

Article

The Spread Body and the Affective Body: A Discussion with Emmanuel Falque

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Abstract: This article presents a constructive dialogue between contemporary theological phenomenology and systematic theology. It considers the writings of the French phenomenologist Emmanuel Falque by offering a precis of his unique approach to “crossing” the boundaries of theology and philosophy. This methodological innovation serves as an intervention into contemporary theological phenomenology, which allows him to propose an overlooked dimension of human corporeality, what he calls the spread-body (*corps épandu*). Within the latter is embedded a conception of bodily existence that escapes ratiocination and is comprised of chaotic forces, drives, desires, and animality. The article challenges not so much this philosophical description but rather suggests that Falque’s *theological resolution* to this subterranean dimension of corporeal life consists in a *deus ex machina* that re-orders these corporeal forces without remainder through participation in the eucharist. It argues that Falque’s notion of the spread body can be supplemented theologically by an account of ‘affectivity’ that is distinguished from *auto-affection*, as in the case of Michel Henry, and which also gleans from the field of affect theory. This supplementation is derived from current research in systematic theology, which looks at the doctrines of pneumatology and sanctification to offer a more plausible account of corporeality in light of the Christian experience of the affective body.

Keywords: Emmanuel Falque; spread body; affectivity; systematic theology; pneumatology



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The wind (*to pneuma*) blows where it chooses, and you hear the sound of it, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes. So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit.

– John 3:8, NRSV trans

Man is a vast deep, whose hairs you, Lord, have numbered, and in you none can be lost. Yet it is easier to count his hairs than the affections and motions of his heart.

– St Augustine, *Confessions*, 4.14.22, Chadwick trans

1. Introduction

This article presents a constructive dialogue between phenomenology and systematic theology. Its primary interlocutor will be the French phenomenologist and theologian Emmanuel Falque, whose principal contribution to systematics will come to be judged by his *philosophical* description of human corporeality, a theme increasingly pronounced in Christian dogmatics.¹ Assessing this description, however, requires delineating Falque’s relationship to theology in the first place, for it is only in the act of theologizing, he claims, that a mature *phenomenology* of the body comes into view.² Indeed, intervening in the debate between phenomenology and theology, which has preoccupied the enclave of reflection in the ‘theological turn’ ever since Dominique Janicaud’s critique, is central to Falque’s program of embodiment, since, according to him, resisting the confusion of these boundaries is in fact what engenders a proper and transformative encounter between them. It is precisely on the basis of such confusion that a baptized phenomenology

comes to *determine* descriptions of the body, which appear ultimately at odds not only with the Scriptural tradition but also with what phenomenology can come to discover when it acknowledges its own limit. Thus, given the manifold ways in which thinkers of the theological turn have and continue to influence contemporary systematic theology (predominantly in its Catholic mode), the broader aim of this article is to suggest that Falque's intervention deserves much-needed attention as an alternative to the dominant obsession with phenomenological descriptions of transcendence in systematic theology. Here it must be said that Falque's reception has been felt most acutely within French theological phenomenology,³ (the significance of which is outlined below), but with only a limited reception outside of this arena. In a crucial respect, this article aims to test the fecundity of his contribution to embodiment for discussions in Protestant systematics.

The article begins by following the methodological debate between phenomenology and theology, illustrating its stakes as it pertains to the body in Falque's critique of Michel Henry, from where the theologization of phenomenology can be said to have reached something of a climax, and importantly, with significant consequences for our conception of corporeality.⁴ Following an encounter with Henry, the article moves to explicate Falque's own concept of embodiment, which undergoes development from his earlier writings to his more recent reflections on the notion of the "spread body" (*corps épandu*).⁵ Through this investigation, we discover in Falque's vocabulary of the 'spread body' several features that are attributed to disparate sources (theology, psychoanalysis, philosophy) and which combine to contribute to a vision of embodiment encompassing a broad and unstructured field of chaotic forces, desires, drives, sensations, raw organic matter, and animality.⁶

However, just as Falque (a philosopher first and foremost—a point which he never fails to insist on)⁷ endeavors to persist within phenomenology (albeit at its limit), he nevertheless also exhibits at key moments an encumbrance to his explicitly confessional (Catholic) theological commitments. Thus, in the domain of philosophy and theology, he treats this unstructured and chaotic situation of embodiment by offering an account of its transformation, or "metamorphosis", in the staging of the Last Supper, problematized in terms of the movement from animality to humanity or eros to agape. While an accurate reading of Falque's methodology makes clear that a phenomenological explication of the eucharist presents an opportunity for a deeper understanding of our material human condition (and here especially for systematic theology), and thus is neither a mere usurping of dogmatic concepts for a philosophical anthropology nor simply a theological apologetics for Catholic faith, his distinctive confessional orientation nevertheless compels him to find the unity of thought in the meaning of the sacraments. It is for this reason that Falque subsequently obscures the phenomenological insights he makes on the very basis of this Catholicity. Hence, for example, when Falque rightly concedes that we do not leave behind the spread body's eros, passions, animality, sensations, forces, and drives, he still advocates for their conversion or transformation (from animality into humanity or eros into agape), which takes place as a re-orientation of our being-in-the-world when Christ comes to dwell with us in the eucharistic. This may be an appropriate *phenomenological* description of doctrine (eucharist and resurrection), which begins to establish Christianity's "credibility" (as opposed to believability) in a secularizing world, but it could also be philosophically and theologically extended. For, what this description still lacks is an *explanatory force*—that is, an account of *how* the efficaciousness of grace comes to transform our orientation in the world as embodied beings, or what *is* precisely happening 'in' or 'to' the spread body as it is re-orientated. Therefore, the article suggests that the spread body needs to be joined by "the affective body".

Philosophically, on Falque's own terms (following Deleuze), phenomenology cannot always be sufficient in attending to that which is constitutively outside of phenomenality.⁸ This justifies his own forays into philosophies of immanence as well as psychoanalysis to explore dimensions of our organic life that 'weigh-down' and come to influence our experience of subjectivity but do not necessarily rise to levels of conscious reflection. From the perspective of this article, which wishes to promote the phenomenological method as a means for dia-

logical encounter with theology, the field of affect theory can thus be proposed as a suitable “backlash” for phenomenology—since it takes for its object both a speculative metaphysics of materiality and a theorization of pre-predicative forces (‘affects’) to which phenomenology has, by definition, no access. The paradigm of affect theory becomes particularly apt for “supplementing” Falque’s notion of the spread body—with its emphasis on chaotic forces, drives, and animality—but is also importantly distinct from the notion of *auto-affection* in Michel Henry.⁹ Since affect theories attempt precisely to theorize these forces, which appear in Falque’s texts in a largely romantic register, reducing them to an anonymous yet necessary substrate of human life, the “affective body” in the model proposed here does not shy away from these forces but comes to understand them through concrete dynamics of structure and novelty.¹⁰ With this paradigm of the affective body—stimulated in response to Falque’s philosophical investigations—the article moves finally to supplement Falque’s *theological* resolution of the spread body in the eucharist through a discussion with contemporary systematic theology, which treats the metamorphosis of the affective body through ‘sanctification’ (atonement) and through the inner-working of the Holy Spirit (pneumatology). Through this discussion and dialogue with Falque’s philosophy of embodiment, systematic theology not only continues its rich exchange with (contemporary) theological phenomenology in so far as it gleans insights into aspects of our corporeal condition, but it also demonstrates that the work being done in systematics can also enhance phenomenology’s (Falque’s) desire to see finite humanity described *tout court* as well as account for its possible transformation in light of the Christian experience of faith.

2. Falque, the Flesh, and the ‘Theological Turn’

The context in which Falque’s notion of the spread body takes shape (Section 4) are the developments in the so-called ‘theological turn’. With much already written on this movement that need not be repeated here,¹¹ it is necessary and simply enough to say with respect to Falque’s own place within its trajectory that he broadly agrees with Dominique Janicaud that something has happened to phenomenology in its French mode, particularly where phenomenology is inflected by theology and where the supposed orthodoxy of phenomenology has been compromised by religious transcendence (Levinas, Henry, Marion).¹² But even a cursory overview of the intensely theological titles of Falque’s series of monographs will immediately complicate—and perhaps mystify—his relationship to theology as a phenomenologist. In short, Falque’s position is neither to simply dismiss the religious (Janicaud) nor to confuse the boundaries between phenomenology and theology (Marion, Henry, Levinas), but to argue for distinction with simultaneous irreducibility. Philosophy and theology are different, but they cannot be separated; they are hospitable and not hostile to one another, for they both should serve to return us “to the things themselves [*auf die ‘Sachen selbst’*]”¹³—and for the purposes of this investigation, the phenomenological and theological exploration of the body.

