

The Reduction and ‘The Fourth Principle’

Jean-Luc Marion

Preview

Among the many difficulties, or even paradoxes, that phenomenology has imposed upon us by positing itself as a doctrine, or at least as a radical foundation for philosophy, one must first and foremost consider the operation typically referred to as the reduction. The reasons for detecting difficulties therein are many, but they take on even greater significance since Husserl proclaimed the reduction to be fundamental to any philosophy that wished to establish itself as a phenomenology. The history of phenomenology, then, would appear not only as the history of all the difficulties encountered in the reduction, but principally as the history of Husserl’s own self-elucidation of his entire project. This brings us to the point of reformulating Ricoeur’s claim—that phenomenology is the sum of misinterpretations of Husserl’s doctrine—with this new contention: that phenomenology consists in the sum of discussions and disagreements about the doctrine and practice of the reduction.

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The Question

Among the many difficulties, or even paradoxes, that phenomenology has imposed upon us by positing itself as a doctrine, or at least as a radical foundation for philosophy, one must first and foremost consider the operation typically referred to as the *reduction*. The reasons for detecting difficulties therein are many, but they take on even greater significance since Husserl proclaimed the reduction to be fundamental to any philosophy that wished to establish itself as a phenomenology. The history of phenomenology, then, would appear not only as the history of all the difficulties encountered in the reduction, but principally as the history of Husserl’s own self-elucidation of his entire project. This brings us to the point of reformulating Ricœur’s claim—that phenomenology is the sum of misinterpretations of Husserl’s doctrine—with this new contention: that phenomenology consists in the sum of discussions and disagreements about the doctrine and practice of the reduction.

There was a time when none would claim the title of phenomenologist without first working on the reduction. Indeed, the first exemplary debate between Husserl and his students who followed him from Munich to Göttingen was a debate regarding the reduction—on whether one should admit that the eidetic (or quasi-*epoché* quasi-eidetic) reduction described in *Logical Investigations* fell under the control of an explicitly transcendental reduction in *Ideas I*. Today, on the other hand, there is a strong tendency amongst those who call themselves phenomenologists to explicitly reject the reduction, or at least a tendency among some of the most eminent thinkers in the discipline to attenuate and ultimately

¹ [The following is an English translation of an article first published in *Archivio di Filosofia* 83 (2015) 1-2: 13-31. We acknowledge the editors of that journal for their permission to publish an English-language translation herein.—*Editors*.]

extenuate it (from Maurice Merleau-Ponty,² Hans-Georg Gadamer,³ and Paul Ricœur,⁴ to Claude Romano,⁵ Dominique Pradelle,⁶ and Jocelyn Benoist⁷). The opposite thesis sometimes arises, in a rare reaction to this trend: that phenomenology cannot but become an idealism and that the reduction should only be conceived as a transcendental reduction effected by an I that is itself radically transcendental.⁸

Michel Henry made a powerful, original and very illuminating contribution to this complex and often confused debate in the now classic article “The Four Principles of Phenomenology.”⁹ I shall first concentrate on his analysis, especially since it states and establishes the pertinence of the fourth principle, which I had introduced a few years earlier: “so much reduction, so much givenness.”¹⁰ This principle and its formulation were added to three others which

² For example, the hesitations found in the notes from February 1959 in Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and the Invisible: Followed by Working Notes*, trans. Alphonso Lingis (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1968), 173 ff [Merleau-Ponty, *Le visible et l'invisible* (Paris: Gallimard, 1964), 225 ff].

³ Hans Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, trans. Joel C. Weinsheimer and Donald G. Marshall (New York: Continuum, 1975), 235 ff. [Gadamer, *Wahrheit und Methode: Grundzüge einer philosophischen Hermeneutik* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2010), II, 1, 3, 246 ff].

⁴ For a good account of Ricœur’s evolution see Françoise Dastur, “De la phénoménologie transcendantale à la phénoménologie herméneutique,” in *Paul Ricœur. Les métamorphoses de la raison herméneutique*, eds. Jean Greisch and Richard Kearney (Paris, Cerf, 1991), 37-50.

⁵ For example, Claude Romano, *At the Heart of Reason*, trans. Michael Smith (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2015), ch. XIV [Romano, “La phénoménologie peut-elle être transcendantale?,” in *Au cœur de la raison, la phénoménologie* (Paris: Gallimard, 2010)]; for an even more precise account, which contests my notion of the erotic reduction, see Romano, “Love in its concept: Jean-Luc Marion’s *The Erotic Phenomenon*,” trans. S. E. Lewis in *Counter-Experiences. Reading Jean-Luc Marion*, ed. Kevin Hart, (South Bend: University of Notre-Dame Press, 2007), 319-37.

⁶ Dominique Pradelle, *Généalogie de la raison. Essai sur l’historicité du sujet transcendantal de Kant à Heidegger* (Paris: PUF, 2013).

⁷ Although it no longer pertains directly to the reduction, this position is taken in Jocelyn Benoist, “Le sujet, ou plutôt la subjectivité,” in *L’idée de phénoménologie* (Paris: Beauchesne, 2001), 105-22. See also chapters 1-4 of Benoist, *Autour de Husserl. L’ego et la raison* (Paris: Vrin, 1994).

⁸ Among other texts, see Jacques English, *Sur l’intentionnalité et ses modes* (Paris: PUF, 2003), ch.

7. “Pourquoi la phénoménologie est et ne peut qu’être une philosophie transcendantale,” 285-339.

⁹ Michel Henry, “The Four Principles of Phenomenology,” trans. J. Rivera and G.E. Faithful, *Continental Philosophy Review* 48 (2015) 1: 1-21 [First published in *Revue de Métaphysique et de Morale* 1 (1991): 3-26; reprinted in Henry, *Phénoménologie de la vie*, vol. I. *De la phénoménologie* (Paris: PUF, 2003), 76-104. References give the page numbers first to the English translation, then to the 2003 *Phénoménologie de la vie* reprint.—*Trans.*]

¹⁰ See my *Reduction and Givenness. Investigations of Husserl, Heidegger, and Phenomenology*, trans. Thomas A. Carlson (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1998) [*Réduction et donation. Recherches sur Husserl, Heidegger et la phénoménologie* (Paris: PUF, 2004)]. I of course addressed Henry’s analysis in my *Being Given: Toward a Phenomenology of Givenness*, trans. Jeffrey L. Kosky (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2002), § 1 [Étant donné. *Essai d’une phénoménologie de la donation* (Paris: PUF, 2013 [corrected edition in “Quadriges” series])]. However, there I took it up only through the optics of my own phenomenology. Here I shall take it up from Michel Henry’s own perspective, that is to say to reconsider the doctrine of the reduction itself. [References to both of these works give the page numbers first to the English translation and then to the most recent French edition.—*Trans.*]

it claimed to both radicalize and surpass: the Kantian principle “so much appearing, so much Being,” the “principle of principles” defined in § 24 of *Ideas I*, and phenomenology’s motto “back to the things themselves.”¹¹ To be clear, we must admit immediately that none of these four formulations receive Henry’s endorsement, and for one single reason: because they all remain “purely formal concepts,” they all lack “the pure phenomenological material” not limited by the world but which ultimately refers back to the phenomenality of life. They cannot, therefore, define appearing, the most fundamental mode of appearing for phenomena in their ‘how,’ because they pertain only to the derivative appearing of things in the world, and completely omit an entirely different kind of phenomenality, namely the self-affection of life without any ecstatic gap. This “catastrophic confusion of the appearing of the world with the universal essence of appearing”¹² hides the fact that “the Archi-Revelation of Life never surrenders itself to the guise of evidence.”¹³ Having established this challenge, let us now review the respective insufficiencies of each of these four formulations.

Three Insufficiencies in Principle

In the first formulation, “so much appearing, so much Being,” appearing becomes the necessary and sufficient figure of Being. In an almost banal sense, this serves to indicate that everything that appears is insofar as it appears, even if it is not always in the same manner or by the same name, according to whether it is true or false, felt or imagined, in actuality or only in possibility, etc. This formulation fails in two respects. First, it leaves appearing itself indeterminate, since it gathers under the same heading diverse, divergent, and even incompatible modes of phenomenality, only to gather them together again under the undifferentiated heading of the *percepta* of a *percipi* that is unspecified but which nonetheless always refers them back to their only real correlate, the *percipere*, such that each time it posits them by its universal and univocal *cogitatio*. This is what Descartes understood and did. But this reversal led him precisely to grant to the *percipere* and its *cogitatio* the rank of a first being (“*ego sum, ego existo*”), and thus to found appearing upon the Being of a privileged being that is completely irreducible to other modes of appearing. It is this that the first principle neither says nor thinks. Thus the second failure; the Being of the phenomenal *percepta*, already indeterminate, depends on a different, but also indeterminate, being (this Heidegger condemned).

