

Special Issue Reprint

Religious Experience and Metaphysics

Edited by
Olga Louchakova-Schwartz

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Guest Editor

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About the Editor

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Preface

This Reprint of the Special Issue of *Religions* entitled “Religious Experience and Metaphysics” is focused on the problem of the genetic phenomenological relationships between religious experience and metaphysics. Husserl believed that metaphysical concepts are constituted by consciousness in correlation with its intuition of the world. Thus, one of the tasks of Husserl’s legacy is for phenomenology to eventually reveal the genesis of realistic metaphysics. But in religious thinking, another kind of metaphysics is constituted: the transcendental metaphysics of the absolute Being. This metaphysics is distinct from the realistic metaphysics of the world: its ground must be not in the sensory intuitions, but in something else. Husserl suggests two options for the genesis of concepts of religious metaphysics: the idea of God (the transcendental Being), or evidence of the self-giving of such a Being via immediate intuition in experience. By contrast with experiences of ordinary or abstract objects, originary self-giving in religious experience can be non-associative, open-ended, and undetermined; in other words, excluding mental or “real” (empirically so) objects. This Reprint offers first-person, a priori, and text-based reflections on relationships between religious experience and metaphysics. The collection brings together nine established and early-career authors sharing a broad spectrum of resources in phenomenology. Beginning with Husserl’s and Heidegger’s views on religious experience, the collection also includes reflections on Scheler, Derrida, Mamardashvili, St. Augustine, and Thomas Aquinas. Other authors in this collection treat religious experience as such, within first-person phenomenological reflection, addressing issues such as reduction, gift, the reading of the Gospels, and the boundaries between religious experience, the Absolute, and the world of things. The collection is not limited to the Eurocentric or Christian views, presenting papers authored by the Western, Eastern European, and Islamic thinkers.

Olga Louchakova-Schwartz

Guest Editor

Editorial

Introduction to the Special Issue “Religious Experience and Metaphysics”: A Brief Overview of Husserl’s Concept of Metaphysics

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Over the past decade, the recognition of connections between phenomenology and metaphysics has transformed our understanding of phenomenology quite significantly. Rather than being treated as a technical discipline—a method of philosophy—phenomenology has emerged as a fully fleshed-out philosophy of its own. One may assume that interpretations follow the *zeitgeist* (which nowadays favors metaphysics), but it is not by vogue alone that a variety of metaphysics have come forward in contexts of phenomenology. The freedom of making reference to metaphysics in the context of phenomenology arose via the influx of a significant amount of new evidence from Husserl’s archival notes, lectures, letters, new translations, and from the advent of a new generation of daring investigators with a strong capacity for *epoché*. This *epoché* suspends the methodological purism that dominated readings of phenomenology up to the end of the 1990s, and brings to light the unifying logos in Husserl’s *sui generis* philosophy.¹

Where does religious experience come into this picture? The answer to this question depends on what was meant by metaphysics in different periods of Husserl’s work. Within the scope of this changing view, different conduits for our knowledge of reality can be established; religious experience then either counts or does not count as knowledge. The common consciousness of the everyday gives us the materialized world, and reality as physical reality. Religious experience also gives us reality, but in another mode, not as a physical but as a spiritual reality. If this experience is rational and if it is given by intentionality,² religious experience is knowledge. If so, reality may have different modes of being given, and how it is given in religious experience can lead to a metaphysics which complements that of physical reality. This claim needs proof; without it, claims to knowledge of reality via religious experience can be unfounded; the whole concept of reality may have validity only when reality is materialized. To sort these questions out, we have to analyze the connections between religious experience and phenomenologically oriented concepts of metaphysics—which is exactly the objective of this Special Issue of *Religions*.

The evolution of the idea of metaphysics in Husserl was noticed and outlined by De Santis (2021b, 2023a, 2023b). De Santis brings to the forefront not only Husserl’s life-long interest in clarified and revitalized metaphysics, but how conception of metaphysics was correlated with advancements in the understanding of consciousness. Before this ground-breaking volume, Husserl’s critique of Heidegger, and the Husserlian roots of Heidegger’s ideas were, of course, known, but the connection has not been made between Husserl’s criticism of Heidegger and Husserl’s own idea of metaphysics as radically distinct, at all times in its development, from Heidegger’s metaphysics of *Dasein*.

If Husserl's work in the phenomenology of consciousness was indeed connected with his background desire to clarify the metaphysics of reality, including the questions such as "what is this world?" and "what is our place in it?", the separation of the theory of knowledge from metaphysics was a necessary undertaking. This separation also brought up a question which one is the "first", and which one is the "last philosophy"—the views that changed in Husserl over the course of time. The question of sequencing the fields of study in the creation of phenomenology was a subject of debates between Husserl and Heidegger, Husserl beginning with the principles of the phenomenology of consciousness, and Heidegger beginning with his anthropomorphic metaphysics of Dasein. For Husserl, theology stood as a field of study separate from scientific metaphysics, but not from the so called "new metaphysics" that he articulated later in his work. As of Trizio (2021b, p. 521), "theology is the most important part and the overarching theme of what Husserl systematically referred to as the highest and ultimate questions (*höchsten und letzten Fragen*) along with the closely connected problems of immortality, freedom, the sense of history, and the possibility of a happy and meaningful human existence".

The highest and ultimate questions are, paradoxically, not the questions that philosophy as a vocation can exclusively uphold, but questions which are asked by all of us naively. The idea of connection between consciousness and metaphysics of reality has a spiritual angle which is shared by all seekers of spiritual advancement. Soteriology in all religious traditions, be it concerned with enlightenment, liberation, immortality, or salvation, inspires the focus on the nature of the self. But if, in the spiritual quest, the self is designated to be the locus of the supernatural reality, there remains the problem of the nature and origins of the world. In all of religious history, the theological metaphysics of the self served as the foundation of soteriology (cf. papers by Oliva and Litvin in this Issue). The primacy of the metaphysics of Dasein in the phenomenology of Heidegger thus stands as a variation of this theme. However, as we know, religious traditions did not solve the problem of relationships between consciousness and multiplicity in the appearances of the world. Some traditions, such as Buddhism or Vedanta, neutralize this question by announcing the world to be an illusion. Other traditions, such as Christianity, give rise to dual metaphysics, but in monastic practice, abolish the world by renunciation. Islamic absolute monotheism, in which dual substance metaphysics has no place, treats the world as the signs of God (Schimmel 1994). But how did the "illusion" of the self and world come about? How does *creatio ex nihilo* appear as multiplicities? And if the seat of absolute reality is in the self, what is the world? Rather than sidelining these problems with the metaphysics of the world, Husserl (1983) confronted them directly and started his transcendental phenomenology with material ontologies of the natural attitude in *Ideas 1*.

The phenomenology of consciousness is thus the means to discovering both religious and non-religious metaphysics. Beginning with originating intuition, the phenomenology of consciousness searches for foundation on which true concepts can be built. All rational intentionality emerges out of this foundation. If things are understood as they are in themselves, i.e., if understanding correlates with these originating intuitions, the sense of truth is bound to emerge. Research of consciousness is thus the way to a grounded metaphysics, to the true inventory of the world, and to the concept of reality of the whole.

Now back to how religious experience fits into metaphysical agendas of phenomenology. In the beginning, Husserl's metaphysics was the metaphysics of a natural scientist, i.e., the metaphysics concerned with what pertained to the nature of reality as physical reality, or as reality of sciences, but not as God or the self. Similarly to Aristotle's metaphysics, it was supposed to complete the *a priori* sciences by serving them an apodictic path to general principles—the principles these sciences were lacking and on which they themselves should have been based. De Santis (2023b) differentiates between three periods

in the development of Husserl's concept of metaphysics: the beginning period with natural and scientific metaphysics, which lasted till 1906; the period after 1906–1907, in which his metaphysics was impacted by the transcendental theory of consciousness and the conceptions of the transcendental ego; and the period when not only the transcendental ego, but other concepts of subjectivity, become pronounced with regard to metaphysics and alter Husserl's interest in it.

Up to 1906–1907, Husserl agreed with the Aristotelian idea of metaphysics as the first philosophy. This metaphysics proceeds from the natural attitude which becomes modified by the sciences. Such metaphysics should produce the grounding assumptions for the sciences concerned with actuality and reality, i.e., is valid not just for itself but for the sciences. By presenting its vision of reality, such metaphysics would fix and test presuppositions of experimental sciences regarding the actuality they attempt to investigate. The assumptions under scrutiny concern (a) the existence of an external world, (b) the nature of space and time, and (c) the relationship between becoming and causality. For his contemporary situation, Husserl also emphasized the need to untangle metaphysics from the theory of logic (or knowledge). Formal researches in phenomenology, whose task was now to uncover the foundations of pure logic without metaphysics, requires metaphysical neutrality. However, and as Husserl says in the 1898 lectures, the questions falling under the heading "theory of knowledge" stood and remained "on the threshold of metaphysics" (*an der Schwelle der Metaphysik*). . . "knowing consciousness and known realities are two, necessarily disconnected, realities"; "the knowing consciousness is always directed towards something that is really present in it" (Hua-Mat III, 253, 235–236, *apud* De Santis 2023b, p. 132).

Religious experience is hardly relevant for this kind of metaphysics. These metaphysics of the natural attitude are correlated with the externalistic account, that is, with the idea that consciousness is partly determined by what lies outside of consciousness.³ Husserl's account of consciousness in general is quite externalistic, despite the emphasis on essences and categorial intuition. Externalism in Husserl cannot be claimed completely because the ego supplements its own excess of meaning to originating intuitions. Yet, the genetic phenomenology of judgements, historical and cultural generativity of consciousness, and passive syntheses of the world-horizon all begin from sensory "earth-ground" of perception (Steinbock 2001). They share the same originating ground, just differ in the scale of time and their relationships to the duration of the individual life. Since evidence in religious experience does not depend, at least overtly, on the external sensory input, religious experience remains unconnected to Husserl's metaphysics in the sense of the first philosophy. Likewise, one does not find a reference to religious experience in Aristotle's metaphysics. The absence of such reference is not because at the times of Aristotle, division between the everyday and religious experience had not yet taken place. We simply cannot bridge directly religious experience with metaphysics as the first philosophy until, and if, we prove that religious experience contributes to the understanding of reality by the sciences. This absence of an apodictically given connection between religious experience and metaphysics is why, e.g., Kuravsky (in this Special Issue) finds links between religious traditions and Heidegger, not Husserl. The same took place in much of the philosophy of religion, e.g., in Iranian academia. The connection with Husserl's ideas concerning metaphysics becomes apparent beginning only with the second period in the development of Husserl's concept of metaphysics.

Beginning in 1906–1907, as De Santis indicates, with Husserl's lectures on *Introduction to Logic and Theory of Knowledge*, Husserl's idea of metaphysics transforms itself along with the rise of his theory of transcendental consciousness. He recognizes metaphysics now as constitutive accomplishments of the transcendental ego, and not a product of naïve

perception of the world. Accordingly, “metaphysics” amounts to the re-interpretation of the actually given as the constituted. And, by extension, the sense of metaphysics now includes the transcendental ego (see, e.g., the paper by Louchakova-Schwartz in this Issue). The eidetic of the sciences—a discovery pertaining to the transcendental concept of ontological regions—also transforms the understanding of metaphysics toward a greater emphasis on the role of consciousness. Thus, the place of being “the first philosophy” is now given to the science of consciousness, while the metaphysics of the real world and of the sciences takes the place of “the last philosophy”. *Evidenz*, which is a concept that is rather linear and formal in *Prolegomena to Logical Investigations* (Husserl 2001a), becomes much more detailed in *Ideas 1* (Husserl 1983). Since any *Evidenz* can serve as a foundation of knowledge, if religious experience produces *Evidenz*, the latter can become the source of metaphysics. And if religion has its own province of meaning (Barber 2017), it can also be understood in terms of the eidetics of such a province, and can possibly be interpreted as an ontological region in which a specific mode of givenness can be rationalized as an aspect of reality. This is exactly the conceptual equipment which motivated the call for papers for this Special Issue of *Religions*. We see the concepts of Husserl’s transcendental phenomenology being applied to the analysis of metaphysics in the papers by Costello and Litvin.

Something is given in religious experience. We call it “God”, “Truth”, or “the Absolute”, but we cannot readily determine what it is. However, as Wiltzsche (2022) argues, a possibility of originary givenness, rather than originary givenness itself, can be the foundation of rationality. This gives us the space for vast interpretations of the connections between religious experience and the metaphysics of reality. De Santis (2023b, p. 144) states that “the ‘metaphysical interpretation’ of factually given reality corresponds to reason (*Vernunft*) ‘interpreting’ (*interpretieren*) factual reality as the domain in which it strives towards realizing itself (*telos*) through the activity of the many positive sciences. Reason “interprets” factually given reality as its own realization via the sciences”. Can we assume that religious experience can also be a form in which reason attempts to realize itself, but in the absence of things materialized and understood as the objects? Peiró Pérez, in her paper in this Issue, argues that rationality can overcome an apparent contradiction in the notion of being emerging *ex nihilo* by recognition of the true nature of being. The rationality of being is incompatible with any sort of univocity, equivocation, ambiguity, or constitutive frailty. By contrast with the rationality in Husserl’s concept of metaphysics, Zhao (in this issue) argues that the vagueness of categories in Heidegger’s metaphysics serves to break down the naïve categorial apparatus which is unproductive in the description of the world.

As one can see from the exposition of developing relationships between phenomenology and metaphysics (De Santis 2023a, 2023b), the treatment of metaphysics is closely tied to the concept of phenomenology. Their ordering in a philosophical discourse to a large degree defines the validity of the phenomenological interrogation. Husserl responded to Heidegger’s metaphysical–anthropological interpretation of *Dasein* by differentiating between the transcendental and monadic ego, with the latter concept being introduced in Fourth Meditation of *Cartesian Meditations* (De Santis 2023b, vol. 2, p. viii). One can “slice” subjectivity differently, with its ontologies articulated on different levels of abstraction. Formal and transcendental expressions of such abstraction are self-explanatory: the formal is consciousness as it is analyzed in *Logical Investigations* (Husserl 2001a, 2001b), including the elaborations in the Appendix to the second volume, and the transcendental is consciousness as it is explained in *Ideas 1* (Husserl 1983). Monadic consciousness is more concrete, thus being closer to the actuality of human life with its delimiters of birth and death, but not concrete enough to count as individual consciousness. The structures found in the monadic ego can be generalized. With this concreteness of the ego understood as a monad, Husserl’s metaphysics now expands (he calls it “new metaphysics”) to cover the so-called

limit phenomena, to which religious experience is necessarily connected (Husserl 2014; Steinbock 2017). New metaphysics is no longer the rational metaphysics of the sciences, but a metaphysics which includes the irrationality of human life. De Santis (2023b, pp. 148–49) gives a clear-cut description of the distinction between the ontological form of intelligibility or rationality (*Rationalität*) and the transcendental one (*Vernünftigkeit*), followed by an analysis of their relationships with irrationality. Religious experience fits with this problematic like a glove: it widens the limits of perception, and brings into the picture a metaphysics based on theology, that is, the metaphysics of the invisible and the metaphysics of non-objects (two aspects of the phenomenological metaphysics featured in the research of the Society for the Phenomenology of Religious Experience, www.sosphere.org). Lala's paper in the present volume contains a very interesting idea derived from the Islamic phenomenological metaphysics, of the realities of religious experience manifesting in real (individual or monadic) life. Similarly, the paper by Oliva combines the Husserlian phenomenological approach with a metaphysical analysis of prophetic thought in Aquinas, and in the same monadic context, Barber discusses the pragmatic encroachment of religious experience. The monadic view, however, connects with formal concepts of phenomenology in the Nyaku treatment of Scheler, and in Pietrogrande's paper on Derrida (in the present Issue).

With the idea of totality viewed in the monadic context (Husserl 2014), one gains a new logical entry into the problems of ontological and logical priority of Dasein vs. God vs. phenomenology. For discussion of related themes, see the paper by Cassara. The problem widens from the Dasein-phenomenological terrain to the inclusion of the ultimately transcendental aspect. Following the Husserlian motion in metaphysics, one attempts to engage rationality which is based on the transitivity of presentations⁴ with the things which lie beyond this kind of rationality but may be not irrational at all.

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Notes

- ¹ For metaphysics and related issues in the contexts of phenomenology (see Beyer 2020; De Santis 2021a, 2021b, 2023a, 2023b; Trizio 2017, 2021a, 2021b; Zahavi 2017; for earlier notes on metaphysics and phenomenology, see Willard 1995).
- ² On intentionality as knowledge, see (Hopp 2011, 2021).
- ³ For more on consciousness in the internalism-externalism debates (see Crowell 2013, p. 88).
- ⁴ For the Husserlian critique of the notion of appearance from the standpoint of their transitivity (see Nitsche 2018).

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Article

Max Scheler's Movement of Love and the Object of Religious Experience

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Abstract: In this paper, I explore the implications of Max Scheler's concept of the movement of love, and I show that this movement, for him, constitutes not only the core of human nature but also the metaphysical presupposition upon which the nature of the object of religious experience could be understood. I argue that Scheler's unique way of blending intellectual knowledge of essences and spiritual intuition, i.e., metaphysics and religion, respectively, makes his position extremely interesting for present-day interpretations of religious experiences. The question then is, could religious experiences, such as awe, bliss, reverence, and revelation, be said to be given only in spiritually participating in the movement of love—and could this participation be the defining factor of these experiences?

Keywords: Max Scheler; movement of love; religious experience; religious act; revelation

1. Introduction

A generally accepted view of what exactly constitutes the nature of a religious experience is difficult to pinpoint given its vagueness and the wide variety of experiences that are classified under it. Phenomenological approaches to the nature of religious experience have mainly focused on the views of Edmund Husserl's strand of phenomenology, with little or no attention paid to the views of the other pioneer of this school of thought, Max Scheler. In this paper, I explore the implications of Max Scheler's concept of the movement of love and I show that this movement, for him, constitutes not only the core of human nature but also the metaphysical presupposition upon which the nature of the object of religious experience could be understood. Scheler's unique way of blending intellectual knowledge of essences and spiritual intuition, i.e., metaphysics and religion, respectively, makes his position extremely interesting for present-day interpretations of religious experience.

I start by first examining the fundamental role of the movement of love in the becoming of consciousness in human beings and their experiences of the world. This will be followed by a study of Scheler's notion of religious experience, which is defined by his concept of the religious act, and by comparison with present-day views of this experience. I will argue that Scheler's view of religious experience is mainly a consequence of his positions on the act of participating in the movement of love and its attributes, and the fact that these attributes endow human beings with capacities that transcend and precede consciousness. Furthermore, I discuss Scheler's fundamental insight that "there is not nothing" that has implications for his view on the concept of nothingness. These reasons I argue make the object to which a religious act is directed or redirected crucial to understanding what may count as a religious experience, as they imply that the spiritual participation in the unique value or personality of this object is the defining factor of this experience. The question then is, could religious experiences such as awe, bliss, reverence, and revelation be said to be given only in spiritually participating in the movement of love; and could participation be the defining factor of these experiences?

2. The Nature of Movement

2.1. Movement of the Heart

The central role of movement [*Bewegung*] in Max Scheler's works should not be ignored. In the English translations of his works, we encounter expressions such as movement of love; movement of mind; movement of acts; movement of hate; movement of expression; movement of spirit; movement of the innermost personal self; movement of intentions; etc. These expressions not only indicate the importance of the concept of movement in Scheler's thought but also raise the question—what did he mean by a moving love, hate, spirit, mind, or innermost self? To answer this question, let us investigate the meaning of the movement of love [*Bewegung der Liebe*], which is perhaps the most important concept in Scheler's thought and could be considered the mother of all movements, as it is expressed in some of his works, such as the essays "Ordo Amoris" (Scheler 1973c), "Ressentiment" (Scheler 1972), and "Humility" (Scheler 1981). For example, in "Ordo Amoris", Scheler provides a hint of what this movement entails when he states that:

"I find myself in an immeasurable vast world of sensible and spiritual objects which set my heart and passions in constant motion. I know that the objects I can recognize through perception and thought, as well as all that I will, choose, do, perform, and accomplish, depend on the play of this movement of my heart". (Scheler 1973c, p. 98)

This passage raises the question—what is meant by the movement of the heart? One interpretation to rule out is the physical (pumping) motion of the heart described for example in the works of Aristotle and Thomas Aquinas. Aristotle refers to the movement of the heart as the involuntary movements the heart makes outside the control of the intellect (703b4–704a1, p. 1095)¹, while Thomas Aquinas takes this physical movement as originating in the emotions and the intellect since, as far as he was concerned, it is the intellect that causes diverse emotions and cognitions that move the heart.²

However, for Scheler, the movement of the heart referenced in the above quotation refers not only to the pumping, physical motion of the heart but also to a more fundamental, dynamic, process that brings about changes in the passions, intentions, actions, and drives, in a living creature. In other words, it refers to a primal movement that constitutes the drive in an entity. We see glimpses of such descriptions very clearly in Scheler's essay "Idealism and Realism", where he discussed how primal movement relates to his concepts of resistance, consciousness, spatiality, and temporality, concepts that he uses to explicate how human beings (and other living creatures) experience the world.³ So, in order to grasp what Scheler's notion of movement of the heart entails, we need to investigate how the central role of this primal movement pertains to his understanding of consciousness in human beings. However, before we proceed, it should be noted that for Scheler consciousness of something generally refers to "all intentionally directed acts filled with meaning". Scheler thus contrasts his view of consciousness with what he describes as the intellectual view of consciousness, which he claims is based on theories of "representation" and refers to "everything that comes to appearance in inner perception".⁴

2.2. Movement and Consciousness

We begin by exploring the nature of Scheler's concept of movement and how consciousness results from it. In "Idealism and Realism", Scheler introduced the concept of a "tendency" [*Tendenz*] that motivates primal movement in living objects. According to Scheler,

"We define a living movement as one in which, throughout the experience of movement, the change of place of an identical something, which is ingredient in every movement, proves to be founded on "tendency" [*Tendenz*] which is likewise ingredient in all movement". (Scheler 1973b, p. 330)

The important point to note in this quotation is the fact that this "tendency" is an "ingredient in all movement". This point indicates that what Scheler takes to be "tendency"

is not some sort of unmoved mover from which other movements originate, as in Aristotle, but rather that tendency is an essential part of the movement in question.⁵ Although the exact nature of tendency is not always very clear, this characteristic of being part of all movement suggests that Scheler is here referring to what he describes in his *Posthumous works* as a “self-positing eternal Substance” (the *Ens a se*)⁶. This is a Substance of which we only know two of its attributes that together constitute the world (reality) and our consciousness of it. Scheler describes these attributes in various contexts as, respectively, Spirit and Nature, Supreme Mind and Supreme Life, *Geist* and *Drang*, *Agape* and *Eros*, etc., and sometimes he even describes this substance as Supreme Being, eternal Being, or simply as Being.⁷ However, it is important to note that for Scheler’s latter metaphysics, this substance does not refer to God. The eternal Substance is beyond God (Nicholas 2011, p. 148; Frings 1980). For the latter Scheler, God only *becomes* from the interdependency of the two known attributes of the eternal Substance and is therefore dependent on these for their realization. Consequently, Scheler suggests that the eternal attribute of spirit is what God and human beings have in common, implying that human beings and God are collaborators in the realization of the *Ground-of Being*.⁸ Scheler’s position thus differs from any form of monism, such as in Spinoza for whom God is Nature or belongs to Nature, and from Bergson for whom God is, or is the source of, an immanent *élan vital* or love (Nadler 2022). The attributes of the eternal substance will be addressed again below but let us first tackle the issue of the becoming of consciousness which Scheler characterizes as a kind of knowledge.

The Becoming of Consciousness

For Scheler, living things have a tendency for spontaneous self-movement (and self-modification) and it is through this tendency that one becomes conscious of oneself in space and time.⁹ In this spontaneous self-movement one suffers *resistance* from an entity that transcends oneself, resulting in a *reflexive act* that originates consciousness. This process implies that movement precedes consciousness, implying that consciousness cannot be inborn or primordially given in human beings but is rather a kind of knowledge that one discovers in distinct stages of one’s development as a being. Zachary Davis distinguishes three different modes of consciousness in Scheler’s primordial self-movement. These are vital consciousness, bodily consciousness, and self-consciousness. Vital consciousness is the compulsion of self-movement brought about by the drive impulsion (*Drang*). Bodily consciousness is the awareness of having an ego, i.e., the “I can”, the *lived body*, the consciousness of being an individual as distinct from others. Self-consciousness is described as “an achievement reserved for persons alone, for it assumes the act of objectification and ideation”. Each of these three modes of consciousness is separated by *resistance*, which is pain, the suffering of not being able to fulfill a need (Davis 2015, p. 597).¹⁰

The becoming of consciousness forms an important distinction between Scheler and the generally held conception of consciousness as primordially given in human beings as we see in major philosophical works, such as in Descartes, Kant, the German Idealism of Fichte, Schelling and Hegel, neo-Kantianism, and in Husserl (Frings 1992, p. 106) and rules out any form of ontological constructivism. According to Scheler,

“We must reject entirely the frequently encountered assertion that consciousness is a “primal fact”, which one ought not to speak of an “origin” of consciousness. The very same laws and motives in accordance with which we think of consciousness’ raising itself from one level of reflection to the next will apply when we think of consciousness itself origination out of a preconscious, partly subconscious, partly supra-conscious condition of the being of the contents of knowledge. (And the motive is always suffering from some sort, suffering, as we shall see, at the hands of the real being [*Realsein*] which is ecstatically given priori to all consciousness.) Only a very definite historical stage of overreflective [sic] bourgeois civilization could make the fact of consciousness the starting point of all theoretical philosophy, without characterizing more exactly the mode of being of this consciousness” (Scheler 1973b, p. 295).

However, it should be noted that the resistance suffered in the self-movement referred to above can only be experienced at the core of one's being, by which is meant the level of the "self" that Scheler "provisionally defined as the center of vital drives [*triebhaftes Lebenszentrum*]" (Scheler 1973b, p. 321). This center is "the genuinely central experience of our life of straining and striving [*Drängens und Strebens selbst*]" and forms the core of the "self".¹¹ This is because what one gets "thrown back" onto in the *reflexive act* is the "ecstatic [*ekstatische*] knowledge", which is a knowledge that one possesses without being aware of having it or how it was had—that is, a knowledge that "includes no form of being-conscious".¹² It is in this reflexive act that one becomes consciously aware of a transcendent object because in this act ecstatic knowledge becomes conscious knowledge since the "knowledge of the knowledge of things is added to the knowledge of things" (Scheler 1973b, p. 294). According to Scheler,

"Only when the . . . act furnishing ecstatic knowledge and the subject which performs this act become themselves the content of knowledge in the act of reflection does the character originally given in ecstatic knowledge become a mere reference pointing to the "object". It is only here that the object or that which turns into an object remains from now on "transcendent" to consciousness. Therefore, whenever there is consciousness, objects transcendent to consciousness must be given to consciousness. Their structural relationship is insoluble. Whenever self-consciousness and consciousness of an object arise, they do so simultaneously and through the same process". (Scheler 1973b, p. 298)

What is important to note from this passage is that for Scheler, conscious awareness of the self can only be triggered by an entity that transcends the conscious subject.¹³ To prepare the foundations for exploring the implications of this claim to religious experiences in the sections below, let us now turn to the movement of love and the two attributes Scheler discerns from it. For it is through the interdependence of these two attributes of drive impulsion (*Drang*) and spirit (*Geist*) that Scheler holds that human beings experience the world.

2.3. Movement of Love and Its Attributes

The notions of tendency, self-movement, self-modification, resistance, and reflexive acts, all of which lead to consciousness as a form of knowledge in living creatures, bring us to the question of how these concepts could be reconciled with the primordial givenness of love in human persons, as Scheler claimed in his earlier works such as *Ordo Amoris*, *Ressentiment*, and *The Formalism*. The pressing question to ask is whether by "tendency" Scheler is referring to the primordial love, which he described as the "tendency . . . that seeks to lead everything in the direction of perfection", "a dynamic becoming, a growing", a primal act that "awakens both knowledge and volition", and "the mother of spirit and reason itself" (Scheler 1973c, pp. 109–10). My line of reasoning is based on the presupposition that this "tendency"—what we pointed out above as a self-positing eternal *Substance* of which we only know two attributes (*Geist* and *Drang*)—is love. This is because with these notions of love and tendency, as part of a primordial movement in living creatures that leads to self-consciousness, Scheler seems to be referring to a *motivating* eternal entity that is beyond time itself, an entity out of which human beings can conceive of anything that *is*, an entity that is not relative to anything else, and an entity that transcends the division between essence and existence.¹⁴ According to Scheler, "Whatever is involved in this basic foundation of everything, it is eternally self-positing and we are in it" (Scheler 2008, pp. 206, 213, 294, 352, 355). My presupposition that this self-positing eternal *Substance* is love also entails that its movement—the movement of love as eros and agape—provides the "golden thread" for claiming continuity in Scheler's thought.¹⁵

This presupposition made above demands an exploration into Scheler's two attributes of spirit (*Geist*) and the principle of drive impulsion (*Drang*) in relation to his notion of a primordial movement of love.¹⁶ Scheler describes spirit, on the one hand, as "the one

ultimate ground of all entities of which life happens to be one particular manifestation". Spirit transcends life itself and is essentially detached from any organic being or any bodily "drive-related "intelligence" (Scheler 1992a). Furthermore, this spirit is a constituent of the "World-Ground" (*der Weltgrund*) that is realized in the process of becoming.¹⁷ Drive impulsion, on the other hand, is the basic need for the continuous self-activation of a living entity to self-modify that leads to consciousness in human beings, animals and, to an extent, even in plants' "general impulsion toward growth and reproduction". Although what is meant by growth could differ in human beings and animals, in general, Scheler sees this drive of self-propagation in living entities as proof that life is not defined by "the will to power" but rather by impulsion towards reproduction and death (Scheler 1992a, p. 8).

An explanation of how these two attributes of *Drang* and *Geist* mutually interpenetrate has been provided by Manfred Frings who describes them as metaphysical principles of spirit and impulsion. According to Frings, the respective natures of these two principles allow them to form the process by which the ever-becoming "World-Ground" is realized: impulsion yearns in the direction of the ideas and values of spirit, while spirit longs to direct impulsions towards the realization of values that constitute the "World-Ground".¹⁸ In other words, what Scheler meant by an impotent spirit relies on a potent drive impulsion to participate in the realization of essences of objects and the world, and vice versa. It is important to note that the drive impulsion in itself does not possess reality, but only has the potential to become real (under the direction and guidance of spirit). Thus, the two principles complement each other in such a way that "impulsion is the twin of spirit, and spirit is the twin of impulsion". In Frings' words,

"The tendency in impulsion towards spiritualization is referred to by Scheler as *Eros*. *Eros* "motivates" spirit; the direction of pure spirit to impulsion is *agape*. *Agape* is spirit's "benevolent affirmation" of being, and of the being of values, and spirit craves and yearns (*die Sucht*) for the realization of its ideas by means of impulsion. Or: primordial spirit has only a direction toward the realization of its ideas and values by virtue of impulsion's for all time yearning to realize them. Since impulsion is, like spirit, primordial, impulsion is also the primordial realizing factor from which all the historical and individual realizing factors . . . follow". (Frings 2002, p. 99)

Frings' insight into the mutual dependency of impulsion and spirit echoes the interdependency that we see in the movement of the two attributes of love in the realization of values. On the one hand, there is an upward/ascending movement of love (as *eros*) that is characterized by the craving and yearning to become spirit and the ego's desire to attain knowledge and mastery of objects and the world, and on the other hand, there is a downward/descending movement of love (*agape*) that is yearning to realize the being of values. Figure 1 below provides a visualization of this movement of love in the form of a parabolic curve.

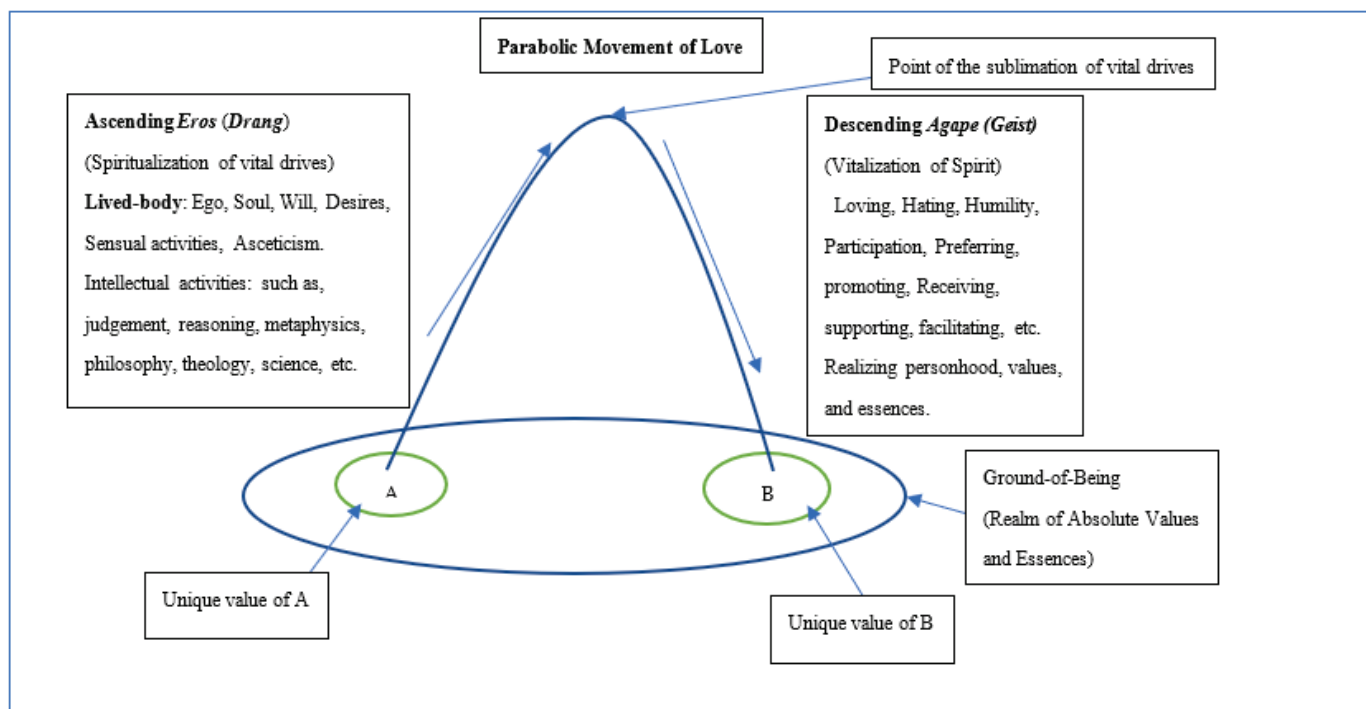


Figure 1. A visualization of the movement of love showing the directions of eros and agape, the point of sublimation of drives, and the World-Ground.

The visualization shows a parabolic movement of the attributes of love, eros, and agape, which could be said to move in an upward and downward direction as we saw above. Ascending eros is characterized by the striving of the ego, through asceticism, to attain knowledge; while descending agape is characterized by spiritual participation and service through which value or essence is given. It is in this descending movement of love that the whole person participates in the spiritual act of loving service that, as Arthur R. Luther puts it, provides “space” for the beloved person *to be*.” (Luther 1970, p. 225). This means promoting, supporting, and in fact, “facilitating” the beloved to attain a higher being of value (Vacek 1982, p. 163). It should be noted that *to be* for Scheler is having the capacity for emotive spiritual loving, by participating and realizing one’s unique value. Providing space for a person *to be* in this sense may not be reduced to Heideggerian or Derridian “letting be”, which refers to what thought gains access to the Other (Serafini 2016, pp. 484–85). The descending movement of agape is thus characterized by the givenness and realization of values, the highest of which are the religious values such as awe, humility, repentance, reverence, and bliss.¹⁹ It is the realization of values that constitute the history of the world as the unfolding of the “World-Ground” (*der Weltgrund*) or “Ground-of-Being”. For each unique value realized in a person or object is the eternal substance in them (Frings 1980, p. 142) that is received when a person A promotes the realization of the unique value of B. I argue elsewhere that for Scheler values are realized and received only in this descending movement of agape, by which I define his concept of humility. Values are in this sense felt as gift-wrapped in humility.²⁰

Given what we have hitherto discovered about the primordial movement of tendency and love we could conclude that, for Scheler, the movement of the heart does not only refer to the mechanical or physical movement as we see in Aristotle and Thomas Aquinas, mentioned above. Rather, this movement refers to a primal movement that occurs at what constitutes the core of a human being, i.e., a movement from what Scheler calls the *act center* of a person which is the site from where an individual suffers resistance and gains consciousness of the world and self. Hence, this primal movement neither refers only to a primal animateness (See Sheets-Johnstone 2011), nor is it concerned with movement relating to external perception only as in Husserl, who seems to have rejected the possibility of a

vital consciousness that operates without an ego, despite possible parallels with Scheler's thought elsewhere.²¹ As Dermot Moran pointed out, "An egoless consciousness is, for Husserl, an a priori impossibility" (Moran 2009, p. 89).

Movement of Love and Sublimation

Having described the movement of love in the form of a parabolic curve, the question arises as to what the turning point of this curve represents.²² This paper argues that the turning point of this curve is the sublimation of drives by which spirit is provided with vital drive energy to manifest itself. In *The Human Place*, sublimation is defined as "the human being's ability to say 'No' to his drives that paves the way from an inadequate knowledge to an intuitive insight." (Scheler 1992a, p. 40). According to Scheler, this ability to repress drives is not a "fortuitous quality", but part of the *constitution* of human beings who are never at peace with their surrounding world and are always desiring to transcend this world including the reality of their own self.²³ Sublimation places the human being in a position to "build an ideal realm of thoughts" above their world of perception and "thereby to divert more of the energy dormant in the repressed drives into his spirit". This enables the human being to become "world-open" and no longer tied to the bondage of organic dependence on "life" and everything which belongs to life (Scheler 1992a, p. 40).

However, sublimation should not be reduced to an asceticism or repression of drives that would suggest a Freudian hierarchical divide between body and spirit (Hackett 2018, p. 32). What is sublimated is the lived-body that extends beyond just a body and encompasses the ego and the soul, all of which are located in the "*meta-biological ground of life itself*" (Frings 1980, p. 137). Scheler himself sees human beings' distinctive ability to sublimate sexual or erotic energy, from serving only the sexual and reproductive act, into Eros as the most important act to this end (Scheler 2008, p. 230). This is because the sexual energy and its reproductive system are "the oldest, most original and most energized" of the drives: the only drives that are directed toward another creature and, hence, the only drives that "provides a reservoir for Eros as a participating act" (Scheler 2008, p. 233). Scheler thus rejects what he describes in *The Human Place* as the "*negative theory of the human being*" that claims that repression of drive energy directly provides our capacity for higher cultural activities, a position he not altogether accurately, perhaps, ascribes to Buddha, Schopenhauer, and Freud.²⁴

Looking at Scheler's concept of sublimation from the perspective of the movement of love, we could argue that it is sublimation that paves the way for a reversal in the direction of movement from the lower aspiring to the higher, to the higher stooping down to the lower in a loving act of humility. The parabolic curve of the movement of love describes how human beings become conscious of themselves and the world. The turning point of this curve is the distinctive feature, the important moment of the sublimation of drives by which human beings attain spiritual readiness to be guided towards the realization of essences and the Ground-of-Being. Scheler remarkably describes this moment as "sweeping aside anthropocentric drives".²⁵

The movement of love thus shows how Scheler blends the lived-body drive activities in eros, such as rational and sensory knowledge including metaphysics, with spiritual intuitions such as preferring and co-participating in agape in the realization of values and essences. This blending is key to his view on how best human beings can "possess" God. According to Scheler,

"We cannot now avoid seeing that the most adequate possession of God, the maximal participation of our being in his, cannot be achieved unless we first attain to a *simultaneous vision*, free from all contradictions and incompatibilities, of the religious God and the metaphysical 'world-basis' together. It follows that we cannot achieve this goal by wholly or partly making either the religious God or the metaphysical 'God' the yardstick against which we measure the *other intentional object*". (Scheler 1960, p. 141)

I argue that, for Scheler, this *simultaneous vision* could only be achieved in the descending movement of agape through loving participation in the unique personal value of an entity.²⁶ The movement of love has significant implications for religious experiences.

3. Movement of Love and Religious Experience

In the first part of this paper, I argued that, for Scheler, consciousness is a kind of knowledge generated from the primordial spontaneous self-movement and self-modification in human beings and the resistance suffered at the core of our being. In this sense, consciousness is not a given primal act but the outcome of the suffering of transcendence at different levels of being. Consciousness is always a becoming. The primal movement is motivated by the tendency in the two attributes of a self-positing eternal Substance, *Drang* and *Geist*, through which the becoming of the “World-Ground” or “Ground-of-Being” is realized. I argued that these two attributes constitute the two attributes of love, *eros*, and *agape* and that it is in the movement of love that essential values and their ranks are realized through the articulation of the whole person in the loving act towards the beloved object. The highest realms of values that can be experienced in this movement of love are the religious values of the holy and unholy and their corresponding spiritual feelings of personality that stem from an ego-free and intertwined spiritual act of love, humility, and participation. According to Scheler, spiritual feelings, such as bliss and despair that “spontaneously issue from the depth of our person are beyond any volitional control” and are, as such, non-reactive and not “subject to arbitrary production”.²⁷ This means that these feelings cannot be desired, rather they “present themselves . . . as pure ‘grace’” (Scheler 1973a, p. 337) and, hence, they are beyond intellectual activities.

Now, what then does Scheler take to be the source of spiritual feelings and, as such, of religious experiences? To answer this question, it is necessary to consider how the movement of love relates to the concept of the religious act by establishing what exactly is meant by religious experience in present-day studies. Given that even though there seems to be a general agreement among scholars as to its mysterious nature, and hence its unknowability through scientific methods, there seems to be less agreement on what its object and even its source should be. For some scholars, the mystery of God is unquestionably the object of religious experience, while for others, God cannot be the subject of experience since God is unknowable as the subject (Louchakova-Schwartz 2019, pp. X, 1–22). Outside of such theistic views of religious experience, there is also the non-theistic view that claims that religious experience need not have an object at all. That is to say, religious experience is taken to be the experience generated from a subject’s inner self without any reference to any entity that transcends this inner consciousness, as experienced for example in certain strands of Buddhist meditation. Consciousness is in this sense seen as having spontaneous creativity that can generate specific experiences and is seen as a “*sui generis* activity of religious experiences” (Louchakova-Schwartz 2019, p. 101).

However, when we speak of an object in relation to a religious experience, we also need to ask what role the object plays in this experience. That is, (i) should the object be what is contained in the religious experience itself? (ii) Should the object be that which structures the religious experience? (iii) Should the object be that to which the experience is aimed at as a (teleological) goal? The possibility of distinguishing a religious experience from other forms of experience thus hinges on determining the role of the object in experience or if an object is involved at all. Scheler is, for example, primarily concerned with the intended object of a religious experience; that is, its “*nature and essential structures*”, and not on “the chaotic random world of individual religious experiences”.²⁸

In light of the above, it is necessary to first explore the object-related view of religious experience, and question whether religious experiences are indeed solely the act of consciousness. For, if consciousness is knowledge as Scheler claims, and if there is a general agreement among scholars that religious experience is actually a mystery that cannot be characterized as knowledge, then what exactly constitutes religious experience? Secondly, we should question what exactly is meant by the description of religious experience as a

mystery. Do we mean mystery in terms of the unknowability of the object of experience, which Scheler takes to be an anti-metaphysical stance, or do we mean to refer to a mystery as a form of mystical or emotional intuition of a (divine) entity?

3.1. Object-Related Religious Experience

3.1.1. Religious Act

In attempting to explore the object of religious experience and the mystery surrounding it from a Schelerian perspective, I will develop my argumentation by turning to Scheler's concept of the religious act which in his view constitutes all religious experiences. To begin with, for Scheler, religion is necessarily a longing for salvation and not a way of knowing an object belonging to the world. "Religion is . . . founded in the love of God and longing for a final salvation of man himself and all things. Religion is thus pre-eminently a way of salvation" (Scheler 1960, p. 138). What Scheler means by salvation is the process of becoming that culminates in the "vital communion with God" (Scheler 1960, p. 134). That is, a process by which human beings and the world become one with God in the realized "Ground-of-Being" or "World-ground".

This process of salvation is made possible in human beings by the insight-providing religious act, which is *antecedent* to all other forms of cognition, including philosophical cognition (Scheler 1960, p. 152). This religious act, Scheler claims, is a surplus power of the mind with which it "*participates* in a supersensual realm of being and value whose contents and objects cannot stem from experience of finite things" (Scheler 1960, pp. 263–264). This surplus power also enables the mind to soar "above any employment it can find in this world", and find fulfillment only in self-revealing divine entities that transcend the psycho-physical world. Thus, for Scheler, the religious act does not proceed from any ethical, logical, or aesthetic acts, as it is given prior to any of these acts whose objects of intention are found in the psycho-physical world. Scheler's assertion entails that the religious act is not relative to any kind of *Weltanschauung* but is rather an "essential endowment of the human mind", whose presence no individual can escape (Scheler 1960, p. 267).

However, given the diversity of religions and religious experiences, the occurrence of the religious act in every human being suggests that the object to which this act is directed could be the source of the differences. After all, for Scheler, the object of a religious act determines what qualifies as a religious experience. This is because although the religious object can only find fulfillment and realize its essence in a divine entity, this act can also be redirected to a finite object that will result in idolatry (Scheler 1960, p. 267). Hence, for Scheler, we can only speak of religious experiences in reference to a divine object that transcends all finite things.

3.1.2. Religious Experience

Given the importance of an object in the religious act, the question that now needs to be addressed is the role this object plays in a religious experience. For Scheler, the object of a religious act is the object in which one participates, and it is the realized value of this object that structures the religious experience that is given. According to Scheler, in examples of religious acts, such as praise, love, veneration, or worship, "our mind oversteps the bounds not only of this or that one finite thing, but of the very sum and substance of all finite things" (Scheler 1960, p. 253). Overstepping all finite things allows us to participate in an entity that is a "wholly other", and it is the value of this wholly other that structures the religious experience. The point Scheler seems to want to drive home is that in a religious experience our minds, hearts, and wills, are directed by the religious acts to a "wholly different realm of essences" that were previously unknown and beyond comprehension.²⁹ The religious act directs us "toward some thing which 'is' and has value, something which hovers before our mind over against all possible world-experience as the 'totally other', 'essentially incomparable' thing, which the former can in no wise contain" (Scheler 1960, p. 253). It is the value of this entity that structures the religious experience and is also the "what" of the experience itself. Hence, if the religious act is directed to God, then it is the

value of the personhood of God that is experienced. This experience is the unplaceable fear, awe, and humbling that we feel in the religious act.³⁰ Therefore, as in spiritual participation, wherein a unique value of the beloved object is realized, it is the object of the religious act that constitutes the “what” of religious experience.

3.1.3. Mystery in Religious Experiences

For some scholars, the inability to place the value of a divine entity given in a religious experience is a source of mystery that is interpreted as the unknowability of the objects of these experiences. However, Scheler sees the emphasis on mystery altogether as an exaggerated form of mysticism that leads to what he describes as an anti-metaphysical notion of agnosticism since he takes metaphysics itself to be an important part of the process by which the value of a divine object is experienced.³¹ According to him,

“What metaphysics aims for is to reveal the mystery of the world, but not just in the way of a silent, thoughtless reverence for it, leaving it alone as an uninvestigated jewel. On the one hand, it takes the view that what is absolutely real is not completely unknowable, but, on the other hand, it is not so foolhardy as to assume that we can gain more than an inadequate knowledge of all possible essences, all possible ways of being, or all attributes of what is absolutely real”. (Scheler 2008, p. 28)

Note the fact that, for Scheler, metaphysics leads us not only to the knowledge of objects in the psycho-physical world but also of objects that transcend us as “wholly other”, through the religious act as we saw above.³² It is this knowledge of a divine entity that is the source of the mystery experienced as fear, awe, wonder, hope, thanksgiving, etc. According to Scheler, in *religious hope*, we fervently hope for this thing even though we have no well-grounded evidence that gives us confidence this hope will be fulfilled; and in *religious thanksgiving*, “we give thanks for ‘something’ in relation to which what we have acquired is only a sign, indication or symbol, and not the proper object of the thanks . . .” (Scheler 1960, p. 252). Mystery in religious experience could in this sense be seen as a reception of knowledge of a divine entity that does not fit into the realm of knowledge of the psycho-physical world.³³

3.2. Religious Revelation

The experience of awe is also present in religious revelation, which is the most distinctive characteristic of the religious act. Religious revelation entails a demand for an answer from the object to which the religious act is directed. Scheler refers to this demand as an “*act of reciprocity*” and claims that “one may only speak of ‘religion’ where the object bears a *divine personal form* and where revelation (in the widest sense) on the part of this personal object is what fulfils the religious act and its intention”.³⁴ The demand for a personal response (through participation) from the object of the religious act makes religious revelation “a *necessary and universally valid knowledge*” because *what* is revealed is given as generally (known) symbols that are accessible to everybody through the religious act.³⁵ Hence, Scheler’s assertion is that revelation is simply the manner in which “*a reality of the divine character is given to human consciousness*” (Scheler 1960, p. 254). In other words, revelation is the manner in which the value of the object of the religious act is given in human beings.

Scheler’s emphasis on the personal character of revelation does raise the question of whether he sees Christianity as the most perfect religion, as pointed out by Michael D. Barber. According to Barber, Scheler’s claim of the necessity of a personal character of the divine object entails that one must wait for this person to reveal themselves, and accordingly, Scheler, by placing “a priority on the divinity of Christ . . . entertains the question of whether Christianity is the most perfect religion”.³⁶ In his early period Scheler did refer to God as the *ens a se*, and that can also be seen in various parts of the “Problem of Religion”.³⁷ What is more, he in fact referred to “the one true God” to whom “our hearts

and minds have a natural bias [and] a natural link of significance" in his essay "Christian Love and the Twentieth Century" in his criticism of what he saw to be Marx's presupposed messianism (Scheler 1960, pp. 398–99). Therefore, Barber's claim about Scheler's early view on Christianity seems accurate.

However, Scheler's latter metaphysics suggests that his insistence on the personal character of a divine entity does not imply the capacity of this entity to reveal itself as a person figure, but rather his insistence has to do with the capacity of this entity to love, to participate.³⁸ This is because Scheler believes that it is only in this *act of reciprocity* (spiritual participating in an interpersonal loving relationship) that the highest value can be co-felt. This means that a relationship with a non-personal entity will not realize such a value. Thus, we could argue that for Scheler the religious act is in fact an important attribute of the movement of love that motivates human persons toward participating in the value of a divine entity.³⁹ This implies that the religious experience of bliss could be taken to be the loving response one feels from a divine entity, and a religious revelation taken as a response that is also a "knowledge" of the unique personality of a divine entity. That is to say, knowledge in which "we can grasp what is original to the personality" of the divine being.⁴⁰

Thus, we could conclude that the necessity of the personal character of a divine object enables the revealing of the value, but not necessarily the human nature, of the divine. For Scheler, it is our shared personhood in the movement with God that binds us as partners *en route* to realizing the ultimate ground of the world or Ground-of-Being (Frings 1980, p. 142 and Scheler 2008, p. 208).

3.3. The Religious Act and the Sphere of Nothing

As we have seen above, for Scheler, religious experience is only possible through the religious act, which is a surplus of consciousness that is given to every human being and is always directed to either an object of divinity or redirected to a finite object. While the religious act finds fulfillment in a divine object only, redirecting the act to a finite object is idolatry. The question now is, what would the possibility of a religious experience without an object imply? In other words, how could we reconcile Scheler's claim of the necessity of the religious act with other notions of a religious experience without an object? Olga Louchakova-Schwartz, for example, has pointed out the possibility of a nontheistic religious experience, such as in Buddhist *bodhicitta* that does "not have a sense of the numinous about it and is not configured as God experience but rather shows up as how Buddhists themselves term it, as the enlightened mind of compassion" (Louchakova-Schwartz 2019, p. 102).

It should be noted that for Louchakova-Schwartz, religious experience is a creativity of consciousness and is strictly "a private, internal event pertaining to the sphere of ownership" belonging to the "region of individual being, that is, to one's inward psychological universe". Religious experience is in this sense "a one-time event, unreproducible, spontaneous, resisting generalizations, and belonging to the self". Furthermore, Louchakova-Schwartz holds that "religious experience is also not perspectival" in the sense that it does "not add up to constitute a whole picture of the Holy, or a whole picture of the Numinous" because each experience is a "moment complete in itself" (Louchakova-Schwartz and Crouch 2017, p. 672). What then distinguishes religious experiences from other experiences is, for Louchakova-Schwartz, the instant conversion of an emotion into another, such as anger changing into compassion, which she describes as "transmutation".⁴¹

Thus, Louchakova-Schwartz's notion of religious experience belonging to "one's inward psychological universe" clearly contrasts with Scheler's view of religious experience. The question that now arises is whether the former's view then amounts to what Scheler regards as a mystical technique—which he takes to be an attempted escapism from life into higher things (Scheler 1960, p. 12). To further explore this question I will now address Scheler's notions of nothingness, and the spheres of inwardness and expression.

3.3.1. Nothingness

Scheler makes a distinction between relative nothingness and “*Absolute* nothingness”.⁴² Relative nothingness refers to an *absence* in relation to another entity, such as the absence of human beings, the world, or anything at all that the world contains. Scheler describes this as “the not being there of one [finite] object in a situation where there is some other [finite] object”. In other words, for each finite being-so of an object, there can be a host of not-being-so, from which follows that we could speak of a “relative non-being” of any other object that *is*.⁴³ In this sense, the principle of non-contradiction applies only to “a relationship between relative being and relative non-being” (Scheler 2008, p. 382).

However, the principle of non-contradiction does not obtain the concept of Being, which cannot *not be*. “*Absolute* nothingness” is meant to denote the absence of any form of being at all; that is, “a state of complete ‘non-being’”.⁴⁴ However, for Scheler, such a thought is impossible to conceive of although the attempt to conceive it reveals the most “valuable insight into truth itself, which is that “‘there is something’ or, better, ‘there is not nothing’” (Scheler 2008, p. 383). This is because “Being itself is an ultimate entity” that cannot be defined or derived from knowledge or consciousness.⁴⁵ The only thought that could be the opposite of being is “the ultimate thought of *absolute* nothingness”, which is a state of complete ‘non-being’” (Scheler 2008, pp. 381–82) that cannot be conceived of, or imagined, and therefore should not be confused with ‘relatively nothing’.⁴⁶ Frings explains the impossibility of this thought of absolute nothingness by the fact that the very thought of this concept turns it into an object of thought that *is*.⁴⁷

Thus, for Scheler, what is usually referred to as absolute “nothingness” is in fact a “relative nothingness” that belongs to the “absolute sphere of godliness” and stands in direct contrast to the “sphere of worldliness”. The former is the sphere of “non-effective being” (*Geist*) and the latter is the sphere of “effective entities” (*Drang*). In the light of this view, Scheler perhaps too quickly, without specifying the strand of Buddhism he meant, asserts that the ‘Nothing’ (Nirvana) that is referred to by Buddha is a parallel correlation to the contents of this world, which is the sphere of effective entities.⁴⁸ Hence, the notion of “Elimination of suffering” in Buddhist thought “means no more than to unmask, by means of spontaneously obtained knowledge, the chimera of objects existing independently of us”.⁴⁹ That is to say, we transcend into the sphere of non-effective being, the sphere of the spirit, where the question as to whether or not the contents of the world are dependent on our desires becomes redundant.⁵⁰

3.3.2. Inwardness

What are the implications of Scheler’s insistence on the necessity of a transcendent object in a religious act for the claim that religious experience is a private internal event belonging to one’s inward psychological universe only? For Scheler, inwardness [*Innes-ein*] is indeed a psychological sphere or psychological universe “through which the human being, at least, experiences a for-himself or for-herself [*Für-sich-Sein*] in the form of an immediate region of control of their actions” (Scheler 2008, pp. 169–71). However, this inwardness also refers to one’s life-center that relies on the resistance of an object that transcends it in order to *be*—that is, it belongs to one’s drive impulsion, one’s psyche—meaning that it cannot be the sphere of the “wholly other”.⁵¹ Hence, for Scheler, religious experience is only given when the religious act is directed to an entity that transcends the psycho-physical world, implying that a religious act directed to one’s psychological sphere, if this is at all possible, will in his view not count as a religious experience.⁵²

This means that Scheler’s understanding of a religious experience could not be the kind of “internal experience” that Louchakova-Schwartz describes in terms of an “embodied self-awareness”, “a self-affection”, “self-luminosity”, “self-fulfilled”, “inward self-transcendence of internal consciousness” or for that matter as a “mystical self-awareness in union with God”, all of which designate a religious experience in “phenomenologically material interiority” (Louchakova-Schwartz 2017). The notion of a “phenomenologically

material interiority" itself, whereby one performs a reduction on one's own consciousness that leads to a union with God, is debatable from a Schelerian perspective. This is because for Scheler, a reduction is an ego-driven activity that remains within the lived body, and hence it cannot lead to a religious experience without the spiritual act of participation in a transcending object. Scheler's position is underscored by Angela Ales Bello's warning that religious experience should not be reduced to the psyche only and that there needs to be awareness of the role of spiritual acts (Louchakova-Schwartz 2019, pp. x–xi).

4. Conclusions

In the first part of this paper, I demonstrated that, for Scheler, human beings are endowed with drives and capacities that transcend and precede consciousness. Consciousness is in this sense not primordially given but is acquired through suffering resistance from an object that transcends the consciousness itself. Consciousness is thus a kind of knowledge that is always a becoming, i.e., human beings become conscious in distinct stages of their being. I also argued that consciousness is the consequence of human beings' tendency toward self-movement and self-modification that is driven by the upward movement of love as eros. Love itself is what I took to be the self-positing eternal *Substance* of which we know only two of its attributes that are expressed as Spirit and Nature, Mind and Life, *Geist* and *Drang*, *Eros* and *Agape*. For Scheler, these attributes are pre-given and transcend the psycho-physical world but can nevertheless be grasped intuitively and, therefore, do not represent any form of monism with a parallel division between the psychic and the physiological realms as, for example, is the case in Spinoza (Scheler 2008, p. 143). The two attributes of love move in what I described as a parabolic curve—the upward movement of eros and the downward movement of agape—the turning point of which I described as the point where the drive of eros is sublimated into agape in the realization of values through participation in a beloved object. The movement of love shows how Scheler blends the lived-body drive activities in eros with religious intuition in agape to realize the values and essences of objects or entities.

In the second part of this paper, we saw that, for Scheler, the source of a religious experience is primarily related to the object to which the religious act is directed. A transcending object is always involved in determining the nature of this experience—"there is not nothing". The religious act is a given intuitive capacity that is antecedent to and is a surplus of consciousness. This act is always directed to the absolute sphere that transcends the psycho-physical world and cannot be accessed through intellectual means but by intuition only. Now, given that the religious act is rooted in every human being, it "*participates* in a supersensual realm of being and value", and that it is a given that is antecedent to all other forms of cognition, we could argue that for Scheler the religious act is a prominent feature in the movement of love. This movement of love, which is characterized by participating in the loving act (the gesture of agape) and in which alone the essence of this "wholly other" is given as gift-wrapped in humility, demands a personal character of the object of the religious act. The object of the religious act can thus only be said to be realized in the gesture of agape in the form of religious experiences, such as awe, worship, bliss, etc., where religious values of the holy and unholy are felt. Hence, it is in fact the intuition of the unique value (nature) of the personality of the divine entity in the movement of love that is generally considered to be the mystery of religious experience.

In short, Scheler's distinctive blending of metaphysics with spiritual intuition in the primordial movement of love, out of which consciousness becomes in distinct stages of being, and his (essential) metaphysical insight that "there is not nothing"; provide a unique criterion for defining religious experience as the felt value personality of a divine entity.

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Notes

- ¹ Aristotle, *The Complete Works. Electronic Edition. The Complete Works of Aristotle. BOLLINGEN SERIES LXXI-2 Volume I.*
- ² Vincent R. Larkin explains that for Aquinas “the intellect and imagination cause emotion, such as concupiscence, anger, and the like on account of which the heart grows warm or becomes chilled”. The warmth and coldness of the heart make the heart move and, hence, he concludes that “the movement of the heart varies according to the diverse emotions and cognitions of the soul” (pp. 29–30). See Larkin (1960, pp. 22–30). A more recent publication by Anthony J. Steinbock provides a more detailed account of the profound role of the heart in human experience—the heart as the emotional core of the person, the heart as another dimension of evidence and cognition with its own mode of critique. See Steinbock (2021).
- ³ The discussion on temporality and spatiality is complex, and beyond the scope of this paper.
- ⁴ It is under the intellectual view of consciousness that notions as *subconscious* and *surconscious* fall, and perhaps the reason why Scheler hardly discusses the subconscious. See (Scheler 1973a, p. 392).
- ⁵ In fact, this paper will argue that tendency carries along with it the primary experiences of spatiality and temporality, and personhood, all of which are primordial and precede consciousness. (See Scheler (2008). Henceforth cited in this paper as *Posthumous Works*. Here, p. 165).
- ⁶ The word “Substance” should not be interpreted to mean an object or anything tangible. Perhaps an easier way to interpret this eternal Substance is to think of it as the “something” because of which Scheler claims “there is not nothing”.
- ⁷ Scheler’s concept of “Being” differs from the Heideggerian “Being”, which refers mainly to existence. For Scheler, being refers to motivating something to *be*. As A. R. Luther (1972) points out, for Scheler, being is loving.
- ⁸ This claim regarding the eternal substance was clearly given in the late works of Scheler, but it is also very likely that this eternal substance was also presupposed in some of his early works such as *On the Eternal on Man*. See also Peter Spader’s explanation of the development of Scheler’s thought from theism to panentheism in Spader, 2005.
- ⁹ See (Scheler 2008, pp. 203–14, 257, 294, 352, 355, 375, etc.). My presupposition is that what Scheler meant by this self-positing eternal Substance is love.
- ¹⁰ Scheler’s view of a primal movement that precedes consciousness is underscored by contemporary research in phenomenology, cognitive science, and neuroscience, in Maxine Sheets-Johnstone’s book *The Primacy of Movement*. Sheets-Johnstone holds that we discover ourselves as conscious subjects in kinetic spontaneity and that our capacity to grow and make sense of ourselves and the world, to become conscious, is grounded in our primal animateness. “In the beginning is movement” she declares. We discover ourselves through these spontaneous self-movements, “a felt unfolding dynamic”; and not by our being capable of consciously controlling anything. Sheets-Johnstone’s findings confirm Scheler’s insights into the primacy of a spontaneous self-movement and self-modification, which precede consciousness of the perceptual world. See Sheets-Johnstone (2011, pp. 118–19).
- ¹¹ See (Scheler 1973b, p. 320). This center of drive is also different from the conscious knowledge of our central will. Hence Scheler claims, “The consciousness of a drive does not lead to the experience of resistance . . . Rather, it is the primarily ecstatically experienced resistance [offered by the world] that first occasions the act of reflection through which the impulsive drive can now become a matter of consciousness”. In other words, consciousness only results from the resistance at the level experienced by the spontaneous self-movement, and not at the level of sensation. (p. 325).
- ¹² “Idealism and Realism”, p. 294. According to Scheler, such knowledge is “a relation to the world which is prior to the emergence of self-consciousness of reflection”.
- ¹³ Frings points out the distinction Scheler makes between ecstatic knowledge and knowledge itself, and the importance of a transcendent object in any form of consciousness. “The former is not related to an ego or a transcendence of objects, because the world is not an object in ecstatic knowledge. But the world can become an object when a reflexive act, in which an ecstatic act (*ekstatisch gebender*) turns onto itself, hits the central self as the starting point of acts . . . A transcendent object is, by dint of acts of reflection, part and parcel of any consciousness”. (See Frings 2002, pp. 140–41).
- ¹⁴ This passage from *Cognition and Work* seems to support my presupposition “‘*Mens*’ or ‘*spirit*’ is to us the X or the epitome of the act in the ‘knowing’ being through which such participation is possible . . . The root of this X, the motivating moment for the execution of the acts which lead to some form of participation, can only be the *taking-part* transcending itself and its being. We call this, in the most formal sense, ‘*love*’.” (See Scheler 2021, p. 14).
- ¹⁵ Gottlöber (2022, p. 3). (My arguments in defense of this claim are beyond the scope of this paper).
- ¹⁶ Scheler elsewhere (in Scheler 2008) also refers to these two principles as Mind and Life, or Spirit and Nature.
- ¹⁷ See (Frings 2002, p. 98). Scheler’s *Geist* differs from Hegel’s, for whom this concept is reasoned from the material world.
- ¹⁸ Manfred Frings describes this mutual dependency as a process of becoming and functionalization, or of spiritualization and realization. According to Frings Scheler’s notion of functionalization is the process by which “something not existing turns into existence by way of a mediator”. For example, colors need material surfaces to appear, and hence a color exists only when it

“functionalizes” with something else that enables it to be perceived. See Frings (2002, pp. 72–74), also Scheler (1973a). Cited in this paper as *The Formalism*. Scheler uses the example of “how laws are experienced as fulfilled or broken only in the “execution of acting” (pp. 141–42); and in *On the Eternal in Man* Scheler discusses how essential insights undergo a “functional transmutation” that allows us to understand that there can be the growth of reason itself (Scheler 1960, pp. 201–2).

In (Scheler 2008), Scheler points out how “Spirit realizes itself in the form of a person” in a movement from above to below; and a life realizes itself in the form of an organism in a movement from below to above (p. 367).

See my upcoming Ph.D. dissertation, “The Gesture of Agape: The implications of Max Scheler’s Concept of Humility as Loving Service”, in progress.

It is not my wish in this paper to suggest a simple opposition between Scheler and Husserl. The work done by Nam-In Lee on instincts, for example, has shown the possibility of a dialogue between Scheler’s account of primordial drives and Husserl’s complex account of instincts. See Lee (2020). I thank one of the reviewers for pointing out these parallels.

The turning point is also a reference to what Scheler describes in *The Nature of Sympathy* (Scheler [1954] 1970, p. 162) as “the great turning-point between the ancient and the Christian conceptions of love” (*der große Umkehrpunkt von der antiken zur christlichen Liebesidee*), see (Scheler 1973d).

Scheler shares the notion of restlessness in human nature as we see in the history of western philosophy in the works of Plato, Locke, Leibnitz, Spinoza, Hegel, etc., just to mention a few. It is important to note that for Scheler the cause of this restlessness is the movement of eros (nature) towards agape (spirit) and is thus not referring to the distinction between platonic objects and forms.

In (Scheler 1992a, pp. 41–43). The debate of whether Scheler’s reading of Buddha, Schopenhauer, and Freud is accurate is beyond the scope of this paper.

In (Scheler 2008, p. 67). Sublimation, it could be said, puts one in a position to “touch base” with the self-positing eternal substance that one shares with spirit, and it is in participating in another object that this base is touched.

Scheler’s views on the sublimation of drives and the blending of metaphysics with religion should not be seen as advocating a new form of asceticism that makes philosophers the only group of persons capable of realizing higher spiritual and religious values, as suggested by Ronald Perrin. This is because for Scheler although all human beings are endowed with the capacity to realize higher values, it is somewhat easier for the philosopher partly because of her capacity for making a distinction between a self-evident absolute entity from a non-absolute entity. See (Perrin 1971, p. 157).

According to Scheler, “Bliss and despair appear to be the correlates of the moral value of our personal being. And for this reason, they are the metaphysical and religious self-feelings par excellence. They can be given only when we are not given to ourselves as relates to a special area related to our existence (society, friends, vocation, state, etc.), and when we are not given to ourselves as existentially and valuatively relative to an act that is to be executed by us (an act of cognition or will)” (*Formalism*, p. 343).

For more on how Scheler distances his approach from William James’s view of religious experiences, see (Scheler 1960, pp. 291–92; Barber 2020).

Scheler thus rejects any mystical technique, within theistic religions that purports to reveal the reality of things, as bogus (*Posthumous Works*, p. 24) This is because what these techniques claim to be the reality of things is, in his view, only a presupposition what is already known. According to Scheler, “The mystic supposes that he has reached reality itself, by whatever method he proclaims—intuition, life, feeling—yet all he is doing is presupposing a belief or an idea that he already had, and then vaulting over [and ignoring] what he believes or knows, to claim a togetherness with reality. There is, however, no possible way in which the existence or nature of this reality can originally emerge from anything the mystic claims to do”. See also (Scheler 1960, p. 252).

See (Scheler 1960, p. 252). We envisage a being that “is different from any finite being and also from any being which is non-finite or infinite in some specific way (such as infinite time, infinite space, infinite number, etc.); we find ourselves directed toward something whose place cannot be taken by any finite good, however worthy of love, since religious love transcends the essential nature of all such goods”.

See (Scheler 1960, pp. 98–99). One of Scheler’s criticisms of agnostics is that they fail to see what he takes to be the (self-evident) metaphysical insight that “there is not nothing”; “that every possible entity must necessarily possess an essence and also an existence”; and that “there is an *absolute entity*”.

See details of Erich Przywara’s criticism of Scheler regarding the possibility of knowing the unknown in S. Gottlöber’s “Intuiting the Divine? Erich Przywara’s Critique of Scheler’s Phenomenology of Religion” in Gottlöber (2022).

Scheler’s critique of mysticism does not do justice to richer the history of mysticism as provided, for example, in the phenomenological accounts of mysticism in Steinbock’s (2007). I thank one of my reviewers for pointing this out to me.

This is not the case for “metaphysics the personality of the divine forms a never-attainable boundary of cognition, for religion this personality is the alpha and omega”. (Scheler 1960, pp. 253–54).

See (Scheler 1960, p. 254). For Scheler’s view on the “intrinsically universally valid truth” and an “intrinsically individually valid truth”, see p. 23.

- 36 According to Barber, “A potential difficulty with Scheler’s view is that his value theory argues that the absolute being must be personal, to which the religious act is coordinated in such a way that it must await a personal revelation. As a consequence, Scheler goes on to place a priority on the divinity of Christ because Christ, as the absolute being, is then able to offer a personal revelation of the absolute being correlative to the religious act, as opposed to considering Christ merely as a teacher alerting us to truths we might be able to discover by exercising our own cognitive capacities. For this reason, Scheler entertains the question of whether Christianity is the most perfect religion”. (Barber 2020, p. 272).
- 37 See (Scheler 1960, p. 333). I thank one of the reviewers for drawing my attention to this.
- 38 See (Scheler 1960, pp. 25–27). Basically, Scheler claims that metaphysics can attain knowledge of God’s attribute as an *ens a se*, but not the personality of God. The latter can only be felt in the interpersonal relation between human beings and God that is made possible by the movement of love.
- 39 Perhaps in addition to Peter Spader’s claim that Scheler’s move to metaphysics has to do with the latter’s struggle with “the problem of evil”, (Spader 2005) we could also add that another reason is Scheler’s insistence that a divine entity must have the capacity to participate in a spiritual loving relationship. Taking God to be an attribute of the eternal provides the needed reason for the possibility of reciprocal spiritual loving, which was a concern to Scheler. After all, the ground-of-being, the *ens a se*, cannot be an object of spiritual loving since nothing transcends it, and it is itself that in which spiritual loving is possible.
- 40 White (2001, p. 382). In this sense we could argue that Scheler seems to have dropped the notion of bipolarity and asymmetry in the relationship with God in his latter metaphysics.
- 41 Transmutation is a condition “... whereby one emotion turns into another, not as a shift between two emotions but rather as a change of quality within the same emotion: for instance, anger is not replaced by compassion but becomes compassion. This conversion of emotion happens instantly, perhaps, along with some dissociation and refocusing of attention. The direction of the change is always the same, repeated between sets of practice and therefore predictable: for example, anger always changes into compassion, not vice versa”. See Louchakova-Schwartz (2019, p. 85).
- 42 Frings identifies a third distinction of nothingness in Scheler, i.e., nothingness in terms of logical negation. See Frings (1977, 2002).
- 43 The same holds for concepts of emptiness and holes, which are “only intuitively grasped relative nothings—a negative state of affairs, *me on*”. See (Scheler 2008, p. 289).
- 44 See (Scheler 2008, p. 381). A state of non-being “is a state which we can further denote as an absence of being itself—i.e., an absence of anything whatsoever and not just an absence of the existence of something”.
- 45 See (Scheler 2008, p. 381). See also (Scheler 1960), where Scheler states: “... whoever has not, so to speak, looked into the *abyss of absolute nothing* will indeed completely overlook the eminent positivity inherent in the insight that there is something and not rather nothing; he will begin with one or other of the perhaps no less self-evident insights which are, nevertheless, posterior and subordinate in self-evidence to this insight, as for example the insight implicit in *cogito ergo sum*, or such intuitions as that there is truth, that there is judgment, that there are feelings, or that we have a ‘picture’ of the world”. p. 99.
- 46 P. Gorevan has criticized Scheler’s first essential insight as a false start because “It does not permit an experience of being of the depth and variety which is needed”. See (Gorevan 1995, p. 326).
- 47 Frings explains this by stating that “the concept of absolute nothingness is impossible because in thinking about it, it is already something in the thought of it. For this and other reasons, already Parmenides saw that this is the case and concluded that there is no nothingness but only ‘is’”. See (Frings 2002, p. 73).
- 48 See (Scheler 2008, pp. 115–16). Scheler, for example, did not specify the strand of Buddhism he was referring to and wrongly seems to have assumed that his description covers the variety of strands within Buddhism.
- 49 Scheler (1992b), cited in this paper as *The Meaning of Suffering*, here, p. 105.
- 50 For Scheler, this transcending into another sphere entails that for Buddha, knowledge is “an *emptying of the contents* of the world from our apprehension by severing the chain of desire that binds us to these contents and makes their existence possible... knowledge is primarily an abolition of all affirmations or denials of existence”. Knowledge is thus the locating of the void of “nothing”—in the sense that things no longer resist us—at exactly the point where things previously appeared in their separate existence with all their prominence, freshness, and splendor. See (Scheler 1992b, p. 105).
- 51 Frings also points out that, “Inwardness ‘is’ through its lived relatedness to what is ‘outside.’ Therefore, Scheler attributed to the unlocalizable life-center a ‘primordial suffering’ from what it is not. Inwardness must suffer ‘resistance’ in order to ‘be’ related to what is outside and, thus, to be able to be ‘for’ itself” (See Frings 1980, p. 138).
- 52 The sphere of the “wholly other”, as we mentioned above, is the sphere of spirit (*Geist*), which is the sphere of the absolutes, mentioned above, to which the religious act could find fulfillment.

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Article

Phenomenology and Transcendence: On Openness and Metaphysics in Husserl and Heidegger

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Abstract: In this paper I examine the relationship between phenomenology and metaphysics by reassessing the relationship between phenomenological and metaphysical transcendence. More specifically, I examine the notion of phenomenological transcendence in Husserl and the early Heidegger: Husserl defines transcendence primarily as the mode of givenness of phenomena that do not appear all at once, but must be given in partial profiles; Heidegger defines transcendence primarily as Dasein's capacity to go beyond entities toward being. I argue that these divergent understandings of phenomenological transcendence have resulted in a significant difference in reception among French phenomenologists of religion. These thinkers assert that phenomenology, when properly conceived and utilized, can make room for the divine and its revelation, i.e., for a *metaphysical* transcendence. I further argue that these thinkers prefer Heidegger's phenomenology to Husserl's because they understand Heidegger's transcendence as the subject's openness to being, while they understand Husserl's transcendence as a limit, as the inability to capture worldly objects. I take up Jean-Luc Marion's phenomenology of givenness as a "case study" to illustrate this point. Finally, I argue that this preference for Heidegger over Husserl is misplaced and should be reversed. A close reading of Heidegger's *Phenomenology of Religious Life* shows that Dasein is confined to its own possibilities and cannot be open to a relationship with the divine. By contrast, Husserl's phenomenology provides the radical openness necessary to welcome revelation. While Husserl cannot envision a "worldly God," the structures of horizontality and temporality characterize a subject capable of an authentic openness to revelation.

Keywords: phenomenology; transcendence; metaphysics; revelation; subjectivity; Edmund Husserl; Martin Heidegger; Jean-Luc Marion; horizon; temporality

1. Introduction

This paper inquires anew into the relationship between phenomenology and metaphysics by reassessing the relationship between phenomenological and metaphysical transcendence in Husserl and Heidegger. For both authors, the notion of phenomenological transcendence determines the accomplishments and limits of intentionality. For Husserl, phenomenological transcendence is said of phenomena that can only be given in profiles [*Abschattungen*], while for Heidegger transcendence is said of Dasein's possibility to go beyond itself and toward the world, and to go beyond entities toward their being¹. These different understandings of phenomenological transcendence have resulted in a marked difference in reception among French thinkers such as Jean-Luc Marion, who seek in phenomenology an approach that can make room for the divine and its revelation, that is, for the *metaphysically* transcendent.

In putting phenomenology to this use, French phenomenologists have tacitly privileged Heidegger's approach over Husserl's. In France, Husserl's transcendental idealism continues to be interpreted as a subjective idealism that would determine ahead of time what can appear and how it will appear². By contrast, Heidegger's reinterpretation of intentionality as the transcendence of Dasein, its openness to being beyond entities, is considered

more suitable for a phenomenology that wants to allow for the unique phenomenality of divine revelation. I will take up Jean-Luc Marion's phenomenology of givenness as a "case study" to demonstrate this claim. Marion is particularly suited to this task because his work gathers excessive and paradoxical modes of phenomenality, originating from other thinkers as well as himself, under the formal rubric of the saturated phenomenon.

I argue that, on the contrary, it is Husserl's phenomenology that provides the openness to metaphysical transcendence sought in French phenomenology. The structure of horizon-intentionality and the future-oriented structure of time-consciousness constitute a radical openness that can in principle welcome something like divine revelation. By contrast, Heidegger's Dasein-structure is closed in on itself from the start and can only make room for its own possibilities. This can be observed in certain interpretive and phenomenological decisions that Heidegger makes in his *Phenomenology of Religious Life*, as well as in his 1928 essay "Philosophy and Theology".

I will conclude that a hybrid conception of intentionality, one that draws on Husserl, Heidegger, and Marion, can meaningfully relate to the transcendent, both phenomenological and metaphysical. Husserl's contribution is a horizontal structure that is both open and "generous," one that, as Espen Dahl shows, can make room for both the proximity of the divine *in* things and for its remoteness in the outer horizon. Heidegger, on his part, contributes an account of transcendence as the *movement* of a subject who is essentially restless and concerned. This hybrid account of intentionality is not simply a logical correlation between consciousness and object, nor is it merely the self-projection of possibilities. It is rather a desirous movement toward the world and beyond, a movement full of expectation and—here is Marion's contribution—drawn to excess.

2. Phenomenological Transcendence in Husserl and Heidegger

For Husserl as for Heidegger, the notion of phenomenological transcendence determines the accomplishments and limits of intentionality. For Husserl, phenomenological transcendence is mainly said of phenomena that are only given partially or in adumbrations [*Abschattungen*], and the phenomenological reduction plays an essential role in defining this mode of givenness eidetically. For Heidegger, transcendence is mainly said of Dasein and its movement toward the world, as well as its movement beyond entities and toward their being. As such, transcendence is for Heidegger a self-transcendence, an always-already-being-in-the-world.

2.1. Husserl's Phenomenology: Reduction and Transcendence

The notion of transcendence as a mode of givenness of objects is already present in the *Logical Investigations* and prior to any explicit doctrine of reduction or *epoché*. In the context of the *Investigations*, transcendence is defined under the light of a descriptive psychology, one that separates the immanent and the transcendent according to an almost common-sense understanding of "inner" vis à vis "outer" experiences. Despite the lack of any explicit process of reduction, Husserl does say that at this point he is after "ideations performed in exemplary cases of [intentional] experiences—and so performed as to leave empirical-psychological conception and existential affirmation of being out of account, and to deal only with the real phenomenological content" of intentional experiences as a pure species of acts (Husserl 2001b, p. 97). In other words, Husserl brackets ontological and empirical questions in order to focus on "real phenomenological content," but without a mature account of phenomenological reduction this bracketing happens within a psychological, empirical framework.

When parsing between the immanent and transcendent components of intentional acts, Husserl distinguishes between intentional and real contents, both of which should be understood as immanent. The object as intended in the act is "merely intentional" and not really inhering in it, while the truly immanent contents "belong to the real make-up of the act," make possible the intention, but are not themselves intended: "I do not see colored sensations, but colored things, I do not hear tone sensations, but the singer's song" (Ibid.,

p. 99). The transcendent part of the act, the object “outside” of consciousness, is *not* present in consciousness and wholly transcends the act (Ibid., p. 120). It is the object intentionally referred to and presented intentionally in the act, but it does not inhere in consciousness the way that content-sensations do. At the same time, Husserl warns against the temptation of representationalism, stating that the object “is not present to consciousness merely because a content rather similar to it simply somehow is *in* consciousness . . . but that all relation to an object is part and parcel of the phenomenological essence of consciousness, and can in principle be found in nothing else, even when such a relation points to some ‘transcendent matter’” (Ibid., p. 126). The status of the object in the *Investigations* is thus liminal: it is present intentionally or as referred to, but does not “reside” in consciousness as liquid in a container. The intentional reference to the transcendent object makes possible the experience of it through its presenting contents.

