

Beneath Time and Reflection: The Shadow of Husserl in Michel Henry's Non-Intentional Phenomenology

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Preview

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**Beneath Time and Reflection:
The Shadow of Husserl in Michel Henry's Non-Intentional
Phenomenology¹**

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Introduction: Grounding Intentionality

Ever since *The Essence of Manifestation* (1963),² Michel Henry's phenomenology developed in a close dialogue with Husserl. This confrontation led Henry, in 1995, to formulate the project of a "non-intentional phenomenology,"³ which would find its point of departure in a quite simple question: is intentionality—the key feature of consciousness and of lived experience as such in Husserl's perspective—able to ground itself? Does it provide its own foundation? If not, in what could its possibility-condition be found? Henry's gesture invites us not to a purely descriptive attitude toward such intentional acts, but rather to an inquiry into their origin and their inner ground, to submit them to a transcendental interrogation in order to discover "what ultimately makes them possible."⁴

This ambitious enterprise has known several key moments since 1963, and has advanced past the 1995 article. A remarkable contribution to the debate was made by *Material Phenomenology* (1990),⁵ and by Henry's last phenomenological work, *Incarnation* (2000).⁶ In order to evince the complexity and the incisiveness of Henry's project, however, it is important to take into consideration its Husserlian

¹ A previous version of the first half of this paper has been published in French, as the first part of "Michel Henry et la question du fondement de l'intentionnalité," *Bulletin d'analyse phénoménologique* 8 (2010): 284-304.

² Michel Henry, *The Essence of Manifestation*, trans. Girard Etzkorn (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1973) [Henry, *L'essence de la manifestation* (Paris: PUF, [1963] 1990)].

³ Henry, "Phénoménologie non-intentionnelle: une tâche de la phénoménologie à venir," in *L'intentionnalité en question. Entre phénoménologie et sciences cognitives*, ed. Dominique Janicaud (Paris: Vrin, 1995), 383-97. (Translation original).

⁴ *Ibid.*, 386 (Translation original).

⁵ Henry, *Material Phenomenology*, trans. Scott Davidson (New York: Fordham University Press, 2008) [Henry, *Phénoménologie matérielle* (Paris: PUF, 1990)].

⁶ Henry, *Incarnation. A Philosophy of the Flesh*, trans. Karl Hefty (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2015) [Henry, *Incarnation. Une philosophie de la chair* (Paris: Seuil, 2000)].

background and roots. For did not Husserl himself explore the limits of intentionality? What is, then, the character and the status of the pre- (or non-) intentional in Husserl's phenomenology? Does Henry's non-intentional phenomenology work entirely against Husserl, or is it, instead, an attempt to save and to justify a certain tendency that is present in Husserl's own phenomenological account of consciousness?

First, however, we must inquire into the reasons for which Henry believes himself authorized to claim that intentionality could never find its ultimate phenomenological possibility in itself. A first element in an answer to this question is provided by the fact that intentionality designates the structure of a relation to objects: therefore, it can very well describe and characterize the appearing of beings, but not its own appearing, or its own self-givenness. With this consideration, the heart of the problem has already been intimated:

The question of intentionality is not that of its being but that of its appearing, and... the question of how intentionality appears is that of knowing whether this appearing is homogeneous or identical to the appearing of beings, otherwise said, if the appearing of intentionality depends on intentionality itself.⁷ This manner of questioning intentionality goes further than Heidegger's well-known reproach regarding the "indeterminacy" of the "being" of intentionality. Heidegger's attempt to ground intentionality in a more original "transcendence," which is supposed to name its ontological *ratio essendi*,⁸ is implicitly rejected as insufficient: for Henry, what Heidegger calls "transcendence" is equally incapable of accounting for itself and, consequently, incapable of providing a satisfying foundation for intentionality. The second section of *The Essence of Manifestation*, under the title "Transcendence and Immanence," has shown indeed that transcendence, understood as an act of "relating to...," can only ground itself in immanence. *Philosophy and Phenomenology of the Body* has stated this in a particularly clear way:

More original than the phenomenon of transcendence and, so to speak, prior thereto, is that immanence in which transcendence finds what is, from the ontological point of view, its ultimate possibility-condition.⁹

This is why transcendence cannot provide the sought-for ground of intentionality; it does not fulfill the phenomenological requirement of being the principle of its own manifestation. Henry is fully conscious of how strong and radical this objection is, when he writes: "This is the main and the strongest illusion of contemporary phenomenology: believing... that transcendence is phenomenologically and ontologically autonomous."¹⁰

⁷ *Ibid.*, 390.

