

The Significance of Self-Affection: Michel Henry's Critique of Kant

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Preview

Michel Henry's "Destruction ontologique" does not interpret itself. In the following interpretive essay, I will attempt to articulate its basic structure, to address its principal engagements, and, on this basis, to interpret its defining themes and positions. In the course of this attempt, I will comment also on the importance of this work in the context of Henry's œuvre, and contemporary scholarship thereupon. One need not accept every assertion, or agree with every position, in this article to recognize its importance. This importance is both greater, and different, than the reader may expect.

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Révélation. Opposer mon sens de [l']apparence transcendante à celui de Kant—chez qui [elle est] illusion, parce que [il n'élabore] pas d'ontologie de la subjectivité.¹

Introduction

Michel Henry's "*Destruction ontologique*" does not interpret itself. In the following interpretive essay, I will attempt to articulate its basic structure, to address its principal engagements, and, on this basis, to interpret its defining themes and positions. In the course of this attempt, I will comment also on the importance of this work in the context of Henry's *œuvre*, and contemporary scholarship thereupon. One need not accept every assertion, or agree with every position, in this article to recognize its importance. This importance is both greater, and different, than the reader may expect.

The following abstract introduces the French version of *Destruction ontologique*: "This previously unpublished text of Michel Henry was written during the preparation of his first major work, *The Essence of Manifestation*, published in 1963." This text, we read, "would have been integrated in this work, in the context of the author's criticism of the ontological monism² privileged by

¹ Michel Henry, Ms. A 3870; cited in *Revue Internationale Michel Henry* 3 (2012): 160. I would like to acknowledge the material assistance of a FRQSC (*Établissement de nouveaux professeurs-chercheurs*) Research Grant for the project "La critique henryenne de Kant et le tournant théologique de la phénoménologie française," which allowed me to travel to, and consult, the *Archives Michel Henry* while *Professeur Invité* at the Université Catholique de Louvain in 2014, and a McGill University Social Sciences and Humanities Development Grant, which allowed me to consult the same Archives as *Chercheur Invité* in 2012. I am particularly grateful to Jean Leclercq, Director of the *Fonds d'archives Michel Henry* for his support and for his exemplary collegiality, across a range of collaborations.

² For this concept of 'ontological monism,' see *L'essence de manifestation*, 2 vols. (Paris: PUF, 1963), § 1 ("The Clarification of the Concept of Phenomenon: Ontological Monism"), 47-134, and

the strong tradition of German philosophy, from Jacob Boehme and Kant to Heidegger.” Henry, we read, will “argue... that the aforementioned German philosophical tradition is not able to grasp the essence of the self in its primordial nature, [insofar as it is] covered over by representation.”³

It is important to see that in this text, however, Henry intends not the “German philosophical tradition” as such, but Kant in particular, and that he intends not a general theory or critique of “representation,” but rather a more precise thematic focus.

As Anne Henry writes in her Introduction to the same text; “*ce texte retrouvé de Michel Henry et consacré à Kant...*” concerns the “*question capital qu’est la connaissance.*”⁴ She adds that though it was “*impossible d’insérer un examen complet de Kant dans un ouvrage de neuf cents pages,*”⁵ this text was composed concurrently, and is congruent thematically, with that work.⁶ It further amplifies the treatments of Kant found throughout Henry’s (early) philosophy, and plays a crucial role, as I will suggest below, in establishing Henry’s right *quid juris* to a ‘doctrine of manifestation’ or ‘revelation,’ and thus a ‘theological turn.’ According to the same author, Michel Henry “*avait pratiqué ses textes très tôt*” in his philosophical development. Having been instructed by the most accomplished French Kant scholars,⁷ he “*met... dans son sac à dos... La Critique de la Raison pure*”—which he then carried throughout his service during the Second World War).⁸ Henry’s engagement of Kant in this text, then, is neither untutored, as it is the result of years of close study and reflection⁹; nor is it casual, as Kant for Henry was and remained a uniquely significant source in the history of modern philosophy; nor is it occasional, as Kant is as central to the character and development of Henry’s own philosophy as he is to that of modern philosophy as

footnote 2 in the translation of “*Destruction ontologique*” in this same issue. It should be noted that the general critique of “ontological monism” plays at most a minor role in this text, as Henry here focuses his critique specifically on Kant, and more specifically still on the doctrine of time as form of inner sense.

³ Anne Henry, “Introduction,” to Michel Henry, “Destruction ontologique de la critique kantienne du paralogisme de la psychologie rationnelle,” *Studia Phaenomenologica* 9 (2009): 17-53, at 17.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 17-8.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 18.

⁶ The composition of the text—its plan and its contents—can actually be traced to the late 1940’s; see footnote 96, below.

⁷ “...l’un de ses professeurs de khâgne était Jean Nabert” (A. Henry, “Introduction,” 18).

⁸ For a narrative of Henry’s life, including the years in the French Resistance, during which period he earned the code name “Kant” for his devotion to reading the *Critique of Pure Reason*, see the “Biographie de Michel Henry” by Jean Leclercq in *Michel Henry: Pour une phénoménologie de la vie* (Mayenne: Éditions de Corlevour, 2010), 9-26.

⁹ Henry’s first personal copy of the *Critique of Pure Reason* (the Barni translation; see notes 8, above, and 74, below), now in the *Archives Michel Henry*, is annotated to the point of illegibility in certain key sections, each of which is central to the theme of inner intuition and each of which remained central to his reception of Kant: the expositions of time in the Transcendental Aesthetic, the first-edition Deduction, Kant’s General Comment on the System of Principles (for which, see his treatment of B 291, above), and the (second edition) Paralogisms.

such.¹⁰ For each of these reasons, the English translation and publication of “The Ontological Destruction of the Kantian Critique of the Paralogism of Rational Psychology” is overdue.

In the following interpretive essay, then, I suggest that the systematic significance of this work, the “*Destruction ontologique de la critique kantienne du paralogisme de la psychologie rationnelle*”—written for inclusion in *L’essence de la manifestation*¹¹ but not published therewith—can be seen in light of another apparently occasional early essay, the thematically congruent “*Le concept de l’âme a-t-il un sens?*” published in the *Revue philosophique de Louvain* in 1966.¹² I do not attempt to *exhaust* the significance of the long and complex relation between Henry and Kant: I do not examine the best-known and most-commented engagements of Kant, in §§ 22-25 of *L’essence de la manifestation*,¹³ I examine the fourth chapter of *Généalogie de la psychanalyse*, “*La subjectivité vide et la vie*

¹⁰ For Henry’s understanding of the importance of Kant to the subsequent history of philosophy, and to his own relation thereto, see, e.g., Ms. A 4390; cited in the *Revue Internationale Michel Henry* 3 (2012): 190; “*Le kantisme (toujours régnant: les résultats de la phénoménologie sont soumis au poids de l’héritage kantien dans ce qu’il avait de plus nocif) a appauvri l’expérience humaine: retour à [la] subjectivité, [à la] vie intérieure, les mouvements, les traditions, les expériences religieuses.*” It is in this context that Henry resolved to “*suivre ce courant souterrain de la subjectivité qui réapparaît sans cesse et toujours fuit, comprendre même pourquoi il réapparaît sans cesse et pourquoi il fuit: absence d’ontologie de la subjectivité,*” an absence effected and enforced by the Kantian critique. Ms. A 6017, for instance, which appears to be a note for “*Destruction ontologique*,” is entitled “*intuition kantienne de l’âme.*” It announces an attempt to “*mettre à nu les présupposés philosophiques de telle critique*” and exposes the way in which “*elle [i.e., cette critique] est contradictoire.*” Henry stresses “*l’extrême importance*” of this theme. This importance obtains not only for the *importance* of the theme, for the way in which this question establishes “*le statut ontologique attribué à l’âme*” in Kant, but also the *influence* of the frame, for its status as a horizon for the work in both philosophy and theology, for example, *Husserl* (Ms. A 6018) and *Maréchal* (Ms. A 6019), both of whom (*entre autres*, as well will see) wrote (differently) in “*conséquence de la critique du paralogisme de la psychologie rationnelle*” (Ms. A 6019).

¹¹ Henry, *L’essence de la manifestation* (Paris: PUF, 1963).

¹² “*Destruction ontologique*” was published posthumously in *Studia Phaenomenologica* 9 (2009): 17-53. “*Le concept d’âme a-t-il un sens?*,” which I utilize in the following article, was published originally in the *Revue Philosophique de Louvain* 64 (1966) 81: 5-33, from two lectures given at the *École des sciences philosophiques et religieuses* (Faculté universitaire Saint-Louis, Bruxelles), in November 1965. It was reprinted in Henry, *Phénoménologie de la vie*, t. I. *De la phénoménologie* (Paris: PUF, 2003), 9-38. (An unfortunately titled, early translation is available in English as “Does the Concept ‘Soul’ Mean Anything?,” *Philosophy Today* 13 [1969]: 94-114). The first of the two parts of “*Le concept d’âme*” are thematically and doctrinally consistent with the essay translated here; the second of its two parts departs from this Kantian horizon in order to consider Heidegger and Merleau-Ponty. Thus “*Destruction ontologique*” is Henry’s longest and most sustained published engagement of Kant.

