

Michel Henry between Krisis and Critique: Philosophy in the Age of Barbarism

Carla Canullo

Preview

Michel Henry was, fundamentally, neither a thinker of the Krisis, nor a philosopher of “critical” thought. In his *Barbarism*, however, and his two volumes on Marx, Henry criticized forcefully the culture of his time and place. Culture, Henry suggests, has brought about an over-turning (*rovesciamento*) that has obscured life, its inner essence. Henry’s phenomenology, which opposes itself explicitly to this over-turning, strives to grasp, and to re-turn (*controrovesciare*) thought again, to that which, in his view, has been concealed. This doubled turn—an over-turning of an over-turning, advanced in order to restore what modern thought has subtracted, i.e., life—represents the most fundamental, genuinely, ‘critical’ aspect of Henry’s philosophy. The question here, then, is to see whether and how Henry’s phenomenological proposal can regain (*ritrovato*) what has been forgotten and concealed, and how this subtracted (*rimosso*) element can be returned (*ridonato*) again to thought. If this can be clarified, the genuinely critical character of Henry’s thought can be constituted, as capable both of protesting against its time and of proposing elements for its renewal. In this essay, I will introduce certain characteristic themes of *Barbarism*, in order to establish a connection between barbarism and its critique. This connection will be established through a clarification of two such radical reversals in our age; those of culture, on one hand, and psychoanalysis on the other. In order to investigate this connection, and in order to engage the general theme of a reversal (*rovescio*), I will take a detour, in order to begin with what I will define as a forgotten overturning (*rovescio*).

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Michel Henry was, fundamentally, neither a thinker of the *Krisis*, nor a philosopher of “critical” thought. In his *Barbarism*,¹ however, and his two volumes on Marx,² Henry criticized forcefully the culture of his time and place. Culture, Henry suggests, has brought about an over-turning (*rovesciamento*) that has obscured life, its inner essence. Henry’s phenomenology, which opposes itself explicitly to this over-turning, strives to grasp, and to re-turn (*controrovesciare*) thought again, to that which, in his view, has been concealed. This doubled turn—an over-turning of an over-turning, advanced in order to restore what modern thought has subtracted, i.e., life—represents the most fundamental, genuinely, ‘critical’ aspect of Henry’s philosophy. The question here, then, is to see whether and how Henry’s phenomenological proposal can regain (*ritrovato*) what has been forgotten and concealed, and how this subtracted (*rimosso*) element can be returned (*ridonato*) again to thought. If this can be clarified, the genuinely critical character of Henry’s thought can be constituted, as capable both of protesting against its time and of proposing elements for its renewal. In this essay, I will introduce certain characteristic themes of *Barbarism*, in order to establish a connection between barbarism and its critique. This connection will be established through a clarification of two such radical reversals in our age; those of culture, on one hand, and psychoanalysis on the other. In order to investigate this connection, and in order to engage the general theme of a reversal (*rovescio*), I will take a detour, in order to begin with what I will define as a forgotten overturning (*rovescio*).³

¹ Michel Henry, *Barbarism*, trans. Scott Davidson (London: Continuum, 2012) [Michel Henry, *La barbarie* (Paris: Grasset, 1987)].

² Henry, *Marx*, trans. Kathleen McLaughlin (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1983) [Henry, *Marx*, 2 vols. (Paris: Gallimard, 1976)].

³ [The author here employs a set of concepts articulated more fully in her *La fenomenologia rovesciata. Percorsi tentati in Jean-Luc Marion, Michel Henry e Jean-Louis Chrétien* (Torino, Rosenberg & Sellier, 2004)—*Trans.*]

Philosophizing in Reverse, or; Toward a Forgotten Overturning

The first part of *Incarnation*⁴ is entitled “*Le renversement de la phénoménologie.*” Therein, Henry summarizes a thesis that he had advanced previously, in different terms. This thesis is much more than a mere hermeneutic hypothesis: it is a genealogy of philosophical knowledge as born in Europe, and embraced also on other continents, despite pockets of resistance still today. Before dealing with this specific theme, however, I would like to introduce the general frame in which these observations obtain, a frame that itself emerges from a difficulty.

What we commonly term ‘philosophy’ has its origins—or at least gains this name—in Greece. In this “place” of spirit, the word assumes the meaning we normally assign to it, i.e., a rational principle that grounds objective knowledge. The term that defines the title of Henry’s book, ‘barbarous,’ from which “barbarism” derives, was born in Greece as well. This term was used to designate those who could not speak Greek, those who did not belong to the shared and common cultural *koiné*. Indeed, the term did not have any negative connotation, as it does in Henry’s usage. In Greece and Rome, a barbarian was a “stammerer,” someone who could not speak, as a result of being a stranger, and of descending from a different lineage. To the degree that barbarism is stigmatized, the phenomenological proposal made by Henry does not intend to speak the Greek language of the *logos* that illuminates all knowledge. Paradoxically, for such a Greek it is Henry who would appear barbarous. Indeed, Henry is barbaric also for the modern philosophy that developed from the Galilean scientific breakthrough.

Henry returns serially to the theme of his own barbarism, as well as to his critique of the Greek idea of manifestation and truth. The first chapter of *I Am the Truth*,⁵ and § 5 of *Incarnation*, testify to this:

In Greece, things are called “phenomena.” “Phenomenon,” *phainomenon*, comes from the verb *phainesthai*, which carries within it the root *pha-*, *phos*, which means light. *Phainesthai* therefore means “what shows itself by coming into the light, by coming into the daylight. The light into which things come in order to show themselves in their quality as phenomena is the light of the world. The World is not the set of things, of beings, but the horizon of light where things show themselves in their quality as phenomena. The world thus does not designate what is true but rather Truth itself. The phenomena of the world are things inasmuch as they show themselves in the world, which is their proper “monstration,” their appearance, their manifestation, their revelation.”⁶

⁴ Henry, *Incarnation. A Philosophy of Flesh*, trans. Karl Hefty (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2015) [Henry, *Incarnation. Une philosophie de la chair* (Paris: Seuil, 2000)].

⁵ Henry, *I Am the Truth. Toward a Philosophy of Christianity*, trans. Susan Emanuel (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003), 12-20 [Henry, *C’est moi la vérité. Pour une philosophie du christianisme* (Paris: Seuil, 1996), 21-31].

⁶ *Ibid.*, 14 [23-24].