⁸ See Martin Heidegger, *Die Grundprobleme der Phänomenologie*, in *GA XXIV*, ed. Friedrich-Wilhelm von Herrmann (Frankfurt am Main: Klostermann, 1975), § 9.b, 91.

⁹ Henry, *Philosophy and Phenomenology of the Body*, trans. Girard Etzkorn (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1975), 219 [Henry, *Philosophie et phénoménologie du corps* (Paris: PUF, [1965] 1987), 304].

¹⁰ Henry, "Quatre principes de la phénoménologie," *Revue de Métaphysique et de Morale* 1 (1991): 3-26, at 17: "Telle est la principale et la plus puissante illusion de la phénoménologie contemporaine:

As does intentionality, so too does transcendence require a more original foundation. In order to accomplish this, however, one has to overcome the Heideggerian concern for the *being* of intentionality and hint instead at a deeper and more phenomenological concern, by interrogating its *appearing*, or the manner it is given to itself. And indeed, the appearing of intentionality cannot be that of beings or objects: intentionality is not an object, and supposing an intentional access to intentionality itself would lead necessarily to a *regressus ad infinitum*. It is why one needs to acknowledge that phenomenalisation cannot be univocal and homogeneous: “the categories that concern the *how* of givenness cannot be borrowed from the given itself.”¹¹ That is why the structure of appearing is necessarily *dual*: one could not claim its unity or homogeneity, its “absolute indifference,” without falling into the “ontical-phenomenological equivocation”¹² that would result from considering all phenomena as world-phenomena.

As we can see, the disclosure of the non-intentional ground of intentionality requires the acknowledgment of the duality of appearing. Consequently, it becomes necessary to make room for a new kind of appearing, distinct from that of objects or beings, which could be adequate for intentionality itself. Thus, the necessity of establishing a phenomenological foundation for intentionality reveals that intentionality cannot be the sole principle of phenomenalisation. It is intentionality itself that unveils the limits of its own power of givenness, insofar as it unavoidably resists any ontic or mundane appearance. The conclusion can therefore only be the following:

Intentionality is not a phenomenological concept capable of conceiving intentionality. This means that intentionality does not accomplish its own revelation; the self-appearing of appearing is not the appearing of beings.¹³

If, as the case of intentionality makes clear, there is a non-ontic form of appearance, distinct from that of beings, phenomenality can no longer be regarded as exclusively mundane or ontic, just as intentionality can no longer be the unique principle of appearing. It is thus necessary to abandon that which *The Essence of Manifestation* had termed the “dogmatism of intentionality,”¹⁴ a dogmatism that sees in intentionality the “principle and unique criterion of phenomenality.”¹⁵ In order to avoid this ontic drift of phenomenology, which reduces the latter entirely to a phenomenology of the object (and of the given, rather than of givenness), one has to face the most crucial phenomenological question, that of the appearing of appearing—and, implicitly, that of the appearing of intentionality.

croire...que la transcendence est phénoménologiquement et ontologiquement une essence autonome” (Translation original).

¹¹ Henry, “Phénoménologie non-intentionnelle,” 390: “Les catégories qui concernent le comment de la donation ne peuvent pas être empruntées à ce qui se donne en elle” (Translation original).

¹² See Henry, “Quatre principes de la phénoménologie,” 13.

¹³ Henry, “Phénoménologie non-intentionnelle,” 391: “L’intentionnalité n’est pas un concept phénoménologique adéquat pour penser l’intentionnalité. Ce qui veut dire: ce n’est pas l’intentionnalité qui accomplit sa propre révélation, l’auto-apparaître de l’apparaître n’est pas l’apparaître de l’étant” (Translation original).

¹⁴ Henry, *The Essence of Manifestation*, 51 [62].

¹⁵ See Henry, “Phénoménologie non-intentionnelle,” 387 (Translation original).