Let me add a remark to Henry’s legitimate diagnosis: here already there is a hint of the role, and undoubtedly the necessity, of the reduction. For that which prevents ‘appearing’ *as such* from meriting ‘Being,’ is the fact that the unequal multiplicity of modes of phenomenality are not yet qualified in their Being (which confirms the possible double translation of *Schein* as *apparition* [appearance] or

¹¹ On their historical origins and their uses, see the indications in *Being Given*, § 1, 10 ff [19].

¹² Henry, “Four Principles,” 7 [80].

¹³ *Ibid.*, 10 [84].

appearance [*apparaître*]). This qualification can only be granted to them by another authority, thinking and not only thought, that decides upon the dignity of these modes of appearing and, as a result, their respective ontic dignities. In order for appearing to be equal to Being, the test (*épreuve*) of a reduction is required. That the reduction operates (following this ‘Cartesian path’) only by the distinction of degrees of certitude in order to distinguish degrees of Being, and therefore considers phenomenality only by the measure of indubitability and hence the measure of knowledge, does not prevent this path from already doing more than merely sketching a phenomenological reduction. That we cannot specify whether it operates as a reduction of essences or as a transcendental reduction (the positions of Malebranche and Leibniz or Kant respectively, to put it simply), is less a mark of Descartes’ insufficiency than the radicality of his inaugural work which is still full of several concurrent, if not contradictory, orientations. In any case, this first principle is clearly not sufficient to announce the principle of phenomenality, for it dis-qualifies appearing (*apparaître*) as a simple indeterminate apparition (*apparence*). Here one must follow Henry.

The third principle, the “return to the things themselves,” thus intervenes as a “reversal” of the first:¹⁴ it consists in renouncing that which the second would call the “theories produced by the power of thinking, *erdenkliche*,” in order to go directly to what is in question. The distinction between *Sache* and *Dinge*, about which translators endlessly worry, should not deceive us. To be sure, this principle has less to do with things (*Dinge*), in their already defined materiality and already constituted objectivity (there would be no need to return to them since they are readily accessible without ‘theories’), than with states of affairs (*Sache*, “*affaires en question*”), still debatable problems that must be clarified, specified, and finally achieved. But in both cases, one accepts the same presupposition: beyond or on this side (*au-déla ou en-déçà*) of that which manifests itself (or not), lies that which remains simply not-yet manifest, waiting for our gaze (*regard*) to join it. Thus we presuppose that Being precedes phenomenality, far from being defined by it and its process. Otherwise put: “The radical reduction of being to appearing (the first principle) finds itself supplanted by the inevitable dissociation of the two.”¹⁵ This, however, constitutes not only the danger of a summary realism, but a kind of doctrine of the thing in itself; an inverted thing in itself to be sure, since it is accessible and even necessarily accessible and leaves phenomenality no role to play, not even that of access. We can see here the premises of what today’s so-called ‘new realism’ claims to be its radical innovation, which it is quite undoubtedly a regression and in any case an illusion. For nothing, no state of affairs could ever concern us (or assure us), if it did not first attain to us and affect us; otherwise put, if it never appeared to us. The mode of appearing belongs firstly and definitively to that which appears and, against Descartes’ powerful assertion in the first of the *Regulae*, it is completely legitimate for Henry to insist that the light of

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 4 [81].

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 5 [81]. Moreover, “what results from the devastating rupture that it [the duplicity of the concept of phenomena] creates, and the primal unity of appearing and being?” (*ibid.*, 6 [83]).

the spirit, this supposedly solar *lumen*, remains indifferent to that which it illuminates.¹⁶ Unless, and here the harm would be greater, the phenomenality of things in question were not undone but were rather reduced to the transparency without appearance of worldly *objects*. For what could we expect from objects, these pure objectives that simply conform to the aim that consumes them while establishing them? Objects are in fact defined without the least *in-der-Welt-sein*, as *barely* worldly since the very experience of being in a world escapes them, and as *barely* phenomenal since their appearing disappears as soon as they are posited in the evidence of knowledge. The third principle tends to efface not only the ontic consistency, but also the phenomenal consistency of that which it governs.

Will an appropriate phenomenological approach to appearing be found, then, with the second principle, the ‘principle of principles’? Let us re-read it: “*every originary giving intuition* (gebende Anschauung, “intuition donatrice”) *is a legitimizing source of cognition...everything originarly offered to us in ‘intuition’* [in its carnal effectivity, that is to say] *is to be accepted simply as what it is presented as being*, but also *only within the limits in which it is presented there.*”¹⁷ For Henry, however, this amounts to “murder.”¹⁸ The murder of what? Of everything that such a definition of phenomenality through intuition excludes. For intuition is meaningful only insofar as it functions to fill intentionality, because, since Kant, its task has been to *give*, as contrasted with the concept, which would remain empty without it. Therefore, it has value only insofar as it relates to the concept. The giving intuition is in play only in and for the concept, which implies, in Husserlian language, that its fulfilment concerns and makes use only of intentionality. Otherwise put, the role of intuition is limited to the phenomenality of the intentional object alone: “it is the transcendence of this object, its setting at a distance that constitutes phenomenality as such.”¹⁹ It consists in an ecstatic phenomenality, exclusively and *as such*, for the ‘principle of principles’ lays claim to universality and admits of no exception. It must be concluded, then, that if “intuition is only a name for this transcendence, it implies in itself this unconscious but radical elimination of life.”²⁰ The second principle, “in truth the first,” does then accomplish “a murder”—that of the other phenomenal region which radically

¹⁶ Henry here (*ibid.*, 6 [83]) cites René Descartes, *Œuvres De Descartes*, vol. X, ed. Charles Adam and Paul Tannery (Paris: Vrin, 1983), 360: “Humana sapientia, quae semper una et eadem manet, quantumvis differentibus subjectis applicata, nec majorem ab illis distinctionem mutuatur, quam Solis lumen a rerum, quas illustrat, varietate...” [Descartes, *The Philosophical Writings of Descartes*, vol. I, trans. John Cottingham, Robert Soothoff and Dugald Murdoch (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 9].

¹⁷ Edmund Husserl, *Ideas Pertaining to a Pure Phenomenology and a Phenomenological Philosophy. First Book: General Introduction to a Pure Phenomenology*, trans. Fred Kersten (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1983), § 24, 44 [Husserl, *Ideen zu einer reinen Phänomenologie und phänomenologischen Philosophie. Erstes Buch: Allgemeine Einführung in die reine Phänomenologie*, in *Hua III*, ed. Walter Biemel (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1950), 44. Translation modified to suit Marion’s French.—Trans.]

¹⁸ Henry, “Four Principles,” 8 [87].

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 8 [86].

²⁰ *Ibid.*

distinguishes itself from the phenomenal region and regime of transcendent (and ecstatic) objects which is concerned only with the distance of intentionality, namely the region “of infinite life that does not cease to give us to ourselves and to engender us to the extent that it engenders itself in its eternal self-affection.”²¹ And in fact Husserl would always remain, even sometimes to the detriment of his most daring analyses, a hostage, if not a prisoner, of this concentration of phenomenality on the modes of appearing of the object according to the phenomenality of the *intentional* distance alone.²²

Thus each of the three formulations of the principle of phenomenology ultimately omit the phenomenality of appearing, the object, and the intentional gap respectively and successively, leaving all indeterminate and uninterrogated.

The Fourth Principle

We must now examine, therefore, the fourth and final principle, the one I introduced with the formula “so much reduction, so much givenness.” A precise and generous reader, Michel Henry himself recognized that this principle made an advance towards “[restoring] to the reduction a truly positive significance” instead of interpreting it “in a purely negative sense.”²³ The reduction does not reduce, it leads back (*reconduit*) (as a method, which it will remain for Husserl, as we shall see). It leads appearance back to what is at stake, to its visible heart—that which appears insofar as it appears and is thus accomplished according to its mode of appearing. “Far from limiting, restricting, omitting, and thus from ‘reducing,’ the reduction opens and gives. And what does it give? Givenness.”²⁴ To be sure, in order to give, it restricts appearing to itself; it limits it by excluding the apparitions and the theories that habitually surround and obscure it; it destroys the familiar prestige of the natural attitude. In Cartesian terms, one could say that it suspends the doubtful (apparition) in order to bring to light the certain; that is to say, in Husserlian terms, that it leads appearing back to that which truly appears in it and in person, that it distills appearing to the empirical, still indistinct and raw in its “manifold of intuition,” in order to give it its spirit and its flavour, in order to expose it insofar as it gives itself. The reduction allows appearance to be given as

²¹ *Ibid.*, 8 [87].

