

Cogito, Phenomenology, and Christianity in Michel Henry

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This article shows, in Michel Henry, the relationship that Descartes' cogito maintains with phenomenology and Christianity. Thus, this article first shows to see how the phenomenology of life is only possible through a reading of Descartes' cogito. For, in it is in the cogito that one discovers how the life of the ego relates the ego to itself by excluding from itself what is outside of itself in the reduction in which this ego is constituted. The article then observes that it is from the way in which the ego is constituted in its most radical immanence that Michel shows how Husserl confused the immanence of the ego with the transcendence which lies outside of the ego. The article finally explains how the ego which discovers itself in pure immanence is the institute of a phenomenology of life which remains the mode of being of the philosophy of Christianity.

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Introduction

To reflect on the relationship of the cogito to phenomenology and Christianity is to be invited by Michel Henry to reflect on Descartes' cogito, without which such a relationship between the three notions could not be achieved. Now, to reflect on Descartes' cogito, for Michel Henry, is precisely to reflect on the mode of constitution of truth through the movement in which truth is constituted, which is ultimately common to the cogito, to phenomenology, and to Christianity. The singularity of Descartes, whose entire philosophical enterprise consisted in reflecting on this movement in which truth is constituted, lies in the precise fact that he was able to deconstruct all the truths already acquired in order to understand and show what truth is constructed by and on. From the methodical doubt through which he thus learned to doubt everything, Descartes thus finally arrived at the discovery of metaphysical doubt in thought, through which it is accomplished and outside of which this doubt could not be accomplished by the thought that is at work in the way it experiences itself as constitutive of truth. Thus Descartes enjoys the exceptional merit of having discovered in the test of thought the metaphysical doubt where truth is then constituted in the union of thought with itself. It is by authorising the union of thought with itself that Descartes discovered in the exercise of doubt that Michel Henry has thus discovered in this gesture where thought unites with itself how truth is constructed in thought. This mode in which truth is constructed in thought and by thought, in the eyes of Michel Henry, allows us to understand how God opens up within us in his relationship with us. A relationship finally contributes to the self-discovery of God through whom his relationship to his son Jesus Christ and to man is discovered by means of the philosophy of Christianity. But, if the reading of the cogito opens the way to phenomenology, how does such a reading contribute to the establishment of phenomenology whose truth is the place where this cogito is

discovered, in Michel Henry's work? How does the phenomenology that the cogito contributes to establish contribute in its turn to the establishment of Christianity through which is discovered the relationship of all the power of God to the cogito, to his son Jesus Christ and to man? It is through the answers to these two major questions that we will finally be able to show in three chapters how the cogito is able to institute material phenomenology, which is distinguished from Husserl's transcendental phenomenology. So that through this distinction between the two types of phenomenology, we understand how material phenomenology alone remains the teacher of the philosophy of Christianity.

Reading the Cogito as the Locus of Descartes' Relationship With Michel Henry

Why does the reading of the cogito constitute the locus of Descartes' relationship with Michel Henry throughout the history of philosophy? The cogito constitutes the locus of Descartes' relationship with Michel Henry throughout the history of philosophy, because it is by reading Descartes' cogito that Michel Henry finally discovered in the cogito the condition of possibility of phenomenology. It is the fact of having first proceeded to the reading of the cogito, in order to finally access its interpretation, having made possible the comprehension of its mode of being, which was thus able to found the protocol of the relationship that Michel Henry was able to build with Descartes. This is why Michel Henry believes that "Descartes' cogito constitutes the birth act of phenomenology. In this sense, a phenomenological reading of the cogito is not only possible, but it is the only possible one" (Henry, 2003a, p. 90). To understand the gesture of the phenomenological reading of the cogito through Michel Henry's claim is to discover in Descartes' reading of the cogito the only possibility that hermeneutics offered to Michel Henry in order to access the phenomenology of the cogito. It is therefore by opening himself to the interpretation of the cogito through the reading of the cogito that Michel Henry was able to open himself to the hermeneutics of the cogito, which finally opened the way to the phenomenology of the cogito. If, as Vincent Descombes rightly points out, "philosophical hermeneutics is meant to be the appropriation of a doctrine that one has chosen to assume and not pure historical exegesis" (Descombes, 2004, p. 166), the decision to appropriate Descartes' doctrine through the interpretation of the cogito in order to gain access to phenomenology constitutes the fundamental motive that allows us to understand how Michel Henry actually related to Descartes through the history of philosophy.

For Michel Henry's reading of Descartes' cogito would not have been possible without the history of philosophy, which therefore remains the foundation on which the hermeneutics of the cogito is built. It is through the reading of the history of Descartes' philosophy that Michel Henry was able to interrogate the cogito, whose hermeneutics was finally able to establish its meaning. Through the way in which he questioned himself deeply about the cogito, Michel Henry thus appropriated the meaning of the cogito, which finally and precisely decided the birth of phenomenology. It is through the reading of the cogito that Michel Henry discovered in his own way of questioning this cogito all the power of the being of the cogito. The questioning of the cogito is thus precisely equivalent, for Michel Henry, to the power of hermeneutics where the very being of the cogito is revealed to itself, without which no understanding of phenomenology is possible. It is only in the questioning of the cogito that the tool that gave Michel Henry access to the hermeneutics of the cogito was revealed. In other words, it is by questioning Descartes' cogito by means of the reading made possible by the history of philosophy that the cogito, opening up to itself, finally opened up to Michel Henry's understanding. The enigma of the being of the cogito, which is none other than the very enigma of phenomenology, can thus be understood by the way in which Michel Henry's reading was able to bring this enigma of the being of the

cogito to language. In this way, questioning the enigma of the being of the cogito is equivalent for Michel Henry to appropriating, by means of reading, the language in which this enigma of the being of the cogito is said. Working then through reading to interpret this enigma of the being of the cogito, working precisely to show how this being of the cogito is this pure veiling of being, which is found inside oneself, is for Michel Henry to appropriate this type of language where immanence is the only true place of truth, where the veiling of being is done. Outside of a true reading of the cogito through the history of philosophy, there is therefore for Michel Henry no true possibility of language through hermeneutics that can open the way to the understanding of the cogito where the truth of phenomenology is discovered.

Descartes' Cogito and Ideal Phenomenology, by Michel Henry

How does the hermeneutics of the cogito, which opens the way to the understanding of phenomenology, make phenomenology itself this way through which the access to the truth of the cogito becomes possible? In other words, how can we understand the path to the understanding of the cogito through the ideal phenomenology according to Michel Henry?

