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## Correlations between phenomenology and metaphysics in French philosophy

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## **CORRELATIONS BETWEEN PHENOMENOLOGY AND METAPHYSICS IN FRENCH PHILOSOPHY**

**Key words:** metaphysics, phenomenology, first philosophy, French philosophy

1. Jean-Luc Marion's understanding of phenomenology as first philosophy. 2. Michel Henry's reinterpretation of Husserl. 3. Assessment of the theological turn in French phenomenology.

This article's title may seem puzzling. Why should the correlation between phenomenology and metaphysics be of particular interest to French philosophers? As Michael Haar points out in *La philosophie française entre phénoménologie et métaphysique*<sup>1</sup>, the French philosophy of the second half of the twentieth century introduced significant modifications to the understanding of phenomenology. First it was assimilated, and then "corrected". Some even speak of a theological turn, which may seem odd when the country's enlightenment tradition is taken into consideration. It is impossible to discuss what caused the changes and what resulted from them in a single article, so the present work focuses mainly on the views of the two thinkers who seem most representative of the changes, Jean-Luc Marion and Michel Henry. Analyzing their conceptions, I will look for the causes of this turn. Much evidence supports the claim that Husserl himself played a role in the changes, since his views gave rise to certain interpretative doubts. He did not manage to free himself entirely from metaphysics as first philosophy, for it turns out that such metaphysics can take various forms, or even conceal itself.

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<sup>1</sup> M. Haar, *La philosophie française entre phénoménologie et métaphysique*, PUF, Paris 1999.

## 1. JEAN-LUC MARION'S UNDERSTANDING OF PHENOMENOLOGY AS FIRST PHILOSOPHY

It seems a truism to remark that even the best assumptions or intentions may not have the best executions. Husserl's attempts to free his phenomenology from all metaphysical premises are an example. Heidegger's case is similar. He also was convinced that his (Heidegger's) conception was free from metaphysical premises. The correlations between phenomenology and metaphysics, in Husserl and Heidegger, are well illustrated in Jean-Luc Marion's *Étant donné*<sup>2</sup>. Marion refers to the main premises adopted by Husserl, rendered by the French phrases *autant de réduction, autant de donation* (so much reduction, so much givenness). Dominique Janicaud writes that what is interesting is not so much to analyze if Marion is right, there is no doubt in this regard, but rather to analyze the manner of transition from phenomenology to metaphysics that he proposed<sup>3</sup>.

It turns out that much trouble in the process of separating phenomenology from metaphysics is caused by Western languages, which are the languages of metaphysics<sup>4</sup>. They operate with expressions such as "pure", "absolute", "unconditioned". And their presence cannot be neglected. So the borderline between phenomenology and metaphysics lies within phenomenology, as Heidegger observed. It is of no surprise then that Marion tried to present his vision of phenomenology, which contains a theological element. This was pointed out by Janicaud, who does not claim that this is theology in the sense of *doctrina sacra*, or negative theology in the traditional meaning of the phrase. To the objections that he engaged in cryptotheology, Marion answers that any doubts that do arise, from a misunderstanding of his interpretation of phenomenology. Marion further claims that he aims at "the return to the given itself" or at "showing the pure phenomenon"<sup>5</sup>. Such an

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<sup>2</sup> J. L. Marion, *Étant donné. Essai d'une phénoménologie de la donation*, PUF, Paris 1977.

<sup>3</sup> D. Janicaud, *La phénoménologie dans tous ses états*, Gallimard, Paris 1998, 196.

<sup>4</sup> Op. cit., 200.

<sup>5</sup> J. L. Marion, *Étant donné*, op.cit., 107.

answer is not satisfying to Janicaud, for when Marion speaks about the return to the given itself, he thinks about the self of the givenness, thus introducing either an ontological or a theological category<sup>6</sup>. Moreover, he translates Husserl's and Heidegger's works in a peculiar manner, which makes his views clearly theological in character.

It turns out that Marion renders the Husserlian expression *Gegebenheit* by *donation*, and also translates the Heideggerian expression *Geben* as *donation*. Linguistic analyses show, however, that these translations are rather odd<sup>7</sup>. The German *Gegebenheit* denotes the fact of being given, and not that which is being given. Is that which is being given identical, then, with the fact of being given? Additionally, Marion oddly translates the German expression *Gegebenheit* as *le donné* or *la donnée*, and also as *la présence*. However, according to Janicaud, the French expression *la donation* is equivalent to the German *eine Schenkung*, which presupposes the existence of the person who gives, namely a giver. Marion regards *donation* as the habit of giving (*pli du donné*) or the conceptual content (*concept consistant*)<sup>8</sup>. Thus, Marion's translation assumes the existence of the person who gives something in an unconditional manner, yet with the acceptance of the receiver. It is worth noticing that this changes the epistemic perspective.

