its phenomenological bearing—from pushing reason to its end, that is, to itself, without admitting any other limits than those of phenomenality.[50]

That is, *if* the religious or theophanic phenomenon indeed coincides with a fundamental mode of phenomenality. One element of Janicaud's critique has then not yet been rejected: "But in virtue of what experience?"[51] If Marion's phenomenology is a phenomenological philosophy of religion, not a phenomenological theology, then experience's religious qualification (its specificity or theophanic character) cannot be faith-dependent. The legitimacy of Marion's phenomenology, as analysis of theophanic phenomena, is thus not disputed; whether it is justified as philosophy rather than theology, that is the question. Let us therefore explore that phenomenology.

2. Marion's account of revelation in terms of givenness

Janicaud depicts the authors he berates as careless, but nothing could be further from the truth: concern for the phenomenological method motivates them, and their extension of the phenomenal field results from an attempt to be true to it. They therefore elaborate their phenomenological heterodoxy through a careful study of Husserlian orthodoxy: "If phenomenology could 'turn' to theology," Marion says, "it is not enough to denounce it (…); it

[50] Marion, *V&R*, 61.

[51] Janicaud, *TTFP*, 27.

would first be necessary to explain it."[52] We must thus explain how Marion criticises Husserl on Husserlian grounds.

a. Defending Marion against Janicaud's critique

i. The principle of givenness

Like for Janicaud, phenomenology begins from the principle of principles, "the principle of nonpresuppositions" (Husserl),[53] for Marion: it concerns the *appearing* of phenomena to consciousness, "to let what shows itself be seen from itself, just as it shows itself from itself" (Heidegger).[54] His starting point is thus perfectly orthodox, shared with Husserl and Heidegger. However, they deviate from it themselves, Marion laments, failing to execute the reduction properly: Husserl reduces to *objectness*, whilst Heidegger reduces to *beingness*; but neither reduces to *appearing*.[55] Marion therefore suggests a further, radical, reduction to the mere *givenness* of phenomena to consciousness: if the appearing of phenomena means their self-showing, he adds that "what *shows itself* first *gives itself*."[56] He thereby formulates what Michel Henry calls the "fourth principle of phenomenology," subsuming all the others, namely: "so much reduction, so much givenness."[57]

Henry's reading of Marion eloquently sketches the latter's critique of classical phenomenology. He identifies the principle of principles with the principle of phenomenality, for it determines the *de jure* conditions or sources (*Rechtsquellen*) of the phenomenon, giving it the right to appear.[58] Yet, insofar Husserl and Heidegger understand it as only requiring a reduction to, a phenomenality in terms of, objectness or beingness, the classical conception of phenomenality

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[52] Marion, *IE*, 27.*

[53] Marion, *V&R*, 55.

[54] Heidegger, *B&T*, 34/30.

[55] Marion, *BG*, 31-39.

[56] *Ibid*., 5.

[57] Marion, *Reduction and Givenness*, 203; Henry, 'FPP', 1-21. The others are: (1) Heidegger's 'so much appearance, so much being' (*B&T*, 36/34*); (2) Husserl's principle of principles; and, (3) Husserl's 'Back to the things themselves!'. Marion has since adopted this didactic frame (*IE*, 17; *BG*, 11-19).

[58] Henry, 'FPP', 8.

"constitutes the oldest and least critical presuppositions of traditional philosophy."[59] It neglects, Henry suggests, that appearing is "foreign to the phenomenality of beings, as an appearing *of what appears. What appears in appearing is first and necessarily appearing itself.*"[60] Phenomenological reduction is misunderstood as an ontic reduction: disregarding certain contents of consciousness whilst accepting others, giving us *what* appears (phenomena), rather than its *how* (phenomenality); offering some truths *as* self-evident (certain), but not cognition's evidential mode *itself* (certainty). Instead, Henry says, we ought to execute a "pure reduction directed toward pure phenomenality," extending reduction "to its end (*terme*)."[61] Beyond objectness and beingness, we should reduce to the *givenness* of phenomena to consciousness: "Far from limiting, restricting, omitting, and thus from 'reducing,'" he says, "the reduction opens and gives. And what does it give? Givenness."[62] What does it open? Husserl's "absolute sphere as the field of research peculiar to phenomenology,"[63] *as givenness*. Phenomenology's fourth principle thus proportionally unites its method (reduction) with its object (givenness): so much reduction, so much givenness; so much reduction, so much appearing (with 'pure' phenomenality constituting 'absolute' givenness).[64] "In the fourth principle," unlike in the others that contained elements they could not themselves justify, "everything is phenomenological."[65] This acquits Marion of Janicaud's charge, for his extension of the phenomenological method (reduction) is a radicalisation instead of an expropriation: the phenomenal field is extended, but only to the heart of phenomenality (givenness). The alleged extension is actually a deepening.

[59] *Ibid*., 7.
[60] *Ibid*., 13.
[61] *Ibid*., 11.
[62] *Ibid*., 9.
[63] Husserl, *Ideas I*, 97/117.
[64] Henry, 'FPP', 11.
[65] *Ibid*., 17.

ii. Radical empiricism

Having dealt with one point of Janicaud's critique (presuppositions); let's turn to the other (immanence). Marion's reinterpretation of the principle of principles—the principle of phenomenality—as a principle of givenness, has a fundamental consequence:

> This principle enacts a revolutionary advance because the answer to the question of right (…) will henceforth no longer come from (…) a principle anterior to the phenomena themselves or different from them, but will depend solely on the fact of their real givenness (…). The question of right allows for a response of fact: phenomena no longer need to be justified before a tribunal of reason, but are given as such. Givenness finds itself erected as the self-justification of the phenomenon as such.[66]

By recognising givenness as principle of phenomenality, Marion collapses the question of the phenomenon's possibility *de jure* (legitimacy as cognition) into that of its possibility *de facto* (factuality as cognition). Givenness, as sole condition of possible experience, allows for the coincidence of the material and formal conditions of phenomenality: something counts as phenomenon when *actually* given; for when given, it is given *in terms of* givenness. Indeed, givenness, its *mode* of appearing, is coextensive with the *fact* of its appearing, its givenness.[67] "The sole criterion in phenomenology issues from the facts," Marion says, "What shows itself justifies itself by that very fact."[68] Hence, givenness comprises the essence of the reduction: allowing whatever *does* show itself, to be seen *from* itself.[69] Marion therefore believes to be simply restating the phenomenological method: namely, "a finally radical empiricism—finally radical because it is no longer limited to sensible intuition but admits all originarily giving intuition."[70]

Indeed, Marion and Janicaud agree on what the phenomenological method *is*, but disagree on what it *allows* for: for Marion, too, phenomenology's radical empiricism means putting "in parentheses all transcendence, including that of God," yet "the question of God is played out as

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[66] Marion, *BOS*, 96; *V&R*, 4-5.

[67] Marion, *IE*, 21.

[68] Marion, *V&R*, 60.

[69] *Ibid*., 5.

[70] *Ibid*., 57.

much in the dimension of immanence."[71] Insofar as religious phenomena *actually give themselves*, they must *in principle* be subject to phenomenological analysis: "religious phenomena would reappear again in philosophy, as *facts* justified de jure since given *in fact*."[72] This accords perfectly with the phenomenological understanding of reason. It is thus, again, a matter of the conditions within which reason operates: not the logical validity of the inference, but the ontological status of the assumptions informing it. The question is whether the premise is true: whether religious or theophanic phenomena do *in fact* give (show) themselves, as (from) themselves. Let us therefore consider why this not traditionally thought to the case.

b. Marion's critique of Husserl

i. The conditions of possible experience

According to Marion, religious or theophanic phenomena are justified under the principle of principles, yet classical phenomenology overlooked this because its understanding of this principle was internally inconsistent: "not because intuition as such limits phenomenality, but because as intuition it remains framed by two conditions of possibility, conditions that themselves are not intuitive (…). The second and third traits of the 'principle of all principles' contradict the first, as conditions and limits (…) contradict the claim to absolute possibility opened by the giving intuition."[73] Husserl exposed absolute givenness, but misses the coincidence of the material and formal conditions of phenomenality it implies: beyond proclaiming the supremacy of giving intuition, his principle also adds a second trait, a *horizon*, circumscribing the limits in which intuition gives itself; and a third trait, the *I*, to which the intuition gives itself and by which it is constituted into a phenomenon.[74] These two additional traits undo the first's achievement (givenness' absolute character) by contradicting the criterion it established (reduction): if the first trait abolished every formal condition irreducible to a material one; then, as exclusively formal conditions, the first and

[71] Marion, *IE*, 24, 27.
[72] Marion, *V&R*, 5.
[73] *Ibid.*, 22; *BG*, 197-189 (184-189).
[74] Husserl, *Ideas I*, 43-44/44-45.

second traits are illegitimate. For classical phenomenology, "the possibility of the phenomenon results not from its own phenomenality," Marion says, "but from an authority that is (…) external: that of the conditions of experience for and by the subject."[75] It uncovered absolute givenness, "but it thinks that givenness only on the basis of determinations that threaten its originary character: the horizon and the reduction [to the *I*]. Phenomenology would thus almost immediately condemn itself to missing what the giving intuition indicates to it as its goal," namely "appearing as such."[76]

Moreover, these two formal conditions led Husserl and Janicaud to exclude the possibility of religious or theophanic phenomena: the *de jure* exclusion of revelation, as the *a priori* exclusion of an absolute phenomenon by the requirement of a limiting horizon, makes its *de facto* manifestation impossible. "The obstacles to revelation thus coincide with the conditions of manifestation,"[77] Marion concludes: the conditions of possible experience, making manifestation possible (appearing), render impossible revelation as manifestation (an *impossible phenomenon*). Yet, as formal and therefore phenomenologically illegitimate, these conditions prove no hindrance to a genuine phenomenology of religion (i.e., divine revelation as theophanic experience):

> Phenomenology refuses to admit the full possibility of revelation, because it imposes two limits on possibility in general: the *I* and the horizon. Hence even the question of a phenomenology of religion, like that of a phenomenology of revelation, suggests calling into question the axiomatic character of these two presuppositions.[78]

We must thus rethink the general conditions of possibility for the phenomenon and render them adequate to Henry's *pure phenomenality*, namely Marion's *absolute givenness*: conceptualising phenomenality such that *in principle* an absolute phenomenon (revelation) can give itself absolutely (formally unconditioned); where self-giving intuition on its own "secures its condition of possibility," where "the phenomenality of givenness is indexed to intuition."[79] We must, in

[75] Marion, *BG*, 181.

[76] Marion, *V&R*, 24.

[77] *Ibid*., 12.

[78] *Ibid*., 13-14.

[79] Marion, *BG*, 193.

principle, be able to think "the possibility of a phenomenon where intuition would give *more*, *indeed immeasurably more*, than the intention would ever have aimed at."[80] Ultimately, Marion says, this means thinking the theophanic phenomenon of revelation, for "the religious phenomenon poses the question of the general possibility of the phenomenon."[81]

ii. The horizontal character of experience

For Husserl, *givenness* is always only the *intuitive fulfilment* of an *intentional horizon*: intuition is never complete, but consciousness compensates by constituting phenomena out of this adumbrational presentation against intentional horizons that function as "'predelineated' potentialities" of experience.[82] So, givenness is givenness of what-was-*already*-intended, intertwined with the horizon *within which* it gives the object *as* the object that it is. Take the appearing of a die: "the die leaves open a great variety of things pertaining to the unseen faces; yet it is already 'construed' in advance as die (…). This leaving open (…) is a moment included in the given consciousness itself" as "what makes up the 'horizon'."[83] The horizon allows the phenomenon to appear *as* the phenomenon it is, with intentional constitution making up for a "deficit of intuition,"[84] as Marion calls it: though intuition only gives me one face and not the die as a whole, the intentional horizon against which it appears *as die* compensates by anticipating the other faces that are not presented intuitively; only thus is the phenomenon *given* as die. The horizon is *my perspective*, allowing the phenomenon to appear *as* it does *to me*, even though it *precedes* and is itself *foreign* to intuition (i.e., the phenomenality of givenness).

[80] *Ibid.*, 194. Of course, not *all* phenomena give themselves absolutely, but they all depend on the possibility of absolute givenness (revelation), see: Marion, *BG*, 179-247; Gschwandtner, *Degrees of Givenness*.

[81] Marion, *V&R*, 18.

[82] Husserl, *CM*, 82/45.

[83] *Ibid.*, 83/45.

[84] Marion, *BG*, 192.

Marion considers this requirement of a horizon, of appearing *as* something, phenomenologically illegitimate.[85] He paints it as an arbitrary decision by Kant and Husserl,[86] whereby for "any phenomenon," the "possibility is decided in advance within the dimension of its horizon of appearance."[87] Husserl might reply that intuition is limited, lacking, *because* (not *despite*) of how it gives itself, with the intentional horizon being necessarily implied in givenness: phenomena *de facto* require intentional constitution. Yet, this issue is undecidable, Marion says, for the limitation can always "already be authorized by a de jure limitation: any intuition, in order to give within certain factual 'bounds (*Schranken*),' must first be inscribed by right within the limit (*Grenze*) of a horizon."[88]

How could phenomena appear without appearing *as* something *against* an intentional horizon? This is a difficult task, Marion admits.[89] "How then can a phenomenon that challenges any horizon appear in the horizon of a world?" he asks. "By saturating it." Here the famous *saturated phenomenon* comes in: a phenomenon so rich in intuition, because it gives itself absolutely without reserve, that it is *in excess* of any possible intentional horizon. As such, it "only appears by contradicting by excess the conditions of any appearance: its glory (*doxa*) is always exercised as a paradox, where evidence shows itself through bedazzlement."[90] It is exercised as a paradox because absolute givenness only appears by contradicting the conditions of appearance: "Givenness par excellence actually lays itself open to seeming to disappear (by defect) precisely because it gives itself without reserve (by excess)."[91] It is not what is *seen*, but rather the appearance of the invisible as the awareness that there is more *to-be-seen* than I can register (constitute), detected only "by the interference of its horizon, like the luminous rays that, by being reflected in the frame of a mirror,

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[85] Hence, for Derrida, in giving up the *as such* (*als was*), the horizon, Marion abandons phenomenology. See their discussion, 'On the Gift', 66-68.

[86] Marion, *BG,* 192, 194.

[87] Marion, *BOS*, 98.

[88] Marion, *V&R*, 22.

[89] *Ibid*., 24.

[90] Marion, *BOS*, 99.

[91] Marion, *V&R*, 63-64.

interfere with and hinder each other or, in contrast, gather their lights in an unbearable bedazzlement."[92] Though one wonders whether this still constitutes a *phenomenon* (however saturated) as opposed to what Lévinas calls an *enigma*,[93] it is indeed paradox: the appearing of what cannot appear, the disturbance of (the conditions of) appearance.[94] Hence, saturation ushers religious or theophanic phenomena, like revelation, into the phenomenal field: "Revelation entails a presentation," though "it condescends to assume a horizon," nevertheless "revelation presents itself in a horizon only by *saturating* it."[95] Revelation is not appearance (of something) but its disruption, stunning anticipation: not experienced but making itself felt in its stunned subject. That brings us to the second condition: the *I*.

iii. The subjective character of experience

The principle of principles' third trait, like the second contradicting the first, is that intuition only gives itself 'to us,' to an *I* constituting what appears from what gives itself against a horizon. Put differently, *a priori* conditions of possible experience are imposed on self-giving intuition by a subject: "Even if it shows itself on the basis of itself, the phenomenon can do so only by allowing itself to be led back (*réduit*), and therefore reduced, to the *I*."[96] The I's essential function is to control givenness so that it can be constituted into an object.[97] Here, too, Marion asks: "Can we imagine phenomena" that "invert limit (by exceeding the horizon, instead of being inscribed within it) and condition (by reconducting the I to itself, instead of being reduced to it)?"[98] Indeed, we can: the saturated phenomenon that, by giving itself absolutely, challenges subjective constitution against the horizons it disrupts. Phenomena then constitute and impose themselves on a subject, rather than the subject imposing its conditions on phenomena to constitute them. The given,

[92] Marion, *BOS*, 99.
[93] Lévinas, 'Phenomenon and Enigma', 66; Janicaud, *PTE*, 217.
[94] Marion, *G&R*, 55-57.
[95] Marion, *V&R*, 15.
[96] *Ibid*., 23-24.
[97] Marion, *BOS*, 99.
[98] Marion, *BG*, 189; *V&R*, 24.

Marion says, "merits its name by its being a *fait accompli*, such that it happens to me, and in which it is distinguished from all foreseen, synthesized, and constituted objects, since it happens to me as an event."[99] The direction of intentional constitution is reversed: the event surprises me, I find myself constituted by it (*je me suis fait*), as *witness* to it. In scrambling horizons, absolute givenness, "constituting its interlocutor as stunned (*interloqué*) and not as a phenomenon constituted by an *I*, takes up again a common phenomenological character, but here also by inverting it. It indicates the position of the *I* that has become a *me* (*moi*): responding to a givenness rather than objectifying it."[100] It can then also be understood as *witness to revelation*, for the saturated phenomenon "divests the *I* of any a priori character. This is commonly said as: Revelation reveals the *I* to itself."[101]

Marion thus places religious or theophanic phenomena within reach of phenomenological reason as determining the general possibility of the phenomenon because it challenges phenomenologically illegitimate conditions of possible experience. Where classical phenomenology concerns what gives itself conditionally *as* something through constitution; Marion's radical phenomenology concerns what gives itself unconditionally by imposition.[102] "The difference between these standpoints does not run between rationality and credulity," as Janicaud suspects, "but (…) between empirical acceptance of an 'impossible' possibility and the banning on principle of the possibility of 'impossible' events."[103] Only this approach would be the radical empiricism phenomenological reduction requires.

c. Marion's account of the relationship between phenomenology and theology

Phenomenology, Marion says, therefore succeeds where previous philosophy of religion failed: "freeing the possibility of revelation, hence possibility as revelation, from (…) the a priori condition of possibility (hence of impossibility)."[104] Revelation is an *impossible possibility*: the

[99] Marion, *IE*, 25.
[100] Marion, *BOS*, 100.
[101] *Ibid.*, 100; *BG*, 216-219; *G&R*, 52-53.
[102] Marion, *G&R*, 47-48.
[103] Marion, *BOS*, 90.
[104] Marion, *V&R*, 16-17.

moment "where an authority that is transcendent to experience nevertheless manifests itself experientially,"[105] an experience that transcends the conditions of possible experience. Phenomenologically speaking, *possibility precedes actuality*: givenness is circumscribed by what can give itself within a particular intentional horizon.[106] In Marion's framework, however, *actuality precedes possibility*: since revelation is "the phenomenon taken in its fullest meaning,"[107] phenomenality is limited only by the actuality of experience, rather than *a priori* conditions regarding its possibility. Whatever gives itself in fact, is justified by that fact. Saturated phenomena thus do not put themselves into question by exceeding the conditions of possible experience, but rather put into question that conception of possibility.

Accordingly, Marion understands the relationship between phenomenology and theology, which "givenness radically redefines,"[108] in terms of possibility:

> Phenomenology (…) never considers the phenomenon of revelation except as a possibility of phenomenality, one that it would formulate in this way: (…) Revelation (of God by himself, *theo*-logical), if it takes place, will assume the phenomenal figure of the phenomenon of revelation (…). To be sure Revelation (as actuality) is never confounded with *r*evelation (as possible phenomenon). (…) Revelation exceeds the scope of all science, including that of phenomenology. Only a theology (…) could reach it. Even if it had the desire to do so (…), phenomenology would not have the power to turn into theology.[109]

Marion distinguishes between Revelation and revelation: the former concerns its *actuality*, the historical event of God's self-revelation, the *fact* of his givenness; the latter concerns the *possibility* of such an event being experienced, its phenomenality, its *mode* of givenness regardless of whether it is actually given. "Between phenomenology and theology," Marion says, "the border passes between revelation as possibility and Revelation as historicity."[110] Regarding the religious phenomenon, phenomenology thus "exercises a purely and simply critical function, in a strictly

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[105] *Ibid.*, 2.

[106] Heidegger, *B&T*, 38/36.

[107] Marion, *V&R*, 46.

[108] Marion, 'The Other First Philosophy', 800.

[109] Marion, *BG*, 235n90.

[110] Marion, *V&R*, 64.

Kantian posture,"[111] namely rendering phenomenality (revelation) adequate to Revelation. Indeed, Falque observes, Marion performs "a quasi-transcendental deduction of revelation starting from the saturated phenomenon."[112] Marion thereby believes to have realised a phenomenological philosophy of religion that grounds phenomenology proper.

3. Questioning Marion's principle of givenness as the method for the phenomenology of religion

a. God is not given (Marion's atheist critics)

Marion's argument is brilliant but whether its brilliance is theological or phenomenological remains unclear. Though his phenomenology of religion grounds phenomenology proper, it equally forms the *praeambula fidei* for theology, which cannot describe Revelation without first importing Marion's phenomenological framework.[113] Comparing Marion to Aquinas, James K.A. Smith suggests that "the topic of a phenomenology of religion is precisely this theophany: what distinguishes it from theology is simply its mode of knowledge or perception."[114] If phenomenology and theology share the same field (the saturated phenomenon's theophany), they remain implied within one another.

Indeed, the ease with which some, when the possibility an absolute phenomenon has been admitted to in principle, identify it with actual theophany is remarkable. Kosky, for example, insists that "insofar as revealed theology, the Scriptures, claims to describe certain appearings and manifestations, theophanies, it belongs within phenomenology."[115] Marion similarly states that by recognising absolute phenomenality, "an experience, effectively beyond (…) the conditions of possibility of experience, is affirmed (…) by words or expositions rightly accessible to everyone (e.g., the Scriptures)," concluding from this that "Revelation takes its strength of provocation from

[111] Marion, *IE*, 28.

[112] Falque, *LS*, 134.*

[113] Curiously, this turns theology from a speculative into a phenomenological discipline, see: Marion, *BG*, 243; Caputo, 'HP', 80; Tanner, 'Theology and the Limits of Phenomenology'.

[114] Smith, 'Liberating Religion from Theology', 22; Marion, *V&R*, 47-48.

[115] Kosky, 'Translator's Preface', 116-118.

what it speaks universally."[116] Surely this confuses the *regime of revelation* (phenomenality) with actual *Revelation* (the phenomenon), a historically situated theophany?

Falque urges caution: "contemporary phenomenology is indeed wrong to somewhat quickly identify phenomenality with revelation."[117] If an absolute phenomenon actually gives itself absolutely, it remains to be seen whether *what* it thus gives is God. Appearing's *what* cannot simply be deduced from its *how*. Marion forgets that phenomenological reduction concerns not just theophany's *actuality* (Revelation), until only its possibility remains (revelation), but also extends to its *nature* as theophany (*theophaneia*): that the appearing (*phanein*) is of divinity (*theos*). Bracketing intentionality seems impossible here, Caputo suggests: "Something is given (…) that is intended *as* a presence of the risen Jesus (…); it could also be intended *as* an hallucination if one does not have faith."[118] Marion's argument that Scripture provides universally accessible descriptions of Revelation is (at best) naïve: one needn't be a Christian to accept the *historical actuality* of the experiences recorded there; one does, however, need to be a Christian to accept their *theophanic character*. Put otherwise, phenomenological reduction extends to *theological realism* as well as ontological realism. Caputo therefore rightly accuses Marion of a "theological magical realism," necessitating the acceptance of Scripture as accurate recordings of historical events, given for all to see unconditionally:

> It would be paganism to think that the divinity of Jesus would have been detectible (…). The divinity is a matter of faith. By faith, we are given (…) to intend Jesus as divine, but the divinity is not itself *given*. Even if you were standing right beside Jesus you would not see the divinity unless you believed it; and if you believed it, that is because you would not see it.[119]

The religious phenomenon's *religious specificity* (i.e., its theophanic character) thus remains questionable: phenomenalising the absolute is insufficient, we must be able to phenomenalise the absolute (God) *as* God. This question is phenomenological, according to Marion's distinction,

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[116] Marion, *V&R*, 2. Marion has recently softened his rhetoric, e.g. *G&R*, 1-4.

[117] Falque, 'Philosophie et théologie', 207.

[118] Caputo, 'HP', 88.

[119] *Ibid*., 85.

because it does not require God to actually reveal himself, but asks *how* God reveals himself when he gives himself absolutely: talk of the unknowable, nonrational, unconditional or absolute is not, in itself, talk of *God*.[120] Revelation cannot simply be deduced from phenomenality: "we should not reduce 'the experience of the Absolute' to an 'absolute experience'," Falque warns, "meaning that the lived experience (…) should not be confounded with the appearance of God himself."[121] In short, no (phenomenological) reason is *given* to identify the regime of revelation (absolute and unconditional appearing) with the actual theophany of Revelation (God's appearing).

This problem motivates the atheist critique of Marion, which questions the indexation of phenomenality to factual givenness: if revelation is coextensive with Revelation, if the religious phenomenon determines the general possibility of all phenomena; does that not *presuppose the actuality of Revelation* from which all other phenomena (revelation) are construed (derived)? Marion claims to describe the possibility of "the phenomenon of revelation," though always "without presupposing its actuality,"[122] but is this itself *possible*? How can Marion describe the mere *possibility* of this experience, if its phenomenality is indexed to its *actuality*? Atheists dispute precisely Revelation's actuality rather than its possibility: mystics have recorded overwhelming experiences, their *possibility* is thus beyond dispute; however, whether they can be ascribed to God, their *actuality* as Revelation, remains questionable. The implication seems to be that we must simply assume, perhaps because of their weight in the tradition, that experiences recorded by mystics or Scripture, which are purportedly *of God*, indeed *actually* are.[123] This is not, however, a phenomenological argument.

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[120] Bultmann, *WIT?*, 64-65, 70-75, 89.

[121] Falque, *LS*, 218.*

[122] Marion, *BG*, 235.

[123] A problem especially evident in Steinbock's *Phenomenology and Mysticism*.

One such atheist critic is Jocelyn Benoist, who asks Marion "what will you say to me if I tell you that where you see God, I see nothing or something else?"[124] Nancy likewise asks Marion the following:

> Basically, what becomes of this name God at the end of your entire analysis? (…) What is the reason for it? For (…) we need a reason to say 'God' rather than nothing. (…) How is God anything but nothing? Or why is God, that name, necessary (…)? I know you cannot do everything, but is it not necessary however—without awaiting another development—when we are at that point you reach, to decide between nothing and God (…)?[125]

Why call absolute givenness *God*? The identification of the saturated phenomenon with actual Revelation has neither been prepared, nor justified, by the purely formal phenomenology provided: the capstone *of* Marion's phenomenology (Revelation) cannot be deduced *from* it (revelation), failing its own criterion by containing an extra-phenomenal element (like Husserl and Heidegger). In short, the impossible cannot be deduced from the possible:

> Everything you say about 'the possible' could also (…) be put through the Bergsonian critique of the possible. Bergson has this extremely strong argument to say that there is no possible possible, thinkable, on the basis of the concept of the possible itself, which has a reality after the fact. Which is to say, the impossible is a limit-concept because I cannot put anything into it; because, when we talk of the possibility of the impossible, in the end, it is not a possibility (for example, like Heidegger's phrase for death). Thus, in a way that could also be said to be quite Aristotelian, the act always comes first, insofar as the potency can only be thought or posited starting from the act.[126]

I will deal with Nancy's critique in terms of Heidegger (being-unto-death) later in this chapter, and in terms of Aristotle (potency in relation to act) in the final chapter. We can, however, also articulate that same critique theologically by saying that, if Revelation is an *historical event*, it cannot let itself be deduced; *it happens*: "insofar as it is possible," Benoist says, "it is not an event."[127]

Whilst theology and phenomenology thus may concern the same phenomenality, namely revelation (absolute givenness); they do not necessarily concern the same objects: its name aside, no *reason* is *given* to ascribe anything specifically religious or divine to the regime of 'revelation', to

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[124] Benoist, *L'idée de phénoménologie*, 102.

[125] Nancy, 'Débat', 262-263. Marion replies (256) that 'nothing' still says too much about God. However, *that* we are dealing with God, rather than nothing, is precisely the question.

[126] *Ibid*., 262; *Sexistence*, 52.

[127] Benoist, 'La philosophie face au problème de l'atheisme', 150.

regard revelation (*phanein*) and Revelation (*theophanein*) as coextensive. The *religious specificity* (i.e., theophanic character) of religious experience is not established *phenomenologically* as *given*: Marion's phenomenology has not, Benoist says, "secured the conditions of publicity necessary according to its language,"[128] namely that of evidence (givenness) rather than faith (intentionality). In short, what phenomenological reason can Marion give for suggesting Scripture provides publicly accessible instances of Revelation? After all, Benoist disputes not the *historical actuality* of the experiences related there, but the *public accessibility* of or degree of evidence (unconditional and universal) for their supposed theophany: rather than suspecting the authors of the Scriptures are misleading us, he fears they were themselves misled. If Scripture "speaks universally,"[129] why is the Revelation not universally recognised? If the saturated phenomenon gives itself unconditionally, why does Benoist not see it?

This is the problem of the divine datum. Joseph Rivera, for example, suggests that "theology provides data analogous to sense data," namely "divine Revelation."[130] He distinguishes sharply between "sense data (philosophy)" and "divine data (theology),"[131] with the latter delivering "the *positum* of Revelation."[132] Like Marion, Rivera thus implies that, for example, Scripture contains some universally accessible divine datum, accessible precisely *as* divine datum (God). Yet, what could this divine datum possibly be? Benoist's objection is precisely that where Marion sees an extraordinary divine datum, he sees an ordinary sense datum. Marion has established pure phenomenality as absolute givenness, but not therefore *absolute* givenness as *divine* givenness: rather than divine data giving themselves absolutely, religious experience consists in sense data being (intentionally) mediated to me *as* theophanic. Only in this way can phenomenology discuss revelation's possibility (absolute givenness), whilst leaving actual

[128] Benoist, *L'idée de phénoménologie*, 102.
[129] Marion, *V&R*, 2.
[130] Rivera, 'The Myth of the Given?', 184.
[131] *Ibid*., 182.
[132] *Ibid*., 189.

Revelation to theology (historical theophany)—concepts that are not on the same axis. Both deal with identical data, those of experience, that are merely received differently: there is no phenomenologically accessible positum *of* Revelation; Marion's phenomenology merely shows that absolute givenness is the experiential positum *as* revelation. "God is never 'given'," [133] Lacoste therefore concludes, never a datum.

When Marion then proclaims his "historical literalism about the events of the New Testament," [134] Kosky speaks of theophany, and Rivera assumes divine data, we really do "want to believe that it is by design (…) that farewell is thus bid (…) to the stuff of phenomena," for "the only tie that binds these citations to whatever kind of experience is religious." [135] Phenomenologically, phenomenality (revelation) and theophany (Revelation) cannot be linked: they make two. Marion's phenomenology then finds its legitimacy in theology rather than philosophy: in the *presupposed actuality of Revelation*, with which possible experience must catch up. Phenomenology then likewise finds its (extra-phenomenal) ground in theology. We must therefore admit with Janicaud that this is "a Christian phenomenology," one "whose properly phenomenological sense must fall away, for a nonbeliever, midway through the journey." [136] Or, with Caputo, that this phenomenology is "only for Christians, for no one else can find phenomenology there." [137] I am perfectly prepared to do that: phenomenology is a method; not all philosophy is phenomenological, and not all phenomenology is philosophical. Yet, that gets us no further in our (and Marion's) questioning: how can phenomenology contribute, not to theology, but to philosophy of religion? This question is coextensive with Benoist's: how can he see nothing where Marion sees God? How do we account for real *seeing differently*? How does faith render *possible* the religious phenomenon, absent its undisputed *actuality*?

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[133] Lacoste, *AG*, 175-176/149-150.

[134] Caputo, 'HP', 83.

[135] Janicaud, *TTFP*, 63; *PTE*, 215.

[136] *Ibid*., 67.

[137] Caputo, 'HP', 69.

b. The will to see (Marion's reply)

Marion has, rather impatiently and violently, replied to Benoist's objection directly: "To be sure, claiming to see is not sufficient to prove that one saw. Yet the fact or the pretense of not seeing does not prove that there is nothing to see. It can simply suggest that (…) it is necessary to learn to see otherwise."[138] Marion essentially tells Benoist to try harder, to have *another* look, and this time, please, a *proper* look: because the saturated phenomenon gives itself absolutely, the only reason why Benoist does not see it must be because he does not *want* to see it, refuses to acknowledge what is right in front of him, unconditionally *given to be seen*. Contrary to Benoist's suggestion, for Marion, faith is not an intentionality compensating for incomplete intuition, allowing him to see God where others do not, for then givenness would not be absolute; rather, faith is merely the willingness *to see* what is there *to be seen*.[139] Yet, in thus dismissing Benoist's objection, is Marion not equally guilty of what he accuses classical phenomenology of: namely, an arbitrary refusal to take the actuality of certain experiences (or lack thereof) seriously?

Surprisingly, Marion therefore introduces "the will to see,"[140] as an essential determinant of the possibility of the phenomenon: "it converts what gives itself into what shows itself. For, in order to phenomenalize the given, one first has to admit it (to 'want' to receive it) (…). The decision to (…) receive, precedes the possibility of seeing."[141] The subject suddenly becomes the gatekeeper of the phenomenon again, having "the charge of opening or closing the entire flux of phenomenality."[142] There is an unsavoury moral dimension to this idea: by "consecrating excess as standard," Falque says, Marion "places the 'fault' of its non-phenomenalisation on a subject that is as impotent as it is faulty."[143] Joeri Schrijvers similarly observes that "the 'faulty will' is the absence of that which, properly speaking, ought to be there, the will to see the given," and

[138] Marion, *V&R*, 124.
[139] Marion, *BOS*, 99, 136.
[140] Marion, *BG*, 307.
[141] *Ibid.*, 305.
[142] *Ibid.*, 307.
[143] Falque, *LS*, 124.*

"nonphenomenalization of the given is understood as a lack, an unwillingness, or irresponsibility to see the given as given."[144] Therefore, Schrijvers notes, Marion confirms Benoist's objection, for his not-seeing "cannot be due to a hole in the theory (for instance: something is simply not given) but to the absence of a certain will that, properly speaking, *ought* to be there."[145] Falque articulates the same criticism: "If there is a 'banality of saturation', should it not put into question the paradigm of saturation (…), recognizing that we may (…) *perceive things differently*?"[146]

Marion thus *gives no reason* for privileging a particular seeing, even declares, correctly, that *such a reason cannot be given*: the will to see is a decision for givenness (seemingly original) but supposedly also derives from givenness itself (actually final), thereby initiating and maintaining a hermeneutic circle wherein what gives itself shows itself.[147] Marion can give no reason for his seeing because he cannot escape that circle to reason from the original or final position, i.e. from the *givenness*: the phenomenal (givenness) is constituted by an extra-phenomenal element, namely the decision to see (faith), which is itself groundless—*not given*. This turning of the will is therefore dependent on a theological dimension; and, insofar as it constitutes the phenomenality of givenness, inscribes Marion's phenomenology within that theological dimension: "This decision to see," Thomas Carlson explains, indicates how "the possibility of phenomenology itself relies on a necessarily pre-phenomenological movement of faith (…). Phenomenology, then, may well be first philosophy, but philosophy is not first, for it cannot get going without faith."[148] Ultimately, Marion's phenomenology finds its ground, its reason, in theology: namely, in faithfulness or *fidelity to givenness*. As Falque puts it: "theology, seemingly disconnected from phenomenology (…), nevertheless constitutes for the man as for the work its ultimate meaning and reason for being."[149]

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[144] Schrijvers, *Ontotheological Turnings?*, 85.

[145] *Ibid*., 85.

[146] Falque, *LS*, 101.

[147] Marion, *BG*, 307-308. On this hermeneutic, see Bultmann, *TNT2*, 68.

[148] Carlson, 'Blindness and the Decision to See', 161-162.

[149] Falque, *LS*, 139.*

However, not just any theology; but what we could call a 'non-correlational' one (e.g., Barth and Balthasar): "at stake for Marion," Caputo says, is a discourse "where God is allowed to be God on God's own terms, without submitting God to prior conditions of possibility, where *theo*logy is (…) *God*'s word about God, not our word (theo*logy*)."[150] However, phenomenology is an odd way of analysing how God gives himself on the basis of himself, since its method is thoroughly correlational: what Husserl calls phenomenology's "breakthrough," is a "universal a priori of correlation between experienced object and manners of givenness," or "between *appearance* and *that which appears as such*."[151] This follows from the intentionality of conscious acts: consciousness is only known in knowing objects, and the world in being known by consciousness.[152] God therefore cannot appear *as* God, even Lévinas knows this: "the impossibility of manifesting itself in an experience," is due "to the structure of all thought, which is correlation. Once come into a correlation, the divinity of God dissipates, like the clouds that served to describe his presence."[153] The phenomenological method lends itself more naturally to a 'correlational' theology, starting from God's Incarnation and kenosis to describe how he gives himself *to* man, *as* a man, *on* human terms (e.g., Rahner and Bultmann).[154] I will take this correlational approach going forward: nothing, certainly not God, gives itself from itself, because it always gives itself *to us* and appears *as* something. God-in-Godself is meaningful only to God.

c. Correlation as the proposed method for the phenomenology of religion

The method I will use going forward is therefore Falque's, guided by his frustration that "in phenomenology as in theology, we find terms that say nothing *about* or *to* the human," especially in the theological turn:

> In fact, theological objects (…) have been directly engaged (…) but without first passing through the human per se (…). Indeed, this movement is occurring as if the coincidence of phenomenology and theology has become so perfect that the revealed has gained on the given.

[150] Caputo, 'HP', 77. For example, see Marion, *God Without Being*, xxi-xxii, xxvii.

[151] Husserl, *Crisis*, 165-166.

[152] Husserl, *Ideas I*, 65/75.

[153] Lévinas, 'Phenomenon and Enigma', 62.

[154] Theologically, *correlation* is associated with Tillich, *ST1*, 59-66 (60).

> It is as if we have discovered the infinite as the inevitable vanishing point of phenomenality, at most leaving to the finite the task of bearing its stamp in Descartes's image of the worker on his work.[155]

In Marion, a Descartes-scholar, this expresses itself as what Falque, echoing Janicaud, calls a "preemption of the infinite on the finite,"[156] namely, grounding the finite (human consciousness) in an originary infinite (the idea of God), which gives itself unconditionally and regardless of the (human) limits it saturates (illustrating, as Husserl's *Cartesian Meditations* suggest, "how much scholasticism lies hidden, as unclarified prejudice, in Descartes' *Meditations*").[157] Marion loathes these limits:

> Limits of course remain on principle indestructible (…). It does not follow, however, that what contradicts them cannot still be deployed paradoxically as a phenomenon. Quite to the contrary, certain phenomena could appear only by playing at the limits of phenomenality—indeed by making sport of them.[158]

This renders Marion unable to take Benoist's objection seriously: the infinite's presupposed actuality, *given* its actuality, makes light of the limited souls failing to recognise it. Marion starts from an originary infinitude (saturation), with which human finitude (limitation) *ought* to catch up, and from which all phenomenality (possible experience) is itself *deduced* transcendentally. Likewise, theology (Revelation) serves as ground and criterion for philosophy (revelation): "The 'faulty will'," Falque says, "shows itself to be 'fallen', according to a theological model (…), from a primitive state of saturation which is impossible to realize but that always constitutes the norm." Therefore, "we will not find finitude as such within the thought of Marion," he continues, "it appears (…) only (…) as 'deficiency' in the non-phenomenalization of the given."[159]

For Falque, however, even in theology, finitude is primary, for the Christian God assumed this finitude in his Incarnation (which constitutes his Revelation): God only appears *to us* insofar

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[155] Falque, *CR*, 122.

[156] Falque, *MF*, 16-19; *LS*, 104, 129; Janicaud, *PTE*, 177.

[157] Husserl, *CM*, 63/24. See further: Janicaud, *PTE*, 177-178; Descartes, *Meditations*, 36: "my perception of the infinite, that is God, is in some way prior to my perception of the finite, that is myself."

[158] Marion, *BG*, 189.

[159] Falque, *LS*, 123-124.*

as he takes on *our human condition* (finitude) in Jesus Christ, appearing on *our terms* (within the horizon of finitude). As he puts it: "We have no other experience of God than the experience of (the) man (*l'expérience de l'homme*)."[160] For Falque, correlation is precisely what it means to take seriously, *phenomenologically*, God's Revelation as Incarnation (including kenosis): "not that we can reduce God to man," but "rather that we need to see in God how he makes himself the measure of human beings (*kenosē*)," and thereby "marks out a route for us toward the divine, starting from the human." In short, "Christ (…) teaches me to look at myself in my humanity in order to reach *him* in his divinity."[161] This requires a change of strategy, Falque observes, for the debate between Rahner and Balthasar concerning correlation (the supposed "anthropological reduction" of divinity),[162] continues:

> The essential question today (…) is not uniquely that of the 'phenomenon of revelation' or 'god' (…). Instead it concerns the human or receiving subject in their capacity—or lack of capacity—to speak about the phenomenon, or God, or whether one starts from the phenomenon itself or from God in the act of self-revelation (the descending ontological way), or starts from (…) the human conditions of existence (*in via*) rendering impossible all direct access to some beyond (*in patria*) (the ascending cosmological way/s). (…) Must we necessarily accuse of an 'anthropological reduction' a phenomenology that would first take 'the human as such,' (…) in our finitude, as point of departure for phenomenality? And must we not, on the contrary, hold (…) as impossible (…) all the bedazzlement of the 'phenomenon of revelation' that would give itself (…) independently of all the (transcendental) conditions of its reception?[163]

Marion takes the descending ontological way, deducing revelation's possibility from Revelation's actuality. However, Nancy reminds us, "the absolute can never be absolute but for the absolute."[164] Phenomenologically, a non-correlational theology is untenable, because the phenomenology of religion is only enabled *as phenomenology* by its *Christological nexus*: God appears *as* a human being, only as such is he revealed *to us* in the sense of *appearing* (through faith).[165] Phenomenologically, we can only speak in terms of this correlation: there might be plenty of theological objections to

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[160] Falque, *MF*, 15.*

[161] *Ibid.*, 6.

[162] Balthasar, *Love Alone is Credible*, 31-49; Rahner, *Foundations of Christian Faith*, 21-25. For commentary, see: Falque, *CR*, 92-94; Holzer, *Le Dieu Trinité dans l'histoire.*

[163] Falque, *LS*, 131-132.*

[164] Nancy, 'Un mot d'accompagnement', 10; Falque, *GFO*, 130; *LE*, 114; *LS*, 125; 'TIMB', 290; *WFL*, 152.

[165] Bultmann, *TNT2*, 85: "God is available only through Jesus, (…) the Incarnate One."

speaking to speaking phenomenologically; but, having committed to speaking phenomenologically, these concern us little here. Paul Tillich captures this well: "although God in his abysmal nature is in no way dependent on man, God in his self-manifestation to man is dependent on the way man receives his manifestation."[166] Phenomenologically, we are not concerned with God-in-Godself, but with God as he appears to us (human beings), as a correlate of (human) consciousness. Rather than reasoning downwards from the infinite, we must stick to what appears within the horizon of finitude (human experience). For Falque, finitude is the ultimate touchtone as the primordial experience we have, namely, that of our own humanity, which excludes all experience of God *as* God (*theo*phany):

> It is rather to propose (…) to take finitude as the first given. Finitude (…) sums up the most ordinary existence of all human beings, including that of the Son of God, who was exactly 'made man' (…). One couldn't in fact hypothesize any further than this, faced with the humanity of a divinity of which (…) at first sight we have no experience. (…) I know myself and I feel myself to be finite, and not to admit this is a way of beating a retreat in front of an evident 'fear of existence.'[167]

Unlike the saturated phenomenon, only the experience of what we are ourselves is universally shared: our human condition (finitude).

If, as Tillich has it, "the test of a phenomenological description is that (…) it is convincing, that it can be seen by anyone who is willing to look in the same direction,"[168] then we must be able to do justice to Benoist's experience, to account for his *seeing differently*: the account of religious or theophanic experience offered needs to be understandable on the basis of what Falque calls "the grammar in common,"[169] the humanity shared between people of faith and unfaith, rather than on the basis of faith alone. Put otherwise, religious experience must be made intelligible to the atheist

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[166] Tillich, *ST1*, 61. This implies a necessary anthropomorphism of the Incarnation, where God's choice to assume the human form in *kenosis* (anthropomorphosis of God) corresponds to human *theosis* (metamorphosis of finitude), see: Falque, *MF*, 101-102; Chrétien, *Lueur du secret*, 93-94.

[167] Falque, *MF*, 13.

[168] Tillich, *ST1*, 106.

[169] Falque, *MF*, 34; *CR*, 133.

so that it may bring him to a point of decision (faith or unfaith).[170] The atheist's experience thus serves as criterion, for the horizon of finitude itself implies an existential atheism:

> Impassable immanence as opposed to any supposition of an immediate opening up to transcendence (…) and the recognition of the *possible depth of man without God*: All these are characteristic features of such a concept of finitude. The believer, like everyone else, will come to question 'man, simply man' at the risk of losing—in a supposed aspiration to the divine—what constitutes his shared humanity.[171]

What theologically appears arbitrary (presupposing a 'pure nature'), is thus phenomenologically necessary: today, confronted with the atheism of many, it no longer suffices to declare their position an exercise in bad faith and, indeed, a 'drama'.[172] Instead, we must *account* for their seeing differently, since "to *see differently* is not necessarily to misconstrue," Falque insists: the "certitude of Christianity (…) for many Christians corresponds then to the no less striking obviousness of atheism (…) for many of our contemporaries."[173] He therefore concludes that "the '*limited phenomenon*' should (…) supplant the *saturated phenomenon*,"[174] for "although we cannot altogether deny the saturated phenomenon, it is not so clear that it is a communally shared experience."[175] Limits precede saturation, for saturation is only evident in my limits *being saturated*: it is an experience of my finitude, my humanity before God, rather than God's self-revelation. Therefore, Falque says, "a phenomenology from below precedes and grounds any theology from above,"[176] by calling "the unlimited (…) back to the limit(ed) which constitutes us."[177]

This study therefore considers *finitude as such*, or Nancy's "*absolute finitude*," namely finitude "absolutely detached from all infinite."[178] It assumes, with Nancy, that "finitude is not privation,"[179]

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[170] Bultmann, *WIT?*, 96.

[171] Falque, *MF*, 14.

[172] For the theological background, see: de Lubac, *The Drama of Atheist Humanism*; *Surnaturel*; *The Mystery of the Supernatural*. For insightful contemporary commentary, see Lacoste, *Le monde et l'absence d'œuvre*, 23-54.

[173] Falque, *MF*, 33-34.

[174] Falque, *LS*, 125.

[175] *Ibid*., 123.

[176] Falque, *CR*, 124.

[177] Falque, *LS*, 124-125.

[178] Nancy, *FT*, 27; *SW*, 29-33.

[179] Nancy, *SW*, 29.

for such a privation inevitably annuls itself by being conceived of as privation; and, with Lacoste, that it is therefore "untrue to suppose that a relation to the Absolute natively structures experience," that the infinite is grafted on the finite: "Dasein exists in the world without God—this does not presume the nonexistence of God but teaches only that the world, as world, draws a veil between Dasein and God."[180] Given that we are finite (human), the absolute (God) cannot become phenomenal *to us* except *in terms of our finitude* (humanity), by *taking-leave* of its absolute form (*kenosis*), by *taking-on* finitude (Incarnation): "the Absolute does not make itself present in the world without this presence conforming to the ambiguous modes by which the world manifests it (the world is not the field of theophany but that of (…) a 'kenotic' presence (…))."[181] Such an account can be found in Nancy, and might resolve some of the internal contradictions of Marion's framework.

4. Nancy's account of revelation in terms of correlation

Though critical of both Christianity and phenomenology, Nancy's work nevertheless must be understood as emerging from both traditions. As such, there is an unconventional quasi-phenomenology of revelation in Nancy, "a phenomenology that is theological, but not theophanic."[182] Before turning to him, however, I continue my discussion of Marion to illustrate how this alternative refines rather than contradicts the theory of saturated phenomena, aiming to meet the objections of atheists like Benoist.

a. Marion's initial correlationist approach

Curiously, Marion provides the means to articulate a correlationist approach. As discussed, for Marion, phenomenology has an exclusively critical function: outlining the mode of phenomenality (revelation) appropriate to the saturated phenomenon (Revelation). Well, in an early essay that grounds the phenomenology of saturation in a theology of miracles, Marion says the following:

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[180] Lacoste, *E&A*, 41.

[181] *Ibid.*, 36.

[182] Nancy, *Dis-Enclosure*, 49

> This kind of critical work will discover that possibility was richer and larger than previously thought. In this sense, the miracle (…) will no longer bear on a physical event but on my consciousness itself (…). Admitting for this case such a surplus of effective possibility over our expectation already requires a standpoint of faith (…): even in rational inquiry one must know how to recognize the unknown.[183]

Marion makes two uncharacteristic admissions: first, the supposedly distinctly phenomenological work of outlining the saturated phenomenon's phenomenality already requires faith, since its actuality must first be admitted to; secondly, everything centres around the subject again as the site of the miracle itself. The true miracle is my acknowledgement of the given (faith), it bears on my consciousness (intentionality): "Revelation occurs in the depth of the soul; the objective side is accidental."[184]

Let's trace Marion's argument. Like classical phenomenology arbitrarily excluded religious experience, we today no longer believe in miracles. However, he says:

> I do not conclude this from any kind of knowledge but decide it by my will. (…) What precludes the miracle here is (…) *the renunciation of possibility*: I agree to accept that an impossibility has in advance overwhelmed any possibility, however slender, that time still leaves open to me. 'There are no miracles' means (…) that I give up on the least possibility.[185]

Only a faulty will (bad faith) excludes miracles, pre-emptively limiting possibility (phenomenality), instead of letting it be determined by actual experience (givenness). Contrary to Hume's "violation of the laws of nature,"[186] the miracle works subjectively, displacing what *I* thought possible rather than the objective world-order: the miracle is the transformation of possibility by what I thought impossible *actually* occurring. "The miracle," Marion says, simply means "*to believe our eyes*." Rather than presupposing faith, he adds, it merely "puts faith into operation." Objective givenness (actuality) thus maintains its priority over subjective reception (possibility): faith is needed to confront the given (*fidelity to givenness*), yet faith itself derives from givenness (which can only be recognised *from the standpoint of faith*); the givenness itself, therefore, remains unconditional.

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[183] Marion, *BOS*, 93.

[184] Tillich, *ST1*, 140; Falque, *MF*, 135.

[185] Marion, *BOS*, 88.

[186] Hume, *Enquiry*, 10.12/173.

However, how could anything become operative without already being present? Marion's argument is again theological, namely Christ's resurrection: as "the death of death," resurrection demonstrates life beyond death, the possibility of the impossible. Yet, *to whom* does it demonstrate this? To those who *already* have faith, of course. Marion, however, limits faith's operation to the *reception* of phenomena as opposed to their *givenness*, which proceeds unconditionally: "It requires a kind of faith to recognize that our expectation (…) must allow itself to be fulfilled by an occurrence that it took to be impossible."[187] Yet, how can Marion claim, supposedly from a neutral standpoint, that there is givenness, when its recognition already requires faith? One can only claim that givenness precedes reception when one has *already* admitted to it: no *reason* can be *given*; it is a question of *faith*. Hence, Falque says, Marion maintains "in the framework of theology what phenomenology holds nevertheless as forbidden—the primacy of the fact over the sense."[188]

This renders Marion's rhetoric of absolute givenness questionable, for givenness too is apparently existentially situated: it requires faith, a subject faithful to it, to give itself. In this early essay, Marion therefore speaks of the "saturating phenomenon,"[189] rather than the saturated phenomenon: the phenomenon is not *in itself*, in its givenness, saturated; saturation characterises its reception, namely *saturating* intentional horizons. Rather than a sovereign property of givenness (overabundant intuition), saturation denotes the situation the receiving consciousness finds itself in (failing intentionality): saturation marks our finitude.[190] The (onto-)theological qualification carried by saturation as Revelation is then, likewise, not a matter of givenness (God's self-revelation), but of our own willingness to abandon ourselves to what exceeds us (faith). "Thus our decision on the subject" of the resurrection, Marion observes correctly, "comes down to a decision about our own subject: Do I accept or not that my death decides my end?"[191] In deciding who we

[187] Marion, *BOS*, 90-93; *G&R*, 50.

[188] Falque, '*Larvatus pro Deo*', 194.

[189] Marion, *BOS*, 99.

[190] In reference to Kant, see Nancy, *FT*, 148: "The feeling of the sublime (…) is the feeling of the limit of our faculties."

[191] Marion, *BOS*, 93.

are, we open or foreclose the miraculous phenomenality of Revelation: though this decision itself is *not given* (extra-phenomenal), and *precedes* (situates) givenness, it nevertheless constitutes phenomenality as givenness (revelation). As Lacoste puts it: "God does not appear like the Alps, huge and undeniable," but "in such a way that we can make up our mind about him, for or against."[192] Nancy can help us elucidate what this means, still in reference to the resurrection.

b. Nancy against phenomenological revelation (givenness)

Nancy's project rejects the core of Marion's: namely, *givenness*. Commenting on Marion, he laments that "this powerful and eloquent proposition does not emerge yet out of a 'self-giving' (and of a 'self-showing') of the phenomenon, whereas I propose here, simply, that *nothing* gives *itself* and that *nothing* shows *itself*—and that is what is."[193] Nancy constantly attempts to think the following: "Nothing *presents itself*—which also means not even *a* nothing, nor *the* nothing present themselves," and constitutes "the end of negative theology as well as the end of a phenomenology in general, albeit that of the unapparent,"[194] both of which we find in Marion. Or, as Ashok Collins puts it: "in piercing to the heart of givenness, we encounter the exposure of a patent nothingness."[195]

Dealing with the end of phenomenology first, for Nancy provides an alternative quasi-phenomenology of Revelation, refusing anything given made apparent as such in the act of revelation:

> There is nothing (…) to show, nothing (…) to unveil or reveal. A thought that conceives of revelation as bringing to light a hidden reality (…) is only the religious or believing modality (…) of Christianity (…). But in its deep, nonreligious, and nonbelieving structure ((…) the auto-deconstruction of religion that it puts into play), 'revelation' constitutes the identity of the revealable and the revealed, of the 'divine' and the 'human' or the 'worldly.'[196]

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[192] Lacoste, *AG*, 107/87; Bultmann, *TNT2*, 21.

[193] Nancy, *CW*, 123n24.

[194] *Ibid.*, 72; *Adoration*, 14. This is not Marion's "givenness by denegation" (*BG*, 54): not the lack of givenness *as given*, but refusing to take anything *as given*. Nancy tries to think what, in being given, withdraws from givenness: the *resistance* to givenness.

[195] Collins, 'Towards a Saturated Faith', 332.

[196] Nancy, *NMT*, 4; *Dis-Enclosure*, 147-148.