That phenomenology defines the only way to access what is thought and must be thought in the cogito is my first thesis. But this thesis is only true with the addition of this essential precision: the phenomenology that must serve as a guide to reach the buried intuition of the cogito, is not what we understand today under this title, that is to say this movement of thought inaugurated with brilliance by Husserl, pursued by Heidegger and the other philosophers who have been nourished by their inspiration. (Henry, 2003b, p. 90)

For Michel Henry, finding through phenomenology the true way of access to the cogito means that it is through phenomenology that one must access the understanding of the cogito. Now, understanding the cogito through phenomenology makes phenomenology a pure knowledge that works properly to understand how the cogito is accomplished through its mode of being. Phenomenology that works to understand how the cogito is accomplished through its mode of being is distinct from the type of phenomenology proper to Husserl, Heidegger, and their disciples. Contrary to Michel Henry's phenomenology, which is exclusively concerned with understanding the mode of emergence of the cogito, the phenomenology of Husserl, Heidegger, and their disciples has simply given rise to a history of phenomenology. In Michel Henry's view, there is therefore a history of phenomenology which makes Husserl, Heidegger, and their disciples phenomenologists, who have contributed and still contribute to the establishment of phenomenology. This being the case, if it is all the truer for Michel Henry that the immanent phenomenology that opens to the understanding of the cogito is distinct from Husserl's transcendental phenomenology, which his disciples fed on, how does Michel Henry set about bringing to light such a radical phenomenology of the immanence of the cogito?

Indeed, in order to reach a suitable answer to this decisive questioning, Michel Henry decided to use reduction to show how the ego appears to itself in order to allow the cogito to relate to itself. Thus Michel Henry claims that "the ego arises at the same time as the cogito, at the end of the reduction and through it, when there is no longer either an empirical individual or a world" (Henry, 2003c, p. 73). How can we understand what is at stake in the reduction through which Michel Henry invites us to understand the mode of emergence of the ego that allows the cogito to access itself? To understand what is at stake in the reduction by which Michel Henry invites us to understand the access of the cogito to itself through the emergence of the ego is precisely to grasp how such an access of the cogito to itself cannot take place without the emergence of the ego. Now, in order to understand how the cogito accesses itself, Michel Henry shows how the reduction in which the

cogito's access to itself is accomplished is only possible if, through this reduction made possible by the emergence of the ego, the cogito's break with the man who happens to be in the world is really accomplished. In this way, the cogito cannot access itself in and through the reduction if the emergence of the ego does not always already accomplish the rupture of the cogito with the man who remains in the world.

But why, in the eyes of Michel Henry, does access to oneself for the cogito through the emergence of the ego by means of reduction require the rupture of the cogito with man, insofar as he remains a simple being in the world? The access of the cogito to itself requires the rupture of the cogito with man, who remains a simple being in the world, because the reduction presupposes the emergence of the ego, which alone can make this rupture of the cogito with man possible, so that the cogito is given to itself. This is why the major discovery made by Michel Henry through the Cartesian cogito is the fourth founding principle of phenomenology, which Jean Luc Marion has stated for him in these terms: "all the more reduction, all the more donation" (Henry, 2003a, p. 106). But what does this fourth principle mean for Michel Henry and Jean Luc Marion? In the eyes of these two great French phenomenologists, Michel Henry and Jean Luc Marion, this fourth founding principle of pure phenomenology reminds us of phenomenology's debt to Descartes' cogito. Now, if phenomenology is indebted to Descartes' cogito, it is because of this debt that Michel Henry and Jean Luc Marion invite us to understand what lies at the basis of the relationship between the philosophy of the cogito and the most ideal phenomenology. There is only an ideal phenomenology that responds to the process of institution of the cogito, especially since the truth of the cogito is that which is discovered through the institution of phenomenology. Each gesture of reduction, which is thus accomplished through Descartes' philosophy of the cogito, is equivalent to the donation of phenomenology where the truth of the cogito is finally given to itself. It is precisely in the way it is given to itself that this truth of the cogito always accomplishes the divorce between the cogito and man against the background of the emergence of the ego, which gives the cogito to itself, so that it is finally given to the ego. This is what makes Michel Henry say that,

If it is a question of measuring what the aim of the cogito really was, it must be noted that, far from establishing man at the centre of its problematic, it rather excludes him in a radical way, and this in the reduction: what remains has neither eyes, nor ears, nor body, nor belonging to the world, nor to anything similar. (Henry, 2003a, p. 75)

To understand then what is aimed at through the cogito in the light of this statement is synonymous with understanding finally how, through the constitution of the cogito in the reduction, this break of the cogito with man who belongs to the world is radically operated. For man to belong to the world is for him to access the world by means of the reduction, which opens him to the world that remains separate from the cogito. Man is finally separated from the cogito in the reduction by which he is thus discovered outside the cogito. It is by being outside the cogito through the reduction that finally separates him from the cogito that man discovers how he is finally in and of the world. By discovering, therefore, how he is in the world and of the world through and in the reduction that separates him from the cogito, man discovers how his body that is equivalent to the world finally remains separated from the cogito. Man, through the reduction, is thus foreign to the cogito, which opens him up to this reality where he discovers his material body given over to the world's mode of being. It is precisely because he is made of these organs of sense that are the eyes, the ears, the hands that the material body of man participates properly in this movement of being in the world, which remains deprived of the power to move. Now, it is only through the reduction that can be understood by this power that consists in moving oneself in order to move the organs of sense that Michel Henry allows us to understand how the rupture

of the subjective body that is the cogito with this material body that is man, which remains simply moved as what is in the world, that is to say, outside of the cogito, finally takes place.

This is why, for Michel Henry, understanding the truth of the cogito consists in understanding it through reduction, insofar as it remains the way in which the cogito is constituted in the rupture with this material body which is none other than man. It is by discovering in the reduction this power of the original body which is already at work in the way the cogito is constituted that Michel Henry has precisely and finally discovered through Descartes how this subjective body is constituted, through which the union of the cogito with oneself is accomplished. It is this originally subjective body through which the union of the cogito with oneself is accomplished that is clearly brought into play by Michel Henry, when he invites us to understand what the beginning means through the ego. Since for Michel Henry “ego concerns the beginning itself and dwells in it. Ego cogito means that in the original emergence of appearing that Descartes calls thought, ipsity is implied as its very essence and as its most inner possibility” (Henry, 2003b, p. 73). How does Michel Henry allow us to discover the beginning from the ego, which finally allows us to think the relation of the ego to the cogito through the ego cogito?