Marion claims that it was Husserl who confused the data present in consciousness with co-intention, as he maintained that there is a time correlation between cognitive experience of what is given in itself and the epistemic content (*Erkenntniskontingenz*). This would mean that one should look for intellectual confirmation of the given and, at the same time, of the world's appearing in consciousness although it could "not be". This way, Husserl avoided the necessity of introducing the content of the higher order that proves the existence of the world. He did not need to solve the problem of coexistence of the intentional certainty of what is given and the cognition of its non-reducible content, since he did not look for absolute data but pure phenomena, i.e. phenomena reduced to what is certain in character. Marion claims

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<sup>6</sup> D. Janicaud, *La phénoménologie dans tous ses états*, op. cit., 203.

<sup>7</sup> Op. cit., 205.

<sup>8</sup> J. L. Marion, *Étant donné*, op. cit., 97.

that this type of reduction was supposed to help Husserl to obtain the absolute given<sup>9</sup>. Thus, the most fundamental difference between Husserl and Marion is that for Husserl the final aim of reduction is to establish the status of what is given, while Marion's aim is to establish what the given is<sup>10</sup>.

Husserl thought that it is necessary to put aside the question about the existence of what is transcendent, since it is not the absolute given of pure perception, whereas Marion claims that what is transcendent can be defined on the basis of what is given. Husserl was not satisfied with a pure given, but looked for its status in pure perception. He strove for an absolute explanation free from any objections. However, he did not limit himself only to the description of individual phenomenological givens (data). Heidegger did likewise, and especially in discussing giving, for he treated giving more as an action of giving (a verbal use), and not in the sense of giving something (a nominal use).

Moreover, Marion translates the German *Ereignis* as *avènement*, which is again an odd interpretation, since the French word refers mainly to an event which is to come, i.e. the arrival of someone, usually the Saviour, the king or other person of high rank. It does not approximate *Ereignis* (event, happening) which denotes being without beings<sup>11</sup>. Also, by translating the German *Ereignis* with *avènement*, Marion lost the play on words so characteristic of Heideggerian expression<sup>12</sup>. The same objection has been raised against the translation of the German *Es gibt* by *cela donne*. It seems more suitable to render the expression by *il y a*. The expressions under consideration can be analyzed in an ontic sense. Using this method of translation, Marion concluded that Heidegger had discovered more than he said or could say. It is doubtful whether he was right to do so. Marion mainly points to a sentence in *Sein und Zeit*, "Die Gabe von Anwesen ist Eigentum des Ereignis", which he translates as "Le don de la présence revient

<sup>9</sup> Op. cit., 24.

<sup>10</sup> D. Janicaud, *La phénoménologie dans tous ses états*, op. cit., 208.

<sup>11</sup> M. Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit*, Niemeyer, Tübingen 1969, 25.

<sup>12</sup> D. Janicaud, *La phénoménologie dans tous ses états*, op. cit., 210. The German *Ereignis* can denote *Begebenheit* (event, incident) but also *Geburt* (birth).

à l'avènement". An English version of the original reads: "The Gift of Presence is Property of the Happening"<sup>13</sup>, while an English translation of Marion's version reads: "The Gift of the Presence Comes Back to the Coming or Advent"<sup>14</sup>. According to Janicaud, this results in an ontologization of the event in Marion's translation.

Meanwhile, it is difficult to see the identity between *Eigentum* and *Ereignis*. Heidegger did not claim after all that the gift of presence is in any way subordinate to the coming (the advent). He claimed, however, that the gift of the present time is the property of the adaptation. D. Janicaud observes that, most probably, Heidegger meant that being is dispersed in *Ereignis*. François Fédier is of the same opinion<sup>15</sup>. Also, *Sein und Zeit* says *Sein verschwindet im Ereignis*<sup>16</sup>. *Ereignis* is thus not a concept of the highest order that allows us to understand other concepts of lower levels, which seems to be suggested by Marion. After all, Heidegger's aim was not to create a universal or general phenomenology.

## 2. MICHEL HENRY'S REINTERPRETATION OF HUSSERL

Yet another thinker, who reinterpreted Husserl's views, was Michel Henry. He claimed that the immanence of the self-identity is what is revealed by affection, that it is self-affection (*l'auto-affectation*). Lévinas, who maintained that it is metaphysical transcendence, was of the same opinion. Both of them postulated the existence of the Absolute or the Infinite as the explanatory reason of what appears in the phenomenological experience as the affection of the subject. However, it should be noted that this existence is not deduced from experience but postulated as being present in experience, thanks to which, the experience itself becomes more comprehensible. Therefore, what is this presence of the Absolute? Do not the philosophers mentioned above refer to the meta-

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<sup>13</sup> D. Janicaud, *Phenomenology „Wide Open”*. *After the French Debate*, Fordham University Press, New York 2005, 39.