Tracking Christianity—especially its phenomenological appropriation—in its self-deconstruction, we find there is nothing for Revelation to reveal, nothing given: there is no Revelation without the possibility of its revelation being set by its reception, displacing absolute givenness in favour of a logic of faith. Revelation (of the divine) then coincides with the means and subject of (its) revelation (by the worldly human): its *subject*, for there is Revelation only insofar *as*, and in terms *of*, its reception (faith); and its *means*, for Revelation *is* the worldly human itself (Incarnation). "That is why one must already have in order to receive," Nancy explains, "one must have the receptive disposition, and this disposition itself can only have already been received."[197]

Nancy is interested in the receptive disposition (faith), the limits within which givenness gives itself, displacing absolute givenness. Like Marion, he turns to the resurrection, often depicted in painting as a "spectacle of an extraordinary force" (impossible experience): by taking "the gesture of seeing (…) to the point of dazzling the gaze," Nancy says, "painting wants to raise itself up to the measure of a blinding force (…) wherein the first day of the saved world suddenly appears, sovereign" (saturated phenomenon). However, Nancy continues, this episode "is nowhere given to be seen," nor "even suggested in the Gospels," which depict actual encounters with the arisen more modestly: "They are organized precisely around the 'natural' rather than 'supernatural' character of the coming of the arisen," Nancy says, "around the familiar rather than the spectacular."[198] At issue are encounters with the arisen who is initially not recognised: "this difficult and uncertain recognition bears the stakes of faith," because it "does not consist in recognizing the known but in entrusting oneself to the unknown,"[199] to what is precisely not *given*, not *there to see*, requiring faith instead of providing support. "Faith," Nancy concludes, "consists in seeing and hearing where there is nothing exceptional for the ordinary eye and ear."[200]

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[197] *Ibid.*, 6.

[198] *Ibid.*, 21-22.

[199] *Ibid.*, 28.

[200] *Ibid.*, 22.

Offering competing versions of these narratives, Marion choses the encounter on the road to Emmaus (Luke 24:13-35),[201] whilst Nancy reads the story of the appearance to Mary Magdalene outside the empty tomb (John 20:11-18). At issue is the recognition of an apparently ordinary man as the arisen. John in particular relates how the arisen appears to Mary, but she does not recognise him, seeing a gardener instead. Once he calls her by her name, she turns around, now recognising him, and calls him by his. Jesus then commands her not to touch him, but instead to go tell the disciples the good news of the resurrection.[202] Nancy wonders why Mary does not recognise Jesus initially, since she was obviously familiar with him.

What did Mary see? How does she recognise Christ in the gardener? This a phenomenological question (forbidden, Bultmann suggests, to theologians and exegetes).[203] What offers itself to sight is highly ambiguous, Nancy says:

> He is the same without being the same, altered within himself. (…) Is it not this alteration (…)—the appearing of (…) he who can no longer properly appear, the appearing of an *appeared and disappeared*—that (…) bears the imprint of death? (…) The departing is inscribed onto the presence, presence is presenting its vacating. He has already left; he is no longer where he is; he is no longer as he is. He *is dead*, (…) he *is not* what or who he (…) is or presents. He is his own alteration and his own absence: He is properly speaking only his impropriety.[204]

The arisen only *gives* (presents) himself in his *withdrawal* (departure) from himself: he is not properly himself (with the father), therefore presenting only this impropriety, this going-absent, this withdrawal. Mary's recognition is then not *seeing* differently, like Marion suggests, as if the gardener is a guise to be seen through; but rather *relating* differently to what is (not) given to be seen:

> Mary Magdalene neither places her faith in the emptiness nor (…) a proof. She believes because she hears. She hears the voice that says her name. She hears this voice that contradicts the appearance of the gardener but, even so, it is not said that her seeing changes. She is responding only to the voice of he who maintains the same appearance. (…) There is nothing changed in his appearance. Thus there is nothing to change in Mary Magdalene's seeing, and this seeing is not a mistake. (…) Indeed, Mary sees the gardener, an ordinary man who comes after that other ordinary deceased man, whose gaping tomb exposes unfathomable absence.[205]

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[201] See Marion, *BOS*, 136-143; *Ge&R*, 51-52. Compare: Nancy, *NMT*, 22; Mackinlay, 'Eyes Wide Shut'.

[202] For the exegetical background, see Larsen, *Recognizing the Stranger*, 196-205.

[203] Bultmann, *John*, 686.

[204] Nancy, *NMT*, 28.

[205] *Ibid.*, 29-30.

The arisen is not *given* to be seen *as* arisen: there is no extraordinary saturated phenomenon, only the ordinary man, the gardener, whom she *recognises as* the arisen when he reveals himself *to* her by saying her name. Mary had faith, and therefore no need for a divine datum to believe the resurrection, recognising it in an ordinary sense datum: she knows how "to see what is not to be seen, to see what gives itself to be seen only to a capable gaze," for she has the "ears to hear what the gardener says, eyes to see (into) the radiant emptiness of the sepulchre, a nose to smell what smells of nothing."[206] Indeed, *nothing gives itself* to Mary, and yet she recognises Christ, and yet she has faith in the resurrection: "The real Easter faith therefore is that which believes this," Bultmann concludes, "it is not faith in a palpable demonstration of the Risen Lord within the mundane sphere."[207]

How does the Revelation take place here? What is the site of its phenomenality? It cannot be any *givenness* Mary receives; rather, Nancy suggests, it belongs to her *reception*, the situation in which there is givenness (her faith): "'revelation' is not the sudden appearance of a celestial glory," but "consists in (…) the absenting," yet "it is not he who leaves that reveals; it is she upon whom the task is conferred to go and announce his departure."[208] Given that nothing is given, the Revelation proceeds through Mary's faith: the resurrection is not revealed *to* her (she sees only the gardener), but *by* her (her departure to go tell the good news); she herself becomes the Revelation.[209] She is a testament to the Word by which, in carrying it out, she is herself carried. The Revelation is not some theophanic experience Mary enjoys, but the *testimony* to that faith she herself provides: the arisen is "what is not seen and what nonetheless shines, what is not in the light but behind it," hence "his glory shines only insofar as it is received and transmitted."[210] The Revelation is the faith sustaining Mary's senseless actions: she goes to proclaim the good news,

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[206] *Ibid.*, 21, 46.

[207] Bultmann, *John*, 688.

[208] Nancy, *NMT*, 48.

[209] Chilton, *Mary Magdalene*, 130: "It is *her* experience that ultimately teaches the other disciples how to see Jesus as well."

[210] Nancy, *NMT*, 17.

even though she has not *seen* Christ alive. Here, Nancy connects Mary's faith to Abraham's: "'Mary' resonates here just as 'Abraham' had done long before. (…) And like Abraham, Mary does not demonstrate her faith through statements, hypotheses, or calculations. She leaves."[211] Neither could *give reasons* for their actions, point to universally accessible *data* justifying them; instead, they act on faith alone (see chapter 3).

Rather than *fidelity to givenness*, a willingness to admit it; for Nancy, faith becomes a *fidelity to nothingness*: maintaining the void opened by the empty tomb out of which the Revelation emerges. Faith is only possible *in* the absence of givenness, *as* withdrawal of givenness: only when there is *nothing given* does faith operate as "the necessary relation to the *nothing*," indicating that "there are no buffers, no halting points, no markers, no indeconstructible terms,"[212] not even givenness. This withdrawal of givenness is what Revelation reveals for Nancy:

> Revelation—this revelation of which the resurrection must be the summit and the last word—reveals that there is nothing to show, nothing to make appear out of the tomb, no apparition, and no theophany or epiphany of a celestial glory. Thus there is no longer a last word.[213]

In Revelation, faith therefore finds its character as faith: namely, a seeing where there is *nothing given to be seen*, where intentionality knowns *no intuitive fulfilment*, where action has *no reason* (see chapter 3).

c. Nancy against theological negation (excess)

Turning, then, to the end of negative theology. For Nancy, "the divine is withdrawn from itself,"[214] for in itself, it is nothing: the absolute is absolute only for the absolute.[215] Indeed, he says: "Divine is the *kenosis* whereby God empties himself of himself, of his separation from man, of his abstract

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[211] *Ibid.*, 30.

[212] Nancy, *Dis-Enclosure*, 12.

[213] Nancy, *NMT*, 45; *Dis-Enclosure*, 147-148.

[214] Nancy, *IC*, 120.

[215] *Ibid.*, 147; Nancy, 'Mon Dieu!', 273-274. In reference to Marion's negative theology, see Collins, 'Being Exposed to Love', 298: "A 'God' defined by his distance from concept can no longer claim to make himself present to thought at all."

absoluteness."[216] God therefore only appears as the withdrawal of (his) appearing (givenness), "in the ruin of all appearing,"[217] now phrased more abstractly:

> The world is unknown to God. The visible and its brilliance, appearing is unknown to him. But he, the invisible, (…) sends himself (…) in the visible, something foreign in which, having sent himself there, he is all the more invisible.[218]

In becoming visible, he becomes all the more invisible, for he is invisible in himself: *in* that withdrawal from visibility, the divine appears *as* that withdrawal. God has a *kenotic phenomenality*, emptying himself out *of* appearing *as* appearing.[219] Indeed, God's phenomenality is not a question of appearing, but of the decision (faith) sitting below (kenosis) and therefore its movement beyond (transcendence) appearing: God "does not appear to be described, since there is nothing *to* describe, only a man like other men," Lacoste explains; "to make an appearance," he says, "the god must be present kenotically."[220] As Nancy puts it: "our experience of the divine is our experience of its desertion."[221] Indeed, God's *invisibility* is not a "concept of invisibility (…) that belongs to (…) objectifying thinking," Bultmann warns, for it is "the invisibility *of God*."[222] His invisibility "is not directed against those who seek God, knowing their own blindness, but to the blind who think that they can see, to the poor who imagine they are rich." God is not invisible because he overwhelms intentional limits, but because he gives too little: anything he gives *us* is not *God* but only the man he became (the gardener), whose divinity is only detected through faith. Marion thus thinks himself rich whilst he is poor (in intuitive givenness). God's invisibility is "understood only in the light of the revelation," after the fact: identifying saturation (givenness) with Revelation (divinity), as opposed to with nothing, presupposes the *actuality* of Revelation

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[216] *Ibid.*, 149.

[217] *Ibid.*, 130.

[218] *Ibid.*, 122.

[219] Althaus, 'Kenosis', 1244-1246: "The Godhead is there hidden under the manhood, only open to faith and not to sight. (…) That (…) God enters into the hiddenness of his Godhead beneath human nature, is kenosis."

[220] Lacoste, *AG*, 91/72.

[221] Nancy, *IC*, 148.

[222] Bultmann, *NT&M*, 122.

(faith).[223] Only retrospectively, from the standpoint of faith, can the revelation (*phanein*) be said to constitute Revelation (*theo*phany): appearing is conditioned transcendentally by faith.[224] This *transcendental condition* negates givenness' *factual absoluteness*, as divinity effacing its own absoluteness, withdrawing and emptying itself of itself, in its appearing: never appearing *as* absolute, the absolute must appear kenotically.

From this, Nancy concludes that God cannot be signified: he is unnameable. However, not as in negative theology, where "unnameability is the result of an overflowing of names," whilst "the unnameability of the god to whom I address myself (…) results from the lack of a name."[225] The unnameability results, not from *God exceeding* every possible name (Marion),[226] but from the impossibility of naming *my singular relationship* with God: divine names "no longer call upon 'my God',"[227] the God to whom Eckhart prays to deliver him from God (the concept).[228] One's singular *address* to God ('my God') constitutes our only way of speaking about the divine ('God') for Nancy: "'My god' says that it is I alone (…) who can call on God (…). 'My God' signifies: here, now, I am entering into a singular relationship with the lack of a singular name."[229] God is a proper name, not a common noun: *givenness* does not capture what, or rather *whom*, Mary recognises when Christ calls her by her name, and the name she in turn calls him by, "Rabboni" (John 20:16), *her* name for Christ.[230] Nancy explains:

> Mary's faith consists in her trust that he who calls her calls no one other than her and that there is a fidelity to this naming. (…) 'Who hath ears to hear, let him hear' means above all: let him (her) hear who hears that it is addressed to him (to her) (…). 'Hear that I call you, and that I call you to leave and to tell the others that I am leaving. (…) I give you nothing. I reveal nothing to you, for you see only the gardener. Go and repeat it, that I have left.'[231]

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[223] Bultmann, *John*, 81; *WIT?*, 63; *TNT2*, 47-48.

[224] Bultmann, *WIT?*, 73.

[225] Nancy, *IC*, 118; 'Mon Dieu!', 278.

[226] Marion, *Gé&R*, 51.

[227] Nancy, *IC*, 118.

[228] Meister Eckhart, *The Complete Mystical Works*, 424.

[229] Nancy, *IC*, 117; 'Mon Dieu!', 271-272. On namelessness in Eckhart, see Dubilet, *The Self-Emptying Subject*, 37-41.

[230] Nancy, *Dis-Enclosure*, 56, 58. John specifies the Aramaic, which commentators take as a term of endearment, see: Stallings, *The Gospel of John*, 279; Ridderbos, *The Gospel of John*, 637; Bultmann, *John*, 686n7.

[231] Nancy, *NMT*, 30.

The Revelation takes place in this singular relation, this *address*: of God to mankind ('Mary!') and of mankind to God ('Rabboni!'). Hence why for Chrétien, rather than Revelation, "prayer is the religious phenomenon par excellence."[232]

This returns us to Nancy's critique of Marion, since this address is the reason for speaking of *God* rather than *nothing*: I have faith that I am addressing myself to God, even though I see nothing; my faith forms "the necessary relation to the *nothing*" (address).[233] Hence Bultmann says that "the ground and the object of faith are identical," namely, *nothing*—a faith in what does not give itself and therefore provides no reason for itself: "Those who would believe in God as *their God* (…) have nothing in hand on the basis of which they could believe (…). They alone find security who let all security go, who—to speak with Luther—are ready to enter into inner darkness."[234] Nancy thus espouses a correlational theology like Bultmann's, where talk of Revelation is talk of an address: phenomenologically, we talk of God *on our terms*, insofar as he gives himself *to me* (subject) and *as* something (horizontal fulfilment), namely *this* singular person to whom I address myself in faith.[235] If Nancy then asks "*if there is a place* for god," namely, "a place where he does not become indistinguishable from something else, and where it is consequently still worth calling him by the name of *God*,"[236] the answer is that *faith* allows Marion to see God where Benoist sees nothing. Faith is that *place for God*, where God takes place in and as the finite's *address* to the infinite: the truly extraordinary is to have faith that I am addressing myself to God when speaking to the gardener. This divine place is not a name where God is present, but an existence where divinity *can take place*: a human being, like Mary, deserted by God, yet addressing herself to him through faith.

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[232] Chrétien, *The Ark of Speech*, 17.

[233] Nancy, *Dis-Enclosure*, 12.

[234] Bultmann, *NT&M*, 122 (my emphasis); *TNT2*, 68-69.

[235] Bultmann, *John*, 35; *NT&M*, 110.

[236] Nancy, *IC*, 114.

Nancy articulates this with Heidegger and Lévinas. From the former, he borrows Dasein's *being-unto-death*, with death denoting a relation to a nothing, to "*the possibility of the impossibility of existence*," for "death gives Dasein nothing to be 'actualized'," but nevertheless lets Dasein come into its own (as possibility), for "as anticipation of this possibility, being-toward-death first *makes* this possibility *possible* and sets it free as possibility."[237] Nancy merges this with the latter's *adieu*, which Lévinas describes as follows: "To be in time is to be for God *(être à Dieu*), a perpetual leave-taking (*adieu*).[238] For Lévinas, the encounter with God takes place within finitude (temporality): in our being-for-God (*à Dieu*), he effaces himself by entering finitude (*adieu*). Merging these ideas, Nancy turns Heidegger's being-unto-death into a being-unto-God (*être-à-Dieu*): the relation to the nothing (impossible possibility), through which Dasein comes into its own, is no longer resolve before death, but faith before God.[239] The divine's phenomenality, its givenness, *withdraws* into the being of the human (*adieu*), its "*kenotic* existence,"[240] for whom there can be givenness (faith): God becomes what is experienced absent its actuality ('givenness'), as the relation in which Dasein deploys itself ('exists'), whilst what it thus relates to is nevertheless not given ('nothing').

Only in this sense is there Revelation for Nancy: in the being-unto-God, the existence-in-faith, where God appears by disappearing into the human being who has faith without reason, absent anything given to believe (in). Nancy explains:

> *Here* (…) divinity lets itself be seen, manifestly invisible and invisibly manifest. God reveals himself—and God is always a stranger in all manifestation and all revelation. Revelation (…) is not a presentation (…): it must be the evidence of the possibility (…) of a *being-unto-god*. What there is revelation of is not 'God,' as if he were something that can be exhibited (…), it is rather the unto-god (*l'à-Dieu*) or being-unto-god. Or more exactly, it becomes manifest that such a being-unto-god is possible, that man is invited and permitted to be—that is, to die—before (…) god.[241]

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[237] Heidegger, *B&T*, 262/251.

[238] Lévinas, 'Ethics of the Infinite', 74.

[239] Like Nancy, Marion ties *adieu* to love, but thereby again exposes their respective understandings of faith and love (*faithfulness*) as diametrically opposed: compare Nancy, *IC*, 82-109; and Marion *The Erotic Phenomenon*, 184-222.

[240] Lacoste, *E&A*, 194.

[241] Nancy, *IC*, 124.

Revelation reveals that there is no Revelation (theophany): *nothing* to reveal, *nothing* to see, *nothing* to appear out of the empty tomb; there is only the gardener, to whom we may address ourselves in faith, and thereby receive our being.[242] Revelation reveals the possibility to see *more* than what is *given*: the possibility of *faith*, of being-unto-God instead of being-unto-death, as an alternative relation to nothing. Hence, Bultmann's warning against "taking the Easter-stories for more than they are," namely "signs and pictures of the Easter faith," indeed, "confessions of faith in it."[243] As Nancy puts it:

> Revelation is not a doctrine (…) and revelation does not unveil anything that is hidden: it reveals insofar as it addresses, and this address constitutes what is revealed. God calls Abraham, Mary, Mohammed. The call calls for a response (…). It is not a question of learning a doctrinal corpus, but of responding.[244]

In short, *the* R*evelation is the* r*evelation of faith*: the possibility of an address, an intentionality, a reaching- or venturing-out, and thus an existence; rather than anything actually given.

Nancy then correctly states that "there is no theology that does not turn out here to be either ontological or anthropological—saying *nothing about the god* that cannot immediately be said about 'event,' about 'love,' about 'poetry.'"[245] If Marion relies on an "ontologism of Revelation,"[246] we must now complete our change in strategy by (re)turning to the transcendental conditions of possible experience (revelation): going forward, I will do so by affirming with Bultmann that all "theology is, at the same time, anthropology," dealing "with God not as He is in Himself but only with God as He is significant for man."[247] Talk of God is talk of the *correlation* established by man's address to him (faith—part I) and his address to man (Incarnation—part II): if Nancy locates divinity's phenomenality, *its place*, in a human being-unto-God (faith); then God becomes "an

[242] Nancy, *NMT*, 46.
[243] Bultmann, *TNT2*, 57.
[244] Nancy, *Adoration*, 41.
[245] Nancy, *IC*, 113.
[246] Falque, *LS*, 131.
[247] Bultmann, *TNT1*, 191.

expression of our existence."[248] This existence is a phenomenological philosophy of religion's field of inquiry: "it indicates to theology that, in order to speak of God, we have to speak of something other than the Other."[249] Attempts by the authors of the theological turn to capture *God* in various pre-emptions of the infinite on the finite—saturation (Marion), auto-affection (Henry), or the face (Lévinas)—neglect the ground of their intelligibility: *human finitude*. "Finitude thus serves as the beginning of philosophy as well as theology," Falque concludes, for "no theologoumenon has any meaning outside (…) a philosophical 'existential.'"[250] My aim will therefore be similar to Lacoste's *Disputed Questions on the Humanity of Man*, namely "speaking of man, of the Absolute, and of putting their potential encounter into the terms of the language of experience—the superficially banal intention of 'religious anthropology'."[251]

[248] Bultmann, *Faith and Understanding I*, 60.

[249] Nancy, *IC*, 113.

[250] Falque, *CR*, 124.

[251] Lacoste, *E&A*, 1.

Chapter 2. The faith of reason: An anthropological reading of the 'deconstruction of Christianity'

> The experience of unreason cannot simply be forgotten: we must form a new idea of reason.
>
> — Merleau-Ponty, *S&N*, 3.

In the previous chapter, I tried to heed Bultmann's warning that talking about God as *my God* requires awareness of the lack of any given basis for such talk. Instead, he suggested, we ought to turn to what Luther called "inner darkness,"[1] to the human life that constitutes a place for God in the world: theology or phenomenology must become anthropology (i.e., what Heidegger calls 'existential ontology'). Falque's anthropology likewise centres on "the darkness in humankind, made up of passions and drives, which the mirages of *signifying* in phenomenology are wrong to evacuate."[2] This passionate and driven darkness will be my object, for it constitutes how God can be *my God*. Here, I start fitting Nancy thought in Falque's post-phenomenological framework, for he deserves to be added to the host of thinkers Falque has already enlisted in thinking, phenomenologically, what resists phenomenality (e.g., Deleuze, Derrida, Bataille, Blanchot).[3] Indeed, "the ultimate task of phenomenology is to understand its relationship to non-phenomenology," Merleau-Ponty says: "what resists phenomenology within us (…) cannot remain outside phenomenology."[4]

1. Falque's kenotic ambition

First, we need to outline Falque's framework. According to him, "there is something prior to or beneath phenomenology," namely "a 'ground of consciousness'" that is neither "consciousness

[1] Luther, *Lectures on Romans*, 162.
[2] Falque, *WFL*, 15; *LS*, 22, 26, 36; *CRV*, 30.
[3] Falque, *LS*, 55.
[4] Merleau-Ponty, *Signs*, 178.

proper," nor "'the unconscious'."[5] He calls it the "*below of sense*," which "drills into spheres that do not reach the pair of sense and non-sense." It is "not decipherable, but nevertheless at the base of any act of interpretation."[6] Taking this into account, Falque suggests, requires a reconceptualization of phenomenality, but one distinct from the theological turn's: "a new expansion of phenomenality, not beyond its current limits but beneath them, not toward the heights of negative theology but into the depths of a more basic phenomenology."[7] Rather than looking up at the blinding light, we turn to the dark depths below.

Through Merleau-Ponty, Falque therefore articulates "a phenomenology of the underground,"[8] namely a "phenomenology that *descends into its own underground*,"[9] that considers the extra-phenomenal basis of phenomenality. This underground is the darkness in humankind, made up of our passion and drives, which resists signification:

> We descend ever deeper into the abyss (…). Some people call this the 'unconscious.' I call it Chaos, or Tohu Wa-Bohu, or the mass of sensations. (…) The abyss makes humankind. It is what humankind is constructed upon (…). Chaos, the abyss, the gap, the opening (…). That is what we must now (…) try to rediscover. In our descent we strive to reach an abyss.[10]

This notion thus has many names for Falque: brute natural being (Merleau-Ponty), the sensational manifold (Kant), Chaos (Nietzsche), *tohu wa-bohu* (Genesis), the unconscious (Freud) and even *khora* (Derrida). They all denote "something utterly 'outside', which is impossible both to synthesize and to appropriate,"[11] namely the whole of passions drives that constitutes our humanity as the darkness within. Though I will develop it according to different conceptualisations in subsequent chapters; for now, I will describe this underground of phenomenality in terms of *khora*.

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[5] Falque, *LS*, 46.

[6] Falque, *CRV*, 34-35.

[7] Falque, *LS*, 46.

[8] *Ibid.*, 45-75.

[9] Merleau-Ponty, 'Preface', 8.

[10] Falque, *WFL*, 5*; *LS*, 23, 36.

[11] Falque, *LS*, 13.

Falque draws on Derrida's treatment of *khora* in the *Timaeus*.[12] There, Derrida shows, *khora* denotes what sits *in between* or *below* the poles of any binary opposition: an area neither inside nor outside the city, but the elemental spacing that makes inside-outside possible. It makes the opposition possible, without being subject to it itself: *khora* is a third term (*triton genos*) that cannot be grounded *by* the binary, disappearing *in light of* what it itself establishes.[13] "*Khôra* is neither a place nor a god," Falque writes, "neither a thing nor no-thing, neither an order nor a dis-order," but instead "'some-thing that is not a thing'; a 'there is' that gives nothing in giving the 'there' (…): a simple mode of being that escapes all beings and nevertheless underpins the ground of being."[14] As Derrida puts it: "*chora* never presents itself as such," but is rather "the very place of an infinite resistance."[15] Falque therefore concludes that *khora* denotes whatever *resists* or *withdraws from* givenness: it "gives precisely nothing and even less so represents the sheer fact of giving (…). It is (…) *outside the gift*, exterior and indifferent to" or "resisting (…) any scheme of givenness."[16] Instead, it constitutes givability as such: the spacing that is itself without place, resisting localisation; the abyss underneath all ground, resisting foundation. Caputo articulates this more clearly: "*Khora* does not take place but it is what makes it possible for something to take place."[17] It is the placeless place, a groundless ground, neither inside nor outside, in which things can *take place*. Put otherwise, *khora* designates a "quasi-transcendental condition" (Caputo),[18] "behind and below" philosophy (Derrida),[19] or below signification (Falque): the *underground* underlying signification, making it possible, yet itself remaining outside signification.[20]

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[12] For an overview, see Sallis, *Chorology*.

[13] Derrida, *ON*, 89.

[14] Falque, *LS*, 22; Caputo, *PT*, 35-36.

[15] Derrida, 'Faith and Knowledge', 21; Falque, *LS*, 29-36.

[16] Falque, *LS*, 35; Falque, *CRV*, 95, 119; Derrida, 'On the Gift', 76; Caputo, *PT*, 36. Hence, Marion has no time for Derrida's notion of *khora*, see his *Figures de phénoménologie*, 122-123, 127-128.

[17] Caputo, *Deconstruction in a Nutshell*, 101-103; 'Before Creation', 98; *PT*, 39-40; Derrida, *Rogues*, xiv.

[18] Caputo, *PT*, 12-13.

[19] Derrida, *ON*, 125.

[20] See Kristeva, *Revolution in Poetic Language*, 26.

This darkness *resists* phenomenology, remains outside phenomenality, but as its underground rather than its excess. Against interpretations of *différance* elevating its darkness towards the heights of negative theology (Marion), Derrida maintains that *khora* is nevertheless an *experience*, but not one reducible to the phenomenal signification of lived-experience:

> *Chora*, the 'ordeal of *chora*' would be (…) a place name (…) for that spacing which, not allowing itself to be dominated by any theological, ontological or anthropological instance, without age, without history and more 'ancient' than all oppositions ((…) sensible/intelligible), does not even announce itself as 'beyond being' in accordance with a path of negation, a *via negativa*. As a result, *chora* remains absolutely impassible and heterogeneous to all the processes of historical revelation or of anthropo-theological experience.[21]

Indeed, Falque concurs, "*khôra* itself refers to something negative that Christian apophasis does not reach, but to which God himself, in his kenosis, could not remain indifferent,"[22] namely, the chaotic depths of passions and drives comprised by human embodiment (what Caputo calls "khora-poreality").[23] Instead of a negative theology (excess of visibility and discourse), a more profound phenomenology (obscure depths of the sensate) is needed: we are to take "the low road," moving "in and through the sensate world rather than vaulting above and beyond the sensate."[24] Our guide is to be Plato (*Timaeus* rather than *Republic*) instead of Pseudo-Dionysius (*Mystical Theology*),[25] for "despite appearing quite the same," the silence resulting "from a lack of intuition" (or "the muteness of chaotic corporeality"), "differs from the silence arising from an excess of signification" or phenomenality ("the ineffable of the apophatic gesture"):

> However, in being unable to speak of something because of the limits of the question itself, we nevertheless trace the contours of what lies in the subterranean depths of our humanity. Even still, (…) only God, in his kenosis, could ever truly reach *Khôra* and the ground of that which, in us, remains formless—if not to give it shape, at least to inhabit it.[26]

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[21] Derrida, 'Faith and Knowledge', 20; *ON*, 76; *Psyche*, vol. 2, 174; Falque, *LS*, 29.

[22] Falque, *LS*, 21.

[23] Caputo, *The Weakness of God*, 60, 80.

[24] Falque, *LS*, 25.

[25] *Ibid*., 22. Caputo also refuses to read Derrida in terms of negative theology (good beyond being), preferring the atheological depths of the sensate (*khora*), see *PT*, xxiv, 1-12, 26-41, 154-159. For a critical discussion, see Kearney, *Strangers, Gods and Monsters*, 191-211.

[26] *Ibid*., 24.*

In this study, I am thus trying to think the muteness of experience, the experiencing resisting reduction to a phenomenon of intentionally lived-experience, including how the latter depends on and therefore withdraws into the former, using the theological figure of kenosis.

However, this already hints at the conclusion of this study. Currently, we are concerned only with its method, the framework required to think the darkness in humankind, the underground of phenomenality, as identified with, amongst others, *khora*. This is likewise Derrida's concern: "how is one to think the necessity of that which, while *giving place* to that opposition (…), seems sometimes to be itself no longer subject to the law of the very thing which it *situates*? What of this *place*?"[27] Falque's proposed solution is precisely "descending underground in a sort of katabasis or kenosis into the 'cellar' of our existence wherein lies the *Chaos* or the *Opening* of our passions and drives," to explore the "common depth that lies in the oft-forgotten frontiers of thought (…). Ceasing to elevate itself unto the heights, the human must (…) descend into the depths."[28] In these depths, we find not something knowable, a new foundation, but rather the obscurity of the abyss underneath all foundations resisting knowledge—the chaotic whole of our passions and drives (embodiment): "The 'phenomenology of the underground' does not seek a new ground, (…) but dives into the groundlessness of our being," into "this 'wild region' that makes us 'ourselves' without being properly 'ours'."[29] These depths are thus what Derrida calls *khora*: providing a space for things to take place, without itself having a place within it.

Falque characterises this descent into the abyss, this dive underground, this plunge into *khora*, as *kenosis* because a similar dynamic of self-becoming as self-effacing is at issue: if God becomes who-he-is by emptying himself of divinity in humanity, in his descent towards man (Incarnation); man likewise becomes who-he-is by sounding the irreducible depths of the darkness

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[27] Derrida, *ON*, 90.

[28] Falque, *LS*, 47-48*; *CRV*, 41, 93. Compare Caputo's approach in *The Folly of God*, 8: "everything in theology is to be measured by depth, not height. The best interests of theology lie not in God in the highest but in the depths of God (…), and for that very same reason, deep within us."

[29] *Ibid*., 63, 65.

within himself.[30] Consequently, both humanity and divinity play out in this darkness, according to Falque: "The *descent into khôra* is named 'kenosis' because God does not simply give form to the formless but consents to sacrificing his (divine) form for our (human) form, which is formlessness in its very constitution (*khôra*)." Instead "of a God (…) who rejects the emptiness of chaos by filling it with presence, who soars on high disregarding the here-below," we thus have to do with "a God who inhabits the formless event at the great cost of renouncing his proper form, who submits to the darkest depths of the human condition the likes of which we ourselves could not fathom."[31] Instead of unnecessarily theologising an anthropological notion, kenosis provides a model for thinking it: "Christianity is a rebellion of everything that crawls on the ground against everything that has *height*"[32] (Nietzsche). God's *kenosis* exemplifies our own *katabasis*, illustrating how we are to inhabit the darkness within ourselves:

> I merely aim to explore (…) what, for Christians, a *kenotic descent* of God into *khôra* might signify, descending not necessarily to give form to the formless but, rather, to inhabit it—the formlessness of the world to be sure (chaos and *tohu wa-bohu*) but also that of our own interior life, so lacking in form that it is hard sometimes to reflect on it at all (passions and drives).[33]

If we wish to speak about God, we can likewise only speak about that part of ourselves we come to share with him (through kenosis and Incarnation), and hence theology must be anthropology: "no *beyond* without descent into the *below*, no *transcendence* without first (…) rooting it in *immanence*."[34] As such, Falque refers to phenomenology's required "descent into the abyss" as its "kenotic ambition."[35] Or, sticking with Luther: "By his outgoing, God thus causes us to enter into ourselves, and by making himself known, he causes us to know ourselves."[36]

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[30] *Ibid*., 69.

[31] *Ibid*., 40.

[32] Nietzsche, *The Anti-Christ*, 40.

[33] Falque, *LS*, 38.*

[34] Falque, *CRV*, 143.

[35] *Ibid*., 149.

[36] Luther, *Lectures on Romans*, 79.

Having outlined this framework abstractly using Falque, I will now flesh it out by showing how Nancy fulfils this kenotic ambition. My interest is anthropological, namely to explore the underground of man conceived as *rational animal* by executing a *kenosis of reason*: descending into the depths below reason, irreducible to yet constituting it as reason. I will do so by providing an alternative, anthropological reading of Nancy's deconstruction of Christianity, framing its theme as "a question of knowing (…) what the simple word *human* means."[37]

2. The depth of reason: Nancy reads Kant

The project of the deconstruction Christianity is one of opening-up, specifically the opening-up of reason. As summarised by its opening lines:

> It is not a question of reviving religion, not even the one that Kant wanted to hold 'within the limits of reason alone.' It is, however, a question of opening mere reason up to the limitlessness that constitutes its truth. It is not a question of overcoming some deficiency in reason, but of liberating reason without reserve.[38]

Nancy is examining reason's opening-up from within, how reason by its nature is driven to its limits, in a gesture he calls *dis-enclosure* (*déclosion*). He does so by looking at Christianity which, in its self-deconstruction, exposes how the West "has arrived at a sort of confinement both of reason and of the world that makes us despair of ourselves."[39] Reason has lost touch with itself in modernity, supposedly the age of reason: "The civilization of 'the death of God,' or the emancipation of reason," Nancy says, "will have ultimately abandoned reason to hand itself over to understanding."[40] The Enlightenment's delineation of reason from other intellectual modes encloses reason within itself, allowing reason to understand "itself to be fulfilled in its self-referentially."[41] Reason has outdone and undone itself in terms of reason, forgotten what being rational means: reason is nothing without unreason, just like untruth makes truth stand out.

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[37] Nancy, *Dis-Enclosure*, 2; *Adoration*, 5.

[38] *Ibid*., 1.

[39] Nancy, *Adoration*, 38.

[40] Nancy, *Dis-Enclosure*, 3.

[41] *Ibid*., 6.

a. The drive of reason

For Nancy, Kant's critical philosophy both exemplifies and dis-encloses reason's enclosure, for with his attempt at safeguarding the Enlightenment spirit from the excesses threatening to undermine it, modernity becomes self-aware for the first time.[42] To safeguard reason, Kant limits it in various ways, without however dismissing what remains outside the correct use of limited reason: reason carries within itself a *drive* (*Trieb*) towards its own unreason. This drive ultimately dis-encloses reason from its self-sufficient and self-referential enclosure: "this confinement is contrary to the drive (…) that searches, in us, for contact with the 'open'."[43] This extra-rational element—belonging to reason because it is driven towards it, yet equally dis-enclosing reason from its self-referential enclosure—Kant calls *the unconditioned*: "The closure invariably dis-encloses itself," Nancy therefore suggests, "such is the precise sense of the demand for the unconditioned that structures Kantian reason."[44]

What does this mean? If Kant's limitation of reason precludes *knowledge* (experiential cognition) of metaphysical ideas (God or the world) because they are beyond the principles of possible experience, reason's inherent structure nevertheless necessitates their being *thought*: "the nature of reason itself" *drives* it towards the "transcendental ideas, just because they cannot be avoided and yet will never be realised." They cannot be avoided because they form the *unconditioned ground* of our conditioned knowledge: rationally organised experience delivers knowledge about worldly objects, *if* there really is a world unifying those judgements. The world as a whole is unknowable, since not experienced as such, yet is nevertheless presupposed to ground our knowledge of discrete objects. Hence, Kant says, "any answer given according to the principles of experience always begets a new question which also requires an answer."[45] When answering questions according to the principles of possible experience, new questions inevitably arise since

[42] See Kant, 'What is Enlightenment?'.

[43] Nancy, *Adoration*, 38.

[44] Nancy, *Dis-Enclosure*, 7.

[45] Kant, *Prolegomena*, 353; *CPR*, Avii.

the unconditioned ground of knowledge transcends these principles: reason, Kant says, "does not thereby find satisfaction for itself."[46] Reason must go outside itself to find itself, to know what being rational means, which constitutes it as *driven* according to Nancy.[47] Reason is naturally driven towards the unconditioned in "its desire for the thing itself,"[48] pushed towards its own limits and outside itself, where the transcendental ideas—belonging to reason as much as they do not—, reside: "Only in the cognition of the latter," Kant says, "can reason hope to see its desire for completeness in the progression from the conditioned to its conditions satisfied." Kant therefore suggests that we "think for ourselves an immaterial being, an intelligible world, and a highest of all beings (all noumena), because only in these things (…) does reason find completion and satisfaction, which it can never hope to find in the derivation of the appearances from the homogeneous grounds of those appearances."[49]

Yet, this is not a result of the transcendental deduction. Reason only finds its ultimate ground in *moral faith* as response to the *experience* of the moral law within ourselves: God is meaningfully conceived as the supreme being making my experience of morality possible. It is then this experience, as the heterogeneous or groundless ground of reason—i.e., its unreason—, that grounds reason in an extra-rational element (moral faith):

> Reason does not suffice unto itself: *for itself* it is not a *sufficient reason*. But it is in the acknowledgement of this insufficiency that it fully justifies itself. (…) This is why what Kant called a 'moral faith' (…) has its essence not in a failure of reason but (…) in the firmness with which reason confronts its own dissatisfaction. Not seeing therein insufficiency, a failing (…), moral faith there discovers 'non-sufficiency.'[50]

Reason justifies itself, becomes itself and grounds itself, when recognising its own insufficiency or groundlessness: reason is grounded in an act of faith, for reason may have faith in itself but can give no reason for itself.

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[46] *Ibid.*

[47] Nancy, *Adoration*, 62.

[48] *Ibid.*, 49.

[49] Kant, *Prolegomena*, 354-355.

[50] Nancy, *Dis-Enclosure*, 25-26.

Reason thereby dis-encloses itself from its enclosure: self-sufficiency. Reason deconstructs its enclosure by being *driven* outside itself, by itself, as itself. Nancy's deconstruction of Christianity (reason's dis-enclosure) should therefore be understood against the backdrop of Kant's moral faith (reason's drive), namely as embodying the same (kenotic) gesture of self-becoming in self-effacing: "whereas Enlightenment reason (…) judged it necessary to close itself off to all dimensions of the 'outside,'" he now wants "to break the enclosure in order to understand that it is from reason and through reason that the pressure, the drive (this *Trieb* of reason (…)) of the relation with the infinite outside comes about, and does so *in this very place*." Thus, Nancy concludes: "Deconstructing Christianity means opening reason to its very own reason, and perhaps to its unreason."[51] The deconstruction of Christianity is thus the kenosis of reason: exposing reason to the darkness within, the *unreason* constituting it as reason, irreducible to or indeducible from reason (moral faith). In short, there is no reason for reason, there is only faith: reason requires an extra-rational element to justify or satisfy itself.

Nancy's terminology nevertheless differs from Kant's. Where Kant uses the *unconditioned*, Nancy speaks of the *alogon* to denote "the extreme, excessive, and necessary dimension of the *logos* (…) that reason introduced with itself."[52] As extreme dimension of *logos*, the *alogon* sits at *logos*' limit and therefore belongs to it; yet, as its excess, does so only as the outside constituting (delimiting) the inside, and thus a-logical rather than illogical: "the extreme limits of reason in an excess of and over reason itself (the 'of' and the 'over' being woven here one into the other)."[53] Faith consequently belongs to reason "in the demand for the unconditioned, that is, for the *alogon*, without which (…) we can give up thinking."[54] Reason's dis-enclosure then involves shining a light on its darkness, on what "the Enlightenment could not enlighten" or "was unable to illume in

[51] Nancy, *Adoration*, 24-25.

[52] Nancy, *Dis-Enclosure*, 8.

[53] *Ibid*., 7. This linkage is drawn, not just from Kant, but also from Heidegger's understanding of 'critique', see: *What is a Thing?*, 119-121; *PR*, 72.

[54] *Ibid*., 10.

itself,"[55] namely its extraordinary *faith* in reason, reason's *faith* in itself, lacking any *reason* for reason: reason's unreason. Nancy calls this reason's *duty* or *requirement* of "casting a light on its own obscurity, not by bathing it in light, but by acquiring the art, the discipline (…) to let the obscure emit its own clarity."[56]

b. The piety of reason

As dis-enclosed, reason thus "opens unto the extreme withdrawal of any 'given reason'," demonstrates its own withdrawal or retreat into faith: "Reason has moved away from the wish to give reasons (*rendre raison*)," knowing "that giving one's reasons is an interminable process" because it "goes beyond any reason that can be given."[57] Consequently, opposing reason and faith becomes untenable: reason and faith "lie within each other,"[58] as Tillich has put it. By denying "*knowledge* in order to make room for *faith*,"[59] in an exercise of reason, Kant implicates faith in reason as its drive (*pulsion*) and beating heart (*pulsation*).

Donald Loose therefore suggests that "for Nancy, Kant's 'rational religion' simultaneously appears as a faithful reason: a reason that is confronted with its own limits and excess."[60] Yet, this remains too superficial: reason is not simply *confronted* with, 'thrown before' (*ob-jectum*), what exceeds its limits; reason *carries* it within itself, the extra-rational sitting at the heart or underlying, 'thrown under' (*sub-jectum*), reason. Reason is subject to its drive, its dis-enclosure or opening-up in *reasoning*. Reason is indeed faithful, but only in virtue of *its nature as reason*. Nancy calls this the "piety of reason," namely "the observance of duty that was incumbent on reason with regard to the unconditioned principle or dimension it requires."[61]

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[55] *Ibid*., 4.
[56] *Ibid*., 6.
[57] Nancy, *Adoration*, 43-44.
[58] Tillich, *DF*, 74-77 (75).
[59] Kant, *CPR*, Bxxx.
[60] Loose, 'The Excess of Reason and the Return of Religion', 163.
[61] Nancy, *Dis-Enclosure*, 3.

The question is then the critical one of how to understand reason as formed by this operation, in its observance of that duty, by its act of faith in itself.[62] What we could call a *critique of pious reason* is therefore needed: an investigation of how reason operates in its drive towards the unreason of faith. As Nancy puts it:

> What Kant's expression holds open for us is (…) this: a critique of reason (…), a demanding and non-complacent examination of reason by reason, makes unconditionally requisite, within reason itself, an opening and an e-levation (*ex-haussement*) of reason. It is not a question of 'religion,' here, but rather of a 'faith' as a sign of the fidelity of reason to that which *in and of itself* exceeds reason's phantasm of justifying itself (*rendre raison de soi*) as much as the world and man.[63]

In its elevation (*ex-haussement*), reason is carried outside (*ex*) itself, to the point where it can no longer *give a reason* for itself, ground itself in itself (*rendre raison de soi*). This reason is perhaps best understood as what Tillich calls "ontological reason,"[64] which constitutes faith as "the act in which reason reaches ecstatically beyond itself,"[65] or "reaches its boundary line, is thrown back upon itself, and then is driven again to its extreme situation." Faith as reason's ecstasy "is the form in which that which concerns us unconditionally manifests itself within the whole of our psychological conditions. It appears through them. But it cannot be derived from them."[66] Faith precisely *underlies* reason by simultaneously establishing (providing its unconditioned ground) and displacing (not being reducible to it) reason as its extra-rational or groundless ground: "If reason is grasped by an ultimate concern, it is driven beyond itself; but it does not cease to be reason, finite reason. Ecstasy is fulfilled, not denied, rationally."[67]

Paradoxically—or, perhaps, kenotically—, ecstasy therefore constitutes, not a *beyond* reason, but what Tillich calls "the depth of reason,"[68] namely faith as "the expression of something that is not reason but which precedes reason and is manifest through it," indeed, "is expressed

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[62] Nancy, *FT*, 91; *Logodaedalus*, 58.
[63] Nancy, *Dis-Enclosure*, 28.
[64] Tillich, *DF*, 74-80; *ST1*, 72-75.
[65] *Ibid*., 76.
[66] Tillich, *ST1*, 113.
[67] Tillich, *DF*, 76; *ST1*, 112.
[68] Tillich, *ST1*, 79-81.

through every rational expression."[69] In words that could be Nancy's, Tillich also puts it thus: "this 'outside' is not merely outside," but "represents (…) an element in reason itself, the depth of reason."[70] Reason's depth constitutes its piety (or ecstasy, *ex-haussement*): "Reason is the presupposition of faith, and faith is the fulfilment of reason. Faith as the state of ultimate concern is reason in its ecstasy. There is no conflict between the nature of faith and the nature of reason; they are within each other."[71] Exploring this unreason, diving into reason's abyss, descending underground towards its faith, is what conceiving of reason in its operation means, i.e. *critiquing* it: "Ecstasy unites the experience of the abyss to which reason (…) is driven with the experience of the ground in which reason is grasped by the mystery of its own depth."[72] We must thus consider that experience.

c. The experience of reason

Kant, Tillich complains, has "mere awareness" of reason's depth,[73] namely as moral consciousness (duty), the experience *from which* he *reasons* but *in which* he does not *delve*. A critique of pious reason then means "to open rationality to the dimension appropriate to the absolute (…), to a 'higher reason'," the ecstatic elevation (*ex-haussement*) of reason. "This piety of reason," Nancy says, "this service that the *greater reason* (Nietzsche) owes itself in the name of its absolute destiny—this has proved unable to communicate its own fervor."[74] The critique of pious reason thus seeks to expose the *feeling* or *fervour* of the act of *reasoning*, the drive of reason that constitutes the movement of reasoning, the experience in which it exists. Nancy therefore develops what Boyan Manchev calls a 'meta-critique' of thought: "experiencing the experience (*faire l'expérience*) of thinking,"[75] a thinking of reason by reason stemming from its experience, the feeling or fervour of reason's

[69] *Ibid*., 79.
[70] *Ibid*., 84.
[71] Tillich, *DF*, 77.
[72] Tillich, *ST1*, 113.
[73] *Ibid*., 82.
[74] Nancy, *Dis-Enclosure*, 2-3.
[75] Manchev, 'Jean-Luc Nancy', 170.

ecstasy. It is a critique of reason, not in its theoretical or practical use, but rather in its *existential operation*,[76] where the theoretical and the practical make one another possible: "pure reason is practical in itself (…), in our desire for the unconditioned (…), we act in the world."[77] This critique of pious reason thus thinks "'pure reason' *in terms of* its being-practical, *in terms of* the duty that constitutes or enjoins it,"[78] by making reason's unreason (its faith) stand out in the experience of reasoning or the experiencing of reason: without infinitising it (Hegel), showing how reason's finite nature *drives* it towards the unconditioned as to its own unreason. This is the experience of reasoning, which, in virtue of its finitude, is never satisfied with a given reason or a possible experience.

Nancy's reference to Nietzsche's 'greater reason' is instructive here. The latter distinguishes a small reason from a greater or higher reason. Compared to small reason, the "higher type is more *unreasonable*,"[79] as the reason of the body (see chapter 5):

> The body is a great reason (…). Your small reason, what you call 'spirit' is also a tool of your body (…) and plaything of your great reason. 'I' you say and are proud of this word. But what is greater is that in which you do not want to believe—your body and its great reason. It does not say I, but *does* I.[80]

The "unreason or counterreason of passion"[81] exceeds small reason yet nevertheless grounds it as "the infinitely higher and broader rationality of a sentiment, even a passion."[82] The critique of pious reason thus exists in opening-up reason to (its) faith: the sentiment, the passion, the experience, the fervour, that sits at its limit. Put otherwise, not the experience that reason makes possible, but the experiencing that reason is or completes (*fait*): moral consciousness and the

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[76] See Tillich, *DF*, 75.

[77] Nancy, *The Possibility of a World*, 19; *FT*, 142; *Dies Irae*, 46-47; Kant, *CPR*, 31, 42, 91, 105.

[78] Nancy, *FT*, 142.

[79] Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, 77.

[80] Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, 23.

[81] Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, 78.

[82] Nancy, *Dis-Enclosure*, 4.

response through faith which cannot be justified rationally, exposing what Manchev calls "the heteronomy of reason."[83]

d. The facticity of reason

As this experiencing of reason, Nancy goes further than Kant and actually delves into the depth of reason, allowing him to avoid certain obvious pitfalls, such as the one observed by Philip Goodchild:

> Treating the unconditioned as a regulative ideal may avoid the contradiction of treating it as a metaphysical object, but leads to a further contradiction: the unconditioned (…) remains conditioned by the piety of reason, the very practice it is intended to constitute. For whether the unconditioned is conditioned by objects or by thought, it is still subject to conditioning.[84]

However, the unconditioned is not a condition imposed by thought as a regulative ideal, but rather implied by the *fact* of thought: the experience of reasoning (knowing the world) in which we do not feel the need to provide a reason for this reasoning.

Nancy's argument parallels Kant's, who grounds reason in the morality that presents itself as a "fact of reason," in that "one cannot reason it out from antecedent data of reason,"[85] yet is "nevertheless firmly established of itself,"[86] as the "consciousness of freedom of the will."[87] This moral consciousness is difficult to categorise within Kant's framework: "neither an intuition nor a concept,"[88] as consciousness, it is nevertheless an experience or experienc*ing*; a rational rather than empirical experience, the experiencing that *is* (*fait*) reason itself (duty) and the experience that *constitutes* (*fait*) it as such (reasoning). "Morality comes (…) from common experience to the extent that it is an experience of the moral law inscribed at the bottom of every heart," Nancy explains, and is thus "common only to the extent that it is the experience of *pure* practical reason."[89] The

[83] Manchev, 'Jean-Luc Nancy', 172.
[84] Goodchild, *Capitalism and Religion*, 199.
[85] Kant, *CPrR*, 31.
[86] *Ibid*., 47.
[87] *Ibid*., 42.
[88] Nancy and Lacoue-Labarthe, *The Literary Absolute*, 31; Nancy, *FT*, 143-144.
[89] Nancy, *Logodaedalus*, 51.

"*factum rationis* of morality," as an "underivable *factum* that is nothing other than the being-in-practice of reason,"[90] then "designates a factuality heterogeneous to and incommensurable with the reason from the heart of which, nonetheless, it emerges."[91] In short, reason is constituted by an experience irreducible to and incommensurable with it.

The unconditioned thus forms the "experience of thinking,"[92] the fact of existence driving reason beyond its limits: the world is unknown, yet in inhabiting that world we are naturally driven to ascribing our knowledge to it. As Nancy puts it: "thinking (…) can think—indeed, cannot not think—that it thinks something in excess over itself."[93] Our thinking thus "establishes by means of a fact what could there [in speculative reason] only be *thought*."[94] For example, complying with Kant's "rejection of all [speculative] teleology and all theology," nevertheless "does not alter the fact that we still (…) are confronted with (…) the question of the origin of the world, of the Big Bang, and so on."[95] Goodchild's objection therefore fails, for the unconditioned is conditioned neither by objects nor by thought; it is rather the *experience* of thinking (reasoning), the experienc*ing* constituting reason's natural disposition (drive), which is unconditional *as* rather than *in virtue of* piety. The unconditioned is not *of* the order of thinking (reason), but rather *forms* that order by making it possible (the experience of reasoning): theoretical reasoning is conditioned by practical reasoning, which is conditioned by nothing-but-itself, namely the fact of reason (moral consciousness).[96] In short, the unconditioned is itself not borne out of, thus conditioned by, thought; but rather forms the existential unity of reason as the consciousness of the freedom of the will, which is *in fact* the unconditioned itself, and as such *drives* reason towards the unconditioned. The unconditioned is thus not itself conditioned by the drive or piety of reason,

[90] Nancy, *Dies Irae*, 50.
[91] Nancy, *FT*, 145.
[92] Manchev, 'Jean-Luc Nancy', 170.
[93] Nancy, *Dis-Enclosure*, 11.
[94] Kant, *CPrR*, 6; Nancy, *Dies Irae*, 46.
[95] Nancy, 'On Dis-enclosure and Its Gesture', 311; *Adoration*, 16.
[96] Kant, *CPR*, 121.

as Goodchild suggests, for it *is* this drive constituting reason's piety: in exceeding reason, making it pious, the unconditioned is reason in its act of reasoning. Nancy calls this movement "the existential ordeal of thought," which "alone constitutes reason in its unconditionality or in the absoluteness and infinity of desire through which man is caught up in it infinitely."[97]

3. The ground of reason: Nancy reads Heidegger

a. The principle of reason

We now move on from a consideration of reason's existential operation (knowing through reasoning) to a consideration of reason's metaphysical function (grounding by giving reasons). Here, Nancy echoes Heidegger's treatment of the principle of reason. Though comprising philosophy's method since its inception, it is only formulated *as a principle* by Leibniz in the seventeenth century: his *principium rationis* famously states that "nothing is without reason."[98] In his lectures on this principle, Heidegger regularly remarks how curious it is that the idea governing philosophy, *its principle*, "needed so many centuries to be expressly stated as a principle."[99] This may be due, Heidegger muses, to its apparent self-evidence: capturing how we understand things, namely by giving reasons for them, pointing out their causes. Heidegger therefore calls it our *modus vivendi*: "We have an eye out for grounds in all that surrounds (…) us. We require a specification of reasons for our statements. We insist upon a foundation for every attitude."[100] Yet, then why did Leibniz feel the need to formulate it as, and to elevate it to, a principle? During "the triumph of this supposed Worldly Reason," Nancy answers, "the 'principle of reason' demanded by Leibniz (…) came to deploy itself *and* encountered its own uncertainty, trembled on its own foundation," becoming "an express philosophical demand because the model of rationality (…) was already aware of, or was already touching, its own limit."[101] The *principle* of reason arises when reason's *self-*

[97] Nancy, *Dis-Enclosure*, 11.
[98] Leibniz, *Philosophical Essays*, 31.
[99] Heidegger, *PR*, 4.
[100] *Ibid*., 117.
[101] Nancy, *Adoration*, 32.

evidence degrades, the principle emerges with the unreason to avoid having to give a reason for reason: "the meaning of *principium* (…) in the principle of reason is highly problematic."[102]

Before we start, the translation of Leibniz's *principium rationis* as Nancy's *principe de raison* and Heidegger's *Satz vom Grund* requires clarification. A *principle* is the *arche* of thought, meaning both thinking's original premise and governing assumption. Reason is the principle of philosophy insofar as philosophy assumes that things have reasons and its gesture consists in reasoning. The German *Grund*, translating *ratio*, is then far richer than the French *raison*: naming not only reason, but also the meaning of giving reasons (*rendre raison*) through the *principium reddendae rationis*, i.e. establishing *why* something is the case. As such, Heidegger says, "*ratio* means ground," namely "the foundation for a true assertation."[103] The principle of reason (*Grund*) thus *grounds* (*begründen*) beings in being, exposes their *foundation* (*Begründung*), gets to the *bottom* (*Grund*) of things.

b. The groundlessness of reason

According to Heidegger, "the principle of reason doesn't deal at all with reason as such"[104] (and therefore "no longer falls within the scope of critique").[105] The principle concerns *being*: stating that, for there to be something rather than nothing, there must be a reason. According to the principle, "each mode of being always has its ground," its reason-for-being, thereby accomplishing a "conjunction" of ground and being: "*Ground pertains to being.*"[106] As a result, "the principle of reason," Heidegger continues, "is (…) not a statement about reason, but about beings, insofar as they are beings."[107] We are therefore no longer engaging in a critique of reason (*Vernunft*), but rather in a metaphysics of reason (*Grund*): considering its ontological implication (*why* we use it) rather than its transcendental operation (*how* it works). Conflating the critical and metaphysical questions of reason is the mistake made when acceding to its principle as self-evident (conceiving

[102] Heidegger, *MFL*, 109.
[103] *Ibid.*, 110.
[104] Heidegger, *PR*, 9.
[105] Nancy, 'CCC', 10.
[106] Heidegger, *MFL*, 111.
[107] Heidegger, *PR*, 44; *MFL*, 111-112.

being as being-known): we do not have a *reason* to agree with the *principle* (premise) that there *is* nothing without a reason; thus "plenty of shadows are cast over the principle of reason," for by accepting it as self-evident, are we not guilty of "the grossest neglect of the principle itself?"[108] We therefore find ourselves in a similar situation as with Kant: the principle of reason itself drives us towards its own groundlessness. As Heidegger puts it:

> But what are we getting ourselves into if we take the principle of reason at its word and move towards the reason of reasons? Does not the reason of reasons *press forward beyond itself* to the reason of reason of reasons? If we persist in this sort of questioning, where can we find a respite and a perspective on reason? If thinking takes this path to reason, then surely it can't help but fall intractably into groundlessness?[109]

Yet, Heidegger offers an alternative conceptualisation of reason's unreason: not faith, but the *groundlessness* or *abyss* (*Abgrund*) of reason (*Grund*).[110] We use the principle of reason "as a prop for support," he says, "but it also immediately propels us into groundlessness."[111]

c. The exhaustion of reason

According to the principle, every being (*Seiende*) has a reason (*Grund*) for its being (*Sein*). The causal *reason* for a-being's-being, the *ground* for its beingness, is thereby identified with its *being*: for example, God as supreme being causally responsible for our being-a-being (onto-theo-logy).[112] Or, as Nancy puts it: "*God* denotes the premise or principle of a presupposed totality" and "represents (…) being at and as the ground of beings."[113] However, we were not asking about beings' beingness (being-*qua*-beings), but their *being* (being-*qua*-being). This approach, Nancy says, remains stuck in tautology:

> In doing so, metaphysics sets a founding, warranting presence beyond the world (…). This setup stabilizes beings in their own beingness. (…) This fulfilment amounts to an exhaustion: (…) self-reference ultimately immobilizes and paralyzes even *being* itself or the sense of the event that it names, and (…) the dissociation of the two regimes that the closure affixes to one

[108] *Ibid.*, 11-13.