This descriptive-psychological account of intentional acts fails to resolve the ambiguity of objectivity, as it is not clear how the object can be given in experience while transcending it. The phenomenological reduction comes to Husserl’s aid in parsing out the modes of givenness of the different moments of the intentional act. There is a shift in the status of the transcendent object once the reduction secures the field of transcendental consciousness, and this is best observed in *Ideas I*. While in the *Logical Investigations* the intentional content of the act is outside of consciousness and not part of the real [*reell*] content of the act, the phenomenological reduction allows for a distinction between immanence and transcendence *within* the phenomenological contents of the act. The intentional object, the object as presented, is included in the *reell* content and its transcendence lies in the fact that it cannot be given all at once (Drummond 2003, pp. 69–72). Thanks to the reduction, we gain a phenomenologically sound account of how the object’s transcendence is given in the act. To use the language of *Ideas I*, the object pure and simple is distinguished from the noema, which is the object *as intentionally contained*: “The intended objectivity is contained within the noema just as it is intended, and the determinable X is that object considered formally, apart from its determinations.” (Drummond 2003, p. 72) The object is *in* experience *as* transcending experience, because it is given as a noematic manifold that never ceases to reveal new profiles and phases.

By the time the *Cartesian Meditations* are composed, this paradoxical account of the transcendent object as immanent to and yet excessive of experience is thoroughly cemented:

Just as the reduced Ego is not a piece of the world, so, conversely, neither the world nor any worldly Object is a piece of my Ego, to be found in my conscious life as a really inherent part of it. [. . .] This “transcendence” is part of the intrinsic sense of anything worldly, despite the fact that anything worldly necessarily acquires all the sense determining it, along with its existential status, exclusively from my experiencing. (Husserl 1977, p. 26)

Transcendence is therefore said of worldly objects and is a sense that belongs to the experience of them. In the field of transcendental consciousness, transcendence is experienced as a sense that results from the excessiveness of the object vis à vis the conditions of possible experience: I cannot experience a worldly object all at once such that a prolonged temporal experience will show me nothing new, and neither can I experience a worldly object except as a complex of present and absent profiles. The worldly object always exceeds my experiential capacities.

2.2. Heidegger’s Phenomenology: Intentionality, Transcendence, and the Unity of Dasein

For Heidegger, transcendence is said of Dasein and its “movement” toward the world and the being of entities. In this sense, transcendence indicates the self-transcendence implied in the designation of Dasein as being-in-the-world and as the capacity for concern for Being. In broader phenomenological terms, transcendence is for Heidegger the essential upshot of the discovery of the intentionality of consciousness: intentionality should not be understood as a logical or representational relation between subject and object, but rather

as the indication that Dasein always already transcends all immanence (consciousness psychologically understood) and is already among entities questioning their being.

The question of transcendence first emerges in the 1925 lecture course *History of the Concept of Time*, where Heidegger discusses Scheler and Pascal in the context of their ontology of the subject³, but transcendence as a positive determination of Dasein's Being does not surface until *Being and Time*. In Heidegger's magnum opus, Dasein's transcendence is discussed in the context of a critique of the separation of consciousness and world, a category mistake that results in Husserl's erroneous doctrine of the world and its objects as transcendent of consciousness (Heidegger 1962, pp. 201–2)⁴. In Heidegger's view, one can only arrive at this account of transcendence if one fails to see that the transcendence of worldly objects is necessarily grounded on Dasein's more fundamental transcendence (Ibid., pp. 201–8). An order of grounding is given here: Dasein's ecstatic temporality is the ultimate ground, Dasein's transcendence is grounded in its temporality, being-in-the-world is grounded in transcendence, practical being-with equipmental entities [*Zeug*] is grounded in being-in-the-world, and finally the theoretical objectification of equipment is grounded in this practical being-with (Ibid., p. 364). Only when equipment is regarded theoretically with an objectifying gaze does it become possible to locate transcendence in the sphere of objectivity.

In the Summer Semester 1927 lecture course *The Basic Problems of Phenomenology*, Heidegger deepens his inquiry into Dasein's transcendence and connects it to Dasein's capacity for understanding being. It is well and good to talk about Dasein's self-transcendence as what allows it to step beyond itself and be among innerworldly entities. However, world itself is an ontological determination of Dasein and not an entity that is there alongside it. "World is not extant [nor handy] but world *exists*" (Heidegger 1988, p. 297) in the same way that Dasein exists. "Self and world are not two beings, like subject and object or I and Thou, but self and world are the basic determination of the Dasein itself in the unity of the structure of being-in-the-world" (Ibid.). Transcendence indicates the overstepping that Dasein *is*, and this overstepping is clear to see in the three moments of Dasein's existential movement, namely, being-toward-itself, being-with-others, and being-among-entities handy and extant (Ibid., p. 301). As a moment of overstepping, the transcendence of Dasein is itself grounded in its ecstatic temporality, and the temporalizing movement of Dasein is always at the same time an understanding self-projection oriented futurally—of Dasein as self and of Dasein as world. In this way, Heidegger lays bare the intrinsic connections not only between temporality and transcendence, but also between transcendence and understanding.

3. Transcendence as Difference: Levinas, the "Theological Turn," and the Limits of Phenomenology

Both for Husserl and for Heidegger, the theme of transcendence marks the possibilities and limitations of phenomenology. In claiming that transcendence is said of worldly objects, Husserl claims that the totality of the worldly object exceeds the perceptual capacities of consciousness. It is simply impossible for the worldly object to be fully contained in consciousness and, even after the development of the reduction, the phenomenological field secured through it is not the space in which the object *simpliciter* resides. The reduction effectively shows that transcendence is announced within the phenomenological field precisely as the excess of the object and the limit of the subject. On his part, Heidegger argues for transcendence as the movement that characterizes Dasein's continuous overstepping and claims that transcendence should be understood as a designation of existence and not of objectivity. In this sense, Heideggerian transcendence becomes a double gesture, one that liberates the subject from solipsism and at the same time limits the excess of objectivity, thereby rendering worldly entities available and handy.

These different understandings of transcendence have resulted in a marked difference in reception among subsequent phenomenologists. In particular, the phenomenologists of religion associated with the so-called *tournant théologique*, or theological turn, inherited

Husserl's and Heidegger's philosophies asymmetrically. These thinkers have sought in phenomenology an approach that can preserve a space for the metaphysically transcendent, i.e., for divine revelation. It is on the basis of these divergent accounts of phenomenological transcendence that some of these phenomenologists regard Heidegger's thought to be more suited to this task than Husserl's. This, however, is not as evident as it might first appear. I will show that there is just as much reason, if not more, to employ Husserl's phenomenology for this task as Heidegger's and, on the other hand, that Heidegger's phenomenology is not as suited to the task as the French phenomenologists of religion think.

Still, it is not difficult to see why one would conclude that Husserl has little to offer to those interested in divine revelation as a phenomenon. Indeed, as soon as *Ideas I* introduces the process of reduction, God as the transcendence *par excellence* is excluded from the phenomenological field: "After the natural world is abandoned, we encounter yet another transcendence which is not given . . . immediately in union with reduced consciousness but becomes cognized in a highly mediated fashion We mean the transcendence pertaining to God" (Husserl 1983, pp. 133–34). The kind of transcendence that belongs to God differs completely from the transcendence of worldly objects, for the latter still corresponds to a mode of givenness—what one might call *Abschattungsgegebenheit* or adumbrational givenness—while the former only arises as a sort of Kantian regulative idea. That is to say, God is posited either as the ultimate ground of the *value-possibilities* and *-actualities* that attach to the absolute facticity of constitutive consciousness, or as the *telos* of a "marvelous teleology" that appears when the regulated order of nature becomes evident (Husserl 1983, pp. 133–34)⁵. Because such a being "would obviously transcend not merely the world but 'absolute' consciousness" as well, and since the phenomenologist is here faced with "an 'absolute' in a sense totally different from that in which consciousness is an absolute," with "something transcendent in a sense totally different from that in which the world is something transcendent," the divine transcendence must "naturally" be excluded from the field of absolute consciousness (Ibid.). The difference of divine transcendence here remarked upon is exactly the difference between phenomenological and metaphysical transcendence that I take up here, the difference between the transcendence of worldly objects and the transcendence of God.

Nevertheless, such a precisely calculated exclusion, one that is brought up in the text even before the phenomenological field and the noetic-noematic moments of intentional acts are parsed out, certainly has a powerful effect on the reader. It feels almost as if Husserl were warning philosophers of religion not to get ahead of themselves, that in his phenomenology they will not find what they are seeking.

3.1. The Reception of Husserl in France: Levinas on Husserl through Heidegger

In addition to this terse exclusion of divine transcendence from the phenomenological field, the circumstances of Husserl's reception in France gave him little chance to be read without prejudice. Indeed, these circumstances encouraged a misunderstanding of Husserl's phenomenology that can still be observed today. It was thanks to Levinas that Husserlian phenomenology finally made meaningful contact with the French academy, specifically through two texts: his co-translation (with the help of Gabrielle Peiffer and with advice from Alexandre Koyré) of Husserl's "Paris Lectures," which would become the first edition of the *Méditations Cartésiennes*, and the publication of Levinas' doctoral thesis *The Theory of Intuition in Husserl's Phenomenology* (Spagnuolo Vigorita 2021, pp. 43–45). However, the "Paris Lectures" were not the momentous event that one would imagine in hindsight⁶, and *Theory of Intuition* in fact criticizes Husserl for not being Heideggerian enough. This work gives an interpretation of Husserl as a thinker more preoccupied with limiting manifestation than with letting phenomena become manifest. In introducing Husserl to the French philosophical scene, *Theory of Intuition* is just as much an embrace of the spirit of phenomenology as it is a rejection of its outdated founder and his concerns with the absoluteness of the philosophical sciences⁷. In the text proper, Levinas only hints

at the problem of an excessive intellectualism, and it is only in the conclusion that he voices his reservations.

The charge of intellectualism should bring Heidegger to mind even before he is explicitly invoked in the concluding remarks. *Theory of Intuition* reads Husserl through Heidegger from the start and not only in its critique of the former, but also in its enthusiasm for the latter. Levinas freely admits that he interprets constitutional problems as ontological problems, and that the task of phenomenology is “to throw light on the meaning of existence” (Levinas 1995, p. 154). This transposes the entirety of Husserl’s transcendental project onto a metaphysical-ontological plane and locates the core Husserlian problematic not in logic or descriptive eidetics, but rather in the question, posed in the *Logos* article, “what does it mean for objectivity to be?” [*Was besagt dass Gegenständlichkeit sei?*]⁸. This allows Levinas to claim that, although Husserl poses the question of the meaning of being, only Heidegger dares to engage it directly. “This problem,” Levinas writes, “has for its object . . . the meaning of the existence of being, and attempts to find the meaning of Aristotle’s ‘transcendence’, the meaning of the ‘substantiality of substance’” (Levinas 1995, p. 154).

Yet, *Theory of Intuition* is not primarily concerned with the lack of an ontological dimension in Husserlian phenomenology, since Levinas makes clear that, in his view, the question of phenomenological constitution can and must be posed in ontological terms. The chief problem for Levinas, and consequently for many of the French authors who were introduced to phenomenology through his work, is that Husserl never grasps the full implications of the doctrine of intentionality. While the idea of intuition harbors the hope for a direct access to *lived* experience [*Erlebnis*], Husserl’s intellectualism leads to an unliving science of life rather than to life as a lived phenomenon. Intentionality properly understood should be the point of convergence between thought and life, but Husserl’s vision of phenomenology as the science of all sciences leads him to impose methodological strictures—the reduction, the focus on essences, constitution as a process of conceptualization, to name but a few—that recast intentionality as the *distance* between thought and life. Husserl’s notion of intentionality is for Levinas a theoretical process of representation, so much so that the “Husserlian concept of intuition [cannot but be] tainted with intellectualism” (Ibid., p. 94).

Dazzled by the prospect of an apodictic science of phenomena, Husserl necessarily fails to see that the temporal and historical dimensions of life have a transcendental, and not merely empirical, import for philosophical praxis. Husserl’s philosophy “seems as independent of the historical situation of man as any theory that tries to consider everything *sub specie aeternitatis*,” and is consequently blind to the fact that historicity and temporality are not secondary attributes of the human being but “form the very substantiality of man’s substance” (Ibid., p. 156). Much like Heidegger (e.g., Heidegger 2005)⁹, Levinas attributes this failure to a misplaced emphasis on reflection as a “suprahistorical attitude” that is tasked with supporting the entirety of conscious life. The reduction, the gesture of freedom with which phenomenological philosophy begins, is motivated by the will to theory, such that “the historical role of the reduction and the meaning of its appearance at a certain moment of existence are, for [Husserl], not even a problem” (Levinas 1995, p. 157). The very possibility of the reduction, and thus of phenomenology itself, depends for Levinas on those structures that Husserl never investigates, on the temporality and historicity of the concrete and living subject who, motivated by its history, chooses to philosophize. The result is a philosophical enterprise incapable of raising the historical and temporal dimensions of life to the level of a priori science¹⁰.

Most important for my purposes here is, first, that Levinas’ critique is imported almost wholesale from Heidegger, and second, that through this critique Levinas draws an explicit connection between the meaning of phenomenological transcendence and the historical and temporal dimensions of concrete life. As Heidegger states, phenomenological transcendence can be correctly understood as belonging to the ecstatic unity of Dasein only if the order of grounding between the transcendence of objectivity, the transcendence of being-in-the-world, and the ecstatic temporality and historicity of Dasein are accurately

and explicitly delineated. Heidegger makes this clear in *Being and Time* and *The Basic Problems of Phenomenology*¹¹, and this in turn supports Levinas's critique: if Husserlian phenomenology ignores historicity, then all the more must Husserl be wrong about the meaning of transcendence, a privileged locus of phenomenological inquiry for Levinas. Without an understanding of the grounding and transcendental roles of temporality and historicity, Husserl is doomed to pose the question of the meaning of being without finding an answer. This is why, for Heidegger as well as Levinas, Husserl can only understand phenomenological transcendence as belonging to the world and, in a more radical sense, to the divine.

In short, the publication of *Theory of Intuition*, which marks the moment in which Husserlian phenomenology finally made landfall in the French academy, is really an endorsement of Heidegger's phenomenology rather than Husserl's, especially with regard to the question of the meaning of transcendence¹². From the very beginning of his reception in France, there was little possibility that Husserl would be read in his own right. He was introduced as incapable of thinking phenomenological transcendence positively, limiting it instead to the mode of givenness of what does not adequately appear. At this juncture, Levinas calls upon Heidegger and his understanding of transcendence in order to conquer a field of experience that does not need to exclude the transcendent, a phenomenology capable of grasping lived experience *as* lived, historical, and factual. This positions Levinas as the figure connecting Husserl and Heidegger to a younger generation of French thinkers. Through Levinas' work, and in particular through his dismissal of Husserl and his endorsement of Heidegger, a space was opened for French phenomenology where, perhaps, even the divine transcendency can become manifest in its *sui generis* phenomenality.

3.2. Marion as Case Study: On the Theological Turn and the Freeing of Transcendence

In a later essay titled "Transcendence and Evil," Levinas draws an essential connection between phenomenological transcendence and Heidegger's ontological difference, a connection that builds on the conclusion to *Theory of Intuition*¹³. If in the earlier work Heidegger is praised for opening up the historical and temporal dimensions of concrete life by means of a more fundamental understanding of phenomenological transcendence, in this later essay he is acknowledged for recognizing that the self-transcendence of the subject makes it possible to think the ontological difference, the difference between entities and their being. Dasein's transcendence allows phenomenology to inquire into what does *not* appear as entities do, and with what does not appear except as its *difference* from entities. "This difference," Levinas states, "exerts a fascination upon those philosophers who, after the Nietzschean remark about the death of God—and outside of all onto-theology, dare to take interest in the meaning of transcendence." One may wonder, he continues, "whether [the ontological difference] permits us to think of a transcendent God from beyond being," whether it "can be suitable for, and sufficient to, divine transcendence," but it remains nonetheless the case that "the *ontological difference* serves philosophers as the [principal] model of transcendence"¹⁴. Levinas mentions Jean-Luc Marion by name in this context, praising his "courageous attempt" to conquer a space for the manifestation of the transcendent—be this a phenomenological or metaphysical (i.e., divine) transcendence¹⁵.

I take up Marion as a sort of "case study" for the hypothesis that I have advanced thus far, namely, the French preference for Heidegger over Husserl where the phenomenological possibility of revelation is concerned, for two reasons. First, because he is the best-known French phenomenologist of religion across different philosophical circles and debates. Second, Marion's phenomenological thought is, in my view, an encyclopedic thought because it gathers and elevates the contributions of thinkers who came before him: Levinas's face of the Other, Henry's flesh, and Merleau-Ponty's reflections on art¹⁶, are all grouped under the heading of the saturated phenomenon. An analysis of Marion's phenomenology is therefore particularly relevant for the confirmation of my claim.

For Marion, phenomenology should be concerned with transcendence in two senses: first, transcendence understood as the self's capacity to go beyond the phenomenon to

its “call”¹⁷; second, transcendence understood as the various paradoxical forms of givenness that differ from the phenomenality of ordinary or “poor” phenomena (Marion 2002a, pp. 216–19)¹⁸. These phenomenological tasks follow and confirm Levinas’ evaluations, as Marion accuses Husserl of imposing artificial boundaries on phenomenality while remaining within the Heideggerian paradigm of transcendence as ontological difference. In this sense, the task of phenomenology for Marion is to liberate the transcendent, understood as that which phenomenologically *differs* from ordinary phenomena, from the strictures imposed on it. Furthermore, although it is true that Marion also criticizes Heidegger for limiting the scope of phenomenality, he does not escape the fact that, as Levinas writes in “Transcendence and Evil,” Heidegger’s ontological difference remains the structure of transcendence in his phenomenology. Marion’s project rests on fundamentally Heideggerian structures even as he criticizes Heidegger for enacting a so-called “ontological reduction” that dissimulates the radical scope and role of givenness.

In the case of transcendence as the call of the phenomenon, it is a matter of the subject’s difference from innerworldly beings, a difference that makes it possible for the subject to hear and hearken to the call, to be the place for the unpredictable “landing” of the phenomenon. In the case of transcendence as paradoxical form of manifestation, it is a matter of the difference between what is given, i.e., the phenomenon, and givenness, i.e., phenomenality as such and without restriction. Where Heidegger uses ontological terminology and points to the difference between entities [*Seienden*] and being [*Sein*], Marion uses the language of givenness and distinguishes between the given phenomenon or gift [*donné, don*] and givenness [*donation*]. In the context of Marion’s phenomenology, givenness is supposed to be prior to being, but the differential structure is the unmistakable model of transcendence both in the call and in the paradoxes of phenomenality. The last chapter of *Reduction and Givenness* shows as much in the case of the call, while Book IV of *Being Given* displays this in the case of the paradox.

In the last chapter of *Reduction and Givenness*, “The Nothing and the Claim,” Marion is at pains to distance and distinguish himself from Heidegger. He asks whether Heidegger actually gains access to being as a phenomenon, that is, to being in its manifestation. The ontological difference between entities and being is here the fundamental starting point, for the whole difficulty of achieving the phenomenality of being is precisely that it differs from that of entities: not that it does not manifest, but that it manifests differently and in its difference. Marion’s first move is to contest Heidegger’s account of the call or claim of being on Dasein, and his analysis shows that, far from compelling Dasein to listen, this call can just as well go unheeded. If in its boredom Dasein can heed the claim of Being, this is because there is a more fundamental freedom, itself unleashed by this boredom, that allows this as well as its opposite, the forsaking of the call¹⁹.

Of interest in this critique is not so much its accuracy, which is debatable, as much as the fact that Marion retains the Heideggerian model of the claim as the foundational gesture of his own phenomenology: “if boredom liberates the *there* from the call of Being, it sets it free only in order better to expose it to the wind of every other possible call; thus, the liberated *there* is exposed to the nonontological possibility of another claim” (Marion 1998, p. 197). Levinas is here called upon to furnish an alternative account of the claim that can pave the way for Marion’s own reinterpretation, namely, the call of the face: the “*en face* of the face in its expression—in its mortality—assigns me, demands me, claims me” (Ibid., pp. 197–98). Marion grounds the origins of his phenomenology not in a particular claim, whether of being, of the Other, or of God, but rather in “the call itself [which] intervenes as such, without or before any other ‘message’ than to surprise the one who hears it, to grab even the one who does not expect it” (Ibid., p. 198). This is, for Marion, not simply a matter of overcoming lesser arguments through philosophical strength, but a matter of phenomenological reduction. Just as Husserl leads back natural experience to the correlational accomplishment of *Sinngebung*, and Heidegger leads entities back to Dasein and to the claim of being, Marion reduces these particular claims to the “pure form of the

call." Any claim, even the claim of being, must take on this pure form of the call in order to be deployed²⁰.

Whence this call? Whence this form? It is not necessary to answer this question because it can only be posed after the fact, after this event. The call comes from beyond and can only be known insofar as I recognize myself called before any self-constitution or any there-ness of Being. Here, in the gesture that seeks to reach back to the most original givenness, the most original movement of phenomenality, lies the most radical appeal to transcendence as the proper theme of phenomenology. Not so much a contradiction of Heidegger as a reinterpretation, a reintegration and reabsorption. It is not surprising, then, to read in Courtine's essay on the theological turn that the phenomenologists named in it improperly applied Heidegger's phenomenology of the inconspicuous in order to reach beyond the phenomenon to phenomenality, beyond the world to life, beyond the given/gift to givenness (Janicaud et al. 2001, p. 126). Flippant or debatable as this claim is, it does point to a common structure in the projects of thinkers, aside from Marion, like Michel Henry and Jean-Louis Chrétien. A structure derived from Heidegger's original insight that transcendence does not mark the *limit beyond which* phenomenology must not inquire—because it will find nothing—but rather the *border within which* the ground of phenomenality reveals itself: even *as* limit, *as* paradox, *as* difference.

Meanwhile, Marion's critique of Husserl's work is radical to the point that the phenomenology of givenness bears little resemblance to Husserl's transcendental phenomenology. In his reading of Husserl, Marion imports some familiar critiques, as one clearly sees in the working hypothesis of his inquiry: "what would happen, as regards phenomenality, if a givenness was accomplished without the limit (the principle of a horizon) or condition (the transcendental I) still imposed on it by the intuition of the 'principle of all principles'?" (Marion 2002a, p. 189) Marion is referring to §24 of *Ideas I*, where the "principle of all principles" is formulated as follows: "every originary presentive intuition is a legitimizing source of cognition . . . Everything originarily (so to speak, in its 'personal' actuality) offered to us in 'intuition' is to be accepted simply as what it is presented as being, but also only within the limits in which it is presented there" (Husserl 1983, p. 44). Marion's conclusion is that if these limits and conditions were eliminated, phenomenality would finally be coextensive with givenness and the phenomenon would be free to appear in its own right, for "only givenness suggests that the phenomenon guarantees at one stroke . . . its apparition and the reason for its apparition" (Marion 2002a, p. 184). Husserl would certainly respond that a phenomenology without horizons, transcendentality, and even intuition, would be no phenomenology at all, as Levinas and Derrida have commented²¹. Yet, Marion insists that the exclusion of these structures and concepts actually allows phenomenology to investigate what appears differently and otherwise.

Regarding the horizon, it is as a structure involved in the intuition of objects in general. However, rather than being a description of the structure of transcendence, as it is with Husserl's description of adumbrational givenness, Marion takes the phenomenological horizon to be an organizing principle, "already defined . . . where lived experiences not yet given could simply be united with the lived experiences already given . . . in one and the same objective intention" (Marion 2002a, p. 186). The horizon would thus be something like a Kantian schema that plays the function of objectification. For "within the horizon, the unknown refers in advance to the known, because it welcomes and fixes it" (Ibid.). Therefore, the horizon takes possession of the phenomenon and inscribes it in a pattern that is already known, through an intention that has always already anticipated, and therefore limited and reduced, the givenness of the phenomenon.

As for the transcendental I, Marion sees its function in the phenomenological process as that of constituting objects. However, constitution does not take place according to a sense that the phenomenon itself gives—though, for Marion, it should—and rather becomes "a mere synthesis by [the transcendental I] of its lived experiences according to an intention aiming at an object" (Marion 2002a, p. 187). Synthesis and constitution—these are the results of the I's "transcendental posture" toward the given phenomenon, a posture

“which alone is equal to the task of fixing forms and concepts a priori, thereby determining phenomenality in advance according to conditions of experience” (Ibid.) that arbitrarily condition the givenness of the phenomenon²².

The common thread in these two phenomenological constrictions is the idea of a shortcoming on the side of intuition, one that must be made up for on the intentional side of the correlation. Both the horizon and the transcendental I must intervene, according to Marion, and shape what is intuited into an object or objectivity that, so to say, makes the best of the penury of intuition: “What keeps phenomenology from letting phenomena appear unreservedly is therefore, first of all, the fundamental deficit of intuition that it assigns to them—without appeal or recourse” (Marion 2002a, p. 192), or more directly stated, “What gives is lacking. The very thing that is lacking is precisely the only thing that could and should give” (Ibid., p. 194). Marion finds here an essential but unjustified decision to restrict the breadth of giving intuition such that, he claims, whole regions of phenomenality are excluded from the phenomenal field, without justification.

One should not miss Levinas’ imprint here, neither in the critique of Husserl nor in the aspirations for a liberated phenomenology. In the context of Marion’s critique of both horizon and transcendental I, it is illuminating to recall the following passage from *Totality and Infinity*: “Since Husserl,” Levinas writes, “the whole of phenomenology is the promotion of the idea of *horizon*, which for it plays a role equivalent to that of the *concept* in classical idealism.” Like Levinas, Marion reads Husserl as a thinker preoccupied with forbidding the manifestation of certain phenomena than with ensuring that the givenness of phenomena in general is brought to phenomenality in whatever way it gives itself. This is tantamount to saying that Husserl is more concerned with banning the transcendent than to allow its self-manifestation²³. Marion’s work combats against this suppression of transcendence. Phenomenology should seek ways to broaden the phenomenological field so that also transcendent phenomena can give themselves, in themselves and by themselves, without any interference or objectification on the part of the transcendental I, and without the imposition of a horizon that decides the modality of manifestation ahead of time. In short, Marion believes he constructs a phenomenology that liberates the transcendent from the brackets that Husserl places around it. If Husserl banishes the transcendent, Marion sees himself as rescuing it. In this way, ordinary phenomenality is better accounted for within the phenomenology of givenness, and what Marion calls “saturated phenomena”—phenomena that give themselves in excessive and paradoxical manners—are allowed to appear when Husserlian phenomenology would either turn them into ordinary objects or eliminate them outright from the phenomenological field (Gschwandtner 2007, p. 72)²⁴.

It becomes clear at this point that Marion is not only interested in phenomenological transcendence, but also, and perhaps even more so, in divine transcendence and its revelation. The saturated phenomenon *par excellence* is, for Marion, divine revelation, the manifestation of the metaphysically transcendent, the apparition of the divine transcendence that is transcendent in that completely different sense that Husserl fatefully mentions in §58 of *Ideas I*. Marion would of course reject the identification of the divine with the metaphysical, though it is often not clear what Marion means by metaphysics. Much of the secondary literature assumes that Marion’s definition of metaphysics is simply imported wholesale from Heidegger, but this is an oversimplification. Marion follows the later Heidegger in defining metaphysics as a framework common to a broad section of the Western philosophical canon. However, he finds it necessary to amend and deepen Heidegger’s definition of metaphysics as onto-theo-logy. For Marion, metaphysics is ultimately about certain a priori conditions that simultaneously ground and circumscribe the possibilities of a system of thought. In his phenomenological works, the terms “metaphysics” and “onto-theo-logy” are used almost interchangeably, but what makes a system of thought metaphysical is not its reference to the divine. Rather, “grounding, need for certainty, ontology, causality, and perfect presence circumscribe the metaphysical project”²⁵. Marion would therefore disagree that, as far as his own phenomenology is concerned, the

metaphysical and the divine can be equated. However, in the context of an argument such as mine, one that deals with the historical and philological conditions of possibility for Marion's phenomenology, it is appropriate to use this term more broadly. This helps to situate Marion's phenomenology within a context that also includes Husserl and Heidegger, the very authors he criticizes for succumbing to metaphysics. It is in this sense that metaphysical transcendence, divine revelation, and phenomenological saturation converge, and the notion of revelation as the saturated phenomenon *par excellence* shows this most clearly.

Phenomenological saturation is defined according to Kant's logical categories of quantity, quality, modality, and relation (Marion 2002a, p. 199; Marion 2002b, pp. 34, 100, 112, and 159). Saturation describes the form of a phenomenological possibility without determining its content, so there is no a priori restriction on what can manifest as a saturated phenomenon, as long as it gives itself in an excess of intuition and there are no obstacles to limit this givenness. In this sense, the saturated phenomenon represents a form of maximal phenomenality that Husserl's phenomenological apparatus otherwise distorts or does not allow to appear. Furthermore, while various phenomena can be saturated in one, two, or even three categories²⁶, only the phenomenon of divine revelation is saturated according to all four. In fact, revelation "saturates phenomenality to the second degree, by saturation of saturation" (Marion 2002a)²⁷. Divine revelation is the ultimate phenomenological possibility and shines forth with such an excess of givenness that, far from being constituted by a transcendental ego, it instead constitutes the I in a process of counter-intentionality²⁸. Such a radical reversal, in which the self receives itself from the givenness of the phenomenon rather than giving meaning [*Sinngebung*] to the phenomenon, is a direct response to §58 of *Ideas I*. For where Husserl's transcendental phenomenology excludes the divine transcendence on the basis that "this being . . . obviously transcend[s] not merely the world but 'absolute' consciousness" (Husserl 1983, p. 134), and is thus not given in intuition, the phenomenology of givenness allows the divine not simply to reveal itself as common phenomena do, but to appear in such an excessive manner as to overwhelm and reshape the ego (Marion 2002a, pp. 234–36).

The rejection of some of the most fundamental structures of Husserlian phenomenology—the horizon, the transcendental ego—along with the absorption and reinterpretation of essential parts of Heidegger's thought—phenomenality as event and the phenomenon as gift, in addition to the call and the ontological difference—come together to form the very ground on which Marion's phenomenology of givenness stands. The liberation of the divine transcendence and its unimpeded manifestation depend entirely on these gestures of rejection and absorption. Husserl's phenomenology is too concerned with objectivity and absolute scientificity to concern itself with givenness *tout court*, and for this reason it is unable to investigate paradoxical forms of phenomenality. By contrast, Marion cannot but resort to Heidegger's philosophy, appropriately interpreted and modified, to proffer his own phenomenology. This is not to say that Marion is not critical of Heidegger, but rather that his critique of Heidegger takes place within a larger context of appropriation, as Levinas saw and despite Marion's protests to the contrary²⁹.

4. Emendations: The Capacity for Transcendence in Transcendental Phenomenology and Fundamental Ontology

Thus far, I hope to have shown that the concept of transcendence, phenomenological and metaphysical, is at the heart of the preference for Heideggerian phenomenology found in the thinkers of the theological turn. The analysis of Levinas's text on intuition showed that Husserlian phenomenology was introduced to France as incapable of taking transcendence into account, while Heidegger was endorsed as the purveyor of a phenomenology more suited to the task. Furthermore, Levinas underlined that the French theological phenomenologists invariably take the ontological difference as the model for transcendence, and he identifies Marion and his *God without Being* as a privileged example. A deeper examination of Marion's phenomenology of givenness has shown that not only the structure of the ontological difference, but also other Heideggerian themes such as the event and the

gift, are cornerstones for Marion's phenomenological thought³⁰. By contrast, Marion finds in Husserlian phenomenology all the constrictions that limit phenomenality: the horizon, the transcendental of the ego, and intuition as a de jure deficit of phenomenality in need of synthetic support.

I will now attempt to overturn these conclusions and show, on the one hand, that Husserlian phenomenology in fact has much to offer to phenomenologists of religion and, on the other, that the reliance on Heidegger's ontology is misplaced. Husserl's double horizational structure (internal and external horizons), along with the future-oriented structure of time-consciousness, establish a radical openness that can, in principle, make room for the revelation of the divine transcendence. Heidegger, meanwhile, conceives of Dasein as an entity entirely closed in on itself, and the only transcendence of which it is capable is self-transcendence toward itself in its ecstatic temporality. However, this phenomenological transcendence is only possible if it is preceded by, and grounded in, a more original metaphysical transcendence. An examination of his 1920–1921 lecture courses on Paul and Augustine will confirm this hypothesis³¹.

4.1. Proto-Christian Life: The Epochē of Grace and the Self-Enclosedness of Dasein

Toward the end of his first Freiburg period, between the Winter Semester of 1920 and the Summer Semester of 1921, Heidegger taught two courses on the phenomenology of religious life. The first, *Introduction to the Phenomenology of Religion*, contains a long preamble on methodology and a phenomenological interpretation of Paul's letters to the Galatians and Thessalonians³². The second, *Augustine and Neo-Platonism*, enacts a detailed interpretation of Book X of Augustine's *Confessions*. In both courses, Heidegger focuses on the radically new way in which early Christianity lived its relationship to time and develops an account of ecstatic temporality that is essentially bound up with grace, alterity, and transcendence both phenomenological and metaphysical.

Before any phenomenology can be carried out, it is imperative for Heidegger to "attain to the genuine object of religiosity itself," because methodological presuppositions also presuppose the kind, form, or type of object in question (Heidegger 2010, pp. 52–53). Only by means of a phenomenological destruction [*Destruktion*] can the factual life of primal Christianity be regarded phenomenologically at all. The only possible beginning of a phenomenology of religion is to be found in the motivation of factual life itself, and this entails two lines of questioning: first, one must ask what motivates proto-Christian factual life itself; second, one must ask what motivates the phenomenologist (Ibid., p. 54). Insofar as factual life is in question in both cases, Heidegger's phenomenology of religion is an existential-historical self-questioning³³. One may rightly ask, why turn to religious phenomena to clarify ontological questions about existence and history? Heidegger had already answered this question in a lecture course held the previous year (WS 1919–1920): early Christianity is the "historical paradigm" [*historische Paradigma*] that best exemplifies the temporality of factual life in general (Heidegger 1993, p. 61; Esposito 2003, pp. 143–44). In other words, primal Christian facticity is the ontic instance in which the ontological structure of temporality becomes manifest most clearly, an event in time where factual life discovers its peculiar temporality. Thus, the phenomenology of religious objects must become a phenomenology of factual life in its religious specificity, carried out as an existential-historical self-questioning, and therefore a questioning of the "how" [*Wie*] of life's self-possession. Only if these indications are followed can the phenomenologist grasp the essence [*Wesen*] of religious life.

For this reason, Heidegger's reading of the Pauline letters focuses on Paul's historical situation within the existential context of the communities to whom he writes. The two fundamental experiences in 1 Thessalonians are (1) their having-become, which for Heidegger also entails Paul's own having-become, and (2) their knowledge of having-become, which Paul bids them to remember. Having-become, along with the knowledge of it, determines the "how" of a factual life situation in which temporality and historicity are experienced "kairologically" (or ecstatically, as *Being and Time* would state seven years later): "Having

become is not, in life, [just] any incident you like. Rather, it is *incessantly co-experienced*, and indeed such that *their Being now [Sein] is their having-become [Gewordensein]*" (Heidegger 2010, p. 66). Heidegger recognizes that the Thessalonian Christians are determined in the "now" by their having-become, a past that is not simply a present time that came before but rather a constant inheritance co-experienced in their present-being, the continual movement of conversion that coincides with the experience of life's ineluctable facticity.

Paul describes the Thessalonians as if suspended between, on one hand, their having-become and the continuous movement required by the act of conversion, and on the other, Christ's second coming. The latter presents a futurity that is as imminent as it is incalculable; Christ will come like a thief in the night, precisely when the present time is lived as peace and security. By contrast, Paul writes that he lives in constant distress over the second coming of Christ: "These moments—the impossibility of bearing it any longer, the devil, the call to prayer, the imploring at the end—all this makes possible . . . an understanding of Paul's distress" (Ibid., p. 69), the situation that allows him to live the future coming of Christ in an entirely peculiar way. The parousia of Christ is not a particular date that will eventually become present, but an eschatology that calls the first Christians to live the present as hope and vigilance. Paul lives time as the hope of parousia, and it is for this reason that he does not speculate about the precise moment in which it will take place. The "day of the Lord" already takes place as the present expectation of an unobjectifiable eschaton (See Esposito 2003, pp. 295–96; Ruggiu 1998). In this regard, Heidegger states that "the When is determined through the How of the self-comportment, which is determined through the enactment of factual life experience in each of its moments" (Heidegger 2010, p. 75). Time cannot be understood here as a series of present moments, and the time of Christ's parousia depends rather on one's comportment [*Verhalten*]. The three structural moments of temporality—past (having-become), present (facticity), and future (parousia), are radically altered within the factual life of the early Christians, so that the kairological-ecstatic temporality of factual life becomes transparent for the first time.

Heidegger follows a similar path in his lecture course on Augustine. If in his reading of Paul temporality is uncovered in conversion and in the expectation of Christ's parousia, in his reading of Augustine temporality is uncovered in memory [*memoria*] and in the restless search for God. Within the context of an investigation of memory, Book X of the *Confessions* places the reader in front of the paradox of forgetting: how can memory, a supreme power of the soul, also represent forgetting [*oblivio*]? "If *memoria* is present—representation to myself—then *oblivio* cannot be present, and vice versa . . . How then is it present for me to remember when, if [forgetting] is present, I cannot remember?" (Ibid., p. 138) It is an existential-theological rendering of the well-known Meno's paradox where what is sought is God himself, the one whom Augustine loves. The only possible solution, for Augustine, is that he must in some way already have God in mind if he knows that he is searching for God. Heidegger states the solution in an equally paradoxical way: "As long as we have still lost something, we still 'have' it" (Ibid., p. 140).

"But what do I love when I love You?" Augustine asks. His answer is *beata vita*, the happy life (Ibid., p. 141). The search for God is the search for a kind of life that Augustine must somehow have in his memory, that he remembers having forgotten. This is a temporal knot in which having comes before searching and forgetting comes before knowing. When Heidegger asks about the How of this fore-having, he discovers an ecstatic temporality that is structurally the same as that found in his reading of Paul: on one hand, life already has the *beata vita* insofar as it searches and hopes for its future advent, and on the other hand, life has the *beata vita* as what is always already forgotten, what must always already be retrieved. Memory, perhaps the loftiest power of the human soul, can make present the forgetfulness of God and of the happy life, but only precisely *as forgotten*. Likewise, life searches for and hopes to have the *beata vita* when in fact this searching and hoping are the only ways in which it can possess the happy life in the now. In this sense, proto-

Christian life makes clear what most of the time is unclear, namely, that factual life as such is fundamentally determined by a non-linear, ecstatic temporal structure.

Heidegger identifies a further essential characteristic of factual life in Augustine's *curare*, a restless concern for oneself that Heidegger will transform in the unitary structure of care [*Sorge*] in *Being and Time*. The context here is Augustine's description of temptation or trial [*Tentatio*] as a ubiquitous phenomenon in the life of those who seek God. "Is human life on earth not perhaps a trial?" (Ibid., p. 152) Augustine asks, and Heidegger comments that, in the very asking of this question, Augustine expresses a "fundamental character of factual life" (Heidegger 2010, p. 152). Augustine's *curare*, his care and concern, is lived as fearing or as desiring, and this concern is itself placed in its own concrete horizon of awaiting. In this regard, the fundamental experience of being concerned is always a question about how this concern is enacted in concrete living, but in every case factual life is this concern. "Thus, the enactment of experience is always insecure about itself," such that life can find no respite in a neutral middle ground devoid of trials and concern (Ibid., p. 154). Whether as fearing or desiring, life is always concerned about itself.

Through his readings of Paul and Augustine, Heidegger gains a radically new way of understanding the relationship between life, time, and concern for oneself. As I have shown above, ecstatic temporality will become the ground of Dasein's transcendence in *Being and Time* and *The Fundamental Problems of Phenomenology*: it is because Dasein's temporality is ecstatic that it constantly transcends itself toward the world. It is imperative to recognize, however, that Heidegger secures this account of temporality from texts in which it is indissolubly bound up with the experience of grace. For instance, Heidegger comments that "the Christian is conscious that this facticity cannot be won out of his own strength, but rather originates from God—the phenomenon of the effects of grace" (Ibid., p. 87). Likewise, Oscar Becker writes in his notes to the course on the *Confessions* that "the tendency toward *vita beata*—not [in actuality] but [in hope], emerges only from out of the [remission of sin], the reconciliation with God" (Ibid., p. 214). It is not possible for Paul to live time as he does without a prior opening of his life to God's grace, and Augustine's life is pure, restless concern because "[God] touched me, and I am burning for [His] peace" (Ibid., p. 151).

It is clear from the texts in question that the condition of possibility of these radicalizations of factual life is a constitutive relationship with God and a fundamental openness to grace. In this sense, the possibility of a phenomenology of factual life, whose temporality Heidegger discovers in these texts, rests on the condition that life be open to the metaphysically transcendent. Augustine himself goes so far as to say that "I will pass beyond [*transibo*, transcend] my memory to reach [God]," that the very movement of life's self-transcendence is possible only because life's constant searching searches for God (Ibid., p. 139). Likewise, Heidegger comments that Paul's transcendence of the Now into the futurity of parousia is only possible if one "understand[s] everything *salvation-historically* . . . in fundamental comportment to God" (Ibid., p. 110). Far from being a self-transcendence toward the world (i.e., toward Dasein in its unity), the transcendence that enacts the movement of ecstatic temporality is self-transcendence in a *metaphysical sense*, transcendence toward something that is precisely *not* already one of life's own possibilities. According to Heidegger's own reading, phenomenological transcendence should and must include metaphysical transcendence not as another of its own possibilities, but as the condition of possibility for factual life itself and for a phenomenology of it.

Heidegger is, of course, perfectly aware that what he gains for his phenomenology of factual life can only be gained on the condition of an efficacious relationship with God: "The proper *object of the proclamation*," he writes, "*is already Jesus himself as Messiah*" (Ibid., p. 83). Likewise, Augustine is clear that all goodness comes from God, and that it is a form of temptation to think that any good is received because of personal merit (Ibid., pp. 178–79). Yet, Heidegger consistently reinterprets Paul's and Augustine's relationship with God as factual life's relationship with itself and, more specifically, with its own nothingness. Christian life accomplishes itself in the temporal modality of the relationship

to the parousia, but it is as if the radical rereading of this temporality as a paradigm for factual life must put aside the relationship that makes it possible for it to be at all. The way Paul lives time must be strictly separated from this originary relationship. Similarly, the Augustinian novelty of *memoria* and the temporality that it entails are not irreducible in their content, that is, in the way that they relate to God. Better yet, even if the content is irreducible, life's relationship to this content "is then curved definitively in the centripetal, or endogenous, mode with which life . . . is in relation to itself as radical self-reference" (Esposito 2010, p. 302). A real relationship with God and grace is simply not possible, because even when proto-Christian experience is most aware that this relationship is constitutive of how Christian life lives itself, Heidegger insists this is ultimately a self-relation. Thus, when Augustine describes temptation with respect to a good that, like all goods, comes from God, Heidegger translates the phenomenon of temptation as a mode of enacting the experience of being-there. The good should not be understood as something given to the self, but as existence itself (Ibid., p. 298). Worldly temptation is not evidence of creatural imperfection, but the full manifestation and realization of the self (Ibid., p. 299). For, Heidegger writes, "even if genuine insight into the character of the good exists, and if a genuine good belongs to the self ('being good': authentic existing!)—which, as such, can only be from God—it is, to oneself, taken as self-appropriated, *as having been given to the self by itself* . . . *having elevated oneself to this position of existence*" (Heidegger 2010, p. 179). Factual life is at once radically open and radically closed. Open, because it can never grasp itself due to its ecstatic temporality. Closed, because the temporal ecstasies of factual life can only ground a transcendence of oneself *toward* oneself, toward one's own possibilities.

Heidegger justifies these interpretive decisions by claiming that they are methodologically necessary. Apart from various statements in the *Phenomenology of Religious Life* in which Heidegger discusses why specific phenomena should be regarded phenomenologically and *not* theologically (Heidegger 1992, p. 367)³⁴, Heidegger makes more general methodological remarks in his "Natorp-bericht," composed the following year:

If philosophy . . . exists . . . as *questioning* knowledge [*fragendes Erkennen*], i.e., as *research* [*Forschung*], simply as the genuine, explicit actualization of the tendency towards interpretation which belongs to life's own basic movements (movements within which life is concerned about itself and its own Being); and secondly, if philosophy intends to view and to grasp factual life in its decisive possibilities of Being; i.e., if philosophy has decided radically and clearly on its own . . . to make factual life speak for itself on the basis of its very own possibilities; i.e., if philosophy is *fundamentally atheistic* and if it understands this about itself; then it has decisively chosen factual life in its facticity and has made this an object for itself. (Heidegger 1992, note 2, p. 393)

Here, it is not simply a matter of the relationship between philosophy and theology, but about the relationship between authentic inquiry (*questioning* knowledge, *research*) and inquiry about the experience of God. If one wants to grasp life in its most essential being, if one seeks to understand facticity as the being of life, then it is necessary for philosophy to be fundamentally atheistic. However, this is not simply a methodological requirement motivated by the difference in principles between two sciences. Here, Heidegger is much more radical. Any and all investigations of life's most essential determinations *must* be fundamentally atheistic, or else they are not authentic. There is a strict exclusivity between the very question of God's manifestation in life's experience—be this understood as grace, as the relationship with a truly present Christ, or as mystical experience of the Godhead—and the possibility of understanding life in its facticity. In a note on this passage, Heidegger explicates that "life's retreat towards its own self," i.e., authentic philosophizing, is "a show of hands against God. But only then is philosophy honest . . . [and] in keeping with its possibility . . . before God"³⁵. Simply put, if philosophy wants to remain true to itself, it must reject the possibility that the facticity of life is essentially bound up with life's relationship with the divine.

It is beyond the scope of this paper to investigate the reason for Heidegger's strict separation of factual life and the life of faith³⁶. My purpose here is to show the implications of this Heideggerian decision for the relationship between phenomenological and metaphysical transcendence. In *Being and Time*, Heidegger writes that transcendence should be understood as the self-transcendence of Dasein toward the world. He deepens this insight in *The Basic Problems of Phenomenology* (1927), indicating not only that Dasein's transcendence toward the world is a transcendence toward itself (since the world exists, has the same manner of being as Dasein), but also an order of grounding that leads from temporality to Husserl's mistaken view that the world and its objects are transcendent³⁷. This order of grounding reveals that phenomenological transcendence, for Heidegger, is grounded in Dasein's temporality. A careful reading of Heidegger's courses on the phenomenology of religion (1920–1921), however, shows that Heidegger obtains his account of ecstatic temporality from Christian texts where this new account of intentionality is itself grounded on a relationship to the divine and to grace, that is to say, it is grounded on a prior, metaphysical transcendence. It is not possible for Paul to live time as he does without first being in a relationship with Christ and his proclamation. In the same manner, Augustine cannot transcend himself (or his *memoria*, which is the same) unless this movement of transcendence restlessly seeks God. It is clear, then, that Heidegger separates the fruits of proto-Christian life from the relationship that makes them possible in the first place. The ecstatic temporality of factual life, along with its care for itself, cannot properly be said to be the deepest onto-ontological structures of life because they do not show themselves except in the context of a relationship with God. In this sense, life's transcendence cannot be exclusively toward itself and its own possibilities, because its very condition of possibility is a metaphysical transcendence which Heidegger excises from his phenomenological interpretation of proto-Christian texts.

It is not surprising, then, that Heidegger spends the next years of research working on an Aristotelian reinterpretation of the results obtained in the courses on Paul and Augustine. The framework of Aristotelian science hangs on the notion of *ousia*, the self-sufficient being that functions according to the movement [*kinesis*] prescribed by its form and inherent to its structure. Heidegger's interpretation of Aristotle's *Physics* supplies a non-relational account of movement which, in his eyes, could describe the motility of factual life while dispensing of the external relationality that, according to his Christian sources, grounds the possibility of this motility. Heidegger is thus able to recast the care and temporality of factual life in terms of the practical, concerned movement of the human substance, and any relation to a transcendent other becomes internal to the ontological motility of life, a matter of life's own possibilities³⁸. In this regard, Heidegger writes in the *Natorp-Bericht* that, since "theological anthropology must be traced back to its philosophical experiences and motives," the problem of facticity that emerges from the courses on religious life can only be adequately grasped through "a concrete interpretation of the Aristotelian philosophy, [such that] the central phenomenon, whose explication is the theme of the *Physics*, becomes the being in the How of its Being-moved"³⁹. The fundamentally religious and relational origins of ecstatic temporality and care must be reframed in terms of Aristotelian science, that is, as the modes of movement internal to and possible for the human being. Human existence will prove to be the exception to Aristotle's entire doctrine of *ousia*, as Heidegger famously states that in the being of Dasein, existence precedes essence and possibility is higher than actuality (Heidegger 1962, p. 38). but what is most significant for my purposes is that Heidegger nevertheless develops the ontology of Dasein in Aristotelian terms. What Heidegger gains from this gesture is a purely philosophical account—purged of all references to God, Christ, and grace—which he maintains is more fundamental than any theological expression. This position will become cemented over the years leading up to the publication of *Being and Time* and is clearly expressed in Heidegger's 1927 lecture "Phenomenology and Theology" (Heidegger 1998, pp. 39–62; Graves 2021; DeLay 2020).

4.2. Teleology, Horizon, and Futurity: Husserl and the Possibility of a Phenomenological Theology

After the examination of Heidegger's lecture courses on religious life, it might appear that he and Husserl agree on the compatibility of phenomenology and theology, especially with regard to a possible divine phenomenon or revelation: Husserl clearly states in *Ideas* §58 that the divine transcendence must be excluded from the phenomenological field, while Heidegger makes clear that philosophy, in order to be authentic research, must stop before it becomes entangled in theological categories. Yet, Husserl's phenomenology is more open to metaphysical transcendence and the divine than many give it credit for. The works that Husserl published in his own lifetime present a sporadic insight into Husserl's thinking at a particular time, but his sustained reflection and philosophical experimentation become visible only when the published works are supplemented with his posthumously collected works. My purpose here is not to give an exhaustive account of Husserl's openness to metaphysical transcendence, nor to reconstruct a Husserlian phenomenological theology. Rather, I will first show that Husserl's phenomenology is fundamentally and radically open to the other not only in the form of the *alter ego*, but also in the sense of the divine and its revelation. Second, I will briefly describe how Husserl himself treated the question of a phenomenological metaphysics and theology.

I begin by referencing again §58 of *Ideas I*. Scholars have argued that even if this text is taken by itself and without reference to the posthumous *Husserliana*, it is not at all clear that *Ideas I* definitively excludes the divine transcendence from phenomenological science. From a textual point of view, Husserl's bracketing of the divine transcendence can be understood neither as a secular prejudice nor as the final word on the possibility of experiencing the divine. If §58 is read in the context of the reduction and with reference to Husserl's principle of principles, it becomes clear that Husserl thinks not that God has nothing to do with experience, but simply that God is not given "in person" [*leibhaftig*] the way a feeling or the profile of a worldly object is. We can thus distinguish between the experience of God "in person" and the experience of God as revealed, that is to say, God as phenomenon in the etymological sense. In addition, we should keep in mind that the bracketing enacted in the *epoché* does not eliminate what is bracketed, but rather suspends it and puts it out of play for the sake of eidetic analysis. For Husserl, if something is bracketed then there is something to bracket, and a description of it must be given.⁴⁰ Beyond the exclusion of the divine transcendence from the phenomenological field, it is just such a description that Husserl provides in §58.

After the bracketing of the natural world, Husserl writes that another transcendence, i.e., God, is "encountered" and at the same time "not given . . . immediately in union with reduced consciousness." There must be other ways of encountering things beyond direct intuition, and although the divine transcendence is not directly intuited, it is "cognized in a highly mediated fashion" (Husserl 1983, §58 p. 133). Husserl confirms this in a note appended to §51 while considering the mode of transcendence of the "theological principle." God must be transcendent in a completely different way than the world's, for if the two senses of transcendence were the same there would be a fallacious circularity in the order of rationality that Husserl is uncovering: "the ordering principle of the absolute [the field of absolute consciousness] must be found in the absolute itself [the theological principle] considered purely as absolute" (Ibid., §51, p. 116). If it were not so, God would have to be considered either worldly in the same way as any worldly objectivity, or immanent to consciousness in the same way as a mental process or act⁴¹. Thus, Husserl concludes that "there must be . . . within the absolute stream of consciousness and its infinities, modes in which transcendences are made known *other than the constituting of physical realities as unities of harmonious appearances*" (Ibid., p. 117). Furthermore, there must also be "intuitional manifestations to which a theoretical thinking might conform so that, by following them rationally, it might make intelligible the unitary rule of the supposed theological principle" (Ibid.). The highly mediated cognition of §58 is just such an intuitional manifestation, a noticeable order in the world that has complex theoretical acts as its noetic correlates.

This noticeable order is, on the noematic side, a “*morphologically ordered world*” that allows for classification on the part of the positive sciences and, on the noetic side, “[factual] concatenations of mental processes” that allow the ordered world to be determined theoretically as the bearer of exact laws (Ibid., §58, p. 134). I have translated Husserl’s term “faktisch” as “factual” rather than using Kersten’s term, “factual,” because it indicates a precise modality of being of the noeses correlated to the ordered world. It is imperative to understand that for Husserl the rationality disclosed in the noeses is *not* demanded by the essence of the world-correlate; it is merely made actual by the factual mental acts. In other words, the morphological order of the world, its rationality, is an absolute “Faktum” for which no explanation can be found outside of its being there. For Husserl, there is no deeper condition of possibility that accounts for the order of the world. If the essence of the world were to dictate a necessary rationality, it would be impossible for us to imagine a world without such a rational order. The world is amenable, so to say, to our rational mental acts, but, from a phenomenological point of view, this need not be the case. The factual nature of this rationality discloses, for Husserl, a “marvelous teleology” (Husserl 1983, §58, p. 134) on both the noetic and noematic sides, and it is the teleological form of this factual rationality that leads us to posit a theological principle as the ground of the Faktum. The order of things is indeed given, and given as a teleological path not dictated by an essential rationality. But the acts in which this path is disclosed “[lead] necessarily to the question about the ground for the now-emerging [factuality] of the corresponding constitutive consciousness” (Ibid.).

It is as just such a ground that the divine transcendence is “cognized in a highly mediated fashion.” It is indeed excluded from the phenomenological field, but this is only because God is not *immediately* given in union to reduced consciousness, that is, because it is not given in an original intuition. However, this does not mean that there is no evidence of a theological principle. In fact, the epoché makes this mediating evidence much more recognizable because it leads reason away from the attitudes that obscure it. In the natural and naturalistic attitudes, most of us take for granted a worldview in which the world is simply what the natural sciences say about it, a world in which efficient causality and abstract idealizations take the place of final causes as explanatory principles. In bracketing these and other theses, the epoché renders evident both the teleology that is woven into the world and the insuperable factuality of this order.

In indicating this evidence of the theological principle, Husserl follows a traditional path in Western philosophy, namely, that of arguments that reason from the teleologies observed in the world to an ultimate final cause (Bello 2009, p. 27). However, as someone like Marion might object, the mediating evidence of final causality is not itself divine revelation. If all that Husserl can offer is yet another version of the cosmological argument, and if the possibility of an immediate self-disclosing of the divine is definitively precluded, then Husserl does not, in the final analysis, have more to offer to theologically minded phenomenologists than Heidegger does. Both phenomenologies would be theological *Holzwege*, errant paths that cannot lead to divine revelation. Just as Heidegger’s conception of phenomenological transcendence cuts off the constitutive metaphysical transcendence that makes it possible, so would Husserl’s epoché exclude the possibility of divine revelation simply because a worldly God is, in Husserl’s eyes, a countersense.

The dense argumentation found in §51 and §58 of *Ideas I*, while short to the point of appearing dismissive, actually delineate a precise direction of research which will occupy Husserl for the rest of his life. The idea of God as the ground of a constant teleological process resurfaces and intensifies in the manuscripts from the early 1920’s along with another way of understanding God, namely, God as the intersubjective totality of monads which, acting within each monad, creates endlessly augmentable values⁴². These conceptions of a theological principle describe a complex and subtle relationship between phenomenology and transcendence, and as such they are important for anyone who wishes to develop a metaphysically minded Husserlian theology⁴³.

Nevertheless, Husserl does not believe that the divine can become worldly, nor does he offer a structural description of divine revelation as Marion attempts to do. The rational order that can lead us to posit a ground for the world, along with the intersubjective teleology of monads, are for Husserl the only ways in which phenomenology can say something about the divine. However, I believe there is a space in his phenomenology for revelation in a robust sense, i.e., revelation as the self-showing of the divine in experience. It is Husserl's conception of the phenomenological horizon, understood not as Marion interprets it but as Husserl describes it, that can welcome revelation *into* experience. This means encountering the divine within what Husserl calls the "world-horizon" [*Welthorizont*] rather than outside of it⁴⁴. Husserl's notions of the divine transcendence as ultimate ground and telos, while significant for those interested in the possibility of a Husserlian metaphysical theology, cannot count as instances of revelation because they do not fall within the scope of the world-horizon. They are ideas posited in response to the *facticity* of the world's rational and axiological order, and as such they cannot lead to a phenomenology of revelation. At most, they can be seen as grounding and directing the ordered world, but they themselves do not fall within it. Revelation in a robust sense, on the other hand, can, eidetically speaking, be welcomed within the horizon of experience. A brief description of the notion of horizon is all I can offer here, but this should be sufficient to show that the horizon in fact makes possible the experience of revelation.

The notion of horizon indicates the interplay, eidetically present in all intuitive experience, between the "foregrounded" object and its "background" context. Whenever a phenomenon is given intuitively and thematized by consciousness, a background is always co-given that remains unthematized. This is easiest to notice in the case of external perception. I am walking along a trail in the mountains and a bird flies by. My gaze automatically follows the bird, which becomes the thematic focus of my experience. However, I do not cease to intend everything that "surrounds" the bird. The beaten path, the gurgling stream, the blue sky, the panoply of trees—everything else that is part of the "scene" is still there, but it is given as a non-thematic context that contributes to the sense of the phenomenon that is the object of my attention. However, anything that contributes to the sense of an object is a horizon for it: not only the visual-perceptive context, but also the language one speaks, the culture in which one grows up, the history of the nation that one is a citizen of, etc. In short, the horizon is a universal structure of consciousness, it is always co-given non-thematically along with the thematized phenomenon, and it contributes to the sense of the phenomenon by providing a context of meaning within which the phenomenon finds a place⁴⁵.

Husserl distinguishes between the inner and outer horizons. The outer horizon refers to the "surroundings" that provide a context of sense for the thematic focus of consciousness. This may be a spatial field, a linguistic horizon within which a word or judgment has its sense, or, most generally, the world itself as the ultimate horizon of all objectivities. The inner horizon, by contrast, has to do with the temporal structure of experience: one and the same perceived object, for instance, is given in adumbrations both spatially and temporally, that is to say, is given in a manifold of intuition that spans space and time. The structure of inner time consciousness, in its retention of the recent past and in its protention toward the near future, makes it possible to "gather" the many appearances under one and the same noematic sense. In this way, the transcendence of the worldly object with respect to the capacities of consciousness is still accounted for, albeit non-intuitively. Where perception grasps one side of the worldly object in one momentary phase, the unseen sides are apperceived along with it and the retentive and protentive moments of the temporal experience make possible the unity of the object across a certain span of time. The outer horizon is the surrounding context within which a phenomenon makes sense, while the inner horizon unites under a single sense the noematic manifolds in which one and the same phenomenon is given⁴⁶.

What makes the horizonal structure relevant for the possibility of divine revelation is its essential openness to novelty and revision. On the one hand, it is true that the horizon

of sense prescribes, to a certain extent, the general sense-configurations within which the thematized phenomenon can make sense. Insofar as this is true, Marion's objection to the horizontal structure is correct in regarding the horizon as marking a limit of possibility of sense. On the other hand, the horizon's gamut of sense is not fixed once and for all but is rather the result of sedimentations [*Schichte*] of sense that become habitual. In this sense, the phenomenological horizon *can* change, become more nuanced, and even undergo paradigm shifts that alter one's entire outlook on the most fundamental questions of existence. This possibility of revision bespeaks an inherent openness to what comes, a welcoming of phenomena in general that Espen Dahl has aptly called the "humility" and "generosity" of the horizon (Dahl 2013, pp. 344–60). However, these characteristics are possible only if temporality plays a transcendental role in the process of constitution.

The temporal and historical qualities of the horizon reveal a hermeneutic relationship between the sense of the thematic phenomenon and the pre-delineations of sense of the horizon. From the perspective of static phenomenology, the thematized phenomenon is indeed almost always limited, in its possibilities of sense, to what the horizon prescribes. However, from a genetic perspective, that is to say, from the perspective of an analysis that takes into account the genesis of constitution and its habitualities, things are markedly different. When phenomenological analysis also considers the transcendental role of temporality—a dimension of sense constitution from which static analysis abstracts—transcendental subjectivity is recognized as a process of becoming in which the subject is temporalized as a single flow of experience, a dynamic unity, and horizons of sense are themselves revealed to be the result of a process of sense-layering⁴⁷. Horizons are not impervious to the modifications that the monad undergoes, but change according to the ways in which the monad changes. The genetic broadening of Husserl's phenomenology reveals the hermeneutic co-affection of single lived experiences and the horizons that contextualize them. The monad always lives experience while "keeping in mind" the general sense-structures it becomes used to, but over time the very experiences of sense that are informed by the horizon can deepen, alter, and perhaps even completely overhaul the kinds of sense pre-delineations of the horizon itself⁴⁸. Transcendental subjectivity does not simply come to be with pre-constituted horizons of sense that are then imposed on phenomena. Rather, the repetition of general types of experience motivates the coming-to-be of horizons in such a way that transcendental subjectivity forms a certain *style* of constitution, a certain fore-understanding of phenomena's general delineations (Husserl 2001a, Part 2, §5, p. 64).

The horizontal structure is what allows the divine to manifest itself at all, what allows the divine to reveal itself and "land within" experience at all. It is a necessary characteristic of phenomena in general that, along with its appearing, inner and outer horizons are co-given⁴⁹. However, far from limiting the givenness of the phenomenon, the horizons allow it to be experienced as sensical, and this must be so especially in the case of revelation. A phenomenon given absolutely without horizon would not appear at all—would it not be given in an adumbrational manifold? Would it not be experienced as a sequential experience, and therefore as in some sense temporal?—or would be tantamount to a radical trauma that cannot be integrated within the stream of consciousness⁵⁰. If it does not appear at all, this would be because it does not and cannot have any sense, nor any hyletic impression, for the subject. Outside the horizons of temporality, spatiality, and the deepest levels of passive constitution, the subject simply has no way to detect manifestation. It would be no phenomenon at all. However, if a phenomenon somehow manages to appear without co-given horizons, it would strike the subject as a trauma so profound that it could not be integrated into the stream of experience at all⁵¹. Outside the temporal horizon, this phenomenon would not be part of any logical sequence; outside of the horizon of sense, this phenomenon would be outside the possibility of any comprehension; outside the horizon of the lived body, it would not be possible to regard this phenomenon in any way. Following Geniusas I ask of Marion, "how else is one to recognize saturated phenomena as

saturated if not *in virtue of the horizon?*" (Geniusas 2012, p. 143) Indeed, without horizons, the phenomenon of revelation cannot hope to be experienced *as* divine revelation at all.

Furthermore, the type of revelation in question calls for the analysis of horizons as they are relevant to this or that type. In the case of mystical experiences, for example, an inquiry into the "stretching," broadening, or even abolishing of particular horizons is indeed warranted. For instance, the excessive and overwhelming experience of the Christian mystic Margareta Ebner should give the phenomenologist pause: reciting the *Pater Noster* "is so well with me then that I think, 'can heaven be better than this?' My human understanding cannot grasp this. Such a powerful love and such a strong faith are given to me that I perceive God's presence as real, so that all things become delightful" (Ebner 1993, p. 108). The experience reported here likely raises certain exceptions to Husserl's doctrine of the horizon. Yet, although this excessive experience was most likely impossible to capture in language and may have modified the temporal horizon beyond recognition, it nevertheless *made sense* to Ebner, and this means that to some extent this experience could be related to a broader context of sense. Ebner's own reflection and writing attempt to reintegrate this experience further within the horizons that are shared by others, so that it might be of help to her cloistered sisters and, ultimately, for the good of all. Outside of a horizational structure, be this a linguistic, cultural, or temporal horizon, mystical or excessive experiences remain uncommunicable. Integration within a horizon, even if it happens after the fact, allows the experience to be shared and to benefit all members of the religious tradition in question⁵².

In a similar manner, the medieval Christian debate on how the beatific vision can appear as such to a finite intellect relates directly to the question of the subject's capacities as the dative of manifestation. Thomas Aquinas, for example, describes a supernatural expansion of the created intellect, caused by the "light of glory," so that human creatures may know God as he is⁵³. From a phenomenological point of view, this debate can be reframed as a debate on the horizational structure before and after death: what modes of givenness do the medieval philosophers describe, and do they make sense outside of a speculative theological context? In what sense can there be a beatific *vision* if, at least in the Abrahamic religions, God is immaterial? These and other related questions bear directly on the possibility of broadened or breached horizons, and answering them is crucial for the possibility of a phenomenological metaphysics or a phenomenological theology.

However, within a phenomenological context, mystical experiences and beatific visions should be treated as exceptions rather than as rule. If the paradigm for the phenomenon of divine revelation is an experience so excessive and incommunicable that it completely isolates the religious subject (Marion uses the language of a phenomenon "saturat[ed] . . . to the second degree . . . the *paradoxōtaton*" (Marion 2002a, p. 235)), there can be no hope of religious community nor of the formation of religious traditions. Even if something like a tradition were to arise around such an experience, those who do not have them would over time become alienated from the few who do. In this sense, shared horizons are what make religious communities and traditions possible.

It is no accident that religious and spiritual traditions from all parts of the world invite their adherents to cultivate a certain way of regarding all things, a "deeper" way of seeing. The repetition and maintenance of particular forms of prayer or meditation, regular attendance of religious rituals and worship, and religious-spiritual calendrical cycles all educate the religious subject to remember that space, time, and all of life itself are fundamentally related to the ultimate truths of the subject's religious tradition. Over time, the rhythm and repetition of these practices form what Husserl calls a habituality or style of constitution that modifies our horizons quite radically. For example, the canonical hours, which invite Christians to pray seven times a day at different hours, are supposed to sanctify the day and to help the Christian cultivate their relationship with God. This daily repetition is meant to help them grow in their awareness of God's presence in their daily lives, so that eventually the temporal horizon itself becomes tied to the awareness of the presence of God in all things. When new lived experiences or phenomena take place,

the “religiously charged” horizon, so to say, will motivate the subject to make sense of the novel experiences according to the style of constitution that has developed from the sustained practice. A deeply painful experience, such as the sudden death of a loved one, may immediately evoke the beginning of Psalm 22, which the canonical hours prescribe as one of the Friday psalms: “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?”⁵⁴ An occasion for deep joy, such as the reconciliation of estranged siblings, may elicit thanksgiving toward God and bring to mind the words of Psalm 133: “How good and pleasant it is when kindred live together in unity!”⁵⁵ In a Buddhist context, the steady practice of meditation might help to develop one’s detachment from impermanent things, according to the Four Noble Truths and the Eightfold Path taught by the Buddha (Gethin 1998; Gowans 2003, 2015). In each case, the horizontal structure makes possible a gradual conversion, the deepening of one’s religious sensibility that realizes the ideal of a religious tradition.

The question must therefore be posed: what kinds of experiences count as divine revelation? While Marion seems to think that saturation is a *conditio sine qua non* of revelation, most people are not bowled over in religious ecstasy as they pray, meditate, attend communal worship, or read sacred texts. Yet, the religious traditions that recommend these forms of practice generally claim that the divine is in all things, nearer than we are to ourselves, perhaps to be found at the heart of our own subjectivity. If the divine is omnipresent and at the same time inconspicuous, and if it is possible to develop a sensitivity to the divine through these kinds of religious practices, then the horizontal structure and its hermeneutic implications are necessary for an adequate account of religious experience, practice, and revelation.

5. Conclusions

In the foregoing text, I have argued for several interconnected claims. Foremost among these is the claim that the notion of phenomenological transcendence is of paramount importance not merely because it reveals an essential difference between the phenomenologies of Husserl and the early Heidegger, but also because it bears directly on the question of divine revelation as a phenomenon. It is due to their different conceptions of transcendence that French phenomenologists of religion, in particular Levinas and Marion, have preferred a Heideggerian framework over a Husserlian one. I have attempted to argue this historically—by laying out the fraught reception of Husserl in France through Levinas’ first works—as well as thematically—by taking up Marion’s phenomenology of givenness as exemplifying this preference. Finally, I have argued that this preference for Heidegger with regard to the revelation of the divine is wrongheaded.

On the one hand, the lecture courses on Paul’s letters and Augustine’s *Confessions* show that Heidegger is eager to detach the fruits of Christian faith from the relationship with God that make them possible. The ecstatic temporality and care that make up the most fundamental determinations of factual life cannot be discovered except as the result of a prior relationship with the divine and the grace that this relationship grants. In this sense the transcendence of Dasein, which is grounded in its ecstatic temporality, itself depends on a prior metaphysical transcendence of self toward the divine other. Heidegger’s reinterpretation of these Christian experiences in an Aristotelian key ensures that they can be reinscribed in the fully endogenous context of Aristotle’s theory of substance.

On the other hand, Husserl’s phenomenology provides the radical openness necessary to welcome something as unexpected as divine revelation. While §§51 and 58 of *Ideas I* irremediably deny that there can be a worldly God, a God in and of experience, the Husserlian structures of horizontality and temporality define an open subjectivity that welcomes what is to come. It is counterproductive—if not downright nonsensical—to demand that divine revelation be manifest on the condition that there be no horizon, because this structure is what allows phenomena to be recognized as what they are in the first place. There certainly are experiences where these structures appear changed or abolished, and these warrant a phenomenological investigation. Mystical experience and the notion of beatific vision are two such experiences that I have briefly mentioned,

but they are exceptions that confirm the ubiquity and necessity of the horizontal and temporal structures.

This analysis on the relation between phenomenological transcendence and the possibility of divine revelation as a type of metaphysical transcendence is meant as an invitation to further study (See, for instance, DeLay 2022, another piece that profitably takes up many of the same themes). The analyses and arguments I have presented ultimately lead to the very notion of intentionality: What account of intentionality can take into account both a phenomenological and a metaphysical transcendence as they relate to religious experience? The phenomenologies of Husserl, Heidegger, and Marion are not, on their own, capacious enough to welcome the divine in its manifold modes of revelation: Husserl does not think a worldly God possible, Heidegger rejects the metaphysical openness that his own account of subjectivity presupposes, and Marion does not admit the possibility of an un-saturated phenomenon of revelation. I conclude with a hybrid proposal that seeks to gather what is valuable in each: a radically open intentional subject with an essential concern for what is to come and for what it itself is. Such a subject would be characterized essentially as a *subject of desire*, an openness to the world and beyond, full of care, full of the drama of a desire that is never completely extinguished⁵⁶.

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Notes

- ¹ For the sake of clarity, I will translate Heidegger's "Seiend" as "entity" and his "Sein" as "being." This is the way J. Macquarrie and E. Robinson's translation of *Sein und Zeit* renders this distinction, though it seems to have fallen out of style in recent years. J. Stambaugh's translation conveys this distinction through capitalization—"Seiend" is translated as "being" while "Sein" is translated as "Being." Because this distinction names the ontological difference, I find it best to make this difference as clear as possible by using different English terms rather than a capitalized or uncapitalized version of the same word.
- ² This reading of Husserl was made popular by Paul Ricoeur (Ricoeur 1967); *A Key to Husserl's Ideas I* (Marquette University Press, 1996); (Ricoeur 1975, p. 85), Emmanuel Levinas (Levinas 1995, 1998, pp. 47–90; Maritain 1959).
- ³ Heidegger states in this regard: "Inasmuch as Scheler sees the person in the unity of acts, which means in their intentionality, he says: the essence of man is the intention toward something or, as he puts it, the very gesture of transcendence. Man is an eternal out-towards, in the way that Pascal calls man a god-seeker" (Heidegger 2009, p. 130).
- ⁴ German pagination. Because there are several translations of *Sein und Zeit*, I will henceforth give the German pagination whenever *Being and Time* is cited.
- ⁵ It is an open question whether for Husserl the "highly mediated cognition" of the divine transcendence should be considered a mode of givenness. I will return to this question toward the end of the paper.
- ⁶ Spiegelberg reports Jean Cavaillès' impression of the event: "[Husserl was] very much the small town university type, in a frock coat and bespectacled, but in his delivery the warmth and the simplicity of the true philosopher" (Spiegelberg 1994, pp. 431–44).
- ⁷ Husserl's philosophy came to be considered in its own right in France much later than one might first suspect. Prior to Levinas' efforts, Husserl's work was taken up in an ancillary manner, for instance as a method that might aid neo-Scholastic philosophy or as a precursor to the "true innovators," Scheler and Heidegger, both of whose works were translated before Husserl's. Spiegelberg attributes the eventual success of Husserlian phenomenology in France to Sartre, in particular to his 1936 essay *On the Transcendence of the Ego* (Sartre 1991) and his book-length studies on the imagination and the emotions (Sartre 2012; Sartre 1962), composed between 1936 and 1940. However, as De Beauvoir writes in *De Beauvoir* (1960), Sartre was himself introduced to phenomenology through Levinas's *The Theory of Intuition*, which, so the anecdote goes, he began to read voraciously as he walked home from the bookstore on Boulevard St. Michel.
- ⁸ (Husserl 2002, pp. 260), my emphasis. This transposition brings the discussion on the meaning of transcendence to bear on the current debate on the metaphysical neutrality of Husserl's phenomenology. A full consideration of this is beyond the scope of the current paper, but the relevant texts are the following: Crowell (2001); Burch et al. (2019); Crowell (2008, pp. 335–54); Carr (1999); Zahavi (2017); Drummond (2019, pp. 265–73).
- ⁹ See (Heidegger 2005), esp. Part 1, ch. 2, §§ 4–11, 15–16; Part 3, ch. 2, §§ 46–47; ch. 3, §§ 47–49. In §47, Heidegger states that "the care about certainty [in the sense of an a priori apodicticity] is here a care about the formation of science . . . , [it is] based on a science held up as model," and he continues in the following section: "The same care about certainty leads . . . to mangling . . . what . . . was positively accomplished in phenomenology, [namely] . . . with respect to intentionality insofar as this is always construed . . . as specific theoretical behavior," so much so that "for every intentional context of a complex sort, theoretically meaning

something forms the *foundation*, that each judgment, each instance of wanting, each instance of loving is founded upon a *presenting* [Vorstellen] that provides in advance what can be wanted, what is detestable and loveable" (208–9).

In (Cassara 2020), I detail Heidegger's critique of Husserl on the unexamined assumption that phenomenology must be an a priori science. This assumption prevents Husserl from seeing that the a priori in phenomenology is the temporal and historical situation of the subject, i.e., the hermeneutic situation. In criticizing Husserl on his blindness to the historical, Levinas is very much following the same path as Heidegger and seizing on the same point regarding the hermeneutic nature of the knowledge that phenomenology affords.

See II.B above.

On the theme of transcendence in Levinas's philosophy, see (Bloechl 2022).

On the connection between phenomenological transcendence and ontological difference, see also (Courtine 1990). esp. "Différance Métaphysique et Différance Ontologique," as well as (Courtine 2005).

Emmanuel Levinas, "Transcendence and Evil," in (Levinas 1998), p. 125.

Levinas is referring to (Marion 2012, p. 126).

On the aesthetic connection between Marion and Merleau-Ponty, see (Fritz 2009, pp. 415–40), which tacitly argues that (Merleau-Ponty 1968) informs Marion as well as Henry on the relationship between art and the manifestation of the invisible.

(Marion 1998, chp. 6, pp. 183–86) and conclusion.

See also (Marion 2002b, chp. 1) "Phenomenology of Givenness and First Philosophy."

For Heidegger's treatment of boredom as a fundamental attunement [*Befindlichkeit*], see (Heidegger 1995, chps. 2–4).

Jean-Louis Chrétien has profitably expanded the notion of the call from beyond phenomena in several of his works. See (Chrétien 2004, 2007).

(Derrida and Marion 1999, p. 66). Marion says, "I said to Levinas some years ago that in fact the last step for a real phenomenology would be to give up the concept of horizon. Levinas answered me immediately, 'without horizon there is no phenomenology.' And I boldly assume he was wrong!" Derrida responds, "I am also for the suspension of the horizon, but, for that very reason . . . I am not a phenomenologist anymore. I am very true to phenomenology, but when I agree on the necessity of suspending the horizon, then I am no longer a phenomenologist. So the problem remains, if you give up the [as-structure of hermeneutic understanding], *what is the use that you can make of the word phenomenology?*" [my emphasis].

There is also no lack of criticism of Husserl's career as a mathematician and logician, which for Marion means being a master of "poor" phenomena, phenomena so abstract and lacking in intuition that they are the only ones allowed to achieve perfect evidence. (Marion 2002a) §20–23, in particular his distinction between "poor," "common," and "saturated" phenomena.

This is an extensive and definitive treatment of the subject of metaphysics in Marion's work.

This is the case with the face of the other, which is saturated according to quantity, quality, and relation. See (Marion 2002a, p. 233; Marion 2002b, pp. 114–15; Gschwandtner 2014, pp. 100–1).

(Marion 2002a, p. 235; Marion 2002b, pp. 28–29, 52–53, 158–62), and the conclusion.

Book V, "The Gifted," esp. §25–28.

In addition to *Reduction and Givenness* and *Being Given*, see also (Gschwandtner 2007, chp. 3; Pettinari 2014, esp. "Introduzione" §3, Part II §10, and Part III §§1 and 4).

This preferential option for Heidegger's thought in those phenomenologies that seek "the transcendent within immanence itself" has also been observed by others: not only Levinas and Courtine, who are mentioned in the paper, but also Janicaud, Dufrenne, and Benoist. See (Janicaud 2005, p. 80). For an engagement that brings Janicaud, Dufrenne, and Benoist together on the question of the theological in phenomenology, see the first two essays in the same volume.

It is beyond the scope of this paper to come to any conclusions on whether Heidegger's post-*Being and Time* thought forecloses any openness to metaphysical transcendence. But Heidegger's conception of the history of metaphysics and his advocacy for a new path of thinking, one that is not metaphysical, indicate a clear aversion to it. As for a conception of the divine that is not metaphysical, one may refer to what the *Contributions to Philosophy* say about "the last god," or what Hölderlin's *Hymns 'Germania' and 'The Rhine'* says about the holy. But these motifs are not about the divine in the sense of a highest entity—Heidegger's diagnosis of onto-theology as the essence of metaphysics explicitly condemns this understanding of the divine. Rather, the holy and the last god are part of the preparation for a new way of thinking, one that stands outside of metaphysics.

Heidegger might have spent the entire course on these rigorous methodological requirements if students had not complained to the dean that there was very little religion in the course. Heidegger was then forced to abruptly interrupt his crucial discussion on formal indication and to begin a concrete, phenomenological explication of Paul's letters. See (van Buren and Kisiel 1994, pp. 175–92; McGrath 2014, pp. 185–207).

Ibid., p. 6. On this point, Heidegger states that "philosophy arises from factual life experience. And within factual life experience philosophy returns back into factual life experience." In this sense, philosophy is necessarily a hermeneutic endeavor. See (Esposito 2010, pp. 137–48).

