

Phenomenology of Interior Life and the Trinity

Analysing Michel Henry's Phenomenological Schism between Life and World in Light of the Christian Doctrine of the Trinity

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ABSTRACT Michel Henry radicalises phenomenology by putting forward the idea of a double manifestation: the “Truth of Life” and “truth of the world.” For Henry, the world turns out to be empty of Life. To find its essence, the self must dive completely inward, away from the exterior movements of intentionality. Hence, Life, or God, for Henry, lies in non-intentional, immanent self-experience, which is felt and yet remains invisible, in an absolutist sense, as an a priori condition of all conscious experience. In Christian theology, the doctrine of the Trinity illuminates the distinction between the immanent Trinity (God’s self-relation) and the economic workings of the Trinity (God-world relation). However, the mystery of God’s inmost being and the economy of salvation are here understood as inseparable. In light of this, the paper aims to: 1) elucidate the significance of Henry’s engagement with the phenomenological tradition and his proposal of a phenomenology of Life which advocates an immanent auto-affection, radically separate from the ek-static nature of intentionality, and 2) confront the division between Life and world in Henry’s Christian phenomenology and its discordancy with the doctrine of the Trinity, as the latter attests to the harmonious unity that subsists between inner life and the world.

KEYWORDS divine economy; Henry, Michel; interiority; Life, phenomenology; theology; Trinity

Michel Henry, one of the major proponents of the “Theological Turn,”¹ proposed a new phenomenology of Life in stark contrast to the phenomenology of being-in-the-world. His aim is to radicalise phenomenology by putting forth the idea that a double manifestation is at work: “the Truth of Life”—as “the Truth of Christianity” (2003a, 23)—and “the truth of the world.” The world, for Henry, turns out to be empty of the real substance of Life. To find its essence, the self must dive completely inward, away from the exterior movements of intentionality and the world. The real, the Truth and the substance of Life, for Henry, lies in non-intentional, immanent self-experience, which is felt and yet remains invisible, in an absolutist sense, as an a priori condition for all conscious experience.

Henry struggles explicitly with the limits of phenomenology, as a theory and method, as he blatantly expresses a sense of disillusionment with both the original Husserlian ideal—that phenomenology would revive genuine interior life—and also with the course taken by the majority of post-Husserlian phenomenologists in the opposite direction: *outward*. In light of all this, Henry strives for a reversal of phenomenology, proposing instead a radical turn *inwards* which he believes will manage to bring phenomenology to its true conclusion.

Henry frames his phenomenology with Christianity, making explicit references to the New Testament and especially the Gospel of St John, where God is equated with Life (Jn 14:6 NRSV). According to Henry (2012, 42), human beings are “nothing other than Sons of God. Their origin is held in God, their nature arises out of that of God. Engendering humans as living beings, giving them a life which exists in himself, God has in this way given them the same nature as his own: that of life.” This revelation, for Henry, is Life’s Arch-intelligibility. In this sense, for Henry, God is the transcendental condition of our enfleshed consciousness (Calcagno 2004).

In Christian theology, the doctrine of the Trinity² illuminates the distinction between the immanent *interior* Trinity (God’s self-relation) and the transcendent *economic* workings of the Trinity (God-world relation). This distinction, however, does not bring about separation and conflict. Theologians such as Karl Rahner and Catherine LaCugna, among others, maintain

1. One of the central themes which stand out in contemporary phenomenology is how it takes the critical stance of questioning the limits and possibility of phenomenology itself as its starting position. This can be found in the works of other prominent phenomenologists, such as Jean-Luc Marion and Jean-Louis Chrétien, who also form part of the Theological Turn in phenomenology (Janicaud 2000).

2. The doctrine of the Trinity has recently generated interest within phenomenology (Rivera 2018).

that the mystery of God's inmost being (*theologia*) and the economy of salvation history (*oikonomia*) should in fact be thought of as inseparable. Such a union entails that God can be understood both *in se* and *pro nobis*. In contrast to this, however, Henry understands Divine auto-affection as an immediate self-experience within the intra-Trinitarian life which owes nothing to the economic Trinity. Life, or God, for Henry, is inwardly complete already, as a tautology that involves no relation with the world.