[109] *Ibid.*, 13.

[110] *Ibid.*, 59.

[111] *Ibid.*, 131.

[112] See Heidegger, *Identity and Difference*, 42-74.

[113] Nancy, *Dis-Enclosure*, 21.

> another ends up proving to be a phantasmatic dissociation between the unimpeachable empirical real and the inaccessible real or intelligible surreal.[114]

Giving reasons for being in terms of beings encloses being in beingness, which ultimately leads to an exhaustion: if I ask why I am here (reason and ground for my being), and the answer I receive is God (a supreme being), I will simply ask again why God is there.[115] Human reason, always already practical and active in-the-world, is intrinsically driven towards the unconditioned. "In truth," Nancy therefore concludes, "metaphysics deconstructs itself constitutively, and, in deconstructing itself, dis-encloses in itself the presence and certainty of the world founded on reason (…): it foments in itself the overflowing of its rational ground."[116] Heidegger likewise stresses that being cannot itself *be*, that being's ground is the abyss whereby it falls outside the order of beings it both establishes (grounds) and dis-encloses (exceeds), that *being is groundless*: "being (…) as ground/reason," he says, "has no ground/reason," since "every foundation (…) remains inappropriate to being as ground/reason. (…) Being *qua* being remains ground-less. (…) Being: the *a*-byss."[117] Nancy's *exhaustion* then means that, eventually, we simply give up asking for sufficient reasons or grounds: to carry on with our lives, we content ourselves with an insufficient reason or ground. Reason exhausts itself before being, before its failure to give sufficient reasons or grounds, because reason can only reason about the conditioned, about being insofar as it is (a being). Its exhaustion is the exasperation of the parent grown tired of their child's constant asking *why*. It results from the mere *fact* of reason's finitude, our being-in-the-world: "The 'end of metaphysics'," Marion says, "is a fact of reason."[118]

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[114] *Ibid*., 6-7.

[115] Falque, *MF*, 36-40; Marion, *V&R*, 53.

[116] Nancy, *Dis-Enclosure*, 7.

[117] Heidegger, *PR*, 111.

[118] Marion, *V&R*, 53.

d. The leap of reason

This realisation is detrimental to the modern project, for which reason formed the foundation (*Grund*): the ground underneath its feet is opening-up.[119] Leibniz therefore felt the need to make reason (*Grund*) into a principle (*Satz*). However, this merely exacerbates the problem: by establishing a *principle* of reason, Leibniz undoes the whole practice of using principles and giving reasons.[120] For the principle of reason is the foundational principle, the principle of all principles: "The principle of reason (*Satz des Grundes*) is the ground/reason of principles (*Grund der Sätze*)."[121] It is the *ratio rationis*: the reason for reason; yet, itself without reason.

Insofar as they both expose the *fact* (of reason) that reason is without reason—either as faith (Kant) or groundlessness (Heidegger)—, Kant's unconditioned runs parallel to Heidegger's being: for Heidegger, Nancy explains, "Kant's operation is a response to the demands of the principle of reason as situated within the determination (…) of being as objectness."[122] Being is unconditioned and unknowable because it exceeds the principles by which we know things as conditioned: for Kant, the unconditioned is not an object (outside space-time); for Heidegger, being is not a being (outside beingness). Heidegger himself admits as much:

> Kant names the method of the *Critique*—that is, of the circumscriptive rendering of sufficient reason—'transcendental' and not 'transcendent'; for Kant names 'transcendent' that which lies beyond the limits of human experience, not insofar as it surpasses objects in the direction of their objectness; rather, insofar as it surpasses objects along with their objectness—and this without sufficient warrant, namely, without the possibility of being founded. According to Kant a cognition is 'transcendent' that pretends to know objects inaccessible to experience.[123]

For Kant, the unconditioned is unknowable yet *grounds* our knowledge, and thereby *conditions* knowledge as unknowable: the unconditioned is thus not of the order of thinking, rather it *is* (grounds) this order. For Heidegger, being is likewise not of the order of beings, rather it *is*

[119] Heidegger, *PR*, 43.
[120] *Ibid.*, 7-8.
[121] *Ibid.*, 13.
[122] Nancy, 'CCC', 10.
[123] Heidegger, *PR*, 78.

(grounds) this order.[124] Indeed, Nancy wonders "whether the unconditioned toward which the *Trieb* of reason extends would not itself be an abyss."[125]

Heidegger then considers how we move from the principle of reason as a principle about beings towards an understanding of being-*qua*-being. This, he contends, is what Kant does too with his transcendental investigation of reason:

> We will briefly recall (…) the extent to which the discussion of the transcendental (…) belongs to the preparation of the leap from one tonality of the principle of reason into the other. Understood in a Kantian way, the 'transcendental' pertains to the surpassing of objects, that is, of experienceable beings, to objectness, that is, to being. However, the leap is the leap from out of the principle of reason as a principle about beings into the principle as an utterance of being *qua* being. The transcendental, the surpassing, and the leap indeed are not equivalent, but the same insofar as they belong together with respect to the differentiation of beings and being.[126]

Kant's investigation exists in showing how reason is animated by the unconditioned and thus driven to its own excess. Heidegger therefore concludes: "If we discuss the principle of reason as a principle of being, we follow it off to that place to which the principle (…) removes us,"[127] namely, being-*qua*-being (the unconditioned). Critique prepares for a leap from beingness into being-*qua*-being, from the conditional (reason) into the unconditioned (unreason): "critique proceeds toward that which authorizes it," Nancy explains, resulting in "a circular connection between critique and leap, and it is not impossible that such a circle is present (…) in Heidegger's text."[128] Critique is necessitated by the fact that reason emerges from unreason, being from the abyss, and that one can only move from one to the other by means of a *leap* (*Satz*) absent any ground or reason (*Grund*), i.e. by way of faith.

That reason is groundless (Heidegger), grounded in faith (Kant), or in the *alogon* (Nancy), means that reason is *not grounded in itself*, but rather in something extra-rational: it is heterogeneous

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[124] Nancy, *CW*, 68.

[125] Nancy, 'CCC', 11.

[126] Heidegger, *PR*, 78.

[127] *Ibid*., 52.

[128] Nancy, 'CCC', 10-11.

or ecstatic. Modernity therefore makes reason into a principle: given that reasons cannot be given for it, it becomes the premise on the basis of which reasons are given. Nancy explains:

> The decisive point is this—it ought to be the task of the principle (…) *to exceed qua principle principiation itself* (…), it ought to be the task of the premise to elude itself, to withdraw from itself, (…) to deconstruct principiation on the basis of itself. A principle or principate (…) can only *exempt or make exception of itself in regard to itself*. At least, this is one of the branches of the alternative before which this principate is ineluctably placed: either it confirms itself, infinitely, or it exempts itself by or from itself—and this, no less infinitely. (…) To reuse our earlier terms, either the premise confirms its etiological and teleological tautology, or it is in itself exposed as heterogeneous to any tautology: fleeing into a heterology.[129]

The task exposed by our critique of pious reason and the insufficiency of the metaphysics of ground as reason is then the following: exposing the principle's non-principled grounding, the extra-rational reason for reason; showing how the principle of reason is grounded heterologically by something outside the order of principles. The principle of reason (the principle of all principles) is grounded by what grounds the order of principles as such, though without itself belonging to it (principiation). Reprising Kant's (drive) and Derrida's language (*khora*), Nancy sums it up: "But this is just as much the affair of Reason itself—that of this pressure or drive (Kant's *Trieb*), directed toward the 'unconditioned' or toward the unlocalizable outside of the world, in the world itself."[130] It is thus a questioning of the thinking the darkness within, what remains extra-rational yet belongs to reason as the underground that makes it possible, that provides the space for it to take place without itself having a place within it.

4. The value of reason: Nancy reads Marx

Let's recapitulate. Nancy tracks reason's dis-enclosure from its modern enclosure in self-sufficiency by abandoning its self-referentiality:

> Reason cannot be satisfied with explanations or 'reasons given' but pushes toward an incommensurable and an unnameable of sense (…). If it fails to give this push or drive its due, reason wilts and sinks into general commensurability and an interminable nomination in which all names are interchangeable.[131]

[129] Nancy, *Dis-Enclosure*, 22-23.

[130] Nancy, *Adoration*, 39.

[131] *Ibid.*, 38.

To think this incommensurability, this heteronomy, Nancy turned to Kant: "Kant is the first to attempt to give this drive its due, namely, a due exceeding the order of the 'understanding' and knowledge of an object."[132] Specifically, "Kant tries to think the feeling, the sentiment (…) of relating to a dimension of the world that (…) is the very existence of the world," which "surpasses the capacity of thought to seize upon it and opens something up."[133] Put otherwise, Kant thinks the groundless ground of reason as the *experience of morality* (faith), adumbrating what Nancy called the *existential ordeal* or *experiencing* (*faire l'expérience*) of thought (reasoning): its drive towards the absolute, unknown since not given in experience, nevertheless forms the very experience of reasoning. Rather than an empirical intuition (which it transcends), this is a rational experience: the experience of reasoning or the experiencing of reason, the experience in which reason consists (*fait*)—its facticity. In short, it is the experience of *the heterogeneous* or *the incommensurable*: of what cannot be commensurated in reasoning, what is without or beyond a common measure or reason, of a different order; whilst nevertheless forming that order, constituting commensurability and rationality as such. As Nancy puts it: "what Kant called 'reasonable humanity,' instead of being a tangential approximation of a given rationality (…), will have to conceive of its own rationality as the incommensurability of Reason in itself, or to itself."[134] Reason, making the rational animal what-it-is (human), cannot be grounded in itself (reasonable humanity) but only in what remains incommensurable to it (animal passions and drives).

a. The incommensurable

Nancy draws on the language of the first book of Marx's *Capital*—which conceives of money as a general or "universal equivalent,"[135] since it "serves as a *universal measure of value*"—,[136] to conceptualise this:

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[132] *Ibid*., 48.

[133] Nancy, 'On Dis-Enclosure', 312.

[134] Nancy, *CW*, 62.

[135] Marx, *Capital*, 39-41 (40).

[136] *Ibid*., 66; *AF*, 5, 31

> Ultimately, if the capitalist (…) economy constitutes the general form of value or sense today, that is by way of the worldwide reign of a monetary law of exchange (or general equivalency) or the indefinite production of surplus value within the order of this equivalency—a value whose evaluation remains impossible except in terms of equivalency.[137]

Things only have value in relation to a monetary standard. Everything relates to that standard, making things generally equivalent in terms of value, rendering everything commensurate (under capitalism "value *is* in equivalence").[138] Yet, this simultaneously undoes value, because if everything is exchangeable—equivalent, commensurate, homogenous—, then nothing has value: "That which is good for everything, or the general equivalent (currency), is worth nothing of and for itself."[139] Or, as Marx puts it: "Money, like every other commodity, cannot express the magnitude of its value except relatively in other commodities."[140] By rendering everything commensurate ("as a measure of value"), money—*currency*—ensures that the exchange itself is never-ending ("as the medium of circulation").[141]

"Against this suffering of the in-finite (capital, equivalence (…))," Nancy says, "a different evaluation (Nietzsche),"[142] is needed: "it is necessary to *reevaluate value* itself," namely to "rethink value's price, considering it as an absolute price and one no longer dependent on a principle that (...) fixes it."[143] This does not concern particular values amongst many ('evaluations'), existing in relation to a particular standard (rarity, demand, the good), and thereby placed in an equivalence: values understood as exchangeable evaluations are "insufficient."[144] It rather concerns what Marx sometimes simply calls "Value,"[145] namely "the nature of absolute *value* in itself" situated "behind

[137] Nancy, *Dis-Enclosure*, 31.
[138] Nancy, *TD*, 23.
[139] Nancy, 'IV', 437; *AF*, 31; Heidegger, *Pathmarks*, 265.
[140] Marx, *Capital*, 64.
[141] *Ibid*., 105-106; Nancy, *AF*, 6-8.
[142] Nancy, *Adoration*, 74.
[143] Nancy, *Dis-Enclosure*, 76.
[144] Nancy, 'IV', 438; *AF*, 31-32.
[145] Marx, *Capital*, 5.

the phenomenon,"[146] underlying its monetary phenomenalism.[147] Rather than "values as given markers (…) against the backdrop of an equivalence between the evaluative gestures themselves," for Nancy "value is to be found (…) in (…) the gesture that evaluates it."[148] Real value, value that has value in itself ('properly'), cannot be measured by a common measure, cannot be devalued by money: "This is how a different evaluation could be opened up," Nancy says, "in the fact that there is no value besides what has absolute value."[149] Real value is *absolute value*:

> Value must have value without measure. Bataille expressed this in calling value 'heterogeneous': The 'homogenous' is the exchange of values, a general equivalence. In order to have value properly, it is necessary that value be heterogeneous to that equivalence.[150]

Value's *Umwertung* thus entails an "affirmation of incommensurable value," away from evaluations relative to a particular standard (generally equivalent) and towards an incommensurable and therefore absolute value (singularly unique): not simply "introducing another system of differential values," but "to introduce a new nonequivalence," namely "finding (…) a sense of evaluation, of evaluative affirmation, that gives to each evaluating gesture—a decision of existence (…)—the possibility of not being measured in advance by a given system but of being (…) each time the affirmation of a unique, incomparable, unsubstitutable 'value' or 'sense.'"[151] Absolute value means deciding against any common measure rendering things exchangeable (equivalent, homogeneous, commensurable): "*value*, absolutely speaking (…) is absolutely incommensurable with every other measured (evaluated) value. (Commensurability is called 'general equivalence')."[152] Only absent a given common measure can value be absolute, only as incommensurate with everything else can value have value in itself: as "unexchangeable," absolute value is paradoxically "what is without

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146 Nancy, *CW*, 38; *Adoration*, 82. Compare: Henry, *Marx*, 213-231; Derrida, *Specters of Marx*, 187-205.

147 Marx, *Capital*, 66: "Money (…) is the phenomenal form that must of necessity be assumed by that measure of value which is immanent in commodities, labour-time."

148 Nancy, *TD*, 22

149 Nancy, *Adoration*, 74.

150 Nancy, *Dis-Enclosure*, 76-77.

151 Nancy, *TD*, 24.

152 *Ibid.*, 49.

value because it is outside all measurable value."[153] Real value denotes the incommensurable, the heterogeneous, something without price—in short, the absolute: what cannot be evaluated because there is no adequate measure.

Recasting the problem of reason's unreason (its incommensurability to itself) into that of value (as incommensurability) does not resolve it, though: how to think the incommensurable (value without price) or the heterogeneous (reason's unreason), when thinking (reasoning) means commensurating everything into a homogeneous whole (giving reasons)? This is the problem at the heart of this study: how to account phenomenologically for the extra-phenomenal? Nancy's solution takes recourse to a non-phenomenal sense of experience: value or "the heterogeneous is not a matter of usage or of exchange" (its phenomenal forms), "it is a matter of experience."[154]

b. Experiencing value

"There is a 'without price'," Nancy declares, "But what can the 'without price' be? (…) What can be said outside of any evaluation?"[155] The answer is value as such (absolute because without measure) rather than any one of a particular system of values (relative because generally equivalent). *Value* must therefore be understood in another sense (transvaluated). Against values (*valeurs*, *Werte*) as evaluations (measurements against a particular standard), Nancy proposes Value (*valeur*, *Wertung*) as valuation or valour itself (the very standard or measuring):

> Value also consists, however, in a certain power. *Valere* is to be strong, capable, in good health. This power is *not* measured against an other. It is not to be stronger than another force, not the strongest of all. Health (…) does not consist in being less ill, nor to not be so at all, but to affirm an existence, unconcerned with comparisons; and, therefore, also, to affirm (…) an ill existence. Value here is thus a power to be, or a power to be a power. Power is not evaluated, it is itself the power to evaluate.[156]

Whilst values are relative (exchangeable), valuation is absolute (without price): the standard is itself without measure, cannot be measured, because it does the measuring. Marx knew this: "money

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[153] *Ibid.*, 17; *Dis-Enclosure*, 80.

[154] Nancy, *Dis-Enclosure*, 77.

[155] Nancy, 'IV', 438-439.

[156] *Ibid.*, 438; *CW*, 40; *Dis-Enclosure*, 79; *Adoration*, 47.

itself has no price," thus "to put it on an equal footing with all other commodities (…), we should be obliged to equate it to itself as its own equivalent."[157]

Nancy understands this power-to-value (valuation) in distinctly German—indeed, Kantian—terms, namely as the dignity of the human person (for whom there is value):

> It is in this sense (with this value) that dignity (*Würde*) must be understood as beyond all value (*Wert*) (…). Sense here is affirmation itself, as an affirmation which values by itself, as a power to affirm. This sense is not valued in terms of price or signification. It is (…) only of value as the origin of sense and desire. What is under question in the discourse of values is therefore that which has no price; that which is not evaluated. Dignity, for example (…). Kant (…) opposes dignity (*die Würde*) to any notion of value or price established on a comparative scale.[158]

The reason for this dignity, the power-to-value's absolute character, Nancy says, is the *singularity* of each person: "everyone is (…) an absolute origin of the world," and therefore "the origins are inevitably incommensurable with each other."[159] Someone else's world, the way-they-value-things, is irreducible to mine (resisting equivocation, commensuration, or reason). Nancy therefore concludes that "it is existence itself which is without price."[160]

Absolute value is the singularity of each valuation, underlying its phenomenal forms (use and exchange), incommensurable through money: a worthless object that once belonged to a deceased family member may become priceless to me without, however, this absolute value being *given* with the object. As such, Nancy considers value, existence's valuation, to be an *experience*:

> In place of representations and significations is substituted the affirmation of existence itself. Not speculation over its value, but value in itself as the affirmation and exposition of existing (…). This affirmation that existence is experience: that it does nothing else (…) but expose itself to the unforeseeable, the unheard of of its own event. Experience simply (…) events' (*s'évenir*), 'comes forth of itself.' This *évenir* opens *within* the world an *outside* that is not a beyond-the-world, but the *truth* of the world.[161]

This experience (its experienc*ing*), appreciating the things of-the-world outside-the-world, constitutes existence (its exist*ing*), a being-in-the-world without being-of-the-world

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[157] Marx, *Capital*, 67.

[158] Nancy, 'IV', 438; *Adoration*, 56-57; *SW*, 97; *Dis-Enclosure*, 121-122; *CW*, 40; *AF*, 40; Kant, *Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals*, 434; *The Metaphysics of Morals*, 434-435.

[159] Nancy, 'IV', 440; *Adoration*, 59-60; *BSP*, 15-17.

[160] *Ibid*., 439.

[161] Nancy, *Dis-Enclosure*, 79.

("adoration"),[162] as valuation (its valu*ing*): existing means detachment from all givenness, seeing more than what is given, appreciating as priceless what is worthless.

The "experience of absolute value" is thus "absolutely foreign to the fettered order of the world (of use and exchange)," and as such "introduced *into* the world this *withdrawal* that is heterogeneous—in the place of the principle that founded and provided measure," according to Nancy: "existence consists in having, in the world, the experience of what is not of this world, without being another world for all that" (*value*).[163] In short, value is an experience in excess of the given—or, better, sets the terms on which things are given, providing the space for givenness to take place, without itself being given:

> It sets (us) in the world, according to the novelty of an experience that is not of this world because it is that of value: the values of this world are measured, that is, evaluated by (…) the interests of this world. But he who does not let himself be measured by that evaluation, he who has for himself the experience of value—he withdraws from the world in the very midst of that world (…): (…) he becomes the site of an experience that, in itself, is or creates value, absolutely.[164]

Valuation therefore means situation, the existential situation of experience or reason: it sets the terms on which we experience things *as* what-they-are (reasonable or valuable).

This experience displaces givenness, withdraws from givenness, sits below givenness, and is identified with the experience (experienc*ing*) of existence (exist*ing*): the absolute freedom of detachment from any given standard. As Nancy puts it:

> Truth is value reevaluated: a devaluation of every measurable value, a devaluation of every given by which one evaluates. Value is existence, which, in eventing evaluates itself: it becomes value without equivalence. That is the absolute price of existence without price. The same price that the existent gives itself, when it lets itself be evaluated by nothing. It gives itself a price without price, one that it can neither measure nor pay. It has nothing to pay: neither fault nor debt. It has neither sinned nor borrowed: it is redeemed from and for its being in the world through its withdrawal from the world. However, this withdrawal comes to pass in the midst of the world: it is contemporaneous with existing, it events with existing, as existing.[165]

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[162] Nancy, *Adoration*, 2-3, 16, 59.

[163] Nancy, *Dis-Enclosure*, 77-78.

[164] *Ibid.*, 78.

[165] *Ibid.*, 79.

In the next chapter, I will describe this experience with Kierkegaard as that of faith, for it is precisely this experience that sits at the heart of Christianity and drives its self-deconstruction.[166] For now, however, we are considering it as the experience of value—or, rather, the *fact* of experienc*ing* value: an experience of things that is not given with or as them, an experience of the heterogeneous. As value, this experience of existence establishes itself as the groundless ground, the unmeasurable measure, of reason: reason is not grounded in itself, but in an experience at its heart, in an existence that *values* reason and remains *faithful* to it, without having any *reason* to do so.[167]

c. The phenomenology of value

Having established this experience (value) or this existence (valuation)—the valuation of value as the experience of existence (valuing)—as the groundless ground of reason, its phenomenology awaits articulation. As suggested, this experience is not a phenomenon of lived-experience—a knowledge-object delivered by intentional consciousness—, but rather the experience undergrounding phenomenalisation, the experienc*ing* of (lived-)experience (*faire l'expérience*), constituting it while remaining irreducible to it: "the 'ordeal of *chora*'" (Derrida),[168] "the existential ordeal of thought" (Nancy),[169] or the *factum rationis* of morality as the experience reason completes (*fait*) (Kant). It is not an *empirical* intuition but rather a *rational* experience: the experience (or experienc*ing*) of reason (or reason*ing*)—its *drive*. The question is then: how does this experiencing (reason's drive)—irreducible to a given of lived-experience (extra-phenomenal) or principle of reason (extra-rational), yet making phenomenality (appearing) and rationality (knowing) possible—relate to what it experiences (reason)? How does the extra-phenomenal relate to the phenomenality it remains outside of yet constitutes? Or, how does the unconditioned (experiencing value) *condition* or *drive* phenomenalisation?

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166 *Ibid.*, 80; *Adoration*, 23-24.

167 See Heidegger, *Pathmarks*, 247.

168 Derrida, 'Faith and Knowledge', 20.

169 Nancy, *Dis-Enclosure*, 11.

Kant, Heidegger, and Nancy only provide some hints. Kant ultimately grounds moral principles in an experiencing, namely *respect* (the "feeling of the beauty and the dignity of human nature").[170] Respect orients us towards the absolute, obliges us to affirm the incommensurable: "Respect protests in the name of what is incommensurable about obligation, and (…) makes of us the *factum rationis* that obligates us."[171] We do not thereby know the absolute, it does not appear, for it is affirmed precisely as incommensurability (dignity): it is an experience of *resistance* (to evaluation), but precisely an "ethical resistance" (Lévinas), namely "a relation not with a very great resistance, but with something absolutely *other*"[172] (without price). In short, the unconditioned is not *given* to respect in this feeling, but demands to be respected in its *resistance* to (remaining outside of) evaluation or equivocation.

We should therefore perhaps speak of *esteem* rather than *respect* concerning the unconditioned's conditioning of experience:

> Each time it is a question of a particular consideration (…), of respect (…), directed at singularity as such. It is not that 'respect for nature' advocated by facile ecologist discourse (…), but rather an esteem (…) that turns its back on 'valuation' measures. For estimation—or evaluation—belongs to (…) general equivalence (…). Esteem on the contrary summons the singular (…). Esteem (…) addresses something inestimable, (…) more precious than any price, something incalculable, so exceeding any possible calculation that one does not even try to imagine it.[173]

Heidegger develops this notion of *esteem* phenomenologically in his lectures on the principle of reason: the Greek for *principle* (*principium*) is *axiom* (*axioma*), deriving from *axioo*, meaning to value or think worthy. Heidegger explains:

> 'To find worthy' means 'to bring something to shine forth in that countenance in which it finds its repose, and to preserve it therein.' An axiom shows what has the most noble countenance, and has this not as a consequence of an evaluation emanating from humans (…). What has this most noble countenance (*im höchsten Ansehen Stehende*) composes this regard (*Ansicht*) on its own. (…) That which enjoys having the most noble countenance opens the lookout (*Aussicht*)

[170] Kant, *Observations on the Feeling of the Beautiful and Sublime*, 2:217.

[171] Nancy, *FT*, 146.

[172] Lévinas, *Totality and Infinity*, 199; Nancy, *FT*, 146.

[173] Nancy, *AF*, 39.

> towards that stature (*Höhe*) from whose look everything else always receives its look (*Aussehen empfängt*) and possesses countenance (*Ansehen besitzt*).[174]

For the Greeks, seeing (*Sehen*) is informed by societal worth, esteem or regard (*Ansehen*), which determines one's out-look (*Aus-sicht*), one's approach to world, the conditions under which it appears: worth (*Ansehen*) determines appearance by conditioning our out-look (*Aussehen*). Nancy echoes this:

> The Most High is the one whose height is no longer relative (…). It is Height itself, all height and nothing but height ((…) an absolute superlative). The Most High does not allow measurement. (…) The Most High is the inequivalent itself. It is not equivalent to any kind of equivalence or inequivalence. It is, to the contrary, on its basis alone that something like the register of equivalence or inequivalence can be posited.[175]

This is not a subjectivist imposition of value on fact. The interaction between *Ansehen* and *Aussehen* is circular: worth emanates from the world itself, because the world appears in a certain way, mutually reinforcing that worth and that appearance. We cannot imagine the world appearing otherwise, we cannot evaluate the world's appearance, and therefore hold it in such high esteem. The worth, axiom, or esteem thus constitutes our *modus vivendi* ("generally the way in which real contradictions are reconciled,"[176] quips Marx): experiencing the world in terms of our being-in-it. Existence, being-in-the-world, then forms the measure-without-measure, the groundless ground, incomparable to anything else: we cannot consider an alternative way of valuing the world, exactly because we *already* value it (Marx's "fetishism").[177] "We are not aware of this," Marx says, "nevertheless we do it."[178]

Hence, principles are grounded in existence (valuation), in a way-of-valuing or making-sense-of the world that itself, as measure, remains without measure. Lacking a reason for reason, Leibniz therefore makes it into a principle (*axioma*): he *values* reason, his ultimate concern. He does not do so arbitrarily, but rather because our way-of-valuing, our valuation *is* (grounds) reason:

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[174] Heidegger, *PR*, 16.

[175] Nancy, *CW*, 97.

[176] Marx, *Capital*, 76.

[177] *Ibid*., 43.

[178] *Ibid*., 45; Nancy, 'IV', 438.

reason makes it possible for the world to appear to us (rational animals), namely appearing in terms of reason (measurements).[179] Hence, nothing *is* without a reason, because nothing *appears* to us if it transcends reason's terms: Kant's unconditioned is primarily the extra-phenomenal about which ontological predication is meaningless. Put otherwise, the reason for reason, the experiencing of (lived-)experience, the ground of the principle (whether of reason or phenomenality), remains itself extra-rational or extra-phenomenal: *not-given*. This is a general law of phenomenality, not "in the sense of a phenomenal law but in the sense of a law of the phenomena that does not itself appear in the phenomenal sense."[180]

Phenomenology has been reluctant to address this extra-phenomenality phenomenologically. Indeed, Heidegger notes, "here everything goes around in a circle. We become dizzy. Thinking stumbles into perplexity."[181] Echoing Heidegger, Nancy writes that "the Most High can only produce one thing: vertigo."[182] Yet, as Falque pointed out, "the mirages of *signifying* in phenomenology" incorrectly neglect this "darkness in humankind, made up of passions and drives."[183] With Nancy, we must therefore descend into phenomenality's underground (extra-phenomenality) or the cellar of our existence (unreason in its passions and drives): the placeless space that allows things to take place (*khora*). As Nancy puts it:

> We must have in sight that which escapes any sign. Of necessity we have to invent the direction to take, and to invent it knowing that this invention can never claim to 'know' for everybody in that together-with-one-another which has no price because it is existence itself. To bring into view that which we cannot 'see' (…) and to bring 'into view' the fact that we cannot 'see' it.[184]

Having explored this underground anthropologically in terms of how the extra-rational conditions rationality, we must now spell out its phenomenological consequences in term of how the extra-phenomenal structures phenomenality: if chapter 1 established that the phenomenality of

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[179] See Husserl, *Crisis*, 21-59.

[180] Nancy, *FT*, 148.

[181] Heidegger, *PR*, 126.

[182] Nancy, *CW*, 97.

[183] Falque, *WFL*, 15; *LS*, 22, 26, 36; *CRV*, 30.

[184] Nancy, 'IV', 440-441.

givenness is made possible by an extra-phenomenal element (faith), which therefore conditioned experience as religious or theophanic (Revelation); we must now seek to account phenomenologically for this dynamic of undergrounding.

Chapter 3. The experience of faith: Nancy and Kierkegaard on Abraham's ordeal

> Since this perception is an event of our historical life, it is actual only as our deed, and as such it makes our life. *In our experiences we are always questioned, put to the test*. We cannot *have* them as a possession. We have them only in the doing.
>
> — Bultmann, *WIT?*, 152.

In the first chapter, I criticised Marion for bracketing the role of intentionality in the constitution of phenomena, and particularly the role of faith in the constitution of religious or theophanic experience (i.e., the saturated phenomenon of Revelation). Against Marion, I argued that this faith is indispensable as the existential situation in which there can be givenness, as the intentional horizon against which givenness is experienced as theophanic. This faith, nevertheless, is not given to consciousness, but instead constitutes the way in which the human being intends what is given to it, the horizon within which it can recognise something as given. The second chapter therefore tried to bring this faith into view as what resists givenness whilst nevertheless constituting it, as the underground of anything or any reason that can be given. Where the second chapter still operated an anthropological register, this chapter will apply those insights phenomenologically in an attempt to better account for religious or theophanic experience: i.e., not solely in terms of givenness. Specifically, I will suggest that faith is an experience, but a more primordial kind than the phenomena of lived-experience brought into view by classical phenomenology: faith denotes a particular way of experiencing experience (*faire l'expérience*). Put otherwise, faith indicates that the human being lives what is given in experience in a particular way, namely as informed by the life in which this givenness takes place: phenomenologically, faith functions as the life that situates givenness existentially whilst itself remaining outside the phenomenality of givenness. Faith is never given, but always a venture;[1] as such it too is a kind of experience, I argue, though irreducible to the phenomenality of givenness. To account phenomenologically for this extra-phenomenal

[1] See Bultmann, *Existence and Faith*, 63-66.

experience, we must then ask how it relates to the phenomena it constitutes whilst nevertheless itself remaining outside their proper phenomenality: how does faith make religious or theophanic experience possible? In short, how does the experiencing of experience through faith *form* said experience?

I will explore this by discussing an author Nancy stays largely silent on: Søren Kierkegaard. This silence is remarkable, given the natural affinity between both thinkers' respective understandings of Christianity, as well as their shared sensitivity to philosophical style. I will therefore illustrate how reading both together can illuminate their shared understanding of faith, articulating a (quasi-phenomenological) *poetics of faith*, since for both, faith is not primarily a question of appearing (*phanein*) but of doing (*poiesis*). Specifically, I will suggest that faith constitutes the form of experience determining it as religious or theophanic. The question that should interest the phenomenologist then becomes that of the form of experience, which remains extra-phenomenal though constitutive of phenomenality as the way in which givenness is received, and phenomenology therefore turns into a poetics: i.e., a discourse on the form of experience that determines that experience. I will proceed in four steps: the first step sets out the phenomenological framework used; the second and third steps apply this framework to Kierkegaard's understanding of faith; the final step spells out the consequences of the preceding analysis with Nancy.

My main point of reference will be Kierkegaard's *Fear and Trembling*, for it offers an extraordinarily penetrating, though equally controversial, analysis of faith. Following Paul (Romans 4:16-17, Galatians 3:7-9), the book hails Abraham as the father of faith by way of a reading of the Old Testament narrative of the binding of Isaac (Genesis 22), a cruel story where God tests Abraham's faith by demanding that he sacrifices his only son. Abraham passes the test, showing himself willing to kill Isaac, though God ultimately provides a lamb to be sacrificed instead. Abraham is then the father of faith, *Fear and Trembling* suggests, because of his blind obedience to God, even though God's command did not make any sense: Abraham only has faith because he

acts "on the strength of the absurd,"[2] because his actions were senseless—not simply in themselves, but through the accompanying faith that even by demanding the sacrifice of the son of promise, God will keep his promise that Abraham would be the father of many nations through Isaac (Genesis 17:4, 21:12). A troubling "teleological suspension of the ethical" then accompanies faith, seemingly implying that the duty to God supersedes 'ethical' duties.[3]

The book's identification of faith's religious enthusiasm with the madman's insanity may therefore appear jarring: the man of faith is indeed insane, religious passion has detached him from worldly rationality; however, contemporary readers have misinterpreted this, reproaching Kierkegaard for gleefully embracing faith as irrational.[4] Even Caputo distances himself from Kierkegaard here:

> For Kierkegaard, the moral of this story is that the ethical rule admits of exception, because God (…) can suspend any given law (…). That is a profoundly dangerous position to take (…). *Fear and Trembling* appears to realize the worst fears of those who are troubled by Kierkegaard's view that 'truth is subjectivity'. Is something true just so long as you are deeply and passionately convinced that it is true? Is that not the very definition of fanaticism?[5]

This is an odd statement coming from the author of a book entitled *Against Ethics*, throughout which he celebrates *Fear and Trembling*'s pseudonymous author, "Johannes de Silentio, whom I have taken as a certain mentor."[6] Of course, *Fear and Trembling* contains disturbing statements, for example: "If faith cannot make it into a holy deed to murder one's own son, then let the judgement fall on Abraham as on anyone else."[7] However, reading further, we discover that *Fear and Trembling* concerns faith, not morality: "if you simply remove faith (…) there remains only the raw fact that Abraham was willing to murder Isaac, which is easy enough for anyone without faith to imitate," but "if one makes faith the main thing—that is, makes it what it is—then (…) it is only in respect

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[2] Kierkegaard, *F&T*, 65.

[3] *Ibid.*, 84-95.

[4] See, most famously: MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, 49; Lévinas, *Proper Names*, 68-72.

[5] Caputo, *How to Read Kierkegaard*, 46, 51, 55 (46); *AE*, 139-146; *On Religion*, 28; *Truth*, 157-158.

[6] Caputo, *AE*, 5.

[7] Kierkegaard, *F&T*, 60.

of faith that one achieves resemblance to Abraham, not murder."[8] Kierkegaard is thus not *arguing* that faith justifies extra-moral actions, but *showing* what it means to have faith.

1. *Erfahrung* beyond *Erlebnis*: Experience in Nancy, Gadamer and Romano

In this chapter, I will therefore argue that we are dealing with a phenomenology here: the book provides *an experience* rather than an argument, namely that of faith. However, this is 'experience' in a very particular sense, which needs to be explained first. Specifically, it is the kind of experience Lacoue-Labarthe finds in poetry: "'experience,' provided that we both understand the word in its strict sense—the Latin *ex-periri*, a crossing through danger—and (…) avoid associating it with what is 'lived' (*le vécu*), the stuff of anecdotes. *Erfahrung*, then, rather than *Erlebnis*."[9] This *ex-periri* is thus distinct from classical phenomenology's *lived-experience* (*Erlebnis*, *le vécu*). Here, Gadamer's historiography of *Erlebnis* proves illuminating: on this conception, "something becomes an 'experience' not only insofar as it is experienced, but insofar as its being experienced makes a special impression that gives it lasting importance."[10] The term *lived-experience* (*Erlebnis*) thus does not simply denote the experienc*ing* (*erleben*), but brings it into view in terms of its result, the reality *lived* (*das Erlebte*) within it.[11] Lived-experiences deliver *phenomena*, stable "unities of meaning,"[12] intentionally constituted out of the sensational flux (*Erlebnisstrom*): "A lived experience is a distinctive and characteristic mode in which reality is there-for-me," Dilthey writes, it "is there-for-me because I have a reflexive awareness of it" and "possess it immediately as belonging to me."[13] It implies "that every part of it is connected with the other parts in one consciousness," whilst simultaneously "it can be isolated within the household of my life because it belongs to it

[8] *Ibid.*, 60-61.

[9] Lacoue-Labarthe, *Poetry as Experience*, 18. Nancy often echoes this, see: *EF*, 81-95; *BP*, 3, 200; *Corpus*, 101, 113, 134-135, 140; *MA*, 208-210; *IC*, 112; *CW*, 43.

[10] Gadamer, *T&M*, 53.

[11] *Ibid.*, 53-56, 349.

[12] *Ibid.*, 56; Husserl, *Ideas I*, 106/129.

[13] Dilthey, 'Fragments for a Poetics', VI.312/223; Husserl, *Logical Investigations*, vol. 2, 101-102.

structurally as a function."[14] Lived-experience thus emphasises the thing *lived* (*erlebt*), what consciousness is consciousness *of*, thereby stabilising the stream of consciousness into a self-same, immediately given and present, unity of sense.[15]

Yet, Gadamer feels that lived-experience does not constitute the *whole* of experience: "something else quite different," he says, "needs to be recognized in (…) 'experience,'" namely "its inner relation to life." The model of lived-experience seems unnecessarily limited:

> If something is (…) an *Erlebnis*, that means it is rounded into the unity of a significant whole. An experience is as much distinguished from other experiences—in which other things are experienced—as it is from the rest of life in which 'nothing' is experienced. An experience is no longer just something that flows past quickly in the stream of conscious life; it is meant as a unity and thus attains a new mode of being *one*.[16]

Perhaps in the rest of life, or in life itself (*Leben*), nothing is experienced (*erlebt*), insofar as life itself is without intentional object; however, it does not follow that this life is not itself an experience or at least an experienc*ing*. Does phenomenology not forget the *life* (*Leben*) by focussing on *what-is-lived* (*das Erlebte*) in its *lived-experience* (*Erlebnis*)?

According to Gadamer, life is an *adventure*: "by no means just an episode," a lived-experience, it "lets life be felt as a whole," it "is 'undergone,' like a test or trial from which one emerges enriched." As adventure, life consists in "venturing out into the uncertain," *living through* (*fahren*) something, *facing a danger* (*Gefahr*): life's adventure is an *experience* (*Erfahrung*).[17] Here, emphasis is on the *life* (*Leben*) rather than the *thing-that-is-lived* (*das Erlebte*): the basis on which things are lived. This is still an experience, as Claude Romano suggests, though not one I have (*avoir*), but one I am or undergo (*faire*). The former concerns lived-experiences as unities of sense constituted against an intentional horizon delivering knowledge of the world: an *empirical* experience of repeatable innerworldly facts that makes the world predictable. The latter concerns a singular and

[14] *Ibid.*, VI.314/224; Husserl, *CM*, 70-72/31-33; *Ideas I*, 64-65/73-75.

[15] Gadamer, *T&M*, 58.

[16] *Ibid.*, 57-58.

[17] Gadamer, *T&M*; Nancy, *Sexistence*, 92-93. Without citing Gadamer, Romano echoes him in *E&W*, 148. See nevertheless Agamben, *Infancy and History*, 28-29.

unrepeatable experience or ordeal that constitutes the (trans)formation of that horizon itself, involving facing-a-danger or traversal from self to self: the experience of being changed by what happens to me such that how the world appears is likewise changed, for it appears to a different *me*, against a different horizon, on different terms.[18] The two selves are incommensurable: I no longer recognise myself in the person I have become because I have *lived-through an ordeal* and been (trans)formed by it, which subsequently changes how I *live* or *experience* everything else.[19] This experience is therefore transcendental rather than empirical: not of innerworldly facts—indeed, not *of* anything—, but the event of experienc*ing* that makes worldly the world, its disclosure through my being-in it.[20] For Romano, this second, transcendental sense, is the "primary phenomenological sense" of experience,[21] as "a nonempirical undergoing," the ordeal of phenomenalisation itself (*erleben*), "only accessible from events, which put it to the test, and through which—at the risk of itself—it shows itself," which he calls "*ex-per-ience*" (*Er-fah-rung*).[22]

In this sense, too, Nancy calls freedom "the inaugural experience of experience itself." He explains:

> The 'foundation of foundation' supports itself alone, having nothing to support it (…), sustaining itself only on its existence (…). Here (and now), existence tries itself (*experiri*) (…), it tests its every chance of existence (…). This is why the 'foundation of foundation' is experience itself: experience does not experience anything, but it experiences the *nothing* as the real that it tests *and* as the stroke of luck it offers. (…) But the experience of experience is nothing other than experience itself: trying the self at the self's border.[23]

This experience in which *nothing is given*—where there is *no object to live*, except the experience itself undergoing itself in the ordeal of experiencing, its going-to-the limit of itself as itself—, is or forms the self: *ex-per-ience*, namely, *ex-istence*; being-put-to-the-test, venturing-out into the uncertain. Or

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[18] See not only Nancy and Romano, but also numerous recent phenomenological contributions: Romano, *E&W*, 144-150; Nancy, *EF*, 20; Barbaras, *Le tournant de l'expérience*; Falque, *LE*, 21-22; Pattison, *A Phenomenology of the Devout Life*, 202; Stiegler, *Nietzsche et la critique de la chair*, 42. Lacoue-Labarthe and Romano both cite Roger Munier's helpful etymology 'Réponse à une enquête sur l'expérience', 37.

[19] For examples, see: Romano on illness (*E&W*, 149); Bultmann on revelation (*WTT?*, 76).

[20] See, for example: Nancy, *TM*, 19-20; Romano, *E&W*, 163.

[21] Romano, *E&W*, 146.

[22] *Ibid.*, 141.

[23] Nancy, *EF*, 86-87.

again: "To undergo an experience is, then, to *be* experience," for it "moves through itself, from one side to the other."[24] For Nancy, experience is a question of existence, of going, living, making it *through* something: "existence is experience." This means, most obviously, that experience is experienced somehow, (in)formed by an existential situation: life (*Leben*), its orientation (intentionality), determines how things are lived-in-experience (*er-lebt*). This is how we should understand Nancy's statement that experience "does (*fait*) nothing else but expose itself to the unforeseeable, the unheard of of its own event. Experience simply (…) 'events' (*s'évenir*), 'comes forth of itself.'"[25]

For Nancy, too, then, "this is not empiricism's experience."[26] It is, instead, an experience that "proves itself by testing itself," which is "anterior to every empirical certitude, without being, properly speaking, on the order of the transcendental" as "*a transcendental experience* or *the transcendental of experience*, the transcendental that *is* experience."[27] At issue is that non-empirical undergoing in which ex-per-ience exists, that ex-istence experiences, and makes all subsequent lived-experiences possible by determining how things are lived—i.e., the *form* of experience: namely, existence itself, the life that *makes-for* the lived-experience (*fait l'expérience*), the being-in-the-world through which Dasein's being is world-disclosure. Romano calls it a "transcendental *a posteriori*."[28] It forms (makes possible) lived-experiences, and is thus transcendental, but is simultaneously itself experience, and thus *a posteriori*: the experience forming all subsequent lived-experiences as their experienc*ing* (e.g., the *ex-per-ience* of being bitten by a dog as a child causing dogs to *appear* as a threat later in life). Caputo calls it the *predelineation of experience*:

> These are possibilities whose essential content has been (…) predelineated (…) by actual experience. (…) Such predelineation makes all subsequent experience possible. It is a universal law of intentionality, therefore, that every object of possible experience depends upon a prior projection (…). This prior projection is no Kantian a priori, for it is drawn from (…) the actual

[24] Nancy, *MA*, 208-210.

[25] Nancy, *Dis-Enclosure*, 79; *BSP*, 169.

[26] Nancy, *EF*, 89.

[27] *Ibid.*, 87.

[28] Romano, *TI*, 62; *E&T*, 152; *E&W*, 150-157, 162-163. For commentary, see my 'The Event of Faith'.

> course of experience, and (…) subject to ongoing temporal revision (…). In other words, it is a gradually accumulated a priori, the product of (…) the regularities of experience.[29]

This life on the basis of which experience is lived, this ex-per-iencing predelineating lived-experiences, then takes phenomenological priority as the *originary form of experience*.

The primordial sense of experience as *experiri* is thus not a lived-experience (*Erlebnis*), but rather the *life* (*Leben*) on the basis of which things are lived (*erlebt*) whilst itself being ex-per-ience (*Er-fahr-ung*): the *ordeal* (*épreuve*) of going-through life, the *trial* (*épreuve*) in which it exists, the *undergoing* (*épreuve*) of what happens to me. I will thus follow Romano in distinguishing what is *undergone* (*éprouvé*) in ex-per-ience (*Erfahrung*) from what is *lived* (*vécu*) in experience (*Erlebnis*).[30] The experience at issue is the *ex-per-iencing* of experience, *the life that makes for or forms the lived-experience*. It aims at what is called *faire l'expérience* in French, or *eine Erfahrung machen* in German: the undergoing (*leben*) determining how I experience (*erleben*) things.[31]

With Abraham, the *ordeal* (*épreuve*) traversed, the *experience* (*épreuve*) undergone, is that of faith: namely, the *trial* or *ordeal* (*épreuve*) of his life, how he is put to the *test* (*éprouvé*) by God, the fear and trembling he lives-through.[32] For Kierkegaard, this ordeal is the singular event of Abraham's life, for what happens to him is precisely not an empirical development.[33] "The important thing here is not the idea of acquisition," say of the divine will, as Romano puts it in a secular context nevertheless perfectly befitting of Abraham; "but (…) being put to the test, which is simultaneously a transformation: I can only *undergo* an experience because it happens to me unsubstitutably, by allowing me to advene to myself, always anew, differently, unforeseeably."[34] Abraham's *ex-per-ience of faith* is not the experience *of* a transcendent object (e.g., the divine will), but a way of being open to the world, another way of living life, another way of experiencing

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[29] Caputo, *RH*, 43-47 (45).

[30] Romano, *E&W*, 144.

[31] For the French, see: Falque, *LE*, 15, 21-23; Romano, *E&W*, 144-146. For the German, see Heidegger, *On the Way to Language*, 57.

[32] On *épreuve*, see Robert, *Trials*, 1-2.

[33] Bultmann, *John*, 69-70: "What faith sees (…) has never been perceived as an empirical event by any man."

[34] Romano, *E&W*, 144.*

(*erleben*), resulting from the ordeal he has lived-through: not phenomenology's appearing (*phanein*), but the experience born out of *personal suffering* (Aeschylus' *to pathein mathos*).[35] Indeed, referring to Abraham in his *Upbuilding Discourses*, Kierkegaard declares that "experience is the fruit of spiritual trial,"[36] rather than appearance to consciousness. The experience of faith is then the experience *par excellence* returning us to its *experiri*, Caputo observes: "'ordeal'" is precisely "the category of Job and father Abraham."[37] It is not a phenomenon, not given in lived-experience, but comprises the ex-per-ience of Abraham's life out of which he experiences the world: his faith.

Here, phenomenology takes on the form of a poetics or a discourse on creative forms, not an ontology or a discourse on the ground of being: at issue is the relation between life and experience, not being and appearing. We are considering a form-of-life, rather than the transcendental existentiality making it possible: namely *faith*, a way of being-in-the-world (form-of-life), which *forms* or predelineates world-disclosure, how things are lived-in-experience (form-of-experience). *Fear and Trembling* wants to make us *experience the experience* of faith: the *ordeal of faith* Abraham undergoes, in which his existence exists, that makes-up or forms (*fait*) his life. The (quasi-)phenomenology put forward here is thus one of this non-empirical undergoing, this ex-per-ience (*Er-fahr-ung*), *this life*—the risk and danger (*Gefahr*), the ordeal (*épreuve*), in which Abraham engages himself, finds himself, and without which "Abraham is not the one he is."[38]

2. Reading Kierkegaard's *Fear and Trembling* phenomenologically

a. The clash of forms

Kierkegaard's poetics of faith consists in staging a confrontation between two forms-of-life or ways-of-experiencing: between Abraham, who has faith, and Johannes de Silentio, *Fear and Trembling*'s pseudonymous author, who does not. The analysis offered is that of a clash of forms:

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[35] Aeschylus, 'Agamemnon', 177. See also: Romano, *E&W*, 161; Falque, *LE*, 16; Gadamer, *T&M*, 350-351. Falque identifies this experience with that of *khora* in *LS*, 28-29.

[36] Kierkegaard, *UD*, 95. On (religious) experience in Kierkegaard, see Pattison, *Kierkegaard's Upbuilding Discourses*, 56-62.

[37] Caputo, *AE*, 106.

[38] Kierkegaard, *F&T*, 60.

not *what* is experienced (the command); but *how* it is experienced, the basis on which it is lived (faith or unfaith). Kierkegaard offers this analysis by having Johannes ponder *the ordeal of faith*, namely, Abraham's life. Two things are thus going on simultaneously: Kierkegaard is staging a clash of forms-of-life (the difference between Johannes and Abraham), whilst Johannes is analysing the experience of faith Abraham's life presents him with (from the position of unfaith). Poetics' task is navigating this difference in form.

Johannes is impressed by Abraham, impressed by how he could perform such an appalling act, not simply because God demanded it (resignation), but because Abraham believes he will receive Isaac anew through it (faith)—which is absurd, he has no reason for thinking this: "while Abraham arouses my admiration," Johannes says, "he also appals me."[39] The point is then not to *justify* (by giving reasons) Abraham's absurd actions, but to *show* (through illustrations) what having faith means, undergoing its ex-per-ience, living-through it for ourselves.[40] Johannes is not "a philosopher," but "in poetic and well-chosen terms (*poetici et eleganter*) a supplementary clerk (…) who pledges neither anything about the System nor himself *to* it."[41] The discourse offered illustrates faith rather than making it understandable, presenting its findings *poetici et eleganter*, as a particular *form-of-life*: Abraham's ordeal. Pseudonymity operates a quasi-phenomenological reduction: by making Johannes elaborate his admiration and disgust, Kierkegaard points out that we only have access to the *form* (how) of Abraham's experiences, not the *content* (what). We cannot know whether what Abraham experiences is God; we only know that, because he lives-his-life and experiences-his-experiences through it, faith recognises God in them. Here, again, the theophanic character of religious experience is made-up, not by what is given, but by how it is received. This means that we cannot adjudicate whether Abraham is delusional, and therefore cannot justify (i.e., *give reasons* for) his actions.[42]

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[39] *Ibid.*, 89.

[40] *Ibid.*, 136.

[41] *Ibid.*, 43*; Caputo, *AE*, 20-21.

[42] Caputo, *AE*, 26.

The experience Johannes relates is the stupefaction undergone when faced with the paradox of Abraham's life—namely, his *faith* that he would receive his son anew in killing him—, from the position of unfaith, an experience that therefore itself constitutes a paradox:

> I am all the time aware of that monstrous paradox that is (…) Abraham's life, I am constantly repulsed, and my thought (…) is unable to enter into it (…). The hero I can *think* myself *into*, but not Abraham; when I reach that height I fall down since what I'm offered is a paradox.[43]

Since faith is a paradox (an impossibility), it cannot (possibly) be understood; it can only be shown (by an experience), when it becomes an event in one's singular existence, when it (trans)forms one's life: "Even if one were able to render the whole of the content of faith into conceptual form," Johannes says, one would not thereby have "grasped faith."[44] The forms-of-life are incommensurable, and the clash between them makes for the paradox, and thus the experience at issue.

The teleological suspension of the ethical illustrates this clash: rather than Kant's morality (*Moralität*), it suspends Hegel's *Sittlichkeit* (*Sædelighed*), unhelpfully rendered in English as *the ethical sphere*.[45] Nietzsche calls it the "morality of mores" (*Sittlichkeit der Sitte*): arbitrary social rules ensuring society's smooth function by applying universally to its members.[46] Merold Westphal captures it accurately as "the laws and customs of one's people,"[47] which concern decency rather than the good: a situation where, Hegel says, "virtue displays itself as the individual's simple conformity with the duties of the station to which he belongs, it is *rectitude*."[48] Nancy makes the distinction too: "the 'good life' is not a life that conforms to good morals," but what "in this world, keeps close proximity to what is not of this world."[49] It is not immoral to refrain from shaking someone's

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[43] Kierkegaard, *F&T*, 62-63.

[44] *Ibid.*, 43.

[45] Hegel, *Elements of the Philosophy of Right*, 189.

[46] Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morals*, 188. *Moralität*, for Kant and Hegel, is individual, the universal revealing itself to me as singular individual: an undergoing making me "universal *by virtue* of being singular" (Romano, *E&W*, 160). For examples, see: Hegel, *Elements of the Philosophy of Right*, 135; Kant, *CPr*R, 8.

[47] Westphal, 'Abraham and Sacrifice', 320. Caputo, too, identifies this correctly, see: *AE*, 11-12; *PT*, 199-212.

[48] Hegel, *Elements of the Philosophy of Right*, 193.*

[49] Nancy, *NMT*, 39.

hand when meeting them, but it is universally frowned upon—one stands-out, asserts oneself as an individual by defying the established social order: "The ethical as such is the universal, and as the universal it applies to everyone," Johannes therefore concludes, "it rests immanently in itself, has nothing outside itself that is its *telos* but is itself the *telos* for everything outside." Meanwhile, the "single individual," is ethically speaking "the particular that has its *telos* in the universal," his task being "always to express himself in this, to abrogate his particularity so as to become the universal." From the moment "the single individual wants to assert himself in his particularity, in direct opposition to the universal, he sins."[50] Ethics (*Sittlichkeit*) achieves the singular through the universal (one's place in the *Gesellschaft*, one's station); morality (*Moralität*), meanwhile, achieves the universal via the singular (one's experience of the moral law).