- 33 See, for instance, (Heidegger 2010, p. 96) on the formation of philosophical concepts; p. 103 on Paul's concern and urgency in his letters to the Thessalonians; p. 125 on how to read the *Confessions* phenomenologically; and p. 155 on the correct understanding of Augustine's analyses of *tentatio*.
- 34 This text is commonly referred to as the "Natorp-bericht."
- 35 Some have claimed that Heidegger simply no longer believed in God, and that for this reason his phenomenology could not but be atheistic. Others have claimed that Heidegger secularizes Lutheran themes. One need only think of Luther's rejection of a natural desire for God, which in Heidegger would become life's tendency to fall into itself, or Luther's doctrine of the total depravity of human nature, which in Heidegger would become Dasein's basic state of inauthenticity and its tendency to fallenness. And still others have argued that Heidegger does not simply secularize Luther, but rather follows and complements him, and that the hermeneutic phenomenology of factual life should be understood as a "phenomenology of the Godforsaken." See (McGrath 2014, chps. 1–2, 6).
- 36 See note 11 above.
- 37 A famous footnote in *Being and Time* (p. 199, note vii) states that "the way in which 'care' is viewed in the foregoing existential analytic of Dasein, is one which has grown upon the author in connection with his attempts to Interpret the Augustinian (i.e., Helleno-Christian) anthropology with regard to the foundational principles reached in the ontology of Aristotle." In the body of the text, however, Heidegger relates a brief fable about the personification of care and her encounters with various Greek deities, reported by K. Burdach and said to have been reworked by Goethe. It should not be lost on the reader that, despite his indebtedness to Christian sources, Heidegger's confrontation with Augustine and its translation into the terms of Aristotelian ontology are merely mentioned in a footnote.
- 38 "Natorp-bericht," pp. 372–73. See (Kisiel 1995, chp. 2, 5; Esposito 2010, pp. 293–94; van Buren and Kisiel 1994, pp. 175–92).
- 39 (Bello 2009, p. 25), Other treatments of Husserl's overall reflections on God can be found in Ales Bello's untranslated (Bello 1985), in (Housset 2010; Hart 1986) cited below.
- 40 Of course, it is also possible that God does not exist. But this is not a possibility that Husserl considers, and it is telling that this lack of consideration is an integral part of his phenomenology.
- 41 This is already referenced in §58 of *Ideas I* (see note 105 above), though not in terms of Leibniz's *Monadology*. It becomes the subject of a much broader set of metaphysical reflections that have been collected in (Husserl (1973, 2014)).
- 42 This kind of theology has been developed in the works of James G. Hart, Angela Ales Bello, Espen Dahl, Stefano Bancalari, and Edith Stein, among others. In addition to Ales Bello's works cited above, see (Hart 1986, pp. 89–168; Dahl 2010; Bancalari 2015; Stein 2002, 2004).
- 43 (Geniusas 2012), Part III: "The World-Horizon as the Wherefrom, Wherein, and the Whereto of Experience."
- 44 (Geniusas 2012) is an outstanding and comprehensive study of Husserl's notion of horizon.
- 45 (Husserl 2001a) Part 1, §6 and Part 2, §44, among others; (Luft and Overgaard 2013, pp. 129–30). See also (Drummond 2003), (Welton 2002, esp. Part III), and (Jacobs 2022, chps. 12 and 13).
- 46 See (Husserl 2001a), "Translator's Introduction" pp. xxxii and passim., Supplementary Section 4, esp. B, "The Phenomenology of Monadic Individuality and the Phenomenology of General Possibilities and Compossibilities of Lived-Experiences: Static and Genetic Phenomenology."
- 47 Hart puts it this way: "'World,' [the ultimate horizon] is not merely the frame and motivational principle for the particular meaning-acts, but as *noema* of noemata, as base/horizon of the mind's intentions, it is itself incessantly in a process of revision, confirmation, incremental growth, and decline as a result of these achievements." Hart 1986(91). See also (Geniusas 2012, pp. 143–44).
- 48 Husserl states that "a physical thing is necessarily given [in such a way that it] is apprehended as being surrounded by a horizon of 'co-givenness' . . . of more or less vague *indeterminateness*. And the sense of this indeterminateness is . . . predelineated by the universal essence of this type of perception which we call physical-thing perception" (Husserl 1983, §44).
- 49 Gschwandtner reaches a similar conclusion in (Gschwandtner 2014) and advocates for a more hermeneutic understanding of the saturated phenomenon.
- 50 A fascinating possibility opens up here, though for Marion it is certainly unintended. Unmoored from any horizon, the saturated phenomenon could not appear as such for the subject. However, following a psychoanalytic framework, it could reappear as (neurotic or psychotic) *symptom*. This path is outside the scope of this paper, but warrants further investigation. Brian Becker's excellent work is related to this line of inquiry. See (Severson et al. 2016; Becker and Manoussakis 2018; Bath et al. 2018, pp. 252–67). Richard Kearney's work on the intersection of narrative and trauma is also worthy of mention: see his contributions to the edited volumes just mentioned.
- 51 See (Gschwandtner 2014), esp. "Introduction" and chs. 6–7. See also (Gschwandtner Forthcoming).
- 52 *Summa Theologiae*, part I, Question 12, Articles 4, 7, 13.
- 53 Psalm 22:1, New Revised Standard Version—Catholic Edition, 1st ed. (Bible 2009).
- 54 Psalm 133:1, NRSV—CE.

- ⁵⁵ See (Gschwandtner Forthcoming, chp. 5) on Devotional Experience, for a related phenomenological analysis that expounds this point.
- ⁵⁶ Such a subject has been described, with varying degrees of success, by Scheler, Barbaras, and Butler, among others. See (Scheler 2009; Barbaras 2011, 2022; Butler 1999).

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Article

The Metaphysical Magnificence of Reduction: The Pure Ego and Its Substrate According to Phenomenology and Vedanta

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Abstract: This article examines relationships between the absolute being of the universal ego (*Ātman*-self) according to the Indian religious philosophy of Vedanta (V) and the phenomenological, irreal being of the transcendental ego in Husserl's phenomenology (P). Both *Ātman* and the transcendental ego are accessed in the first-person perspective by onto-phenomenological reductions. Such reductions, as stated by Husserl, have absolute freedom of positing and, thus, can reveal or conceal states of being. In contrast with P-reduction, which renders the being of the ego-pole invisible, V-reduction penetrates into the being of the ego-pole and opens a horizon of unique, non-intentional mental states. Following the dialectics in pre- and post-reduction givenness of being, there emerges a picture of connection between the intentional phenomenological being of the transcendental ego and the non-intentional being of the pure ego of Vedanta (*Ātman*-self). The pure ego of Vedanta manifests as a substrate for the transcendental ego of phenomenology. From this, we can conclude that reductions function as the loci of dialectical syntheses of being, whereby the unity of being has a fuller, more complex and multi-sided sense than the one intended in the natural attitude. In their breaking of theoretical habits conditioned by the substance metaphysical tradition, reductions are truly indispensable in the revelation of being that grounds the theory of knowledge.

Keywords: intentionality; the transcendental ego; Husserl; Atman-self; Vedanta; drg-drishya viveka; reduction; material substrate essence; dialectics; being

1. Introduction

This article employs two sets of concepts—from dialectics and from phenomenology—to show the relationships between reductions in phenomenology and Vedanta. The concepts from dialectics serve to uncover the continuity and dynamics of being under reductions, and the concepts of phenomenology show the consciousness in which this being appears.

In both phenomenology (hereafter P) and Vedanta (hereafter V), the freedom of ontic positings encouraged reductions revealing the absolute.¹ However, in clarifying the phenomenality of being, P and V came to very different results.² At issue here is not their commensurability, for that has been established (Gupta 2009; Louchakova-Schwartz 2012, 2017, Forthcoming),³ but rather, the directions of their reductions. Husserl (1998, pp. 57–62) maintained that reductions give one access to previously invisible fields of being. Shankara, a Vedantic philosopher who believed that empirical reality has an illusory nature, de facto maintained the same. Both sought the ground of knowledge, but with very different results: the epistemic absolute in P is the transcendental ego and, in V, the universal and fully immanent ego (*Ātman-Brahman*). Does this mean that the absolute freedom of reduction has limits with a certain kind of being? That there is, so to speak, a turtle at the bottom of the world? Or many turtles? By looking at these reductions side by side, I aim to understand the role they play in the self-revelation of being.

If there is an irreducible being, which is a being given absolutely, it should serve as a substrate for everything else. Why, then, do P and V reductions render different epistemic

absolutes? One can suggest that these reductions are predetermined by a difference in metaphysics: the naïvely scientific realism of P and the monistic metaphysics of the self in V. Conceptually, these metaphysics are orthogonal: the notion of reality in P excludes the real being according to V, but the real being according to V would ground the reality of P. If reductions *construct*, not *unveil*, the new being, this revelation of being is but an artifact of a preconceived metaphysics and not a *sui generis* originary given one can trust. If so, the claim that being is appearing is false, and one cannot make a bridge off phenomenology to metaphysics. However, the juxtaposition in this paper of two independently existing reductions resolves this problem. If two independently obtained epistemic absolutes turn out *to be given* in such a way that one can serve as a substrate for the other, they are truly intuited and not constructed. If, as I show, reduction in V renders the phenomenologically available substrate-being for the epistemic absolute revealed by reduction in P while P does not presuppose the existence of any being (such as in V), this phenomenological connectivity reveals the actual status of being in the phenomenal field. Constructed artifacts of independent reductions would not be able to complement each other in such a way.

In the literature, differences in the ontology of consciousness according to V and P were reduced to mere differences in the models of consciousness. Comparison between reductions was never a part of these discussions. However, if V- and P-reductions disclose actual fields of being and if these fields of being are reciprocal in their appearance or connected in some other way (e.g., via the above notion of a substrate), we can conclude that they form a unity. If they form a unity, this provides additional support to the claim that these are true regions of being and not regions constructed by reductions on ground of pre-given metaphysics.

If reductions indeed reveal being in its originary givenness, then we have at hand a wonderful key to a unitive, phenomenologically grounded metaphysics. Since P-reductions proceed from the naïve metaphysics of objects and follow the structure of the natural *cogito*, this theoretical habit prevents P-reduction from reaching all possible being:⁴ “The transcendental ‘absolute’ which we have brought about by the reductions is, in truth, not what is ultimate; it is something which constitutes itself in a certain profound and completely peculiar sense of its own and which has its primal source in what is ultimately and truly absolute” (Husserl 1989, p. 193).⁵ The epistemic absolute of the transcendental ego, which P-reduction reaches, is grounded in temporality: “For us temporality is a sufficient mark of reality. . . . Should we wish, however, to keep all metaphysics out, we may simply define ‘reality’ in terms of temporality” (Husserl 2001b, p. 249).⁶ But if this is not a true absolute, what is? As I will show, reaching beyond temporality and objectified *hyle*, V-reduction opens access to a possible phenomenological substrate of the transcendental absolute, that is, the primal ground of being and knowledge.

I proceed in the following way. First, I follow the limits of P-reductions by examining the transcendental ego in light of the dialectics of being. Using dialectics allows one to explicate relationships in being before and after P-reductions: the natural being, the being of consciousness, and last, of the transcendental ego. Connections between the transcendental ego and natural being help one to understand Husserl’s repetitive concern about the transcendental ego not having an obvious substrate. I review Husserl’s attempts to find such a substrate and show that this problem has no solution under P-reductions because P-reduction not only reveals being but also conceals it. Then, I describe V-reduction and focus on how it accesses the being which was masked by P-reduction, and I argue this field of being can be considered as the absolute substrate. The same substrate of the ego, which was not found under P-reduction, is disclosed by V-reduction. Thus, V-reduction becomes a complement to P-reduction, giving us a fuller and more logically coherent picture of being. The ego-pole in this scheme of things acts like a switch between the fields of being uncovered by P- and V-reductions. This part of analysis also bears on the phenomenologically grounded metaphysics of the self. I conclude that, even though phenomenological reductions are means of knowledge in that they are free to disclose being, this freedom has constraints. Each reduction has a limit. Within the spectrum of

possibilities of consciousness, reductions can take different directions and, thus, should complement one another in the argument for the epistemic absolute.

2. Dialectics Implicit in P-Reduction

“The transition to pure consciousness by the method of transcendental reduction leads necessarily to the question about the ground for the now-emerging factualness of the corresponding constitutive consciousness”.—Edmund Husserl (1998, p. 134)

The dualistic metaphysics of the mind and the world comes to a halt in Husserl’s (2014b, p. 205) analysis of intertwining: “Determining how these two—what is really obtaining constituent of experience and what we are conscious of as not really obtaining in it—are related to one another introduces difficult problems”. Of the synthetic being of this intertwining, Husserl can say only that it is unreal—that is, it shows up after the reduction, which removes the naïve sense of reality and ideality. The structure mediating the intertwining, the transcendental ego, consists of the intentional relationships between two polarities: the ego-pole and the object-pole. On the side of the ego-pole, no being is showing up; the object pole takes all the being. The freedom of the reduction cannot stop belief in objects, but it stops the latter from a realistic obtaining: instead of counting the world outside of experience, one now counts it as given inside the transcendental ego—hence, “transcendence in immanence”. The ego itself is further irreducible: if we count it out, we end up in the void. However, this being of the ego is really strange: it is in the world, but not completely in the world.⁷ It is the subject of experience, it is self-luminous, but the problem is that it has no ontological homogeneity whatsoever. Yet, it shows up as the ultimate essence of all essences. Kant says that “nothing can be known of this [transcendental] self, because it is a condition, not object, of knowledge” (“Kant”, Encyclopedia Britannica 2016), but Husserl (1960, p. 18, fn. 8; 2014b, pp. 105–6) insists on the contrary: reductions cause tangible shifts in experience, and the resulting ego is experiential and even apodictically given. And with the ego becoming an antecedent to the being of the world, reduction is out of a job: there is nothing further to reduce. But is this really so? In dialectics, each limit of preceding being inaugurates the new being. Such a new being would still be subject to the freedom of reduction, just not the one by which this being was uncovered, e.g., V-reduction instead of P-reduction.

2.1. Husserl’s Attitudes toward Dialectics and Rationale for Referencing the Dialectics of Being in the Present Paper

A logician and mathematician, Husserl did not favor the speculative dialectical method (Lauer 1974). However, both Derrida and Suzanne Bachelard point to the inherence of dialectics in P (Edie 1984, p. 4; Moran and Cohen 2012, p. 78). The main thesis of suspending belief in being in order to access a possibility for this belief (cf. Heinämaa et al. 2014, p. 2) is, in itself, normative dialectics, but it is not a formal dialectical method (cf. Findlay 1974, p. 56). Using the method analytically would destabilize the logic of justifications, but it happens nevertheless: periodically, phenomeno-logic exhausts its linear logical options and runs into sublations. It is usual that a famous “zigzag” (Husserl 2001b, p. 175), which follows being in its own dialectical turns, must send the inquiry into a new area. This is not the evolution of idea, but being, *per se*, acting in opposites and syntheses. Here are some examples. When ontic positing is suspended, one cannot discuss consciousness with regard to being, and, against the real being of the world, the being of consciousness is undetermined anyway. But the being of consciousness not only survives reduction but increases in apodicticity. Thus, the concept of immanence steps in from this dialectical impasse of being. Further, since grasping an extra-mental object by an intra-mental process is impossible, a concept of transcendence is born out of the actual situation of the intertwining. Both immanence and transcendence are non sequitur concepts to neutrality modification, but they are dictated by the dialectics of being. In fact, Husserl never denied dialectics to being.⁸ In fairness to the given, it would not be possible.

Thus, even after ontic positings are suspended, a reference to being remains pervasive to P. Being (*Sein*) is characterized with regard to its reality (*Realität*) and actuality (*Wirklichkeit*) (cf. De Santis 2021, p. 483). *Realität* refers to being meant as “factually existing” (Husserl 1998, p. 74) or “actual”. The concept of actuality is then relocated from the “being this there” to the “perceived and experienced [*erfahrbar*]” (Husserl 2014b, p. 50), thus turning the empty logical possibility of a fact into a possibility rich in content and “found in immediate intuition” (Husserl 1998, p. 51).⁹ The categories, such as essence, universality, individuality, substrate, state of affairs, etc.¹⁰, continue to operate in post-reduction phenomenological being, not in real being as in Aristotle.¹¹

In both transcendental eidetics and dialectics, the concept of absolute subjectivity generated strong correlationism.¹² Both Husserl and Hegel see absolute subjectivity not as a synthesis of preexisting *a priori* but as a special kind of being. Hegel did not complete integrating the concept of transcendental ego into dialectics (Desmond 1995, p. 17). Husserl’s transcendental eidetics fit with this unfinished project if the former is extended into the analysis of being. The transcendental ego is not just the unreal being but has its own specific characteristics. The ego’s irreducible properties (luminosity, transparency, subjectivity, etc.) are the properties of being; they warrant this being’s transcendental structure. This ego is also alive—a metaphysical aspect which remains undetermined in phenomenology, and which, according to Henry and Tymieniecka, is responsible for the transcendental unity of apprehension. Thus, the transcendental ego is different from everything else there is in being. In virtue of what would the being of the ego possess such unique characteristics? Henry, for example, argues in favor of separate, dedicated analysis of the being aspect of *cogito*, because

“transcendence in its true meaning is in no way safeguarded, if it is reduced to a characteristic of consciousness. It serves no purpose to say: that transcendence is an essential, fundamental characteristic of consciousness; that the consciousness is ‘entirely’ this ‘movement toward’, this sketching of the world; that such a project is not a predicate which would be added synthetically to the prior existence of a subjectivity; finally, that it is transcendence which makes the very substance, the subjectivity of the subject. As long as the Being of the subject has not been clarified, we in no way escape the paradox which founds the condition on the thing conditioned. For, from what can the subject draw its substantiality, even if this is nothing more than the pure act of transcending, if it is not from Being itself?” (Henry 1973, p. 21).

Further, Henry cautions against the relocation of the research of being into the context of pure *cogito*:

“Transposing the central themes from the ontology of Being to the interior of the philosophy of the cogito cannot but lead to the deformation. This deformation, so serious that it merits our calling it a falsification and a perversion, has a two-fold consequence: on the one hand, that Nothingness with which one invests the condition of the ‘subject’ actually sheds its nature as essence in order to become a single subjective operation. The transcendental meaning viz. of being a simple subjective operation which one tries to retain seems at times to be no more than a last attempt to escape from psychologism; but how would transcendence be able to avoid indefinitely being confused with a psychological act, since it actually appears as the property of a determined Being?”¹³

In neutralized phenomenology,¹⁴ the analysis of being as being is, de facto, absent. The reference to being appears in Husserl’s material ontology of essences (Husserl 1998, esp. chp. 1). and, of course, in his notes on transcendental idealism (See, e.g., Husserl 2003, esp. circa 70 ff). Henry, however, argues that in regard for the realistic ontology¹⁵ (which is one of governing directions of contemporary phenomenological research), the analysis of being (as being) should appear. If so, one cannot avoid dialectics since it is dialectics that describes the behavior of being, as opposed to beings. Thereby, in this paper,

I refer to dialectics in order to trace the transformations of being in phenomenology into the being uncovered by Vedanta. The observed dialectics also prepares ground for the strictly phenomenological account in Section 3, in which I discuss the substrate of the transcendental ego.¹⁶ Consequently, between Sections 2.2 and 3, there is a transition from descriptive dialectics to phenomenological criticism.

2.2. Modifications of Being under P-Reduction

Es ist ja ganz evident: Für mich ist etwas gegeben und zu geben, zu geben nur durch irgendwelche Modi des Bewusstseins (in intentionalen Erlebnissen). Gegeben und zu geben ist aber als seiend für mich nicht nur es selbst und das ihm immanente Eigene, sondern auch ihm Fremdes, ihm Äußeres.

/It is quite evident: for me, something is given, and to be given is to be given only through some mode of consciousness (in intentional experiences). Given, and to be given as being, for me is not only itself and what is immanently its own, but also what is foreign to it, what is external to it.—Edmund Husserl (2002, p. 22)

P-reduction suspends faith in being: “I inhibit precisely the being-accepted-beforehand of ‘this’ world or its antecedent being-for-me which, as a being posted both actually and habitually, carries me continuously in my entire natural living and is thus the foundation of all my practical and theoretical living” (Husserl 1998, p. 61, ft. 30). The “being-accepted-beforehand” of this world and being of the “I” are natural polarities. By immanence of its *cogito*, the being of the “I” survives inhibition: “as our point of departure, we take consciousness in a sense that is concise and initially affords itself, a sense that we designate most simply by means of the Cartesian *cogito*, the ‘I think’” (Husserl 2014b, p. 59).¹⁷ Uncovered by P-reduction, phenomenological being subsumes two preceding opposites of subjective/mental and objectivated/physical being, while at the same time completely transforms their sense.¹⁸ The immanence of the mental being and transcendence in the being of the world become the “transcendence in immanence” of the phenomenological being. This synthesis is not Kantian and is not just an idea: it is the actual transformation in givenness of being as being.

Since the two polarities of being are given in asymmetrical opposition to one another, their modes of givenness can only be dialectically transformed into a single being when they retain the polarity of original modes. The reduced phenomenological being spans the ego-pole and the world, but the relationships between the two are yet unclear. The second step of P-reduction toward the transcendental ego clarifies this peculiar form of relationship by uncovering the synthetic sense of asymmetry within the unified phenomenological being: “In the accomplishment of each act there lies a ray of directedness I cannot describe otherwise than by saying it takes its point of departure in the “Ego”, which evidently thereby remains undivided and numerically identical while it lives in these manifold acts, spontaneously takes an active part in them, and by means of ever new rays goes through these acts toward what is objective in their sense” (Husserl 1998, pp. 75–77).

Thus, on one side, P-reduction functions as a reduction and, on the other, as a locus of dialectical synthesis. The role of reduction is to reveal the new being which subsumes preceding opposites in their being and sense,¹⁹ as in: “Consciousness is a ‘project of the world,’ which transcends itself toward what it is not and will never be, and yet consciousness is, at one and the same time, the “pre-objective” possession of itself in immanence” (Edie 1984, pp. 76–77). The new transcendent-in-immanence phenomenological being not only exists, but even grounds new transcendental judgments: “We set aside all hitherto prevailing habits of thinking, . . . we recognize and tear down the intellectual barrier with which they confine the horizon of our thinking and now, with full freedom of thought, seize upon the genuine philosophical problems to be set completely anew made accessible to us only by the horizon open on all sides” (Husserl 1998, p. xix).

The “complete freedom” (Husserl 1998, p. 61) of the neutralizing P-reduction finds its limit in the being of the transcendental ego: “Has the phenomenological ego (the one

that is doing the investigating from the outset) also become a transcendental nothing by means of the phenomenological reduction?" asks Husserl (1998, p. 105). The answer is "no": this ego, even though transcendental and, thus, including residual connotations of real being, basks in irreducible immanence. This ego *knows* by transcendence but *exists* by immanence. The subject cannot get away from oneself. Transcendence in the being of the ego is called for by objects, but what warrants the possibility for the inherently immanent ego to transcend itself? What makes it possible for immanence to never go away? What gives subjectivity its peculiar property of being a subject of experience? This brings up a question of the substrate of the ego—the question Husserl keeps returning to throughout his work.

3. The Problem of Substrate

3.1. Appearance of the Transcendental Ego

Characterizing the being of the transcendental ego as both immanent and sense (i.e., transcendent), Husserl (2014b, pp. 64–65) says, "We cannot be turned toward a thing otherwise than in the manner of apprehending" This ego—the living essence of cognition—operates both in pure thought and in personalistic embodiment: one apprehends ideas or grasps things of the world via the same polarized intentional structure. "Insofar as every *cogito* calls for *cogitatum* and insofar as this latter is related to the pure ego in the accomplishment of an act, we find remarkable polarity in every act: on the one side, the ego-pole; on the other, the object as counter-pole" (Husserl 1989, p. 11). There is, however, a distinction between how this polarity is given in pure thought and how it appears in embodiment. In pure thought, "seeing" has no empirically localizable point of origin, no obvious ego-pole—thus, Descartes could doubt away everything other than acts of thinking, and hence, in the first edition of *Logical Investigations*, Husserl declares the ego-pole empty or non-existent. In contrast, in the body, the ego-pole harbors the felt sense of the embodied "I", which is likely why Husserl later finds it²⁰ (Jacobs 2022, p. 88). Zahavi (2022) suggested that the shift in Husserl's understanding is induced conceptually. However, it may be observed that the same transition from not finding to finding the ego-pole happens over time in practitioners of self-awareness and, thus, can entail a transition which reconstitutes the embodied sense of the self.

The whole of the transcendental ego becomes visible under reduction as a polarized, self-luminous, transparent continuity of apprehension—a nearly tangible expanse of presence making perfect sense logically. Being sense, having polarity, being perspectival, and being the subject give the transcendental ego its lived actuality. Everything appears in no other way but by this from-the-subject-to-the-object, qualitatively asymmetrical continuity. If for the real being one can separate essence from existence, then for the being of consciousness there is a numerical identity of essence and existence: the self-same being, in the same place, of the same form, present in all cognitions. Even when expressed as a purely formal ideality in contrast with, e.g., the eidetic laws of chemistry, the transcendental ego still remains identical to itself. Never a primary objectivity, this being is possible only as a subject. On occasion, Husserl even considers using the word *quale* to characterize this immanental first-person actuality (Husserl 2003, p. 12, ft. 1).

Transcendental reflection (Beyer 2021) is possible because the original sense of the real being is not just bluntly neutralized by P-reduction but is dialectically incorporated into the transcendental ego. This sense never goes away. Not just the ideality of this ego, but all real mental processes, whether concrete or abstract, show "peculiarity in question" (Husserl 1998, p. 202): "If an intentional experience is currently actual, i.e., implemented in the manner of the *cogito*, the subject of that experience 'is directed' at the intentional object" (Husserl 2014b, p. 64). The real mental processes are, thus, discovered to be intentional; the transcendental ego lives through them. And as soon as the realistic reference in the being of the ego comes into play, metaphysical problems start surfacing like rocks from under melting snow. If intentional relationships operate in the real being, they must be based on something, i.e., have a substrate.

3.2. The Search for a Substrate

The concept of substrate goes back to Aristotle's argument with Parmenides, whereby real beings are defined as forms filled with material stuff and exhibiting properties that make individual substances recognizable. In addition to having the connotations of substance, the concept of substrate implies the presence of foundation in virtue of which supervening properties and relationships came to be.²¹ "Ancient materialism creates a new one effective motive: material being is a substrate that is presupposed to be present everywhere in the world because of the latter's material properties (especially mechanically and mathematically understood) and material causality", says Husserl (2014b, p. 210). While indifferent toward the material foundations of consciousness (Husserl 1998, pp. 202, 204), Husserl vastly acknowledged the role of material substrate essence in the constitution of networks of validity. This line of thinking—that, if there are properties, there should be substrates of properties—fits remarkably well with Husserl's tendency to seek grounding (logical, syntactical, constitutive, ontological, aprioristic, etc.)²² through regressive analysis.

Under P-reduction, grounding is always in essences (Mulligan 2020). The constitution of reality is grounded in two essences: "We have contrasted the formless ultimate essence and the This-there. Now we must ascertain the essential connection obtaining between them, which consists of each This-here having its materially-filled essential composition characterized by a substrate-essence that is formed in the sense stated" (Husserl 1998, p. 28). "This-there" constitutively couples with "the formless ultimate essence" and becomes a substrate for recognizable properties or states (Husserl 1989, pp. 46–47, 80). In a similar manner, psychological habitualities build upon the ego: "The subject is now a substrate of properties (personal properties in a determinate, very broad sense), analogous to the way a material thing is a substrate of thingly-real properties" (Husserl 1989, p. 129).

The transcendental ego, which serves as a substrate for psychological properties, is also the epistemic absolute. To be lived, to mediate sense, and to be immanent, the ego must have a substrate. But, if everything is known by this ego, it must have its own substrate within itself: for the eidetic essence of this ego to make sense, we cannot constitute it outside of the epistemic absolute itself. It cannot be constituted on some kind of external substrate, since that substrate would need to have capacities of knowledge of the epistemic absolute, i.e., would have to have the same characteristics as the ego and, thus, regress *ad infinitum*.

To meet the condition of serving as its own substrate, some parts of the ontologically diverse structure of the transcendental ego can, perhaps, be grounded on other parts. The ego is polarized into the ego-pole and the object pole-spanned by intentional relationships. The object-related part of the ego indeed has its own substrate in the "hyletic substrate bound to the body" (Husserl 1989, p. 160). These substrates count "for the life of desire and will" (ibid.) and "theoretical, affective, and practical acts" (ibid., p. 240). But, in apprehension, the objects of intentionality act rather as referential magnets, not as grounds from which an intention can spring forth. As a ground for apprehending intention, the object is logically insufficient: a pencil I am using cannot turn around and look at me. Since my focus may be commanded by the object but still, "springs forth from the ego that thus can never be missing" (Husserl 2014b, p. 64), intentionality should proceed from the ego-pole—from the apprehending "I".²³ Indeed, Husserl assigns *substrate-ness* to the ego-pole:

"Das Ich ist ein Pol, aber nicht ein leerer Punkt. Es ist nicht ein leeres und totes Substrat für Eigenschaften, sondern ein Ich-Zentrum von Aktionen, das selbst seine ichlichen Tiefen hat, und das heißt, tiefer ergriffen und tiefer leistend, immer mehr aussich hergebendes, mit immer größerem ichlichen sich entfaltendes, in der Entfaltung sich an sein Objekt hingebendes Ich-Zentrum ist.

/The I is a pole, but not an empty point. It is not an empty and dead substrate for properties, but an ego center of actions, which itself has its ego depths, and that means, more deeply grasped and more deeply accomplished, more and

more yielding with ever greater ego unfolding, in the unfolding is the ego center surrendering to its object". (Husserl 2014a, p. 358)

The "I" in question is the intentional "I", i.e., the "I think" of *cogito* which, according to Husserl's analysis in *Cartesian Meditations* (Husserl 1960), is identical with the transcendental ego. However, while being the transcendental absolute, this "I" turns to have constituting strata: "the stream of phenomenological being has a stuff-stratum and a noetic stratum," says Husserl (1998, p. 207). In *Späte Texte über Zeitkonstitution* (1929–1934), Husserl (2006, p. 53) searches for "the ultimate hyletic ground". The latter has "nothing pertaining to intentionality" (Husserl 1998, p. 203)²⁴ and becomes visible only via the intentional constitution of time²⁵: "Ich sagte immer: Dieses pure „Ich“ ist abstrakt, konkret ist es nur durch den Gehalt der stromenden Gegenwart./I always said, the pure "I" is abstract. It is only concrete through the content of the flowing present" (Husserl 2006, p. 53). Insofar as "the flowing present" is itself constituted out of passive (hyletic) primal impression by the intentional moments, there emerges a logical loop in which the ego has to rely, as it does, on its substrate—on its own constitutive capabilities.²⁶ Another problem is this: in virtue of what can ego accomplish "aboutness" in its most primitive form as sentience? What in the ego is alive and, thereby, can sense?

Husserl kept returning to this problem. For example, in Text No. 7, "The formal general proof of transcendental idealism and the unthinkability of real being without bodily subjectivity. . . .", which was composed in 1914 or 1915, Husserl (2003, p. 139) says the following:

"Nichtexistenz des Erkannten, was ein Widerspruch ist: Es wäre A und zugleich Nicht-A. Die rechtmäßige Erkenntnis schließt ja die Existenz des Erkannten notwendig in sich (natürlich nicht realer Einschluss). Nun ist aber klar, dass die Möglichkeit der Erkenntnis als leere logische Möglichkeit besteht, ob A existiert oder nicht existiert, dass sie m. a. W. Korrelat der bloßen logischen Möglichkeit des Seins, der bloß widerstreitlosen (einstimmigen) Vorstellbarkeit ist. Bloß "logische" Möglichkeit von A ist bloß widerstreitlose Vorstellbarkeit und impliziert logische Ansetzbarkeit. Und demgemäß ist dann auch eine to Erkenntnis des A vorstellbar und in gleichem Sinn ansetzbar. Oder kurz: Die widerstreitlose Vorstellbarkeit von A ist gleichwertig mit der widerstreitlosen Vorstellbarkeit einer Ausweisung der Existenz von A. Das gilt für jedes "logisch mögliche" A, mag es wirklich existieren oder nicht existieren. Aber die Unwirklichkeit eines möglichen A schließt andererseits die Möglichkeit der Erkenntnis aus—währendes andererseits nach dem Gesagten die Möglichkeit im Sinn der logischen Möglichkeit der Erkenntnis (ihrer Vorstellbarkeit) nicht ausschließt. Somit ist die hier ausgeschlossene Möglichkeit, die zur Existenz des A gehört, sicher nicht (die) bloß logische Vorstellbarkeit. Sie ist "reale" Möglichkeit, wie umgekehrt die von der Existenz des A geforderte Erkenntnismöglichkeit eine "reale" ist. Was sagt diese Realität, was fordert sie? Natürlich ein Erkenntnissubjekt. Aber ein bloß logisch mögliches Subjekt ist kein Substrat realer Möglichkeiten.

/Non-existence of what is known is a contradiction: it would be A and not-A at the same time. Lawful knowledge necessarily includes the existence of what is known (of course, not real inclusion). But now, as it is clear that the possibility of cognition exists as an empty logical possibility: whether A exists or not is a correlate of the mere logical possibility of being, of the merely uncontested (unanimously) imaginability. The mere "logical" possibility of A is merely unchallenged imaginability and implies logical presumption. Accordingly, the same knowledge of the A is imaginable and applied, in the same sense. Or, briefly: the uncontested imaginability of A is equivalent to the uncontested imaginability of demonstrating the existence of A. This applies to every "logically possible" A, whether it really exists or doesn't not exist. Yet, on the other hand, the unreality of a possible A excludes the possibility of knowledge—while according to what has

been said, it does not exclude the possibility in the sense of the logical possibility of knowledge (its imaginability). The possibility excluded here belongs to the merely logical imaginability. It is a “real” possibility, just as, conversely, the possibility of cognition demanded by the existence of A is real. What does this reality say, what does it demand? A subject of knowledge, of course. *But a merely logically possible subject is not a substrate of real possibilities*”. (Italics mine, OLS)

In his critique of P-reduction, Henry (2008) clearly demonstrated the masking influence of intentionality on any possible substrate of intentionality. If P-reduction reveals intentionality, it is certain that the same reduction will be masking any possible substrate. If knowledge is intentionality, no substrate can never be known.²⁷ This explains why Husserl never could see the ego-pole other than as being an abstract entity. Striving to find “an absolute beginning called upon to serve as a foundation, a *principium* in the genuine sense of the world” (Husserl 1989, p. 44), he posits the absolute *a priori* of “pure seeing” (Husserl 1991, p. 364). He then comes to the broader conclusion that Spirit (*Geist*, in a sense of intentional achievements of human reason), by postulating all mental formations, is itself a generator of substrate in the sense of imposing an intentional *morphe* on an amorphous *hyle*: “all substances must be of the nature of our subjectivity, must be spirits” (Husserl 2012, p. 446). However, in reaching this conclusion, Husserl inadvertently duplicates the transcendental psychologies of Leibniz and Kant: a view according to which all *a priori* material ontologies, including the structure of sciences, are carved out at their joints by our mental constitution. Thus, phenomeno-logic comes a full circle, confirming Kantian limitations of knowledge, which P-reduction was supposed to change in the first place. The being of the transcendental ego is given apodictically: “[T]his ego—that I, understood as the ultimately constitutive subjectivity, *exists for myself with apodictic necessity*” (Husserl 1978, p. 251), yet is lacking conditions of possibility. How is this situation possible? If P-reduction toward the transcendental ego is not sufficient to fully disclose the ego’s being, then the synthesis of opposites which give birth to the ego is incomplete, and the ego’s immanence remains split off its transcendence. V, furthering the freedom of reduction, offers a solution to this logical impasse.

4. Reduction in Vedanta

Als philosophische sind sie auf das absolute Sein gerichtet, d.i. auf eine Welterkenntnis,

/As philosophical ones, they are aimed at absolute being. . . —Edmund Husserl (2002, p. 13)

Vedantic seers did not rest satisfied with the objective direction of the mind in *cogito* (Gambhīrānanda 1997, p. xxxvii), but looked for knowledge where no one had ever looked before: in the ego-pole. They found this location to be a gateway into the being of the universal epistemic absolute: *Ātman-Brahman*. In contrast with Husserl’s slight interest in the individual self (cf. Zahavi 2022), Shankara, the leading authority in V, found the self to be individual and universal at the same time and further irreducible in either logical or intuitional investigations of consciousness. Husserl (2002, p. 21) says, “Jeder von uns sagt und kann sagen: ‘Ich bin’. Er spricht damit die absoluteste aller erdenklichen Evidenzen aus./Everyone says of oneself and can say: “I am”. He is expressing the most absolute of all imaginable evidences,” but what is meant by “I am” according to P and V differs vastly.

After acknowledging the absolute apodicticity of “I am,” in what would appear to a Vedantin as a contradiction, Husserl (2002, p. 21) identifies “I am” with the intentional transcendental ego:

“Ich bin und bin, indem ich lebe. Mein Leben ist ein unaufhörlicher Strom subjektiven Erlebens und darin beschlossen ein Strom eines (un)aufhörlichen ‘Bewusstseins’, das in sich selbst Bewusstsein von etwas ist, Bewusstsein, in dem ich irgendetwas bewusst habe, und das in verschiedenen Formen: Ich lebe in Form des ‘ich nehme wahr’, und wahrnehmend habe ich bewusst einen

Wahrnehmungsgegenstand, ich lebe in der Form des Micherinnerns, des Erwartens, des Phantasierens, des Denkens, des Kolligierens, des Beziehens, des universellen und partikulären Prädizierens usw., worin bewusst wird ein Etwas, eine Gegenständlichkeit im Modus des Vergangenen als Erinnerten, oder Künftigen und Erwarteten, oder Phantasierten, oder eines Subjekts von Prädikaten, oder eines Besonderen einer Allgemeinheit, einer Menge, eines Gesetzes usw.”.

/"I am and am by living. My life is an incessant stream of subjective experience and it includes a stream of (in)cessant "consciousness" which is in itself consciousness of something, consciousness in which I am conscious of something, and this in different forms: I live in the form of "I perceive", and perceiving I consciously have an object of perception, I live in the form of me-remembering, of expectation, of phantasy, of thinking, of colligating, of relating, of universal and particular predicating, etc., in which something becomes conscious, an objectivity in the mode of the past as remembered, or future and expected, or fantasized, or a subject of predicates, or a particular of a community, a crowd, a law, etc.".

In contrast, V focuses not on the fleeting contents of experience, but on the constancy of self-sense: "Always I am, always I shine [I am awareful/I am self-luminous], never am I an object [of dislike to myself]. Therefore, it is established that I am that *Brahman* [the limitless one whose being fills up the whole of the universe] which is of the nature of existence [truth], awareness [consciousness], and fullness [blissfully filled with its own limitless being]".²⁸ In contrast with P's agenda of sharpening logical distinctions and overcoming dualistic ontologies, V, throughout its many centuries of history, has been quite accommodating of dialectics. V finds no problem with the idea of intuiting the self neither directly (via the senses) nor indirectly (eidetically), but through self's own knowledge of itself by itself (*aparokṣa*) (Śaṅkarācārya 1966). Such a view suggests that there can be knowledge which stands in relationships of the incorporating, in a dialectical sense, of all other kinds of knowledges. The ego-pole stands exactly as the phenomenological locus in which such syntheses become possible, in which knowing and being are indistinguishable and in which appearing and being are recognized as the same principle. V qualifies such ego as self-luminous; in contrast with the Western philosophical meaning of the term, luminosity of the ego does not entail self-objectification. The light of the self is akin to the light of the sun in the sense of the latter not needing a candle to be seen, and thus, it entails no objectification. In its being, the Vedantic ego is similar to the ultimate substance of dialectics (Jordan 1976, p. 13) and, in its essence, to the ultimate substrate essence in Husserl,²⁹ except for its not being posited as something material or immaterial, ideal, or eidetic.

4.1. Vedantic Epoché

To access this being, V directs epoché away from all objects. This happens via a mental operation known as *drṣṭvā-viveka*, or 'discrimination between the seer and the seen' (Śaṅkarācārya 1964),³⁰ which also concerns constancy vs. change, limitlessness vs. spatio-temporal character, and indivisibility vs. divisibility. The ego-pole harbors the being of "I am" in its limitlessness, constancy, and indivisibility—apodictic, and exactly that part of experience that can be never reduced out. This *epoché* also suspends the mental mode called *ahaṅkāra*, the "I"-maker, which is responsible for objectivating predications of the "I am". *Ahaṅkāra* makes the changeless ego appear as this or that by superimposition on its own changing cognitions.³¹ The two appear as one, just as in the case of mistaking a rope for a snake, whereby the former is really there, but the latter, the illusory one, masks the former. *Ahaṅkāra* has to detach itself from the mind, the body, and the senses and attach itself to the ego-pole.

Through differentiation, one discovers one's constancy, but this is still the constancy of the intending, transcendental, phenomenological "I am". The differentiation has to continue forcefully so that one finds not the intending ego, but "who the seer is"³²—that

is, the source of intention. Beginning with differentiation “I am not the body, nor the sense-organs, nor *prāṇa*, nor the mind, nor the intellect; for these are all embraced by the ‘my’-thought in the playground of the ‘this’-thought”³³, one internally turns toward the phenomenal origin of cognitions, i.e., where one never looked before. *Epoché* toward the ego-pole is not a blunt negation of cognitions, but a step toward suspending the intentional aspect of consciousness. It aims at an intuitive recognition of the substrate of all cognitions, *antaryāmin* ‘indweller’, ‘inner controller’³⁴ by unmasking it in the ego-pole, which is free of intentionality. To that end, one first locates the ego-pole perspectively, in “the point of zero orientation” (cf. Husserl 1989, p. 61) and then objectifies and discards spatiality altogether. However, this is not yet full V-reduction, but *epoché*. In itself, it is insufficient for reaching the pure ego of V.

4.2. Neutralization of Temporality

In order to neutralize intentionality, V-reduction suspends the temporalizing consciousness. Then, the networks of validity, which are founded on this consciousness, can be reconstituted, and their teleology is reversed from the world to the ego-pole. For this, Vedanta uses a logic which derives judgements of the real and unreal purely out of the character of presentations. In this aspect, V is even more radically phenomenological than P itself. To demonstrate how this works, we need a brief detour into Husserl’s analyses of the consciousness of internal time. Husserl says (1991, p. 15),

“According to Brentano, the modifying temporal predicates are irreal; only the determination of the now is real. What is remarkable here is that the irreal temporal determinations can belong in a continuous series along with the only actually real determination, to which the irreal determinations attach themselves in infinitesimal differences. The real now then becomes irreal again and again. If one asks how the real is able to turn into the irreal through the supervention of modifying temporal determinations, no answer other than the following can be given: temporal determinations of every sort are attached in a certain way and as a necessary consequence to every coming into being and passing away that occurs in the present. For it is altogether evident and obvious that everything that is, in consequence of the fact that it is, will have been; and that, from the perspective of the future, everything that is”.

The now is deemed real because it belongs to the body whose being is of the world. According to Husserl, the now is filled with *Urimpression*, which is “the core of the living present” (Moran and Cohen 2012, p. 262). *Urimpression* has an inherent lack of seeing or being seen. It becomes “being seen” only in time—and, hence, is referred to as “now”—by added intentional moments of protention and retention. These, however, belong to the transcendental ego. Even though “the pure Ego can be posited as an object by the pure Ego which is identically one with it” (Husserl 1989, p. 107), all it can see in itself is the intentionality which is of its own bestowal:

“Es ist ja ganz evident: Für mich ist etwas gegeben und zu geben, zu geben nur durch irgendwelche Modi des Bewusstseins (in intentionalen Erlebnissen).

/It is quite evident: for me something is given and to be given, to be given only through some mode of consciousness (in intentional experiences)”. (Husserl 2002, p. 22)

This ego cannot see its own substrate, and yet, as the actuality bound to the real, it needs a substrate. Along with Henry (2008), one ends up thinking that we cannot count on the transcendental ego to be the full epistemic absolute. While acting in correlation with the real world, the substrate-less ego does not own sufficient means to become sense: in the real world, a structure needs to have a substrate.

In reference to the reality of the world, there is at least one situation in which a structure counts as preceding its material substrate: the spacelines of Minkowski timespace, which may precede the quantum field, particles, and, by inference, the materiality of the

macro-world. But, while the substrate argument does depend on causal or teleological views (Husserl 2012, p. 436), in the background of P, these views are limited to realism. By contrast, V finds its way to the absolute substrate without a background physicalist or idealist reference by following the leads of pure phenomenality—a move forbidden to Husserl because of the world-related teleology of his epistemic absolute.³⁵ Distinct from these residual metaphysical ties that bind P, V-reduction is free to go in a direction away from the world. However, this fact alone cannot inhibit intentionality: the transcendental ego is only reversed and directed toward the ego-pole—an attitude for which Vedanta needs the transcendental ego in order to predicate *Ātman* as *Brahman*.³⁶ Thus, to purge the ego of intentionality, V deplatforms the foundational time-consciousness.

The empty ego-pole of pure thought and the empirical ego-pole of temporalized *Urimpression* in the body are co-extensive, e.g., empirically tracing a thought, e.g., the “I”-thought to the point from which it phenomenally arises (cf. Louchakova-Schwartz 2017), whereby one ends up at the zero point of orientation in the body: cf. “obviously connected with this is the distinction the body acquires as the bearer of the zero point of orientation, the bearer of the here and the now, out of which the pure Ego intuits space and the whole world of the senses” (Husserl 1989, p. 61). Vedantic *epoché* takes the route into this “now” and, *en route*, suspends all temporalities, i.e., all constitutive unities that serve as multiple substrates in the upward constitution (cf. Husserl 1991, pp. 256, 257, 268, 273). Time, for V, is infinitely divisible (which is also Husserl’s view) and consists of a series of moments: the illustration is a pack of rose petals which a needle pierces one by one in a unit of time, whereby piercing each petal takes just a section of this time unit. These moments suspended, the shared ego-pole of pure thought and embodied self becomes further reduced into the phenomenological locus of the pure seeing.

4.3. The “Pure Seeing” under V-Reduction

In Husserl (1991, p. 364), “pure seeing” functions as an *a priori* or as a horizon of appearances. While both are true, instead of regarding “pure seeing” vis-à-vis appearances, V-reduction aims at its unique manner of being and appearance.³⁷ According to V, “pure seeing” has the appearance of the self (*Ātman*), which is the self that manifests itself when the opposites of the invisible ego-pole of logic and the personalistic ego-pole(s) of the body enter their dialectical synthesis by V-reduction.³⁸ What comes and goes cannot be real, says V. The real and unreal always appear in the same location, akin to a red-hot iron ball in which two different things, the metal and the fire, appear as one. In the “pure seeing” associated with the ego-pole, the constant and Vedantically real substrate is masked by the transcendental ego, as in “In me . . . rises this celestial city called the world” (Lakshmidhara 1990, p. 13). One is real, the other unreal, and the latter masks the former. By deeming intentionality unreal, V-reduction not only suspends ontic positings, but redirects perceptual faith toward the ego-pole’s pure seeing. This move produces a unique form of evidence.

5. Evidence of Being under V-Reduction

Unveiled by V-reduction, *Ātman* ‘the self’ comes to the forefront as *Brahman*: real, time-less, dimensionless, limitless, filling up the universe. Empirically, this is very interesting, because the constancy of the self remains exactly as the self—in its striking difference from non-egological explorations, e.g., in Buddhism—and yet, there is nothing but this self in the whole universe. The *Dakshinamūrti Stotra* (Śaṅkarācārya 1978, p. 8) says the following:

[W]hen, by *śruti* [canonical texts taught in the oral tradition], by the master’s favor, by practice of Yoga, and by the Grace of God, there arises knowledge of one’s own Self, then, as a man regards food he has eaten as one with himself, the Adept Yogin sees the universe as one with his Self, absorbed as the universe is in the Universal ego which he has become.

This “stateless state” (Siddharameshwar 2021) is “hard as a rock”, indivisible “like a crystal of salt”—in other words, totally transparent yet absolutely certain. There is no ideality or physicality to it. By contrast with P-reduction, under which the sense of certainty arises from intentional fulfillment, under V-reduction, the sense of certainty is in *aparokṣa*: pure intuition independent of intentionality, temporality, and hyletics. In this ego, the polarized opposites of immanence and transcendence are in synthesis. The subject–object polarity is, thus, transformed: paradoxically, the subject rests as the self, but there is no moment or location where it is not. The subject stops being a subject by relationships to objects but becomes a subject by its own disposition: by knowledge of itself by itself or, conversely, by the kind of knowledge which is the substrate of all knowledges. In relationship to this absolute substrate, the transcendental ego appears as a dislocative tension of this absolute immanence similar to the tension in a transparent film of plastic when stretched against a window frame. In such a tension, things acquire being, and the real being of the self appears polarized and transcendental. Like a hall of mirrors, the time-bound intentionality displaces its own source and makes it appear in spatio-temporal extension as if consisting of parts. V calls this effect *māyā* ‘illusion’.

6. Conclusions

Back to the turtle at the bottom of the world: both V and P suggest that the epistemic absolute has being of its own—being given through its own unique mode of appearing. In thinking of being, one has two foundational natural options, which are materiality and ideality. In conjuring up its epistemic absolute, P sidesteps this aporia with only tentative success: the transcendental ego is unreal, a structure, and a means of proof rather than being *per se*. In contrast, for V, the epistemic absolute is apodictically given being, neither material nor ideal and, most importantly, never an object. Can one conceive of such a being? In theory, one can—by dialectics. Can the dialectically conceived possibility of this being not just be suggested by empirical reference but logically proved? Yes, Vedānta-pramāṇa does exactly that by the logic of reflection on the lived self. But it is V-reduction that leads one to an immediate intuition of this being.

Just as it did for James, Dewey, or Bergson, in stating its legacy task of new metaphysics, P relies on the given. Reductions extend this given by bringing out being, which is ordinarily invisible. Thus, reductions are truly indispensable. In bringing out a fuller picture of being, reductions help us to break theoretical habits conditioned by the substance metaphysical tradition (cf. Seibt 2022). Reality, for V, is accessed via the ego-pole, not in the world. If this reality is altogether possible, it must be considered as part of new metaphysics. In step with P-reduction, Vedānta gives us *adhiṣṭhāna* ‘the first foundation,’ by which, once known, all other things are indeed known (cf. Anrò 2021).

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Notes

- ¹ Since German originals of Husserl may not be available to the readers of this paper, I reference English translations whenever possible. For *Ideas I*, I reference translations by Kersten (Husserl 1998) and by Dahlstrom (Husserl 2014b). If only a German text exists, I give my translation following the quotation in German.
- ² For the metaphysical objective of P, see (De Santis 2022; Husserl 2001b, p. 14; Marosan 2022). For metaphysics in Husserl, see (Moran 2001, p. ixv; Trizio 2017). For realism in Husserl, see (Zahavi 2019); for reality as a correlate of the syntheses of verification, see (Doyon 2022).
- ³ Objections to the commensurability of phenomenology with any other theory of knowledge can be made in a sense that experience, according to Husserl, emerges in the shared world: “phenomenological accounts. . . prefer to talk about meaning-constitution and establishing a sense of a shared world within which objects are encountered. Even to frame the problem as how individual minds reach outside their inner domain to grasp something that is not a part of mind is itself to misstate the problem” (Moran 2013, p. 319). However, this view in phenomenology evolved gradually: the concept of the shared world is mentioned but is not

as prevalent in both the highly formal ontology of consciousness in *Logical Investigations* (published by Husserl first in 1902) and the transcendental phenomenology of *Ideas 1* (published first in 1913). It is only in *Cartesian Meditations* (published in 1929) that the concept of intersubjectivity acquires full force. The notion of the shared world becomes fully fleshed out in later Husserl works, such as *Experience and Judgement* (first published in 1948) and the *Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology* (first published in 1954), both published after Husserl's death. In its early stages, phenomenology is quite commensurable with Vedanta, as both are rational philosophies, both ground reflection in the given, and both function under the reduction of consciousness, as such.

For more on possibilities of being in, e.g., the metaphysics of individuals vs. process metaphysics, see (Seibt 2022).

For contextualism of Husserl's concept of the absolute, see (Marosan 2022).

"Existing world, as substrate of properties, is already in time" (Husserl 2014a, p. 68).

For the positional status of the ego, see (Staiti 2016), who shows consciousness in the natural attitude as unsettled—which corresponds with my argument for the absence of ontological homogeneity in the structure of the transcendental ego.

For more on the dialectics of reality, see (Brenner and Igamberdiev 2021).

For the ambiguities of "fact," see (Fine 2001).

For Husserl's approach to metaphysical categories as the categories of logic, see, e.g., the first chapter in the first section of *Ideas 1* (Husserl 2014b, pp. 9–33).

For more on Aristotelian logic in P, see (Drummond 2007, pp. 15, 17, 38, 75, 129). For the dangerous instability of logical argument under the impact of dialectics, see (Findlay 1974).

For more on correlationism in Husserl, see (Doyon 2022; in Hegel, see Desmond 1995).

Henry (1973, pp. 22–23). There is no direct critique of Husserl in this work of Henry (*The Essence of Manifestation*); the critique comes later when Henry (2008) switches his investigations to the horizon of neutralized phenomenology.

For neutralized and non-neutralized phenomenology, see (Brainard 2002).

For links with realistic ontology, see (Thomasson 2019, 2020). For the role that Husserl's mereology can play in realistic ontology, see (Delamare 2021). For objects as truth-makers, see (Mulligan et al. 1984).

For an extended argument on the masking influence of intentionality on the Vedantic being, see (Louchakova-Schwartz 2017).

For more on directedness, see (Husserl 1989, pp. 103–7).

For the transformation of sense from the Cartesian *cogito* to the transcendental ego, see *First Meditation* in (Husserl 1960, pp. 7–26).

For the being of consciousness, see (Husserl 1998, p. 65).

Formalization of the ego concept takes place in Husserl's *Logical Investigations*, where he is "quite unable to find this ego, this primitive, necessary centre of relations" (Husserl 2001b, II/92), as well as in *Ideas 1*; the personalistic account begins with *Ideas 2* and continues in the lectures of *Nature and Geist*. For more on the development of Husserl's concept of the ego, see (Zahavi 2022). Zahavi attributes the dynamics of perception of the ego in Husserl to his scholarly pursuits, but the same happens to people who internally practice Vedantic differentiation.

For more on substrate in Aristotle, see (Cohen 1984). For more on (meta)metaphysics regarding the question "in virtue of what?", see (Raven 2020).

For a similar reasoning in phenomenology, cf. "Phenomenology . . . lays bare the 'sources' from which the basic concepts and ideal laws of pure logic 'flow', and back to which they must once more be traced" (Husserl 2001b, p. 166); the idea of "primary contents" (Husserl 1998, p. 203, fn. 36); or even the idea of *a priori*: "this infinite field of the Apriori of consciousness which, in its peculiar ownness, has never received its due, indeed, has actually never been seen, must be brought under cultivation, then, and made to yield its fullest fruits" (Husserl 1998, p. 147).

For more on substrate in real being, see (Husserl 2019, p. 45): "if I judge that the sun is at the center of our planetary system, then this natural state-of-affairs is the What stated, therefore, something real here, to which the real sun belongs as substrate, but nevertheless surely not an Idea". For syntactic substrate, see (ibid., pp. 72, 102). For contrast between the syntactic and the constituting ground of presentation, see p. 142.

Delimitations of this argument depend on whether the background metaphysics relies on a causal or on a teleological view (Husserl 2012, p. 466).

In lectures on active and passive synthesis (1920–1926), Husserl (2001a) develops the concept of passive intentionality. This intentionality proceeds not from the ego, but from sensibility. Says Steinbock (the translator), "Husserl's analyses of 'passive synthesis' challenge this schism between the sensibility and the understanding by describing intentionality as the interplay of intention and fulfillment as they both pertain to the perceptual and the cognitive spheres of experience. If truth is not alien to the sphere of sensibility (any more than intuition is to judgment), then passive syntheses are not without epistemic import, and a transcendental aesthetic cannot be foreign to the problems of truth, evidence, and their modalizations. Sensibility does make a contribution to the acquisition of knowledge, and an enterprise that wants to determine the limits, powers, and conditions of human cognition. (i.e., critical philosophy) must not only address active syntheses discernible in a transcendental logic, but it must be attentive to the unique and irreducible sphere of passive syntheses peculiar to a transcendental aesthetic" (Steinbock

2001, pp. xi–xii). According to these analyses, intentionality genetically proceeds from sensibility, i.e., from the constitution of objects.

25 “Sensuous hyle are given only intentionally, as the continuum of these momentary-substrates, extends throughout them and in this way lasts for that extent of time” (Husserl 1991, p. 257).

26 For consciousness becoming its own substrate, see (Husserl 1991): “The act of meaning can become immersed in the consciousness, can take the internal consciousness as its substrate” (pp. 131–32). Alternatively, “The concrete unity is the substrate, the principal substrate; it bears in itself the “property”-substrates” (p. 268).

27 For criticism of intentionality and a detailed argument in favor of phenomenological materiality as the substrate of appearances (Henry 2008) in Vedānta, see (Louchakova-Schwartz 2017). For a critique of regional ontologies and radicalism of the formal ontology (which is relevant to the present critique of the transcendental ego), see (Henry 1973, p. 10); for an ontological critique of the transcendental ego in Kant, which is relevant to my present critique, see (Henry 2009). For Henrian reading of Husserl, see (Taipale 2014). For limitations of non-intentional phenomenology, see (Henry 1995; Serban 2016).

28 Lakshmidhara (1990, p. 13); Husserl (1991, p. 255) also refers to such constancy but does not pursue it.

29 Cf. “If we now concentrate on the class of materially filled objectivities, we arrive at ultimate materially filled substrates as the cores of all syntactical formations. . . Substrate and form are referred to one another and are unthinkable “without each other.” Material filling of objectivities is referred to as “ultimate substrate essence” in the constitution of individual objects and syntactic objectivities (Husserl 1998, pp. 24–28). Henry (2008) later posits phenomenological materiality as the ultimate substrate essence of subjectivity and all appearances.

30 Śaṅkarācārya’s authorship in this source is contested.

31 For superimposition, see, e.g., Nikhilananda, *Vedāntasāra*, Chapter 2, especially pp. 44–47. Related concepts appear earlier in, e.g., the Taittirīya Upaniṣad (see Hume, *Thirteen Principal Upanishads*, pp. 275–93).

32 Lemkin and Goodman, *Call Off the Search*; also, see Śaṅkarācārya (1966).

33 Lakshmidhara (1990, p. 19). For the earlier related concept of *neti-neti*, of “not this, not this” (BṛU 2.3.6), see (Diwakar 2014).

34 The term *antaryāmin* appears in *The Brihadaranyaka Upanishad* (1934) and, later, in canonical texts and commentaries (see e.g., Saha 2017) Close to the Aristotelian sense of substrate as a hyletic filler of forms, the sense of *antaryāmin* is an epithet for the self with the connotation of ultimate inner substance filling all forms.

35 *Epoché* toward the self can be observed, e.g., in the *Taittirīya Upaniṣad*, dated to the sixth century BCE. For the date, see (Angot 2007, p. 7).

36 For *pramāṇa*, or ‘means of knowledge’, and specifically, Vedantic reflective phenomenological as *pramāṇa*, see (Louchakova-Schwartz Forthcoming).

37 To be distinguished from “peculiar”, which is the term used by Husserl to characterize the transcendental ego.

38 Dialectical syntheses have hierarchical, developmental significance. But development is in itself a metaphysical category; under both P- and V-reductions, it goes into suspension and remains as pure presentation only. Thus, it does not impact our analysis.

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Article

Being as Absolute *Beginning*: Metaphysical Considerations Regarding the Gifted Character of Being *Ex Nihilo*

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Abstract: The metaphysical crisis that Western thought is going through—whose main sign is nihilism—can be overcome through an understanding of the finite being that, precisely understood as *ex nihilo*, excludes nothingness from itself. This paper analyzes the notion of being *ex nihilo* and its real dynamism through the contributions provided by the metaphysics of the gift. The origin of being *ex nihilo* as *donatio essendi* is addressed first; we then move on to a reflection of finite being as given and absolute beginning. In this paper, I will aim to show that (§1) the notion of *donatio essendi* is a radical way of conceiving being as an absolute novelty that safeguards God's freedom while securing the proper novelty of created being, (§2) then illustrate how created being is an absolute gift wholly dependent on the divine being, especially if the created being is a person, and (§3) finally, explain how these theses are compatible with an existential interpretation of the *actus essendi* according to the first principle of metaphysics, i.e., being as noncontradiction.

Keywords: gifted character; absolute beginning; *donatio essendi*; metaphysics of the gift; being *ex nihilo*

1. Introduction

It has been evident for several decades that Western metaphysical thought is immersed in a cultural crisis that manifests as grave ethical, political, economic and ecological challenges. Even if determining the causes that have taken us to this situation is not an easy task, for the purposes of this paper, it may suffice to point out that the ethical/moral relativism that accompanies every cultural crisis is nothing more than a reflection of a deeper one, anthropological and metaphysical in nature.¹

Regarding the current crisis of metaphysics and the subsequent loss of sense in the question about truth and being that constitutes reality, one of its main causes can be seen, in my view, in the crisis of rationality denounced by Husserl in the 1930s. The father of phenomenology warned, then, about the peculiar dangers arising from encircling what is rational to the remnant of what positive science understands as its object and method² in such a way that everything overcoming this limit falls in the abyss of the irrational.³ Such has been the drift from what appeared then to be a menace (*The Crisis*, Husserl 1976, pp. 11–12) endangering the very pillars of modern society, ultimately resolved, for a good portion of contemporary philosophy, in the end of metaphysics and the inevitable sinking into a lack of meaning, devastating at every level.

We can thus see that metaphysical decline is a consequence—among other reasons—of a gnoseological self-absorption that signals a suffocating subjectivism that renders us incapable of the mere possibility of knowledge itself, as it truncates the aspiration for truth beyond opinion in its very beginning. This is the proper horizon of the road towards Heidegger's "Zerstörung der Metaphysik" in *Being and Time* (Heidegger 1927, sct. 6) knowledge and truth, radical hermeneutics and transhumanism.⁴ Such a process within the debates of first philosophy can only culminate in so-called metaphysical nihilism (Zubiri 1996, pp. 56–57), the final stage of the metaphysical crisis that leads to our current society,

while every human being is headed towards despair as an unequivocal sign of an existence bereft of meaning (Vargas 2020, pp. 33–82).

A metaphysics of being as an act, however, such as the one laid forth by Aristotle and Saint Thomas,⁵ can rightfully hold that the question about the kind of being that originates and sustains reality is not one that confronts extramental existence with its opposite, that is, nothingness, as a philosophy of being, real being, even if *ex nihilo*—and because it is *ex nihilo*—lacks an absolute contradiction. In this meaning—the one referred to by Leibniz first and then by Heidegger when undertaking the question “Why is there something rather than nothing?”—real or proper being is not under consideration, but rather its intelligible conception, which is not real but ideal. Only an ideal being can be opposed to nothingness as its contrary, because only mental being, as thought, can be conceived as given, i.e., in a “position” that allows for the possibility of something previous. Real being—the *actus essendi*—however, cannot be opposed precisely because it is not thought, or supposed. Therefore, when dealing with the question about the being that sustains reality, we can never posit a real opposition, only a distinction, as these acts are not in reality opposite but diverse (Peiró 2014).

Alejandro Llano and Fernando Inciarte put forth the question: “Is a Metaphysics possible, after the end of metaphysics?” (Inciarte and Llano 2007, p. 15); my aim in this paper is an attempt to begin this investigation, after the premise that metaphysics can find a possible way to overcome contemporary nihilism through an understanding of finite being that, as being *ex nihilo*, excludes nothingness from itself.⁶ To accomplish this undertaking, I focus on being *ex nihilo* and its own character through the metaphysics of the gift.⁷ First, I investigate the origin of being *ex nihilo* in terms of a donation essence, turning later to the study on finite being as giftedness and absolute beginning. Approaching these notions through the metaphysics of the gift, I contend, will allow us to overcome postmodern skepticism and relativism, the parting point of metaphysic nihilism. In my view, this overcoming is possible by a strong acknowledgment of human rationality that recognizes the true nature of being, that is, its own intelligibility and its incompatibility with any sort of univocity, equivocation, ambiguity or constitutive frailty.

2. The Value of the Thomistic *Donation Essendi* in the Question about Being

As Husserl claimed in a posthumous manuscript: “An autonomous philosophy, such as Aristotelianism was and as what remains a continuous demand, necessarily brings us to teleology, and a theological philosophy, as a non-confessional road towards God.”⁸ According to this claim, the question of being takes us necessarily to the question about its Origin, one that is pure actuality and whose original quality consists in not being able to be thought of in a way that is previous to its realization (Inciarte and Llano 2007, pp. 24, 349). It is therefore the radical metaphysical question, the question about the being of the world, effectively, the question about which activity sustains it and ultimately propels us towards the Absolute as Origin. If any being were questioned, it would answer with its finitude, insofar as things exist only partially and in a particular way; hence, they are not their being: their existence does not refer to themselves nor does it exist in itself, theirs is not a consummate and completed existence. Rather, their own lacking becomes a claim towards their Origin. That is why metaphysics cannot relinquish natural theology, as doing so would make it unable to investigate the root of its own subject: the being of the universe as an act of being *ex nihilo*.⁹

We know Aquinas holds several times that God’s creating freedom is absolute (Thomas de Aquino 2001, *De Pot.*, q.3, a. 15, sol.). In this fashion, he turns to the formal, necessary deduction or derivation of pagan Neoplatonism, which he knew and challenged, e.g., Avicenna’s metaphysics (Thomas de Aquino 2005a, *In Sent.*, II, d. 18, q. 2, a. 2, sol.). According to Aquinas, God creates whatever he wills, in whatever fashion and for whatever reason he wills, but, and this nuance is important, not according to an arbitrary will but rather a loving and wise intent: “As the creature proceeds from God in diversity of nature,

God is outside the order of the whole creation (. . .) for He does not produce the creature by necessity of His nature, but by His intellect and will.”¹⁰

According to creation, being is not produced as an idea, nor is created being the blind and necessary effect of the divine cause. That is why, in order to make way for divine freedom, intrinsic to the originating act, we must allow for the metaphysical gap that opens our view to an action beyond that which is necessarily established by the necessity and contingency of the natural order of causes and productions. Aquinas is one of the first thinkers to undertake this metaphysical fracture through a comparative analysis between creation. The key concept is the recognition that creatures are endowed with an act of being that originates by means of an action that is the origin of all they are. Truthfully, in several passages, he mentions that previous thinkers did not take up the idea of creation because they never considered the act of being. For Aquinas, considering *esse* as the act of existence is necessary to understand reality as created—an idea that is intelligible independently from Trinitarian theology and even God’s existence. However, Trinitarian theology is what allows him to reach the deeper meaning of creation, all the way up to the conclusion that an unequivocal free notion of creation requires an idea of beginning that goes beyond the concept of cause, producer or artisan: the notion of person. This, in turn, drives him to consider creative action through the sieve of the personal action *par excellence*: amorous donation.¹¹

This comparative analysis allows Aquinas to explain creation as donation, in an analogous way, with the divine processions *ad intra*: creation as *donation essendi*.¹² The clearest passage in this regard can be found in his Commentary on the Gospel of John, wherein he explicitly holds that: “But God acts in all things from within, because he acts by creating. Now to create is to give existence (*esse*) to the thing created. So, since *esse* is innermost in each thing, God, who by acting gives *esse* acts in things from within.”¹³

As the quintessential free action, creation has an unblemished rational and voluntary character that encourages an interpretation as a personal act of love. The reason is that creative freedom, while showing that nothing interlopes between the divine will and the creature (there is no third action or receptive subject) (Thomas de Aquino 2001, *De Pot.*, q. 3, a. 3, sol.), identifies the creative act with an act of generosity, namely the gifting of being. This is especially noticeable when considering the radical novelty that radical being *ex nihilo* introduces in the scheme of free creation: only a personal understanding of creation can explore the whole scope of divine freedom introduced by creation, of which human freedom is an image (González 2013, p. 49). Only through this view can the essence of creation transcend its speculative center, release all of logical–formal or dialectical necessity (Pangallo 1991, p. 86) and show its true character as a giving, amorous and effusive act.¹⁴

It is true, however, that Aquinas does not always distinguish between giving, causing and producing when talking about creation.¹⁵ The reason for this apparent ambiguity is, in my view, that the three terms, in their common use regarding the created order, seem to perfectly adjust with an action proper to the uncreated being. On the whole, however, Thomistic metaphysics establishes a hierarchical order among them, for, as Falgueras points out, even if “giving”, “causing” and “producing” are used as synonyms many times, they signify quite different actions, and out of those three, the specific nature of creating finds its best expression in the idea of an absolute or transcendental gift (Falgueras 1997, pp. 83–84).

This is the reason why the best explanation for *creatio active sumpta* is not one that points out the proper notes of physical causation or production, but rather one that acknowledges that the core of creation is gratuity and freedom. Thus, we should conceive creation as a real form of communication, one that is donative, real and pure: creation is absolute donation. In the first place, because the radical novelty of creative being is only manifest when we understand the donative character of being *ex nihilo*. Moreover, only from the notion of *donatio essendi* can safeguard divine freedom: when God creates, he donates without becoming the passive subject of an *ad extra* relation. We can thus affirm, as a direct corollary, the absolute gratuity of creation, which becomes absolute benefit. The way created being depends on its creator is only as a gift. Being created means being received

as gift, not caused or produced; being created is being given as granted. In this fashion, it is a being from another and for another (especially in the case of rational, free beings); in other words, being dependent towards another.

As *donatio essendi* par excellence, the philosophy of being conceives of reality as the communication of absolute giftedness that, unlike other explanatory frameworks, dismantles the scheme of ontological monism (which corresponds to univocal predication) and brings us to an open predication grounded on the exclusion of an idea of the “totality of the real”. A metaphysics such as this follows the real distinction between *esse* and *essential*. In ontological terms, creation means a leap into reality itself, a sort of transcendental discontinuity which opens up the space of radical innovation that is the world as the donation of being *ex nihilo*. The theoretical advantage of such a reading of the original act of existence lays in the mentioned discontinuity between originating and originated reality, safekeeping the plenitude of divine freedom as well as the novelty of being (See Haya 1997, op. cit., p. 206; also Verdú 2019, p. 127). From this stage, we can rationalize the coexistence of two real orders, both absolutely diverse and transcendently linked: the uncreated and the created order.

By focusing our attention in the absolutely free nature of being *ex nihilo*, we can also conceptualize the radical innovation of the *donatio essendi* in its own terms, necessary to account for personal created being, as every person is a surge when seen from the rest of reality. In what follows, I try to show how being *ex nihilo* relates to what F. Haya has called metaphysics of the gift (Haya 1997, p. 320), with the aim of describing created being *ex nihilo* as an absolute *acceptio esse*, as well as characterizing the donative nature of personal beings, which are even more radically defined as being *ex Deo* than by being *ex nihilo* (Haya 1997, p. 206).

3. The Donated Nature of Being *Ex Nihilo* as Absolute *Acceptio Esse* and Personal Being as Being *Ex Deo*

Even if the daily notion of gift is not perfectly applicable to creation, active and passively considered, we can employ it through the idea of *donatio essendi* from a transcendental point of view.

“The phenomenology of the pure gift -Haya writes- describes the manifestation of a reality that is not contained in its precedent conditions insofar as it has none. An absolute gift is no gift if it is contained in the giver, in such a fashion that its being consists only in its deployment or being made explicit. In turn, absolute giving, as an action, is essentially free and gratuitous, in the sense that no necessity constricts either the giver or the giving itself, and the giver is only one insofar as we consider the act of giving itself.” (Haya 1997, op. cit., p. 324)

In these lines, we find the thesis that giving involves from a free being, so that such an action pertains to what is most peculiar in the giver: its intimacy. A gift is so because it is donated, so that donation can be construed as the character of personal beings, as their radical way of existence according to their being a gifted act, which implies gratuity, that is, no less than an unprecedented giving (González 2013, p. 45).

In order for a donation to be pure, there must be a giver and a gift that is absolute. What is specific about giving, in turn, as absolute benefit, is absolute regarding the action of giving, in such a way that there is no way to hold that there is a giver or an act of giving without the gift, as an absolute donation involves no necessity. The act of giving implies freedom; on the other hand, if an absolute donation needs no receptor of the gift, then giving is an immanent action, for there is no term that sets limits upon it, nor is its goal outside of giving. This is perfectly compatible with the ratio creations, as giving (*donare esse, in Aquinas's terms*) is creating. What is given is precisely being, that is to say, everything, or rather, the gift itself, which is a giver that donates itself. It is an act that requires no alterity, because *ex nihilo* implies absolute inexistence and therefore the complete absence of an awaiting receptacle (González 2013, p. 49). In other words: if *donatio pura* is creation, it cannot have any requirements, not even someone who receives it.

That is why the perspective of a metaphysics of the gift is capable of giving meaning to the absolute reception of being, a new radical significance that can hold an answer to the inevitable problem of the passivity of being that accompanies the idea of *acceptio esse*. In order to correctly gauge the notion of being *ex nihilo* as given, the only possible way goes through thinking it as radical benefit, for, again, there cannot be a receptacle, and the idea that what is received is divine in any way is also inadmissible (because what is received is precisely what is *ex nihilo*).

The absolute relativity of being *ex nihilo* implies no passivity, even and as a gift, and even less so with regards to free beings: giving is not self-referential and an absolute donation is not a passive receptor (González 2013, p. 47). We know, however, that, for Aquinas, creation, from the viewpoint of the creature, is an absolute *acceptio esse* (Thomas de Aquino 2005a, *In Sent.* II, d. 1, q. 1, a. 2, ad 2). This cannot mean, at any rate, that the creature's essence, as really distinct from being, acts as a receptor of any kind. On the contrary, according to Aquinas, the essence is ontologically posterior and dependent on being and cocreated with it, so that it cannot contain it: what is perfect always contains what is imperfect. The idea of creation as absolute reception must then signal to a different way of reception: a reception without a previous receiver. This is what makes it "absolute"; what is created is entirely the receiver, or rather, the receiver is the gifted existence.

Only when thought of as absolute benefit can being *ex nihilo* be understood as gifted being. This is because absolute donation relates to absolute receiving, that is, radical benefit or radical gain, which does not imply any sort of necessity or demand in gifting on behalf of what is gifted. As M. J. Soto explains: "Creating, as God's proper act, is properly giving being, but not the being of the Creator but rather the being of what is created." (Soto-Bruna 2002, p. 147). Being *ex nihilo* consists in this benefit on the part of what is gifted; even more so, it identifies with it, as its being is being-given. This is what we mean by being *ex nihilo* as absolute benefit, in such a way that the *donatio essendi* adds nothing to God.¹⁶

"Giving is more than just diffusion", as Gonzalez says, for it excludes any sort of passivity. The activity of a donated being is centered in its dependency and subordination. The absolute correlate of giving, for its part, is not receiving but rather accepting; this is the activity of being *ex nihilo* in its deepest dimension as revealed by a metaphysics of the gift, for the superior active character of being given consists in its acceptance of being relative, or in other words, its being obedient regarding the being on whom it depends and it is subordinated to. How should we understand the activity of those beings without conscience of their gifted being? The question is not exempt from difficulties; as a provisional answer, I should like to point out the convenience of recognizing, as Polo does, that there are different ways of being a creature, according to the intensity of donated being (Polo 2016, p. 90).

Indeed, according to Polo, we can pursue two distinct senses of creation: one is the universe, or cosmic being, while the other is the person, the personal act of being. For creatures, being is not always the same. The high point of Polo's proposal (which, in my view is coherent with Aquinas, i.e., that beings are distinct according to their differing acts of being, which order them towards the origin) (See Kerr 2019). is that it does not accommodate the differences between creatures in a gradual scale, from less to more perfect (as some Thomists suggest (Fabro 2009, p. 137), from a lesser to a more intense perfection, as Thomism does; it is, rather, a real distinction that qualifies the differing existential character of the acts of being. It is a proposal that accepts a plurality from the Origin as corresponding to a plural meaning of creation, for the intensity of dependence is directly proportional to the distinction of created beings (Polo 1993, p. 57).

From the previous lines, we can infer that the gifted character of being *ex nihilo* as absolute *acceptio esse* implies that, if being is an amorous and absolute donation, what the *ad extra* communication of divine being adds is a phenomenology of the gift that, as what is given, as radical gain, is something purely and absolutely relative to the action of giving. Moreover, a complete understanding of being *ex nihilo* as absolute receiving clarifies how the personal act of being is, in the end, a giving of oneself, beyond being given. Thinking

about being necessitates its understanding as a giving existence. Hence, Haya writes, from the point of view of the gift, we have a full manifestation of the gifted character of being *ex nihilo*: it is not something previously given or contained—this would belong to what is included in the essence—but rather to act itself towards its intensification.¹⁷

Metaphysically understood, creation *qua donatio essendi* consists in the communication of relative actuality. To create means to grant the giving: not giving gifts but forming being, and not on something that is previous to being, but being that does not possess its own being, as it exists *ex nihilo*. In the case of created being, being is also donating, but donating gifts, not the giving itself, which only belongs to the Original giver. This does not mean that personal beings, as absolute gifts, cannot give their own giving, or that the donated being is incapable of giving itself to other personal beings through its essence, which is cocreated along their personal existence; on the contrary, as a giving reality, the subsistent personal being implies its own capacity of giving without mediators or deviations. Its intensity as a donating being means that personal being is even more *ex Deo* than *ex nihilo*: it is an absolute gift. A personal being achieves its own perfection in its giving itself: it acts then not only at an essential level but in what is proper of its own *actus essendi*: as destination (Haya 1997, p. 314). Otherwise, the donating nature of personal being would end up truncated.

From the point of view of the metaphysics of the gift, the existence of the universe can be understood as something that is radically initiated, and in this sense, different from the Original being while totally dependent upon it. Through the notions of gifted being and to the absolute gift, we may develop a comprehension of the *ad extra* communication of divine being, both in its diffusive nature, as *donatio essendi*, and in its return, for the nature of the gifted being implies that its plenitude as gift-being is more in the return to the Giver than in itself. In this sense, we can conclude that the donating action of being to the gifted being is a real communication, because it is real and absolute, and therefore free. When God created, He gives without construing a real *ad extra relation* (Pérez-Guerrero 1996, p. 159). In turn, if the gifted character of being *ex nihilo* consists in its dependence, the absolute gifted nature of the personal being, being *ex Deo*, consists in its own destination and radical giving of itself to the Origin.

4. From Absolute Beginning to Absolute Dependence: The Metaphysical Dynamic of the Gifted Act of Being (*Acceptio Esse*)

In the previous section, we described the essential attributes of being *ex nihilo* and being *ex Deo* as an absolute gift from the perspective of the metaphysics of the gift. This analysis allows for a better understanding of the nature of givenness, one that implies that the plenitude of the given-being is more in returning its gift to the Given than within himself. In order to complement this analysis of the *donatio essendi* and what it entails as a donated being *ex nihilo*, I now turn to the study of the way in which the donated character becomes manifest in the dynamics of reality, namely, the way in which the act of being, as absolute beginning, is essentially a dependence. I show how, through the notion of gifted being, reality, insofar as it is *ex nihilo*, is recognized as beginning and absolute growth (Haya 1997, p. 323).

We have noted that, for Thomas Aquinas, being is not a factum or the sameness of the mental object but a first act or principle. A metaphysics that holds up to this will not conceive being as data, an object or a static identity, not even as an activity that merely opposes nothingness by “being”, as if it could just exist even while not fully realizing its being; being is the metaphysical sense of activity donated on a transcendental level (Polo 2015b, p. 55). Hence, the most adequate expression of the gifted character of being *ex nihilo* is absolute beginning and with no continuation: absolute given being. This modality of activity of things, as inseparable from *donatio essendi*, can be properly named inchoated activity, or in other words, an activity that (like sunrise or blooming) consists in persisting in its beginning, which is demanded from the impossibility of the Origin’s relation to given being as position *extra nihilum* (Peiró 2020).

When the metaphysics of the gift raises the question of the actuality that grounds and sustains reality, the answer it achieves cannot be extramental existence along with nothingness as its assumed contrary, because in a philosophy of being, real being, because it is *ex nihilo*, lacks an absolute contrary. Only ideal being can be opposed to nothingness, because mental being or thought being can be conceived as a supposite, that is to say, considering its previous position to existence. The consideration of the dynamics of real being, the *actus essendi*, cannot be made by thinking of an absolute opposition: being has no opposite because it is not ideal and cannot be presupposed as some sort of “absolute in-existence”. When talking about being as an act of existence, it is more adequate to talk about a radical distinction that, appealing to a transcendental leap, allows us to consider being as an act of existence without putting ourselves in a Parmenidean univocal position. The proper and radical distinction I suggest here is that between being *ex nihilo* and being as Origin. These acts are not opposite, then: they are diverse. That donated being is an *ex nihilo* reality means that its activity as a being that lacks consists in excluding nothingness from itself. The real activity is being, which as donated is equivalent to absolute beginning. Being *ex nihilo* is, as donated, beginning to be.

This is an idea worthy of consideration: the metaphysical development on what being *ex nihilo* is and means signals, according to Miguel García Valdecasas, finite being as threatened by the undefined nothingness that precedes it. This is a proper way to understand what is previous to it: the plenitude of the Origin of which created being is lacking. This anteriority, far from being temporal in nature, expresses atemporality as the donated nature of absolute beginning (García 2014, pp. 57–58). The founding giving action of reality is not a fact, or an event, but as actual today as in the first instant in which our universe began and the rest of the universes could begin to exist or will exist. Thus, the *donatio essendi* is as cognizable today as it was yesterday, it is “the clarity in which the beginning is lulled.” (García-Valdecasas 1998, pp. 93–94).