<sup>14</sup> Op. cit., 39.

<sup>15</sup> D. Janicaud, *La phénoménologie dans tous ses états*, op. cit., 212.

<sup>16</sup> M. Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit*, op. cit., 22.

physics that they wished to avoid? These are very important questions and they need investigation<sup>17</sup>.

An analysis of M. Henry's work shows that he tried to differentiate two pairs of opposing concepts: transcendence – manifestation, immanence – revelation (*révélation*). He claimed that a self-revelation to the self presents only the vision of something, but not what is visioned. The vision feels like the visioned, which corresponds with Cartesian *videre videor*. Henry analyzed this correlation in *L'essence de la manifestation*<sup>18</sup>, and also in *Analogie de la psychoanalyse*<sup>19</sup>, where he concluded there is no difference between the subject and being. Absolute being reveals itself as the being of suffering which changes into happiness<sup>20</sup>.

It is worth noticing that similar views were expressed by such philosophers as Eckhart, Jakob Boheme, and Maine de Brian, who maintained that being reveals itself by transcending itself, by becoming clear and abstract. Heidegger corrected their views, saying that there is no need to posit any exteriority [such as God] in immanence in order to speak about revelation (appearing). However, Henry does not agree with Heidegger, for he believes that the essence of manifestation resides in exteriority as such<sup>21</sup>. The being that reveals itself is a being-in-itself, and not in the subject. Immanence is not a being-consciousness<sup>22</sup>. According to Henry, it is life that is important, and not consciousness. On the other hand, nobody has ever seen life, which causes cognitive anxiety<sup>23</sup>. "The object is the mode of treatment itself (...) Phenomenology investigates the Parousia of the absolute on the foundation of the absolute understood as the Parousia"<sup>24</sup>.

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<sup>17</sup> Op. cit., 5.

<sup>18</sup> M. Haar, op. cit.

<sup>19</sup> M. Henry, *Analogie de la psychoanalyse*, PUF, Paris 1985.

<sup>20</sup> M. Haar, op. cit.

<sup>21</sup> M. Henry, *L'essence de la manifestation*, PUF, Paris 1963, 124.

<sup>22</sup> M. Haar, op. cit., 5.

<sup>23</sup> Cf. op. cit., 120.

<sup>24</sup> M. Henry, *L'essence de la manifestation*, PUF, Paris 1963, 69; M. Henry, *The Essence of Manifestation*, translated by G. Etzkorn, ed. M. Nijhoff, Hague 1973, 56.

It can be said that the eye, which the Absolute uses to watch us, is exactly the same eye that we use to watch Him<sup>25</sup>. “The phenomenology of essence and revelation is the same. The manifestation of being is the manifestation of the Absolute (...) Absolute knowledge lies in the ontological understanding of being”<sup>26</sup>. What is not the only being is not a true being. This is the thesis once put forward by Leibniz. The mover and the moved are one thing. They are identical.

The greatest interior depth of identity manifests itself in suffering, in being delivered over to self, and keeping no distance from itself. In suffering the use of the own-being fully manifests itself. The own being is happiness and suffering, which reveal the non-freedom of being. Contrary to Henry’s belief, Sartre, for example, claims that suffering and sorrow belong to the human being<sup>27</sup>. According to Sartre, freedom manifests itself to itself, and not in being in the form of either happiness or suffering<sup>28</sup>.

Henry, in contrast, claims that affectivity can be ultimately defined as “initial power”, as “enlightening collection” of that without which there would be nothing<sup>29</sup>. “The blessed affectivity is not only “its own reason”, the source of own being, but it is the reason that everything exists in the world”<sup>30</sup>.

In this way then Henry rejects Heidegger’s ideas, as he claims that there is no such thing as the category of the subject as the first ontological principle. There is no division between being and the subject. Admittedly, Heidegger rehabilitated affections, but for him *Befindlichkeit* (translated in Polish as *położenie* ‘(mental) state/ situation’<sup>31</sup>) is neither subjective nor objective, but is prior to the division into object and the subject. It is not self-affection. The subject is, after

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<sup>25</sup> Op. cit., 69.

<sup>26</sup> Op. cit., 123.

<sup>27</sup> Op. cit., 126.

<sup>28</sup> J. P. Sartre, *L’être et le néant*, Librairie Gallimard, Paris 1943, 73.

<sup>29</sup> M. Henry, *L’essence de la manifestation*, PUF, Paris 1963, 594.

<sup>30</sup> Op. cit., 594.

<sup>31</sup> M. Heidegger, *Bycie i czas*, transl. from German by B. Baran, PWN, Warsaw 2008, 171.



all, thrown into the world. He can find himself, yet only by departing from the exteriority of the world<sup>32</sup>.