Moreover, Falque, as a Christian thinker who maintains confessional commitments, wants to understand how to think with Christianity in a philosophical way in a world that is no longer exclusively Christian, or at least beset with new cultural conditions of (post)secular life.¹⁴ These details are not incidental but central to understanding his position within the ‘theological turn’ and the attempt to distinguish himself from it. Whereas thinkers like Marion or Levinas begin with a gesture that posits the infinite and then derives the finite, Falque begins with a positive account of the human as such. Following Heidegger, this is not finite as privation but the positive position of “finitude”¹⁵—the inescapable mortality that is shared first of all and by all of humanity, i.e., before any relation to the revelation of God.¹⁶ Insofar as “finitude” implies for Falque an approach that begins with a methodological atheism, this does not preclude him from using the means of theology to pursue his philosophical anthropology. This means that Falque’s interest in Christ’s incarnation, for example, is not only something that reveals God’s humanity but is also philosophically useful because it radically reveals humanity to itself.¹⁷ The stakes of this methodological delimitation could be approached in several ways and

through different thinkers who populate Falque's oeuvre, but our focus here will be on his reading of Michel Henry,¹⁸ for it reveals both the way in which phenomenology has been theologized—i.e., Henry's collapsing of the philosophy of embodiment (*Leibhaftigkeit*) into incarnation—and also points toward Falque's broader passion for the body that escapes modern phenomenology's rendering of 'flesh.'¹⁹

Falque accuses classical phenomenology from Husserl through Henry of renewing the modern dichotomization of soul and body into the phenomenological distinction between *Leib* (flesh) and *Körper* (body), not in the sense of a trivialized dichotomy but such that it cannot provide an account of *access* to the body through the flesh.²⁰ For Husserl, the *Leib* is the medium of all perception and thus an imminent, subjective consciousness of the body, which is distinct from the body (*Körper*) as an object of experience within the mundane world of objects.²¹ Although things are more complicated in Husserl, it is for Falque, particularly the French reception of this distinction and its ontologization, which have captured phenomenological inquiry.²² In a translation heritage—crucially departing from the early translations of Husserl (Levinas), which translated *Leib* as *organic body* or *living body* (*corps organique* and *corps vivant*)—*Leib*, as the body-which-I-am (Merleau-Ponty) and as the site of all givenness (Franck), becomes translated as *flesh* (*chair*).²³ The result of this is that flesh (*chair*) not only takes on a phenomenal meaning as that which exclusively refers to *Leib* as subjective-body but, more problematically, when it comes into contact with theology, the originary *theological* meaning (*sarx*) is paradoxically lost and taken over. This is what Falque claims is at work in Michel Henry: *a phenomenology of embodiment in terms of flesh that determines the theological meaning of the incarnation*.²⁴

3. Michel Henry and the Impossible Incorporation

Henry's account of flesh in a purported work of philosophy, but which culminates theologically (*Incarnation: A Philosophy of Flesh* [2000]), follows an *a priori* claim throughout his texts in the development of what he calls 'radical' or "material phenomenology":²⁵ namely, the need to avoid ontological dualisms that arise in the Western philosophical tradition and particularly its latest iteration in "phenomenological monism."²⁶ Since this position appears in direct tension with Falque's protest against phenomenology's rendering of *Leib* and *Körper*, one needs to grasp how Henry's flesh, on both phenomenological and theological grounds, becomes precisely what it rejects—"an astral, 'psychic,' or even 'spiritual' matter."²⁷ Phenomenologically, ever since his magnum opus, *L'essence de la manifestation* (1963), the phenomenological method of reduction for Henry, which defines phenomenality in terms of transcendence, alienation, or what is other or beyond consciousness (*ek-static*), is seen as inadequate for revealing the 'essence' of subjectivity. Reversing Husserl's distinction in §85 of *Ideas I* between sensible matter (*hylē*) and intentional form (*morphē*), the latter, as noetic transcendence, no longer takes precedence and must undergo a (radical) reduction to the original matter or hyletic impressional components that underwrite subjectivity. This purely affective zone (Henry's concept of Life)²⁸ is an immanence without horizon and intentionality, a dimension of auto-impressions/auto-affection that renders possible any conscious activity.²⁹ As will later become evident, it is this account of affectivity—where hyletic impressions are not given intentionally, that is, to a transcendental consciousness, but radically given in a more primordial givenness and thus, for Henry, remaining *within* a genuine phenomenological project—that makes Falque resistant to any notion of an 'affective body' or 'affects' more generally. (Yet, as our discussion will demonstrate, it is precisely Falque's development of a so-called "extra-phenomenology" *contra* Henry that provides the post-phenomenological link to the field of affect theory.)

For Henry, it is from this phenomenological standpoint that he interprets the incarnation as the revelation of Life itself, in contrast to the disclosure of the world 'outside of oneself': "the revelation of life. . . does not have any separation within itself and never differs from itself. *Life reveals itself*. Life is auto-revelation."³⁰ With this phenomenological distinction between life and the world, the difference between body and flesh becomes equally significant and pronounced. On the one hand, the phenomenological flesh takes

the side of Life's auto-revelation, appearing only within life itself, while on the other, the body is constituted in the mundane world of objects, appearing only as a possibility 'in the world.'³¹ Therefore, the human condition modeled on the in-carnating of Christ for Henry is to be regarded as one of flesh, which means that "an abyss separates forever material bodies that fill the universe. . .and the body of an 'incarnate' being such as man."³² The biological material body becomes merely incidental for human existence, and to understand humanity according to its inert matter is to render it 'barbaric': only the body-as-flesh, understood as *incarnation* (*Verleiblichung*), can be reduced to a singular lived experience. This is where Falque registers his first critique in terms of what he calls the "impossible incorporation", a formula he borrows from Didier Franck.³³

According to the problem of the impossible incorporation, the question for phenomenology in general and Henry in particular is how to obtain a "genuine access to the body through the flesh,"³⁴ when the latter is "co-extensive with the world of ownness" and the former remaining constitutively "outside-of-flesh [*hors-chair*]"³⁵ For Falque, Henry's new discovery of an originary flesh "retains no consideration of human thingliness and therefore utterly neglects the 'old body'", which means that the dualism of *Körper* and *Leib* is merely subsumed. "How and why do we continually attempt to conceive *the flesh without the body*", Falque asks rhetorically, "—or, at the very least, to conceive a self-experiencing flesh independently from an 'inert or exterior body', upon which that very flesh depends and touches without ever conceptualizing it as such?"³⁶ This failure for Falque is connected to what he sees as an impoverished view of the human condition, according to which a fundamental hierarchization eliminates what is not only an incidental occurrence but an essential and necessary feature, namely, *animality*. Indeed, Henry admits already in his opening that a philosophy of the flesh will be prejudiced to the 'human experience' there-of: "we will make an initial decision to leave living beings other than human beings outside the field of investigation", for everyone "has the immediate experience of their own body. . .while their relation to animal bodies. . .is of another order."³⁷ It is important to note that Falque is not denying a phenomenology of flesh or its importance,³⁸ but arguing simply that its progressive priority misses a structural condition that makes the very experience of oneself possible. Including within the scope of human embodiment the animality of our bodies (*corps organique* as *hors-chair*)—their organic, material, visceral, biological quality—offers not only a more complete picture of our condition as continuous with the non-human but is also the only way by which we can have any experience of our own flesh (*chair*) in the first place.³⁹

By rendering a philosophy of embodiment according to a phenomenological notion of incarnation as the experience of one's own flesh without the body, rejecting its biological dimension, and thus repeating a dualistic ontology that subordinates the empirical-visceral to the intentional, the figure of incarnation becomes its opposite: a dis-incarnated body focused on "invisible phenomena" at the expense of the "visible." Falque, by contrast, inverts Henry's phenomenological perspective, not to prioritize simple geometric extension (barbarism), but to argue that the body must be "incorporated" or undergone—which is not the same thing as either the originary experience of flesh or material extension. Whereas Henry fails to achieve what Falque calls a "kenosis of the flesh"⁴⁰—i.e., an emptying of the experience of flesh as an auto-affected in-carnation—Falque argues for the experience of the impossibility of 'incorporating' my body into the flesh. This leads, as we will see, to Falque's notion of the 'resistance of the body' or the 'spread body' and what we will go on to call later, in a modified way, the 'affective body.'