Understanding the gifted nature of being *ex nihilo* makes it possible to explain reality as something radically initiated and depending.¹⁸ Understanding the principal character of being becomes recognizing its gifted nature, speaking in absolute terms, because being as gifted is not what is constituted by God: it is that being, which conjoined with the essence, ends up as a concrete being. This is only possible if we overcome a substantial consideration of being and recognize being as gifted, that is to say, being as a principle, as an absolute inchoative and nonoriginary activity, which is more distinguishable from the Origin than from nothingness. This inchoative activity consists in its being a depending reference to the Giver.

These assertions lead us to consider how the metaphysics of the gift identify *ex parte creaturae* with it, for both its constitutive and constituted dimension bring together the existential nature of the principle of noncontradiction and the principle of causality. Being *ex nihilo* as gifted is equivalent to a being lacking itself, because the being of something does not refer to itself as it is not in reference to the essence (it distinguishes itself from it); distinct from its essence, the act of being of something is a noncontradictory activity. This is why being *ex nihilo* means beginning-to-be, an absolute or transcendental beginning, for, as Polo says, “beginning to be is non-contradictory insofar as it does not cease and is not followed, for if it were followed it would be followed by something different from being and would therefore cease to be.” (Polo 1991, p. 70). Being *ex nihilo* is a radical beginning that does not reach an end, it does not finalize or culminate, as all these would entail the ceasing of the noncontradictory activity, and hence its annihilation. As a transcendental inchoative activity, beginning-to-be means persisting in the beginning: being persistence. Persistence in the beginning means persisting in a noncontradictory activity (*esse ex nihilo*), wherein resides the existential character of noncontradiction as an activity of being (Polo 2015a, pp. 148–49). Once again: persisting in the noncontradictory activity implies a being lacking itself, a being that does not refer to itself; and, if being *ex nihilo* does not refer to itself, it is because it is a reference to another, to the Original being, as being *ex Deo* (Vargas 2020, pp. 127–42).

The gifted nature of being *ex nihilo* entails its conjunction to the *donatio essendi*. In Thomistic terms, it is the equivalence within the actus essendi of the *positio extra nihilum* with the nature of lacking itself and dependence (Piá 1996, p. 937). Aquinas explains this in the first book of his Commentary to the Sentences, where he takes the meaning of nothingness in creation to distinguish divine generation from creation, insofar as, in the latter, lacking itself equals dependence on being.¹⁹ In this passage, Aquinas explains that if the expression “from nothingness” meant just a negation of the material cause, the Second Person of the Trinity would also be *ex nihilo*, and hence a creature, which is impossible. Moreover, being from nothingness is predicated on the affirmation of the order of posteriority to nothingness. In the real order, saying *extra nihilum* also entails saying extra contradiction, because for a creature, falling into contradiction is equivalent to falling into nothingness, which would happen if the persistence in the beginning ceased to be. As Aquinas defends in this text, in the real order, beyond what is merely logical, nothingness is nothing.²⁰

As we have seen, in being *ex nihilo*, dependence is an act: the act of dependence, which is the proper activity of the gifted actus essendi. The *donatio essendi* in being *ex nihilo* can be called relation insofar as the gifted being is not finished: there is unity in it but not identity. This is why the relation of dependence should be understood as an absolute reference of being *ex nihilo* to the Original being, not something added to it as an accident, and also why the reference of gifted being is not to its essence but to the divine being. The dependence of being *ex nihilo* is therefore one that is proper to that which cannot be consummated.

In sum, the point is to understand that in a metaphysics of being, being as first is equivalent to the existential character of the first principles. Which means, in Polo’s words, that there are different senses of the first. We can actually distinguish the principial nature of the first as a sense of the first. Thus, the donation of being as creature can be thought of as a beginning insofar as it principiates, i.e., as a radical novelty, because principiating is proper to what radically begins (Haya 1997, p. 193).

In the understanding of being as a principle, its meaning becomes different whether we refer it to divine being or to *ex nihilo*. Both meanings are ultimately irreducible: the principle, insofar as it principiates, is not, absolutely speaking, the principle as Origin, for as we have seen, it does not in any way originate or cause anything. Giving being is creating the beginning-to-be as a noncontradictory activity. Hence, donated being is not included or contained in God, nor does God make gifted being necessary in any way, because giving is not the same as causing (Haya 1997, p. 193). As we have said, creation as *donatio essendi* is free and gratuitous, and being *ex nihilo* is, as gifted activity, dependence.

Being as an absolute beginning is distinguished from God as an *ad extra* virtual relation. The positivity of gifted being lies here: in the authenticity of its positive actuality. The reason is that the notion of absolute beginning demands a positive distinction, one in which the distinction expressed by the expression *ad extra* becomes incomparably superior to the one expressed by *extra nihilum*. Giving being to gifted being means excluding nothingness from it, but the being that is gifted is, above all, the one that is radically distinct from the divine being. Giving being is not, then, giving being to “something” that has no being, nor is it giving the proper being of the One who is its own being. Giving being is giving a being to one that is not its own being: gifted being. From here, it is impossible not to think of gifted being as the dependent being, as absolute dependence is the notion that best shows the ontological status of the *ex nihilo* as distinct from the Origin. This is why Polo will say that “precisely because originated being depends, and dependence does not collapse the positivity out of the distinction, but rather explains it, originated being is an act of being.” (Polo 2016, p. 156).

As absolute beginning, being of itself is not an imperfection or a defect of the act of being of things: it is only being *ex nihilo*, i.e., gifted being. In the same way, absolute or absolute beginning or absolute dependence is not a description of any weakness of being, passivity or potentiality. The action of dependence is the highest activity realized

by the *ex nihilo actus essendi*; it is the way being lacks itself, or in other words, persists in noncontradictory actuality. Absolute dependence is what makes absolute beginning possible because its perfection as gifted being is dependence. Being is being, so to speak, because it is capable of dependence, so much so that if being is dependence, not-being is not-dependence. This is the last and fundamental metaphysical sense of nothingness: to stop existing would mean to stop depending, so that no-being for finite being is equivalent to not being *ex nihilo*, falling into contradiction, and ceasing as absolute beginning. This is not the annihilation of being but rather the wandering into nothingness, being without meaning that becomes existing without its constitutive lacking of itself, like how an astronaut that unhooked from their ship drifts eternally in the abyss.

The dynamic of gifted being and the elucidation of the act of being in donal terms makes the radical dependence of being *ex nihilo* regarding the absolute more radical, as well as more active, because its very being is dependence, that is, being a gift as beginning (Haya 1997, pp. 321–22). That is why the primary sense of dependence of gifted being cannot be achieved if it is understood in a passive way. On a first impression, the dependence inflicted by the undivinization of the universe understood as *donatio essendi* may seem to entail a certain passive character: dependence assumes something outside the dependent being, something passive. However, Polo holds that such an explanation is impossible in the creationist view, because absolute passivity would not be *extra nihilum*. If being gifted is by definition *extra nihilum*, the radical dependency that emerges from the notion of *donatio essendi* can only be an activity:

“The paradox of the (*donatio essendi*) is that its dependency is what constitutes (being *ex nihilo*) insofar as it is an activity, insofar as it is an act, because as its dependency is absolute, it is equivalent to its keeping in existence, not being ultimately constituted, or sufficiently. Creating is not producing something that is already enough, because the dependency would then be broken. Creation has to be something continuous and instantaneous. The demand for a continuation (to being) does not impact God: it is a demand for the creature. Every neediness of (being *ex nihilo*) is, in this fashion, activity: the creation demands to be ‘kept in existence’, which is precisely its *energeia* or activity. Thus, God is also given the name Primary Activity or Pure Act.” (Polo 1993, pp. 134–35)

Thus, explaining the reality of finite being means to recognize that it is a real activity as being *ex nihilo*, a being whose activity—existence—consists in lacking itself and excludes nothingness from itself, which is in turn equivalent to absolute beginning. As an act of being, being *ex nihilo* means beginning-to-be-in-dependence. This is its proper ontological dynamic as an act of existence.

5. Conclusions

From our previous considerations we may conclude the following:

1. Metaphysical nihilism can only be overcome when philosophy welcomes an understanding of finite being that, as *ex nihilo*, excludes nothingness. In order to do so, we can face the question of the existence of reality and its own actuality based on the metaphysics of the gift. In the first place, the origination of being *ex nihilo* as *donatio essendi*, and then towards a reflection on finite being as given and absolute beginning.
2. The origin of the finite being should be described as absolute donation. The reason is that it allows us to think of finite being as radical novelty and absolute benefit, with no trace of passivity, ambiguity, or ontological nihilism. In the *donatio essendi*, the gifted being is in no way existent prior to the given. The nature of giving implies producing or doing what is given, i.e., giving what the given is not previously. In an absolute donation, the gift is “generated” as it is given; being as absolute donation means being-given. The notion of absolute gift through *donatio essendi* is inseparable from the character of given, a character that defines and determines it. That is why the metaphysics of the gift is so appropriate to determine the ontological character of being *ex nihilo* as absolute *acceptio esse*.

3. The real communication of being as *donatio essendi* allows us to consider its radicality through its gratuitousness and freedom. Thus, the origination of finite beings is real communication because it is a real and absolute donation. The very notion of *donatio essendi* permits the safekeeping of divine freedom because communicating being *ex nihilo* does not imply a real *ad extra* relation in God. Consequently, the absolute gratuitousness of creation becomes an absolute benefit.
4. The idea of *donatio essendi* points to the *ex nihilo* giving of an existence whose perfection is set in its reference to Another, in giving itself. This is the plenitude of the gifted being. As gifted, being *ex nihilo* is not static, but intrinsically temporal, insofar as gifted being is temporal, because giving being is not limited (on God's part) to "placing" being. It is donating the gift, or rather, donating the giving.
5. The existential value of the principle of noncontradiction is the persistence in noncontradictory activity, which means that we should reject any meaning of possible activity to just affirm the equivalence of being *ex nihilo* and noncontradiction as activity, precisely in terms of its gifted nature. This implies the rejection of a real equivalence, according to the principle of noncontradiction, between being and nothingness. The idea of existence as "opposed to" nothingness or "non-existence" should also be disregarded, insofar as it is an opposition of reason. On the contrary, the principle of noncontradiction, as real extramental principle, is the noncontradictory existence, i.e., being *ex nihilo*.
6. The donated act is diverse and not opposite to the Original being. It is in this sense that we claim that being *ex nihilo* is first, and that is why its activity should be understood as beginning, which entails its radical novelty: being *ex nihilo*, as *position extra nihilum*, is a form of existence that premieres as beginning. A being that begins is "first" not in the sense of originary, but as absolute beginning, because nothing precedes or follows being *ex nihilo*. It cannot be compared with anything that exists like it does, as it is secondary to nothing (it is *extra nihilum*, not *extra causam*).
7. Being *ex nihilo* is not the kind of being whose activity resolves in becoming free of nothingness in order to continue being. Being *ex nihilo*, rather, means distinguishing itself radically from nothingness; on the other hand, it is *extra nihilum* only insofar as it is *ad extra* regarding God. In other words, as nothingness is nothing, being *ex nihilo* consists in getting rid of nothingness by differentiating itself from it, which in a positive sense means being donated by an absolute giving (*donatio essendi*). The *ad extra* existence of the *donatio essendi* should therefore be understood as a distinction, not exteriority. This distinction excludes all comparisons: it is no determination or category of gifted being that allows for a comparison with the Giver, with which he is not linked in any causal or relational sense. For gifted being, its existence is not a proper determination that is previous to being gifted, and hence comparable to the Being that is its own being, but rather its reality as lacking its own being, which points towards its determination as being-given (this is what its gifted nature means).
8. The activity of being *ex nihilo* as gifted is not centered in rejecting nothingness but in being-dependent-beginning, i.e., transcendental beginning and absolute dependency on its Origin. This is the proper activity of finite being, characterized here by the principles of noncontradiction and causality. Being *ex nihilo* is absolute beginning and dependence, which is the way in which a finite being is dependent, as donated by an absolute donation. Being as beginning is being received as gifted, not as caused or produced, and therefore being towards and for another: an existence that refers to another.
9. The *donatio essendi* is an absolute reception of being (*esse*), as Aquinas claims, and that reception grounds its being an absolute reference and dependence to the Giver. Being subsistent as an absolute gift: this means being an absolute donation. A personal being becomes an absolute donation by accepting and destinating itself, which is its own activity as gifted personal being. This makes it *ex Deo* rather than *ex nihilo*: it distinguishes itself more from the Creator than from nothingness (as, properly

speaking, nothingness does not actually exist). As *ex Deo*, personal gifted being has a natural order with regards to nothingness, which determines it as a dependent being, but its personal nature allows for an increase in its donating activity in receiving its own being as its acceptance and donating itself through destinating itself. Its plenitude lies here.

10. Through the metaphysics of the gift, a metaphysical understanding of reality can actually acquire the full positivity that is proper to being, one which was lost throughout the history of philosophy. As such, *donatio essendi* is the theme of the absolute communication and coexistence of two different kinds of being: Original being and originated being. The principiality of originated being rests in its novelty, and beginning being *ex nihilo* should therefore be characterized, above all, by centering our attention on these two parameters, as beginning and as novelty. Only then, without assuming anything about being, can metaphysics take a step forward to hold that the absence of anything previous explains what being lacks: no thing is its own existence. This lacking, its real distinction, manifests that being, for each thing, is its reference, that is, its dependence. Novelty and dependence are, therefore, the two attributes that define the nature of the gifted character of existence, in its utmost comprehension.

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Notes

- ¹ This crisis is not only experienced within the realm of experimental and human sciences, nor is it only an ethical crisis—whether collectively or individually understood—but rather a personal crisis of meaning. Moreover, we must assert that human beings are in a state of constant tension, of permanent crisis, which has to do, among other reasons, with the fact that the spiritual condition of man translates into a capacity for unyielding, limitless growth. The possibility for growth—and lessening—of man manifests our condition of the proper and constitutive crisis of human beings. See (Vargas 2017; Zorroza 2019).
- ² It is important to point out that the crisis Husserl refers to is not one of science itself regarding its capacity to attain its objects through its proper method (whether it is a physical science or a science of mind): “The scientific rigor of all these disciplines, the convincingness of their theoretical accomplishments, and their enduringly compelling successes are unquestionable” (Husserl 1976); A similar idea may be found in (Zubiri 1994, pp. 27–57).
- ³ “At any rate, the contrast between the “scientific” character of this group of sciences and the “unscientific” character of philosophy is unmistakable” (Husserl 1976, *The Crisis*, cit., pp. 4–5).
- ⁴ Derrida will suggest the necessity of moving beyond Heidegger’s failed deconstruction of metaphysics towards one of language itself, as its structure secures the very origin of metaphysics. It is, however, a deconstruction more rightly understood as de-sedimentation rather than demolition. See (Derrida 1967, pp. 21–24); see also (Inciarte and Llano 2007, pp. 28, 121–31). Regarding radical Hermeneutics, cf. (Miguel 2010, pp. 55–75); and (Gadamer 1975).
- ⁵ In Aquinas’ ontology, the principle of a creature, the *proprium esse* of each thing, turns every being into a perfection insofar as it makes it be so; that is to say, the proper *esse* of a being is the perfection of such a being, and not just one among many other constituents. Cf. S. Th., I, q. 4, a. 1, ad 3. Cfr. S. Th., I, q. 3, a. 4; In Sent., I, d. 8, q. 1, a. 1. In this respect, Alejandro Llano properly holds that “the act of being is the immanent origin of the plenitude of each being according to its proper essence. That is why the nobility of each thing arouses from its being. When Thomas Aquinas repeatedly holds that the *esse* of each thing is its perfection, he is not just pointing out—as a limited sense of ‘perfectio’ might suggest—that it is limit, the definitive realization of something that is coming-to-be. In a metaphysical sense, ‘perfectio’ means positivity, goodness, plenitude, value, in their most radical meaning.” (Llano 1984, p. 295). Regarding the intelligible nature of reality according to Thomistic metaphysics, see (Ramos 2014, pp. 95–111).
- ⁶ Indeed, if finite being is necessarily *ex nihilo*, we can establish the classic problems of being in what Zubir rightly calls the “horizon of nihility”. Zubiri himself traces his *About the Problem of Philosophy* around this plan, dedicating its fifth chapter to “the horizon of Western philosophy: creation and nihility” (Zubiri 1996, pp. 3 y 30).
- ⁷ Regarding what I call the “metaphysics of the gift”, see Fernando Haya’s (1997) extraordinary.
- ⁸ This quotation is taken from (Inciarte and Llano 2007, p. 349); it translates an expression from Husserl, E., *Vorgegeben Welt, Historizität, Trieb, Instinkt* (Ms. 1934, Sign. E III 10, p. 18), y citado por S. Strasser, “Das Gottesproblem in der Spätphilosophie Edmund Husserls”, *Philosophisches Jahrbuch*, 67 (1958), p. 142.

- 9 Our task becomes, then, a metaphysical understanding; in Zubiri's words, "creation is now, in the concrete, an 'origination of being' (. . .), a radical origin from what is not being, from nothingness. Being is always not-nothingness, it is *creatio ex nihilo*" (Zubiri 1996, op. cit., p. 47).
- 10 S. Th., I, q. 28, a. 1, ad 3; see also *De causis*, lect. XI. Translations of the Summa theologiae are taken from the 1920 edition by the Fathers of the English Dominican Province, available online at www.newadvent.org/summa (accessed on 6 May 2020) (ed. Kevin Knight).
- 11 In the same line of the metaphysics of the gift, Angel Luis González claims that "the highest sense of being is precisely gifting" (González 2013, p. 49). Indeed, as pointed out by Haya and Gonzalez, personal being has more to do with giving than with that which is given: what is given, gifts, belong to the essence, while being is giving. The origin of this metaphysical view is in Leonardo Polo, who, in his study *Having and gifting* (Tener y dar), suggests that a human person is not only nor specifically defined as a being capable of having, but rather he is personal because, while endorsing having, he is capable of gifting. That is why, against the question of what lies beyond our tendency to possess and possession itself, Polo answers the following: "Obviously, donation. If the activity of the Will is donating, it transcends what the Greeks understood as *télos*: this is a Christian hyperteology. Gifting is giving without losing, an activity that is above a balance of wins and loses, winning without acquiring or acquiring while giving" (Polo 2015c, pp. 229–30). Thus, the personal created being consists in gifting: gifting gifts, not gifting itself, for gifting as such belongs exclusively to God, as only he can donate existence, which cannot be confused with the given (the essence).
- 12 "Creare autem est dare esse"; In Sent., I, d. 37, q. 1, a. 1, sol. Cfr. In Sent., I, d. 7, q. 1, a. 1, ad 3; In Sent., II, d. 1, q. 1, a. 2, ad 2; S. Th., I, q. 9, a. 2, sol.; q. 104, a. 1, ad 4. In line with these considerations, I hold that any investigation into the meaning of creation as gifting demands that our metaphysical viewpoint is extended to anthropology, as gifting is a free action that is proper to personal beings, and the only accessible freedom to our natural understanding is the one of the personal human being. In the same way, Trinitarian theology itself makes use of our analysis of the personal created being, only then being able to analogously consider divine personal relations.
- 13 See (de Aquino 2005b, *Super Io.*, cap. 1, l. 5, n. 133). Polo comments that "when Aquinas says *creatio est donatio essendi*, he is no longer regarding being in the order of grounding: he augments the causal view. When you gift something, you are not grounding; gifting goes beyond grounding. That is to say: being is; it is not caused or made, but rather given. Which is more proper of creation: making being or gifting being? (. . .) Gifting, insofar as gifted, is in the order of coexistence." (Polo 1993, p. 175).
- 14 Regarding human freedom in Aquinas' thought, cfr. (Peiró and Zorroza 2014, pp. 435–49).
- 15 Cfr. De Pot., q. 3, a. 4, sol.; C. G., II, cap. 15.
- 16 "Creatio active significat actionem divinam, quae est eius essentia cum relatione ad creaturam"; S. Th., I, q. 45, a. 3, ad 1, but this is a relation of reason.
- 17 We should note that a metaphysics of totality allows no intensification: it is a closed system that depends on making explicit what is already implicitly present. Cfr. (Haya 1997, op. cit., p. 315). The intensification of being, on the other hand, is always inside a finite order, for the domain of donated being can be a greater and better remission to the Origin (never in identifying with it). The perfection of gifted being does not consist in it stopping being donated, nor in its falling into nothingness, nor in the sense that its perfection lies in "divinizing" itself, so as to be confused with divine being. To the metaphysical view of creation as *donatio essendi*, against Hegelian dialectics, the overcoming of the limitations of created being, as distinct to the divine being, cannot be solved in the confusion of the created and the divine, but rather in intensifying its own being created qua created, which implies a greater sharpness in its distinction from uncreated being. For a creature, "being more" means to be a better creature.
- 18 We could say that being finite as donated and dependence is what Aquinas calls being by participation. The Thomistic doctrine of participation in being, one of whose manifestations is the real distinction between being and essence, sets the real state of the creature in the metaphysical consideration of the real composition of beings. It is through the real distinction that Aquinas achieves an explanation for the authenticity of the created being as an act by participation without its dissolution in the divine Being. Only God is its own Being; in everything else, being differs from the essence. Cfr. S. Th. I, q. 61, a. 1, sol.
- 19 Cfr. In Sent., I, d. 5, q. 2, a. 2, sol. Cfr. S. Th., I, q. 45, a. 1, ad 3; q. 46, a. 2, ad 2; In Sent., II, d. 1, q. 1, a. 2, sol.
- 20 In the realm of reason, the principle of noncontradiction is a certain prelude to the idea of nothingness, which is a being of reason. In reality, however, nothingness should be understood as "to cease" or "being followed" by absolute beginning. Not ceasing points directly to the Origin insofar as in beings; the act of being is really distinct from the essence and, because it is caused, can be investigated without mentally determining it or making it dependent on the essence. This ultimately means that, for created beings, the lacking of themselves and the nature of dependence are intrinsically linked. In other words, radical beginning shows radical dependence, because persisting in beginning is impossible without radical dependence. Cfr. (Polo 2015b, op. cit., p. 207).

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Article

Turning Religious Experience into Reality: The Spiritual Power of Himma

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Abstract: The extremely influential mystic, Muḥyī al-Dīn ibn ‘Arabī (d. 634/1240), believes that the most advanced gnostics are imbued with a special power that turns their religious experience into reality. This is the power of *himma*—the power of existentialisation that elite gnostics derive from God’s absolute power of existentialisation. Ibn ‘Arabī and his followers assert that this power, which is exercised by the gnostics through an intense and unremitting concentration, actually shapes and forms external phenomenal reality as long as the concentration of the gnostic persists. This paper explores the different types of *himmas* that can exist, what kind of reality they allow the gnostics to perceive, and what relationship the objects created by *himma* have with the gnostic who exercised this power.

Keywords: religious experience; spiritual experience; mysticism; *himma*; Ibn ‘Arabī; reality

1. Introduction

Religious experience has long been thought to inform our subjective reality. Friedrich Schleiermacher underscores the subjectivity of the experience, negating not only its phenomenological counterpart in others but also its articulation:

But religion is of such a sort and is so rare, that whoever utters anything of it, must necessarily have had it, for nowhere could he have heard it. Of all that I praise, all that I feel to be the true work of religion, you would find little even in the sacred books. To the man who has not himself experienced it, it would only be an annoyance and a folly (Schleiermacher n.d., p. 14).

For Schleiermacher, religious experiences are as unique and manifold as those who experience them.¹ The sensitivity of such experiences, their disparate manifestations, and their myriad conduits, make religion in its entirety an endless panoply of phenomenological compilations, or as Schleiermacher puts it,

as long as we are individuals, every man has greater receptiveness for some religious experiences and feelings than for others. In this way everything is different. Manifestly then, no single relation can accord to every feeling its due. It requires the sum of them. Hence, the whole of religion can be present only, when all those different views of every relation are actually given. This is not possible, except in an endless number of different forms (Schleiermacher n.d., p. 147).

Thus, religion is a sum total of all the subjective experiences of humankind. However, if this is the case, organised religion would be an ineluctable casualty since phenomenological subjectivity is afforded supreme authority.² Accordingly, there quickly appeared an appeal to objectivise these phenomenological subjectivities in order to preserve organised religion, and to affect an evolution in it. This tradition goes back to Philo (d. 50 CE), who believed that, along with the religious texts of Judaism, there were other non-textual sources that needed to be considered, as Harry Wolfson elucidates when he writes, ‘Besides the written Scripture, Philo also draws upon certain unwritten traditions. These traditions are referred

to by him in various terms' (Wolfson 1962, p. 90). One of these terms was the 'unwritten law' (Wolfson 1962, p. 188), which Philo believed was a

progressive revelation, a continuous revelation of God to chosen individual human beings to make known to them the meaning of the revealed Law. For though he believed that the revelation was final and perfect, inasmuch as the Law was to be eternal, this belief did not mean to him that it was a closed revelation (Wolfson 1960, p. 104).

Since these experiences were afforded the same epistemological value as scripture—the former being revelation of the gnostic, the latter revelation of a prophet—revelation was an ongoing divine act that was continually played out, but only in the overarching framework provided by sacred texts. It is God 'who reveals Himself in the depths of the self' to the gnostic in order to reprimatinate the religion (Scholem 1995, p. 34). Scholem describes this phenomenon in the following way:

Revelation, for instance, is to the mystic not only a definite historical occurrence which, at a given moment in history, puts an end to any further direct relation between mankind and God. With no thought of denying Revelation as a fact of history, the mystic still conceives the source of religious knowledge and experience which bursts forth from his own heart as being of equal importance for the conception of religious truth. In other words, instead of the one act of Revelation, there is a constant repetition of this act. This new Revelation, to himself or to his spiritual master, the mystic tries to link up with the sacred texts of the old; hence the new interpretation given to the canonical texts and sacred books of the great religions (Scholem 1995, p. 28).

Therefore, the divinely revealed exegesis of scripture was perpetually being cast down in the world through the religious experiences of the gnostics. Muḥyī al-Dīn ibn 'Arabī (d. 638/1240), known as 'the Greatest Master' (*al-Shaykh al-Akbar*), due to the sheer enormity of the influence he exerted (and continues to exert) on Islam generally (Sufism specifically and our perception of the Qur'an especially), agrees with this.³ Indeed, he claimed that his principal works—*Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam* and *Al-Futūḥāt al-makkiyya*—were products of mystical experience (Ibn 'Arabī 2002, p. 47; Schimmel [1975] 1978, p. 265). Such was the epistemological primacy of mystical experience that even the followers of Ibn 'Arabī predicated their religious insights on it (Morrissey 2020b; Lala 2019). This means that we can speak of an initial phase in which subjective experience informed the religious reality for the individual, which was then followed by a secondary phase in which this experience actually revived religious texts, thereby objectivising the subjective experience and making its application possible to those other than the individual who experienced it. This tethered the experience more closely with phenomenal reality. Nevertheless, Ibn 'Arabī did not just stop there, he believed that the experience of the gnostics of the highest level could actually *create* a phenomenal reality through the spiritual power of *himma*.

Ibn 'Arabī maintains all three of these levels, while at the same time acknowledging that the layfolk experience the religion subjectively but lack the authority to universalise their subjective experience as do the gnostics. It is then the gnostics of the highest level who can not only universalise their subjective experience in the interpretation of sacred texts but actually universalise it by creating phenomenal reality through the spiritual power of *himma*. This means a universalisation of their subjective experience is absolute since it is not restricted to those who believe in and read scripture but applies to all who experience sensible reality.

2. The Levels of Humankind

In the mystical *weltanschauung* of Ibn 'Arabī, humankind is afforded the highest rank since it possesses the potentiality to manifest all of God's 'most beautiful Names' (*Al-Asmā' al-ḥusnā*), such as 'the Compassionate', 'the Mighty', 'the Wise', etc., in one locus of divine

manifestation. These are the ninety-nine attributive Names of God that are mentioned in the Qur'an.⁴ In the now extremely well-known beginning of the *Fuṣūṣ*, Ibn 'Arabī writes,

God, be He praised, wanted, through His most beautiful Names that are countless, to see their essences. Or if you want, you could say, He wanted to see His essence in a comprehensive being (*kawn jāmi'*) that would comprise the whole matter because it has sensible existence, and with it, His secret would be manifest to Himself (Ibn 'Arabī 2002, p. 48).

Humankind has the ability to manifest all the divine Names, which is the purpose for the creation of the universe, as Ibn 'Arabī elucidates in this passage. Nevertheless, the capability to manifest the divine Names is one that is not realised by most people. Ibn 'Arabī explains this concept by means of an example:

Our saying, 'Zayd is less knowledgeable than 'Amr' does not gainsay the essence of God being in the essence of Zayd and of 'Amr, but it is more perfect (*akmal*) and more knowledgeable in 'Amr than it is in Zayd, just as the divine Names are of different ranks but they are all still God (Ibn 'Arabī 2002, p. 153).⁵

The essence of the knowable God—which is God as He is described through the most beautiful Names (Lala 2021)—is manifested by 'Amr and Zayd. But the fact that 'Amr is more knowledgeable than Zayd means that he manifests God's Name 'the Knowing' (*Al-'Alīm*) more perfectly than Zayd (Al-Nābulusī 2008, 2:158–59; Al-Jāmī 2009, p. 367). This means that, even though the essence of humankind is one, inasmuch as they are all human, the potentiality to manifest the divine Names, and thus the epistemological rank that comes with it, differs. It also means that each person experiences reality, all of which is a manifestation of God's divine Names, in different ways. The susceptibility to experiencing reality as it truly is—a manifestation of God's Names in phenomenal reality—thus changes as the potentiality to realise the divine Names change.

Ibn 'Arabī affirms the value of subjective empiricism when he claims that even God 'gains' knowledge through His experience of the way in which His divine Names are manifested in the world. This is despite the fact that He has absolute knowledge of everything. If this 'dependence'⁶ on phenomenological epistemology applies even to God, then it applies a fortiori to humans. He writes the following:

He [Luqmān] describes God as 'Experienced' (*khabīr*), that is, knowing from experience (*ikhtibār*), just as God declared [in the Qur'an], 'And We shall surely try you until We know' (Qur'an, 47:31). So this is knowledge from [spiritual] 'tasting' (*adhwaq*). Therefore, God makes Himself someone who gains knowledge, even though He knows the matter as it is. And we cannot deny what God clearly declares in the Qur'an regarding the truth about Himself. God, be He praised, therefore, made a distinction between the knowledge of [spiritual] tasting (*'ilm al-dhawq*) and absolute knowledge (*al-'ilm al-muṭlaq*) (Ibn 'Arabī 2002, p. 189).

Q47:31 asseverates that God's 'experience' of the universe is the basis of His empirical epistemology, which does not contradict His absolute knowledge of all things. Ibn 'Arabī seems to be saying that, even if one knows something, experiencing it and knowing it through 'spiritual tasting' is quite different. It is for this reason, adds Ibn 'Arabī, that God discloses that there are some of His servants who achieve such closeness to Him that 'I am his hearing through which he hears, his sight through which he sees, his hand with which he grasps, and his foot with which he walks' (Bukhārī 1987, 8:105).

The primacy of subjective experience in Ibn 'Arabī's mystical outlook is undeniable. Yet most people, as they do not actualise their potentiality to manifest the divine Names and do not achieve the level elucidated in the tradition above, must adhere to the letter of the law and cannot objectivise their experience by using it to interpret scripture. The gnostics, who have actualised their theophanic potentiality, however, are able to do this; as Ibn 'Arabī clarifies in the following:

It is known that when the divine tongues of religions (*alsinat al-sharā'i' al-ilāhiyya*) say about God, the Exalted, what they say, they do so in a way that conveys the immediate meaning to lay people (*al-'umūm*). As for the gnostics, they understand each word in many ways, no matter what language it is conveyed in. Therefore, God is manifested (*ẓāhir*) in every knowable thing while He is concealed (*bāṭin*) from all comprehension, except for he who says that the cosmos is His form and His essence (Ibn 'Arabī 2002, p. 68).

Ibn 'Arabī offers this as an explanation for Q57:3, which describes God as '*the First, the Last, the Manifest, the Hidden*'. The point he makes is that God, the Manifest, is experienced by lay people (*al-'umūm*) and gnostics alike. Now, even though all of the layfolk, as they are disparate theophanic loci, experience God, the Manifest, differently their experience does not qualify them to undertake the 'concealed' or inner exegesis of the Qur'an, which itself is a scriptural representation of the universe; or as Ibn 'Arabī says, 'all [sensible] existence is letters (*ḥurūf*), words (*kalimāt*), chapters (*suwar*), and verses (*āyāt*), and that is the macrocosmic *qur'ān* (*Al-Qur'ān al-kabīr*)' (Ibn 'Arabī n.d.a; Lala forthcoming). This macrocosmic *qur'ān* is 'brought together' in the scriptural Qur'an, which is why, according to Ibn 'Arabī, it is derived from the root *q-r-n* (to join together) and not *q-r-'* (to read), as people generally assume (Ibn Manẓūr n.d., p. 3607; Lala forthcoming).

Lay people must therefore confine themselves to the 'immediate meaning', which is the 'basic meaning' of scripture (Izutsu 1998, pp. 18–24). Their subjective experience of God as the divine Names, of reality as it is the macrocosmic Qur'an, and of the textual Qur'an does not imbue them with the authority to excavate the 'concealed' (*bāṭin*) meanings of the Qur'an since they have not fully actualised their potentiality to manifest the divine Names. This is not the case for the gnostics. They too experience God, reality, and the Qur'an, subjectively. However, because they have fully realised their capability to manifest the divine Names, they have the authority to objectivise their subjective experience and employ them in the excavation of the 'concealed' meanings of the Qur'an and the true reality of God and the universe about which it speaks. This is because, in their elevated experiences, they comprehend the true nature of God, of reality, and of the Qur'an. This is what it means to 'understand each word in many ways'. Ibn 'Arabī highlights that the comprehension of the elite mystics is not limited to linguistic meanings of the Qur'an nor even is it confined to language itself, which is why he makes it clear that the gnostics comprehend the true reality of the Qur'an and, by extension, of God 'no matter what language it is conveyed in'.

The relationship between the divine Names, their manifestation as the universe, and of the epitomisation of the macrocosmic Qur'an that is the universe as the scriptural Qur'an, as well as the creational culmination of the divine Names as the gnostic who is the Perfect Man (*Al-Insān al-kāmil*)⁷, may be summarised as the following (Figure 1):

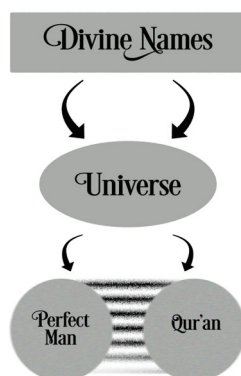


Figure 1. The divine Names as the Universe, the Perfect Man, and the Qur'an.

This diagram makes it clear that there is complementarity between the gnostic, who is the Perfect Man, and the Qur'an. Only when humankind fulfills its highest potentiality to manifest all the divine Names does its phenomenal experience have a direct analogue to

the reality of scripture. The subjective experience of reality, which is the divine Names writ large, can only be authoritative and amenable to universalisation, when all of the divine Names are faithfully manifested in the gnostic in a microcosmic way. Ibn 'Arabī, then, is in lockstep with Philo that the gnostics are able to use their own experiences as a vehicle to reinterpret and repristinate scripture. However, Ibn 'Arabī goes further. Since the universe is just a large-scale representation of the Perfect Man, the Perfect Man can—through his experience of reality and his unremitting concentration—project his experiential reality onto phenomenal reality. This is the spiritual power of existentiation known as *himma*, which is exercised by the very highest level of gnostics.

3. The Power of *himma*

Himma is not a term that readily lends itself to translation. As with almost all concepts and ideas in Ibn 'Arabī's worldview, the term has a Qur'anic basis. In the chapter of Joseph, we are told that the wife of the man in whose house he resided pursued him. The Qur'an says, 'Surely, she desired him (*hammat bihī*), and he would have desired her (*hamma bihā*)' (Qur'an, 12:24). The well-known Mu'tazilite exegete, Abu'l-Qāsim al-Zamakhsharī (d. 538/1144), who is known for his linguistic exegesis of the Qur'an (Ibrahim and Ibrahim 1980), explains that to '*hamma* a matter is to intend it (*qaṣadahu*) and to resolve on it ('*azam 'ayah*)' (Al-Zamakhsharī 1987, 2:455). Even though Edward Lane provides these denotations in his lexicon, he also writes that *hamma* lies in between intention and firm resolution (Lane 2003, 8:3044). Al-Zamakhsharī continues that to *hamma* a thing means 'to carry it out, and not to desist from it' (Al-Zamakhsharī 1987, 2:455). This means that, for al-Zamakhsharī, it is more than just an intention, it is a solid and unflinching resolution. This seems to be consistent with the way in which the term appears in Sufi lexicons.

Aḥmad al-Naqshbandī al-Khālīdī (d. 1284/1867), the Ḥanafī mystic, in his lexicon of Sufi terminology, explains that there are three ranks of *himma*. He begins with 'the *himma* of awakening' (*himmat al-ifāqa*), writing, 'It is the first rank of *himma*, and it is the awakening of [the desire] to seek the One Who Remains (*Al-Bāqī*), and not seeking that which is ephemeral (*fānī*)' (Khālīdī 1997, p. 97). The first level of *himma*, therefore, is the initial spiritual awakening of the gnostics after which they no longer seek the transitory world; they only seek God who will always remain. Al-Khālīdī uses the divine Name 'The One Who remains' (*Al-Bāqī*) and juxtaposes it with the evanescence of the phenomenal world, in much the same way as the Qur'an when it declares, 'All who are on it [the earth] will perish. And Your Lord's countenance will remain, radiant with majesty (*jalāl*) and honour (*ikrām*)' (Qur'an, 55:26–27). Subsequent to this, comes 'the *himma* of rejection' (*himmat al-anafa*), about which al-Khālīdī remarks the following:

It is the second rank, which inculcates in the one who possesses it rejection for seeking reward (*ajar*) for actions, to the extent that their heart rejects being occupied with expecting what God has promised in terms of reward for actions. It [the heart] then no longer fears witnessing God; rather, it worships God with perfection so that it does not fear turning to God, seeking only closeness to Him and nothing besides Him (Khālīdī 1997, p. 97).

In this level, then, the gnostics do not seek the reward for worshipping God because they have risen above such mercenary pursuits and seek only proximity to the divine; their hearts, therefore, shun anything that is not God. However, even in this rank, there is a barrier between the gnostics and God because they do not seek God as He is in His absolute essence; they seek only the manifestation of God through the divine Names. This barrier to the divine in His absoluteness is removed in the final rank, which al-Khālīdī says is, 'the *himma* of the lofty *himma* lords' (*himmat arbāb al-himam al-'āliya*). He writes the following:

It is the third rank, and it is only concerned with God, and does not turn away from Him, for it is the highest of the *himmas*, inasmuch as [the gnostic] is no longer content with spiritual states or stations,⁸ nor even, with stopping at cognisance of the divine Names and attributes, and desires nothing but the very Essence (*dhāt*) [of God] (Khālīdī 1997, p. 97).

This means that the *himma* of the gnostic progresses from the initial spiritual awakening—as the desire to seek God—in the first stage, to rejecting anything that is not God—as a manifestation of the divine Names—in the second stage, to desiring only the absolute divine Essence in the final stage.

The Turkish mystic, Diyā' al-Dīn Aḥmad ibn Muṣṭafā al-Kumushkhānawī (d. 1311/1894), provides a far more detailed analysis of *himma*, delineating nine aspects of it from its beginning to its end. His general definition of the term is as follows:

Turning one's attention to God completely whilst rejecting all other considerations (*mubālāt*) by safeguarding the self from all other objectives (*aghrād*) and reflections, and by adopting all the resources and means to achieve it, like [pious] actions, hope, and firm belief (*wuthūq*) in Him (Al-Kumushkhānawī 1913, p. 207).

The general contours of this definition correlate with al-Khālīdī's assertions. However, al-Kumushkhānawī elaborates that this takes different forms and has different facets, based on the level of the gnostic. The form *himma* takes in the beginning stages (*bidāyāt*) is that '*himma* is attached to the obedience of God (*ṭā'a*)' (Al-Kumushkhānawī 1913, p. 207). This seems to be prior to the spiritual awakening with which al-Khālīdī begins and paves the way for the spiritual awakening; for al-Kumushkhānawī affirms that only after this stage does the gnostic come to the gateways (*abwāb*) of *himma*, which is 'attachment of his heart to the felicity that always remains (*al-na'im al-bāqī*), and his turning away from that which is ephemeral (*fānī*), and his diligence in seeking it without tiring (*tawān*)' (Al-Kumushkhānawī 1913, p. 207). Although al-Kumushkhānawī sets up the same juxtaposition as al-Khālīdī by asserting that the gnostic seeks that which remains (*bāqī*) and scorns that which is ephemeral (*fānī*), i.e., the world, yet there is a fundamental difference between them. This is because al-Khālīdī believes that what is sought of the things that remain is God, whereas al-Kumushkhānawī declares it is paradise.

Al-Kumushkhānawī continues that the conduct of those with *himma* towards others (*mu'āmalāt*) is that their *himma* 'evokes them to remain steadfast in [righteous] deeds whilst remaining vigilant of the [lower] self (*murāqaba*) and having firm trust in, and completely submitting to, God (*al-tawakkul wa'l-taslīm*)' (Al-Kumushkhānawī 1913, p. 207). This means that all their social interactions are guided by these principles of righteousness, self-evaluation, and trust in God, and they pay no attention to how things ostensibly appear. This, then, informs all their actions, and their disposition (*akhlāq*) becomes one in which they 'turn their *himma* completely towards the acquisition (*iḥrāz*) of felicity and perfections (*kamālāt*)' (Al-Kumushkhānawī 1913, p. 207). So far, however, the gnostic still seeks felicity and not the divine itself, which is the initial stage al-Khālīdī mentions. But when it comes to the principles (*uṣūl*) of *himma*, al-Kumushkhānawī explains that 'it attracts its possessor to the divine presence, with the strength of certitude (*yaqīn*), and the soul of intimacy (*rūḥ al-uns*), which prevents lassitude (*futūr*) in proceeding on the spiritual path and from deviating (*zaygh*) from one's purpose' (Al-Kumushkhānawī 1913, p. 207). This corresponds with al-Khālīdī's first rank because the purpose is now the divine presence and nothing else.

Al-Kumushkhānawī then expatiates on the 'states' (*aḥwāl*) when all the disparate '*himmas* become one *himma* seizing (*istilā*) divine love' (Al-Kumushkhānawī 1913, p. 207). The gnostic has now dissociated from the world and is cultivating their relationship with God alone. Next come the ranks of sainthood (*wilāyāt*) when the *himma* 'rises from the states and stations (*maqāmāt*) to the plane of the divine Names and attributes' (Al-Kumushkhānawī 1913, p. 207). This is the second rank that al-Khālīdī describes when the gnostics seek only God just as they conceive of Him in terms of His Names and attributes. This changes in the following level of 'the realities' (*al-ḥaqā'iq*) when 'the *himma* rises above the divine attributes and turns away from the characteristics of God to the divine Essence (*dhāt*)' (Al-Kumushkhānawī 1913, p. 207). Now the final rank al-Khālīdī delineates has been attained wherein it is the absolute divine Essence that is sought and not God as He relates to His creation through His divine Names and attributes. But al-Kumushkhānawī writes

that, even after this, there is a rank, which he names ‘the final stages’ (*al-nihāyāt*). He writes that, in this stage

there is no *himma* except perception through effects of God in all existent things, like when God said, ‘And you [Muḥammad] did not throw what you threw, but it was God Who threw [it]’,⁹ and when He said, ‘And when you brought forth the dead with My permission’.¹⁰ So in this final stage, ostensible actions and earning rewards (*takassub*) are annihilated and it is unsullied by the contamination of contingency; the path becomes widened and expansive, and the heart ascends to the station of the [divine] secret (*maqām al-sirr*) (Al-Kumushkhānawī 1913, p. 207).

The final stage, as is clear, is merely a progression from the rank of the realities and adds further certainty to the heart of the gnostic that all things in creation are ultimately manifestations of the divine Essence. The gnostic, thus, becomes aware that there is no real contingency, only the absolute existence of the divine manifested as contingent beings. Al-Kumushkhānawī, therefore, agrees with the basic tripartite levels that al-Khālīdī delineates, but he adds further sublevels to these in his analysis. The reason for this concordance is detailed below.

Ibn ‘Arabī’s categorisation of *himma* in his *Rasā’il* agrees with these Sufi manuals since he defines it as ‘isolating the heart for the objects of desire (*munā*)’ (Ibn ‘Arabī 1997, p. 536), but this is a characteristically ambiguous definition. Further detail provided by Henri Corbin, elucidates that *himma* is actually very different for Ibn ‘Arabī because he believes it is

the act of meditating, conceiving, imagining, projecting, ardently desiring . . . It is the force of an intention so powerful as to project and realize a being external to the being who conceives the intention (Corbin 1997, p. 222).

When elite gnostics focus their absolute and unremitting intention to the extantiation of a being in the phenomenal world, they cause them to exist in it. Su’ād al-Ḥakīm explicates that, according to Ibn ‘Arabī, *himma* is ‘an active faculty’ (*quwwa f ‘āla*) or an ‘active capability’ that human beings have (Ḥakīm 1981, p. 1109). This faculty or capability may be given by God and be part of the ‘natural constitution’ (*jibilla*) of a person, or it could be the fruit of ‘nurture’ (*tarbiya*) and ‘acquired’ (*iktisāb*) (Ḥakīm 1981, p. 1109). Ibn ‘Arabī specifies the disparate provenances of *himma* in his work, *Mawāqī’ al-nujūm*:

Know that the existence of this *himma* in the servant is of two kinds . . . a *himma* that arises in the essence of the inborn disposition (*khilqa*) of a servant and [in his] natural constitution (*jibilla*), and a *himma* that is gained after not having it (Ibn ‘Arabī 1907, p. 84).

As an example of the *himma* of natural constitution, Ibn ‘Arabī mentions the incident of ‘Īsā speaking to defend his mother’s honour whilst he was still ‘in the cradle’ (*fi’l-mahd*), as detailed in Q19:29-33 (Ibn ‘Arabī 1907, p. 84). The proof of the *himma* of acquisition, says Ibn ‘Arabī, is in the Prophet Muḥammad’s saying, ‘Learn certainty (*yaqīn*)’, and in the story of ‘Īsā, because ‘when it was said to him that he used to walk on water, [he replied that] if he had increased his certainty, he would have walked on air!’ (Ibn ‘Arabī n.d.b). Ibn ‘Arabī explains that the level of certainty (*yaqīn*) in God, as the ultimate cause of all things in the phenomenal realm, directly impacts our perception of it and our capabilities within it such that miraculous feats, like walking on water or floating on air, are achieved thereby.

As *himma* may be innate or acquired, and it is an active capability that allows the manipulation of reality, it can be employed for diverse objectives, as al-Ḥakīm elaborates in the following:

Since *himma* is only a capability, it varies according to that to which it is attached, and it follows the will (*irāda*) of its bearer. So if the bearer of *himma* attaches it to the [material] world, we see him gain worldly treasures . . . and if he attaches it to worship (*ibāda*), he will attain [spiritual] stations (*maqāmāt*) . . . and if he

attaches it to God, all other attachments (*ta'alluqāt*) fall away and his multiple *himmas* become one *himma* (Ḥakīm 1981, p. 1111).

There is a reciprocity between the power of *himma*, which is active, and its object, which is passive, such that the passive object also determines the active power of *himma*, thereby becoming active and rendering the power of *himma* passive.

Ibn 'Arabī allows the power of *himma* to be attached to the material world and if this is the case the bearer of this *himma* gains what they desire. There are others who focus their power of *himma* on religious worship, which allows them to ascend the stations and progress on their spiritual journey. But even this, intimates Ibn 'Arabī, is a degree removed from a pure focus on God. This second group is subdivided by al-Kumushkhānawī into multiple initial groups that seek felicity in the hereafter through their *himma*. The third cohort, says Ibn 'Arabī, comprises those spiritual elites who merge their 'multiple *himmas*' into one *himma* with the sole objective of reaching God. Al-Kumushkhānawī also speaks of combining disparate *himmas* into one *himma* to seize divine love in the rank of 'states' (*aḥwāl*). This means that not only are there different kinds of *himma*—from those applied to the profane as well as to the sacred—but the same person can have multiple *himmas*, just as they have multiple inclinations and objects of desire. Ibn 'Arabī elucidates that the matter to which the power of *himma* is applied plays a pivotal role in the power itself:

Surely the *himmas* vary according to the varying objects of desire (*maṭāmī'*) because the *himma* is attached to them . . . and, were it not for the objects of desire, the *himma* would be cut off, and if there was no *himma* then there would be no actions (*a'māl*) (Ibn 'Arabī n.d.b, p. 15).

As the basis for the action, then, *himma* is crucial for anything to be achieved, but al-Ḥakīm explains that 'powerful *himma*' (*al-himma al-qawiyya*) is more than just intention and desire, it is in the 'root of the natural constitution' (*jibilla*) and allows the bearer to 'ascend ranks' because it is 'attached to prodigious affairs' (*'aẓā'im al-umūr*) (Ḥakīm 1981, p. 1111).

Ibn 'Arabī, like al-Khālidi, declares that there are three grades of this *himma*. The first one he calls 'the *himma* of [mystical] awakening' (*tanabbuh*). He writes the following:

The *himma* of [mystical] awakening (*tanabbuh*) is the heart's waking up to what the reality of humankind bestows, which is what one's desire is attached to, whether it is impossible or possible, so it is isolating the heart for the objects of desire (*munā*) (Ibn 'Arabī n.d.a).

This is the level Ibn 'Arabī begins with in his definition of *himma* in the *Rasā'il* (see above). It differs from al-Khālidi's first level of spiritual awakening when the world is already forsaken by the gnostic for the divine. Corbin explains that, for Ibn 'Arabī, this level of *himma* gives a person the capacity to become cognisant of things as they really are. Therefore, it provides information about the object of desire that cannot be gained by the intellect and is only attained through mystical 'tasting' (*dhawq*) (Corbin 2008, pp. 269–70). Ibn 'Arabī writes the following:

This *himma* makes him [the bearer] truly 'perceive' that which he desires . . . so if this perception gives him [the inclination] to withdraw from the object of desire, then he withdraws; and if it gives him resolution to pursue it, then he becomes resolved (Ibn 'Arabī n.d.a).

Schleiermacher makes the same point about the 'sages' who perceive the reality of things residing, as they truly are, under their phenomenal manifestations. This is their 'clear intuition', in which

all strife between appearance and reality is resolved, and who, therefore, undisturbed by these refinements, can again be stirred like children, their joy would be a real and pure feeling, a living impulse, a gladly communicative contact between them and the world (Schleiermacher n.d., p. 56).

These sages experience the world in a completely different way, and they are able to reconcile the dichotomy between the appearance of things in the ostensible universe and

their inner reality. The sage is only able to achieve this, Schleiermacher asserts, because ‘his nature is reality which knows reality’ (Schleiermacher n.d., p. 33). When he has reached this level, the gnostic becomes cognisant of the connection between him and the universe and so he is able to

pursue the play of nature’s powers into their most secret recesses, from the inaccessible storehouses of energized matter to the artistic workshops of the organic life. He measures its might from the bounds of world-filled space to the centre of his own Ego, and finds himself everywhere in eternal strife and in closest union. He is nature’s centre and circumference. Delusion is gone and reality won (Schleiermacher n.d., p. 100).

For Ibn ‘Arabī, the reason he finds ‘he is nature’s centre and circumference’ is because he has now realised his inner reality as a locus of manifestation of the divine Names, and that the reality of the universe is identical to his, but on a macrocosmic scale. This is his mystical awakening according to Ibn ‘Arabī. And since the *himma* of mystical awakening allows the gnostic to gain esoteric knowledge about the reality of the object of their desire, says Ibn ‘Arabī, he is now in a position to make an informed decision about whether to pursue it or not. Based on this, the gnostic resolves to acquire the object or to abandon it. However, because the epistemological basis of the reality of the object is mystical, it is inaccessible to the intellect and can only be gained through ‘tasting’. Ibn ‘Arabī frequently refers to knowledge that he gained only through mystical tasting.¹¹ Schleiermacher makes the same point about the sages who gain this faculty (Schleiermacher n.d., pp. 45–46, 56, 100). Ibn ‘Arabī writes in the *Fuṣūṣ* that this knowledge of tasting is predicated on the rank of the gnostic: ‘the knowledge of the divine through [mystical] tasting (*al-‘ulūm al-ilāhiyya al-dhawqiyya*) that the people of God, the Exalted, have varies depending on differing abilities’ (Ibn ‘Arabī 2002, p. 107). So, at this stage, the *himma* bequeaths the gnostics true perception of reality, which is what things truly are behind the phenomenal façade that everyone else views. This level of *himma* shapes their reality, but it does not affect the reality of others. The second level, however, affects others as well.

Ibn ‘Arabī dubs the *himma* of the second level, ‘the *himma* of the will’ (*irāda*). He writes the following:

As for the *himma* of the will ... it is a comprehensive *himma* (*himma jam‘iyya*) ... so if the self (*nafs*) comes together, it can affect bodies of the [sensible] world (*ajrām al-‘ālam*) and their states (*aḥwāl*) (Ibn ‘Arabī n.d.a).

This is the power of extitention that is derived from the divine power of existention. It is a level that al-Khālidi or al-Kumushkhānawī do not mention. Ibn ‘Arabī explains that, when the gnostics of the highest level use their spiritual power of *himma* that comes from their enlightened hearts, they are able to mirror the divine power of existention, and God uses them as ‘causes (*asbāb*) [through which] God, be He praised and exalted, does things that are already [determined] by Him’ (Ibn ‘Arabī 1907, p. 84). The elite gnostics, thus, employ the power of *himma* only in accordance with the divine will and not based on their own desires (see below).

This power of existention emanates from the spiritual concentration of the elite gnostics, as long as it persists. Ibn ‘Arabī clarifies that the elite gnostics do not actually ‘create’ anything in phenomenal reality, the operation that their power of *himma* carries out is the transfer of already existing beings in the pre-phenomenal realms of reality that are then manifested in the sensible world (Corbin 1997, pp. 225–26).¹² Their spiritual concentration maintains the perpetual existence of the object in the sensible world because Ibn ‘Arabī agrees with Ash‘arite occasionalism that our perception of phenomenal reality is rapid perpetual re-creation by God.¹³ He, nevertheless, believes that the Ash‘arites only got this partially right as they dismissed the ever-present divine substrate that underpins all of reality (Ibn ‘Arabī 2002, p. 156).

Since all of reality is merely a rapid re-creation of things in different realms, and because all these realms are connected—being nothing but more and more differentiated

versions of the divine Names of God (Lala 2022)—the elite gnostic is able to affect the re-creation of things from the pre-phenomenal realms to the phenomenal one through their power of *himma*. The power of *himma* is therefore the power to cause the phenomenal appearance of things that are already present in other pre-phenomenal realms (Corbin 1997, p. 226). This power, then, creates a new phenomenal reality as long as their spiritual concentration persists, but it may only be other gnostics who can perceive this new reality (Corbin 1997, p. 227).

Ibn ‘Arabī then mentions the third and highest level of *himma*. This is ‘the *himma* of the Reality’ (*al-Ḥaqīqa*), ‘which is the combination of *himmas* with the purity of inspiration (*ilhām*)’ (Ibn ‘Arabī n.d.a). He says that this *himma* is reserved for the gnostics of the very highest level ‘who combine their *himmas* on God’ (Ibn ‘Arabī n.d.a) because He is the only one with true reality.¹⁴ These elite gnostics use this combination of *himmas* to connect with the ‘divine unity’ (*aḥadiyya*), which is a term Ibn ‘Arabī customarily reserves for the numinous God in His undifferentiated state (Lala 2019, pp. 119–23, 164; Al-Qāshānī 1992, p. 51; Jurjānī 1845, p. 12). In this way, the gnostics of the highest level are able to see the unity behind phenomenal multiplicity, or, as Ibn ‘Arabī puts it, they do this ‘to flee from multiplicity, and seeking the oneness of multiplicity (*tawḥīd al-kathra*), or just oneness’ (Ibn ‘Arabī n.d.a). The highest level gnostics, then, do not just perceive things as they truly are like the gnostics of the first level. They are able to go beyond the reality of things and see them as a manifestation of the ultimate reality which is God. Al-Khālīdī and al-Kumushkhānawī also afford this rank to the highest level gnostics. This means that the elite gnostics see the oneness in the multiplicity of creation, which in turn means their perception of reality is entirely distinct from everyone else. Al-Ḥakīm elaborates that, as the gnostics ascend through the ranks of spirituality, they lose their attachment to all things besides God until there remains no other object for the *himma* to be applied to except God; therefore, it is in this way that all the *himmas* become just one *himma* (Ḥakīm 1981, pp. 1111–12).

Ibn ‘Arabī’s conception of *himma*, although it bears similarities with al-Khālīdī and al-Kumushkhānawī, is clearly different. One of the reasons for this is that ‘Abd al-Razzāq al-Qāshānī (d. 736/1335?), arguably the most influential person for the formalisation of Ibn ‘Arabī’s thought, did not simply perform the function of systematising and promulgating Ibn ‘Arabī’s ideas, he also highlighted some concepts and downgraded others (Lala 2019). His treatment of *himma* in the most comprehensive of his three lexicons on the Sufi nomenclature of Ibn ‘Arabī and the final work he authored in his life, *Latā’if al-i’lām*, bears ample testimony to this (Al-Qāsimī n.d., p. 733). In this work, al-Qāshānī begins by offering the same basic definition of *himma* as Ibn ‘Arabī in the *Rasā’il*. He also agrees that *himma* primarily denotes attachment of the heart to God, not to the world or even to the reward God bestows on His faithful servants (Al-Qāshānī n.d., 2:335). It is for this reason, he asserts, that *himma* has been defined as ‘seeking God, whilst shunning (*i’rāḍ*) all things besides Him, without lassitude (*futūr*) or tiring (*tawān*)’ (Al-Qāshānī n.d., 2:335). Al-Qāshānī then adduces the same tripartite classification of *himma* into the initial ‘*himma* of awakening’ (*himmat al-ifāqa*), then ‘the *himma* of rejection’ (*himmat al-anafa*), and, finally, ‘the *himma* of the lofty *himma* lords’ (*himmat arbāb al-himam al-‘āliya*) as al-Khālīdī (Al-Qāshānī n.d., 2:335–36), indicating that the latter enthusiastically adopted the former’s definitions. This would add credence to the contention of recent scholarship that al-Qāshānī exerted a powerful and abiding influence on the intellectual topography of Sufism (Lala 2019).

Al-Qāshānī writes that the ‘*himma* of awakening’ (*himmat al-ifāqa*) is when ‘the heart of the servant [of God] awakens from the overwhelming effects of temporal transience (*duḥūr*) and the tribulations of desires, so he sees the world in this state as repugnant’. This is because in this state, adds al-Qāshānī, ‘he sees that everything in the world has no permanence, so he craves that which abides because he sees that the hereafter (*ākhirā*) does not have an ending’ (Al-Qāshānī n.d., 2:336). It is clear that, even though al-Khālīdī accepts al-Qāshānī’s terminology wholesale, his definition of the ‘*himma* of awakening’ is slightly different from his predecessor because, whereas al-Qāshānī states that it is a spiritual awakening that galvanises the gnostic to seek the hereafter because it will remain

forever, unlike this ephemeral world, al-Khālīdī affords the gnostic the higher rank of seeking God Himself.

Al-Qāshānī's second rank of 'the *himma* of rejection' (*himmat al-anaḥa*), wherein the gnostic does not seek rewards for their actions, but instead seeks only proximity to the divine (Al-Qāshānī n.d., 2:336), is fully adopted by al-Khālīdī, who produces a strikingly similar account of it in his lexicon. Al-Khālīdī's final rank of 'the *himma* of the lofty *himma* lords' (*himmat arbāb al-himam al-ʿālīya*), nevertheless, furnishes the reader with far more detail than al-Qāshānī divulges, for he writes simply that it is the rank in which only God is sought by the mystic, to the exclusion of all else, which is why this *himma* is called 'the highest of the *himmas* because it is related to God, above Whom there is nothing' (Al-Qāshānī n.d., 2:336). 'This is why', adds al-Qāshānī, 'his *himma* is also called "the lofty *himmas*"' (*al-himam al-ʿālīya*) (Al-Qāshānī n.d., 2:336). It is this rank that al-Khālīdī describes as 'the *himma* of the lofty *himma* lords' in which the mystic's *himma* 'does not even stop at witnessing the divine attributes; rather, it goes beyond witnessing the divine qualities to the divine essence itself' (Al-Qāshānī n.d., 2:337).

It may be clearly discerned from the foregoing that al-Qāshānī heavily influenced al-Khālīdī, who presents a condensed version of his entire treatment of *himma* with only slight changes. If al-Qāshānī exerted a powerful influence on al-Khālīdī, then his impact on al-Kumushkhānawī is even greater as his entire disquisition on *himma* has been taken verbatim from al-Qāshānī's *Iṣṭilāḥāt al-ṣūfiyya* (Al-Qāshānī 1992, pp. 304–5), which is why al-Kumushkhānawī's analysis reads as just a more detailed version of al-Khālīdī's. Al-Qāshānī's formalisation of Ibn ʿArabī's thought evidently achieved its intention of garnering a much wider audience (Lala 2019; Al-Qāshānī 1892, p. 3; 1992, p. 21; 1995, p. 34). However, in order to achieve this goal, al-Qāshānī either downplays aspects of Ibn ʿArabī's thought or omits them entirely (Lala 2019). Specifically, in this case, there is no mention of the power of existentiation that features so prominently in Ibn ʿArabī's works in either the *Iṣṭilāḥāt* or the *Laṭāʾif*. Ibn ʿArabī spills a lot of ink in describing the '*himma* of the will' that enables the gnostics of the highest level to shape reality, but al-Qāshānī overlooks it in these two lexicons as it does not serve his purpose. He does, nevertheless, include it in his lexicon of intermediate length, *Raḥḥ al-zulāl*, where he writes the following:

This *himma* is called 'the *himma* of the will' (*himmat al-irāda*), and it is a comprehensive *himma* (*himma jamʿiyya*); the self (*nafs*) becomes restricted to it so nothing can oppose it, to the point that if he [the gnostic] conceptualises something and wishes it to exist, it would exist immediately (Al-Qāshānī 1995, p. 116).

This definition of 'the *himma* of the will' is completely consistent—in meaning and nomenclature—with Ibn ʿArabī's articulation of it in the *Futūḥāt*. However, al-Qāshānī side-lines this concept, which he perhaps deems divisive, and omits it from his lexicon for the initiates, *Iṣṭilāḥāt al-ṣūfiyya*, and his most comprehensive and final work, the *Laṭāʾif*. Whereas the idea that the perception of reality of the gnostics of the highest level differs from layfolk is comparatively uncontroversial—which is why al-Qāshānī dedicates so much effort to its delineation and formalisation in the *Iṣṭilāḥāt* and then the *Laṭāʾif*—the belief that these gnostics could actually alter reality might prevent initiates from embarking on the mystical path or neophytes from proceeding along it. Al-Qāshānī's careful curation of Ibn ʿArabī's mystical outlook entails the relegation of the notion that the highest-level mystics change reality itself. But if this is the case, as Ibn ʿArabī argues and even al-Qāshānī concedes, and gnostics can affect phenomenal reality through their '*himma* of the will', why is it that we do not often find gnostics exercising this awesome power?

4. Using *himma* to Existentiate Sensible Reality

The power of *himma* can be used by gnostics to do miraculous things (*karāmāt*) in the phenomenal world, as Ibn ʿArabī elucidates, 'And they are not, I mean miracles [worked by gnostics], except that which is manifest through the power of *himma*' (Ḥakīm 1981, p. 1116). The remit of the power of *himma* to form reality is vast. In fact, Ibn ʿArabī writes that it encapsulates all things that can be done through ostensible means, 'Everything that

cannot be gained by a person except by their body or by apparent means (*sabab zāhir*), is gained by the prophet or the saint (*walī*) through their *himma*' (Ibn 'Arabī 1907, pp. 83–84). Yet the gnostics seldom use this power, as Samuela Pagani observes, 'Les saints et les prophètes dont la connaissance est plus parfaite, évitent cependant d'avoir recours à ces pouvoirs' (Pagani 2014, p. 121). Partially, this is to protect the neophytes who are not spiritually equipped to witness the incredible power to form a phenomenal reality that the elite gnostics wield; therefore, this power would only try their faith if they saw what the gnostics could do (Ibn 'Arabī n.d.b). But it is also because

they knew that in this world the servant cannot become the Lord, and that the subject who dominates a thing (*mutaṣarrif*) and the thing he dominates (*mutaṣarrif fīhi*) are essentially one being, but also because they recognized that the form of what is epiphanized (*mutajallī*) is also the form of what the epiphany is revealed (*mutajallā-lahu*) (Corbin 1997, p. 229).

This is why, when Zakariyya did eventually use this power to pray for a son, while he was senescent and his wife barren (Q19:1-6), he invoked the divine Name, 'The Master' (*Al-Mālik*), as Ṣadr al-Dīn al-Qūnawī (d. 673/1274), the adopted son and foremost disciple of Ibn 'Arabī (Todd 2014), clarifies in the following:

Know that the secret that describes his wisdom is the wisdom of acquisition because what overwhelmed his state was that it was governed by the [divine] Name, 'The Master' (*Al-Mālik*). This is because dominion (*mulk*) is power (*shidda*), and an owner (*malik*) is powerful (*shadīd*). And God is the possessor of power (*dhu'l-quwwa*), The Strong (*Al-Matīn*) (Qur'an, 51:58). So God aided him with power that penetrated his *himma* and concentration, and produced a response and acquisition of what was asked for (Qūnawī 2013, p. 106).

It was Zakariyya's *himma*, then, that allowed him to access God's absolute lordship and His absolute power of existention, which, in turn, enabled him to create the reality that he wanted. However, not only was he reticent about using this power, he made his supplication privately so that the layfolk would not be overawed by his power, and in order to maintain his spiritual concentration that allowed existention of such a reality (Al-Jāmī 2005, p. 162).

Perhaps the best example of the lengths gnostics and prophets go to avoid using the power of *himma* is the prophet Lūṭ. In the Qur'anic narrative, Lūṭ, overwhelmed by the transgression and recalcitrance of his people, cries out, 'If only I had power to oppose you or recourse to some strong support' (Qur'an, 11:80). Ibn 'Arabī believes that Lūṭ already had recourse to 'strong support' (Ibn 'Arabī 2002, p. 127); it was his power of *himma* through which he could have shaped reality to whatever he desired, but he chose not to use it. The Sufi gives two reasons for this: (1) 'because of his realisation of the station of servanthood (*maqām al-'ubūdiyya*)', and (2) because there is a 'unity of the one acting and the one acted upon' (Ibn 'Arabī 2002, p. 128). These are the same reasons Corbin delineated. The principal student of al-Qūnawī, Mu'ayyid al-Dīn al-Jandī (d. 700/1300?), who studied under him for ten years (Kaḥḥālā 1993, p. 943; Baghdādī 1951; Al-Jandī 1982, p. 12, 2:484; Ḥājī Khalīfa 1941, 2:1261) and wrote a commentary on the *Fuṣūṣ* under instruction from al-Qūnawī (Al-Jāmī 1858, pp. 648–50), explains that this means there is a

unity between the one acting and the one who is acted on, which demands acting even as it prevents acting because it occurs in the same thing; there being nothing in existence except God. But the [phenomenal world] requires actions to occur, so if the gnostic does act, his act is nothing but the act of God, be He praised, on account of the aforementioned unity. This is particularly true for the perfect servant (*al-'abd al-kāmil*), who has taken on all of the divine nominal realities (*al-ḥaqā'iq al-asmā'iyya al-ilāhiyya*) of the Lord so that none of his traits of servanthood (*ṣifāt al-'abdāniyya*) remain because of the unity of the essence, for if they do, he is not a perfect servant. Yet he does not exercise or wield his power of *himma* for fear that he forsakes the station of servanthood (Al-Jandī 1982, p. 402).

Since all things in reality are theophanic loci, the division between agent and object, active and passive, is effaced. Nevertheless, al-Jandī appreciates that the semblance of causality has to be maintained, and this may require the exercise of the power of *himma*; so when a gnostic—who is the Perfect Man or the perfect servant because he has actualised his potentiality to manifest all the divine Names, and thus ‘taken on all of the divine nominal realities’—uses his power of *himma*, his action is nothing but God’s action. By wielding this immense power to form reality, the gnostic is operationalising the divine power of existentiating, which means that now he is using his manifestation of the divine Names of lordship to exercise complete control over phenomenal reality. This is why ‘none of his traits of servanthood (*ṣifāt al-‘abdāniyya*) remain’ in him. But the gnostic does not want to flaunt this active power; he wishes to remain in ‘the station or servanthood’ so he does his best to not use his power of *himma* unless it is absolutely necessary, al-Jandī puts it as follows:

The only thing in reality that stops him [from using his *himma*] is [wanting] to stay in the station of essential servanthood (*maqām al-‘ubūdiyya al-dhātīyya*), which is [suitable] for him, and giving the trust of accidental lordship (*al-rubūbiyya al-‘araḍiyya*) back to God, following the example of the people close to God. Therefore, he does not busy himself with acting [effectively] or controlling [others], instead turning his attention entirely to God (Al-Jandī 1982, p. 402).

The gnostic refrains from using his incredible existentiating power of *himma* and stays in the station of servanthood by giving back to God the power to exercise lordship over the sensible world. This power of lordship that the gnostic returns is accidental lordship that is derived from God’s absolute lordship. Therefore, he remains a passive servant and does not become an active lord in the world. The gnostics of the highest level are the ones least likely to use their power of *himma* because they see reality as it truly is—a manifestation of the divine Names—so they have no desire to change it, as al-Jandī makes clear in the following:

Perfection in gnosis and knowledge about the realities of things necessitates perfect comportment before God, the Exalted, which is not occupying oneself with manifesting power and influence through the spiritual power of *himma* (Al-Jandī 1982, p. 405).

It is for this reason that Lūṭ, despite having the spiritual power to manipulate sensible reality, did not use it even when he was overwhelmed by his people. More generally, this is why gnostics do not ordinarily exercise their power of *himma* unless it is in accordance with the divine will. The power of existentiating that the gnostics have, thus, is just another one of the causes God employs to carry out His decree in the phenomenal world; it is never employed by the gnostics because of their desires since they have achieved the rank of the Perfect Man. This means that they have become a locus of manifestation of all the divine Names. Due to being a comprehensive theophanic locus, there is no separation between the gnostic and the divine Names, and so God’s will is the gnostic’s will. The power of *himma*, then, is deployed in pursuance of this singular will.

5. Conclusions

It has long been acknowledged that religious experiences inform our subjective reality, but this could be antithetical to the dictates of organised religion if it was given absolute priority in every case and for every person. Thus, there was a move to objectivise these phenomenological subjectivities by affording only elite gnostics a parallel revelation in addition to the initial revelation received by prophets. This perpetual revelation not only allowed a repristination of the religion in accordance with unique concerns of the gnostics from different eras, but it also maintained a direct channel between God and His closest servants. Ibn ‘Arabī took this process of objectivisation a step further by claiming that the gnostics of the highest level do not just perceive reality in a different way than normal people because they view the true divine reality behind the phenomenal façade, they can

actually form phenomenal reality through their mystical power of *himma*, which enables them to transfer existents from pre-phenomenal realms to our physical world. This means there is a progression from the subjective reality of lay people to objective scriptural reality, based on the subjective reality of gnostics, to objective phenomenal reality, based on the subjective reality of the highest level gnostics. However, Ibn ‘Arabī makes it clear that the gnostics of the highest level never use this power in pursuance of personal desires. In their capacity as comprehensive loci of all the divine Names, or Perfect Men, they are in complete accord with the divine Will and thus their power of *himma* becomes another conduit for the execution of the divine Will in phenomenal reality.

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Notes

- ¹ One must differentiate between religious experiences and spiritual experiences. Whilst the former is associated with an articulation of experiences that are within a specific religious context, the latter is more often used to denote a private experience (Hood 2009, p. 189). It is clear that Schleiermacher conflates these terms and blurs the lines between the private experience and the religious expression of it.
- ² The issue of subjectivity and religious diversity is discussed by (Alston 2014), chapter 7. Gershom Scholem argues that it is evidently untenable, in the context of experiences that emanate from and are operative within specific religious beliefs, to speak of experiences that are purely abstract. He writes, ‘There is no such thing as mysticism in the abstract, that is to say, a phenomenon or experience which has no particular relation to other religious phenomena. There is no mysticism as such, there is only the mysticism of a particular religious system, Christian, Islamic, Jewish mysticism and so on’ (Scholem 1995, p. 26). One must therefore make a distinction between mystical experiences and religious experiences. But even before this can be done, one should attempt to define mysticism. As William Ralph Inge observes, however, there is no universally agreed-upon definition of mysticism, which is why he provides approximately twenty-six definitions of the term (Inge 2010). Scholem agrees with this assessment (Scholem 1995, pp. 23–32), but that is not to say that one cannot make any pronouncements about mysticism and mystical experience. Mystical experience—as it is most commonly conceived—forms a subcategory of religious experience. As such, a mystical experience is a kind of religious experience (Webb 2022). This being the case, all religious experiences would be mystical experiences, but not vice versa. For the purposes of this paper, in the context of Ibn ‘Arabī’s works, I shall be referring to religious experiences that are articulations of spiritual experiences, and narrowly conceived as mystical experiences, in order to mitigate issues arising from differing definitions.
- ³ A detailed exploration of the life of Ibn ‘Arabī and his thought, in general, is outside the scope of this study. For the former, see (Addas 1993; Hirtenstein 1999). For the latter, there is a wealth of material available, such as (Izutsu 1983; Landau 2008; Sells 1994; ‘Afifi 1939; Chodkiewicz 1993a, 1993b; Ghurāb 1985; Gril 2005; Lala 2019; Lipton 2018; Mayer 2008). On the topic of the influence that Ibn ‘Arabī had, see (Knysh 1999; Morris 1986, 1987).
- ⁴ For details on these names, see (Al-Ghazālī 1999).
- ⁵ It is noteworthy that the concept of unity and multiplicity in essence and form in Islamic intellectual history was first thoroughly interrogated by Abū Yūsuf al-Kindī (d. 259/873?) (Al-Ahiwānī 1948, pp. 105–7).
- ⁶ It is important to note that Ibn ‘Arabī does not suggest that God gains knowledge or is dependent on empirically-derived data in the sense that humans gain knowledge or are dependent on causes, as the citation makes plain.
- ⁷ The concept of the Perfect Man is one of the cornerstones of Ibn ‘Arabī’s mystical outlook. Masataka Takeshita explores this idea in (Takeshita 1987). However, it was ‘Abd al-Karīm al-Jīlī (d. 812/1408?) who really elaborated on and systematised the concept in his seminal work on this topic, *Al-Insān al-kāmil fī ma‘rifat al-awākhir wa’l-awā’il* (Al-Jīlī 1997). Fitzroy Morrissey interrogates al-Jīlī’s understanding of the Perfect Man, and how it departs from Ibn ‘Arabī’s articulation of it, in (Morrissey 2020a).
- ⁸ A spiritual station (*maqām*) is a rank on the aspirant’s spiritual journey. It is distinct from a spiritual state (*ḥāl*) because a spiritual state is temporary whereas a station is permanent. The aspirant must attain numerous stations on their spiritual journey (Al-Tahānawī n.d., 3:1227; Al-Qāshānī 1992, pp. 107–8).
- ⁹ This refers to the Prophet Muḥammad throwing some dust and small stones in the direction of enemy combatants at the Battle of Badr, which caused widespread panic alarm among them, as detailed by Abū Ja‘far al-Ṭabarī (d. 310/923) in his celebrated commentary (Al-Ṭabarī 2000, 12:442–43).

- 10 This refers to the Prophet ʿĪsā’s ability to bring forth the dead (Al-Ṭabarī 2000, 11:215).
- 11 See, for instance, Ibn ʿArabī (2002, p. 158).
- 12 There are five realms or levels of existence in Ibn ʿArabī’s ontology. The first is the presence of the divine Essence (*dhāt*). This is followed by the presence of the spirits, then the presence of the souls, the presence of the ‘images’ (*mithāl*), and, finally, the presence of the sensible world (Chittick 1982, pp. 107–28).
- 13 Abū Bakr al-Bāqillānī (d. 403/1013) first introduced the idea of perpetual re-creation of all things in existence into Sunni theology in order to preserve absolute divine omnipotence (Gardet and Anawati 1981, pp. 62–64).
- 14 It is for this reason that in Sufi literature, the term for ‘God’ is usually ‘the Truth’ (al-Ḥaqq) (Jurjānī 1845, p. 96).

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Article

Fore-Giving in Time: A Husserlian Reading of *Genesis*, *Luke*, and *John*

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Abstract: This paper attempts to perform a phenomenology of forgiveness by way of careful analysis of texts on time-consciousness and alterity by Edmund Husserl. It does so in two ways: first, by identifying the manner in which we give time to ourselves as both absolute and concrete subjectivity; and second by identifying the way in which our relation to other persons has an isomorphic, structural similarity with our self-relation as temporality. The final part of the paper engages with three biblical texts—the story of Joseph and his brothers in *Genesis*, where forgiveness is mentioned for the first time—and two short passages in the Gospels of *Luke* and *John*. Ultimately, the paper concludes that forgiveness of self and other occurs as a kind of pre-giving or fore-giving in the sense of opening up new meaning for us all to inhabit.

Keywords: forgiveness; hermeneutics; phenomenology; temporality; Edmund Husserl

1. Introduction

Our moments, our years, our lives pass away. But they seldom *just* pass. It is true that there are moments or whole stretches of our life where we *do not explicitly notice* our time passing, say on a road trip where the toll booth brings us home to the fact that four hours and three hundred miles have been on autopilot. However, much of the time, our moments, years, our lives *matter* to us *insofar as they pass*. Our passing matters to us. It matters emotionally. Thus, in relation to our own passing away, we tend to be aware of our feelings that concern our passing—very often of feelings of nostalgia, resentment, sadness, or disillusionment.

Within the grip of these feelings, we can also work to extend or to assign sense to our passing by speaking. We can speak about our passing in order to codify a recognition of ourselves *in our passing* as vulnerable or defiant—“what could I do?” or “that is just how time works” or “it was her time” (these kind of remarks speak out of our sense of our vulnerability); “I am not just this deed or these measurable moments or this many years” or “I am not ready to let go of it” or “it is never my time” (these speak out of our sense of our defiance).

Our feelings and our speaking of passing away—our making sense of loss—work together to indicate our own a priori connection to time as such. This particular passing away of a trip or a love or a person matters because *time itself* matters to us. And this means, I would argue, following the work of Edmund Husserl, that we are connected to time prior to being immersed in any concrete event.

The recognition of our connection to time as such, we might say, seems not only to indicate an a priori connection to time but also, particularly within the experience of harm or grief or loss, to mark out a conflict. We are connected to time, but we would like *not* to be. We do not want things or people to end as they do. We would like the harm or the grief, as it ends, to hurry up and run its course. Why won't it? Who is responsible for time moving so slowly? Or so quickly? If I am connected to time, if I therefore *am* time, why do I have so little or too much of it?

The experience of time is thus, in grief or in harm, also the experience of an intimate need to flee from time's structure or to try to hold *someone*—perhaps even *ourselves*—responsible for the passing of our temporality as such. Fleeing, holding responsible, blaming, even resigning—these sound like ethical moves. And they are. Indeed, our passing, the passing of time, is an impetus toward ethical responsibility, toward holding responsible, *for the meaning of temporality itself*. Time is a call to make the meaning of time itself an ethical choice.

In this paper I will argue for the primordially of forgiveness as the appropriate ethical response to the meaning of our temporality. On the one hand, the forgiveness required is a forgiveness of *self*, in our having given time to ourselves as our own project. This self-forgiveness, perhaps as a kind of self-permission, is already visible and under way in the moments that pass without notice or comment—as can the miles on a road trip. On the other hand, the forgiveness required is a forgiveness of other people, the ones who harm us or who pass away and leave us abandoned. This forgiveness will be visible in the attempt to open up new territories of meaning or what I will call *fore-giving*. It is more than the pardoning of harm, as it works to transcend trauma and move toward the to-come.

To make my argument, I will first explore some of the work of Edmund Husserl on time-consciousness in both *Ideas* and *Lectures on Time-Consciousness*. Two of the central points I will highlight in Section 1 are the following: first, his description of the (infinite) base flow or stream in us that forms our internal experience of time, which Husserl calls “absolute subjectivity”; and second, his description of the pairing together in a “double intentionality of retention” of that absolute flow and of the “genuine time” of our concrete, retentive life. Examining these two central points will allow me to argue in Section 2 of this paper that we as “absolute subjectivity” give ourselves time and thus open up for ourselves the possibility of moving beyond resentment, of granting self-forgiveness and of the surpassing of trauma.

After analyzing Husserl's description of time-consciousness and defining self-forgiveness, I will then move into a treatment of the relationship between the experience of memory and the pairing with other people in Husserl's Fifth Cartesian Meditation. Examining this relationship then allows me to claim that time is *for* the relationship with the other person and, ultimately, for the possibility of forgiving them by fore-giving new territories for our more authentic, peaceful lives together.