Thus, in light of both Henry's phenomenology of Life and the Christian doctrine of the Trinity, this paper aims to: 1) elucidate the significance of Henry's engagement, and confrontation, with both Husserlian and post-Husserlian phenomenology, whilst analysing his proposal of a phenomenology of Life as a radically immanent, interior auto-affection, wholly separate from the ek-static nature of intentionality, which he ultimately links to his turn towards theology, and 2) confront the fracture between Life and world in Henry's phenomenological theology and its discordancy with the Christian doctrine of the Trinity that attests to the harmonious unity that subsists between God's inner life (*in se*) and God's world relation (*pro nobis*).

1. HENRY'S PHENOMENOLOGY OF INTERIOR LIFE

From the outset, phenomenology stood in stark contrast to naturalism, since the latter completely ignores the subjective interior realm.³ In fact, it is within this school of thought that the notion of interiority regains its recognition, and also notoriety, in the early twentieth century, with the intention of preventing it from being swallowed up by the emerging positivist sciences; a task which Henry would staunchly undertake and fiercely pursue throughout his philosophical works. In fact, Henry consistently stresses that he seeks a certitude that can only be grasped and attained from *within*; committedly adhering to the Cartesian maxim: "to search for no knowledge other than what could be found within myself" (Descartes 1998, 5). Throughout his works, Henry struggles to remove all traces of transcendence in order to make room for a realm of genuine immanence which brings about certain knowledge that is secure from any doubt. In turn, transcendental phenomenology posits the ego as the starting point and centre of philosophical investigation.⁴ Henry believes that,

3. Husserl (Husserl 1965, 192) claims that it is through transcendental phenomenology that the "inner life of the spirit" can be retrieved.

4. For Husserl, the world is transformed in a world for the ego. In fact, the crux of Husserl's project is that the essential structure of any experience is its intentionality, which implies

in order to accomplish this goal fully, a non-intentional, pure immanence must be founded within the ego as an a priori condition for all conscious, intentional experience.

In fact, Henry criticises phenomenology for not being sufficiently Cartesian in its radical sense, whereby, according to him, self-givenness should be ultimately understood as pure self-presence. For Henry, the phenomenological turn towards being-in-the-world eventually leads to a form of alienation, where one ends up being caught up in an exterior life, forgetful of a genuine understanding of a true, interior self. Henry argues strongly that man must turn his attention to a mode of self-givenness which does not presuppose a relationship with the world. This self-givenness, for Henry, is prior to any subject-world correlation, as he believes that the essence of man cannot be found in exteriority, or visibility, but in a radical and absolute interiority; or invisibility: "The relation between the world and our life is here proposed under the form of a radical opposition between the visible and the invisible. The world is the reign of the visible, life that of the invisible" (2012, 15). Thus, Henry embarks on a mission to reverse the phenomenological turn towards exteriority in order to uphold a radical form of interiority which, he believes, should be the true path of philosophy and theology.

Henry claims that something underlying phenomenology itself has previously been left unexamined and unattended by phenomenologists—its own *essence*. Henry's claim is that whilst that which manifests is transcendent, the essence of that manifestation does not arise in transcendence but within the sphere of radical immanence. For him, these poles are two radically different modes of manifestation which should not intersect; denoting the former as the "truth of the world" and the latter as the "Truth of Life"—or, more directly, "Truth and Life versus Lies and the world" (2003a, 197). Ultimately, Henry's main aim is to take phenomenology into the depths of pre-reflective, non-intentional self-experience.

This clearly goes against the original phenomenological method, which is formed around the limitations imposed by the relation between the intentional ego and the world. In *Material Phenomenology*, Henry (2008, 17) writes: "Intentional phenomenology is transcendental phenomenology, but the transcendental reduced to the intentional noesis is not truly a transcendental, an a priori condition of all possible experience, if it always requires what is wholly other than itself: the sensation, the impression."

that experiences are always directed beyond themselves, toward something which transcends them—denoting this *aboutness* in experiences.

Henry's task, one which he consistently pursued throughout his life work, is precisely aimed at radicalising phenomenology by founding it on a non-intentional source which is wholly immanent.

Immanence designates that which does not need any further explanation outside of being and, for Henry, this is precisely why phenomenology needs to be radicalised in order to achieve a true starting point—a first condition devoid of any world relation. Henry equates this radical immanence with *affectivity*. This affectivity is, for him, that which defines the transcendental realm which he is seeking—a truly radical and autonomous one, prior to any form of intentional movement and hence completely lacking any trace of transcendence.