Husserl and the Impression as Primary Consciousness

But how could one subtract intentionality from its ontic deployment? How can one leave behind the level of objectifying intentionality? While engaging himself in precisely this enterprise, Henry is far from ignoring that this path has been outlined by Husserl himself. As he admits in his 1990 work, *Material Phenomenology*, “the self-givenness of intentionality is a question that Husserlian phenomenology did not totally evade.”¹⁶ It is, more precisely, in the 1905 *Lectures on Inner Time-Consciousness*, esteemed by Henry as an “extraordinary text” and “certainly the most beautiful of the twentieth-century,”¹⁷ that Husserl had attempted to go beyond objectifying intentionality by deepening the phenomenology of perception, and by stepping toward a phenomenology of inner time-consciousness. The question of the phenomenological origin of time had led Husserl to insist on the *Urimpression* as “the primal source of all further consciousness and being,”¹⁸ as an “absolute beginning,” and as an original generation and creation without which consciousness “is nothing.”¹⁹ Moreover, the crucial function of the *Urimpression* manifests, as Husserl puts it, a “strong phenomenological difference”²⁰ that distinguishes it from all other forms of consciousness (that are only its modifications or reproductions).

What is, more precisely, Husserl’s goal in underlining the fact that the “primary consciousness” is “impressionary”?²¹ His polemical intention in the 1905 *Lectures* is to refute the *derealization of time* such as it inevitably occurs in the account of his master, Franz Brentano. For Brentano, the unity of (inner) time is generated by the imagination; this ultimately implies that time, outside of the present moment, has no reality in itself. On the contrary, through his insistence on impression, and on the mechanisms that allow its preservation, Husserl aims to prove that the reality of time is constantly provided and renewed. Quite remarkably, Henry’s reading of the 1905 *Lectures* is symmetrical to Husserl’s own critique, insofar as it is driven by the same concern to avoid losing or weakening the reality of time. Instead of accepting Husserl’s solution—according to which impression is the source of all intentionality—however, Henry denounces the fact that, by inscribing impression within intentionality, Husserl destroys their difference and eventually produces the lack of reality he wanted to avoid.²² Far

¹⁶ Henry, *Material Phenomenology*, 22 [32].

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 21 [31].

¹⁸ Edmund Husserl, *On the Phenomenology of the Consciousness of Internal Time* (1893-1917), trans. John Barnett Brough (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publisher, 1991), 70 [Husserl, *Zur Phänomenologie des inneren Zeitbewusstseins* (1893-1917), in *Hua X*, ed. Rudolf Boehm (Den Haag: Martinus Nijhoff, 1966), 67].

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 106. [100].

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 47 [45].

²¹ See *ibid.*, 90 [94-95].

²² Henry’s detailed analysis of these *Lectures* is especially to be found in his *Material Phenomenology*, 20-35 [30-50], but also in the conference “Phenomenological time and the living present,” which is also from 1990 and was published for the first time in *Auto-donation. Entretiens et conférences* (Paris: Beauchesne, 2004), 45-62.

from retaining the originary character of impression, its intentional recuperation can only provoke a leap into irreality.

In order to understand the reasons that lead Henry to claim that Husserl is unable to impede the relapse of phenomenological time into irreality, let us examine more thoroughly the enterprise of the 1905 *Lectures*. Paradoxically, it is precisely Husserl's effort to maintain the reality of the *Urimpression* within the perpetual flowing of time that will produce what Henry esteems to be an unwanted result. The reason for this is the fact that the manner in which impression is preserved is dependent upon a first and genuine form of intentionality: namely, retention. Retention is an "original consciousness," for it is not a "pictorialization (*Verbildlichung*)"²³ of the past, but rather its intuition or its direct presentation. This is why Husserl can call it the "living horizon of the *now*."²⁴ Husserl's emphasis on what distinguishes retention from memory as commonly understood manifests his intention to preserve the impressional source of consciousness by granting to the consciousness of the past itself the characteristics of immediacy and intuitiveness.