For Michel Henry, the beginning concerns the ego because within the ego resides this power that makes the ego arise so that through the ego the cogito relates to itself. The truth is that the cogito cannot relate to itself if its relation to itself is not made possible by the ego, whose mode of arising makes this movement in which the cogito is given to relate to itself appear. In other words, the ego cogito for Michel Henry implies this power where the ego arises to itself, so that from this arising to itself of the ego arises the movement where the cogito is given to itself through the ego. By showing how the ego maintains its relationship with the cogito through the ego cogito, Michel Henry finally gives us the possibility to understand how the movement of donation of the cogito to itself cannot be accomplished outside this power where the ego arises to itself. If the emergence of the ego to oneself participates in this pure subjective power of my body where the ego is to oneself, then in and through the power of this subjective body the place of the ego opens up, through which the movement where the cogito is given to itself is accomplished. To understand the real stake of the ego-cogito through the relation of the ego to the cogito consists finally in understanding for Michel Henry how the movement of donation of the cogito to itself cannot be accomplished without the power that triggers it by the way the ego arises to itself. The movement of donation of the cogito to itself, which cannot therefore begin with itself, only begins in this power of the body where the ego arises to itself, in order to open to itself this place of donation, where the cogito is finally given to itself. It is precisely to ipsity that it belongs, for Michel Henry, this pure inner power to make the corporeality of the ego arise to itself, so that the donation of the cogito to itself is made possible. It is to finally show how there is no cogito except through the ego that Michel Henry wrote

me or ego, indeed, it is not the same thing, even if classical thought slides from one to the other in the most extreme confusion and without seeing that there is in this double designation of the self, however constant it may be, at least one problem. (Henry, 1996, pp. 170-171)

This problem that there is, in the eyes of Michel Henry, in the passage from the ego to the cogito allows us to understand how there can be no cogito, which is not preceded by the power of the ego, which contributes to give it birth. Since the cogito's access to itself is only possible through the power of the ego, which makes possible, so to speak, the ego's union with itself is required for the cogito to access itself. In order for this fixed point, the cogito, to be able to discover itself joined to itself, is therefore necessary to carry out a power of the

ego, which can make possible this joining to itself of the ego, without which no discovery of the cogito within itself is possible.

It is therefore precisely in order to elucidate the fact that the power of the ego always remains the power of a movement of the cogito, because the movement of the cogito always stems from this power of the ego, which opens up to the cogito the place where it is accomplished, that Michel Henry managed to clearly thematise “a self-donation (...) which is absolute self-affection outside of which nothing is given to itself or given in any way, outside of which there is neither living nor world” (Henry, 1996, p. 267). How can we understand here and now the relation of the ego to the cogito through the self-giving of the ego to itself, which alone makes possible the giving of the cogito to itself, which gives the cogito to the ego? For Michel Henry, there can be no donation of the cogito to itself without the self-donation of the ego to itself, because the donation is only accomplished through the self-donation, which allows it to be accomplished as a donation. By denying the possibility of self-donation, Michel Henry shows very clearly how the self-donation of the ego accomplishes the donation of the cogito to itself. The self-donation is that pure power in which the body of the ego is affected, so that the cogito is affected in the way it is given to itself by the self-affection of the ego, by means of which the power of the ego is accomplished, which accomplishes the movement in which the cogito gives itself to itself. Without this power in which the ego aims at itself, the aiming of the cogito cannot be accomplished in this movement in which the cogito is given to itself. To aim at oneself for the ego is equivalent to aiming at the cogito, especially since the power where the ego aims at itself gives rise to the movement where the cogito is given to itself by the way it is given to the ego without which it would not be given to itself. Therefore, the ego cogito for Michel Henry is understood by the power of the ego from which arises the movement where the cogito is given to itself in order to be given to the ego. Since it is by giving itself to the ego that the cogito is given to the ego through the power of this body of the ego, which cannot be dissociated from its movement where the cogito appears to the ego, by appearing to itself as the ego cogito.

It is here that Michel Henry's issue between ego and cogito through the ego cogito reveals very clearly the relationship between cogito and phenomenology through his work that he finally chose to call *Philosophy and Phenomenology of the Body*. Why is the whole issue of this relationship between the cogito and phenomenology revealed to Michel Henry through *Philosophy and Phenomenology of the Body*? In other words, how can the relationship of the cogito to phenomenology be better seen through this major and very significant breakthrough work that Michel Henry was able to write with great difficulty, choosing to rightly call it *Philosophy and Phenomenology of the Body*? In truth, the relation of the unique original body that constitutes the cogito to the phenomenology of the body is clearly revealed by *Philosophy and Phenomenology of the Body*, because this work shows precisely how there is no pure and true phenomenology of the body, except from the philosophy of the body, which is discovered in Descartes in the cogito.

In other words, by discovering the subjective body in and through the cogito, Descartes, for Michel Henry, fundamentally inaugurated the metaphysical tradition of the philosophy of the subjective body, because, to Aristotle before Descartes it belongs only the merit to have discovered in his work: of the soul “the body as a self-visible object” (Aristotle, 2005, p. 124).

Now, by discovering the body as a self-visible object, Aristotle's discovery ignores the subjective body discovered by Descartes. Moreover, by discovering the body as a self-visible object, Aristotle has precisely ignored the fact that there is no object that is visible to itself, except from a power subjectively exercised by the ego that is not an object. The ego, which is not an object but rather a subject, passes from self to self, so that the

cogito opens up the movement where it accesses itself in order to access the ego through the power of the ego. The true genius of Descartes compared to Aristotle, then, lies in the way he shows, not how power is both united and separated from act, but rather in the way the power of the ego, which cannot be separated from the act of the cogito, constitutes the place by which the cogito discovers itself related to itself, by the way it is related to the power of the ego, which is divine in nature.

Hence, power and act, which Aristotle at the same time linked and separated from each other, are not finally separated, but linked to each other in Descartes. Descartes was the first philosopher of the metaphysical tradition of subjectivity, who, beyond Aristotle, thus enjoys the true merit of having been able to discover how power, which is not only virtual, really joins the act of the subject who thinks itself. Since my subjective body that thinks itself, in Descartes, opens within itself this place where the ego arises from itself to itself, so that the cogito that accesses itself through the power, the power of the ego, accesses this power of the ego. Thus, “very great philosophers, such as Descartes or Maine de Biran (...), Michel Henry acknowledges, have been able to recover the founding intuitions” (Henry, 2002, p. 30) of the metaphysical thesis of my subjective body. That said, how does Michel Henry allow us to discover Descartes’ cogito as this originally subjective body, which ultimately contributed to the establishment of the phenomenology of the body? How does the corporeality of Descartes’ cogito equate, in Michel Henry’s eyes, to the phenomenology of the body in Michel Henry?