¹³ Henry, *L’essence de la manifestation*, 169-95. See Part II (“Transcendence and Immanence”), § 22 (on “The Problem of Receptivity”), § 23 (on “The Problematic of Schematism”), § 24 (on “Time as Auto-Affection”). One can speculate that this essay on the paralogism of rational psychology may have been destined for insertion as the conclusion to this series of engagements, after his treatment of receptivity, schematism, and self-affection and before § 25 and its “Clarification of the Essence of Receptivity and the Phenomenological Determination of the Original Reality of Transcendence,” itself made possible by the transition *from* Kant’s own account of the dynamics of our receptivity to transcendence as effected in this essay.

perdue: la critique kantienne de l'ame,” only cursorily.¹⁴ I attempt instead to introduce and to contextualize this relation, to suggest that we cannot comprehend fully the systematic significance of Kant for Henry without the context provided by these two early, lesser-known works and the specific character of the Kant-critique that they establish.

Context

The initial lines of the Introduction to *L'essence de la manifestation* specified already “*le sens de l'être de l'ego*” as Henry's, and that text's, thematic focus.¹⁵ This question implied another, regarding “*la façon dont se forme en nous l'idée du moi,*”¹⁶ that *processus* “*par lequel l'ego peut surgir à l'existence et acquérir son être propre.*”¹⁷ As we know, this process for Henry implies not only the possibility-conditions of the appearance of the ego *per se*, but also, universally, “*toute connaissance comme telle.*”¹⁸ Both require for their resolution a determination of the “*problématique de l'intuition*” as “*le fondement de toute assertion rationnelle.*”¹⁹ Thus, “*la première tâche de la phénoménologie*” involves the systematic examination of the “*structure fondamentale,*” and the “*différents types,*” of intuition, as well as the delimitation of “[*le*] *champ du donné intuitif,*” its range or extent, and its limits. Only on this basis does Henry treat the “*multiples différenciations d'ordre eidétique qu'il présente.*”²⁰ In fact, an analysis of the eidetic order is impossible without this intuitive foundation; “*l'étude de la raison exige que ce fondement [intuitif] soit tiré au clair.*”²¹ The context in which Henry's investigation of the character and limits of intuition is significant, then, is no less than the basic context of Henry's phenomenology, as framed in *L'essence de la manifestation*.²²

¹⁴ Henry, *Généalogie de la psychanalyse. Le commencement perdu* (Paris: PUF, 1985) [Henry, *The Genealogy of Psychoanalysis*, trans. Douglas Brick (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998)].

¹⁵ Henry, *L'essence de la manifestation*, 1.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 3.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 2. For the meaning of the term ‘ego’ in Michel Henry, see Grégori Jean's “Michel Henry: Notes Préparatoires à *L'essence de la manifestation: la subjectivité,*” *Revue Internationale Michel Henry* 3 (2012): 22; “*L'Ego tel qu'il est ici nommé n'est pas le moi, n'est pas le Dasein, et n'est pas l'homme.*” As Henry puts the point in his hand-written notes: “*L'homme n'est pas l'ego, mais l'ego est l'essence de l'homme*” (Ms. 2356).

¹⁹ Henry, *L'essence de la manifestation*, 5.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 4.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 5.

²² Another clear introduction to the broad significance of this engagement for Henry's own philosophy is contained in the Introduction to *Phénoménologie Matérielle* (Paris: PUF, 1990), 5-12. There, Henry situates “*la question de la phénoménologie*” as “*la discipline fondamentale du savoir.*” This latter “*ne concerne plus les phénomènes mais le mode de leur donation, leur phénoménalité*” (*ibid.*, 6). This phenomenality Henry considers as first as “*venue d'un Dehors*” according to “*la manière...dont elle est représentée*” (*ibid.*). He does so in order “*radicaliser la question de la phénoménologie*” by “*interroger le mode selon lequel elle se phénoménalise originellement, la substance, l'étoffe, la matière phénoménologique don't elle est faite—sa matérialité phénoménologique pure*” (*ibid.*). This, for Henry, “*est la tâche de la phénoménologie matérielle*”

The importance of Kant's doctrine of intuition for this project is indicated still more clearly in Henry's "*Le concept de l'âme a-t-il un sens?*" Henry frames his discussion here by citing Kant's general distinction between intuition and understanding; "*Kant nous dit 'nous ne pouvons apercevoir la possibilité d'aucune chose par la simple catégorie.'*" Instead, "*nous devons toujours avoir en main une intuition pour mettre en évidence la réalité objective du concept pur de l'entendement.*"²³ Henry supposed that it was for this reason and in this universal context that "*la critique de Kant*" was both "*radicale*" and "*définitive*" in its destruction of "*la métaphysique traditionnelle.*" Kant "*subordonne la metaphysica specialis, de l'âme et aussi de Dieu, à la metaphysica generalis.*" The latter "*devient chez Kant une interrogation sur la condition de possibilité de l'expérience en général.*" Thus, "*si donc nous voulons parler de l'âme,*" or "*le sens de l'être de l'ego,*" as above, "*nous devons au préalable rejeter la critique kantienne.*"²⁴ It is "*l'ontologie kantienne*" as such that must be overcome.

The systematic significance of the doctrine of intuition as set out in *L'essence de la manifestation*, and its specifically Kantian horizon as set out in "*Le concept de l'âme...*," render the question of the validity of Henry's critique of Kant essential rather than adventitious. Importantly, then, Henry interrogates Kant's doctrine with respect to its own, inner requirements, rather than any requirement imposed upon it from without. Within Kant's ontology, Henry continues, "*l'idée de phénomène reçoit... une limitation décisive.*" This "decisive limitation" is found first in the general thesis that only "*ce qui est donné à la sensibilité et pensé par*

(*ibid.*, 7). In light of the latter, he would comprehend "*qu'avant l'être-au-dehors où tout est placé à proprement parler hors de soi...*" there obtains a "*structure intérieure de cette manifestation originelle*" that "*n'appartient aucun Dehors, aucune Ek-stase*" and that "*n'est pas la visibilité.*" Only "*la phénoménologie matérielle est capable de désigner cette substance phénoménologique invisible,*" which "*rend possible tout affect, toute affection, et ainsi toute chose*" (*ibid.*). In this way, both historically and conceptually, Henry's "*phénoménologie de l'invisible*" (*ibid.*) is contextualized through the Kantian before Husserlian and Heideggerian "*problème du temps*" (*ibid.*, 8) and the problem of "*auto-affection.*" By recovering and reconsidering the aporetic character of the latter, Henry would orient his philosophy historically; it "*propose un avenir à la phénoménologie et à la philosophie elle-même*" by discovering "*un passé nouveau.*" Henry cites Marion's intention to "*exhumer et enfin... penser une autre histoire de la philosophie,*" a task that can be accomplished only by comprehending, and comprehending differently, the character and status of, e.g., Kant's theory of the nature and limits of knowledge. He would also, by so doing, orient his philosophy conceptually, by adopting in this context a "*tâche immense,*" that is "*à la fois celle de la compréhension de la réalité,*" its givenness through intuition and affection, "*et de l'auto-compréhension de cette compréhension,*" in an account of the dynamics of self-consciousness that does not ignore the history of such accounts and their formative influence on our preconceptions (*ibid.*, 12).

²³ This basic principle of Kant's theoretical philosophy is, as is well-known, repeatedly serially throughout the work, for example at A 16, B 30; A 19, B 33; A 51, B 75, and A 62, B 87, which reads; "cognition rests on the condition that objects to which it can be applied are given to us in intuition. For without intuition, all our cognition lacks objects, and thus remains completely empty." This principle is repeated again at A 77, B 102; "Transcendental aesthetic offers [transcendental logic] this manifold [of intuition] in order to provide it with a material for the pure concepts of the understanding. Without this material, transcendental logic would have no content, and hence would be completely empty."

²⁴ Henry, *L'essence de la manifestation*, 6.

l'entendement” can appear as a phenomenon.²⁵ For Kant, Henry argues, “*un concept d’objet est donc un concept déterminé,*” and “*la détermination de ce concept suppose sa mise en relation avec une intuition.*”²⁶ This intuitive contribution to cognition is important first for the passivity that it alone establishes; “*l’intuition nous ouvre à ce qui est, à l’étant; elle nous ouvre à lui, mais elle ne le crée pas, elle le trouve, elle le rencontre.*”²⁷ For this reason, “*toute solution synthétique exige une intuition.*”²⁸

Each of these theses can be justified by even a cursory review of Kant’s doctrine of intuition in the Transcendental Aesthetic of the *Critique of Pure Reason*. Just as Henry attested that “*toute solution synthétique exige une intuition,*” so Kant had argued in similar terms that we “have no concepts of understanding and hence no elements whatever for objectual cognition except insofar as an intuition can be given corresponding to these concepts.”²⁹ Just as Henry had suggested that the determinacy of our concepts requires intuition, Kant argued in similar terms that “intuition is that faculty by which cognition can refer to objects directly (*unmittelbar*).”³⁰ through sensibility alone are we related to objects as individuals *in concreto* rather than through universal and discursive concepts *in abstracto*. Just as Henry suggested that the objectivity or synthetic character of our concepts “*suppose sa mise en relation avec une intuition,*” so Kant had argued that concepts of the understanding are only *mediately* related to objects; in the order of cognition or *ordo cognoscendi* they are determined as “mediate (intellectual) representations of an immediate (intuitive) presentation,” already at A 19, B 33. Finally, just as Henry had suggested the givenness and passivity of our intuition, Kant had indeed argued that it is “through sensibility [that] objects are *given* to us,” by means of a *passive* or receptive relation thereto, *per modum recipientis*, at B 30.