The entirety of Henry's thought is committed to the critique, and to the supersession, of this reductive manner of intending 'truth.' This is, however, but one aspect of his disapproval of Greek thought; a second aspect is related to the term *Logos*. Combined with the term *phainomenon*, this latter term gives rise to the philosophical tradition dedicated to the investigation of the conditions of appearance that triumphed in the twentieth century as phenomenology.⁷ Since that which appears needs also, and at the same time, to be both understood and said, the term *Logos* synthesizes both the possibility of thinking, and of enunciating, that which appears. In *Incarnation*, Henry writes:

The Logos is the final possibility of all language; it is the original Speech that speaks in every word. It does so to the extent that it is identified with the pure phenomenality on which it is based, which is one with it. Phenomenality and Logos ultimately mean the same thing...

Phenomenality and Logos are interpreted in the Greek sense: They both denote the world's appearing.⁸

The virtual entirety of the effort of Henry's thought is directed to the search for a distinct manner of manifestation that does not thus alienate, both to and from itself, the phenomenality of phenomena. Otherwise put; if the world is that in which everything appears, it represents the condition of the possibility of every manifestation. This condition could only obtain in the ecstatic "*au Dehors*" that phenomenality requires for any manifestation. According to Henry, western philosophy is therefore "that philosophy whose *logos* is the phenomenality of the world and whose *logos* is based on this phenomenality."⁹ It is on this prejudice that it founds itself. This (perhaps too) strong critique is nonetheless motivated, and must be justified, if we are able to return to the root of the question Henry prosecuted ever since his *thèse* of 1963, *The Essence of Manifestation*. Indeed, in some of its best-known passages, in which Henry proposes a search for the "essence of manifestation," and denies that this essence is the work of transcendence, we read: "not to be the work of transcendence means for a manifestation to arise and to accomplish itself independently of the movement whereby the essence hurls itself and projects itself forward in the form of a horizon,

⁷ As Henry records, in introducing *Material Phenomenology*, 1 [5]: "With the collapse of the Parisian fashions of the last decades, and most notably structuralism, which represented its most widespread form because it was the most superficial, and with the return of the human sciences (which sought to replace philosophy but only offered an external viewpoint on the human being) to their proper place, phenomenology increasingly seems to be the principal movement of the thought of our times. The "return of Husserl" is the return of a capacity for intelligibility, which is due to the invention of a method and, first of all, a question in which the essence of philosophy can be rediscovered. Phenomenology will be to the twentieth century what German Idealism was to nineteenth, what Empiricism was to eighteenth-century, what Descartes was to seventeenth-century, what Thomas Aquinas and Duns Scotus were to Scholasticism, what Plato and Aristotle were to Antiquity."

⁸ Henry, *Incarnation*, 42 [63].

⁹ Henry, *Material Phenomenology*, 96 [130].

arising, accomplishing, and maintaining itself independently of the ontological process of objectification, namely in the absence of all transcendence.”¹⁰

Immediately thereafter, Henry continues:

The manifestation which occurs in the absence of all transcendence is nevertheless the manifestation of transcendence itself. That a manifestation, the manifestation of the essence understood as transcendence, should happen in the absence of all transcendence, therefore means that the original act of transcendence reveals itself independently of the movement whereby it hurls itself forward and projects itself outside itself. The act which appears as independent of its own forward movement, independently of the movement whereby it projects itself outside itself, reveals itself in itself, in such a way that this 'in itself' means: without surpassing itself, without leaving itself. That which does not surpass itself, that which does not hurl itself outside itself but remains in itself without leaving or going out of itself is, in its essence, immanence. Immanence is the original mode according to which is accomplished the revelation of transcendence itself and hence the original essence of revelation.¹¹

Thus, to the degree to which Henry refuses a Greek [philosophical] language in order to grasp the essence of manifestation, Henry behaves deliberately as a *barbarian*: he does not speak the language of Greek philosophy. Nor does he speak the language of a [philosophical] modernity that assigns primacy to the representation that objectifies anything that is known. This barbarism does not originate from a refusal of every form of rationality. It originates rather in the attempt at an authentic way of understanding the fabric of reason and rationality as such. This fabric Henry terms “impressional flesh”; on it, as we will see now, is founded the primary moment of any knowledge, as Descartes had understood in confirming the *cogito* as *at certe videre videor*.

Those who know Henry’s work, know already his interpretation of this passage. After suspending the relation to the world by a sort of *epochè ante litteram*, Descartes is led to the discovery of the irreducibility of the *ego sum, ego existo*. He produces a definitive argument, to defend this discovery from any assault of doubt: “*At certe videre videor, audire, calescere*,” Henry translates as “yet I certainly seem to see, to hear, and to be warmed.”¹² Thus, with his meditations, Descartes not only initiates modernity, he also introduces the question of the origin [of philosophy] as the search for an initial, primary point [of departure]. (Of course one can say that the history of philosophy coincides with

¹⁰ Henry, *The Essence of Manifestation*, trans. Girard Etzkorn (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1973), 226 [Henry, *L'essence de la manifestation* (Paris: PUF, [1963] 2003), 279].

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 226-7 [279-80].

¹² Henry, *The Genealogy of Psychoanalysis*, trans. Douglas Brick (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1993), 17 [Henry, *Généalogie de la psychanalyse. Le commencement perdu* (Paris: PUF, 1985), 25].

the history of the beginnings of philosophy, and that Descartes puts into action but one such beginning, amongst others.) In contradistinction to Aristotelian thought, that asserted that philosophy begins with a sense of wonder that leads to the question about the absolutely pre-eminent being, Descartes discovers the *'je pense'* and inaugurates the [modern] metaphysical tradition that enshrines the primacy of the latter.

Still in accord with the Greek logo-centric tradition, this [modern] thinking is in part an ecstatic act, addressed to an object that is represented in thought. However, it is also immediate. If, then, as Descartes writes, even feeling is a thinking, this feeling is a feeling of “something” the possibility-condition of which is in fact the capacity to experience and to feel itself. Thus, “thought's primal sensing, the *sentimus nos videre* (i.e., the self-sensing that originally presents thought to itself and makes it what it is, appearance's original self-appearing) is radically opposed to the sensing that rules seeing, hearing, touching.”¹³ Immediately thereafter: “seeing can see what is seen only if it is first possible as seeing, that is, is apperceived in itself. So this apperception is inherent to *ec-stasis* and precedes, instead of being constituted by, it. It is appearance's original self-appearing;... radical exteriority's radical interiority; the internal knowledge that precedes acquisition; the *videor* of *videre*, what knows the eye, the mirror, and itself.”¹⁴