“If I mean I can”, wrote Michel Henry, “I can deploy each of the powers that I find in myself, and that is because, coinciding with it, placed inside it as it were, I have it at my disposal and can exercise it whenever I want and as often as I can”. (Henry, 1996, p. 173)

To discover here the I that means I can through the Cartesian philosophy of the cogito, which opened the way to the phenomenology of the body, is finally and precisely for Michel Henry to discover the cogito, the I as pure subjective body through the phenomenology of the body. Since the phenomenology of the body, which is the mode of discovery of the corporeality of the I, i.e., of the cogito, is given to be understood by the accomplishment of the power of this body which is equivalent to the I. By accomplishing itself as I can, the subjective body of the I that is the cogito is accomplished precisely in and through this power without which it could not be accomplished as a subjective body. The I through which the philosophy of the cogito is understood is finally this subjective body where the I coincides with itself. It is coinciding with itself from itself that the I, which accesses its body where it is to itself, finally accesses the incarnation of itself. The power that the I demonstrates through this pure ordeal of immanence where it experiences itself as constitutive of the self from the self is the original mode of the incarnation of the I that is equivalent to its body. The incarnation of the I is equivalent to its body, because the body is the power that the I exercises to come to itself from itself. The I cannot therefore come to itself from itself outside the exercise of this power where this pure movement of conquest of itself by itself is triggered. In order to conquer itself as a self, the self as I, cogito, is both power and movement. So that no movement of conquest of self by self is possible if the self itself does not experience this pure power, from which this movement of return of self to self from self is born.

It is finally because the I remains properly this power outside of which it cannot discover itself as a relation to itself from the power where it comes to itself that Michel Henry specifies “there are powers of the body for example. The power to take, to move, to touch, to hit, to lift, to deploy one’s limbs from within, to move one’s eyes, etc.” (Henry, 1996, p. 172). But, how does the power of the I come to be understood, for Michel Henry, through the gestures of taking, moving, touching, striking, lifting, deploying one’s limbs from

within, moving the eyes? Indeed, taking, moving, touching, striking, unfolding one's limbs, and moving one's eyes testify in Michel Henry's eyes to the most radical proof of the immanence of the I. All the more so as all these gestures are the expression of an immanent power of the I which shows itself to be seen within itself by the way it is close to itself. Taking, walking, and moving the eyes are thus immanent powers of the I, because the gestures of taking, walking, moving the eyes are the pure inner experiences of the powers of the I, which are accomplished by the I within the self. Thus, picking up, walking, and moving the eyes, far from being accomplished as movements of the material body, which remains deprived of the power to move, are rather pure immanent movements of the I, which makes the pure immanent experience of its body, which, alone, moves inside itself, by its powers where it relates to itself. The gestures of taking, walking, moving the eyes are thus, for Michel Henry, pure immanent movements of the experience where the I is to its body; the evidence of such a Cartesian thesis, which shows how the philosophy of the cogito is equivalent to the phenomenology of the body, is clearly and rightly reinforced by the Biranian thesis of the effort of the self. That said, what is this reinforcement, this significant contribution of Maine de Biran, who according to Michel Henry, was able to show how he was finally able to found the perfect elucidation of the subjective body, better than Descartes?

According to Michel Henry, the originality of Maine de Biran, through the way he perfectly contributed to the elucidation of the Cartesian thesis of the subjective body, lies properly in the nature of the effort of the self. It is thus by showing precisely how the subjective body is constituted by the self that makes an effort that Maine de Biran, like Michel Henry, discovered in the effort the mode on which the subjective body is constituted. That the effort made by the self to constitute itself can then give access to the mode of constitution of the subjective body discovered by Descartes is how Maine de Biran was able to discover in the effort the place of the relationship that the cogito philosophy maintains with the phenomenology of the body. For Maine de Biran, the truth of the subjective body is therefore that in which the pure self that makes effort is discovered. Making an effort for the pure self is then equivalent to the effort where this pure self discovers itself as constitutive of its truth within its body. But, in the eyes of Michel Henry, what does this great dose of genius of the Biranian thesis of the effort of the self consist of, through which we understand the extreme lucidity that Maine de Biran was able to bring to the Cartesian philosophy of the cogito, which is none other than that of the subjective body that Descartes had the merit of discovering, before Maine de Biran?

It was driven by the legitimate decision to give more credibility to the Cartesian thesis of the *meum corpus*, i.e., of my subjective body, that Michel Henry believed he had to rely on Maine de Biran, whose thesis of the effort of the self contributes to a better elucidation of this subjective body that Descartes was certainly able to elucidate, but based essentially on the movement of the soul, whereas the movement of the soul, which Descartes confused with the movement of the spirit, in the eyes of Michel Henry, cannot better explain the subjective body, which is better explained by the movement of the spirit, which is not the movement of the soul. This is why the subjective body has already been clearly thematised by Descartes through two privileged textual places, namely the *Metaphysical Meditations* and the *Metaphysical Meditations of the French Republic: Les méditations métaphysiques* and *Les passions de l'âme*; Michel Henry attributes its pure, original discovery to Maine de Biran.

This explains all the dignity accorded to Maine de Biran by Michel Henry, for whom "it was not until the beginning of the nineteenth century that a philosopher of genius, Maine de Biran, made the discovery of a subjective body opposed to the body-object of tradition" (Henry, 2002, p. 30). By means of what, then, can Maine de Biran finally explain his purely original discovery of the subjective body, which Descartes had the

merit of discovering, even though the merit of the perfect elucidation of this subjective body does not fall to him here and now? Michel Henry attributes the merit of the elucidation or interpretation of the subjective body to Maine de Biran, because his merit is explained by his lucidity in having been able to distinguish the movement of the mind from the movement of the soul. It is finally because Descartes refrained from radically distinguishing the movement of the spirit from the movement of the soul that Maine de Biran, who best succeeded in distinguishing one from the other, had more merit in being able to understand that only the spirit is that pure true self, which makes an effort through its action which is accomplished on itself, whereas the soul, which cannot exert itself through its own effort, rather undergoes the effort of the spirit through the movement of its reaction towards the spirit. For Michel Henry, conferring the dignity of the interpretation of the subjective body on Maine de Biran is equivalent to rediscovering this subjective body in the action of the spirit on itself, from which arises the reaction of the soul towards the spirit. The only action in which the spirit relates first to itself, before relating to the soul, is the movement of the spirit which shows itself to be seen through the gesticulations of our sense organs. Far from performing their own actions, therefore, our sense organs, which are deprived of the power to perform action, show to be seen only how the actions of the spirit, which appeal to the reactions of our senses towards the spirit, are performed through them. The movements of the mind are thus the only gestures of the mind's action upon itself. So that the soul reacts towards the spirit that resists it, because the strength of the spirit that does not equal that of the soul explains the impenetrability of the soul in the spirit. It is this action of the spirit on itself which is not proportional to the reaction of the soul towards the spirit, which always resists it, that Michel Henry finally discovered in Maine de Biran's "action as an operation of this subjective body, having its place in our invisible flesh" (Henry, 1996, p. 30). So that the spirit which remains invisible to the soul is none other than the flesh, that is to say the leib of which the soul sees only the *Körper*, the visible part where it is inscribed. Insofar as it is accomplished as the pure power of the carnal action of the body on itself and within itself, the invisible flesh always causes the visible body to emerge from itself, which is properly a sign towards the world. Philosophy of the body and phenomenology of the body thus lead, in Michel Henry, to a pure and true celebration of the subjective body. This is the only original body of the cogito from which Michel Henry finally shows how the ideal phenomenology, which is born from this cogito, remains a true reinvention of Descartes' pure material phenomenology, which is radically different from Husserl's transcendental phenomenology.