What faith suspends in relation to God is thus not *morality*, but the *rationality* providing the universally understandable terms for public discourse by grounding the single individual in the communality of society: not the morality Kant describes as a fact established by itself, the experience of being bound by duty Caputo calls *obligation* (an originary ex-per-ience of reason); but, the formal system of *ethics* deriving from it, whose universal validity is grounded in reason's transcendentality (an *ex post facto* inference justifying that fact).[51] Faith, as paradox, displaces ethics by short-circuiting rational justification in the name of the brute facticity of our obligation (to God) in what Caputo calls an "Abrahamic *Befindlichkeit*."[52] Obligation to God is the bind Abraham finds himself in, as incommensurate with the ethical: "faith is just this paradox," Johannes says, "that the single individual is higher than the universal,"[53] that Abraham "exists as the particular in

[50] Kierkegaard, *F&T*, 83; *CUP*, 224-225.

[51] For Kant, morality is a *fact* (*Faktum*) of reason: not a phenomenon given *to* us from without (empirically), but nevertheless experience generated *by* reason from within (rationally); something reason *does* (*facere*), the *action* in which reason exists. On this, see: Kant, *CPrR*, 6, 31; Nancy, *FT*, 143-145. Caputo ascribes this to our facticity in *AE*, 5-7, 15-27, 70 (22): "Here I am (*me voici*, Levinas), faced with a fact, as it were (Kant), in a pregiven factical situation (Heidegger)."

[52] Caputo, *AE*, 27.

[53] Kierkegaard, *F&T*, 84.

opposition to the universal."[54] Faith suspends the ethical since universal public reason cannot recover this paradox: Abraham's faith wrenches him out of respectable society, withdraws him from the universal, releases him of his station. The obligation in and by which he finds himself (bound) makes him so completely and singularly himself that he becomes a stranger to society.

Faith, therefore, cannot be understood universally, rationally, in principle, as one of reason's transcendentals or Dasein's existentials (*a priori*); instead, it requires ex-per-ience, an event taking place in one's singular existence and determining that existence (a transcendental *a posteriori*). It is thus resistant to the universal whose categories strip it of its (singular) meaning, turning it into a paradox.[55] Rational mediation is universalisation (and vice versa): making something understandable by explaining it in terms transcending the singular event at issue, appropriating it into the universal by giving reasons. However, since faith can only be understood in its singularity—there are no reasons for faith, it requires ex-per-ience—, it cannot be understood at all.[56] Only in that sense does Abraham suspend the ethical, namely: the universal terms or shared language in which we justify or make ourselves understandable to others, for my singular encounter with God defies such terms. This is then what Caputo means by thinking *against ethics* (and thus also against transcendental phenomenology): not against moral obligation, but against ethical reason.[57] Obligation's singularity resists reduction to a reason because it belongs the "realm of that facticity which Heidegger showed, against pure phenomenology, does not submit to neutralization," namely "my *Befindlichkeit*, the fix I find myself in."[58] The obligation is the bind Abraham finds himself in, which he does not try to explain away, for he precisely *finds himself* in it (*there*): forced to do the impossible, he does not question it, but merely replies "Here I am" (Genesis 22:1). Rather than justifying Abraham, making him understandable, we must appreciate

[54] *Ibid.*, 90.
[55] *Ibid.*, 85.
[56] *Ibid.*, 99.
[57] Caputo, *AE*, 9.
[58] *Ibid.*, 25.

the impossible bind he finds himself in (faith), and undergo his ordeal for ourselves (fear and trembling).

In short, the impossibility of what God commands Abraham to do cannot be mediated by giving reasons, either by justifying it (ethics) or grounding it in transcendental structures of consciousness (phenomenology). Something else is needed: against the universal, Caputo proposes a *poetics of obligation* to think the singularity of what happens, the bind Abraham finds himself in, *his form-of-life* or the impossible *ordeal he lives-through* (faith). Its task is "to grapple with the impossible, not in order to see how it may actually be possible," but simply "to proclaim that it happens, as a matter of factical fact, and to provide it with a suitable idiom."[59] Kierkegaard provides this horrifying impossibility with a suitable idiom by staging the clash of forms between Abraham and Johannes, by having Johannes describe his admiration and disgust.

b. The form of faith

Fear and Trembling offers a description of the form of faith (Abraham's ordeal), from Johannes' position of unfaith. However, Johannes first establishes that Abraham did indeed have faith. An earlier chapter of Genesis illustrates this: when God makes his promise, that Abraham and Sarah will conceive a son in old age from which many nations will descend, Sarah laughs (Genesis 18:10-14). Abraham, however, Johannes points out, "did not laugh at it, as Sarah had laughed." He believed God: "faith," which Sarah lacked, "made Abraham accept the promise." Moreover, "as time went by," Johannes continues, "he did not cast suspicious glances at Sarah, fearing she was growing old," but "believed and held firm to the promise." Ultimately, God then gave them Isaac, keeping his promise despite its worldly impossibility (absurdity).[60]

This event, this experience of the im-possible, of the conditions of possible experience being challenged by the ex-per-ience of possibility itself, redefines possibility for Abraham, reorganises the conditions of possible experience, transforms its predelineation. Yet, this is entirely

[59] *Ibid.*, 126.

[60] Kierkegaard, *F&T*, 51-53.

a question of faith—that is, of ex-per-ience—, we cannot reason our way up there from the absurd: faith clings to an im-possible possibility (Derrida); it is an event that transforms possibility (Romano and Falque); it is an experience calling out to us from beyond the real, calling-out the real (what-is) in the name of the hyper-reality (what-can-be) of the promise (Caputo).[61] As Kierkegaard explains:

> The absurd is not one distinction among others embraced by understanding. It is not the same as the improbable (…). The moment the knight resigned he was convinced of the impossibility, humanly speaking; that was a conclusion of the understanding (…). In an infinite sense, however, it was possible (…), for it is only in the finite world that understanding rules and there it was and remains an impossibility. On this the knight of faith is just as clear: all that can save him is the absurd; and this he grasps by faith. Accordingly he admits the impossibility and at the same time believes the absurd.[62]

Faith holds-out for the im-possible, without it ever appearing possible, but paradoxically hearing its call and feeling its promise nonetheless. After all, Abraham is *surprised* when the im-possible happens, over-taken (*sur-pris*) by events. He has no *reason* to believe the promise, he simply has *faith*: "He believed on the strength of the absurd, for all human calculation had long since been suspended."[63] Ex-per-iencing the promise—a call from beyond possibility as actuality—calls into question worldly reason and possibility, making the promise's hyper-reality paradoxically more real than the reality of the world it suspends, just like the single individual becomes more real than the rational system of the universal.

Because Abraham has now experienced possibility beyond actuality for himself (promise), lived-through its event which left him transformed (faith), he experiences worldly possibility differently: in the ex-per-ience that things do not have-to-be as they are, things cannot stay as they are. "The suspension," Johannes therefore concludes, "consists in the individual finding himself in a state that is the exact opposite of that required by the ethical," for "he relates to actuality not

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[61] For an account of experience in terms of the possibility of the im-possible, see: Derrida, *ON*, 35-85 (43); *Psyche*, vol. 1, 15; 'A Certain Impossible Possibility of Saying the Event', 51. For an account in terms of a transformation of possibility (Romano) or metamorphosis of finitude (Falque), see: Romano, *E&W*, 31; *E&T*, 185-192; Falque, *MF*. For an account in terms of the hyper-realism of the call, see: Caputo, *The Weakness of God*, 9-12, 102, 112, 121-124. For comprehensive commentary, see my 'Imagining the World Otherwise'.

[62] *Ibid*., 75-76.

[63] *Ibid*., 65.

as possibility but as impossibility."[64] Faith is therefore a paradox: its event is attached to the world, whilst its logic opens-up the world from within onto an outside that remains obscure, making us tremble in fear. In short, "it was by his faith that Abraham could leave the land of his fathers to become a stranger in the land of promise," by his ex-per-ience of the hyper-reality and im-possible possibility of the promise "he left behind his worldly understanding and took with him his faith."[65] As such, Abraham can experience (*erleben*) what remains absurd and paradoxical to Johannes: they have lived different lives, been-through or ex-per-ienced (*er-fahr-en*) different things, and therefore now also live or experience (*er-leben*) things differently.

Having established Abraham's faith, we can now consider the form this ex-per-ience or this life takes on and how it in turn forms or predelineates all subsequent experiences. Johannes paints Abraham's faith as both *silent* and *performative*. Starting with the former, he observes that Abraham immediately sets off to perform the sacrifice, without even attempting to explain himself: "He said nothing to Sarah, nothing to Eliezer. After all, who could have understood him? Hadn't the test by its very nature exacted on oath of silence from him?"[66] Not that Abraham does not *want* to justify his actions, he simply *cannot*: he has no justification other than faith, which makes it absurd, for faith is not a reason. Faith is an "abyss of inwardness,"[67] the lack of outward justification or anything given to stand upon, which must be leapt over to act on faith instead. Faith, its paradox, is not a justification, for, as paradox, it resists universalisation and rationalisation, reduction to what Derrida calls the "familial or public, ethical, or political space."[68] This makes-up (*fait*) the ordeal of faith, its fear and trembling: "Faith itself cannot be mediated into the universal, for in that case it would be cancelled. Faith is this paradox, and the single individual is quite unable to make himself intelligible to anyone."[69] Thus, because faith concerns

[64] Kierkegaard, *CUP*, 224.
[65] Kierkegaard, *F&T*, 50.
[66] Derrida, *GD*, 55; Caputo, *PT*, 199.
[67] Kierkegaard, *CUP*, 220; *F&T*, 90.
[68] Derrida, *GD*, 128.
[69] Kierkegaard, *F&T*, 99.

the singular, whilst speech and justification concern the universal, Johannes de Silentio—the pseudonym that "keeps silent"[70]—shows us that faith is characterised by *silence*:

> Abraham is silent—but he *cannot* speak, therein lies the distress and the anguish. For if when I speak I cannot make myself understood, I do not speak even if I keep talking (…). He can say what he will, but there is one thing he cannot say and since he cannot say it, i.e. say it in a way that another understands it, he does not speak. The relief of speech is that it translates me into the universal.[71]

Not that Abraham cannot think of what to say, there simply is *nothing* to say, nothing that might make anyone else understand, *no reason to give* and *nothing to see*: Abraham's life (his faith) displaces the practice of *giving reasons* (the ethical). This is faith's teleological suspension of the ethical: an irreducible ex-per-ience, the event of existence itself in its resistance to rationality and conceptuality (to anything *given*); as the singular defying the universal, I achieve my self as ultimate responsibility absent anything given, like the safety-net of ethics. Is this not what the experience of morality consists in? What the experience, the adventure, of going-through life exists in?[72] This *resistance of existence* makes-up its *ex-per-ience*: the experience of faith, its ordeal, its fear and trembling, its passion.

The divine thus becomes a matter of one's singular existence (its ex-per-ience) rather than an innerworldly fact (an intentional state). Rather than a worldly object given in lived-experience, God forms a way of being-in-the-world in terms of which it is disclosed: instead of being experienced or lived, the divine is to be lived-out, lived-through, undergone, in faith. The second aspect of faith Johannes thus illustrates is its *performative* character: it exists in actions, a way-of-living-life (*leben*) corresponding to a way-of-experiencing (*erleben*). "This faith," Nancy says, "is but the 'conviction' that gives itself over in act—not even to something 'incomprehensible' (according to (…) a logic of the *credo quia absurdum*)," as Caputo suspects, "but to (…) another act: a

[70] Derrida, *GD*, 59.

[71] Kierkegaard, *F&T*, 137. Of course, Abraham does say something to Isaac (Genesis 22:7-8), yet without thereby *breaking the silence*, see: Derrida, *GD*, 60; Caputo, *PT*, 199.

[72] See Nancy, *FT*, 12, 74-76, but especially Romano, *E&W*, 161-162.

commandment."[73] Faith is action, expressing itself in what Abraham does, his life, his passing the test. Abraham might understandably doubt the command's authenticity (like Kant suggests),[74] beg God to change his mind, or pray that it wasn't true. However, Abraham does nothing of the sort—which is incomprehensible (impossible!)—, as a father he *did the impossible*:

> Abraham had faith and did not doubt. He believed the absurd. (…) He did not beg for himself in hope of moving the Lord (…), he did not look in anguish to left or right, he did not challenge heaven with his prayers. He knew it was God the Almighty that tried him, he knew it was the hardest sacrifice that could be demanded of him; but he also knew that no sacrifice was too hard when God demanded it—and he drew the knife.[75]

Abraham simply makes himself available to the God he does not understand: "Here I am" (Genesis 22:1, 11). Faith, as an Abrahamic *Befindlichkeit*, forms the *there* where Abraham finds himself, the orientation he lives-out (of), without which "Abraham is not the one he is."[76]

3. Nancy on the experience of faith

In his reading of the Epistle of James, Nancy's silence on Kierkegaard is deafening: it is perhaps the single most import Christian text for Nancy (James is depicted on the cover of the English edition of *Dis-Enclosure*), a preference he shares with Kierkegaard, who referred to the epistle as "my first, my favourite, text."[77] Faith (*pistis*) is understood by James *ek tou ergou*, by its works (2:18). We only hear the Word insofar as we are *poietai logou*, doers of the Word (1:22). Faith is the *doing* (*poiesis*) of the Word (1:25): not simply the production of an object adequate to its concept, but the internal displacement of the productive operation. Faith "is the *praxis* that takes place in and as the *poiēsis* of the *erga*," Nancy explains: it "opens in *poiēsis* the inadequation to self that alone can constitute 'doing' (*faire*)" and whereby "*praxis* is that which could not be the production of a work adequate to its concept" though "*praxis* is in every work (…) that which exceeds the concept of

[73] Nancy, *Dis-Enclosure*, 53.

[74] Kant, *Religion with the Bounds of Bare Reason*, 98.

[75] Kierkegaard, *F&T*, 142.

[76] *Ibid*., 60.

[77] Kierkegaard, *Journals and Papers*, vol. 6, 416. On Kierkegaard reading James, see Bauckham, *James*, 159-174.

it." In short: "Faith would thus be here the *praxical* excess of and in action."[78] This inadequation (in) which faith operates is difficult to grasp, but Nancy illustrates it with Abraham:

> But faith, according to James, is effected entirely in the inadequation of its enactment to any concept of that act (…). The work of Abraham is the acting or the doing of this inadequation: a *praxis* whose *poiesis* is the incommensurability of an action (to offer Isaac up) and of its representation or its meaning (to immolate his son).[79]

The work of faith thus consists in "the inadequation of the work or the inadequation at work,"[80] a doing whose production displaces its own product, for *the doing itself* exceeds *what is done*. Graham Ward captures this by declaring "the Christian act" (*ergon*) the site where "the activity of God crosses through the activity of being human," realising an inadequation that thus "finds a unique singular expression as praxis."[81] In faith, human activity is displaced by divine activity *as* human activity (*theopoiesis* or *theosis*). Faith is thus the inadequation of self to self, of doing to action, for doing "exceeds itself and *makes* itself in the act, or *makes itself* exceed itself."[82]

Faith is being-*in*-the-world whilst *at-odds-with*-the-world; whereby, as Bultmann puts it, "the world is annulled *within* the world"[83] in an act of "desecularization," meaning "detachment within the world from the world."[84] Without abandoning the world, faith expects more from it: living not out of the real, the world-as-it-is, but out of the hyper-real, the world-as-it-can-be (the promise). As Nancy puts it:

> 'Christianity' is life in the world outside of the world. Nietzsche (…) knew that Christianity (…) consists in being in the world without being *of* the world. That is to say that it does not limit itself to adhering to inherence, to what is given (…). Two of Nietzsche's well-known figures illustrate (…) the 'experience [*Erfahrung*] at the heart' of Christianity: the tightrope dancer and the child playing with dice. Neither relates to the world as a given (…); on the contrary, they relate to that in the world which makes an opening, rift, abyss, game, or risk.[85]

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[78] Nancy, *Dis-Enclosure*, 52; *EF*, 85.

[79] *Ibid*., 54.

[80] *Ibid*., 57.

[81] Ward, '*Kenosis*, *Poiesis* and *Genesis*', 172; *How the Light Gets In*, 166-170.

[82] Nancy, *Dis-Enclosure*, 54.

[83] Bultmann, *John*, 508; *NT&M*, 123.

[84] Bultmann, *TNT2*, 86.

[85] Nancy, *Adoration*, 23-24; Nietzsche, *The Antichrist*, 32.

Faith is a state of the heart, a way-of-life: being-*in*-the-world without being-*of*-the-world.[86] It is an ex-per-ience that "restores us to the world, and it sets (us) into the world anew," namely "according to the novelty of an experience that is not of this world," whereby its subject "withdraws from the world in the very midst of that world," and "becomes the site of an experience" like faith.[87]

Phenomenologically, faith becomes a particular orientation of intentionality: a seeing of things not as-they-are, but in terms of the discrepancy, the inadequation, the gap opening-up between how they are (reality) and could-be (promise). Intentionality *leaps* ahead of itself, goes where it has no *reason* to go, where there is nothing *given* for it to work on. In that sense, Abraham's life (being-in-the-world without being-of-the-world) offers more than Johannes (immersed in worldly possibility and reason) can conceive, and is only thus 'saturated': saturation, a blinding refraction of light, means the clash of incommensurable forms-of-life or ways-of-experiencing. Nancy explains:

> Faith consists in relating to God (…), to the extent that God and his love are not present, shown (…). The greatest (…) analyses of the Christian faith show that faith is (…) *the adhesion to itself of an aim without other*. I will say, in phenomenological terms, the adhesion to itself of an aim without a correlative object, or with no fulfilment of sense but that of the aim itself. One could perhaps say that faith is pure intentionality, or (…) the phenomenon of intentionality as a self-sufficient phenomenon, as a 'saturated phenomenon' (…). I understand perfectly well that Marion (…) is not talking about a phenomenon like faith, but rather of phenomena (…) that would entail faith; nevertheless, I leave open the question of whether faith might not be such a 'saturated phenomenon,' or even, perhaps, saturation itself.[88]

Faith does not access saturated phenomena in a *theophanic revelation* (a lived-experience, a phenomenon); rather, faith, as a *theopoetic act* (an ordeal, a life), is itself a saturated phenomenon: a way of being-*in*-the-world that is not *of*-the-world, that *does* the im-possible, because it is oriented towards what exceeds the world (as-it-is) in terms of world (as-it-can-be), without having any (worldly) reason for this. Faith is intentionality without correlative object, intentionality *leaping*—venturing and adventuring—ahead of itself: a seeing where there is nothing to be seen, nothing

[86] See John 17:13-19, especially as developed by: Augustine, *Tractates on the Gospel of John*, 273-282; Bultmann, *John*, 507-508; *TNT2*, 75-79, 85-86.

[87] Nancy, *Dis-Enclosure*, 78.

[88] *Ibid*., 152-153.

given, nothing publicly accessible. Faith, Merleau-Ponty says, "is an adherence that goes beyond the guarantees which one is given and therefore excludes an ever-present sincerity."[89] This reprises Caputo's critique of Marion:

> There is (…) a phenomenological *surplus* in faith, but the surplus is to affirm more than one is given to see, to affirm what one is not given to see, (…) intending *without* givenness. (…) Put in Husserlian terms, the gift of faith (…) belongs not to the order of givenness but (…) of intention, for the believers are given to believe what they are not given to see, what they cannot see (…). Faith is not a saturated givenness but an intending that ventures out beyond the given.[90]

Kierkegaard calls this intentionality "the expectancy of faith,"[91] which embraces the future's open-endedness: openness to a singularly new event, living in the ex-per-ience of actuality's contingency and the impossible's possibility. Precisely this, Gadamer says, comes from ex-per-ience (*Erfahrung*), namely, "the insight that all the expectation and planning of finite beings is finite."[92] Faith is lived *in* this ex-per-ience, rather than *despite* it:

> The believer, however, says: I expect victory (…), victory in all (…) spiritual trials, because experience had taught that there would be battle. But with the help of faith, it expects victory in all of them. Only for a moment does it pause. 'It is too much,' it says. 'It is impossible; life cannot be that glorious; no matter how golden youth was in its supreme happiness, this surely surpasses the most joyous hope of youth.'—Yes, it certainly does surpass even youth's most joyous hope, and yet it is so, even if not exactly as you suppose.[93]

Faith lives-out (of) the ex-per-ience, the ordeal, of the world's contingency, embraced in faith rather than resignation: it expects the im-possible, since nothing is impossible for God (Luke 1:37).[94] Without making the impossible possible, justifying the unjustifiable, rationalising the absurd (we cannot even hope); faith suspends reason and possibility teleologically in an openness to the singularly new, but not therefore foreseeable. Rather than neglecting the world in favour of

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[89] Merleau-Ponty, *S&N*, 176.

[90] Caputo, 'HP', 87-88.

[91] Kierkegaard, *UD*, 7-29; Nancy, *Expectation*, vii.

[92] Gadamer, *T&M*, 351. Bultmann offers a theological version: "freedom is (…) being open for the genuine future, letting one's self be determined by that future" (*TNT1*, 334).

[93] Kierkegaard, *UD*, 21.

[94] See Bultmann, *WIT?*, 67-69.

an otherworldly promised kingdom, faith sees and performs its coming within world: exposing the world from within to what exceeds it in terms of world.[95]

Faith expects more than is given without having any *reason* to do so, which secures its performative character: action follows from the realisation that things do not have-to-be how they are. Faith, being-*in*-the-world without being-*of*-the-world, means *experiencing* the world not as-it-is but as-it-can-be: if existence is experience, then "existence consists in having (*faire*), in the world, the experience of what is not of this world, without being another world," instead opening "*within* the world an *outside* that is not a beyond-the-world, but the *truth* of the world."[96] This truth is something to be done: not *given* in lived-experience, but *formed* by the ordeal of going-through life that makes it true. "Faith resides in inadequation to itself as content of meaning," Nancy says, and as such "it is truth qua truth of faith or faith as truth and verification," of *doing* truth or *making* it (come) true (*poiesis*), "not sacri-fication but veri-fication."[97] This, Nancy observes, is what Kierkegaard—for whom truth and faith are coextensive—understood perfectly:

> The truth is nothing that can be known. It is to be lived. (…) This truth to which Kierkegaard devotes his word (…) is not true but as existing in the actual existence of this or that, which (…) veri-fies it; this truth that cannot be said without being done (*fait*), as if this saying functions as performative of an action which would be (…) the saying itself as living (*être*)—being making itself (*être se faisant*) in this world stranger to the world, detached from it and any attachment, absolute.[98]

It is not a truth that elevates itself, a truth of the world beyond the world; but rather a truth that makes itself true in the doing of truth (*veritatem facere*), and in so doing makes the world come about as world (i.e., makes the kingdom come).[99]

In summary, then, *Fear and Trembling*'s poetics of faith forms a (quasi-)phenomenology of faith, "a phenomenology that is theological, but not theophanic,"[100] as Nancy puts it. Without

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[95] See Pattison, *Kierkegaard's Upbuilding Discourses*, 50.

[96] Nancy, *Dis-Enclosure*, 78-79.

[97] *Ibid*., 53.

[98] Nancy, 'Un mot d'accompagnement', 9; *Adoration*, 61. On this *faire*, see Nancy, *MA*, 3-9.

[99] On this Augustinian motif, see: Caputo, *PT*, 282-339; *On Religion*, 28, 115, 127; Derrida, 'Circumfession', 47-49.

[100] Nancy, *Dis-Enclosure*, 49.

offering a lived-experience of God *through* faith, it analyses the ex-per-ience *of* faith itself: a life lived in the world, like the ordeal Abraham makes it through, that challenges the world from within, opening-up the *what-is* of the world to the promise of what it *can-be* but *is-not-yet*. The ex-per-ience of Abraham's faith, its ordeal, as Caputo puts it, is not one of "'seeing God,' although it gives faith a quality of 'truth' in this sense of *facere veritatem*," but means rather "testifying (…) to the love of God, doing something, a deed."[101] This testimony is found in lives in which the name of God becomes an event by taking on the flesh of existence, in how a particular being-*in*-the-world without being-*of*-the-world constitutes a place for God. "This is, at least, what is proposed in Christian faith," Nancy says, namely that "one has faith not only in truths that are signified, translated, or expressed by a prophet, but primarily, and in fact perhaps exclusively, one also has faith in the effective presentation of truth as a singular life or existence."[102] Phenomenology thus becomes a *poetics of faith*: a consideration of how the form-of-life (the ordeal of faith) makes-up or forms (*fait*) lived-experience, sets the terms on which there can be givenness.

[101] Caputo, *On Religion*, 116.

[102] Nancy, *NMT*, 4.

PART II. EMBODIMENT AND INCARNATION

To the despisers of the body I want to say my words. I do not think they should relearn and teach differently, instead they should bid their own bodies farewell—and thus fall silent.

'Body am I and soul'—so speaks a child (…).

But the awakened, the knowing one says: body I am through and through, and nothing besides; and soul is just a word for something on the body.

The body is a great reason, a multiplicity with one sense, a war and a peace, one herd and one shepherd.

'I' you say and are proud of this word. But what is greater is that in which you do not want to believe—your body and its great reason. It does not say I, but *does* I (…).

Work- and playthings are sense and spirit, behind them still lies the self. (…) Behind your thoughts and feelings, my brother, stands a powerful commander, an unknown wise man—he is called self. He lives in your body, he is your body. (…) Your self laughs at your ego and its proud leaps. 'What are these leaps and flights of thought to me?' it says to itself. 'A detour to my purpose. I am the leading strings of the ego and the prompter of its concepts' (…).

To the despisers of the body I want to say a word. (…) I say to you: your self itself wants to die and turns away from life. (…) Your self wants to go under, and for this reason you became despisers of the body!

— Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, 22-24.

In other words, the drive is nothing other than the existing—eksisting, exsisting—itself in its character of emergence and multiplication, of unknown origin outside its proper opening and thrust. Of all the divine figures or ways of not long ago, it resembles most of all the first monad, the uncreated, of which the continual fulgurations produce the created monads.

— Nancy, *Sexistence*, 39.

Descending into the abyss of our own existence to fulfil phenomenology's kenotic ambition by delving into the underground of phenomenality, part I showed how phenomenality is constituted by an extra-phenomenal element, how givenness is situated existentially (e.g., faith). Part II will further describe this existential situation of givenness in terms of the material condition that engenders our finite existence in the world, namely: *embodiment*. In short, if part I recovered the constitutive *role* of experience's intentional horizon, the *nature* of that intentionality is now further described in part II as corporeal. Here, it nevertheless remains a question, as Falque puts it, of "the descent, even the kenosis (…), right down to the 'affects' that make for the fact that the *ex-perire* (…) ties together *affectivity* [*Befindlichkeit*] and *spirituality*."[1] In other words, if our kenotic ambition aimed at recovering the existential situation of givenness or the form of (religious) experience as an Abrahamic *Befindlichkeit*, i.e. an intentionality of faith that displaces absolute givenness; this intentionality, which forms experience by situating givenness existentially, is now further described in terms of the material form engendering it: embodiment. Whereas part I argued against Marion (phenomenological givenness understood as theological Revelation), part II takes Henry as its foil (phenomenological embodiment understood as theological Incarnation).

It is again a question of philosophical anthropology or existential ontology, for it concerns the body as the transcendental condition of possibility for humanity: it is, as Falque puts it, a question of "knowing what it *is* about this so-called 'human' body,"[2] that makes us call it so. Despite the multitude of phenomenologies of the body that emerged since Husserl, this remains a fundamental problem for phenomenology: "The ontological body has yet to be thought,"[3] Nancy says, "ontology has yet to be thought out, to the extent that it's basically an ontology where body = the place of existence," understood as "a skin-event," i.e. "skin as the place for an event of existence."[4] Put otherwise, if existence is experience, and that existence is embodied, then

[1] Falque, *LE*, 277.
[2] Falque, *ECE*, 24.
[3] Nancy, *Corpus*, 15.
[4] *Ibid.*, 15; *BSP*, 84.

experience is likewise embodied. Embodiment should therefore be the starting point of phenomenology understood as (existential) ontology:

> 'Ontology of the body' = exscription of being. Existence addressed to an out-side (*there*, where there's no address, no destination; and yet (but how?) someone does the receiving: myself, you, us, bodies, finally). Existence: bodies are existence, the very act of ex-istence, *being*.[5]

Thus, to elucidate this cryptic passage from Nancy, part II inscribes his account of embodiment within Falque's phenomenological framework, which sets itself up explicitly as an attempt at remedying what he considers to be a forgetting of the human, ontological or existential body (i.e., the existential *of* the body): "an 'existential analytic of the body' still awaits its articulation—that which makes of the human body, including the animal and biological, the 'transcendental' on the basis of which the world appears," and whose "corporeality no longer gives itself 'present to hand' (*vorhanden*), nor 'ready to hand' (*zuhanden*), but simple 'there' (*Da*) outside of any grasp (*prise*)."[6]

In considering the relationship between humanity and embodiment, we will quickly encounter the limits of any phenomenology of the body: natural science, psychoanalysis and theology, all illuminate certain aspects of the experience of embodiment that phenomenology remains structurally incapable of conceiving phenomenologically. However, rather than therefore abandoning phenomenology altogether, we must simply learn to take into account these alternative perspectives: i.e. to account phenomenologically for what remains extra-phenomenal, to appreciate the revelatory capacity of what does not give itself.

To argue this, however, I will first explore the traditional phenomenological analysis of the body, especially its radicalisation and theologisation in Henry's phenomenology of incarnation. Chapter 4 therefore gives a critical summary of Henry's identification of the process of phenomenalisation with incarnation. Specifically, with Falque, it criticises this identification on the grounds that it implies an understanding of incarnation as disembodiment, making the Incarnation a spiritual rather than historical event. Chapter 5 then contrasts Henry with Falque's theological

[5] *Ibid.*, 19.

[6] Falque, *ECE*, 24; *WFL*, 93.

account of human embodiment in order to make its 'backlash' felt on the phenomenological understanding of incarnation. Finally, chapter 6 once again fits Nancy into Falque's broader framework, spelling out its implications for both theology (incarnation) and phenomenology (experience). Specifically, I argue that Nancy provides a better account of the experience of embodiment, precisely by conceiving of experience itself as embodied. Put otherwise, if part I established existence as the form of experience (since experience is a function of finitude), part II argues that that form of existence is itself determined by a particular form of embodiment (since embodiment engenders our finite existence), meaning that experience is thus itself corporeally informed.

Chapter 4. Henry's swerve of the flesh

> The Incarnation changes everything. Since the Incarnation, God has been externalized. (…) Henceforth man's road toward God was no longer contemplation but the commentary and interpretation of that ambiguous message whose energy is never exhausted. In this sense Christianity is diametrically opposed to 'spiritualism'.
>
> — Merleau-Ponty, *S&N*, 174-175.

1. Henry's phenomenology of incarnation

a. Flesh and body in Husserl's account of embodiment and its French reception

Though "the traditional dualism of body and soul is now considered dated," Falque says, "a new binary structure" replaced it: namely, "flesh and body."[1] This distinction dates back to Husserl, for whom the body is "the *medium of all perception*," and therefore "*necessarily* involved in all perception" as "the *organ of perception*."[2] Part II considers the significance of understanding the body as *medium* of all perception, both in terms of how the body can itself become phenomenal, and how phenomenality is a function of embodiment. Husserl's account of embodiment is bidimensional: he distinguishes the body as material and inert worldly object, studied by the natural sciences (*Körper*), from the lived-experience of said body as "reduced to what is included in my ownness,"[3] namely the body considered by phenomenologists who bracket its mundane appearance (*Leib*). The former is the object of experience, the latter its subject. The body is thus framed according to the two spheres that Husserl's framework distinguishes: the lived-body (*Leib*) belongs to the immanence of consciousness, as *my own* body achieved through reduction; whilst the material body (*Körper*) belongs to the transcendence of mundane objects.[4] The lived-body is my own insofar as it

[1] Falque, *WFL*, 1.

[2] Husserl, *Ideas II*, 56/61.

[3] Husserl, *CM*, 128/97.

[4] Husserl, *Ideas II*, 105-107/111-114.

shows up in my lived-experience and *determines* how all experience is indeed lived: since everything appears to me as oriented in a particular way, to the left or right of me, my subjective body has "the unique distinction of bearing in itself the *zero point* (*Nullpunkt*) of all these orientations."[5] Yet, the lived-body and material body are not distinct *entities*, but merely two ways of *bringing into view* an entity that is "*in fact* numerically one,"[6] as Derrida puts it: the body as corporeal reality (*Leibkörper*), which is only lived-body (*Leib*) because there is an organic reality (*Körper*) to live (*erleben*) in experience.[7] Helmuth Plessner therefore understands man as a lived-body in a material body (*Leib im Körper*): "man has (…) an equivocal relation to his body," for "his existence imposes on him the ambiguity of being an 'embodied' (*leibhaften*) creature and a creature 'in the body' (*im Körper*)," which "means an actual break in his way of existing."[8]

In France, however, this phenomenological distinction has become ontologised: "the body is not an object," Merleau-Ponty proclaims, instead "*I am my body*," since "my body is as it were a 'natural' subject, a provisional sketch of my total being."[9] Rather than an object-I-have, the body is the subject-I-am. This emphasis on the subjective over the objective body in the French reading of Husserl is captured by Didier Franck's 1981 *Flesh and Body*,[10] a study of Husserl that follows Merleau-Ponty in translating *Leib* as *flesh* (*chair*) and *Körper* as *body* (*corps*).[11] Since Husserl's principle of principles delivers intuitions given in their *leibhaftige Wirklichkeit*, flesh (*Leibhaftigkeit*) becomes "the *site of all givenness*," thus "the original intuition is incarnate givenness."[12] Flesh comprises the

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[5] *Ibid.*, 158/166.

[6] Derrida, *Edmund Husserl's 'Origin of Geometry'*, 98.

[7] Husserl, *Ideas II*, 161/168-169.

[8] Plessner, *Laughing and Crying,* 32.

[9] Merleau-Ponty, *PP*, 231. Compare Husserl, *Ideas II*, 212/223: "the Body is *my* Body (…) in the first place as my 'over and against,' my *ob-ject*." For a development, see Romano, 'L'incorporation'.

[10] See Derrida's discussion of Franck and Nancy in *OT*, 216-243.

[11] Early translators of Husserl (e.g., Lévinas and Ricoeur) render *Leib* as *organic body* (*corps organique*) or *living body* (*corps vivant*), rather than *flesh* (*chair*). Note also the consistent translation of Nietzsche's *Leib*, in English and French, as *body* (*corps*). The most basic indication that *flesh* (*chair*) is an inadequate translation of *Leib*, is that it annuls the synonymity between *Leib* and *Körper*. On this, see: Depraz, 'La traduction de *Leib*, une *crux phaenomenologica*'; Depraz, 'Leib'; Depraz, *Transcendence et incarnation*; Stiegler, *Nietzsche et la biologie*; Stiegler, *Nietzsche et la critique de la chair*; Derrida, *OT*, 31, 64, 184-243 (233-238).

[12] Franck, *F&B*, 23.

immanence of *ownness* (*propriété*) to which the reduction leads (originary giving intuition), namely the *ownmost body* (*corps propre*). Following Husserl, Franck defines this ownness negatively as "what not-foreign (*non-étranger*),"[13] and positively as "what is given to oneself in an apodictic perception."[14] Phenomenology's field of research, he therefore concludes, is the flesh: "If the essence (*le propre*) of experience is the experience of ownness (*du propre*), then the most essential experience of my ownness is my flesh."[15] French phenomenology thus infuses *flesh* (*chair*), a word with significant theological resonance (*sarx*), with a distinctly phenomenological meaning (*Leib*): namely, as denoting the body-subject (*corps sujet*), the lived-body (*corps vécu*), my ownmost body (*corps propre*), in Husserl.[16] This causes significant difficulty when phenomenology comes into contact with theology, as it does in Henry.

b. Life and world in Henry's account of incarnation

Henry's phenomenology of embodiment, like Husserl's, aims to avoid all untenable ontological dualisms (body-soul, matter-spirit, cognition-extension, etc.).[17] He produces a *philosophy of the flesh* through a *phenomenology of incarnation*, understood both phenomenologically (givenness in the flesh (*leibhaftige Gegebenheit*)) and theologically (the Word made flesh (*verbum caro factum*)): these two concepts are coextensive for Henry, as they both concern a coming-into-the-flesh (incarnation as phenomenalisation). If incarnation is then further defined theologically as God becoming man, then the human condition is to-be-incarnate, to be flesh.[18] This, Henry suggests, avoids all ontological dualism in the human condition:

> The flesh is thus not added to the self as contingent and incomprehensible attribute (…). Because the flesh is (…) the most interior possibility of our Self, it is a unitary Self. Man does not know dualism. (…) I and Flesh are one (…) because they both come from Life, and because

[13] *Ibid.*, 93*; Husserl, *CM*, 126/95.
[14] *Ibid.*, 95; Husserl, *CM*, 131-133/100-103.
[15] *Ibid.*, 81.
[16] See Derrida, *OT*, 233-234.
[17] Henry, *Incarnation*, 124.
[18] *Ibid.*, 3-4, 11-14, 19, 32.

> they are (…) the ordinary and essential phenomenological modalities according to which life arrives in itself and happens to be life.[19]

Yet, in avoiding ontological dualisms, Henry institutes a severe phenomenological one between two modes of appearing he distinguishes sharply, namely *life* and *world*:

> Whereas the world is disclosed 'outside of oneself' such that everything disclosed is external, (…) the revelation of life (…) does not have any separation within itself and never differs from itself. It only reveals itself. *Life reveals itself*. Life is auto-revelation. One the one hand, it is life that carries out the work of revelation; it is anything but a blind entity. On the other hand, what it reveals is itself.[20]

When something appears in the world, it appears on basis of the world's properties (e.g., space-time, rational categories) rather than on the basis of itself: it appears as an object, standing over and against ourselves in exteriority (*ob-jectum*). When appearing in life, however, the phenomenon (what) coincides with its phenomenality (how)—namely, life itself: the appearing forms a "pathos, an embrace without distance,"[21] a pure auto-affection in which I undergo and experience my-self in "a dimension of revelation that carries no 'gap' within it, no difference (or *différance*), exclusive of all exteriority and, as such, invisible."[22] This life is phenomenological rather than biological: not animation, but auto-impressionality; not organic, but transcendental; not visible, but appearing's invisible condition of possibility. Life is thus the originary coincidence of self-with-self, absolute intimacy, pure immanence (and, indeed, 'pure phenomenality').

When Henry applies this distinction to the body, we encounter the new dualism Falque complains about:

> Body and flesh are thus distinguished through the radicality of an originary phenomenological dualism. The body lacks the power to make manifest; it has to seek its manifestation in the world outside-of-oneself and is thus constituted as a mundane body. The forms of the intuition of space and time along with the categories of representation under which it is subsumed are the modes of the process of externalization through which it becomes a phenomenon. The flesh, by contrast, is an auto-impression in the process of the autorevelation of life. Its revelation

[19] *Ibid.*, 124.

[20] Henry, 'Incarnation', 129.

[21] Henry, *Incarnation*, 120.

[22] Henry, 'AEF', 176.

> is derived from life and from it alone. Bodies are possible in the world, whereas a flesh never occurs elsewhere or otherwise than in life.[23]

Flesh and body are thus distinct: the former is lived, an impressional substrate that experiences itself precisely because it can experience anything at all; whilst the latter is an inert material thing that cannot experience anything, let alone experience itself experiencing.

The flesh is thereby again identified with Husserl's "sphere of ownness,"[24] and the body with that of transcendent objects. However, Henry goes further, identifying man's very being with flesh and its selfhood:

> 'Before the Self' and 'Before the flesh' are one and the same. (…) This sheds a different light on the human condition. If the same experience of pathos makes the Self into a Self and the flesh into a flesh—*the ipseity of the Self and the auto-impressionality of the flesh*—then the Self and the flesh go together. The human is thus a *carnal living Self*.[25]

As a result, "an abyss separates forever the material bodies that fill the universe (…) and the body of an 'incarnate' being such as man."[26] For, even though "the distinguishing characteristic of incarnate beings is that they have a body,"[27] as Henry admits, this *body* is understood strictly ("more precisely"),[28] as *flesh*. According to Henry, incarnation therefore cannot concern an inert material body, for then we would have to understand the human condition (to-be-incarnate) in the same way we understand the world, using modern technology and science: that would be barbarism, Henry says, or "the destruction of the human being."[29] Amongst living beings, then, he further restricts this to human embodiment, to the exclusion of the body of animals, with auto-impressionality seemingly reducible to self-consciousness. After all, Henry suggests, given that we have no lived-experience of animal bodies, how would we know that they are not inert? Everyone "has the immediate experience of their own body (…) while their relation to animal bodies (…) is

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[23] Henry, 'Incarnation', 130-131.

[24] Husserl, *CM*, 124-130/92-99.

[25] Henry, 'Incarnation', 137.

[26] Henry, *Incarnation*, 3.

[27] *Ibid.*

[28] Henry, 'Incarnation', 128.

[29] Henry, *Barbarism*, 3.

of another order. So much so that certain thinkers, and not the least of them, have regarded all such living beings, with the exception of man, as if they were like computers that understand nothing of what they do."[30] In excluding the physical body (extension) as well as the organic body (animation) from the analysis of human embodiment (auto-affection), the human condition is defined as incarnation to the exclusion of incorporation: "To be incarnate is not to have a body, to put oneself forward as a 'corporeal' and thus material being—an integral part of the universe," but "to be flesh."[31] This entails a radical de-worlding of the human body and of humanity as such, which can no longer be thought according to the ecstatic logic of being-in-the-world: "Defined by everything a body lacks, flesh should not be confused with the body, but it is (…) the exact opposite,"[32] and therefore has "another intelligibility than that of the world."[33] Indeed, Henry's phenomenology can only consider the body "*in as much as our body is not a body but a flesh*."[34] The body retreats from view entirely, both as-body and as-flesh, since flesh concerns life's invisible. In short, we lose all access to the body-as-body: the body by definition cannot be phenomenalised, reduced to lived-experience, because it remains inert.[35]

This indeed avoids all dualism concerning the human body, but because it only succeeds at the expense of our *embodiment* (*Körperlichkeit*)—relegated as incidental to our humanity understood as *incarnation* (*Verleiblichung*)—, it also distorts the human condition. Our humanity cannot be conceived independently from our animality and embodiment, as Nancy puts it:

> We would not be 'humans' if there were not 'dogs' and 'stones.' A stone is the exteriority of singularity in (…) its mineral or mechanical actuality. But I would no longer be 'human' if I did not have this exteriority 'in me,' in the form of the quasi-minerality of bone: I would no longer be human if I *were* not a body.[36]

[30] Henry, *Incarnation*, 3.
[31] *Ibid.*, 4.
[32] *Ibid.*
[33] *Ibid.*, 32.
[34] *Ibid.*, 256.
[35] *Ibid.*, 4.
[36] Nancy, *BSP*, 18.

The corporeal unity that for Husserl remained caught in an indissociable intertwining (*Verflechtung*)—the body as *body-of-flesh* (*Leibköper*)—is radically reduced such that it alienates us from our bodies, and thereby from our humanity. It alienates us from our body because *the experience* (the flesh) we have of it is detached from what it is an experience *of* (the body): "our body as we live in it—this body that walks, feels, desires, labors in pain or joy," Henry says, "has nothing to do with the body of physics, nor with its material particles," or "with the biological organism that is made up of molecules, chains of acids, neurons, etc."[37] However, surely the body that walks cannot experience itself walking without presupposing a certain anatomical reality and the laws of physics; surely the body that desires, that labours in pain or joy, cannot experience itself as such without presupposing the neurochemistry enabling all feeling?

Falque and Derrida both diagnose the same problem here: Henry forgets that "the whole problem of 'flesh' itself is its corporeity," Derrida says, "for 'flesh' is also a body."[38] Falque agrees: "our bodies are first and foremost 'bodies of flesh'," for "no one has ever had a 'lived experience of the body' (*Leib*) independently from the materiality or organicity (*Körper*) that makes such an experience possible."[39] Falque therefore contends that the body cannot simply be reduced to its lived-experience (flesh): "the immense paradox of the 'flesh' (*Leib*)" is its attachment "to the body (*Körper*). (…) *Nothing* (…), not even a 'reduction', will rid me of my 'body' (*Körper*), not even when it appears to me on the basis of my 'flesh' (*Leib*)," for the reduction itself shows that it "touches, and allows us to reach a 'necessary irreducible', that, far from being held in the pure abstraction of the flesh (*Leib*) by way of auto-affection (…), on the contrary returns us to the body in its materiality (*Körper*), or its thingliness (*Ding*)."[40] Flesh requires body, and a phenomenology of the lived flesh therefore also requires an account of the material body: "it remains true," Franck insists,

[37] Henry, 'Incarnation, 140.
[38] Derrida, *OT*, 237.
[39] Falque, *LS*, 172; *MF*, 137.
[40] Falque, 'PRC?', 103.

"that corporeality is the layer of the world that founds all others."[41] This requirement cannot be dismissed as barbarism, at least not when barbarism means the destruction of humanity, for embodiment is constitutive of humanity.

The problem is thus that Henry's account of the carnal self, with its "entirely new definition of humanity," distorts our basic understanding of humanity, since it consists in "*the definition of an invisible, and at the same time carnal, human being—and invisible in so far as carnal.*"[42] This spiritualisation of the human condition forces Henry to draw seemingly untenable conclusions, for example: "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."[43] This account leads to obvious explanatory gaps, for on it, Romano suggests, "I would never have more than a phantom-body," meaning that "I would haunt the world with a spectral presence incommensurable with that of things."[44] Moreover, it reintroduces the precise logic Henry (and Husserl) sought to avoid: opposition between substances.[45] For, on Henry's account, man's flesh becomes precisely what he rejects in others, namely "an astral, 'psychic,' or even 'spiritual' matter," something "better described as a soul, a flesh-soul or a soul-flesh, etc."[46] Derrida draws same conclusion: "By making the flesh ubiquitous," he says, "one runs the risk of vitalizing, psychologizing, spiritualizing, interiorizing, or even reappropriating everything (…) where one might still speak of the nonproperness or alterity of flesh."[47] Nancy understands this danger better than most: "all thoughts of the 'ownmost body' (*corps propre*)—laborious efforts at reappropriating what we used to consider, impatiently, as 'objectified' or 'reified'—(…) only expel the thing we desired."[48] This problem endemic to phenomenology (its reduction to lived-

[41] Franck, *F&B*, 90.
[42] Henry, *Incarnation*, 19.
[43] *Ibid.*, 155.
[44] Romano, *TI*, 145.
[45] Falque, *LS*, 149.
[46] Henry, *Incarnation*, 10.
[47] Derrida, *OT*, 238, 242.
[48] Nancy, *Corpus*, 5.*

experience), yet manifests itself particularly acutely in the context of Christianity (the language of Incarnation).

c. Franck's impossible incorporation

Admittedly, this problem does not pose itself as urgently for Husserl. However, it is already detected there by Franck as a liability phenomenology is structurally inclined to produce: namely, as Roberto Esposito puts it, "this dialectic set in motion by the carnalization of the body results in its infinite disincorporation."[49] Franck calls this the problem of the "impossible incorporation," namely "the impossibility of constituting flesh as a body within the egological sphere of ownness."[50] Given its limitation to the sphere of ownness (*propriété*), defined negatively as what is not-foreign (*non-étranger*), phenomenology cannot think beyond the flesh as ownmost body (*corps propre*), and therefore cannot think the foreign body (*corps étranger*) or the body's otherness (*impropriété*).[51] The "question of incorporation," then concerns the possibility of contact between flesh and body, which the phenomenological method seemingly precludes: "It is thus a question of knowing how, in the purely egological sphere of ownness, my flesh can acquire the sense of a body."[52] Husserl deals with this by taking recourse to phenomenology's *deus ex machina*: intersubjectivity. The problem, therefore, need not be fatal for phenomenology. However, when it comes into contact with Christianity, Derrida observes,[53] as it does in Henry and where it results in a complete disembodiment of the flesh, it becomes particularly acute: "Flesh is co-extensive with the world of ownness, and without its incorporation, it is very difficult to understand the possible meaning of an outside-of-flesh (*hors-chair*)."[54]

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[49] Esposito, 'Flesh and Body in the Deconstruction of Christianity', 90.

[50] Franck, *F&B*, 90. This argument is inverted by Ricoeur in *Freedom and Nature*, 439-443 and *Oneself as Another*, 317-329. Even Ricoeur, however, admits that the problem of the impossible incorporation is ultimately inevitable.

[51] Franck, *F&B*, 90.

[52] *Ibid.*, 81-82.

[53] Derrida, *OT*, 233.

[54] Franck, *F&B*, 84.

Part II therefore considers the relation between incarnation (enfleshment) and incorporation (embodiment), as the prism through which both Falque and Nancy develop their strikingly similar accounts of the body: "Incarnation is structured like a disembodiment," Nancy writes, namely as "the absolute contradiction of not being able to be a *body* without being the body *of a spirit*, which disembodies it."[55] Falque expresses the same idea in a fundamental question he poses to Henry: "Is there a *flesh without body*?"[56] The answer is, of course, negative: no incarnation without incorporation, no lived-experience of the flesh without there first being a body to live in experience. I first pursue this point in terms of Falque's critique of Henry (chapter 4), both phenomenologically (first objection) and theologically (second objection). Each time, I argue that Henry is himself complicit with the Gnostic accounts of the Incarnation he constantly criticises: what characterises the Gnostic accounts, as Balthasar suggests, is that they "excluded a Kenosis."[57] Or, as Merleau-Ponty puts it: "The Incarnation is not followed out in all its consequences."[58] Henry's account of incarnation is too limited because it knows no kenosis and therefore cannot be conceptualised along the lines of what theology understands as the Incarnation of the Word. Subsequently, I show how this theological critique makes its backlash felt in a consideration of phenomenology's limits (chapter 5). Finally, I show how Nancy thinks the body beyond phenomenology as undergrounding the process of phenomenalisation (chapter 6).

2. Objection I: The kenosis of the flesh

"There is an infinite distance," Falque sighs, "between discourses *on* the body and the reality *of* the body."[59] Phenomenologies like Henry's do not capture the whole experience of embodiment. This is the problem of incorporation, of the experience of our bodies outside-the-flesh (*hors-chair*): according to Falque, Henry provides "no indication of any genuine *access* to the body through the

[55] Nancy, *Corpus*, 69.
[56] Falque, *LS*, 143.
[57] Balthasar, *Mysterium Paschale*, 24.
[58] Merleau-Ponty, *S&N*, 176.
[59] Falque, *ECE*, 23.

flesh," instead "the flesh (…) has become so invasive that we have come to forget that it is (…) experienced, at least materially and visibly, in and through a body."[60] The experience he finds lacking in Henry is the dimension of embodiment making possible the lived-experience of flesh (*chair*) without itself belonging to it (*hors-chair*), namely that of the worldly and material body (*corps*):

> Henry's description of 'invisible phenomena' as manifested in carnal pathos forgets (…) the visible body, without which no invisible phenomena or carnal impressions would exist (…). Hence, the difficulty of phenomenologically analysing the body (…) of man—(…) the impossible incorporation—, rather than fixating on his flesh (…), remains the Gordian knot of contemporary thought. Today's pervasive *fixation on the flesh* forgets its attachment to the body, often to the point of disembodying it. (…) Our question, then, is not (…) theological or Christological but phenomenological: How and why do we continually attempt to conceive *the flesh without the body*—or (…) self-experiencing flesh independently from an 'inert and exterior body', upon which that very flesh depends and touches without ever conceptualizing it as such? In rushing to discover the essence of humanity, one forgets man's basic animality.[61]

Falque is attacking the twofold limitation Henry imposed on his inquiry: namely, first, the restriction to the human body, excluding the animal body (auto-impressionality as self-consciousness); and, secondly, the restriction to the lived-body, excluding the material body (life as flesh).

a. Animal bodies

Henry's restrictions are motivated by the phenomenological method: we have no lived-experience of animal bodies and therefore cannot consider them. However, this assumes a seemingly untenable discontinuity between the animal and the human. Falque therefore considers this restriction "unjustifiable insofar as we are constituted more fundamentally by our organicity and thingliness than by our fleshly affection."[62] In the *depths* of our being, human beings are *also* animal beings and thus must have some experience of their animal bodies: we share a dimension of our embodiment with animals, namely the body's passions and drives (organicity). Rather than diminishing our humanity, this dimension makes it possible by undergrounding it. Consequently,

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[60] Falque, *LS*, 144. Rather than the *mind-body* problem, Evan Thompson calls this the *body-body* problem in *Mind in Life*, 244: "the problem of relating one's subjectively lived body to the organism or living body that one is."

[61] *Ibid.*, 166*; 'MHT', 534; *CRV*, 91.

[62] *Ibid.**

the restriction is unjustified: it may be that, as Henry says, "*we see living beings but never their life*,"[63] but it does not follow, Falque counters, that we must "deny 'the living [or organic]' (*le vivant*) to oppose it to 'Life'."[64] Henry has an odd tendency to deny life to non-human living beings: e.g., his suspicious allusion to Descartes's idea ('not the least of philosophers') that animals would be mere automata ('computers') in rejecting any biological dimension of life. "*In biology there is no life*," he says, "*there are only algorithms*."[65] However, Drew Leder remarks, this desire to keep phenomenology "unsullied by empirical science," is itself "the heritage of a Cartesian ontology,"[66] a dualism demanding the intentional be treated differently from the physical.

To illustrate his point, Henry likes to reference Heidegger's "profound remark"[67] that "the chair never 'touches' the wall,"[68] for it does not have the kind of being (Dasein's being-in) allowing it to *encounter* the wall ("the stone (…) is *wordless*; the animal is *poor in world*; man is *world-forming*").[69] Henry therefore replies to Falque's charge as follows:

> The question of 'incorporation' as coming-into-a-body of a purely material nature remains speculative. (…) A stone neither gets hungry nor thirsty, it does not demand a pillow, it does not mourn the death of a friend. And even if a material organisation takes on the complex form of an organism that we give the illusionary name of 'living' (…), the abyss that separates it from the life that experiences itself impressionally in its flesh is never bridged.[70]

However, Henry moves too quickly here: no one denies that humans are different from stones, nor that humans are different from animals; but, surely, animals are also different from stones? Comprising what part I called 'the underground' or 'cellar of our existence', Falque therefore speaks of "the animal in common" to indicate the "community of animality between animals and human beings, through Chaos—passions and drives that we cannot deny without also cutting off

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[63] Henry, *I Am the Truth*, 40.

[64] Falque, 'MHT', 533.

[65] Henry, *I Am the Truth*, 38; *Barbarism*, 6. See further Gschwandtner, 'What About Non-Human Life'.

[66] Leder, *The Absent Body*, 6.

[67] Henry, *Incarnation*, 3; 'AEF', 171.

[68] Heidegger, *B&T*, 55/55.

[69] Heidegger, *The Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics*, 177. For a critique, see: Nancy, *SW*, 54-58; Agamben, *The Use of Bodies*, 89-90, 184-186; Agamben, *The Open*, 49-77; Franck, 'Being and the Living', 135-147.