Henry was convinced that being belongs to *ek-stasis* and reveals itself in the spatial dimension. “The inner darkness of human nature is the sense of its finitude (...). For man, to be finite means to be separated from the truth”<sup>33</sup>. There is a mutual relation between man and being<sup>34</sup>. Being reveals itself in the being of man. In this respect, Henry shares the views of Heidegger, but he notices that being originates outside of man and reveals itself in man. To forget being is to forget the essence of subjectivity. Unlike Heidegger, Henry questions neither transcendence nor exteriority. Moreover, he accepts them. What he rejects is duality, i.e. that being and existing are not the same thing. Phenomenality, its essence, is not the same as the phenomenon, something exterior<sup>35</sup>.

There is yet another difference between Henry and Heidegger. It concerns the notion of *Geworfenheit*, of being thrown into the world, or “thrownness”. Henry notices the contradiction between *Nichtigkeit* and *Grundsein*, the notions discussed by Heidegger. After all, Heideggerian *Dasein* would be helpless if it were not determined in its essence by transcendence, whereas *Nichtigkeit* (‘nullity, nothingness’, Polish *nie-ważność* ‘non-validity, nullity’) discloses the helplessness of transcendence. According to Henry, Heidegger reduced affectivity, depriving it of efficiency and leaving it open only to the past and the future. But affectivity is *causa sui*. After all, an affection is not the content of experience, but the condition of its possibility. It is independent of psychological development or existential phenomena that happen to us. It is something existing, as Haar points out<sup>36</sup>.

Ontic understanding has nothing to do with existential understanding (with which Heidegger was concerned). It is of no surprise, then, that Henry also rejects Scheler’s thesis that an affection has primarily

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<sup>32</sup> M. Haar, op. cit., 128.

<sup>33</sup> M. Henry, *L’essence de la manifestation*, op. cit., 253.

<sup>34</sup> Cf. M. Haar, op. cit., 129.

<sup>35</sup> Op. cit., 130n.

<sup>36</sup> Op. cit., 132-134.

an existential dimension, because it is not a psycho-physiological mechanism<sup>37</sup>.

It is worth noting that similar views were expressed once by Spinoza, who repeated that *in Deo movemur et sumus*. Thus absolute revelation accomplishes itself in suffering which changes into happiness or felicity. In support, Henry quotes Nietzsche's words that there is a constant transition from suffering to happiness<sup>38</sup>. However, it is not a contradiction, as Nietzsche believed, but a unity. For this is human destiny. The same expression was used by Nietzsche, yet he associated it with coincidence, the imperfection of man and the world, whereas Henry claimed that the transition from "no", aimed against suffering, to "yes", aimed at happiness, manifests itself as the outburst of interior power (*débordement*). What follows from this is that Henry's reasoning is entirely the reverse of Nietzsche's thinking<sup>39</sup>.

Nietzsche looked for the transition from weakness, i.e. the weak man, to the "ubermensch" (overman), from resentment to the change of will. He believed that it is a matter of chance, while Henry regards happiness as the absolute certainty of being. Henry gives epistemic priority to passivity, and this differentiates him from Nietzsche. In Henry's opinion, affectivity is absolute self-revelation of the subject<sup>40</sup>. Such an understanding of passivity, revealing suffering and happiness, stems from Eckhart's views. He kept saying: "If my suffering is in God, then my suffering is as such God"<sup>41</sup>.

Henry notices that God's life is the story of suffering. It is His interior becoming, and dialectical change to happiness<sup>42</sup>. Thus, if revelation is the revelation of pure identity between suffering and happiness, then God is the name of the eternal identity, the foundation of the subject.

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<sup>37</sup> See M. Henry, *L'essence de la manifestation*, op. cit., 611.

<sup>38</sup> Op. cit., 839.

<sup>39</sup> M. Haar, op. cit., 135.

<sup>40</sup> Op. cit., 137.

<sup>41</sup> Op. cit., 138.

<sup>42</sup> M. Henry, *L'essence de la manifestation*, op. cit., 843.

Similarly, Eckhart claimed that: “If I did not exist, God would also not exist. God and I are the same”<sup>43</sup>.

Passivity is the foundation of self-affectivity. This foundation is absolutely free. God is free, since He is dependent on himself only<sup>44</sup>. It is easy to see that Henry’s phenomenology is, in a sense, Cartesian, since he refers to the notion of radical beginning. Also, he rejects the notion of inclination. He speaks about a behaviour similar to the one described by Nietzsche in *The Gay Science*<sup>45</sup>, especially in paragraph 278. Yet, Henry rejects the notion of an affection, which allows absolute self-affectation. Such a notion would be an absurd<sup>46</sup>. Moreover, he makes no attempts at defining affections in a language, because for him language is imprecise. He rather operates within the framework of negative psychology, stating what a given affection is not, and what it definitely does not reveal<sup>47</sup>.