But what of theology? According to Falque, Henry's philosophy of flesh is tainted by his theology of the incarnation, and thus the former's methodology becomes apposite since it will be the role of theology to assist phenomenology's partial analysis—not to 'complete' it but to enact a "counterblow" of theology's own unique perspective through what Falque calls the "backlash" of theology on phenomenology.⁴¹ If, for Henry, "[t]o be incarnate is not to have a body"⁴² but to be a flesh that is ubiquitous and admits of no outside-of-flesh,⁴³ then the Incarnation of Christ on this account is also problematically not kenotic enough. By

establishing as coterminous his own paradigmatic phenomenological description of flesh (as auto-affection) with the theological notion of incarnation, Henry deprives what is of utmost theological import for the Christian doctrine of the Incarnation, namely, Christ's assumption of our full humanity (including its corporeity). For Henry, it is of course true that the Word reveals itself by taking on the human condition,⁴⁴ but this condition, which is that of 'flesh', is the same flesh we saw above: a flesh that coincides with the Word manifesting (revealing) Life. The incarnation, thus, concerns the body "*in as much the body is not a body but a flesh*."⁴⁵ Perhaps most clearly, this spiritualized prejudice is seen in Henry's anti-patristic, or "parricide of Tertullian".⁴⁶ According to Henry, for Tertullian, the "Word becomes-visible in the visible body"⁴⁷ and this enacts a "banalization of Christ" that reduces the Word to the exteriorization of the world, a material and thus an incognito presence, who's extra-ordinary quality as the "Word of Life" becomes indistinguishable from our own.⁴⁸ But this, Falque retorts, is to miss not only the point Tertullian makes against the Gnostics or St. Paul, but the venerable tradition of Christian thought itself, which sees God revealed precisely *in* this banality—in the 'weakness of God', as John Caputo might say.⁴⁹ Falque writes: "What is truly extra-ordinary about the Word's incarnation is precisely that it took place in and through the most *ordinary* aspects of our human condition, specifically that it gave itself in a *body*."⁵⁰ Coming into a *body* (incorporation), then, is the way in which God reveals his divinity, which can only be *known* through faith, not through his coming into flesh (Henry's incarnation). Henry's distortion of the theological by imposing phenomenological categories (*Leib* for flesh) unknown to St. John (*sarx*), or Tertullian (*caro corpus*) for that matter, means that paradoxically, a 'better' theology—Falque's insistence that incarnation means the *Menschwerdung* ("humanification") of God and not simple *Inkarnation* ("enfleshment")⁵¹ in the Henrian sense—creates a fuller picture of the human condition while explicating the limits of phenomenology.

4. The Spread Body at the Limits of Phenomenology

Thus far, we have encountered Falque's methodology as well as a point of differentiation regarding contemporary theological phenomenology via his critique of Henry. However, we have only briefly intimated a positive conception of embodiment through a theology of the body that draws up the limits of phenomenology.⁵² To expand on the latter, therefore, and eventually on its implications for the 'affective' body, we have to pass through the former. For Falque, as we have seen, theology's paradigm of embodiment is one that should assume God fully taking on our human condition in its temporality, visibility, historical, and material density.⁵³ Divine *kenosis* involves the *Menschwerdung* of Christ in order to make possible any salvation (*theosis*)—our being taken up into the Divine life. If this seems uncontroversial theologically, then Falque's latest work pushes the depths of God's assumption of our condition even further when he undertakes, among other things, a phenomenology of the eucharist—the "this is my body" (Mark 14:22)—provoking a more comprehensive philosophical understanding of our *animality* and *organic* humanity.⁵⁴ For Falque, the eating of the sacrificial lamb of the Jewish Passover and the Lamb of God offered at the Last Supper are both images of the divine assuming our animality, so much so to transform it. The metaphor of the lamb points to the animality of our human condition, which Christ comes to fully embrace. Its distinctive features, once again in contrast to the *Leib-Körper* dualism in phenomenology and to the spiritualization of Christ's body in theology,⁵⁵ consist in an existential "chaos" of the "underground" self⁵⁶ and its "forces, drives, desires,"⁵⁷ which cannot be evacuated from our existence. Moreover, Falque asks us to return to the organic matter of the body, the site *for* these forces and drives, whose material density is both susceptible to decay but also denotes a certain thrust in the "struggle for life" or, following an exposition of Spinoza and Nietzsche, a *conatus* or *affectus* of the somatic origin of bodily power.⁵⁸

For Falque, this theology of the eucharist moves philosophy, or rather phenomenology, "*to its limit*,"⁵⁹ for the chaotic, instinctual, organic materiality of the body, as revealed in the eucharist, is that which lies beneath the phenomenological preoccupation with

signification.⁶⁰ The name he gives to this body is the spread body (*corps épandu*):⁶¹ “it is not totally objective because it cannot be reduced to a geometric form. Nor is it totally subjective, because it does not fully correspond to the ego when we examine it in terms of consciousness.”⁶² Falque frequently uses the image of the body on the operating table, and thus, in the context of suffering, he writes: “[t]he body extended on the operating table is not there in length, breadth, and depth—as we might describe a Cartesian geometric space. It is there in heartbeats, respiration, and intestinal rumbles—qualitative attributes of biological life.”⁶³ Between the lived body (*Leib*) and the extended body (*Körper*), then, resides the spread body, which is an “abyss and mixture of passions and drives that our biological flesh retains.”⁶⁴ As the imagery of the notion already suggests, the spread body emerged in the context of palliative care for Falque, where he wants to resist, on the one hand, any technical reduction of the living body to a mechanical object (*res extensa*), while on the other, to question the pure interiority of the subjective experience of suffering that excludes the animality of the body (Henry). The concept of the spread body descends “into the depths rather than making sense of it via narrative, acknowledging the thingly strangeness of my own body rather than solely reducing it to the lived body, the struggle for life, or the power of the organic rather than simply welcoming suffering.”⁶⁵ The spread body, therefore, brings us to an experience of the body that ‘resists’ being reduced to a *lived*-experience: “I no longer live my body. In some way this body lives *me*.”⁶⁶ The description of this foreign other as the chaos of our physiology that feels invasive, Falque further designates as a “limited phenomenon,”⁶⁷ not because it is a nothingness or because it saturates intentionality, but because it shows the limit of what is overflowed without ever being received into consciousness.⁶⁸

Through the ‘backlash’ of theology (phenomenology of the eucharist), phenomenology begins to encounter its limits, thematized according to three ‘pitfalls’: “sense over non-sense,” “hypertrophy of the flesh over the body,” and the “primacy of passivity over activity.”⁶⁹ The non-sense of the body and its active quality form part of a resistance to the “constant recourse to the lived experience of consciousness (or of the flesh), as opposed to the solidity of the body in its biological dimensions and drives.”⁷⁰ This organic body nevertheless requires a phenomenological account, or rather an account of what is “outside phenomenology” or “extra-phenomenal,”⁷¹ since, for Falque, there is an experience of the body that is not simply reducible to an experience of the body-that-I-am. The body-that-I-have is also the body that can have *me*, and in a way that is foreign to me or in which I do not even recognize myself or fail to experience myself in it. It is in this body’s sheer “thereness” of “mute experience” of its chaos and drives that it points “toward that which cannot be spoken, in terms that simple signification offers us—toward the Chaos that only our human biological body encounters: the animal and the instinctual.”⁷²

One can emphasize two responses to this challenge and at least one outcome that will be taken further to develop what is being called ‘the affective body’. The first is that what is required is not simply to “deploy some kind of physiology of the passions. . .one that privileges the somatic over the psychic”, but to “seek, what is the foundation of our embodiedness”, a line of thought that is later articulated as “the strength of the body.”⁷³ Secondly, this should then be coupled with a resistance to any intentionality thesis by way of Henry or Marion-esque *counter*-intentionality that privileges passivity over activity. The outcome is, therefore, an attempt to avoid a mistaken reduction into the ontic sciences on the one hand and to further abandon phenomenology’s priority of subjective intentionality on the other, but, and here is the crucial point, to still maintain an account of subjectivity that is founded by the organic body. In short, it is not for Falque the *intentionality* of consciousness that brings the body into view for experience, but the *intentionality of the body* that brings consciousness into view, or rather, that which “drives” it while withdrawing from view and thus being irreducible.⁷⁴

If Falque has taken us through the backlash of theology on phenomenology to the spread body at the limits of phenomenology, and if phenomenology is thus “perhaps not the last word in the ambitions of philosophy,”⁷⁵ then does the pathway to a “philosophy

of the organic”—which is ultimately about attending to “things themselves”—not invite a consideration of affect theory that is distinguished from the conception of Henrian auto-affectation?⁷⁶ This will be argued for below, but since not only is ‘affect’ in no way clearly delineated within the field of affect studies itself, but also because the language of ‘affectivity’ is problematic in measure for Falque vis-à-vis Henry, one should articulate any productive relation first by preparation and qualification.

