

## Article

# Is Michel Henry's Radical Phenomenology of Life a Christian Philosophy?

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**Abstract:** This paper examines two fundamental claims by Michel Henry on his philosophy's relationship with classical phenomenology (Husserl and Heidegger) and Christianity. It shows in what way Henry's phenomenology is the radicalization and absolutization of classical phenomenology: pure phenomenological truth is the identification of appearing and what appears rather than the separation of the two. According to Henry, his notions of life and truth is fully in accordance with Christianity's Revelation of God. In the last part, the paper challenges Henry's claim that his phenomenology is a Christian philosophy from a Kierkegaardian point of view and argues that Henry's phenomenology is, as a matter of fact, a philosophy without Christ. Contrary to a popular viewpoint that Michel Henry is a Christian thinker of our age, I would argue that Henry's concept of God and Christ is essentially a scholarly philosophical invention. If Henry's philosophy is an absolute and ultimate form of phenomenology, then it is reasonable to draw a conclusion that Christ as the Truth of Christianity is outside the boundary of phenomenology.

**Keywords:** phenomenological truth; life; sin; Christ; Atonement



**Citation:** Hao, Changchi. 2022. Is Michel Henry's Radical Phenomenology of Life a Christian Philosophy? *Religions* 13: 761. <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel13080761>

Academic Editor: Xin Leng

Received: 11 July 2022

Accepted: 17 August 2022

Published: 19 August 2022

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## 1. Introduction

The debate over the “theological turn in French phenomenology” (Janicaud 2000) has been focused on whether phenomenology should be atheistic in its character; that is, whether it is legitimate to address theological issues in phenomenology. As a matter of fact, this is a pseudo-question, as theological questions or questions about God can be found even in the writings of Husserl and Heidegger (Hao 2013). What should be asked is rather as follows: can phenomenology properly address the theological issues (especially the question of “how does God shows Himself in Himself”)?

Heidegger in his critique of traditional philosophy, says, “the deity can come into philosophy only insofar as philosophy, of its own accord and by its own nature, requires and determines that and how the deity enters into it” (Heidegger 2002, p. 56). God becomes the god of philosophers because He has to submit Himself to the terms and frameworks of metaphysics as a reflection of human reason rather than Himself. If the fundamental principle of phenomenology is to go to things themselves, that is, “to let that which shows itself be seen from itself in the very way in which it shows itself from itself” (Heidegger 1962, p. 58), then on the issue of God, shall we say that it is only in phenomenology that the task of “the freedom of God with regard to his own existence” (Marion 1991, p. 2) can be accomplished?

In the essay “Being, the Ethical, and Love: The Basic Questions of Phenomenological Theology” (Hao 2021), I show that Heidegger's critique of metaphysics or traditional ontology can also apply to Heidegger, Levinas, and Marion in their thinking of God in the perspective of phenomenology. For Heidegger, the issue of God as an ontic question can be properly addressed only if it is based on our ontological thinking about the existential structure of Dasein and the question of the meaning of Being. In Levinas, the word “God” is meaningful only if it is considered in the ethical relationship; that is, in one's responsibility for the Other. In other words, God is reflected on the screen of our ethical relationship.

Marion proposes a “pragmatic theology of absence” (Marion 2002, p. 155) in which predication gives way to praise and God as a saturated phenomenon overcomes, submerges, and exceeds the measure of each and every concept (Marion 2002, p. 159). Marion says, “God remains incomprehensible, not imperceptible—without adequate concept, not without giving intuition” (Marion 2002, p. 160). What Marion emphasizes is that God is incomprehensible not because of the lack of intuition of God, but rather as a result of the excess of the intuition in which we may feel so shuddered or frightened that we could not inscribe God in the horizon of predication. Similar to Heidegger and Levinas, Marion’s notion of God as the saturated phenomenon *par excellence* is only part of his phenomenological project.