Henry takes *pathos*⁵ as the essential form of affect. For him, pathos is the condition for any existence which is free from any intentionality. Moreover, life itself is, for Henry, understood as originally an auto-affection; which means that affection is a self-relation completely immanent and radically self-sufficient. Ultimately, what Henry is after is the essence of that which manifests itself. This, for him, cannot be related to its manifestation and the tendency to highlight this enduring schism is to be found in all of his philosophical works. This notion of essence is crucial for Henry's work, and thus in the preface of *The Essence of Manifestation* he writes:

This book is dedicated to the clarification of this secret essence of our Being which will prove to be, at the end of the phenomenological process of analysis, nothing other than affectivity, not the simple interplay of our empirical feelings, but their very possibility, their effectiveness and the effectiveness of Being itself. (1973, xii)

For Henry, the essence of manifestation reveals itself only in affectivity as an absolute interior experience. Moreover, for Henry, this auto-affection is ahistorical and infinite. This means that such an absolute immanence is purely auto-referential; which can be defined as a "tautological interiority" (Janicaud 2000, 73). What seems immediately clear is that radical immanence goes against a phenomenological intentional experience as it remains outside of it as an absolute auto-revelation. In this absolute radical immanence, being experiences itself completely in its auto-affection in such a way that no content beyond itself penetrates and affects it. This radical form of immanence pre-exists everything else, including thought

5. Understood as an experience which cannot cease to adhere to itself, in its self-enclosed nature.

itself, since, thought is also *about* something and hence intentional. This is clearly illustrated in Henry's claim:

Before thought, thus before phenomenology and theology alike (before philosophy or any other theoretical discipline), a Revelation is at work, which owes them nothing but which they all equally assume. Before thought, before the opening of the world and the unfolding of its intelligibility, absolute Life's Arch-intelligibility fulgurates, the Parousia of the Word in which it is embraced. (2015, 255)

Ultimately, Henry aims to confront what he identifies as "the horizon of phenomenological monism" (2015, 136) arguing that it must be removed in order to make room for another mode of appearance which is wholly non-exterior. This can be disclosed only through the experience of pathos as an auto-affectation. Thus, in this sense, Life is understood as an *a priori* condition for all conscious experience, one where Life and world remain clearly separate. For Henry, this radical immanence is a necessary transcendental condition and therefore neither constructed nor mutable; it defies both representation and knowledge. Affectivity as Life's essence here means that Life can only be felt, and it is therefore imbued with a radical passivity.

Henry's radical phenomenology proposes two modes of appearing: the intentional and the affective; as absolutely different and detached from each other (Seyler 2012). Henry claims that:

Everything that is given is given to us, so to speak, two times. The first givenness, the *Empfindung*, is mysterious. It is the type of givenness and given in which the mode of givenness is itself the given. Affectivity is both the impression's mode of givenness and its impressional content. It is the transcendental in a radical and autonomous sense. And this, this first given, which is already given and presupposed, is given a second time in and through intentionality, as a transcendent and unreal thing, as its "vis-à-vis." (2008, 17)

This affectivity of Life is theistic, linking this mystery of auto-affectation with Christianity, as for Henry, "God is Life" (2003b, 105). For him, religious faith is not something which is connected with a transcendent gift but, on the contrary, comes about from the fact that Life is given to itself through this auto-affectivity. Thus, faith, does not involve temporality and the world since, for Henry, we are already present in a non-temporal unity with God who manifests himself not as transcendent but as fully present to the soul through this radical immanent auto-affectation. Henry equates

all living beings, including God and Life itself, as united in this pathos of auto-affectivity (Williams 2008). Moreover, he also claims that “our flesh is God” (2003b, 108). This claim can be understood in light of Henry’s radical distinction between invisible/subjective flesh (*Leib*) and visible/objective body (*Körper*) which, according to him, belong to two separate fields of display: the former is unconstituted and real, whilst the latter is constituted and unreal;⁶ leaving them as two irreconcilable fields incapable of harmony. Henry’s notion of flesh is dependent on the prototypical incarnation of the “Word became flesh” (Jn 1:14 NRSV). For Henry, the visible body of Christ, as a visible display of the temporality of the world, has nothing to do with the essence of this “Word became flesh,” as the latter generates its flesh through its own pathos, as auto-affection, in its radical immediacy. Thus, for Henry, Christ’s flesh, as pure *Leib*, resides outside of the world, sealed within the Trinity, as it only appears in the field of invisible display cut off from visibility, physical embodiment, and temporality.