This passage confirms the foregoing analysis; the question does not concern primarily that which is seen, but rather the possibility of this being-seen. Henry terms this possibility a “*mode de donation*.” He clarifies that “this pure mode should not be depicted merely in its structure; this would not sufficiently establish its specificity.... In fact, pure phenomenality brings itself to appearance in conformity with its own power.”¹⁵ The “material phenomenology,” as conceived by Henry, is not concerned with contents, but rather intends to “read in that accomplished phenomenality the structure of its mode of accomplishment, a structure that exhausts itself in the materiality of actual concrete phenomenality. Here, the word structure... means the *how* of phenomenality's mode of self-phenomenalization identical to the how of its actualization.”¹⁶ By favoring not the structure (or the “how”) of thought, but the intellect that grasps it, Descartes betrays this initiation. Therefore, *ec-stasis* will prevail over affectivity, i.e., the possibility of receiving impressions, a possibility that is given before every ecstatic knowledge, and that founds all knowledge. Instead, the ecstatic dimension of the Greek *Logos* will become the foundation of all knowledge. The primacy of the representation of consciousness will replace primordial affectivity's self-affection. Consequently, that which belongs properly to the scope of affectivity will be considered only an unconsciousness that cannot be represented, or that eludes representation.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 22 [31].

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 24 [33].

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 26 [35] (Translation slightly altered).

¹⁶ *Ibid.* [35-6] (Emphasis added).

Now, this unconsciousness is what I termed above the forgotten overturning (*rovescio dimenticato*). It is lost or abandoned not only in Descartes but also in Kant, and in the phenomenologies of Husserl and Heidegger, who inverted phenomenology so as to lose this, its proper materiality. To overturn phenomenology once again will imply a return to this unconsciousness, the opposite of objectivity, of the visible, the beneath of the surface. There are at least two possible ways of understanding this overturning, and reversal: a thematic overturning, i.e., an overturning of the order of questions and themes, and a more genuinely philosophical-phenomenological overturning. An example of the first is provided by the Cartesian procedure; this reverses an Aristotelian-metaphysical order, as was founded on an ontological primacy, in order to begin from a more radical certainty, the certainty of the I. The second, which I define as genuinely philosophical-phenomenological, attempts to thematise this opposite of objectivity, its fabric or structure. For this reason, I define Henry's phenomenology as an "overturning philosophizing" (*filosofare alla rovescia*), or rather; a philosophy of re-turn (*a rovescio*). This return proceeds through a reversal of phenomenological reasons, toward the return of (*verso il rovescio*), or in order to return to, what has been forgotten or lost. What has been lost, according to Michel Henry, is that life that only self-affection would allow us to rediscover, a life that avoids every *ecstasis* of thought. In order to reach this life—which is also the lost beginning of philosophy—Michel Henry becomes a barbarian, by refusing and confronting a Greek philosophical language.

A Reversal of Language

If a barbarian is one who does not speak the language of a learned community, Henry—as neither Greek nor modern—is a barbarian. The discovery of a return that would propose a "barbaric principle" in Schelling's sense, however, is not the objective of his philosophy. Henry attempts to inaugurate a new form of language that is not a pure abstraction, but is rather a returning, in a language of materiality, that intends to bring to light "how" something can appear in distinction from any *ecstasis*. Too cursorily, it is a philosophical language that would be more Greek than the Greek, and authentically Greek: a reversal of language.¹⁷ As we will see, this will imply a non-ecstatic language, a language that utilizes the vocabulary of affection and affectivity, or—so to say—derives from that affectivity that makes all other feeling possible.

In order that such a language be both authentically Greek and authentically philosophical, it must assume the same linguistic form as the language that it intends to refute. Otherwise, a radical and complete renewal of philosophy would not be possible, and this language would simply position itself outside of the

¹⁷ See Martin Heidegger's "A Dialogue on Language," in *On the Way to Language*, trans. Peter D. Hertz (New York: Harpers & Collins, 1971), 112: "Our thinking today is charge with the task to think what the Greeks have thought in an even more Greek manner." [The author's distinction between "*il lato diritto*" and "*il lato rovescio*" echoes Camus' usage of these terms in *L'Envers et l'endroit* (1937), translated into English as "The Wrong Side and the Right Side."—*Trans.*]

philosophical domain. Even if a barbarian cannot speak the language of *κοινή*, he can at least speak a language; this language, even if it is as lost and forgotten as the origin, still represents the language of an affective and non-ecstatic materiality, the language of the Greek *pathos*. *Pathos* is the reversal of language, its fabric, its structure, its flesh; its possibility-condition.

Pathos designates the mode of phenomenization according to which life phenomenizes in its originary self-revelation; it designates the phenomenological material out of which this self-donation is made, its flesh: a transcendental and pure affectivity in which everything experiencing itself finds its concrete, phenomenological actualization....

If life originally reveals nothing but its own reality, this is solely because its mode of revelation is *pathos*, which is this essence entirely concerned with itself, this plenitude of a flesh immersed in the self-affection of its suffering and joy. In the immanence of its own *pathos*, this reality of life is then not any life whatsoever. It is everything except what contemporary thought will turn it into, that is, some impersonal, anonymous, blind, mute essence. In itself, the reality of life bears necessarily this Self, generated in its pathetic self-generation, this Self which reveals itself only in Life as the proper self-revelation of this Life—that is, as its Logos.¹⁸

What I termed “originary feeling” now assumes the Greek name *pathos*, which is both totally immanent (just as is the essence of manifestation) and the manner in which life manifests itself. Indeed, the world cannot reveal any suffering and rejoicing; life alone manifests them. This language, more Greek than Greek, is neither a-logical nor illogical, but inaugurates a way of interpreting the *logos* as capable of generating “the reality of which it speaks.”¹⁹ In other terms; “The speech of life generates reality inasmuch as it reveals as life does: life generates its own reality by experiencing itself in the Self in which it self-reveals itself. Thus, the Speech of life reveals simultaneously the reality of life and the Self without which no life is living. The unthought of our ultimate, phenomenological condition, that of being living beings in life, consists in this double revelation.”²⁰ This passage, however, does not justify the further thesis that I am suggesting, that *pathos* is a reversal of language. If the exposed aspect of language consists in its capacity to express things, its hidden aspect consists in the manifestation of what is inexpressible except by means of this *pathos*. The term *pathos* is not pronounced; it pronounces itself, as does suffering:

¹⁸ Henry, “Material Phenomenology and Language (or, Pathos and Language),” trans. Leonard Lawlor, *Continental Philosophy Review* 32 (1999): 343-365, at 353. [Henry, “Phénoménologie et langage (ou: pathos et langage),” in *Michel Henry. L'épreuve de la vie*, eds. Alain David and Jean Greisch (Paris: Cerf, 2001), 25].