[70] Henry, 'AEF', 171.

some part of our humanity."[71] To deny that animals are alive, and share that life with us even though we might live it differently, is to espouse a conception of life that borders on the non-sensical. Similarly, it is overly hasty to reduce corporeality geometrical extension.[72] Human life and embodiment always remain animal and material: a dimension of our life is biological (organic), insofar human beings are the subject of the life sciences; a dimension of our embodiment is likewise physical (material), insofar as we are subject to the laws of physics. This does not mean that the human condition can be exhaustively described by biology, or cognition reduced to neurological impulses (that would indeed be barbarism). However, the natural sciences do teach us *something* about who we are, light up a particular *aspect* of the being belonging to human beings; even if they can never have the last word: man is part of nature, even if he does not coincide with *his* nature. This dimension, too, requires a phenomenological account.[73]

b. Material bodies

Henry likewise restricts his investigation to the lived-body for reasons of phenomenological methodology, namely that the material body simply does not show up in lived-experience and therefore cannot be considered phenomenologically (i.e., in terms of its phenomena):

> It is easy for us to know our flesh, to the extent that it never leaves us and adheres to our skin in the form of numerous impressions of pain and pleasure that constantly affect us—so that each of us actually knows quite well, with an absolute and unbroken knowledge, what his flesh is (…)—our knowledge of the inert bodies of material nature is quite different and vanishes on arrival, ending in complete ignorance.[74]

This is, again, only true if one assumes a radical discontinuity, this time not between animality and humanity, but between body and flesh. Having established that the body rather always underlies the flesh, we need to account for it somehow, Falque says: "All joys and all sufferings concern (…) *the body* and cannot be reduced to the lived experience of the originary flesh." Consequently, "if the flesh is somehow 'more easily known than the body' then the body should garner our attention,

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[71] Falque, *WFL*, 79.

[72] Falque, *LS*, 148-149; 'TIMB', 282.

[73] Falque, *WFL*, 1-15, 59-99, 100-104; *ECE*, 18-20.

[74] Henry, *Incarnation*, 4-5.

even if our investigation must commence with the flesh."[75] Falque thus inverts Henry's order of priority: "I undergo or experience my body first as 'thing' before living it as 'ownmost'."[76] Due to phenomenology's insistence on carnal lived-experience, it has neglected the body's organicity and materiality in a forgetting that Falque calls "the swerve of the flesh," and to which he opposes "the resistance of the body."[77] A renewed thinking of the body as it *resists incarnation* (coming-into-the-flesh) *and reduction* (to the givenness of lived-experience) is needed, requiring in turn the (re)incorporation of the flesh: showing how the body's organicity (incorporation) *undergrounds* phenomenalisation (incarnation).

After reduction, Falque says, "a 'residue' remains (of the body),"[78] *resistant* to reduction. Husserl already adumbrated this resistance: "the same Body which serves me as means for all my perception obstructs me in the perception of it itself and is a remarkably imperfectly constituted thing."[79] The body, as the *zero-point* of lived-experience, making it possible as flesh, simultaneously inhibits (certain) lived-experiences, precisely as my body, thus equally constituting its *vanishing point*: "I do not have the possibility of distancing myself from my Body," Husserl says, "and accordingly the manifolds of appearance of the Body are restricted in a definite way," precisely because "certain of my corporeal parts can be seen by me only in a peculiar perspectival foreshortening, and others (e.g., the head) are altogether invisible to me."[80] Merleau-Ponty likewise observes that "my body as given to me by sight is broken at the height of the shoulders," though "I am told that an object is visible for others in this lacuna in which my head is located" and "science teaches that organs, a brain, and (…) 'nerve influxes' in this visible object would be found by means of analyses," but "I will never see anything of all that."[81] Falque concludes from this that the body-as-flesh, the zero-

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[75] Falque, *LS*, 166-167.*

[76] Falque, 'PRC?', 99.

[77] Faque, 'FD', 332; *WFL*, 1-4. Compare Nancy, *Corpus*, 83.

[78] Falque, *WFL*, 12.

[79] Husserl, *Ideas II*, 159/167.

[80] *Ibid.*

[81] Merleau-Ponty, *The Structure of Behavior*, 213-214.

point of orientations, impedes us from seeing the body-as-body, i.e. the zero-point constitutes a vanishing point:

> It is enough to realise that 'I do not see my head' (…) to recognise that the 'zero-point' of the flesh-that-I-am (*Leib*) is coextensive with the body-that-I-have (*Körper*). The 'centre of orientation that is the flesh' (*Leib*) opens the space (…) but it also prevents itself from seeing itself as 'body' (*Körper*), having difficulty finding a way of detaching itself from the lived-experience that basically denies it access.[82]

We are thus returned to the problem of the impossible incorporation of the flesh, perhaps best summarised by Plessner:

> A human being always and conjointly is a living body (…) and has this living body as this physical thing. (…) In this situation, the human position can be understood as eccentric. Just as the world and my own body are revealed to me (…) only insofar as they appear in relation to a central 'I', so (…) they retain their ascendancy over their subjection in this perspective as an order indifferent to me and including me in a nexus of mutual neighborhoods. Even if man can come to no decision between these two orders, the one related to a centre and the other not, he must nevertheless find a relation to them. For he is totally merged in neither. Neither is he just living body, nor does he just have a body. Every requirement of physical existence demands a reconciliation between being and having, outside and inside.[83]

In overemphasising that I *am* my body as lived-experience (swerve of the flesh by way of incarnation), phenomenology forgets that I also always *have* my body as material object (resistance of the body by way of incorporation).[84] I am never entirely immersed in one (Henry's carnal self) or the other (La Mettrie's *homme machine*); but am instead always one-in-the-other (Plessner's *Leib im Körper*, Husserl's *Leibkörper*): the human position is eccentric, a self never fully coinciding with itself, whether in carnal auto-affection or geometrical extension.

c. Suffering bodies

So far, Falque has merely indicated the limits of Henry's phenomenology, rather than offered a counter-argument. We are still, however, doing phenomenology, so Falque has an experience in mind.[85] That experience is the ex-per-ience of our human condition itself, namely suffering or

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[82] Falque, 'PRC?', 103-104.

[83] Plessner, *Laughing and Crying*, 34-37; Falque, *WFL*, 70-78.

[84] The *swerve of the flesh*, prioritising the flesh over the body undergrounding it, is induced by a *swerve of lived-experience*, prioritising lived-experience over the experiencing undergrounding it: phenomenology's tendency to produce a flesh-without-body results from its tendency to produce *Erlebnis*-without-*Erfahrung*. On this, see: Falque, *LE*, 23-24; Gadamer, *T&M*, 56-57.

[85] Falque, *ECE*, 14.

death (finitude), particularly in a medical context: "By dint of saying phenomenologically that 'I am my body' (*Leib*), one may have come to forget that 'I have a body (*j'ai un corps*)' (*Körper*) and that one day my body will get me (*mon corps m'aura*)—in the experience of suffering, of illness and death."[86] What we undergo in suffering shows that the experience of the body-that-I-have cannot simply be reduced to the lived-experience of the body-that-I-am. Of course, for Henry, too, the experience of suffering (pathos), is paradigmatic, revealing the flesh's auto-impressionality and the self's ipseity as coinciding in a carnal living self.[87] Yet, in suffering, Falque suggests, "there is certainly the auto-affected lived-experience of the pathos of enjoyment and suffering that overflows myself (Henry), but still rooted in a corporeality of my own that is sometimes so foreign (*étrangère*) that I struggle to recognize myself and even to experience myself in it."[88] As Nancy puts it: "'the body' is our agony stripped bare,"[89] to the point that we no longer recognise that which is causing us such much pain. Henry's account of the body, in which *I* am one with my-body as a *carnal self*, is a body that has never known illness: only as a healthy body, capable of auto-affection, has the body appeared in and to phenomenology.[90] However, illness is precisely the experience of the uncooperative body: "My own body penetrates me, even annihilates me, like the ingrown nail does my flesh (*l'ongle s'incarne dans ma chair*). Ready to construct 'itself' (in health), it is also ready to self-destruct (in illness)."[91] Suffering—from pain, illness, finitude—, is thus not primarily the experience of the self undergoing itself; rather, "in illness, there is a descent in oneself (*en soi*) that is also a descent of the self (*du soi*)."[92] Suffering is a kenosis of the carnal self: a descent into the abyss, where the carnal self with its lived-experiences dissolves or empties itself into the chaotic underground that made it possible (organic and animalistic drives and passions). Falque explains:

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[86] Faque, 'FD', 332-333; *ECE*, 16-17, 38; 'PRC?', 99, 105.

[87] Henry, 'Incarnation', 137.

[88] Falque, 'PRC?', 99-100; *ECE*, 16.

[89] Nancy, *Corpus*, 7.

[90] Caputo, *AE*, 194.

[91] Falque, *ECE*, 37-38; Nancy, *Dis-Enclosure*, 81; *Corpus*, 132.

[92] *Ibid.*, 18.

"illness is therefore first abyss and chaos, destructuration of the body, certainly, but also of the I (…) that ensures that we are not reduced to pure animality."[93] 'Incorporation' thus indicates "the impossible incarnation of self to self,"[94] for in it my body appears as distinct from me (*hors-chair*). What I suffer from or undergo in illness is not my-self, I suffer *my body*—a corporeal other, rather than a carnal self: instead of "the auto-affection of the self by the self in its pathos (or its flesh)," illness comprises the "hetero-affection of the self by the other in its body (or its bios)."[95] Only when "I no longer recognise 'this body here' (…) as 'mine'," when "the *materiality of the body* resists all *assimilations of the flesh*,"[96] when "*I* become the object of my pain, and in becoming it I *objectivise myself*" to the point that "the lived-experience of suffering is almost no longer mine because the I itself destroys itself by dint of suffering,"[97] does the body *materialise* (*se corporéiser*),[98] rather than *manifest* or reveal, itself: becoming visible as-body rather than as-flesh because it no longer appears as mine (*propre*), but instead as foreign (*étranger*). Put otherwise, the body only appears in what Leder calls its "dys-appearance,"[99] i.e. it appears when it dysfunctions or when it is ill (*dys-* in Greek meaning *ill* in English, or *mal* as in *mal-adie* in French) and thus becomes an object for consciousness.

d. Embodiment as withdrawal of the flesh

The body then also only appears by disappearing in its more ordinary sense, precisely because it cannot appear in lived-experience: in the lived auto-affection of the flesh, the body's appearing (flesh) is its own disappearing (body), or its own transcending of appearing.[100] The body, Nancy says, is a black hole, swallowing up all revelatory light, appearing only as a *withdrawal from appearance*:

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[93] *Ibid.*, 57; *WFL*, 24.
[94] Faque, 'FD', 323.
[95] Falque, *ECE*, 52.
[96] Falque, 'FD', 329.
[97] Falque, *ECE*, 39.
[98] Falque, *WFL*, 113.
[99] Leder, *The Absent Body*, 84.
[100] Nancy, *Corpus*, 73; Falque, *WFL*, 102, 218.

> The body retreats into its own depth—the depth of Sense—just as sense withdraws all the way to its mortal depth. This body forms very precisely what astrophysicists call a *black hole*: a star whose dimension is such that its gravity withholds its own light, a star that extinguishes and collapses on its own into itself, opening, in the universe, at the center of the star and its extraordinary density, the *black hole* of an absence of matter.[101]

The body's phenomenality is therefore kenotic: it withdraws from the flesh, meaning that it becomes phenomenal in and as the self-emptying of phenomenality; or, inversely, the body appears where the flesh is withdrawn, in retreat.

When Henry then thinks the experience of a flesh without body (health) as incarnation, Falque emphasises incorporation as experience of a body without flesh (illness): "The experience at issue here is not that of a 'flesh without body' (the route commonly taken by French phenomenology (…)); but rather, and inversely, that of a 'body without flesh' (the limit experience of the objectivity of my own body (…))."[102] This achieves a *kenosis of phenomenality* as what Falque calls a "kenosis of the flesh,"[103] i.e., a *withdrawal of incarnate givenness*. Falque sketches the phenomenality of the flesh emptying itself out into the organic embodiment making it possible, which in turn empties itself out into the absolute obscurity of material embodiment: a "descent or katabasis of the 'flesh' (*Leib*) into the 'body' (*Körper*) and of the 'body' (*Körper*) into the 'thing' (*Ding*)."[104] More precisely, pure phenomenality (revelation of flesh or givenness—consciousness) empties itself out into what is itself sub- or extra-phenomenal yet as such nevertheless forms phenomenalisation (drives and passions as they appear in biology, psychoanalysis and metaphysics, either organic (Nietzsche), unconscious (Freud) or rational (Kant)—the human condition), which in turn empties itself out into the world (those same drives and passions viewed as mechanical forces—materiality).

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[101] *Ibid.*, 75.

[102] Falque, 'PRC?', 106; *WFL*, 100; 'TIMB', 281; *GFO*, 164-165. Compare Merleau-Ponty on phantom limbs in *PP*, 93-94.

[103] Falque, *LS*, 169-171.

[104] Falque, 'PRC?', 102.

3. Objection II: The kenosis of Christ

Henry understands phenomenological incarnation (the revelation of things in their givenness in the flesh (*chair*)) and theological Incarnation (the Revelation of the Word in its assumption of flesh (*sarx*)) as coextensive: denoting a coming-into-the-flesh (incarnation as phenomenalisation). Put differently, for Henry *incarnation is the mode of revelation*, whether understood phenomenologically as revelation (appearing to consciousness in the lived-experience of the flesh) or theologically as Revelation (the Word coming among us by taking on our human condition of flesh). Therefore, if God comes among us through the Incarnation, revealing himself by taking on our human condition of flesh, that incarnation also becomes the condition of possibility for salvation. As such, Henry says, "the ultimate motive of Incarnation, which contains the possibility of salvation, is uncovered for us: *The Incarnation of the Word is its revelation, its coming among us*. If we can thus enter into relation with God and be saved in this contact with him, it is because his Word was made flesh in Christ. The revelation of God to men is thus here the fact of flesh. The flesh itself as such is revelation."[105] The philosophy of the flesh is then only preparatory to a phenomenology of the Incarnation—i.e., salvation in the Christian sense—, and as such concerns, not only man and his human condition, but also God insofar as he has become man.[106] Let us now explore the theological side of Henry's argument, for there too he runs into the problem of the impossible incorporation: namely, the inability to think materiality, understood theologically as *historicity*. If a flesh without body is unsustainable phenomenologically, it is perhaps even more so theologically.

a. Henry's anti-Patristic account of the Incarnation

Concerning the Incarnation, too, Henry wants to avoid all dualism: this time, the Gnostic dualism of the human and divine natures of Christ as distinct substances, one spiritual (the Word) and the

[105] Henry, *Incarnation*, 15.

[106] Henry (*Incarnation*, 23) defines the objects of phenomenology as follows: "Givenness; showing; phenomenalization; unveiling; uncovering; appearance; manifestation; and revelation. Yet (…) these key words for phenomenology are also (…) key terms for religion, or theology." Therefore, like in Marion, "within the work of Henry, phenomenology is explicitly presented," Falque notes (*LS*, 144-145*), as the "*preambula fidei* necessary to all theology." Phenomenology (revelation or incarnation) is again preparatory to theology (Revelation or Incarnation) and understood on theology's terms, with appearing (phenomenology) identified with revelation (theology).

other material (the flesh). Instead, according to Henry, the Incarnation of what he calls "the Word of Life,"[107] means that *Word and flesh coincide* (auto-affect), precisely as *life*, i.e. the *human condition*. The Word is thus not something added to the flesh, but is coextensive with the flesh:

> For the Word (*Parole*) does not say that the Word (*Verbe*) took on the human condition and for this reason was endowed with flesh, among other human attributes; the Word says that it 'was made flesh,' and that is truly why, in and by this flesh, it was made man.[108]

There is then no dualism in Christ because the human condition is defined strictly as flesh, and the flesh, in turn, is itself but a mode of the life that comes into it in the Incarnation of the Word. Henry's argument is that, in the Incarnation, the Word never knows a moment of exteriority, is never *outside-itself*, never *outside-the-flesh* (*hors-chair*)—i.e., no kenosis:

> In the depths of its Night, our flesh is God.[109]

By placing them on the same axis—spanning the *invisibility* of flesh, life and God—Henry moves easily from a phenomenology of the flesh (incarnation) to a phenomenology of the Incarnation (salvation in the Christian sense).[110]

It is this coincidence (of Word with flesh in life) that the Fathers of the Church, steeped in Greek philosophy (with its worldly categories like substance), were unable to think according to Henry.[111] He takes issue with Tertullian's account of the Incarnation in particular.[112] Tertullian understands the flesh Christ takes on as an organic and material reality: a "flesh, in fact, suffused with blood, scaffolded of bones, threaded through with sinews, intertwined with veins, competent to be born and to die, human unquestionably."[113] Moreover, where would this flesh come from "if not from matter of that quality in which it was present to sight? From whence the body (*unde*

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[107] Henry, *Words of Christ*, 102.

[108] Henry, *Incarnation*, 11.

[109] *Ibid.*, 262. Yet, God does not assume 'humanity' or 'flesh' in the abstract, but the historical situated 'humanity' of a specific human being: Jesus of Nazareth. For a concise explanation, see Bultmann, *TNT2*, 41-42.

[110] *Ibid.*, 20.

[111] *Ibid.*, 9. Famously developed by Harnack's *History of Dogma*, vol. 1, 46-57.

[112] Henry, *Incarnation*, 14. Nevertheless, see Alexandre, *Une chair pour la gloire*, 139-140.

[113] Tertullian, *FC*, 19.

corpus), if the body was not flesh (*si non caro corpus*)?"[114] For Tertullian, the flesh Christ takes on is thus an organic body, a body-of-flesh (*Leibkörper* or *caro corpus*).[115] Henry is quick to dismiss this account as leading to "a series of enigmas,"[116] and makes a rather bold move: "it is without philosophical transition and without any conceptual justification that to [Tertullian's] conception of the objective body (whose reality is the world's matter) the presupposition of a radically different flesh (of another order) is juxtaposed—*a suffering flesh that draws the reality of its suffering from its pathos-filled phenomenalization in life*."[117] With this juxtaposition, as Arnaud Perrot shows, we have nevertheless returned to the Gnostic dualism that Tertullian—supposedly, just like Henry—was arguing against:

> Tertullian understands 'flesh' (*caro*) in its common sense as an organic body (*corps vivant*), object and sensible, which is the body of every man (…). In the third century debate opposing Tertullian to his Gnostic adversaries, Christian doctrine is understood, precisely, as the refusal to substitute for the 'flesh', i.e. the body of Christ understood in its common meaning, a 'flesh' of another order, psychic, astral. The distinction between body and flesh is unthought by the Carthaginian.[118]

The theological critique of Henry's understanding of the Incarnation then concerns his unjustified substitution of phenomenological terms for theological ones, thus distorting their distinct theological meaning: like Marion gave us no reason to think revelation (phenomenalisation) in terms of Revelation; Henry gives us no reason to think incarnation (phenomenalisation) in terms of Incarnation, misunderstanding 'flesh' in Husserl (*Leib*) as 'flesh' in John (*sarx*) or Tertullian (*caro*). This confirms that phenomenology and theology make two: the supposedly entirely philosophical use (revelation-incarnation) of theological concepts (Revelation-Incarnation) by the authors of phenomenology's theological turn is bound to run aground. This is not due to it being *too* theological, but rather it not being theological *enough*: if, as Jérôme Alexandre notes in his long treatise on *caro* in Tertullian, "the word hardly belongs to the vocabulary of philosophy, which

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[114] *Ibid.*, 23.

[115] Falque, *LS*, 169; *GFO*, 150.

[116] Henry, *Incarnation*, 17.

[117] *Ibid.*, 131.

[118] Perrot, 'Michel Henry', 656.

speaks more readily of 'body' (*corps*),"[119] then it cannot simply be substituted by Henry's *chair* "without philosophical transition and without any conceptual justification."[120] The theological and the philosophical are not, by default, on the same axis, as Henry implies. A philosophical transition, from *sarx* to *chair*, and a conceptual clarification, what *chair* means in relation to *sarx*, is therefore a task of the utmost urgency that Henry nevertheless refuses to take up.

b. Henry against Tertullian I: The banalisation of Christ

Despite his bold declaration, Henry does bring some arguments to bear against Tertullian: "the thesis that the Word becomes-visible in the visible body, which it has (…) assumed (a self-evident thesis (…) supposedly definitive of Christianity), comes up against two massive difficulties."[121] Primarily, it would amount to a "banalization of Christ,"[122] for "as long as flesh is confused with the body, the Incarnation of the Word is its coming in a body and thus in the world. *Revelation is entrusted to the world's appearing.*" Yet, he continues, "if God must reveal himself in the form of this worldly man whose corporeal appearance he has assumed, how is this to be distinguished from the corporeal appearance of other men—how can we know or believe that this is precisely the Word?"[123] If Jesus assumes a worldly and material body, just like and therefore indistinguishable from our own, "his journey on earth will unfold with insurmountable incognito."[124] Like Marion, Henry insists that what appears with Jesus Christ is not just the ordinary humanity, but also his extraordinary divinity. The extraordinary appearance is that of Life (*Vie*) itself; not just a living man (*homme vivant*), but the transcendental condition of humanity: the Word of Life.[125] Jesus thus appears such that he is "not an ordinary man but the Word of God,"[126] as pure flesh without a

[119] Alexandre, *Une chair pour la gloire*, 200.
[120] Henry, *Incarnation*, 131.
[121] *Ibid.*, 16.
[122] *Ibid.*, 17.
[123] *Ibid.*, 258.
[124] *Ibid.*, 16.
[125] *Ibid.*, 259.
[126] *Ibid.*, 231.

body, something to marvel at. "However," Falque observes correctly, both John and the Fathers "did not wish to proclaim a God of the extra-ordinary but, rather, the unlikelihood of the Word's incarnation in the daily ordinariness of our simply material corporeality."[127] Indeed, Tertullian asks, is there any *evidence* (like Benoist), is there any *experience* (like Janicaud), suggesting that Christ's divinity was apparent?[128] Is the fact that Christ was widely ridiculed during his lifetime, that his message is still far from universally recognised today, not a perfect indication that his journey on earth *did in fact* proceed incognito?

Here, we must bear in mind Kierkegaard's constant reminder that "it was Christ's free will (…) to be incognito."[129] Or, as Falque puts it, that his "kenosis into the limit" was the "choice of God himself,"[130] his way of exercising his divinity. He does so to be *recognised as God*, precisely in his inability to *give himself as God*: "the true God *cannot* become directly recognizable," Kierkegaard says, "for he can only be the object of faith."[131] Given that God cannot give himself, he only manifests his divinity through the actions of the human: showing his divinity by taking leave of it, choosing the form of the servant, which no ordinary human would do. "God's servant-form however is not a mere disguise, but is actual," Kierkegaard says, "he is not a parastatic body but an actual body," and can only reveal himself thus: "There exists for him no such possibility as that which is open to the noble king, suddenly to show that he is after all the king."[132] The human being, his finite existence, his corporeal embodiment, which God takes on in the Incarnation, is not a mask behind which God hides himself from us; rather, it is his appearing to us: we only experience the divine as its withdrawal from experience, we only ever see the back of God, his human face. Put differently, God appears *kenotically*, in his transcending of appearing, due to the

[127] Falque, *LS*, 169.*
[128] Tertullian, *FC*, 25.
[129] Kierkegaard, *TC*, 128.
[130] Falque, *LE*, 112.
[131] Kierkegaard, *TC*, 137.
[132] Kierkegaard, *PF*, 68.

very nature of what experience is.[133] There is therefore no experience of God that is not the experience of his incognito: he does not appear *as himself* (in divine form), but as a human being (in servant form); he does not appear *on the basis of himself*, but on human terms; his appearance is not something *extraordinary*, but the servant's humility. In short, the divinity consists in the banality. Henry asks "how can we *know or believe* that this is precisely the Word?"[134] Obviously, we can never *know*, but must instead *believe*, that the humble servant is God; but knowing and believing are different: no reason can be given to believe the divinity, it is an act of faith. As Bonhoeffer puts it:

> The Body of Christ takes up space on earth. That is a consequence of the Incarnation. (…) Anything which claims space is visible. Hence the Body of Christ can only be a visible Body, or else it is not a Body at all. The physical body of the man Jesus is visible to all, his divine sonship only to the eye of faith, just as that Body as the Body of God incarnate is visible only to faith.[135]

After all, if we could know that this man was God, why would anyone even think of crucifying him?

Henry seems to be one of the exponents of 'modern Christendom,' "so *distrait* as to forget Christ when thinking of Christianity."[136] Kierkegaard's critique of these figures is as biting as ever:

> What they say is that Christ directly affirmed that He was God (…); they are horrified at any suggestion of concealment, as a thing unworthy of Christ, as vain trifling with regard to a serious matter (…), the salvation of man. Ah, (…) it is hidden from their eyes that they are doing away with Christianity. (…) They make Christ a speculative unity of God and man; or they throw Christ away altogether and take His teaching (…). If Christ is very God, He must also be unrecognizable, He must assume unrecognizableness, which is the negation of all directness. Direct recongizableness is precisely the characteristic of the pagan god.[137]

Henry is indeed offended by the notion that God could appear obscurely, incognito, as a banality. Yet, we must not mistake the *offense* (Bultmann) or *scandal* (Kierkegaard) of the Incarnation: a man claiming to be God![138] Nothing about the Incarnation carries the self-evidence of phenomenological flesh, experience does not deliver the apodictic ground for faith as given.

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[133] Lacoste, *AG*, 38, 72.

[134] Henry, *Incarnation*, 258.*

[135] Bonhoeffer, *CD*, 277.

[136] Kierkegaard, *TC*, 132.

[137] *Ibid.*, 134-135; *PF*, 68-88.

[138] See Bultmann, *TNT2*, 46-47.

Instead, the Incarnation offends precisely because there is nothing *given* in this man's *appearance* that justifies it: faith alone overcomes the offense.[139] In short, those like Marion and Henry, who elevate God's appearing to a universal and unconditional experience, forget that God's power lies in humility, his divinity in humanity, his glory in banality: "God makes himself the equal of the humblest," Kierkegaard concludes, "let no (…) professor of philosophy," whether they teach in Paris, Chicago, or Montpellier, "imagine that he is a shrewd enough fellow to detect anything,"[140] for boasting "about one's cleverness in penetrating the God's incognito (…) is but silly twaddle, by which one (…) makes a mockery of God."[141]

Rather than the Word appearing *as Word* (the form of God), the Incarnation denotes the Word's appearing *as a man* (the form of the servant), which offends: Christ cannot show us "the Word in him,"[142] but only the Word *as* himself, by *embodying it*, and only as such *living it*. As Tertullian puts it:

> All these tokens of a terrestrial origin were also in Christ, and (…) hid the fact that he was the Son of God, since for no other reason was he supposed to be merely man than because he consisted of human bodily substance. If not, point to something in him that was celestial (…): for the things I have enumerated are no less evidences that his flesh was terrestrial than that it was ours. I find no trace of anything novel or anything outlandish. In fact it was only for his words and works (…) that they were astonished at Christ as man: whereas a new kind of flesh in him would even have been remarked upon and taken for a marvel. But it was precisely the non-marvellous character of his terrestrial flesh which made the rest of his activities things to marvel at.[143]

Tertullian offers a distinctly phenomenological argument: based on what *data* does Henry declare Christ's flesh to be 'of another order' (celestial) than our ordinary human bodies (terrestrial)? The critique levelled against Marion can therefore now also be levelled against Henry: phenomenologically, there is nothing divine about Christ's appearing—i.e., the divinity is not *given*—, since "we have no other experience of God than the experience of (the) man."[144] The

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[139] *Ibid.*, 127-128.

[140] Kierkegaard, *PF*, 80.

[141] *Ibid.*, 79.

[142] Henry, *Incarnation*, 259.

[143] Tertullian, *FC*, 37.

[144] Falque, *MF*, 15.*

phenomenology of religion is enabled by its Christological nexus; but, since that nexus results from a kenotic and Incarnational doctrine of God, is equally hampered by it: Jesus Christ, as incarnate divinity, is both its *zero-point and vanishing point*, for his humanity allows us to talk phenomenologically about 'God', whilst placing his divinity out of bounds. The divinity is *nowhere given to be seen*: we see only the man God became, precisely because his divinity exists in emptying itself out into humanity. Theologically, the Incarnation is then a *kenosis of the flesh* (incorporation) rather than Henry's *entry into the flesh* (phenomenological incarnation). Indeed, "the kenosis of Christ is (…) first anchored in the kenosis of his flesh,"[145] Falque explains, this time not understood as phenomenality, but as a condition other than the human: "the Son does not simply experience himself in his *flesh*," but "also gives himself in a *body*, a properly human, organic material shared by everyone (…). 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*."[146] Christ reveals his divinity not by what he *appears to be* ('a new kind of flesh') but by what he *is seen doing* ('his words and works').

Henry's response to this argument returns again to his flawed definition of the category of flesh:

> *De incarnatione* removes the difficulty by showing that this ordinary man, of humble appearance, like others, (…) differs from them by words and by acts that are so extraordinary that he proves to be no longer a man but, in the violence of the contrast, the absolute of justice and truth in which many will recognize the Messiah. It is permissible to think, however, that the Incarnation accomplishes the Revelation of God otherwise than by means of this contrast (…). Is it not enough to recall (…) that the Incarnation of the Word is not its coming in a body but in a flesh?[147]

However permissible, Henry has not shown the *necessity* of thinking the Incarnation as coming-into-a-flesh (incarnation) rather than coming-into-a-body (incorporation). The phenomenological force of Tertullian's argument is thus not even blunted: "Why do you allege that that flesh is

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[145] Falque, *GFO*, 164.

[146] Falque, *LS*, 170; 'MHT', 534-535; *GFO*, 151-152.

[147] Henry, *Incarnation*, 258.

celestial which you have no data for thinking celestial," he asks, "why deny that that is terrestrial which you have data for recognizing terrestrial?"[148] Tertullian's rebuke is always the phenomenological demand for *Evidenz*: "Let them then show proof!"[149] Yet, as part I demonstrated, by definition, such a proof, a reason for this seeing, cannot be *given*. Even when formulated theologically, the objection faulters: how would "a perishable body contain a promise of immortality?"[150] This runs into the same phenomenological obstacle: even if it did contain that promise, it would surely be nowhere *given to be seen*, for all experiencing is a function of finitude.[151] Consequently, Falque dismisses "Henry's patricide of Tertullian" as "totally unjustified," since Tertullian, "in contrast to the negligence of contemporary phenomenology, inserted this question of *embodiment*—and not simply that of incarnation—into the heart of his theological system."[152]

c. Henry against Tertullian II: The distinctness of theology

Having rejected Henry's first objection to Tertullian's understanding of the Incarnation as incorporation, we move on to the second. This objection is likewise based on the axiomatic definition of the relevant categories within Henry's phenomenology:

> The second difficulty (…) arises from John's discourse itself. For John does not say that the Word took on a body, or assumed the appearance of one. He says that it 'was made flesh.' On the one hand, it is a question of the flesh and not of the body; and if the difference between flesh and body appeared essential to us from the outset, it is because the flesh and not the body must serve as the central theme for understanding Incarnation in the Christian sense (…). On the other hand, neither does John claim that the Word took on the 'appearance' of this flesh, but precisely that it 'was made flesh.'[153]

Though the distinction between flesh and body is essential for Henry, surely it is far from obvious that it is equally essential for John? The distinction is likely to be as unknown to John as it was to Tertullian, who uses the two words interchangeably to indicate the organic body (*caro corpus*). It belongs the French reception of Husserl: not Husserl himself, his early students like Plessner, or

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[148] Tertullian, *FC*, 39.

[149] *Ibid.*, 25.

[150] Henry, *Incarnation*, 16.

[151] Falque, *LE*, 17; Gadamer, *T&M*, 351.

[152] Falque, *LS*, 169; *WFL*, 137; *GFO*, 161.

[153] Henry, *Incarnation*, 17.

his German reception, where both terms denote the same entity from different perspectives. These are technical phenomenological terms that cannot simply be applied to the Gospels or texts from late antiquity. Nevertheless, Henry insists on reading them with his own phenomenological framework in mind, thus distorting their meaning. Perrot therefore describes Henry as "an *iconoclast exegete* of the Christian literature," reconstituting "the meaning of their vocabulary to his own philosophical system."[154] Ironically, he continues, "Henry specifies that Tertullian condemned the Valentinian Gnostics, not for denying Christ's 'flesh' (…), but for having exchanged—like him, basically—the ordinary and common meaning of (…) 'flesh' for a meaning particular to their school."[155] Theology is distorted by its phenomenological appropriation, and the theologian might therefore equally concur with Janicaud's insistence that *theology and phenomenology make two*.

Regardless of how Henry reads other authors, this problem is symptomatic of a larger one: it indicates, against Henry, that we cannot move from a *phenomenology of the flesh* (incarnation) to a *phenomenology of the Incarnation* (salvation in the Christian sense); or, against Marion, from the *givenness of phenomenology* (the revelation that is all appearing 'in the flesh') to the *Revelation of theology* (God's appearing 'in the flesh' by assuming the human condition). Simply substituting philosophical terms (Henry's *chair* or Husserl's *Leib*) for theological ones (John's *sarx* or Tertullian's *caro*) distorts the theological point being made. Henry, too, thus becomes susceptible to Falque's critique of Marion: by "reconciling philosophy and theology too closely," Henry neglects "the specificity of phenomenology (the fleshly lived experience of the body of man) as well as that of theology (the flesh of Christ as a history of God becoming man)."[156] We neglect the disciplinary distinction between phenomenology and theology at our peril: "the link between incarnation in the properly human sense of bearing one's flesh (*phenomenology of the flesh*) and *the* Incarnation in the theological

[154] Perrot, 'Michel Henry', 658; Falque, *GFO*, 118.
[155] *Ibid.*, 656-657.
[156] Falque, *MF*, 63.

sense of the divine's entry into the flesh (*phenomenology of the incarnation*) is not self-evident."[157] Falque explains:

> Certainly, (…) the unilateral transfer of phenomenological flesh (*Leib*) into theological body (*resurrectio carnis*) cannot be taken as a matter of course and is even a kind of mistranslation. In theology, the 'in-carnation' does not (…) imply a 'becoming flesh' (*Verleiblichung*) of mankind (…); it is rather God's 'becoming man' (*Menschwerdung*), or his entry into the historical process. (…) Christian incarnation is closer to a 'becoming body' (*Verkörperung*) in its historical solidity than to a being *taken into the flesh* (*Verleiblichung*) as a kind of taking on of the self by the self.[158]

Theological Incarnation entails kenosis: not the self coming into itself as auto-affection, an undergoing of self by self; but the self (God) coming into itself by withdrawing from itself, emptying itself out of its proper form. Whereas phenomenological incarnation operates within the immanence of transcendental Life, theological Incarnation concerns the ecstatic dimensions of world and historicity. Perhaps, Falque suggests, a linguistic particularity caused Henry to naively place the two on the same axis: like English, French "establishes a homonymy between the two terms (…), whereas German rigorously distinguishes the human case of 'enfleshment' (*Inkarnation*) and the divine case of 'humanification' (*Menschwerdung*)." Henry, meanwhile, institutes "a disjointure between the divine incarnation—God's pure and simple enfleshment (*Inkarnation*)—and the 'humanification' of God (*Menschwerdung*),"[159] since humanity is not coextensive with carnality.

Thus, since "that he 'was made flesh' (*Inkarnation*) also signifies (…) that 'he was made man'," Falque concludes that "the phenomenological mode of incarnation in a 'flesh' (*Leib*) would benefit from being critically appropriated by theology and, as a result of God's 'humanification' in a body (*Körper*), from feeling the 'backlash' of theology."[160] In what follows, I will therefore show, with Falque, how "unilaterally conducting a phenomenology of the flesh will not suffice," when elucidating the human condition to provide a basis for Christology; but that, insofar as our concern

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[157] Falque, *LS*, 145.

[158] Falque, *MF*, 136-137.*

[159] Falque, *LS*, 145; *MF*, 63.

[160] *Ibid.*, 172.

is Christological, "only a theology of the body—that is, of pure organic matter—will succeed in integrating what Henry frequently keeps apart," namely "the enfleshment of God and his corporal and historical humanification."[161] The following chapter thus considers how this theological critique of Henry's phenomenology, its backlash on that phenomenology, brings us to a consideration of the limits of phenomenology, and thereby to a conception of embodiment (and thus the human condition) that goes beyond phenomenology. We must then agree with Janicaud that *theology and phenomenology make two*, but equally with Falque that *the more we theologise, the better we philosophise*: if the phenomenology of the flesh cannot adequately think Christ's humanifcation (theological Incarnation), it means that, from the position of Christology, we may gain valuable insights concerning the human condition as such.[162] A philosophical anthropology that can think even the extreme situation of the humanity *of God*, can be confident that its conception of humanity is adequate—indeed, a phenomenological Christology is nothing but a philosophical anthropology. This will be a matter of "disincarnating one's body,"[163] executing a kenosis of the flesh: from the swerve of the flesh we thus move on to (descend into) the resistance of the body.

[161] *Ibid.*, 145; *WFL*, 3.

[162] Falque, *GFO*, 13-42; *CR*, 147-152.

[163] Falque, 'FD', 337.

Chapter 5. Falque's resistance of the body

> The Incarnation changes everything. Since the Incarnation, God has been externalized. (…) The world ceases to be like a flaw in the great eternal diamond. It is no longer a matter of rediscovering the transparence of God outside the world but a matter of entering body and soul into an enigmatic life, the obscurities of which cannot be dissipated but can only be concentrated in a few mysteries where man contemplates the enlarged image of his own condition.
>
> — Merleau-Ponty, *S&N*, 174-175.

Falque's theological critique of Henry attempts to recover the meaning of those categories associated with the world rather than life: embodiment, historicity and finitude. He explains:

> The theological (…) was intentionally avoided [by Henry], as evidenced by the paucity of references to the properly human experience of Christ's suffering (…). God experiences himself in his true humanity only in the *here-below of this world*. Jesus submitted himself to all the powers reserved to God on high, and he received them in the here-below—in his finitude—precisely where the most direct encounter between God and Man takes place.[1]

The organic body engenders finitude, constitutes my being as being-unto-death, puts me in-the-world. Christ likewise assumed, not just the flesh, but the full existential condition of man, including his finitude and therefore an organic body, which forms the transcendental ground of his passion by rendering him capable of suffering, both existentially (from finitude) and clinically (from pain). This chapter therefore repeats the kenotic anthropology of chapter 2, but Christologically: elucidating Christ's humanity. It aims to show that the obscurity in our human condition *persists* in carnally lived-experience, since it *resists* both incarnation (coming-into-the-flesh) and reduction (to the givenness lived-experience): i.e., it undergrounds the entire process of phenomenalisation (incarnation and reduction). This necessitates a consideration of the limits of phenomenology, its inability to think this resistance (*hors-chair*). The backlash of the theology of the organic body on phenomenology will thus be explicated in this consideration of phenomenology's limits. Once

[1] Falque, *LS*, 155-159. Developed existentially in *GG*, though I understand finitude here simply as the embodiment which engenders it.

transformed by its encounter with theology, we can then reconsider the phenomenology of the body.

1. The significance of the creation of man

a. Man as bodily being

Henry's account of the Incarnation is inadequate due to its limited understanding of the human condition: we are not just flesh but also body, since there can be no flesh except as the lived-experience of a body. Consequently, Falque suggests, it is unclear whether, on Henry's account, God actually fully assumes the human condition:

> Paradoxically, it is as if God was never actually *incarnated* in [Henry's] *Incarnation*, at least not temporally and visibly, that is, in a *historical*, *earthly body*. (…) Henry's treatment of incarnation is disclosive, but there is (…) *nothing to see*, since it deals primarily with 'life's invisible' and essentially discounts the visible world. In this way, the pathos of the flesh (…) pertains to the 'special or astral flesh' (…) more so than it does to the actual corporeity of Christ, who 'was made in human likeness' (Phil. 2:7) and came to share 'a flesh like ours, irrigated by blood, constructed by bones, traversed by veins.'[2]

I outlined, with Tertullian, how the Incarnation rather operates a *kenosis of the flesh*: phenomenologically, the lived-experience of the flesh empties itself out in the body making it possible; theologically, God is only God insofar he empties himself of his divinity in humanity. Put otherwise, *kenosis* (divinity's humanification) and *theosis* (humanity's divinisation) go together, as Falque explains:

> The real difficulty (…) is therefore not (…) the already spiritualised mode of carnal incarnation (*Leiblichkeit*), but (…) its 'impossible incorporation' (*Körperlichkeit*). (…) God has not only (…) taken on 'the aspect of man' (Phil. 2:5) (…). His 'human form' refers theologically to his very being of God. (…) The 'deification of man', so dear to the Greek Fathers, (…) must first of all also pass through the 'humanification of God', closer now to the Latin ones: "it was not said to me that 'where *He is him*, there shall you be you'," Augustine remembers (…), "but: 'where *you are you*, He is him as well."[3]

God assumes humanity's full "density,"[4] not just a particular aspect of it (e.g., flesh or consciousness): Incarnation is first incorporation, like the body precedes the flesh it makes possible. Only as such can there be salvation, for "salvation is not simply a matter of redemption;

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[2] Falque, *LS*, 172*; *GFO*, 163-164.

[3] Falque, 'MHT', 534-535; *WFL*, 59; *GG*, 71; *GFO*, 142; 'TIMB', 284; *LE*, 18; *MF*, 19-20.

[4] Falque, *WFL*, 104.

it is also solidarity or fellowship," according to Falque: "It is through the fellowship of God and humankind, which goes into the furthest depths of the obscurity that makes up our created being (our passions, impulses—our animality), that humankind will be saved."[5] Salvation (the Incarnation) therefore concerns phenomenological incorporation rather than incarnation because the *fellowship between man and God* is established as a *shared embodiment* "right down to the depths of its viscera, between the fibers of its muscles and all along its irrigation channels."[6] Bonhoeffer therefore often speaks of salvation through "bodily fellowship,"[7] fellowship established through the body: God made man. The Incarnation, Falque concludes, demonstrates God's glory "in his act of submitting himself to the limits of man in order to transforms them and otherwise inhabit them (the 'kenosis')."[8] Only because he descended towards man (*kenosis*), is man raised up towards God (*theosis*): "Christ took upon himself this human form of ours," Bonhoeffer writes, "He has become like a man, so that men should be like him."[9]

Salvation, on Falque's account, then becomes a question of God's *Eucharistic incorporation* through which man becomes available for being raised up in transformation: "that by which the Word is incorporated (…) into the bread in its kenosis (subjective genitive), and by which we are ourselves caught in the act of integration and transformation (objective genitive). (…) We are ourselves cast into it; we do not just assimilate or digest it."[10] The incorporation *of* God (*kenosis* and Incarnation) makes possible our incorporation *into* God (*theosis* and Eucharist) by establishing the *this is my body* as a call *from* the organic (God) *to* the organic (man): a communing within the same visceral physicality in which the transforming encounter can thus take place, for which corporeality provides the space. In short, only by coming down to our level and assuming the human condition (*kenosis*) can God raise man up and accomplish its salvation (*theosis*). Falque therefore understands

[5] *Ibid.*, 7; *GG*, 83.
[6] Nancy, *Corpus II*, 85.
[7] Bonhoeffer, *CD*, 266, 269, 277-279, 281.
[8] Falque, *LE*, 114.
[9] Bonhoeffer, *CD*, 341, 344.
[10] *Ibid.*, 209; Falque, *MF*, 81-90.

"the Eucharist as an *intentional mode* of incorporation," namely the event in which I am transformed or reoriented by what has assumed my own form, raised up by what has descended towards me: "To eat *the* bread of Christ" does not mean that it is "I (the subject) who assimilates the bread (the object) in eating it," but that "the bread itself (…) *makes me become this body* that is not me."[11] As Bonhoeffer puts it: "through the gift of his Body we become one body with him."[12]

b. Man as created being

Contrary to Henry, Falque understands the human condition holistically, including its *animality*. Incarnation therefore means the assumption of the whole human condition, including its *organicity*: Christ suffers his corporeality in his passion, incorporation constitutes his humiliation, and therefore his humanity.[13] As such, Falque concludes, "*incorporation* and not incarnation (…) remains (…) the most crucial problem for any Christology."[14] To think it, we must descend again into the cellar of our existence, the obscurity in man, our passions and drives, for we share this darkness with Christ insofar as he shares our embodiment. Falque calls this abyss, this underground of humanity, *animality*:

> If we move to (…) our own animality, Chaos can then be the name we give to *bodying life*: Life seen overall as bodied. We cross a threshold here and move from (…) the chaotic (…) to Chaos itself, as an opening up of the biological body, or the thrust of our drives toward what remains creative in their relationship with the world (…). Chaos then goes deep down into our emotions as well as into our drives and into our physiological and instinctive bodies. It starts as a kind of bottomless descent into our own animality; in that way it ensures that our embodiment, or our drives, reach into what we live without ever being able to signify what it is that we live (and thus the (…) resemblance between *Trieb* and *Tier* (…)). Simply to spiritualize all this is not convincing.[15]

Like conceiving of flesh requires conceiving of the body, conceiving of humanity—both ours and Christ's—requires conceiving of the animality (the chaotic whole of passions and drives) that makes it possible.

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[11] Falque, *MF*, 86.

[12] Bonhoeffer, *CD*, 281.

[13] Falque, *WFL*, 32, 174; *GFO*, 140; *GG*, 81-83. This aligns Falque with the Copenhagen school of 'deep Christology', see Gregersen (ed.), *Incarnation*.

[14] Falque, *LS*, 159*; *GFO*, 162.

[15] Falque, *WFL*, 26.

Whilst for Henry incarnation contrasts humanity to animality, Falque precisely wants to think Christ's animality: his incorporation rather than incarnation, for the flesh's corporeal nature is coextensive with humanity's animal nature (passions and drives).[16] What was first considered phenomenologically (kenosis of the flesh), then theologically (kenosis of Christ), is now considered metaphysically (kenosis of humanity): "In making himself flesh, the Word certainly espoused *our* flesh," Falque explains, yet "it is still the case that this flesh—our flesh—brings out our animality." What is true for humanity is equally true for incarnate divinity, namely that "the *intentional animal* (…) is also *a driven animal* in the closeness of animality and drive that we find in Husserl."[17] This does not mean that Christ is an animal: "to speak of the animality in humankind is not to reduce Christ to [an] animal,"[18] for the Incarnation means precisely God assuming the *human* condition. Rather, it emphasises that humanity is a relation to or a form of animality, including in Christ: thus, "it is not through *animality* that the Word becomes incarnate, but *exclusively in our humanity*," yet in so doing "the Word takes on—through us (…)—that part of animality that is undoubtedly in us."[19] Or, again: "In becoming incarnate God certainly did not become an animal," but "God cannot remain indifferent to this internal chaos, this abyss of our passions and impulses, which (…) contemporary phenomenology has largely spiritualized or even denied."[20]

At issue, philosophically, is what Nancy captures by saying that "the body is the unconscious."[21] Falque thematises it as "the animality within ourselves,"[22] by way of "accepting to descend 'together' into the 'unconscious of the body' of which we are 'communally' constituted."[23] Yet, Falque says, this constitutive role of animality (and corporeality) is often forgotten: "There is (…) an omission even more fundamental than the neglect of being," namely, "the neglect of our

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[16] See Falque, *LS*, 166.

[17] Falque, *WFL*, 98. See further: Falque, *CRV*, 94-99; Nancy, *Sexistence*, 33-40; Bernet, *Force, Drive, Desire*.

[18] *Ibid.*, 9. See further Hiuser, *Animals, Theology and the Incarnation.*

[19] *Ibid.*, xx.

[20] Falque, 'TIMB', 282.

[21] Nancy, *Corpus*, 156.

[22] Falque, *ECE*, 64.

[23] *Ibid.*, 53; *WFL*, 107.

animality that tries to conceal the chaotic abyss of our humanity."[24] At issue, he continues, is "the metaphysical access of humankind to our own animality,"[25] namely the means of talking about corporeality in terms other than the flesh (*hors-chair*), of thematising the "darkness in humankind" without illuminating it.[26] It is a way of thinking what *resists* reduction to lived-experience (phenomenalisation), the residual outside-the-flesh (*hors-chair*):

> It goes without saying that speaking *philosophically* of 'animality' is not to speak of 'animals' or even of a straightforward difference between human and animal. Animality instead provides a 'mode of access' to our corporeality. Philosophy and theology both must rediscover this. Animals matter little; what matters is this chaos of passions and impulses that God came to assume.[27]

In assuming all of this in his Incarnation, God *(trans)forms* it: turning our animality into a (new) humanity, the chaotic void (*tohu wa-bohu*) into a life-world (Genesis 1:2).[28] God, *through his Incarnation*, is always there where I am most fundamentally myself, in my corporeal, animal, passionate and driven nature, *as a created being*.

Creation thus forms the core of Falque's critique of Henry, who apparently rejects the notion entirely.[29] Henry says:

> Man has never been created, he has never come into the world. He has come into Life. And it is in this 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.[30]

Of course, man—on Henry's definition as the invisible phenomenological substance of transcendental life—has nothing to do with the world, which is its opposite:

> Like God, man is nothing of the world, and nothing in him can ultimately be explained by the world. (…) Because life is never visible. It is because he is Life that God is invisible. And for this reason man is too.[31]

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[24] Falque, *WFL*, 43; *MF*, 76.

[25] *Ibid.*, 70-71.

[26] *Ibid.*, 15.

[27] Falque, 'TIMB', 283.

[28] Falque, *WFL*, 147.

[29] Falque, *LS*, 168.

[30] Henry, *Incarnation*, 229.

[31] *Ibid.*

We have thus returned to the strong identification of humanity's transcendental condition with divinity itself.[32] Both are invisible, unworldly, sharing (in) a "pathos, an embrace without distance."[33] Yet, surely there is always some distance between the divine and the human? In neglecting creation, Henry neglects the distinction between intimacy (relation in difference) and identity (coincidence in coextension): "There is," Falque says, always "a relational distance of man to God (…). Whosoever speaks of *creation* therefore also speaks of *dependence* (…), a relation wherein the two poles necessarily maintain a certain exteriority to one another (…). That single point (…) throws Henry's entire work into radical question and exposes how it cannot sustain any true thought of corporeity in terms of spatial extension."[34] This issue of creation thus not only returns us to the theological point that there is no Incarnation without humanification (*Menschwerdung*), but also to the philosophical point that there is no flesh without body (incorporation). Only Incarnation understood as humanising incorporation institutes God's fellowship with man, *through* which salvation takes place, precisely *as* creation: the coming of the kingdom through the doing of God's will. Here again, divine *kenosis* ties into human *theosis*.

As "the fathers, indeed John himself, wanted to demonstrate in their clash with the Gnostics," and contrary to "the currently pervasive thesis of the *Christos angelos*," Falque concludes that Incarnation means God's assumption of humanity insofar as Jesus took on the *whole* human condition, not just flesh, but *also* corporeality and animality—namely, the darkness in man, his *worldly* dimension (*hors-chair*): since "the animal remains the bedrock of the human via incarnation or incorporation," in his Incarnation "God no less takes responsibility for the entirety of 'our' humanity," for "he comes to assume all in order to save all—our animality to turn it into humanity (salvation by solidarity) (…). The integral being hence designates first the incarnate human being, but not independently of the organic dimension by which it is also constituted. It does so to the

[32] *Ibid.*, 262.

[33] *Ibid.*, 120.

[34] Falque, *LS*, 168-169.*

point of animality."[35] Indeed, with animality, Falque pushes back against the idea of the *Christos angelos*: Christ is like us and unlike the angels.

c. Man as human being

"Man is neither angel nor beast," Pascal writes, "anyone trying to act the angel acts the beast."[36] This passage forms the motto for Falque's attack against the Gnostic "mistakes of angelism,"[37] that ascribe to Christ an ontological status like that of angels: namely, a spirit without body; or, as Henry might put it, the opposite of the animal's body without spirit.[38] Yet, this opposition is too simple, Falque observes: if this were the case, it would be, once more, as if God were never incarnated, for we have never encountered a pure spirit (angels), nor a pure corporeality (Henry's animals).[39] Yet, human beings have encountered God: the Incarnation, as God's assumption of the human condition, is always, precisely because of that, his entry into the world, his entry into *historicity* and *visibility*.[40] Falque explains:

> What is substantial in the body of Christ (…) is not that he resembles the angles (the theme of *Christos angelos*) (…). The Son, in becoming incarnate, has in reality no other wish (…) than (…) to be *like us*—not angel but human, not through pure spirit but made into a body that is first of all material and inhabited also by the spiritual.[41]

So, denying that Christ had a material body like our own, or aspiring to rid ourselves of our own embodiment to be more like him—both forms of angelism implicit in Henry's phenomenology—is contrary to the Incarnation's logic: a *denial of humanity* (barbarism), both Christ's as well as our own.[42] The Incarnation means God's comprehensive assumption of human condition, including animality and corporeality. Salvation precisely takes place *there*, in the animality and corporeality assumed by divinity, and thereby transformed into humanity: "Divinity would have been the total

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[35] Falque, 'TIMB', 283; *WFL*, 104.
[36] Pascal, *Pensées*, §678.
[37] Falque, *WFL*, 15.
[38] *Ibid.*, 70.
[39] Nancy, *Corpus*, 128; Henry, *Incarnation*, 3.
[40] Falque, *GG*, 94; *GFO*, 131-132.
[41] *Ibid.*, 73.
[42] See Falque, *CR*, 22; *MF*, 58.

assumption of *our* animality, the vocation of which is to be transformed into humanity and called to be incorporated in God."[43]

Man is thus neither angel nor beast, but human: animality assumed and thereby transformed into something new sitting between angel and animal; neither body nor flesh, but a *body-of-flesh* (*Leibkörper*), conscious of how its lived-experiences are grounded in a material and organic reality. On Falque's account, the *human being* is *a being that is animal and corporeal in its nature whilst having the possibility to take ownership of that nature,* to elevate it to the level of culture. Man is the being called to responsibility for its nature, and as such *exists* in a relation to it: our behaviour as human beings is indeed driven by our animal and corporeal natures, but we do not coincide with what we are driven to do, remaining instead personally responsible for our actions. The ecstatic structure of the kind of being belonging to man makes him into a moral agent, subject to the moral law. Speaking, famously, of "*the starry sky above me and the moral law within me*," Kant illustrates this perfectly: the former "annihilates (…) my importance as an *animal creature* that, after having for such a short time been provided (…) with vital force, must give back again to the planet (a mere dot in the universe) the matter from which it came," seemingly reducing man to that matter; however, *simultaneously*, the latter "on the contrary, elevates infinitely my worth as that of an *intelligence* by my personality, in which the moral law reveals to me a life independent of animality."[44] Our capability of acting in animalistic rage or blind passion does not *justify* it: the starry sky above me reminds me of my corporeal and animal nature, whilst the experience of the moral law within me shows that another life is possible, another—properly human—life that does not coincide with my given animal nature but instead takes ownership of it.