Henry also explores the possibility of a language which does not belong to the world, as the “other site where the Word of Life speaks” (2003a, 230–1). This entails that, for Henry, the true meaning of Life is wholly separate from that which the world generates; as the latter merely simulates the former but can never succeed in giving genuine access to it. Henry (2003a, 1) highlights that he intends to examine Christianity “as the essential truth” and how “by some mysterious affinity is suitable” for believers “to the point that it alone is capable of assuring them salvation.” He claims that the Truth of Christianity has no relation to the truth that arises from the analysis of the texts or their historical study. In fact, Henry’s preoccupation is that the Truth of Christianity ends up being reduced to the truth of the world, as he claims that:

It is not the corpus of New Testament texts that can offer us access to the Truth, to that absolute Truth of which the corpus speaks. On the contrary, it is Truth and Truth alone that can offer us access to itself and by the same token to that corpus, allowing us to understand the text in which Truth is deposited and to recognize it there. (2003a, 9)

This entails that the Truth not only pre-exists and is wholly independent of language, but, moreover, the former is apprehended as radically contrary to the latter, since, for Henry, “language is the negation of this

6. This also forms part of Henry’s radicalisation of Husserl’s phenomenology as the latter’s notion of *Leibkörper* is understood as an integrated unity.

reality" (2003a, 10). History is no less underprivileged here; like language, its horizon is none other than that of the world and visibility. Henry's aim is to show that the Truth of Christianity (the Truth of Life) and the truth of language and history (the truth of the world) are incommensurable and in conflict, as the former "has the power to reduce the two others to insignificance" (2003a, 11).

Ultimately, this follows his same aim: to separate the "truth of the world" from the "Truth of Life" to the extent that the latter is devoid of any external reference, and, hence, nothing to do with the former. In fact, the two are for Henry of an entirely, different order. What shows itself and the fact of self-showing are radically disjointed, as the latter is completely indifferent to the former. Whilst consciousness, according to Henry, refers to a manifestation in relation to the exterior world, the essence of that manifestation is this fact of self-showing, considered *in itself* and, as such, is what defines the notion of Truth in its pure form. For Henry, Christianity faces scepticism today precisely because this difference is unacknowledged and, as a result, ends up in a "ruinous confusion" (2003a, 153) between the Truth of Life and the truth of the world (McCaffrey 2013). Ultimately, for him, what this entails is that if the scriptures remain ensnared within the world, they end up losing their power to present a Truth which is of a different kind—*radically interior*.

In this sense, interiority is radically self-contained and non-relative, enclosed within itself without any trace of transcendence. His notion of auto-affection is purely interior, lacking any mediation or distance between what affects and the affected; hence being immediate, atemporal and non-ekstatic immanence. For Henry, if one were to claim otherwise, then they would succumb to a particular Western philosophical misconception, namely the idea that what is given is always given from one perspective: *in the world*. For Henry, interiority does not reveal itself in the world's exteriority as it is impossible for it to be grasped and understood through any categories pertaining to the world, thus remaining completely concealed and detached from it. As Zahavi (2007, 143) maintains:

since absolute subjectivity cannot appear in the visibility of worldly exteriority, since it evades every gaze, it is called obscure and invisible, and Henry is consequently led to the radical conclusion that the unique manifestation of absolute subjectivity must be characterized as an *invisible revelation*.

Ultimately, for Henry (2015, 85), "we are intelligible only in the invisible, and on the basis of it." This highlights his consistent undertaking: to disentangle

the interior, invisible Life from an exterior, visible world in an absolutist way.

2. THE INTERIOR AND ECONOMIC LIFE OF THE TRINITY

Henry holds that a phenomenology of the world leads to an estrangement from a genuine understanding of interiority. In turn, Henry proposes a phenomenology of Life which advocates a non-intentional, immanent auto-affection, understood as the possibility and condition of all visibility which appears against the horizon of the world. However, Henry's formulation of interiority as radically detached and insulated does not come without a price. This rupture can be contrasted with the doctrine of the Trinity, in Christian theology, that attests to the harmonious unity that subsists between the immanent *interior* Trinity (God's self-relation) and the transcendent *economic* workings of the Trinity (God-world relation). Engaging with this issue, theologians such as Rahner and LaCugna, amongst others, maintain that the mystery of God's inmost being and the economy of salvation history cannot be separated. Such a union attests to a triune God that can be understood both *in se* and *pro nobis*, as stated in the Catechism of the Catholic Church:

The Fathers of the Church distinguish between theology (*theologia*) and economy (*oikonomia*). "Theology" refers to the mystery of God's inmost life within the Blessed Trinity and "economy" to all the works by which God reveals himself and communicates his life. Through the *oikonomia* the *theologia* is revealed to us; but conversely, the *theologia* illuminates the whole *oikonomia*. God's works reveal who he is in himself; the mystery of his inmost being enlightens our understanding of all his works. (*Catechism of the Catholic Church* 1994, 236)

Etymologically, the Greek word *oikonomia* originates from a composition of two words: *oikos* meaning household, and *nomos*, meaning law, custom or practice. Accordingly, economy entails a kind of stewardship, or planning, and, hence, the management and administration of the household and the running of the affairs of that estate. In theological terms, it came to mean God's divine plan revealed within the world's history. This theological meaning, as the Catechism indicates, was popularly employed by the early Church Fathers, referring to *oikonomia* in relation to the coming of Christ in the world as part of God's plan to redeem it (Litfin 2019).

In *The Kingdom and the Glory*, Giorgio Agamben also explains this distinction between "theologia" and "oikonomia" as that between the being

of God and his activity, respectively. He makes reference to two distinct paradigms in Christian theology which are brought about from an emphasis on either side: political theology, grounding sovereignty and power on the single God, and economic theology, conceived as an ordering of both divine and human life. In relation to his distinction, he refers to Aristotle's *Politics* in order to maintain the difference between economy and politics, in the same way that the household (*oikos*) is different from the city (*polis*). However, the *oikos* should not be understood in the modern single-family sense, or merely the extended family. Rather, it refers to "a complex organism composed of heterogeneous relations, entwined with each other" (Agamben 2011, 17). These economic relations are connected by a paradigm which Agamben defines as administrative, and not epistemic. This entails that *oikos* emphasises an activity that is not bound by a systematic rubric and hence avoids becoming a science. In this sense, it is understood as a particular way of being. Such an activity involves decision taking and directions that deal with specific issues concerning the running of the various parts of the household. It is on this basis that the term *oikonomia* can be understood in relation to God's divine plan of salvation in the world.

If, however, the doctrine of the Trinity is restricted to radical immanence, sealed and self-enclosed, as in Henry's notion of an absolute Life that "does not cast outside itself what it reveals but holds it inside itself" (2003a, 30), and hence is unrelated to the world, then it not only loses a central component, but, furthermore, risks leaving many religious communities feeling disconnected from their worldly deeds and actions. In *God for Us*, LaCugna proposes that our conception of the triune nature of God must be rooted in the economy of salvation, in God's self-communication through Christ and the activity of the Holy Spirit. In this sense, history—which includes the history of salvation, of persons in communion, of God and all creatures in communion—needs to be integrated with the nature of God's existence which ultimately makes such a history both possible and real. Thus, LaCugna (1991, 4) maintains that, as a theological principle, "theologia and oikonomia, the mystery of God and the mystery of salvation, are inseparable." By this, she means that the doctrine of the Trinity ultimately describes how the eternal being of the invisible God is revealed to us through his relationship with his creation in the economy of salvation history. Thus, for LaCugna, the immanent and economic Trinity are two aspects of the same self-communication of God. In this light, soteriology and theology belong together in this essential union.

LaCugna draws her influence from Rahner's theology on the relationship between *oikonomia* and *theologia*, where the latter advances an "axiomatic

unity of the 'economic' and 'immanent' Trinity" (2001, 21). Rahner claims that any treatise of the Trinity which isolates the two, and hence distorts this relationship, must be erroneous, as he maintains that there must be a connection between Trinity and created beings, for if the Trinity was not also a mystery of salvation, it would not be revealed in the first place. Rahner (2001, 22) presents the Trinity in this formulation: "The 'economic' Trinity is the 'immanent' Trinity and the 'immanent' Trinity is the 'economic' Trinity." Thus, for him, a separation between the interior life and the economic works of the Trinity becomes inadequate. His claim is that something occurs externally of the intra-divine life, in the world itself, which belongs to the Logos itself. Thus, there is nothing in salvation history, in *oikonomia*, which cannot equally be attributed to the triune God as a whole and to each specific person within the Trinity.