What, then, is the source of Henry's discontent with Husserl's solution? His argument is that, instead of preserving what is specific to impression, retention ineluctably transforms it into what it is not—that is, into intentionality. Indeed, even if he admits that time-consciousness has its genuine source in impression, Husserl does not hesitate to characterize it eventually through intentionality. It is true that the form of intentionality which is then at stake is different from object-intentionality: Husserl speaks²⁵ of a "longitudinal" intentionality in order to distinguish that which grants the unity of the stream of inner-time from objectifying ("transversal") intentionality. The ultimate result of this distinction, however, far from limiting the rights and powers of intentionality, consecrates its absolute reign. This means that even in "the obscure depths of the ultimate consciousness which constitutes all such temporality"²⁶ of lived experiences (as the *Ideas I* put it), what we find can still be described as an intentional process. Therefore, the § 85 of *Ideas I* can serenely state that "intentionality... resembles an intentional medium that ultimately carries all lived experiences, even those that are not intentional," that is, even "the *sensuous, which has in itself nothing pertaining to intentionality.*"²⁷

In the 1905 *Lectures*, the same universal signification is granted to intentionality when the unity of inner time-consciousness is considered as the result of a special type of intentional constitution. Husserl is nevertheless well-aware of the fact that this duplication, this splitting of intentionality, risks masking

²³ See Husserl, *On the Phenomenology of the Consciousness of Internal Time*, 33 [32].

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 45 [43] (Emphasis added).

²⁵ See *ibid.*, § 39.

²⁶ See Husserl, *Ideas Pertaining to a Pure Phenomenology and to a Phenomenological Philosophy. First Book: General Introduction to Pure Phenomenology*, trans. F. Kersten (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1983), 203 [Husserl, *Ideen zu einer reinen Phänomenologie und phänomeno-logischen Philosophie. Erstes Buch: Allgemeine Einführung in die Phänomenologie*, in *Hua* III/1, ed. Karl Schuhmann (Den Haag: Martinus Nijhoff, 1976), 191].

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 203 [192] (Emphasis in original).

what is specific to the temporal stream of consciousness and what distinguishes it from object-intentionality; but he prefers to face, rather than to evade, this consequence:

There is one, unique flow of consciousness in which both the unity of the tone in immanent time [i.e., the unity of the temporal object] and the unity of the flow of consciousness itself become constituted at once. As shocking (when not initially even absurd) as it may seem to say that the flow of consciousness constitutes its own unity, it is nonetheless the case that it does.²⁸

Furthermore, longitudinal intentionality makes it useless and pointless to question any further the appearing of the temporal stream or the way it is given: “The self-appearance of the flow does not require a second flow; on the contrary, it constitutes itself as a phenomenon in itself.”²⁹ Otherwise said, the stream produces its own self-giveness. These considerations show that Husserl has clearly and directly faced the question of the appearing (or that of the self-giveness) of intentionality. But the response provided by his theory of a double intentionality—of an intentional constitution of the stream of consciousness itself, which is also the key to its appearing—cannot satisfy Henry. Even if the 1905 *Lectures* exhibit a layer of consciousness deeper and more fundamental than object-intentionality, they fail to establish both the autonomy, and the consistency, of the pre-intentional. Thus, what is held to be primordial (the impression) is finally diluted into what is only its modification (retention and longitudinal intentionality); the constituting is reduced to what is constituted. Quite predictably, Husserl can only be disconcerted by this paradox: “The constituting and the constituted coincide, and yet naturally they cannot coincide in every respect.”³⁰ Moreover, while submitting the stream of inner time-consciousness to a constitution that is fully intentional—in spite of the fact that its origin and source are to be found in the *Urimpression*—Husserl does not only alter it, he also produces the loss of its materiality and of its specific consistency. Even though § 8 of the 1905 *Lectures* proceeds to a genuine *hyletic* reduction (“We now exclude all transcendent apprehension and positing and take the tone purely as a hyletic datum,”³¹ it was announced), the consideration of the hyletic level, that had afforded the revelation the *Urimpression*, was submerged by the unexpected primacy of the “form of the stream” in respect to its matter.³²

In conclusion, then, the 1905 *Lectures* lead quite surprisingly to a double victory, that of intentionality over impression and that of $\mu\omicron\rho\sigma\phi\eta$ over $\acute{\omicron}\lambda\eta$.