Finally, I will use Husserl on time-consciousness and alterity to inform my reading of two stories from Scripture—that of Joseph and his brothers in *Genesis* and two accounts of the life of Jesus in the Gospels of John and Luke. In performing this hermeneutics, I will be able to suggest that self-forgiveness and the forgiveness of others are, taken together, the essential acts of recognition of our primary responsibility to what is pre-given or fore-given. In sum, I will argue that forgiveness is a project that includes becoming able to pardon *others* by recognizing our own agency in the very experience of time.

2. Husserl on Time-Consciousness

2.1. Time in *Ideas* 1

In Section 81 of his first volume of *Ideas*, Husserl identifies time as both “something universally belonging to every *single* lived experience but also a necessary form *combining* lived experiences” (Husserl 1983, p. 194, my emphasis). Time is an experience of ourselves as being unable to escape the passing away of each experience. But it is also an experience of being bound together with ourselves. It is an experience of all of our experiences being bound together as they flow away and as they flow into one another. Time is thus an experience of self-relation *in* our passing.

Let us take each in turn. Time as lived for the phenomenologist is, first and foremost, the experience of “*belonging* to one endless stream” (Husserl 1983, p. 194, my emphasis) as the horizon into which each lived experience fits and has room to run its course. Time is the “*belonging*,” the embrace of each lived experience, its support, by the field of lived temporality as a whole, a field that is lived in its self-contained, flowing unity.

Metaphorically, perhaps, our time-consciousness is given as a stream. But this metaphor *works* insofar as it identifies the manner in which we grasp the experience of time as a *whole*, a whole that is also *what* we are.

The difficulty comes when we notice the *tension* between the time of *each* lived experience and its relation to the *whole* stream. Indeed, the experience of time as both the duration of this lived experience and its fitting into or showing up upon the horizon of time as a whole—this shows us that the experience of the whole of temporality as our stream of lived experiences *conflicts* with every other lived experience. For, unlike a single lived experience, “the stream of lived experiences *cannot* begin and end” (Husserl 1983, p. 194, my emphasis).¹

The stream “cannot begin or end.” But each experience does. How is that possible?

It is possible, Husserl implies, and *necessary*, because the non-beginning, non-ending stream of temporality is the very horizon or stage on which the individual experiences appear. For the duration of this experience of typing this paper to get its bearings, to begin at all, it must appear against the backdrop of my life as a professor. But that life itself must appear against the backdrop of a stream of lived experience that can neither show that it begins nor ends. My life and the act of writing this paper appear at all thanks to a stream that does not appear in its beginning or ending. The conflict or internal difference is *for* the sake of this experience of writing.

Beginning and ending, duration as such, these appear in a way similar to the unreflected within the reflected. I reflect on what was previously not noticed by me. In doing so, I *both* cannot fully gain the unreflected as it was *prior* to my act of reflection (since I sense it as always already underway before I noticed it) and yet I am *nonetheless given* the experience as lived prior to reflection in the way that I reflect on it, with the proviso that further reflection may shift my understanding of what was at stake.

Similarly, though perhaps from the other direction, the duration of this or that lived experience appears only against that which I am as a whole. I am given the duration of each experience because I also always already am given to myself as a whole stream of all lived experiences in their interrelationships. This stream, as a whole, presents itself as a total being that claims its *priority* over the very issue of the ending and beginning of the things we notice.

Something within one’s experience of temporality, then, something within finitude as the ending and beginning of particular lived experiences and of the life of experience as a whole (since I will die), is *not finite*. Something in the experience of time is the experience of unlimited flow. It does not mark itself out or give itself, this stream of lived experiences, as finite. It gives itself, rather, as that which allows finitude to mark out its own path.

Time, like reflection then, is both an act and a method of drawing forth meaning from experience. Time is that which sustains the relation of the experience to the ego, to other experiences, and to objects.² Again, like reflection, our experience of lived time allows us to see at the edges, on the periphery, that it is our engagement with transcendence within immanence, with the object within our subjectivity, which gives us hope that our dying itself will not necessarily mean the end of consciousness. It gives us this hope because we find that consciousness still functions—and perhaps functions most essentially—within indistinction, within the *a priori*, on the way to finite meaning. Consciousness finds itself always already entwined with the whole world, with the entire object, with the unlimited, and with the priority of the indistinguished.

Lived time then is a “consciousness-continuum of constant form” (Husserl 1983, p. 195). It is the flowing away that enables continuity. It is the backdrop that allows for the maintenance and seizing upon of meaning that transcends the passing away by working *with the passing away* and *not against it*. To read this *whole* sentence, to hear the *whole* verse of that song, is to let pass what has just come in favor of what is not here yet. To have heard the *last part* of the sentence, the last part of the verse is to recognize that working with the passing away is essential. What came prior in the sentence or the verse was not simply lost but remained embedded in its passing—both in the to-come and in the present as the

constant form. What was prior remained embedded because the field in which it appeared was unending, was prior to beginning and ending, and so was an appropriately supportive form, a suitable and welcoming home.

To listen, to hear is not a mystery—it is the ecstatic character (which may explain Husserl’s almost constant reference to joy) of experience with itself as it is broken open to the transcendent and the alien. The joy in reading and understanding and listening and participating—this is the transcending of oneself and the content and the returning to both in the openness to the to-come. Joy is the mechanism by which temporality can claim mourning and surprise as its two-sided unity.

But what of this stream of lived experiences? In what sense can we say truthfully that each of us can “see” it as the whole that I am? Husserl says in Section 82 of *Ideas* that the stream, as noted earlier, “is an infinite unity” (Husserl 1983, p. 196). From what vantage point, then, can we gain access to this infinite?

As this infinite unity, even if without end, the stream is, however, a whole. For Husserl, it is as a whole, or rather *because* it is a whole, that the stream of time itself *could be experienced*. We are made to seize upon wholes in our perceiving life. We notice things that have boundaries, and we move inward to discriminate their characteristics. And the stream, Husserl says, is a “self-enclosed concatenation of lived experiences [*geschlossenen Erlebniszusammenhang*]” (Husserl 1983, p. 196). The bounded endless stream is thus “self-contained”, and as such it can offer us its modes of givenness.

However, one might ask the following: how can the endless be contained? It is contained by virtue of being *my* life, the life of *my* Ego: “One pure Ego—one stream of mental processes [*Erlebnissen*] fulfilled with respect to all three dimensions, essentially concatenated in this fulfilling, *summoning itself* in its continuity of content: these are necessary correlates” (Husserl 1983, p. 196, my emphasis). What contains the stream in its endlessness, then, is my life as the I of my experiences. The whole “summons itself” to my view by virtue of my internal connection to its “self-enclosure”.

In summoning myself to notice the whole that is the infinite field of my internal temporality, I am more than I take myself to be. Summoned to my absolute life by the epoche and transcendental reduction, I witness the stream, all my temporality as such, in the *manner* in which *my* I accompanies its experiences, lives them, has them. But this does not mean that the stream is simply my reflective act. Rather, the stream, even as my correlate, is responsible for “summoning itself in its continuity of content [*sich in seiner inhaltlichen Kontinuität fordernder Erlebnisstrom*]” (Husserl 1983, p. 196). The stream calls itself into being, demands itself to be continuous, *as the correlate of the Ego*. The Ego thus *must* be temporal, must see itself always in relation to, called by, the self-summoning of time. The experience of the Ego is of necessity to be that which immediately and always is an experience of time.

The correlation of Ego and Stream, however, is such that reflection on the stream can never grasp the stream in its wholeness all at once. *Being* the stream does not immediately free for adequate viewing the exhaustive index of inter-relations between this lived experience and all other lived experiences that are implicated within it: “this whole concatenation is never given or to be given by a single pure regard [*reinen Blick*]” (Husserl 1983, p. 197, top).

Somewhat like we cannot get a direct, lived, exhaustive sense of a city all at once or from one vantage point (even from an airplane), we cannot see the whole of the concatenations of lived experiences from within this or that one. We cannot get to the entire stream of consciousness all at once from within the lived experience we are having. And yet Husserl says we can see it “in the fashion of ‘limitlessness in the progression’” (Husserl 1983, p. 197).

The experience of the stream as such is thus not another lived experience but rather of an idea: “in a certain way . . . we now seize upon the stream of lived experiences as a unity. We do not seize upon it as we do a single lived experience but rather in the manner of an idea in the Kantian sense” (Husserl 1983, p. 197, bottom).

Just as the city unfolds as one walks along the roads of one of its burroughs, and just as the experience of the city is absolutely indubitable as a whole *form* from within this

part of it, and even though this experience of the whole city is grounded in intuition, yet the difference between the givenness of the whole and the givenness of this part is quite different. The progression and the style of the part *gives* the whole or gives us over *toward* the whole, just as the concatenations of Broadway towards Brooklyn more than *suggest—they give* the whole.

Each lived experience then is not self-sufficient. They rather flow into one another and are “in need of supplementation [*ergänzungsbedürftig*]” (Husserl 1983, p. 198).³ The whole thus appears within the belonging together, and in the “need” and its complement the “supplementation” that each further street or neighborhood offers in the unfolding of the city.

My temporality as this whole stream is what is given to me to witness as the very supplement of one experience by another. My temporality is the endless background to my passing away in the recognition of each meaning within each lived experience. The need of each lived experience to turn into the next one gives me all the evidence I need of this.

And yet the gap or the distance, the notion of the “Kantian idea” haunts. We are given the whole of endless time as our very life. We are sustained by it in the midst of this or that finite experience. It calls to us as the correlate of our subjective initiative. And yet we also remain on this side of it. Time as an endless whole is thereby both ours and not ours. It remains our principle, our form, and yet out of our explicit reach. We cannot dominate it.

2.2. Husserl in *Lectures on Time-Consciousness*

As Husserl says rather enigmatically in his *Lectures*, “we lack names” (Husserl 1991, p. 79) for the subjectivity within us that is responsible for our flow of time as such. We have called time a stream and said that it pairs with our Ego as its correlate. However, there is something more to be said about that Ego, and about that correlation, that cannot, apparently, be given adequate expression.

Certainly at every moment, as we have already said, the past flows away and yet retains the experiences of the now. At every moment, the future is anticipated from within that same now *as* that same now is passing away. The form of the flow, the stability and regularity of the transitions between now, just past, and yet to come—these are constants. However, these constants, this form is not something we discover as transcendent to us. Unlike the rules of the family we are born into or of the department in which we serve, rules which we had no (or very little) say in setting up—unlike these, with respect to the rules and structure temporality as such, *we form* that. We are bound up with time’s stability and regularity. In an important way, we constantly and continuously *form* the form of time.

If in *Ideas* Husserl emphasized the agency of the stream as self-contained, as it summoned itself, even if as a correlate, here in *Lectures* the emphasis is from the opposite direction. Here the stream seems to be even more clearly the activity of the “absolute subject.” So, the fact that we flow—this is clearly our doing. And yet the “we” that we are in the construction and enactment of the flow seems indeterminate and pre-personal: “This flow is something we speak of in conformity with what is constituted but it is not something in objective time. It is absolute subjectivity and has the absolute properties of something to be designated metaphorically as flow” (Husserl 1991, p. 79). Fundamental questions of about the correlation of the Ego and of the stream of experience arise here.

How can I be an absolute subjectivity that is both the principle and the object of itself? How can the stream also be a subjectivity that is not exactly an I, that is nothing but an evanescent “metaphor”, that is something I can only “speak of”, and only speak of obliquely, only *as if* it were an object, i.e., as a nonconforming “conformity”? How can I claim to be this author of that absolute work when my lived experience is fundamentally of myself as this particular person, a person who takes a specific emotional and linguistic stance on and within this flow? How can I be responsible for the parameters, the phases, and the transitions of a flow that I have not witnessed myself creating and that exists only in a kind of basic concealment, only as the very taking up of itself as that absolute ground or absolute subjectivity *within and into* the constituted and concrete self?

Though Husserl does not say this explicitly, he indicates that the role of “absolute subjectivity” is only divided into the correlation of Ego and stream from *within* the concrete lived experience of time. In itself, absolute subjectivity is prior to the distinction between Ego and stream.

Our absolute subjectivity is thus prior to distinctions and is something our concrete life calls us toward, as a vocation, as the field in which we play a sport calls forth our actions in a game. Our absolute bubbles up within our concrete, as its very ground and motor, and we pursue it by a radical kind of introspection, perhaps by way of our powerful feelings and utterances about time as such. Because our passing matters to us, we turn inward to ask how it could matter. We then demarcate the absolute and “speak in conformity” with ourselves as constituted, as personal, because something within our concrete lives demands that we locate the place of the flow within, deeper within, ourselves.

Let us begin again. Within internal time-consciousness we notice time as such. We sense the form of time in all of our joy, mourning and declarations. And so our own experience turns us toward the absolute as the heart of ourselves. We speak concretely about the absolute, in terms of metaphor, we speak about it as a correlation between an almost-I and an as-if object, because we cannot speak otherwise about and as the absolute subjects we also are.

If we could speak an absolute language, if we could take a stand on ourselves as that which prepares the way for intentionality as such, then that language would be music or words in a foreign language that we hear only the sonority of. It would be bare passage and self-maintenance through absolute loss. It would be the language of the sphere of ownness, from the *Cartesian Meditations*, which could not be a shared language. The language and the action of the absolute, somewhat as Sartre said towards the end of *Being and Nothingness*, would have to be something between slime and water and could claim us only as a palimpsest claims both its texts.

As such a difficulty and a necessity, the manifestation of absolute subjectivity within its concrete accompaniment offers a resonance. It offers its similarity, though in only a complementary manner, to the way in which the transcendence of the perceived object, under the epoche, is located within our own experience. The chair, the water bottle, the computer are, Husserl says, within our reduced experience and claim transcendence by retaining the ability to “point” outwards, to point outside of consciousness, even though as Husserl has said, consciousness is that out of which nothing can slip. The *pointing* of the object, which one beholds in the moment of *grasping* it is the correlative of the trace of absolute subjectivity within the concrete, temporal person I am.

Complementarily, then, the form of time appears and maintains itself in its difference as absolute, not constituted, i.e., maintains itself as both I and stream, by way of requiring that our constituted, concrete life point *inward*, from the very heart of the concrete, towards the absolute that remains within us by virtue of our self-indication. Absolute subjectivity is thus ours by way of being an always already existing claim to referential self-continuity. It is the I in the stream and the stream in the I.

Absolute subjectivity is the way in and the way home—both reference and continuity—the temporal home and foundation. Because we exist concretely within the distinctions that absolute subjectivity sets up for us, we only *feel it*, and we feel it only as if peripherally, as if at the very heart of the concrete. We feel the absolute and the ultimate self-unity of I and stream, as the supportive form of all the particular events we live.

Absolute subjectivity is thereby also similar to Husserl’s description of pairing in the Fifth of the *Cartesian Meditations*—a pairing which claims the other person we experience as an impossible memory, a pairing which itself appears as a foundationless ground, as a form of identity. In both absolute subjectivity and pairing—in both of these—the a priori, the unified subjectivity, founds and flows within all concrete relationships that evince its structure.

All other experiences as mine—beyond a bare, rather empty sphere of ownness—presuppose pairing with the other. Similarly all experiences of time as lived presuppose the

flow of absolute subjectivity by way of its pointing inward toward the home of concrete self-experience. We recognize the work always already accomplished by ourselves as absolute subjectivity by living its inward pointing. In our self-indicating, pointing finger, one might say, is the finger of the divine, of the unlimited, of that which is prior to all distinctions and to which all finite distinctions return. And thus we come home to ourselves by following our own directionality, by having our own motion of pointing carry something larger than our concrete selves.

The kind of co-inhabiting that absolute subjectivity does with our constituted, particular subjectivities, the absolute with the experiential, is something Husserl clarifies in *Lectures* when he talks about the double intentionality of retention. The reason, perhaps, we cannot get a direct view of absolute subjectivity doing its formative work, forming the whole stream, is that it is always on the “other side” of the constituted. Just as we cannot see our own backs without a mirror or without asking someone else to look at them for us, so too the absolute, which creates the ongoing possibility of the whole of our retained, past life, locates itself on the obverse of the experiencing life.

This block to our experience of absolute subjectivity lifts a bit when we consider how we “retain” the past within the present, retain the previously heard notes within the melody, retain the tradition within the evolution of the heritage, as we might if we welcome a new family member who is of a different faith during the familiar holidays. In retention, the pre-reflective holding together of the just past and the now, there is something so fundamental to the continuous having of an experience as the same, as now, that it would seem that our whole stream of lived experiences grows out of that possibility to retain:

We believe, therefore, that the *unity of the flow itself* becomes constituted in the flow of consciousness as a one-dimensional *quasi-temporal* order by virtue of the continuity of retentional modifications and by virtue of the circumstance that these modifications are, continuously, retentions of the retentions that have continuously preceded them. (Husserl 1991, p. 86, my emphasis)

The stream of lived experiences depends on the flux of temporality. The flux of temporality, which is the stream prior to the noticing of the distinctions between subject and object, creates itself through the act of retention.

The stream or flow thus holds on to each moment in its relations with every other moment. We hold the moment and the holding of the moment. The unity of the stream is the holding together of a moment (as if an other) and of the retaining (as if a self). Hence “the unity of the flow itself” is something we do to and for ourselves as if time were both something other than us, a separable moment that we retain, and something that is us, a holding of the holding.

When I try to witness *explicitly* what the appearance of the unity of the flow is, I find that my ray of regard must go in two directions at once—*both* towards the act of retaining everything here in the now as it passes *and* toward the way in which what is new, now, enters into the retention. I cannot in fact be in both places explicitly at once, even though I *exist* both places and *perform* both acts.

This is because there are, Husserl says, “two inseparably united intentionalities, requiring one another *like two sides of one and the same thing* ... interwoven with each other in the one unique flow of consciousness” (Husserl 1991, p. 87). I zig-zag back and forth from the one to the other. One intentionality is directed toward retaining the stream as such, toward retaining or maintaining the current moment together with everything already past. In this moment, the focus is on holding everything together, retaining the retentions, perhaps like Atlas holding up the heavens. The other embraces the now from *within* that previously fashioned whole, renewing the process of retention by taking for granted the whole and focusing on the one moment the now, perhaps like Odysseus within each adventure as he is attempting to return home.

In one intentionality, one act, “immanent time becomes constituted—an objective time, a genuine time in which there is duration and the alteration of what endures” (Husserl 1991, p. 87). In the second intentionality, “it is the quasi-temporal arrangement of the

phases of the flow that becomes constituted" (Husserl 1991, pp. 87–88). Neither of the intentionalities, neither Atlas nor Odysseus, appears as such. For that which creates the time of this or that experience, and that which creates the flow as flow—is a "prephenomenal, pre-immanent temporality . . . as the form of the time-constituting consciousness and in itself" (Husserl 1991, p. 88). What absolute subjectivity is doing in these two intentionalities, fused together, is what makes all appearing possible, what makes the distinction between transcendence and immanence possible. As "prephenomenal", the intentionalities can only be traced by virtue of what we witness ourselves doing from one moment of one lived experience to the next, by virtue of the whole we exist each moment. As "pre-immanent", the intentionalities are neither objective nor subjective, not at all the interplay of noetic and noematic, because the distinction between inside and outside has not even been formulated yet. The self-summoning of the stream of experience is possible because what we are as "absolute subjectivity" is the preparation for distinction by means of a more intimate self-unification.

By identifying ourselves with such non-appearing, inseparably paired intentionalities that are prephenomenal and pre-immanent, we recognize, as absolute subjectivity, that we cannot ever be fully reduced to our lived experience.⁴ Yet we can never *live* within the absolute subjectivity that here announces itself to us, either. We are this absolute subjectivity only insofar as we can trace its syntheses and realize that our finitude has a basis in the unending, infinite self-constituting consciousness of time. That is, whatever is the absolute of time-consciousness is woven into our reflective, experiential life much the same way as, for Merleau-Ponty, the category of color is rooted in the givens. But nevertheless, even given this intimate interweaving, there is some new that offers itself to us through Husserl's description of absolute subjectivity.

There is something about our temporality that pushes us to see ourselves as not simply finite. We are as if simultaneously finite and infinite. Like Kant's famous reliance on the as-if within the experience of beauty—a beauty that is *as if* a quality of the object and yet really just a free play of democratically acting faculties of imagination and understanding—the absolute foundation of temporality involves its enactment of the form of our retention as what can be described only as "quasi-temporal." The flow gives us our time and yet the flow itself is not *itself* temporal. Rather, like beauty, the structure of our temporality, its form, is only *as if* temporal, a play of our absolute, internal, self-referential faculties or intentionalities (toward self and moment)—a play that sets up all temporal experience of objectivity and of subjectivity as such by remaining distinct in its "quasi-temporality." Time is not fully made of time, then, even if it is nothing else either apart from time.

But unlike the externally perceived object that begins the whole experience of beauty for Kant, our absolute subjectivity, the arranger of our flow, nevertheless appears in some sense, i.e., peripherally or metaphorically and yet indubitably, as existing in its own right for Husserl. Absolute subjectivity exists and exists *as us* because the flow itself *is* its own, we might say, *body*. The flow exists as a kind of metaphor and yet for all that exists as a "self-appearance": "the flow of the consciousness that constitutes immanent time not only exists but is so remarkably and yet intelligibly fashioned that a *self-appearance* of the flow *necessarily* exists in it, and therefore the flow itself must necessarily be apprehensible in the flowing" (Husserl 1991, p. 88, emphasis). The flow is the appearance to itself, and to us as concrete, of the absolute.

We are "remarkable" and "intelligent" in the way we have, behind our backs as it were, constituted temporality for ourselves such that the very structure of time is itself an appearance. It is almost as if we had given the appearance of time to ourselves so as to create the possibility for us to reckon with finitude and infinitude as bound up inseparably. We "must apprehend" the flow because that is the only way for us to see how what is lived reaches back into—and perhaps also toward—what is absolute.

But if the double intentionality of retention is both "pre-phenomenal and pre-immanent", then how could the flow appear to me at all? How could the flow *necessarily* appear to me?

They are joined, they appear, with the pre-phenomenal and pre-immanent intentionalities, which do *not* appear, Husserl says, by means of an imperfect overlaying:

the constituting and constituted [overlay], and yet naturally they cannot [overlay] in every respect. The phases of the flow of consciousness in which phases of the same flow of consciousness become constituted phenomenally cannot be identical with these constituted phases, nor are they. (Husserl 1991, p. 88)

Absolute and concrete, “constituting and constituted” are joined together, requiring one another, interwoven—and yet there is a gap between them, a distance or a distinction between absolute and concrete.

I can witness the flow, however the witnessing act is achieved, as always already mine. When I do witness it, I am given over to the intentionalities of retention that have made my life appear as such. But I cannot witness these intentionalities actually doing their work. Like workers in a secret factory, they do their work somewhere always out of reach. These intentionalities are “not identical” to the appearance of the retaining and the having of a continuous lived experience of typing this paper. Whatever in me is absolute remains absolute. Whatever in me is a correlation between Ego and stream remains that correlation and retains that distinction.

The fact that we are given temporality as our doing does not mean we can adequately or directly witness ourselves creating it. And this prohibition against direct seizing upon our absolute subjectivity, which might remind one of both the garden of Eden and the garden of Gethsemane, is further what produces the need for self-forgiveness. I have given myself temporality as what I am without allowing myself to claim full awareness of that absolute subject or to gain security as that. This gap between constituting and constituted, between absolute and pure/lived Ego, is the motor of my life. It cannot be otherwise. But that does not mean that this motor has not set us on a path of self-confrontation. Indeed, I would argue that it is in this overlaying that is never total, within this distinction or gap between absolute and Ego that can lie the very possibility of taking a stance on their unity—a stance of resentment, resolute acceptance, even joyful or willing embrace.

3. Forgiveness of Oneself

If both the form and flow of time as such and concrete lived experience belong together as a unity I live, if they are firmly interwoven and yet still separated in terms of their sense and manner of appearance—then I would argue that what it means to accept one’s life as finite, what it means to forgive the passage of time in favor of the meaning it brings to light is always already possible. Acceptance, forgiveness of having to be absolute subjectivity and Ego—this is possible because of their “remarkable” and “intelligent” inter-relation. We are absolute flow. We are Ego, I, who exist within a life of concrete passing away and anticipation. When we see these intertwined, it is possible for us to reckon with our finite selves as created or called forth or founded by our absolute ones.

To say we give ourselves time from our own act as absolute subject—this is not necessarily to deny divinity as the author of our existence. But it is to notice our own participation in our creation. Given Husserl’s descriptions I mentioned previously, I think it makes sense to say that we have *created*, in some pre-reflective, absolute manner, the *facticity of our existence* and *its differentiation* from the power of its flow as such. By seeing that we have an important role in creating ourselves as finite, we can extend to ourselves in advance the kind of generosity and motility needed to choose something other than resentment or grief over our limitations.

At the death of my father, I was grief-stricken. Another phenomenologist I knew, when I said I could not imagine ever being happy again, laughed. He said of course I would. In that moment, I did not like this person or his laughter. But I think what he did was remind me that time passes, that grief learns what it is doing as it moves and flows through and out of us. Essentially, like Husserl, he handed me over to the experience of my own absolute power of forming myself as flow. And in that process, which may have been hobbled by his laugh, I was still to come to terms with my father as a finite being and

with myself as *setting myself up* for just such a tension—the tension between finitude and absolute—that I live as grief. In short, what I learned from this other person’s intervention was that I needed to forgive myself as a co-creator of this meaningful mess that was the loss of my father in order to forgive my father “giving in” to the cancer that killed him.

In light of my own reckoning with my grief then I would like to offer this argument: before we reckon with the deeds or finitude of another, then, I believe we need to see that our structure as the intertwining of absolute and constituted calls out for self-forgiveness first and foremost. I believe we are called to pre-extend to ourselves the acceptance and hospitality that we find in Derrida’s discussion of the gift. For it is not God—or not only God—who has made ourselves vulnerable to harm and to grief. Like the Fifth Cartesian Meditation’s description of the way we have always already transferred sense to the other person in our pairing with them prior to our awareness of the relationship as such, so too, implicit in Husserl’s description of time-consciousness, and in some sense in our own psyche, I believe we find that we have always already, in some sense, *agreed* to the character of our temporality as flow.⁵

To live concretely is to live against the backdrop of the endless stream of experience, of the absolute self-appearing flow. It is to agree to our absolute self-giveness as absolute flow, to our *a priori* acts of setting up the backdrop of our lives. And thus, as handing time to ourselves as ourselves, we have agreed to the very possibility of moving with our finitude into increasingly sophisticated ways of recognizing meaning. As handing time to ourselves, we can become resolute in a stance of not extending loss, pain, trauma, or guilt beyond its necessary, essential movement. We can become dancers of a movement that is freeing insofar as we can allow the experience of grief to return us toward the absolute responsibility that we bear as a moment of a transcendental whole. We can give ourselves back to ourselves instead of denying ourselves, instead of denying our temporality, in a clash of titanic intentionalities.

An example: I once tried to describe what happens the activity of crying. One central question was this: What is the meaning of the tears that flow from me? After reflecting, it seemed to me that one meaning of tears is the expression of our ignorance. We can cry in order to show we do not know how to deal with our particular situation as a whole. Tears in such a case would also express a desire to learn more, a desire to become more adequate to the situation’s demands while acknowledging one has not yet been so. Tears can call for a re-examination of the relationship between our finitude and the surpassing nature of our involvement in meaning as such.

Now this desire to learn may not be the motivation in all situations in which one cries. We could cry to manipulate others, to change the subject, etc. But if crying *can* express a desire for self-education, I think that crying can be the reminder of both our finitude (I have not yet known) and our absolute (we already know that what we are *is* flow—and this too shall pass if we learn how to let it pass and learn toward what we might aim).

It might matter *how* we cry, too. If we cry in a gut-wrenching way, reduced to collapsing on the floor with loud heavings, as I was when I heard my father die, then we might not allow ourselves to see immediately, in that moment, what the relation is that we bear to the absolute. But if we cry in multiple ways, at reminders or fears of forgetting, we might just see that in all instances of crying we retain an eidetic structure—i.e., we flow in part as a structure of self-relation, as water out of the river of ourselves. In that way, our crying could literally present itself as the metaphor of the stream of lived experience, of our temporality as such. And hence it could be a gift of the divine or the transcendental to the concrete.

If I am responsible, deeply, for my own unpreparedness—if I have given myself over to my own inability to reconcile my absolute and my concrete—then crying can also be an act of self-recognition and self-forgiveness. Like an echo of the flowing out of blood, of the flowing out of life, of the brushing of dirt from one’s sandals, crying can be the very recognition of having given oneself to oneself in advance. Crying can be the possibility of moving into a more adequate space, of flowing toward future adequation.

4. Husserl on Time and Pairing–Forgiveness of Others

Husserl claims, albeit elliptically in the text of the Cartesian Meditations, that the pairing with the other person involved in transcendental intersubjectivity is somewhat like internal time-consciousness: “Somewhat as my memorial past, as a modification of my living present, “transcends” my present, the appresented other being “transcends” my own being . . . ”. In both cases the modification is inherent as a sense—component in the sense itself” (Husserl 2013, p. 115). I would argue that the import of this comparison is more than metaphorical.

In order to remember my past, in order to have a “memorial past”, I must place myself, in the present act of remembering, outside of my present. I must live in the past that I remember as something like a guest, a visitor. To have a “sense” of my past, to remember it, is to live within a “modification” of that past. To remember is not to have the past in the same way as I had the past when it was present. Rather, it is to dwell within the past in a new way, in the way of remembering.

But I can have such a relation to the past, even though I “modify” it within the act of remembering. And that past remains what it is, namely *not* the present experience I have now, not even the act of remembering—the past remains *not* my present and yet *still* mine by way of an inherent difference and similarity with my present. For example, I remember typing the last paragraph. I remember trying to emphasize words from the original quote from Husserl’s *Cartesian Meditations*, but I remember this as if simultaneously from the outside (the act of typing that paragraph is gone) and from the inside (it was my experience and remains so even in the act of typing this new paragraph).

The togetherness of past and present in my experience, the togetherness of memory and present living—these are a very personal deployment of absence (no longer being there) and presence (being there in a new, reflective way). And thus memory is possible as a self-transcending act because I manage to situate absence and presence *within* the sense of my life as such.

This memorial deployment or situating of absence and presence, modification and immediate intuition, is itself possible, as noted above, because of the double intentionality of retention, as Husserl described in the *Lectures*. And, to repeat the salient point, that double intentionality, towards retaining the moment as it passes and toward the retention of the retention, allowed us to see that consciousness as absolute, as pre-phenomenal and pre-immanent retaining and retaining of the act of retaining—this absolute could dwell with the concrete life that I am in the following manner:

the constituting and constituted [overlay], and yet naturally they *cannot* [overlay] in every respect. The phases of the flow of consciousness in which phases of the same flow of consciousness become constituted phenomenally *cannot be identical* with these constituted phases, nor are they. (Husserl 1991, p. 88, my emphasis)

At the heart of my time-consciousness, then, for Husserl, is the awareness that the examination of my self-transcending capacities to remember my past experience leads to an appreciation of how my relation to time itself is embedded within absence and limit. I “cannot” simply identify my absolute self, in which I give myself time as such, in which I give myself my flow, my entire stream of lived experience, with my concrete self. Rather, the identity of those two, absolute and concrete, is always across a gap, across an inability to forge a complete identification. Their difference is, therefore, the *method* and the most important *part* of their unity.

My absolute subjectivity, in its difference from my concrete life, resists a simple dissolution into me. My absolute subjectivity thus transcends itself, we might say, in its double intentionality of retention and in its self-appearance as the totality of the unending stream, *toward* my concrete one. And in that being-toward one another, they dwell together, layered together as a pair, such that to talk about the one is immediately to have to talk about the other.

This overlaying that is not total means that it is the pre-phenomenal, pre-immanent, by departing from view but also by never completely departing, that makes possible

experience as lived by an Ego who has and lives a past within the present by transcending itself towards itself. This arrangement is the very way in which I deploy the mechanics of the total stream and its absolute self-synthesis toward further concrete recognition of my concrete self.

What Husserl means, then, by the comparison of the “memorial past” with the “appresented other” in the *Cartesian Meditations*, within the quote with which we began this section, is that temporality as the interweaving of absolute and constituted thus claims a kind of morphological, structural community with my experience of being paired with other persons.⁶ As itself a pairing of that which is fundamentally different from one another, my temporality as such *leans further into* (or we might say *is made for*) the structure of the experience of the other person.

In Husserl’s description of pairing in the Fifth Cartesian Meditation, instead of two aspects of my own temporal subjectivity (absolute and concrete) that overlay one another, my entire lived-bodily subjectivity overlays that of the other person.⁷ This is important because, even though the other person lives their body and I live mine, even though there is no (and indeed *can be no*) full identification of the other with me, still we appear as intertwined, as paired.

In one sense, this pairing of subjectivities is not surprising, since all pairing has the same structure—whether we are talking about a pairing of shoes, of trees, of words, or of persons. In each case there is the following:

we find essentially present here and intentional overreaching, coming about genetically (and by essential necessity) as soon as the data that undergo pairing have become prominent and simultaneously intended; we find, more particularly, a living mutual awakening, and an overlaying of each with the objective sense of the other. This overlaying can bring a total or partial coincidence . . . As a result of this overlaying, there takes place in the paired data a mutual transfer of sense—that is to say an apperception of each according to the sense of the other. (Husserl 2013, pp. 112–13)

However, in another sense, this is quite surprising. For the other person is *alien* to me. Theirs is always, at best, a “partial overlaying” with me. The fact that we understand ourselves to be within “a mutual transfer of sense” that happens before we are aware of it, i.e., “as soon as” we perceive one another—this means that what is alien to me, radically other, is nevertheless bound up with me.

Again, this can only be because the gap or the distance or the difference between us is no impediment to our mattering to one another. It is not the block to our relationship. Rather, our relationship begins as making sense of the difference or gap while also being about what we share—this new sense that arises on the basis of our immediate, perceived togetherness.

We are simply capable of forming meaningful relations at distances: “Every overlapping at a distance, which occurs by associative pairing, is *at the same time* a fusion and therein, so far as incompatibilities do not interfere, an assimilation, an accommodation of the sense of one member to that of the other” (Husserl 2013, p. 118, my emphasis). “Distance” and “fusion”, then, as absolute and concrete or constituting and constituted—these immediately form higher unities together that generate meaning and avenues for phenomenological description.

But this very fact is exactly what necessitates forgiveness. The other person has made a withdrawal, made a “transfer” of sense out of me. And I have made one from them. Our very appearing together, the perception of our bond as citizens, persons out on the same street, reader and author, whatever—this is happening without my explicit control. It is something I bear responsibility for—and yet not only me. The other, too, has gotten me into this mess: I have to navigate *them* in traffic while driving. I have to hear *their* lawnmower when I want quiet. I have to answer the questions of a two-year-old or an elder with Alzheimer’s. As soon as I notice them, their demands begin, our inescapability from each other displays itself.

How can it be that we have already begun to see each other as “distant” and yet “fused”? It seems we can do so, can be paired with what is fundamentally resistant and alien to us, because of the inherent alterity of our time-consciousness, because we have already seen this “overlaying” at a distance somewhere before, at least in part.

Even though I am able to identify the absolute subjectivity that gives temporality to itself as *mine*—even though I identify my absolute subjectivity with my concrete one—still there is a significant distance or gap or difference. There is a difference at the heart of my own unity. And this is what animates my own resentment or resistance to limit and facticity and finitude. I am not myself. And yet I am myself as well.

This problematic self-identity, across the layers and the gap between them, is what makes possible a still more *radical formation of meaning* that occurs *without identification*. If I were not capable of uniting myself with myself, at some notable cost or shift, I might add, to my self-awareness—I would be unable to do so with the other person, who is indeed alien. That is why I would argue that our time-consciousness is *made for* experiencing others.

There is a teleology there. What is familiar to us, the “memorial past” and our inhabiting it from here and now, the absolute subjectivity that beats the heartbeat that we take to be our own—this is *for* movement that is alien to us. We move by degrees. From time to other. And the structural, morphological similarity is the key to that.

We inhabit the other’s life, the other’s dreams or emotions or thoughts, as a guest, a visitor. One who always maintains the distance, the fear, the condescension toward the host. And vice versa. We are within each other like memories, especially like memories, when they die. Especially like memories when we miss them.

But this is because the form and substance of time is the project of coming to recognize oneself within the world, as the partners to the alien. We remember (or anticipate) because it is the way we have of dancing toward the other person, of trying to take up what we have lost. And we have *already lost control of the narrative* from the very moment they appear with us.

Time is thus the backwards- and forwards- echoing of the radical alterity of the appearing of the other. And, reciprocally, the other person is the hearkening back or toward the way my absolute subjectivity and my concrete, factual, historical Ego live together. In both cases there is a prior purchase, some pre-existing resonance, within my conscious life. Time and alterity—these are pairings. These are also *paired together as such*. Pairing *pairs*.

We are responsible for the mess of temporality.⁸ We are also responsible for the mess of relations with others. In neither case, can we see exactly how we *chose* to be finite or to be involved so directly or intimately with everyone else we experience. And yet we seem to have no choice. We must forgive or give permission to ourselves to have made (and continue to make) ourselves finite. Even if (and before) we sense our absolution. We must also forgive or give permission to others and ourselves to have made (and continue to make) a “transfer” from each other in order to form a meaningful world and live a meaningful life.

We form the form of relations with others within the structure of our temporality. We echo the relations of time in the structure of our lives with one another. And this intertwining of “double intentionalities” leads to concrete forms that are virtually unlimited—parent, child, sibling, stranger, enemy, lover, acquaintance, friend, etc.—completely given and yet always at a distance, always open to particular revision and resistance. We will never form *the* concrete relation that is the absolute, unchallenged, beatific essence, standard, and excellence of pairing. Just as the democratic play of the faculties in beauty is only a “lingering” for Kant, our best relations are but short durations and affirmations of the possibility of “overlaying of each with the sense of the other.”

There will always be harm to forgive. There will always be a reckoning with the a priori that we are, that gave us time and made us transfer. And there will always be a role for us to play in launching ourselves forward on our own and on others’ behalf—toward a structure or a place that will make room for us to be better instigators of pairing together.

5. A Reading of Genesis

This discussion of Husserl's description of time-consciousness and pairing leads to me to suggest that forgiveness is first and foremost an act of pure giving, a pre-giving, a *fore-giving*. As this kind of pure act that would be rooted in the intertwining of absolute and constituted, forgiveness would be the opening up of a new territory or a new possibility *independent* of the situation in which any harm occurred in the first place. This new territory or possibility is a new act of flowing forward by means of retaining the whole. It is a conversation with others, a radical act of creative *interpretation*.

In this interpretative act, just as in the intertwining of our absolute and constituted temporality, we find that we ourselves—not the previous situation, not tradition in a simple sense, not God or *not only* God—are the ones who forgive, who give beforehand. And if one might say that we follow a divine plan forward, if we forgive as God or Jesus taught us, I would argue further that it is largely impossible to say which comes first, God's plan or our interpretative doing, as the act is ours which interprets the primacy of the divine text, the divine plan, the divine act. To illustrate this, let us examine the story of the reconciliation of Joseph and his brothers in the book of *Genesis* and the forgiveness that Jesus offers in the Gospels of Luke and John. Afterwards, I will again remind us of the way Husserl has situated us with respect to forgiveness.

Within the book of *Genesis*, there are a number of stories of violence within families: Cain and Abel, Abraham and Isaac, Joseph and his brothers. However, with all this violence against ones supposedly loved within the family, there is little mention of forgiveness.

At the end of *Genesis*, though, in the story of Joseph and his brothers, forgiveness is, perhaps for the first time in the whole book of *Genesis*, explicitly discussed. Let us tell and hear the story again.

After giving Joseph the coat of many colors, Jacob sent Joseph to find his brothers and their flocks. Joseph is naïve. He only knows that he “seeks his brothers”. But when they see him from far off, Joseph's brothers, all but Reuben, wanted to kill him from jealousy. Reuben's refusal led them to throw him into a pit, sell him to the Ishmaelites for twenty pieces of silver, dip his coat of many colors in blood and allow Jacob to think that Joseph had perished at the hands of a wild animal. When Joseph became a powerful servant of the Pharaoh and the brothers chanced to meet him again when begging for food to feed their families, it would seem that, after initially toying with their emotions, Joseph forgave and was reconciled with them. But this forgiveness is more complicated than it first appears.

When Joseph discloses himself to his brothers for the first time, he asks them to come close to him. And when they have done so, when his eyes can meet theirs and the light of recognition can be kindled, then he says “now do not be distressed, or angry with yourselves, because you sold me here; for God sent me *before you* to preserve life” (45:5, my emphasis).

Initially, Joseph does not talk at all about forgiveness. In fact throughout the whole story *he* never does. Instead, Joseph tries to get the brothers to undo their own resentment, their own guilt. Forgiveness is not something he thinks he can give by himself, perhaps, or perhaps it would involve something more than an exchange of debt and credit for Joseph.

And yet in his encouragement of his brothers, in his rejection of their anxiety and self-blame, he has done something more important for them—something that sounds to me like forgiveness in its second moment. Joseph has changed the narrative that the brothers are expecting. He tells his brothers that he, Joseph, is *not essentially* the young man they sold into slavery. He has moved beyond the interpretation of himself as the wronged party. By being “sent before you”, Joseph has acted anew. He has cleared a way.

I would argue that, both in becoming powerful and in his interpretation of God sending him before the brothers so as to prepare for this very moment, Joseph has acted poetically, for the sake of all. He has moved into the future and has returned to them as the actor who has received and inaugurated the sending-forth of God. What looked like murder and abandonment returns, in Joseph's interpretation, as restored relations and the

preservation of life. In Joseph's life and in his words, the lives of his brothers are recast beyond guilt towards their unification as a family and as a people.

No merely passive reception of grace on the brothers' part, not even on Joseph's part, could do what Joseph has just one. No mere exchange of debt and credit could do that. Certainly Joseph leaned into what was pre-given, as he says to his brothers that it was "God" who sent him—but Joseph did more than simply respond. He interpreted Pharaoh's dreams to Pharaoh. He charted a new territory, a new home, in a foreign land.

In his telling of this narrative, Joseph has moved beyond the question of whether the brothers remain guilty. In his story, they are not only, are no longer, or perhaps *never were* simply the violent mob they took themselves to be. Rather, Joseph unites them more authentically in a possible endeavor "to preserve life", an endeavor the whole of which was, according to Joseph, sustained and sanctioned by God.

Joseph's act of interpreting his going to Egypt thereby unfolded a whole that had sides that were yet to be seen because it was a whole given, at least in part, by his own initiative. It was a whole completed only within the return. If to himself, if in his interpretation, he was simply following out what God had opened up, that higher power, that source, nevertheless remained *within* and *as* him.

It is true that the author of *Genesis* claims that Potiphar, Joseph's first master, "saw that the Lord was with him and that the Lord caused all that he did to prosper in his hands" (39:3). Still it is Joseph whom Potiphar trusts; it is Joseph whom Potiphar's wife tries to seduce. Likewise, it is true that Joseph asks "Do not interpretations belong to God?"; yet he still says "Please tell them to *me*" and speaks on behalf of God, gives a unique and compelling account to those who ask (40:8, my emphasis). Finally, it is true that Joseph claims to Pharaoh that it is ultimately God who gives "a favorable answer" (41:16) through Joseph's interpretation of Pharaoh's dreams. But it is Joseph's own act that gives the answer, Joseph's own breath that forms the words.

So Joseph, I am arguing, is offering us an example of the fundamental moment of forgiveness as fore-giving, the pure act of interpretation. And he is doing this without using the word "forgiveness."

Perhaps this is because forgiveness seems to be limited to its use as a kind of legal term, a protection from retaliation. In support of this claim, the word "forgiveness" only surfaces after the death of Jacob, when Joseph's brothers fear that their protection from Joseph's retaliation is gone:

Realizing that their father was dead, Joseph's brothers said "What if Joseph still bears a grudge against us and pays us back in full for all the wrong that we did to him?" So they approached Joseph, saying "Your father gave this instruction before he died, 'Say to Joseph: I beg you, *forgive* the crime of your brothers and the wrong they did in harming you.' Now therefore please *forgive* the crime of the servants of the God of your father. (Coogan 2001, *Genesis* 50:15–17, my emphasis)

What are we to do with this? Certainly, these brothers of Joseph are not entirely trustworthy. They lied to Jacob and said Joseph was dead. So whether or not this command of Jacob's was genuine or not is not clear. But they are clearly afraid of Joseph's position in Egypt. So they cry great tears as they say this plea and offer themselves as slaves.

Joseph simply reminds them of what he has said before. He does not tell them he forgives them. He does not agree that there was a crime. He rejects their framing for a second time. And instead he tells them not to be afraid and asks them

Am I in the place of God? Even though you intended to do harm to me, God intended it for good, in order to preserve a numerous people, as he is doing today. So have no fear; I myself will provide for you and your little ones". In this way he reassured them, speaking kindly to them. (Coogan 2001, *Genesis* 50:19–21)

Again, Joseph is opening the future, redefining what it means to be powerful. Power lies in referring one's own identity to the source of all goodness and wisdom and thereby entering into a time of self-giving and interpretation. Joseph is free to forgive in a radical way, to

transcend the binary choice of pardoning or resenting, because the creativity he has within the following after a futurally-oriented God is an immediate capacity. Joseph is following a call that is intimately bound up with his own disclosive power and action.

Joseph will be the way forward to reconciliation and growth. He will “provide” for the life and growth of the “little ones”. He will inaugurate “kindness” as a way of hearing the “good” of God which is happening “today”, but which is oriented toward the salvation of the whole people in the future. His interpretations are the essential action of God that Joseph is inaugurating in his own manner.

6. A Reading of the Gospels

For the purposes of continuing this meditation on forgiveness being a kind of *fore-giving*, I would like to read the Gospels of Luke and John together, at least in part. In each one there is a kind of unrepeated original contribution related to forgiveness and the way in which it is a fore-giving, an opening up of new territory or a new attitude towards the divine and towards one another.

In the Gospel of Luke, Jesus explicitly asks God to forgive those who are putting him to death. He asks, and in asking, seeks to provide a reason in advance for God granting that forgiveness: “Father, forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing” (Coogan 2001, *Luke* 23:34). Reading that verse, we might be compelled to say that Jesus believes these people who are harming him either do not understand or would not intend to harm him if they truly knew who Jesus is. Perhaps we might even contend that Jesus sees ideological systems in place that prevent individual or creative reflection. That is, these people do not understand how their participation in Jesus’ crucifixion, which they may think is their own communal decision and act, may in fact be required of or called out of them within some other more powerful narrative than their own. That is, maybe Jesus means that they do not understand how their acts or words are functions of their being pawns of a pre-given plan of Rome or of Jerusalem or even of God.

That Jesus gives a reason to God for forgiving the people who are torturing and killing him is very interesting. Jesus could have just asked God to forgive. End of story. But in tying forgiveness to a lack of knowledge, it would almost seem that, like Joseph in relation to his brothers, Jesus believes that there is enough within the givenness of the situation to render their action as non-binding. The real thing is to move beyond this situation, this clash of systems embodied in the torture and ritualized murder of one man, in order to return to the people around him, de-systematize them, and grant both knowledge and possibility.

In the Gospel of John, we do not find an echo of Luke’s narrative. There is no mention of Jesus’ explicit request for forgiveness of those who crucify him. However, we read in John’s Gospel that Jesus talks, before his passion, about how he goes ahead of others in order to prepare a place for them:

Do not let your hearts be troubled. Believe in God, believe also in me. In my father’s house, there are many dwelling places. If it were not so, would I have told you that *I go to prepare a place* for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, *so that where I am, there you may be also*. And *you know the way* to the place where I am going. (Coogan 2001, *John* 14: 1–4)

This going in advance, this “preparing a place” and then returning to “take you to myself”—this advance action seems to provide a clearing, a shared space. It will disclose itself as beyond grief or guilt. The arrival at this future place is “prepared”, as John writes, for those who believe and love Jesus. Jesus makes an essential, creative act. He is “the way”, as he says in response to Thomas (14:6). Knowing Jesus, following him, means receiving the essential act he is doing as also one’s own path to take. It means responding as if already claimed, by some mutual agreement or transfer, in order to perform a similar, essential act of their own—this “knowing the way” is the disciple’s capacity to strike out ahead on their own in their own future time, too. Knowing Jesus is to live into the act that is required. It is

to put imagination and understanding, interpretation and action in relation to one another. Knowing is immediately seeing that each of them can strike out upon the way. The future that Jesus offers is one that they chart too, for the sake of Joseph's "little ones" who are yet to arrive.

7. Conclusions

The impersonal, absolute subjectivity that appears in itself and to itself as flow is what directs our view to our internal limits. We will die. We will cease to matter to people near and far. We cannot be the people we want to be. We hurt others. We are hurt by others. But we have set all this up.

We are both absolute and constituted. We are paired with others and yet also radically alone. We are intimately responsible and yet never fully self-conscious. We are always at a distance and yet always fused. We exist against our own endless backdrop and yet only appear to ourselves as finite. These are the parameters of finitude, a finitude that is vulnerable to resentment and paralysis while also being open to movement and increasing sophistication and adequacy.

When we see *ourselves* as setting up those parameters of finitude, when we see ourselves as having already agreed to our mutual transfer, we can move *with* our structure as flow and begin to learn how to take a stand on this structure. Having one foot in absolute, one foot in concrete is to be able to see that the passage of time is not an independent, impersonal thing that we can simply and consistently resent or bargain with or enjoy. Rather, we can see time and our relations as *our doing*. By means of our giving ourselves to ourselves, we can see that the finite in us, the finite that we are, uses the increasingly larger whole of our past, which is held together by our *absolution*, to open up the future toward greater community with others who share this same temporal structure with us.

Our resentment or trauma exhausts us. Our grief bores us. Our anger or pain fades. But the absolute structure of time makes that possible. The steady passing away into memory is the mechanism by which we can move on, if we do the work of charting out some new place to dwell with others. And we do that best when we see that we cannot ever have any life at all if that life does not go precisely away.

Today I asked my students to tell us what "power" meant. Where is it? What does it look like? They have trouble, as I think we all do, answering what power is. It is easier to live it, to live into it, to em-power than to grasp it in our hands. Tracing the power of our intentional life is what this phenomenology of Husserl's does. It traces and em-powers. The rest is up to us.

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Notes

- ¹ Dan Zahavi, in "Phenomenology and reflection", comments on the same chapter in Husserl's *Ideas* as I am here. Zahavi notes that *Ideas* has a lacuna, namely that Husserl is talking about the relation between the constituting consciousness and the constituted object and *not* the way the constituting consciousness is itself formed: "as Husserl admits in [section] 81, his preceding discussion of constituting consciousness has not really been a discussion of the truly absolute. Rather, his analysis of constituting act-intentionality is an analysis of something that itself is constituted temporally in a profoundly different manner than the objects of intentionality" (Howell 2015, p. 180). My own choice to move from *Ideas* to *Internal Time* follows the move from constituting to absolute consciousness that Zahavi suggests would resolve the "lacuna". That is, I seek to understand how the experience of the stream or the flux as such can be understood as moving us toward the other person. I thus start from the constituted whole of the stream and work back to the constituting parts.
- ² Paul Ricoeur notes, in his commentary on this section, that "this constitution [of the stream] is the very constitution of the Ego as a form of temporality. This form is the object of eidetic intuition and not only, as Kant holds, a condition of possibility attained by regressive analysis" (Ricoeur 1996, p. 128).
- ³ Marcus Brainard says "supplementations of a lived experience are always regulated by its essence. They prove to be the key to how the stream can be grasped, and in fact by virtue not of their necessity so much as their very possibility: it cannot be grasped after the manner of a concrete lived experience but more as a sense of egoic motility" (Brainard 2002, pp. 129–30).

- 4 Max Schaefer argues similarly: “in regarding the event of absolute consciousness as a form of novelty, the latter is seen not as reality itself, as something perishable therein, but as presenting the very possibilities of reality, as a plastic force that, since it can never itself be given to appearance or intuition, requires that it be approached through a thought that begins ever anew” (Schaefer 2018, p. 983).
- 5 Whitney Howell uses Husserl on passive synthesis to make a similar point about learning: “the subject of perception does not inhabit a world of perceptual meaning that she must continually and actively assent to, but rather one that, for the most part, she has already assented to, one that is already meaningful. In other words, the realization of perceptual meaning—the defining activity of perceptual consciousness—requires the passivity of the perceiving subject: it requires that she has already “lent” herself to the meaningful perceptual world” (Howell 2015, p. 319).
- 6 This contention of mine, however, needs to be careful. As Shaun Gallagher notes in his commentary on time-consciousness in Husserl, “Husserl rejects an isomorphism between the stream of consciousness and the temporal objects and events of which it is conscious. The relations between protention, primal impression and retention are not relations of past-present-future in a way that matches up with a perceived object such as a melody” (Gallagher 2017, p. 92). The isomorphism I propose, however, is not between pre-reflective and reflective syntheses. Both the double intentionality of retention and pairing are pre-reflective or passive syntheses that seem to claim one another.
- 7 For an extended treatment of the Fifth Cartesian Meditation, see my *Layers in Husserl’s Phenomenology* (Costello 2012.)
- 8 James Mensch notes, perhaps in a different manner than I, that the absolute subjectivity that Husserl identifies in *Lectures* is itself responsible for temporality but by virtue of my involvement with “surpassing being”. First Mensch claims that is because of the absolute that time is constituted within me as my responsibility: “I can assert both that time is constituted from me and that I am temporally constituted through the processes that arise in the primal pre-present” (Mensch 2010, p. 169). However, my responsibility is limited for the constitution of time insofar as the “I” that constitutes itself as time is prior to the distinction between one and many: “The pre-individual, pre-egological origin of time is, however, not this individual being, but rather what Husserl calls in another manuscript is “surpassing being” . . . My identity with this pre-individual absolute is a matter of this “surpassing being” (Mensch 2010, p. 169). I identify with the absolute, and thus with time, because what I am behind my Ego is a surpassing being. Perhaps a being who is out of itself within the stream of others and my pairing with them.

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Article

The Experience of Prophecy and the Metaphysics of Providence in Aquinas

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Abstract: This paper discusses the active role of the prophet within divine providence, namely her understanding of the prophetic message and her use of prophecy. I focus on Aquinas' account of prophecy and I adopt two methods: the phenomenological method that describes the experience of prophecy and the metaphysical method that starts from the divine attribute of goodness and works through the order of divine providence. In Aquinas' view, prophecy is a personal mission that the prophet receives to fulfill God's plan for humankind. This mission involves the prophet's mental operations and practical engagement. I start with the metaphysics of providence and then describe the prophetic experience. Finally, I address the issue of judgment in the understanding of the prophetic message and the use of prophecy.

Keywords: prophecy; providence; judgment; Aquinas

In prophecy, God intervenes to enlighten the prophet's mind and help humankind advance in history. Thus prophecy is both a cognitive and a moral matter. Its recipient is the prophet's mind, and its scope is human action in history. The prophetic message impacts the moral orientation of a community or even of humankind. The prophet interprets her community's situation in light of the divine message and indicates a specific direction of action. Her surrender to God's will, courage to lift a veil over contemporary evil and issue uncomfortable warnings, and unabashed faith in the possibility of human redemption make up her active role in history. I believe philosophy has not fully explored this role, perhaps because it sees the prophet as merely instrumental to God's message. Contemporary philosophers mainly discuss the divine foreknowledge of future contingents, pondering how God's omniscience fares with the unstable nature of contingency.¹ In this paper, I attempt to highlight the active role of the prophet within divine providence, namely her understanding of the prophetic message and her use of prophecy. I adopt two methods: the phenomenological method that describes the experience of prophecy and the metaphysical method that starts from the divine attribute of goodness and works through the order of divine providence. I have found both methods employed in Aquinas' account of prophecy and providence. As Niels Christian Hvidt observes (Hvidt 2007, p. 140), Aquinas' treatment of prophecy is phenomenological because it focuses on the experience of prophecy. At the same time, Aquinas' metaphysics of providence helps untangle the role of prophecy in history as it outlines God's care for humankind in general and individual human persons in particular. From this angle, prophecy is a personal mission that the prophet receives to fulfill God's plan for humankind. This mission involves the prophet's mental operations and practical engagement. I will start with the metaphysics of providence and then describe the prophetic experience. I will then focus on the issue of judgment in the understanding of the prophetic message and the use of prophecy.

1. Prophecy and Providence

According to Karl Rahner, theology insufficiently explored the connection between prophecy, providence, and divine action in history. Mystical theology preferred pure,

infused contemplation to the prophetic element. Pure contemplation is less troublesome and challenging for the moral and political situation of a community, the Church, or humankind, as it raises above earthly concerns. Prophecy pierces, on the contrary, the historical whirlwind, constantly provoking the spirit of the time and calling for change. To avoid political instrumentalization, the ecclesial validation of prophecy takes a long time. Furthermore, although it had a doctrine of gifts, medieval theology lacked a proper sense of history and thus did not sufficiently account for the meaning of prophecy as “the vital stirring of the Spirit, for the growth and development of the Church”.²

I think that Aquinas escapes this criticism, though. His account of prophecy synthesizes and critically discusses the previous medieval views: Christian (especially Augustine and Albert), Jewish (especially Moses Maimonides), and Arab (especially Avicenna).³ Through this critical synthesis, Aquinas builds a coherent view of prophecy that harmonizes his metaphysics of providence with his epistemology. Prophecy occupies an important place in Aquinas’ metaphysics of divine providence, which affirms God’s government over human collective and personal history. The prophet’s mental contribution through judgment shows her active role within providence. This role follows the action of God in history, which enlightens the prophet’s mind and pushes her to guide her community in a given historical moment. Moreover, by placing judgment at the center of prophecy, Aquinas avoids the contrast between the unproblematic pure contemplation and the feared prophetic messiness. Judgment ensures that the prophet prudently interprets the divine message in light of the current historical situation and accord with the already existing revelation and Church doctrine. It also pushes the prophet to move the crowds in the right direction, with outrage against evil but hope for salvation. At the same time, Aquinas’ pragmatic interest in the concrete life of the faithful and the mental operations accompanying prophecy does not undermine its mystical pathos. On the contrary, prophecy requires a contemplative union with God, without which a prophet would be a mere fortune teller.⁴

The prophet receives from God truths that are naturally inaccessible and benefit a community or humankind. Whereas public revelations like the Incarnation appear to everybody, prophecy is a private revelation, made to only one person (or a restraint group of persons), the prophet(s). Most prophecies are predictions of the future. Some do not predict the future but indicate God’s evaluation of the present situation and His request to humans to change their course. However, even in this wider form, prophecy still deals with the future, as it orients humankind in history. This divine intervention through one particular person, the prophet, rests on the order of divine providence. God would not intervene within history to help humankind if He had no plan for humans and withdrew from their drama. Likewise, there would be no disclosure of the future to the mind of a prophet if God did not order the future in an overarching providence. Aquinas highlights this connection in Book Three of *Summa Contra Gentiles*, dedicated to the theme of providence. This book outlines God’s plan for His creation, the way His plan is realized, and humans’ purpose, namely happiness. The last part of the book discusses how God helps humans achieve their ultimate purpose, focusing on grace: “So, if man is ordered to an end which exceeds his natural capacity, some help must be divinely provided for him, in a supernatural way, by which he may tend toward his end”.⁵ A prophecy is a form of such divine help. In this case, God helps a community through an intermediary, who receives objects of faith directly from Him and communicates them to the others: “But, since the things that come from God are enacted in a definite order, as we showed above, a certain order had to be observed in the manifestation of the objects of faith. That is to say, some persons had to receive them directly from God, then others from them, and so on in an orderly way down to the lowest person”.⁶

In his metaphysics of providence (See Kretzmann 2001; Shields and Pasnau 2012, chp. 5.3), Aquinas makes a rational case for God’s intervention in human history based on the attribute of divine goodness. Starting from the premise that God is good, Aquinas concludes that a good creator cannot leave His created world to itself but maintains it into existence and orders it toward its end, its perfection. “For as it belongs to the best, to

produce the best, it is not fitting that the supreme goodness of God should produce things without giving them their perfection. Now a thing's ultimate perfection consists in the attainment of its end. Therefore it belongs to the Divine goodness, as it brought things into existence, so to lead them to their end: and this is to govern" (Aquinas 1984, Part I, Q. 103, Art.1, p. 505). Therefore, a good creator takes care of His creation by governing it orderly and guiding it toward its perfection. Aquinas calls this divine plan providence. While God's plan is eternal, its execution is temporal and mediated by secondary causes. These natural causes have their own operation, although their first cause remains God. For instance, when playing piano, the musician is the first cause, and the piano is the secondary cause. The piano operates both through itself and the motion given by the player. The effect, namely music, is produced simultaneously by the first cause, the musician, and the secondary cause, the piano. God's providence occurs similarly: God is the first cause of natural agents that realize His plan through their own operations. We will see that this cooperation between God and secondary causes takes place also in the prophet's case.

Being fully involved in every operation of natural agents, God does not rule only over universals but also singulars. His government does not stop at the general laws of nature and extends to every individual thing: the tree in front of my office, the planet Mars, my neighbor's dog. Aquinas thinks this involvement has to do with the ontological status of singulars. Singular things have being even more than universals because the latter exist only in singulars. Since God maintains things into existence, He governs over them individually: "Moreover, since God is the cause of actual being because He is being, as was shown above, He must be the agent of providence for being, because He is being. Indeed, He does provide for things, because He is their cause. So, whatever a thing is, and whatever its mode of existing, it falls under His providence. Now, singulars are beings, and more so than universals, for universals do not subsist of themselves, but are only in singulars. Therefore, divine providence also applies to singulars".⁷

Among singulars, humans have a special place within providence because they are free. God governs non-human singulars only for the sake of their species, as these singulars always follow the pattern of their species. By contrast, God governs humans for the sake of the species and their own sake. Indeed, human beings do not merely follow the species' inclination in their free acts. If they did it, they would not be free, and their acts would not have much diversity. For this reason, God governs them through special providence or special care: "And yet there must be some special kind of providence bestowed on intellectual and rational creatures in preference to others".⁸ God has a plan for each person; thus, each person has a personal life purpose, different from another person's purpose. While a human person has a general purpose that pertains to the human species and entails union with God in the beatific vision, she also has a personal purpose in accord with the general purpose but tailored to her characteristics and situation. The Thomistic scholarship has widely focused on the general purpose, leaving the issue of special providence aside. I have argued elsewhere (Oliva, forthcoming) that the personal purpose is equally important and not limited to a person's concrete application of the general purpose. If it were a mere application, the personal purpose would only be a matter of choice of the human person. It would mean that each person tries to reach the ultimate perfection in her way, making either the right or bad choices. However, the personal purpose is given to us by God, it is God's calling for each of us and requires our cooperation. Therefore, it is not a matter left at the person's discretion.

Moreover, the special providence for each person also entails special interventions of God in a person's life. God intervenes to help (as in the case of grace), or to punish. For instance, in his interpretation of the Book of Job, Aquinas observes that Job knows his hardship comes through a divine test (Aquinas 1989, p. 246). He is, thus, aware that God has an individual plan for him and intervenes in his life to stir its course in the right direction. Job's exhortation well expresses this awareness: "What is man that you should exalt him, that you should set your heart upon him, that you attend to him every morning, and test him every moment?" (Job 7:17).

How does prophecy fit into this account of providence? Prophecy is a type of grace given to a person to benefit the common good. The prophetic message refers to a future situation whose significance surpasses the individual good of the prophet. For instance, the prophet Joshua foretold the cutting off of the waters of Jordan. (Joshua, 3:13) While sanctifying grace is a habit given to a person for her moral and spiritual development, prophecy is a momentarily gift given to a person for the benefit of a community or humankind. In prophecy, the individual and the collective converge, as the individually given grace works directly for the common good. Indeed, the way God stirs the global history of humankind accords with His plans for individual persons. For this reason, the prophet is not a mere instrument, as if she were governed exclusively for the sake of humankind. Instead, the prophet's individuality emerges in the experience of prophecy, which involves the prophet's understanding, judgment, and communication. This experience, I argue, reinforces the metaphysical idea of special providence, insufficiently recognized in the Thomistic scholarship.

2. The Experience of Prophecy

Aquinas' description of a prophet's experience engages an Aristotelian epistemology centered on the reception of the representative species and judgment about this representation (Torrell 1992, p. 220). This distinguishes him from Augustine's Platonic account of prophecy⁹, in which the prophet is rather a passive recipient of a vision given by God. While he maintains the passivity in the reception of prophetic knowledge, Aquinas insists on the active role of the prophet's mind in judgment and the use of prophecy. Considering his analysis of the mental faculties involved in the prophecy and the keen description of the experience, we can classify his account as phenomenological. However, this descriptive approach does not result in a naturalizing of prophecy. It emphasizes, on the contrary, its supernatural character. God has the initiative in prophecy, not the prophet. Thus, Aquinas insists—against some of his Jewish and Arab predecessors (Decker 1940, p. 204)—that prophecy is not a habit and that the prophet does not need exceptional moral qualities to receive it. At the same time, once she receives the prophecy, the prophet is called to interpret it, announce it, and orient the community in the direction indicated by God.

The main writings in which Aquinas describes the prophetic experience are *Summa Theologiae*, II-II, Q. 171–174, *De veritate*, Q. 12, *Summa Contra Gentiles*, Book III, Part II, Chapter 154, *Commentary on Isaiah*, and *Commentary on the First Epistle to the Corinthians*. Most of his examples come from prophets in the Hebrew Bible, the prophetic model for medieval scholars. Hans Urs von Balthasar notes, in this sense, that Aquinas never mentions Hildegard of Bingen's prophecies, although she lived before him (Balthasar 1996, pp. 276, 302–5). However, Aquinas defends the need for post-Incarnation prophecies, and his view also yields in these latter cases. Therefore, to illustrate his ideas, I will also present some of Saint Hildegard of Bingen's prophecies, in addition to his examples. Hildegard is one of the most prolific medieval prophets. She not only prophesied but often reflected on her prophetic experience. I believe that her prophecies and self-reflection well confirm Aquinas' prophetic phenomenology.

Prophecy is a divine gift given to a person to help a community or humankind. Aquinas distinguishes between the gratuitous grace (*gratia gratis data*) given for the sanctification of others and the grace given to the person for her own sanctification (*gratia gratum faciens*). The gratuitous graces, or gifts, are grouped in three categories according to the type of act involved: (1) knowledge: prophecy, rapture; (2) speech: the gift of tongues, the gift of words; (3) action: the gift of miracles.

The gift of prophecy pertains to knowledge. Prophets know things that are far from natural human knowledge. In this sense, prophetic knowledge includes more than future contingencies. Aquinas classifies three types of things remote from human knowledge. First, things remote from one particular person but not from another. For instance, Eliseus knew prophetically what his disciple Giezi did in his absence (4 Kings, 5: 26). Likewise, Saint Hildegard of Bingen got a glimpse into the life of Saint Rupert through divine vision:

“Now, as I see in true vision, our blessed patron Rupert, bereaved by his father, lived with his widowed mother in this place. /... / I will speak of him as the living light showed me in true vision and as it taught me” (St. Hildegard of Bingen 2010, p. 45).

Second, Aquinas shows that prophecy may refer to some things that surpass the knowledge of all humans not because they are unknowable but because of a defect in human knowledge. For instance, the Seraphim revealed the mystery of the Trinity to Isaiah (Isaiah, 6:3).

Third, prophecy also deals with things that are in themselves unknowable, namely the future contingencies. Since they are the farthest away from human knowledge, they most properly belong to prophecy. For instance, Saint Hildegard of Bingen prophesied a time of extraordinary peaceful flourishing before the second coming of Christ and the end of the world: “But what is more, such new and unknown ordinances of justice and peace will develop in that time that people will be amazed, explaining that this is because they had neither heard nor known of such things before, and because this peace was being granted to them before Judgment Day” (St. Hildegard of Bingen 2018, Part III, Vision 5, p. 451). In that blooming time, prophecy will increase because the vicinity of the Last Day will be evident: “Indeed, prophecy will in that time be laid open, as described above, and wisdom will be cheerful and strong; and in them all the faithful will reflect upon themselves as in a mirror. /... / Those days will surely be strong and praiseworthy in their peace and stability, but they will also be like armed soldiers who lie along a cliff-top, waiting in ambush for their enemies, whom they then follow for the kill. For they will declare the coming of the Last Day, because whatever the prophets have foretold of goodness and grace will be fulfilled in their time”.¹⁰

While the nature of prophecy is cognitive, its scope is practical. Aquinas underlines these traits of prophecy, which instructs in faith and guides our actions: “... prophecy is directed to the knowledge of Divine truth, by the contemplation of which we are not only instructed in faith, but also guided in our actions. According to Ps. XLII:3, *Send forth thy light and Thy truth: they have conducted me*”.¹¹ In this sense, prophecy discloses matters pertaining to the doctrine of faith, evaluates the present time, and indicates God’s will for the future. Here, Aquinas defends what became the standard Catholic stance on prophecy, namely the idea that up until Christ, prophecy’s goal was both doctrinaire and moral, whereas after Christ, the doctrine of faith is complete, and prophecy will only have a guiding goal. He upholds the actuality of prophecy against those who thought there would and should not be any other prophecies after Christ because He fulfilled the revelation about divine truth. “... at all times there have not been lacking persons having the spirit of prophecy, not indeed for the declaration of new doctrine of faith, but for the direction of human acts”.¹² Thus, before Christ, prophecy builds the doctrine of faith and orients human action in history; after Christ, it only orients human action in history.¹³ However, this limitation does not necessarily mean temporal reduction. On the contrary, Aquinas thinks that prophecy has increased over time: “Accordingly, if we speak of prophecy as directed to the Godhead as its end, it progressed according to three divisions of time, namely before the law, under the law, and under grace”.¹⁴

Aquinas’ defense of post-Christ prophetic possibilities highlights prophecy’s historical nature and its stable place in the human vocation. These characteristics exalt the active role of the prophet within the order of providence. Indeed, the increase in prophecy mirrors the historical development of humankind and reveals the prophet as a historical agent.¹⁵ Moreover, the permanence of prophecy throughout history shows that prophecy is not an extremely rare phenomenon but belongs, on the contrary, to the universal vocation of each human being called to testify the love of God. Thus, rather than being an occasional instrument of God, the prophet actively responds to God’s call, taking charge of her vocation. Mary Hayden Lemmons highlights this vocational aspect of prophecy, so crucial for understanding a prophet’s place in the providence: “Although prophesying specific messages from God can be a special gift given to the few like Moses and John the Baptist, within Christianity, it is also a Baptismal gift given to all. Prophesying is accordingly a part

of the Christian vocation" (Hayden Lemmons 2016, p. 34). This universally open possibility of prophecy is visible also in the proliferation of women prophets after Christ, and even of child prophets in the 20th Century (for instance, the prophecies from Fatima).¹⁶ The Church's prudence and long discernment in approving prophecies should not undermine the recognition of prophetic vocation.

As we have seen, prophecy is bound to a particular historical moment. This temporal conditioning determines its transitory cognitive status. Aquinas vigorously denies that prophecy is a habit permanently inhering in the prophet. If so, a prophet could prophesy every time she wanted to. But this is not the case. No prophet was ever able to prophesize 24 h a day. For instance, the prophet Eliseus confesses not knowing about the thoughts of a Shunammite woman: "Her soul is in anguish, and the Lord hath hid it from me, and hath not told me". (4 Kings 4:27) Furthermore, if the prophetic light would permanently inhere in the prophet, it would fully transfigure her mind and render it capable of knowing all things. Such perfect knowledge would come from grasping the principle of all things, namely from seeing God's essence. But the prophets do not see God's essence. Thus, the prophetic light is only a transient impression in the prophet's mind, and a momentary inspiration meant to enlighten the prophet's understanding regarding a particular moment in history.

This limitation on prophecy is, however, not a defect. While the general human incapacity to see the divine essence is a result of the original sin, the lack of full sight in the prophet is due to the peculiar arrangement of providence. The confined contents of a prophecy reflect the singular moment in which God intervenes by giving each what they need for providential orientation: "The prophetic light, once infused, does not give knowledge of all that can be prophesied, but only of those things for the knowledge of which it is given. This limitation does not come from lack of power in the giver, but from the ordination of His wisdom, which distributes to each as He wishes" (Aquinas 2008, Vol. II, Q. 12, A.1, p. 108). Thus, the lack of full sight is not a predicament of the prophet who must content himself with a limited vision but a condition for historical orientation. It elevates the role of the prophet. Bound to a specific moment and lacking perfect contemplative knowledge, the prophet must evaluate the vision he receives and transmit the message to his community according to the present historical situation. The prophet receives, in this sense, all that he needs for communicating a message in a particular moment: "The Lord reveals to the prophets all things that are necessary for the instruction of the faithful; yet not all to every one, but some to one, some to another. /.../ Consequently it does not follow that nothing is lacking to prophetic revelation, but that it lacks none of those things to which prophecy is directed".¹⁷

Prophecy entails sight and declaration. In both of them, judgment plays a key role. Prophetic sight represents the reception of a message and the judgment of this message. The declaration is knowledge transmitted to the community through speech and sometimes confirmed or strengthened through miracles. The prophet's use of what she receives requires her judgment, both in regard to the significance of the contents for the community's situation and the action needed in light of the message.

The first layer of prophecy is thus passive. But even at this stage, there is a potency waiting to be actualized in the receiver. Aquinas calls it an obediential potency (*potentia obedientialis*). The obediential potency is the ability of every creature to be changed by God in ways unavailable to a natural agent: "... the whole of creation has some capacity to obey, insofar as every creature obeys God, to the extent of receiving in itself whatever God wills" (Aquinas 2005, Q. 1, Art. 10, #13, p. 69). For instance, the seawater can be warmed up by the sun but can be separated only by God. Similarly, all human beings have the obediential potency of receiving prophetic light: "In human nature there is a passive potency for the reception of prophetic light, which is not natural but only obediential, like the potency which is in physical nature for those things which happen miraculously".¹⁸

The reception of a divine vision occurs in several modes of representation. The prophet's mind can receive sensible forms in three ways: through the senses, imagination,

or direct impression of a mental representation in the mind. In the first case, the prophet sees with her senses a concrete image. For instance, Daniel saw writing on the wall in the palace of Belshazzar. In the second case, the prophet's imagination either receives a new species or receives coordination of an already existing species. In the first situation, a blind person can receive color; in the second, a person can see something already seen with senses but represented in a new way. For instance, Jeremiah saw the boiling cauldron from the face of the north (Jeremiah, 1:13). Finally, a prophet can receive infused scientific knowledge of wisdom, like Solomon or the apostle.

However, the reception is not only visual and representative. Aquinas holds auditive prophecies in higher esteem than the visual ones: "A third basis is the manner of perceiving these things, for the more distinctly the things prophesied are signified, the higher is the grade of prophecy. But no signs portray anything more distinctly than words. Therefore, when one perceives words expressly indicating the thing prophesied, as we read of Samuel in the first Book of Kings (3:11), the grade of prophecy is higher than when certain figures which are likenesses of things are shown to us, as the boiling caldron which was shown to Jeremias (1:13)".¹⁹

But reception by itself is not enough; it needs judgment²⁰ which depends on the inflow of divine light. Therefore, it is possible that persons who receive representations through divine action can lack judgment. This is a case of imperfect or improper prophecy: "Wherefore if certain things are divinely represented to any man by means of imaginary likenesses, as happened to Pharaoh (Gen. xli. 1–7) and to Nabuchodonosor (Dan. iv.1–2), or even by bodily likenesses, as happened to Balthasar (Dan. v.5), such a man is not to be considered a prophet, unless his mind be enlightened for the purpose of judgment; and such an apparition is something imperfect in the genus of prophecy".²¹ Thus, Joseph, who interpreted Pharaoh's dream, is more a prophet than Pharaoh himself. Joseph does not have a supernatural vision; nonetheless, he receives a supernatural light that allows him to judge. It is, therefore, possible to have prophecy without any supernaturally given representations. Indeed, a prophet can also interpret, through infused light, sensible images that he receives through natural senses without supernaturally infused images. For instance, the prophet Amos saw a fruit basket and interpreted it as a symbol of a ripe time in which God evaluates the situation of Israel and urges her to change: "This is what the Lord God showed me: a basket of ripe fruit. 'What do you see, Amos?', he asked. I answered: 'A basket of ripe fruit.' Then the Lord said to me: The time is ripe to have done with my people Israel; I will forgive them no longer" (Amos, 8: 1–3).

Ideally, a prophet should have both vision and judgment. But the possibility of prophecy based on intellectual light without vision shows that judgment is the necessary condition of prophecy. The active role of the prophet is thus at the core of prophecy.

The judgment gives the prophet the certainty of the divine origin of the message. For instance, Jeremiah was sure about the message he received: "In truth the Lord sent me to you, to speak all these words in your hearing". (Jer. 26:15) The prophet must discern, with the help of prophetic light, whether what she received is of a divine origin: "Thus, in speech with which God is said to have spoken to the prophets in Holy Scripture, we consider not only the species of things which are imprinted, but also the light which is given, by which the mind of the prophet is made certain of something".²²

Furthermore, judgment discerns the meaning of a message or a command. For instance, David knew that the message he received from God regarded the covenant with Israel: "The spirit of the Lord spoke through me; his word was on my tongue. /... / He has made an eternal covenant with me, set forth and secured". (2 Samuel, 23:2–5) The judgment of a message often recurs to the doctrine of faith. It interprets this new message in light of an already existing religious knowledge.²³ This is the case of Saint Hildegard of Bingen's prophecy of a pre-apocalyptic flourishing time. She interprets her vision of such a peaceful time in accord with a Biblical situation that saw a peaceful time before the first coming of Christ: "Yet after the flood, as in that middle time between the flood and the coming of God's Son into the world, flowers blossomed with the new sap and with every sprout in a

different order than before, because the earth was baked then with the moisture of water and the heat of the sun".²⁴ Hildegard sees in her vision of that peaceful time a continuation of the peace that preceded Incarnation: "For the peace that had preceded the coming of my Son's Incarnation will be fully accomplished in those days, because strong men will rise up then in great prophecy".²⁵ Furthermore, she connects her prophecy with Isaiah's Biblical prophecy in *Isaiah* 4:2: "Every bud of justice will also flourish then among human sons and daughters, as was foretold at my will by my prophet and servant: 'In that day the bud of the Lord shall be magnificent and glorious, and the fruit of the earth high, the joy of those who had been saved of Israel.'"²⁶

However, there are cases of prophetic predictions in which the receiver does not know the meaning of what he prophesies. For instance, Caiaphas prophesied that Jesus would die for the nation without knowing the significance of this message. Aquinas thinks Caiaphas has prophetic instinct but is not a true prophet (See Rodolfi 2020). Divine providence can turn evil into good; thus, Caiaphas was a prophetic instrument without being a true and proper prophet because he lacked judgment.

An action commanded by God can have a meaning only a discerning prophet can understand. It is the case of Jeremiah, whom God ordered to buy a linen loincloth, wear it, and then bury it. After a long interval, God ordered him to unbury the cloth, which was completely rotten. This action symbolized the decay of the people of Israel because of their pride: "Thus says the Lord: So also I will allow the pride of Judah to rot, the great pride of Jerusalem. These wicked people who refuse to obey my words, who walk in the stubbornness of their hearts, and follow strange gods to serve and adore them, shall be like this loincloth which is good for nothing". (Jeremiah 13:9–10) Unlike Jeremiah, the soldiers who divided Christ's garments did not understand the meaning of what they did.

The understanding and judgment involved in prophecy also require the evaluation of the present moment in light of the divine message. Prophetic lucidity should trump, in this sense, the mere human curiosity regarding the future. The Vatican's document on the message of Fatima distinguishes mere fortunetellers from prophets based on a faithful understanding of the signs of time: "On this point, it should be kept in mind that prophecy in the biblical sense does not mean to predict the future but to explain the will of God for the present, and therefore show the right path to take for the future. A person who foretells what is going to happen responds to the curiosity of the mind, which wants to draw back the veil on the future. The prophet speaks to the blindness of the will and of reason, and declares the will of God as an indication and demand for the present time. /.../ In this sense, there is a link between the charism of prophecy and the category of 'signs of the time'" (Congregation for the Doctrine of Faith 2000).

This prophetic lucidity and insight into the *Zeitgeist* may sometimes take exacerbated forms. In his analysis of prophetic consciousness, Abraham Heschel (2001) shows that prophets have an unusual sensitivity to evil. They may even exaggerate the gravity of facts because they want to shake their contemporaries' complacency and bring them to a moral awareness and a faithful return to God. This is the case of Hosea's harsh predicament: "There is no truth, no love, and no knowledge of God in the land; Swearing and lying, killing and stealing, and committing adultery, they break all bonds, and blood touches blood". (Hosea 4:1–2) In Heschel's eyes, the sometimes unfair accusations of Israel's prophets against their own people aim at rallying Israel to her divine mission: "The countries of the world were full of abominations, violence, falsehood. Here was one land, one people, cherished and chosen for the purpose of transforming the world. This people's failure was most serious".²⁷ Saint Hildegard of Bingen strikes similar harsh tones against the people of her time, including the Church, accused of corruption and apathy²⁸. In her case, too, this rash criticism intends to awaken her contemporaries to the need for conversion and repentance in view of salvation.