Michel Henry's Material Phenomenology and Husserl's Transcendental Phenomenology

Why did Michel Henry finally choose to compare his so-called material phenomenology, born precisely from the reading of Descartes' cogito, with Husserl's transcendental phenomenology, born from this same reading of Descartes' cogito? How, through this comparison between the two types of phenomenology, does the double inspiration drawn from the cogito clearly emerge, which alone finally and precisely allows us to understand how Michel Henry's material phenomenology differs from Husserl's transcendental phenomenology? Indeed, if Husserl's reading of Descartes' cogito allowed him to discover the intentionality of consciousness for which all consciousness is consciousness of something, Michel Henry's reading of the cogito, however, allowed him to discover a cogito without object. It is precisely by discussing the Husserlian thesis of intentionality according to which consciousness is always consciousness of something that Michel Henry, who chose to return to Descartes' fundamental intuition, wrote

Husserl undoubtedly made an extraordinary revolutionary advance by describing intentionalities. But he made a mistake in declaring intentionality to be the first principle, and consequently in defining the question of the manifestation of appearance. If I look at a painting in a museum, I forget the conditions for the exercise of this seeing, i.e. consciousness, the manifestation of seeing and the presence of light. It is the sensitivity of subjectivity itself that remains in the darkness of the night. (Henry, 1990, p. 74)

How can we understand what is at stake in such a criticism addressed by Michel Henry to Husserl concerning intentionality? Why does Michel Henry deny intentionality as understood by Husserl this power where the self-revelation of seeing is accomplished? Michel Henry denies Husserl's intentionality this power where the seeing is revealed to itself because the proper nature of Husserl's intentionality is to be the relation of consciousness to its object. Now, before consciousness relates to its object, there is a primordial seeing whose immanent truth is discovered by Michel Henry in the pure movement of seeing. As a movement of immanence, the pure seeing is thus for Michel Henry this seeing that shows itself to be seen within itself through the gesture where the seeing sees itself. This is why, taking fundamentally the example of the I who looks at a painting in a museum, Michel Henry relies essentially on the pure phenomenological gesture of looking to show how the material phenomenology of seeing is accomplished in the self-revelation of seeing to itself. By thinking intentionality through transcendental phenomenology in the mode of consciousness, which remains after epoch because it is accomplished as consciousness in reduction, Husserl forgot that the pure phenomenological seeing is accomplished before epoch. It is the immediate movement of seeing that the very gesture of looking at a painting shows to be the true seeing that for Michel Henry escapes Husserl's understanding. What does this pure phenomenological seeing finally refer to when we really look at a painting in a museum, according to Michel Henry? This pure seeing that is at work when we look at painting in a museum is accomplished for Michel Henry by and in the very movement of the gaze. Now, this movement of the gaze that looks at the painting in a museum is none other than that of the eye. By basing himself on the movement of the eye, insofar as it shows to see what is shown through the movement of seeing, Michel Henry returns to this seeing itself, which remains faithful to vision as Descartes thematised it through the cogito. The very nature of seeing, of the vision that is equivalent to the cogito's gesture of looking at oneself, is explained by this movement within oneself of the cogito that the eye turns within the space where it is housed.

Husserl thus failed to understand that before the world that he believes to be a simple natural attitude is put out of play by means of epoche, it is already a self-manifestation of seeing through the movements of the eyes where the invisible self-revelation of seeing that opens consciousness to itself is accomplished. The mode in which Husserl finally reaches the discovery of intentionality thus poses a real problem for Michel Henry. For it belongs to this pure invisible consciousness that appears to itself in the movement of the gaze, whose mode of being it is, to make the consciousness that discovers itself to be without object appear. Husserl's consciousness, which is consciousness of something, thus transcendental consciousness, would be deprived, stripped of this something which is not the "object", if Husserl had finally succeeded in showing how consciousness shows itself to be seen to itself in and through this seeing of which it is itself the gesture of seeing. For Michel Henry, the seeing where the seeing is seen through the gestures of our eyes is a pure movement that opens to itself this invisible place of seeing which is none other than the cogito that always remains veiled in the night that Michel Henry calls the pathos. For want of having had recourse to the gaze itself, as a movement of coming to oneself from the invisibility of the cogito in its self-revelation to oneself, Husserl managed to confuse the self-revelation of consciousness to oneself with consciousness simply related to its object. Without the pure

invisible seeing, such a relation of consciousness to the object thought by Husserl would not be possible. Intentionality is therefore true, for Michel Henry, only in the sense that it is not the relation of consciousness to the object, but rather the relation of consciousness to itself in its pure proximity to itself through its gesture of the invisible gaze where it is immediately to itself. The invisibility of the gaze is thus understood for Michel Henry by the gesture without which it could not be accomplished. Now, the gesture of the eye, by showing how the eye opens so that it closes immediately, shows how consciousness opens to itself this place of itself where it is to itself. To be one's own is for consciousness to take its place within itself through the gesture that offers the only condition for placing the self in its place of self. What Husserl did not understand, without understanding intentionality precisely, is the gaze of the eye whose gesture opens this intentional place where intention is united to itself.

This is why Michel Henry considers that "Husserl reduces manifestation to phenomenality, which is always the phenomenality of something (...) what, according to Michel Henry, Husserl forgot to take into account is the power to reveal" (Henry, 1990, p. 235). In other words, the reason why Husserl does not understand intentionality is precisely because of the powers at work through intentionality. For no intentionality is possible if the intentional power in which the gaze invisible to itself is revealed is hardly fulfilled. The power of intentionality would thus be understood by Husserl, according to Michel Henry, as the power of the manifestation of intentionality. That the power of intentionality is what makes consciousness see to consciousness and in consciousness is what properly defines the immanent nature of consciousness and not its transcendence. Thus, although he was inspired by Descartes, in Michel Henry's eyes, Husserl, by thinking the transcendence of the ego as the mode of being of intentionality, did not manage to think the immanence of intentionality. Hence, Michel reproaches him for the fact that

Husserl thinks the reality of cogitatio as transcendence. In itself and through the self-relation constitutive of its reality, cogitatio intentionally relates to the object and in the transcendence of this intentionality, gives it to see, makes it manifest, reveals it. Revelation is here the revelation of the object, appearing is here the appearing of the object, in the sense that what appears is the object. (Henry, 1990, p. 108)