In Heidegger, Levinas, and Marion, we may say that the issue of God is not the central subject of their phenomenological theories. Michel Henry’s phenomenology of life, as an absolute form of phenomenology, however, is an attempt to make the issue of God as the central and only subject of phenomenology in the absolute sense. As Rudolf Bernet says, “The phenomenology of absolute self-affection is therefore not simply the sole phenomenology which would be philosophically coherent, but, in addition, it is the only one that permits the message of Christianity to be thought” (Bernet 1999, p. 326). Can phenomenology be used to deal with the theological issue of God properly? In this paper, I will focus on Henry’s phenomenology of life in order to highlight the potential conflict between God and philosophy (including phenomenology), and I will attempt to show in what sense the God of the Bible is outside of the boundary of phenomenology.

In this paper I will firstly show that Henry’s understanding of phenomenology is fully in accord with Husserl’s idea of phenomenology, and because of this internal connection, I will discuss the reasons why Henry thinks Husserl’s phenomenology does not live up to its ideal. Secondly, I will give a critical review of Henry’s standpoint that his notion of life is completely in accordance with Christian truth. In the last part, I will provide a Kierkegaardian critique of Henry’s Christian philosophy in arguing that since his notions of God, Christ, and man are just different modes of manifestation of the phenomenological truth of life, the central issue of Christ’s death of Atonement is redundant in Henry’s Christian philosophy. Scholars such as Jeffrey Hanson have shown that there are some similarities and differences between Henry and Kierkegaard regarding their understanding of Christianity. At the end of his article “Michel Henry and Søren Kierkegaard on Paradox and the Phenomenality of Christ”, Jeffrey Hanson draws such a conclusion: “Kierkegaard gives us an account of how both God in Christ and I as a faithful believer are not of the world and yet are nevertheless in the world, whereas for Henry, God and man are definitely not of the world, but neither are they in it” (Hanson 2009, p. 450). In my view, Hanson’s conclusion is what we need to give a further explanation because these two Christian thinkers, on a deep level, are more opposite than similar to each other in their understanding of Christianity. Henry’s philosophy of Christianity is a form of philosophy without Christ, or to use Bernet’s words, his phenomenology of life is “an *aesthetic* conception of Christianity” (Bernet 1999, p. 339, Bernet’s italicization). According to Kierkegaard, however, the essence of Christianity is its ethical-religious character. My conclusion will be that because of Henry’s absolutizing of phenomenology, his phenomenology clearly shows that Christian truth is outside of the boundary of phenomenology. Phenomenological Life as the identification of appearing, and what appears is not equal to Christ as the Revelation of God.

## 2. Husserl and Henry on the Concept of Phenomenology

Henry’s phenomenology is unique. He claims that in his phenomenology we finally see what has been defined by Husserl as the ideal of phenomenology in its absolute and ultimate form. We must first make it clear that Henry’s understanding of phenomenology is the same as Husserl’s in order to show that Henry’s absolutization of phenomenology is potentially rooted in the development of phenomenology. We also have to prove that Henry’s absolutization of phenomenology is justified in order to see the boundary of phenomenology.

Husserl in *The Idea of Phenomenology* defines the word “phenomenon” as “the essential correlation between *appearance and that which appears*” (Husserl 1964, p. 11, Husserl’s italicization), which means that the phenomenology of cognition deals with “the problem of givenness, the problems of the *constitution of objects of all sorts within cognition*” (Ibid.). The task of phenomenology is “to clarify the way in which an object of cognition *constitutes itself in cognition*” (Husserl 1964, p. 10, Husserl’s italicization); that is, phenomenology is concerned with how the known object is constituted in the knowing subject, or how it is manifested in the knowing subject. Understood in this way, all phenomenologies, no matter how different they are from each other, are in one way or another just varieties of interpretation of the term “phenomenon”. Husserl says, “the task is just this: within the framework of pure evidence (*Evidenz*) or self-givenness to *trace all forms of givenness and all correlations*” (Ibid.) For Husserl, a phenomenological elucidatory analysis should be conducted within the framework of pure evidence, and he sees “pure evidence” as equal to “self-givenness”, or we may say that he reduces self-givenness to pure evidence, which will be challenged by Henry.