Finally, judgment is also involved in the use of prophecy. Prophecy is given, indeed, for practical reasons, to discern "truthfully and efficaciously what is to be done".²⁹ Although it does not, per se, make people virtuous, it aims at a virtuous life. Indeed, neither the

prophet nor those to whom she announces the prophecy are automatically virtuous merely by this reception. However, the way she uses prophecy acquires a moral value: "... the use of any prophecy is within the power of the prophet".³⁰ A prophet must be careful to use prophecy for holiness and not, for instance, to obtain favors from others. Thus she must also maintain a life that is minimally detached from "the entanglement in the pleasures and cares of this world"³¹, a condition Aquinas borrows from Moses Maimonides. Indeed, according to the Scriptures, one knows the false prophets by their fruits. (Matthew 7:16)

The use of prophecy consists of a declaration or announcement, which can be done either by words or deeds. The prophetic announcement needs a certain boldness that empowers the prophet to speak even though opponents of the truth might persecute her.³² At the same time, the prophet needs to maintain sobriety so that she does not come across as erratic. In her announcement, she must use the right sensible signs: "The prophet does the announcement either by words or even by deeds, as is clear in Jeremias (13:5), inasmuch as he put his girdle near the river to rot. But in whichever of the two ways the prophetic announcement is made, it is always made by a man not transported out of its senses, for such an announcing takes place through certain sensible signs. Hence, the prophet doing the announcing has to use his senses for his announcement to be perfect. Otherwise, he would make the announcement like an insane person".³³

Because the scope of prophecy is practical, the prophet is not just a microphone but a person on a mission, as Heschel observes.³⁴ Her declaration is a call to action. Through her judgment, she must orient the action of her community in light of the message she receives. For example, Jeremiah receives from God the historical mission to bring about radical moral change: "See, today I appoint you over nations and kingdoms to uproot and tear down, to destroy and overthrow, to build and to plant". (*Jeremiah*, 1:10) Although it is not a habit, prophecy imbues everything a prophet does. Saint Hildegard, for example, realized her prophetic ministry in various ways: writing, painting, musical compositions, and preaching trips.³⁵ Called the "Sibyl of the Rhine", she advised a wide variety of leaders on religious and political matters, either at her own initiative or at their request. Her intense correspondence with leaders of the time testifies to her practical engagement. For instance, in her letter to Pope Eugenius III, she warns him of a peril coming from a bear, most probably a metaphor for Emperor Frederick Barbarossa. Henry, Bishop of Liège, avails himself of her prophetic gift asking for guidance: "Do reply to this letter and tell me what the living light has revealed to you so that I can rouse myself from sleep. May the most merciful God grant that through you I will perceive a most certain comfort in your writings. And may he grant me through your intercessions to enter the final dwelling-place of eternal peace". (St. Hildegard of Bingen 2011, p. 183). The solicitation of prophetic guidance shows that even the audience recognizes the prophet's pragmatic autonomy and employment of personal operations. As Aquinas observes, the use of prophecy lies in the prophet's power, and the latter might even decide not to use a particular prophecy.³⁶ At the same time, this pragmatic autonomy is not arbitrary, and prophecy is not simply consulting on demand. While prophecy deals with concrete situations, its final end is salvation. Indeed, the prophet must ensure that her engagement does not stop at mundane matters but aims at salvation.³⁷ Her judgment must thus make the best use of prophecy following this compass.

3. Conclusions

We have seen that judgment is at the core of prophecy. The prophet is not merely instrumental but plays an active role. While Aquinas sometimes calls the prophet's mind an instrument of the Holy Spirit, his emphasis on judgment and the use of prophecy avoids instrumentalism. According to Paul Synave, Aquinas uses the term "instrument" broadly to indicate the dependence of prophecy on divine inspiration. He surely does not use it in its proper sense of a cause that does not have the source of movement in itself (Synave and Benoit 1961, p. 77). If that were the case, the prophet would not judge and interpret the meaning of what God transmitted to her. Aquinas' rejection of such reductive views

on prophecies is visible also in his criticism of Montanus, whose errors compromised the good standing of prophecy in Christian theology. According to Aquinas, Montanus (second century AD) committed two main errors. First, he denied the role of judgment in prophecy. Second, he claimed that prophets were out of their senses when announcing as if they were mad or talking in their sleep.³⁸ Both errors boil down to instrumentalism because they negate a prophet's creative autonomy in (1) the understanding of the message and (2) the use of prophecy. For this reason, a correct phenomenology of the prophetic experience would give a prophet her due recognition and re-establish prophecy among meaningful religious experiences that theology cannot neglect.

Through her active role, the prophet has a privileged position within the divine providence and, thus, a specific God-given purpose. Indeed, God orders the communication of faith matters on a scale that starts from God, moves to the angels, then to the humans who receive charismatic gifts (among them, the prophets), and stops with the faithful who receive these matters from the beings above.³⁹ The prophet's place is high on this scale. Her mission is to transmit God's message to her community for holiness and salvation. Indeed, the gift of prophecy, along with other gifts, is given for the sanctification of others. It differs from the grace given to one person for her sanctification. Prophecy and sainthood⁴⁰ often meet in one person (for instance, in Saint Hildegard of Bingen), but prophecy's very nature is social and not individual. However, while the prophet receives the prophecy for the good of the others and not for her confined individual good, prophecy contributes to her life purpose and becomes part of her destiny. For instance, Jeremiah reports that God revealed to him his prophetic calling: "The word of the Lord came to me, saying, 'Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, before you were born I set you apart; I appointed you as a prophet to the nations'". (*Jeremiah* 1, 4–5)

Looking back at Aquinas' distinction between providence for the sake of the species and providence for the sake of the individual, we can conclude that a person receives prophecy for the good of the species (humankind), but she must accomplish it freely through her judgment and thus must make it her mission. The prophetic experience's phenomenology reveals the prophet's particular place in the providential order insofar as the individual mission of the prophet aims at the salvation of humankind.

Aquinas' phenomenology of prophetic experience reaches two objectives. First, it highlights the active feature of prophetic consciousness, namely, judgment. While many scholars before and after him think that prophecy is a passive reception and communication of divine messages, Aquinas has a more complex view of mental operations involved in prophecy and thus assigns an active role to prophets. His view aligns with the Biblical text and the post-Incarnation prophecies, as we could see in the case of Fatima or the experience of Saint Hildegard of Bingen. Second, his description of prophetic experience sheds light upon a less known aspect of his metaphysics of providence, namely the distinction between providence for the sake of the species and providence for the sake of the individual. Many interpreters of Aquinas focus on the general purpose of human beings, shared by all of us, and disregard the personal purpose given to each of us by God. In prophecy, the two purposes converge in exemplary fashion because the prophet's personal call aims at humanity's salvation.⁴¹

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Notes

- ¹ See Davidson (2018) for a discussion on prophecy, (first published 18 February 2005, revised 2 August 2018).
- ² Rahner (1964, p. 103). See also Niels Christian Hvidt, *Christian Prophecy*, p. 34.
- ³ On the sources of Aquinas' account of prophecy, see Decker (1940).
- ⁴ Contemplation remained, for Aquinas, fundamental until the end of his life. In the last months of his life, he received a revelation that surpassed all his lifetime work. He famously told his friend Reginald of Piperno that his written work seemed like straw compared to what he had seen through that revelation. See Stump (2003, p. 12).
- ⁵ Aquinas (1992, Book III, chp. 147, p. 224). Aquinas borrowed the connection between prophecy and providence from an earlier medieval Jewish thinker, Moses Maimonides. In his *The Guide of the Perplexed*, Maimonides discusses prophecy in the context of providence. See Maimonides (1974, Book II, chp. 32–48). See also Yaffe (1980, pp. 62–74); Cortest (2017, pp. 66–80); Strauss (2004, pp. 537–49); Dienstag (1974, pp. 104–18); Kreisel (2001, chp. 3); Patch (2004, pp. 83–104).
- ⁶ Aquinas, *Summa contra Gentiles*, Book III, chp. 154, p. 240.
- ⁷ Aquinas, *Summa contra Gentiles*, Book III, chp. 75, p. 252. See also Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, I, Q. 14, Art. 11.
- ⁸ Aquinas, *Summa Contra Gentiles*, Book III, Part 2, chp. 111, p. 114.
- ⁹ On the relationship between Aquinas' and Augustine's accounts of prophecy, see Pomeroy (2015, pp. 127–44).
- ¹⁰ St. Hildegard of Bingen, *The Book of Divine Works*, pp. 454–55.
- ¹¹ Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, II-II, Q. 174, Art. 6, p. 1905.
- ¹² Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, II-II, Q. 174, Art. 6, p. 1906
- ¹³ Aquinas' proposal remains valid also in the ongoing debate in the Church regarding the nature of post-apostolic private revelations. See Rahner (1964, p. 108): "If we consider all this, the only satisfactory answer to our problem of the theological nature of post-apostolic, private revelations of the Church remains this: they do not reveal an objective affirmation as such which would either form an accidental supplement to public revelation or simply be identical with it, but private revelations are essentially imperatives showing how Christianity should act in a concrete historical situation: not new assertions but new commands".
- ¹⁴ See note 11 above.
- ¹⁵ On the historical character of Aquinas' notion of prophecy, see Rogers (2016, pp. 100–1). Rogers combats the claims of early twentieth Century commentators like Étienne Gilson and Alois Dempf regarding Aquinas' indifference to history.
- ¹⁶ See Hvidt (2007, p. 97). Aquinas acknowledges that both men and women can receive prophecies in *Summa Theologiae*, II-II, Q. 177, Art. 2, 1917: "The grace of prophecy consists of God enlightening the mind, on the part of which there is no difference of sex among men".
- ¹⁷ Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, II-II, Q. 171, Art. 5.
- ¹⁸ Aquinas, *Truth*, Q. 12, Art. 3, p. 124.
- ¹⁹ Aquinas, *Truth*, Q. 12, Art. 13, p. 174. See also Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, II-II, Q. 174, Art. 3, p. 1903. Schlosser (2000, p. 71).
- ²⁰ Aquinas does not explain the nature of judgment in detail in his writings on prophecy. For his notion of judgment, see Aquinas (1953); Aquinas (1962, I, p. 1); Aquinas (1995, p. 1, VI, chp. 4); Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, I, Q. 16, Art. 2.
- ²¹ Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, II-II, Q. 173, Art. 2., p. 1897.
- ²² Aquinas, *Truth*, Q. 12, A. 7, p. 144. Rahner explains that prophecy reaches the awareness of objectivity due to judgment, not perception. A vision lacks an essential criterion of the reliability of perception, namely, its coherence with our previous experience and its confirmation by our subsequent experience. See Rahner (1964, p. 132).
- ²³ According to Peter Geach, this integration of prophecy into the existing corpus of revelation distinguishes prophecy from lucky guesses. See Geach (2001, p. 86).
- ²⁴ St. Hildegard of Bingen, *The Book of Divine Works*, p. 429.
- ²⁵ St. Hildegard of Bingen, *The Book of Divine Works*, p. 452.
- ²⁶ See note 25 above.
- ²⁷ Heschel (2001, p. 17). The unmasking of evil and injustice also lies at the heart of the Black Prophetic Tradition in the 20th century. See West (2015).
- ²⁸ St. Hildegard of Bingen, *The Book of Divine Works*, Part III, Vision 5, p. 427.
- ²⁹ Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, II-II, Q. 173, A. 2, p. 1897.
- ³⁰ Aquinas, *Truth*, Q. 12, Art. 4, p. 127.
- ³¹ Aquinas, *Truth*, Q. 12, Art. 5, p. 130. On Aquinas' distinction between true and false prophets, see Schlosser (2000, pp. 301–10). See also Aquinas (2019).
- ³² Aquinas, *Truth*, Q. 12, Art. 13, p. 173.
- ³³ Aquinas, *Truth*, Q. 12, Art. 9, p. 149

- 34 Abraham J. Heschel, *The Prophets*, p. XXII.
- 35 Niels Christian Hvidt, *Christian Prophecy*, p. 99.
- 36 Aquinas, *Truth*, Q. 12, Art. 4. See also Aquinas (2012, chp. 14:6, pp. 876–77).
- 37 Aquinas, *Truth*, Q. 12, Art. 2.
- 38 Aquinas, *Truth*, Q. 12, Art. 9, p. 151.
- 39 Aquinas, *Summa contra Gentiles*, III, chp. 154, p. 239. On the prophet's place in the hierarchy of divine communication, see also Balthasar (1996, pp. 300–1).
- 40 Anna Rodolfi suspects "Aquinas' intent of an implicit confrontation with the Jewish and Arabian prophetology, where moral perfection plays an important role". (Rodolfi 2020, p. 183). Additionally, in the Christian Orthodox tradition, prophets are considered holy. See Evdokimov (2011, p. 208). I think that Aquinas' point here is not to dissociate holiness from the prophetic experience but to underline the final end of the prophecy, namely the common good.
- 41 I thank Bill Powers, two anonymous reviewers, and the participants at the session of the Society for the Phenomenology of Religious Experience at the annual meeting of Central APA 2022 for their critical remarks and suggestions.

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Article

Time, Memoria, Creation: Receptions of Augustinism in the Philosophical Theology

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Abstract: The aim of the paper is to develop a thesis about the potential of phenomenology as a method for analyzing classical ancient texts. The article outlines the key issues of the doctrine of the time of Augustine and raises the question of the principles of phenomenological interpretation. Proceeding from the presentism approach, parallels are drawn between the philosophy of Augustine and the phenomenology of E. Husserl, the issue of duration and structure of the present is especially considered. The philosophy of Augustine includes both theological and epistemological conclusions.

Keywords: Augustine; philosophy of time; Edmund Husserl; memory; phenomenology

1. Introduction

Twentieth-century commentators on Augustine frequently come to the conclusion that understanding the problem of time and memory is not simply related to thinking about creation, and that those two areas of research are not conceivable without each other. Augustine's ontology of time and creation and the problems of measurement of the aesthetic perception of time all reveal an epistemological and structural relationship with the mechanisms of memory. Accordingly, like most aspects of his epistemology, the doctrine of memory, to which the tenth and eleventh book of *Confessions* is dedicated, bears in itself an interpretation of Platonism (and Neoplatonism), which nevertheless acquires Christian forms. In itself, the problem of memory cannot be overemphasized: at the heart of any historicism, be it the poetization of individual experience or the sociology of national identity, lies some idea of the connectedness of events, which in anthropological models can be conditionally called memory.

The fact that Augustine paid much attention to memory is undoubtedly relevant in modern interdisciplinary approaches in philosophical anthropology, including the latest phenomenological studies. After the 'theological' turn in French phenomenology, Augustine's anthropology and epistemology is vividly developed by Jean-Luc Marion, and also in Orthodox theology, by John P. Manoussakis. The theology of creation is also a focus for researchers in natural theology and the philosophy of consciousness, among them Eugene T. Long, Calvin L. Troup, and Roland J. Teske. The historical and philosophical reconstruction of Augustinianism continues to be relevant to modern philosophical anthropology and the philosophy of time, but the question of the theology of creation for the newest philosophical theology remains open. It is impossible to equalize the phenomenological reflection and Augustine's intuition, such as to ignore the similarity of both Neoplatonic and phenomenological approaches to the nature of introspection. To clarify, this similarity is very heuristic for the intuitivism in the philosophy of time.

The aim of this paper is to study the historical and philosophical relationship between time and memory in the context of Augustine's creationism, and to interpret this doctrine phenomenologically. Such phenomenological interpretation must clarify the following question—does the hermeneutics of creation have a dimension in the time experience?

2. The Concept of Time According to St. Augustine and Its Phenomenological Interpretation: *Distentio Animi*

The eleventh book of *Confessions* by St. Augustine is usually considered to be the source of all classic questions in the philosophy of time. In polemics with the time doctrines of ancient philosophers, mostly Neoplatonists, Augustine formulated some methodological principles of the philosophy of time, which were later reproduced in their secularized form by phenomenology. I consider three points of his anthropological doctrine of time, namely *distentio animi*; the question of time and memory; and the role of perception and imagination in the process of time constitution. The hypothesis of the research is the following: there are not only historical parallels between Augustine and Husserl as between two temporal philosophers, but there is also a methodological similarity between their approaches. The result of such supposition will be to apply a phenomenological analysis of Augustine's doctrine of time, with an emphasis on its concrete aspects. To justify our method, it is necessary to analyze the two topics of doctrine—the idea of *distentio animi*, and considerations about perception of time, including the aesthetic experience.

Augustine reflects on the relationship between time and eternity, largely relying on the concept of time that Plotinus proposed. Plotinus questioned the relationship between time and eternity in the seventh tractate of the *Third Ennead* (Ennead III, 7), which contains an interpretation of Plato's story about the origin of the world, as expounded in *Timaeus* (Timaeus 28b). In that tractate Plotinus builds his reasoning, starting from the story of Plato in *Timaeus* about the beginning and origin of the world. Already in Plato we see the juxtaposition of eternity and time as a kind of sample (παράδειγμα) and copy, a prototype and image. All created things are created according to the eternal pattern, or rather, the pattern of eternity, to which the Demiurge 'looked', creating the cosmos (Timaeus 28b). Since all created things exist in time, then the 'sky' was created along with time, time (and any created) is also an image. According to Plato, time is a 'moving semblance of eternity', and all its forms, arising and disappearing, past and future, are 'parts' of time—which 'imitates eternity and circles through the number (Timaeus 38a). Moreover, time is born simultaneously with the 'sky', so that it will disappear: 'for the model exists for all eternity, while the universe was and is and always will be for all time' (Waterfield 2008, p. 28, Timaeus 38c)¹. The creation of planets, stars and all luminaries in general, according to Plato, was necessary to realize the concept of the birth of time. The planets, each equipped with its own movement, participate in the structuration of time, just like the whole geometry of the universe that Plato presented in detail.

Apparently, the correlation between the pre-image and the image is revealed through the number of movements: time functions as a moving image which, however, does not wholly explain the very transformation of the prototype into an image²—in other words, the 'secret' of the birth of time. In spite of the fact that the whole set of movements of the planets, their rhythms and velocities, actually forms the world harmony, close to its eternal prototype, and also creates the schemes of the action of all material objects, the question of the origin of time from eternity remains open.

Plotinus also cites that problem of the relationship between the prototype and the image, choosing this difficulty as the central point of reasoning. Werner Beierwaltes, a present-day commentator of Plotinus, indicates that all Plotinus's reflections on eternity and time are determined by the dialectic of prototype and image, which is the question of the origin of time (Beierwaltes 1967, pp. 10–11). Time, according to the Third Ennead, arose because of some activity of the Soul, which 'always wanted to apply to everything else what was known to her in the noumenal world'³ (Enneads III, 7.11). Time is the life of the sensory world in imitation of the supersensible, and it arises when the activity of the Soul creates events and their sequence, which is time. Namely, 'time is the life of the Soul, which in the process of movement passes from one manifestation of life to another'⁴ (Enneads III, 7.11).

Commenting on the time doctrine of Plotinus, it is noteworthy that the influence of the Stoics, Aristotle, and the Epicureans is traceable in his thinking, if through the

prism of Plato's cosmology and mathematics. Plotinus apparently inherits from previous thinkers the doctrine of motion, and the concept of number, as well as measures. Therefore, his consideration of the nature of time can be termed the final one for the entire ancient tradition. However, the so-called psychologization which arises in connection with the concept of the World Soul, belongs to Plotinus himself, and precisely because of this idea the doctrine of time then becomes significant for Christianity. Psychologization—bringing into the cosmological scheme the properties of the 'life' of the soul—emerged, as can be seen from the course of reflection, in the process of simultaneously solving two problems: firstly, the problem of the origin of time, and secondly, the problem of duration as its property. In *Timaeus* and *Physics*, these problems are posed separately. Plotinus, summing up the tradition, combines them in the question of the possibility of measuring time in relation to eternity. In a sense, psychologization further generalizes the formulation of the question of time, in an attempt to answer all questions at once. In any case, we can talk about psychologization as what leads simultaneously to a kind of 'decosmologization',⁵ that is, a departure from Platonic creationism.

Thus, the causal relation between eternity and time in Plotinus correlates with those elements of his philosophy which distinguish it from Plato's, in particular with the hypostases of the One, the Nous, and World Soul. St. Augustine accepts the Neoplatonist idea that time exists in the 'Soul' and is part of the spiritual order; however, due to inconsistency of the idea of World Soul within the Christian doctrine, he shifts the emphasis into the sphere of the individual human soul. The question of eternity is considered in the context of the concept of Creation, although St. Augustine accepts Plotinus's argument about the impossibility of attributing to eternity any temporal characteristics. Time is not part of eternity, not some segment on a 'line' of eternity: it is qualitative, another dimension.

(Confessions, XI, 10.12)

Drawing a distinction between eternity and time, St. Augustine examines time based on the everyday experience. Following his method of considering a subject of reflection as a part of inner experience, St. Augustine describes the daily sensations associated with the experience of time, primarily its duration (Confessions XI, 27.34–35). When he tries to understand what gives us the sensation of duration, the sensation of temporal intervals, which can be short or long, St. Augustine considers the three attributes that we normally ascribe to time as its essential predicates—the past, the present, and the future. As a result, St. Augustine arrives at an idea that will later form the basis of the phenomenological model of consciousness of time: namely, through the present we obtain knowledge about the past and the future. In the present we can exactly differentiate the actual sensation from the memory images of the past, which do not exist *already*, and anticipate events in the future, which do not exist *yet*. Only the present has ontological status, while knowledge about the past and the future derives from our perception of the present. Bringing all three time-predicates to a common denominator, Augustine also points to the subjectivity of time.

In the twentieth century, this idea of present is analyzed in Husserl's phenomenology.⁶ The key mechanism of time-consciousness is the constitution of the present.⁷ Transcendental Ego as the center of intentional functions is founded on the *actuality* of perception. In the consciousness of immanent objects, Husserl distinguishes not only the properties of objects themselves, but all the ways in which the differences between the properties are understood. Realization of the differences always occurs as if from the perspective of a 'Now-Point' (Jetzt-Punkt) (Husserl [1928] 1985, pp. 390–93), originating from the duration of perceiving the actual Now. Actual perception constitutes the present; it constitutes the temporal⁸ objects with their structural definitions, which is the phenomenon of temporal constitutive consciousness. The present is understood as the *way of being* of the transcendental Ego, that is, as a constitutive core and the primary function of the *transcendental I*.⁹

St. Augustine calls time the ‘extendedness of mind (soul) (Augustine 1955, p. 203).’ (*distentio animi*¹⁰):

‘... since it is possible that if a shorter verse is pronounced slowly, it may take up more time than a longer one if it is pronounced hurriedly. The same would hold for a stanza, or a foot, or a syllable. From this it appears to me that time is nothing other than extendedness; but extendedness of what I do not know. This is a marvel to me. The extendedness may be of the mind itself’.

(Conf. XI. 26.33; Augustine 1955, p. 203)

This famous idea allows him to give a new dimension to the problem of duration, and hence to the measurability of inner time. To ‘grasp’ Now is the way to keep it in mind. If time is measured as a memory of itself—in other words, as a special kind of image in memory—then the very consciousness of time is nothing other than an effort to memorize and to hold in mind.

‘The span of my action is divided between my memory, which contains what I have repeated, and my expectation, which contains what I am about to repeat. Yet my attention is continually present with me, and through it what was future is carried over so that it becomes past. The more this is done and repeated, the more the memory is enlarged—and expectation is shortened—until the whole expectation is exhausted. Then the whole action is ended and passed into memory’.

(Conf. XI. 28.38; Augustine 1955, p. 205)

This effort, or as St. Augustine wrote, ‘the life of this action’ (*vita hujus actionis*¹¹) (Conf. XI. 28.38) is the actual present: the effort of consciousness, the attention is focused on the present, through which the future is ‘carried over’ (*trajiciatur*) and becomes past (Conf. XI. 28.38).

Thus, duration is not a property of the past, present or future, it is rather a property of focusing attention, focusing consciousness. Attention (*attentio*), focused on the present, diffused between memory (*memoria*) and expectation (*expectatio*), this is the effort of consciousness, the ‘movement of the soul,’ which creates the perception of time. *Attentio*, *memoria*, *expectatio* are the three aspects¹² of the act of perception, which correspond to the present, past and future. This three-fold perception and the associated experience of time exist in the dynamics underlying the inner historicity and its external implications—the idea of social history, historicism as a political or ecclesiological scheme.

3. Time and Memory: To Remember the Present and to Forget the ‘I’

St. Augustine interweaves the question of memory in the problem of past and duration. The memory, or more precisely, the inner memory (*memoria interior*), is the foundation of thinking in general (Conf. X. 8.12–14; Kaiser 1969, S. 23; Teske 2001, pp. 148–58; Troup 1999, pp. 86–87). Impressions and information about the external world enter the memory and remain there in the form of images or concepts about the objects. Mental states and experiences are stored in memory in the form of recollections, the nature of which corresponds to the nature of memory.

‘I remember the health or sickness of the body. And when these objects were present, my memory received images from them so that they remain present in order for me to see them and reflect upon them in my mind, if I choose to remember them in their absence. If, therefore, forgetfulness is retained in the memory through its image and not through itself, then this means that it itself was once present, so that its image might have been imprinted. But when it was present, how did it write its image on the memory, since forgetfulness, by its presence, blots out even what it finds already written there? (Confessions, X, 16. 25; Augustine 1955, p. 164). Also, memory allows one to remember the existence of God.

(Confessions X, 24–26. 35–37)¹³

The point is that any synthesis, as such, is built on the ability of memory to constitute the duration (Kaiser 1969, pp. 23–24). Memory is the basis for the interrelation of the experiences of time and continuity; memory ‘preserves’ the coherence of any content, including those that we conditionally call the connection between the past, the present, and the future. Actually, memory is itself that connectivity, the ability not only to perceive objects of the sensory world integrally, but also to ‘assimilate’ ideas. The spiritual connection between things assumes both the possibility of their maximum discrimination and detailing, as well as the possibility of changing the contents (Kaiser 1969, pp. 32–35; Troup 1999, pp. 88–90).

This notion of the sense of memory directly clarifies the problem of the present in Augustine’s philosophy of time. The present is that which has already fallen into the memory, is ‘held’ within it, fixed as existing. What Augustine calls the present ‘*distentio animi*’¹⁴ not only emphasizes the spirituality of the time-image in consciousness (that is, time cannot yet be reduced to sensation), but also points to the complexity of the aporia of memories. Recollection preserves continuity, actualizing experiences, ‘leading’ them to awareness here and now. However, remembering is a movement, not a rest, continuity includes variability as a repetition of actualization (Kaiser 1969, pp. 47–48). Duration will never be a mechanical reproduction, it is always a living process of ‘restoring’ the experience.

The meditative character of St. Augustine’s reflection is emphasized through discerning and metaphorical language, and it continues the tradition of inner contemplation (*intus cernimus*). The meaning of image and inner imagery goes back to the notion of man’s creation in the ‘image of God’ (Genesis 1:27), that is why imagery as a source of knowledge is the natural foundation of spirituality. St. Augustine also links the notion of memory as an inner space to the topic of the ‘inner word’ (*verbum interius*, *verbum cordis*, *verbum quod intus luget*). Thus, the way to keep in mind the moment, the remembering, is a special kind of memory, similar to an act of reproduction. Like the other parts of Augustine’s epistemology, the doctrine on memory is borrowed from Plotinus,¹⁵ the kinds and functions of memory belong to a capacity of the soul, as the active psychic capacity.

From a phenomenological viewpoint, Augustine writes about objectifying the act of consciousness, which includes different types of reproduction and constitution. The structure of inner perception that constitutes the foundation of time consciousness consists of continuous combinations of elements reflected by subjectivity and passive synthetic unities which connect both objects’ properties and differences in a sequence of apprehensions (*Auffassungsakte*). The structure of inner empirical perception is founded thereby on a certain kind of synthesis which allows one to speak about modification not only in the sense of changing, but also in terms of an ‘interflow’ from one phase to another. The interference of phases is evident in the ‘everyday’ experience, while in the new experience (such as in social communication) the images of past are ‘mixing’ with expectations and phantasms. The synthesis is passive but can be structured through reflection.

Jean-Luc Marion analyses the narrative of the *Confessions* and the question of reflection. Marion indicates the significance of the story in the ‘first person’, when the questions—who is? and who says? (Marion 2008, p. 30)—lead to a conclusion about the speaker’s special perspective. According to Marion, Augustine tells the story not strictly ‘from the first person’, and as though ‘instead of himself’, locating himself in the present, in the place of himself in the past. This stylistic method of ‘imaginary self’ typifies Augustine in general (Marion 2008, p. 21) and is crucial for understanding his philosophy. Moreover, that exact method reflects the theological meaning of confession as a form of speech, which contains a narrative and prayer at one and the same time. Prayer creates a very special image of ‘I’, thus, a special subject which exists in this kind of duality, ‘instead of’ himself, in the paradoxes ‘from the first person’. Memory is something that solves the problem of the paradoxes of ‘I’ but solves it paradoxically; it does not eliminate the contradiction but completely manifests the impossibility of understanding for subject of himself, the inability of Ego for *cogitatio sui*. Memory gives the unity for consciousness through temporalization (See Manoussakis 2014, p. 19), but has no ‘place’ in the history of the subject—the place

of all the thoughts that are not in the world'¹⁶. According to Marion, the memory as anamnesis solves the problem of consciousness of the subject, in the 'protection him from himself' (Marion 2008, p. 114). Moreover, as the definition of the boundaries of oblivion, as the fullness of actuality of the memory, not only is the absent present (visible), but also keeps the absence absent (invisible), granting both dimensions completeness. In other words, memory is not only the memories of the past, it is also the definiteness of the past, the distance of the past from the subject.

4. Imagination and Time: The Creation of the History?

What is the connection between cosmology and prayer? How does experience become the experience of inner history and the perception of time—the experience of fullness of being? From a Christian point of view, this question refers to the special eventfulness of the liturgy that creates the inner spiritual world, and its repeatability sanctifies the inner dialogue of the soul. From a phenomenological point of view, the relationship between prayer and cosmology derives from awareness to experiences of faith. Therefore, the third point of this topic is the aesthetics of Augustine, his theory of music, which does not contradict Husserl's phenomenology, where a musical tone served as a model of a temporal object. The phenomenology of sound can be considered as possessing psychological and aesthetical dimensions, but the wholeness of religious experience of the Eucharist is not possible without the inner historicism of creation and eschatology, and without the repetition of that historicism in each liturgical event. Following Marion's idea that Augustine was the first phenomenologist, we turn to the early period of his work and conversion, which shaped both the aesthetic and cosmological views of the Bishop of Hippo.

Augustine was evidently drawn to music. His early writings in Milan, before his ordination, show that he was overwhelmed by the music he heard in church, because of St. Ambrose who had instituted antiphonal singing and wrote hymns. Ambrose's authority was so high that his style is still a compelling one in the history of church music. Milanese chant took shape distinct from Gregorian chant. It is the oldest style in the western repertory of liturgical music, influenced neighboring regions and spread to central and southern Italy, and as far as central Europe.¹⁷ Augustine introduced several Ambrosian hymns—*Deus Creator omnium*, *Eterne rerum conditor*, *Jam surgit hora tertia*, and *Veni Redemptor gentium* (Ibid., p. 695). He was also interested in psalm and hymn singing, and his commentaries on psalms (*Enarrationes in psalmos*) provide some information on the topic. His thoughts on many aspects of music and liturgy are found in other treatises—*Confessionum*, *Retractationum libri II*, *De ordine libri II*, and *De Doctrina Christiana libri IV*. The most famous and profound analysis of music theory and its philosophical reflection appears in *De Musica libri VI*. The so-called 'Augustinian canons' would emerge later, in the eleventh–twelfth century, as an organized body with its order characterized by the fully developed liturgical life.

Augustine had a powerful influence on the history and philosophy of music. His ideas were key notions in the transition from the outlook of the Ancient world to that of the Christian world, and aesthetics was formed on the crossroads of Hellenistic directions. Early Christianity's music was connected with theology, and the aestheticization of liturgy was formed as the realization of cosmological order. This idea exists in the later ecclesiology and continues until now in the Orthodox and Catholic liturgy, where the succession of hymns and actions not only glorifies but also reconstructs the history of Creation and Incarnation, with the Eucharist as an emphasis. However, during Late Antiquity, when the dogma was taking shape, the liturgical forms of creationism were a part of that polemics and included elements of ancient philosophical ideas. From the viewpoint of the history of music, the general features of church music are, firstly, improvisation, which differed fundamentally from synagogue worship and, secondly, the primacy of the word (See The New Grove Dictionary 1980, Vol. IV, p. 364). The word as *logos* 'created' the aesthetical space. The music of the fourth century developed under Asian, particularly Syrian influence, and it is

impossible to affirm that the musical philosophy of early Christianity was based solely on Greek musical theory (Ibid., p. 365).

Concerning cosmology, Augustine's cosmology was based on his various commentaries on Genesis, like other Church Fathers. At the same time he was writing the treatise *De Musica*, from 387 to 391, he was also writing the treatise *De Genesi contra Manichaeos*, from 388 to 389/390. One can hypothesize that the aesthetical realization of cosmology and, perhaps also Augustine's later philosophy of time, developed under the influence of his musical practice.

Thus, the sixth book of *De Musica*, where mostly philosophical theory is concentrated, includes the doctrine on numbers, borrowed from Plato. Plato's *Timaeus* represents the doctrine of creating numbers, which are key elements of cosmogony. It seems that the idea of *distentio animi* and the purpose of measuring time are directly related to the concept of numbers. For St. Augustine, numbers constitute a universal law, a global regularity, around which all life and the spiritual world are organized. In the sixth book, St. Augustine reflects on the types of numbers, which create the foundation for perception. All four types of number manifest different experiences of sensory perception, and so the perception of time is a part of sensibility. As constituting an act of perception, numbers as form are related to the actuality of act, resembling the different modes of temporality—length and brevity (*sonantes* and *occursores*), rhythm (*progressores*), and memory (*recordabiles*) (De Musica, VI). Having determined time as the 'distension of the soul', St. Augustine does not thereby provide an opportunity to claim that time is given only in the senses. If we consider sensuality or perception in general as abilities of the soul, then sensuality itself is manifested by means of time, or in other words, it is represented in a temporal form. The perception is complemented by imagination as formation ability. Moreover, one of imagination's functions is to shape human sensations. Three different components must arrive at unity: the type (*species*) of some objects which can be seen; its image (*imago*), imprinted in the senses, an imaginatory sensation (*sensus formatus*), and the will of the soul (*voluntas animi*), which focuses the senses on the perceived object (De Trinitate XI, 2).

Thus, delving into the specifics of the function of imagination, we come to the notion of sensation, which returns us to the issue of duration—thus, the boundary between the past and the present is really hard to measure precisely, because the sensations are formed by the imagination.

This difference between perception and imagination is a typical difficulty in the phenomenology of time-consciousness. Husserl analyzed the notion of imagination as an image-consciousness, in the context of considerations of inner perception (Husserl 1980, pp. 15–18, 35–36). Image consciousness (*Bildbewusstsein*) is similar to the consciousness of time (*Zeitbewusstsein*) in a structural way. A 'fusion' and similarity in appearance of images, structurally replicates the 'fusion' of temporal objects, demonstrating in the description the internal passive mechanism of shaping of temporal form (Husserl 1966, pp. 72–73). The cognition is realized as a coordination or coincidence (*Deckung*) between intention and contemplation (Volonte 1997, pp. 115–19). The imagination allows one to transform the act of perception into an act of consciousness. The system of acts of reproduction and representation (*Vergegenwärtigung*) orders the line of retention-primary impression-protection as reflective levels of self-consciousness and self-cognition (Volonte 1997, pp. 129–34).

5. Memory and Creation, Ordo and Experience

As for the problem of creation, one of the meanings of memory is its ontological status as existential, since it clarifies the nature of creation and the variability associated with it. The transition to the ontological plane in a study of Augustine implies that the possibility exists of a kind of equalization of being and knowledge (not thinking), which correspond to each other on the basis of both the Platonic idea (De Civitate Dei VIII, 4) and the consequence of the likeness of man to God. Of course, this likeness will never become an identity, but knowledge is eternal, on the grounds that the soul is eternal (De Trinitate XV, 15, 24–25),

and knowledge is revealed in the soul. The question of the disclosure of knowledge—in other words, about thinking—demonstrates function of memory exactly. Knowledge and thinking differ only in the degree of actualization, and thinking is precisely actual knowledge, like Plato's 'remembering'. The same applies to knowledge about oneself, that is, the subject also receives knowledge of her 'I' in the form of actualization. In this sense 'I' is always temporal, revealing itself as a temporal being (Kaiser 1969, pp. 116–17). Moreover, if God exists in the strict sense of the word, then a human exists only 'at the moment' of actualizing knowledge about herself. The temporality of a human's existence does not mean the finiteness of life, but on the contrary, the possibility of actualization and of remembering eternal knowledge in the soul, determining our knowledge of ourselves, and memories of the eternal soul.

This same possibility of remembering—actualizing the eternal foundations of our existence—means what we can call the ontology of variability. Creation of the world and human existence is understood, in a certain sense, as *imitatio*. The well-known Christian complexity entailed in understanding *analogia entis*, which was systematically discussed at the time in scholasticism, is also emphasized by Augustine through the indication of contingency (Kaiser 1969, pp. 47–48; Schulte-Klöcker 2000, pp. 35–36), which does not contradict actualization, and at the same time realizes the idea of imitation, similarity. However, since the act of creation cannot be understood as an act arising in time, on the contrary, the question of the beginning is the question of causality, the 'creation' of time acquires the character of aporia even before we can fix any regularities in its nature. Time was created together with the world (according to Plato), with other (Christian) words, eternity was transformed during (at some 'moment') and/or continues to be transformed to date (the continuity of creation). In any event, when asking the question of how eternity (God) creates time, we are either forced to change the register—go to the question of the creation of matter (according to Plato), the numerical patterns, or (in Christianity) the question of the will of God, of his love, because of which the world was created. Augustine, as can be seen from the Confession, takes the second step.

Arguing about time and variability, Augustine takes into account the possibility of a negative term (*Confessions* XII, 38; Schulte-Klöcker 2000, pp. 53–54), that is, the ability to affirm the difference of time from eternity, to understand time as 'non-eternity', respectively, as a characteristic of the being of things. This difference does not, however, become the complete opposite of eternity, because it is set by it, and instead becomes a sort of order which organizes the material world, embodying God's presence in it¹⁸ (*Confessions* I, 10; *Confessions* VII, 21). Thus, variability is the order of control of the world, based on the eternal fullness of God.¹⁹ There is no reason to believe that variability can be reduced to a pattern of sequence (temporal moments); on the contrary, variability based on completeness is the possibility of the unfolding of being, and time as its order plays the role of a transition from one (any) state to another, from the state of non-being to being.

This idea of the variability of abiding eternity seems to be a key one in Augustine's time doctrine. It is that state of time which he defines as *distentio* (*Confessions* XII, 11, 12), 'dispersion', 'stretching', 'scattering of moments', a kind of movement as a whole 'desire for being (and for nothingness)',²⁰ which is also natural, as a world good, but we can only understand it through reflection and questioning. *Distentio* as the fullness of presence can solve the problem of the present which, like every moment of the created world, involves an aspiring and already-becoming movement towards being.

It should not, however, be forgotten that this fullness does not come from the nature of the movement, but from the nature of the divine presence, and therefore a psychological reading is also necessary. The fact that the *distentio* as an *ordo* exists in the soul may not be principally ontological (that is, the fullness exists and the world is created in an order, regardless of our understanding), but without this fact the measurement of time is impossible. Even if we imagine that we can dispense with the notions of the past and the future (*Confessions* XI, 37)—which is unlikely in the ontological sense, taking into account not only creationism but also Christian eschatology—even then the universality of the

fullness of being needs to be interpreted. The interpretation is possible only as a sequence, a quantitative statement of the essence. In other words, in language there is already a need to measure time—time as the fullness of being and the presence of God.

Concluding this study with an analysis of modern receptions of the question of creation, we will reveal the key to philosophical theology in which one can find elements of Augustinianism. In the understanding of creationism, one can conditionally distinguish the concept of creation as an object of comprehension in natural theology, and creation as a political category in which the design of ‘eternal being’, the City of God on Earth, is realized. These two meanings often coincide, since in natural theology the revision of the concept of experience is actualized and, following the nineteenth-century disputes between science and religion, needs a new thematization. Philosophical theology after Karl Barth, Rudolf Bultmann, and Paul Tillich raises questions about new forms of substantiation of experience, assimilating not only the rhetoric of existentialism, but also its theory of cognition, the appeal to ‘living’ forms of experiences and judgments, and expands the boundaries of both theological and ethical reflection. After Hannah Arendt’s dissertation which was dedicated to the concept of love in Augustine, Augustinianism becomes a part of political reflection and remains until now one of the directions of Christian liberalism.

In this regard, in parallel with the Aristotelian–Thomist tradition for natural theology, there is increased urgency of the tradition deriving from Augustine and, thanks to Anselm, Bonaventure, and Duns Scott, representing a fundamentally different one, in comparison with the Aristotelian–Thomist tradition of the proof of the existence of God and of God-knowledge. Its difference is that it includes the issue of free will, which is contained in the first book of the same treatise of Augustine and receives rather detailed reflection in further philosophical theology. Not only the idea of salvation, but in general, the proof of the world order and hierarchy (Mackey 2011, pp. 16–18) proceeds from the experience of direct contemplation given as free action. Augustine considered the existence of such an ability as *sensus interior* which, together with the external (*corporis sensus*) and reason, forms the foundation of understanding and existence. The idea of an inner feeling not only reflects the immediacy of self-reflection and thus develops the neo-platonic epistemology characteristic of all the writings of Augustine. From the historical and philosophical point of view, justified in this way interiority will become the basis of the idea of the autonomy of the subject, the autonomy of consciousness and personality, politically and ontologically significant for the whole of the new European culture (Taylor 1989, pp. 131–32). Accordingly, its involvement in the proof of the existence of God and the hierarchy of order assigns a special place to the natural theology of Augustine (Taylor 1989, pp. 133–34).

Thus, Long, rightly noting that the concept of experience up to the twentieth century was developed in two key traditions—British empiricism and Kant’s philosophy—indicates that in modern times this notion should be revised, including from the standpoint of natural theology, whose function is to mediate between ‘everyday’ and scientific discourse on the one hand, and with theological discourse on the other. Using the idea that experience is what is given in reflection and, accordingly, implies the consideration of experience precisely as suffering (or gift) and the need for reflexivity, not just descriptiveness or articulation, Long suggests the following option for explaining the transcendental dimension of human experience and its boundaries. First of all, experience can be understood as a contingent experience, as an experience that can include the most extraordinary manifestation of miracles and freedom. Contingency need not be understood in a universal sense (and only in the sense of a cosmological argument); rather, it is about the existential freedom of which Sartre wrote, and even more—Jaspers—who understands it as a kind of completeness of self-reality realized in one’s existence and that is not unimportant in the freedom to be next to the Other. This position undoubtedly reconciles several questions at once: how is religious experience possible, what is a person, and why does the existence of God remain an integral part of the problem of determining the boundaries of human cognition? In addition, this position points to the role of phenomenology for the interaction of modern approaches in the dialogue of natural theology and science. Experience is

any comprehension that can be carried out both by rational schemes of causality, and in existential or aesthetic experience. Although it can be concluded that the very concept of reflection in this case is either blurred or complicated by a system of phenomenological description, the question about the boundaries of the mind remains unanswered, in other words, about the abilities of thinking, and the cognitive possibilities of understanding the world and oneself.

6. Conclusions

The phenomenological interpretation thus enables us to clarify the theory of time posited by St. Augustine, and to analyze its epistemological background. The phenomenological reduction and transcendental goals of this method lead to a specific kind of secular philosophy of self-consciousness, but the comprehensive phenomenological analysis lets us understand the nature of time and human experience. St. Augustine interweaves the question of memory in the problem of time and the function of imagination in the process of self-cognition—this statement of question constitutes the phenomenology of inner time-consciousness in both Husserl's and Augustine's theories. The experience of inner perception of time orders not only the aesthetical experience but also the experience of fullness of being.

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Notes

- ¹ In other words, time as a created thing will not exist forever.
- ² For more on the transformation of paradigm into image, f.e. the difference between paradigm and image see also classical analysis of Mesch (2003, pp. 145–57).
- ³ See also the translation of Enneads III.7. 11: 'For the Soul contained an unquiet faculty, always desirous of translating elsewhere what it saw in the Authentic Realm, and it could not bear to retain within itself all the dense fullness of its possession.' (Page 1956).
- ⁴ See also: 'Would it, then, be sound to define Time as the Life of the Soul in movement as it passes from one stage of act or experience to another?' MacKenna & Page f. 5.
- ⁵ Beierwaltes uses the term 'Entkosmologisierung', the translation of which as 'decosmologization' seems appropriate, among others because in modern philosophy of religion, the 'demythologization' of Rudolf Bultmann is consonant. Although Beierwaltes himself does not mention him, in my opinion, the transitional role of Neoplatonism in many ways contributed both to liberation from ancient myths and the emergence of a new anthropology.
- ⁶ In the introduction of Vol. 10 of *The Husserliana*, Rudolf Bernet writes that Husserl's phenomenology of time could well be called 'marginal notes' to the *Confessions* of Augustine. See (Husserl 1985, p. XI). See also (Bernet 2009, p. 117). For more on Husserl's phenomenology of time see (Husserl 2001, 2006).
- ⁷ The key research on the question of present is (Held 1963).
- ⁸ Temporary as a continuing object of perception, for example, sound.
- ⁹ For more about the transcendental 'I' and self-temporalization, see (Brand 1955, pp. 67–68, 71–74).
- ¹⁰ The origin of the term is unclear, but there is a hypothesis that the term may have been borrowed from Basil of Caesarea. See: (Callahan 1958, pp. 437–54).
- ¹¹ Basic reference for each latine term: Augustinus Hipponensis. *Confessiones*. Pl 32. Jacques-Paul Migne, 1845.
- ¹² Kurt Flasch mentioned that this trinity does not have theological ground. See (Flasch 2004, S. 219).
- ¹³ For more on self-cognition through the idea of remembering God (O'Daly 2001, pp. 41–43).
- ¹⁴ Modern commentators often wonder whether it is possible to understand *distentio animi* as any extension expressible in spatial terms. This question is fully justified, given that Augustine describes memory in the metaphors of space (*Confessions* X, 12), but the length is not inherent in the present. Most authors are inclined to this opinion. See (Futch 2002; Humphries 2009, pp. 80–84).
- ¹⁵ For numerous other parallels between the two thinkers, see (O'Daly 2001, pp. 41–43).
- ¹⁶ (Marion 2008, p. 113). For a deeper analysis of absence and presence from the psychoanalytical perspective see (Manoussakis 2016, pp. 54–55).
- ¹⁷ For more on the Ambrosian (Milanese) Rite, see (The New Grove Dictionary 1980, Vol. I, p. 314).
- ¹⁸ We can say that being in time (in the material world) does not prevent us from being with God (in eternity).

- ¹⁹ Kaiser, fn. 18, (Kaiser 1969, pp. 47–48, 144–45; Callahan 1967, pp. 24–26, 40–41).
- ²⁰ Humphries expresses the thesis that in understanding *distentio animi* there is no need to distinguish between anima and animus, therefore, the present is equally created by both the soul and the mind. *Distentio animi* is a function of memory in its ability to actualize the semblance of time and eternity, fn. 23, pp. 75–101. His point of view differs from the well-known position of Teske, who believed that *distentio animi* refers exclusively to the Plotinus world soul. See (Teske 2001, p. 32); Cf. (Kaiser 1969, p. 146; Schulte-Klöcker 2000, pp. 69–70).

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Article

Desire for Purity and Inevitable Contamination: Derrida and Prayer

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Abstract: The aim of this paper is to understand the reasons underlying Derrida's interest in the phenomenon of prayer. The article traces the different directions taken by the topic in the over forty-year long reflection of the philosopher. I start off by highlighting the dichotomic structure around which Derrida lays out his entire analysis of prayer, describing it, in general terms, as an opposition between determination and indetermination: on the one side, the multiple concrete manifestations of prayer; on the other, the possibility of a pure address to the other as other, not marked by metaphysics. I proceed by examining the qualities of what Derrida calls the "pure prayer", or "prayer in itself", in direct contrast with the praising prayer. The issue concerning the autonomy and the specificity of this indeterminate act of addressing is especially taken into consideration. The fundamental question remains whether a pure prayer is truly conceivable, or whether its contamination is as inevitable as necessary for the actual possibility of religion, theology, and prayer itself.

Keywords: prayer; Derrida; metaphysics; ontotheology; praise; Heidegger

1. Dichotomies of Prayer

The emergence of Derrida's interest in the phenomenon of prayer can be traced in the debate concerning the affinity between what the tradition has called "negative theology" and what the philosopher calls "*différance*". This is confronted in texts such as "How to Avoid Speaking: Denials" (Derrida 1992a) and "Post-Scriptum: Aporias, Ways and Voices" (Derrida 1992b). Different reasons justify the suspicion of this affinity: the deployment of the same rhetoric strategy recurring to a series of negative locutions in order to break down the apparent solidity of propositional language (Derrida [1972] 1982, p. 6); the shared risk of a metaphysical re-appropriation of the two discourses, because of the necessary recourse to a language that inevitably remains immersed in the element of the logic and the grammar of onto-theology (Derrida [1972] 1982, p. 26; 1992a, p. 79); the enigmatic character of the heading "negative theology" and the unknown resources that it may hide, which could put it in contact with the equally enigmatic "*différance*" (Derrida 1992a, pp. 82, 131; 1992b, pp. 288, 311). Only one element, instead, seems to justify a clear distinction between the two discourses: prayer. One does not pray to *différance*, whereas one needs to invoke the divinity in order to be uplifted to the mystical summits. The deconstructionist rhetoric lacks a devotional horizon within its procedures; the apophatic rhetoric, on the contrary, must be guided by a prayer which gives purpose to the otherwise empty raving of its mechanical negations (Derrida 1992a, pp. 81, 103, 110). Starting from this rather specific indication, the problem of prayer gains space in the reflection of Derrida. It progressively takes different directions and comes to assume a certain autonomy with respect to its point of emergence. The aim of this paper is to trace these different paths and understand the underlying reasons and purposes supporting this interest in the phenomenon of prayer.

One of these directions falls within the context of a certain religious fervor of Derrida and is of particular interest to us, insofar as it appears as the symptomatic expression of a fundamental problem for his entire reflection on prayer. Especially in the last years

of Derrida's academic activity, the theme of prayer has frequently been tied to details of biographical character. Following, in particular, some rather enigmatic statements in "Circumfession" (Derrida 1999), questions have multiplied with regard to the philosopher's private experience of prayers and tears (Derrida 1999, p. 188), as an Arab-Jew who, in his own admission, may quite rightly pass for an atheist (Derrida 1999, p. 155). On different occasions, Derrida was then asked to elaborate on whether, in his prayers, he referred to someone in particular or no one at all, whether he demanded and expected anything (Caputo et al. 2005, p. 28), and whether he used or simply mentioned the name of God (Dooley 2003, pp. 29–31).

This biographical declination of the subject, with all the curiosity that it has fomented within and outside the academic world, hides a rather essential issue for our analysis. At a strictly textual level, this issue initially imposes itself as the difficulty of identifying, within Derrida's production, a clear boundary between what relates to his *personal practice* of prayer and what, instead, relates to his *theoretical account* of prayer. By generally treating the two accounts separately, scholars have at least tacitly assumed a clear-cut distinction between practice and theory: on the one side, Derrida's practice of prayer in "Circumfession" (Derrida 1999, p. 188), on the other, Derrida's philosophical account of prayer in "How to Avoid Speaking" (Derrida 1992a, pp. 110–11) and in *The Beast and the Sovereign* (Derrida 2011, pp. 202–30). Rightly so, at least inasmuch as one can maintain that there is no strict relation between the "personal" and the "philosophical"; that the biographical context of Derrida as a man of prayers and the philosophical context of an analysis on the nature of the phenomenon do not, in any straightforward way, influence each other. The insistence on this divergence might be at least partially founded on the fear of falling into some sort of biographical fallacy, that is to say, of misguidedly tracing a link between the ensemble of empirical accidents which come to constitute the author's life and the meaning of his written production.

This fallacy, however, might find in the figure of the Algerian philosopher quite a strong opponent. For, at a deeper analysis, it is not always evident where exactly one should or could draw this dividing line. Throughout most of his texts and public responses, Derrida tends to often conflate autobiographical details and philosophical reflections. For instance, in responding publicly to questions related to his personal experience of prayer, he clearly refers to some features of what, in his theoretical analysis in "How to Avoid Speaking", he describes as "prayer in itself" or "pure prayer" (Caputo et al. 2005, pp. 29–31; Derrida 1992a, pp. 110–11). At the same time, however, in the midst of "How to Avoid Speaking" he cares to point out how this lecture might indeed represent "the most 'autobiographical' speech [he has] ever risked" (Derrida 1992a, p. 135).

Upon a closer look, in fact, it would seem that, in Derrida's analysis of prayer, a clear-cut divergence between his personal practice (*his own* prayer) and his philosophical gesture (prayer *in itself*) is very hard to maintain. This does not mean in any way that Derrida is proposing a theory on which one could or should model a practice; or, on the contrary, that he is extrapolating a theory from his own personal practice. Certainly, the two aspects are frequently weaved together in his texts, to the point where it is often hard to distinguish one from the other. Nevertheless, upon a closer look, it is not a matter of an absolute juxtaposition of theory and practice, according to a simplistic overturning of a sharp divergence. It is rather a matter of a tension, a mutual contamination—or, in Derrida's words, of a *mobile border* that cuts through the two "bodies" (the works, "*le corpus*", and the body, "*le corps*") without the possibility of any suture (Derrida 1984, pp. 40–41).

Something important is at stake here. We have highlighted this tension starting from the difficulty of tracing a line, within Derrida's written production, between the personal practice of prayer and the theoretical account of prayer. However, to what extent does this mixture of practice and theory remain restricted to the "superficial" level of a textual analysis of the philosopher's body of work? To be more precise: to what extent is this tension interpretable as the simple by-product of the philosophical style he employs (with

its typical textual swerves, its plurality of voices, its performative character, its lack of any systematic intent, and its increasingly deconstructive gesture)? To what extent, instead, does not this mutual contamination of biography and philosophy, practice and theory—or, in other words, determination and indeterminateness, empirical and ideal—perhaps invade the whole territory of the question on prayer?

Indeed, much like the proverbial tip of the iceberg, the purely textual problematic we have just exposed seems to represent solely the more noticeable part of the issue. On closer scrutiny, the entire Derridean discourse on prayer is built around a set of apparent dichotomies. These can be interpreted as nothing more than a series of variations on the overarching theme of the practice-theory binary opposition. Let us list them right away: Derrida's own private experience of prayer, and prayer in its essence; the predicative character of the praising prayer, and the pragmatic apostrophe of prayer in itself (Derrida 1992a, pp. 110–11); prayer to “you as . . .”, and prayer to “you” (Derrida 1992a, p. 110); prayers quoted by Dionysius (Derrida 1992a, pp. 116–17), Robinson Crusoe and Pascal (Derrida 2011, pp. 70–82, 209–14), and the pure prayer on the edge of silence (Derrida 1992a, p. 130); inauthentic prayer, and authentic prayer (Derrida 2011, pp. 80, 204); prayer in a strong sense, and prayer in a weak sense (Derrida 2011, p. 203). Far from constituting the simple outcome of a stylistic choice, these dichotomies rather seem to signal that “the immense and undelimitable question of prayer” (Derrida 2011, p. 231) is always already inscribed within a seemingly irresolvable tension.

The issue that on the surface manifests itself as the limit between Derrida's biography and Derrida's philosophical insight, thus, seems to impose itself in more radical terms. On the one hand, *a* prayer (or the different prayers) which, according to the philosopher, remains inevitably entangled in the onto-theological grammar of language: this prayer is a form of articulate discourse which cannot avoid speaking *of* the other to whom it turns. On the other hand, *the* pure prayer (or prayer *in itself*), in whose essentially pre-predicative structure Derrida, at times, sees the possibility of overcoming the boundary imposed by the metaphysical regime of discourse: this prayer is a pre-discursive moment of pure address *to* the other as other.

However, what do these dichotomies of prayer actually represent? Once again, one needs to comprehend whether it is possible to trace a clear distinguishing line between these two prayers. That is to say, whether one can really imagine a pure experience of prayer devoid of any singular determinations, capable of respecting the absolute alterity of the other. Could there actually be something like a *pure* prayer, a prayer *in itself*, *in its essence*, separate from its multiple determinations? Or, on the contrary, could not the essence of prayer be an unavoidable slippage into determination (prayer of this or that human being, with these or those words, according to this or that rite)? Following the issue of textual analysis from which we have started this reflection, one could even risk this question: would not prayer always be contaminated by the factuality of a biography? Derrida himself seems to acknowledge as much when, at the end of “How to Avoid Speaking”, calling into question his previous analysis of what he denominated as a “pure experience of prayer”, he asks:

Are there criteria external to the event itself to decide whether Dionysius, for example, distorted or rather accomplished the essence of prayer by quoting it, and first of all by writing it to Timothy? Does one have the right to think that, as a pure address, on the edge of silence, alien to every code and to every rite, hence to every repetition, prayer should never be turned away from its part by a notation or by the movement of an apostrophe, by a multiplication of addresses? That each time it takes place only once and should never be recorded? But perhaps the contrary is the case. Perhaps there would be no prayer, no pure possibility of prayer, without what we glimpse as a menace or as a contamination: writing, the code, repetition, analogy or the—at least apparent—multiplicity of addresses, initiation. (Derrida 1992a, pp. 130–31)

We shall, for now, keep these questions open and comprehend them in their depth while exploring Derrida's analysis of prayer. In any case, the conclusion of "How to Avoid Speaking" looks as much cautious as straightforward, insofar as it does nothing more than reiterate the fundamental justification of the deconstructive gesture: where there appears to be a contrast, an opposition, a divergence, it is necessary to unveil an interdependence. The dichotomies of prayer do not express a dualistic exclusion; on the contrary, they reveal an essential complementarity.

2. The Apostrophe of Prayer

Derrida's analysis of prayer develops from and constantly revolves around a seemingly undecidable play between two kinds of prayer: one more determinate, as a practiced and lived act; the other more indeterminate, as a pure form of addressing. The consistency and the autonomy of the second is briefly questioned at the end of "How to Avoid Speaking". At first, however, Derrida seems at least persuaded by the possibility of a pure and exclusive experience of prayer, uncontaminated by any theological or metaphysical determinations. According to this possibility, the dichotomies of prayer would not result in a dialectic complementarity, but rather in some sort of privilege assigned to an "idealistic" form of the discourse. The undecidable play would then be resolved at the very moment of its manifestation. Prayer, in its essence, by way of a pure address to the other as other, would represent a form of pragmatic discourse capable of overcoming the limits imposed by the metaphysical grammar. Only an improper contamination would make this pure address stray from the right path.

This privilege is fairly evident in the way Derrida introduces the topic of prayer halfway through the lecture "How to Avoid Speaking". At this moment, the examination of the subject is described as an attempt to distinguish and isolate two traits "in the experiences and in the so manifold determinations of what one calls prayer" (Derrida 1992a, p. 110). However, it soon becomes clear that these two traits belong to radically different levels or moments. Derrida introduces the first one as follows: "In every prayer there must be an address to the other as other [. . .]. The act of addressing oneself to the other as other must, of course, mean praying" (Derrida 1992a, p. 110). On the one hand, then, the multiple determinations of what one generally calls "prayer": prayer of this or that person, to this or that deity, with this or that purpose, accompanied by these or those words, inscribed within this or that rite, enriched with these or those acts. On the other hand, before or beyond these determinations, the core of prayer, the address to the other as other that characterizes every prayer: what Derrida calls "pure prayer", "prayer in itself", "prayer in its essence" (*euché* in Greek), or simply, "prayer". Strictly speaking, then, it is not really a matter of distinguishing between traits. Or better, one can distinguish between traits—portions, features, elements—only from a perspective of manifold determinations of prayer. A trait of prayer would then be the singular qualification differentiating one prayer from the other. At this moment, however, it is exactly this perspective that Derrida is attempting to abandon. The first "trait", in fact, characterizes not just one prayer or the other, but rather every prayer. The address to the other as other is identified with prayer in itself: it *is* prayer *as such*. It is then evident that if this act of addressing oneself to the other is the matrix of every prayer, only what will supplement it and determine it can rightly be called a trait of prayer. Accordingly, the second trait, which is identified with the praise or encomium (*hymnein*) exemplarily found in Dionysius' *The Mystical Theology*, will be defined by Derrida as an addendum of prayer in itself.

Before delving into the peculiar determination of the encomium, let us first try to understand what characterizes "prayer in itself". Derrida briefly describes it as the unmediated linguistic act of "addressing oneself to the other as other [. . .], that is, asking, supplicating, searching out" (Derrida 1992a, p. 110); the condition of this outward movement being solely the possibility of a receptiveness on the side of the addressee. Perhaps—he claims—even beyond all that can be begged for, prayer in itself only asks for the giving of the other's presence and transcendence: "The pure prayer demands only that the other hear it, receive

it, be present to it, be the other as such, a gift, call, and even cause of prayer" (Derrida 1992a, p. 110). As such, this act of language—whether prayer is uttered or kept silent—is purely pragmatic and, thus, exempted from any theoretical (true or false, affirmative or negative), or theological conditions of discourse. This pure experience of prayer is, thus, defined by three tightly intertwined constitutive features: an address to the other as other; a demand for the other's presence and transcendence; and the character of pure performativity of the act.

At a first glance, the element of demand of the other's presence and transcendence might appear contradictory. In other instances, in fact, Derrida maintains that prayer does not actually request or ask for anything, that it "remains foreign to the question properly speaking" (Derrida 2011, p. 231). He even stresses that prayer is absolutely heterogeneous with regard to the calculation, evaluation, and instrumentalization that a petition would more or less explicitly imply (Caputo et al. 2005, p. 31; Schwartz 2001, pp. 230–31). This contradiction, however, is only apparent. For Derrida, prayer, in its essence, does not in fact ask for anything. The demand of presence is not to be interpreted as a precise petitionary content which could or could not, like some sort of unessential appendix, supplement the sheer act of addressing that prayer is. In other words, this request is not a trait that would determine the scope of prayer, making it, in this case, petitionary. If it is a matter of understanding what prayer is at the bottom, then the demand of presence and transcendence which Derrida is referring to cannot be associated to a heterogeneous element which would complement the core of prayer. Instead, this needs to be comprehended as an articulation internal to the pure act of addressing. That the other gives his presence as other and the transcendence of his otherness itself is what any act of prayer asks in its simple turning to the other through an apostrophic movement. This movement represents the actual condition of possibility of any further determinate requests. To pray—says Derrida—means addressing the other as other; addressing the other as other means demanding the other's presence and transcendence.

For a better comprehension of the specificity of this peculiar demanding address, one needs to look beyond Derrida's theoretical production. Particularly elucidating is a brief response to Regina Schwartz's contribution to the 1999 conference at Villanova University, entitled "Questioning God":

Of course, there is instrumentalization in a prayer, obviously. But there is something in a prayer that gives up any usefulness. I pray not to ask for something, not to request, but just simply to address the other in an apostrophe without even being sure that there is a responsiveness. To pray, you must, of course [. . .] presuppose a responsiveness, but you cannot be sure that there is someone on the other side. So you may pray without asking for anything, just calling the other, and without describing the other. (Schwartz 2001, p. 231)

Still reflecting around two opposed views of the meaning of prayer, this comment confirms what we have just pointed out. Prayer, if strictly intended as a specific form of petition, undoubtedly exposes itself to instrumentalization insofar as one prays *for* something. Nonetheless, Derrida insists that there is "something" in a prayer which, contrary to its multiple determinations, renounces any economy of needs or desires. This "something", which he identifies with the figure of the apostrophe, does not ask for anything in particular, but simply calls the other. Calling the other means exactly this: asking the other to give his presence and transcendence as other; an invitation rather than an order, a hope rather than a certainty. This call, being "absolutely heterogeneous to the minimal description, evaluation or narration" (Schwartz 2001, p. 231), has little to do with the instrumental petitionary contents which can, in a secondary moment, supplement the pure movement of addressing. That the other is present to one's prayer, that the other gives himself to be prayed, this is what the apostrophe of prayer asks before any other requests. Prayer in its essence is, for Derrida, *petition of presence*.

This gesture of calling the other is here directly associated by Derrida to the presupposition of a responsiveness assumed by the act of prayer. The conditions of this assumption

are to be linked to the anteriority of the call of the other which, despite its indeterminate-ness, still compels one to speak, pray, call (Derrida 1992a, p. 97). The apostrophic address to “you” bears this presupposition of responsiveness. I pray “you”, and by doing this I must presuppose the existence of the second person to whom I address myself. Without this assumption, one would not begin to utter any prayer, one would not apostrophize the other. Nonetheless, for Derrida, this postulated presence remains unassured; it is never the “being in front of”, “being next to”, “being at hand” (*prae-esse, para-ousia*) of the metaphysical present being. For this reason, he maintains that one can never be sure, in prayer, of a responsiveness on the other side: “Were I sure that when I call there is someone, someone real, at the other end, I wouldn’t call [. . .]. If God were really present to me, as a certain, as a sure, presence, I wouldn’t call” (Caputo et al. 2005, p. 38).

The apostrophe that turns oneself to the other, to “you”, bears both a presupposition of presence and a call for presence. In this sense, prayer, as Derrida describes it, dwells right in the space between the sheer emptiness of pure solipsism and the metaphysical certitude of a full presence. Furthermore, the uncertainty concerning the referent of the act clearly differentiates prayer from the order or the command: “If I knew or were simply expecting an answer, that would be the end of prayer. That would be an order” (Caputo et al. 2005, p. 31). The distinction is quite significant: while the command *requires* a presence and an immediate fulfilment, prayer *calls* for a presence and a fulfilment. One could even extend this insight beyond the circumscribed character of Derrida’s prayer, and the uncertainty of the addressee’s presence that characterizes it. Prayer is not the command or the order exactly because it is essentially petition. Even when the presence of a referent is assumed, the petition of prayer is always exposed to the risk of not being fulfilled (Nédoncelle 1962, p. 18). Prayer’s first steps are *precarious*¹—they lack the audacity and the insolence of the command.

As the presupposition of the other’s presence lacks the metaphysical assurance of a present being, so the subsequent call for presence is determined by a certain skepticism. This can be linked to what Derrida, in comments more closely related to his personal experience of prayer, has determined as the character of *hopelessness* or *epoché* of prayer: a suspension of any certainty, knowledge, expectation, economy, and calculation which is necessary in order for prayer to be authentic (Caputo et al. 2005, p. 31).² Prayer, in its manifold determinations, is certainly not foreign to calculation. Derrida himself, while talking of this suspension of the calculative thought, admits that “in praying something happens [. . .] a therapy might be taking place” (Caputo et al. 2005, p. 31). Simply put, the performance of the act is not devoid of effects. Even when the effect obtained by praying is just feeling good about oneself, a calculation might have already taken place. Nonetheless, there is “something” in a prayer that remains heterogeneous to all the calculation, knowledge, and science which condition its singular determinations. This “something” is, once again, the address, the apostrophe, or, simply, prayer in itself.

Let us sum up Derrida’s analysis. Prayer is a pure act of addressing that does no more than this: starting from a presupposition of the other’s presence, it then calls the other, it attempts to recognize and affirm the presence of the addressee to whom it turns. It does not matter *what* it specifically asks, insofar as the act of prayer, in its essence, barely contains anything more than an apostrophe, an address to “you”. In addition, it does not matter to *whom* it turns, insofar as the “you” who is addressed is not, at this point, circumscribable. Prayer in itself is not addressed to the singularity of a “who”: “prayer, at bottom, is addressed to nobody—one does not know to whom it is addressed” (Derrida 2011, p. 78).

Naturally, Derrida’s argument cannot but sound shrill, as it inevitably involves a deep reconsideration of our most common idea of prayer as a form of discourse asking something to someone. We are here facing a conception of prayer that is emptied both of a determinate content and a determinate referent. This reduction to the apostrophic address is certainly instrumental for Derrida, as it allows him to exempt prayer from any kind of theoretical and theological determination of the discourse. What is questionable, however,

is the ultimate outcome of this reduction. Once deprived of its content and referent, can what remains of prayer still be called “prayer”? Does not this pure address on the edge of silence lack the characteristics which would actually make it a *praying* address and not just simply any other address?

The question is one of specificity. Different qualities make up the singularity of the phenomenon of prayer. At the very least, a certain degree of determinateness and reachability of the recipient; some form of more or less determinate petition which acknowledges the addressee as a “center of activity and responsibility” (Nédoncelle 1962, p. 18); and a specific attitude and style (bodily movements, reverential gestures, facial expressions), a practice generally shared by a community. Resolute in finding a way to overcome metaphysics through a particular modulation of language, Derrida exclusively turns his attention to the linguistic element of prayer. By doing this, he appears to forget that—as the poet wrote—“prayer is more/Than an order of words, the conscious occupation/Of the praying mind, or the sound of the voice praying” (Eliot 1944, p. 40). Nevertheless, even the linguistic qualities of prayer are rarefied in Derrida’s analysis. What remains is the implication of presence and petition. This character, however, assumes a strongly agnostic tone, as the petition asks for the very presence that it first needs to presuppose. However, the presence of whom? The availability of the other’s presence is presupposed and called, but never determined. As Caputo writes, “Derrida pursues the way of *non-knowing*, of invoking without knowing, of praying without truth” (Caputo 2005, p. 97). This way, however, is so rigorously indeterminate that it appears to suffocate the contemplative act of prayer right in the moment of its opening. Prayer remains suspended on the indeterminate space opened by a simple apostrophe.

3. The Determination of Praise

Insofar as it is nothing more than the simple movement of apostrophizing the other as other, asking and hoping for his presence, prayer—in Derrida’s view—takes place right before the discourse falls into predication. Its belonging to a performative dimension of language exceeds the borders of a purely propositional analysis on the truth value of assertions. This is pointed out by Aristotle in a well-known passage of *De interpretatione*, which constitutes a constant point of reference for contemporary philosophers dealing with the topic of prayer.

After having established that all logos, as a set of independent elements (names and verbs), is significant (*semantikos*) by convention and not by nature, Aristotle observes that only a verbal enunciation whose peculiar prerogative is to be either true or false is apophantic (*apophantikos*)—that is, declarative, attributive, assertive, predicative. Then, he writes: “thus prayer [*euché*] is a discourse [*logos*], but is neither true nor false” (*De Interpretatione* 4, 17a 1–6). The apophanticity, as a particular species of the genre “*logos semantikos*”, allows for a verification on the base of truth or falsehood. In other terms, truth and falsehood occupy a specific area of the significance of logos. Nevertheless, there are certain peculiar logoi which, despite being significant, are not apophantic. Their enunciation exceeds the competence of a logical science concerning the theoretical value of inferences, whence their dismissal from the analysis in *De interpretatione* and the relegation to rhetoric or poetic.

Among these neither-true-nor-false discourses, prayer might certainly be one of the most evident representatives. *Euché*, in fact, is certainly a logos (that is, in Aristotelian terms, a correlation of semantic elements). However, it does not assert anything which can be verified as true or false according to its correspondence in the extra-psychoic real. This is because the intra-locutionary relation of this discourse is released from a purely propositional intention of the affirmative or negative type “*S is/is not P*”. Simply put, the purpose at the base of this act of language is not communicative or informative; property of this discourse is not to speak of or about this or that. For these reasons, Aristotle maintains that only a different kind of analysis, one that pertains more properly to poetic or rhetoric, would be able to shed some light on the particular form of discourse that prayer is.

“But would Aristotle have said that the encomium (*hymnein*) is not apophantic? That it is neither true nor false? That it has no relationship to the distinction between the true and the false? One may doubt this. One may even doubt it in the case of Dionysius” (Derrida 1992a, p. 136). According to Derrida, the praise, encomium or celebration (*hymnein*), is another trait that often accompanies what one generally calls “prayer”, to the point of being frequently associated with it. It is the case, for instance, of the main polemic object of his analysis in “How to Avoid Speaking”: namely, Dionysius’ invocation of the Trinity at the beginning of *The Mystical Theology* (I, 1, 997a). In this passage, the apostrophic movement of the address to “you” seamlessly flows into a praise of the Trinity beyond being. In other words, Dionysius addresses the other as other (“you”) through praise (“you as Trinity higher than any being and guide of the Christians”). This gesture makes the apostrophe and the encomium appear as homogeneous elements of one single hymnic act.

In criticizing the overlapping of what he believes to be two entirely heterogeneous elements, Derrida directly collides with Jean-Luc Marion. The latter, in *The Idol and Distance*, has designated this passage to the praise of the Trinity as the passage to prayer itself: “Denys tends to substitute for the *to say* of predicative language another verb, *hymnein*, to praise. What does this substitution signify? It no doubt indicates the passage from discourse to prayer, for ‘prayer is a *logos* but neither true nor false’ (Aristotle)” (Marion [1979] 2001, p. 184). Here, Marion echoes the Swiss theologian Hans Urs von Balthasar who, in a meticulous analysis, has identified within the *Corpus Areopagiticum* no less than 108 recurrences of the verb “to praise” and its derivatives, thus concluding that “when it is a question of God and of the divine, the word *hymnein* nearly replaces the word ‘to say’” (von Balthasar [1962] 1984, p. 173). Even though the “nearly” seems to invite some cautiousness (Derrida 1992a, p. 111), this might certainly be true. In fact, for what concerns the exemplary case of Dionysius, Balthasar highlights how the “hymnic” encompasses the Areopagite’s entire theological discourse to such a degree, that it comes to constitute as much a theoretical methodology as the sheer purpose of all his thinking (von Balthasar [1962] 1984, p. 160).

Nevertheless, the overall celebrative character of Dionysian theology, as well as the formal proof of this terminological substitution within the texts, is not sufficient to demonstrate an exemption of the encomium from the propositional regime of discourse. One still needs to understand, at a theoretical level, whether the language of praise, in attempting to speak to rather than of God, actually succeeds in avoiding any form of onto-theological predication. In the terms employed by Derrida, one needs to understand whether the language of praise constitutes another form of denegation: that is to say, whether in claiming not to speak of God, it actually does speak of God.

Despite his admiration for Marion’s reflection in *The Idol and Distance*, Derrida stresses that the two “traits” of prayer and praise should not be deemed identical and confused with each other. Prayer in itself (*euchē*)—he claims—requires nothing more than an apostrophe to the other as other, without any kind of further narration or description, both at the level of the content and of the addressee; praise (*hymnein*), on the contrary, while it surely shares the belonging to a performative rather than predicative dimension of language, maintains an undoubtable relationship to predication.

How can one deny that the encomium qualifies God and *determines* prayer, *determines* the other, Him to whom it addresses itself, refers, invoking Him even as the source of prayer? How can one deny that, in this movement of determination (which is no longer the pure address of the prayer to the other), the appointment of the *trinitary* and hyperessential God distinguishes Dionysius’ *Christian* prayer from all other prayer? To reject this doubtless subtle distinction, inadmissible for Dionysius and perhaps for a Christian in general, is to deny the essential quality of prayer to every invocation that is not Christian. (Derrida 1992a, p. 111)

It is clear what Derrida wants to convey in this passage. The encomium, by naming God as Trinity and hyperessential, determines the apostrophe of prayer and delimits its absolute indeterminateness: the pure address to “you” becomes the praise to “you as

Trinity". This designation functions as a discerning element between a Christian prayer and all the other singular determinations of prayer which do not belong to the realm of the Christian faith. The distinction between prayer in itself and praise proposed by Derrida is then inadmissible for a Christian. The latter, in fact, cannot but ultimately refuse the authenticity of a prayer addressed to an indeterminate "you" (or he can accept it only at the cost of glimpsing in this *pro-nomen* at least the shadow of a *nomen* more or less adequately referring to God, thereby annulling the sheer indeterminateness of the apostrophe). As a matter of fact, a Christian cannot but refuse the authenticity of any prayers addressed to a deity different from the Christian God. In this sense, praise refutes the essential quality of the apostrophe to every other determinate, non-Christian prayer. It is exactly the necessity of respecting the possibility of other, non-Christian prayers that pushes Derrida to affirm an essential indeterminateness of the apostrophic address.

This subtle distinction between *euché* and *hymnein* can become clearer by briefly returning to the Aristotelian analysis in *De interpretatione*. As we have seen, Aristotle excludes certain peculiar discourses from a purely theoretical analysis, among which prayer (*euché*). Nonetheless, this does not necessarily exclude the possibility of a logical verification of a proposition as a component of a neither-true-nor-false discourse. In other words, the proposition, isolated from the overall purpose of the discourse, can still be submitted to verification in accordance with truth and falsehood. This is what Derrida seems to be alluding to when he stresses that the encomium, while certainly maintaining a performative character, entertains a close relation with the predicative character of logos: "Even if it is not a predicative affirmation of the current type, the encomium preserves the style and the structure of a predicative affirmation. It says something about someone" (Derrida 1992a, p. 137).

The sheer performative character of the encomium is then insufficient to demonstrate an exemption of Dionysian discourse and the language of praise from predication. The performance, in fact, does not always exclude predicative attributions (Derrida 1992a, p. 137). This is evident in the Dionysian praise at the outset of *The Mystical Theology*, which celebrates its addressee by qualifying it *as* Trinity, beyond being, beyond divinity, beyond goodness and guide of the Christians. Even if the reference of this encomium belongs to a higher—hyperessential—order of truth, this does not prevent Dionysius from maintaining the theoretical form of predication of the kind "*S is P*". Between the *as* (language of praise) and the *is* (ontological language), the difference seems, indeed, minimal. When Dionysius invokes God *as* Trinity, it is hard not to read in it a predicative statement (God *is* Trinity), and, thus, the reflection of a rather explicit theology attributing to the addressee all the positive, dogmatic contents that distinguish the Christian praise from all the other forms of praise.

Perhaps more significantly than all this, elsewhere, Derrida remarks that praise always includes a constative structure, insofar as it implies a recognition of the other's worthiness of being praised: "In the praise there is already some constative structure, that is, the other is worthy of being praised. It is not a pure performative; it implies some knowledge or implied knowledge, some supposed knowledge, a description of who God is or who you are, and so on" (Schwartz 2001, p. 231). Beyond all the possible determinations of logos, then, praising someone always brings about a more or less implicit form of predication. The essence itself of praise is, for Derrida, dogmatic.

4. Specificity as Indeterminateness

This refusal of praise as a language unable to detach itself from the metaphysical conditions of logos allows us to better comprehend Derrida's radical philosophical gesture. The reduction of prayer to its apostrophic essence appears to him as a necessary move to avoid any onto-theological contamination. As we have pointed out, however, in responding to the rationalistic excesses of metaphysics, Derrida seems to have fallen victim to a specular form of excess. Not much can be said of prayer in itself, which is reduced to an apostrophe.

This is a simple outward movement of addressing, of turning oneself to the other and calling the other; a linguistic act devoid of any clear content and referent.

Scholars have raised multiple objections to this rather peculiar account of prayer. Regina Schwartz, referring specifically to the passages in “How to Avoid Speaking”, has contested Derrida’s insistence on the absence of any determinate requests in prayer. In her opinion, prayer essentially maintains a petitionary character, inasmuch as one always prays for something: “I fear the instrumentality of prayer [. . .]. Too many prayers sound instrumental to my ears, asking, as they do, for something” (Schwartz 2001, p. 230). Significantly, Schwartz takes a position that is very close to the one taken by Marion, insofar as she admits that what Derrida calls prayer is exactly how she would define praise: “Demands only that the other hear it, receive it, be present to it, be the other as such, a gift, a call, and even cause of [praise]” (Schwartz 2001, p. 233). The inversion is striking, as she goes on to say that praise is actually prior to prayer, linking this choice to a biblical understanding of praise which, in her opinion, escapes the instrumentality that characterizes prayer (Schwartz 2001, pp. 224, 233).

Schwartz’s concern certainly captures an important issue: is not prayer petitionary in its essence? Does not prayer always mean requesting something, asking for something more than just the presence of the addressee? However, by insisting on the petitionary character of prayer, her objection to Derrida misses the mark. The dissociation that Derrida is inviting us to make in the pages of “How to Avoid Speaking” is not between petitionary prayer and praise, but rather, more radically, between the multiple determinations of prayer (among which are petitionary prayer and praise) and the pure prayer, prayer in itself. Simply put, Schwartz is contesting at the level of the determinations of prayer, what Derrida instead poses on a level prior to or beyond that. For Schwartz, prayer means “petitionary prayer”; for Derrida, prayer means “prayer in itself”. The confusion comes from the fact that Derrida still calls “prayer” the pre-predicative apostrophe that founds and opens the possibility of every common determination of prayer, including petitionary prayer and praise. Not coincidentally, in his brief response to Schwartz, Derrida reiterates the dissociation of prayer and instrumentalization and stresses the essentially constative structure of praise (Schwartz 2001, pp. 230–32).