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 356 [26].

²⁰ *Ibid.*

What the original Speech of life says to every living being is therefore its own life.... Let us consider the suffering that I experience. The suffering does not say, for example, that 'I suffer, someone is guilty,' which lets one think that one ought to add ultimately some cause or something like that to the suffering one feels. In its nudity, in its naivety, in its total exposure, in its pure self-experience, what suffering says is itself and nothing else.²¹

This is followed by:

We see therefore why suffering is a speech, why it is suffering who speaks and suffering who says: the revelation of what, in this way, it tells us is done in and by the flesh of its suffering so that what it tells us is itself, this suffering flesh and nothing else.... Only in the self-donation of life and inasmuch as the latter is accomplished does each suffering experience itself, in its own Self, but first in the originary Self that absolute life generates in itself in its self-revelation to itself. In this way, within the very heart of suffering, life has already spoken otherwise, in an older suffering, this older suffering in which life embraces itself in the process of its self-advent, in the love and enjoyment of itself—this older suffering which lives in every modality of life, suffering or joy, because in either suffering or joy, it is this older suffering which gives suffering or joy to itself inasmuch as in this older suffering, in this original pathos which belongs to it, absolute Life gives itself to itself.²²

Henry insists that the possibility of the *logos* is not in “what is said,” but in “pure phenomenality,” in that affectivity that founds all experience. (This Henry will discuss at length in *Words of Christ*, his posthumous, and final, text.²³) To speak a different, barbaric language is already to allow another, unheard, language to sound, in a reversal of language that provides the possibility-condition of every language and word, i.e., their substance and structure. Therefore, to be barbarous can also mean to be able to speak of things that, for their withdrawal, an “educated” language can not. Henry however goes further; he suggests that the barbarous can teach language those features it has forgotten or lost: the reversal of language is not silence, but is rather a different language that reveals to language its unknown resources.

An unresolved question still remains: a common ecstatic language affords a universal propagation of knowledge, whereas Henry attempts a novel manner of bringing to evidence terms that, as such, risk remaining unintelligible and incommunicable. If this is the case, *cui prodest* from this process toward the reversal of language? It is at this point that the crisis, and the critique, of ecstatic language evince their heuristic power, by attesting that the self-manifestation of

²¹ *Ibid.*, 355 [27].

²² *Ibid.*, 355-6 [28].

²³ Henry, *Words of Christ*, trans. Christina M. Gschwandtner (Grand Rapids/Cambridge: Eerdmans, 2012) [Henry, *Paroles du Christ* (Paris: Seuil, 2002)].

pathos as a reversal of language is itself the manner that the phenomenological root of every manifestation can be grasped. *Pathos*, i.e., this reversal of language, in fact can reveal a new sense of culture and of unconscious, repressed life. It is in order that such new forms emerge that the reversal is effected: Henry's severe oppositions—e.g., the opposition between the truth of the world and the truth of Life—gain their proper sense only in light of this goal.

Henry does write of their truth in oppositional terms, of course. To think of all revelation only in terms of the light of the world cannot afford comprehension of a variety of the dynamics definitive of humanity. To ecstatic manifestation, Henry objects, there are realities—suffering or joy, for example—that do not manifest themselves in the external world. To these, each, alone, must offer a direct testimony. One could object that the “au dehors” must always retain its rights, however, as there is not only such sorrow, pain, and joy: to exclude the ecstatic manifestation of the world would imply a renunciation of a variety of the dynamics definitive of humanity.

My thesis is that the world and Life are of course different, as are their truths, but that they obtain together no less than the top and the bottom of a carpet or an embroidery; they are distinct, but contiguous. A carpet is nothing but a web of interlacements and threads. As an over-turned embroidery displays the pattern of the visible side, and yet reproduces it as inverted; it brings that same pattern to visibility, without being identical therewith. In the interlacement of an embroidery or a carpet, for example, there isn't any continuity “between” the visible and the inverted sides, but rather a sort of contiguity. Indeed, in order that this interlacement obtain, a canvas must take shape in such a way that an interstice from which the “right” and visible side could appear. So, the inversion, unseen and “separated” from the surface of the interlacement, is a minimal interstice that is “between” the pattern and the structure and that enables the interlacement. One can object that this is true for an embroidery that supposes the existence of its interstice (the cloth), but not for a carpet, that constitutes *itself* only when it is weaved, and its pattern created. However, even the apparent simplicity of its craftsmanship is broken and open, in itself exposed, as the interlacement not only produces a “pattern,” it manifests—indeed, institutes—the structure of the carpet as well. This structure interrupts the continuity between the two sides and establishes a special contiguity that does not pre-exist the interlacement.

In this sense, then, Henry is a philosopher of the *Krisis*, because—and when—he *criticizes* the surface of things in order to emphasize their reversal, a reversal that determines the manifestation of things and that philosophy has not known how to determine. This reversal preserves both aspects, i.e., the visible, and the invisible that effects manifestation; or by preserving the appearance of one side, while also preserving the other as not yet manifest. It is no different, I would dare to say, with barbarism; if in one sense it represents the destruction of culture, while in another sense we require the barbarian in order that the smooth, crystalline surface of things be broken, and the unseen truth of reality emerge.

That Which Was Not, and That Which Is, Manifest

A more typical approach to Henry's philosophy would certainly be clearer: to proceed in reverse and in order to discover such a reversal, several of the topics dear to the French philosopher remain unclarified. The price of that clarity, however, would imply the mis- and under-interpretation of the opposition that Henry emphasizes, and accentuates; above all, that between world and Life, from which follows that between the body (which becomes a phenomenon in the world) and the flesh (which becomes a phenomenon within the immanence of suffering). In this way, we can interpret from another point of view; less orthodox perhaps, but still respectful of Henry's intent.

That intent is clear: any, even minimal manifestation of the living being is such that life itself is not seen as an "object," but rather gathers itself in its coming to be, and in its self-feeling. Life is the unseen reversal of the living, that reversal that was unmanifest in Greek or modern philosophy, and that can become manifest by means of a method that does not assert its authority over manifestation but that is born from such a manifestation. It is this that motivates Henry's oscillation with respect to the issues he faces and the critical observations (of philosophy, society, etc.) that he would make: these are in reality directed toward the advance of the life that would become visible—in order that the yet unmanifest gradually manifest itself. Rather than purely critical observations, these then are attempts to find the way to the self-manifestation of life in itself and from itself. This attempt begins with one of the engagements that I announced at the beginning of this article, with psychoanalysis and its genealogy, with the lost beginning of life.