From Impression to Life

Henry’s enterprise is driven fundamentally by a wish to avoid and to repair this double loss; its aim is to recuperate both the impression and the $\acute{\omicron}\lambda\eta$ and, by so

²⁸ Husserl, *On the Phenomenology of the Consciousness of Internal Time*, 84 [80].

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 88 [83].

³⁰ *Ibid.*

³¹ *Ibid.*, 25 [24].

³² See *ibid.*, 118 [114].

doing, to disclose the non-intentional ground of intentionality. It is to this intention that the elaboration of a *material phenomenology*, that no longer accepts the subordination of hyletics to noetics asserted by Husserl in § 86 of *Ideas I*, responds. “Intentional phenomenology is transcendental phenomenology, but the transcendental reduced to the intentional noesis is not truly a transcendental and a priori condition of all possible experience if it always requires what is wholly other than itself; the sensation, the impression.”³³ One can recognize easily here Henry’s objection as previously encountered: in spite of the universality that Husserl grants to it (far too easily), intentionality cannot be its own possibility-condition: it cannot account for its own manifestation insofar as an irreducible difference separates the appearing of beings from its own appearing.

In order to reach the foundation of intentionality, one must rethink the relation between sensible ὄλη and intentional μορφή. By doing so, ὄλη is no longer to be understood as a mere content, but as the authentic transcendental, and as a genuine possibility-condition:

“Matter,” which material phenomenology understands in its clear opposition to the hyletic, no longer indicates the other of phenomenality, but its essence. To the extent that in pure givenness it thematizes and explains its own self-givenness, material phenomenology is phenomenology in a radical sense.³⁴

For Henry, the ὄλη no longer has to respond to the question of meaning, and to obey the intentional *morphé* as *sinngabend*, as the privileged source of meaning. Insofar as it can account for its self-givenness, the impressional matter, the ὄλη, is phenomenologically autonomous. This cannot be claimed, however, of intentionality, which, as previously seen, depends intrinsically on the pre-intentional—that is, on impression.

On the other hand, it is legitimate to inquire, as Henry himself does, into the “origin of the impression.” In doing so, one has eventually to acknowledge “the inescapable reference of a phenomenology of impression to a phenomenology of life.” This is motivated by the fact that “the original appearing of impression is nothing else but that of life.”³⁵ But how is this reference to be justified phenomenologically? Henry insists that the connection between life and phenomenalisation is far from being extrinsic or accidental: “life is phenomenological in a primordial and fundamental sense.”³⁶ Life is the sole source of phenomenalisation. This means that “phenomenality has its original essence in the fact that life experiences itself in such a manner that this self-experience is the self-appearing of appearing.”³⁷ That is why the phenomenology of life is precisely the most radical kind of phenomenology; without life as intrinsically

³³ Henry, *Material Phenomenology*, 17 [25-26].

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 42 [58].

³⁵ See Henry, *Incarnation*, § 9.

³⁶ Henry, “Phénoménologie non-intentionnelle,” 393: “La vie est phénoménologique en un sens original et fondateur” (Translation original).

³⁷ *Ibid.*: “La phénoménalité trouve son essence originaire dans la vie parce que la vie s’éprouve soi-même, de telle façon que s’éprouver soi-même est l’auto-apparaître de l’apparaître” (Translation original).

phenomenological, there is indeed no phenomenalisation and no phenomenality. Likewise, without life, there is no intentionality: “intentionality is only possible as intentional life.”³⁸ Otherwise put:

There is no intentionality, but only an intentional life. The task of a non-intentional phenomenology is precisely to acknowledge the specific phenomenality of life, the pathetic self-affection that makes it possible as a life, in its radical heterogeneity to... intentionality.³⁹

The non-intentional phenomenology that is at stake here can be equally characterized, as previously seen, as a material phenomenology of impression and self-affection, and as a phenomenology of affectivity. But it is ultimately a phenomenology of life. Nevertheless, at this point lies also its greatest difficulty: if there is such a heterogeneity, or ontological and phenomenological distance between intentionality and the life that grounds it, how is this grounding relation still possible and conceivable? Henry has not avoided the question, but his attempts to resolve it evince how delicate the conquest of the autonomy of the pre- (or non-) intentional is.