²² With a different, historical, approach, Jean-François Lavigne has recently followed Henry’s critique: “As it stands, the principle leaves both the type of intuition considered and the varieties of ‘what appears to us’ completely indeterminate and indistinct” (Jean-François Lavigne, *Husserl et la naissance de la phénoménologie (1903-1913)* [Paris: PUF, 2003], 28).

²³ Henry, “Four Principles,” 9 [88]. We could oppose to this reproach the many passages in which Husserl insists that bracketing is “not understood, naturally, as implying that we are deprived of it” (*Ideas I*, § 31, 55); see also *ibid.*, § 76, 74; *ibid.*, § 135, 329; *ibid.*, § 145, 356; see also Husserl, *Cartesian Meditations: An Introduction to Phenomenology*, trans. Dorian Cairns (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1960), § 8, 20-1 [Husserl, *Cartesianische Meditationen und Pariser Vorträge*, in *Hua I*, ed. Stephen Strasser (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1950), 60]. It is true, however, that that which is found bracketed is still the world (according to the natural attitude), and thus precisely ‘ecstatic’ space in Henry’s sense, rather than ‘life,’ which is ignored.

²⁴ Henry, “Four Principles,” 9 [88].

a proper phenomenon, in *Selbstgegebenheit*. In doing so, it aims not at an ontic residuum, but that which the ontic itself registers as a mere symptom or by-product—the given *insofar as it appears*. “The radical reduction reduces appearing itself.”²⁵ Today I formulate it thus: the reduction allows the phenomenon to appear *in itself*, whereas its unreduced appearance excludes the thing in itself by definition. The reduction allows the phenomenon to manifest itself as a thing manifesting itself *in itself*.

From my re-definition of the reduction as the operative (*Pouvoir*) of givenness, several positive and radical modifications of phenomenality follow, according to Henry: 1) The given that gives the reduction to the phenomenon can no longer be characterized, as it was for Husserl, by the fundamental destitution of intuition which, in front of the ecstatic anticipation of intentional aims, would remain first (if not forever) “punctual, conditional, surrounded by unfilled horizons.”²⁶ On the contrary, appearing does not cease to result in what Henry calls “the ‘more’ which characterizes the original givenness,” and that “lacks nothing.”²⁷ It fundamentally consists in what I call saturation, the excess and increase that pulls appearing beyond the object-type of phenomena, towards not only that which Henry identifies as the “invisible essence of life,”²⁸ but what I describe as saturated phenomena. 2) It results that phenomenality is carried not by the finitude of the objects of the world any more than givenness is limited by the “finitude of any ecstatic horizon,”²⁹ including that of Being, as in Heidegger’s view, or that of the subject who supposedly constitutes beings through its finite intentionality, as in Husserl’s view. Appearing is not measured by Being nor does it concentrate on beings. “The subordination of ontology to phenomenology”³⁰ that I propose therefore contrasts with Heidegger’s use of phenomenology as a simple method of ontology,³¹ and in this sense radicalizes some of Husserl’s indications such that I can speak of an “outside-being” of the *I*.³² In fact, one can undoubtedly maintain that Husserl’s discovery, in 1907, of *Gegebenheit* as the ultimate

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 11 [90].

²⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 18 [100].

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 13 [94], 14 [95].

³¹ Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. Joan Stambaugh (Albany: SUNY Press, 2010), § 7, 24: “The expression ‘phenomenology’ signifies primarily a *concept of method*”; *ibid.*, 31: “Phenomenology is the way of access to, and the demonstrative manner of determination of, what is to become the theme of ontology. *Ontology is possible only as phenomenology*”; *ibid.*, 33: “As far as content goes, phenomenology is the science of the being of beings.” [Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit* (Fübingen: Max Niemeyer, 1953), § 7, 27: “Der Ausdruck ‘Phänomenologie’ bedeutet primär einen *Methodenbegriff*”; *ibid.*, 35: “Phänomenologie ist Zugangsart zu dem und die ausweisende Bestimmungsart dessen, was Thema der Ontologie werden soll. *Ontologie ist nur als Phänomenologie möglich*”; *ibid.*, 37: “Sachlich genommen ist die Phänomenologie die Wissenschaft vom Sein des Seienden”]

³² Marion, *Reduction and Givenness*, V, § 7, 161 ff [240 ff] (cited by Henry, “Four Principles,” 15 [95]). Henry also confirms that my analysis of boredom is opposed to Heidegger’s analysis of anxiety in *Being and Time*, 97 ff [104 ff]. See *Reduction and Givenness*, VI, § 5, 186 [280]).

character of phenomenality cannot legitimately be identified with Being, and that it folds back on its ontic determination only due to the negligence of its “*ontological indifference*,” to take up the just analysis of Jean-François Lavigne.³³ Nothing necessitates that this reduced phenomenality, that of givenness, be reabsorbed into the ontological interpretation of beings, especially if these beings are defined first by their belonging to the world and their dependence on an intentional, ecstatic, aim. On the contrary, more originally than through beingness, the phenomenon is made explicit and is fulfilled without exception by the givenness in it. The reduction leads the phenomenon back to givenness by diminishing that which is not given in its appearance, without having always to concretize it under the apparition of a being or even an object. From Michel Henry’s perspective, this signifies that the phenomenon par excellence, Life, is no longer to be inscribed in Being (or beings) than it is to be manifest in any intentional ecstasis.

However, while recognizing the “immense merit” of the fourth principle,³⁴ Henry does not, finally, admit it as *the* principle of phenomenology, for a fundamental reason and through a very clear argument. To be sure, I could not have established as a principle “so much reduction, so much givenness” by simply passing beyond the limitation (following Husserl) of the reduction to the phenomenal horizon of the object. In so doing one would remain dependent on Heidegger’s critiques. Therefore, to in turn pass beyond the limitation (following Heidegger) of the reduction to the phenomenal horizon of Being, I took recourse to the profound boredom that subverts even anxiety as the fundamental tonality of *Dasein* by suspending the “call of beings,” and finally the call of Being itself to beings.³⁵ However, while Michel Henry might have approved of this suspension of the horizon of Being, he could not allow for the means that I employed in order to suspend it, namely the call (*Anspruch*). Neither, then, could he allow for that which the call constitutes, in a structural, and therefore, ecstatic relation: the response. In fact, the “the pair Call/ Response is substituted for the classic dichotomy of Subject/Object...it only *reverses* a relation conceived in both cases as constitutive of phenomenality, as preserving it. Far from escaping from the call of Being and from its implicit phenomenology, the structure of the call refers to Being and receives its own ‘structure’ from it: the opposition of Ek-stasis.”³⁶ It matters little that the “structure of the call” does not “create,” *for us*, any “personality,” since that is not the heart of the objection. In fact, the basis of the argument comes from elsewhere, from the observation that with respect to the phenomena of life, no call ever proceeds from any origin since there is no room, in this life, for any response: “what characterizes the scope of life is that it precedes

³³ Lavigne, *Husserl et la naissance de la phénoménologie*, 28. See *ibid.*, § 3, on the interpretation of the ‘three principles’ (*ibid.*, 21 ff), with the condition that we take this ‘total ontological indeterminacy’ (*ibid.*, 32, 372, and 527) no longer in a sense that is negative, but well and truly positive.

³⁴ Henry, “The Four Principles,” 16 [97].

³⁵ See *Reduction and Givenness*, §§ 4-7, 181 ff [272 ff].

³⁶ Henry, “The Four Principles,” 18-19 [101] (Emphasis added).

every response and does not wait for one. . . . And if there is no place here for a response that would give us the leisure of assuming or refusing the destiny of being, it is because, strictly speaking, we can no longer properly speak of the call.”³⁷ Life does not call or ask for a response, since it “has already thrown us into life itself, crushing us against it and against ourselves, in the suffering and joy of an invincible pathos.”³⁸ Not only can the play of the call and response not apply indifferently to all phenomenality, and thus remain without any relevance for the original phenomenon of life (the *Archi-phenomenon*), but it reproduces precisely that which forbids access to life—a dual structure, and therefore a distance, ecstasy—in short, the most constant and radical phenomenological obstacle to a phenomenology of life. In its pretention to maintain a unique definition of phenomenality as ecstasy, “this pure form of the call. . . resembles the unelaborated and univocal concept of the beginnings of phenomenology.”³⁹ In order to decisively surpass such an “empty formalism,”⁴⁰ one should admit of another “pure phenomenological material,”⁴¹ that precisely of life. Whence the demand for a *material* phenomenology in the strictest sense.⁴² The material of appearing, and that of life first and foremost, alone determines the ‘how’ of the phenomenon in a phenomenality without ecstasy. From there a reduction particular to life would follow—without intentionality, without the structure of the call, and without ecstatic object.