5. Toward the Affective Body

In one sense, affect or affectivity could be understood phenomenologically as a rendering of the German *Befindlichkeit* (crucially distinguished from ‘mood’, *Stimmung*) as it appears in Martin Heidegger, for whom affective experiences are fundamental for revealing the ontological features of our own, *human* existence. In Heidegger, we know that *Befindlichkeit* constitutes one of the four existentials alongside *Verstehen*, *Verfallen*, and *Rede*.⁷⁷ However, there are some stark translation issues here: for example, Macquarrie and Robinson (Heidegger [1962] 2016a) use the problematic phrase “state-of-mind,” which is inadequate since *Befindlichkeit* is neither a state nor does it refer to a mind.⁷⁸ Another alternative is the Stambaugh (Heidegger 1996) translation, which renders *Befindlichkeit* as “attunement,” capturing the ontological depth that Heidegger intends.⁷⁹ The problem with this translation, however, is that it is not uncommon to also translate *Stimmung* also as attunement.⁸⁰ One should rather follow Hubert Dreyfus’ translation of “affectedness” or “affectivity”, the benefit of which is that it captures the notion that, as existing in the world, we are always already affected by and feel things, as well as the sense in which in *Befindlichkeit* things matter to us.⁸¹ The German expression “*Wie befinden Sie sich?*” which literally means “how do you find yourself?” but which is also used as the common expression “how are you?” captures this well. *Befindlichkeit* is thus the basic ontological structure of human existence that makes it possible for human beings to find themselves situated in or attuned to the world in a way that is *meaningful* to them. It is one of the ways in which *Dasein*’s existence in the world is disclosed to it. Crucially, *Befindlichkeit*, or affectivity, is not itself the locus of meaningful content; it is an ontological disposition that makes meaning possible and not a phenomenon that appears. There is thus a structural affinity in this phenomenological understanding of affect with Falque’s conception of embodiment, only insofar as the body for him *is* this existential condition for meaning. We might call this, following Richard Kearney, a ‘carnal *Befindlichkeit*’,⁸² which has less to do with the intentionality of consciousness and more with the ‘intentionality of the body’⁸³—where the former is orientated and *driven by* the body.

If there is precedence by way of phenomenology for ‘affectivity’, understood in terms of this general structure, which Falque seems to assume, then it is possible, as we have observed in the notion of the spread body, that affect is for him also paradoxically related to the *non*-phenomenological. This structural notion of affectivity is filled-out or given ‘content’, in an important chapter in *The Wedding Feast of the Lamb*. Following a discussion concerning ‘The Animality That Thus I Am’, drawing insights from Derrida to assist phenomenology in searching not for the “route of pure humanity” but for the “animality and affectivity”⁸⁴ of our humanity, Falque then inaugurates a ‘Return to the Organic’.⁸⁵ In the introductory movement of this chapter, he states that what is at stake in the return is the organicity—or “ensemble of phenomena associated with the organ”—and the organic matter of the flesh. In particular, with reference to the organs, it is not the necessities of life that ‘drive’ the organs but the organs that drive life. And then, in a move surprising for the phenomenologist, indeed, outside-phenomenology, Falque turns to the Spinozistic-Nietzschean tradition to revise the *struggle for life* that Spinoza described as *conatus*: the inclination for life that derives primarily from the body in the affections (*Affectus*). This allows the envisioning of the animality of our bodies, their organicity, and materiality in a way that highlights the body’s ‘power’ and ‘process’ not in denial of the psychic but to enlarge its range of possibility.⁸⁶ From Nietzsche is derived the “unconscious of the body”, the flesh (*Leib*) that is not extended or subjective and which is, no doubt, connected to

the psychic while preceding it. In marrying Spinoza and Nietzsche (and Deleuze also in the background), Falque substantializes this power of life when he writes, “bodies derive from forces or power—not forces or powers from bodies.”⁸⁷ This comes to a head in the adoption of the Deleuzian formula of the “body without organs”, where the advocacy is not to strip the body of its organs but to recognize what is “beneath” them: the ‘dis-organized’, pressures, passions, and drives, “where the power of life is expressed without being immediately integrated or technicized.”⁸⁸ There is then an *internal power to life* in its capacity to create forms, seek new ways of being, and “to be *always becoming*.”⁸⁹

Falque later states, nevertheless, that this model of the affective life is still recovered by a certain lucidity in a “manifesto of the flesh” which is not a simple return to subjective experience but a living through of the body (an embodying), which also weighs me down. The (affective) body as understood by Falque is, in the end, not just a corporeal substructure—even if this is the long detour he wants us to take—but still ostensibly related to the full phenomenological sense of flesh (*Leib*) as well as the body of non-thetic lived-experience, formed by the habits that make up the *habitus* of our being-in-the-world.⁹⁰

Despite these final and necessary phenomenological provisos, Falque’s rich and textured account of the limits of phenomenology takes us into the depths of the underground of our experience and into the organic-organicity of our affective bodies. But is it not now time for a second (or third) “backlash” of affective theory? For the citational tradition that Falque deploys through the consonant terms of affectivity, *conatus*, power, and strength of the body, as well as force, has found a home in this burgeoning field and thus invites us to differentiate this sphere of our embodiment. Here it should be pointed out that this is not just a matter of differentiating for its own sake but precisely because the power of the body is also ethical, i.e., it *makes a difference* how we come to theorize this zone beyond phenomenology. Indeed, as Falque has written, an ethics of the spread body is not the search for norms or consensual values but of attending to an ethos or ethology that speaks “the remainder of the flesh when the ‘signifying word’ has gone all but silent,” it speaks to the “chaos of the body and by the body.”⁹¹

6. The Affective Body and Systematic Theology

We have now seen that Falque’s lexical diversity and conceptual range resists pinning down a single position on what exactly the body ‘is’ or what it is capable of ‘doing’. This would accord with the broader ‘loving struggle’ (*le combat amoureux*) of his approach, a hermeneutical technique designed not to win-over or defeat but to seduce through interlocution with multiple others, while at the same time relaying the discussion into a plenitude of unthought directions. However, the preceding presentation has indeed given us *at least* a structure of his conception of embodiment, and thus we can enter a ‘struggle’, one that both appreciates and pushes beyond, or rather *below*, some of Falque’s theological and philosophical positions.

Falque’s backlash through a phenomenology of the eucharist (but also his more recent work in psychoanalysis) has asked phenomenology to reconsider its ‘hyper-technicality’ and obsession with defending its ‘private territory’ and return to ‘the things themselves’ by questioning its foundational axiom of ‘givenness’ (*Gegebenheit*) at the expense of the non-given.⁹² This has placed an almost unmatched emphasis on the raw materiality of the body in contemporary theological phenomenology, one from which subsequent theology can retain insights concerning the body and its relation to the animal and the wider natural world—often too easily relegated in theological discourse.⁹³ Moreover, Falque has also, by virtue of this questioning, opened phenomenology to other disciplines, celebrating the fact that phenomenology does not necessarily have ‘the last word,’ while still maintaining its integrity as a distinct discipline and not to be confused with theology. With respect to the ‘spread body’ then, we have seen that Falque seeks to promote an account of the body that escapes intentional analysis, not because it exceeds but *precedes* the subjective lived-body and ‘drives’ it by virtue of an *intentionality of the body*.