The Case of Reflection

The question of reflection is a symptomatic example of this difficulty; its consideration will allow us to prolong our inquiry into Henry’s plea for a non-intentional phenomenology.⁴⁰ What, then, is the status and the consistency of reflective consciousness with respect to non- or pre-reflective consciousness? The Husserlian analyses can here, too, function as a guide. We have seen that the 1905 *Lectures* grant a crucial role and position to the *Urimpression*—to impressional consciousness, within the temporal immanent stream of lived experiences, and to retention, as the intuitive (presentative) consciousness of the past, as the mechanism through which this original consciousness is preserved. It is on the basis of retention that reflection—that is, the retrospective glance that embraces the past phases of the stream of consciousness—is possible. But this does not mean that the initial—impressional—phase of the stream becomes conscious only through the reflection that retention makes possible. “If it were intended *only* by retention, then what confers on it the label ‘*non*’ would remain incomprehensible.”⁴¹ Consciousness is not entirely reflective, even though reflection is the most fruitful methodological tool for its study: “the beginning-

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 397: “L’intentionnalité n’est possible que comme vie intentionnelle” (Translation original).

³⁹ *Ibid.*: “Il n’y a pas d’intentionnalité mais seulement une vie intentionnelle. Reconnaître la phénoménalité propre de cette vie, l’auto-affection pathétique qui la rend précisément possible comme vie, dans son hétérogénéité radicale au voir de l’intentionnalité, c’est la tâche d’une phénoménologie non intentionnelle” (Translation original).

⁴⁰ For a further treatment of this question, see my “Conscience impressionnelle et conscience réflexive: Husserl, Fink et les critiques phénoménologiques,” *Revue philosophique de la France et de l’étranger* 4 (2012): 473-493.

⁴¹ Husserl, *On the Phenomenology of the Consciousness of Internal Time*, 123 [119] (Emphasis added).

phase [of the stream] can become an object only *after* it has elapsed... by means of retention and reflection.”⁴²

Ideas I reaffirms the crucial role of reflection for the phenomenological analysis by stating (in § 77) that “the phenomenological method operates exclusively in acts of reflection.”⁴³ Nevertheless, the methodological importance of reflection does not involve that lived experiences are conscious only thanks to reflective acts: “Every ‘*P*’ has (*erlebt*) its lived experiences.... It lives them: that is not to say that it has them, <has> its ‘eye on’ what they include, and is seizing upon them.”⁴⁴ Reflection is by its own nature a modification of lived experiences, and this implies that, when examining consciousness, we will eventually reach a level of “absolutely non-reflective lived experiences” which ultimately are “impressions” (*Impressionen*).⁴⁵ In spite of this, reflection remains crucial, and even indispensable, for the phenomenological analysis of consciousness, and this epistemological function is due especially to the fact that it is only through reflection that lived experiences appear as belonging to the intentional life of one and the same I. This is why the I is always an I of reflection: there is no such egological dimension in purely impressional consciousness. Thus, a tension emerges from the collision and concurrence between the necessity of acknowledging the pre-reflective (and the pre-intentional) constitution of the I in its full consistency and autonomy, and the teleology of knowledge in which the pre-reflective and the pre-intentional are always eventually inscribed.

What is Henry’s position with respect to Husserl’s view on the role of reflection? The way in which Husserl grounds in reflection both the certainty of the I, and the relation of belonging that connects its lived experiences to it, is clearly unacceptable to him. As in the case of intentionality, Henry stresses firmly the distance and the heterogeneity between reflection and the pre-reflective life:

In reflection (whether it’s a matter of transcendental, phenomenological reflection or of simple natural reflection), whenever thought turns to life, in an attempt to grasp it and know it in its vision (in the *sehen und fassen* that belongs to it in principle), thought does not uncover the reality of life in its “originary presence,” but only the empty place of its absence.⁴⁶

Clearly, when Henry denies that life could be grasped through reflection, his aim is to take into account more seriously the fact that life constitutes itself before reflection. Just as in the case of intentionality, reflection cannot properly designate the self-appearing of life, the self-givenness of lived experience. The claim that reflection, as necessarily derived and posterior, cannot grant an access to a life that is in itself pre-reflective leads Henry to challenge the role and status of retention itself (which, as previously seen, was regarded by Husserl as the intermediary link between impression and reflection). Retention is therefore no longer seen as a necessary mediation, but as the first fatal alienation of

⁴² *Ibid.* (Emphasis added).