### 3. ASSESSMENT OF THE THEOLOGICAL TURN IN FRENCH PHENOMENOLOGY

The above considerations show that there was a certain turn in French phenomenology, yet it was completely different from the one envisaged by Husserl. Those responsible for it, as Janicaud observes, did not manage to separate themselves from the Gallican way of thinking<sup>48</sup>. They did not ultimately depart from the typically scientific thinking characteristic of mathematical physics, although they wanted to engage in phenomenology. Even though Husserl, and indeed Bergson, dreamed of creating certain knowledge based on intuition, which could reveal the essence of things, science has chosen formal methodology. Some of

<sup>43</sup> Op. cit., 387.

<sup>44</sup> M. Haar, op. cit., 139.

<sup>45</sup> F. Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, ed. B. Williams, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 2003.

<sup>46</sup> M. Henry, *L’essence de la manifestation*, op. cit., 859.

<sup>47</sup> Op. cit., 594; 860; M. Haar, *La philosophie française entre phénoménologie et métaphysique*, op. cit., 140n.

<sup>48</sup> D. Janicaud, *Le tournement théologique de la phénoménologie française*, Editions de l’éclat, Combas 1991.

Husserl's successors agreed that philosophy would not fully reveal itself as long as it expressed everything in terms of essence<sup>49</sup>. Therefore, Maurice Merleau-Ponty as well as Michel Henry again undertook the search for certain and interior knowledge. Emmanuel Lévinas joined them. They believed that it is possible to find something that is between scientific objectivity and speculative metaphysics. This something was supposed to be phenomenology, but understood differently from Husserl's proposition. Is a third, intermediate, way possible? Why was the turn correct?

It is almost impossible to overlook the fact that many philosophers regarded phenomenology as unreliable, since its conclusions, they claimed, are too subjective and relative when it comes to determining sense. Further, they maintained that no science can be understood from the point of view of other sciences<sup>50</sup>. They held this to be true of phenomenology as well.

Husserl, as it is well known, did not want to bracket natural knowledge and tried to maintain total objectivity. Because of this his conception contains some assumptions of special metaphysics about the nature of the soul, the world and God. Husserl wanted to discard the world of metaphysics, but metaphysics understood in a particular way. However, he adopted certain empirical and metaphysical assumptions inherited from Locke and Hume.

Those who did not agree with Husserl replaced his understanding of primary intuition with the concept of primary revelation (*l'arch-révélation*) or pure call. They claimed that the eidetic method was of no importance in revealing primary experience<sup>51</sup>. It only showed the duality of cognition, the fact that not everything can be conceived in a certain way. In particular it has been pointed out that there is aduality between the conditions for the possibility of experience and the particular forms of experience. Paul Ricoeur elaborated on this issue in one of his works, *À l'école de la phénoménologie*<sup>52</sup>. He also began to look

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<sup>49</sup> Op. cit., 77.

<sup>50</sup> Op. cit., 81.

<sup>51</sup> Op. cit., 82n.

<sup>52</sup> P. Ricoeur, *À l'école de la phénoménologie*, Vrin, Paris 1987, 156.

for exterior reasons to explain internal revelations. And others followed him. According to Janicaud, they began to create ideology, an exterior discipline artificially uniting different experiences, whereas, as Janicaud emphasizes, phenomenology lies between the ideal of the mathematical type and universality, between exact epistemic methodology and what is unpredictable, between eidetic intuition and practical theory, between the questioning of intentionality and the search for new ways of knowing<sup>53</sup>. It is worth mentioning Heidegger, who was the first to correct Husserl, also included considerations about being in time in the scope of the interest of phenomenology. It served as a motive to undermine traditional phenomenology and look for other solutions, mainly within the framework of theology, although Heidegger distanced himself from theological considerations<sup>54</sup>.

Among others who separated theology from phenomenology was e.g. Sartre, who created atheist phenomenology (though different from Husserlian one). Similarly, Heidegger rejected theological explanations, for he claimed that adopting them would mean identifying methodology with ideology. It should however be noted that by theology he understood Christianity<sup>55</sup>. Heidegger was convinced that faith is explained by revelation and not by deduction<sup>56</sup>. In Heidegger's opinion, it is not possible to explain e.g. sin by means of the notion of *Schuld* in the meaning presented in paragraph 58 of *Sein und Zeit*. If we want to look at sin from the existential-ontological perspective, then we do indeed need phenomenology to correct some of the theological formulations, but we are not capable of creating theological phenomenology, because that would be, as Janicaud expresses it, a square circle, or wooden iron<sup>57</sup>. Christian philosophy as well as existential philosophy

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<sup>53</sup> D. Janicaud, *Le tournement théologique de la phénoménologie française*, op. cit., 83.

<sup>54</sup> Cf. op. cit., 84.

<sup>55</sup> Cf. op. cit., 86.