Caputo and Marion, instead, have raised some questions in connection to the absence of a determinate referent of the prayerful act as described by Derrida. The former, in relation to Derrida’s admission of rightly passing for an atheist while at the same time living in prayers and tears, has candidly asked him to whom he turns these prayers and whom he expects to answer them (Caputo et al. 2005, p. 28). In a more radical fashion, the latter, in reaction to Derrida’s disqualification of the praising prayer as a disguised form of predication, has strongly contested the possibility of an anonymous prayer. What would it mean, in fact, to pray without praying to anyone, to demand without demanding from anyone? (Marion 1999, pp. 28–30).

Notwithstanding the different contexts and motives that prompted them, these questions raise again the crucial issues concerning the *what* and the *who* of prayer. As we have seen, Derrida seems at times persuaded to identify prayer with a peculiar linguistic act which, being absolutely foreign to onto-theological determinations, would be capable of respecting the absolute alterity of the other to whom it turns. This act, which he calls in different ways (pure prayer, prayer in itself, the address, the apostrophe, prayer), is absolutely pre-predicative insofar as it is not determined by any kind of contents or singular referents. The pure prayer does not demand anything to anyone, but simply calls the other through an apostrophe; it is turned to no one in particular, as it lacks the metaphysical assurance of a present being with a series of names or accidents.

Now, it would be too easy to dispense with these objections by simply returning to Derrida’s analysis and pointing out, once again, the motives that guide his choice of reducing prayer to the minimal structure of the apostrophic address. The truth is that these questions regarding the content and the referent of the prayerful act, in their rather

innocent simplicity, are not easily dismissible. One must then take these concerns seriously and not underestimate the issues that they raise.

The insistence of these objections has the merit of allowing us to grasp a fundamental problem. Derrida's account inevitably involves a profound reconsideration of what one generally understands as "prayer". Insofar as he insists on calling "prayer" a minimal addressing act which does not resemble the rich and multifaceted phenomenon of prayer, his argument cannot but remain exposed to misunderstandings and objections. Overall, these come down to one simple question: can this minimal apostrophe, this pure address to the other on the edge of silence, still be called *prayer*? This question touches upon the problem of the specificity of this pure act of prayer. We have seen how the philosophical gesture of reducing prayer to the apostrophe is somehow felt as necessary by Derrida. In general, this affirmation of an essential indeterminateness of the address responds to onto-theological concerns, to the risk of a re-inscription of the discourse of prayer in the metaphysical regime of logos. Moreover, in particular, this indeterminateness is demanded by the respect of the possibility of multiple experiences of prayer which cannot be restricted to just one confession or the other. Nonetheless, one could argue that, in responding to these concerns, Derrida went too far; that the reduction to the apostrophe comes at the cost of a loss of specificity of what one commonly denominates as "prayer". It is in fact not clear what exactly would distinguish the apostrophe of prayer from any other kind of apostrophe. Perhaps its sceptic and hopeless qualification? Derrida does not delve much into this. When he cursorily points to this issue, he actually maintains that there might be no specificity whatsoever, at least at the level of the structure of the linguistic act. Or, better, that the specificity of prayer is its very indeterminateness and universality; that the act of calling God in prayer or calling Kevin Hart, who is sitting next to him, bear the same structure. For faith—he claims—"is at once an exceptional, unique experience and something very common, universal in a certain way" (Caputo et al. 2005, p. 38).

5. Solemnity and Triviality

This brief comment on the commonality of faith allows us to delve deeper into the problem relating to the specificity of prayer. Further references to the indeterminateness of prayer can be found in Derrida's latest reflections on the topic within the seminar *The Beast and the Sovereign*. Turning our focus to this seminar will allow us to retrieve the questions which we have previously anticipated without, however, facing them directly. Let us recall them.

As we have seen, Derrida's analysis of prayer revolves around a series of dichotomies. At first, it would seem that these dichotomies express a dialogical opposition between two forms of prayer, one more indeterminate and the other more determinate. On different occasions, Derrida appears to assign a priority to the more idealistic side of these dichotomies. The idea is that prayer is some sort of pure address without content and reference. This purely pragmatic act of addressing the other as other would constitute a form of language beyond the limits of onto-theology. Nonetheless, the brief ending remarks in "How to Avoid Speaking" resound as a wake-up call. They seem to point towards a radically different direction, certainly more appropriate to Derrida's thought, always preoccupied with a "fluidification" of the dichotomies of the tradition. The question is rather straightforward: can prayer actually remain an apostrophe on the edge of silence, or is it not always on the verge of determining itself (in a particular code, form, gesture, tradition, theology)? Perhaps, suggests Derrida, without this inevitable contamination there would not be any prayer, nor any theology.

A particular opposition opens the eighth session of the second year of the seminar *The Beast and the Sovereign*, on 5 March 2003: the one between *prayer in a strong sense* and *prayer in an ordinary sense*. Within the thematic horizon of this seminar, which is explicitly concerned with the relation between the animal (the beast) and the human (the sovereign), the topic of prayer would seem to occupy a rather strange position. The sudden introduction of this theme in the second session and its more thorough elaboration in the third, give to

the whole seminar a different, unexpected orientation. In these early sessions, Derrida is mainly concerned with reading Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* as a book of prayer: "The whole of *Robinson Crusoe*"—he argues—"can be read as a rhythmic series of attempts to learn how to pray properly, authentically, in the Bible, on the Bible" (Derrida 2011, p. 48). Derrida goes into details to trace the whole process of Robinson's apprenticeship of prayer: beginning with a first, still irreligious prayer, "the precursory plaintive breath of a distress call which, during the earthquake that threatens to bury him alive, is not yet truly and religiously addressed to God, to the Other as God" (Derrida 2011, pp. 77–78); up until what, according to Robinson Crusoe, is his first *true* and *authentic* prayer, that is, a prayer on the New Testament, to God in the person of his son (Derrida 2011, p. 80).

After these couple of sessions, however, the topic of prayer goes underground for about five weeks. When it resurfaces in the eighth session, Derrida gives to the whole analysis a wider scope. The more general questions on the nature and the possibility of prayer that inaugurate the session are already indicative of a clear change of pace: "What is to pray? How to pray? How not to pray?" (Derrida 2011, p. 202). The philosopher goes on to evoke once again the opposition between the pure performativity of the linguistic act of prayer and the logos as articulate language or enunciative proposition. By doing this, he reiterates the foundation of his interest for the topic, while at the same time indicating a new direction of analysis. This will investigate Heidegger's outline of *logos apophantikos* in the 1929–30 seminar *The Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics*, and his rather cursory references to prayer in this seminar (Heidegger [1983] 1995, pp. 304–33), as well as in the 1957 lecture "The Onto-theo-logical Constitution of Metaphysics" (Heidegger [1957] 1969, p. 72). Before dealing with the German philosopher, however, Derrida raises some further questions, which in his previous accounts of prayer he had not raised explicitly:

What is one doing when one says to someone "I pray you," "*Je vous en prie*", "I pray you to"? Can one pray without praying *to someone*, i.e., without "addressing" one's prayer to the singularity of a "who"? Can one pray without praying to . . . ? Can one pray without asking or expecting something in return? Is there a link between the quotidian and trivial "*je vous en prie*" and the orison or chant of religious and sacred prayer that rises and lifts itself above the quotidian, even if it lifts itself every day, at fixed times, or, solemnly, once a year [is there a link and an analogy] between the anemic and mechanical "*je vous en prie*" and, on the other hand, prayer in the strong sense, with or without active faith, which grips one, and brings with it a sort of ecstasy beyond automatic triviality? (Derrida 2011, p. 203)

Once again, Derrida works on an apparent dichotomy between two kinds of prayers. On the one hand, the quotidian and trivial "*je vous en prie*", the common interjection that punctuates different Western languages.³ This is an inchoate, mechanical, almost frivolous prayer, in a way like the first one Robinson Crusoe utters out of fear, which lasts only for the brief moment of his anguish. On the other hand, the solemn, sacred prayer that one turns to a deity and transcends, to a certain measure, the order of trivial factuality. This opposition is initially linked to the two key problems concerning the possibility of praying without asking or expecting anything in return, and of praying without addressing anyone in particular. Derrida is then simply reiterating, with a slightly different accent, what he has already indicated in "How to Avoid Speaking" with the opposition between *euché* and *hymnein*. The trivial "*je vous en prie*" would constitute a restricted form of prayer, that apostrophic address which simply turns to the other as other without demanding anything; the solemn prayer would be a more determinate form of prayer, uttered in fixed instances and places, with a specific religious attitude and even determinate words. Right after these questions, Derrida seems to suggest that the difference between the trivial prayer and the solemn prayer might be one of empirical intensity. Both would be prayers; that is to say, they would bear the same essential linguistic structure. However, the first would be quotidian, frivolous, machine-like, anemic; the other solemn, liturgical, more elaborated. The similarity or dissimilarity that links "the most insignificant 'pardon' from someone

who steps on your toe” and “the guilty and repentant gravity of ‘I ask your pardon’ for the most criminal offence” (Derrida 2011, p. 203), would perhaps represent a similar instance.

The more profound reasons behind the exposition of this distinction are revealed right in the following passage:

More radically, [. . .] can one address oneself to someone or indeed to any living being at all—or even something not living—without some implicit prayer coming to bend, to inflect the discourse, or even the simple silent look which, addressing itself to the other, cannot fail to ask of him or her “listen to me, please [*je t’en prie*], listen, I pray you, look at me looking at you, please, turn toward me, turn your attention toward what I’m saying or doing to you, be present to what is coming from me” [. . .]. One always prays the other to be present to one’s own presence. Can, then, this experience of prayer be limited, circumscribed? Or else does it invade the whole field of experience from the moment the other enters into it, i.e., without ever waiting, since the other is what *is* already, whether I’m expecting it or not, whether I want it or not, etc.? (Derrida 2011, pp. 203–4)

The ordinary character of prayer is, then, the sign of something quite more profound: a form of implicit prayer, an elementary “I pray you”, invades the whole territory of experience, anticipating every possible utterance. This experience of prayer, says Derrida, cannot be delimited. When turning one’s words to the other, an originary prayer has already taken place; when the other enters the empirical space, one has already started to pray. Not only, then, there is a pure prayer that precedes every determinate prayer; there is also—and more significantly—an implicit prayer that precedes every utterance in general: “a silent prayer or plea [that] precedes every constative, every statement of fact, every assertion, even the most coolly and confidently scientific protocol sentence” (Krell 2013, p. 162).

There is then no specificity of prayer. Or differently—as we have previously suggested—the specificity of prayer is to have no specificity whatsoever, but rather to anticipate, with an imperceptible movement, every sentence that is turned to the other: “I cannot speak to someone without praying him or her, at least implicitly, not only to pay attention, but by that very fact to retain the memory of what I am saying to him or her, be it only from the beginning to the end of the sentence” (Derrida 2011, p. 204). While Aristotle argued that prayer (*euchē*) is a form of non-apophantic, neither-true-nor-false discourse, Derrida goes one step further: every true or false proposition implies prayer; the non-apophantic tacitly marks every apophantic discourse. Then, everyone prays, believers and atheists alike; indeed, everyone prays without ceasing, as the Apostle asked (1 Thessalonians 5:16–18) and as Derrida claims to do (Caputo et al. 2005, p. 30). The apostrophe of prayer is not just the premise of every prayer, it is the spring moment of logos itself.

6. The Respect for Prayer

Every proposition presupposes an elementary “I pray you”. This argument provides the criticism that Derrida directs to Heidegger during the eighth session of the seminar. The German philosopher—Derrida stresses on multiple occasions—does not pray, does not apostrophize anyone in his writings; the theoretical, constative mode of discourse governs the ensemble of his philosophical project. At the same time, Heidegger curiously alludes to prayer on at least two occasions, at a distance of almost thirty years: first, in the 1929–30 seminar *The Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics* (Heidegger [1983] 1995, p. 309); then, in the 1957 conference “The Onto-theo-logical Constitution of Metaphysics” (Heidegger [1957] 1969, p. 72).⁴ In both, however, he avoids plumbing the depths of the topic. What are the reasons behind this exclusion?

Derrida begins from the latest and most famous of these instances: Heidegger’s conference, held in Todtnauberg on 24 February 1957 and published in *Identity and Difference*. Let us recall the main argument presented in this conference. Concerned to explain the appearance of God in philosophy, Heidegger argues that metaphysics, forgetful of the ontological difference between Being (*Sein*) and beings (*Seiende*), founds the latter on the

former: Being appears as the fundament and beings as the founded. In order to think beings in their totality, metaphysics becomes a logic as theo-logic insofar as it conceives God as the supreme and ultimate ground of beings (as first cause, *causa sui*, *Ursache*). However, this God of metaphysical onto-theology—says Heidegger re-evoking the Pascalian distinction between the God of the philosophers and the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob—remains extraneous to the most common acts of devotion, such as praying: “This [*causa sui*] is the right name for god in philosophy. Man can neither pray [*beten*] nor sacrifice to this god. Before the *causa sui*, man can neither fall to his knees in awe nor can he play music and dance before this god” (Heidegger [1957] 1969, p. 72, trans. modified).

There are essentially two ways to read Heidegger’s statement, depending on whether one lets the accent fall on the act (prayer) or the referent of the act (God). A first interpretation would focus on the necessity of learning again to address prayers and sacrifices to God: if one wishes to withdraw God from onto-theology, one must learn to “pray in addressing oneself beyond the sovereignty of God or independently of his supposed sovereignty, of his ontic sovereignty in any case, as fundamental cause, *causa sui* or supreme principle” (Derrida 2011, p. 207). A second interpretation would instead suggest that one must think a “divine God”, a God deprived of his ontic sovereignty, if one wishes to pray and sacrifice to him: in fact, “the God of the philosophers (Aristotle’s *noesis noesos* or pure act, Spinoza’s *causa sui*, etc.) is not, in essence, a being who receives prayers and sacrifices and chants and praises and hymns, etc.” (Derrida 2011, p. 208).

Heidegger then speaks of prayer, without, however, praying; he speaks of God, without, however, addressing any God; he stresses that one cannot pray to the God of the philosophers, without, however, explicitly enjoining anyone to pray. As Derrida highlights, “Heidegger says what he says about prayer in a text the discursivity of which remains theoretical or constative, which in any case is not of the order of performative address, and certainly not of prayer in the strict sense” (Derrida 2011, p. 208). In Derrida’s eyes, this is the most striking difference between Heidegger’s discourse on prayer and the one of Dionysius, Robinson Crusoe, or Pascal. Heidegger discusses prayer, but he neither prays nor addresses anyone. His whole discourse is exposed in the third person, even when he refers to the God whom one would fall on one’s knees to and pray, dance and sing. Dionysius, Robinson Crusoe, and Pascal, on the contrary, insistently quote their prayers, thus reiterating them in their writings and letting one know of their link to Christian revelation. Dionysius quotes his prayer to the Trinity and invites Timothy (and, thus, the reader) to abandon perception and knowledge, and to reach the mystical summits and union with the God beyond being (The Mystical Theology I, 1, 997b); Robinson Crusoe narrates his apprenticeship of prayer, he writes down his prayers and, in a way, he learns to pray by quoting and retelling his prayers (Defoe [1719] 2001, pp. 75, 81, 84–85); Pascal writes his prayer on a little piece of paper (Pascal 1946, p. 142), which is destined “if not for someone, at least to remain, to survive the moment of its inscription, to remain legible in the exteriority of a trace, of a document, even if it were readable only for Pascal himself” (Derrida 2011, p. 212).

Right after this cursory reference to prayer, Heidegger adds a remark that appears as an explanation or a justification of the impossibility to pray: “The god-less thinking which must abandon the god of philosophy, god as *causa sui*, is thus *perhaps* closer to the divine God. Here this means only: god-less thinking is more open to Him than onto-theo-logic would like to admit” (Heidegger [1957] 1969, p. 72, emphasis added). According to Heidegger, then, philosophical atheism (*das gott-lose Denken*) would *perhaps* be closer to the divinity of God (*der göttliche Gott*); it would be—comments Derrida—“more respectful and more open, better prepared for a God to whom one would pray and sacrifice, than is onto-theology when it refers to God as supreme Being and *causa sui*” (Derrida 2011, p. 215). One could then say that Heidegger is neither praying nor delving into the topic of prayer for the precise reason that philosophical atheism is closer to the divine God. In addition, as he points out right after, only this thought of a non-onto-theological divinity can “throw a little light on the path to which thinking is on its way, that thinking which

accomplishes the step back, back out of metaphysics into the active essence of metaphysics” (Heidegger [1957] 1969, p. 72). Not prayer, then, at least not the one turned to the god of onto-theology, but rather a god-less thinking would be able to accomplish the overcoming of metaphysics.

It remains, however, the ambiguity of a “perhaps” (*vielleicht*) that wounds the usual rigorousness of the German philosopher’s discourse. It remains also the uncertainty regarding the possibility and the modality of the prayer that one would turn to the divine God who is no longer the sovereign god of onto-theology. What instead remains clear, in Derrida’s view, is the recurrent exclusion of prayer within the Heideggerian theoretical exposition. The second occasion of this avoidance is the 1929–30 seminar *The Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics*. In the section §72b, Heidegger deals with the apophantic logos according to Aristotle. He describes it as the discourse that, “in the manner in which it gives something to be understood, has the specific tendency merely to exhibit as such whatever it is referring to” (Heidegger [1983] 1995, p. 309). Only the apophantic logos is an enunciative proposition (*Aussagesatz*), that is, a discourse that points out, informs, makes something known. Then, right after, he writes:

Prayer [*das Bitten*], εὐκχή, for example, is a non-apophantic λόγος. If my discourse is a prayer [*Wenn ich bittend rede*], then it is not attempting to inform the other person about something in the sense of increasing his or her knowledge. Nor, however, is the prayer [*die Bitte*] a communicating of the fact that I desire something or am filled with a desire. Nor is this discourse a mere desiring, but rather the concrete act of “praying another [*einen anderen Bittens*]”. (Heidegger [1983] 1995, p. 309, trans. modified)⁵

This observation conveniently highlights two intertwined qualities of prayer on which Derrida has insisted on different occasions: its “uninformative” purpose and its essentially performative character. After this interesting remark, however, Heidegger avoids any further reflection on the topic. By doing this, he diligently follows Aristotle’s path, relegating the analysis of the non-apophantic logoi to poetics or rhetoric: “The examination of these kinds of discourse which do not have the character of a pointing out [. . .] belongs to rhetoric and poetics” (Heidegger [1983] 1995, p. 310). Questioning once again this surprising exclusion, Derrida argues that Heidegger ignores the pervasiveness of prayer. In the overwhelming dominion of the theoretical regime, he forgets that the enunciative proposition, insofar as it is addressed to someone, always implies *the concrete act of praying another*. Some sort of elementary address, an “I pray you to listen to me”, punctuates even the most rational assertion (Derrida 2011, p. 217).

This “brutal exclusion” of prayer obviously must be taken seriously. However, does it suffice to interpret it exclusively as the outcome of the constative perseverance of Heidegger’s discourse? Could not this avoidance, on the contrary, indicate the deepest respect for prayer and for the divine God (*der göttliche Gott*) to whom it should address itself? These questions allow us to reach the conclusion of our analysis by linking Heidegger’s exclusion of prayer to Derrida’s conclusive remarks in the last pages of “How to Avoid Speaking”. Derrida laments that Heidegger does not leave any space to this neither-true-nor-false discourse that prayer is; that he neither prays, nor quotes prayers or enjoins anyone to pray. At first glance, this can undoubtedly imply the dominion of the theoretical mode of discourse within his texts and, therefore, the rejection of theology and of performativity. A different reading remains nonetheless possible and is briefly alluded to in the last passages of “How to Avoid Speaking”: by not quoting prayer, by not inscribing it in a text, by not inviting anyone to pray, Heidegger actually saves prayer from reification, determination, contamination. If prayer, as Derrida suggested, is a pure apostrophe on the edge of silence, always endangered by a possible onto-theological determination, then silence could represent the most respectful sign for the essence of prayer. Heidegger—Derrida seems to suggest—manages to avoid speaking of prayer and of the divine God to whom it should be turned. This avoidance of the topic represents the sign of the most profound respect for prayer.

Respectful or disrespectful as it may be towards the essence of prayer, Heidegger's avoidance does not help us in grasping the actual consistency of this pure act of addressing the other as other. There is, *perhaps*, an uncontaminated prayer, a purely performative moment that anticipates every predication and that, finally, allows us to speak *to* the other. However, what are the conditions that actually make this prayerful moment graspable, possible, attainable? The autonomy of this pre-predicative prayer is questionable and the attraction offered by its possibility must be mitigated by a different realization.

Perhaps there would be no prayer, no pure possibility of prayer, without what we glimpse as a menace or as a contamination: writing, the code, repetition, analogy or the—at least apparent—multiplicity of addresses, initiation. If there were a purely pure experience of prayer, would one need religion and affirmative or negative theologies? Would one need a supplement of prayer? But if there were no supplement, if quotation did not bend prayer, if prayer did not bend, if it did not submit to writing, would a theiology be possible? Would a theology be possible? (Derrida 1992a, p. 131)

In his conclusion, Derrida leaves no doubt that a reduction of prayer to a pure essence is actually impossible. Prayer may certainly be pre-predicative in the way it apostrophizes the other as other. This simple apostrophe, however, is an all too fleeting moment whose condition of possibility depends on its very determination. If prayer were indeed pure and nothing else, in fact, one would not need religions and theologies, invocations and petitions. The relation is complementary: there is no pure possibility of prayer without this perpetual slippage into contamination; and, at the same time, there is no determinate prayer without a pure possibility of prayer. This genuine apostrophe remains indeed a possibility, perhaps even a teleological principle; in any case, a moment that can be grasped only within its alteration. Ultimately, it is this inevitable failure of the pure apostrophe that makes religion, theology, and prayer itself possible.

In the end, prayer does not allow us to accomplish the step out of metaphysics. The silent address preceding every prayer and every discourse is nothing more than a tangential moment, between the “unnameable glimmer beyond the closure” (Derrida [1967] 1976, p. 14) and the closure itself of metaphysics. In Derrida's discourse, prayer manifests itself at once as the symptom of a desire and of the unfulfillment of this desire. We remain in some sort of convalescent state, neither entirely inside nor entirely outside of the metaphysical system: in our prayers continues to resound the echo of the irrepressible metaphysics.

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Notes

- ¹ From the Latin *precarius*, from *præx*, “prayer”, literally expressing what is obtained with prayers, granted by grace, hence, provisory, unstable, unassured.
- ² Starting from this priority of scepticism over knowledge, John Caputo has drawn a comparison between Derrida's and Augustine's account of prayer, which instead prioritizes knowledge over scepticism (Caputo 2005, pp. 97–98).
- ³ The semantic attenuation or emptying of terms and expressions belonging to the religious sphere is a well-documented phenomenon. In the case of “prayer”, the acceptance of the term loses the sacred character that distinguishes the appeal to the divinity. The French “*je vous en prie*” or “*je t'en prie*” (literally, “I pray you for it”) is the polite response to a thanks, as in the English “you are welcome”. Similar expressions of courtesy can be identified in the German “*bitte*” (first person singular of the present indicative of the verb “*beten*”, to pray, and contracted form of “*Ich bitte Sie*”, “I pray you”) and in the Italian “*prego*” (from the verb “*pregare*”, and contracted form of “*io ti prego*”, “I pray you”). This phenomenon of semantic attenuation, of which Derrida does not highlight the amplitude, is not exclusively limited to interjections which, being spontaneous expressions of feeling, are essentially devoid of conceptual reference. It also includes entire verbal locutions: “*je te prie de ...*”, “*ich bitte dich ...*”, “*ti prego di ...*” (“I pray you to ...”). Other ordinary uses of the verb recur in the reflexive locutions such as “*se faire prier*”, “*se laisser prier*”, “*sich bitten lassen*”, “*farsi pregare*”, “*lasciarsi pregare*” (literally, “to let oneself be prayed”, used to indicate a reluctance to do or concede something); or, in the negative form, “*ne se faire pas prier*”, “*sich nicht bitten lassen*”, “*non farsi pregare*” (“do not let oneself be prayed”, that is, of someone who easily or promptly gives his or her consent).

- ⁴ We can here point to a third instance, in the section §7B of *Being and Time* dedicated to the concept of logos (Heidegger [1927] 1962, p. 56), of which the section §72 of *The Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics* constitutes an expansion.
- ⁵ In the different terminology (*beten*, *bitten*) used by Heidegger in “The Onto-theo-logical Constitution of Metaphysics” and in *The Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics* to refer to “prayer”, Derrida identifies once again the distinction between a general or trivial prayer (*bitten*) and a religious prayer (*beten*). However, as Derrida precises right away, “the nearness of the two remains troubling and equivocal, as the always possible passage from *bitten* to *beten*, and reciprocally” (Derrida 2011, p. 216).

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Article

Pragmatic Encroachment, Phenomenology, and Religious Experience

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Abstract: Aaron Rizzieri's *Pragmatic Encroachment, Religious Belief, and Practice* (2013) is the fullest religious appropriation of a relatively new epistemological concept: pragmatic encroachment. To achieve this goal, Rizzieri rightly sees (1) how justification takes place within an encompassing pragmatic context and (2) how justification of religious belief establishes within a wider context less than absolute knowledge. While the first point can be supported by Alfred Schutz's theory of action, often including multi-layered sub-acts, Schutz's idea of a theoretical enclave can create a space for epistemic evidentialism, as an independent distinctive moment, with distinctive (justificatory) purposes, within an overarching practical action. Rizzieri's book itself exemplifies such evidentialism, theoretically justifying pragmatic encroachment, after the fashion of Husserlian transcendental phenomenology. Rizzieri could also profit from Husserlian regional ontologies, on which he implicitly already relies to support religious knowledge. Husserl's concept of bipolar intentionality would accommodate Rizzieri's responsible internalism, while allowing for the action of objects upon us. This, in turn, opens the door to the evidence for religious knowledge that an account of religious experience such as Max Scheler's could provide. Such an account could counter those who reduce religious experience to mere subjective projection—a critique to which internalism might be more vulnerable.

Keywords: pragmatic encroachment; multiple realities; temporality; intentionality; phenomenology of religious experience; regional ontologies; philosophical responsibility; relevances; transcendental phenomenology; theoretical bracketing

1. Stakes, the Contexts of Knowing, and the Meaning of Knowing Relative to Contexts

From Blaise Pascal's wager to William James's will to believe, philosophers have explored the question of whether one ought to believe in God despite the lack of convincing evidence that God exists, simply because the benefits of believing or the disadvantages of not-believing are so considerable that it is worth the risk to believe, despite the lack of evidence. Recent philosophical literature has recuperated a version of these traditional arguments under the canopy of "pragmatic encroachment". According to this paradigm, the bar of justification for a belief, which one might think is merely an epistemic matter and decidable independently of one's practical interests, can actually be elevated when the pragmatic stakes linked to one's knowing are high (Rizzieri 2013).

Rizzieri (2013) presents a clear example of how pragmatic encroachment works in general before considering its religious application. A hypothetical banking case depicts a situation in which an individual, Hanna, ponders whether to transfer money to her grandmother on Friday or wait until Saturday, but if she does not successfully transfer the money this weekend, her grandmother will be unable to pay for life-saving surgery. Hanna remembers transferring money on past Saturdays and consequently has a true belief (which would presuppose that we know that the bank will be open and the transfer possible) that she can transfer the money on Saturday, but the question is whether, if she is not sure of her memories, she knows that the bank will be open and will permit the transfer service on Saturday. In Rizzieri's view, Hanna, because she has some doubt about whether the bank still maintains the business hours she recalls, would be morally negligent

if she did not double check before waiting until Saturday to go to the bank to initiate the transaction. This case clearly indicates the principle of pragmatic encroachment, namely that when the stakes are high (the grandmother's surgery), the bar for justification becomes higher than it would be if the grandmother did not need life-saving surgery that had to be paid for on Saturday or if she had sufficient funds and would not need the monies from the transfer or if Hanna's only concern was to go to the bank to make a deposit and to avoid the inconvenience of traveling to the bank on Saturday only to find it closed. Because the grandmother's surgery heightens the need for the successful transfer, Hanna is morally required to check twice. On the basis of this and similar cases, Rizzieri (2013, p. 30) criticizes those "intellectualist" perspectives that divorce "the connection between knowledge, assertion, and practical reason" and that would "fail to register the significance of the fact that the degree of reliability that is required for Hanna to properly believe that [a proposition] *p* is affected by stakes considerations" (Rizzieri 2013, p. 23). In effect, they separate pragmatic concerns from epistemic concerns and fail to see their intimate connection so that pragmatic circumstances, as in Hanna's case, can elevate the bar for justification. Rizzieri's coupling of epistemic with pragmatic concerns also implies that knowledge can serve to ground the rationality of practical action, so that when Hanna's justification is strengthened by double-checking, she would be guided to make the transfer in such a way that her grandmother's surgery would be ensured.

Seeing this connection between knowing and practical action, Rizzieri argues that we can say that if Hanna knew or was justified about proposition *p*, it would have been rational for her to act as if *p*. Consequently, relying on only her vague memory that the bank had been open previously on Saturdays and not double-checking, Hanna would not have known sufficiently *p* (that the bank would be open on Saturday) to act on it, to act as if she knew *p*. The sufficiency of knowledge in this case is clearly affected, though, by the fact that if Hanna did not make the transfer that weekend, her grandmother's life-preserving surgery would not have been able to take place. After checking, though, Hanna would have been rational in acting as if *p*, and we could say that at that point, however, much of her knowledge or justification may have fallen short of absolute certainty (e.g., the bank could blow up early Saturday morning) that she knew *p* or was justified in believing *p*. One knows or is justified in believing that *p*, if it is rational to act as if *p*. Furthermore, Rizzieri notes that the conditions under which Hanna, or anyone for that matter, would be negligent or irrational depends on what one should or could be aware of, with reference to the pragmatic situations facing them, with their different stakes. The higher the stakes, the higher the bar of justification.

Moreover, insofar as Rizzieri's argument concentrates on the evidence one ought to have and its strength in order to act responsibly, that is, without negligence, Rizzieri's account represents an epistemological internalism. Within such a responsible internalism, it is more suitable to speak of the justification for one's beliefs than knowing. To illustrate how the justification involved in responsible internalism works, Rizzieri (2013) points out how a doctor who takes account of all the evidence available, all that she should be aware of, both to diagnose a client's malady and prescribe the appropriate medication, is justified and acts responsibly. This would continue to be the case, even should the client in the end die because of properties present in the medication, unknown to pharmacological science at the time of her prescriptions and discoverable only later—properties that the doctor could not have possibly known about.

Rizzieri (2013) then applies his theory to religious belief and justification by considering the case of Tony, a believing Christian who has a strong evidential basis (but short of certain knowledge) for *J*, that Jesus rose from the dead. His belief in *J* is not risky since his psychology and behavior would be better off believing in the resurrection, even if, unbeknownst to him, that belief might be false. The stakes are not high and the justification bar is low. However, this all changes for Tony, when it comes to justification or knowledge regarding not-*J*. The psychological suffering and loss of hope that would result for Tony if he knew that not-*J* would be immense and since the stakes here of acting as if not-*J* are

quite high, the level of justification for not-*J* is raised correlatively. In contrast, an atheist might think that the stakes are high to believe that *J*, since the atheist's life might have to be considerably altered if *J* is known and so for the atheist, the bar for any justification of *J* would be high.

Up to this point, Rizzieri's argument could be taken to center on knowledge relative to specific contexts, in which higher stakes elevate the bar of justification needed for *p* if one is to allow *p* to guide one's practical action—in contrast to another setting for *p* in which the stakes and the correlative bar of justification are lower. Rizzieri also raises the question about how this *p*, sufficiently justified to come to terms with a new context in which the stakes are higher, would fare vis-à-vis other kinds of knowledge and justified propositions such as those of the natural sciences, particularly if one's *p* seems justified with respect to religious questions such as *J* or not-*J*. To begin this discussion, Rizzieri (2013, p. 48) acknowledges that there is no certain knowledge on either side of the religious belief or unbelief question, and so, for the religious believer, he focuses on the idea that knowledge of God's existence should be expressed through the language of "hope", following the views of Jeff Jordan (2006). Rizzieri (2013) asserts that one can neither hope in a religious/spiritual sense for what one knows to be false nor hope for what one knows will certainly obtain. Thus, regarding the former and retrieving the earlier discussion, the stakes are so high for the believer that she would need a high level of justification to assent to not-*J* (that Jesus did not rise from the dead). However, if one's justified beliefs convincingly demonstrated not-*J*, the only responsible thing to do would be to abandon one's religious/spiritual commitment. However, if one's belief in not-*J* has not been conclusively demonstrated, the religious believer could still hope in *J* (that Jesus rose from the dead), but in that case, one would not know whether the object of one's hope would be obtained. In spite of this fact, Rizzieri (2013, pp. 3, 48) conceives that one might nevertheless achieve a level of justification that is not sufficient for a settled "outright belief" that *J*, but that still might suffice to render *J* probable, adequate epistemically for one to maintain one's commitment to spiritual/religious experience. Rizzieri suggests the parallel example of a widow who would hope that her missing husband is alive and search for him, even though there is strong evidence that he may not be alive and even if she does not know for sure that he is alive. However, if she knew that he was deceased, then she could not hope at all. It would make sense, Rizzieri (2013, p. 52) comments, for her to say "I know that he is probably dead, but I hope he is not", as opposed to saying "I know that he is dead, but hope he is not". This discussion on hope suggests that one's belief that *J* need not be free of doubts and uncertainties. Keith de Rose marks out a similar in-between field when it comes to knowledge of God's existence when he observes that we often engage in an inauthentic pretense of claiming to know things we merely accept to be the case. Consequently, he proposes an alternative form of religious belief that represents a kind of agnosticism, that of those who take themselves not to know, those agnostics, who "even when engaging in the pretense of knowing things they merely accept as being the case, won't talk as if they know them" (DeRose 2018, pp. 300–1).

Despite religious belief falling short of "outright belief", Rizzieri (2013, pp. 80–107) claims that his internalist position is more rigorous than Alvin Plantinga's reformed epistemology. Plantinga, conceiving "warranted belief" (Plantinga 1993, pp. 46–47) as taking place when cognitive faculties function properly, that is, as they are supposed to, describes religious beliefs (e.g., about God's existence) as basic beliefs (not dependent on other beliefs). Such beliefs are effected through the support of an in-born *sensus divinitatus*, but they also, because of sin, depend on the internal instigation of the Holy Spirit. Given the assistance of this divine efficacy, one's burden of responsibility in the face of counter-evidence is to "do one's best" (Rizzieri 2013, p. 101), that is, pay sufficient attention to such counter-evidence, which, if it is found unconvincing, requires no further effort. This "duty-blameless" (Rizzieri 2013, pp. 81, 95) approach to justification is weaker than Rizzieri's attention to the important internal rationality requirement on knowledge, which would call upon one to abandon religious belief if it was disproven and to seek to articulate the

level of justification possible for religious belief in relation to other types of “knowledge” and which Rizzieri (2013, p. 102) calls a “duty-fulfillment” notion. Rizzieri believes that Plantinga, as a result of his more relaxed standards, downplays evidential arguments against God’s existence because of the problem of evil and even could end up justifying negligent actions.

Reiterating the internalist position that one could be wrong even though not negligent insofar as one thoroughly assesses the evidence that one could be held responsible for knowing, Rizzieri (2013, p. 125) responds to objections that his internalist view could justify clairvoyance as a method for obtaining truth or a “subjective perspective” stance that might justify a belief that ends up true, but only by accident. Rizzieri insists that such objections neglect the fact that internal responsibility requires that one’s process of belief formation relies on virtues (even if an ordinary subject cannot articulate them all). Furthermore, an internally responsible subject would know that reliance on clairvoyance as a method of belief formation would be irresponsible and that to endorse a method that would arrive at truth only accidentally, would in effect permit one to arrive at action-guiding beliefs that could be charged with negligence. Instead, one’s process of belief-formation must have a track record of reliability over time. In other words, internalism heads off many of the objections that externalism raises against it.

In the end, for Rizzieri, pragmatic encroachment involves considering how the degree of evidence for believing p , namely that God exists, is calibrated with reference to p ’s being a reason for acting, that of committing oneself to God in a religious relationship. For Rizzieri, the evidence for God’s existence is either counterbalanced or inscrutable, and the value of a commitment to God implies that that one can hope in God’s existence even if one is justified in believing in God’s existence in a way that falls short of “outright belief”, that is, a completely sufficient knowing of that belief. That is, one does not know that God does exist, which Rizzieri had admitted earlier, and one does not know that God does not exist (and we recall that for a believer, the stakes have to be high and therefore the bar of justification is high for showing that God does not exist). Rather, hope is more vulnerable than outright belief, but it embraces the internalist norm of providing a justification of p for which one can be held responsible, in contrast to knowledge that p , however much such knowledge might be an ideal for the guidance of an action.

As a final consideration of how one’s religious belief p might be brought into relationship with broader notions of “knowledge” (as opposed to considering specific contexts in which higher stakes affect the bar of justification), Rizzieri (2013) shows the relevance of his perspective to the thought of William James. Because William James, as a pragmatist, thought belief entailed willingness to act and perhaps because he was responding to Clifford, who held that one could only be morally justified in acting as if p only if one had adequate, knowledge-level evidence that p , James found it difficult to decouple the action (e.g., dedicating oneself to God) from one’s epistemic position on p (God exists). James held that the choice between believing that God exists or does not exist is forced, that is, for him, to fail to believe p (have knowledge that God exists) would be equivalent to believing not- p (that God did not exist). The latter, of course, would have undermined religious belief completely. Likewise, one could not fully dedicate oneself to God as an action unless one knew that God exists. The idea of a hope based on an internalist justification of p instead of “outright belief” that p , given the religious values at stake, was simply not available to James. Instead, Rizzieri (2013, p. 153) proposes, following Bishop (2007), that belief that p is not an “all-or-nothing affair”, not a forced option. One can fully dedicate oneself to a course of action on the basis of a partial belief (Rizzieri 2013, p. 151).

2. Knowing in Contexts: Relevances, Bracketing, and Temporality

Rizzieri (2013) criticizes the intellectual contextualism of Keith DeRose and Stewart Cohen insofar as it fails to see the relationship between knowledge, assertion, and practical reasoning; holds that agents can instantiate knowledge relationships that serve no purpose; and overlooks how knowledge relations that p provide epistemic support that match the

different levels necessary for rendering a variety of activities practically rational in various settings. Rizzieri's pragmatic encroachment demonstrates the intertwining of knowledge, assertions (that p), and practical rationality, and it does so by showing how practical stakes interact with and affect the bar of justification for propositions that will guide action. One can illustrate the place of pragmatic encroachment (religious and non-religious) and the interweaving of valuative and epistemic concerns that Rizzieri argues for, if one not only lays out side-by-side pragmatic concerns and epistemic accounts of justification, each interacting with each other, but also sees that these different strands are entwined with each other as strata within a single, complex (vertically oriented) action. To envision this possibility, it is worthwhile to turn to the theory of action developed by Alfred Schutz.

In Schutz's theory of action (Schutz 1967), one devises in reflection beforehand an in-order-to project, which one imagines in future perfect tense, that is, what will have resulted after one takes all the steps including all the sub-actions nested within and making up the process leading to the project's realization. The ultimate goal of an action, its purpose, the in-order-to motive of an actor, functions as the guiding interest or "relevance" for the sake of which all the relevances and purposes for the sake of which the sub-actions are undertaken are themselves subordinated. Hence, Hanna's ultimate motive might be to ensure that her grandmother receive her life-saving surgery and a sub-goal en route to achieving that purpose would be seeing to it that a money transfer could be effected by Saturday and to achieve that goal, one would need to have knowledge of a certain strength whether the bank would be open Saturday so that the transfer could be made. To achieve that knowledge, Hanna could not rely simply on her memory of past Saturday bank activity, but would need to double-check. In other words, a series of sub-projects and the sub-actions taken to realize them need to be executed so that the final goal, the grandmother's surgery, can materialize. All of these components can be seen as constitutive of a single, intricate action. Were Hanna to adopt a different ultimate goal such as playing golf on Saturday instead of making the transfer, or were she to allow at a lower level of the single action her unexamined memory to guide her to going to the bank on Saturday (without double checking), she could be criticized, from either a common sense or theoretical level, for having a morally improper ranking of relevances in her choice of actions or for being morally negligent in establishing the belief (about the post office being open Saturday) that should have guided her action at that lower-level of the action sequence, leading to her final goal.

Similarly, in the religious/spiritual version of encroachment, the ultimate goal of one's action might be to maintain a spiritual relationship with God but to achieve that actional goal, one would have to establish (justify to some degree) some belief/proposition that would be able to "guide" the action (parallel to Hanna's determining that post-office would be open on Saturday). In the religious case, one can imagine even a reflective common sense actor, who might have unreflectively undertaken a religious commitment, at some point coming to consider what kinds of beliefs ought to be in place as a condition for the action of committing oneself to God. Rizzieri (2013) is clear that even normal adults are capable of recognizing without full-fledged philosophical, discursive analyses what propositions might be needed, or what truths they ought not to obtain if they are to responsibly pursue certain goals. Hence, it could definitively be shown that God does not exist, for example, one could not consistently commit one's life to God (and hence, as mentioned, given these high stakes, the bar of justification for the non-existence of God would be high). Supposing that common-sense, reflective believers are convinced that there is no definitive proof that God does not exist, they might then go further to consider how much justification, in some way and to some degree, would be needed for them to responsibly engage in a relationship with God, just as Hanna recognized that in order to ensure her grandmother's surgery, she would need more evidence about whether the bank would be open on Saturday than her vague recollection that it had been open on previous Saturdays. The proposition that would guide this action of relating to God would have to do with whether God exists and the degree of justification that one would have for that p . Of course, one could hold the action-

guiding goal of making possible the surgery or having the relationship with God without engaging in the process of justifying to a degree p (“The post office is open on Saturday” or “God exists”), but in such cases, a common-sense actor would be refusing to seriously come to terms with the proposition or belief that it is necessary to guide the action one has undertaken or is about to undertake. In some sense, the project of considering, weighing, and deciding what kinds of grounds there are for the proposition guiding one’s ultimate action can be seen as a sub-project en route to that final action (e.g., committing oneself to God) and a subsidiary component of that entire action, just as Hanna’s investigation about whether the bank would be open on Saturday led toward her grandmother’s surgery.

Rizzieri’s book represents, from a sophisticated perspective, an effort to clarify philosophically what on a common sense level the epistemic/pragmatic processes that Hanna and the common-sense believer seem to be carrying out. For Rizzieri, the question is whether or not an actor would be morally negligent and epistemically irresponsible with regard to the demands of an accountable internalism. Placing Rizzieri’s account in a theory of action, one can understand that Hanna’s double checking and the examination of the evidence for the existence of God constitute sub-projects focused on the p , that is, to guide an action that itself aims at some ultimate goal (guaranteeing surgery or committing oneself spiritually/religiously). Such ultimate goals, toward which our actions are directed, constitute stakes that in turn prescribe the bar of justification for propositions that will guide those actions and the process of working out one’s justifications are sub-projects aimed at the ultimate goals. For Rizzieri, one could pursue with sufficient justification the high-stakes goal of committing oneself to God as long as one does not have knowledge that God does not exist, and even if one lacks outright belief in God’s existence. Rizzieri illuminates what must go on in the sub-project en route to the ultimate goal of committing oneself to God. It is a constituent part of this multi-layered action, just as Hanna’s double-checking is a partial act toward the ultimate action of guaranteeing her grandmother’s surgery. It is difficult to disentangle knowledge, assertions, and practical rationality insofar as they function together as constituents of a single multi-stratified action.

Putting Rizzieri’s pragmatic encroachment theory to work within a theory of action highlights the seeming inextricable implication of epistemic concerns within projects of practical action and demonstrates what he claims that DeRose (2009) cannot explain: “a plethora of knowledge relations that p which . . . entail levels that are needed to render a variety of activities practically rational at various contexts” (Rizzieri 2013, p. 31, italics Rizzieri’s). According to Rizzieri, DeRose would hold that when Hanna relies on her remembered knowledge (without double-checking), she “knows”, but in a different way and degree than what she would know when she double checks, but Rizzieri construes Hanna’s situation differently. For Rizzieri, once one takes into account all of the pragmatic conditions Hanna faces, especially her grandmother needing surgery, anyone who would base their justification of p (the post office will be open Saturday) on the basis of unsubstantiated memories would not have knowledge, but would only have it after double-checking. In DeRose’s view, Hanna’s first knowing, based only on past memories, would be knowledge, but it just could not be put to work in a certain context. As a result, Rizzieri (2013, p. 30) thinks that DeRose interprets that first knowledge as an epistemic proceeding, shielded against or totally detached from any intrusion from a pragmatic context, and such an interpretation would lead to the improbable conclusion that “an agent can instantiate knowledge relations that do not serve any purpose”.

While Rizzieri is right insofar as he directs his philosophical attention to elucidate the intricate relationships between knowledge, assertion, and practical reasoning, it remains important to see how justification processes work in tandem with pragmatically shaped contexts and yet how they also involve, to a degree, a detachment, as DeRose (2009) suggests, from the pragmatic concerns impinging on one’s justification. For instance, rather than seeing Hanna’s first knowing on the basis of memories as “detached” from any pragmatic purposes, not serving any purpose, free-floating until put to work or inserted into a certain context, one could imagine Hanna’s knowing as continually tied to, but

not reducible to pragmatic interests. In the second case, in the face of pragmatic pressure insofar as her grandmother required surgery and depended on the bank transfer occurring that same weekend, Hanna, at first, might have supposed that she, in accordance with her memories, could easily go to the bank on Saturday and make the transfer. However, since her considerations at this point would be at the service of securing the surgery for her grandmother and not separated from this pragmatic goal, she might have commenced to reflect on whether those memories provided sufficient evidence that the bank would be open on Saturday (en route to the long-range goal of making possible her grandmother's surgery). In this reflective moment, Hanna, perhaps from the past experience of the inadequacy of her memories or the flexibility with which banks adjust their schedules, might have questioned whether her memories could have supported the proposition *p*, that the bank would be open on Saturday, and whether those memories could have guided her action of going to the bank to secure the transfer for her grandmother. In a sense, for a moment, Hanna would have stepped back or detached from the project of going to the bank on Saturday and temporarily bracketed the pursuit of that goal in order to undertake a new goal (on the way to the ultimate goal), in fact, a new sub-project: namely, examining how reliable her memories would have been; whether they would have provided sufficient evidence for *p*, the bank being open; what other evidences might have been available (e.g., calling the bank, consulting its website); and how reliable these evidences might have been relative to each other and her memories. In brief, a theoretical interlude would have opened up within the pragmatic project aimed at making the bank-transfer on Saturday. This kind of interlude, connected with pragmatic interests and yet undertaken at a momentary reflective distance from those interests, represents a pattern that might even have been at work in the case in which the grandmother's surgery was not at stake, insofar as Hanna, planning to make use of the bank on Saturday (with no pressing issues at stake other than not wanting to make the effort to travel to the bank only to find it closed), might have briefly entertained a question of how reliable her memories were or how consistently the bank maintained its schedule of opening hours. Even here, a reflective moment might have arisen, needing epistemic adjudication, but still tied to practical purposes.

In the literature on pragmatic encroachment, one can find opinions about the concept eddying about two extreme poles. On one hand, there are those that would argue that the pragmatic context reaches in and actually affects the validity of a claim. Hence, Stanley (2005, p. 124) claims that "all normal epistemic notions are interest relative" and that "evidence is interest relative". Rizzieri appears to concur with this viewpoint when he criticizes DeRose for claiming that if Hanna were to rely on her memories to substantiate the bank being open on Saturday in the situation where the practical interest of making possible her grandmother's surgery was preeminent, she would have knowledge that just did not fit in that context; for Rizzieri, she would not have knowledge at all. Here, it would be as if the pragmatic concern enters into the epistemic process itself and disqualifies using memories as evidence for the proposition about the bank being open, as if a proposition supported by such evidence would have no validity at all. One would, however, give less force to the idea of such pragmatic interests as able to completely undermine the epistemic claims to validity, if one granted that the evidence from memories provided *some* evidence (albeit weaker than double-checking the bank's website) that would make possible *some* knowledge, although of a lesser strength than double-checking would. The point is that checking the website would provide stronger evidence for *p* than vague memories, and this epistemic determination, albeit brought to the fore by the change in stakes, can be resolved by considering the epistemic relation between evidence and the claim the evidence is taken to support. On the other hand, the alternative would be to see the epistemic processes working in a vacuum, apart from any pragmatic conditioning, functioning as "knowledge relations that do not serve any purpose"—the view that DeRose seems to be taking, according to Rizzieri.

In fact, though a variety of positions see the value of conjoining pragmatic interests such as forming the conditions, within which epistemic claims to validity and their pro-

cesses emerge follow their own autonomous trajectory, these determinations of validity can support the attainment of higher level pragmatic purposes, as Schutz's idea of the layers of action indicates. Moss (2018), for instance, seeks not to eradicate pragmatic encroachment but to limit it from dictating the epistemic facts. Fantl and McGrath (2005), whose work was pivotal in the development of the notion of pragmatic encroachment, insist that shifts in pragmatic concerns do not undermine knowledge (as if one would not know what one knew at one point when the concerns shift), but rather the question becomes one in which evidentially established claims can be better relied on to achieve the pragmatic purpose in question (e.g., one could better rely in the case of one's grandmother's needing crucial surgery on a p established on the evidence turned up by double-checking as opposed to that based on vague memories). Sanford Goldberg (2005, p. 277) differentiates how stakes can affect "whether one's epistemic perspective on a given perspective is practically adequate" without the stakes or practical adequacy being relevant "to determinations of whether the subject knows". Pascal Engel (2009) separates the justification that one might have for a proposition at a particular time from the higher-level justification that one would need if the stakes were higher (e.g., the difference between relying on vague memories so one will not make an unnecessary trip to the bank versus the justification needed if the grandmother's life-saving surgery was in the balance). The evidence on one level enables one to decide whether to believe p or not- p , but on a higher level, the question includes inquiring about what to do with that earlier established p . To say that the greater one's interests are the stronger one's evidence must be is not to say that "pragmatic factors enter or determine the amount of our justification, but just that pragmatic factors impinge upon our need of more evidence" (Engel 2009, p. 198). While not denying the importance of the pragmatic relevances whose significance Fantl and McGrath highlighted, Engel defends a place for evidentialism.

Schutz, whose theory of action we have shown to accommodate the interwovenness of knowledge, assertions, and practical rationality that Rizzieri and other encroachers desire, also provides a way for preserving the evidentialism that Engel and other authors believe to work in tandem with pragmatic preoccupations. In *On Multiple Realities*, Schutz (1962b) develops the finite province of the meaning of scientific theory, which involves separating oneself from pragmatic everyday life and taking up an overarching attitude with a distinctive self-concept and stance toward one's body, temporality, way of engaging others, and, above all, an overriding purpose or relevance which Schutz (1962b, p. 245) depicts in this way: "Scientific theorizing—and in the following terms theory, theorizing, etc. shall be exclusively used in this restricted sense—does not serve any practical purpose. Its aim is not to master the world but to observe and possibly understand it". Schutz (1962c, p. 169), though, then argues that in the midst of executing pragmatic projects in the everyday world of working, we can "stop and think" and adopt a theoretical-contemplative approach, reviewing plans and projects before making up our mind. Insofar, as such reflection is undertaken for the sake of pragmatic goals, it is not itself an example of the province of the meaning of scientific theory, but rather an "'enclave' of theoretical contemplation within the world of working" (Schutz 1962b, p. 245). The paradigmatic cases of pragmatic encroachment, then, exemplify enclaves. When Hanna is thinking of going to the bank on Saturday, merely to make a deposit and to avoid inconvenience, she is willing to follow the guidance of p , that the bank will be open, but then she stops to think about whether the bank will be open and whether the evidence she has, her past memories, support p . Although establishing p can be conceived as a sub-action en route to the final goal of carrying out her banking business, Hanna achieves the goal of establishing p by weighing and considering critical evidence to see if it gives epistemic grounds for p . The ultimate relevance of this sub-act, this reflective interlude, this interruptive enclave, is not itself practical (thought it serves a longer-range practical purpose), but epistemic, and it examines whether the evidence supports the truth that the bank will be open on Saturday. Should a new pragmatic relevance surface, namely that Hanna's grandmother needs life-saving surgery to be paid for immediately, Hanna would have to temporally enter a theoretical enclave no less

epistemically oriented (but also for the sake of this new pragmatic relevance) and she would come to see that stronger evidence could and should be given for p if she checked the bank website beyond relying on her memories. One reason why these epistemic enclave moments are not recognized in their distinctiveness, but are assimilated with the longer-range pragmatic relevance, ultimately governing the multi-layered action they serve, is that we regularly move rapidly through a series of experiences in which different relevances predominate and our attitudinal stance undergoes continual and subtle modifications. As Schutz (1962b, p. 258) observes, “my mind may pass during one single day or even hour through the whole gamut of tensions of consciousness, now living in working acts, now passing through a daydream, now plunging into the pictorial world of a painting, now indulging in theoretical contemplation”. Nevertheless, by combining Schutz’s theory of action with his account of enclaves, one is able to include both the pragmatic contexts of conditions within which knowledge arises, as Rizzieri, Stanley, and other encroachers emphasize, and the “evidentialism”, or “purism” in Engel’s view (Engel 2009), intrinsic to knowledge-establishment and upheld by De Rose, Fantl and McGrath, Moss, Goldberg, and Engel.

One final comment on temporality. It is certainly the case that one’s memories could be taken to constitute sufficient evidence for p when all that is stake is whether Hanna would be inconvenienced by going to the bank on Saturday only to find it closed. With the subsequent emergence of a new relevance, needing to ensure the grandmother’s surgery, Hanna could see that the evidence from memories would be insufficient and second checking would be needed. When comparing these cases, one might be tempted to say that one really did not even know p in the first case, as Rizzieri suggests. However, this conflation of the two cases neglects that one would have had evidence for p , attaining a level and degree of knowledge, limited, but also appropriate for the pragmatic purpose of simply avoiding inconvenience. Schutz himself identifies and opposes an analogous conflation when economists, equipped with better information, look back on an earlier economic decision adequately based on the information at hand at that time and then (mistakenly) criticize that earlier decision as mistaken. Such transposing of oneself into a different or earlier context while overlooking the unique conditions (in Hanna’s case, perhaps the information requisite for avoiding inconvenience) prevailing in each context represents the fallacy of *hysteron proteron* (Schutz 1996).

3. Transcendental Phenomenology, Regional Ontologies, and Spiritual/Religious Experience

While the previous section discussed how the justification of p takes place with regard to different contexts shaped by pragmatic concerns that circumscribe but do not undermine evidentialism, a further question rises after one has provided evidence for some p , say in questions of religious knowledge. How does this type of knowledge and evidence in the domain of religious experience relate to other domains of knowledge such as that of the natural sciences? How do the metaphysical or epistemological arguments supporting a religious p differ from the empirical evidence utilized to validate claims in the natural sciences? Rizzieri seems fully aware of this problem insofar as he admits that religious knowledge is a matter of “hope”, falling short of “outright belief”. Husserl addressed these questions of types of knowledge relative to different objects within his theory of regional ontologies as a part of his transcendental phenomenology. One can imagine Rizzieri, given his focus on the interconnection between knowledge, assertion, and practical reason in which stakes considerations play a significant role, being reluctant to engage this higher level of epistemological analyses that can seem quite remote from the pragmatic considerations they have left behind. Furthermore, one can imagine Rizzieri being critical of Schutz when he makes the statement, anticipating perhaps the transcendental level of philosophy, that the finite province of theorizing does not serve any practical purpose.

However, one can find traces of transcendental phenomenology or Schutz’s theory of how the non-pragmatic finite province of theory works in Rizzieri’s own book *Pragmatic Encroachment, Religious Belief, and Practice* itself. For example, in the first chapter, Rizzieri

addresses the general structure of pragmatic encroachment, how it can be that practical concerns of varied types can interact with varied degrees of epistemic justification, that is, with high stakes raising the bar for justification, which Rizzieri explains through an internalism that depends on a knower taking the epistemic responsibility for the kinds of justifications that could be expected of any rational agent. To lead his reader to philosophical insights into such pragmatic encroachment, Rizzieri presents a variety of examples such as Hanna's grandmother's need for life-surgery shaping the standards of knowledge that Hanna must meet. After limiting the general features of pragmatic encroachment that encompasses a wide variety of concrete examples and presenting the generalized internalist epistemological perspective that he will make use of—from Chapter 2 onward, Rizzieri moves to a concrete level, an enclave, if you will, in which he provides a thorough elucidation of how one committed to a religious relationship with God might think about certain propositions that would guide (or undermine) that action of relating to God and which would require certain degrees of justification that Rizzieri distinguishes (e.g., no knowledge that God does not exist, hope that falls short of outright belief). The kind of reasoning that Rizzieri produces in his general discussion of pragmatic encroachment in Chapter 1, internalism, and the propositions that guide actions and require degrees of justification, function as high-level theorizing, not clearly or directly serving practical purposes. Such reasoning differs markedly from the very specific kind of reasoning that is exemplified in enclaves such as when Hanna tries to figure out what degree of justification she needs for her belief that the bank will be open when her grandmother's life hangs in the balance or when the religiously committed person weighs a religious commitment by evaluating not-*J*. In these concrete cases, potential knowers are immersed in spelling out and pondering knowledge relations that serve a definite purpose; the applied philosopher—a role Rizzieri takes up from Chapter 2 onward in his book—joins them in their enclave, making explicit the factors and questions that they must ask and answer and that they might already be implicitly aware of, but are unable to articulate as lucidly as the trained philosopher.

However, in effect, Rizzieri, in Chapter 1, engages in the kind of scientific theorizing of the type of a Schutzian province of meaning that delineates what pragmatic encroachment is in general, but it is not itself an attempt to address the questions posed within enclaves by the kind of concrete pragmatic encroachment, the religious, that Rizzieri later mentions and analyzes. High-level theorizing itself is not necessarily an example of what it theorizes about; a theory about pragmatic encroachment is not necessarily itself an example of pragmatic encroachment. In the same way, Schutz's account of the theoretical province of meaning in *On Multiple Realities*, strives to get a sense of what is generally involved in any theory at all, despite the wide varieties of examples of theories in which it would be instantiated. It is not one of those particular theories seeking to observe and possibly understand the world, but stands above all those theories that do so and seeks to articulate their inner structure. Such a theory could be said to serve no pragmatic purpose, but instead it presents a theory of theories about providing an accurate or true description of theories to "get it right" about what they are and how they work. In the same way, Rizzieri's book seeks to get it right about what pragmatic encroachment is in general and how epistemology strives to adapt and come to terms with it. On the meta-level of philosophy, there is a place, then, for knowledge that seems not to serve any practical purpose and that can actually depict how knowledge can serve the practical purposes that it is engaged with and that affect it and how it can do so responsibly. The enclave of theory within religious experience that Rizzieri works out from Chapter 2 onward *does* serve pragmatic purposes, showing how one can responsibly live a religiously committed life that depends upon the guiding propositions it has adequately justified.

Even though the enclave of theorizing, directed toward practical purposes and actions, differs from higher level theorizing about theorizing, just as Rizzieri's Chapters 2–6 differ from the more general Chapter 1, the two levels nevertheless share normative epistemic commonalities derivative from the internalism that underlies Rizzieri's book. That is,

enclave theorists ought to think in the right way for concrete practical situations, to strive to be accurate about the details considered, to refrain from distortive biases, and to comport themselves with epistemic responsibility, in brief, to strive “to get it right”. Therefore, Hanna, realizing that her fallible memory may not be sufficient to determine if the bank is open on Saturday with her grandmother’s surgery in the offing, will double check, but this will require that she perhaps check a website with the bank’s hours and make sure that that website is up-to-date. Similarly, religious believers examining arguments supporting the belief that God does not exist ought to first aspire to understand accurately what the arguments are, perhaps in the interest of fairness, setting in abeyance for a while their religious leanings, trying, for instance, to understand correctly Hume’s views on miracles first, before assuming a critical stance that will be on the lookout only for omissions, misinterpretations, or imbalanced emphases. However, also in Chapter 1, one proceeds with epistemic responsibility, trying to understand and carefully and fairly evaluate Rizzieri’s point of view, his idea of pragmatic encroachment, his ideas about truth and practical rationality, and how they interrelate. In a sense, one is implementing internalist responsibility about Rizzieri’s quite generalized account of internalist responsibility, trying to understand it accurately, inquiring if correct or deficient in any way, etc.—as is happening throughout this paper. Similarly, one undertakes a theoretical attitude when considering Schutz’s idea of a finite province of the meaning of theory, striving to understand it and assess it fairly, trying to get oneself right about it.

Rizzieri might protest that even what he writes about in Chapter 1 is not theorizing detachedly from practical purposes and action, since the account of pragmatic encroachment ultimately makes possible a responsible commitment in relationship with God, as one sees by the time he reaches Chapter 6. Such a point need not be denied, but the distance from pragmatic concerns that one experiences in Chapter 1 (one does not know in Chapter 1 where things will end up by Chapter 6) makes it particularly visible that there is an epistemic level where questions of evidence and validity are prominent and require assessment to a degree independently of the pragmatic goals, as a relatively independent sub-act, en route to a more comprehensive act (making that responsible commitment). As Moss comments, the point is not to eradicate pragmatic encroachment but to locate its legitimate place with regard to evidentialism.

In addition to Rizzieri’s own book exemplifying on a meta (transcendental?)-plane the relationship and difference between pragmatic interests and evidentialism, he also engages in a semi-transcendental project when he recognizes that after justifying p relative to some pragmatic context, there is a further question of how one might situate claims like p , say in a religious setting, to other types of claims such as those in different sciences. Throughout the book, Rizzieri shows sensitivity to different contexts that require different kinds of evidence. Thus, for Hanna in the pragmatic setting where her grandmother’s life is at stake, a kind of “empirical” double-checking (e.g., of the bank’s website) would provide her belief that she could make the money transfer on Saturday with satisfactory justification. Similarly, religious believers who need the belief in God’s existence to guide the act of committing themselves must have sufficient justification to reject the proposition that God does not exist and sufficient justification for propositions about God’s existence, though the evidence for these claims would fall short of “outright belief” and therefore would presumably differ from the empirical evidence one might find in perceiving an object or on a website or by calling the bank. The propositions necessary to guide practical action can concern empirical objects (e.g., the bank being open) or objects not sensibly given such as God. There are different types and degrees of justification (which internalism accommodates) possible for such propositions and for the knowledge of their diverse objects. In this, Rizzieri converges with the thought of Edmund Husserl (1960, pp. 63–64) who argues on an ultimate transcendental philosophical plane that there are diverse regional ontologies that depend on eidetically described objects that found “sciences” in which there are different types and degrees of evidence that can be modalized as “possible, probable, or doubtful” (Husserl 1960, p. 58). For instance, empirical evidence would be used to validate

the claims of the natural sciences, whose founding objects are material things, but in the case of the social sciences, whose founding object is the social world and whose scientists can interpret others who are interpreting their world through Weberian type-constructs, these constructs can be validated by the community of social sciences but not by narrow empirical, sense observations typical of the empirical sciences (Schutz 1962a, pp. 51–52). When considering the object of religious belief, empirical evidence will not be pertinent, but other kinds of evidence would be necessary, and Husserl (2014) even suggests that religious experience can be used as evidence for theological claims. The Husserlian view of regional ontologies, another aspect of his transcendental phenomenology, makes explicit a framework that Rizzieri implicitly seems to presuppose when he observes that religious propositions, justifiable within the ambit specified by pragmatic encroachment, could be justified in comparison and in contrast with other domains of knowledge, even though the religious justifications may differ from and fall short of “outright beliefs” that might be found in those other domains.

In some ways, Rizzieri also converges with Husserl’s thought in aspects of his internalism. Justification for Rizzieri (2013) is explained in internalist terms insofar as he focuses on the perspective internal to the knower, who is justified in believing that p if she has fulfilled all of the duties that pertain to obtaining evidence for the truth of p . Clearly, as Fumerton (1995, p. 13) remarks, internalism by inquiring what a person was justified in believing recognizes “the relevance of the epistemic perspective of the agent”. In a similar way, Husserl insists on including the internal point of view of the subject, who undertakes all justification by seeing, for instance, whether the evidence given to the subject at hand fulfills or thwarts a proposition, which the subject signitively intended previously. The subject is the one who must responsibly bring into synthesis a proposition, its evidence, and the decision of whether the evidence supports the proposition or not (Husserl 2001). This notion of intentionality with a subject oriented toward an object that presents itself to acts of conscious is basic for Husserl and hence every external object appears and every justification takes place in relation to the intentional acts of a subject (and so it is not coincidental that this citation comes from the *Cartesian Meditations* of Husserl, which are modeled on the philosopher who made subjectivity central in the knowing process).

Whatever exists for a man like me and is accepted by him, exists for him and is accepted in his own conscious life, which, in all consciousness of a world and in all scientific doing, keeps to itself. All my distinguishing between genuine and deceptive experience and between being and illusion in experience goes on within the sphere itself of my consciousness . . . Every ground, every showing of truth and being, goes on wholly within myself; and its result is a characteristic in the cogitatum of my cogito (Husserl 1960, p. 82)

One can see how Husserl’s understanding that everything presenting itself to us in the world and processes of “evidencing” happen with reference to intentional conscious acts would result in a subject who, like Rizzieri’s subject, when faced with pressing pragmatic concerns, would exercise responsibility by trying to find whether evidence will support the propositions that are to guide one’s practical action, considering what evidence is needed, how strong it is or needs to be, whether the processes of establishing the evidence are reliable, etc. However, because of the bipolarity of the foundational character of intentionality for Husserl, it can be said that the object, not reducible to the subjective acts through which it is given, is more clearly seen to act on the subject, soliciting the subject’s attention (Husserl 1973), resisting manipulation, and exploding intentional anticipations. Husserl gives more of an “equal” status to the objective, noematic pole of experience that is not prominently to be found in Rizzieri. Of course, for Husserl, such soliciting, resisting, and exploding themselves are experienced within the field of consciousness of the subject.

In the picture that Rizzieri (2013) paints, the emphasis is on the subject assessing inputs from the external world rather than attending to the experience of being affected by it. Over and over again, Rizzieri points out that within the internalistic paradigm, one’s belief could be justified, even if one were wrong about the way the world is. Thus, a

doctor who took all the necessary steps to ensure knowledge-level justification that the needle she was using was safe could defend herself against being negligent if the needle turns out to spread infection. Or a doctor prescribing a medicine that all the available evidence indicates ought to have been prescribed would have acted justifiably even if later evidence, of which the doctor could not have known, emerges that this medicine ought not to have been administered. Furthermore, an agent inhabiting a Cartesian framework and not believing in an external world could be more perceptive about what presents itself (e.g., the number of speckles on a hen that presents itself) than a non-Cartesian—which implies for Rizzieri (2013, p. 116, my italics) that “Only the ability to reliably detect features of one’s experiences that *represent* the external world in a certain way is required”. Clearly, this representational framework differs from Husserl’s idea of phenomenological access to the world in which there is no intermediary representing the object, as the intentional act reaches its object directly, without an intermediary. Rizzieri (2013) further handles the standard objections raised against internalism such as that it might license relying on clairvoyance, project wishful thinking onto the world (a standard objection to religious belief, also, for instance), or getting at the truth merely by accident, as a matter of a hunch or lucky guess—as Bergmann (2006) observes. Rather than discuss how objects would offer resistance and serve as obstacles to such subjective projections onto the world, Rizzieri responds to critics such as Bergmann that one must rely on processes of belief formation that display reliability over time and that to establish justifications in any other way would be irresponsible. In a religious example, Rizzieri thinks that Plantinga’s trivialization of the internal rationality requirement and the need for self-critical justification of one’s beliefs could result in an uncritical Abraham actually killing his son simply because he has received an external command from God.

Perhaps Rizzieri might reply that his internalist processes of justification themselves have already taken account, as some level, of how objects are presented to us and act upon us. The Husserlian could reply to this reply by insisting that one must take as foundational in the first place a phenomenological account of the life-world that would describe and demonstrate exactly the kind of interaction that exists between conscious acts and noematic objects before one embarks on a theory or the kind of theoretical justification processes Rizzieri describes. If one did this, one would be less liable to de-emphasize the significant role that objects play in the bipolar structure of intentionality.

Of course, part of the epistemic suspicion of religious experience has to do with the fact that it seems to have broken loose from knowledge based upon the encounter with the world of sense and science in which empirical objects confront us, resist us, and compel us to be accountable to them. Rizzieri (2013, p. 43) himself alludes to this point when he observes how for Hume “purported miracles have such a horrendous fit with our background knowledge concerning the laws of nature”. No doubt this lack of empirical evidence for religious/spirituality claims explains why, as Rizzieri (2013) admits, we do not have outright belief that God exists or why William James thought that someone trying to avoid error might refrain from positing God’s existence. By retreating from the physical encounter with objects at the basis of science and other kinds of knowledge and focusing on internal processes of justification, Rizzieri’s internalist approach to religious belief might well confirm the empirically-minded in their suspicions that religious experience is nothing more than a psychological projection of a belief in God onto a world devoid of such non-observable entities, despite Rizzieri’s own insistence that clairvoyance and wishful thinking (often considered to be at the root of projectionism) are not reliable or responsible methods of belief formation.

It could be that one way to counter such an empiricist critique of religious experience would be to take seriously what goes on in the religious experience itself. Rizzieri, I have argued, labors with a theoretical enclave within the broader finite province of religious experience and his questions have to do with how one theoretically see one’s way clear to make a religious commitment, and so, in effect, he does not consider in itself religious experience (itself a distinctive entire province of meaning in the Schutzian paradigm). He

does, however, make remarks that suggest what he thinks of the religious experience: evaluating the rightness of religious actions includes asking whether they maximize total happiness; produce a rich, inner spiritual life; or enable one to live a psychologically healthful life (Rizzieri 2013). However, such an idea of religious experience might simply reinforce the skeptical position of the empirically minded toward it: one projects an idea of God in order to fulfill psychological needs.

What, though, if Rizzieri complemented his work with a fuller account of religious experience that could serve as evidence within the enclave of theory within the religious province of meaning, evidence correlated with and justifying propositions in the situation of pragmatic encroachment that the religious experience initiates and that heightens or lowers the bar of justification?

Scheler (2010) focused precisely on religious experience and developed an account that could supplement Rizzieri's stance. Scheler's lengthy essay, *Problems of Religion*, drawing for its entire structure on the intentional framework of act and object in the phenomenological tradition, objects to William James's description of religious experience, which, not unlike Rizzieri's, is built around a "downright utilitarian touchstone: the happy issues of convictions in practical life" (Scheler 2010, p. 292). Instead, Scheler carefully delineates the nature of the religious act, which differs from acts of wishing, seeking need-satisfaction, and desires, hence projecting a God out of one's own resources. Scheler insists that the religious act is distinctive from other psychological acts, and, in effect, it mobilizes these other acts such as imagination, affect, and other sub-intentionalities, under an orientation toward the supernatural. The religious act is essentially receptive, "disposed for and concerned with a possible reception" (Scheler 2010, p. 254), however, much spontaneity may play a role in it. In executing a religious act, one knows oneself to be dependent on the object of the act, God, who as a free person must freely bestow revelation, with the result that all knowledge of God comes from God. In fact, part of the uniqueness of the religious act is that it takes aim at the value region of the absolute, which only the infinite God can fill, and should one fill that absolute region with a finite object, one engages in a kind of idolatry that ultimately will frustrate and enslave oneself, at least until God disillusions one from this idol. Furthermore, given that God, as the absolute, occupies the highest value sphere, it is part of the law of valuing that the higher one ascends the value scale, the less power one has over the object one is directed toward, the more passive and receptive one becomes toward it. In Scheler's phenomenology of religious experience, then, God is active, intrusive, interruptive, free, resistant to human efforts to control, and loving before we even respond, and our role, to take up the religious act, is to be receptive to the action of God that we do not manage. Indeed, William Alston's comparison of religious experience to perception that impinges upon us can be seen to ally itself with Scheler's interpretation of religious experience (Alston 1991). Similarly, Barber (2020) sought to demonstrate that God interacts with us as a "consociate", in the sense that word has in the Schutzian depiction of the social world, engaging us face-to-face and immediately, taking initiatives, correcting or confirming our typifications of God, acting on us in ways similar to the way the object acts on the subject according to the Husserlian theory of intentionality. Rizzieri's theory of pragmatic encroachment could mine religious experience described in this way as another source of evidence, one encountered in the finite province of religious experience before one theorizes within the theoretical enclave that arises within that province and that can take up such experience into its justifying processes. There is no guarantee that this evidence will convince those disposed otherwise. However, surely this evidence would offer justification for what Rizzieri calls an act of "hope", as opposed to outright belief or knowing. Plantinga (2000, p. 500) seems to recognize this possibility in this quotation that Rizzieri (2013) cites, despite his admission that he is not exactly clear about what Plantinga means:

From the point of view of classical Christianity . . . this includes also the proper function of the *sensus divinitatis*. Someone in whom this process was functioning properly would have an intimate, detailed, vivid, and explicit knowledge of God; she would have an intense awareness of his presence, glory, goodness, power, perfection, wonderful attractiveness, and sweetness; and she would be as convinced of God's existence as her own.

4. Conclusions: Pragmatic Encroachment and Phenomenology

Rizzieri shows the role that pragmatic concerns can play in affecting the bar of the justification requisite for a proposition that can guide action in various particular domains of knowing (e.g., very practical domains such as whether and when to go to a bank or that of religious belief). A Schutzian theory of action with a strata of sub-actions leading to an ultimate final action and goal can support Rizzieri's wish that knowledge, assertions, and practical rationality function in concert. However, the Schutzian notion of enclaves, in which one puts into abeyance, temporarily, the pragmatic pressures to make space for a moment of epistemic evidentialism (which might in the end support longer-range practical goals), allows one to make use of pragmatic encroachment without subsuming and dissolving the epistemic search for evidence and justification that must proceed to a degree independently of pragmatic purposes. Finally, Rizzieri's own book demonstrates, on a semi-transcendental plane, the independence (and relatedness) of pragmatic encroachment and evidentialism. Furthermore, the propositions justified, which guide actions in specific actional domains, must venture into a broader field of knowledge and evidential systems such as those of the different sciences, and to distinguish regional ontologies as Husserl does, makes possible a variety of domains of rationality irreducible to each other. Finally, Rizzieri, for the justification of the propositions of religious belief, could profit from the noetic–noematic paradigm of bipolar intentionality in order to give an account of the action of the divine on oneself, as Max Scheler depicts the religious act, thereby resisting projectionist accounts of religious belief. Rizzieri's internalism cannot take sufficient account of the religious experience in which the revelation of God takes place from God and offsets the projectionist account of religious experience that internalism more easily falls prey to. Such a move would also enhance Rizzieri's ability to take religious experience as evidence for religious beliefs.

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Article

Heidegger's World: Re-Enchanting through Thingness

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Abstract: This study investigates how Martin Heidegger's notion of "the thing" (*Das Ding*) can help rescue modern disenchantment with regard to its root in the World, a concept developed from "being-in-the-world" presented in *Being and Time*, and later taken as a participant in the bilateral *polemos* illustrated in *die Gestalt* (signifying Being's strife to disclose itself against the Earth: self-concealing concealment). In Section 1, I analyze the occurrence of disenchantment by critically reviewing several thinkers' discussions of it, pointing out that "faciality"—which has structured the modern Western understanding of reality—is the cornerstone of ontotheology, as well as the collapse of it: disenchantment. In Section 2, to demonstrate how Heidegger's rediscovery of usefulness in a de-subjectified discourse of signification has challenged the positivistic view attached to "faciality", I examine Heidegger's idea of "readiness-to-hand," revealing the basic temporal-spatial units composing the "handiness" of *categorical* beings and its relation to *Dasein*, progressing thereon to the analysis of a thing-centered worldview of Heidegger's phenomenology. In Section 3, I demonstrate how this thing-centered worldview has the potential to form a preparative stage for re-enchantment of the World by uncovering the concealed *existentiality* within things, aligning with Heidegger's *polemos* in his philosophy of art.

Keywords: Heidegger; *Das Ding*; being-in-the-world; readiness-to-hand; disenchantment; existentiality

1. Disenchantment and Historical Change in the Conception of Reality

The concept of the modern world becoming "disenchanted", although increasingly controversial in recent years, has long been a view in the study of modernity dating back to the early 20th century. It was first introduced by Max Weber in his 1919 lecture "Science as a Vocation", where he discussed the issue of "intellectualization" and argued that the mission of modern scholarship—remaining impartial and detached from meaning judgments, using calculative methods, and producing calculable results—is the inevitable outcome of disenchantment. According to Weber, the fundamental unknowability of the mystical aspect of the universe, combined with the perceived effectiveness of rational analytical tools, has led to an era in which people no longer seek help from the sacred to improve their lives. In comparison to their ancestors, they tend to be less receptive to mysterious powers and spirits, which is due to the intellectualized recognition that, as an alternative to "technical means and calculation", magical thinking is not promising. In this way, disenchantment is not only occurring within the scientific realm, but it is also changing the way of thinking for all people in this age.

Principally, there are no mysterious incalculable forces that come into play, but rather that one can, in principle, master all things by calculation. This means that the world is disenchanted. One need no longer have recourse to magical means in order to master or implore the spirits, as did the savage, for whom such mysterious powers existed. Technical means and calculation perform the service. This, above all, is what intellectualization means. (Weber 1946, p. 139)

However, Max Weber, in his analysis of disenchantment, did not delve into the origins of this phenomenon. He merely acknowledged its occurrence without attempting to

understand how it arises ontologically. It is not clear if Weber was interested in exploring alternative possibilities to disenchantment or if he believed it to be an inescapable, irreversible reality. Instead, he focused on finding ways to cope with disenchantment as a *fait accompli*. Moreover, his explanation of the causal relationship between the loss of gods and the rise of science and technology entails a pragmatic perspective, as shown in the phrases “no longer have recourse”, “master or implore”, and “perform the service” quoted above. This suggests that he thought “technical means and calculation” replaced the “spirits” just because they effectively fulfilled the latter’s role of being employed to achieve practical purposes. In addition, Weber questioned the very foundation of “fundamental value” in both science and religion, arguing that even if practical purposes can be realized via science, the meaningfulness of science can by no means be confirmed since the judgment of meaningfulness belongs to the epistemologically inaccessible sphere.¹ Following this logic, the holy is described as something epistemologically inaccessible as well, and thus, is considered unlawful to guarantee the validity of itself as well as because “certain subjective states and acts possess the quality of holiness” (Weber 1946, p. 154). This is why, as concluded by Weber, a scholar can only surrender to positivism; otherwise there would be “intellectual sacrifice” (Ibid.).

Weber’s declaration of the “disenchantment of the world”, his observation of the meaning crisis in both religion and science, and his acute discovery of the retreat of the mystical from the public sphere are monumental. These ideas are exemplified by his poignant reflection towards the end of *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (1904–05): “According to Baxter, the concern for material goods should lie upon the shoulders of his saints like ‘a lightweight coat that could be thrown off at any time’. Yet fate allowed a steel-hard casing [...] to be forged from this coat” (Weber 2005, p. 103). He thus initiated a discourse on secularity that has since been taken up by scholars such as Charles Taylor, Hubert Dreyfus, and Martin Hägglund, influencing the ongoing dialogue about faith in an increasingly materialistic era to this day. However, as we focus on the issue of disenchantment, which is more than ever evident as a disease of capitalism and its attendant valuation mechanisms, we should also recognize, retrospectively, that there is a problem with Weber’s original articulation of it: is it justifiable to take for granted a pragmatic and positivistic stance—that is, to attribute a thing’s decline simply to the fact that it is no longer effective in being employed, and to refuse to discuss a thing’s “value” merely because the source of such “value” is scientifically unverifiable—in the analysis of a historical phenomenon, given that pragmatism and positivism are historical phenomena?