Ecstasy and the “Call and Response Structure”

Thus the argument Michel Henry uses to preclude the principle “so much reduction, so much givenness” *in the final analysis* has less to do with this formulation itself than with what it implies *in fine*: the formal structure of the call and response.

We must, then, examine this claim and ask whether the “structure of the call” truly refers back to the ecstasy of intentionality, and therefore if it pertains, in the best case scenario, only to the phenomenality of the world and not to that of

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 19 [102]. The mention of ‘Being’ here might seem shocking.

³⁸ *Ibid.* See the “purely formal character of the pronouncements” (*ibid.*, 2 [78]), “purely formal concepts” (*ibid.*, 6 [84]), “call as such. . . appearing too formal” (*ibid.*, 17 [99]). This reproach joins, strangely enough, that of Dominique Janicaud: “. . . pure, absolute, unconditioned—such is this call. It addresses, it is true, to a reader, to an interlocutor, however ideal. But here the interlocutor is in his or her turn reduced to his or her pure form, to the interlocuted ‘as such.’ Is not this experience, slimmed down to its a priori sheath, too pure to dare to pass itself off as phenomenological?” (Dominique Janicaud, “The Theological Turn in French Phenomenology,” in *Phenomenology and the Theological Turn*, trans., intro. and ed. Bernard G. Prusak (New York: Fordham University Press, 2000), 63 [Janicaud, *Le tournant théologique de la phénoménologie française* (Combas: Éditions de l’Éclat, 1991), 49]).

³⁹ Henry, “The Four Principles,” 18 [104].

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 7 [87].

⁴² See Henry, *Material Phenomenology*, trans. Scott Davidson (New York: Fordham University Press, 2008), especially the first study “Hyletic Phenomenology and Material Phenomenology.”

life. This interpretation rests on a clear and distinct presupposition: that ecstasy, or a distance and gap, separates the call and the response essentially—one opposes the other logically because the call should be able to remain without a response, just as the response should be able to reject the call. This always possible, and necessarily ecstatic, opposition should also be able to be marked chronologically by a temporal gap: once the call is pronounced, after a certain period of waiting, a response will arise be it instantaneously or after a delay. The two terms, reciprocal to be sure, would in this way remain in a relation that distinguishes them as much as it holds them together. Henry does not describe this situation explicitly, because he holds it to be well established and to go without saying; in fact, it is only on this condition that he is able to take as self-evident that the structure of the call and response is equivalent to the intentional structure of the subject and the object. But here the question arises: is the structure of the call and response indeed equivalent to intentional ecstasy?

On the contrary, we have long since established the fact⁴³ that the response proceeds from the call only because, *phenomenally*, it precedes it; in fact, far from coming after it, it appears simultaneously with it. This paradox therefore indicates that the relation between the call and response cannot be conceived according to a simple chronological succession (physical, worldly), since their relation does not make use of the ecstatic gap of intentionality. Let us make this point with a few examples.

1) The call is not heard by an auditor who awaits it, already awakened, already in the situation of listening, looking out for a sign or a sound. The watchman who awaits the aurora cannot serve as a paradigm here. For if he is awaiting the aurora, he is already keeping watch (*veille*); and if he is already keeping watch, it must be because he had been awakened (*éveillé*) once before, by a different call to which he has already responded: he must have already admitted that the sun must return at the end of every night, or that God saves and will always save his people. Only this *first* call, which has allowed him to keep watch with confidence and constancy every night, allows him to keep a close eye on the rising dawn today. It was only the first call (be it faith in God or the conviction of the truth of the laws of astronomy), which awakened him for the first time, that allowed him to become, thereafter, a regular and informed watchman. Just as, empirically, there is no pre-awakened consciousness that awaits the dawning of a day in the rooster's crow, and just as the sleeping consciousness does not lie in wait, since it is simply not a consciousness but a non-consciousness that sleeps like a log, phenomenologically there is no *I* (above all no transcendental *I*) who precedes the call, who anticipates it like an intentional consciousness anticipates its object. The addressee of the call is born *at the same time* as the call, is awakened by this call and bursts forth out of the depths of their own absence. He who is awoken therefore undeniably hears the call *at the very moment* of the response (the awakening), to the point that he reconstitutes the call by the response that he brings to it, even *after* it. We must conclude that the awoken one, the called one, is not held in ecstatic

⁴³ At least since my *Being Given*, § 28, 282 ff [390 ff].

distance from the call (or whatever other term you like) because he did not exist before it—was simply not *there*, in terms of *Dasein*.

2) However, one might ask in response if, once awoken by the call, the addressee does not address himself as such, as exposed to the responsibility of the response that depends upon and originates from him, as another term that he posits in front of and facing himself and the received call? This objection, however, again presupposes that which it intends to demonstrate—namely, an ecstatic structure (subject/object, the gap of the intentional aim)—which absolutely does not correspond to the real phenomenological situation of the response. For what is proper to the call lies in that it arrives first and for the most part as indeterminate, anonymous, and silent. *a) Indeterminate* because I do not immediately know *if* there was indeed a call: it could be nothing but the illusion of a sound, an insignificant perturbation, a noise, that I could accidentally take to be a true and distinct call; I must then decide that it is *in fact* a call and this eventual qualification as real will constitute my first response. *b) A call characterized as such will remain, then, anonymous*, for I must still decide that it is indeed addressed *to me* and that it concerns *me*, without immediately knowing its whence and whither: for, without any contradiction, I could very well identify a call while knowing neither its origin nor its meaning or impact. The search for identity (mine, deriving from that of the caller in the call), is an integral part of the event and experience of a call. To go along with, or to compromise with this anonymity demands from my side a response and only develops insofar as this response endures. *c) The call is silent*, finally, for as long as I do not fix its meaning, it will remain empty and say nothing. Supposing that I know whence it comes and that it concerns me, it would still remain empty as long as I did not establish whether it consists of simple information that should be registered as a neutral datum, or if it consists in a call asking for reaction, action, decision, or conversion from my side (or, as we rightly say, a *vocation*). Here again I must decide and decide by pronouncing a response, which alone can make the call a plenary phenomenon and appearing as such (*un phénomène plénier et apparaissant comme tel*). It follows that the call never *appears* by itself or immediately, except and only when the response constitutes it as an audible or visible phenomenon. The call is only accomplished in the response, and, without the response, remains inaccessible. And this is why some cannot hear the same call that I hear: for them, it might suffice not to identify a call, and to not take it up themselves, but to leave it mute; hearing the same call, I might I identify is as such, address it to myself and formulate it. Ultimately, in order to “have a voice,” one must simply respond to it.

Therefore, between the call and the response there is no logical or temporal gap: the call, albeit always *already* there by definition, only ever appears *after* its manifestation in the response that it provokes, and due to this fact it remains invisible and inaudible if no response meets it. The paradox of the call (always *already* given, but *not yet* phenomenalized) and the response (*first* phenomenalized but always *after the fact*) amounts to a prolepsis: the call is first found in the response. This prolepsis indissolubly gathers the two, abolishes the delay and intentional distance, and cancels the stable ecstatic gap.

The Univocity of “Life” in the Call and Response

However, there is more. Not only does the fourth principle (and its corollary in the structure of the call and response) not fall under the weight of Henry’s critique since it does not assume ecstatic phenomenality, but it might alone allow for the non-ecstatic phenomenality of ‘life’ to be conceived.