<sup>56</sup> M. Heidegger, *Phänomenologie und Theologie*, Klostermann, Frankfurt a/M 1970, Archives de Philosophie 32(1969), 356, reprinted in: E. Cassirer, M. Heidegger, *Débat sur le kantisme et la philosophie*, Beauchesne, Paris 1972, 101-131.

<sup>57</sup> D. Janicaud, *Le tournement théologique de la phénoménologie française*, op. cit., 86.

should guard the ontological difference as such. These domains cannot be both all and nothing. Many advocates of phenomenology, however, regard it as the ultimate authority in explaining all being. This is particularly visible in Lévinas, for whom the central notion is that of the Other, who does not exist but somehow is.

Janicaud notices that still there is a temptation to transform phenomenology into general metaphysics (*métaphisique générale*)<sup>58</sup>, though opinions vary as to how it should be done. Marion and Greisch believe that there is no need to totally reject Plato's idea of *agathon* or *ousia*,<sup>59</sup> which shows that there were varying attempts to complement phenomenology with some hermeneutics.

It turns out that for some phenomenologists the fundamental problem is the question of who (what) the subject of immanence is. Is it only consciousness or is it something more? The being of *Cogito* referred to a universal horizon in which something revealed itself. In Janicaud's opinion immanence cannot be reduced to self-revelation, nor can it negate being in the Sartrean sense. Also, immanence is something more than a simple rejection of ontological transcendence. Hence Janicaud refers back to Heidegger, who emphasized that being is the revelation of what is revealing itself. It (i.e. being) is, however, marked with a certain exteriority in relation to what is revealing itself. Thinking is always marked with a certain exteriority and objectivity. Thinking can be conceived of by beginning from that which is revealing itself, and not by treating it only as a phenomenon of internal structure. Immanence is not a reversal of the transcendence given in perception, but its initial condition, receptivity assumes transgression of transcendence in the direction of the horizon<sup>60</sup>.

In this way Henry connects the Husserlian *epoche* with Heideggerian difference, and attempts to grasp something more primary, namely self-affection. According to Henry, the essence of revelation manifests itself in affectivity of not only the individual subject, but also of revelation itself, which is absolute in internal experience. This view of tran-

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<sup>58</sup> Op. cit., 87.

<sup>59</sup> J. Greisch, *L'herméneutique dans la phénoménologie comme telle*, op. cit., 63.

<sup>60</sup> Cf. M. Henry, *L'essence de la manifestation*, op. cit., 279n.

scendence and the way it reveals itself is almost exclusively religious in character. The revelation of absolute being is not independent of this being, the revelation is also absolute. Self-affection is what life is, understood not historically, not in a finite way, but as something that is eternal and mystically related to itself. How then, asks Janicaud, can this thought labyrinth be understood?<sup>61</sup> For he claims that the structure of something, whatever it may be, material or formal, has to have relations which can be distinguished from each other. Henry understands transcendence differently, because in his opinion the structure of immanence is its pure self-reference. It is thus clearly tautological in character, or at least it may seem so<sup>62</sup>. In Janicaud's opinion, it is an echo of the metaphysics of life elaborated by Hegel. Thus phenomenology becomes a proponent of the absolute, and shows us a certain transparency that reveals itself in affection. This happens because Henry assumes, as Janicaud maintains, a certain negative theology, which has a richer structure than the immanence from which it emerges<sup>63</sup>.

This methodological approach was conditioned by the fact that Henry was looking for expressions that would allow the separation of the notion of God from Catholic theology, that would, in other words, permit a philosophical grasp of God. In rejecting Hegelian monism, which reduced everything to the objectivity of the spirit found in consciousness, Henry was looking for the immanence of the absolute spirit in phenomenal manifestations. However he overlooked, in Janicaud's opinion, the fundamental fact that divine immanence escapes not only the phenomenological apprehensions as representations, but also all knowledge. He reduced immanence to experience, which is doubly paradoxical, to the gaining of knowledge and the grasping of the universality of life. He explained what knowledge is by means of the notion of non-knowledge. Moreover, Henry regarded life as solitude. This is illustrated by the following question: How can solitude create universality?<sup>64</sup>

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<sup>61</sup> D. Janicaud, *La phénoménologie dans tous ses états*, op. cit., 110.

<sup>62</sup> Op. cit., 111.

<sup>63</sup> See. D. Janicaud, *La phénoménologie dans tous ses états*, op. cit., 112.

<sup>64</sup> M. Henry, *L'essence de la manifestation*, op. cit., 354.

