

## INTRODUCTION

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It is without a doubt for any informed reader of phenomenology that Michel Henry is amongst the most influential representatives of international phenomenology, especially so in the last fifteen years, and that the reception of his work expands to an equal extent to other fields, such as humanities or medical science, aesthetics or cultural philosophy. This volume of *Studia Phenomenologica* bears testimony to his increasing influence (especially amongst young researchers) as well as to the growth of disciplines where Henry's thinking is applied. To illustrate this point — after a documentary part, where we included a previously unpublished manuscript of Michel Henry on Kant, written during the time of preparation of his *Essence of Manifestation* —, we have organised the contributions to this volume into four main sections, starting from radical phenomenology and passing through politics, aesthetics and religious philosophy, without leaving out the necessary confrontations with other reputable modern thinkers, such as Bergson, Heidegger, Deleuze, and Derrida.

As for the reasons of an ever increasing readership, it is necessary in our opinion to distinguish at least three main ones which could explain the impact of Michel Henry's thinking on the current philosophical and cultural research studies:

1) His thinking does not rely on any factual, intentional or hermeneutical evidence in order to transcendently confront the question of *phenomenality* in itself.

2) Leaving behind any possibility of philosophically getting stuck into a thinking which is still relative to differ(a)nce or mundane meaning, Michel Henry asks the fundamental question of an ultimate *Donation originaire* which does not depend any longer on any construct or rhetoric, but implies a *phenomenological self-revelation as pure individuation*.

3) Having anticipated in his insightful analyses the recent historical and cultural events (such as, for example, the political shift in the East and a cer-

tain economic and financial disintegration starting from *Marx* which can be seen in the current “global” crisis), Michel Henry’s thinking can speak in fact to *any* individual who finds him/herself without any possible illusion — that is to say, in the *abyssal self-affection of the absolute phenomenological Life*.

In this sense, the classical “phenomenological field” finds itself once more completely open, as all aspects of thinking and praxis can — and have to — be reassessed starting from an affective transcendental situated, by virtue of its own phenomenological essence, *before* any language or ideo-logy, i.e. the domain of *Re-presentation* which has guided our philosophical thinking since its Greek origin. If, like Emmanuel Lévinas, Michel Henry outlines then a *non-Greek* approach to the “phenomenalisation” of the invisible self-manifestation, he does not only replace the metaphysical, logical or scientific Being with another “paradigm” such as “Life”. On the contrary, any paradigmatic construct in so far as bound to the horizontality or temporality of its manifestation is abandoned in favour of the *self-manifestation* of all phenomenality so as to totally rely on the *self-generation* of the absolute phenomenological Life. Indeed, such a “methodological” constraint does not any longer promote the operation of an ontological fundament, but the apodictic or assured nature of a *living receptivity* which structures itself as immanent and rigorous passivity, more precisely as a place or radical beginning found between life and affective body.<sup>1</sup>

It is important to reassert this crucial point of departure in Henry’s thinking because it always forms the arriving point of any radical or material phenomenological analysis. As long as an eidetic “description” remains inside *transcendent* categories, it cannot truly capture this transcendence, which never has a self-sufficiency or auto-nomy that could guide the manifestation of “phenomena” back to the place of their generation. It is obvious that the relationship between transcendence and immanence is even nowadays the inevitable territory of a critical “phenomenology of life,” as long as the effectiveness of this *counter-reduction* has not been clarified. It is therefore natural that we find the same debate in the discussions presented in this volume dedicated by *Studia Phenomenologica* to Michel Henry. But we have to say with equal emphasis that this threshold is by no means the end of a purely material analysis. Rather we have to do with what is ongoing and one which is achieved, by its very nature, from the preference in the absolute sphere for the affective modalities. That is to say, in the final analysis, we have to do here with an analysis deriving from the preference for a Life that in its core is one which both always “selves” itself and is a self-present life that is always already “served.”

<sup>1</sup> See already the debates on “Michel Henry et la question de sa réception” at Collège International de Philosophie, Paris, 2000, published in *Revue Philosophique de la France et de l’Étranger* 2 (2001).

It is precisely this debate that contributions included in the first and second sections continue in order to highlight, at the same time, that the “world” is not absent from such a radical phenomenological analysis, because any affective materiality is also immediately an aesthetic, ethical and communitarian reality. It is this real or practical arch-factuality that contributions in the third and fourth sections capture. Here the reader can find, in fact, some of the most advanced analyses in terms of contemporary phenomenological research.

Needless to say, this volume of *Studia Phænomenologica*, dedicated to Michel Henry, cannot aspire to present the totality of international discussions on the “phenomenology of life”, discussions which extend to Japan, the United States or Brasil, without forgetting Africa. But the editors paid great attention to ensuring that the essential points are presented here and that, for the reader who desires additional bio- or bibliographical information, we included the following online sites for further reference — in addition to other recent volumes<sup>2</sup> — where a great amount of information and further discussions can be found:

*Official site Anne Henry:*

[www.michelhenry.com](http://www.michelhenry.com)

*Société Internationale Michel Henry:*

[www.sociétémichelhenry.free.fr](http://www.sociétémichelhenry.free.fr)

*Groupe de recherches phénoménologiques Michel Henry Nice:*

[lavigne@free.fr](mailto:lavigne@free.fr)

*Centre d'études Michel Henry Beyrouth:*

[jadhatem@usj.edu.lb](mailto:jadhatem@usj.edu.lb)

*Groupe de recherches Michel Henry Portugal:*

[martins.florinda@gmail.com](mailto:martins.florinda@gmail.com)

*Site bibliographiques Ruud Welten:*

[www.home.planet.nl-welte185/rt/henry/htm](http://www.home.planet.nl-welte185/rt/henry/htm)

*Michel Henry Kunst- und Kulturkritik (Marco Sorace):*

[www.michelhenry.de](http://www.michelhenry.de)

*Institut für Existenzanalyse und Lebensphänomenologie:*

[www.guenterfunkeberlin.de](http://www.guenterfunkeberlin.de)

*Forschungskreis Lebensphänomenologie Freiburg-im-Breisgau:*

<http://www.lebensphaenomenologie.de>

*(translated from French by Adina Bozga)*

<sup>2</sup> J.-M. Brohm and J. Leclercq (eds.), *Michel Henry* (Lausanne: L'Age d'homme, 2009); *International Journal of Philosophical Studies*, vol. 17/3 (2009): *The Work of Michel Henry*. It is also announced the publication of the proceedings of the colloquium *Affectivité et vérité, à la lumière de la Phénoménologie matérielle*, held in May, 29 and 30, 2007 at the University of Nice, volume edited by J.-F. Lavigne.