That Which Was Not, and That Which Is, Manifest: Psychoanalysis and Life

Although the human *psychè* cannot manifest itself as a representable "object," philosophy (or at least transcendental philosophy), subjected it to the condition of representation (Descartes) and time (Kant). These typically modern objectifications arise from the Galilean systematization of the world. This world that is written in geometrical and mathematical signs can be completely known and explained. This scientific model extended to every area of knowledge, shaped even the so-called "*science de l'homme*" and effected major consequences on the organization of culture as such. *La Barbarie's* final chapter, dedicated to the destruction of the University,²⁴ addresses this theme from the point of view of the systematization of sciences in academic education, in which a scientific or positive psychology has been instituted: "classical philosophy took care of psychology, inasmuch as *psyche* means soul or subjectivity and *logos* is the knowledge of it. Psycho-logy is the definition of philosophy."²⁵ Therefore, when subjectivity is ruled out, *true* psychology is ruled out too, as attested by behaviorism. Henry writes:

²⁴ See Henry, *Barbarism*, Chapter VII.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 130-1 [203].

That is why scientific psychology can only truly arrive at its goal by challenging the specificity and autonomy of human behavior, by interpreting it as a mere appearance, as the epiphenomenon or result of a process that is biological. With this attempt to produce an exhaustive explication of subjectivity on the basis of biology, “scientific” psychology reveals its most ultimate materialist presupposition. It self-destructs as an autonomous discipline in order to give voice to a science of nature...

Scientific and materialist psychology thus appears as the truth of the Galilean project applied to the human being, and it consists of the elimination of its own essence.²⁶

Life, once expelled from the field of scientific psychology; “entails its repression in the “unconscious,” and it is this that is recovered by psychoanalysis. Psychoanalysis is unconsciously the substitute of philosopher, and takes up again its proper task: the delineation of the *humanitas* of the human being. This recovery is impossible without a transcendental and eidetic method and without a conscious rupture with Galilean objectivism to which, paradoxically, psychoanalysis continually returns. That is why it has only been able to build a bastard psychology—half-subjective and half-objective—an empirical psychology in which the attempt to make empirical concepts (relation to the Father, anal sexuality, etc.) play a transcendental role results only in the most extreme confusion.”²⁷

In *The Genealogy of Psychoanalysis*, Henry wrote with conviction that “when objectivity ceaselessly extends its reign of death over the devastated universe, when life has no refuge but the Freudian unconscious, and when a living determination of life hides under each of the pseudoscientific attributes with which that unconscious clothes itself, then we must say that psychoanalysis is the soul of a world without soul, the spirit of a world without spirit.”²⁸ “The soul of a world without soul”: one could hardly find a more forceful adage. But Freudianism contributed also to the oblivion and to the dismissal of that soul, assuming that “what psychoanalysis primarily requires in its essential analyses, as in its therapy,”²⁹ is nothing but the subordination of life to representational thought. What was not manifest in the “science of soul” is—paradoxically—the soul itself.

This, Henry’s observation on the scientific aspects of psychoanalysis, appears critical. It is, however, but one of the aspects of his interpretation thereof. Florinda Martins is fully aware of this when she writes that, in order to catch the true spirit of Henry’s works on the intersection of science, philosophy and culture, we should not read them only according to the letter.³⁰ Indeed, Henry’s

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 131 [203].

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 132 [205].

²⁸ Henry, *The Genealogy of Psychoanalysis*, 7 [12].

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 6 [10].

³⁰ I thus am fully in accord with the positions of Florinda Martins in “L’autre: le corps vivant,” in *Michel Henry. Pensée de la vie et culture contemporaine*, ed. Jean-François Lavigne (Paris: Beauchesne, 2006), 67-79.

interpretation of Freud and psychoanalysis exhibits a reversal of an unconscious conceived only negatively, as that which avoids representation. On the contrary, the unconscious is, in a positive sense, the life that manifests itself as affection. That which cannot manifest itself from a scientific point of view, can be manifest in and by life's pathic self-affection, as a living *pathos*. We would be wrong, however, to oppose these two conceptions of the unconscious as contradictories. Each is opposed to, while also being contiguous to, the other, separated by a minimal interstice. It is for this reason that they appear to be in contradiction and not just in contrast. Rolf Kühn noted insightfully that this minimal gap requires a "*passage*."³¹ I would propose precisely this interpretation for the following quotation from *Généalogie de la psychanalyse*, from the chapter dedicated to the unconscious:

In summary, the unconscious does not exist—if one puts aside the fact, in this case the a priori law of all ecstatic phenomenality, that almost everything represented is excluded from representation. Outside representation, what is represented does not, for all that, subsist in the form of “unconscious representations,” those entities for which Freudianism imagined such fantastic destinies. As for the unconscious that designates life, it cannot be reduced to the empty negation of the formal concept of phenomenality if life is the initial coming into itself of being in the form of affect, its self-increase, if in the end the quantities of "excitation," their increase and decrease, are merely the expression in energy imagery of the fundamental pathos of that life.³²

The unconscious does not and cannot manifest itself if the horizon of every manifestation is ecstatic representation. It manifests itself only by means of the self-affection of life, i.e., *pathos*. Henry's barbaric language affords appearance to what the Greek language of *koinè* cannot recognize. It does not do so in and through the light of the world. But it affords appearance to life and its *pathos* (misinterpreted by Freudianism, and by Pierre Janet—“*en dépit de sa nosographie d'ailleurs admirable*”).³³ To suggest that the two sides have to be contiguous and not continuous: otherwise, every exposed aspect would be negated, automatically in its reversal, and understood as oppositions. One could say that any psychoanalysis for this reason risks becoming only a technique; it would not only be incapable of manifesting life, but rather would nullify it. On the other hand, a therapy that obtains within the manifestation of life and of living beings³⁴ is

³¹ See Rolf Kühn, *Radicalité et passibilité. Pour une phénoménologie pratique* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2003), 139 ff.

³² Henry, *The Genealogy of Psychoanalysis*, 315 [384].

³³ See Henry, *Barbarism*, 105 [164].

³⁴ In addition to the work of Florinda Martins (see n. 30, above), Rolf Kühn made essential contributions to this topic, particularly in *Radicalité et passibilité. Pour une phénoménologie pratique* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2003), 165 ff., and in “Individu vivant et réalité, ou le regard transcendantal,” in *Michel Henry. La parole de la vie*, ed. Jad Hatem, (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2003), 97-115. See also Rolf Kühn, “Regard transcendantal et communauté intropathique. Phénoménologie radicale de la

genuinely a *praxis*, and would be able to generate a different form of clinical therapy.