Husserl also notices that the word “phenomenon” “in its proper sense means that which appears, and yet it is by preference used for the appearing itself” (Husserl 1964, p. 64). Even though phenomenology has to investigate “the objects and modes of cognition”, Husserl seems to emphasize that properly speaking, phenomenology’s aim is the discovery of what things or objects are given, and the analysis of consciousness or cognition is just one inseparable task. How is consciousness given in itself? Husserl says, “[i]n reflection, the *cogitatio*, the appearing itself, becomes an object, and this encourages the rise of ambiguity” (Ibid. p. 11, Husserl’s italicization). The differences in understanding the “ambiguity” are crucial for the definition of phenomenology. Since he takes the structure of phenomenon as essentially intentional, Husserl does not concern himself with a possible question: what if that which appears is the same as appearing, that is, cognition or consciousness itself is given in itself? Henry’s phenomenological works can be seen as a reflection on this ambiguous issue.

In *The Essence of Manifestation*, Henry proposes a new approach to the fundamental problems of phenomenology: we need to go back from Heidegger to Husserl and then go further back to a place where we can find the ultimate foundation. In Heidegger, Being is appearing, and beings are what appears. “It is only because Being is uncovered that beings can show themselves” (Henry 1973, p. 19); therefore, Being is the transcendental horizon of beings, and in this sense the question of Being is more important than the questions of beings. Henry says, “The clarification of the meaning of Being interior to a specific domain of objects implies the prior clarification of the meaning of Being in general; but the meaning of Being of the *ego cogito* is not a regional meaning at all, if it is true that it is in and by this ego that all the possible types of Being in general and, by way of corollary, all the types of meaning immanent to them, are constituted” (Henry 1973, p. 25). Contrary to later Heidegger, for Henry, the meaning of Being of Dasein is more important than the meaning of Being in general because it is in the Being of Dasein that the meaning of Being in general is constituted or manifested. In Husserlian language, Henry says, “Consciousness is constituted of the meaning of Being in general, it is consciousness which prescribes for each object and for each type of object the meaning of Being peculiar to it. The meaning of the Being of the *ego cogito* is to confer a meaning upon Being; more fundamentally, it is to be the source of the meaning, the absolute origin from which, in every case, the latter springs forth as a free creation” (Henry 1973, p. 26). Different from Heidegger, for Henry, the Being of the *ego cogito* is more original than the meaning of Being in general: “More original than the truth of Being is the truth of man” (Henry 1973, p. 41). Different from Husserl, Henry regards Husserl’s transcendental ego as not transcendental enough, that is, the reality of consciousness has not been properly discussed in Husserl. Henry says, “the absolute ego is the origin, the foundation, the *Urstruktur* of all possible sources and of all possible meanings of Being” (Henry 1973, p. 26), and “the *mode* whereby the ego becomes a *phenomenon* is something so *fundamental* that it cannot be subordinated to any condition”

(Henry 1973, p. 37, Henry's italicization). The Being of ego cannot appear in anything else than in itself, "the path of access to the foundation is none other than the foundation itself" (Henry 1973, p. 41). The truth of man is the final and ultimate question of phenomenology: "the ultimate meaning of phenomenology in the last analysis hangs upon the fact of the discovery of a 'phenomenon' which is itself the foundation" (Henry 1973, p. 42). Henry would think that in his philosophy Husserl's idea or ideal of phenomenology is finally realized because in his work "there exists *absolute knowledge*" (Henry 1973, p. 43).

We can safely say that Henry's phenomenology is the radicalization of Husserl's phenomenology. It is not a going forward, but rather a going back to the original source, the absolute transcendental truth. In the following section, we will see in what sense Henry radicalizes Husserl's philosophy.