Heidegger is more insightful than Weber in questioning the basis of taking such a stance. For Heidegger, as for Weber, modernity involves a “loss of the gods”—“degodization”—an unrestricted trust in the effectiveness of scientific and technological tools, along with a positivist mindset that doubts all unverifiable beings. However, Heidegger saw the root of this disenchantment in the pre-modern establishment of ontotheology (beginning with post-Socratic idealism and culminating in Christianity) instead of its modern collapse, as Charles Taylor, for example, has suggested. In Heidegger’s view, it is the construction of a discourse of ontotheology that attributes the originality of the world to an “infinite, unconditional, absolute” cause, rather than the supposed inaccessibility of such a cause, that has led to the flight of God and the gods. The disenchantment thus defined has occurred in a double sense: first, it represents the creating agency (if there is one) as a pure idea objectively grasped; second, the “worldview” made possible by the entire system of representation has reduced our primordial sense of the mystical to a mere empirical scope. He wrote in 1938:

The loss of the gods is a twofold process. On the one hand, the world picture is Christianized in as much as the cause of the world is posited as infinite, unconditional, absolute. On the other hand, Christendom transforms Christian doctrine into a worldview (the Christian worldview) and in that way makes itself modern and up to date. The loss of the gods is the situation of indecision regarding God and the gods. Christendom has the greatest share in bringing it about. But the

loss of the gods is so far from excluding religiosity that rather only through that loss is the relation to the gods changed into mere “religious experience”. When this occurs, then the gods have fled. (Heidegger 1977, p. 116)

As far as Heidegger is concerned, the fundamental problem with disenchantment is the lack of reflection on the evolution of the pre-disenchanted conception of the mystical. He asserts that the prevailing nihilism in modernity, which casts doubt on discussions of “value” as described by Weber, stems from the Cartesian perspective of the world as a static image. Within this framework, beings are perceived and assessed solely on the basis of their function as vessels representing the goodness bestowed by a superior entity, namely God. Consequently, worth is equated with value, and God Himself, the authority of value, is reduced to a representation. Heidegger thought that this marked a sharp departure from the situation in pre-Socratic Greece, where people just “lived with” the gods and fostered a more direct relationship with the sacred dimension of the cosmos—he clarified this connection by emphasizing his interpretation of the Greek word for “they”: “The *αὐτά* refers to everything present, everything that presences by lingering awhile: gods and men, temples and cities, sea and land, eagle and snake, tree and shrub, wind and light, stope and sand, day and night” (Heidegger 1984, p. 40), which clearly shows intimate interconnectedness between humans and the holy. That is why, in his 1942 comments on Nietzsche’s declaration “God is dead”, Heidegger argued that it is misleading to see nihilism as a purely modern phenomenon only arising with the abandonment of God and the values associated with Him. According to Heidegger, nihilism emerged in “the interpretation of the God as the highest value” by believers themselves and denotes a degradation of “the first of beings” (Heidegger 1977, p. 105).

Hence, Weber’s positivist perspective on disenchantment is challenged by Heidegger’s critique of value representation. For Heidegger, it is illicit to declare the unlawfulness of questioning the worthiness of a thing based on it being epistemologically inaccessible, which relies on the assumption that something must be epistemologically accessible to be considered worthwhile: a premise held by rational supremacists who link the judgment of worth with the value of reason. Without the reduction of worth to values, Weber’s explanation of science and technology’s replacement of magic due to the Latter’s ineffectiveness—its lack of practical value—is also unconvincing. As mentioned before, Heidegger believed that replacement is caused by a “worldview” that favors representationally assessable things. Further, he contended that the deeper root of the establishment of the “worldview” is that human beings are “needed” by “a destining of revealing” (Heidegger 1977, p. 30) to engage in the historical coming-into-presence of “Enframing” (*Gestell*)—“the gathering together of that setting-upon which sets upon man, i.e., challenges him forth, to reveal the real, in the mode of ordering, as standing-reserve” (Heidegger 1977, p. 20).

The interpretation of this quote, particularly the concept of “challenging”, presents certain complexities. Basically, it denotes an artificial disruption of the natural rhythm of beings. Heidegger asserts that “the work of the peasant does not challenge the soil of the field”, whereas agriculture, specifically “the mechanized food industry” does (Ibid.). The essential distinction between these two forms of labor lies in the fact that agriculture, as a branch of modern technology, has established its own scheme grounded in scientific measurement, objectifying the world to fit into a subjective configuration. It is important to note, however, that “Enframing” should not be reduced solely to the Cartesian subject-object dichotomy. Instead, it is a part of the compelling revelation of Being and beings demanded by the essence of Dasein, which exists as a region of unconcealedness, disclosing what *is*, and can be traced back to the purpose of “clearing” (*Lichtung*) inherent in the initial transition from magical thinking to rationalization in ancient Greece:

For the Greek, what is their own is “the fire from the heavens”, that is, the light and the glow of that which determines the arrival and proximity of the gods. Yet in order to appropriate this as their own, the Greeks had to pass through something foreign, namely through the “clarity of presentation”. They had to be

alienated and taken hold by the latter so as with aid first to bring the fire into the still radiance of pure lucidity. (Heidegger 1996, p. 136)

In this way, Heideggerian disenchantment is portrayed as a deeply ingrained, long-evolved, and inevitable condition inherent to the autonomous unfolding of Being. This condition compels itself to seek transparency and articulation. As a result, human Dasein assumes the role of “challenging”, extracting and consolidating the pre-thematic reality that initially arose as primal poesy from the idea/material indistinguishable ambiguity, thereby subjecting existence to scientific scrutiny. While this process aims to reveal and has indeed succeeded in granting clarity to what has been transformed into a “worldview”, it has also led to the oblivion of the multidimensional enchanted world that once existed in a hazy, dynamic, discrete manner. This phenomenon is observed across all sciences, including theology, which Heidegger also regards as a “positive science”.

In his lecture “Phenomenology and Theology” delivered in Spring 1927, supplemented by later notes, Heidegger elaborates on how theology, as a theoretical and objectifying inquiry “enjoined on faith, out of faith, and for faith” (Heidegger 1998, p. 45) has ontically overcome one’s pre-Christian existence by imbuing finite being-toward-death with the notion of “rebirth”. However, it remains ontologically determined by the *existential* framework it seeks to comprehend. At its core, he believes, is the preservation of *existential* concepts within theological ones. For example, he explains:

Sin is manifest only in faith, and only the believer can factually exist as a sinner. But if sin, which is the counterphenomenon to faith as rebirth and hence a phenomenon of existence, is to be interpreted in theological concepts, then the *content* of the concept *itself*, and not just any philosophical preference of the theologian, calls for a return to the concept of guilt. But guilt is an original ontological determination of the existence of Dasein. (Heidegger 1998, p. 51)²

This perspective shifts the focus towards the unfathomable mysteries that govern the evolution of Being beyond human beings’ self-conscious understanding. Weber shared a similar notion when he stated, “[f]ate, and certainly not ‘science,’ holds sway over these gods and their struggles” (Weber 1946, p. 148). As Heidegger argues, this fate can only be comprehended through philosophy, concerned with the *existential*. By contrast, theology, being *existential*, is merely the ontic rationalization of a phenomenon, itself a product of disenchantment.

Consequently, to shed light on the cause of the disappearance of the gods, one must temporarily step outside the realm of theology. While ongoing debates persist regarding the possibility of a Heideggerian “theology”, it is beyond the scope of the investigation previously defined as a historical problem within the internal transfiguration of “Enframing”. Instead, it is crucial to examine the issue on its *existential* grounds, and this requires a look at Heidegger’s ontological concept of Being. According to his interpretation of its pre-Socratic context, Being as truth as *aletheia* manifests itself through the world’s struggle to open the earth, constituting the template of *die Gestalt* (Heidegger 1971, pp. 38–55). With reference to Section 7 of *Parmenides* (1942), this strife, serving as a primary movement generating the causality of presence, can be understood in principle as a *polemos* against *lethe*—the counter-essence of *aletheia*—by way of Dasein’s intuitive knowing of *lethe* (Heidegger 1992, pp. 118–20).

In Heidegger’s philosophy, *lethe* is not just the ontological oblivion of Being, but also synonymous with the abyss (*Ab-grund*), developed from its literary prototype found in the Greek Underworld, a realm of emptiness where a river of “unmindfulness” erases the memories of departed souls before they embark on their next mortal journey. Heidegger considers this abyss to be an originary onefold “time-space” where “god, man, world, earth recoils in swaying” and the *decision* regarding Being and non-Being takes place (Heidegger 2012, pp. 21, 264–66, 341). Thus, for Heidegger, modern disenchantment is essentially the consequence of a historical *amnesia* that could be phrased as follows: Ironically, the effort against oblivion, which aimed to grasp the intelligible thematically,

has inadvertently relinquished the entire pre-scientific landscape to its adversary, until the withdrawing effects of *lethe* have submerged the world so grandly that the very existence of *lethe* becomes unintelligible, and the self-evident nature of *aletheia*—that which comes to be by standing in contrast to *lethe*—has also been forgotten. Heidegger's consistent criticism of Cartesianism indicates that he thought in the change of truth's definition from the unconcealment of being to the correctness of representations³, the old way of experiencing reality as the *lethe-aletheia* interplay has become inaccessible to humans—who have converted the manifold World into a simple system of values.

Concerning a pre-disenchanted conception of reality, Weber's analysis of charismatic authority serves as a good example to support Heidegger's opinion of how truth used to be received by humans. According to Weber, the credibility of charisma is guaranteed by "a 'sign' or proof, originally always a miracle", (Weber 1968, p. 49), which is self-evident, self-sufficient, and free from "intellectually analyzable rules" (Weber 1968, p. 52). In this regard, "recognition is a duty" (Weber 1968, p. 51). Whenever people need to rationally justify charismatic authority and ask for its legitimacy, the secularization of charisma occurs. Moreover, the meaningfulness presupposed in religion lies "beyond the limits of science", not representing "knowledge" but rather existing as a "possession" (Weber 1946, p. 154). On this issue, he shared very similar viewpoints with Heidegger, who maintained that prior to the establishment of a Cartesian picture—for instance, in the Middle Ages, although faith was already theorized within Christianity, the pursuit of truth was not directed toward the development of science, namely, "the theory of the real", (Heidegger 1977, p. 157), but truth was purely thought of as a kind of divine revelation, transcending human epistemological agency (Heidegger 1977, p. 130). Since reality has been objectified into quantifiable representations and subjected to overwhelming machination in an age when positive science is regarded as the sole agency granting credibility, the meaning of truth has also undergone a fundamental change, losing its connection to any untestable agency of divinity.

The problem of the opposition between value representation and spiritualism, especially the former's swallowing of the latter through the formation of a "worldview", has been examined by other modern thinkers such as William James, who in 1899 asserted that there is a "certain blindness" emerging from the pragmatic trend that has caused the decline of spirituality. Like Heidegger, James also called for returning to thingness from a de-subjectified perspective. In his comments on an autobiographical passage by Richard Jefferies narrating "a worthless hour of life" spent on appreciating the Sun and Earth, James said that we as "practical beings"—who are occupied with "limited functions and duties to perform" (James 2010, p. 146)—would first have to become "worthless" in order to "attain to any breadth of insight into the impersonal world of worths as such" (James 2010, p. 155). Nevertheless, he still affirmed that the "mystic sense of hidden meaning starts upon us often from non-human natural things" (James 2010, p. 152), citing a paragraph from "Obermann" that cherishes "a jonquil in blossom" and Wordsworth's phrasing—"Authentic tidings of invisible things!" (James 2010, p. 153)—to illustrate his point. However, James did not attempt to abolish the subject/object dualism in his criticism of subject-centered pragmatism. He only pointed out the incompatibility of spiritual worth and practical value, respectively connecting them with objecthood and subjecthood while urging for a change of perspective to engage in the common spirituality enlightened by "a large objective scale" (James 2010, p. 155).

In this respect, the views of Deleuze and Guattari, the deconstructive critics of liberal capitalism, go even further. In *A Thousand Plateaus* they question the structural basis of subject-centered pragmatism. They use the metaphor of a "face" to characterize Western civilization: according to them, the combination of signification and subjectification—as a natural consequence of the mixture of semiotics that induced the establishment of a white wall/black hole mechanism—composes the "faciality" of the West:

Earlier, we encountered two axes, signification and subjectification. We saw that they were two very different semiotic systems, or even two strata. Signification is

never without a white wall upon which it inscribes its signs and redundancies. Subjectification is never without a black hole in which it lodges its consciousness, passion, and redundancies. Since all semiotics are mixed and strata come at least in twos, it should come as no surprise that a very special mechanism is situated at their intersection. Oddly enough, it is a face: the white wall/black hole system. (Deleuze and Guattari 1987, p. 167)

Perhaps because Deleuze and Guattari's theory was not proposed until 1980—much later than the views of Nietzsche, James, Weber, and also later than that of Heidegger—it may have led to a more radical undermining of the traditional Western concept of reality. Hence, pure subjectification is not sufficient to remold reality into the subject-value-representation-object chain that is illustrated above; rather, it must be assisted by the system of signification to achieve this.

This point is quite inspiring in studies of Heidegger, for as clearly articulated in his hermeneutic phenomenology, Heidegger essentially saw the world, or Dasein's being-in-the-world, as the totality of significances. In Section 17 of *Being and Time* (1927), Heidegger elucidates how the formation of the "thing", which constitutes "worldliness", relies on "reference and signs" (Heidegger 1962, pp. 107–14). In his commentary on "The Ister" (1942), he specifically explores why the poet, as a "sign" or a "symbol", is needed by Being to clarify the essence of showing in terms of the indispensable role of language in defining human Dasein. He even asserts: "The belonging together of the gods is therefore conditioned by this sign, through the fact that the sign is" (Heidegger 1996, p. 136). This raises concerns about whether Heidegger's conception of reality remains confined within the "white wall": Was it limited by traditional discourse and thus inadequate? Moreover, the more fundamental question underlying this issue is, if Deleuze and Guattari were correct in pointing out the two spheres' collaborative effects in the construction of "facility", is it necessary to destroy both signification and subjectification in order to overcome their hybrid product, which actually serves as the soul behind the "face": *res cogitans*? If so, is Heidegger's project of recovering the full meaning of Being, so far shielded by Western ontotheology, merely a failed "revolution" insofar as it still operates on the system of signification?

I propose that the answer to all these questions is "no", especially the second one. Essentially, Heidegger's hermeneutic phenomenology entails exploring the potentiality of a de-subjectified system of signification in redefining the traditional metaphysical idea of reality, which would further lead to the possibility of re-enchantment without erasing existing discourse, but which would definitely be capable of overcoming *res cogitans* by containing it. His project includes two parts:

- (1) At the deconstructive level, he investigated the game that a subject is playing; that is, rationalizing within signification, which is present in his numerous criticisms of Descartes, ontotheology, machination, and value representation. Heidegger claimed that "Nietzsche's thinking remains imprisoned in value representation" (Heidegger 1977, p. 142), for his idea of re-evaluating all values (*Umwertung aller Werte*) is simply meant to replace God, an objectively ultimate entity, with subjective facilities (the will to power, in its place of being valuable), but Nietzsche did not question the concept of value itself nor the mechanism of subjectification. To thoroughly examine such a mechanism, Heidegger described a certain kind of being as "presence-at-hand", embodying how reality is viewed and experienced as one single layer (which, according to his analysis of the Cartesian worldview, "mathematical knowledge is exceptionally well suited to grasp" (Heidegger 1962, p. 129)) among the manifold totality of significances apprehended through Dasein's transcendence. Concerning this part, Heidegger is distinguished from other critics of Cartesianism in that he did not simply aim to criticize the idea of *res cogitans-res extensa*; rather, he considered it a necessary mode of being and sought to understand the rationality of its formation; for instance, how the uncanny mood generated from being-toward-death motivated

Dasein to pursue a sense of certainty by securing reality as a representation, a theme of *Being and Time*.

- (2) At the constructive level, he kept examining various forms of being unrestricted by the subject value-representation-object chain in philosophy, mythology, art, poetry, and everyday life, initiating an experimental discussion of the extent to which humans and things can be linguistically coded in their co-existence as organic spatial-temporal units. In these units, reality is fluid and is defined in terms of the ever-changing meanings disclosed in the light of “care” at every moment; that is, the ephemeral organisms of signification, which dissolve the traditional notion of reality founded upon linear time and 3D space. Such a new way of conceptualizing reality has enabled the incarnation of the Earth in the world by bringing previously unnoticed signs and references that comprise the inconspicuous lower level of signification—which embraces much more non-determinacy, discreteness, and mysteries than the scientifically structured surface layer—into articulation. This is achieved by figuring out the all-rounded human-thing and human-human “involvements” through *zur Sache selbst*, such as distinguishing usefulness from values, and correspondingly, “readiness-to-hand” from “presence-at-hand”.

In the following sections, I demonstrate why Heidegger’s project of linguistically redefining the world has the potential to bring about re-enchantment in the established context of signification. I argue that compared to seeking a complete renewal of history⁴ on the condition of subverting the entirety of Western thinking, turning inward to the inconspicuous, spatial-temporal units hidden in the existing world helps us to realize the possible re-enchantment that Heidegger implicitly called for, or using the word he borrowed from Holderlin’s “Patmos”: “salvation” (Heidegger 1971, p. 115). The inconspicuous spatial-temporal units are composed of “readiness-to-hand”, the “handiness” of which manifests the nature of *categorical* beings in their relation to Dasein: usefulness. Further, as Heidegger’s definition of usefulness is in a de-subjectified system of signification, the usefulness he discovered is essentially different from (and more comprehensive than) the practical effectiveness of employed objects, based on which the value of beings is judged from a positivist angle. I maintain that by shedding light on the usefulness of *categorical* beings and investigating their non-Cartesian origin in a broader linguistic ecosystem—the thing⁵—Heidegger strongly challenged the objectifying procedure of positive scientism leading to pragmatism, which (as a product of “faciality”) simply equates the worthwhile-ness of *categorical* beings to the success of their application.

2. What Is a *Categorical* Being?

Heidegger defined the essence of the “thing” as “gathering”, (Heidegger 1971, p. 172), which is equivalent to his interpretation of the Greek notion of *logos* (Heidegger 2014b, p. 179). However, the exact process of such a gathering remains unclear. It is clear that a single infrastructure of signification—the reference of A to B—is not sufficient to identify a thing, as references are constantly starting and stopping, making it impossible to create a persistent concept. Indeed, the idea of a “persistent concept” itself is questionable insofar as it assumes the existence of an ultimate reality. According to Heidegger’s arguments, this is fundamentally a product of ontotheology, which he aimed to deconstruct using a time-space-based phenomenological perspective. Thus, when examining the essence of *categorical* beings, rather than trying to determine their unconditional factors as traditional philosophers such as Plato, Aristotle, and Descartes did, Heidegger was more interested in exploring the conditionality of their presence.

Numerous examples have been raised by Heidegger to demonstrate the conditionality of *categorical* beings. A typical example he frequently uses is the Sun, which has a constantly changing and space-time dependent outlook. To clarify the necessity of exploring thingness, Heidegger wrote the following in *The Question Concerning the Thing* (1935):

And the Sun which daily rises and sets and gives light is growing ever colder; our Earth must draw ever closer to it in order to retain the same degree of heat.

And yet the Earth is moving away from the Sun, and rushing toward catastrophe, albeit in “timeframes” compared to which [...] the few thousand years of human history on Earth signify not even one second. [...] Now, which of these is the real sun? Which thing is the true thing—the shepherd’s sun or the astrophysicist’s? Or is the question badly put? And if so, why? How should we decide? (Heidegger 2018, p. 9)

In this passage, Heidegger raises a classic ontological question: When a thing’s appearance does not match its substance, which one is true? This is a rephrasing of Descartes’ famous “bending pencil” problem: An intact pencil appears broken when placed in a glass of water. From this, he concluded that truth must be attained through clear and indubitable ideas. Descartes’ argument is founded upon undervaluing phenomena that cannot be ruled out as illusionary occurrences, or, in Heidegger’s words, “being as seeming”⁶. As objective idealists, Descartes and his followers viewed “truth” as nothing more than mathematically verifiable results and value as nothing more than “truth”. However, for Heidegger, the situation was more complex: without assuming the supremacy of transcendental values, the certainty of objective representations of entities, and an *a priori* link between value and truth, the universe embodies a gathering of diverse phenomena without any hierarchy, including those favored by rationalists. From Heidegger’s perspective, these particular kinds of phenomena are “presence-at-hand”, captured through the dualistic vision that categorizes the world into *res extensa* and *res cogitans*. Hence, in this reconfiguration of the world, Heidegger did not try to destroy the “picture” drawn by traditional metaphysicians and natural/social scientists, but rather attempted to undertake a more ambitious project: to contain them in his own story. Knowing this, we can further infer that Heidegger perceived all sensible phenomena as truths⁷. A more poetic illustration of this point can be found in *Introduction to Metaphysics* (1935):

Let us think about the sun. It rises and sets for us daily. Only very few astronomers, physicists, and philosophers directly experience this fact otherwise as the movement of the Earth around the Sun—and even they do so on the grounds of a particular, although rather widespread, conception. But the seeming in which Sun and Earth stand—for example, the early morning of a landscape, the sea in the evening, the night—is an appearing. This seeming is not nothing. Neither is it untrue. Neither is it a mere appearance of relationships that, in nature, are really otherwise. This seeming is historical, and it is history, uncovered and grounded in poetry and saga, and thus an essential domain of our world. (Heidegger 2014b, p. 36)

The acceptance of the rich meaningfulness of appearances can well explain Heidegger’s intricate conception of truth, which considers errancy as part of truth and maintains truth’s essential belonging to the self-concealing, mystical mechanism at its core, which unceasingly generates errancy: “Truth, in its nature, is un-truth” (Heidegger 1971, p. 53). It then follows that, since the fundamental enigma of how beings come to be is unintelligible and there is no clear true/false distinction among various modes of existence, it is lawful to develop alternative narratives of reality to confront existing ones, as long as they provide solid, informative ideas about the nature of being. Thus, as far as I am concerned, in his examination of *categorial* beings, Heidegger created the concept of “readiness-to-hand” as opposed to “presence-at-hand”. Still using the example of the Sun, he stated, “thus the sun, whose light and warmth are in everyday use, has its own places—sunrise, midday, sunset, midnight; these are discovered in circumspection and treated distinctively in terms of changes in the usability of what the Sun has bestowed” (Heidegger 1962, p. 137).

Further, by figuring out the nature of “readiness-to-hand”, he rediscovered the primary linguistic structure of usefulness that was long covered up by its unwarranted reduction to pragmatic effectiveness and hence values. Heidegger established that the essence of a thing’s “thingly character”—being useful—is constituted by the referentiality of “in order to”⁸ in Dasein’s *circumspection*. He indicated, in Dasein’s interaction with its equipment, that

its work “bears with it that referential totality within which the equipment is encountered”, and the equipment, in being useful, let Dasein “encounter already the ‘towards-which’ for which it is usable” (Heidegger 1962, p. 99). This is to say, through the action of using, not only are the function of the used and the user’s intention disclosed, but the whole “ontological genesis”—or in other words, a “manifold of such assignments” (Heidegger 1962, p. 97) that makes such an action possible—is implied. As Heidegger put it: “When we make use of the clock equipment, which is proximally and inconspicuously ready-to-hand, the enviroing nature is ready-to-hand along with it” (Heidegger 1962, p. 101). Moreover, the embodiment of Dasein’s dealings with its environment in its wholeness, through which beings *appear* in the “sight”⁹, has a flashback feature: because “what means what” is already known, the end of an action is always foreseen before it is carried out. This flashback feature is precisely an expression of the spatial–temporal qualities of a *categorial* being thus used.

Then, what is the significance of analyzing the manifested linguistic context—which generates the possibility of using a tool—in defining a *categorial* being?

Principally speaking, it connects a thing’s essence to the temporality and spatiality of Dasein, which is *existential*. This is to say, by discovering a phenomenal organization of “readiness-to-hand”, Heidegger started to explore how a *categorial* being could exist *existentially*, although he himself may not have realized this at first. The temporality of Dasein, as defined by Heidegger, is revealed “as the meaning of authentic care” (Heidegger 1962, p. 374). He wrote, “Dasein’s totality of Being as care means ahead-of-itself-already-being-in (a world) as Being alongside (entities encountered within-the-world). According to Heidegger, “ahead-of-itself” is grounded in the future, the “being-already-in” is present in the past, and the “being-alongside” is actualizing at present (Heidegger 1962, p. 375). This triple-structure, in Heidegger’s existential *philosophy*, is revealed as a unity in Dasein’s *anticipation* of what it is coming toward, conducted through authentic *resoluteness*. As he explained, such coming toward not only signifies Dasein’s “ownmost potentiality-for-Being”, but also includes its inclination to manipulate its world, manifested in the prediction of how the beings it is alongside should be:

Anticipatory resoluteness discloses the current Situation situation of the “there” in such a way that existence, in taking action, is circumspectly concerned with what is factually ready-to-hand environmentally. Resolute Being-alongside what is ready-to-hand in the Situation—that is to say, taking action in such a way as to let one encounter what *has presence* environmentally—is possible only by making such an entity *present*. Only at the *Present* (*Gegenwart*) in the sense of making present, can resoluteness be what it is: namely, letting itself be encountered undisguisedly by that which it seizes upon in taking action¹⁰.

Thus, in Dasein’s *anticipation*, *categorial* beings would be involved in an *existential* temporality: every sense made regarding a thing is necessarily coded into making present the pre-determined possibility of Dasein’s “Da”, or its “there-being”. Hence, in a *categorial* being’s encounter with Dasein, the *categorial* being is endowed with Dasein’s triple-structured temporality, that is, always coming toward what has already been estimated by Dasein. Essentially speaking, in this way, a thing is made living through “care”, and hereby plays a role in “care”. Perhaps this is why Heidegger referred to the following sentence—an expression of Dionysius the Areopagite adopted by Meister Eckhart—to characterize the entanglement between man and things: “Love is of such a nature that it changes man into the things he loves” (Heidegger 1971, p. 174).

Moreover, since temporality and spatiality are inseparable in Heidegger’s philosophy, in building up a common temporality shared by man and things, a common spatiality would also develop in referential totality. The common spatiality is embodied in an *existential* activity that Heidegger called *de-severance*, which he defined as “making the remoteness of something disappear” (Heidegger 1962, p. 139). He specified that *de-severance* is “a circumspective bringing close—bringing something close by, in the sense of procuring it, putting it in readiness, having it to hand” (Heidegger 1962, pp. 139–40). He also claimed that “in Dasein there lies an essential tendency towards closeness” (Heidegger 1962, p. 140).

However, Heidegger carefully differentiated this *existential* bringing close from the point-to-point movements in the purely physical sense, as shown in the statement “remoteness never gets taken as a distance (Ibid.). Further, by highlighting the example of the radio, he implied that *de-severance* does not require an actual motion, but can be a kind of abstract occupation of something/somewhere far away, made possible purely by knowing about it:

With the ‘radio’, for example, Dasein has so expanded its everyday environment that it has accomplished a de-severance of the ‘world’—a de-severance which, in its meaning for Dasein, cannot yet be visualized. (Ibid.)

In sum, in Heidegger’s examination of the temporal-spatial structure of a specific type of *categorial* being—“readiness-to-hand”—a novel narrative of thingness is created to encapsulate a more primordial mode of existence compared to “objective reality” within the system of signification. In addition, this narrative (which is conducted in a hermeneutic phenomenological vision) has replaced the traditional narrative of rationalistic idealism by incorporating the latter into itself: accurately speaking, taking representational thinking as an inevitable historical phenomenon among the manifold meaningfulness of the world. On this basis, the problem of modern nihilism could be overcome without abolishing the philosophy giving rise to it, but, by penetrating into the soil that conceals the roots of such a philosophy, Dasein could gain all-inclusive insight into the *aletheia/lethe* interplay through the referential totality that composes itself and its world, which are essentially identical to each other inasmuch as both of them are “care”. However, up until this point, our analysis still cannot answer the question: How might the new temporal-spatial narrative of thingness contribute to a possible re-enchantment of the world?

To further explore this issue, I propose an experiment in the next section where I reverse the position of humans and things based on the assumption that because the two kinds of beings are in a symmetrical relationship, they are interchangeable with each other. The reason for saying that a human and a thing are interchangeable is transparent: As a realm of openness, a human contains the senses of multiple temporal-spatial units in relation to things, and vice versa. Seen from a phenomenological angle, a thing, in relation to humans, likewise takes their shared referential units into its own openness, which is the foundation for forming what middle Heidegger called *die Gestalt*, which in turn makes the whole intertwined appearance of world-earth organicity in a work of art. This experiment may challenge earlier Heidegger’s *existential/categorial* classification of beings, but is supported by his later idea that thinghood is incarnated enough to take actions upon humans. Heidegger implicitly expressed this idea, such as when he stated in his Freiburg lectures of 1951–1952, “we stand before a tree in bloom [. . .] and the tree stands before us. [. . .] The tree and we meet one another. [. . .] Did the tree come first to stand and face us, so that we might come forward face-to-face with it?” (Heidegger 1968, pp. 41–42). Further, I show that this experiment (to view a thing as more of a “master” than a human) is in line with Heidegger’s own thinking during his “turn”, and may even explain why he became interested in a particular type of thing with immortal life—works of art—in his middle period.

3. The Immortalization of Things

In the first two divisions of *Being and Time* (1927), Heidegger’s examination of the human/thing relationship is still within a singular “world”, that is, the totality of significances opened as one independent “Da”. Although he considered the co-existence of multiple consciousnesses in his notion of “Dasein-with”, how an entity could simultaneously make sense in several consciousnesses has not been investigated. Granted, the primary task of *Being and Time* is to develop a fundamental ontology, and its restriction to that with which it is concerned—an exclusive “mineness” embodied as “my ownmost possibilities” constituting Dasein and its world—is reasonable. However, after the delineation of Dasein’s spatiality and ecstatic temporality (which is successfully completed in Divisions I and II), the focus of his phenomenological inquiry should have been changed from the study of Dasein to the study of being as such. To put it more accurately, as clearly stated in Section 5 of this book, his original purpose was to study being as such; studying Dasein is only an

inevitable means to that end.¹¹ This purpose is re-emphasized as a series of questions in the last section of Division II:

The existential-ontological constitution of Dasein's totality is grounded in temporality. Hence the ecstatic projection of Being must be made possible by some primordial way in which ecstatic temporality temporalizes. How is this mode of temporalizing of temporality to be interpreted? Is there a way which leads from primordial time to the meaning of Being? Does *time* itself manifest itself as the horizon of Being? (Heidegger 1962, p. 488)¹²

These grand questions may have made it difficult for the earlier-middle Heidegger to elaborate on them using the current system of metaphysical language, leading him to abandon the planned Division III of *Being and Time*.¹³ However, given his continued interest in the intended theme of Division III, it is not surprising to think that he kept the proposed idea in his mind and connected it to his later writings. In discussions about what Division III might have been, some scholars argue that that this unfinished volume was completed in other forms (Sheehan 2015) or that Heidegger's thinking about it at least anticipated his works after *Being and Time* (Dahlstrom 2015). I support this hypothesis. However, unlike scholars who approach this issue from a macro and transcendental perspective (e.g., Thomas Sheehan viewed Heidegger's later idea of *Ereignis* as his answer to all questions about being as such) (Sheehan 2014), I investigate it by examining a more micro and empirical unit, that is, the thing.

It is almost obvious that on the basis of the theory and worldview of *Being and Time*, the study of things, or *categorial* beings, is the most efficient and effective way to explore the horizon of time beyond a singular "Da" standing for a mortal's consciousness. This "Da" would end as the mortal dies, but the thingness contributed by him to the thinghood is still going to be part of the things' lives. As William James noticed, a jonquil in blossom, if cherished in a piece of poetic work, would be memorized and appreciated by countless late-coming readers; this is almost all about what Wordsworth did. Some of the stars observed and named for the first time by scientists, even though their bodies may have disappeared in the physical sense, would continue to shine in astronomical records and even in astrological charts. Furthermore, what is most interesting regarding things is that the senses constituting them would not only be archived and reserved, but also aggregated and combined, generating a living culture (even a civilization) of their own. Plato's sun differs from the Sun in the Bible, but both of them would be remembered by those who have inherited the classic traditions. One might think of the "form of beauty" while looking at the Sun, while it is equally possible that what comes to mind is *Ecclesiastes* 1:5: "The Sun also rises, and the Sun goes down, and hastens to the place where it arose".

Therefore, I believe—and this is a point that is entirely Heideggerian, but Heidegger himself did not explicitly state it in his works—that within a thing that has experienced the lives of multiple mortals, there is a living multi-worldness. Moreover, insofar as in each moment a world is nothing but making present the "care"—Dasein's ecstatic temporality in its finiteness—at that moment, a thing can "grow" by collecting moments at which it encounters with human beings. In this way, it would not only be shuttling between, and gathering, the worlds of contemporaries, but also building up a geology of worlds throughout history. This construction of multi-worldness as thingness, from my perspective, is exactly how "*time* itself manifests as the horizon of Being". As *time* flies, Dasein is temporizing itself; in Dasein's self-temporizing, its pre-determined possibilities come true as its world. As Dasein is procuring *categorial* beings encountered in its world through *de-severance*, *categorial* beings are at the same *time* procuring the ecstatic temporality of Dasein. Then, the ecstatic temporalities thus deposited and living on in the thinghood become history. From microscopic to macroscopic, the horizon of Being shows spectral diversification. Viewed from this angle, tracing human consciousness in things is as significant as (or even more significant than) tracing things in human consciousness.

Hence, it is rather reasonable to pursue a thing-centered conception of reality. This method is consistent with Heidegger's tendency to describe a reversed version of a human-

thing relationship in his later years. As we can see in “The Thing”, unlike what he portrays in *Being and Time*—that is, the being of entities is completely dependent on Dasein insofar as Dasein had conditioned their uncoveredness (he claimed that “before there was any Dasein, there was no truth; nor will there be any after Dasein is no more”)¹⁴—in his depiction of the Fourfold, the thing is thought to be a holder of mortals as well as the sky and earth that they dwell with. This is not to say, of course, that Heidegger abandoned his assumption that beings cannot *be* independent of Dasein. In the new, more developed paradigm of thingness, the being—or uncoveredness—of thinghood is still made possible by Dasein, yet Dasein has become more of a collective concept here, which keeps dying as every single individual constituting it dies, but at the same time lives forever. As long as there is *one* consciousness that illuminates a thing alive, the being of the thing is guaranteed. Moreover, as shown in the example of the jug, during the evolution of the Dasein-deriving involvements gathered around the thing, the collective fate of human beings would be reflected in the thing’s concentration of the inferential totality shared by them all. This fate, which is normally first brought into intelligibility in the light of “readiness-to-hand”, has the potential to further manifest mortals’ inherent connection to the divine:

The gift of the pouring out is drink for mortals. It quenches their thirst. It refreshes their leisure. It enlivens their conviviality. But the jug’s gift is at times also given for consecration. If the pouring is for consecration, then it does not still a thirst. It stills and elevates the celebration of the feast. The gift of the pouring now is neither given in an inn, nor is the poured gift a drink for mortals. The outpouring is the libation poured out for the immortal gods. [. . .] To pour a gush, when it is achieved in its essence, thought through with sufficient generosity, and genuinely uttered, is to donate, to offer in sacrifice, and hence to give. (Heidegger 1971, p. 170)

In this way, the consciousness of a singular human being is no longer the sole master of a universe—although in its ownmost being-toward-death it may remain so—but has become a resident of a larger, more enduring universe that has an internal sacred dimension.¹⁵ This universe, as a preserved *physis* (i.e., the uttered Nature) is contained in the thing. Inasmuch as the jug is used by someone, the universe will continue to exist. Likewise, any handicraft might once be part of its maker’s world, and with the emergence of referential totality, it would contain its maker’s world. Then, it might be part of its user’s world, and in the same way, it would contain its user’s world. Then one day, it might be present in front of *me* . . . in such a manner, an eternal loop forms: A man has his things, and a thing has its men. In the light of *thinging*, Heidegger’s fundamental ontology, which was initially about a single mortal’s life, became historicized.

Concerning the sacred dimension, though it literally appears as the narratives of heavenly beings and is frequently referred to by Heidegger in his writings as God and gods, viewed in the whole context of his phenomenology, Heidegger’s mention of that which is divine is less of a theological issue (e.g., justifying the existence of God and gods, as Descartes did) and more of an *existential* one. This observation is in line with what we clarified about disenchantment in Section 1—Theology itself arises from reducing the conceptualization of faith to a positive science. Therefore, to restore enchantment, one must venture beyond theology and delve into the philosophical essence of “Enframing”, where understanding inadvertently obscures primordial temporality. Moreover, as elaborated in *Contributions to Philosophy* (1936–1940), Heidegger takes human articulation of divine beings in the history of ontotheology as a way of transcendence, that is, of sensing beyond the sensible and connecting to what might be representationally called supersensible (by Kant, for example): “When we speak of God and gods, we think—according to a long-standing habit of representation—in that form which still indicates primarily and above all the multi-faceted name of ‘transcendence.’ By this term one means that which transcends extant beings, including human beings. Even where particular ways of transcending and of transcendence are denied, still, this way of thinking itself cannot be denied” (Heidegger 2012, p. 28). That is to say, for Heidegger, the gathering of meanings (*logos*) related to the

divine is primarily an expression of Dasein's fundamental *existential* condition: its inherent search for the invisible foundation beyond the grasp of all things in terms of physical, perceptible qualities such as shape, color, and smell, spanning from *physis* to meta-*physis*. The essential task, then, in order to dispel the obscurity inadvertently engendered by "clearing", is to first recover the authentic essence of this *existential* condition.

Building upon this premise, we are compelled to inquire about the *existential* nature of enchantment. How is it embedded within everyday accessible things and how does it retain the potential for awakening? If transcendence surpasses the mere physical manifestation of "extant beings" in consciousness, and what we seek—beyond ontotheology—is not a specific form or spirit within the realm of ideas but rather the projection of an obscure *beyng* itself, one that has been supplanted by form or spirit through the lenses of Platonists, Christians, and Cartesians. Then, this projection, being cognitively inaccessible, can only be vaguely envisioned through the effects it manifests in the phenomenal world. When the envisioned projection is theorized as the common fate of a group of people, it gives rise to theology and metaphysics, while in its pre-ontological form, it exists in the realm of free imagery interconnected through intuition, composing poetry and saga.

In the manifold transcendence, the territory of the Earth, as conceived by Heidegger, remains a constant destination—a withdrawing concealment that "carries an abyss", (Heidegger 2014a, p. 96) according to his reference to Hölderlin. This abyss establishes intangible boundaries that define the finite nature of all beings, encapsulating their openness. Mythologically, it finds its prototype in the imagery of a "subterrestrial", "supraterrestrial" (Heidegger 1992, p. 118) wasteland—the region of *lethe* in which memories are erased before souls return to the mundane world. In *Parmenides* (1942), Heidegger explored this concept in his commentary on Plato, retelling the myth of Er in Book X of *Republic*. Er's journey through Hades, his witnessing of post-death rewards and punishments based on virtue, and his subsequent departure from past life in *lethe* (Er didn't drink from the "unmindfulness" river but saw others do), are among the earliest and most magnificent poetic expressions of man's transcendental knowledge of the power of the sacred to restrict the consciousness of the living. In an *existential* sense, however—going back to Heidegger's fundamental ontology discussed in Section 2—what makes the abyss appear as a symbol of the finiteness of existence is *anticipation* in the most discrete, fleeting, and angst-ridden situations: Dasein, authentically circumspective of all the possibilities with which it is endowed, *anticipates* its ownmost impossibility of being possible at all.

This is probably why, when Heidegger elaborates on "Dasein is its world existingly", he asserts that "the world is transcendence" (Heidegger 1962, pp. 416–17). The fear and awe of "not-being" evoked by transcendence naturally melt into the temporal-spatial units opened up through Dasein as its world, culminating in the closure of each transient moment. This provides a further basis for the understanding of thingness from an *existential* and meta-*physis* perspective, which delineates the essence of things as standing-over-against in relation to the happening of Dasein as the condition of their very revelation. In his reading of Kant, Heidegger recognizes the nature of the thing as a "composed homogeneity" (Heidegger 2018, p. 139) dependent on the enigmatic unfolding of space and time, which implies that Dasein (here synonymous with its world) is also a "miracle" in which the realm of entities eludes cognitive faculties while affecting the sensible out of its own freedom. The temporal and spatial determination of being-in-the-world, as sketched in Section 2, is rooted in "care" bounded up with *using*, which results in an "inbetweenness" of man and thing. Heidegger depicts this "inbetweenness" as a self-contained circular structure, like the ancient symbol Ouroboros: "This Between, as anticipation, reaches beyond the thing and likewise back behind us. Grasping-ahead (Vor-griff) is casting-back" (Heidegger 2018, p. 167). This statement comes from Heidegger's interpretation of Kant's *First Critique*, which, following Kant, asks why synthesis of the *a posteriori* is possible *a priori*. Given the complexity of the theoretical clarification, I will not probe into the issues of causality and intelligibility at this time. My intention is simply to underscore Heidegger's proposition that things, as tangible phenomena (facticity), derive their interactions and involvements

with human beings (in alignment with Dasein's ecstatic temporality) from their own essence. In doing so, he reveals the elusive foundation of existence as the governing force that facilitates the emergence and regulates the retreat of finite unconcealedness—an idea that bears a resemblance to Kant's concept of the "purposiveness of Nature".

Therefore, transcending mere "objects", Dasein's embrace of its existence, as illuminated in the "appropriating mirror-play" (Heidegger 1971, p. 177) of earth, sky, mortals, and divinities—*thinging*—allows it to enter the sacred realm of Being. Rather than directly seeing a heavenly realm (which is cognitively impossible), Being perceives the possible power of "God" through its effects limiting the world of phenomena: finiteness. Dasein thus intensifies the transience of life, giving rise to unsettling moods that defy clear articulation. This aspect distinguishes Heidegger's conception of reality from earlier metaphysicians who failed to take into account the non-thematic modes of being, whether it be Plato, Descartes, or Kant (with whom he may have much in common), for he sees existence as a time-space that can never be fully established, let alone repeatedly experienced (in a cross-conscious manner), except in the non-thematic, trivial activities of Dasein. Thematic constructions always seek a purified formal structure, whereas the act of everyday *speculation* involves impure semantics and the perplexity of their endings, such as a sigh at the fulfillment or failure of an "in-order-to" and the wearing out or abandonment of "handiness". These moments, in their closure, become indicators of the impenetrable earth and the land of Hades below, converging into the destiny of things: tools made of clay originally come from the dark soil and will eventually return to it. Dasein's connection to the mystical, or predestination, is thus manifested through *thinging*.

In his criticism of modern science and technology, Heidegger made clear that many meanings once belonging to thinghood are lost in the process of machination. The nature of things is decaying and eroded. Still, in the example of the jug, he stated, "the pouring of the gush, once its nature withers, can become a mere pouring in and pouring out, until it finally decays into the dispensing of liquor at the bar" (Heidegger 1971, p. 171). This means that today, not only can people seldom see the feast for the gods through a jug, but the whole profoundness of "pouring" is no longer visible. Underlying the prevalence of positivistic scientism, human beings tend to refuse to seek meanings beyond "values" that have been so keenly attached to the success of application. This causes an ignorance of the true meaning of usefulness, manifested as "readiness-to-hand", which is closest and free of any value judgement. As Heidegger indicated, "we failed to give thought to what the jug holds and how it holds" (Heidegger 1971, p. 169), which signifies a historical *amnesia*. This is spurred on by science becoming more hegemonic, and also, as fewer and fewer people can touch their worlds in a de-subjectified way that our ancestors used to experience through *circumspection*, *anticipation*, and *de-severance*. The feeling of the human/thing symbiosis is dismissed and abandoned, especially the most primary interactions emerging as the basic temporal-spatial units, which meaningfully reorganize both Dasein's and the thing's worlds at the first moment of *speculation*. Heidegger asked: "What is nearness?" (Heidegger 1971, p. 169). Apparently, he viewed this question as being far from answerable. Beginning in *The Question Concerning the Thing* where he states that a thing's essence is defined by its particularity—"Each thing is in each case this and no other" (Heidegger 2018, p. 10)—Heidegger is actually telling an esoteric story about the "once-in-life-time" usually neglected by those who consider everything as measurable and reproducible. This story is about the "this", the "nearness", and the "handiness", which compose the everydayness¹⁶ of space and time. Unfortunately, in the modern era, such "this", "nearness", and "handiness" often only become noticeable when the things we are so familiar with (which we tend to overlook) are no longer functional. As analyzed by Heidegger in his notion of *obtrusiveness*, when a tool in need is missing (i.e., in its "un-readiness-to-hand"), it shows up in a way "disturbing to us" that "enables us to see the *obstinacy* of that which we must concern ourselves [with] in the first instance before we do anything else"¹⁷.

The problem of forgetting “readiness-to-hand” thus leaves room for remembering usefulness, as well as all the enigmatic meanings dormant in the time-space enclosed within a tool. If, at some unexpected point when “handiness” suddenly disappears, the forgotten thinghood becomes more obtrusive than ever, then the grasp of these moments is exactly part of what Heidegger called “salvation”: the reopening of an underlying “world” (part of the Earth) that was concealed by machination. In “What are Poets for?” Heidegger cites Hölderlin’s poem to highlight a danger that has made the World “unhealable”, “unholy”, and “assaulting man’s nature in his relation to Being itself” (Heidegger 1971, p. 115), and he thinks such danger, where what “grows [is] also what saves” (Ibid.) can be saved by an “Open” enabling the “having-seen” of the danger (Heidegger 1971, p. 119)—here he refers to Rilke’s lines: “and that, when we saw it threatening, we turned it so into the Open . . .” (Ibid.). For Heidegger, the concept of the Open consisted of that which dissolves objectification, grants safety, and sheds light on the “in being”, which he explained as “present in the unconcealed” (Heidegger 1971, p. 120). Since “handiness” is the nature by which useful things reveal their “being-in-themselves” (Heidegger 1962, p. 98) in Heidegger’s phenomenology, an Open disclosing the “in being” must have “handiness” as a moment of existence in its embracement.

This line of reasoning also explains why, in Heidegger’s philosophy of art, a work—which he also defined as the Open—is always interpreted in terms of its thingly character embodied in its role of being useful. A typical example is Van Gogh’s shoes, based on which Heidegger wrote three pages to demonstrate how “the equipmentality of equipment” discloses both the world and the Earth: “This equipment belongs to the earth, and it is protected in the *world* of the peasant woman”¹⁸. In more detail, the shoes on canvas make the “ripening grain and its unexplained self-refusal”, the “uncomplaining anxiety as to the certainty of bread” and the “shivering at the surrounding menace of death” (Ibid.) come into *presence* in the world. The thing thus has an incarnated World in it, and the World, therefore, has an incarnated Earth in it. Notably, human beings also dwell on the Earth and let such incarnations happen through the strife to open what is closed under their feet: the mystery of finitude, rebirth, and the cause of consciousness. This is what the Open is all about, and, as that which opens the Open, “handiness” is thus endowed with an artistic nature by virtue of the man who discovered and preserved it. Such a turning of “handiness” into art has also deconstructed the ontotheological cornerstone of traditional aesthetics—the Cartesian view of beauty, which sees the beautiful as representations of an ultimate reality—by blurring the longstanding distinction between handicrafts and artwork.

Now we should ask: at this point, is it still accurate to consider the “thing” a *categorical* being? Can it be considered an *existential* being now that it has been transformed into a grand Open? From my point of view, it remains true (and will always be true) that without Dasein, things cannot open the Open on their own, so the *physis* that is preserved is still the polymer of the “*in-order-to*”-based spatial-temporal units (making Dasein’s “care” present), which transiently occurs in Dasein’s daily life, although it may be manifested in the light of a being other than Dasein. Nonetheless, the dependence of a thing’s being on Dasein, as well as its *categorical* essence, does not restrict it from serving as a safeguard (or even a ruler) of *existentiality*. In fact, precisely because a thing does not have to be as finite as Dasein (it can preserve the worlds of multiple generations like a “multiplication” of Dasein), it is possible to overcome the power of *lethe*—which would continually erase every single mortal’s knowledge of its *existentiality*, but at the same time allow latecomers who can truly see a thing to intuitively understand the mystery of existence—in an unlimited temporal-spatial scope. *Existentiality*, which has thus become eternally recurring, would be incarnating the thinghood to make it a potential “other”. Using Freud’s term, the “returning repressed” repetitively re-enchants the human community.

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Notes

- ¹ To deny discussions of the worthiness of science, Weber said: “No science is absolutely free from presuppositions, and no science can prove its fundamental value to the man who rejects these presuppositions”. The most crucial ones of these presuppositions, as he later elaborated, include “A exists”, “A is valid”, and “A is meaningful”. However, none of these presuppositions can be proven by science because they should be self-evident, that is, granted by “the holy”, but “the tension between the value-spheres of ‘science’ and the sphere of ‘the holy’ is unbridgeable” See (Weber 1946, pp. 153–54).
- ² (Heidegger 1998, p. 51); emphasis in the original.
- ³ Sometimes it seems that Heidegger implied this problem should be traced back to Plato, as he stated in the end of “Plato’s Doctrine of Truth” in *Pathmarks*, 182: “The story recounted in the ‘allegory of the cave’ provides a glimpse of what is really happening in the history of Western humanity, both now and in the future: Taking the essence of truth as the correctness of the representation, one thinks of all beings according to ‘ideas’ and evaluates all reality according to ‘values.’ That which alone and first of all is decisive is not which ideas and which values are posited, but rather the fact that the real is interpreted according to ‘ideas’ at all, that the ‘world’ is weighed according to ‘values’ at all”.
- ⁴ Heidegger put forward the idea of “other beginning” in his criticism of modernity.
- ⁵ Heidegger’s conceptualization of the thing can be found mostly in his middle period, especially in the 1935–36 essay “The Origin of the Work of Art” and the 1935 lecture *The Question of the Thing: On Kant’s Doctrine of the Transcendental Principles*. These texts shed light on Heidegger’s claim that works of art serve as preservers of the general essence of the thing, revealing its temporal and spatial properties as primordial phenomena that defy representation. This perspective lays the groundwork for his later ideas of “releasement toward things” and the “fourfold” gathering of earth, sky, mortals, and divinities as the thing. Importantly, the discussions are not isolated, but in line with Heidegger’s earlier philosophy. As emphasized at the outset of Section 3, the transition from *Being and Time* to Heidegger’s middle period marks a shift from the study of Dasein to the study of being as such. However, it is crucial to recognize that understanding Dasein—the particular mode of being through which beings attain intelligibility—is a prerequisite for exploring being as such, including the thing. Without establishing the spatial and temporal nature of Dasein and the *existential* dimension that arises when beings are revealed within its world, subsequent discussions of the openness and preservation of things, the multi-worldliness of historical Dasein, and the transcendent realms of existence (e.g., abyss, heaven, and predestination) would remain uncharted territory. Thus, this article deliberately returns to Heidegger’s earlier foundational ontology, using the concept of readiness-at-hand as a basic framework to illuminate his comprehensive philosophy of the thing and its intricate relationship to the question of disenchantment—an impoverished understanding of reality that eliminates the *existential* dimension embedded in things.
- ⁶ See (Descartes 1964, p. 77): “So let suppose now that we are asleep and that all these details, such as opening the eyes, shaking the head, extending the hands, and similar things, are merely illusions; and let us think that perhaps our hands and our whole body are not such as we see them”.
- ⁷ This is not to say, however, that all phenomena are identical in terms of being true. For Heidegger, truth as *aletheia* unconceals itself by appearing, which means that it can either stand out directly from the concealment as that which is purely *radiant*, or it can indirectly announce itself from behind the concealment, generating deceptions. Generally speaking, both circumstances involve the happening of truth, but they are certainly different.
- ⁸ Meanwhile, Heidegger says, “in the ‘in-order-to’ as a structure there lies an *assignment* or *reference* of something to something” Heidegger (1962, p. 97); emphasis in the original), clearly indicating its semantical nature.
- ⁹ Heidegger distinguishes “seeing” from “looking” in his discussion of the difference between using something and theoretically comprehending it, suggesting that “seeing”, or observation with “care”, is more primordial than theoretical cognition: “[...] the fact that observation is a kind of concern is just as primordial as the fact that action has *its own* kind of sight. Theoretical behavior is just looking, without circumspection” (Heidegger 1962, p. 99). This means that, for Heidegger, the degree of primodality is negatively related to the degree to which phenomena—as naturally occurring meanings authentically disclosed in pre-ontological contexts—are formalized and planarized.
- ¹⁰ (Heidegger 1962, p. 374); emphasis in the original.
- ¹¹ See (Heidegger 1962, p. 40): “If, then, the answer to the question of Being is to provide clues for our research, it cannot be adequate until it brings us the insight that the specific kind of Being of ontology hitherto, and the vicissitude of its inquiries, its findings, and its failures, have been necessitated in the character of Dasein”.
- ¹² (Heidegger 1962, p. 488); emphasis in the original.
- ¹³ See Heidegger’s own comment regarding this issue, cited from (Dahlstrom 2015, p. 85): “Precisely because the inquiry into the sense of being [...] is different from that of all previous metaphysics, this questioning [...] would still have been able to

show what it accomplishes, for what was insufficient about the part held back [i.e., Division III] was not an insecurity about the direction of the question and its realm, but only that of the correct elaboration”.

- 14 He explicated this statement with the example of Newton’s laws: “Before Newton his laws were neither true nor false”, for only through Newton did the entities of those laws become “accessible in themselves to Dasein”, although saying this does not mean that “before him there were no such entities as have been uncovered and pointed out by those laws” See (Heidegger 1962, p. 269).
- 15 In fact, this idea is presented at length in “The Origin of the Work of Art”, so from my point of view, addressing it again in “The Thing” marks a confirmation of the philosopher’s consistency. See (Heidegger 1971, p. 42): “The temple, in its standing there, first gives to things their look and to men their outlook on themselves. This view remains open as long as the work is a work, as long as the god has not fled from it. It is the same with the sculpture of the god, votive offering of the victor in the athletic games. It is not a portrait whose purpose is to make it easier to realize how the god looks; rather, it is a work that lets the god himself be present and thus is the god himself”.
- 16 To emphasize “everydayness” here does not mean that I perceive Heidegger’s conception of the thing only on an empirical level, given that there is a transcendental and meta-*physis* domain of Being energizing Dasein’s *existential polemos*—the questioning of its absent essence and the basic causality of the cosmos—contained in the abyssal structure of the Earth, which forms a link of the Fourfold, and hence of the thing. The reason why I keep my discussions at the empirical level is that, as the theme of this article is the “World”, I believe that a thing’s worldly character (as well as the *categorical polemos* through which Dasein brought its shared world with the thing into disclosedness) is meaningful enough to sustain an immortal wonder of Being.
- 17 (Heidegger 1962, p. 103); emphasis in the original.
- 18 (Heidegger 1971, p. 33); emphasis in the original.

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Article

Mystical Experiences through the Lens of Heidegger and Mamardashvili: Overcoming the Metaphysical Model of Human Existence

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Abstract: This essay relates a Heideggerian interpretation of metaphysics, as determined by an interpretation of Being in terms of a priori laws/essences, to a traditionally passive model of experience. The spiritual principles of the Christian and the Buddhist experience of the Nothing are shown as an overcoming of this model and an overcoming of metaphysics. The essay displays the ways in which Heidegger and Mamardashvili stress the illusionary nature of a metaphysical understanding of human existence and the central role of personal transformation beyond one's psychological subjectivity. This transformation is tied to the possibility of active engagement with the Nothing, requiring efforts of attentive self-detachment from the constant pressure of one's representational faculties motivated by a hidden flight from anxiety. Buddhist and Christian notions of detachment and letting-be are then interpreted in light of Heidegger's and Mamardashvili's ideas, allowing for a phenomenological interpretation of certain passages from the New Testament and the Bodhidharma's teaching.

Keywords: mystical experience; nothing; Heidegger; Mamardashvili; Christianity; New Testament; Buddhism

1. Introduction

In "The Zen Teaching of Bodhidharma", we read that enlightenment is a state in which one realizes that nothing depends on anything and that the mind depends on nothing.¹ In the Bible, we hear that the law and the prophets were until John but now the kingdom of Heaven is entered by force. In both cases, there is an emphasis on an overcoming of a system of laws, which is not a mere abandonment of the law—as Christ stresses—but rather fulfillment. Namely, as long as one's spiritual condition is determined by rules, laws, or any metaphysical system in general, one has not yet fulfilled the very essence of spirituality itself. One is not yet ready for the kingdom of Heaven and has not yet reached enlightenment. This is the way we should also read Dostoyevsky when he emphatically rejects theodicy in *The Brothers Karamazov* and furiously resists the rational order of things in *Notes from Underground*. Indeed, in a way that echoes Heidegger's criticism of *Das Man* and the anonymous normativity thereof, Dostoyevsky stresses the existential intolerance of the everyday mode of human existence as submitted to a priori laws that one *did not choose*. Such a predicament is simply unacceptable for Dostoyevsky, not, however, because he adores human subjectivity as, for example, Sartre does, but because, as Merab Mamardashvili stresses, the situation in which the world is determined in some way "without me", that is, without my personal responsibility for its meaning and "structure", is humiliating and infantile (Mamardashvili 2014, p. 195). It is a situation in which I am a passive observer of the meaning of Being, a superfluous element which at best solves the problems that he himself has created. In short, in such a situation, one *does not exist*. To overcome this situation, i.e., to exist, is precisely what Bodhidharma and Christ speak about when they speak about the realization of the law as its overcoming.

In this light, Dostoyevsky and Mamardashvili reject *metaphysics* in the sense that Heidegger illuminates, that is, as an assumption of a priori structures determining the

world independently of human will. For Heidegger, this assumption pertains to the heart of the forgetfulness of Being as a tacit interpretation of Being in terms of the a priori structure of the beingness of beings. The metaphysical version of the ontological difference thus proceeds from a conventional view of beings from which we abstract a formal structure. Though metaphysics frequently names such a structure as a “condition” of beings, in reality, such Being is nothing *ontologically* different but merely an indication of beings’ most general features. Such a metaphysical view on Being entails a rigid understanding of what beings are and might be. As Heidegger stresses, it determines the very sphere of the *possible* and excludes anything that does not fit into the artificial form of the a priori of the beingness of beings.²

As I shall show, spiritual enlightenment pertains precisely to the overcoming of the mode of existence pre-reflectively determined by this assumption (i.e., by metaphysics). I shall display that this overcoming pertains to a shift of the mode of one’s experience from the traditional passive model we find in most Western philosophy to the active mode of experience, the possibility of which is presented by Heidegger and Mamardashvili. In particular, I shall argue that what the Buddhists call “non-attachment” or “non-discrimination” and what Meister Eckhart names “detachment” and “letting-be” are not merely characteristics of a mystical or a religious mode of experiencing, but express the essence of experience *itself* in its *ontologically* active, non-metaphysical sense, which, however, must at the same time be grasped as an overcoming of the *ontic* passive–active dichotomy.

2. Experience and the Nothing

All empirical scientific knowledge begins with experience, hence the basic common-sense meaning of “nature” in natural sciences is “the experienceable reality”. Accordingly, when someone argues in favor of some hidden, unseen world, the natural scientist justly frowns. If such a world is neither a part of the experienceable reality, nor belongs to its formal structure (e.g., mathematics), it cannot be seriously taken to be real. Indeed, even the a priori principles of natural sciences, which cannot be tested within it but must be assumed for the scientific law to make sense as a law, are not speculative but come *from experience*. E.g., we *experience* things as causally related. We may be wrong regarding the concrete causal relations, but it is in principle unimaginable that someone would not experience objects as causally related. This is something Kant has formulated with great clarity—there are certain formal conditions for a thing to be counted as an object that belongs to the world, that is, to be *objectively real*. It is this objective reality that constitutes the sense of “nature” in natural sciences. Though in humanities, we meet fields in which the basic principles of being-an-object are not easily applicable—think, for example, of art or history. The natural sciences assume that all such fields are, after all, grounded in objective world. Whatever is present in the world, i.e., is not a hallucination, shares the world with other things and can be lawfully determined in relation to them; an un-natural thing—as Kant stressed—would simply not fit into the world, as its presence would make no sense and have no effect on any of the realities that we experience and live through. So, we may formulate the common-sense relation between experience and reality in the basis of the natural sciences in the following way: *only what is present in the world and can therefore become an object of consciousness is real*, even if it becomes so non-directly, e.g., by means of certain equipment or as a detectable effect of something else (i.e., a theoretical object). It is this general assumption of the natural sciences that Heidegger has already criticized in his first 1919 lectures. Indeed, this criticism can be seen as the very entrance into his path of thinking:

Objectivity and reality are correlates of consciousness as such, of the epistemological subject as such. All Being is only in and through thought, and all thought is thought of Being. For idealism too the world is not mere representation, but reality is always what it is only as we are conscious of it; there are only objects as objects of consciousness, and genuine reality is the objectivity of the sciences.

Only what becomes objective in scientific knowledge is real in the genuine sense.
(Heidegger 2008, pp. 69–70)

Heidegger points out here that to identify reality with objective scientific knowledge means to assume a particular sense of “real” and to set it as a standard. Namely, the idealist and the realist assume the same sense of the real *as a correlate of consciousness*. It does not matter whether reality is constituted by transcendental consciousness or merely mirrored in an empirical one since in both cases, we only accept as real something that *fits the structure of our conscious representation*. Here, Heidegger applies a phenomenological reduction of what is usually taken for ontology: it does not matter in his case whether the world is physical or ideal. However, he performs the reduction not in order to ignore ontology, but rather in order to stress its more profound sense—the ontological meaning of an entity does not tell us what it is “made of” but indicates in what sense it is a *real* entity. Though Heidegger does not deny that only what is experienceable is real, he emphatically rejects from the very start that “to be experienceable” equals or can be in some way reduced to “to be an object of consciousness”.

Such a reduction of experience has happened since, according to Heidegger, Being has been interpreted as a constant presence since the Greeks and until (i.e., including) modern science. That basically means that we interpret things in the world as ‘hanging’ on their own, i.e., as simply present and fully available for our investigation and manipulation. The crest of such interpretation is the mode of human existence that Heidegger criticizes in terms of “technology” (or rather “technicity”). Rather than addressing the mere ontic fact of the questionable nature of our dependence on technology, Heidegger delves into the ontological reduction of beings into what presents itself merely as a resource, ordered to stand by and be immediately at hand (Heidegger 2013, 3:36, p. 17). For a “technological” mode of existence, beings appear only as a “standing reserve” and are revealed in the mode of ordering. As Heidegger stresses, such a mode of revealing beings does not merely reduce beings to what is present and representable as an object, but restricts their “realness” to the mere controllability within the rank and order of possible production.

Yet, as Heidegger explains in many ways, such an idea of existence is ungrounded and—more importantly—does not fit the way beings manifest in our direct experience of the world. We may say that the ‘positive’ aspect of the world, namely the determinable ways in which things show themselves to us, is only the present side of what is. Yet, our experience is also constituted by various forms of absence. It is this ‘Being’ of the ‘not’ that Heidegger sees as remaining unthought in metaphysics. Importantly, the ‘not’ or the ‘nothing’ is not something that belongs exclusively to human experience, but rather co-constitutes the very Being of things in the world. In *Being and Time*, Heidegger first presented an explicit experience of the nothing as occurring in the mood of existential anxiety.³ This point is made even more clear in *What is Metaphysics*.⁴ The mood of anxiety is thus a paradigmatic example of a peculiar kind of experientiality, which emphasizes, within experience, not the present determinable element of beings—which we usually take for beings themselves—but the way this element comes out of nothingness always in relation to other elements (the world) and to our own momentary self-understanding. Namely, beings never become ‘full-fledged substances’ whose presence we could say is solid and constant, but rather are always also concealed, i.e., are also constituted by nothingness. The nothingness here does not mean a simple nihil, like an unoccupied space, but an anxiety-inducing abyss that is the creative origin of all possible determinations of beings. That is not to say that beings have also some hidden, mystical characteristics, but that the very sense of existing as a being, i.e., of manifesting in the world, includes being-abyssal. Being (Sein) conceals itself and only in this way lets beings (Seinde) be (Heidegger 2012, p. 88). Moreover, this refusal or withdrawal of Being is experienceable as it constitutes the way anything is present in our experience. Anxiety is precisely the attunement in which the refusal, that is, the nihilating pervasion of the nothingness, becomes predominant over the familiar presence of beings-as-a-whole.

The phenomenological fact that beings are not fully present objects corresponds to D.T. Suzuki's words, positing that in enlightenment, one does not take things as *too* real and is aware of the nothingness in all things (Suzuki 2011, p. 109). Yet, my idea here is that the traditionally passive model of experience, such as perceiving an a priori determined reality, is dependent on an overlooking of this phenomenological fact and is sustained by our own existential anxiety. Namely, all Western thinkers, including Hume, Kant and Husserl, take experience to be intentional in a sense of being determined by some positive experienced element, irrespectively of whether this element comes as it is, or must be constituted and formed by the transcendental subject. We may say that such a model of experience is inherent to Western metaphysics. One is essentially passive in experience; one does not, for example, "decide" on how the experienced is constituted. Yet, if there is a dimension of experience that engages with what is absent and irrepresentable yet is still *tangible* in ways that may even make us anxious, it makes no sense to say that we merely suffer the external world. In other words, it does not make sense to *passively receive the nothingness*. Instead, we may notice that we always take an active stance towards the nothing, even if merely by fleeing from it and rationalizing the world accordingly. In such a fleeing, we give ourselves to whatever ontological and ethical laws we find ourselves in and, like children, try to do good and judge the bad accordingly. It is this anxiety-driven passive model of experience that we find in the everyday human experience. It is this slavery to the metaphysical a priori of the world that Dostoyevsky so despised. It is in this mode of existence that we calculate how one thing is dependent on another and imagine spiritual levels, steps, procedures, etc. It is in this mode that we are enclosed in the subject-object distinction and experience the world as either objectively estranged or as a place where our subjective wishes may be fulfilled if we follow the right rules.

3. The Nothing and the Self

Both Heidegger and Mamardashvili show that all calculations based on eternal a priori principles of metaphysics, which also determine the meaning of transcendence as relative to such principles, assume the essence of being-human as something determined (Heidegger 2012, p. 22) and block the possibility of experiencing the abyssal emptiness of one's genuine selfhood as something that must yet be enacted (Mamardashvili 2014, p. 319) not arbitrarily, however, but rather according to certain ontological characteristics of creativity of the event of Being. That is to say, the nothingness of which Heidegger speaks indicates that the world is not determined a priori by some list of essences, but is an event in which its fundamental ontological constitution unfolds in unpredictable ways. The unfolding of the world is unpredictable not because something surprising happens *in the world* but because the very meaning of what does it mean to *be a world*,⁵ to *be a being*, to *exist*, transforms so that each time, we can only look backwards and witness ad hoc the occurred transformation of Being.⁶ Still, Being does not change arbitrarily, but rather according to its own inner Logos, not in a Hegelian sense of a systematic unfolding but in a sense that there is indeed a measure according to which Being becomes more essential and true to its enigmatic, unique and genuinely creative nature. The forgetfulness of Being is, on the other hand, an ontological mode in which the way beings exist has degraded into the modern self-concealment of nature, i.e., the mode in which we are unable to experience the enigmatic nature of beings as never being fully present and always partially undetermined in ways that allow them, for example, to serve as signs of the gods, but also, and foremost, as the "natural shelters" of the truth of Being.⁷ Being, as Heidegger explains, is not a mere fact of a thing's realness and presence in the world, but a meaningful dimension of the many aspects and possibilities of such realness, which always, in each thing, include a thing's indeterminate background, thus allowing for the ontological flexibility and creativity of beings-as-a-whole. It is these ungeneralizable principles of creativity that also guide the transformation of human selfhood.

More precisely, the self-concealment of Being does not only permeate beings as the intrinsic concealment of their material suchness, which Heidegger calls the Earth, but

also as the existential dimension of the mystery of Being itself. Namely, anxiety is not merely a state of confusion in the face of the indeterminability of beings, but rather is an expression of the essence of humans as *mortals*. The mortals are called mortals, says Heidegger, not because “their earthly life comes to an end, but because they are capable of death as death.” (Ibid.) The central idea for us here is that death is not merely a moment in human life; it is the shrine of Nothing that harbors within itself the presencing of Being as the *mystery* of Being itself. In other words, rather than first considering human demise and then attempting to abstract something more significant from it, Heidegger—in his own process of thinking—initially assigns death to Being itself as the ever-present element of the mystery of Being essential for the worlding of the world. He then tells us that this mystery cannot exist in the universe as something that is simply absent and irrelevant to what is present. Instead, the mystery of Being permeates all things as the dimension of death that co-constitutes the Being of mortals. The mortals are the “presencing relation to Being as Being” (Ibid.) in the sense that the mystery of Being does not disappear in things or hide “behind things,” but rather constitutes the thinghood of things. If the mystery of Being did not permeate things, things would not *be*. The ontological function of mortals is, then, to be the bearers of the dimension of the world through which the mystery of Being as the Nothing is sheltered in things. Accordingly, the transformation of human selfhood requires a notion of experience that fulfills what I mentioned before as an active experiential stance towards the Nothing. Rational living beings, says Heidegger, must first *become* mortals (Ibid.).

The most important feature of human experience, which is reduced in the traditional model, but pointed out, for example, by Gadamer, is that experience *may* transform me. Namely, I may become someone quite different by undergoing an experience.⁸ Yet, Mamardashvili teaches us that there are two kinds of changes that are possible on the basis of experience. The first is a psychological pseudo-change since it originates *within* the limits of one’s psychological identity and hence *protects* rather than *overcomes* this identity.⁹ Such a change is ontologically passive—something happens to me in what I do (or not do), but I remain within the a priori laws that sustain my flight from anxiety. This is the sort of change that pertains to humans as rational beings that inertly refuse the mystery of Being. The second sort of change is one in which I detach from the automatic rationalizing powers of my self-identity and *allow* something strange and unpredictable to shake me in such a way that something changes in me without my explicit knowledge and understanding of what exactly happens. Proust’s novels are full of such examples, and Mamardashvili offers a genuine interpretation of their transformative power. A sudden experience of a seemingly banal thing may create a momentary gap in one’s representational powers and offer a chance to resist the immediate tendency of rationalizing it and explaining it away. One must, in such a moment, attempt to be fully present and detached, not to judge or discriminate what is happening, not to act or do anything at all to resolve the experience. One must rather “stand still and not replace [one’s] states or impressions with anything.” (Ibid., p. 253) While Proust speaks of the rare moments in which one’s senses are being struck unexpectedly in a way that allows for a chance to *detach* from the already determined world-projection, one can also consciously choose to practice attentiveness and interpretative self-restraint. Whether the gap in the representational order happens entirely on its own or is being “invited” by certain meditative practices, what happens is that one encounters the nothingness lying under one’s own psychological self-identity and witnesses—if one is able to remain within this experience—that this is a creative emptiness that, however, does not invent itself arbitrarily, but allows what I have called the “un-generalizable principle of creativity of Being itself” to come through and become embodied in one’s existence. Paradoxically, one cannot do anything directly to make such a transformation happen, yet by heightening the attention to one’s existential stance within everyday experience, one can indeed become *actively* present in one’s experience in a way that what one experiences is no more pre-determined as an element of a single

a priori world-projection and world-constitution, but becomes an active letting-be of the unexpected and the fascinating strangeness of beings.

Mamardashvili calls such an experience that requires our effort to be fully present and detached from the automatism of representational faculties “an experience of consciousness”. He stresses that this experience is not “something in which consciousness also presents, but an experience of consciousness in which consciousness is something other, experienced as such.” (Mamardashvili 2014, pp. 9–93) This is not an awareness of our reflectivity but an experience of that dimension which we cannot represent or communicate, but within which alone we feel alive (Ibid., p. 93). The experience of consciousness is precisely the non-intentional *active* engagement with what cannot be represented, i.e., with what Heidegger calls the Nothing; it is, as Mamardashvili says, in principle not categorizable.

Nevertheless, the sense of “active” here must not be confused with the traditional sense of representational, goal-oriented volition. Instead, Mamardashvili stresses that the sort of experience that might be enacted through Proust’s novel pertains to human elevation in “its old religious sense.” (Ibid., p. 311) One cannot voluntarily elevate oneself—we elevate by choosing one path and not another. Yet, we cannot voluntarily choose another path without the detour through the anarchic element of “demolishing the whole structure” of who we already are (Ibid., p. 485). Such a “demolishing” is something that can happen to us if we let ourselves become released from our psychological identity by courageously stirring within the darkness of the experience of consciousness. This anarchic element is crucial for overcoming not just some particular order but for becoming released from the grip of the very a priori of lawfulness itself. Then, one is in a free fall of faith as a mode of an ever-new witnessing of the (metaphysically) impossible.

4. Revisiting Religious Experience (and Concluding)

In this context we may return to certain sentences from Bodhidharma and the New Testament and grasp their meaning anew. When Christ turns the other cheek, he restrains from all the ontic matters that are too easily projected upon this occasion and questions the very force that urges one to rebel against the unpleasantness and the seeming injustice of what happens. This does not mean that one should *in principle* avoid stopping the aggressor—that would be a very distorted moral interpretation of the case. What one should do is allow oneself to experience a detachment from whatever a priori logic forces itself on this experience and let something grow and mature beneath one’s psychological self-identity, so that one day it could give fruit and enact a sudden transformation (or emancipation) irrespectively of whether one wishes it or not. The Kingdom of Heaven is taken by force, not, however, as a direct implementation of one’s representational will. A representational will only sees intentional objects and is always constituted to fit the self-protective existential stance of one’s ego. In particular, the very subject–object distinction, the objectification of the world, the seeming harmlessness of rationalization and essentialization of beings, are all in service of one’s psychological mechanisms that protect one from the abyssal nature of one’s own selfhood and from the nothingness constituting all things.

The force that is needed to enter the Kingdom of Heaven and to be emancipated is precisely the force that aims at the irrepresentable and hence seemingly impossible leap outside the mirror show of metaphysical a priori structures and self-serving rationalizations (apropos the wisdom of this world as being mere foolishness). Mamardashvili stresses that such images, like that of Christ’s walking on the water, indicate that “the *really* existing and occurring is what we would call impossible and that only the impossible requires our faith—faith as the *creation* of what is believed and that would not be without faith.” (Ibid., p. 506) Such a faith is a force-less force of detachment from what we take experience to be and from what we take Being to be. As Meister Eckhart stresses, it is a detachment even from God, since even God is an idea that assumes the subject–object distinction and a certain pre-given order of things. One must, for Eckhart, return to the original nothingness—one

that, according to the Heart Sutra, belongs to all form—where one is not separable from God, or, in Heidegger’s language, from the truth of Beyng in its creative self-essencing on the path of the divinization of the never-present last God. In this place indeed, as Bodhidharma says, it is meaningless to say that something depends on something else, as it is childish to think that a law has any value in itself. Moreover, the force-less force of faith/detachment is, according to Eckhart, the point of the attainment of the original oneness between the soul and God. The godly man “is a begetter of the eternal Word, and God could do nothing without such a man.” (Eckhart 2010, p. 27) Indeed, Eckhart is most radical in his emphatic rejection of the limits of the metaphysically possible. So is Heidegger when he ties the overcoming of metaphysics to the *impossibility* of the possibility question (Heidegger 2018, p. 30).

What is crucial to keep in mind—and my detour through Heidegger and Mamar-dahsvili intended to expose this point—is that the sense of “doing” here pertains not to what one does *after* experiencing the world, but rather to the force by which one enters the Kingdom of Heaven, i.e., a force that belongs to experience as a force to enact a *different mode of experiencing*. It is an ability to *choose* how one experiences rather than merely choose what to do with the experienced possibilities. Everything is permissible, says the apostle, but not everything is beneficial. This “beneficial” can be translated to German as “brauchbar” and related to Heidegger’s “brauchen”—a need and a usage pertaining to Beyng itself. Namely, Beyng needs human beings in order to embody its own creative unfolding towards divinity, and so it uses us. In such a usage, says Heidegger, the genuine essence of humans is first liberated (Heidegger 2002, p. 277). We then become the salt of the earth; that is, we first taste what it mean to be truly alive, to be present in each moment in the fullness of our abilities, and the depth of the experienced enigma of Beyng. The essence of experience is then itself experienced as one engages in a dialog with the nothingness and first projects the truly human world. The essence of experience is then revealed not as being a subjective suffering of what comes from somewhere else but—like the German term *Erfahrung* insinuates—both being-drawn and drawing as participating in experience that is not produced in one’s consciousness, brain, or mind, but is an event of human experience itself. By actively participating in this event, that is, by making the right efforts of *not distorting it by our subjective rationalizing projections*, or, in other words, by letting-be, detaching ourselves, or non-discriminating, we first return to the living emergence of the *physis* and allow the world to show itself in all its unrepresentable strangeness and suchness. Such a *physis* rejects any *meta* that would enclose it in an a priori structure of mere presence. In such a world, as Bultmann said, we do not only see things but may also *hear* what they say to us. Through the effort of the de-subjectivization of experience, we pass beyond the naively personal religiosity of the past and the outrageously impersonal objectivization of the universe in the present and encounter the enigma of Beyng, which Nishitani sees as impersonally personal or personally impersonal (Nishitani 1983, p. 40). It is a strange world in which the gods can speak and give signs yet never in a personally schizophrenic way, one that is ego-centered and hence unable to grasp the true responsibility of being the salt of the earth, i.e., of creatively determining the meaning of Being itself. In fact, we already live in such a world but are blinded by inattentiveness to our own experience, noticing only its roughest aspects and silently feeling lost and helpless within its more expansive, non-reifiable and existentially distressing dimensions. Yet, these dimensions of experience are phenomenologically given—this is not a reflection or a thought about experience but the very core of the experientiality of experience. And in this core, we are either active by making constant efforts to be present (to remember ourselves, as Gurdjieff phrased it), or we direct our energy automatically into the current of psychological self-protection in front of the abyssal nothingness to which we all belong, hence directing our energy against anything truly human, against Beyng, and against the possibility of the divine. We may say that modern nihilism is, paradoxically, a flight from the experience of the nothing, while a courageous readiness to experience the nothing is, according to Welte, a possibility of a new, *universal* religious experience:

If a new religious experience is possible in the form of nothing and shows up here and there, then this can also be of great importance for the understanding of certain features in our Christian history of tradition that have often been forgotten. And this can also be of great importance for the understanding of non-Christian religious traditions, whether they are Jewish or Islamic or whether they are Hindu, Taoist or especially Buddhist. Large ecumenical spaces and possibilities can open up from here, which can both open up our own tradition and reach far beyond our predominantly European Christianity. (Welte 2015)

As Mamardashvili stresses, anything that can be said in religious language can also be said in “non-religious language.” (Mamardashvili 2014, p. 160) Though the religious symbols, myths and terms may be needed to communicate the enigmatic and grandiose significance of human transformation beyond the illusions of the ego, the subject–object duality and the a priori based rationality—this is why Heidegger also uses such language occasionally—we may find all the elements and the clues for what experience really means and for the transformation explicated by the Christians and the Buddhists in our everyday life. Moreover, Mamardashvili points out that it is not accidental that religious people commonly downplay the anti-metaphysical (i.e., rejecting any a priori order) element of religious experience. “Since religious work aims at worshipping,” says Mamardashvili, “the side of thoughtful investigation is being reduced.” (Mamardashvili 2014, p. 634) That is why it is crucial, today more than ever, that those who are—by definition—meant to conduct a thoughtful investigation of the phenomena, namely the phenomenologists, become free from metaphysics in a sense that Heidegger had highlighted. We need a better phenomenology, one that is mature enough to realize that the “matters themselves” are not what is always easily approachable and objectifiable in experience, but that which truly *matters* in our existence. We need the sort of reflection in which we actively engage ourselves, not in a theoretical reduction of the momentary and the personal, but in a thoughtful letting-be—one in which the momentary and the personal are being-afforded the opportunity of leading us home, to the genuinely human sphere of the trans-personal and the eternal.

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Notes

- ¹ “Whoever knows that nothing depends on anything has found the Way. And whoever knows that the mind depends on nothing is always at the place of enlightenment.” (Bodhidharma 1989, p. 57).
- ² “The question of possibility is the only basic mode of the metaphysical thinking; the decline to the a priori and the misinterpretation of this procedure in terms of a causal explanation from primary reasons, both belong as formations in the question of possibility.” (Heidegger 2018, p. 24).
- ³ “In that in the face of which one has anxiety, the ‘It is nothing and nowhere’ becomes manifest.” (Heidegger 1962, p. 231).
- ⁴ “Die Angst offenbart das Nichts.” (Heidegger [1976] 2004).
- ⁵ “World is higher than merely ‘created’ things, because it is formative of history and so lies closest to the event.” (Heidegger 2012, p. 216).
- ⁶ “What is inceptual is never the new, because the new is merely what is already fast becoming passé. Nor is the beginning ever the “eternal,” because the beginning is precisely not taken out of, and away from, history.” (Ibid., p. 45).
- ⁷ As Heidegger explains, the sheltering of truth in beings is directly related to the strife between earth and world, that is, between the self-concealing and the revealing “sides” of Being. To lose the nothingness “from our sight” would then mean that we lost one necessary element of what makes being the carriers of truth. (Ibid., p. 25).
- ⁸ “Alteration always means that what is altered also remains the same and is maintained. However totally it may change, something changes in it. In terms of the categories, all alteration (alloiosis) belongs in the sphere of quality—i.e., of an accident of substance. But transformation means that something is suddenly and as a whole something else, that this other transformed thing that it has become is its true being, in comparison with which its earlier being is nil. When we find someone transformed we mean precisely this, that he has become another person, as it were. There cannot here be any gradual transition leading from one to the other,

since the one is the denial of the other. Thus transformation into structure means that what existed previously exists no longer.” (Gadamer 2013, pp. 110–11).

- ⁹ According to Mamardashvili, since rationality is able to objectify what is experienced, it easily hides the true meaning of a situation and tells us a story that would fit our ways of sense-making, which is determined by our identity and protects us from encountering the nothingness. As Mamardashvili explains: “I must live in a world with myself and accept only what lets me continue live in the world with myself.” (Mamardashvili 2014, p. 80).

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