This *praxis* does not begin from a therapeutic methodology in which the patient and the doctor face each other, as if in an object-subject relation. In *Souffrance et vie* Henry writes that suffering should not be understood as a given, to reduce and to eliminate, but rather as the manifestation of life as well. To objectify suffering does not bring it to manifestation, but rather loses its essence, life. Through this objectification, however thoroughly it might betray the essence of suffering, could we not at least indicate it as the self-affection of life? The answer is no; this suffering could never even be announced. A symptom, in its objectivity, is an exposed aspect (*lato diritto*) that presents to us an alternative; we can arrest ourselves in its face, or recognize it in and for its insufficiency. If in one sense a symptom should be representable (without this, every possible therapy would be nullified), in another sense clinical practice should not be guided by an objective representation, but rather by the reversal that provokes its manifestation. This reversal is not other than life.

Thus, Henry can say that “une thérapie est toujours possible, celle qui, d’une façon ou d’une autre, d’instinct ou délibérément, cherchera appui sur le mouvement inlassable en lequel la vie ne cesse de se donner à soi en se donnant à nous-mêmes,”³⁵ even before the worst afflictions. This is possible through the permanent contiguity of an exposed and an inverse aspect, as characterize medicine as well. In *Souffrance et vie* and *Incarnation*,³⁶ Henry suggests that medicine can be considered a science only within the horizontality of consciousness: “le regard médical est un regard transcendantal: à travers une donnée scientifique, il vise ce que nous avons appelé une vie phénoménologique toujours singulière. Déjà sur le plan de la médecine dite somatique—ce qu’elle n’est jamais tout à fait—l’examen d’un cliché radiologique par exemple traverse en quelque sorte ce dernier pour prendre dans sa vue une souffrance qu’il s’agit d’écarter ou de rendre supportable. À plus forte raison dans le domaine de la psychiatrie, c’est toujours cette vie des individus qui définit le thème véritable de la recherche, de la théorie et la thérapie.”³⁷

But we can go further. From the perspective of a reversal (provided that we are not dealing merely with a mechanism of automatism, and a blind repetition), a legitimate question arises: why would one “transcend” toward a reversal? We first should reiterate; this movement is not necessary; in most contexts and cases,

praxis thérapeutique,” in Michel Henry. *Pensée de la vie et culture contemporaine*, ed. Jean-François Lavigne (Paris: Beauchesne, 2006), 119-30.

³⁵ Henry, “Souffrance et vie,” in *Phénoménologie de la vie*, vol. I. *De la phénoménologie* (Paris: PUF, 2003), 155.

³⁶ *Ibid.* See also Henry, *Incarnation*, 317 [222]; Henry, “Eux en moi: une phénoménologie,” in *Phénoménologie de la vie*, vol. I, 208-9. Regarding the conception of the subjective body, Henry is generally said to indebted to Maine de Biran: see Henry, *Philosophy and Phenomenology of the Body*, trans. Girard Etzkorn (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1975 [Henry, *Philosophie et phénoménologie du corps. Essai sur l’ontologie biranienne* (Paris: PUF, 1965)]. We should remember that Maine de Biran was a medical doctor whose conception of medicine was extremely close to Henry’s own.

³⁷ Henry, “Souffrance et vie,” 155-6.

analysis can be arrested at the level of a represented objectivity. However, the reversal has a trait that, in some sense, constrains us to transcend the surface of the exposed aspect. In the present case, life is one and the same for the “patient” and the therapist. This unique life, which is the same for both, is the fabric of their being together, and of every community: a fabric that is expressed by the Greek word *pathos*.

Undoubtedly, the visible aspect of this community is the inter-monadic and inter-subjective community of Edmund Husserl. According to Henry’s *Barbarism*, it is also the community imagined by, and in, sociology.³⁸ Indeed, sociology imagines “the relation between Society and the Individual... as an external causal relation between two separate entities.” Here, “Society becomes the cause of the Individual.”³⁹ The reverse of this conception is really the reverse both of Freudianism (which is an ideology of barbarism as well⁴⁰) and of Marxism. The original unconscious, i.e., life, is the non-representable affection before which “the work of healing subordinates the cognitive progress.”⁴¹ Thanks to this subordination, the real nature of every inter-subjectivity can manifest itself. This is why “the relation of the analyst and the analysand is situated, or rather plays out as, a confrontation of forces immersed in themselves and in the grip of their own *pathos*.”⁴² Immediately thereafter, Henry writes; “in this way, psychoanalysis dissociates itself from the human sciences and resists the Galilean reduction and its linguistic reduction, in particular. At the very heart of the devastation of humanity wrought by objectivist knowledge and its exorbitant pretense, it affirms and maintains... the invincible right of life.”⁴³

Furthermore, in *Material Phenomenology*, Henry notices that the community is a relation of living beings that can be understood only through *auto-affection*.⁴⁴ In the second paragraph of the “*Pathos-avec*” chapter,⁴⁵ in which he examines the paradoxical possibility of an actual “*pâtir-avec*” (since each can witness only his own suffering), Henry returns to psychoanalysis,⁴⁶ in which representation is bracketed in order that the repetition of *transference* be identified. In this way, psychoanalysis manifests life as an unceasing repetition that brackets the world; “psychoanalysis organized the repetition of this transference. In the end, even though psychoanalysis imagines that it can confine the matter of language

³⁸ See Henry, *Barbarism*, 118 ff [206 ff].

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 133 [207].

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 93 [162].

⁴¹ *Ibid.* [163].

⁴² *Ibid.*

⁴³ *Ibid.*

⁴⁴ Henry, *Material Phenomenology*, 126-7 [170].

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 101 [137]. Henry debates the issue of community also in *From Communism to Capitalism. Theory of a Catastrophe*, trans. Scott Davidson (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2014), Ch. VIII: “Death and Politics” [Henry, *Du communisme au capitalisme. Théorie d’une catastrophe* (Paris: Odile Jacob, 1990)]. On the issue of the “other” and inter-subjectivity, see Henry, “Intersubjectivité pathétique,” in *Michel Henry. Le Dossier H*, ed. Jean-Marie Brohm and Jean Leclercq (Lausanne: L’Âge d’Homme, 2009), 126-47; see also *Revue Internationale Michel Henry* 2 (2011).