### 3. The Separation of Appearing and What Appears in Classical Phenomenology

What lies at the heart of Henry's critique of classical phenomenology is that in classical phenomenology there is always a separation of appearing and what appears and because of this separation the essence of consciousness or life cannot show itself in itself. Husserl, in *Ideas I*, says, "the sensuous pleasure, pain and tickle sensations, and so forth, and no doubt also sensuous moments belonging to the sphere of 'drives'. We find such concrete really immanent Data as components in more inclusive concrete mental processes which are intensive as wholes; more particularly, we find those sensuous moments overlaid by a stratum which, as it were, 'animates', which *bestows sense* (or essentially involves a bestowing of sense)—a stratum by which precisely the concrete intensive mental process arises from the *sensuous, which has in itself nothing pertaining to intentionality*" (Husserl 1983, p. 203, Husserl's italicization). In the structure of intentionality which allows us to be conscious of something, the sensuous moments are in themselves non-intentional, and need to be animated or bestowed senses by the intentional moments. The intentional moments presuppose the sensuous moments which are "the non-intentional", "the impressional and the affective", and therefore "the first givenness" (Henry 2008, p. 17). The act of bestowing sense, or "a stratum" in Husserl's words, later imposed on the first givenness, therefore, is the second givenness, according to Henry. What is primordial is the first givenness. It is in this sense that Henry sees Husserl's phenomenology as not transcendental enough and not radical enough: "Intentional phenomenology is transcendental phenomenology, but the transcendental reduced to the intentional noesis is not truly a transcendental, an *a priori* condition of all possible experience, if it always requires what is wholly other than itself: the sensation, the impression" (Henry 2008, p. 17). For Henry, the ultimate foundation or transcendental condition for all possible experiences is the sensation, which is autonomous and immanent. Regarding the relation between stuff and form, Husserl points to two possibilities, "*formless stuffs and stuffless forms*" (Husserl 1983, p. 204, Husserl's italicization). One of Husserl's meanings is that stuff, the sensuous, is blind without being bestowed sense. Contrary to Husserl, Henry points out that the decisive element in the intentional structure is not form, but stuff: "*hyle* is not merely a blind content for noetic act that would inform it at its will. The impressional matters dictate the modalities of their own fulfillment to the noeses, in accordance with the play of their appearing . . . *hyle* even prescribes to *morphe* the essential modalities that it must adopt in the constitution of what it constitutes" (Henry 2008, p. 18). The way in which an object appears in consciousness is determined by the sensuous moments, not the noetic moments. Without matter, form is empty. Without form, however, matter is not necessarily blind. Matter, or sensuousness, determines consciousness in an absolute sense, that is, consciousness is impressional or affective. Henry says, "consciousness is impressional by its own nature, due solely to being conscious" (Henry 2008, p. 23). Following Husserl's definition of the intentional structure of consciousness, Henry reaches an opposite conclusion: Consciousness in its own nature is not intentional, but impressional or affective.

According to Henry, it is not only in the case of how consciousness reaches out to a transcendent object that Husserl misunderstands the relation between matter and form,

but also when he reflects on consciousness itself. Henry says, in Husserl, “from the outset a displacement that leads from the real *cogitatio* . . . to a regard . . . which is a pure seeing in which one holds strictly to what is seen. For, it is under this regard, *in this pure gaze*, that the *cogitatio* becomes an absolute given” (Henry 2008, p. 45). In other words, the real activities of consciousness, for instance, the real perception, the real imagination, and the real feelings, are what is given, while the mode of the given or giving is the pure gaze. “It is an absolute giving because it posits nothing but what it truly sees, nothing but what it gives truly. And it is in this way that the given truly is, truly is seen, and exists” (Henry 2008, p. 45). Consequently, outside of what is happening in the real consciousness, the pure gaze as the mode of the given is added on to the original being of consciousness: “the *cogitatio* is not in and of itself an absolute given, it can only become an absolute given in and through a pure gaze” (Henry 2008, p. 46). This leads to an absurdity: what can be taken into the pure gaze must have already been existing “independently from and ontologically prior to the pure gaze. It is brought about or rather brings itself about independently. It is already there” (Henry 2008, pp. 46–47). Seeing, or the pure gaze, is presupposed as the criterion for something to be in itself and out of itself. In order for the pure gaze to function transcendently, however, it has to presuppose the prior existence of the real conscious activities. Henry points to the fact that even in Descartes there is always a possibility of “seeing as such is fallacious” (Henry 2008, p. 47). It is arbitrary to posit seeing as the transcendental condition. There is another fundamental mistake in Husserl’s phenomenology, that is, to take what is thought as what is real. Henry asks, “Has anyone ever seen his or her own thought, emotion, passion, or anxiety, unless he or she mistakes them for what is only an indication of them” (Henry 2008, p. 48)? In Lecture Three of the *Idea of Phenomenology*, Husserl clearly thinks it is necessary to replace the real *cogitatio* with “the pure *cogitatio*”: “but while I am perceiving I can also look, by way of purely ‘seeing’, at the perception, at it itself as it is there, and ignore its relation to the ego, or at least abstract from it. Then the perception which is thereby grasped and delimited in ‘seeing’, is an absolutely given” (Husserl 1964, pp. 34–35). For Henry, Husserl confuses the real perception with the pure perception under the pure gaze. Henry says, “Our life is never and cannot be seen” (Henry 2008, p. 48).