This is what Pascal means when he says that "man must not be allowed to believe that he is equal either to animals or to angels, nor to be unaware of either, but he must know both."[45] If

[43] Falque, *WFL*, xx-xxi; 'TIMB', 293.
[44] Kant, *CPrR*, 162/203; Nancy, *FT*, 210.
[45] Pascal, *Pensées*, §121.

man must not forget that he *does not coincide* with his nature (acceding to his animality), neither must he forget that he *cannot refuse* his nature (trying to become the angel). For, Pascal says, if he forgets his animality and organicity, if he tries "to act the angel," he in fact "acts the beast."[46] Denying our animal and corporeal nature, the fact that intentional beings are also driven beings, simultaneously denies our humanity: what makes us what we are (human), yet cannot be reduced to it, but instead *resists*; and in resisting, *restricts* what is possible for the human being as a human being (finitude). The human being, precisely because it is human, cannot be the angel; aspiring to be something we are not distances us from our humanity, we become the beast (*bête*).

The difference between *animality*, which for Pascal denotes man's nature,[47] and *bestiality*, denoting "the state of corruption and sin" man finds himself in when he "has fallen from that first state [creation and grace] and has become like the beasts,"[48] is then one of relation: man's animality is a neutral metaphysical fact, denoting his nature; man becomes the beast either by refusing his animal nature in aspiring to be what he is not, or failing to realise that he nevertheless does not coincide with this nature by surrendering to it completely—both are examples of bestiality, the denial of man's humanity (barbarism). Man is to blame for his bestiality, hence it is identified with sin, namely the corruption of his proper humanity; but not for his animality, which should be embraced as what makes man human (by assuming responsibility for it): "animality and bestiality should not be muddled up," Falque explains, "the latter is precisely a drift of the former into sin. There is nothing as 'beastly' as humankind, capable of blaming the animal (or the animal in oneself) simply for existing. Humankind is drawn from the animal, but not reducible to the animal."[49] Thus rather than being denied, animality should be embraced, the responsibility for it assumed, since it is thereby transformed into humanity: the human being is the being that *takes responsibility for* its

[46] *Ibid.*, §678.
[47] *Ibid.*, §630, §664.
[48] *Ibid.*, §131.
[49] Falque, *WFL*, xx; 'TIMB', 283.

animal and corporeal nature.[50] Being human means understanding that we do not coincide with our-selves, but instead gain ourselves from an outside-the-self: our being exposes itself *out-there* (Heidegger), the human position is *eccentric* (Plessner).

The "incarnation of the Word," Falque says, operates the same logic, making it "all the more anti-Gnostic since it can hardly be suspected of 'angel-ism'—unlike certain phenomenological interpretations of Christianity today."[51] God takes responsibility for humanity by exhaustively assuming its condition, without divinity thereby becoming reducible to humanity: God's divinity exists precisely in this total and un-human embrace of humanity (kenosis). In short, Incarnation means God is that human being that does not coincide with or is not reducible to his humanity: an ordinary man who does the extraordinary, who *as man* transcends the limits of what is possible *for man*.

d. Man as finite being

Falque thus understands man as created, meaning neither angel nor beast: "Nothing takes us further from Christianity," he says, "than the false desire of man or woman to wish to leave their rank of created beings and to aim at (…) angelism."[52] Being created means being (trans)formed, having received a form, which constitutes us as human by limiting what is humanly possible for us. For Falque, Christian life therefore consists in a *love of the limit*, for the limits imposed upon us in creation *form* our being.[53] "Drawing back from the limit," he says, "humans actually draw back before what is created."[54] Rather than striving to be something we are not, desiring to transcend our finitude; Christian life, precisely because God has assumed finitude for himself, consists in "an attachment to these limits that must conquer our supposed desire for what is unbounded or

[50] Humanity is then *nothing in itself*, as Agamben observes, but only exists in its relationship to its other, its animality, see: *The Use of Bodies*, 186; *The Open*, 73.

[51] Falque, *MF*, 137.

[52] Falque, *WFL*, 147.

[53] *Ibid.*, 59, 147-154.

[54] *Ibid.*, 154; *MF*, 98-102.

unlimited."[55] Rather than a stain on humanity, a marker of original sin distancing us from God; only within the limits of finitude, Falque says, can *we* encounter the God who assumed them for himself, precisely *so that* we might encounter him: "We should not mix up *limit* and *limitation*. The former acknowledges our ontological being in the face of God; the latter wrongly regrets that we are not like him, not infinite (without limits)."[56] Sin is rather understanding finitude as limitation—displacing an originary infinitude, an originary closeness to God—, for it denies the humanity that forms our only path to God (his Incarnation in Jesus Christ): encountering God takes place within the limits of human finitude, for we encounter God as man, not as God.[57] Here, again, Falque's emphasis on finitude corresponds closely to Nancy's: "'Finitude,' then, does not mean a limitation that would relate man (…) to some other authority from which he could derive his sense, or his lack of it," but "the non-fixing of such a signification" or "the power to leave it open." Finitude denotes the being of Dasein as world-disclosure, allows the world to world on its own terms, by exposing "the *non-given of sense*," Nancy says, "which is the very fact of being as sense—and thus as finitude."[58]

In summary, for Falque, being-human means being-created, namely, being-finite as being-embodied (formed). We are not given to ourselves but instead are formed by taking on the otherness within ourselves (animality). Salvation likewise proceeds as fellowship with God through Incarnation, namely his encounter with us where we are already (a man), divinity transforming our condition (finitude and embodiment) by assuming it. It is only "appropriate for a man to be made divine" (*theosis*), Falque says, "when God himself is humanized" (*kenosis*). Indeed, the real difficulty is "to 'be man'," namely "to respond to our condition as creature," rather than "to wish to break those limits and go beyond our nature." It is the finite and human we should think when considering the infinite and divine: "A love for limits is thus necessary for the sojourn of God in

[55] *Ibid.*, xxiii; *LE*, 112; *MF*, 85.
[56] *Ibid.*, 152; *LS*, 19-20; Nancy, *AF*, 27.
[57] Falque, 'TIMB', 290.
[58] Nancy, *FT*, 178.

humankind, insofar as his life does not take us outside our own humanity, but rather (…) demands that we come to love it."[59] By assuming responsibility for animality, we transform it into humanity; by assuming responsibility for humanity, God transforms it into divinity. Salvation therefore means (trans)formation, indeed, *creation*: it takes place in the worldly condition of embodiment, where God has emptied himself (*kenosis*) as the kingdom's coming (*theosis*).

2. The limits of phenomenology

With Falque, I am trying to make felt the *backlash* of theology (of the organic body) on phenomenology (of the flesh) to remedy phenomenology's structural tendency to carnalise or spiritualise (dis-incorporate) the body as flesh (incarnation of lived-experience), resulting in a paradoxical flesh without body. Franck called this problem the *impossible incorporation*: phenomenology can only consider embodiment in terms of incarnation (its lived experience), and therefore cannot think the organicity and materiality which makes possible that lived-experience whilst itself being irreducible to and therefore remaining outside of that lived-experience (*hors-chair*). If phenomenology's *reduction* to lived-experience resulted in a *swerve of the flesh*, we have been exploring the depths of Christology to show how an organic and material reality of *the body resists* this reduction whilst nevertheless (in)forming it as "the presence *there* of this bodily mass."[60] The backlash is thus felt in this dimension of embodiment more adequately thematised by theology, which thereby shows phenomenology its limits. Falque summarises:

> A 'backlash' is produced, this time from theology onto phenomenology, as soon as it is a question (…) of the 'organic body.' The current phenomenological practice actually amounts to illuminating the given of the revealed (…), while hardly ever questioning the effectiveness of their instruments for identifying what in this belongs to theology—so that theology itself becomes, at times, completely phenomenological. One should nevertheless wonder (…) about their possibility of expressing *the entirety* of human (…) experience. Theology itself shows phenomenology its 'limits' (…). Theology's blacklash onto phenomenology, of the weight of the body as 'incorporation' (*Verkörperung*) on its lived experience as 'incarnation' (*Verleiblichung*), questions the limit of philosophy. This questioning arises from Christ's substantial incarnation, which raises doubts about the phenomenologist's choice to privilege the 'ownmost body' (*Leib*) over the 'material body' (*Körper*), the lived experience (…) over the organicity of the body.[61]

[59] Falque, *WFL*, 59.

[60] Falque, *ECE*, 50.

[61] Falque, 'TIMB', 281-282.*

The theology of God's body, as an ordinary human body, made manifest what its phenomenology leaves unthought: namely, the body, not just as flesh (*Leib*), but as body (*Körper*); the body (*corps*) underlying the flesh (*chair*) without itself appearing as such (*hors-chair*). After having provided this theology of the organic body with Tertullian, and drawn out its consequences for theological anthropology and Christology in our discussion of creation; I will now make its backlash on phenomenology felt, before reprising the phenomenology of the body once transformed by its encounter with theology.

a. Husserl on mute experience

The "beginning" of phenomenology, Husserl says in his *Cartesian Meditations*, "is the pure—and, so to speak, still mute—psychological experience (*Erfahrung*), which now must be made to utter its own sense with no adulteration. The truly first utterance, however, is the Cartesian utterance of the *ego cogito*."[62] I will return to the utterance of *ego cogito* later (chapter 6), but will focus for now on its mute experience. Jérôme de Gramont concludes from this passage that pre-signifying mute experience, distinct from the lived-experiences saturated with signification, forms phenomenology's homeland:

> Now, the first gesture of a phenomenology inherited from Husserl would consist in going back, before speech and judgement, to that silent experience which (…) confines us to the simplest presence of the things themselves. To be there, given to the gaze, things do not have to be said. (…) It matters little that in the dawning of presence our words are not there, provided that the presence is whole. (…) At the dawn of experience, we do not need to speak, we just have to be there, present.[63]

However, Falque notes, if this primordial and mute experience is phenomenology's starting point, why must it immediately be brought to the level of sense, signification and articulation?[64]

Falque's point is important, but somewhat underdeveloped in terms of Husserl. Caputo, meanwhile, in a reading of Husserl that pre-emptively rejects Marion's,[65] articulates a similar

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[62] Husserl, *CM*, 77/38-39.*

[63] de Gramont, 'Le monde muet et la patrie de la phénoménologie', 186; Falque, *WFL*, 130n83. Falque identifies this experience with that of *khora* (*LS*, 36).

[64] Falque, *CR*, 35, 96; *LS*, 54, 74, 243-246; *ECE*, 25-27, 84; *GG*, 82-83; *MF*, 127-128, 135; *WFL*, 25, 125-132, 214; *GFO*, 164; *CRV*, 29, 33; *LE*, 318, 332.

[65] Caputo, *RH*, 36-59 (42-43); 'HP', 77.

argument based on the *Phenomenology of Internal Time*'s 'flux' of experience rather than the *Cartesian Meditations*' 'mute' experience:

> This flux is something we speak of *in conformity with what is constituted*, but it is not 'something in objective time.' It is *absolute subjectivity* and has the absolute properties of something to be designated *metaphorically* as 'flux'; of something that originates in a point of actuality, in a primal source-point, 'the now,' and so on. In the lived-experience of actuality, we have the primal source-point and a continuity of moments of reverberation. For all this, names are lacking.[66]

Here, too, Husserl adumbrates an experience more fundamental than lived-experience's unities of meaning; an experience for which names are lacking, that "does not come into question for us as a datum."[67] Indeed, Caputo suggests, "the flux '*underlies*' the unities of meaning which accumulate."[68] The flux *undergrounds* phenomenality, without itself being phenomenal. In *Ideas I*, Husserl further describes it as a stream-of-conscious-experience (*Erlebnisstrom*),[69] thus "not only the intentive processes," but also the "really inherent moments in this stream."[70] He means those basic acts in which consciousness exists *before* it is intentionally constitutive of phenomena or significations: the mere cognitive act of sensation as it exists before there is lived-experience, before intentionality gets to "the whole stream of mental processes as (…) the unity of *one* consciousness."[71] It denotes the aboriginal substrate of experience, the sensational manifold, which *is not yet* and *cannot be* lived-experience, because there is no intentional horizon according to which to unify its manifold into a phenomenon. Yet, it is experience (*Erfahrung*) nevertheless: "We have this experience," Agamben writes, "only where we lack names, where speech breaks our lips,"[72] i.e. where nothing is *given*. This was the phenomenological problem at issue in part I—the underground on the basis of which there can be givenness—, and Caputo captures it perfectly:

> At this moment in Husserl's phenomenology (…), we are exposed to (…) a pure flow of subjective acts, a river of sensate materials which has not been stabilized, organized, grasped

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[66] Husserl, *On the Phenomenology of Internal Time*, 75/79.*

[67] *Ibid.*, 349/360.

[68] Caputo, *RH*, 47.

[69] Interestingly, both Husserl (*Ideas I*, 96-97/116-117) and Heidegger (*PRL*, 334/252-253) leave the door ajar for a phenomenology of religion through this experience.

[70] Husserl, *Ideas I*, 65/75.

[71] *Ibid*, 168/199.

[72] Agamben, *Infancy and History*, 6.

> about, and interpreted. Here experience runs out of control, and (…) phenomenology finds itself exposed to its opposite—whence the absolute necessity for the interpretative act to intervene. Without (…) interpretation we are given not a pure datum, an uninterpreted given, but a kind of Husserlian equivalent of the primeval chaos.[73]

This experience absent givenness—its primeval chaos, mute purity, primordial flux—forms both the beginning and end of phenomenology as the starting point it cannot itself think:

> For Husserl, the flux is at once the raw material of phenomenology and its constant opposite. It is at once that which requires fixation, stabilization, regularization, and so gives phenomenology the work it has to do, and it is that which threatens the whole enterprise of phenomenology, that which, left unchecked, will break down its entire scientific edifice.[74]

Husserl "resists the flux and looks for a standpoint outside of it," Caputo says, "where consciousness (…) keeps company with the ideal unities of meaning" to "put the flux to sleep." We, however, are precisely interested in those originary "moments of experience," before they are "woven together in the fabric of expectations."[75] Rather than lived-experience, we are interested in its experiencing: the primary phenomenological meaning of ex-per-ience as the flux that forms or makes-for (*fait*) the lived-experience; the undergoing of experience (*faire l'expérience*), before it signifies, intends or lives anything.

Phenomenology, Falque concludes from this, is too eager to make what is not a lived-experience (a phenomenon) into one: "phenomenology tries too much with its concept of the phenomenon," always immediately "covering up the overflowing obscurity with the transparence of intentionality." Instead, he suggests, *experiencing*, "if it involves reaching 'the region of what can no longer be said' (…), entails going-through an experience," that itself brings us to "the limit of the phenomenon in phenomenology," demonstrating "the need to go beyond phenomenology once one has undertaken to enter into the abyss."[76] The problem of mute experience thus joins that of the impossible incorporation: from the beginning, phenomenology is *structurally liable to undo*

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[73] Caputo, *RH*, 42.

[74] *Ibid.*, 37.

[75] *Ibid.*, 58.

[76] Falque, *WFL*, 19.*

itself; it ends where it begins, for it cannot *itself* think the zero-point that is equally its vanishing point.

Falque's critique of phenomenology—that there is something that resists reduction to the lived-experience of consciousness (immanent), yet can neither be dismissed as an inert object beyond consciousness (transcendent)—corresponds to Nancy's complaint that phenomenology cannot think what precedes and exceeds phenomenalisation in the phenomenon, namely *the coming of sense* (experience's 'event'):

> But, nonetheless, phenomenology does not open us up to that which—in sense (…)—infinitely precedes consciousness and the signifying appropriation of sense, (…) precedes and surprises the phenomenon in the phenomenon itself, its coming or its coming up. (…) This is why, for any phenomenology (…), there remains a proper, immanent/transcendent point of origin for sense, a point with which, consequently, all sense is confounded. Nonetheless, all types of phenomenology (…) do not open sufficiently to the coming of sense, to sense as a coming that is *neither immanent nor transcendent*. This *coming* is infinitely presupposed: one does not let oneself be taken in, carried away, or put out of sorts by it.[77]

For Nancy, the primordial unsignifying experience is *sense*, or rather its sens*ing*, its *coming*: an experience "in advance of the phenomenon itself," as that which "rather than the *phanein*, (…) is the *phaos* itself," namely "the light that flashes (*lux*) and that causes to appear, itself nonapparent as such."[78] It is an experiencing (an ex-per-ience) that constitutes phenomenality, sets the terms on which things are lived in experience, but which is not itself thus lived (a phenomenon): the light that does not appear in its own illumination, allowing things to appear without thereby making itself apparent; the intentionality of consciousness which constitutes objects but because of that cannot itself be constituted as one of consciousness' intentional objects. This experience must be recovered phenomenologically by going beyond phenomenology's lived-experience.

b. Falque's phenomenology of the limits

Without abandoning phenomenology, Falque lets its limits manifest themselves in phenomenological practice (e.g., the experience of embodiment beyond the phenomenality of the flesh): he provides a *phenomenology of the limits* of phenomenality, reincorporating the extra-

[77] Nancy, *SW*, 17; *TM*, 32-33; *Adoration*, 46.

[78] Nancy, *TM*, 33; *SW*, 159.

phenomenal into phenomenology as the very question *of* phenomenology (not unlike Marion and Henry). "Without giving up on what engendered us (phenomenology)," Falque says, "we shall come back to the impossibility of formulating, starting from phenomenology, what *lies beneath signification*," namely, "a mode of non-signifying of organic embodiedness—something that simply the lived experience of the flesh (…) could not express."[79] He considers, phenomenologically, what remains outside-the-flesh (*hors-chair*) or outside-signification (*hors-signification*), precisely as what *undergrounds* them, namely the body and mute experience: "To take in this 'mute experience' (…) is not to give up (…) signifying," but "rather, to search underneath the *logos* and reason."[80] Falque consequently identifies three limits of phenomenology, flowing from and reinforcing its method: (1) the excess of sense over non-sense; (2) the hypertrophy of the flesh over the body; (3) the primacy of passivity over activity.[81]

i. Sense over non-sense

We have already been considering phenomenology's presupposition of sense over non-sense: namely, Husserl's assumption that mute experience always awaits its articulation as sense, comprising both phenomenology's method (its beginning) and limit (its end). From this limitation, all the others are derived. It can be summarised as follows: phenomenology cannot think what *resists* reduction to the egological sphere of ownness or the immanence of consciousness (donation), what *resists* synthetisation into a unity of sense (signification), what *resists* phenomenalisation as lived-experience of the flesh (incarnation). In short, it cannot think what remains *outside lived-experience* (*hors-chair*): "Hermeneutics and phenomenology have secretly 'bound together' to affirm the *primacy of sense* (Ricoeur) or the *intentionality of consciousness* (Husserl)—making us believe thereby that nothing remains outside the signified."[82] Indeed, intentionality limits phenomenology to idealities of sense: lived-experiences, phenomena, as unities of meaning (significations), are unified

[79] Falque, *WFL*, 12*; *CRV*, 44, 98.
[80] Falque, *ECE*, 84.
[81] *Ibid.*, 27; 'TIMB', 288; *WFL*, 18-24; *CRV*, 93-94; *LS*, 46.
[82] *Ibid.*, 25; 'The Extra-Phenomenal', 9-11.

(constituted) by intentionality. If, as Sartre says, intentionality means that "consciousness and the world are given at one stroke," that what is "essentially external to consciousness" only appears as "essentially relative to consciousness,"[83] then intentionality causes a certain "phenomeno-mania"[84] (Nietzsche): absolutely everything is either phenomenalised (signified) or withdraws from view completely (into insignificance)—e.g., the body-as-body in Henry. Yet, as discussed, there is an experience (incorporation) that cannot be led back to lived-experience (reduction), that cannot be synthesised into a unity of sense (signification), that cannot be turned into a phenomenon as an object for consciousness (intentionality), that is not given in the immanence of the flesh (incarnation); an experience that precisely *resists* all this (phenomenalisation). In short, the chaos of our bodily passions and drives, our organicity, though obscure and outside consciously lived-experience (*hors-chair*), requires a phenomenological account nevertheless.

Falque therefore concludes that "it is (…) a chronological reversal of cause and effect, that one has to wait for things to appear in consciousness before they exist, or before they take on meaning," as established by his analysis of the suffering of embodiment: "In me *there is* suffering, but it is not a question here of donation or 'givenness' (Husserl), nor even of the absurd or non-sense (Sartre); instead, it is the absence of meaning."[85] The chaos exposed is neither meaning*ful*, nor meaning*less*; but at *neither side* of meaning:

> Chaos is not vacancy or nothingness, in a kind of escape (…) that one always knows will somehow make sense (…). Rather, Chaos is invasion. It is the impossibility of coming to terms with the 'mass of sensations'—not simply in that it breaks open the framework of what we can come to terms with (…) (the saturated phenomenon), but, inversely, because it shows us that it is not able to formulate itself (the limited phenomenon). The limit to the phenomenon does not come (…) because the phenomenon cannot be constituted by consciousness. On the contrary, it comes from accepting a limit that Chaos overflows, without ever being received or transformed into consciousness.[86]

Like Marion, Falque is concerned with the limits of phenomenality; unlike Marion, these limits do not therefore need to be rejected (expanding phenomenality), but simply *experienced*: experience is

[83] Sartre, 'Intentionality', 382.

[84] Franck, *Nietzsche and the Shadow of God*, 183-184, 285; Falque, *WFL*, 22n38.

[85] Falque, *WFL*, 21.

[86] *Ibid.*, 22.

always the *experiri* of going-to-the-limit, the experiencing of our own finitude as the limits that form or make-up (*fait*) our being (corporeality).

Because it is *grounded* in intentional consciousness, phenomenology operates an "a priori of meaning," thereby failing to conceive what is happening underneath that ground, what *undergrounds* it: the "shock of the body," explored in our theology of the organic body, the backlash of which on phenomenology we are now making felt, is "what the philosopher sometimes forgets, either by dint of referring himself to a phenomenon that is always ready to show itself, or by dint of thinking too much that it can always signify," whilst the body is instead usually "but 'unassimilable matter' coming to repel us."[87] Falque and Nancy are both trying to return to this aboriginal mute experience, which is not signified and as such forms the limit of signification. Nancy explains:

> At the outset, there is no signification, translation or interpretation: there is this *limit* (…), this extremity, this outline (…), which can be withdrawn, concentrated, and pulled into the nonextension of a point or self-center, simultaneously distending or extending itself through passages and partitions. This alone can close or release a space for 'interpretations.'[88]

This is not the experience *of sense* (intentional object), but the experience of *making sense*, the *experiencing* of sense, its sensing, which Nancy calls *the coming of sense*.

ii. Flesh over body

Phenomenology's second limit is the hypertrophy of the flesh over the body: as discussed, phenomenology fails to the think material and organic embodiment due to its "constant recourse to the lived experience of consciousness (or of the flesh), as opposed to the solidity of the body in its biological dimension and drives."[89] Similarly, "the presence *there* of this bodily mass" underlying the flesh,[90] is at neither side of signification, according to Falque:

> It is not 'I *have* a body' (…); nor is it '*I am* my body' (…). The '*this* of his body that *is*' reaches out simply to the anonymity of the 'there is' of corporality, descending (…) into the depths of

[87] Falque, *ECE*, 15-16; *CRV*, 12-13.

[88] Nancy, *Corpus*, 23.

[89] Falque, *WFL*, 21.

[90] Falque, *ECE*, 50; Lévinas, 'There Is', 30-31.

> the abyss, the Chaos of the world, as also of myself, and thus making it possible to show this body.[91]

Or, as Nancy puts it:

> *The body exposes a breakthrough of sense, constituted absolutely and simply by existence*. Which is why we will not speak of it as anterior or posterior, exterior or interior to the signifying order—but at the limit. (…) The body is neither a 'signifier' nor a 'signified.' (…) *The body is the architectonics of sense*.[92]

It is this body, at neither side of signification yet constituting the architectonics of sense, undergrounding its phenomenality, that Nancy tries to articulate *beyond phenomenology*:

> We know it's nonsense, but we don't know what to make of this 'non-sense'; we don't see past the tip of sense. We always assent to sense: beyond sense, we lose our footing. (…) We lose our footing at 'the body.' Here, 'non-sense' doesn't mean something absurd (...). It means, instead: no sense, or a *sense* whose approach through any figure of 'sense' is absolutely ruled out. Sense making sense where sense meets its limit. Mute, closed, autistic sense: but, strictly speaking, there is no *autos*, no 'self.' Autism without an *autos* for the body, making the body infinitely less than a 'subject,' but also infinitely other, *thrown*, not 'subjected,' but just as hard, intense, inevitable, and singular as a subject.[93]

Thus, the *resistance of the body*, its *thereness*, forms the opening-up of phenomenality "toward that which cannot be spoken, in terms that simple signification offers us—toward the Chaos that only our human biological body encounters: the animal and the instinctual."[94]

iii. Passivity over activity

Finally, then, there is the primacy of activity over passivity: intentional constitution by consciousness may be problematic, but the answer cannot be the inversion of this dynamic in Marion's *counter-intentionality*.[95] In short, we cannot dethrone the intentional subject by simply ascribing its constitutive powers to the phenomenon instead, which would now constitute *me* (as *à-donné*, or *interloqué*), rather than I *it*, in counter-intentional givenness.[96] This does not reslove the problem, but merely inverts it.

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[91] Falque, *WFL*, 22.

[92] Nancy, *Corpus*, 25.

[93] *Ibid.*, 13.

[94] Falque, *WFL*, 24.

[95] Marion, *Prolegomena to Charity*, 71-101; *IE*, 77-78, 113-119; *BG,* 215-216.

[96] See Mackinlay, *Interpreting Excess.*

Falque himself, however, is more concerned with maintaining an active subject: "with all this enthusiasm for the 'dismantling' (…) of the subject, we cannot help asking if the subject does not lose its active quality,"[97] which he considers essential to comprehensive notion of humanity (world-disclosing Dasein). Indeed, "the constant recourse to the ideal of passivity," he laments, means "that the subject no longer tries to be made flesh, or rather be embodied, in the initial Chaos with which he is confronted."[98] Thus, even if we have abandoned the subjective *intentionality of consciousness* (Husserl's activity of constitution) in the name of the mute experience underneath signification, we must not resort to the objective *counter-intentionality of love* (Marion's passivity of interlocution); but recover the human activity constituted by our material corporeality, namely the *drive of intentionality* (Freud and Nietzsche's instinctual impulses): as intentional, the human being remans a driven being, animated by "a true intentionality of the body."[99]

c. The intentionality of the body

Falque's solution to the problem of the relation of the flesh to the body—i.e., the impossible incorporation—is then securing a transcendental or existential status for the body as *embodied intentionality*: without itself being experienced, the body forms or makes-for (*fait*) experience by orienting or driving intentionality, setting the terms on which things are lived in experience as flesh. This is not Husserl's *intentionality of drive* (*Intentionalität des Triebes*),[100] but a Freudian *drive of intentionality* (*Antrieb der Intentionalität*): not an operation of constituting consciousness (signifying intentionality); but how this operation (intentional consciousness) is itself driven by something irreducible to it (body). The drive makes possible the exercise of signifying intentionality by motivating it, yet itself remains beyond its reach. Falque explains:

> The Freudian drive is diametrically opposed to the Husserlian drive, in that the former attains the magma of (…) an *It* capable of constituting us originarily, whilst the latter interrogates the 'strata of the signified' (…), not to again question intentionality but on the contrary to ground it. In short, the *drive* (*Trieb*) is not the same, because what is brought into view is the inverse—

[97] Falque, *WFL*, 22-23; 'TIMB', 288; *CRV*, 34.

[98] *Ibid.*, 21; *ECE*, 45.

[99] Falque, *ECE*, 58.

[100] See Bernet, 'Zur Phänomenologie von Trieb und Lust bei Husserl', 42.

> the bedrock of unconsciousness on the one hand, and the presupposition of the signified on the other.[101]

Rather than the intentionality by which the body is *brought into view* in experience, the body is the intentionality *forming the point of view* (zero-point) of all experience, therefore *withdrawing from view* itself (vanishing point), except as what *forms* that view. This intentionality is not a cognitive structure, but a bodily disposition: i.e., that intentionality is *driven* means that it is *corporeally rooted.*[102] This results from the human body being a corporeal unity (body-of-flesh): both conscious (flesh) and organic (body), conscious (intentional) insofar as organic (driven).

Sadly, Falque complains, in philosophy's engagement with psychoanalysis—e.g., Lacan, for whom "the unconscious (…) is structured like a language,"[103] with its resulting emphasis on the symbolic order—, "the (somatic) point of departure is forgotten."[104] What Henry achieved phenomenologically through a *spiritualisation* of humanity (detaching lived-experience from its corporeal underground), Lacan achieves psychoanalytically through a *symbolisation* of humanity (detaching drive from its corporeal underground): namely, a forgetting of humanity's basic instinctual animality and material corporeality in favour of a discourse on his signifying activity, which Freud's naturalism precisely precluded. Falque explains:

> By dint of humanising (…) we progressively lose the weight of our animality, even of our bestiality, of our organicity, and even of our brutality. This is what the Freudian beginning did not omit, and towards which we must move again so as not to omit an *It* that traces the contours of a humanity defined (…) by its corporeal weight without which it could not exist.[105]

Nancy, too, finds it "surprising, then, that a certain psychoanalytic discourse would seem to insist," against Freud's original impulse and thus "while denying its object, on making the body 'signify,'

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[101] Falque, *CRV*, 96; *ECE*, 51.

[102] For example, Bourdieu, *Pascalian Meditations*, 143-144: "This practical, non-thetic intentionality (…) is rooted in a posture, a way of bearing the body (a *hexis*)" that "constructs the world by a certain way of orienting itself towards it" in "an active, constructive bodily tension towards the imminent forthcoming (*allodoxia*, the mistake we sometimes make when, waiting for someone, we seem to see that person in everyone who comes along, gives an accurate idea of this tension)."

[103] Lacan, *Écrits*, 868/737.

[104] Falque, *CRV*, 91; *WFL*, 2.

[105] *Ibid.*, 91-92.

rather than flushing out signification as something that always screens off the spacing of bodies."[106] As discussed, precisely at the height of signification, in its carnal disincorporation, the body-*as-body* disappears:

> This kind of analysis 'ectopizes' (or 'utopizes') the body *beyond-place*: it volatilizes it, indexing it to the incorporeality of sense. Hence, it would seem, hysteria is instituted as exemplary: a body saturated with signification. And hence no more body…[107]

Rather than the body's overdetermination by or saturation with signification, Nancy understands hysteria precisely as the body's resistance to signification: where sense can no longer be made of the body, where the body simply presents itself as *there*, showing all our ways of making sense of it to be overdeterminations. He explains:

> I (…) take hysteria as the body's becoming totally parasitical upon the incorporeality of sense, to the point that it silences incorporeality, thereby showing (…) a zone of *a*-significance. (…) The hysterical body is (…) a *pure* concentration in itself, the pure being-in-itself of its extension, which in turn denies and renders catatonic its extendedness and its spacing. A body that cannot be unfolded or opened up. A subject, an absolute substance, absolutely a-signifying. This limit manifests the truth of the body, in the form of its implosion.[108]

The hysterical body is unsignifiable, irreducible to a phenomenon, it cannot be *made sense of*: it simply presents itself *there*, the body, the hysteric.

d. The extra-phenomenal

For Falque, through Freud's naturalism, "psychoanalysis leads phenomenology back towards its *Urgrund*," namely, the "'obscure ground' of the human being it cannot avoid, and phenomenology requires psychoanalysis so that it does not forget its (…) corporeal part."[109] This *Urgrund* refers to phenomenality's underground, which Falque now summarises as the *extra-phenomenal* (*hors-phénomène*), equivalent to Franck's *outside-the-flesh* (*hors-chair*): namely, what remains unthought by phenomenology in terms of lived-experience (incarnation), but nevertheless underlies all lived-

[106] Nancy, *Corpus*, 21.

[107] *Ibid.*, 21-23.

[108] *Ibid.*, 23.

[109] Falque, *CRV*, 92.

experience by making it possible (impossible incorporation). According to Falque, the notion of drive delivers us this extra-phenomenal, precisely by exposing the three limits of the phenomenal:

> The Freudian drive, rooted in a *body* (…), *chaotic* or caught in the magma of the *It* underneath all givenness or orientation of the drive (…), and in league with force rather than passivity (…), requires the phenomenologist to think otherwise, or to revisit his requirements related to the always already presupposed signified.[110]

Falque's phenomenology of the limits thus consists in analysing the role of the extra-phenomenal in the constitution of phenomenality: how a way-of-experiencing (part I) or a particular form-of-embodiment (part II), orients or drives intentionality in a particular way, thereby allowing things to appear *to us* and *as* something. In short, the extra-phenomenal sets the terms for phenomenalisation by delineating the limits of the phenomenal:

> Dwelling at the border, (…) as soon as we reach the limit or the 'extra-phenomenal', is what is at stake in a discourse that does not flee into the insignificant, but articulates (…) the chasm of the human of which the 'depth' or the 'underground' amounts to descending into it rather than papering it over.[111]

Thus, going *beyond phenomenology*, rather substituting our phenomenological analysis for something different, means *feeling the backlash* of theology (and psychoanalysis) on phenomenology and coming to it anew (as transformed by the other disciplines): a coherent naturalism does not reject the signifying *logos* (phenomenology, theology, anthropology, etc.) in favour of a triumphalist scientism; but shows how nature, its brute *thereness*, always resists human efforts at signifying and interpreting it—not unlike God, actually (*deus sive natura*).[112] Indeed, *scientific* naturalism is signifying reason at its zenith: nothing remains obscure to calculating and measuring consciousness. Falque explains:

> The point is not simply to deploy some kind of physiology of the passions, like a contemporary neurology—one that privileges the somatic over the psychic; it is important simply to understand what is at the foundation of our embodiment, where the 'mass of sensations' escapes all signification and (…) phenomenology, which is caught up in the mysteries of the *signifier*.[113]

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[110] *Ibid*, 94.

[111] *Ibid*., 99.

[112] Contrary to, for example: Leiter, *Nietzsche on Morality*; *Moral Psychology with Nietzsche*; Damasio, *Looking for Spinoza.*

[113] Flaque, *WFL*, 25.*

The "darkness in humankind, made up of passions and drives, which the mirages deriving from *signifying* in phenomenology are wrong to evacuate,"[114] is not truly *real*, with the significations it 'causes' being mere 'epiphenomena' that a mechanical anatomy could describe and predict exhaustively—*this is precisely the signified body*: brought into view according to a particular intentional angle. The point is rather to give "what resists phenomenology within us—natural being," as Merleau-Ponty puts it, "its place within it." Indeed, "the philosopher must bear his shadow,"[115] for he casts that shadow *himself*.[116] The extra-phenomenal, as extra-*phenomenal*, is a question *for* phenomenology, as the question *of* phenomenality: the body outside-the-flesh (*hors-chair*) calls into question the phenomenality of the flesh.

At issue is making felt how the extra-phenomenal *drives* phenomenalisation: this drive, in its extra-phenomenality, nevertheless does not *appear* as such; at most, it appears in the way all appearing *withdraws* into the obscure void from which it is constituted. Take the lived-experience of the flesh, the only way of phenomenalising the body. That phenomenalisation has what Nancy calls its "transcendental incentive"[117]—namely, its *impulse* (*Antrieb*, *arche*) and *driving force* (*Trieb*, *principium*)—, in the obscurity of the body-as-body: the body *governs* phenomenalisation as the experiencing of experience (its zero-point), yet therefore also does not *appear* in experience (its vanishing point). Nancy expresses this in Kantian terms:

> If the most general condition of cognition of the understanding is the synopsis of intuition in conjunction with categorial synthesis, it is necessary nonetheless to suppose—and this is something that the *Critique of Pure Reason* doesn't do—the existence of something like an incentive for the activity of cognition.[118]

We located that incentive earlier, namely: faith as "reason's single and most intimate motivating force, its *Trieb* as *Triebfeder* (incentive) for its highest vocation and, ultimately, as the *Grund* of its

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[114] *Ibid.*, 15.

[115] Merleau-Ponty, *Signs*, 178.

[116] Agamben, *The Use of Bodies*, 84. See also: Falque, *LS*, 46; Montavant, *De la passivité dans la phénoménologie de Husserl*, 11.

[117] Nancy, *FT*, 208; Kant, *CPrR*, 72-89.

[118] *Ibid.*, 207.

very being as *reason*."[119] A critical naturalism exposes this transcendental incentive as extra-phenomenal (or extra-rational).

As extra-phenomenal, I would suggest that the body has a *kenotic phenomenality*: the body is never lived (*vécu*) in experience, but only experienced (*éprouvé*) as the *terms* on which the experience of the flesh is lived, its *form*; in *forming* (*poiesis*) or *making-up* (*faire*) the lived-experience by determining it, the body as such *withdraws* (*kenosis*) from it. In short, *body* denotes how the experience of the flesh is *experienced* (*fait l'expérience de la chair*), whilst *flesh* denotes how the body is *lived* (*le vécu du corps*). Take being under the influence of psychedelic drugs: this is not an intentional experience (*of* something), for it knows no specific phenomena, there is no object to live. Nevertheless, when I am under this (neuro-chemical) influence, it determines how I live things in experience. Rather than a lived-experience (*Erlebnis*, *vécu*), it is a way-of-experiencing (*er-leben*, *faire l'expérience*): there is no experience *of* this particular neuro-chemical situation, but it is nevertheless detected as *forming* all experience in the way it sets the terms on which things are lived in it. Thereby, it equally destabilises or de-forms the particular intentional objects of lived-experience, which *withdraw* in my way-of-experiencing them: they might be hallucinations. We can think here of Sartre and Merleau-Ponty's experiments—i.e., experiences—with mescaline.[120] The former describes his hallucinations as playing "on the *margins* of consciousness," for "they are always given with a 'furtive' character that is constitutive of their being: their essence is to be ungraspable, (…) to never be posited *confronting* a personal consciousness."[121] We are precisely interested in this deeper level of experience, which resists intentional constitution into an object or phenomenon, since it is there, as the latter suggests, that we encounter the body-as-body: "the disturbance does not affect the information (…) derived from perception, but discloses beneath 'perception' a deeper life of

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[119] *Ibid.*, 209.

[120] Sartre, *The Imaginary*, 149-159; Merleau-Ponty, *PP*, 265-266, 328-329, 339, 389-402; or, indeed, Husserl on santonin in *Ideas II*, 68/63-80/75 (on "psychophysical conditionality").

[121] *Ibid.*, 157.

consciousness," that constitutes a "debasement of the body into an organism"[122] (i.e., of *Leib* into *Körper*). Nancy echoes this more generally: "the body escapes," he says, "is never sure, lets its presence be suspected but not identified. (…) All we have at our disposal are indications, traces, imprints, and vestiges."[123] If for Freud dreams are the *via regia* to the unconscious, psychedelic experience fulfils the same function for what Falque and Nancy call "the unconscious of the body."[124]

e. Ethics of embodiment

Having made felt the backlash of theology (of the organic body) on phenomenology (of the flesh) by bringing phenomenology to its limits (impossible incorporation); we now return to the body to explore its extra-phenomenal dimension (*hors-chair*): the body undergone as such in experience, rather than lived in the flesh. This experience concerns neither the objective (*Körper*) nor subjective body (*Leib*), but the body as corporeal unity (*Leibkörper*); not the extended body of physics (*corps étendu*), nor the lived-body of phenomenology (*corps vécu*), but what Falque calls the *spread body* of biology and psychoanalysis (*corps épandu*):

> Whatever being human is, it is necessary that one is it (…) right down to the depths of our ownmost viscera. Between the *extended body* (Descartes) and the *lived body* (Husserl), stands (…) a third type of body—which I call here *spread body*—a kind of border area or intermediary body between the objective body and the subjective body (…)—extended in its matter and lived in its intentionality.[125]

At neither side of any binary opposition, this body is precisely *spread-out* between them and provides the space for the two poles to take place. This body is the organic reality that does not appear in lived-experience, but nevertheless forms that experience: by *making possible* the lived-experience of the flesh as the reality experienced therein, the body *determines* that experience as its experiencing. The spread body is thus a *transcendental body*: forming the basis on which the world appears by

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[122] Merleau-Ponty, *PP*, 329, see further 396: "The hallucination is not in the world but 'before' it, because the patient's body no longer enjoys its insertion into the system of appearances. All hallucination bears initially on one's own body."

[123] Nancy, *Corpus*, 156.

[124] Falque, *ECE*, 53; Nancy, *Corpus*, 156. For a similar claim, see Szummer, 'The Hyperassociative Mind'.

[125] *Ibid.*, 17-18; 'TIMB', 282; *WFL*, 12-15.

putting us in-the-world (phenomenologically) and constituting us as human by engendering finitude (existentially).

Since phenomenology cannot think it, Falque proposes, following Spinoza, an *ethics of the spread body*: an analysis of the force, impulse, inclination, or striving (*conatus*) through which the body "endeavors to persevere in its own being."[126] So far, I have been calling this *striving* of the body its *resistance*: the impossibility of reducing incorporation to incarnation. Falque's ethics thus thematises the spread body as residual body: appearing neither as object, nor as subject; indeed, not *appearing* at all, but simply *presenting* itself *there*—a human body irreducible to pure consciousness (angelism) or mere organicity (bestiality). Falque illustrates this using the example of the clinical or reclining body:

> *Animal*, on the one hand (…), the human body always remains such in the medical world—as a clinical body, or reclining (*klinein*), on a hospital bed (…). But, on the other hand, this same body nevertheless is and always remains *human* (…). *There is* thus animality (….) but *seeing there also* humanity. This is what makes up (…) the *spread body*, neither solely extended nor exclusively lived (…); at the same time anchored in its matter, whilst alternatively brought into view according to its manner.[127]

Think of the of the body under anaesthesia as it is spread-out on the operating table: though giving itself *as an object*, at the disposal of the surgeon; the surgeon cannot dispose of their patient as they please, for it remains *a human body*, and not merely an object. The body under anaesthesia does not appear as a corpse might, for we *regard* it differently, thought it perhaps does not *give* itself differently.[128]

Taking a step back then to consider what I have been doing over the past two chapters. Against Henry, I argued that the world, the body, and creation, cannot be bracketed in favour of transcendental Life, the flesh, or incarnation: there is no life without it being lived in-the-world (existence), without it being embodied (finitude), and without it therefore being ecstatic (kenosis)—

[126] Spinoza, *Ethics*, III.7(102)/102.

[127] Falque, *ECE*, 18-20.

[128] Falque, *WFL*, 13.

not in Christianity in particular, and not insofar this life is human more generally.[129] These three things make possible the encounter or fellowship between God and man, and thus salvation, as instituted by God's Incarnation in Jesus Christ: his comprehensive assumption of the human condition (*Menschwerdung*), his entry into historicity and finitude through an organic body (incorporation). Yet, simultaneously, as Henry illustrates, Christian authors have seen reason to understand Incarnation as a disincorporation: indeed, as Derrida remarked, when Christianity comes into contact with phenomenology, the flesh's disincorporation is brought to its extreme. "Incorporation, then, goes along with its dis-incorporation," Falque concludes, "the construction of Christianity with its deconstruction."[130] The next chapter therefore reprises this issue as it appears in Nancy's deconstruction of Christianity.

[129] See Bultmann, 'Humanism and Christianity'.

[130] Falque, *WFL*, 233.

Chapter 6. Nancy's extension of the soul

> The Incarnation changes everything. Since the Incarnation, God has been externalized. (…) It reopens the question of the distinction between body and spirit, between interior and exterior.
>
> — Merleau-Ponty, *S&N*, 174-175.

Nancy straightforwardly declares that "the 'flesh' (…) is finished." Instead, "*body* ought to succeed on the word *flesh*, which was always overabundant, nourished by sense, and egological."[1] Like Falque, he detects a *swerve of the flesh* in Western thought, and like Derrida, understands it as engendered by Christianity: *hoc est enim corpus meum* is coextensive with *cogito ergo sum*, inaugurating the Western "obsession" with the self's immanent auto-affection,[2] and turning Christianity into "the religion of touch (…), of presence that is immediate to the body and to the heart."[3] Like Falque, but contrary to Derrida, Nancy nevertheless understands Christianity as simultaneously delivering us from this philosophical figure it itself instituted (by self-deconstructing). Eucharist and Incarnation (part II), alongside faith and Revelation (part I), are therefore nodal-points of Christianity's self-deconstruction:

> The body proper, the foreign body: *hoc est enim* displays the body *proper*, makes it present to the touch, serves it up as a meal. (…) But instantly, always, the body on display is foreign (…). This, this… *this* is always too much, or too little, to be *that*. (…) If *hoc est enim corpus meum* says anything, it's beyond speech. It isn't spoken, it's exscribed—with bodily abandon.[4]

Nancy is at his most obscure when considering the body, precisely because the body is what remains most obscure to thought. Yet, thinking is embodied and wants to grapple with this condition which is its own, yet not *of* its own (its-self): "With thoughts about the body," Nancy

[1] Nancy, *SW*, 149.

[2] Nancy, *Corpus*, 3-5.

[3] Nancy, *NMT*, 14.

[4] Nancy, *Corpus*, 5-7.

says, "the body always forces us to think farther, always *too* far (…) to carry on as thought, but never far enough to become a body."[5]

1. The experience of the self

If, for Husserl, the body is "the *organ of perception*,"[6] both its zero-point and vanishing point; then "*the body* is *the organ of sense*," for Nancy: not itself *sensed*, yet *making sense* as the ultimate transcendental or "*architectonics of sense*."[7] The body is the existential basis on which things make sense without having a sense of its own.[8] Where Falque therefore questions the phenomenological distinction between flesh and body, Nancy questions it in its transcendental guise as between ownmost (*propre*) and foreign (*impropre, étranger*). The point, however, is always substituting auto-affection for hetero-affection: showing how the body's obscurity *undergrounds* the flesh's revelation (Falque), how there is a foreign element *at the heart* of all selfhood (Nancy), how the phenomenal inside (*chair*) is delineated by an extra-phenomenal outside (*hors-chair*).

Nancy summarises what this chapter will seek to make understandable—namely, the conception of the body as organ of sense and its implications—, as follows:

> A body touches on the outside, but simultaneously (…) touches itself as outside. A body accedes to itself as outside. Have you already encountered yourself as pure spirit? No. This means (…) that we only gain access to ourselves from an outside. I am an outside for myself. This isn't simply through the fact (…) that the eye doesn't see itself (…). This is what skin is. It's through my skin that I touch myself. And I touch myself from outside, I don't touch myself from inside. (…) The phenomenological analyses of 'self-touching' always return to a primary interiority. Which is impossible. (…) I have to be in exteriority in order to touch myself. And what I touch remains on the outside. I am exposed to myself touching myself. And therefore (…) the body is always outside, on the outside. It is from the outside.[9]

I will unpack this in what follows. For now, we can start by remarking that it is a widely shared observation that the eye, the organ of sight, does not see itself: Leder even considers it a "general principle" that "insofar as I perceive through an organ, it necessarily recedes from the perceptual

[5] *Ibid*., 37.

[6] Husserl, *Ideas II*, 56/61, 159/167.

[7] Nancy, *Corpus*, 73, 25.

[8] See Nancy, *EF*, 84.

[9] Nancy, *Corpus*, 128-129.*

field it discloses."[10] This general principle is what I have been calling 'kenotic phenomenality', namely the way the medium of experience withdraws within the experiencing from the experience it makes possible. This constitutes a profound phenomenological problem: vision (the act) and the eye (the organ) withdraw from view; they can only be seen from the outside, as an object. "From the outside," Nancy explains, "but we have *seen* what it means to see the pupil *from the inside*: it is just seeing, and hence not seeing vision, or it is seeing the dead eye in which one is looking. To see the living eye is always to 'look at it from the outside.'"[11] Here, body (part II) joins faith (part I) in performing the same phenomenological function: making phenomenality possible (zero-point), whilst thereby withdrawing from it (vanishing point).[12] The insight that sight is foreign to seeing reveals the limits of phenomenology and exposes something deeper: in overemphasising the subjectively lived, William Desmond says, "the prior sense of self (…) more fundamental than subjective, objective or instrumental mind, will still not have been thought."[13] This prior sense of self, like the eye, is vision's transcendental, only becoming empirical from the outside: only thus do we know that we have eyes and not just vision, even though we have eyes *before* seeing anything. We come to the subject of experience, not through the subject itself, from the inside through introspection as self-foundation ('meditation'); but instead from the outside, as an object. The same goes for the body: the organ is foreign to the lived-experience it makes possible and as such forms its transcendental; yet, *as* that transcendental, it is not known *a priori*, through introspection, but only *a posteriori*, through experience. The body is a *transcendental a posteriori* (Romano), forming the *predelineation of experience* (Caputo).

[10] Leder, *The Absent Body*, 14. For examples, see: Plato, *Alcibiades 1*, 132e-133b; Husserl, *Ideas II*, 147/155; Merleau-Ponty, *PP*, 108-109.

[11] Nancy, *ES*, 61.

[12] See Nancy, *NMT*, 10-11.

[13] Desmond, *Perplexity and Ultimacy*, 64.

a. Descartes' articulation of the self

In thinking the body, Nancy thus goes back to *subject* of its experience, the *self* it embodies, the *soul* it houses—words which for him denote an unreal reality (a fiction): "The Subject, the pure belonging to self of the Self, is a fable."[14] After all, in its foundational moment—namely, Descartes' *cogito*, declaring its *ego sum* based on its self-defining act, its *cogitatio*—, in its self-utterance, it shows itself, shows *its-self*, to be a fiction:

> *Mundus est fabula*: the world is the uttering, the *pure* subject is I who utters itself uttering. Pure and veritable fiction indeed (…). As a result, the subject withdraws in it. Throughout centuries of subjectivity, there will never be any other I than the I withdrawn from its own discourse (…). And it is this *withdrawal* (…) that remains to be thought. That is to say, (…) something that *is* not (…) but something that nevertheless makes up the very act of *ego*, its self-position in the form of: it withdraws *itself*, and this *happens* to it, at the extreme point of its fabulation—of its *saying*—like an accident through which the *self* becomes equivalent to *chaos*. As soon as I open the mouth, I withdraw. The place of this mouth does not let itself be circumscribed.[15]

This is Falque's *kenosis of the flesh* reframed as a *kenosis of the self* (the egological sphere of ownness): the subject, or carnal auto-affective self, withdraws itself into something foreign to its-self, namely, the body as a chaotic whole of passions and drives undergrounding it. The *I* pronouncing itself as pure thought or flesh, without extension or body, immediately disproves itself: it speaks *by opening its mouth*, undergoes itself *through a body*. The *ego* pronouncing itself *cogito*, whose *sum* is its *cogitatio*, also renounces its-self in doing so through a mouth. Its self is kenotic: self-effacing, self-withdrawing, insofar as it is a self. I (*ego*) cannot articulate myself (*cogito*) on the basis of my-self (*cogitatio*), but only through a foreign element (*corpus*).[16]

Far from being a naive metaphysical dualist, Descartes was keenly aware of this problem.[17] The Sixth Meditation, for example, draws a stark and ironic contrast with Henry:

> Nature also teaches me, by these sensations of pain, hunger, thirst (…), that I am not merely present in my body as a sailor is present in a ship, but that I am very closely joined (*conjunctum*) and, as it were, intermingled (*quasi permixtum*) with it, so that I and the body form a unit (*unum quid*). If this were not so, I (…) would not feel pain when the body was hurt, but would perceive the damage purely by the intellect, just as a sailor perceives by sight if anything in his ship is broken. Similarly, when the body needed food or drink, I should have an explicit understanding

[14] Nancy, *ES*, 66; *FT*, 83; *MA*, 75.

[15] *Ibid*., 86-87; *Corpus*, 134-135.

[16] *Ibid*., 112.

[17] Marion, *On Descartes' Passive Thought*; Nancy, *ES*, 89; *Corpus*, 143-144; Falque, *LS*, 52-53.

> of the fact, instead of having confused sensations of hunger or thirst. For these sensations of hunger, thirst, pain (…) are nothing but confused modes of thinking which arise from the union and, as it were, intermingling (*quasi permixtione*) of the mind with the body.[18]

The *ego* is an impossible union of body and soul, a something-that-is-one (*unum quid*). It is a thinking thing that *articulates itself or conjoins its-self* (*s'articule*)—conjoins its body with its soul, articulating *itself* therein—by opening its mouth and uttering *I am* (*ego sum*): *the articulation forms the conjunction* (*l'articulation*). The *ego*, articulating itself as *cogito*, thus never coincides with the *cogitatio* constituting its being. The *I* (*ego*), in *itself* (*cogito*), is never properly its-*self* (*cogitatio*): "who 'I'?," Nancy asks, "who is the subject of this utterance, ever alien to the subject of its statement."[19]

Moreover, Descartes says, rather than rationally, this conjunction is known "from our own frequent experience."[20] What is this *experience*, Nancy asks, "if not the very model of certainty?"[21] Surely nobody has "to be told what existence is before being able to conclude and assert that he exists," Descartes sighs, "the only way we can learn such things is by ourselves: what convinces us of them is simply our own experience or awareness—that awareness or internal testimony which everyone experiences within himself."[22] However, this experience is not empirical, but rather the experience of reason or a purely "rational experience."[23] It is the ex-per-ience (going-through) of ex-istence, more fundamental than the *Erlebnisse*: it undergrounds phenomenalisation by setting the terms on which it proceeds, defining 'what convinces us' as ex-per-ience. Nancy explains:

> The experience of the subject has nothing to do with the order of the empirical, nor with that of an existential intimacy. (…) In this experience, the Subject apprehends his own *sub-stare* to the extent in which he does not grasp it as the *object* of (…) thought (…). The evidence of the *cogito* stands underneath every faculty and every substantiality. Cartesian experience is the experience of the *sub* without stasis or stance. Up to the end without reserve—*ex-perior*—the *sub* puts to the test what it can be. *Ego* is the proof of the *subex*.[24]

[18] Descartes, *Writings*, II.160.

[19] Nancy, *Corpus*, 162; *Corpus II*, 87.

[20] Descartes, *Meditations*, 144

[21] Nancy, *ES*, 106; *Sexistence*, 104.

[22] Descartes, *Writings*, II.417-418.

[23] Nancy, *EF*, 22.

[24] Nancy, *ES*, 108.

What convinces us is the experience of *certainty*: not the cognition of ideas, but our experience of their clarity and distinction. As such, this experience constitutes the self: though confused itself and thus not "accessible to the ego" as certain, it is nevertheless "*from out of this* that the ego emerges."[25] For Descartes, certainty (its experience) is then what morality (its factuality) is for Kant: "a factuality heterogeneous to and incommensurable with the reason from the heart of which, nonetheless, it emerges."[26] Nancy's early work on Descartes thereby anticipates Franck's on the necessary though impossible phenomenological incorporation:

> *Our own experience*: it is a matter of the experience *of ownness* (*du propre*), and there is no other kind of experience for Descartes. And the experience of ownness, for the soul, is as much that of its pure distinction from the body than that of a certain corporeality (…). The experience of ownness is ownness as experience; the soul is properly that which, in uttering itself feels itself (*s'éprouve*) existing (an ordeal (*épreuve*) prior to any passion or affect, but that constitutes a proof (*fait preuve*)) and which, feeling itself existing in this way, experiences itself as properly united to the body. Even though it is never said explicitly, the experience of the union must be implied—be it only obscurely—in that of the cogito. (…) It is *unum quid* who pronounces *ego*. And it is this experience (…) that remains, at the moment where it takes place, impossible to *establish*.[27]

Incorporation constitutes the experience of the union implied by that of the *cogito*, forming the *ego*, opening it up, through the mouth. It is *implied obscurely*, because the body does not belong to the experience of the *cogito* as its object: though itself not clear and distinct (Descartes), outside life's carnal pathos (Henry), incorporation nevertheless makes-for (*fait*) this experience; though outside proper cognition, it allows for there to be cognition.[28] Descartes therefore writes to his Princess Elizabeth that it is *necessary* to conceive of this conjunction or incorporation, but warns her not to dwell on it excessively, for it is simultaneously *impossible*: it cannot be cognised on the basis of ourselves in clear and distinct ideas (egologically).[29] Descartes' union of body and soul is structurally similarly to Kant's ideas of reason towards which reason is *driven* in the *experience* of reasoning: reason, doubt, and reduction are not helpful when conceiving of this *unum quid*, this incorporation; rather, "it is the ordinary course of life and conversation (…), that teaches us how

[25] Nancy, *FT*, 88.
[26] *Ibid*., 145.
[27] Nancy, *ES*, 106-107.
[28] *Ibid*., 110.
[29] Descartes, *Writings*, III.227.

to conceive the union of the soul and the body."[30] I do not get a sense of the union of body and soul, of my-self as *unum quid*, through *re-duction* (doubt and meditation) to incarnate givenness, but only through *ex-istence*, life in-the-world where we discover it as implied in all (confused) experiencing.[31] It is evident as "the most everyday experience of existence," and Nancy therefore concludes that "there's nothing to prove (*prouver*); there's nothing but the undergoing (*éprouver*) of the real."[32] In short, the union of body and soul is a *transcendental a posteriori*.