Indeed, a common critique of Michel Henry’s radically immanent determination of appearance as life, which is in his view the most fundamental and in fact the only essential mode of phenomenality, claims that it results in a division of phenomenality into two incompatible options without continuity or compatibility between them. In fact, he does go so far as to claim that there are “two phenomenologies” following the absolute “duplicity of appearance” between the “ecstatic truth” and the “non-ecstatic auto-appearing, which is the essence of the pathos of Life.”⁴⁴ Should we not detect in such heterogeneity the symptom of an insufficient determination of phenomenality? That is to say, in turning Henry’s own diagnostic against him, does it not mark the still formal and abstract nature of phenomenality and the principle of phenomenology? Moreover, after his examination of the four formulations of a first principle of phenomenology, Henry failed to produce a new formulation (he did not even attempt one) while rejecting all the rest, as though he renounced the very task, perhaps as much a failure as a deliberate passing over. Therefore, his discovery—in itself difficult to contest—of the self-affection of life as a determining phenomenon that escapes the intentional gap and its aporiai, suffers from an obvious weakness: the incapacity to lead the intentional (ecstatic) appearing of objects in the world (of which, for that matter, we could make no economy) back to non-ecstatic self-affection, which is supposed to found it and, in order to do so, remain related to them. This leading back (*reconduction*) (I prefer this modest term to Kant’s proud ‘deduction’) would only

⁴⁴ Henry, “Four Principles,” 18 [100]. This is also to be found in an earlier formulation: “Because their essences have between them nothing similar, because they rather differ in the irreducible heterogeneity of their structures, the invisible and the visible would not be able to transform themselves into one another, and no passage, no time binds them together, but they subsist apart from one another, each in the positivity of its own effectiveness. Thus must be understood in the light of this essential structural heterogeneity their opposition, not as an opposition between two opposed things, such as would hold in a ‘bond,’ but precisely as the opposition of that which has no bond, as an opposition in absolute difference. Such an opposition, in absolute difference, is that of indifference” (Henry, *The Essence of Manifestation*, trans. Girard Etzkorn [The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1973], 447-8 [Henry, *L’essence de la manifestation* (Paris: PUF, [1963] 2003), 561]). This objection was thoroughly developed by Michel Haar, albeit in too polemical a tone: “With what right does this second phenomenality, second in presentation but in reality the only true and originary phenomenality—the first being a catastrophic aberration and turning-away from the second—call itself phenomenal, since it has no outside, no *phainesthai*, no shining, no spark, no face or appearance, neither *Schein* nor *Erscheinung*?” (Michel Haar, “Michel Henry: entre phénoménologie et métaphysique,” in *Philosophie* 15 [1987], reprinted in *Lectures de Michel Henry. Enjeux et perspectives*, eds. Grégori Jean and Jean Leclercq [Louvain: Presses Universitaires de Louvain, 2014], 49). See also, in almost identical terms, Dominique Janicaud’s critique in “The Theological Turn,” 70-87 [57-71]. For a more precise approach which documents Henry’s opposition to Sartre, Merleau-Ponty, and Husserl, see my study “Michel Henry et l’invisible du phénomène,” in *Figures de la phénoménologie, Husserl, Heidegger, Levinas, Henry, Derrida* (Paris: Vrin, 2012), 107 ff.

be able to lead from an ecstatic phenomenality to a non-ecstatic phenomenality by means of a continued variation of the gaze that would in turn provoke a variation on phenomena in their respective 'how.' It would lend all of its foundational force to the phenomenality of life, which would then, and only then, become the model from which intentional ecstasy would derive, admittedly through an impoverishment but at least in the frame of one singular and finally coherent phenomenology, without the problem of continuity. Thus we could also overcome the dichotomies left open by Husserl (between the world of life and that of scientific objectivity), by Heidegger (between *Ereignis* and the metaphysical essence of technology), and especially by Levinas (between infinity and totality, ethics and justice, the Other and the third).

What then, for Michel Henry, would it be to attain the particularity of self-affection and therefore the non-ecstatic phenomenality of life? Precisely this: the experience (*épreuve*) that every living being (*vivant*) has of its own life in itself, that it cannot abstain from this "self-embrace,"⁴⁵ where life grasps it. This embrace is not a choice for the living being, since it is always already alive whether it wants to be or not, and this phenomenon is not preceded by any subjectivity that could attain to it afterwards or grasp it intentionally and be fulfilled, since such a fulfillment (if this term is still appropriate) takes place immediately, *preceding* all intentionality and even dispensing with it. However, with respect to this phenomenality, how could one overlook the many characteristics it shares with the structure of the call and response? Does Henry not suggest as much himself, in highlighting that "the call... is the embrace in which it gives itself to us and at the same time gives us being"?⁴⁶ The facticity without delay of life that is always already there, and always more intimate to me than my own self, effectively carries the character of the call: such a fulfillment, which intervenes without gap, deferral, or delay, from which I can not escape (since to ignore is not to abolish) and that I can support only as a rejoicing, as a suffering, or both, without ever constituting an object carries the character of the response. The non-ecstatic embrace of life with itself, which is accomplished in the self-affection of the living being, carries within it the character of the identity of the call and response, in which the call is phenomenalized. In this way the living being, given to himself in the gift that life gives to and from itself, carries within it precisely the character of the gifted (*l'adonné*), who receives himself at the same time as he receives the given. I summarize thusly:

The receiver does not precede what it forms by means of a prism—it results from it. The filter is deployed first as a screen. Before the not yet phenomenalized given gives itself, no filter awaits it. Only the *impact* of

⁴⁵ Henry, "Phénoménologie de la vie," in *Phénoménologie de la vie*, vol. I. *De la phénoménologie* (Paris : PUF, 2003), 72.

⁴⁶ Henry, "Four Principles," 19 [96]. In this sequence, I have intentionally omitted a) the specific 'call of Being' that mistakenly restricts the call to one of its particular cases, and b) the idea that this call "is simply its upsurge *in us*," which would seem to mistakenly suppose a *we* anterior to this call, whereas it too in fact results from the awakening.

what gives itself brings about the arising, *with one and the same shock*, of the flash with which its first visibility bursts and the very screen *on which it crashes*. Thought arises from pre-phenomenal indistinctness, like a transparent screen is colored by the impact of a ray of light heretofore uncolored in the translucent ether that suddenly explodes on it.⁴⁷

Through this “crash” and singular “shock,” the structure of the call and response allows us to clarify this obscure “embrace” of the self-affection of life—whereas the opposite is impossible. Better, it allows us, or at least does not prohibit us from also clarifying self-affection as an extreme case, but one that coheres with others, with phenomenality in general, without having to divide phenomenality into two regions and into two incompatible phenomenologies: understood through the call, the response, and the gifted, the “embrace” of life could also extend to worldly figures of phenomenality and take account of them as a number of variations, more and more distant and doubtless ecstatic, of that which it first establishes, but not exclusively, as immanent unfurlings of originary givenness. This unfurling, which would remain prohibited if we were to remain only with self-affection in order to effect the call and response in “life,” becomes permissible as soon as the power of the fourth principle, “so much reduction, so much givenness” authorizes it.

The Reduction: Univocal because Reciprocal

It remains for us to connect Michel Henry’s critique and his refutation of the call and response structure to the question that guided our introduction: the reduction. The strongest objections, and those most common to the encounter with the reduction’s phenomenological authenticity, are all concentrated around one principle: that the phenomenological reduction, in its idealistic turn of 1913, results in a transcendental reduction, which implies and originates in a transcendental *I*. Post-Husserlian developments of phenomenology however (and some of their successes which we cannot here discuss), link up with other philosophical developments (usually their aporiai) in order to radically declare that no *I*, *ego*, or subject can still today lay claim to this transcendental position and dignity. Due to the failure of this transcendental *I*, the reduction, which is always considered to be essentially transcendental, must itself be renounced. This critical orientation accords with Henry’s conclusion regarding the principles of phenomenology: they all presuppose, in one way or another, intentional ecstasis, the gap between the intention of the (transcendental) subject and its object (and the objective of its intention) and therefore the opening of the world according to a phenomenality of exteriority. Thus understood, the objection concentrates on the *who* and the *what* of the reduction—who reduces what to what? Even more precisely, it concentrates on the relation of exteriority (and of unilateral domination) between the *who* and the *what*. Therefore, whether we contest the general transcendentality of the *I*, or

⁴⁷ Marion, *Being Given*, § 26, 265 [365]. A precise description of this surprise, as a precise type of phenomenality, should be added here.

if we oppose “life” to it (Henry), the reduction is always rejected, being conceived of in advance as a relation and, in fact, as an unequal relation between two heterogeneous terms, one a reducer, the other reduced. But this presupposition is not self-evident either. In fact, it must be questioned as soon as one recognizes that the reduction is not accomplished in a unilateral and unequal relation, but always in a reciprocal and mutual relation of its terms, its *who* and its *what*. The reduction always *simultaneously* reduces the subject and the object, which are both reduced by the measure of the reduction, insofar as it consists in the reducer and the reduced: “The suspension of the validity (*Außergeltungsetzen*) of the world implies therefore *at the same time (zugleich)* a suspension of the validity of apperception that objectifies myself as being-in-the-world (*mich selbst verweltlichenden Aperzeption*).”⁴⁸