In *Foundations of Christian Faith*, Rahner (1978, 52) also states that "all knowledge of God is an a posteriori knowledge which comes from and through encountering the world, to which, of course, we ourselves also belong." Nevertheless, as he claims, knowledge of God is a transcendental knowledge since man's original orientation towards God is a permanent condition of man's existence as a spiritual being. This entails that any knowledge of God is ultimately a reflection upon this transcendental orientation of man towards God, which means that talk of God is a reflection directed to a more original, unthematic knowledge of God. Although, according to Rahner, knowledge of God is not simply a mystical process within our own personal interiority, the a posteriori feature of our knowledge of God would be misconstrued if the transcendental element is overlooked and, in turn, such knowledge is equated with the model of an a posteriori knowledge whose object comes entirely from outside. Rahner clearly states that it is not the case that we discover God just as we discover an object within the world of experience. It is the unthematic, as a constantly present experience, which is the permanent ground from out of which all thematic knowledge emerges in religious activity and philosophical reflection. In this sense, in such activities and reflections we come across what we already know implicitly before even making it thematic. In fact, we still seem to retain such knowledge even when a conceptual thematization and verbal expression of such original knowledge fails.

Consequently, the following question arises: In light of this union, does it mean that we are only capable of saying what God is for us (*pro nobis*) and not able to say anything about what God is in himself (*per se*)? Rahner's response to such a question is the following: "if we have understood what is meant by the absolutely unlimited transcendentality of the human spirit,

then we can say that the alternative of such a radical distinction between a statement about ‘God in himself’ and ‘God for us’ is not even legitimate” (1978, 54–5). This entails that God’s divine self-communication means precisely that he can communicate his own reality to that which is not divine without compromising his infinite reality and absolute mystery and, on the other hand, without man ceasing to be a finite creature different from God. Hence, God’s self-communication as Father, Son and Holy Spirit, as God *pro nobis*, is to be apprehended as an assertion about God *in se*. This means that “in the economy and history of salvation and revelation we have already experienced the immanent Trinity as it is in itself” (Rahner 1978, 137).

This union of the interior with the economic brings about the union of the substantial with the relational, which bring about a twofold description: a “what” and a “who.” The former informs its essence whilst the latter comes about communally, in relation to the world. This means that God’s relations *ad intra* include God’s relation *ad extra*. The identity of economic and immanent Trinity entails that *who* is given in the economy of salvation is *what* is as such. In this light, “the history of the world becomes as well the history of God” (Grenz 2001, 50). In this sense, the Christian doctrine of the triune God emphasises both essence *and* manifestation; asserting the mutual relations of the three persons as disclosed in their work in the world. This inseparability of interiority and economy, or essence and soteriology, reveals the mystery of God as persons in communion through whom we become, by grace, what God is by nature—persons in communion with God and the world. This entails that, God-in-salvation and God-in-eternity are inseparable. In this sense, the doctrine of the Trinity is not merely a dogma about what God is *per se* but, furthermore, an understanding of a God *pro nobis*, which entails God’s *ongoing and active relationship with the world*.

3. WORKS OF LIFE

As previously discussed, Henry’s account of interiority is articulated as an absolute immanence, denoting an auto-affection as the a priori condition of all conscious experience. Affectivity, as Life’s essence, means that Life can only be felt, and it is therefore imbued with a radical passivity. Moreover, this entails that Life (non-reflexive interiority) and the world (intentionality and exteriority) are radically separate; giving absolute primacy to interiority over economy and, moreover, reducing the latter to a point where it becomes undesirable and superfluous. In this sense, the relationship between interiority and exteriority ends up dissonant and conflicting, since for Henry the “Truth of Life” and the “truth of the world”

must remain radically separate. Henry's claim is that the former does not arise in transcendence but within its own sphere of radical immanence.

Henry's emphasis on this immanent auto-affection seems to resonate with Rahner's aforementioned notion of transcendental knowledge, understood by the latter as a permanent condition of man's existence which denotes this original, unthematic orientation as the permanent foundation of all thematic knowledge that emerges in activity and reflection. However, what differentiates Henry from Rahner is that the latter does not maintain a radical separation when it comes to apprehending the relationship between the unthematic and the thematic. Rather, according to Rahner, the two are brought together in a harmonious union as long as the thematic keeps pointing towards this original, unreflexive knowledge: the unthematic orientation towards the invisible mystery.