⁴⁶ Henry, *Material Phenomenology*, 128 [172].

and verbalization, the unconscious must be sought where it is and such as it is, namely, as this brute force and pure effect.⁴⁷ This affection is a Force, that force through which is evinced the fact that “The nature of the relations between the living in a community... is equally their own nature.”⁴⁸

Here, then, is the crucial point: psychoanalysis can evince the truth of this relation because in psychoanalysis this relation obtains within the context of life, of pure affection and its force (regardless of any therapy that considers disease only as an objective fact). This does not imply that psychoanalysis can be a paradigm for every relation—or that every relation has to be therapeutic. It implies instead that there is one, self-same ‘soul’ that makes every relation possible. This “pathos-with” is not manifest in representation, but only instead in that self-affection in which life experiences itself. But life does not experience itself in any inverted world, but rather in the living relations that constitute the exposed side of *pathos*. The invisible reversal is experienced in self-affection. Thus:

The essence of a community is not something that is; instead, it is that which (*celà*)—not being a that (*ça*)—occurs as the relentless arrival of life into oneself and thus the arrival of each one into itself. This arrival occurs in many ways, yet always in conformity with laws. For example, it is not first carried out in the future but only on the basis of immediacy, and consequently, as a matter of drives and affects. Inasmuch as the essence of community is affectivity, the community is not limited to humans alone. It includes everything that is defined in itself by the primal suffering of life and thus by the possibility of suffering. We can suffer with everything that suffers. That pathos-with is the broadest form of every conceivable community.⁴⁹

This community does not exclude the world, or visibility; it resists enshrining visibility (or society) as the possibility-condition of the relation. Consequently, Henry’s conception of community adheres neither to Freudianism nor to Marxism; according to it, and paradoxically, every living being *feels* by virtue of the life that belongs at the same time to each and to all. This life—a pathic reversal of the living being—would amount only to a new abstraction unless each living being could possess the experience of feeling not only with but also for, and thanks to, another. Thus, if psychoanalytic therapy consists in transference, then the repetition of this transfer is peculiar because its essence is nothing but life.⁵⁰ Therefore, one might

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 130 [174].

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 130-1 [175]. [The correct and full passage in French reads “la nature des relations que les vivants ont entre eux dans la communauté pour autant que la nature de leurs relations est identiquement leur propre nature.” I am grateful to Adam Smith of McGill University for this correction.—*Trans.*]

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 133-4 [178-9].

⁵⁰ At a conference on psychiatry in Porto, Henry spoke again the origin of the community: “C’est dans l’autodotation de la Vie que chaque Soi est donné à lui-même.... Mais l’autre—l’autre Soi— est dans la même situation, c’est dans l’autorévélation de la vie qu’il est révélé de la vie qu’il est

say that the therapeutic relation manifests what is at the root of every relation and yet that remains non-representable, i.e., that affection that is at the same time a force.

That Which Was Not, and That Which Is, Manifest: Barbarism and Culture

A language more Greek than Greek, and therefore a barbaric language, is required to break through the smooth surface and grasp that force that subtracts itself from representation. The same exchange of exposed and inverse aspects, an exchange in which the two sides are contiguous, appears when we speak of culture and barbarism as well. Culture and barbarism each have a visible and an invisible aspect; the visible aspect of culture consists in the different expressions of aesthetics and art, while its reverse side is expressed by life, conceived as force. Barbarism is the manifestation of the arrestation of this Force (that in any case remains its reversal) and is chiefly expressed by technology, that along with science objectifies life, reduces it to the rank of a “*chose ou objet représentable*” and results in the naturalization or reduction of the human being to an “object among objects.”⁵¹

If culture is an energy and a praxis deep-rooted in life, barbarism is the experience of the arrestation of this life, the failure of this energy. Culture is a practical knowledge that is known as such, while barbarism is a disease of life that entrusts its representation to technology and to science. While culture is a praxis that expresses itself in manifestations such as art and religion—the possibility-condition of which is life—barbarism finds itself on the predominance of science, that cannot manifest art and religion insofar as it objectifies life in the attempt to represent it. However, if these were Henry’s sole terms, one could not avoid a sterile and anachronistic opposition. Would one deny the benefits that technology contributes to life, benefits that no one would choose to renounce? Technological barbarism has improved the life of living beings, indisputably; any return would be both anachronistic, and unacceptable for the “society of living beings.” The problem concerns not the rejection of technology but, even more radically, the possibility-conditions for the comprehension of technology, the manner in which it is itself conceivable.

In order to assert itself, technology has to exclude the basic dimension of experience in terms of which art, for example, is founded; sensibility. Human beings inhabit a world only insofar as originally sentient, and because that original

révélé à lui-même.... C’est ainsi que prend naissance et se forme en sa possibilité phénoménologique toute communauté conceivable” (Henry, “Eux en moi: une phénoménologie,” 205).

⁵¹ Henry returns repeatedly to this topic. His thesis, reiterated tirelessly, is this: “La culture est la culture de la vie, au double sens où la vie constitue à la fois le sujet de cette culture et son objet.... ‘Culture’ désigne l’auto-transformation de la vie, le mouvement par lequel elle ne cesse de se modifier soi-même afin de parvenir à des formes de réalisation et d’accomplissement plus hautes, afin de s’accroître” (Henry, “La question de la vie et la culture,” in *Phénoménologie de la vie*, vol.

IV. *Sur l’éthique et la religion* (Paris: PUF, 2004), 19-20). In the same text Henry confronts the problem of barbarism, defining it a “new” thematic context, as a result of the alliance with science (see *ibid.*, 23 ff). On the naturalization of the human being, see *ibid.*, 24-5.

sensibility is the material root of its *pathos*, its fabric. This is to say that the reversal of this *pathos* requires that sensibility, the possibility-condition of which is the pathic flesh [*chair pathétique*]. This will be the topic of *Incarnation*, of course, but already in *Barbarism* it is defined as “bodily-ownness” [*Corpsappropriation*], i.e., the original co-belonging of body and earth.⁵² For this originary co-appurtenance, *techne* is an originary *praxis*. It indicates “[Un] *savoir-faire*... *qui porte en lui son propre savoir et le constitue*.”⁵³ This originary *savoir-faire* is, reciprocally, not other than a *praxis* and therefore not other than life: “it is thus life itself, since *praxis* is known in life. The original essence of technology resides in this original ‘*savoir-faire*.’”⁵⁴

Because the body is not other than the determination of this *praxis*; because all activity is possible only through the body, as the foundation all experience, the pre-condition of *techne*, the sole science of barbarism, obtains in individual corporeity. To stigmatize what thus belongs to the corporeal essence would prove an error. Moreover, there is a close tie between the body and the earth, on which said *praxis* is exercised; for “as long as it overlaps with individual spontaneous *praxis*, *techne* is simply the expression of life. It is the use of the powers of the subjective body and thus one of the primary forms of culture. The internal demands of life give rise to it.... The phenomenological structures of the original body

determine the modalities of its exercise, or rather, they are these modalities.”⁵⁵