Henry then investigates the *processus* in terms of which, for Kant, such a synthetic determination could obtain; the sensible object “*devra donc d’abord être reçu dans l’intuition,*” in order to do be “*pensé par l’entendement.*” For Henry, this implies two theses: 1) “*d’une part un élément empirique devra être fourni, ce sera la sensation*” that arises from outer sensory intuition, and 2) “*d’autre part, cet élément sera exhibé dans l’intuition pure de temps, qui constitue le sens interne*”³¹ or inner sense. Henry in this way integrates into his critique Kant’s distinction between two forms of intuition. As Kant had put the point at A 22; there are “two forms of sensible intuition,” space and time. While “space is the form of outer sense, time is the form of inner sense.” Through the form of outer sense, “we receive present objects as outside us, and in space,” while through the form of inner

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 8.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 10.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 7.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 9.

²⁹ Kant, *Kritik der reinen Vernunft*, B xxv. As is customary, citations are to the A [1781] and B [1787] pagination of the *Akademie* edition.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, A 19, B 33.

³¹ Henry, *L’essence de la manifestation*, 11.

sense, we present such objects “before [or in] the mind.” It was also by means of inner sense, for Kant, that “the mind intuits itself, its inner state.”³²

Henry is interested in this distinction first in order to trace their roles in the *ordo cognoscendi*. In what he terms “*la formation de cet horizon de visibilité*,” he notes the presence of outer sense and its spatiality, but notes “*aussi, et plus fondamentalement, le temps*”³³ as form of inner sense. Within Kant’s theory, Henry claims, “*l’être de la sensation, selon Kant, c’est d’être intuitionnée*.” Ultimately, “*c’est d’être reçue dans le sens interne*.”³⁴ It is clear, as Henry argues, that Kant did indeed accord a certain privilege to time; “all presentations, whether or not they have outer things as their objects, as determinations of the mind, belong to our inner state, to the formal condition of inner intuition, and hence to the condition of time.”³⁵ It was, further, “by means of this [inner] intuition we take up into [encompass in, *befassen*]) our power of presentation all outer intuition.”³⁶ This function of inner sense is, in this acceptation, universal; “all cognitions are nothing for us and are of no concern to us whatever if they cannot be taken up into consciousness”—both *by means of* inner sense,³⁷ and *in or into* inner sense.

Henry continues in this way his analysis of the order of cognition. On this basis, he suggests that “*ce n’est pas tout; l’élément synthétique reçu dans le sens interne doit encore être soumis à l’action des catégories de l’entendement*.” Only the application of the categories to the form of inner sense “*lui assigner une place dans le système général de l’expérience, qui est l’univers que nous connaissons*.”³⁸ Importantly, Kant had argued similarly for such a *priority* of intuition; at A 16, he claimed that “the conditions under which alone the objects of human cognition are given *precede* the conditions under which these objects are thought.”³⁹ At B 145, he repeated that “the manifold for the intuition must be given prior to any activity of the understanding, and independently of it.” It is clear also that Kant proposed not only the possibility, but also the necessity, that the categories be applicable to inner sense, as Henry has just suggested.

It was for this reason that Kant “amplified” inner sense in three steps in his ‘positive’ account of the nature of cognition. First, in the “Synthesis of Apprehension,”⁴⁰ Kant argued for a spatio-temporal unity in inner sense, in order that it be able to contain within it the outer object as intuited originally in outer sense. Thus, it is ‘in time’ that “[all presentations] must one and all be ordered, connected, and

³² Kant, *Kritik der reinen Vernunft*, A 22, B 37. For a more detailed article-length treatment of this distinction see the author’s “La théorie du temps chez Kant et Fichte: un héritage phénoméno-logique,” in *Les métamorphoses du transcendantal: Parcours multiples de Kant à Deleuze*, ed. Gaetano Rametta (Hildesheim: Georg Olms Verlag, 2009).

³³ Henry, *L’essence de la manifestation*, 7.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 13.

³⁵ Kant, *Kritik der reinen Vernunft*, A 34, B 51.

³⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁷ *Ibid.*, A 116.

³⁸ Henry, *L’essence de la manifestation*, 11.

³⁹ Kant, *Kritik der reinen Vernunft*, A 16, B 30.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, A 99-100.

brought into relations.”⁴¹ To generate “unity of intuition,” the “representation of space [or time] must be gone through and gathered together [*Durchlaufen und Zusammennehmung*] in order “to bring the manifold about as A manifold, in one presentation.”⁴² Second, in the “Synthesis of Reproduction,”⁴³ Kant argues for a constancy in inner sense. Kant recognizes that “if I always lost from my thoughts the preceding presentations...and did not reproduce them” in a constant series, recollected therewith, there “there could never arise a whole presentation.”⁴⁴ This constancy across time, Kant writes, must “amount to a determination of inner sense.”⁴⁵ Kant builds in this way to a third ‘synthesis’ or moment, a “synthesis of recognition.”⁴⁶ In the latter,⁴⁷ Kant will combine these claims to (spatio-temporal) unity and (temporal) continuity in order to argue for the conceptual determinability of inner sense. Kant thus builds gradually toward “that unity that only consciousness can impart” to inner intuition, in order that the order of cognition be consummated. Inner intuition, in other terms, must be amplified with the characteristics of spatiality, constancy, and conceptual determinability in order that it perform its positive function within the order of cognition. Only then can inner sense serve its integral role within Kant’s account of the nature of cognition, as “the formal a priori condition of all appearances universally.”

To attest to the importance and insight of Henry’s critique of Kant, I would suggest that this amplified construal of inner intuition is ineliminable from Kant’s account of the nature of cognition in the *Transcendental Analytic*. This positive role of time as the form of inner sense is confirmed, and amplified, both in the first edition *Deduction*, and across the *Analytic*, in both editions. At A 116, in the section “On the Understanding’s Relation to Objects As Such,” for instance, Kant insisted that “all of perception, as presentation, is based a priori on pure intuition (that is, on time, the form of inner intuition).” At A 140 (B 179), inner sense was asserted to be no less than “the universal condition under which alone categories can be applied to any object.” The importance of inner intuition is indicated again in the section entitled “On the Supreme Principle of All Synthetic Judgments.” There, at A 155 (B 194), Kant depicted inner intuition, or “inner sense and its a priori form, time,” as “the medium of all synthetic judgments,” the “only one sum total that contains all our presentations.” Time thus is an *Inbegriff aller Vorstellungen*, an “inclusive, universal representation.” For this reason, Kant claimed at A 210 (B 255) that “all increase of empirical cognition and any progress of perception—no matter what the objects may be, whether appearances or pure intuitions—is nothing but the expansion of the determination of inner sense.”

This exegesis represents only the first aspect of Henry’s critique of Kant, however, and only the precondition for his “destruction” of the latter. This

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, A 99.

⁴² *Ibid.*

⁴³ *Ibid.*, A 100–A 102.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, A 102.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, A 101.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, A 103.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, A 103–110.

“destruction” will only result from the antinomy that results from the positive function of inner sense that Henry has derived from Kant’s account of time in the Transcendental Aesthetic and Transcendental Analytic. To articulate this antinomy, Henry will argue in “*Le concept de l’âme*,” that Kant has advanced “*deux tentatives*,”⁴⁸ or acceptations, of time as form of inner sense. He argues also that there obtains a second, contravening requirement, that such a synthetic determination of, and in, inner sense not obtain. This second acceptance he finds in “*les paralogismes de la psychologie rationnelle*.”⁴⁹ In the latter, he will argue, “*la structure de l’intuition exclut a priori la possibilité d’une intuition de l’ego*”⁵⁰ in and by means of inner sense. For the opposition, or internal contradiction, between these two construals Henry will term the doctrine of time as form of inner sense an “*échec*.”⁵¹ With this concept of an *échec*, Henry suggests, “*nous avons avancé contre Kant une thèse fondamentale*.”⁵² For this reason, Henry writes; “*c’est ici que notre critique doit se faire plus radicale que celle de Kant*.”⁵³ It is because Kant’s theory of the nature and limits of knowledge is divided internally between a negative and a positive exigence that Henry proposes, in “*Le concept de l’âme*” a “*critique de la critique kantienne du paralogisme de la psychologie rationnelle*.”⁵⁴ Henry’s account thereof in “*Le concept de l’âme*” is not definitive, however. It is the task of another, longer work to accomplish this critique, in requisite detail. If the importance of intuition is asserted in *L’essence de la manifestation*, and if a specifically Kantian horizon for the theme of intuition is asserted in “*Le concept de l’âme*,” it is in the “*Destruction ontologique de la critique kantienne du paralogisme de la psychologie rationnelle*” that Henry’s critique thereof will be brought to completion.