Yet this account of the body should now be placed under suspicion; that is, of courting an excess, not of a transcendent beyond but of a romantic surplus of the subterranean, one which Falque insists does not denote a sinful state (the slide from animality to bestiality)⁹⁴ but rather an ontological condition of our being-human (animality, from which humanity is drawn). Through the ‘chaos’ of the spread body, “the darkness of humankind, made up of passions and drives”⁹⁵ which bracket the semiotic and reflexive, there is a somatic abyss. Here, as William Connelly suggests, this “*romanticism of the flesh*”—where all the themes of which coalesce in a more recent project devoted to taking up Maurice Merleau-Ponty’s late work, radicalizing Freud, and injecting Nietzsche⁹⁶—leaves Falque vulnerable to “subtracting the ontological value” of the body, “tending to strip it of any inherent intelligibility. . . without any place for a subsisting order or structure—save for a super-added theological account.”⁹⁷ It is this latter account, which Connelly does not expand upon, taking the form in Falque’s system of a theological *deus ex machina* through an interpretation of ‘conversion’ or ‘transformation’, which, in my reading, is deployed precisely in order to resolve this problem of romantic excess. For Falque—despite the insistence that we do not escape our animality—when philosophy encounters theology, we nonetheless learn that animality can be transformed *into* humanity and finally into God (*theosis*). There is thus something of an enigma here: on the one hand, animality must be maintained and is fully assumed by the incarnate Word, and on the other, it must necessarily be converted into something else.⁹⁸ In a sense, one could understand this as a natural consequence of Falque’s confessional commitment, namely: that the body of Christ given in the eucharist is to effectuate an altered life that begins to order our passions and drives (the animal), in the same way that the eucharistic scene of the wedding feast reconfigures the erotic (of sexual difference) into the agapeic love of the Trinitarian perichoresis. But this solution seems not only to undermine the work that Falque’s phenomenological investigation has illuminated regarding the animality and organicity of the spread body and thereby re-open some of the oppositions between the human and the animal that he seeks to circumvent,⁹⁹ but it also culminates in a theological resolution that does not do justice to the ‘how’ of this transformation.

Indeed, Falque’s Catholic account seems to border on the literal—namely, that it is through the eating of the consecrated bread and drinking of the wine in the eucharist that “his body [is] branched into ours” and “his blood flowing through our veins” is to be understood as a kind of “organic transplant—a sharing of powers. . . by which I live through his true corporeal power.”¹⁰⁰ This body, in its organicity, which is shared with Christ, becomes a base through which the power of the spirit enacts a metamorphosis that conforms it to an “internal power of life”, derived not from the body as substance but flowing from the “force of the Holy Spirit.”¹⁰¹ Nevertheless, the question that remains unanswered by Falque is: exactly *how* does this transformation take place? Or rather, while there is an ontological change in the human being’s disposition to the world by means of the power of the Spirit, as it is taken into the life of God through eucharistic transubstantiation, incorporation, consecration, and adoration¹⁰²—there is still a major gap between the *experiential* effects of this change. We may ask: What is happening to the material body after it is ‘incorporated into God’ and how is it conformed to God’s nature? The final constructive pivot of this article is to suggest that a ‘backlash’ of affect theory in discussion with contemporary systematics allows one not only to continue to acknowledge the density of the body and its forces but more precisely to differentiate the materiality of the body in such a way that (1) avoids subterranean excess through a theorization of affectivity in terms of novelty and structure, and (2), as a consequence, is able to offer a more complete or alternative theological picture of transformation without Falque’s unaccountable supernatural infusion based on an exclusively Catholic doctrine of the eucharist.

6.1. Differentiating Bodily Affect

The study of affects appeared in the nineties out of a series of theoretical positions developed from psychology and gender studies but also later incorporating insights from evolutionary biology and the neurosciences.¹⁰³ The field is delineated across several of these theoretical trajectories and thus resists any singular generalizable approach. What marks its distinctive contribution is that it stands in sharp contrast to overly cognitive modes of appraisal and the anti-biologism that exists in theory circles by situating features of embodied life outside of purely discursive regimes or transcendental approaches to knowledge. It concerns itself with studying how bodies are moved by forces, blurring the lines between the pre- or sub-phenomenological (or what we can call here the “extra-phenomenal”),¹⁰⁴ and the rising-up of these forces into embodied affective forms (which include crucial distinctions between *feeling* and *emotion*).¹⁰⁵ One can speak primarily of two vectors that diverge and intersect across the broad approaches to affect in this sense; the first follows an inside-out directionality where affects are linked to psychobiological differentials that pertain to certain evolutionary hardwiring and can also be associated with a broadly critical development of the ‘motivational tradition’ of the philosophy of emotion.¹⁰⁶ The second, in a reverse flow (outside-in), takes a Deleuzian–Spinozan route, where affects occur in an immanent complex of relations that compose bodies and worlds. To augment what Falque calls the “distance between the vitalist and organic tradition of the nineteenth century...and the phenomenological and auto-affective tradition of the twentieth”, we can situate a middle position with respect to affect, following the affect theorist Donovan Schaefer, between the broadly Deleuzian–Spinozist tradition on the one hand and the psychological–phenomenological position on the other. Since it is here that what emerges is a theoretical status of the affective body accounting for its power, forces, and drives, left either to the chaos of the subterranean or differentiated in its multiplicity and thus integrated as part of a concrete dynamics of structure *and* novelty.

To understand how the ‘affective body’ indexes forces that accumulate and release from it in such a way that avoids the romanticism of excess, we can distinguish two readings of Deleuzian affect, one that is primed by the tension between Spinoza and the other by Bergson. Following Schaefer’s reading of this interpretative dialectic, there is, on the one hand, a Spinozistic Deleuze, which emphasizes a continuum of substance (from affects to the affections), and a more Bergsonian Deleuze, where there is a realm of pure affective creativity preceding representation and is stressed according to a “provisional dualism” of “differences in kind.”¹⁰⁷ Where the latter promotes affects existing on the register of intensity ‘beneath’ human subjectivity, the former sees affects as structured along a continuum that is shared between animal and human, although ‘felt’ differently and embodied in particular correspondences to different but related suites of affects.¹⁰⁸ The more Bergsonian Deleuze has become dominant in Schaefer’s view, due in part to its promotion by Deleuze’s (and Guattari’s) translator, Brian Massumi.¹⁰⁹ For Massumi, a Deleuzian account of affect operates in a pure zone of possibility that forms the background for experience, which precisely allows the body to be an open system. The consequences of this are that the body becomes the horizon exclusively for transformation, since affects as a feature of forces and power are “autonomous” and transmissible, and the body can thus be taken up by the affective forces that may (or may not) come to work upon it.¹¹⁰ On this reading, the affective body not only can become a property in a political strategy, but the specificity of its embodied experience is also erased. Or, in short, the phenomenological subject is completely dissolved insofar as affect comes to *direct* experience but is itself not taken up *in* experience.

Opposed to this romantic view of affect—its anti-intentionality and emphasis on fluidity, plasticity, openness, and chaos, which research in contemporary neuroscience and evolutionary biology seems to contradict¹¹¹—an interpretation that sees affect as part of a *continuum* with animality and not as a zone of pure becoming, and possibility suggests that the operation of a “return to the perception of the flesh”¹¹² must be kept in tension. The possibility of this affective theorization of the body is filled-out by the innovations

of the American psychologist and philosopher, Silvan Tomkins. In contrast to a reading of Freudian drives as always attached to fixed objects (which are then sublimated into other activities and interests), Tomkins argued that prior to drives, there was an affect system. Crucially, this ‘foundation’ of the affective system is not to be viewed as a single deterministic stream of vital energy but as a finite multiplicity,¹¹³ where, “in contrast to the instrumentality of drives and their direct orientation toward an aim different from themselves, the affects can be autotelic.”¹¹⁴ Schaefer summarizes Tomkin’s contribution to affects as “emphasizing the felt life of desire, power, and thought in congress with language, but phylogenetically prior to it,”¹¹⁵ meaning that the model of affect being proposed here might not be so different from a phenomenological sense. On this schema, even though affects can be attached to objects, i.e., can be intended as felt emotional states, they also bring their own agency that we feel but cannot always account for.