It is thus possible to risk the hypothesis that Henry is engaged with a certain essentialism of knowledge; hence he maintains that the finding of content takes place in what is invisible and unspeakable, and manifests itself in feeling happiness as well as sorrow, in the primary pathos of life. It seems that Janicaud is right in saying that under the cover of phenomenology there seems to be a theory which is coherent, though the coherence has been gained at the expense of reaching the ultimate borders of the paradoxical duality<sup>65</sup>. For there is much evidence that this is Eckhart's mystical thinking or Christ's teaching as presented by Hegel. It is legitimate to wonder to what extent this is compatible with phenomenology<sup>66</sup>.

In Eckhart's understanding, the immanence of the human soul was identified with divinity to such a degree that it was impossible to separate them from each other. Immanence was confused with God himself, and Eckhart even called it "divinity". This immanence manifested itself as a substance or a person, hence Eckhart's claim that the rejection of any reference to transcendence inside the divine life, which would be open to us, goes hand in hand with atheism. This is why Eckhart faced many difficulties from the teaching office of the Church. While Eckhart was an adherent of immanence, understood as divinity, Henry sees Parousia in understanding immanence as identical with the divinity of the human soul. However, much evidence supports the claim that Eckhart rejected the notion of the affective essence of the real world. Moreover, he maintained that what is invisible determines the essence of immanence and constitutes it<sup>67</sup>.

If such a phenomenological reality exists in the spiritual interior, then it is love understood evangelically, that is, in compliance with the words of St. John: "Never could I see God if not there where God sees himself"<sup>68</sup>. This is the form in which Eckhart cites the words of the Apostle. Henry also quotes them and tries to find their equivalents in

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<sup>65</sup> Op. cit., 114.

<sup>66</sup> Op. cit., 115.

<sup>67</sup> Op. cit., 116.

<sup>68</sup> In the Bible: "No one has ever seen God but God the One and Only, who is at the Father's side, has made him known", John 1.18.



Kierkegaard, who spoke about the affective and spiritual tonality that seems to justify the rejection of all exteriority, being the exterior knot of essential and pathetic unity, of what is human and what is divine<sup>69</sup>.

Henry overlooked what was noticed by young Hegel, i.e. destiny. After all, it was love in this sense that led Jesus to defeat, and so to failure. He had to surrender in the face of the world and law that were hostile to Him. Hegel, who noted this dimension of Christ's love, tried to explain it by claiming that Christ's escape from destiny was destiny in the highest degree<sup>70</sup>.

Thus, Henry claims that the non-knowledge of God's life is "knowledge", that archoriginal affectivity (pre-beginning) absolutely adheres to itself and is absolutely transparent to itself. By the same token he accepts the new assumption that the all life, with all its complications and hierarchical objectives, seems to deny itself. It cannot be neglected that the religious dimension of his contribution is more than visible. Consideration of his own method led Henry to pose the question: Is the phenomenology of the invisible not self-contradictory?<sup>71</sup>

Since he understood the importance of the matter, he claimed that Husserl was a victim of his own eidetics and that for this reason he overlooked the richness of experience. Similarly, Heidegger did not abandon, in Henry's opinion, the naïve understanding of phenomenon as something restricted only to the senses. They both identified the object of study with the perceived thing. The possibility of perceiving the phenomenon and the phenomenon itself were the same thing. But there is a fundamental difference between transcendental life and an attempt to grasp it by means of phenomenological method. They cannot therefore be identified. Self-affectivity cannot be denied, since the self-affection of life facilitates self-objectivity. "I can present life to myself, and this fundamental possibility is inscribed in life"<sup>72</sup>. Thus,

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<sup>69</sup> Op. cit., 116n.

<sup>70</sup> G. W. F. Hegel, *L'esprit du christianisme et son destin*, op. cit., 103.

<sup>71</sup> M. Henry, *Phénoménologie matérielle*, op. cit., 6.

<sup>72</sup> Op. cit., 129.

Henry wants to penetrate the person, reach to the “object” that reveals itself to itself. Life stays in what is invisible<sup>73</sup>.

Janicaud claims, however, that this method is unscientific, for it results in total separation of form from content<sup>74</sup>. It does not define what self-reference is. It causes us to discover a certain theology, looking from the perspective of content at that which reveals itself to us. This content can be identified as the Word that became flesh and came into this world. It will be overlooked only by those, who do not know the Gospel. The question is why Henry adopts such a method, abandoning a typically academic one.

In Janicaud’s opinion, Henry did so because he noticed the mistakes of his predecessors, chiefly Husserl, who conceived *cogitatio* as transcendence. This led Husserl to claim that eidetics supports his method. Moreover, it has been suggested that Husserl’s mistake is a result of the thinking characteristic of the whole Western tradition, which refers to the Greek notion of *logos*. Janicaud admits that Henry is right, though he objects to his “playing at two tables at the same time”. He holds that Henry could attack Husserl’s logocentrism, and, consequently, the whole of Western epistemology on the basis that it is oversimplified (vulgar). But he ought not have criticised this method and secretly introduced it at the same time<sup>75</sup>.