Content

Henry begins “*Destruction ontologique*” by re-asserting the importance of this encounter; it is “*chez Kant*”—and “*pour la première fois peut-être dans l’histoire de la philosophie*”—that “*le problème de l’Ego reçoit une signification ontologique*.”⁵⁵ This “*moment essentiel de l’histoire de la philosophie moderne*” is, as we just saw, “*un échec total*.” It is important to identify carefully the character of this *échec*: “*Kant tient à faire passer pour une impossibilité métaphysique ultime*,” according to Henry, what is instead an impossibility only on Kant’s own principles. A metaphysical determination of “*l’être de l’Ego*” is not in itself impossible; it is instead the “*difficultés*” and the “*obscurités*” of Kant’s exposition that render the latter—on Kant’s principles—impossible. For this reason, he resolves, “*la*

⁴⁸ Henry, “Le concept d’âme,” 13.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 11.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 12.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 13.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 17.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 15.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 6.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 18.

destruction ontologique de la critique kantienne s'impose à nous comme une tâche que ne peut être différée..."⁵⁶

The essay begins with a review of the basic principles of Kant's doctrine of synthetic cognition; the "*présuppositions fondamentales de l'ontologie kantienne*."⁵⁷ Having introduced these principles—the passivity thesis, the priority thesis, the immediacy thesis—above, I will not review them again here. I need note that none of these general theses are deemed problematic; they are, indeed, the reason that, as Henry put the point above, 'the problem of the Ego received an ontological significance in Kant for the first time in history.' Henry then repeats several aspects of his analysis of the *ordo cognoscendi*. Intuition, he writes, "*devient une fonction concrète lorsqu'elle est mise en relation avec le divers de l'élément empirique*." This yields "*le milieu dans lequel l'intentionnalité*"⁵⁸ can be applied, and a genuinely synthetic judgment accomplished. Like Kant, and as he did above, Henry begins with the form of outer sense, with space; "*par son pouvoir d'intuition, la conscience s'adresse à quelque chose qui lui est foncièrement extérieur, à une réalité indépendante d'elle*."⁵⁹ On this basis, Henry's analysis then turns to an analysis of time as form of inner sense, and its role in this *ordo cognoscendi*.⁶⁰ He traces the trajectory of "*cette impression*" from outer sense until it "*sera soumise à la forme de l'intuition pure, qui est ici le temps*." Nonetheless, at this point, "*l'impression empirique reçue dans le sens interne doit encore être soumise aux principes purs de l'entendement*." These principles are, of course, the "*catégories*," which "*vont déterminer cette impression et lui assigner, ainsi qu'à toute autre donnée, une place définie dans le système général de l'expérience*."⁶¹ In this way, inner sense "*dans l'ensemble d'un tel processus*," receives its proper "*signification transcendantale*" and "*fonction transcendantale*."⁶²

Henry will now suggest, though, that this transcendental function is vitiated by the "*deuxième tentative*" or second construal of inner sense. He cites Kant's general claim from B 291 that "*la catégorie, d'une façon plus précise les catégories de substance et de causalité, ne peuvent s'appliquer qu'à son objet permanent*." He does so in order to introduce the specific and surprising conclusion that Kant draws immediately therefrom: "*le sens interne est impuissant à exhiber puisqu'il n'est rien d'autre que la forme temporelle dans laquelle tout s'écoule et rien ne demeure*."⁶³ Henry recalls that, according to this restrictive construal of inner sense, "*c'est seulement dans l'espace qu'on trouve des impressions suscepti-bles de fournir la matière d'un objet qui puisse être subsumé sous les catégories qui requièrent l'existence d'un permanent*."⁶⁴ Henry takes these assertions from Kant's General Comment on the System of Principles. They are congruent, for

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 24.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 22.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 20.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 26.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*

⁶² *Ibid.*, 30.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 26.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

Henry, with a “*deuxième tentative*” in both the Refutation of Idealism and the Paralogisms. They are incongruent, however, according to Henry, with the first, and positive, acceptance of inner intuition articulated above. The tension, or antinomy, between these two acceptations leads Henry to insist on “*une critique vraiment philosophique de l’interprétation kantienne de l’être du moi.*”

Henry’s claim to a second acceptance of inner sense, too, can be justified by means of an analysis of the Paralogisms of Kant’s Transcendental Dialectic. Here, Kant no longer attributes to inner sense a necessarily positive role in the order and nature of cognition: he instead attributes to inner sense a necessarily negative role in the establishment of the limits of cognition. Here, Kant will argue that inner sense cannot include, but rather excludes—necessarily and at the level of its form—the characteristics and capacities of spatio-temporality, constancy, and conceptual determinability that he required of inner sense in the Transcendental Analytic. This “*deuxième tentative*” can be seen already in the First-Edition Paralogisms, and its “Observation on the Sum of Pure Psychology in Consequence of These Paralogisms.”⁶⁵

There, Kant compared the capacities of outer sense and inner sense directly. He supposed that in and through the former, “much can be cognized synthetically a priori,” whereas in the latter, “nothing at all can be so cognized.” He argued that “although both kinds [of sensible presentations] are appearances, yet the appearance to outer sense has something constant and enduring that provides us with a substratum that lies at the basis of the mutable determinations.” Instead, he suggests, “time, on the other hand, the sole form of our inner intuition, has nothing enduring, and hence allows us to cognize only the variation [*Wechsel*] by determinations, but no determinable object,” as Henry identified above. Kant asserts this of inner intuition in order to argue that “in what we call soul, everything is in constant flux and there is nothing enduring.”⁶⁶ In this way, Kant would “prove that this concept yields absolutely no cognition.” For Kant, “if this [or any] concept is to indicate...an object that can be given...then we must lay at its basis a permanent intuition.” In this case, however, “in inner intuition, we have nothing permanent at all.” In that same context, importantly, we read also that inner sense cannot contain spatiality and its conditions. He wrote that; “in us,” in inner sense, “there does not occur any relation of place, or motion, or shape, or any determination of space at all.”⁶⁷ For this reason, Kant asserted, inner intuition “yields absolutely no [conditions required for] cognition.”⁶⁸

Thus, the spatio-temporal unity, the constancy, and the conceptual determinability of inner intuition that Kant required for his account of the nature of cognition, Kant also denied to inner intuition in his account of the limits of cognition, in order to negate the possibility of rational-psychological (and rational-theological) doctrine of the soul. To this end, Kant asserted that “the thinking I, the soul (a name for the transcendental object of inner sense)” must not have “any use

⁶⁵ Kant, *Kritik der reinen Vernunft*, A 381.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, A 381.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

whatever extending to actual objects, and hence cannot expand in the least our cognition.”⁶⁹ Summarizing this result, Henry supposes that “*c’est l’absence de tout élément intuitif dans le système de la psychologie rationnelle qui faisait précisément la faillite d’un tel système.*” But for Henry, this failure is not only that of rational psychology. It is instead that of Kant’s own structuration of human cognition.⁷⁰ This impossibility, and *ébec*, is traced to the form of inner sense, its character and capacities. The fault within the theory resides within the duality of its functions, positive and negative respectively: “*le sens interne remplit successivement dans le kantisme... deux fonctions*” first in the Analytic, then in the Dialectic. Henry captures this problem in suggesting that, in Kant’s doctrine of inner sense, “*la connaissance du moi et la connaissance de l’objet externe sont à la fois exclusives et homogènes.*” According to the requirements of the first edition deduction, there are “*homogènes;*” the form of inner sense, as an *Inbegriff aller Vorstellungen* functions as the principle of the three syntheses. According to the requirements of the paralogisms, instead, they are heterogenous or “*exclusives;*”⁷¹ the conditions that define the determinability of the outer sensory manifold do not, and can not, obtain within inner sense, itself defined in opposition thereto, both with respect to its (formal) character and its (functional) capacities.

While I am abbreviating Henry’s extended, and intricate, discussion of this antinomy, I hope to have shown why Henry hopes to “*met[tre] à nu le principe de la critique kantienne des paralogismes.*” His “*destruction*” thereof would conclude that Kant cannot claim the critique of rational psychology, on the basis of his negative doctrine of inner sense, without sacrificing his claim to be able to give an account of the *ordo cognoscendi*, through his positive doctrine of inner sense as an *Inbegriff* in the Analytic.⁷² In these terms, Henry concludes his critique. *Destruction ontologique* ends as it began, by indicating, in the strongest possible terms, the importance of its subject and task: “*une fois comprise et dénoncée, cette erreur fondamentale qui est à la base de toute la critique de la psychologie rationnelle,*” will allow for the reconsideration of Kant’s critique of metaphysics as such. It will allow Henry also to “*ouvr[ir] la sphère de l’existence infinie du moi,*” “*le mode selon lequel s’accomplit toute vie humaine.*”⁷³ Henry’s inheritance of idealism, and our own comprehension of its proper character, could hardly be more important to the constitution of the phenomenology of life.