Even Husserl himself sees the difficulty to justify the supposition of seeing as the transcendental condition. Husserl says, “‘Seeing’ does not lend itself to demonstration or deduction” (Husserl 1964, p. 31). Seeing has to justify itself in itself. “The self-foundation of seeing . . . marks the enclosure of seeing within itself, that is to say the unsurpassable and definitive assigning of phenomenality to itself seeing as such” (Henry 2008, p. 50). This enclosure is also the disappearance of the real *cogitatio*; that is, the real life cannot manifest itself through something which is outside of itself. The separation of appearing (giving) and what appears (the given) in Husserl’s phenomenology is blind to another meaning of the term “phenomenon”, the identification of appearing and what appears, the truly self-givenness: “the thing given is given in itself, is shown in itself, in the nudity of its own reality” (Henry 2008, p. 52). The primordial meaning of phenomenon can happen only in life itself, which is called “auto-affection” by Henry. Before we discuss “the reality of appearing itself in its self-appearing” (Henry 2008, p. 53), let’s take a look at another form of the separation of appearing and what appears in Heidegger.

It is well-known that the question of Being lies at the heart of Heidegger’s philosophy. Being is always the Being of beings, and beings are always the beings of Being. Heidegger’s phenomenology of the world can be used to illustrate the meaning of the ontological difference of Being and beings. “The world itself is not an entity within-the-world; and yet it is so determinative for such entities that only in so far as ‘there is’ a world can they be encountered and show themselves, in their Being, as entities which have been discovered” (Heidegger 1962, p. 102). Beings can show themselves in their Being because of their transcendental condition of the world in which they are discovered. Here the world plays the role of appearing in which an entity within-the-world appears. When Heidegger gives a definition of phenomenology as “to let that which shows itself be seen from itself in the very

way in which it shows itself from itself" (Heidegger 1962, p. 58), he does not mean that a being can show itself without any a priori condition. "Only on the basis of the phenomenon of the world can the Being-in-itself of entities within-the-world be grasped ontologically" (Heidegger 1962, p. 106). Readiness-to-hand as the Being of things we encounter in our daily life is manifested in the totality of references or worldhood (Heidegger 1962, p. 114). Similarly, the spatiality of things we encounter is constituted or manifested in the spatiality of Dasein.

Therefore, we can see that in both Husserl and Heidegger the separation of appearing and what appears goes through in all of their interpretations of all different kinds of phenomena.

#### 4. Two Kinds of Truth

If in the structure of phenomenon appearing is essentially different from what appears, then, accordingly, there is a division in the concept of truth between truth itself and what is true, "the indifference of the light of truth to what it illuminates" (Henry 2003, p. 16). This is called the world's truth by Henry. According to Henry, in Husserl, the concept of intentionality indicates that the essence of consciousness lies in its relation to something opposite to consciousness, which is an object. Consciousness always moves beyond itself, toward the outside, and this is why Husserl defines consciousness as consciousness of something. Similarly, in Heidegger, Dasein's existence means letting-be, that is, to bring something into the totality of involvement, to free it from the hidden place, that is, truth means to make something unconcealed. Henry defines the world's truth as "the horizon of visibility in and through which every thing can become visible and thus become a 'phenomenon' for us" (Henry 2003, p. 17). "To say that the world is truth is to say that it makes manifest" (Ibid.). In discussing the structure of consciousness in Husserl or the existential structure of Dasein, the concept of time is essential because it is time that makes something visible. "Time and the world are identical; they designate that single process in which the 'outside' is constantly self-externalized" (Ibid.). "The horizon of the world is thus deployed before us in the form of three temporal dimensions and is constituted by them . . . . It is this three-dimensional horizon of time that fashions the visibility of the world, its truth" (Henry 2003, p. 18). The process of temporality is one of externality, the "coming-into-appearance" (Ibid.) as the horizon in which all things show themselves. Time, both in Husserl and in Heidegger, becomes the transcendental condition for everything to become a phenomenon for us. The truth of world is to make seen, to make manifest, and it is in the process of time that things become phenomena or come into appearance. For Husserl, the process of constitution is to bring non-intentional sensations into objectifying intentions so as to produce objects for us. The objects or phenomena become some kind of collections or products. There is an ambiguity between the object and the noema: are they the same or different? Some may think that the object is a series of noemata and nothing more. From the standpoint of Henry, this ambiguity indicates that in the truth of world, things are torn from themselves, casted outside themselves, and precipitate into nothingness. The world's truth is that in making seen it destroys, that is, it "consists in the annihilation of everything it exhibits" (Henry 2003, p. 18). "Everything that appears in the world is subject to a process of principled derealization" (Henry 2003, p. 20). The world's truth leads to destruction and death. For Henry, the truth of the world is the truth of time. In the horizon of time, nothing that appears can avoid the fate of death. In time there is no life.