Through this differentiation of affects, one which is not anti-intentional but neither insisting that there is no relationship between affects and their objects, Schaefer finally proposes the animality of affect in conjunction with a (Merleau-Pontian) phenomenological perspective, where bodies both human and animal are made of constituent parts with evolutionary histories that make up the instruments of perception. The consummation of these perspectives leads Schaefer to suggest that in the attempt to describe the power and forces that make up the body, we cannot collapse that for which subjective experience is unable to account into an exclusive flow of vital *becoming* or novelty/Chaos—rather, the affective body should also be indexed according to an encounter with this novelty, which carries with it our embodied layers of structured, finite experience, which means we are not always overwhelmed but able to adjust to limited changes. In what Jacques Derrida called the “heterogenous multiplicity”¹¹⁶ of our animality, we are then, as feeling bodies, always emerging out of textured and evolutionary histories, producing outliers but always within the context of coalesced formations of bodily affectivity.

6.2. Augustinian Affectivity

In terms of our discussion with Emmanuel Falque and theological phenomenology, we can see that there are further options afield within the realm of affect studies. Taking up the pulsating forces of the body that the notion of the ‘spread body’ sought to accentuate, though now in a differentiated way that does not consign them to a subterranean underground of chaotic excess, one can propose a constructive theological approach with this view of the affective body. This will be developed by way of conclusion in terms of its deployment in recent studies in systematic theology, which avoid a super-theologically added infusion of grace and thus importantly maintain the integrity of the bodily dimensions of human existence in light of the experience of faith and sanctification. This emphasis on affect within theology as part of the wider ‘material turn’ is a new discussion, although, as already noted, the themes of embodiment, sensation, materiality, and desire in Christology and Trinitarian theology have been adjacent developments in constructive theology and are still being examined and filled out.¹¹⁷ For our purposes, we will focus on the most complete and integrated attempt to engage with affect theory in systematic theology from a Protestant perspective, namely, the work of Simeon Zahl and, in particular, his recent monograph *The Holy Spirit and Christian Experience* (2020).¹¹⁸

At the heart of Zahl’s book is the claim that contrary to the often maligned category of ‘experience’ in Protestant theology (a line traced from Luther to Barth),¹¹⁹ Christian doctrine both ‘implicitly’ resources its content from the experience of our embodied realities and, conversely, doctrine also comes to influence these very experiences in the felt reality of the body.¹²⁰ In a retrieval of Augustine, Luther, and Melancthon, Zahl positions himself in opposition to prevailing assumptions in Anglophone theology; for example, he argues against the claim that central Protestant doctrines like justification operate only according to cerebral assent or in their molding of Christian experience through cultural and linguistic forms.¹²¹ For him, an alternative approach should be offered through an account of the work of the Holy Spirit resourced by affect theory, where doctrines like justification involve

intensely charged affective experiences of transformation *and* intransigence, simmering below the discursive-cultural level and, thus, inextricable from systematic reflection. The special relevance of including affect theory in this approach is its ability to account for why doctrinal claims often do not align with the experiences that Christians encounter.¹²² Here, the theoretical vocabulary provided by affect theory—‘animality’, ‘intransigence’, ‘power’, ‘plasticity’, ‘non-discursivity’—assists Christian theology to articulate these dynamics at the level of the body and does so in a way that resists constructivism or essentialism.¹²³

What this means is that a specifically Christian experience of grace, not just a religious experience more generally, is bound to the doctrine of pneumatology, since it is by virtue of the Spirit’s material operation that a thick connection can be established between the experiences of the affective body and the various works of the Spirit in justification, salvation, and sanctification. In other words, there are “affective effects” that are concretely and practically evident (or “affectively salient”) that follow from the doctrinal claims made about the work of the Holy Spirit in the life of the Christian.¹²⁴ On one level, it seems theologically intuitive to suggest that there are practical and embodied changes to one’s life under grace, but what makes Zahl’s intervention useful with respect to affect theory is that this model is able to account—at the level of embodied reality—*how* these changes are activated and also resisted. To conclude our discussion with Emmanuel Falque, we turn to Zahl’s retrieval of Augustine’s pneumatology in the anti-Pelagian writings,¹²⁵ since it is here where the account of the affective body in a Protestant systematic key supplements Falque’s notion of the ‘spread body’ and, in particular, the way in which the Christian life is transformed and sanctified by the indwelling of the Spirit.

To recall: in Falque’s account of transformation, the work of sanctifying grace can be reduced to the moment where the sacrament of the Eucharist is consumed, conforming the ‘animality’ of our bodies to the ‘internal power of life’ of the Spirit. Here it is assumed that the renewed powers we receive from the Spirit in the sacrament enact changes physiologically as we are incorporated into the life of God (animality-humanity-*theosis*). But how this facilitation of power comes to move our bodies in the ‘right’ direction is left to the mystery of the Spirit at work in the sacrament and is only answered in ontological and metaphysical terms, even if it has subjective material effects. For Zahl, in response to other accounts of sanctification adjacent to Falque, this leads to a pneumatologically deficient theology with important consequences.¹²⁶ Firstly, as we have already referred to, the process of transformation in the work of the Spirit through the Eucharist functions as a *deus ex machina*, or, in Zahl’s words, a “pneumatological version of Descartes’ pineal gland”¹²⁷—a pious cover for a (Catholic) sacramentalism that is theologically inconsistent. Secondly, by locating this key moment in the Eucharist, one runs the risk of assuming a relative progression of moral piety, a position that not only distances the Christian from the non-Christian but also from oneself insofar as animality becomes further displaced on the journey to full humanity and finally *theosis*. In our reading, Zahl’s “affective Augustinianism” repristinates a theological account of transformation by affirming its reality within the material site of bodily experience, while at the same time without superseding the affective-animality dimension, which makes up the complexity of human existence that Falque’s theological phenomenology has rightly emphasized.

A solution is found in the account of transformation given by Augustine and his deployment of the affective category of delight (*delectatio*). For Augustine, “the transformation of desire does not take place simply by divine fiat,” but rather involves a “providentially ordered process” by which God attracts and persuades us to leave behind sinful attachments and to pursue righteousness—that is, to *delight* in the immutable good that is God. While it is true that the love of God in Christians cannot only be reduced to the affective, it cannot be refuted that to love what we delight in must also be an activity that is activated by the Spirit *in* bodies *in* time.¹²⁸ To be free in Christ, then, is to be motivated to pursue the good out of love and delight rather than fear, which means that the motivation to follow God’s will has an affective character that is ‘practically recognizable’. There are two points

to be made here with respect to this affective Augustinianism, and which directly come to bear on our discussion with Falque and the limitations of his account.

First, the way in which the Spirit fosters delight for holiness in bodies is not by an irruption or super-infusion but “through a psychological sequence of affective predicates.”¹²⁹ What does this mean? For Augustine, following Paul, it is the encounter with the law that reveals the disordered desire that brings death, and death names the outcome of disordered desire consisting of affective predicates, which, for Zahl, are those experiences and feelings associated with the fear of death, plight, or relational alienation (from God or others).¹³⁰ The critical function of the law, then, whose agent is the Spirit, is to reveal the manifold symptoms of sin to us, as well as the affective predicates with which they are associated. It is these predicates that are in turn not only generated but also intensified through the law’s critical function, so that they can then be transformed insofar as our desiderative attachments are drawn-in by the delight that is generated in the encounter with divine grace. Through this “soteriological pattern”, the affective body that we are comes to experience sin as debilitating rather than delightful and can thus begin to recognize a transformed sequence whereby the gift of grace delivers a delight in the “sweetness of righteousness”, as Augustine says.¹³¹

This leads to the second point, where the dynamics of an affective Augustinianism also provide for a complexity with respect to the work of the Spirit, one that does not reduce these affective structures and patterns to an overdetermined account of human experience. If one of Falque’s (non)phenomenological insights was to detect a chaotic and inscrutable realm of forces and drives, then, like a differentiated approach to bodily affects, this affective Augustinianism maintains a patterned structure but *also* a novelty of both the Self and the work of the Spirit. Zahl rightly stresses that there are degrees of variability in human experience, especially in what Schleiermacher called a “spectrum of excitement” in the encounter with divine grace, such that what might be a felt affective intensity for one might be less so for another.¹³² Moreover, if biblical texts like John 3:8 preserve a dynamism and unpredictability on the side of the Spirit (“*The wind blows where it chooses*”), then it is perhaps Augustine more than anyone else in the history of Christian thought who recognized the unknown psychological depths on the side of the human heart—“Man is a vast deep,” (*grande profundum est ipse homo*) and “I have become a problem to myself” (*quaestio mihi factus sum*).¹³³ This apophatic tradition, which is well-known through medieval mysticism from Eckhart to phenomenology (Heidegger) and postmodernism (Derrida), thus can also be detected here in affective theology. Nevertheless, Zahl concludes on this point that affective complexity “does not mean such experience is *entirely* shapeless and mysterious” and “for theology in a pneumatological key, a degree of apophaticism can be complemented by a set of constructive affirmations...even as they are ultimately provisional.”¹³⁴ The outcome of these admissions is that, to some extent, there will always be an inherent tension between our attempt to understand the complexities of the affective body in the work of the Spirit and the providential role of God in the transformation of desire.