In the light of this occurrence, Michel Henry reproaches Husserl for not having understood the mode in which intentionality is accomplished. For, by making intentionality the place where consciousness relates to its object, Husserl understands intentionality in the mode of transcendence. Now, intentionality is strictly speaking the relation of consciousness to itself, where the self-revelation of consciousness to itself takes place. Thus, only the consciousness that is inside itself can reveal itself to itself in self-revelation. Thus, to be inside oneself without being outside oneself is to be in the mode of the invisible, which participates in the way the cogito reveals itself to itself in its self-revelation. But, if the self-revelation of the cogito to itself cannot be accomplished in transcendence, Michel Henry asks himself "what is the mode of appearance of the self-reporter" (Henry, 1990, p. 108) that can define intentionality differently than Husserl thought he could understand it. In order to understand intentionality, which Husserl misunderstood, Michel Henry says that it is necessary to "define intentionality in a different way",

To put ourselves back into seeing and to practise reduction in it: to hold on, in seeing and thanks to it, to what is really seen. What is really seen in the pure view of reduced seeing? The cogitatio. But it is clear then that it is no longer a question of the real cogitatio as it experiences itself in the immanence of its self-appearance. It is a question of cogitatio subjected to the phenomenological mode of treatment and reduced seeing. Here cogitatio is no longer a real moment of subjectivity, but an object of knowledge towards which the gaze of thought exceeds itself in order to seize it in its pure

view. This seizure by thought of a content situated outside it and, in this way, seen by it, is a transcendence according to the first meaning that Husserl recognises for this concept. Transcendence thus understood is equivalent to immanence in the second sense to the pure view of cogitatio. When immanence receives the meaning of transcendence, the perversion of the fundamental concepts of phenomenology is complete. (Henry, 1990, p. 76)

What is the issue in this textual occurrence where Michel Henry reproaches Husserl for not understanding intentionality from seeing, which is none other than the cogitatio that they both inherited from Descartes? For Michel Henry, Husserl does not understand intentionality because he has chosen to understand it from the transcendence by which he defines cogitatio, whereas what makes the place of immanence open within cogitatio, which is equivalent for Husserl to the transcendence of the ego, is precisely this movement that takes place in the mind in order to open in the mind this place within which resides that invisible which is hidden from the perception of the outside. That which opens the inside to the inside of oneself is the self that always differs from the perception of the object perceived outside. It is from transcendence, which is the mode of being of the exteriority of the object, that Husserl has misunderstood immanence by means of transcendence. For there is no transcendence of consciousness, i.e., of the ego, if such transcendence is not made possible by the way in which the ego opens within itself the place of the ego where this transcendence becomes possible.

Husserl's inability, if not his blindness, to understand immanence can be explained by the fact that he does not understand how the mind looks at the mind within the mind, which, in looking at itself within itself, remains deprived of an object that it can look at. For, to see oneself for the spirit which is nothing other than the cogitatio is to discover oneself as this cogitatio which carries within itself this interior place where it sees itself in order not to be seen outside, where man sees his object through the inexhaustible distance that there is between him and this invisible spirit which always steals away from man's perception. What Michel Henry fundamentally reproaches Husserl for is the fact that he failed to understand the cogitatio through the inner gaze where the original view opens up on itself. Since the pure seeing or sees itself of the cogitatio is to itself, it is a seeing that is the power to see itself within itself that Husserl has confused with the intentionality of the transcendental ego. Now, the ego for Michel Henry as a cogito that aims at itself in this pure power where it transits from self to self remains without object. So the proper of this pure power where the cogitatio is to itself is the fact of accessing its being, whereas this movement in which consciousness simply sees the object is born outside of cogitatio, which opens up outside itself this movement in which consciousness gives itself to perceive the object. It is precisely because the gaze, which remains only a gesture of the power of cogitatio, opens cogitatio to itself in this kind of accomplishment of vision where sight makes a movement of return on itself, that that by which the perception of its object becomes possible is revealed outside consciousness. It is therefore because he understood the gesture of the gaze, of the eye, the gesture of the hands, the steps of the human body by man that Husserl refrained from understanding what is essentially at stake through these pure gestures which are nevertheless revealing of bodily intentionality. These pure gestures of the subjective body are accomplished without the will of man, who therefore undergoes the gesture, because the gesture, insofar as it is unreflective, precedes the man who reflects through the gesture and without which he would never reflect. The movement through the gesture or the gesture through its movement always opens within the gesturing mind this place where it passes from self to self in this kind of transitivity of the verb to be. Thus, to be for the cogitatio to itself is to make itself a gesture by this power where it accomplishes this seeing where it sees itself in this vision of the gaze where the view of the cogitatio remains open on itself.

It is only in the gesture and through the gesture that escapes the control of human consciousness that the

view of the cogitatio through which the first philosophy is always accomplished can be seen. For Descartes' first philosophy, from which Michel Henry drew all his inspiration from the bodily intentionality of cogitatio, shows how in and through gesture that inner place of consciousness where consciousness finally perceives itself to be without object is opened up bodily. That the consciousness that sees itself as being to itself without an object that it can see within itself participates in the pure and true bodily intentionality; Michel Henry shares this thesis with Maurice Merleau-Ponty. For, the challenge of "The Structure of Behaviour", just like that of Merleau-Ponty's "Phenomenology of Perception", consists in understanding how this bodily intentionality is accomplished through the gesture of behaviour which is equivalent to perception. This is why understanding bodily intentionality through "The Structure of Behaviour" and the "Phenomenology of Perception" is finally and precisely "to understand the relations of consciousness to organic, psychological or even social nature" (Merleau-Ponty, 1942, p. 1). Now, to understand the relations of consciousness to nature is precisely and finally to return for Merleau-Ponty to the behaviour where cogitatio is seen, nature being to itself through its pure movement of bodily intentionality. Merleau-Ponty's *L'œil et L'esprit* and Michel Henry's *Voir L'invisible sur Kandinsky* show how these two French phenomenologists give primacy to the pure movement of bodily intentionality, which is accomplished in and through cogitatio.