According to Henry, however, life is essentially related to another notion of truth: the identification of appearing with what appears, that is, the self-appearing of appearing. This is the essence of consciousness: can anyone see his or her own thought or any conscious activities? "The reality of the cogitation as immanence is a reality of a very particular kind. It is the reality of appearing itself in its self-appearing . . . it is nothing other than the self-appearing of appearing, that it has and can have a reality of its own. By having this reality and experiencing itself, it is a self" (Henry 2008, p. 53). When we see something, we

also feel that we see something, just as when we touch something we also feel that we are touching something. The feeling of seeing or of touching is self-experiencing independent of all objects outside of it. Nothing is transcendent in this absolute transcendental truth. Henry says, “the phenomenization of the immanent givenness of the *cogitatio* is given without any separation, it gives nothing else, nothing that would be placed in the alterity of a distance. What it gives is itself, its own reality. The *cogitatio* thus gives its own reality of itself, inasmuch as it is immanence and exists through the work of immanence” (Henry 2008, pp. 51–52). For Henry, no mental processes, be it perception, imagination, understanding, etc., can be given or appear in time. Consciousness, understood as life, is eternal; it never appears in time. Distance or separation can happen only in time. In Husserl’s phenomenology, the notion of evidence is essentially related to time because it is only as what has occurred or happened that it can be seen. Without time, there is no evidence. For Henry, evidence is only a mode of givenness. The self-givenness of the givenness does not have to be in the form of evidence. The “original self-givenness of givenness is the self-experiencing of absolute subjectivity” (Henry 2008, p. 53). Here we can see that in Henry’s philosophy the concept of absolute subjectivity is not a substance or self-knowledge of absolute consciousness, but life as feeling or experiencing of itself.

The fundamental difference between Husserl and Henry can be seen in their different understanding of our mental processes. In *The Idea of Phenomenology*, Husserl says, what is left after the phenomenological reduction, is “the field of pure phenomena”. “It is more nearly a *Heraclitean flux* of phenomena. What assertions can I make about it? Now, while ‘seeing,’ I can say ‘this here’: No doubt it is” (Husserl 1964, p. 37, Husserl’s italicization). Knowledge is, however, not about this or that particular conscious activity; that is, it is about the essence of cognition. “Phenomenological judgments, if restricted to singular judgments, do not have very much to teach us” (Husserl 1964, p. 38). At this crucial moment there is a “thematic turn” in Husserl’s thinking, as Henry calls it, from the singular to the universal. We are not concerned with this or that perception, but with the universal essence of perception. For Husserl, “[t]he particular cognitive phenomenon, coming and going in the stream of consciousness, is not the sort of thing about which phenomenology establishes its conclusion” (Husserl 1964, p. 44). “Knowledge of universals is certainly given as an absolute phenomenon” (Ibid.). In order to illustrate his view, Husserl gives an example of how the universal redness is given after the phenomenological reduction: “I fully grasp in pure ‘seeing’ the *meaning* of the concept of redness in general, redness *in species*, the *universal ‘seen’ as identical* in this and that. No longer is it the particular as such which is referred to, not this or that red thing, but redness in general” (Husserl 1964, p. 45, Husserl’s italicization). Husserl is convinced that he finally solved the problem of how the transcendence of the universal can enter into the immanent consciousness: it is the self-evident givenness in pure seeing. For Husserl “[t]his cognition is of decisive significance for the possibility of phenomenology” (Husserl 1964, p. 41). What is decisive for the success of phenomenology in Husserl is, however, a crucial failure according to Henry. This thematic turn “consists of phenomenology’s explicit and deliberate decision to give itself new objects in place of the *cogitatio* that escapes it” (Henry 2008, p. 63). “As a this-here (*Dies-da*), the singular is destined, in its ephemeral occurrence, to slide into nonbeing” (Henry 2008, p. 61). Therefore, when the phenomenological reduction is the reduction to pure seeing, to what appears in this seeing, there lies a dissociation between appearing and what appears, and the unavoidable conclusion has to be the disappearance of particular conscious activities or conscious life, because our conscious activities do not show themselves in pure seeing. The essence of cognition is alien to the life of cognition because *cogitatio* does not have to manifest itself in pure seeing. The truth of life is lost in Husserl’s phenomenology. For Henry, “the substitution for the simple, actual givens of particular *cogitationes* with their essence”, this “thematic shift” (Henry 2008, p. 63) betrays the ideal of phenomenology; “it abandons the original how of phenomenality” (Henry 2008, p. 65). Our conscious life is substituted by pure seeing as the ultimate foundation, as the a priori condition for what appears.