Nancy's example of the mouth illustrates this, for as the organ articulating *ego sum*, conjoining it as *unum quid*, the mouth simultaneously *forms* it by *incorporating* it:

> The incommensurable extension of thought is the opening of the mouth. The mouth that opens and forms 'ego' (…) is the place of the union (…), and this is how *unum quid* comes about. This place is not a place, and yet it is not out of place. Within a place (…), it makes up the gaping of a nonplace. In this nonplace the figure (extension, measure) and the figureless (thought without measure) are (…) joined together in their distinction.[33]

In forming words, the mouth constitutes the self as something-that-is-one: the mouth is like a *joint* (*articulation*), connecting two bones and turning them into a functioning unified limb, unifying by forming an *utterance* (*articulation*). The mouth belongs to the body, yet only as the opening-up making it what it is, namely "the eating and speaking body, just as the other openings are what make it the breathing, listening, seeing, eliminating body."[34] The mouth is the space where *unum quid*, this incommensurable unity of the subject, takes place: an opening formed *by* the body articulating what is not *of* the body.[35] "I contain the property of a very close conjunction (…) with what I am not," Nancy says, and therefore "I may still be something more than what I am essentially, without (…) this conjunction being posited as a mere accident in relation to this essence," but instead opening "the space for (…) a singularly double status of 'me'."[36] I cannot *be*

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[30] *Ibid.*

[31] See Nancy, *Corpus*, 144.

[32] Nancy, *FT*, 317.

[33] Nancy, *ES*, 111.

[34] Nancy, *Adoration*, 28.

[35] *Ibid.*, 77.

[36] Nancy, *ES*, 95; *Corpus*, 133.

my body as subject, without also *having* it as object. The *I*, Henry's carnal self, is therefore always already outside-its-self (*hors-chair*), in the body (*in-corporated*):

> For Descartes himself, the famous *ego* (…) is only *ego* by virtue of being outside itself (…). And therefore, (…) the *res cogitans* is a body. (…) *Ego* is being outside with reference to the *ego*. *Ego* is also being a body (…). Body means very precisely the soul that feels it's a body. Or: the soul is the name of the sensing of the body. We could say (…) the body is the ego that senses itself to be other than ego. (…) The formula that sums up this thought would be: the inside, which senses it is outside.[37]

The Incarnation of the Word exemplifies this inside-outside dynamic: the Incarnation does not give us the Word *in itself*, but rather *as* Jesus' life lived in-the-world through his historical body. To appear kenotically, as a servant, incognito, as Kierkegaard observes, is "not to appear in one's *proper role*,"[38] or "not being in the role which essentially belongs to one,"[39] always already outside-oneself. Jesus, the human being, *makes* or *forms* the Word *by*, not in spite of, embodying it, by putting it outside-its-self and thereby letting it articulate itself: his worldly body is the mouth forming the Word(s). Christ is a teacher inseparable from his teaching, for his life is the teaching: the *logos* is not housed in a body, for that *logos* only exists insofar a body gives it form, articulates it, gives it a mouth through which to speak.[40] As Bultmann puts it: "Word and deed are identical."[41] Nancy echoes this: "the *logos* is not distinct from the figure (…), since its essential content consists precisely in the *logos*'s figuring (…) itself, announcing itself like a person who appears unexpectedly, who shows himself and, in showing himself, shows the original of the figure."[42] Christ *embodies* the *logos*, because he cannot *be* it *in itself*. This is Nancy's way of overcoming all dualism, including Gnosticism:

> The body is the unity of a being outside of itself. Here, I abandon the word *dualism* (…), it becomes instead a question of thinking the unity of being outside the self, the unity of the coming to self as a 'self-sensing,' a 'self-touching' that necessarily passes through the outside (…). It involves thinking (…) unity as a form, which is inevitably an articulation. Then what we

[37] Nancy, *Corpus*, 131.

[38] Kierkegaard, *TC*, 127 (my emphasis).

[39] *Ibid*., 132.

[40] *Ibid*., 135; *PF*, 69.

[41] Bultmann, *TNT2*, 60.

[42] Nancy, *NMT*, 4.

> were calling 'soul' (…) is exactly what makes this *being outside*, not this being on the outside, but this *being outside without inside that completely forms the inside*—or all *being to self*.[43]

Or, in Cartesian language, "it makes no sense to talk about body and thought apart from each other (…): they *are* only their touching each other, the touch of their breaking down, and into, each other."[44]

b. Nancy's transplanted heart

Nancy then applies his analysis of the experience of the self (*le propre*) to that of the ownmost body (*le corps propre*): if I can only encounter my-self *from the outside*, if self-sensing is not auto-affective but hetero-affective; then my ownmost body is likewise a *foreign body* to me because, like the organ of sense, it cannot sense itself. The body seen from the outside is the existent body: not the body achieved through reduction (*Leib*), or appearing as distinct from our-selves in meditation (*Körper*); but the body making *me* (*cogito*), who *I am* (*ego sum*), as a unit (*Leibkörper*, *unum quid*). This corporeal unity utters *I*, it is therefore *mine* only in its unity, without coinciding with *me* in my-*self*: it is always already *there* (*da*), requiring *me* to go outside my-*self*, in order to *be-there* (*Da-sein*), *myself*. Put otherwise, the self (or the Word) is not incarnated transcendentally (Henry's logic of *life*), but rather incorporated existentially (Heidegger's logic of being-*in*-the-*world*). Nancy summarises this existential unity of the self, formed by the body, as follows:

> We sense ourselves as an outside. This (…) concerns the sense of existence. (…) Existence is what is sensed as existence. This doesn't mean that there's a little subject back behind, sensing itself as existence. There's no longer a subject 'back behind.' There's only a 'self-sensing,' as a relation to self as outside. And that's what being one's self is. Self being is necessarily being outside (…), being exposed or extended. This is what Heidegger tries to make the word *Dasein* ('existence') say: *Dasein* is being the there (*da*).[45]

The body, *this* body that *I am* (*ego sum*), only appears when we go outside—outside *of* the self (*cogitatio*), outside *in* the world (*Dasein*). This is, again, phenomenology brought to its limits, namely

[43] Nancy, *Corpus*, 133-134.

[44] *Ibid*., 37.

[45] *Ibid*., 132; *BP*, 22-23.

an experience that resists reduction (to lived-experience's incarnate givenness), but nevertheless remains an ex-per-ience: a sense of existence (going-through life).

Like Falque, Nancy refers to clinical experiences, the *dys*functioning or *mal*functioning body: when *my own* body (*corps propre*) no longer appears as such (*propre*), when our body's organic materiality asserts itself as "something that not only resists in 'us' but perhaps also resists us."[46] He elaborates:

> The body is always outside the intimacy of the body itself. (…) The only veritable intimacy of the body is in silence. This is (…) health: (…) the silence of the organs, when I don't sense my stomach, my heart, or my viscera. (…) But when I sense my stomach or my heart, (…) it's from the outside. That's what I'd want to have understood by 'soul': (…) the other of the body (…). The soul is the being outside of a body, and it is in this being outside that it has its inside.[47]

This is Falque's objection to Henry: in carnal auto-affection, there is no experience *of* the body, only experience *as* flesh. The experience of illness therefore exposes the limits of this conception of experience. Indeed, *sensing* the body means experiencing it as an outside, as resistance (hetero-affection) rather than intimacy (auto-affection): the body that hiccups, sputters, *resists*, and in resisting, appears to me *from the outside* (*hors-chair*), yet does so "in the most intimate or intestinal reaches of the *auto*," by way of "the heterological antecedence of the *autos* itself."[48] The outside is *implied* by the very notion of the inside, the *hetero* by the *auto*: inside as outside, and auto-affected only as hetero-affection.[49] As such, the extra-phenomenal is a question for phenomenology itself: the outside of phenomenality is inside as the form or delineation of the phenomenal inside, constituting the inside as 'inside'. The extra-phenomenal is *implied* in the phenomenal without every ceasing to be outside, just like "the experience of the union must be implied—be it only obscurely—in that of the cogito," as an "experience (…) that remains at the moment where it

[46] Nancy, *FT*, 86.

[47] Nancy, *Corpus*, 129.

[48] Nancy, *FT*, 117-119.

[49] See Nancy, *Corpus II*, 84-85; Derrida, *OT*, 14.

takes place, impossible to *establish*."[50] The body is the foreign element forming (delineating) or constituting (making-up) the sphere of ownness, my-self.

Having undergone a heart-transplant, Nancy knows this experience of the body's inside-outside, its intimate resistance, its proper impropriety, better than most. The heart is the organ most fundamental to the body-that-I-am: animating it, keeping it alive, keeping *me* alive. It comprises the whole question of the body as ownmost: "If my own heart was failing me," Nancy asks, "to what degree was it 'mine,' my 'own' organ?"[51] This is an experience of the body-that-I-am without being an ownmost body, precisely because what makes me *me*—keeps me alive—is foreign to my-self, either because it appears in its dysfunction or because it literally belongs to someone else. It is the experience of the self as constituted by something other-than-its-self, which only appears as such (foreign) when it malfunctions, dys-appears, resists: the body-that-I-am appearing as the body-that-I-have, foreign to me and my self. In this experience, I become a stranger to my-self, since when I become conscious of it—of *my* heart, of *my*-self—, it has disappeared: I can only become conscious of my heart as an object, of *I* as *it*, in which case it is no longer *mine*.[52] Instead, it has become an *intruder*: either, a malfunctioning heart, requiring replacement since it risks undoing me; or, once I receive the transplant, the heart literally is no longer my own, yet the reason why I am still here. In both cases, self-awareness is awareness of otherness, auto-affection constituted by hetero-affection. I am only aware *of my*-self, insofar as I become a stranger *to* my-*self*, intruded by something foreign to me: "An intruder is in me, and I am becoming a stranger to myself."[53] Or, again: "Strange to myself, with myself estranging me."[54] This strangeness makes me *me*, in Nancy's case literally: it keeps him alive. The experience of the body is then not primarily a carnal self, but the experience of the stranger in which I somehow must

[50] Nancy, *ES*, 107; *BP*, 27-30.
[51] Nancy, *Corpus*, 162.
[52] *Ibid*., 163.
[53] *Ibid*., 167.
[54] *Ibid*., 168.

nevertheless find myself: "To know oneself," Falque says, "is also to objectivise oneself in a certain way,"[55] or, as Nancy puts it, "to relate to oneself as to an object of one's own knowing."[56]

Yet, Nancy's reflections on his heart-transplant really only illustrate his general thinking of the body as set out earlier in *Corpus*, if not phenomenologically, then at least by writing-out an experience. Indeed, "there's no experience *of* the body," he says, "the body itself is experience,"[57] namely the experience of the self outside-of-itself (the undergoing of ex-istence): the self withdraws in the experience of itself, which precisely *forms* the experience that *is* the self.[58] My self is not a carnal ipseity undergone in the subject's auto-affection; I come to myself as an other, in the experience of my material body as ob-jected to me, resisting my-self, from the outside:

> The body is *self* in departure (…). The intimacy of the body *exposes* a pure a-seity as the swerve and departure that it *is*. Aseity (…) *exists* only as the swerve and departure of this *a*—(of this *a-part-self*), which is the place, the moment proper of its presence, its authenticity, its sense. The *a-part-self*, *as departure*, is what's exposed. (…) The *a-part-self* is not translated or incarnated into exposition, it is what it is there: this vertiginous withdrawal *of* the self *from* the self that is needed to open the infinity of that withdrawal *all the way up to* self. The body is this departure of self to self.[59]

The body is thus only *proper*, my-self, insofar as it is *foreign*, an-other, for in appearing as proper it withdraws from its-self: "to be proper," Nancy says, "the body has to be foreign, and therefore to find itself appropriated."[60] Or, again: "The body is *ours* and *proper* to us precisely to the degree that it doesn't belong to us (…). But to this degree (…), our body isn't just ours but *us*, *ourselves*."[61] Romano articulates this phenomenologically by declaring "proprioception and exteroception" to be "co-originary," meaning that what "*allows me to apprehend my body as mine in the experience of auto-con-tact*" is *"the experience of a hetero-contact*."[62]

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[55] Falque, *CRV*, 50.

[56] Nancy, *Sexistence*, 81.

[57] Nancy, *Corpus*, 101; *BP*, 200.

[58] *Ibid*., 29-31*; *BP*, 18, 27-30; *Corpus II*, 84, 87.

[59] *Ibid*., 33.

[60] *Ibid*., 154.

[61] *Ibid*., 157.

[62] Romano, *TI*, 147.

The body is thereby established as a *place for existence*, where existence takes place and is experienced: the self outside-of-itself; being-*there*, outside my-self, as a stranger. This ex-per-ience, which is ex-istence, resists any phenomenology. Nancy summarises:

> It is from my body that *I have* my body as a stranger to me—expropriated. The body is the stranger 'out there' (…) *because it is here*. Here, in the 'there' of the here, the body opens, cuts, displaces the *out*-'there.' (…) 'Ontology of the body' = exscription of being. Existence addressed to an out-side (*there* (…)). Ex-istence: bodies are existence, the very act of ex-istence, *being*. (…) It's from bodies that we have, for ourselves, bodies as our strangers. Nothing to do with a dualism, a monism, or a phenomenology of the body. The body's neither substance, phenomenon, flesh, nor signification. Just being exscribed.[63]

Here, Romano again articulates phenomenologically what Nancy struggles to write-out:

> The body is already the other of itself (…): it is originary exteriority to itself insofar as it responds to itself, that is, insofar as the 'self' of exteriority constitutes itself in and by such a response. (…) But if the body is originarily eccentric to itself, (…) constituted in itself by an originary being-outside-itself, (…) then we must definitively give up the (…) 'flesh' and replace it with a corporeity as experience of the world (…). Completely exposed to the world, my body is the sensible (and sentient) modality of this primitive being-outside-oneself; if it is experience in a self-contact it is precisely because the latter is self-con-tact, that is, self-experience of itself always already traversed by (…) the world, self-estrangement by which I exist alongside things (…). An openness of an originary being-outside-oneself (…), the body (…) is always of the world and in the world, and it is in this, precisely, that it escapes itself (…). What must be called 'body' is (…) this impossibility of all coincidence, and thus, this primary eccentricity to oneself, (…) this openness that precedes and prohibits all distinction between constituting and constituted, between transcendental and empirical.[64]

Rather than experience *of* the body (the flesh), this is the experience that the body *is* or *forms* (*fait*), namely: ex-istence, how the body constitutes world-disclosure by putting us in-the-world, i.e. outside our carnal selves.[65] The terms on which the world is disclosed are set by the body. As Nancy expresses it succinctly: "A body is the withdrawal from self that relates a self to itself as it exposes the world."[66] In other words, if we saw in chapter 3 how a particular way-of-life (form of existence) facilitated a particular way-of-experiencing (form of experience), and if we have now described the former as itself facilitated by the body (form of embodiment), we must now further elucidate the role of the body (as embodied existence) in the formation of experience. Whereas part I framed this question as a poetics of faith, part II understands it as a technics of embodiment.

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[63] *Ibid*., 19.

[64] Romano, *TI*, 147-148.

[65] Nancy, *Corpus II*, 88.

[66] *Ibid*., 87; *Corpus*, 143.

2. Technics of embodiment: Mauss, Bourdieu and Nancy

Let us recapitulate briefly. Nancy rejects the flesh: the ownmost body (Henry and Husserl), like the subject (Descartes), is a fable. Yet, though irreducible to the egological sphere of ownness, embodiment nevertheless remains an ex-per-ience:

> For (…) a self is nothing if not, at its heart (…), apart from and touching on itself, a pulsing of self to self, by which the 'same' decomposes the 'self' (…) posed and supposed. From this it follows that the evidence of the union (…) is evidence of a different order. It's neither 'evident' nor 'clear and distinct,' and it cannot relate to itself as self-grounded certitude of an *inspectio mentis*. And, in fact, it's a fact subject not to 'inspection' but to an 'exercise,' or a 'test.'[67]

The body's experience is of another order than incarnate givenness: not reached through introspection (meditation or reduction), but by a putting-to-the-test, an ex-ercise, ex-periment or ex-istence: "the materially transcendental experience of a *mouth* at whose opening (…) thought tempts chance and takes the risk (*experiri*) of thinking."[68] Or again: "The soul is a name for the experience that the body *is*. *Experiri*, in Latin, is precisely going outside, leaving without a destination, crossing through something without knowing whether we will return from it."[69] Rather than a phenomenon or given of lived-experience (*Erlebnis*, *vécu*), it means the undergoing (*éprouver*) or ordeal (*épreuve*) of life in-the-world. Body denotes the life (*Leben*) on the basis of which things are lived. If in part I we related the ex-per-ience of existence (faith) to the lived-experience it made possible (theophanic phenomena); we can now likewise consider how the ex-per-ience of the body, or the material condition engendering existence as the finitude of being-in-the-world, forms the lived-experience of the flesh. If part I drew on Kierkegaard to bring out the singularity of existence in Nancy's thought, part II draws on the French sociologists Marcel Mauss and Pierre Bourdieu to highlight the sociality of this existence: embodiment allows the singularity of existence to be understood in terms of its situation within a broader socio-economic complex, which Nancy understands as its 'materiality'.

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[67] Nancy, *Corpus*, 140.

[68] Nancy, *EF*, 90.

[69] Nancy, *Corpus*, 134.

a. The materiality of existence

If, as discussed, ex-istence is ex-per-ience, that experience is of embodiment: being-outside-oneself. If phenomenology became a poetics of faith in part I, it therefore now becomes a technics of embodiment: "'Creation' is the *techne* of bodies. Our world (…) creates itself," i.e. discloses itself as meaningful, "as the world of bodies," i.e. in terms of particular constellations of material conditions. Nancy explains: "Our world is the world of the 'technical,' (…) of the *ecotechnical*. (…) Unless we ponder without reservation the ecotechnical creation of bodies as the truth of *our* world (…), we won't have begun to think *this* very world."[70] What does this mean? Well, Nancy is drawing on Heidegger, who understands *techne* as "something poietic,"[71] i.e. a mode of disclosure.[72] In making this *techne* one of embodiment, however, Nancy identifies the disclosive forms with material conditions: grounding a particular form-of-live (existence), corresponding to a way-of-experiencing (disclosure), in a form-of-embodiment engendering that existence (finitude) and thereby making experience possible (as function of that finitude). Bourdieu, echoing Caputo (pre-delineation of experience) and Romano (transcendental *a posteriori*), explains how this works:

> The world is comprehensible (…) because the body, which (…) has the capacity to be (…) outside itself, in the world (…), has been protractedly (…) exposed to its regularities. Having acquired from this exposure (…) dispositions attuned to these regularities, it is inclined and able to anticipate them practically in (…) a *corporeal knowledge* that provides a practical comprehension of the world quite different from the intentional act of conscious decoding (…). In other words, if the agent has an immediate understanding of the familiar world, this is because the cognitive structures that he implements are the product of incorporation of the structures of the world in which he acts; the instruments of construction that he uses to know the world are constructed by the world. These practical principles of organization of the given are constructed from the experience of frequently encountered situations and can be revised and rejected in the event of repeated failure.[73]

In short, phenomenalisation's existential situation means its (in)formation by material or worldly conditions since we are only in-the-world through the body: we know the world through the bodily or material (i.e., worldly) systems constituting it, whether understood strictly as organicity (e.g., the

[70] *Ibid*., 89.

[71] Heidegger, *The Question Concerning Technology*, 13; Nancy, *MA*, 191; *TM*, 6, 30, 49; *SW*, 41; *The Ground of the Image*, 81; Lacoue-Labarthe, *Typography*, 65-69.

[72] *Ibid*., 10, 34; Nancy, *TM*, 3-4; *FT*, 216-218.

[73] Bourdieu, *Pascalian Meditations*, 135-136.

nervous system) or broadly as socio-economic conditions (e.g., capitalism). These two ways of understanding experience's (in)formation by a particular situation (either existential or material) are in fact identical: for Nancy, existence is always *embodied*, namely a social and material existence—which is what Heidegger forgets.[74] Being embodied means not simply to have the way in which the world appears to us undergrounded by bodily drives and passions (Nietzsche and Freud), but also to have it fall under the social, political and economic rules governing these bodies (Marx, Agamben and Foucault).[75] "As a technical apparatus," Ian James illustrates this, "a family hearth, peasant's shoes, or paintbrush, (…) all articulate a fundamental bodily intentionality or orientation of sense through which the world can be encountered as meaningful (…) (through which the world is 'created')."[76] All experience proceeds through the body, for existence makes for (*fait*) experience, and that existence is embodied: "it is essential," Franck writes, "that *Dasein* have hands so that (…) the being of the being that it is could be named being-at-hand."[77] Kearney likewise writes that "biological existence is synchronized with human existence," and "to live the body (*leben*) is" therefore "already to live this or that particular kind of world (*erleben*)."[78]

b. The disposition of the body

We should understand this materiality of existence in light of Nancy's treatment of the union of body and soul in Descartes. In Descartes, it appears as the materiality or extension ascribed to the self:

> I beg [Princess Elizabeth] to feel free to attribute this matter and extension to the soul because that is simply to conceive it as united to the body. And once she has formed a proper conception of this and experienced it in herself, it will be easy for her to consider that the matter she has attributed to the thought is not thought itself, and that the extension of this matter is of a different nature from the extension of thought, because the former has a determinate location, such that it thereby excludes all other bodily extension, which is not the case with the latter.[79]

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[74] Nancy, *SW*, 56-58; *FT*, 18.

[75] Broadening Ricoeur's discussion in *Freud and Philosophy*, 32-36.

[76] James, *The Fragmentary Demand*, 147. For examples, see: Mauss, *Sociologie et anthropologie*, 303; Bourdieu, 'The Peasant and his Body', 595.

[77] Franck, 'Being and the Living', 144.

[78] Kearney, 'WCH', 40.

[79] Descartes, *Writings*, III.228.

The soul thus has an extension different from the body's, an extension of its own, a materiality proper to itself: if the soul were extended like the body, they could not *properly* be united. It is that kind of embodiment we are trying to think here, the one proper to ourselves in its impropriety to our-selves.

This body can only be conceived of in terms of its conjunction with the soul, in terms of its relation to the flesh, in terms of how it forms the self. Consider the following four of Nancy's indices on the body:

> 6. The soul is the form of an organized body, says Aristotle. But the body (…) draws this form. It's the form of the form, the form of the soul.
>
> 7. The soul is extended everywhere along the body, says Descartes; it is entirely everywhere all along it, on its very surface (…), omnipresent.
>
> 8. The soul is material, made of entirely different matter, matter that has no place, size, or weight. But it's material, very subtly. And so it drops out of sight.
>
> 9. A body's visible, the soul is not. We can easily see that a paralytic cannot move his good leg. We cannot see that a bad man cannot move his good soul: but we should take it as the effect of a paralysis of the soul. And we have to struggle against it and subdue it. Such is the foundation of ethics, my dear Nicomachos.[80]

The soul is extended along the body as its form, the way it is embodied: an outside-the-body delineating or delimiting its inside and thereby circumscribing the finitude of existence as embodiment. Nancy's extension of the soul thus presented then provides an ontology of the body along the lines of Falque's ethics of the spread body, where "*ethos* is the ek-sisting of existence."[81] In short, embodiment denotes the way life is lived. This ontology therefore conceives of the body as existence, and more specifically as its disposition, its character, what becomes second nature to it (*hexis*) as its way-of-being or "conduct" (*ethos*), "the conduct of being-the-there."[82] Rather than behaviour, this *conduct* means the direction (*sens*), form, or orientation of making-sense: how this

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[80] Nancy, *Corpus*, 150-151. Whilst Nancy's analysis remains painfully abstract, Mauss gives an example in 'Techniques of the Body', 78: "A pious Muslim can easily be recognised: (…) He must never touch his food with his left hand, or certain parts of his body with his right. To know why he does not make a certain gesture and does make a certain other gesture neither the physiology nor the psychology of motor asymmetry in man is enough, it is also necessary to know the traditions which impose it."

[81] Nancy, *EF*, 195.

[82] *Ibid*., 184, 188-189; *EF*, 146.

process is *conducted*, how experience is experienced, how sense is sensed, how the world is disclosed in terms of our being-in it.

The materiality of existence then means that, as Bourdieu puts it, "cognitive structures are not forms of consciousness but *dispositions of the body*."[83] In the context of the phenomenology of religion, Mauss draws the following conclusion: "at the bottom of all our mystical states there are techniques of the body," or "necessarily biological means of entering into 'communication with God'."[84] Falque likewise suggests that "being in God is paradoxically his having, or his *habitus*," his revelation "in a *disposition* (or a *hexis*) that gives his recognition to man."[85] God manifests himself as a way-of-being (*habitus*), which is necessarily a form-of-embodiment (*hexis*), and thus a particular way-of-experiencing or disclosing the world as meaningful (e.g., faith). This *habitus* can be understood as what Descartes said 'convinces us', or what Heidegger called our *modus vivendi*, namely: the experience of clarity and distinction, which is not itself a clear and distinct idea, but nevertheless confers upon the *cogito* its world-constituting power; the experience of reason as valuable, which is not a reason for reason, yet confers upon reason its grounding power as a principle. In short, bodily *hexis* forms the basis on which sense is made, and therefore remains outside of it itself: embodiment is the experience of the orientation or drive of intentionality—i.e., the way phenomena are constituted intentionally, the way things are lived in experience—without itself being an intentional experience or phenomenon. As Bourdieu puts it: the *habitus* of embodiment is "what is experienced as most 'natural'," yet "upon which conscious action has no grip,"[86] and thus "is not (…) a transcendental consciousness (…) or even an existential *Dasein*,"[87] but a disposition of the body outside-the-flesh (*hors-chair*).

c. The technicity of the body

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[83] Bourdieu, *Practical Reason,* 54; *Pascalian Meditations*, 176.

[84] Mauss, 'Techniques of the Body', 87.

[85] Falque, *LE*, 100.

[86] Bourdieu, 'The Peasant and his Body', 584.

[87] Bourdieu, *Pascalian Meditations*, 142; *Practical Reason*, 81-82.

By conceiving of embodiment in terms of what Bourdieu calls *habitus* or *hexis*, Nancy accomplishes something of an existential incorporation of the self: the soul delineates the body and therefore belongs to it with an extension of its own; namely, the disposition of that body, the way it is embodied, the form of that embodiment. In that sense, I have used Nancy to tie Descartes into Falque's project of exploring the underground of the self in terms of bodily passions and drives, specifically the way in which intentional consciousness is itself driven as shown by psychoanalysis. Now, Nancy himself explicitly ties Descartes into Freud to think the incommensurability of consciousness to itself as well:

> The incommensurable is what makes possible the *quasi permixito* of the union, and also what makes this union an incommensurable to thought (…). In the *quasi permixtio*, thought *is extended*. It is perhaps what Freud sensed when he wrote (…): 'Psyche is extended, knows nothing of it.' Such a thought could only come to Freud because he was thinking against the Cartesian subject. But this thought also 'came' to Descartes, and for both Descartes and Freud, this thought falls inexorably outside, in excess of any psycho*analysis*.[88]

This phrase by Freud—"Psyche is extended, knows nothing of it (*Psyche ist ausgedehnt, weiss nichts davon*)"[89]—forms the slogan for Nancy's existential incorporation of the self.[90] Indeed, for Freud "the ego is first and foremost a *bodily ego*."[91] Yet, the soul's extension, the ego's embodiment, cannot be geometrical extension if the soul is to be unified with the body: reprising Derrida's language, it must be of a third type (*khora*).[92] The bodily ego is the ego speaking through the mouth: the opening of the body through which it exposes the soul as an instance (a hollow) of the body, which forms, as Malabou puts it, the "third term, an unknown instance between me and myself."[93] Derrida explains:

> The mouth is *at the same time* place and nonplace (…), the gaping place of the 'quasi permixtio' between soul and body, (…) the incommensurable extension between them and common to both (…). I don't believe that the said opening *of self* (…) signifies autonomy or auto-affection.

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[88] Nancy, *ES*, 110.*

[89] Freud, 'Findings, Ideas, Problems', 300. Arguably, Husserl would not have disagreed with Freud, see Kearny, 'WCH', 28-29.

[90] Nancy, *ES*, 110; *BP*, 393; *Expectation*, 201-202; *Corpus*, 21, 75, 119, 138, 144; *Coming*, 108; *Corpus II*, 84.

[91] Freud, *The Ego and the Id*, 72.

[92] See Derrida, *OT*, 24.

[93] Malabou, 'Go Wonder', 20.

> The nonplace-noncase of this place is also opened by the other. *All at once* auto-affected and hetero-affected, uniting both affections like two lips, it lets itself be opened.[94]

This third element provides space in which the other two can take place, by putting them outside-themselves, whilst itself remaining irreducible to either: it is neither sensible, nor intelligible, but *sets the terms* for sensibility and intelligibility. "The 'psyche,'" as Nancy puts this, "is *body*, and this is precisely what escapes it, and its escape (…) constitutes it as 'psyche,' in a dimension of not (being able/wanting)-to-know-itself."[95] It makes for the *unum quid* that cannot be conceived clearly and distinctly (soul *or* body), precisely because it is an in-distinct experience (the union of soul *and* body) in which it articulates itself as "distinct from itself in its indistinction."[96] This returns us to Falque's *spread body*, and it is worth making the parallels between Falque and Nancy explicit.

Psyche ist ausgedehnt. The semantic field of *ausgedehnt* reaches significantly beyond *extended* and towards, for example, "outstretched".[97] Indeed, psyche's *Aus-dehnung* resembles what Falque describes, beyond mere *extension* (*l'étendre*), as the body's *expansion* or *spreading-out* (*l'épandre*): neither objective nor subjective body, but the subjective body's objectivity. Derrida anticipates this when paraphrasing Nancy:

> Pysche must be regarded (…) as an extension that is untouchable (…). And those who bring themselves to be 'present' to Psyche (…) are there *subject* to her. They now *hold* onto her subject. (…) She remains the subject inasmuch as it is rest ('rests,' 'lies'—reposing, lying, resting itself). As for them, they are holding on, standing by her subject, (…) at the edge of her being-extended (…). Knowing but one thing about her, which is that she knows nothing of it, they watch her and seek (…) to give thought to the subject of the subject.[98]

We approach Psyche, stretched-out (*aus-gedehnt*), resting and reclining, not as a mere inert object, but as a self extended on the bed: "the reclining, extended one, who knows nothing about this."[99] The spread body *spreads itself out* between *Leib* and *Körper* (Falque), as an extension of the soul incommensurate with that of *Körper* (Nancy). As such, Falque and Nancy are both considering the

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[94] Derrida, *OT*, 29.

[95] Nancy, *Corpus*, 21.

[96] *Ibid*., 143.

[97] Nancy, *BP*, 393.

[98] Derrida, *OT*, 17-18.

[99] *Ibid*., 225.

body's *residue*, the experience of embodiment insofar it resists reduction to either the subjectivity of conscious life or the objectivity of inert matter: the materiality of the self.

That is why Psyche *weiss nichts davon*, why we cannot think our own extension or materiality (embodiment): because it is neither object nor subject of experience, but rather the *medium* constituting the experiencing of the subject's experience of the object, the way in which it intends or lives objects in experience.[100] Derrida therefore understands corporeality (*Leibkörper*) as the intertwining of subject (*Leib*) and object (*Körper*) to a point that it becomes irreducible to either one: the animate organism (*Leib*) becomes a material object (*Körper*), only to be reintegrated into that animate organism prosthetically, as happens in a heart transplant.[101] It thus reveals the *technicity of the body*: the fact that the human body is a machine, without *we ourselves* ever being *l'homme machine*. The point is not that the self's auto-affection is not real, but rather that it is not originary: the *hetero* precedes the *auto* and the *other* precedes the *self*, like the *anarche* precedes the *arche*.

With that, we have also returned to our phenomenological investigation of how the extra-phenomenal nevertheless forms (*fait*) the phenomenal. Whether through an ethics of the spread body (Falque), a technics of embodiment (Nancy), or a poetics of faith (my position), what this quasi-phenomenological discourse tries to think is how things appear or are made sense of *on the basis of* something that does not appear and that does not make sense: a person's existential situation, their form-of-life corresponding to a way-of-experiencing, engendered by a particular form-of-embodiment. Embodiment does not itself appear because it cannot be reduced to the egological sphere of ownness, and can thus only be considered phenomenologically as transcendental a posteriori (Romano) or predelineation of experience (Caputo) manifesting itself as the intentionality of a life lived in the world through the body (Falque): it is the technical basis on which there is experience, meaning that it makes experience possible and in doing so determines or forms it, whilst simultaneously withdrawing from experience.

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[100] See, for example: Nancy, *Corpus*, 93-97, 144; Derrida, *OT*, 15-16, 64-65.

[101] Derrida, *OT*, 237, 241-243.

3. The exposition of the Word: Nancy's account of the Incarnation

How should we relate Nancy's philosophical account of embodiment to theological Incarnation? I showed Henry's Incarnation as coming-into-life without coming-into-the-world to be untenable, since the human condition must instead be understood as *embodied existence*: extended (material) and ecstatic (being-in-the-world). Having dealt with the materiality of existence, the question of the relationship between Incarnation and world now becomes urgent.

We may return to Pascal who, anticipating the passage from the *Critique of Practical Reason* quoted earlier, writes: "Through space the universe comprehends me (*me comprend*) and swallows me up like a point; by thought I comprehend it (*je le comprends*)."[102] As a worldly creature, man knows the world: as being-in-the-world, his being is world-disclosure. However, simultaneously, man disappears into the world as world: though knowing the world, as a worldly creature, *his own* worldly dimension remains obscure to himself.[103] Bourdieu concludes from this that our embodiment, our bodily *hexis*, the dispositions that constitute the bodily intentionality through which the world is disclosed, is (in)formed by the way in which we ex-posed to the world: "we are *disposed* because we are *exposed*." He explains:

> It is because the body is (…) exposed and endangered in the world, faced with the risk of emotion, lesion, suffering, sometimes death, and therefore obliged to take the world seriously (and nothing is more serious than emotion, which touches the depths of our organic being) that it is able to acquire dispositions that are themselves an openness to the world, that is, to the very structures of the social world of which they are the incorporated form.[104]

The body's disposition (the way it drives intentionality) thus becomes a question a question of its exposition (the way it forms existence): we are only open-to the world, because we ourselves, our mouths, are openings-of the world that articulate the inside in the outside. In Nancy, *ex-position* denotes precisely the world and the self as always outside-itself, and thus the possibility for their encounter in embodied *ex-istence*: being-in-the-world through the body.[105]

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[102] Pascal, *Pensées*, §113.

[103] Bourdieu, *Pascalian Meditations*, 130.

[104] *Ibid*., 140-141.

[105] Nancy, *Corpus*, 142-143; *TM*, 23-24.

Nancy's exposition (opening-up) then parallels Falque's expansion (spreading-out): "In this exposition," Nancy says, "a body is (…) a stranger to itself" in "the foreignness and strangeness to self of a soul thrust out, ejected from the non-place of spirit. A body is the withdrawal from self that relates a self to itself as it exposes the world."[106] In other words, what is exposed in the body's being outside-itself is the spread body: namely, the extension of the soul as the placeless place in which the distinction between object and subject, outside and inside, can take place.[107] The motif of exposition therefore returns us to the mediating role of the Eucharist as intentional mode, a communication within the same visceral physicality that discloses the world in a particular way: organic calls out to organic, calling-out the organic. In short, only insofar as we *belong to it*, can we be *transformed by it*: only insofar as God descended towards man by taking on a body like ours (*kenosis*), can we be raised up and transformed by him (*theosis*). This brings us to Nancy's account of the Incarnation as the gesture "by which God makes himself man (…) in return for a 'divinization' of man."[108]

This thinking of exposition, of both world and body, has its consequences for the Incarnation, as the coming into both world and body of God. In short, Nancy conceives of Incarnation as ex-position, i.e. the Word is put outside-itself by taking on a body:

> *Exposed* (…) does not mean putting something on view that would have previously been hidden or shut in. Exposition, here, is the very being (what's called 'existing'). Or better yet: where the being, as a subject, has for its essence self-positing; self-positing here is exposition itself, in and of itself, in essence and structure. *Auto* = *ex* = body. The body is the being-exposed of this being.[109]

The Incarnation then does not mean the displaying of the Word of God *as Word*, but rather its appearing *as a life* lived in the world through a body: an existence. This existence, the form-of-life incorporating it, remains indissociable from the incarnate Word as coextensive with it: the Word *of God* (the infinite) speaks only through the mouth *of the human* (the finite), since *the Word* (the

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[106] Nancy, *Corpus II*, 87.

[107] *Ibid*., 85.

[108] Nancy, *Dis-Enclosure*, 81.

[109] Nancy, *Corpus*, 35; *SW*, 58.

incorporeal) is only articulated through *the mouth* (the corporeal). The Word's In-carnation thus means its ex-position, its being put-outside-its-self: outside-the-flesh (body), outside-of-God (human). Only *through* the exposition of embodiment does the Word's encounter with man become possible; only because God became body, assumed finitude, suffered *like us*—as exemplified by Christ's passion and crucifixion—, can his Word be meaningful *to us*: "Openings of blood are identical to those of sense."[110]

Like Falque, Nancy therefore has little patience with the "angelic logic" of Henry's *Incarnation*, for it still operates under "the signifying law," where "signification (or representation) gives sense to the body, making it the sign of sense."[111] Incarnation becomes structed as disincorporation, understanding the body always as the body of something spiritual.[112] Put differently, Nancy rejects the phenomenological meaning of incarnation, and like Falque notes that it is not theologically sound:

> The term *incarnation* is usually understood in the sense of the entry into a body of some incorporeal entity (…). It is a change of place, the occupation of a body by a space initially not connatural to the given reality (…). According to that current acceptance ((…) assuredly not the major theological one), incarnation is a mode of transposition and representation. We are within (…) a way of thinking in which the body is necessarily in a position of exteriority and sensible manifestation, as distinct from soul or spirit given in interiority, and not directly representable.[113]

Philosophically, Nancy says, "this idea of incarnation is impossible: what does it mean that something without place would come to occupy a place? It isn't a question, then, of being there."[114] However, it must be resisted theologically, too: "It suffices to read the Christian formula of the *credo* literally," he says, "to see that it does not (…) point toward that interpretation. If the Word *was made* flesh, or if (in Greek) it *became* flesh, or (…) *engendered itself* as flesh, (…) it had no need to penetrate the inside of that flesh that was initially given outside of it: it became flesh itself."[115] In

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[110] *Ibid*., 105.

[111] *Ibid*., 67.

[112] *Ibid*., 69.

[113] Nancy, *Dis-Enclosure*, 81; *Corpus*, 132; Falque, *ECE*, 37-38.

[114] Nancy, *Corpus*, 132.

[115] Nancy, *Dis-Enclosure*, 81-82.*

short, the Word takes on the soul's extension, which is not in competition with the body's, but rather forms or delineates it: denoting the body's being-outside-itself, its opening-up an outside from within, through which speech happens. The *form* (*sarx*) in which the Word articulates itself is indissociable from its *meaning* (*logos*): rather than denoting the Word nesting itself *in* the body as a separate substance, Incarnation means the Word presenting itself *as* the body through which it is articulated (the mouth's opening). As Nancy puts it:

> In this sense, the Christian body is completely different from a body serving as an envelope (or prison, or tomb) to the soul. It is (…) the *logos* itself that makes itself body as *logos* and according to its ownmost *logic*. This body is (…) the 'spirit' having exited itself of its pure identity to identify itself not even *with* man but *as* man (…). But that exiting of the spirit from itself is not an accident that befalls it. (…) In itself, the Christian divine spirit is already outside itself (that is its Trinitarian nature), (…) he is already, himself, essentially a god who puts himself outside himself by and in a 'creation' (which is (…) precisely a putting-outside-oneself).[116]

The Incarnation is therefore not the auto-affection of the 'Word of Life' in the flesh that characterises transcendental life (Henry), but rather the ex-position of the Word (Nancy): it being put outside-itself in order to articulate itself.

Like Falque, Nancy criticises the phenomenological understanding of incarnation on the basis that it lacks any notion of kenosis. Phenomenological incarnation (re-presentational) forgets that theological Incarnation (ex-positional) is embedded within a broader doctrine of God that, for him, is primarily kenotic:

> In this sense, the Christian (…) god is the god who *alienates himself*. He is the god who *atheizes himself* and who *atheologizes himself* (…). Atheology as a conceptualization of the body is the thought that 'god' made himself 'body' by emptying himself of himself (another Christian motif, that of the Pauline *kenosis* (…)). The 'body' becomes the name of the *a-theos* in the sense of 'not-of-god.' But 'not-of-god' means not the immediate self-sufficiency of man or the world, but this: no founding presence. (…) The 'body' of the 'incarnation' is therefore the place, or rather the taking place, the event, of that disappearance.[117]

The body is the site of kenosis, the *place* where God manifests himself *to us* as the effacement of that *self* (divinity). It is thus in the body—whether the body of Christ (incorporation and its technics) or the embodiment constituting the finitude of existence-in-faith (faith and its poetics)—

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[116] *Ibid*., 82.

[117] Nancy, *Dis-Enclosure*, 82-83; *Adoration*, 29-30.

that Nancy shows Christianity deconstructing itself (kenosis and its phenomenology): in this case, phenomenological *i*ncarnation is displaced by theological *I*ncarnation, even if the latter gave rise to the former.

In showing how the body's hetero-affection precedes the flesh's auto-affection, Nancy has thus made his case for the self-deconstruction of Christianity as a thinking *from* Christianity *beyond* Christianity. However, his conceptualisation of the body is not always consistent in this regard: for example, Esposito is surprised that Nancy "positions his concept of the body in direct opposition to the logic of incarnation," for even if "motivated by the spiritualist characterization that Christian doctrine has imprinted on the concept of incarnation," it thereby leaves "intact the very categories that it sets out to deconstruct." He explains:

> It is no accident that, despite having the opposite intention, the spiritualist definition Nancy gives 'flesh' in *Corpus*, does not, deep down, differ from that which, in his recent book on the incarnation, Michel Henry proposes from the opposite point of view: (…) Nancy rejects and Henry adopts the spiritualist definition (…) of a flesh connoted by the presence of an element which is spiritual but lacks a body.[118]

In short, if Henry understands the flesh as everything the body lacks, Nancy understands the body as everything the flesh lacks: in defining the flesh as opposed to the body, little is being done to deconstruct the dualism; in this thinking *from* Christianity, there is little thinking *beyond* Christianity. This is reminiscent of Derrida's critique of the deconstruction of Christianity as "always in danger of being exposed as a mere Christian hyperbole."[119] What is needed instead, Derrida says, as Nancy has identified from the beginning, is a certain *tertium datur*: namely, "by revisiting our Christian provenance" (thinking *from* Christianity), locating "in the heart of Christianity itself a provenance of Christianity deeper than Christianity itself" (thinking *beyond* Christianity), "a provenance that might bring out another resource."[120] Derrida doubts that Nancy achieves this *tertium datur*, instead

[118] Esposito, 'Flesh and Body in the Deconstruction of Christianity', 93.

[119] Derrida, *OT*, 220.

[120] Nancy, *Dis-Enclosure*, 143; Derrida, *OT*, 99.

remaining stuck in the theo-phenomenological tradition to be deconstructed, and his long treatise on Nancy therefore exists in a deconstruction of the phenomenological principle of principles.

However, Derrida and Esposito's criticism perhaps neglects the thrust of Nancy's argument, focussing too much on the rhetoric surrounding it. After all, I contend that we have indeed achieved such a *tertium datur*, an experience of the body that sits between Cartesian geometrical extension and Husserlian lived-experience: namely, the *spread body* (Falque) or the *extension of the soul* (Nancy). The phenomenology of this body has been provided by making felt the backlash of theology (of the organic body—Incarnation) on phenomenology (of the flesh—incarnation). Insofar as contemporary phenomenology is then complicit with Christianity, Falque's exercise of making this backlash felt is coextensive with Nancy's deconstruction of Christianity: for Christianity is discovered as the destabilising agent in the philosophical complex that it nevertheless engendered, causing its self-deconstruction. In short, the deconstruction of Christianity does achieve that *tertium datur*, namely through the figure of *kenosis* (theologically) or *exposition* (philosophically): divinity is only itself insofar as it is ex-posed, outside-its-self; and the body, as what remains outside-the-flesh, is the preeminent site of this experience. Nevertheless, Falque is more successful in avoiding the body-flesh dualism: for him, the body is not *opposed* to the flesh; rather, the body *undergrounds* the flesh as a particular, but not the only, way of experiencing the body (namely, as my own). In short, when focussing on what remains outside-the-flesh (*hors-chair*), we must not forget that this outside nevertheless still delineates the inside, that it forms the flesh, and can only be discussed as such. I therefore end with an illustration of how Nancy nevertheless has the means of considering this poetical-technical interaction.

4. The phenomenality of skin

a. The critique of the phenomenology of self-touch: Nancy, Romano and Chrétien

Henry justifies the restriction of his phenomenology of the body to the human body understood as flesh, excluding the animal and material body, by citing Heidegger's "profound remark,"[121] that "the chair never 'touches' the wall."[122] From this, Henry concludes that the body's organic and material reality can be bracketed out because it does not *touch* anything, it does not *appear*, it cannot be reduced to the immanent auto-affection of consciousness. However, Nancy asks, is this really what touch is? Is this really how appearing takes place? According to Nancy, Heidegger defines *touch* as the gesture delivering us Henry's *flesh*, the egological sphere of ownness, namely: the appropriation in which beings appear or become accessible as at-hand (*Zuhanden*). Yet, as we already saw Franck point out the necessity "that *Dasein* have hands so that (…) the being of the being that it is could be named being-at-hand,"[123] one wonders what Dasein ever touches with these hands: the thing in itself, thus appropriating it completely, or merely its surface? How do these hands, which Dasein *has*, constituting its being as possibility for world-disclosure, relate to the being that Dasein *is*, as world-disclosure? The total penetration of one by the other, and thus the appropriation of one into the other, never takes place according to Nancy: there are only surfaces, skins, touching or rubbing against one another. Rather than this being a marker of Dasein remaining inauthentic, this follows from its corporeal and animal (hands) nature, which itself constitutes its ex-istence by putting it outside-of-itself.[124] Nancy's argument parallels Falque's, namely that human *existence* ex-ists in a relation to one's animal and corporeal *nature*, with all the consequences this has for (the limits of) phenomenology (the making sense):

> Is it not necessary that there should be nonaccess, impenetrability, in order for there to be also access, penetration? That there should be (…) beyond-sense in order for there to be sense? And that *in this sense* the stone and the lizard [Heidegger's examples], too, should be in the circuit of

[121] Henry, *Incarnation*, 3; 'AEF', 171.

[122] Heidegger, *B&T*, 55/55.

[123] Franck, 'Being and the Living', 144.

[124] Nancy, *SW*, 59; *Sexistence*, 105.

> sense, just as I—supposed *Dasein*—am also stone and lizard (…) in accordance with the *there* (*here*) of my being?[125]

If touch denotes how things appear to us, if the body puts us in touch with the world, these notions are insufficiently developed by phenomenology's flesh and auto-affection: "there is definitely no question here of a human touch."[126] At the heart of body and touch must be placed its primordial impropriety, for our propriety is formed in our relation to it. I have already done this by showing *that* the body is a place for existence (i.e., ex-position). What remains to be established is *how* this body, through which we are in-the-world, puts us in-touch-with the world. If we have so far thought the body ontologically as a place for existence (being-in-the-world), we will now think it (quasi-)phenomenologically according to the phenomenality that belongs to this body (world-disclosure), eliciting "the vibration and the singular intensity—itself changing, mobile, multiple—of a skin-event or of skin as the place for an event of existence."[127] Indeed, this phenomenality belongs to the skin, Nancy suggests, rephrasing exposition into *ex-skin-hibition* (*ex-peau-sition*): we are in-touch-with the world through the skin.

The term *ex-peau-sition* refers to how we are opened-up, turned-outside, ex-posed to the world, only through the skin.[128] Leder illustrates this eloquently:

> It is through the bodily surface that I first engage the world. Only because my eyes and ears lie on the surface of my body are they capable of disclosing the events taking place around me. My hands, in order to explore and work upon the world, must extend outward from my corporeal 'extremities.' My expressive face can form a medium of communication only because it is available to the Other's gaze. No organ concealed in the hidden depths of the body could actualize intersubjectivity (…). The surface is where self meets what is other than self.[129]

Only through the skin can we touch upon the outside from the inside, only thus is there touching: namely, a touching *through* the skin and a touching *of* skin.[130] In touching, we touch-upon the other without touching the other, instead touching their skin; neither are 'we' touching, it is our skin: in

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[125] *Ibid*., 60; *Corpus*, 33-37; *Coming*, 107-108; *Corpus II*, 101.

[126] *Ibid.*

[127] Nancy, *Corpus*, 15.

[128] Nancy, *SW*, 58; *Corpus*, 33-37; *Coming*, 107-108; *Corpus II*, 101; *Sexistence*, 165; Derrida, *OT*, 267.

[129] Leder, *The Absent Body*, 11.

[130] Nancy, *Corpus*, 159; 'Essential Skin', 78;

touching, the presence (of the touched) withdraws in touching's presentation (through skin), which precedes the presence. What is *there* to be touched, withdraws in touching, refusing to be *here*: we only touch upon its outside, from the outside—its skin. Or, inversely, when *I am touched*, I am touched from the outside (by the other), through and as the outside (my skin); even when I touch myself, I touch upon the outside-my-self, for I can only ever touch my skin. In the very appearing, touching, there is disappearing, distance.[131]

Touch is therefore never primarily self-touch (carnal auto-affection); touch is always the touching of an outside, another, a skin (bodily hetero-affection). Touch thus returns us to the critique of flesh's ownness in favour of the body's resistance as foreign. As Romano puts it:

> What I touch, in self-contact, is always only a skin (…); it is my hand qua thing in the world. To be sure, (…) I also feel the contact of my other hand (…) when my hand feels it. That is all there is. To speak of 'flesh,' of 'reflexivity,' of 'coincidence of touching with itself' is to have already ventured too far. What is going on here *is basically no different* than what goes on in any other contact with things. To touch a thing (…) is always necessarily to be touched by it as well (…). In grasping properties of things, I also apprehend myself as being affected by them, and conversely, I only experience myself tactilely (…) on the occasion of contact with things. Therefore touch is simultaneously and *inseparably* proprioceptive and exteroceptive: on the occasion of an exteroception, I also perceive myself (…). This implies that (…) touch offers me the perception of (…) my body as *my own* (…) in an original and originary way in the experience of my contact with what is foreign to me.[132]

Touch then becomes the appropriately eccentric way of *appearing* for the eccentricity that the body *is*, namely, the touching of skin:

> I only apprehend myself, in touch, as a skin, with its depth of bones and muscles, the touch is always 'eccentric' to itself, (…) it attests to the essential eccentricity of my own body to itself. The skin is (…) the being-outside-itself that defines the body as such, and it does so because it is (…) the medium of touch, that which opens it onto things. It is because the body appears always fundamentally outside itself in the experience of touching (that eccentricity to itself being (…) 'skin') that it also has an 'inside' that is as the outside of its outside, 'darkness stuffed with organs' that is the intangible of this body.[133]

Obviously, Nancy does not provide such a highly phenomenological analysis, but he does gesture towards it by observing that "on 'touching'," he is "following some paths parallel to those of Jean-

[131] Nancy, 'Essential Skin', 81-82.

[132] Romano, *TI*, 142; Nancy, *Corpus II*, 84.

[133] *Ibid.*, 143.

Louis Chrétien," though has discovered this "too late to make use of it."[134] It is worth spelling out that parallel here to appreciate the phenomenological reach of Nancy's thought.

Chrétien likewise starts by declaring the traditional understanding of touch as self-touch inadequate:

> Do I feel myself as myself through a pure and (…) extra-mundane proprioception, or am I given to myself only through the other? (…) Either way touch remains a privileged and foundational sense, but its privilege is not defined the same way. Contemporary descriptions all insist on the self-relatedness of the feeling body and on the crucial impact of proprioception.[135]

These traditional analyses, by Husserl and Merleau-Ponty, all stress the reflexivity and reversibility of touching and being-touched, grounding the auto-affection of touch in the immanent and egological unity of the lived-body (*Leib*). Take Husserl:

> As *perceptively* active, *I experience* (…) *all of Nature*, *including my own animate organism*, which therefore in the process is reflexively related to itself. That becomes possible because I 'can' perceive one hand 'by means of' the other (…)—a procedure in which *the functioning organ must become an Object and the Object a functioning organ*.[136]

Husserl's point is fairly straightforward, Chrétien suggests: "I can touch one hand with the other, and therefore (…) the operating organ becomes object and the object becomes operating organ."[137] This leads Henry to enclose the experience of embodiment in immanent carnal auto-affection, defined as a life that shares nothing with the outside world. Yet, Romano says, if "the tangible of my body is always my body as 'other,' my body as skin," then surely "touch is always an initiation to the world, and therefore to spatial exteriority." He explains:

> Indeed, (…) touch, the sense of alterity, is the sense of exteriority itself, and consequently of space. What an analysis of touch leads to putting in doubt is precisely the idea that, just as we have a body that is our own, we also have a space that is our own, an originary, preobjective space, that of our flesh (…), preceding the objective space of things and making possible its constitution. (…) This amounts to saying that if my body has a space, that space, given the natural eccentricity of touch, is always necessarily further outside than any alleged 'inner space.' It is this depth carved out in the world itself that I explore with my fingertips trough the

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[134] Nancy, *SW*, 59n64.

[135] Chrétien, *C&R*, 117; Nancy, *Corpus*, 128-129.

[136] Husserl, *CM*, 128/97; *Ideas II*, 144-151/152-159. Other similar accounts, both referenced by Chrétien (*C&R*, 83-84) and Derrida (*OT*, 244-245), include Merleau-Ponty and Maldiney. For Merleau-Ponty, see *The Visible and the Invisible*, 255: "To touch is to touch oneself." For Maldiney, see *Penser l'homme et la folie*, 137: "By touching things, we indeed touch ourselves upon them, we are simultaneously toucher and touched."

[137] Chrétien, *C&R*, 117.