In this way, an affective Augustinian approach to sanctification takes seriously the physiological-psychological (material) changes that accompany the transformed life of the Christian via the categories of desire and delight. It at once affirms the animality (passions, desires, forces, and drives) of our bodily existence (the spread body), accounting for them in structured patterns but also not eliminating a degree of mystery and inscrutability. The consequences of this are that we can say the encounter with divine grace is a theologically embodied activity, as well as that the gap between Christian and non-Christian is not one that can be taken for granted.

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Notes

- 1 By way of example, see (Sigurdsson 2016; Etzelmüller and Weissenrieder 2016; Etzelmüller 2021; Coakley 2013; Coakley and Gavriluk 2012). The theme of embodiment is a guiding thread throughout Graham Ward's systematic theology, see (Ward 2016) and (Ward 2020). See Simeon Zahl's emphasis on 'affect' in his recent and widely disseminated text, to which we will refer extensively below: (Zahl 2020b).
- 2 (Falque 2016a).
- 3 There are, of course, exceptions: for example, Nikolaas Cassidy-Deketelaere tries to read Falque as outside of this tradition, as a type of 'post-phenomenologist', via Jean-Luc Nancy, though still committed to French phenomenology. See (Cassidy-Deketelaere 2020). And there are also others of Protestant orientation who have engaged his work critically, for example, see the essays by Jakub Čapek and Katerina Koči, respectively, in (Koči and Alvis 2020).
- 4 (Falque 2002). A later English translation of this text appeared as (Falque 2016b). An updated version of the text appeared as chapter 5 in (Falque 2018c).
- 5 (Falque 2018a). English translation: (Falque 2019).
- 6 As we will see, Falque deploys the 'spread body' in the unique context of palliative care, but it is also the term he uses to situate a more general phenomenology of the body between "*the subjective flesh* of the phenomenologist and the *objective body* of the scientist." Falque's diverse reflections on embodiment, therefore, can be read under this singular term, which I take as his attempt to search for an "existential analytic of the body". See (Falque 2019, p. 91), and (Falque 2016c, pp. 12–13).
- 7 (Falque 2016a, p. 25).
- 8 (Falque 2016c, pp. 12–15).
- 9 To talk of 'supplement' here is not to invoke a Derridean motif that follows the logic of inversion or subversion, it is to follow Falque, as Cyril O'Regan has written, where it has to do with "an adding to the goods that phenomenology supplies in the interest of bolstering thinking that does not simply think the multiple but is itself multiple." See (O'Regan 2022, p. xvi).
- 10 I will borrow this argument from (Schaefer 2019).
- 11 See *inter alia* the recent volume edited by (Koči and Alvis 2020).
- 12 (Janicaud 2000, p. 37). Janicaud particularly had Husserl's §58 of *Ideas I* in mind.
- 13 See (Falque 2015, pp. 9, 279). One should also note that 'hospitality' does not preclude disagreement—that Falque invites an open and hospitable dialogue between phenomenology and theology, in no way distracts him from exercising exacting criticisms of one by the other, as the case of Henry amply demonstrates.
- 14 (Falque 2012, pp. 30–40).
- 15 The category of 'finitude' is arguably the central concept in French philosophy from the 1940s onward, with almost all the thinkers who use the category referring to Heidegger, who develops it positively without the requirement of an infinite. See (Dika 2017).
- 16 (Falque 2012, pp. 16–19; Falque 2018c, pp. 104, 129).
- 17 For a lucid introduction, see (Cassidy-Deketelaere 2021).
- 18 Much has been made of Falque's critique of his *Doktorvater*, Jean-Luc Marion and the notion of the saturated phenomenon which identifies givenness (*Gegebenheit*) with revelation, for example, owing perhaps to the latter's sheer influence in both contemporary philosophy and theology. See (Falque 2007).
- 19 Apart from what Falque calls the "swerve of flesh" in *Wedding Feast of the Lamb*, 1–4, see also Claude Romano's chapter, (Romano 2016, pp. 114–48).
- 20 (Falque 2016c, p. 1; Falque 2018c, p. 144).
- 21 See (Husserl 1989, pp. 56/61, 105–7/111–14).
- 22 Husserl's texts are at times ambiguous, but the common assumption is that he ultimately prioritizes the subjective-lived experience of the body over the objective. See for example his comments on the "ownness" and "I-can" of the Ego in the transcendental attitude, in (Husserl 1999, pp. 128/96–97). While Falque predominantly directs his attention to this French reception, there is still a question to be answered to what extent the German discourse moves in a parallel way. For a beginning discussion see (Krüger 2010).
- 23 Falque, in fact, claims that Paul Ricoeur is the first to enact this translation in his famous reading of the fifth *Cartesian Meditation*. See Emmanuel Falque and Richard Kearney, "Embrace and Differentiation: A Phenomenology of Eros," *Somatic Desire*, 76–77.
- 24 (Falque 2018c, chap. 5).
- 25 (Henry 2016).

- 26 “At the time, I called it ontological monism, but instead it should be called phenomenological monism.” Michel Henry, “Material Phenomenology”, 121; (Henry 2015b, pp. 39, 124, 136).
- 27 Henry, *Incarnation*, 10.
- 28 (Henry 2003, chap. 3).
- 29 (Henry 2008, pp. 7–9).
- 30 (Henry 2015a, p. 129).
- 31 (Henry 2015a, pp. 130–31).
- 32 Henry, *Incarnation*, 3.
- 33 (Franck 2014, p. 90; Falque 2018c, pp. 164–66).
- 34 (Falque 2018c, p. 144).
- 35 Frank, *Flesh and Body*, 84.
- 36 (Falque 2018c, p. 166).
- 37 See note 32 above.
- 38 (Falque 2016c, p. 118).
- 39 (Falque 2018c, p. 166): “we are constituted more fundamentally by the by our organicity and thingliness than by our fleshly affectivity.”
- 40 Ibid., p. 169.
- 41 (Falque 2016a, pp. 149–50).
- 42 Henry, *Incarnation*, 4.
- 43 For the ubiquity of ‘flesh’ but with reference to Merleau-Ponty see (Romano 2016, p. 141), which Falque cites approvingly. (Falque 2016c, pp. 14, 240).
- 44 Henry, *Incarnation*, 11.
- 45 Ibid., p. 256.
- 46 (Falque 2018c, p. 169).
- 47 Henry, *Incarnation*, 16
- 48 Ibid., 17.
- 49 See (Caputo 2006). For a discussion of Caputo and this material dimension, see (Ullrich 2021). For the ‘visibility’ and ‘solidity’ of ‘flesh’ in Irenaeus and Tertullian, respectively, see Falque’s earlier account developed in his habilitation thesis, *Dieu, la chair et l’autre: D’Irénée à Duns Scot*, published in English as, (Falque 2015).
- 50 (Falque 2018c, p. 170).
- 51 Ibid., p. 145.
- 52 Falque writes: “where phenomenology uses ‘flesh’ of the ‘lived experience of the body’ unilaterally. . . I give more weight to a ‘philosophy of the organic’”. *Wedding Feast of the Lamb*, 3.
- 53 Ibid., p. 172.
- 54 While the ‘this worldly reality’ of the body—it’s materiality, ‘solidity’, ‘visibility’ (fn. 48), fleshly ‘suffering’, ‘corruptibility’, and the *phenomenological* importance of a ‘physical resurrection’—is developed in Falque’s earlier works from *Dieu, la chair et l’autre* to the first two volumes of his triptych, something more radical is underway in the third volume (*Les noces de l’agneau*) and subsequent philosophical works like *Hors phénomène: Essai aux confins de la phénoménalité* (2021), which delve into the ‘underground’ and ‘outside’ of our condition. For a helpful, yet somewhat unsystematic, critical summary of these developments up until *Les noces de l’agneau*, see (Gschwandtner 2012). For a recent text translated into English of Falque’s philosophical account of the ‘extra-phenomenon’, see his (Falque 2022a).
- 55 (Falque 2016c, pp. 84–90).
- 56 Ibid., pp. 5–10. A “phenomenology of the underground” is developed through a reading of Maurice Merleau-Ponty which pushes phenomenology to its limit, toward a notion of alterity in Merleau-Ponty that draws less on his phenomenological influences than it does on existentialism, French spiritualism, and psychoanalysis. See (Falque 2018c, pp. 47–48).
- 57 Here to quote the title of (Bernet 2013), which Falque cites approvingly elsewhere: (Falque 2020), 116 fn. 6.
- 58 (Falque 2016c, pp. 104–109).
- 59 Ibid., p. 11
- 60 Ibid., p. 15.
- 61 (Falque 2019). See Gschwandtner’s translators note pg. 112: “The French term ‘épandu’ can mean ‘stretched out,’ ‘spread out,’ ‘splayed out,’ (as on a bed), ‘expanded’ (over an entire area), or even ‘extended’ (as in water covering a flooded plain).”
- 62 Ibid., p. 13.