Nevertheless, human beings are not prevented from breaking the close tie between body and earth, by objectifying the production of, and the relation with, the latter: in this way, *techne* becomes barbarous, and annihilates every cultural expression, such as art and religion. If culture is knowledge of life, *techne* becomes a knowledge of the science for which everything becomes an object for manipulation. *Techne* becomes “alchemy... the self-fulfillment of nature in place of the self-fulfillment of the life that we are. It is barbarism, the new barbarism of our time, in the place of culture.”⁵⁶ Henry does not condemn that science that “as *pathos* obeys the law of culture,”⁵⁷ but rather denounces and condemns that science that, by excluding *pathos* and the self-affective life, loses and contradicts itself. However, this is not only a logical exclusion. It bears the weight of a negation of life and is therefore an affirmation of the pernicious objectification of what is alive. It is in this way that science-*techne* opposes itself to life, in the moment that it opposes itself to science-culture, understood as not only the transformation, but also the amplification and fulfillment of life.

Unlike culture, barbarism reduces the vital impetus of life until the point of its arrestation. This arrestation cannot be definitive, however, as it stands in need of the Galilean science that defines and quantifies the force that, as we know, is

⁵² See Henry, *Barbarism*, 40 [73]. This is treated also in Michel Henry, “L’éthique et la crise de la culture contemporaine,” in *Phénoménologie de la vie*, vol. IV, 37.

⁵³ Henry, *Barbarism*, 44 [79-80].

⁵⁴ *Ibid.* [80].

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 46-7 [84].

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 52 [95]. See also Henry, *Incarnation*, 194 ff [278 ff].

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 71 [127].

nothing but a vital impetus. This force, originally coincident with pure affection, does *not* manifest itself in barbarism, but rather in culture. These movements of non-manifestation and manifestation are both possible because their condition of possibility, i.e., the reversal of their exposed aspect, is the *living pathos* in terms of which life either perdures or is arrested. The reversal of barbarism, culture, is always possible because life cannot itself “die”; it resists the negations thereof in spite of the effort of *techne* toward objectification. Henry is explicit: the *techne* that would objectify everything cannot break its connection with life; “to try to break this link is in some way to increase its infrangibility: to experience it even more strongly.”⁵⁸ Even the weakness of life testifies to its power, because this weakness is “the impossibility to which this project leads: life runs up against an insurmountable failure in its desire to rid itself of itself.”⁵⁹

Life cannot separate from itself any more than the exposed aspect can separate itself from its inverse. The impossibility of this separation, however, is not a necessary or analytic truth, as in a Cartesian or Leibnizian assertion regarding the necessity that a triangle has only three angles. Such analytic truths manifest themselves in the ecstatic order of the world. Life, instead, is manifest of and from itself. With respect to life, however, barbarism and culture—the first in the mode of negation; the second in a positive mode (*via positiva*)—manifest a characteristic I have not considered; the irreducibility of life. The irreducible is that without which a certain discourse could not even begin; in our case, those of culture, barbarism and psychoanalysis. In our case, barbarism denies but cannot destroy life. On the contrary, it asserts life’s irreducibility, as it manifests an aspect that we have not adequately considered; the impossibility that life be separated from itself. I define as irreducible that which can be refused but not renounced, that which is non-renounceable but not irrefutable. Life can be refused, as the barbarism of *techne* shows, even as it cannot be renounced. This is to say that life demands a fundamental decision that characterizes *praxis* as such: otherwise, life would be only a necessitating automatism, a death. Life, instead, does not die and only human beings can decide on, or desire, death.⁶⁰

In Conclusion, a New Beginning

In this interpretation of Michel Henry, I have tried to distance myself from the oppositions Henry proposes, between the body that becomes a phenomenon in the world and the flesh that is self-manifestation through the *pathos* of life, and between the *ecstatic* truth of the world and the immanent truth of life. My aim was instead to emphasize the relation between visible and invisible, since every “objectification” is only a manifestation of that life that, far from being but “something,” is originary *pathos*.

In order to speak of that which subtracts itself from language, Henry becomes—without anachronistically, nostalgically, regretting the loss of any

⁵⁸ *Ibid.* [128].

⁵⁹ *Ibid.* (Translation slightly altered).

⁶⁰ See Henry, *I Am the Truth*, 274 [345].

golden age—a barbarian. We too must become barbarous if we are to replace the *koinè* of life for the *koinè* of Galilean science, in order that we then grasp what cannot manifest itself, and speak a different Greek—the Greek of the pathos that humanizes human beings, and brings them back to life. Instead, we inhabit a world that could be defined genuinely as “*inhumain*,” a term that indicates “the ontological revolution through which the guiding and organizing principle of a society that found its substance in life no longer exists. The latter “is now only a sum of knowledge, processes and procedures that have set aside life.”⁶¹

To be barbarous, in order to return to the living *pathos* of irreducible life, is to renounce the language of science in order to return to the reversal of culture and psychoanalysis, i.e., to the *pathos* (a Greek term!) of life. This *pathos* cannot be investigated from a scientific point of view. It requires a new language and form of expression, distinct from the Galilean *koinè*. Although it eludes science, *pathos* is not bound to silence or unconsciousness. Instead, it recognizes itself in Henry’s material phenomenology as well as in visual and narrative art. (I conclude my observations with a reference to narrative art, as this activity always accompanied Henry’s philosophical reflection.) As above, although *pathos* is “unknowable” and can be perceived only in self-affection, it (1) is participated in the therapeutic relation and (2) generates inter-subjective community. It is *communicable*, even if not by universal Galilean science, in literary narration, through which the “*unité pathétique*”⁶² narrates itself, and is realized in writing. Indeed, it is *pathos* that is realized and communicated through visual art, while a novel is a narration of human existence “*qui se sent elle-même*”⁶³; life. Against the opposition between philosophy and art, or the reduction of artistic reflection to an activity derivative of scientific-theoretical reflection, Henry inaugurates a language that narrates artistically what each can have in first-personal experience. As the self-communication of the *pathos*, narration allows *pathos* to narrate, and to manifest, itself, in order to recommence perpetually this, its own narration. From beginning to beginning, according to beginnings that never end, for the life that occurs in it.

Translated by Garth W. Green

⁶¹ Henry, *Barbarism*, 120 [210]. The same topic is discussed in Henry, *Incarnation*, 100-2 [146-7].

⁶² Henry, “Narrer le pathos,” 315.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 321.