## 5. Phenomenology of Life and Christian Truth

According to Henry, both the phenomenological truth of life and the truth according to Christianity (or Christian truth) are opposite to the world's truth. For Henry, however, the former two concepts of truth are not only opposite to the world's truth, they themselves are identical in the sense that truth is the appearing of self-appearing or manifestation of self-manifestation. In *I am the Truth: Toward a Philosophy of Christianity*, Henry claims that his concept of phenomenological Life is exactly the Revelation of God. The essence of life is the self-manifestation, and it is the same for God, Christ, and man.

Henry says, a pure phenomenological truth, in an absolute sense, concerns not what shows itself but the fact of self-showing, not what appears but the way of its appearing, not what is manifest but the pure manifestation, in itself and as such (Henry 2003, p. 23). Similarly, what is decisive in the Truth of Christianity is that "it in no way differs from what makes true", "there is no separation between the seeing and what is seen, between the light and what it illuminates" (Henry 2003, p. 24). In pure phenomenological truth, "What manifests itself is manifestation itself. What reveals itself is revelation itself; it is a revelation of revelation, a self-revelation in its original and immediate effulgence" (Henry 2003, p. 25). In the same way, "God is that pure Revelation that reveals nothing other than itself. God reveals Himself. The Revelation of God is his self-revelation" (Henry 2003, p. 25, Henry's italicization). Pure phenomenological truth is nothing other than the Revelation of God in Himself.

In order to make the point that the phenomenological truth is the Truth of Christianity, Henry has to equivocate several key concepts: appearing, phenomenality, manifestation, and revelation. According to Henry, pure phenomenological truth is the "phenomenalization of phenomenality itself" (Henry 2003, p. 25), that is, the appearing of self-appearing or showing of self-showing. And in it there is no separation between appearing and what appears, such as when we have a feeling of pain, it is the painful feeling of pain itself, and nothing other than pain itself showing itself. Phenomenality is what makes a phenomenon appear. As Henry constantly shows, however, phenomenality can be a phenomenalization of phenomenality itself as well as an a priori condition for a phenomenon, such as we can both feel our feeling of pain as well as be hurt by a knife. Manifestation can be a manifestation of manifestation itself. It can also be a manifestation of what is manifest. When he says, "It is the very essence of Christ as identified with 'the Revelation of God'" (Henry 2003, p. 26), however, is the Revelation of God as Christ really identical with Henry's concept of manifestation of life? Can we say that my physical or psychological painful experience has the same meaning as Christ for the Revelation of God? How can we as human beings have access to God? Henry's strategy is to claim that essentially speaking, God, Christ, and man, all share the same eternal Life.