As LaCugna also maintains, a strong emphasis on immanence means omitting the economic role and thus any relation with the world, at the expense of paralyzing activities such as rituals, customs and communication between persons, which aid one's journey in seeking to know the Truth whilst having a meaningful experience of this Truth through a personal relationship. In this sense, the history and plan of salvation (in the economic sense) must be held as being part and parcel of this Truth which is ultimately *for us*. This principle of having both the economic and inner life of the Trinity subsist in a harmonious unity goes against Henry's notion of Life, or God, as an absolute interiority whose auto-affection is devoid of any world relation. In light of the Christian doctrine of the Trinity, interiority cannot be insulated and self-referential in the way Henry claims, but instead must include a self-world (interior-exterior) relation as a kind of stewardship of the world; emphasizing actions within the world-horizon which point towards the mystery of God—understood as both *in se* and *pro nobis*. As Jean Daniélou puts it, engaging with the doctrine of the Trinity ultimately leads one to rediscover, and reclaim, the authentic relation between Creator and creation:

A fundamental relationship is established from the very beginning of the Bible between the Trinity and the world of nature, between the Trinity and the cosmos, so that Redemption comes to mean a recapturing and renewal by the life-giving Trinity of this universe, which is its own because it has created it and can alone lead it to total fulfilment. There is an ontological, primacy, fundamental relationship between the Trinity and Creation. In fact nothing could be more false than to distinguish the religious sphere from the sphere of material realities. The origin of the material world lies exclusively in the action of the Holy Trinity. (1969, 16)

If one accepts the harmonious unity of the economic and inner life of the Trinity as the foundation of all reality, one's attitude towards the world is radically altered by seeking ways and means to preserve its relationship with the world. This means that a turn inward cannot stop at one's own self. One does not go *inside* oneself to find merely oneself but, rather, to find that wellspring of the relational Trinity, whereby, inside and outside are understood as mysteriously intertwined with each other. In this sense, the Trinity exists in its twofold manifestation—that of the world and that of the heart—not as separate, but as two faces of the same reality. For Henry, the reverse is true of creation: it can only be understood as radically separate from Life, and hence from God, highlighting this schism between Life and world as, for Henry (2015, 19):

“to live” means to undergo experiencing oneself. The essence of life consists in the pure fact of undergoing experiencing oneself, and, on the contrary, everything pertaining to matter, or more generally to the “world,” is devoid of this.

However, the Truth of Christianity as maintained in the doctrine of the Trinity, and not in Henry's phenomenology of Life, goes against this division between invisible/Life and visible/world, as it transforms this opposition into a kind of a pair prior to either term considered on its own. This means that God is not absolutely distant and separate from the world but, rather, inhabits and sustains it. The world is apprehended here as a visible sphere that is held together by a structure of invisible meaning, or an invisible inner framework. This means that immanence itself involves transcendence, meaning that my interiority also comprises of an anticipation of transcendence which I can meaningfully experience if I contain this relational dimension within. This interior openness is the key to an understanding of interiority as an intersection that does justice to both its immanent and transcendent components. In this sense, interiority and exteriority interpenetrate.

This interrelationship between immanence and transcendence is also taken up by Edith Stein. Her magnum opus *Finite and Eternal Being* centres upon this possible encounter of the Eternal through the Finite being. Stein argues that the invisible God is in relation with the visible world in so far as God is the creator. She persuasively argues that the invisible God is not absolutely beyond the visible world but, in a Christian sense, is Immanuel—*God with us*—which expresses the incarnation of God becoming flesh and dwelling amongst us: “For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son” (Jn 3:16 NRSV). However, her notion of incarnation is not

the same as Henry's representation of it. In Henry's phenomenological theology, incarnation has no ties or connections with the visible field of the temporal world. For Henry, the site of the incarnation of the second person of the Trinity is flesh, but not flesh as understood on the grounds of visibility and, hence, the world. For him, incarnation is wholly unmediated and in conflict with the world's mediation. Thus, in his view, flesh remains an invisible substance that is solely affective, the receipt of which is acknowledged by absolute subjectivity concentrated entirely within itself. Therefore, incarnation remains absolutely invisible and isolated from the world (Rivera 2015).