In both “*Le concept de l’âme*” and “*Destruction ontologique,*” Henry recognizes that this reading of Kant is not unprecedented. In “*Le concept de l’âme,*” Henry credits “*l’un de ses grands commentateurs, Jean Nabert,*” with the full comprehension of this aporia.⁷⁴ In “*Destruction Ontologique,*” Henry concludes with a long note crediting Pierre Lachière-Rey, instead, for a thorough

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, A 361.

⁷⁰ Henry, “*Destruction ontologique,*” 28.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 29.

⁷² *Ibid.*, 46.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 53.

⁷⁴ Jean Nabert, “*L’expérience interne chez Kant,*” *Revue de Métaphysique et de Morale* 31 (1924) 2: 205-68.

comprehension of this same theme.⁷⁵ Henry indeed follows both closely. Nabert distinguished between a “*constructif*” or positive construal of inner sense and “*l’argumentation plus spécifiquement criticiste*” or negative, in his “*L’expérience interne chez Kant*.” By the first (constructive) construal, “*l’expérience interne en-velopperait primitivement toutes les intuitions*.” By the latter, “*l’expérience inter-ne*”⁷⁶ would be a contradiction on principle. He also argued that it is not due to a simple tension, but to an essential contradiction between the different argumentative usages to which Kant put the doctrine; “*des différents points de vue sous lesquels Kant considère l’espace et le temps, dans l’Esthétique, dans l’Analytique, dans la Dialectique*.” Nabert asserts not complementarity but (internal) contradiction between these various and in fact variant roles. Thus, for Nabert, Kant’s positive intention is thwarted by Kant’s negative intention.⁷⁷

⁷⁵ Pierre Lachièze-Rey, *L’Idéalisme kantien* (Paris: Vrin, 1931). The middle sections of this work return repeatedly to Kant’s “*Übergang*,” and to its concept of “*autoposition*” (*Selbstsetzung*). These are the thematic foci of Lachièze-Rey’s *L’Idéalisme kantien*, itself the object of several reflections within “*Destruction ontologique*.” These sections thus allow us to see how deeply Henry’s account is embedded in the history of French *Kantforschung*. Lachièze-Rey juxtaposed Kant’s antinomic claims regarding the determinability of inner intuition as did Nabert. Applying the characterization of inner sense in the Paralogisms to the positive exigence of the Analytic, Lachièze-Rey supposed that “*le sens interne est tout à fait insuffisant pour remplir ce rôle [positif] parce qu’il ne peut donner aucun moi stable et permanent dans ce flux de phénomènes intérieurs*” as is required by the first-edition deduction and the synthetic principles (See Lachièze-Rey, *L’Idéalisme kantien*, 310). Lachièze-Rey also attempted to resolve this antinomy: “*l’essential de cette critique doit être cherché plus haut*,” in the first, constructive exigence. Lachièze-Rey argues that Kant recognized and resolved this aporia in the *Opus postumum*—“*la détermination du moi comme objet est donc un problème*” (*ibid.*, 190, also see *ibid.*, 171-2, 192)—by privileging the positive aspect of his doctrine of inner sense. (For “*la solution de l’Übergang*,” see *ibid.*, 241) Henry—who dedicates note 9, above, to the consideration of Lachièze-Rey’s position—recognizes that this resolution leaves the critical period task of a critique of metaphysics without support. He criticizes Lachièze-Rey for failing to reflect on this problem. Thus Henry’s claim there that “*one cannot understand how Lachièze-Rey could escape the objections that he himself addresses to Kant*.” Lachièze-Rey does not reflect on the subsequent status of the “*partie négative*,” which must be abandoned if the “*partie positive*” is to be affirmed (and amplified, in the *Opus’ Selbstsetzungslehre*).

⁷⁶ See Nabert, “*L’expérience interne chez Kant*,” 226.

⁷⁷ This tension culminates in the doctrine of inner sense and its synthetic capability, its capacity to yield—or not to yield—“*inner experience*.” In an initial positive acceptance, “*l’expérience interne envelopperait primitivement toutes les intuitions*,” universally (Nabert, “*L’expérience interne chez Kant*,” 226). Upon this construal, Nabert suggests, “*tous les phénomènes ne soient, de quelque manière, des modifications de l’esprit, des états du Gemüt*,” determinations of the *Inbegriff* that is inner sense. Nabert also identifies, however, that this universality of time as form of inner sense would, in effect if not intention, “*unir] étroitement le temps et l’espace, la catégorie de substance et la catégorie de causalité*” (*ibid.*, 228). The latter would jeopardize not only the priority of outer sense claimed in the Refutation of Idealism (*ibid.*, 227), but the critique of *Seelenlehre* as such. In this context, Nabert discusses the attempt in the Paralogisms “*pour affranchir la durée psychologique de tout contact avec l’espace, pour dissocier l’expérience externe et l’expérience interne*” (*ibid.*, 228). According to the latter, “*il n’y a pas, nous le verrons, une détermination intégrale de l’objet du sens interne par les catégories*” (*ibid.*, 236). The categorial determination of inner sense would propose “*un usage illégitime des catégories*” according to the strictures of the Paralogisms (*ibid.*, 218). The concept of an inner experience cannot be sustained. The similarities between Nabert’s and Henry’s analyses are too extensive and detailed to be set out herein; both a general interpretative horizon, and even a specific language, is shared. One can compare Nabert’s argument that “*tous les phénomènes*

Lachièze-Rey began his magisterial work, *L'Idéalisme kantien* with a similar suspicion. In Kant's first expositions of inner sense, he supposed that “*la terminologie peut apparaître inconciliable avec elle-même.*”⁷⁸ He juxtaposed Kant's claims regarding the determinability and indeterminability of inner intuition in the same terms; “*l'argumentation kantienne comprend une partie positive et une partie négative.*”⁷⁹ The former, “positive” part, predominant in the Analytic, requires “*la solidarité, l'homogénéité, la continuité*” between inner sense and outer sense. The latter, “negative” part is advanced toward the end of “*combattant la psychologie rationnelle, qui prétend déterminer l'existence et la nature du moi*” by means of an inner intuition. This second acceptance is “*de beaucoup la plus importante et la plus développée*” for Lachièze-Rey: it has “*pour but de montrer que le moi [as object of inner sense] n'est pas susceptible de fournir l'élément de permanence cherché.*”⁸⁰ The antinomy that results from these two construals is, for Lachièze-Rey, “*une singulière confusion,*” and “*donne naissance à un ordre nouveau de questions impossibles à éliminer.*”⁸¹

The identification of an antinomy between two acceptations of inner sense defines the analyses of both Nabert and Lachièze-Rey, the two sources whom Henry cites, always affirmatively, in each of his engagements of Kant.⁸² I would

ne soient” as “*des modifications de l'esprit, des états du Gemüt*” (*ibid.*, 226) with Henry's treatment of “modifications of the mind (*l'esprit*),” above. One can compare Nabert's claim that “*Kant ne parvient pas... à justifier le sum du Cogito*” (*ibid.*, 222) with Henry's rhetorical question; “is the being of the “I Think” not announced as identical to a nothingness (*néant*)?” Such comparisons obtain on most if not all of the key points of Henry's analysis. In the unpublished manuscripts, see the long engagements of Nabert at Ms. A 2091-3169 (“*Sur Kant, Nabert, le problème de la psychologie rationnelle*”) and Ms. A 6682-6717; *Psychologie et Métaphysique* and *Lecture de Nabert*. Henry's framing of the section dedicated to “the problem of the specificity of the matter of inner sense” is also inherited from Nabert; see Ms. A 3091; “*matière du sens interne*” (Nabert). See particularly Ms. A 2398 and Ms. A 2403. See also *Revue Internationale Michel Henry 3* (2012): 96-97 and Gregori Jean's editorial notes on Nabert (*ibid.*, 217, note 5).

⁷⁸ Lachièze-Rey, *L'Idéalisme kantien*, 2.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 104.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 105.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*

⁸² While Henry cites Nabert and Lachièze-Rey extensively in the published writings, his unpublished notes evince a similar debt to Jacques Havet. In his *Kant et le problème du temps* (Gallimard, Paris, 1947), Havet claimed that “*tout l'édifice de la Critique repose sur l'Esthétique, puisqu'elle seule, en établissant le caractère intuitif a priori de l'espace et du temps, nous fait sortir du domaine des concepts...*” (*ibid.*, 82). In this context, Havet focuses on inner sense—“*le temps joue un rôle central dans la philosophie de Kant*”—and to a tension within it. For Havet, “*son idéalité, parallèle à celle de l'espace*” is depicted both according to (a) its role as *Inbegriff*, “*dans toute constitution d'objet*” (*ibid.*, 9), and (b) “*sa pauvreté et son interiorité*” according to its role in the Paralogisms. Time possesses thus a (a) “*usage fondamental*” according to which it “*se révèle comme le médiateur universel*” and a (b) “*usage dialectique*” according to its mere inconstancy and indeterminacy. For this tension, it “*apparaît comme une réalité équivoque qui ne peut remplir des fonctions si diverses qu'en vertu de l'ambiguïté de sa définition*” (*ibid.*, 10). According to (a), inner intuition is “*la condition de possibilité de toute conscience empirique*” (*ibid.*, 22); according to (b), it possesses only a negative function. Thus “*l'ambiguïté de la notion de temps*” as form of inner sense (*ibid.*, 92), which “*possède une double nature*” (*ibid.*, 80). Havet thus writes initially of a “*symmétrie parfaite*” between outer and inner sense, since both “*rend[ent] possibles des principes apodictiques et qui explique la possibilité des connaissances synthétiques a priori*” (*ibid.*, 86). Thus “*l'un des buts visés par Kant*”

note that this antinomy plays no such role in another famous analysis of time as form of inner sense, that of Heidegger, in either the *Kant und das Problem der Metaphysik*⁸³ or in the *Phänomenologische Interpretation von Kants Kritik der Reinen Vernunft*,⁸⁴ which fail even to arrive at the Paralogisms and their ‘negative construal’ of the character and capacity of inner sense. It is for this reason, I would suggest, that Heidegger can depict Kant’s doctrine as “the most radical under-standing of time, unachieved either before Kant or after Kant” and as a “great me-taphysical advance,”⁸⁵ while for Nabert, for Lachieze-Rey, and for Henry, it remains an “*échee*.”