⁴³ Husserl, *Ideas I*, 174 [162].

⁴⁴ *Ibid.* (Translation modified).

⁴⁵ See *ibid.*, 179-181 [166-167].

⁴⁶ Henry, *Incarnation*, 72 [105].

impressionality—that is, as the irremediable loss of original consciousness. But once again, this manner of deepening these distances produces the same difficulty: how is the constitution of the stream of consciousness to be analyzed and described, if all the modifications of impressionality are rejected? For the stream cannot simply consist in impressions: the life of consciousness is not a perpetual present or a mere actuality. It is as though Henry unavoidably leaps into such a Cartesian vision of consciousness, especially when he follows Husserl’s identification of the original *Zeitbewusstsein* to a “feeling (*Empfinden*).”⁴⁷ This indication is taken indeed very seriously; impressional consciousness is not a reflective consciousness but, precisely, an *affective* one, whose essence is self-affection, that is, a form of self-experience prior to all reflection. This rejection of reflection, however, implies a heavy price, insofar as no form of *non-actuality* of consciousness would any longer be conceivable. What, then, would become of inner temporality itself? Is there still room for something like a *stream* of consciousness? For the stream of lived experiences, as Husserl put this in *Ideas I*, “can never consist of just actualities (*das Erlebnisstrom kann nie aus lauter Aktualitäten bestehen*).”⁴⁸ As temporal, consciousness is necessarily also non-actual in a certain manner. What is, then, the consistency of its relation to the past and to the future, given that neither the past nor the future is accessible through impression? What can replace the function of reflection—which, for Husserl, grants the fact that even non-actual lived experiences can still be perceived, or at least are “ready to be perceived (*wahrnehmungsbereit*)?”⁴⁹

But perhaps the connection between temporality and consciousness in Husserl’s phenomenology has itself been too long, and too easily, taken for granted. This suspicion expresses, in my view, the ultimate level of Henry’s critical reading of Husserl. In the recently edited preparatory notes for *L’essence de la manifestation*,⁵⁰ the degree to which Henry questions the manner in which Husserl thinks the I within the horizon of time becomes particularly clear. For the author of *Ideas I*, indeed, the unity of egological life and the unity of immanent temporality are one and the same. For Henry, instead, the unity of the I is not the unity of time but the unity of life itself: it is within life or as living that the I is given to itself in the first place. Time does not come before, but after, the I. The I does not arise from the reflective unification of immanent time, for time is not unified unless it is *lived* by the I. This also explains why reflection, insofar as it necessarily deploys itself in the element of time, cannot be the primary experience and occurrence of the I.

It is thus toward *an immanence deeper than that of inner time* that Henry directs the phenomenological analysis of lived experiences, through the critiques of both intentionality and reflection. In this manner, the ambition of his project of a non-intentional phenomenology reveals itself in all its magnitude: its ultimate

⁴⁷ Husserl, *On the Phenomenology of the Consciousness of Internal Time*, 112 [107].

⁴⁸ Husserl, *Ideas I*, 72 [73] (Translation original).

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 95 [99].

⁵⁰ Henry, “Notes préparatoires à *L’essence de la manifestation: la subjectivité*,” ed. Grégori Jean, *Revue Internationale Michel Henry* 3 (2012): 93-215.

objective is to question, and to disentangle, the connection between inner experience and temporal experience. The claim that underlies such an attempt is that life is not essentially temporal: time is only a worldly, outer adjunction to life and does not belong to its intimate essence. The challenge will then be to provide a non-temporal description and comprehension of the inner affective dynamics of life. Whether Henry's solution—according to which the affective modulations of life, while undoubtedly forming a unified series, can distinguish themselves from one another only through their valence, independently of their temporal position⁵¹—is a viable one, is a question that would undoubtedly require an autonomous inquiry.

⁵¹ For a subtle and well-developed analysis that challenges this claim, see Grégori Jean, *Force et Temps. Essai sur le "vitalisme phénoménologique" de Michel Henry* (Paris: Hermann, 2015), 55-64 and 205-220.