- Ibid.
- Ibid., p. 16.
- Falque, "Towards an Ethics of the Spread Body", 92.
- Ibid., p. 97.
- (Falque 2016c, pp. 18–24).
- Ibid., p. 22.
- Ibid., p. 23.
- Ibid., p. 21.
- For Falque's account of both these notions, see respectively: (Falque 2018b, 2022b). In both cases Falque is increasingly interested in a purely philosophical account without any recourse to theology; the former in dialogue with Henri Maldiney and the latter with Immanuel Kant.
- Ibid., p. 24.
- Ibid., p. 106.
- (Falque 2020). Sartre calls this a non-thetic intentionality for lived-experience. See (Sartre 2004, p. 6).
- (Falque 2016c, p. 3).
- For an initial attempt at this connection see, Bradley B. Onishi's, "Introduction the English Translation: Is the Theological Turn Still Relevant? Finitude, Affect, and Embodiment", in (Falque 2018c, pp. xi–xxix).
- (Heidegger [1927] 2006b, p. 335).
- (Heidegger [1962] 2016a, p. 384).
- See (Heidegger 1996, p. 126).
- On the relationship between *Befindlichkeit* and *Stimmung*, see (Elpidorou and Freeman 2015).
- See (Dreyfus 1991, chap. 10).
- Kearney, "The Wager of Carnal Hermeneutics", 21.
- See (Franck 2001, pp. 105–23).
- (Falque 2016c, p. 87).
- Ibid., chap. 5.
- See (Falque 2021, chap. 4).
- (Falque 2016c, p. 111).
- Ibid., p. 114.
- Ibid., p. 110.
- Ibid., p. 118.
- (Falque 2019, p. 101).
- Falque, "Outside Phenomenology?" 317.
- Although more recently, see the Barthian inspired project of (Clough 2012).
- (Falque 2016c, p. xx).
- See note 60 above.
- Falque, *Nothing To It* (2020).
- (Connelly 2020, pp. 155–62, 159). Connelly's solution is for a 'backlash' of nineteenth century French Spiritualism, the key figures of which (Blondel, Bergson, Ravaisson, de Biran etc.) were all concerned with force, the body, and consciousness. While analyzing what this *backlash* might consist of remains outside the purview of this study, it is noteworthy that the broad field of 'affect theory' also draws its intellectual heritage from thinkers growing out of this tradition of French thought, particularly Gilles Deleuze.
- There textual evidence of this move is found in several places in *Wedding Feast of the Lamb*: "it is by taking on and transforming animality into humanity that recognizes its filiation that bestiality or sin will be eradicated," xx. See also: xxi, xxiii, xxiv, 7,
- Christina Gschwandtner and Richard Kearney raise similar concerns, respectively. (Gschwandtner 2012, pp. 11–16); Emmanuel Falque and Richard Kearney, "Embrace and Differentiation," pp. 78–83.
- (Falque 2016c, p. 109).
- Ibid., pp. 110–11.
- Ibid., pp. 199–217.
- See (Sedgwick and Frank 1995; Massumi 1995; Gregg and Seigworth 2010).
- Falque, "The Extra-Phenomenal".
- In this respect, emotions take objects, that is, they are intentionally directed. See (Deonna and Teroni 2012, pp. 4–5). While feelings can be said to consist of the 'what-it-is-like'-ness of the emotion being felt. See also (Du Toit 2014, Art. #2692, 9 pages).

- 106 See the seminal introduction to affect theory by (Gregg and Seigworth 2010, pp. 1–25; 5–9).
- 107 Schaefer, *The Evolution of Affect Theory*, pp. 11–15. This part of Schaefer’s text is a concisely argued reading of Deleuze, one which subject to further interrogation in the vast field of Deleuzian studies would surely render further debate outside of the bounds of this article. Nevertheless, our goal here is not to debate affect theories, but merely to bring them to light as a productive source for theoretical reflection.
- 108 Ibid., pp. 9–10.
- 109 See (Massumi 2002).
- 110 Schaefer, *The Evolution of Affect*, pp. 19–22; See Brian Massumi’s famous 1995 essay, “The Autonomy of Affect” in *Parables for the Virtual: Movement, Affect, Sensation* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2002), 23–45.
- 111 See a critique of anti-intentionality, see (Leys 2017), critical positions in neuroscience, see (Papoulias and Callard 2010; Damasio 1999), and evolutionary biology: (Pigluicci and Müller 2010, pp. 3–17).
- 112 See note 38 above.
- 113 (Sedgwick 2003, p. 108).
- 114 Ibid., 19 quoted in Schaefer, *The Evolution of Affect*, p. 39.
- 115 Schaefer, *The Evolution of Affect*, p. 40.
- 116 (Derrida 2008, p. 31).
- 117 Apart from the sources already noted in fn.1, see also *inter alia*: (Harvey 2006; Burrus and Keller 2006; Pickstock 2013; Keller 2015).
- 118 Many of the theses in this book are continuations and constructive deployments of arguments developed elsewhere and are well-worth consulting: see e.g., (Zahl 2014, 2017a, 2017b, 2019, 2020a).
- 119 (Zahl 2020b, pp. 10–47).
- 120 Ibid., pp. 2–3.
- 121 Ibid., pp. 33–47; 148–53.
- 122 Zahl usefully interprets this through the law-gospel dynamic in Luther. Affect theory explains precisely how it becomes so difficult to effect transformation to negative affects (like shame, fear, alienation) despite the encounter with gospel; this is because affects are not simply manipulable through discursive regimes, they are stubborn and reside in the deep “desires of the flesh”, which is why the work of the Spirit to transform “affective intransigence” becomes so important to articulate. See Ibid., pp. 171–77.
- 123 Ibid., p. 147.
- 124 Ibid., pp. 3–4; 37–40. See also (Zahl 2015).
- 125 Zahl refers to several of Augustine’s texts, but the most important here are *On the Spirit and the Letter*, *To Simplicianus On Different Questions*, *On the Grace of Christ and Original Sin*, and *On Nature and Grace*.
- 126 Zahl singles out T.F. Torrance, John Webster, and Romanus Cessario. See Ibid., pp. 184–87.
- 127 Ibid., p. 187.
- 128 Ibid., pp. 190, 192.
- 129 Ibid., p. 194.
- 130 See Zahl’s section on “Affective Predicates” and the “experience of Sin”, which is less to do with discursive judgements about moral culpability, and more to do with an affective experience which has trans-historical value. Ibid., pp. 153–63.
- 131 Augustine, *On the Spirit and the Letter*, quoted in Ibid., p. 196.
- 132 Ibid., pp. 200–1.
- 133 Augustine, *Confessiones*, 4.14.22 and 10.33.50 respectively. English translations are from the Chadwick edition: Augustine
- 134 (Zahl 2020b, p. 203).

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