Bergson thought similarly. He proposed a reorganization of phenomenological research, an abandonment of purely mathematical considerations, resignation from the development of science along the lines of mathematics, resignation from trying to grasp everything as a whole<sup>76</sup>. However, Janicaud claims that there is no need to prove that philosophy prevails over other sciences. In this regard both Husserl and Bergson were mistaken<sup>77</sup>. Both of them referred to intuition as the ultimate authority, and so their followers continued in the direction of either irrationalism or pure idealism. Intuitionism became a “false

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<sup>73</sup> Op. cit., 134.

<sup>74</sup> D. Janicaud, *La phénoménologie dans tous ses états*, op. cit., 121.

<sup>75</sup> Op. cit., 123.

<sup>76</sup> H. Bergson, *Mélanges*, PUF, Paris 1972, 488.

<sup>77</sup> D. Janicaud, *La phénoménologie dans tous ses états*, op. cit., 129.

friend”, to use Janicaud’s expression<sup>78</sup>. Instead of creating logical argumentation, the adherents of phenomenology went in opposite directions, and threw away what they had started so well. In general, Janicaud maintains that philosophy cannot play the role of a very rigorous discipline as far as its method is concerned and at the same time assign appropriate types of activity to other disciplines, fulfil a prescriptive function. Admittedly, at first Bergson claimed that one should work as much as possible, but then he changed his mind. However, the claim, with which everyone agrees, began to tempt various thinkers to introduce changes. It is of no surprise, since Bergson himself further radicalized it, for he wanted to find an appropriate place for the sciences as well as metaphysics.

What provoked objection was not, however, Husserl’s proposition of a new method, nor even his referral to eidetics, with its restrictions, but his claim that “pure phenomenology, considered as a science, can be solely the study of essence and absolutely not the study of existence”<sup>79</sup>.

It is of no surprise then, that first Merleau-Ponty, and then Henry, wanted to open philosophy to these dimensions while preserving the rigours of phenomenology. Phenomenology opened its doors and became something between the particular sciences and more speculative metaphysics.

*Translated by Magdalena Tomaszewska*

## **ZALEŻNOŚCI MIĘDZY FENOMENOLOGIĄ A METAFIZYKĄ W FILOZOFII FRANCUSKIEJ**

### Streszczenie

W drugiej połowie XX wieku zaszły dość istotne przemiany w sposobie pojmowania fenomenologii. Niektórzy wręcz powiadają o zwrocie teologicznym, co może wydawać się dziwne, jeżeli uwzględni się tradycję oświeceniową Francji. Autor sku-

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<sup>78</sup> Op. cit., 130.

<sup>79</sup> E. Husserl, *La philosophie comme une science rigoureuse*, op. cit., 93; G. Berger *The Cogito in Husserl’s Philosophy*, Northwestern University Press, Evanston 1972, 57.

pia się głównie nad poglądami dwóch myślicieli, którzy wydają się najbardziej reprezentatywni dla owych przemian, tj. Jeana-Luca Mariona i Michela Henry'ego. Wiele wskazuje na to, że sam Husserl przyczynił się do wspomnianych przemian, gdyż jego poglądy rodziły pewne wątpliwości interpretacyjne. Nie do końca zdołał on uwolnić się od metafizyki jako filozofii pierwszej. Dlatego też wielu filozofów podchodziło nieufnie do fenomenologii, uważając że jej ustalenia są zbyt subiektywne i relatywne, gdy idzie o określanie sensu. Autor stara się dociec, na ile propozycje rozumienia filozofii, a dokładniej mówiąc, próby powrotu do metafizyki, uczynione przez wspomnianych wyżej filozofów, zostały dokonane w sposób prawidłowy i czy nie były spowodowane samym przekładem tekstów źródłowych z niemieckiego na francuski. Dokonuje też analizy ich poglądów, umieszczając je w kontekście historycznym, nawiązując do rozważań takich filozofów, jak Heidegger i Bergson, i dochodzi do wniosku, że sprzeciw wywoływało nie tyle to, że Husserl zaproponował nową metodę ani nawet to, że odwoływał się do eidetyki ze wszystkimi jej rygorami, ale to, że uznał on, iż czysta fenomenologia rozważana jako wiedza może być jedynie badaniem istoty, a nie egzystencji. Nic więc dziwnego, że najpierw M. Merleau-Ponty, a potem M. Henry, J. L. Marion, a także Ricoeur chcieli otworzyć filozofię na te wymiary z zachowaniem rygorów fenomenologicznych. Fenomenologia otwarła więc swoje podwoje, stała się czymś pomiędzy naukami szczegółowymi a metafizyką bardziej spekulatywną. A to spowodowało ów zwrot ku teologii swoiście rozumianej.

**Słowa kluczowe:** metafizyka, fenomenologia, filozofia pierwsza, filozofia francuska