This hermeneutical frame allows us to understand that Henry’s approach to the *Critique* as neither dogmatic nor skeptical, but as critical, in Kant’s own sense. At A 391, Kant distinguished three possible means of approach or engagements of transcendental idealism; dogmatic, skeptical, and critical. Skeptical objections attack the method of proof for a given proposition, in order to

is “*faire du temps la condition immédiate des phénomènes en général, externes comme internes*” (*ibid.*, 92). Thus, “*dans l’Esthétique le temps est Inbegriff*” such that “*les phénomènes sont organisés par rapport à lui*” (*ibid.*, 114). There, “*l’expérience interne apparaît comme inséparable de l’expérience externe*” (*ibid.*, 69). This symmetry breaks down in Kant’s arguments against rational psychology; these are “*montrer que le temps à lui seul ne permet pas de construire un objet dans l’intuition*” (*ibid.*). While outer sense will be exposed positively according to its capacity, inner sense will be exposed “*purement négativement par les insuffisances...*” (*ibid.*, 87-9). From this tension “*vont naître des difficultés qu’aucun commentateur n’a pu ignorer*” (*ibid.*, 73). This tension “*pose en réalité des problèmes qui nous paraissent insolubles*” (*ibid.*). Havet thus concludes to a “*contradiction flagrante*” within the doctrine of time as form of inner sense (*ibid.*, 99). It is in this sense that Havet, and the Nabertian French historiographic tradition to which he belongs, provides a clear context for Henry’s own Kant interpretation. At Ms. A 6001, Henry supposes that here one finds “*Kant contre Kant*.” Here one finds both the “*insuffisances du kantisme*,” and the “*contradiction du kantisme*,” both of which pertain to inner intuition, through which Kant effected the “*destruction de la vie intérieure*,” that for Henry must now be unmasked and remade. See also the continuous series from Ms. A 6010-6014.

⁸³ Martin Heidegger, *Kant und das Problem der Metaphysik*, in *GA III*, ed. Friedrich-Wilhelm von Herrmann (Frankfurt am Main: Klostermann, 1991).

⁸⁴ Heidegger, *Phänomenologische Interpretation von Kants Kritik der reinen Vernunft*, in *GA XXV*, ed. I. Görland (Frankfurt am Main: Klostermann, 1995).

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, Part I, Ch. II, § 11. For a treatment of the distinction between Heidegger and Henry on this point see the contribution of Roberto Formisano, “Phenomenality and Finitude: Michel Henry’s Theory of Immanence,” in this issue of *Analecta Hermentica* 8 (2016): 235-54, esp. at 251-3, accessed October 26, 2016 (<http://journals.library.mun.ca/ojs/index.php/analecta>). Formisano evinces that while for Heidegger it is imagination that constitutes time’s form originally (Heidegger, *Kant und das Problem der Metaphysik*, § 32, 180), such that “pure intuition is at bottom the transcendental imagination” (*ibid.*, 179), for Henry intuition is irreducible. Formisano cites *L’essence de la manifestation*, § 24, 239; “*C’est dans le temps compris comme intuition... que réside finalement la possibilité de la formation effective de l’horizon transcendantal de l’être*,” and *ibid.*, 237; “*C’est dans la mesure où le temps est en sa nature intuition qu’il est possible comme affection de soi. Ce qui importe dans le temps qui rend ultimement possible l’essence de la manifestation, ce n’est pas son caractère temporal, mais son caractère intuitif*.” On this point, Henry’s notes are clear; to take but one example, see Ms. A 6083; “*Contre Heidegger*,” which continues on Ms. A 6084, entitled “*Kant-Heidegger*,” and names “*la 2^{ème} partie de la Critique de la Raison Pure*” and Heidegger’s interpretation thereof; Henry argues that “*cette interprétation du Kant ... est opposée à celle de Lachieze-Rey qui va vers Fichte*.”

“annul entirely” all legitimate claim to “judgment upon its object.” Dogmatic objections attack the given proposition itself, by illegitimately “pretending to a greater insight into the purported object of demonstration.” Neither critique is legitimate; both are external. In order to adequate the following exegesis to the principles of transcendental philosophy, both will be avoided.

I would suggest that Henry’s early engagement does not presuppose externally—either dogmatically or skeptically—“a greater insight into the character of the object’s nature,”⁸⁶ but proceeds internally and critically through exegesis. A critical objection may assert legitimately “not that the doctrine is incorrect, but that it is groundless.” An analysis of the structure, scope, and significance of the doctrine of, e.g., inner sense, might, then, “leave the proposition untouched in regard to its merit and challenge only the proof,” or the content of its various expositions and the argumentative contexts to which it responds. If an analysis of the assumptions and implications of the doctrine of inner sense should uncover cause for critique, this, legitimately, will “not assert that the doctrine is incorrect, but that it is groundless.” Such critique does not address *quid facti* the intuitive plausibility or popularity of a doctrine. Such critique investigates *quid juris* the formal character and the internal function of that doctrine within its architectonic context.

For the founder of transcendental idealism, this method of engagement allows properly critical objections, if necessary, “to demonstrate that something null,” or internally contradictory, functions within the legitimate context of the more general theory. Critical objections locate this internal contradiction by both tracing its provenance to a particular doctrine, and by isolating the role of that doctrine within the wider architectonic of the theory. Critical objections also ascertain whether such a ‘groundless’ doctrine “is being assumed for the sake of an assertion,” or wider argumentative positions. These positions may also, then, be subject to critique. The discovery of such an internal instability would, in this case, allow a critical objection to “topple the theory... by withdrawing the theory’s alleged foundation.” Such instabilities or intrinsic contradictions in the ground or foundation for claimed argumentative positions may be exposed “without seeking to establish anything else,”⁸⁷ upon a pretended and undemonstrated claim to superior insight, or upon any exigence external to the system. In isolating inner sense always according to the functions—various, and variant—that Kant attributes thereto, Henry’s critique of Kant functions genuinely as a moment in the unfolding history of transcendental philosophy, as a transcendental phenomenology. This characteristic distinguishes Henry’s early engagements of Kant from his later, better-known engagement of Kant, to which I turn next, and establishes the singular importance of “*Destruction ontologique*.”

Of course, Henry’s engagement of Kant does not terminate in “*Destruction ontologique*.” Importantly, Henry’s last extended engagement of Kant, in *Généalogie de la psychanalyse*, reframes this result. *Généalogie de la psychanalyse*, begins

⁸⁶ Kant, *Kritik der reinen Vernunft*, A 391.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*

its presentation of Kant with a remarkably different assertion, and contestation: “*la métaphysique kantienne en est une de la représentativité.*”⁸⁸ Here, Henry will isolate “*représentativité comme la condition de tout ce qui est, et ainsi comme l’es-sence de l’être*”⁸⁹ according to Kant. The frame imposed here by Henry presents Kant as an instance, however privileged, of a common trait or symptom, to cover over or forget the original essence of life as affectivity in Henry’s own sense. This engagement is framed not in terms of the doctrine of intuition, but in terms of the doctrine of intellection—the self-objectification, and thus self-alienation, of consciousness. It is conducted not with reference to the internal needs of Kant’s architectonic, but to the requirement that Henry would make of the latter, to supersede the derivative principle of representation. This late exposition lacks and risks the textual detail and demonstrative force of Henry’s early critique of Kant by considering the latter only as an instance of a longer history of modern philosophy and its “metaphysics of representativity.”