However, in contrast to Henry, Stein seeks a route that involves pursuing the eternal, invisible source of intelligibility of all being *through* the finitude of the world. Stein (2002, 355) claims that "if the creator is the archetype of the created world, must we not of necessity find in the created world an image—be it ever so remote—of the tri-unity of this primordial being?" Stein explains this strikingly in the following passage:

And when the Epistle to the Romans says (1:20) that the invisible in God has been intellectually knowable from his works since the creation of the world, we take it as referring to this pointing of the visible beyond itself as a natural revelation of God to the human mind as such. According to this there would be no need to be raised above nature to get beyond the visible world, but rather to sink down below nature to understand no more the language of the visible world pointing "beyond." (2000, 126)

Stein argues that knowledge of essences cannot be independent of knowledge of finite things, which are in turn known through sense experience. Stein gives importance to sense experience in order to achieve eidetic knowledge since finite beings are always in touch with the world of natural experience. It is through analogy that Stein portrays the fullness of the personal Being of God, as a person who freely wills and loves. Thus, even though Stein does not resort to a univocal language about God, she does not subscribe to equivocity—which would then leave us with a complete separation between our worldly language and God, as Henry maintains. Stein's argument is that it is precisely because finite beings have their archetype in the Divine that God's expression "I am" holds a universal meaning. Thus, for her at least, the words expressed in the "I am" hold this analogy of being.

Following Stein, we can say that it is only the inclusive, not the exclusive, "inward-turner" who can fully disclose the inward in the outward, as well as

the outward in the inward. Thus, this inward “turn” cannot be understood negatively, as a denial, in this case of the external world, since the one doing the “turning” is not transported to an alternative, radically new universe. Rather, one remains rooted in the world of ordinary humanity. Thus, this turning inwards is always complemented by a movement in the opposite direction; whereby the exterior, as outward, does not end up inducing an incomprehensible paralysis in us.

By recognizing that transcendence is already part of our fabric of interiority, exteriority is no longer thought of as its problem or opponent. Divorcing the external world from the interior Life then becomes implausible. In this sense, I am open to exteriority because exteriority is already within me—not in the same way that wine is in a jar but rather in an Aristotelian sense, that the world is my inseparable habitation. The fact that I am never self-enclosed implies that I can never totally cut myself off from exteriority. The potential to have a meaningful encounter with transcendence lies in this internal-external union founded on the Christian doctrine of the Trinity.

CONCLUSION

According to Henry, if God’s self-revelation owes nothing to the world, how can we have access to it? Henry’s response relies on one mode of access: through an immediate experience of that which is non-worldly. This access is found in Life (God) as a radically immanent, interior auto-affection, wholly separate from the ek-static nature of intentionality. For Henry, Life cannot be known through the mediation of the world but through itself alone. Henry’s opposition between Life and world, flesh and body, claims that the relation of man to God bypasses the world. If we accept these two realities as conflicting and obsoletely opposed, God and the world become incompatible.

However, we have seen that the Truth of Christianity as maintained in the doctrine of the Trinity goes against Henry’s phenomenological division between Life and world, as the immanent and the economic workings of the Trinity are understood as in a harmonious union—i.e. as compatible not conflicting: the former focuses on God’s triune self-relation whilst the latter centres on the works of God revealed through the world’s history. Excluding one side in favour of the other would result in an incomplete and distorted meaning of the Christian Triune God. Consequently, Henry’s notion of Life, as a *Deus sive Vita*, one which is radically invisible and unrelated to the world, cannot attest to a full revelation of the incarnational status of the second person of the Trinity, hence the on-going relation

between Creator and creature. Equally, Henry's notion of an insulated and self-referential interiority, in his Christian phenomenology, is discordant with the Truth of Christianity as maintained in the doctrine of the Trinity. In mirroring the Trinity, as having both the economic and inner life in a harmonious relation, the meaning of our interiority must include a relationship with the world, as a sense of stewardship, through quotidian actions pointing towards the mystery of a transcendent God—understood as both *in se* and *pro nobis*.

Thus, adhering to the Christian doctrine of the Trinity would entail that choosing the world can also mean choosing God, as the former is created and redeemed by the latter. In this light, the world cannot be understood as a problem to anyone who ultimately senses that God, the world, the community of persons and one's inmost being are made whole in grace and redemptive love. This means that, instead of exclusivism and purity, we admit unity and a common ground of reciprocal works of love. In this sense, with Kierkegaard (2009, 28), we can acknowledge that "it would be the greatest torture, if love really could contain such a self-contradiction, for love to require of itself to keep hidden, to require its own unrecognizability." Thus, even though the invisible Life, as God, is hidden, his love is revealed and communicated in works and can therefore be known through its different manifestations. In this sense, the Word of God and events in the world are deeply interwoven, as the former permeates the latter.

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