Since seeing for the painter through the eye, which is the original giving intuition whose stake Husserl did not understand is precisely for consciousness to see itself through the pure movement of sight whose seeing is equivalent to the gesture of painting. Now, for Paul Cézanne and Kandinsky, to paint is to do justice to the gesture of the eye, whose movement opens consciousness to this pure place of immanence where it sees itself without object. For the gesture of painting is the pure movement of unveiling the primordial world through bodily consciousness, which discovers itself stripped of all object. The fact that the eye opens and closes each time allows us, for Merleau-Ponty and Michel Henry, to understand the gesture as the behaviour of the view of consciousness on itself. The behaviour of my body for Merleau-Ponty and Michel Henry is therefore the invisible gesture where the mind that sees itself sees itself only within itself through the way the self opens its view of itself on itself. The spirit that sees itself through the behaviour of its sight that the gesture of the eye gives to see is thus for Michel Henry and Merleau-Ponty a spirit or an incarnated consciousness. To grasp the relationship between consciousness and nature is precisely to be invited by Merleau-Ponty and Michel Henry to understand how the gesture of the behaviour of sight is the place where incarnated consciousness opens up to itself. Since it is by looking at nature, whose invisible perception of cogitatio he cannot exhaust, that man, who becomes conscious of himself through nature, perceives his object through nature which is hidden from his perception. By showing Pavlov's mechanistic psychophysiology and Watson's behaviourism how they were interested in the study of behaviour simply as an empirical object, Merleau-Ponty essentially wanted to return to the relationship between man and his environment, which Pavlov and Watson had very poorly understood.

For Merleau-Ponty, the relevant "problem that Pavlov posed is to understand how the organism can relate to its environment" (Merleau-Ponty, 1942, p. 55), as does Watson. Thus, to allow ourselves to think that we turn our eyes towards an object in order to see it is to deny ourselves the possibility of understanding, as Husserl did when he rejected the natural attitude, how the movements of our eyes are each time those movements in which the relation to oneself of the true organism, which is none other than the cogitatio, is discovered. The problem of the *cogito*, of the *cogitatio* that Michel Henry rightly raises to show Husserl that he did not understand bodily intentionality, Merleau-Ponty finally shows how it is resolved by the gesture of behaviour. Why? It is simply because the cogito is discovered in the gesture of the behaviour of the cogito

towards itself. Now, the cogito has no behaviour towards itself except in its inner look at itself, where it discovers itself as a cogito, which only opens up to itself in its view of itself, which allows it to see itself inside itself without an object. The cogito, as Merleau-Ponty and Michel Henry clearly show through the great painters Paul Cézanne and Kandinsky: Paul Cézanne and Kandinsky, is thus understood through the gesture of the eye's movement. In this way, it is through the gesture of the eye that the movement of existence is accomplished, where the cogito, which unites with itself, opens up the place where human consciousness, which is none other than man, perceives its object. The behaviour of the cogito through the gesture of the movement of the eye is thus the pure natural attitude where the immanence of the cogitatio is discovered, which Husserl confused with the transcendental attitude that he unfortunately understood through human consciousness, which differs radically from the gesture of the cogitatio. All the more so since the transcendental attitude that Husserl opposes to the natural attitude nevertheless participates in this natural attitude through its movement of bodily intentionality, which is of the order of immanence and not of transcendence.

Phenomenology of Life as a Mode of Accomplishment of the Philosophy of Christianity

How does the philosophy of life function, in Michel Henry's eyes, as a mode of accomplishment or manifestation of the philosophy of Christianity? Indeed, for Michel Henry

The human condition can no longer be defined by the mere opposition of the invisible and the visible, understood as an opposition of the self and the world and identified with it. Within the invisible itself, an abyss has just opened up, a new relationship has been established. The self does not only relate to the world and to others, it does not only relate to itself in the secret of its thoughts and actions. This secret is subject to the gaze of God. In this way, through this gaze which reveals him to himself at the same time as it reveals him to God, man is linked to God in his inner relationship which now defines his reality. (Henry, 2002, p. 51)

How can we understand such an occurrence of Michel Henry to finally understand the relationship that man has with God through life? How can we understand life through the phenomenology of life which alone allows us to understand the philosophy of Christianity? To understand the relationship between the phenomenology of life and Christianity is to avoid understanding life in terms of the opposition between the invisible and the visible. In this way, the invisible life of God cannot be understood outside the relationship it has with the visible. It is therefore from the way in which this invisible body of God reveals itself to oneself in its interiority that the visible man is revealed to the invisible. In other words, the visible man lives from the invisible, which is none other than God, who lives from himself by opening up life to himself in self-revelation. This is why, in Michel Henry's eyes, there is no secret in God's life that can only be in him, without man knowing it. For divine knowledge is part of the inwardly invisible nature of God, which man enters in order not to be a stranger to this God in whom he dwells. This is what Michel Henry wants us to understand when he writes

Understanding man from Christ, understood himself from God, is in turn based on the decisive intuition of a radical phenomenology of life which is precisely also that of Christianity: namely, that life has the same meaning for God, for Christ and for man, because there is only one and the same essence of life and, more radically, only one and the same life. (Henry, 1996, p. 128)

How can we understand the relationship of the phenomenology of life to Christianity through God, Christ, and man? To understand the threefold relation between God, Christ, and man is to understand, for Michel Henry, how they all three enter into relation through life. Insofar as it remains the condition of the relationship,

life, as enigmatic as it may seem, is a primordial movement in which God comes to himself only to bring forth the Christ who remains inseparable from man. Why is this so? It is simply because if life is that by which Christ participates in God, man who participates in God also participates in Christ. A more intimate relationship is thus discovered between God and Christ, which is not that of God with man. Hence, in the eyes of Michel Henry,

Christ proceeds from him who sent him and from him alone. Generated in the self-generation of the absolute life, taking its essence from it, there is nothing in him that is not this life. The ipseity in which Christ is experienced, that is, his subjectivity, is the ipseity in which the absolute phenomenological life experiences itself, that is, the subjectivity of this life. (Henry, 1996, p. 126)

In the light of this textual occurrence, understanding life for Michel Henry is equivalent to understanding it through the way God who opens himself to himself opens himself to Christ who participates in the same nature as he does. In this way, in the original relationship where life transits from self to self, there is a passage from God to Christ. It is by living from Christ that God lives from himself, all the more so since life is first of all an original, if not original, relationship in which God passes to himself only through his passage to Christ. There is, so to speak, a kind of otherness where God is originally in a relationship of intimacy with Christ. It is precisely because God opens himself to himself through the way he opens himself to Christ that man finally comes to open himself to life through this relationship where God discovers himself through Christ. This is why Michel Henry believes that “to intervene even as a co-constituent element in the nature of Christ, man comes really too late. For that is the aporia” (Henry, 1996, p. 126). But how can man’s relationship with Christ through God be an aporia? In what does the aporia consist in the relationship where man is open to Christ through God? The aporia consists in the fact that there is a delay on the part of man with regard to the relationship where God discovers himself by discovering Christ. It is by one and the same movement of life that God meets Christ, so that man then meets Christ through this movement of self-begetting of God open to Christ. Precisely for Michel Henry “it is a question of knowing what is the nature of this human nature that joins with another of divine essence, to compose with it the mixed essence of Christ” (Henry, 1996, p. 127). In truth, the double nature of Christ allows us to understand the fact that God, who cannot understand himself, understands himself all the more easily through his relationship with himself, which is basically a relationship with Christ. For, in order to enter into a relationship with himself, God through his movement gives birth to Christ. It is through Christ that we discover the way in which God who is given to himself is finally given to Christ to whom he gives birth. God, paradoxical as it may seem to us, is discovered in the relationship with Christ, which is a relationship with God himself. Since the movement in which God discovers himself to be in relation to himself is the movement in which Christ is discovered through this movement in which he is linked to God so that man is linked to Christ through God. There is therefore in the relationship where God is linked to Christ a power of life of which man remains deprived even though he relates to God through Christ. That life is given to God and to Christ and that man can be deprived of it participate in the self-affection of life in which God and Christ are self-affected so that man given to life is affected by this relationship of God to Christ. This is precisely what Michel Henry wants us to understand in these terms