Even here in this shifted rhetorical context, the content of Henry’s critique retains a certain constancy. Henry suggests that “*La Critique de la raison pure tente l’élucidation radicale de cette essence,*” of representivity: “*elle est la recherche systématique des conditions conformément auxquelles s’accomplit l’être-représenté comme tel.*”⁹⁰ Here, too, “*la première de ces conditions est l’intuition.*”⁹¹ Here, too, Henry isolates time as form of inner sense; “*l’intuition apparaîtra comme trouvant son essence la plus profonde dans le sens interne.*” But in this final engagement, intuition, and inner intuition, serve only to introduce the further problem of representation. Thus, the significance of Kant’s philosophy is repositioned in *Généalogie*; “[*le*] *cœur de la pensée kantienne et de son aporie*”⁹² is here taken as the problem of representativity, and not the aporia of inner sense. It is the former problem that “*frappe au cœur le kantisme...comme toute philosophie de la représentation en general.*”⁹³ Even here, Kant remains crucial; Henry insists that “*la difficulté insurmontable devant laquelle se trouve placé le kantisme doit être clairement aperçue.*”⁹⁴ But this difficulty is now intellectual rather than intuitive: “*Kant substitue au cogito sa représentation...dans [laquelle] la pensée se représente elle-même.*”⁹⁵ Here, too, Henry will insist that “*on doit ici renverser la proposition kantienne*” regarding self-consciousness. But here, we must, in particular, “*récusar la possibilité pour la condition de la représentation d’être elle-même représentée.*”⁹⁶ Henry here suggests an intellectual rather than intuitive concern with “*la structure extatique comme telle, l’essence de la*

⁸⁸ Henry, *Généalogie de la psychanalyse*, 124 [103].

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 125 [103-4].

⁹¹ *Ibid.* [104]

⁹² *Ibid.*, 130 [107].

⁹³ *Ibid.*, 134-5 [111].

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 149 [122].

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 151 [123].

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 152 [124].

*représentativité*⁹⁷ rather than with Kant's antinomic construals of time as form of inner sense.⁹⁸

There is no question that the reframing effected in *Généalogie* amplifies Henry's understanding of Kant's importance to the complete determination of the dynamics of representation. But something is also lost; this final engagement lacks the precise focus on Kant's own texts that defined his early, nuanced engagements of Kant, and adopts an external relation thereto. This discourages a comprehension of Michel Henry's Kant through the theme of time as form of inner sense and the close textual detail evinced, and mastered, in the earlier expositions.⁹⁹ It instead

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*

⁹⁸ For Anne Henry, *Généalogie de la psychanalyse* “reprend de façon magistrale et dans une autre perspective les analyses du texte qui suit” (A. Henry, “Introduction,” 18). This view, that the later text instructs the earlier text, both stylistically and substantively, imagines that there is a kind of neo-Kantian scholasticism and sterility to “*Destruction ontologique*” that is overcome by the elimination of its exegetical detail and the adoption of a wider interpretive frame, long after *L'essence de la manifestation*. But this “*autre perspective*” should be evaluated carefully: in *Généalogie de la psychoanalyse*, Henry's analysis is more general (encompassing a history of the concept of representation from Descartes to Schopenhauer, Nietzsche, and Freud) and more polemical (or even dogmatic in our terms above): he is not attempting to understand Kant, as a scholar, but rather to insert Kant in a history of the forgetfulness of the derivative status of representation, in the name of a material phenomenology.

⁹⁹ The *Archives Michel Henry* contains literally hundreds of pages of hand-written notes on this theme. They evince the extraordinary patience and dedication of his early readings of Kant. While the thematic range of Henry's interest in Kant extends past the single theme represented here, his repeated early attempts to reconstruct Kant's doctrine of inner intuition end always in the same antinomy. Most remarkable is Henry's reluctance to decide the question of its problematicity. While Henry's late critique of Kant in *Généalogie de la psychoanalyse* is almost impatient, and ultimately dismissive, his early engagements are extraordinarily patient, and dedicated to comprehension rather than critique. The literally hundreds of pages on, e.g., “*sens interne*” or “*vie intérieur*” are written as reading notes on primary and secondary source texts with the greatest precision. For the first synthesis, see Ms. A 6754 (“*Le problème de l'appréhension*”) for the second and third syntheses, see Ms. A 6756-6763 (“*La synthèse de l'imagination*”). On the syntheses as such, see Ms. A. 6737 (“*Le problème des synthèses dans l'activité de la conscience*”). Of particular importance for this theme are; Ms. A 1674-1696, Ms. A 3091-3169 (especially Ms. A 3129, where Henry argues that the Analytic's amplification of inner intuition would yield the conditions necessary for a determination of the “*l'âme comme substrat permanent de ses propres phénomènes...*” and Ms. A 3139), Ms. A 3387-3419, Ms. A 4487-4507 (particularly Ms. A 4494 (“*Kantisme et psychologie*”), Ms. A 5983-6026 (“*Sur Kant, le neo-kantisme, et la psychologie rationnelle*”), Ms. A 6027-6054, Ms. A 6723-6808 (in its entirety, but particularly Ms. A 6726, “*La distinction du 'je pense' et du son choc ou de son sillage dans le sens interne*”), Ms. A 6728 (“*Kantisme et psychologie*,” where Henry treats inner sense not as an *Inbegriff* but as the principle for “*la négation de toute métaphysique*”), Ms. A 6764-6767 (“*La junction du moi empirique et du moi transcendantale*”); Ms. A 6772-6773, and the reflections dedicated to the relation between self-consciousness and time; Ms. A 6789-6796 (“*La genèse de l'espace et du temps*”), Ms. A 6797-6805 (“*La modalité existentielle de l'objet du sens externe*,” entirely dedicated to the Refutation of Idealism), Ms. A 6774 (“*Le moi et le temps*”). See also Ms. A 6955-7018, Ms. A 7140-7211. On the doctrine of intuition as such, see Ms. A 6739 (“*L'activité de la conscience dans la sensation*”) and Ms. A 6741 (“*L'intuition et concept*”). On the relation between outer sense and inner sense, see Ms. A 6750 (“*Le rôle de l'espace dans la représentation du temps [le permanent]*”). On the relation between inner sense and transcendental apperception, see Ms. A 6725-6728 (“*L'autonomie de la pensée: le 'je pense' est-il une simple représentation?*”). For the handwritten copy of the “*Destruction ontologique*,” from “*Noël 1950*,” see Ms. A 2769-2818. It begins as follows; “*La critique du parallogisme de la psychologie [rationnelle]*”

encourages an understanding of Henry's Kant as but one agent in the longer drama of modern representationalism. I recall this in closing in order to suggest that this new and wider frame allows us to understand the character of recent scholarship on the theme of Henry's relation to Kant.

François Calori, in "La vie perdue? Michel Henry lecteur de Kant,"¹⁰⁰ leaves both "*Destruction Ontologique*" and "*Le concept de l'âme*" untreated, in order to focus instead on *Généalogie*. Thus, according to Calori, for Henry "*la philosophie kantienne est de part en part une métaphysique de la représentativité.*" Indeed, "*la subjectivité kantienne se pense elle-même à partir de la représentation et de la transcendance.*"¹⁰¹ For Calori, "*tel est le paradoxe de la critique kantienne: la subjectivité cherche hors d'elle-même son essence propre.*"¹⁰² One needn't argue this point in order to note that it is advanced at the expense of a close reading of Henry's early engagement of Kant. The doctrine of time as form of inner sense is lost from view. The degree to which *Généalogie* is read to the exclusion, rather than on the presupposition, of "*Destruction ontologique*" et "*Le concept de l'âme*," yields the degree to which Henry's understanding of Kant will be deracinated. It will thus appear to be occasional and even arbitrary rather than thoroughly and well-grounded. For this reason, Calori worries that Henry "*aurait négligé...un moment crucial de la pensée kantienne*" regarding "*la signification fondamentale de l'affectivité dans la compréhension de l'être du moi.*"¹⁰³ In order to find this "fundamental significance," and address "*ce manque*" in Henry's relation to Kant,

concerne explicitement la problème fondamentale [de] l'être de l'Ego..." [The first sentence was added later, and appears here only on Ms. A 2770.] For the typed copy of "*Destruction ontologique*," see Ms. A 3522-3592.

¹⁰⁰ François Calori, "La vie perdue: Michel Henry, lecteur de Kant," in *Lectures de Michel Henry*, eds. Grégori Jean and Jean Leclercq (Louvain-la-neuve: Presses universitaires de Louvain, 2014), 293-310.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 301.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*

¹⁰³ *Ibid.* The continuing role of this original critique of inner sense, even if de-emphasized and re-contextualized within a more encompassing critique of the modern "metaphysics of representativity" is most clear in *Généalogie de la psychoanalyse*, 137-8 [113-4]. In the context of his examination of the paralogisms of rational psychology (reproduced in the original terms of the *Destruction* essay) Henry supposes that "the failure of rational psychology gives rise to the following question: how can we determine the being of our self, or ego; how can we know it, if pure thought is not sufficient?" He continues to suggest that "the theory of inner experience furnishes the answer to that question. It consists of the simple reaffirmation of Kantian ontology's habitual presuppositions: inner experience produces self-being by submitting it to the conditions of experience in general." Thus, "in order to be, the self must first be received in intuition." This *processus* of reception is articulated in the 1985 text exactly as it was in the *Destruction*; "initially a specific empirical element or impression is furnished, which, intuited in inner sense (i.e., in and by time), is then submitted to the categories, which assign it (as well as every other empirical datum) a definite place in the universal system, thus making it a "phenomenon" (i.e., an object of knowledge)." In this subsumption, "the categories of substance and causality can be applied only to a permanent object, which inner sense cannot exhibit since it is nothing but the temporal form in which everything flows and nothing stays put. Only outer intuition can furnish an object subsumable under the categories, which require the existence of permanence" (*ibid.*, 113-4). However, while Henry's original critique of inner sense forms the *basis* of his novel critique of the metaphysics of representativity, it also recedes into the *background* thereof. If it is lost from view, the basis and justification for the later critique is also lost.