Several examples confirm this reciprocity of the reduction. It is remarkable that, in the case of as exemplary a transcendental reduction as that which Husserl establishes between consciousness and reality (or nature, the world, etc.), of the “diversity among modes of being, the most cardinal among them...,” there nevertheless remains an “essentially fundamental difference between corresponding kinds of givenness.”⁴⁹ Indeed, this unique reference to *Gegebenheit* always remains: “We hold fast to the following: Whereas it is essential to givenness by apparitions (*Erscheinungen*) that no appearance presents the affair as something “absolute” instead of in a one-sided presentation, it is essential [on the contrary] to the givenness of something immanent precisely to present something absolute.”⁵⁰ Therefore, all differences notwithstanding, he who effects the reduction carries himself the character of being reduced—here a reduction to *Gegebenheit*, to givenness. He carries it, or more precisely takes it on, in order to effect the reduction: the *who* modifies itself into absolute givenness *in order to* be able to modify the *what* into relative givenness. Transcendentality does maintain its gap, but it also characterizes the *I* because, in the reciprocal determination of the two terms as givens, one is still given as an object (only subsisting insofar as it is given to knowledge) and therefore requires another given to be the knowing

⁴⁸ Husserl, *Erste Philosophie (1923/24). Zweiter Teil: Theorie der phänomenologischen Reduktion*, in *Hua VIII*, ed. Rudolf Boehm (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1959), § 38, 319. [I generally follow Marion’s French translation of *Erste Philosophie*, which has not yet appeared in English.—*Trans.*] This constitutes the conclusion of an even more explicit argument: “What brings me to be elevated above this attitude where I lose myself in the world and where I wear worldly garments? What brings me to become conscious of myself in my purity and my transcendental originality?... The answer is clear: it is *also* by means of this very suspension of the validity of the world in its totality. For I perceive presently only that for me, after having suspended all belief in the world, after having set it aside in the most efficient of manners—namely the very possible hypothesis of the declaration of nullity affecting the whole world—thereafter, my own position as a reality of the world, as a man, also becomes impossible” (*ibid.*).

⁴⁹ Husserl, *Ideas I*, § 42, 90 [88].

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, § 44, 96-97 [93-94]. See *ibid.*, “anything physical which is given ‘in person’ can be non-existent; no lived experience which is given ‘in person’ can be non-existent” [translation modified], and Didier Franck’s commentary in *Flesh and Body*, trans. Joseph Rivera and Scott Davidson, (London: Bloomsbury, 2014), 37 ff [Franck, *Chair et corps. Sur la phénoménologie de Husserl* (Paris: Éditions de Minuit, 1981), 24]; and my own in *Reduction and Givenness*, 49 ff [85 ff].

actor (given insofar as it is the knower). But this inequality does not mean that the *who* can reduce the *what* in some other way than by being himself reduced, to the same and unique givenness.

A significant confirmation of the reciprocity of the reduction is to be found in the second principal figure Husserl introduces, namely the transcendental reduction of experience to the sphere of ownness. This reduction emerges from the question of the access to the other *I*, to the Other (*autrui*), in such a way that he not appear simply as an object in the world (a physical body, a *Körper*), but truly as an *alter ego*, as a “‘mirroring’ of my own self and yet not a mirroring proper, an analogue of my own self and yet again not an analogue in the usual sense.”⁵¹ Its own status as a subject *like and as myself* among a world of objects would also, therefore, have to burst forth through its apparition in sketches similar to those of all other objects in the world, according to a phenomenality through which it could not, however, appear directly by principle. How can we conceive of this paradox? In two steps. First, by another reduction that, strangely, has nothing to do with the world, or the other *I* sought, but with the transcendental *I* that I am myself alone. Indeed, I can reduce myself by bracketing everything in me that refers to an immanent transcendence, namely significations (obtained by the reduction of essences, among other processes), in order to hold on to what is really immanent. In this case I notice that “If I reduce other men to what is included in my ownness, I get bodies (*Körper*) included therein; [but] if I reduce myself as a man, I get my *flesh* (*Leib*) and my soul (*Seele*), or myself as a psychophysical unity in the latter, my personal *I*, who operates (*wirkt*) in this flesh and, *by means of it* in the *external world*, and is affected by it.”⁵² Otherwise put, “among the bodies (*Körper*) belonging to nature and included in my particular sphere of ownness, I find *my flesh* uniquely singled out, namely as the only one among them that is not simply a body (*Körper*) but precisely a *Flesh* (*Leib*): the sole Object within my abstract world-stratum to which, in accordance with experience, I ascribe fields of sensation (*Empfindungsfelder*)... the only object *in* which I *rule and govern* immediately, governing particularly in each of its *organs*.”⁵³ Led back in this way to its own (*propre*) flesh, that is to say properly (*proprement*) to its flesh, to its flesh as what is finally proper to it, the transcendental *I* finds itself reduced: “I, the reduced *human-I* (the “psychophysical” *I*), am constituted, accordingly, as a member of the *world*.”⁵⁴

From this a new possibility follows: thus reduced to my flesh as sensing and sensing the world in sensing it, I might assume, by analogy and pairing, that the Other is my double, similar to me; but this assumption is effected in the reverse direction from that of my own reduction to my flesh: the Other appears as a *Körper* that has received and presents a *Leib*, whereas I experience myself (*je m'éprouve moi*), once my *Körper* is reduced to its ownness, as a *Leib*. We shall not take up

⁵¹ Husserl, *Cartesian Meditations*, § 44, 94 [125].

⁵² *Ibid.*, 97 [128] (Translation modified).

⁵³ *Ibid.* (Translation modified).

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 99 [129] (Translation modified).

this famous demonstration in detail,⁵⁵ but will retain what is important: in order to reduce the Other to its proper phenomenality—so that it does not simply appear as a physical body in nature but as another flesh—I must *first and foremost* reduce myself to my flesh and what is ultimately proper to me. Hence the reduction explicitly becomes a reciprocal relation between the *who* and the *what*. When, and in order that, the *what* might be an Other, the *who*, the *I*, must reduce itself to its own flesh. The *reciprocity* of the relation of reduction even imposes a proportional *univocity* that crosses the modes of phenomenality (in fact of givenness) of its two terms. Phenomenalization progresses according to the measure of the reciprocity in the univocity of the two terms. Moreover, Husserl even dares to speak of a “universal ethical *epoché*”—a bracketing that works *universally*, and therefore reciprocally, with the grasping of the flesh of my *I* and of the other *I*, indeed of all other *Is*.⁵⁶

One could surely confirm this rule of reciprocity with several other exam-ples. Let us sketch at least two. When Heidegger undertakes to allow phenomena to appear as they are in themselves, he no longer attempts to see them in a horizon of objectivity (in which Husserl would always continue to constitute them), but in the horizon of Being, as beings in their (mode of-) Being. Their phenomenality must first, then, pass from one horizon to another, and pass through the distinction of these *very same* phenomena as at once subsisting (*vorhanden*) and usable (*zubanden*) objects.⁵⁷ But this ontico-ontological reduction (and it does remain one) is unable to pass the *what* of a mode of being from one mode of phenomenality to another unless the *who*—who is supposed to effect this passage—understands himself no longer as a simply knowing and perceiving *I* (reproducing the minimal being of *esse est percipere aut percipi* presupposed by the Cartesian position and by that which would become the transcendental *I* of Kant and Husserl), but rather only if he understands himself as that being charged with the Being of all other beings. One must then *reduce* the *I* to *Dasein*. The problematic of self-appropriation (*Eigentlichkeit*) indeed seeks to *reduce* this common figure of the transcendental *I*, doubtless represented by the *One* (*das Man*) in the existential analytic,⁵⁸ whom anyone and everyone can become if the question is only to understand phenomena, to recognize them as always and already well understood, to use them without seeing them, in short: to produce and consume them. To reduce the *One* means to have *Dasein* appear in its ownness (*eigentlich, propre*), by the anticipatory resolution that reveals to it that its Being is oriented towards the end (death), since it orients itself temporally towards the future rather than remaining

⁵⁵ See *ibid.*, §§ 50-55, and Husserl, *Erste Philosophie II*, § 53.

⁵⁶ Husserl, *Erste Philosophie II*, Beilage II, 319.