The difference between the self-affection of absolute life, which brings itself into itself, and that of the ego given to itself for nothing in this gift, places us before an aporetic situation. On the one hand, therefore, the ego that has not brought itself into itself appears fundamentally deprived of the power to do so, i.e. to live, if the power of life is precisely to bring itself into itself and thus to experience itself and to live in the suffering and enjoyment of this living. (Henry, 1996, p. 262)

To understand here and now the aporia that is at work in the life that implies the relation is to understand precisely how the self-giving of life to God and to Christ is this power in which life is given to man, and power without which man would be outside of life and would not know how to live from the life whose original power is hidden from him. In such a way, the relationship between God and Christ, which requires the power of life to be established, would not be established if the power of life were not already at work in and through life, where man opens himself to the life to which he would be closed, without the establishment of this original relationship where life is experienced as constitutive of the mystery of humanity. To experience oneself in life and through life through this relationship in which God discovers himself to be Christ is a sign towards what is experienced by man whose relationship to life allows us to understand how life is experienced within oneself, while man is experienced by life outside life. The test of life finally allows us to discover what is experienced. That which is experienced is only experienced in so far as that by which it is experienced remains within it, whereas that which is experienced which is devoid of the life by which it can be experienced remains experienced by the life which is experienced within itself. From then on, what is experienced allow us to discover this kind of transitivity of the trial where the passage from God to Christ is made, which is experienced where life is constituted within oneself, whereas man remains simply tested in his relationship to life to which he remains open without deciding on the life where the belonging of God to Christ is decided, to which man then belongs through his inscription in the life where he meets God through Christ. That man is not directly open to life by himself allows us to understand the primacy of God over man through Christ who gives life to man as belonging to a second life which always arises from the primordial life where the opening of God to Christ is discovered. Hence, in the eyes of Michel Henry,

The opposition between the self-affection of the absolute life in which this life is self-engendered and the relative self-affection, we say, in which the ego experiences itself given to itself not by itself leads to a radical questioning of the second. In the end, there is only one self-affection, that of absolute life, and this is because the self-affection in which the ego is given to itself is only the absolute self-affection of the life that gives it to itself by giving itself to itself, a self-affection without which no living being or ego would ever live. Such is the paradoxical condition of the ego. (Henry, 1996, p. 263)

But what does the paradoxical condition of the ego consist of when it is given to itself by this self-affection of life that gives it access to the life in which it dwells? Indeed, the paradoxical condition of the ego that inhabits life is understood by the fact that the ego dwells in a part of life, whereas life itself is a whole in which God dwells, who always withdraws from the ego because of the part in which he dwells. To dwell in the part for the ego while God dwells in the whole is to understand how the ego makes its entry into God through the part which is not equivalent to the whole. The relationship of the whole to the part allows us to understand the analogy of being where God resembles the ego only insofar as the ego remains distant from it. It is because God is closest to oneself that the ego resembles him by the way it remains distant from him. The closeness of God to oneself allows us to understand the analogy of being as the distance of the ego from God. It is by being distant from God that the ego resembles God with whom it never coincides. The aporia of life that makes the ego never coincide with God is the very thing that explains death, which is not the disappearance of life, but the opening to life because the ego as a part does not coincide with the whole. It is this emptiness, this gap between the part where the ego is and the whole where God is, that death comes to fill by the way in which life is stolen from the ego so that it is constantly reopened to itself. There would be no death if there were no distance from the ego to God. It is through the distance of the ego from God that death can be explained, which

allows us to understand how our unequal relationship with God makes us always shy away from him because we find it difficult to coincide with him. We can then understand why what is touched in the life of the self with the self is not touched by the ego, which is always in this relationship where it distances itself from God.

It is to the beautiful pages of Merleau-Ponty's *Le Visible et L'Invisible* that we owe the understanding of God's paradoxical relationship with this ego which is none other than man. Why is this so? It is simply because the relation of the "invisible to the visible" allows Merleau-Ponty to understand how my body, which touches itself, is not touched by the visible, which remains simply touched. My body, through which God, who is invisible within oneself, is discovered, makes visible the visible, which is none other than the ego. My body is touched because it is the power of life that opens up to itself, whereas the ego, which opens up to life through life, remains deprived of this power of my body, where it nevertheless lives. Although Merleau-Ponty, who was inspired by Hegel, succeeded in thinking the relationship of my body to the self or to the ego in the mode of reversibility that this relationship knows, there is a discovery of my body as the life of God whose power gives life to the self which by itself remains deprived of life. In Merleau-Ponty, as in Michel Henry, a phenomenology of the body is thus discovered that makes it possible to understand the philosophy of Christianity. Since it is to my body that it is given to open the relation of God to Christ through whom man discovers God. The phenomenology of the body therefore presupposes Christianity, especially since it is through phenomenology that the relationship of God to his son Christ is illuminated, through which man discovers God.

Conclusion

In the end, thinking about the relationship of the cogito to phenomenology and Christianity is equivalent to understanding how phenomenology and Christianity are nourished by the cogito. So that the cogito, where life opens up to itself, opens up to the phenomenology of the body, which is the mode of manifestation of the philosophy of Christianity. Since it is in the relation where the cogito opens to itself that the relation of God to Christ opens so that man is open to God through Christ. As much as phenomenological life is the primordial place where my body opens to itself so that the human subject is open to the world, my body is also the place where this first living being, which is God, is related to itself so that man is related to this body of God, from which he lives while also living from the other, that is to say, from his fellow human being, who participates in the same divine nature as he does. My living body, which is God, remains at the origin of all intersubjectivity where the self and the other discover themselves as belonging to the same origin of humanity, in the name of which they must forbid each other to do harm. Ethics is thus finally discovered through my body, which is the primordial place where the self and the other open up to each other because they belong to one and the same origin of humanity where they must enjoy a common happiness.

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