> elasticity of a skin (…) and I can feel its closure precisely to the extent that I feel it *from the outside*.[138]

Flesh is inseparable from the world, not simply because the (in)experience of one's own body is that of worldly extension (*psyche ist ausgedehnt*); but also because this experience, though not a phenomenon (*weiss nichts davon*), forms the world: the world is disclosed through the body (its own driven intentionality). The experience at issue is therefore that of our prior sense of self (Desmond), the predelineation of experience (Caputo), the "more originary experience," by which, "in exposing myself to the world, I apprehend myself in my relation to things," and thus "*makes the proprioceptive experience thinkable*,"[139] by undergrounding it as a transcendental *a posteriori* (Romano). "Touch," Romano says, "is a cosmological sense," in that "what I touch is never a private, a-cosmic flesh, but a body-in-the-world qua organ of con-tact,"[140] putting us *in-touch* with the world (dis-closure) by engendering our *being-in* the world (ex-istence).[141]

Given the cosmological character of both touch and body, the phenomenological analyses of touch as self-touch are as unsatisfactory as those of the body as flesh: Henry's "embrace without distance,"[142] results in "the experience of touch" becoming "an experience of contact, in which our skin and our flesh apply themselves to the surface of things, abolishing distance and interval," Chrétien says, meaning that ultimately "the flesh is supposed to form a continuum with things by touching them."[143] Yet, he continues, "this self-relationship" cannot be "the primal phenomenon of tactility," and therefore "self-touch cannot be the truth of touch."[144] A different account from the traditional phenomenological one is therefore needed.

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[138] Romano, *TI*, 143-144.

[139] *Ibid*., 144.

[140] *Ibid.*

[141] See Barbaras' 'L'apparentenance' and *L'appartenance.*

[142] Henry, *Incarnation*, 120.

[143] Chrétien, *C&R*, 87.

[144] *Ibid*., 118; Romano, *TI*, 144.

b. Aristotle's metaxology of touch

Chrétien puts forward a more ambiguous account of the phenomenality of touch: "as Aristotle shows," he says, "the interval is never abolished, only forgotten."[145] Chrétien is referring to Aristotle's discussion of touch in *De anima*: a book treating *of the soul*, though one that paradoxically "talks only about the body,"[146] as Nancy observes, for the soul can only be discussed as the form or animation of a body, what Aristotle calls "the being-fully itself (*entelecheia*) of (…) a body."[147]

i. The medium of touch

Touch is the fundamental sense for Aristotle, common to all perceiving beings.[148] Touch, he says, always takes place through a medium (*metaxu*), like the skin, which is occluded in the experience of touching.[149] Any reflexivity is therefore deceptive: like water and air for the other senses, what Aristotle calls 'flesh' (*sarx*)—namely, the body and its skin—forms the medium for the sense of touch, which therefore cannot sense immediately (without distance).[150] "We perceive all things through their medium," he explains, but with touch, this medium "goes unnoticed" for "it seems to us that we touch them and that there is nothing in between."[151] This complicates the notion of touching significantly, as Aristotle illustrates with the example that, in touching things through water, we do not feel wet:

> When some intermediate body is between two bodies, they are not permitted to touch one another. But what is moist is not without a body (…), but must be water or have water. When, however, things touch each other in the water, since their extremities are not dry, they necessarily have water in between, which coats their edges. If this is true, then one thing cannot touch another in water. But this is the same way in the air as well (for the air is disposed toward the things in it like the water is to the things in that water, but this goes unnoticed by us, just as the animals in the water do not notice if something wet is touched by something wet).[152]

[145] *Ibid.*, 87-88.
[146] Nancy, *Corpus*, 125.
[147] Aristotle, *De anima*, 412b.21-22.
[148] *Ibid.*, 413b.1-9.
[149] *Ibid.*, 423b.20-26.
[150] *Ibid.*, 423a.1-18.
[151] *Ibid.*, 423b.7-13.
[152] *Ibid.*, 423a.23-32.

The water or air in which the touching takes place forms its medium; yet, this medium is itself not available to touch: what provides a space for *tangibility*, by inter-spacing or inter-mediating bodies, is itself *intangible*.[153] Nancy and Derrida both conclude from this that touch always involves the untouchable.[154] The experience of touch is a "contradictory experience," Derrida says, of "touch without contact."[155] Likewise, Nancy considers it "a *limit-experience*, like any experience worthy of the name," for it is not "the appropriation of what it represents,"[156] but rather the "inappropriability of appropriation, or the impropriety of the proper (the proper to the proper itself, absolutely)."[157] Chrétien articulates this in more Aristotelean language:

> There always remains an intervening body between our flesh and what it touches (…). But it (…) remains undetected and concealed to touch even as touch takes place through it. It constitutes an untouchable element in touch, a skin or membrane that separates the skin from things but cannot be felt. (…) The theoretical mistake of those who hold touch to be immediate rests on its own phenomenological occultation.[158]

Here, in Chrétien, touch's phenomenology and deconstruction meet, showing how a third element *makes things tangible*, whilst itself remaining *intangible*: fish do not feel wet, yet touch things through water.

Aristotle therefore understands touch as a *discriminatory* sense, opening-up a spacing between bodies, distinguishing one from the other:

> Tangibles, then, are the differences of the body as body (I mean the differences that distinguish the elements—hot/cold, dry/moist (…)). The sense organ is what is receptive to the feel of these, and is that in which (…) the sense of touch primarily resides, the part that is such in potential. To perceive is to be acted upon in some way; so the thing making it be like itself is at work, and it makes the other thing, which is potentially such, to be such. Hence we do not perceive what is equally as hot or as cold (…) as ourselves, but only the excesses, inasmuch as the sense is like a kind of mean of the opposition that is in the sensibles. It is through this that it discriminates the sensibles; for the intermediate is able to discriminate, since it becomes either extreme in relation to the other. Just as what is going to perceive white and black must be neither of them actively, but potentially both (…), so also in the case of touch it must be neither hot nor cold.[159]

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153 *Ibid.*, 424a.12-18.

154 Derrida, *OT*, 5-6, 18; Nancy, *Corpus*, 134-135; *NMT*, 13-14.

155 *Ibid.*, 296.

156 Nancy, *The Gravity of Thought*, 76.

157 *Ibid.*, 80; *EF*, 103.

158 Chrétien, *C&R*, 88.

159 Aristotle, *De Anima*, 423b.27-424a.11; Nancy, *FT*, 109-110.

The skin (body) sets *the terms on which* we experience things: determining whether something is cold or hot *to the touch*. If something is cold to the touch, we experience it as cold because it (its surface temperature) is colder than we are ourselves (our own surface temperature): rather than an immediate experience of the quality of the thing touched, this is an experience of *our own mediation*, our own way-of-experiencing, reflected back in the experience of something *other than ourselves*, the experienced object. Chrétien therefore concludes:

> Touch is the sense of the hyperbole: our own qualities, which go unperceived as such, serve as a measure of what is not us. (…) The body possesses indeed a certain temperature, but this temperature is not given to it, it is what measures the temperature of other things (…). As a mean that measures, the flesh constitutes something intangible in the act of touch: I do not affect myself as hot or cold (…). Absolute qualities are at the same time relative qualities with respect to our flesh.[160]

This thus returns us to the impossibility of seeing one's head: the body is both the zero-point and vanishing point of experience, itself outside of experience but determining all experiencing. It is, then, what Romano calls that "more originary experience, (…) by which (…) I apprehend myself in my relation to things,"[161] namely, as hot or cold *relative* to the thing I touch. What manifest itself, rather than the thing touched, is our touching, our way-of-experiencing: the *terms* on which the thing touched appears to us, which is implied obscurely in every lived-experience.[162]

That I experience myself in all experiencing, whilst experience is always the experience of an other, forms the core of Aristotle's account of perception: in perception, he says, "the unlike is acted upon, but once acted upon it is like."[163] Thus, "perception involves being moved and undergoing something" as "some kind of alteration."[164] How does this alteration take place? I cannot be altered by something wholly other from me, for it would not be able to act upon me; yet, neither can I be altered by something identical to myself, for then there would be no alteration: I must already contain the perceived universal within my soul as potency for me to recognise it in

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[160] Chrétien, *C&R*, 100.

[161] Romano, *TI*, 144.

[162] Chrétien, *C&R*, 108.

[163] Aristotle, *De anima*, 417a.12; Nancy, *Coming*, 109-111.

[164] *Ibid.*, 416b.28-30.

actuality, but without containing it fully.[165] Receptivity is receptivity for what is other-than-me—hence the Eucharist is not digestive assimilation but a mode of ecstatic intentionality—, otherwise there would be nothing to receive: I receive myself (what it means 'to-be-fully-myself', in act) through the other (who I recognise as the actualisation of my being as potency). "The perceptive power is potentially such as the perceptible thing already is fully," Aristotle explains: "So then it is acted upon when it is unlike, but once it has been acted upon it has become similar and is such as the thing is."[166] Experience means coming-into-oneself *through* the other: the difference experience makes is that what I already knew in general, I now know as it applies to me.[167] If I see a builder, I know now that I can potentially become a builder even though I am not yet a builder: I discover that this is a possibility already open to me, yet this discovery is made by way of experience. After all, if I had never seen a specific builder, how would I know what it means that it is possible for me to become one? Hence, the fact that this is a knowing *by way of experience* means that we are dealing with a *transcendental a posteriori*: a possibility-for-being gained through experience.

ii. The kenosis of touch

This metaxological thinking of touch has three consequences. First is its *ambiguous mode of phenomenality*. Touch puts us in-touch with things, makes them appear, but this does not constitute Henry's "embrace without distance,"[168] or what Derrida calls dismissively "the authentic immediacy of spiritual touching (without distance)."[169] Touch, like all perception, involves a movement, a nearing, and therefore a distance, a space or medium for the movement to take place, as Chrétien explains:

> To show that touch involves a sense of proximity is to show that it involves a sense of distance. (…) Proximity forgets, through contact, what separates it from the thing that it touches. It no longer feels this distance as such, precisely because distance no longer impedes touch but

[165] *Ibid.*, 417b.2-8.

[166] *Ibid.*, 418a.2-6.

[167] *Ibid.*, 417b.17-28.

[168] Henry, *Incarnation*, 120.

[169] Derrida, *OT*, 253-255 (255).

> instead constitutes the medium through which we feel. The airy or acquatic medium does not give itself to sensation as a distinct object.[170]

The medium (Aristotle), the interval (Chrétien), the spacing between bodies (Derrida), or "this gap intrinsic to touch" (Nancy),[171] is never annulled without annulling touch itself. "Contact does not cancel separation,"[172] Nancy says, but takes place in separation: "touch makes contact between two intacts" that are "impenetrable to one another and, by virtue of that fact, are united."[173]

When touching something by moving our hand through the air, the air provides touch's medium, but the air is not *felt* in the touching, even though we *feel through* it. Chrétien therefore refers to the "*Verdecktheit*"[174] of touch: a being-veiled Heidegger considers "the counterconcept to 'phenomenon'," the concealment of what is about to appear, the veiling preceding unveiling (denoting how "phenomena are initially and for the most part *not* given").[175] With touch, the veiling is contained within the appearing, and hence we forget about the medium: "it belongs to touch to occult its own conditions of exercise," Chrétien says, "Touch veils itself."[176] This is due to the medium's withdrawal from touch: "What allows touch to exercise its function remains untouchable," constituting "an internal veiling of the phenomenon."[177]

Here, the *kenosis of the flesh* (body forming flesh), further defined as the *kenosis of phenomenality* (extra-phenomenality predelineating phenomenality), becomes the *kenosis of touch* (intangible medium making touch possible)—three referents coexistensive with the *sphere of ownness* (incarnate givenness). True touch displaces the immediacy and appropriation of 'touching' (*le toucher*): I never touch that upon which I touch, skin only rubs against surface. In Nancy, there is therefore a kenosis of touch insofar as touch is the self-emptying of touching:

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[170] Chrétien, *C&R*, 89.
[171] Nancy, *NMT*, 13.
[172] Nancy, *Coming*, 105.
[173] Nancy, *Corpus*, 141.
[174] Chrétien, *C&R*, 88.
[175] Heidegger, *B&T*, 36/34.
[176] Chrétien, *C&R*, 87.
[177] *Ibid.*, 90.

> Two bodies can't occupy the same place simultaneously. (…) No contact without displacement. The fax goes fast: but speed is spacing. There is no way that we, you and I, will touch each other (…). I can't speak *from where* you listen, and you can't hear *from where* I speak (…). Impenetrable bodies: only their impenetrability is penetrable.[178]

Rather than failure of communication, an inability to touch, impenetrability constitutes its very possibility; like the Word speaks only through a human mouth. The distance, medium or space-in-between, makes room for communing, communication, and community, whilst simultaneously always already displacing it.[179] "Such," Derrida says, "is the law of *phainesthai*."[180] Given that touch is the fundamental sense, its kenosis characterises all phenomenality.

Derrida therefore observes that Nancy and Chrétien are deconstructing phenomenology's spiritualised touch (immediate and auto-affective) in favour of a truly human one (mediate and hetero-affective):

> The end of an *immediate* spiritual touch (…), without 'medium or distance,' (…) appears to orient everything (…). This immediate plenitude of haptical fulfilment is of the order of the *infinite* (the Christianization of Aristotle's pure act). (…) Chrétien (…) insists on mediacy, intervals, veils (…), and (…) he is then speaking of the finite touching of creatures in touch with finite beings. (…) This spontaneous veiling lets touch slip from standard phenomenology; it is about a mediatized sense of touch that can be nothing but human, sensitive, and finite (…), and not divine and spiritual. (…) In other words: believing that human touching (…) is immediate is a prejudice, a theoretical error, credulity.[181]

The experience of touch (intangible), just like the body's (outside-the-flesh), escapes phenomenology's proper field of view (the sphere of ownness as incarnate givenness), whilst nonetheless exercising a pivotal role in phenomenalisation and therefore requiring a phenomenological account. "This is where phenomenology reaches its limit and calls for more,"[182] Kearney say, for technics (body) and poetics (world and God). However, phenomenology *itself* reaches its limit, phenomenology *itself* calls for more: as its shadow, the extra-phenomenal is

[178] Nancy, *Corpus*, 57; Aristotle, *De anima*, 418b.17-18.

[179] See Kearney, 'WCH', 25.

[180] Derrida, *OT*, 229.

[181] *Ibid*., 253-255.

[182] Kearney, 'WCH', 54.

generated *by* and a question *for* phenomenology itself. "What calls for 'technics,' then," Derrida concludes, "is phenomenological necessity itself."[183]

iii. The transitivity of touch

The second consequence of Aristotle's metaxological account of touch is that touch is *transitive rather than reflexive*: I never just touch; insofar as I touch, I touch something. Even "when the touching ones touch *themselves*," Derrida insists, "they are in touch with something other than themselves."[184] Aristotle already draws this implication from his theory of perception: the senses do not sense themselves, for if there is nothing other to sense, there is no alternation, and thus no sensation.[185] We only perceive our-selves (potency), Aristotle suggests, when confronted with another already more fully its-self than we are ourselves (actuality), and in this perceiving we are ourselves realised (entelechy).[186] Aristotle therefore escapes phenomenology's impossible incorporation, as Chrétien explains:

> The organ cannot be nor become an object to itself. Aristotle states this in a general way (…): there is no sensing of sensations themselves. We feel only the other, and if we feel ourselves this will be only on the occasion of (…) a feeling of the other (…). To feel oneself is not a beginning, but a response to the appeal made by a sensible that is other than myself and that elicits the exercise of my acts. I never start by saying 'I,' I start by being 'thou-ed' by the world.[187]

Now, compare this to the following passage from Nancy's essay on the extension of the soul:

> First, the soul is the ensemble of form-matter (…), the soul as the entelechy of a body is this body as a complex, as a whole—as a body, finally! The entelechy of a body is thus the fact that the body is matter as form, and form as matter—a sensing. Second, the true entelechy (…) is always the *individual* (…). Singular determination is essential to the body. (…) It is only on the condition of having this body here and not another that this body here can *sense itself* as a body and sense others. The soul as the *first entelechy of a natural organized body* (*Of the Soul*, 412b) is not some thing but the fact that there is a body, its *existence*. We can accentuate this word, as Heidegger has done, by saying *ex*-istence. The soul is the presence of the body, its position, it's 'stance,' its 'sistence' as being *out-side* (ex) (…), that there is extension and exposition. It is therefore offered, presented open to the outside. A body touches on the outside, but at the same time (…), it touches itself as outside. A body accedes to itself as outside.[188]

[183] Derrida, *OT*, 230.

[184] *Ibid.*, 246.

[185] Aristotle, *De anima*, 416b.28-417a.9.

[186] *Ibid.*, 412b.1-9.

[187] Chrétien, *C&R*, 120.

[188] Nancy, *Corpus*, 128.

Both Chrétien and Nancy understand the experience of the self as fundamental openness to the world: we find our-selves *out there* (*Da*), always already exposed to the world as skin. "Sensitivity is transitive, not reflexive," Chrétien therefore concludes: "We always need something other than ourselves in order to feel, and the organ, to exercise its function of organ, requires the alterity of the object. The organ cannot become an object to itself."[189]

iii. The animality of touch

The third consequence of Aristotle's metaxology of touch combines the previous two: tactility or *touch is coextensive with animality*. Aristotle emphasises that touch is the most fundamental sense, shared by all perceiving beings, by all animals.[190] He can say this because touch is not primarily reflexive and thus does not presuppose self-consciousness. Chrétien therefore observes that what Aristotle calls *touch* comprises what phenomenology might call *life-in-the-world*:

> The most fundamental and universal of all the senses is (…) touch. Coextensive for Aristotle with animal life (…). While touch is separable from other senses, (…) touch is inseparable from life itself: no animal is deprived of touch without also being deprived of life. (…) The first evidence of the soul is the sense of touch. Moreover (…), the exercise of touch is indistinguishable from the experience of touch, since touch delivers us to the world through a unique act of presence: in order to see one must be visible, yet seeing is not immediately to be seen by what I see. (…) It follows that a phenomenology of touch does not merely define a particular regional study, focussed on one living function among many. No phenomenology of life, of body and the flesh, can be constituted without basing itself in a phenomenology of touch. (…) Touch is not primarily (…) one of the five senses: for Aristotle, touch is the necessary and sufficient condition for the emergence of an animated body (…). Moreover the sense of touch, far from making the living organism in a mere spectator, pledges it to the world (…), exposes it to the world and protects it from it.[191]

Falque's critique of Henry is subtly repeated here. Whereas Henry distinguished human Life (carnal auto-impressionality) both from animal life and the world, Aristotle shows us what Falque means by *the animal in common*: "what is prior in the sequence is always implicitly present in the other figures or ensouled things," he says, like "the nutritive in the perceptive,"[192] the perceptive is implied in the contemplative, or the animal in the human. Otherness is always *implied* in the

[189] Chrétien, *C&R*, 119-120; Derrida, *OT*, 245-246.

[190] Aristotle, *De anima*, 413b.1-9, 414a.1-4, 414b.1-4, 415a.3-6, 427b.7-9, 434a-435b.

[191] Chrétien, *C&R*, 85-86.

[192] Aristotle, *De anima*, 414b.29-32.

experience of sameness: the outside in the inside (opening), the extra-phenomenal in phenomenalisation (predelineation), the chaotic animality in humanity (animation), the union of body and soul in the experience of the *cogito* (articulation), and the body in the experience of the flesh (formation). However, as Nancy says, it is implied "only obscurely," for the otherness persists (or *resists*) as an "experience (…) that remains at the moment where it takes place, impossible to *establish*."[193] Aristotle gives an example:

> But the tangible differs from the visible and the sounding, in that we perceive the latter through the medium's doing something to us, whereas we perceive the tangibles not under the influence of the medium but along with the medium, like a man who is struck through his shield: for it is not the case that the shield, having been struck, subsequently banged into the man, but rather both ended up being struck at the same time together.[194]

The shield is the medium: the space in which the experienced blow takes place, communicating that movement to me. However, the experiences of the blow and the shield thereby become coextensive. The experience of the touch is given *along with* the (in)experience of the medium: it is impossible to distinguish the *experience* (being struck), from the medium or the *way-of-experiencing* (the shield crashing into me). If touch or experience's medium is then the expository body (skin), the *lived-experience* (flesh) likewise cannot be separated from the *underground* allowing the experience to take place (body). Again, psychedelic experience illustrates this: the neurochemical alteration is not an intentional object of experience, but is nevertheless *implied* in all experiencing as colouring the experience of intentional objects. We experience *through* the medium of the body, but embodiment itself is not *given* in lived-experience; rather, *the body is the basis on which things are lived in experience*:

> Touch unlocks (…) the root qualities that constitute every body as such. The basic sense is also the sense of the basic, of the foundation to which everything in nature can be traced. (…) Through touch, life as such (…) opens itself to the dimensions that constitute corporeity as such. And the flesh, while only a part of our body, gives us access in every least sensation to that which founds every sensible body, to *sôma hèi sôma*.[195]

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[193] Nancy, *ES*, 107.

[194] Aristotle, *De anima*, 423b.10.

[195] Chrétien, *C&R*, 93-94.

Here, the first two consequences of Aristotle's metaxological account of touch (extra-phenomenality and transitivity) come together in the third (animality). After all, as Derrida observes, "Chrétien says 'transitivity' rather than 'intentionality,' although his discourse shows many marks of the phenomenological tradition."[196] For *intentionality* means simply the *transitivity of conscious acts*: consciousness means to be conscious of something foreign to consciousness.[197] In our phenomenological reading of Aristotle's metaxology of touch, the extra-phenomenality and the transitivity, as otherness undergrounding touching, converge to situate phenomenalisation as *driven by our bodily intentionality* (the whole of passions and drives comprised by our animality) without itself belong to the phenomena it makes possible: "My being-in-the-world depends upon my body's self-effacing transitivity,"[198] as Leder summarises this idea.

The body thus forms what Kearney calls a "highly sensitive carnal *Befindlichkeit*," a way of being "attentive and attuned."[199] The drives and passions constituting our embodied condition as shared with animals is implied within phenomenalisation, for they denote how we *find ourselves in the world*: embodied. As such, embodiment constitutes, in the language of Heidegger's existential analytic, a "prior disclosedness of the world which belongs to being-in," and "in such a way that what it encounters in the world can *matter* to it in this way."[200] Leder illustrates:

> Similarly, such corporeal states as hunger, thirst, and sexual craving are not simply 'internal' twinges but modes whereby the environment stands forth. Such biological urges color the perceived world, channelling attention and activity toward potential sources of gratification. The lived body is thus first and foremost not a located thing but a path of access, a being-in-the-world.[201]

We have then completed an alternative account of experience as *embodied*, proceeding through the medium of the body (our own strangeness), as opposed to *incarnate*, playing out within the immediacy of the flesh (the egological sphere of ownness): the body does not appear in lived-

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[196] Derrida, *OT*, 245.

[197] Husserl, *Ideas I*, 167-170/199-201 (168/200); *CM*, 72/33.

[198] Leder, *The Absent Body*, 15.

[199] Kearney, 'WCH', 21, 24.

[200] Heidegger, *Be&T*, 137/133.

[201] Leder, *The Absent Body*, 21.

experience, but nevertheless *forms* it. I have done so in the form of an existential analytic, for like Heidegger's *Befindlichkeit*, the body "is an existential, fundamental way in which Da-sein is its there."[202] Specifically, by tracking Christianity's self-deconstruction (Nancy) or theology's backlash on phenomenology (Falque), we saw how what aggravated phenomenology's structural problems (Derrida)—namely, the appropriation of theological terms by phenomenological discourse (Henry)—, also showed the path towards overcoming these issues: Christian theology (e.g., Tertullian) showed how the body cannot be reduced to its lived-experience (flesh), for Christianity is both the religion of *hoc est corpus meum* (immediate self-presence in touch) and *noli me tangere* (the displacement of presence as touch).[203] Or, as Merleau-Ponty put this: "the paradox of Christianity and Catholicism is that they are never satisfied with either an interior or an exterior God but are always *between* one and the other"[204]—or, indeed, *underneath* the distinction. By turning to theology, by aggravating its problematic tendencies (e.g., the spiritualisation of the body and touch), phenomenology has also been able to leave them behind, for it is in theology that 'the theological' effaces itself, and it is thus only by passing *through* 'the theological' and tracking its self-deconstruction that we are able to think *after* the theological turn (i.e., to 'de-theologise' phenomenology).

[202] Heidegger, *B&T*, 139/135; Nancy, *FT*, 180-181.
[203] Nancy, *NMT*, 14.
[204] *Ibid.*, 176.

Conclusion

This dissertation outlined what Jean-Luc Nancy's work can contribute to the phenomenology of religion by relating it to French phenomenology's recent 'theological turn'. Offering a phenomenological reading of his deconstruction of Christianity, I argued that Nancy's contribution exists in demonstrating how to think *after the theological turn*: though *starting from* the theological turn phenomenology was structurally inclined to produce, this study attempted to *move beyond* it by highlighting its inherent contradictions, by deconstructing it. This deconstruction was achieved by showing how phenomenology's key terms (givenness and embodiment) cannot straightforwardly be identified with theology's (revelation and incarnation). I developed this insight by way of a *phenomenology of kenosis* as an alternative to the accounts offered by the authors of the theological turn: this Pauline notion, according to which God is only God in emptying himself of his divinity through his Incarnation in the human being that is Jesus Christ, illustrates how it is only by turning to theology that phenomenology can de-theologise itself, come into its own as phenomenology, for the God encountered there likewise consists in the self-effacement of the 'theological' dimension.

The results of this study can be summarised along three lines. (a) First, phenomenological insights *sensu stricto*, i.e. into the general structure of (religious) experience: what kenosis as a phenomenon teaches us as a matter of phenomenology of religion, but also, and therefore, how phenomenality itself is reconceived as kenotic. (b) Second, phenomenological insights *sensu lato*, i.e. into the nature of phenomenological discourse as such: having facilitated its own theologisation, only by tracking phenomenology's theological turn can we think after it, can phenomenology be de-theologised. (c) Third, new insights into the specific phenomenological problem of religious experience: noting Marion's inability to account for his and Benoist's 'seeing

differently', this study emphasised the reality of different and equally valid ways of seeing, making the problem one of 'seeing the difference'. Specifically, parts I and II both concluded by gesturing towards Heidegger's *Befindlichkeit* as determining the actuality of religious or theophanic phenomenalisation: part I highlighted faith as an 'Abrahamic *Befindlichkeit*' (Caputo), whilst part II emphasised the body as a 'carnal *Befindlichkeit*' (Kearney). In short, the problems encountered were each time evacuated to this characteristic of existence. This does not avoid the problem. To the contrary, Heidegger precisely uses *Befindlichkeit* to declare existence the originary disclosure of world, which phenomenology can only subsequently raise to the level of concepts. The problem of religious experience, then, becomes a problem of religious existence, of different ways of being-in-the-world: a question of seeing the difference in existential mood, the different existential situations in which the respective subjects of experience find themselves, the different horizons against which things give themselves to them, the different bases on which their experiences are experienced.

a. The phenomenon of kenosis and the kenosis of phenomenality

The proposed phenomenology of kenosis operated on two levels: first, as concerns the phenomenology of religion, kenosis became key to accounting for religious or theophanic experience (God withdraws himself when giving himself, hence experience's theophanic character or religious specificity does not belong to the givenness but to the way it is intended); secondly, as concerns phenomenology as such, the withdrawal of kenosis replaced the revelation of givenness as model for the general structure of experience (phenomenality presupposes, and therefore withdraws in, an extra-phenomenal element that forms or predelineates it and is therefore implied within it). Like God is not given, or the element determining experience as theophanic is not-given, meaning he therefore remains extra-phenomenal in Marion's sense; so, too, the element determining (delineating) all phenomenality remains extra-phenomenal more generally: the phenomenal inside gives way to or *withdraws* into the extra-phenomenal outside implicated within it, for the outside makes the inside possible (by delineating its inside) without being reducible to it

(by always remaining outside as delineation). As Nancy might put it: the outside is inside in the inside's withdrawal from itself as inside; the inside is outside itself, is exposed to itself, can be considered 'inside' only from the outside. The phenomenology of kenosis therefore thematised this withdrawal phenomenologically as phenomenality's self-effacement in what remains extra-phenomenal, related the phenomenal to the extra-phenomenal making it possible as the dependence of the former on the latter, discussed the extra-phenomenal phenomenologically (whether God, for the phenomenologist of religion, or the body, for the phenomenologist generally): "the philosopher," as Merleau-Ponty put it, "must bear his shadow."[1]

I proposed conceiving of this extra-phenomenal element as the *form of experience*, and the relation between it and the phenomenal as one of *formation* (*faire*). It denotes how experiences are experienced, the basis on which things are lived in experience, the life that makes for the lived-experience by setting the terms on which there can be givenness. In short, when Nancy says that "existence is experience,"[2] I took this to mean that existence constitutes or forms (*fait*) experience. I suggested that the formative role of existence in the constitution of experience, the way it makes-for (*fait*) lived-experiences, can be considered 'phenomenologically' by conceiving of existence itself as an experience: namely, its undergoing, the ordeal of going-through life. However, this is no longer the lived-experience (*Erlebnis*) of classical phenomenology, which delivers a phenomenon as the intentional object of consciousness; but, rather, the ex-per-ience (*Er-fahr-ung*) underlying or undergrounding phenomenalisation itself, which, as the experience orienting intentionality and thus forming the basis on which phenomena are constituted, does not deliver a phenomenon for it is itself without intentional object. It is therefore implied in all phenomena, as the ex-per-ience of phenomenalisation, without ever rising to the level of phenomenon itself: it is

[1] Merleau-Ponty, *Signs*, 178.

[2] Nancy, *Dis-Enclosure*, 79.

"implied (…) only obscurely," as Nancy puts it, and therefore remains "impossible to *establish*" phenomenologically.[3]

This ex-per-ience is nothing but the undergoing of ex-istence itself, the experience of going-through life on the basis of which things are lived in experience as phenomenal objects of intentional consciousness. It denotes what Bailly described as the "complete adherence of experience to itself."[4] Or, as Nancy put it, the way "experience simply (…) 'events' (*s'évenir*), 'comes forth of itself',"[5] namely: the mere undergoing of or going-through experiences, which is ex-istence itself, and thus ex-per-ience. This experience has no objects because it lives nothing outside itself, nothing other than its own undergoing as ex-per-ience; it adheres completely to itself, because it ex-ists, as ex-per-ience, in the undergoing of existence: it is the ex-per-ience of ex-istence (venturing-out), which as such constitutes the event of world-disclosure originarily *before* there are any phenomena—I return to this shortly.

For phenomenology to think this ex-per-ience, existence as the form of experience, it must turn itself into a poetics (and, by extension, a technics): a discourse on the form—i.e., the ex-per-ience of existence, of going-through life—that makes for (*fait*) the lived-experience. The proposed phenomenology of kenosis, according to its double scope, did so in two ways. First, as concerns the phenomenology of religion, by elucidating Kierkegaard's poetic account of faith in *Fear and Trembling* as a clash between different ways of existing and thus different forms of experience or different ways of intending what gives itself (Abraham's faith versus Johannes' lack of it): since existence sets the terms on which the phenomenalisation of God proceeds, God's phenomenality withdraws into that existence, his givenness retreats into the intentional reception determining its possibility *beforehand*. Second, as concerns phenomenology generally, by elucidating the technical role played by the body in the constitution of the lived-experience of the flesh: since

[3] Nancy, *ES*, 106-107.

[4] Bailly, *Adieu*, 7.

[5] Nancy, *Dis-Enclosure*, 79.

embodiment—as the material condition engendering finitude and thus in turn the form of existence—sets the terms for all phenomenalisation by orienting intentionality in a particular way, by driving it in a particular direction (*sens*); the phenomenality of the flesh withdraws into the extra-phenomenal corporeal drives and passions operative beneath its surface (the cellar of our existence).

This move beyond classical phenomenality was required to do justice to the 'kenotic' or self-effacing character of phenomenality itself. Each time, we found that the phenomenal—whether the *theo-phanein* of revelation or the auto-affection of incarnation—withdraws into what makes it possible without being reducible to it: revelation, as a theophanic experience, withdraws into the faith that precedes it as a form of life receptive to it; incarnation, as the lived-experience of the flesh, withdraws into the body of which it is the experience, which therefore makes that experience possible whilst remaining outside of it. Put differently, phenomenality (the revelation of givenness or the incarnation of the flesh), insofar as it is always made possible by something extra-phenomenal (the fidelity to givenness or the corporeality lived as flesh), each time effaces or withdraws from itself (its absoluteness and unconditionality or its purity and auto-affection). The withdrawal, the kenotic character, lies in *the impossibility of accounting for the phenomenal on its own terms*, just like God cannot reveal himself in his divine or 'proper' form: something extra-phenomenal (*hors-phénomène*) and foreign (*étranger*) is always implied in the phenomenal (*phénomène*) and ownmost (*propre*), which therefore requires a phenomenological account as well, even if—or, rather, precisely because—it is "implied (…) only obscurely" and "remains, at the moment it takes place, impossible to *establish*."[6]

b. Phenomenology de-theologised after phenomenology's theological turn

If this study established the general structure of experience as the self-effacement of the phenomenal (i.e., as 'kenotic'), it nevertheless likewise suggested a particular conception of

[6] Nancy, *ES*, 106-107.

phenomenological discourse: a too close alignment of phenomenology and theology has been resisted at every turn, precisely because kenosis denotes the 'egress' of the theological mode from within. In keeping with Nancy's deconstruction of Christianity and its characteristic gesture of self-surpassing, we therefore turned to theology in order to deconstruct the theological turn's phenomenological coupling of theological and philosophical terms, to think *after* the theological turn: where Husserl defined the field of phenomenological investigation as intuition insofar it is *leibhaftig gegeben*, I argued that this cannot straightforwardly be identified with the *revelation of incarnate givenness*. Specifically, part I argued against Marion's identification of givenness (*Gegebenheit*) with revelation, whilst part II argued against Henry's identification of embodiment (*Leiblichkeit*) with incarnation. Or, put theologically: the Revelation of Christ cannot be explained solely in terms of intuitive givenness, but also requires the intentionality of faith that allows for the givenness to be recognised as theophanic; nor can the Incarnation of God be explained solely in terms of his taking on the consciously lived experience of man or his phenomenological 'flesh', but requires instead the complete assumption of the human condition, including man's material corporeality. Indeed, Revelation as well as Incarnation, or Revelation *as* Incarnation (the Revelation of Christ), implies kenosis: a withdrawal of divine givenness into the human orientation open to it as the form of its experience or the condition of possibility for its revelation (part I) and the human body as the form of its givenness or the site where revelation takes place through Incarnation (part II). In short, God gives himself *on* human terms and *as* a human being, thereby emptying himself out of his divine form precisely in giving himself. What God gives with one hand, he takes away or withdraws with the other: himself.

Specifically, the first chapter introduced givenness and revelation as phenomenological terms by way of Marion's account of the saturated phenomenon. Marion criticised Husserl for failing to execute the reduction to its end: namely, to the mere givenness of phenomena *to* consciousness, which would include bracketing their intentional constitution *by* consciousness. This leaves Marion with the possibility of a saturated phenomenon: a phenomenon that gives itself

completely on its own terms because its givenness overwhelms any possible intentional horizon, one that is absolutely given and therefore appears unconditionally. The saturated phenomenon *par excellence*, he suggests, is the Revelation of Christ understood as theophanic phenomenon (i.e., divine datum): the appearing of God (i.e., the givenness of God). However, Marion's reduction of intentionality and emphasis on the unconditional givenness of God in the saturated phenomenon renders him incapable of confronting the problem of authentic seeing differently as a disagreement in good faith about *what* gives itself rather than the *fact* of givenness: if God is unconditionally and absolutely given to be seen, why do atheists claim not to see him? Marion fails to give a convincing answer to the questions of his atheist critics: how does he account for his seeing God, Benoist asked, where others see nothing or something else? Indeed, why call this absolute givenness 'God', Nancy asked, and not something else? Here, Marion himself takes recourse to something not-given and thus extra-phenomenal in his sense: the will to see the given as a fidelity to what gives itself to be seen. On his account, atheists are then simply acting in bad faith by refusing to see what nevertheless gives itself to be seen unconditionally and undeniably. Even for Marion, the recognition of givenness thus ultimately requires a certain intentional orientation, namely: faith. This means that we should refocus our attention, away from givenness and towards the intentionality, the faith, that allows it to take place. I showed how Nancy provides such an alternative account, which presents faith, or rather existence-in-faith, as a being-unto-God (*être-à-Dieu*), where the divine effaces its phenomenality, empties itself, in the human existence that orients itself towards it (*adieu*): as demonstrated by Mary Magdalene, the life of faith itself bears witness to God, reveals God. From this, we concluded that Revelation is a *theopoetic act* rather than a *theophanic phenomenon*: something to be done rather than seen, just as God *lived* in the world as a human being rather than *appearing* as divine. This means that the phenomenology of religion must talk about human existence as *the basis on which* there is appearance (e.g., the orientation of faith), before it talks about anything that appears (e.g., the theophany of Revelation). It should be, as

Nancy put it, "a phenomenology that is theological, but not theophanic,"[7] that talks about God phenomenologically (*theo*logical), without doing so in terms of appearing (theo*phanic*). Indeed, phenomenology must continue to recognise the irreconcilable estrangement of divinity from phenomenality and givenness (transcendence). Given that we cannot talk about God in terms of phenomenality, in terms of givenness, we must then turn our attention instead to the human lives of faith that bear witness to him.

I started this task in the second chapter by providing an anthropological reading of Nancy's deconstruction of Christianity, which showed that the condition of humanity as a rational animal is undergrounded by a more profound faith in the reason distinguishing it from other animals: an extra-rational experience underlies, and therefore makes possible, reason; just like an extra-phenomenal experience underlies, and therefore makes possible, phenomenality. This point was made by fitting Nancy into Falque's 'kenotic ambition' for phenomenology: an exploration of the underground of phenomenality, making it possible without being reducible to it. On Falque's urging, we descended into the 'cellar of our existence', where Nancy discovered the underground of reason in terms faith (by reading Kant), groundlessness (by reading Heidegger) or value (Marx): reason is groundless; which is to say, it cannot be grounded itself, it cannot give a reason for itself, it cannot justify itself, except by way of something extra-rational—namely, an existence that values reason, that has faith in its ability to give reasons.

The third chapter discussed this existence, characterised by faith, in terms of its experience, as the ex-per-ience of faith. It thereby provided an example of what a phenomenology of religion might look like when it considers religious existence, a life lived, rather than religious experience, the givenness of phenomena. Specifically, it drew on Nancy and Romano to give a phenomenological reading of Kierkegaard's *Fear and Trembling* in order to illustrate Nancy's enigmatic statement that "existence is experience,"[8] by showing how Kierkegaard understands

[7] Nancy, *Dis-Enclosure*, 49

[8] *Ibid*., 79.

Abraham's existence in faith as existing in an experience: the fear and trembling of faith, the ordeal of Abraham's life. I argued that this experience of faith allows Abraham to see God where the atheist only sees an absurdity. Put otherwise, this experience makes up (*fait*) the theophanic character of Revelation. In making its phenomenology, I showed how this experience nevertheless remains outside the scope of a phenomenology in Marion's sense: it does not concern something given for all to see, but a singular event of Abraham's life that only he has lived-through and in terms of which he therefore subsequently envisions or experiences everything else. His ex-per-ience is the basis on which phenomena can give themselves to him, without this ex-per-ience being able to give universal reasons for his seeing (only in that sense does faith suspend 'the ethical'). In short, this ex-per-ience of existence (faith) constitutes possible givenness for Abraham (revelation), but does not let itself be reduced to actual givenness for all. Faith can therefore be considered phenomenologically only as the form of experience, the extra-phenomenal delineation of phenomenality, the horizon within which there can be givenness without itself being given. From this, I concluded, with Nancy and in an inversion of Marion's account, that the saturation at issue in theophanic experience is not one of overabundant givenness, as Marion claims, but one of an excess in intention: seeing more than one is given to see because intentionality leaps ahead of itself by means of faith. This means that 'religious' or theophanic experience exists in a projection: a particular interpretation, by those who have faith, of what gives itself to all, regardless of their faith; an interpretation that is in itself groundless, or grounded only in a particular existence, not in the givenness itself—hence, fear and trembling is always maintained, the seeing never secure. This is not to dismiss religious experience as a hallucination; the projection is not arbitrary, but existentially (in)formed and situated, constituted by what Caputo calls an "Abrahamic *Befindlichkeit*."[9] As phenomenologists, we can talk about this form or situation, about this *Befindlichkeit*, and are therefore perfectly capable of accounting for the constitution of theophanic

[9] Caputo, *AE*, 27.

or religious phenomena—only, the category of givenness on its own proves to be insufficient. If Marion then understands Revelation as theophanic or 'religious' experience, and considers it the paradigmatic example of pure givenness—i.e., the saturated phenomenon that gives itself absolutely by overwhelming every possible intentional horizon—, this identification has proved untenable: in short, Revelation does not equal givenness (whether possible or actual); something more is needed for givenness to be experienced as theophanic.

Part II likewise resisted the alignment of phenomenological terms with theological ones, this time in reference to Henry's identification of embodiment with incarnation. Specifically, chapter 4 criticised his understanding of human embodiment in terms of 'flesh', namely the auto-affection of transcendental life (phenomenological incarnation), which would equally be the condition God takes on in becoming human (theological Incarnation): "In the depths of its Night, our flesh is God."[10] Yet, this is a conception of incarnation that lacks its revelatory moment of exteriority, its kenosis: there is no flesh without the body of which it is the lived-experience, meaning that the revelation of the flesh withdraws into the obscurity of the body irreducible to it (kenosis of the flesh); there is no Incarnation of God without his assumption of a historical and material body just like our own in the human being that is Jesus of Nazareth, into which the divinity withdraws or empties itself of its divine form (kenosis of Christ). In other words, theological Incarnation (the Revelation of God by taking on the human condition) differs from phenomenological incarnation (the revelation that is all appearing in the flesh): God comes among us by emptying himself out of his divine form, by assuming our human condition, by effacing himself in order to meet us on our terms. Indeed, phenomenologically speaking, the Incarnation of the Word is an incorporation rather than an incarnation, i.e. an *externalisation*: a coming-into-the-body (historicity and world) rather than coming-into-the-flesh (auto-affection and consciousness).

[10] Henry, *Incarnation*, 262.

With Falque, chapter 5 considered this incorporation theologically (the body of Christ as marker of his creatureliness), in order to make the backlash of this theology felt on phenomenology (the experience of the organic body as it resists reduction to the phenomenality of the flesh). In making this backlash felt, in passing through theology to show how its Incarnation differs from phenomenology's incarnation, it became possible to 'de-theologise' phenomenology: by exploring the theological notions phenomenology's inherent structure drives us toward, we gained a better appreciation of their properly phenomenological meaning (e.g., *Leibhaftigkeit*) stripped of all theological connotations (e.g., Incarnation). The backlash of theology on phenomenology is then felt precisely in the dimension of embodiment, which is highlighted by the Incarnation of the Word, but which phenomenology itself cannot think: namely, the body as corporeal reality (*Leibkörper*), the experience of embodiment as it resists reduction to the phenomenality of the flesh (*Leib*) or the obscurity of materiality (*Körper*). Falque called it the *spread body*: the body as it is spread-out between the lived or subjective body of phenomenology and the material or objective body of physics. This is the body, not insofar as it is lived in experience, nor insofar as it remains absent from experience; but precisely the body as it sets the terms on which experience is experienced, with embodied existence forming experience as an intentionality of the body, the way consciousness is *driven*. That the spread body nevertheless exists in an experience, e.g. the experience of being under the influence of psychedelic drugs, indicates that phenomenological incarnation is insufficient when it comes to accounting for our experience of embodiment: in short, embodiment does not equal incarnation.

The sixth chapter finally fitted Nancy's account of embodiment into Falque's phenomenological and theological framework in order to further illustrate its consequences. Specifically, it articulated a new account of the experience of embodiment, i.e. of experience as itself embodied: the only experience we have of the body as corporeal reality is the way in which it is implied in all lived-experience, in the way it forms the basis on which things are lived in experience, in the way it drives the process of phenomenalisation. Drawing on Nancy's notion of

ex-skin-hibition (*ex-peau-sition*), it proposed a phenomenality of skin: the skin functions as the *medium* of experience, namely that dimension of embodiment *through* which all experience proceeds (its zero-point), but which for that reason itself *withdraws* from experience (its vanishing point). I argued that this phenomenality of skin provides a better understanding of experience as embodied: just like intentionality makes all phenomena possible without itself being a phenomenon, except as phenomenalisation itself (intending); as skin, the body is the medium of experience without itself being experienced, except as the mediation itself (touching). Experience is intentionally mediated, meaning it is existentially and corporeally (in)formed. We summarised this by saying, with Kearney, that experience is constituted by a "carnal *Befindlichkeit*,"[11] i.e. just like experience proceeded *on the basis of* existence-in-faith (part I), it equally proceeds *on the basis of* embodied existence (part II).

c. The problem of seeing differently as a question of seeing the difference

If the phenomenology of religion concerns the possibility of 'religious' experience—which we understood more specifically, with Marion, as the necessary and sufficient conditions to speak of experience as 'theophanic' or revealing the Christian God (i.e., the saturated phenomenon as Revelation of Christ)—, and if this study sought to outline how Nancy's thought can serve the phenomenologist of religion; it is worth summarising our results in terms of the problem of religious experience. We encountered it in the first chapter as the problem of real and authentic *seeing differently*: how do we account for the fact that Nancy and Benoist do not see God where Marion does, rather than following the latter in his unserious—and decidedly 'un-phenomenological'—dismissal of their seeing as an exercise in bad faith?

This observation served as our first indication that givenness does not equal revelation: theophanic experience cannot be accounted for solely in terms of givenness, or givenness does not constitute a sufficient condition for this experience, precisely because God cannot give himself

[11] Kearney, 'WCH', 21.

from himself and as himself to finite human beings (i.e., in his proper form)—indeed, my claim throughout is that God *withdraws* from givenness (i.e., gives himself only in an improper form). Instead, we concluded, partly in line with Marion's invocation of the 'will to see', that the reason for this seeing differently does not belong to the givenness itself, but to its reception: the intentional horizon or existential situation within which there is givenness, the predelineation of experience allowing it to be qualified as religious, the way in which the experience is experienced as theophanic—in short, the faith Marion has, which Nancy and Benoist lack. We discussed this non-given, and thus extra-phenomenal in Marion's sense, component of experience as the *form of experience*: understood in terms of existence, and especially existence-in-faith, in part I, and in terms of embodiment in part II. By this, I meant to indicate that experiences are experienced, that things are lived in experience, in terms of or on the basis of a particular existence, a particular way of living life or being-in-the-world, which equally means a particular way of being embodied. Yet, these terms, on the basis of which there is lived-experience, are not themselves *given* in that experience, they cannot be raised up to the level of phenomena, they cannot be made the object of intentional consciousness, precisely because they underground that very process as its experiencing, phenomenalising or intending. In the final analysis, this was each time summarised by taking recourse to Heidegger's language of attunement or *Befindlichkeit*: an Abrahamic *Befindlichkeit* in part I (faith as the experience of existence) and a carnal *Befindlichkeit* in part II (embodiment as the experience of existence). From this, we may now conclude that the problem of *seeing differently* (i.e., religious or theophanic experience) is a question of *seeing the difference*: namely, the difference in attunement or *Befindlichkeit*, the existential situation (i.e., the 'mood') Marion and his atheist critics respectively find themselves in (i.e., faith or unfaith), which in turn determines how they receive what gives itself (i.e., as theophanic or not).

When I then said, in the introduction, that this study would not primarily concern itself with phenomena but instead with an experience that is more fundamental, I meant this *Befindlichkeit*: what is itself not-given, outside-the-flesh (*hors-chair*), and therefore extra-phenomenal

(*hors-phénomène*); yet nevertheless precedes, makes possible and therefore determines or forms, the phenomenality of givenness (Marion) or flesh (Henry). In short, my topic has never been any particular intentional object, any specific phenomenon (i.e., Revelation or Incarnation); but rather the experience of existence that constitutes, and therefore makes-up or determines (*fait*), world-disclosure *before* there are any phenomena (i.e., by constituting givenness in the flesh)—which is precisely how Heidegger conceptualises *Befindlichkeit* as an essential characteristic of Dasein in §29 of *Being and Time*.

There, Heidegger summarises the role of *Befindlichkeit* or attunement in the existential ontology of Dasein, along with its relation to the method of the phenomenological investigation, as follows:

> Attunement is an existential, fundamental way in which Da-sein is its there. It not only characterizes Da-sein ontologically, but is at the same time of fundamental methodical significance for the existential analytic because of its disclosure. (…) The phenomenological interpretation must give to Da-sein itself the possibility of primordial disclosure and let it, so to speak, interpret itself. It goes along with this disclosure only in order to raise the phenomenal content of disclosure existentially to a conceptual level.[12]

Befindlichkeit, how we find ourselves situated, constitutes the primordial world-disclosure that Dasein is as being-in-the-world. Put otherwise, it expresses how our *exposition to* the world (embodiment) constitutes our being as primordial disclosure of world through its *being-in* the world (existence): "This prior disclosedness of the world which belongs to being-in is also constituted by attunement. Letting something be encountered is primarily *circumspective*, not just a sensation or staring out at something." Instead, "the moodedness of attunement constitutes existentially the openness to world of Da-sein," since "being-in as such is existentially determined beforehand in such a way that what it encounters in the world can *matter* to it in this way."[13] *Befindlichkeit* is thus the site of the primordial world-disclosure because it determines our making-sense according to our being-*in*-the-world, how we find ourselves *there*. This, *in turn*, allows the things we encounter

[12] Heidegger, *B&T*, 139-140/131.

[13] *Ibid*., 137/129.

to appear to us *as* the things they are or give themselves out to be. Heidegger summarises: "*In attunement lies existentially a disclosive submission to world out of which things that matter to us can be encountered.* Indeed, we must *ontologically* in principle leave the primary discovery of the world to 'mere mood.'"[14] Mere mood, expressing how we find ourselves thrown in-the-world, thus constitutes the primary disclosure of the world: it *precedes*, and therefore *determines*, the appearance of things in our encounter with them; it forms the basis, sets the terms, on which things appear within the world beforehand. It is that *primary disclosure of existence*, rather than the *secondary appearing of things*, that we have been interested in, precisely because the former determines the latter, meaning that the latter withdraws in or is delineated by the former.

Indeed, for Heidegger, phenomenology only exists to bring to the level of concepts the orginary disclosure of mere mood, which in itself is phenomenology's primary and real though ever-elusive object of interest: it anchors its phenomenality as its zero-point, whilst nevertheless remaining obscure to that phenomenality as its vanishing point (hence "phenomenology is needed" "precisely because phenomena are initially and for the most part *not* given"[15]). Indeed, "mood," Heidegger explains, is "a primordial kind of being of Da-sein in which it is disclosed to itself *before* all cognition and willing and *beyond* their scope of disclosure," meaning that "all immanent reflection can find 'experiences' only because the there is already disclosed in attunement. 'Mere mood' discloses the there more primordially, but it also *closes* it *off* more stubbornly than any *not*-perceiving."[16] The mood can then only be discussed phenomenologically in the way it is implied (though precisely "only obscurely"[17]) in all appearing, in the way it facilitates all appearing, namely as the experiencing of experience or the form of experience. The phenomenology of kenosis suggested here has tried to thematise this implication by sketching the ways in which phenomenality withdraws into its own extra-phenomenal underground, namely the

[14] *Ibid*., 137-138/129-130.
[15] *Ibid*., 36/34.
[16] *Ibid*., 136/128.
[17] Nancy, *ES*, 106-107.

Abrahamic *Befindlichkeit* of faith (when it concerns the givenness of God) or the carnal *Befindlichkeit* of the body (when it concerns the lived-experience of the flesh).

Faith, understood as a mood, is thus a necessary condition for the constitution of theophanic experience—or, rather, for the formation, the experiencing, of experience *as* theophanic: Marion and his atheist critics *see different things* because they *live different lives* and therefore *live things differently* in experience. The problem of religious experience thus ultimately becomes a question of religious existence, the difference being one of living rather than appearing, or appearing only insofar as it is itself constituted by living: at issue are not two different givens, but two different forms of life. Hence, Bultmann says, God becomes "an expression of our existence."[18] I thematised this life phenomenologically by discussing it in terms of its experience, namely the ex-per-ience of existence: an experience that *precedes* and *resists* phenomenalisation as our prior sense of self (Desmond), the predelineation of experience (Caputo), the "more originary experience," by which, "in exposing myself to the world, I apprehend myself in my relation to things"[19] (Romano)—which are all different ways of articulating what Heidegger calls *Befindlichkeit*. The goal of the phenomenology of kenosis developed here with Nancy was to refocus the phenomenologist's attention *there*, on the there out of which things are lived in experience, the existential situation or intentional horizon within which things are given.

Finally, something this study has not considered yet now demands its own account—even though it perhaps cannot be supplied by philosophy but only by theology—, is not the seeing differently attributed to living differently *through* faith, but indeed that very living differently *as a result of* faith. This study simply assumed that existence-in-faith differs fundamentally from natural existence (i.e., an ontological or transcendental difference), which therefore results in different ways of seeing (i.e., an ontic or empirical difference). In other words, I have only considered, phenomenologically, how faith (in)forms experience as a specific instance of how existence

[18] Bultmann, *Faith and Understanding I*, 60.

[19] Romano, *TI,* 144.

(in)forms experience more generally (through *Befindlichkeit*). However, in doing so, it was not necessary to outline, ontologically, the difference between existence-in-faith and natural existence (i.e., the different moods), nor how the Revelation of God or the Proclamation of Christ brings about that difference (i.e., the transformation of *Befindlichkeit*, in particular, and Dasein's finitude, in general). In short, I have considered the difference (living and existence) only in terms of its effects (seeing and experience), not in terms of its causes (being and its event). Yet, it would arguably be impossible to consider these causes phenomenologically, i.e. whilst bracketing the actuality of Revelation: here, rather than the necessary and sufficient conditions for experience to be 'religious' or theophanic in principle (the operation of faith as mood), at issue is how these conditions are actually brought about or realised (the transformation of *Befindlichkeit* by Revelation). About the latter, as Bultmann suggests, we can only speak "retrospectively," i.e. "from the standpoint of faith."[20] Just like an analysis of a response cannot do without presupposing the reality of the call to which it responds, we cannot consider the ground of faith detached from the experience of Revelation's actuality (which Marion failed to recognise). In short, when discussing the ground or nature of faith—as opposed to its effects and operation—, we cannot afford to bracket the theological dimension. Rather than engaging in a deconstruction of Christianity as a cultural or doctrinal construct, providing this account would require us to contribute to its construction: to articulate a theology that outlines the impact of the Word-event on the human being to whom it is addressed. Jean-Luc Nancy in no way provides such an account, precisely because neither he himself nor his work presuppose the actuality of that event: from Husserl and his theologising interpreters (Marion, Henry, Chrétien), along with their deconstructive critics (Derrida and Nancy), or a discussion of *Gegebenheit* in its *Leibhaftigkeit* and the limits thereof; this would entail a shift to Heidegger and his theologising interpreters (Bultmann, Tillich, Rahner), or a discussion of *Da-sein* in its *Befindlichkeit*. Moreover, it would entail a shift from a form of discourse

[20] Bultmann, *TNT1*, 191.

that aspires to be atheological, towards one that confesses its theological character explicitly. Indeed, though this task is beyond the scope of the present study, it could be considered its natural complement, for it too concerns a discourse that is opened up anew by thinking *after the theological turn*: this time not phenomenology, unshackled from its theological resonance, but theology, liberated from its phenomenological appropriation.

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