⁵⁷ [Following Marion’s French rather than the standard English ‘present at hand (*Vorhanden*)’ and ‘ready-to-hand’ (*Zubanden*).—*Trans.*]

⁵⁸ [Here again, under the weight of Marion’s perceptive commentary, the poverty of the conventional English translation of *das Man* as ‘the They’ is too great to be maintained. I opt for ‘one’ which etymologically mirrors the French ‘on’ and which perfectly characterizes the universal and impersonal nature of the transcendental and reduced *I* whose existential incarnation Heidegger so famously problematized.—*Trans.*]

enclosed in the present like *vorhanden* objects. The experience (*l'épreuve*) of this resolution takes place in the fundamental disposition of anxiety, where the nothingness of every object appears to *Dasein* in the region of the world as such, *almost* the ontological difference. Hence *Dasein* must reduce itself to its properly ontological state in order to be able to reduce the objects to their ontic state. The reduction thus turns out to be reciprocal here as well; which explains the incessant comings and goings of the existential analytic that never ceases to practice at once the reduction of things to their beingness and the reduction of the *I* to *Dasein*, as the ontological being. This reciprocity of the reduction implies a univocity (not without difference, since it occurs with the *almost* of the ontological difference).⁵⁹

We must go further. As soon as it is admitted that Levinas opposes what we shall call an ethical reduction that takes phenomenality from totality to infinity to the transcendental reduction of Husserl and the ontico-ontological reduction of Heidegger, which seems like a reasonable admission, we find the two characteristics that we have attempted to discern in every phenomenological reduction: the reciprocity and the underlying univocity of each of its two terms. The ethical reduction leads the natural attitude's sketch, in which the other appears as an animated figure who is visible in common space and is endowed with characteristics compatible with any object (quantity, spatiality, dimensions, administrative *data*, dates of production, validity, physiological performance, a variety of economic calculations, etc.) back to a radically other appearance. This mode of appearance, wherein the other (*autre*) appears ethically as an Other (*autrui*), is signified in that the Face remains, if we take it as a façade and in terms of objectivity, literally *invisible*: for the Face (*face*) and the face (*visage*) do not allow the Other to be seen as an object of the world, precisely because his alterity does not show itself therein, and nor does it do so through symptoms, expressions, or pronouncements; strictly speaking the façade of the other man manifests nothing of his alterity, but rather, it usually dissimulates him as a mask or as a lie. The Other as such is never phenomenalized according to the same *how* as the phenomena of the world. The invisible face, however, phenomenizes the Other in his pure alterity, following another *how* of appearance, in *speaking*, in saying (even without a pronouncement, in fact usually in silence): "You shall not kill me." This is an Other because this is a commandment that imposes itself upon me and posits me as ethically constrained and obligated towards this Other, who thereafter becomes primordial and rules over me. The injunction can evidently be transgressed, but it nevertheless signifies that, because one cannot disqualify or cancel it except by murder, it is definitively that of an *Other*. The Other no longer appears, then, as the term of my intentional aim, as my objective, at the level of other objects of the world; it exerts upon me a counter-intentionality (an interdiction, a commandment) that constrains and reverses me. It reverses me from the status of an ultimately transcendental subject to the status of being responsible for the Other—to the status of he who must unconditionally respond (not only for

⁵⁹ On the details of this reading and the reservations regarding the *almost* that affects the ontological difference in *Being and Time*, see my *Reduction and Donation*, esp. chapters II-IV.

the fault that I might have committed against him, but even for the evil that he may have committed, to the evil he may have committed against *me*). As soon as the ethical reduction reveals to me the *what* as an Other, it has in fact transformed it into a *who*, while I do not become a *what* (as in the Hegelian or Sartrean recognition of consciences), but a *who*, insofar as I understand myself to be ethically obligated to this Other. The reduction transforms me, through election to the commandment, into its hostage in the same gesture that makes it appear as infinite Other.

At this point, we see that one must understand radically that which Husserl called the “inversion of values (*Ummwertung*).”⁶⁰ That which is inverted is not only the mode of appearance of the *what* of the reduction, but also the mode of appearance of its *who*. The reversal concerns the one and the other—from the natural attitude to the field of idealities, to that of the inter-objective objects of the sciences and also towards that of the Being of beings, and especially that of the ethical imposition. Each time, the reduction is accomplished reciprocally: if it were not, if the *who* did not attain to an other *how* of its phenomenality, how could it trigger or confront the corresponding modification of the *how* of its *what*? The underlying univocity of the *how* common to both terms of the reduction also results directly from this reciprocity, in one same ground, the ground of one same phenomenal theatre. The reduction can take on multiple forms, of which transcendental ecstasy and self-affection undoubtedly constitute the two extremes; but all respect the complicity between the given and the gifted, according to the same univocity of the reduction and the constant reciprocity of its terms.

Epoché and Reduction

For all that, does not this double determination of the reduction, even if it allows us to overcome some aporiai (for example Henry’s, among others) admit of exceptions or limits? In particular, should we not reconsider, with Émilie Tardivel, the radical distinction made by Patočka between a reduction which always refers back to a subject (ultimately a transcendental subject) and the a-subjectivity implied by the *epoché*?⁶¹ The argument is well known: in the *epoché*, even at its most radical, far from returning to an *ego* and annihilating the world, phenomenality ultimately returns to the world itself “as unfalsifiable;” indeed, “the possibility of falsification always concerns only singularities, *there is always the world*, the ensemble of objective unities, the unfalsifiable totality.”⁶² Such an

⁶⁰ Husserl, *Ideas I*, § 31 and § 76.

⁶¹ Émilie Tardivel, “La liberté comme expérience du monde,” *Philosophie* 118 (2013): 73 ff. Following her fine introduction to the phenomenality of the world as pure event (see *La liberté au principe. Essai sur la philosophie de Patočka* (Paris: Vrin, 2011)), she adopts a clear solution: the world opens itself to an *epoché*, more than to a reduction (Tardivel, “Monde et donation. Une révision du quatrième principe de la phénoménologie,” *Revue de Métaphysique et de Morale* 85 [2015] 1: 121-160). As we shall see, it might be essential to correct the claim of the fourth principle if we admit that: a) every reduction is not necessarily transcendental, and b) every reduction puts the *epoché* to work as its *method* (such that the two terms are not identical).

⁶² Jan Patočka, *Papiers Philosophiques*, trans. Erika Abrams (Grenoble: Millon, 1995), 267.

“unfalsifiable noema”⁶³ has the final word with respect to phenomenality, for it concentrates no longer on an *ego* which holds only an empty certitude when faced with the unlimited evenmentality of the world.⁶⁴ Bracketing, then, would no longer proceed as a reduction, which always intends to lead phenomenal experience back to an architectonic *I* in one way or another; rather, it would effect an *epoché*, not one which would deliver the phenomenon of the world by installing a principle or transcendental *ego*, but a free *epoché*, and therefore a-subjective phenomenality. To follow the path opened by Patočka, one would have to admit both that the reduction is not ultimately equivalent to the *epoché*, which would undertake a reduction while undoing the subject, but also that the reduction does not have exclusive rights to grant givenness.⁶⁵ Should we accept this conclusion?

In such a delicate debate, prudence dictates that one should return to Husserl and his distinctions. First, one remarks that Husserl never ceased to maintain strict universality with respect to the phenomenological operation. Whether he speaks of a “universal reversal (*universaler Umsturz*),”⁶⁶ a “universal invalidation (*universaler Aufsergeltungsetzen*) of all assumed positions,”⁶⁷ or, most frequently, of “the universality of this *epoché*,”⁶⁸ the result is always a “universal *epoché*.”⁶⁹ However, the *epoché* does not attain to its universality suddenly or immediately, for it is not at all abstract. It comes to be verified as it is accomplished; it always consists in a determination of “which modification, which development of method is required, which kind of extension of the *epoché* to *absolute universality* will be imposed.”⁷⁰ The *epoché* remains essentially, by fact and by right, an operation, the operation of abstaining from positing a thesis, of retaining and suspending it, of putting it out of play and bracketing it. This operation is universalized insofar as it has the chance to be repeated upon different theses and of providing, in doubled retentions, ever-greater givens, like dams that create greater and greater lakes as they hold back the water. Therefore the sole, identical *epoché* can work first psychologically (following the Cartesian path,

⁶³ *Ibid.*

⁶⁴ Patočka, *Introduction to Husserl's Phenomenology*, trans. Erazim Kohák (Chicago: Open Court, 1996), 105; On this point, I agree with Tardivel's analysis of Patočka (see my “La donation, dispense du monde,” *Philosophie* 118 [2013] 3, especially my citations at 83 ff).

⁶⁵ While taking up the position of the aforementioned study with respect to Patočka, I will not reproduce all of its arguments here. However, let us highlight two points: a) It seems clear that the *ego*, as Patočka describes it and its role, offers a kind of equivalency to the giver under the figure of “realizer” (*ibid.*, 87 ff.) such that it is constituted by the givenness that presents the world as event; b) The relation between Patočka and Henry merits a more systematic analysis since they share the ambition of the possibility of a resolutely non-objective phenomenality.

⁶⁶ Husserl, *Erste Philosophie II*, § 52, 168.

⁶⁷ Husserl, *Cartesian Meditations*, § 8.

⁶⁸ Husserl, *Ideas I*, § 32.