Calori recommends that “*c’est bien dans la Critique de la faculté de juger que l’on peut trouver la véritable détermination kantienne de la nature, du statut, et du rôle de l’affectivité.*” As we have seen, however, Henry’s relation to Kant on the character of intuition and affectivity can not and should not be described as a “*manqué*” or as a “neglect.” It was instead the unmistakable focus of Henry’s early work on Kant, published and unpublished, in the context where alone it could be consummated, that of the first *Critique*.

As Calori treats Henry’s relation to Kant only through Henry’s last engagement thereof, so Mario Lipsitz treats Henry’s relation to Kant only through Heidegger. He considers only “*le sillage de la théorie kantienne de la connaissance*” as “*reprise par Heidegger,*” and as concerns “*l’aporie qui gouverne la pensée moniste*” in general, rather than in the specific form of Kant’s own philosophy.¹⁰⁴ For Lipsitz, “*Michel Henry a trouvé dans le ‘Kant’ de Heidegger l’adéquation radi-calisation de la position kantienne.*”¹⁰⁵ For Lipsitz, Heidegger offers the mirror through which alone Kant is seen; for Lipsitz, Henry “*reprend le ‘Kant’ [de Heidegger] pour refaire correctement le chemin de la différence ontologique que Heidegger a échoué à accomplir.*”¹⁰⁶ In this case, there is no direct engagement of Kant, and no motive therefor; Henry’s genuine motive is to profit from Heidegger’s revisions of Kant in order to adopt and adapt Heidegger’s originality rather than Kant’s philosophy. According to Lipsitz’s “*Autour de la différence on-tologique,*”¹⁰⁷ “*des analyses [de Kant et le problème de la métaphysique] seront reprises sans modification dans L’essence de la manifestation.*”¹⁰⁸ Henry, we are told there, “*reprend sans amendement*” Heidegger’s understanding that “*le temps est auto-affection.*”¹⁰⁹ It is by Heidegger, then, that “*la problématique ontique-nou-ménale inhérente à la philosophie transcendantale de Kant à été dissolue.*”¹¹⁰ As we have seen, however, the problematic that Henry identified and explored in Kant plays no role in Heidegger’s engagements thereof. The relation between Henry and Kant is neither merely indirect, nor originally Heideggerian. It is Nabert and Lachièze-Rey, instead, who offer to Henry the frame of the “*double exigence*” of time as form of inner sense, and that motivates his “*destruction ontologique.*”

¹⁰⁴ Mario Lipsitz, “*Sur Kant et le problème de la métaphysique dans L’essence de la manifestation,*” in *Michel Henry. Le Dossier H*, ed. Jean-Marie Brohm and Jean Leclercq (Lausanne: L’Âge d’Homme, 2009), 281. See also his “*Autour de la différence ontologique. L’étant et le monde dans L’essence de la manifestation,*” in *La vie et les vivants: (Re-)lire Michel Henry*, eds. Grégori Jean, Jean Leclercq and Nicolas Monseu (Louvain-la-Neuve: Presses Universitaires le Louvain, 2013), 281-90.

¹⁰⁵ Lipsitz, “*Sur Kant et le problème de la métaphysique,*” 282.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 283.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 151.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 153.

Conclusion

For these reasons—at once historical, systematic, and interpretive—I would suggest that it is important to recover genealogically the full history of Henry’s engagements of Kant.¹¹¹ Only in this way can Henry’s critique thereof perform the crucial argumentative function to which he assigned his account of Kant’s doctrine of intuition in the opening pages of *L’essence de la manifestation*, and that he accomplished in *Destruction ontologique*. I do not wish to suggest that Henry’s critique of Kant’s doctrine of inner sense exhausts the significance of self-affectation in Henry: I have not treated herein the important §§ 22-25 on Kant in *L’essence de la manifestation*; nor have I treated the consummation of Henry’s account of affectivity in the crucial fourth part of *L’essence de la manifestation* that unfolds wholly independently of Kant. Affectivity there is distinguished on principle from sensibility, functions as the ground and possibility condition both of sensibility and of ek-static, conscious activity. There, Henry intends clearly that “affectivity [that] has already done its work when the world arises, as that which makes the world possible in its foundation.”¹¹² I do wish to suggest, nonetheless, that the full significance of Henry’s own doctrine of affectivity cannot be grasped fully without a systematic comprehension of Kant’s doctrine of intuition, and a genealogical account of Henry’s

¹¹¹ Henry’s fellowship research report to the *Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique* for 1946-48 (AN-1922/54) provides an indication of how early, and fundamental, was his study of Kant. This lists “*les travaux effectués depuis le 1^{er} octobre 1946*” as including Lachièze-Rey’s *Idéalisme kantien* and Kant’s “*Dialectique transcendantale*.” He intends an “*étude du cogito chez Descartes, Kant, les postkantien, Kierkegaard, Husserl*.” This direction is expanded in a section entitled “*Problèmes étudiés*,” in which Henry depicts the thematic focus of his work; “*le Moi comme sujet transcendantal*,” and the historical horizon of his work, as an “*étude du cogito chez Descartes, Kant, les postkantien, les néo-kantien, et dans la phénoménologie*.” The latter is undertaken—more than 15 years before the publication of *L’essence de la manifestation*—in order to “*critiquer les philosophes qui méconnaissent le caractère transcendantal de l’Ego*.” Henry affirms “*la réalité de l’Ego transcendantal*,” and proposes an “*étude de l’idée de substance appliquée au sujet*.” This latter is termed “*le problème de l’âme*,” and requires that he “*critique les thèses kantien relatives à l’âme dans la Dialectique transcendantale*,” and offer also a “*critique de l’ontologie kantien en général*,” since Kant “*ne reconnaît qu’une région de l’être: celle de l’objet...*” In this thematic context, and in a report dated “*le 13 mars 1949*,” Henry writes of the “*nécessité d’une ontologie phénoménologique*,” as it is only “*à la lumière d’une conception générale de l’être*” that “*le problème de l’Ego peut-il être légitimement posé*.” In this way, he will effect an “*ouverture d’une sphère nouvelle, originale et infinie d’existence comme milieu indispensable à l’apparition et à la compréhension du problème de l’Ego: le cogito*.” This in turn leads Henry to the theme of “*Cogito et réflexion*,” and to its “*élaboration ontologique du concept de subjectivité*,” that will evince “[*l’insuffisance du concept traditionnel de subjectivité*]” as well as “*les raisons de cette insuffisance, notamment chez Kant*.” Henry’s address of the “*le Moi*” will focus on Kant, then, and on the “*immanence transcendantale de l’Ego*” therein, in order to reveal (1) “[*l’incapacité de l’ontologie kantien à rendre compte de la réalité de l’Ego*],” (2) “*les raisons ontologiques de cette insuffisance*,” and (3) “*ses conséquences*” for post-Kantian philosophy.

¹¹² Henry, *L’essence de la manifestation*, 483.

treatments thereof.¹¹³ We will do well to remember Henry's claim in "Le concept d'âme," that "*si nous voulons parler du sens de l'être de l'ego,*" or the advent of immanent affective life, "*nous devons au préalable rejeter la critique kantienne.*"¹¹⁴

¹¹³ Grégori Jean, in *Revue Internationale Michel Henry* 3 (2012), hopes to "mettre en lumière le sens de la lecture henryenne des auteurs de la tradition phénoménologique" (*ibid.*, 9) in order to "révéler l'arrière-fond historique et philosophique" regarding "le thème de la subjectivité" (*ibid.*) and more precisely "le problème de la structure subjective en tant que structure universelle subjective" (*ibid.*, 10). The present translation and interpretation adopts this goal, and extends it to incorporate not only the 20th-century phenomenological, but also the 19th century idealistic sources of Henry's philosophy, beginning with Kant. Within the nearly four hundred pages of preparatory notes for *L'essence de la manifestation* as presented by Grégori Jean, see particularly, on our theme, *Revue Internationale Michel Henry* 3 (2012): esp. Section I. "L'unité de l'ego," 93-8, Section VIII, "Le Temps," 163-8, and Section IX. "L'ego et le temps," 169-78.

¹¹⁴ Henry, "Le concept d'âme," 6. One might still ask whether and how Henry's critique of Kant's critique of rational psychology will afford him a critique of the critique of metaphysics itself and as such. One might still ask how, in particular, the former will lead to Henry's recovery, in spite of Kant's delimitation of objectivity, not only Fichte's modern philosophy of religion, but also Eckhart's pre-modern philosophical theology, and thus the condition for the "theological turn" of French phenomenology. I have addressed this wider issue in a previous issue of *Analecta Hermeneutica*; see "Kant and Henry: An Inheritance of Idealism and a 'Turn' for Phenomenology," *Analecta Hermeneutica* 4 (2012), (<http://journals.library.mun.ca/ojs/index.php/analecta>).