⁶⁹ Husserl, *The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology: An Introduction to Phenomenological Philosophy*, trans. David Carr (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1970), § 40 [Husserl, *Die Krisis der europäischen Wissenschaften und die transzendente Phänomenologie. Eine Einleitung in die phänomenologische Philosophie*, in *Hua VI*, ed. Walter Biemel (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1954)] and *Erste Philosophie II*, § 48, 143.

⁷⁰ Husserl, *Erste Philosophie II*, § 52, 142.

maintaining the natural attitude), and then transcendently: “I can in this way put to work a kind of ‘*phenomenological epoché*’ with respect to every act that I accomplish spontaneously... in an unlimited and *in no way transcendental* manner, as will be shown.”⁷¹ Husserl insists on this point: “The *epoché* is also relative, even though it can transform into a transcendental *epoché* at any moment, as we know;”⁷² “I become the transcendental spectator and my *epoché* itself becomes *transcendental* because it is universal and radical.”⁷³ There is indeed a progression, a repetition, “a certain extension (*gewisse Erweiterung*) of the *epoché* towards a not only all-encompassing *epoché*, but one which, so to speak, reabsorbs all psychological elements, and would necessarily lead to the transcendental reduction, and to an even further reaching reduction (*noch weiter reichenden*).”⁷⁴ It remains, then, perfectly possible to “nonetheless effect the phenomenological *epoché* at the psychological level as well as the transcendental level.”⁷⁵

This constant repetition of the unique *epoché* allows us to take up the question of its relation to the reduction. Here the conclusion of J.F. Lavigne’s inquiry assumes its full significance: “for the author of *Ideas I*, there is only one phenomenological reduction, one sole *epoché*,” to the point that one “must distinguish between a ‘*phenomenological*’ reduction-*epoché* in the broad sense, which is effected on the basis of the (ontological) natural attitude and leaves the meaning of the being of the world intact as an empirical reality; and a ‘*phenomenological*’ reduction-*epoché* in the strict sense, which leaves behind the natural attitude itself.”⁷⁶ In fact, Husserl did not hesitate to evoke a “method of the transcendental reduction”⁷⁷ as well as a “specific method, the method of the *epoché*,”⁷⁸ and even once of a “method of the universal *epoché* and the reduction.”⁷⁹ This means that the *epoché* and the reduction are not to be found on the same level, concurrently, where the first could eventually bypass the second, but rather that they maintain a relation of method: the reduction follows the method, or the path indicated by the *epoché*, such that with each discovery of givenness, the reduction still and always effects the suspension, the retention, and the bracketing of that which is not found to be effectively given. The *epoché* does not compete with the reduction, it serves it. Or rather, the reduction never ceases to serve (*üben*) the *epoché* and to effect it: “‘Transcendental’ reduction exercises

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, § 43, 108.

⁷² *Ibid.*, Beilage XXIII, 450.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, § 46, 129.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, § 53, 170.

⁷⁶ Lavigne, *Accéder au transcendental? Réduction et idéalisme transcendental dans les ‘Idées I’* (Paris: Vrin, 2009), 140 and 138, respectively. Furthermore: “The reduction is also called *epoché* in the context of phenomenological psychology” (*ibid.*, 138) because “phenomenology first existed *without being transcendental at all*... Phenomenology *became* transcendental, through a process that was piecemeal and quite long (1902-1906)” (*ibid.*, 144).

⁷⁷ Husserl, *Cartesian Meditations*, § 34, 69 [103].

⁷⁸ Husserl, *Erste Philosophie II*, § 48, 141.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, § 52, 165. See Husserl, *Crisis*, § 70.

the *epoché* with respect to actuality.”⁸⁰ There is only ever one operation, the *epoché*, but it is put to work on multiple occasions.

In Service of Givenness

We can make use of at least some of these occasions. The unique *epoché* is produced in the case of the eidetic reduction, which suspends the lived experience of the individual thing in order to reach its essence. It is again produced in the reduction that follows the Cartesian path, which suspends every idea of the world while leaving the *ego* and the consciousness-region as a still posited residue. It is always reproduced in the transcendental reduction: “By phenomenological *epoché* I reduce my natural human *I* and my spiritual life—the realm of *my psychological self-experience*—to my transcendental-phenomenological *I*, the realm of *transcendental-phenomenological self-experience*.”⁸¹ It is produced from the anachronic relation of the not-yet transcendental phenomenological reduction and the properly transcendental reduction.⁸² Furthermore, it is also produced in the ‘second’ transcendental reduction, the reduction to ownness that is the reduction of the *I* to its flesh and the body of the other to the flesh of the *alter ego*. Nothing prevents us from continuing. For the methodological operation works in the suspension of the transcendental subject in order to liberate the originary phenomenality of the world (Patočka), in the suspension that provides for the ethical phenomenality of the Other (Levinas), and finally in the suspension of the world of objects of ecstatic transcendentality in order to experience the invisible

⁸⁰ Husserl, *Ideas I*, § 97, 239 [228]. Also: “With regard to any positing we can quite freely exercise this particular epoché, a certain refraining from judgment which is compatible with the unshaken conviction of truth, even with the unshakeable conviction of evident truth” (*ibid.*, § 31, 59 [64]). The two terms, epoché and reduction, do reunite insofar as they make use of one methodological operation: “The fundamental phenomenological method of transcendental epoché...is called transcendental-phenomenological reduction” (Husserl, *Cartesian Meditations*, § 8, 21 [61]). See also the article for Encyclopedia Britannica: “We would like to proceed here by introducing the ‘transcendental reduction’ as built on the psychological reduction [or reduction of the psychical], as an additional part of the purification which can be performed on it any time, a purification that is accomplished once more by means of a certain epoché.... Thus, while the psychologist, operating within what for him is the naturally accepted world, reduces to pure psychic subjectivity the subjectivity occurring there (but still within the world), the transcendental phenomenologist, through his absolutely all-embracing epoché, reduces this psychologically pure element to transcendental pure subjectivity” (Edmund Husserl, “The Encyclopaedia Britannica Article [draft D],” in *Psychological and Transcendental Phenomenology and the Confrontation with Heidegger* (1927-1931), trans. and ed. Richard E. Palmer and Thomas J. Sheehan (Dordrecht: Springer, 1997), 173 [Husserl, “Abhandlungen der Encyclopaedia Britannica Artikel,” in *Hua IX*, ed. Walter Biemel (Den Haag: Martinus Nijhoff, 1968), 293].

⁸¹ Husserl, *Cartesian Meditations*, § 11, 26 [65].

⁸² Following Jean-François Lavigne’s analysis on the anticipation of the order of the reduction in *Ideas I*: “The reduction that the *Ideas* effects after the justification of transcendental idealism is the *epoché* as an already founded methodological procedure” (Lavigne, *Accéder au transcendental?*, 206); also “The eidetic reduction already itself implies the *epoché* of the facticity of the lived experience” (*ibid.*, 244).

phenomenality of life (Henry). Each time it is a question of “the most profound and rich method of the universal *epoché* and the reduction.”⁸³

We can now return to the ‘fourth principle’ of phenomenology, “so much reduction, so much givenness.” We have attempted to show that it does not attempt to restore the formal structure of a transcendent and ecstatic phenomenology, which would merely mimic Husserl’s hesitant beginnings. We have suggested that the call and response structure that undergirds this principle can alone establish the reciprocal unity of the *who* and the *what* of the reduction. We have emphasized that, therefore, only in this way does the reduction retain its univocity, despite its diverse uses, according to the spaces of phenomenality that provide each *epoché* with its boundaries. It remains to ask whether in every case, as Husserl himself understood, it is a question “not only of the method of the phenomenological reduction, but at the same time a *phenomenology of the phenomenological reduction*.”⁸⁴ Otherwise put, “a phenomenological theory of the *epoché*”⁸⁵ opens the *possibility* of ceaselessly producing new reductions. The last, in fact the first in intention, would be the reduction to givenness. Once more, “so much reduction, so much givenness.”

Translated by Daniel Gillis

⁸³ Husserl, *Erste Philosophie II*, § 52, 165. Or, Husserl, *Ideen zur einer reinen Phänomenologie und phänomenologischen Philosophie. Drittes Buch: Die Phänomenologie und die Fundamente der Wissenschaften*, in Hua V, ed. Marly Biemel (Den Haag: Martinus Nijhoff, 1952), 150: “The proper sense of this problematic returns to the I being purely in and for itself; that this I as presupposition of knowledge of the world cannot remain presupposed as a worldly being, that one must therefore carry it to transcendental purity by the phenomenological reduction, by the epoché with respect to the being-for-me of the world” (Translation original).

⁸⁴ Husserl, *Erste Philosophie II*, § 52, 164.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, Beilage II, 313.