Henry says, "Access to God, understood as his self-revelation according to a phenomenality proper to Him, is not susceptible to being produced except where this self-revelation is produced and in the way self-revelation does so. There where God originally arrives in himself, in the phenomenalization of phenomenality that is his own and is thus, life the self-phenomenalization of this phenomenality proper—there alone is access to God" (Henry 2003, p. 27, Henry's italicization). Phenomenologically speaking, it is only in God that God Himself can have access to Himself. How can we have access to God Himself? Henry has to make a presupposition that God wants humans to share "his eternal self-revelation" (Henry 2003, p. 25). That is, in his self-revelation, God not only reveals Himself to Himself, but also to human beings as a "givenness of God's self-revelation shared with man" (Ibid.). This move is problematic because it is based upon a presupposition, not a self-revelation. As a matter of fact, when we say that pure phenomenological truth is the manifestation of self-manifestation, it is still an empty expression. And when this formal expression applies to both God and human beings, there is a third term, Life. Pure phenomenological truth is the truth of Life, and is Life's self-manifestation or Life's self-revelation. It is Life's self-revelation that makes an essential connection between God and human beings. "Where is a self-revelation of this sort achieved? In Life, as its essence, since Life is nothing other than

*that which reveals itself . . . the very fact of self-revealing, self-revelation as such*" (Henry 2003, p. 27, Henry's italicization). It is only in Life that Life can reveal itself as such. Here Henry's reasoning is formal or analogical rather than phenomenological. For Henry, when we say that God reveals Himself, as a matter of fact, we say that Life reveals itself. So is the case with human beings: when we say that a man reveals himself, essentially speaking, we mean that Life reveals itself. God and man have the same essence as Life. "Everywhere there is Life, this self-revelation is produced" (Henry 2003, p. 27). God can say, "I am the Truth"; a man can also say, "I am the Truth". Henry says, "*what Life reveals is itself*" (Henry 2003, p. 29, Henry's italicization), therefore, in human beings, Life reveals itself. So is it in God. Henry does not, however, analyze whether the word "life", even in the same structure of self-feeling or self-showing, has the same meaning for God and man. Based on the presupposition that life has the same meaning, Henry arrives at the conclusion that God and man are essentially identical. As long as we can know ourselves, we can also know what God is in God. "We can know the essence of God only in God" (Henry 2003, p. 28), because we can say "I am God." Henry agrees with Eckhart' saying: "the core of God is also my core, and the core of my soul, the core of God's" (Henry 1973, p. 310). Thus, "The soul was not created" (Ibid.).

For Henry, Life is pure phenomenological truth because "The content of Life—what it experiences—is Life itself" (Henry 2003, p. 30), and thus there is no distance or difference between the one who experiences and what is experienced. Now the crucial question is: does the phenomenological Life in Henry have the same meaning and content as the Life of God in the Bible? The essential characteristic of Life, according to Henry, is its affectivity. "Experiencing oneself as Life does is to enjoy oneself . . . The self-revelation of life is its enjoyment, the primordial self-enjoyment that defines the essence of Living and thus God himself" (Henry 2003, p. 31). The self-enjoyment of Life is God's revelation. For the same reason, according to Henry, when Christianity says that God is Love, it means that God "eternally loves himself" because love "is nothing other than the self-revelation of God . . . the self-enjoyment of absolute Life" (Henry 2003, p. 31). When the Bible says that God is Life and Love, for Henry, it means nothing other than the self-enjoyment of God Himself.

If both God and man designate in essence the same Life, and the self-enjoyment of Life has the same meaning for God and man, then, we can ask the question: what is the role of Christ as the Mediator between God and man? Is it necessary for Christ to be the Savior for human beings? Henry is strongly against the concept of creation because for him man was not created; that is, man eternally shares the eternal Life of God. Henry says, "The coming of Christ into the world to save people by revealing to them his Father who is also their Father: this is the thesis of Christianity as formulated phenomenologically" (Henry 2003, p. 81). God is the Father of Christ, and He is also the Father of human beings. Why do human beings need Christ? Henry's answer is that Christ is the First Living, in other words, the first-begotten Son of God. Henry claims that when God enjoys Himself, when he feels Himself, he is in "the process of self-generation of life" (Henry 2003, p. 57). In revealing Himself, in feeling Himself, in self-enjoyment, God initiates the process of self-generation, and the first result is Christ. Christ is the first result of the self-generation of God, and human beings are the results of God's self-generation after Christ. For Henry, it is not that God sent Christ into this world, because God had to generate Christ: "the process of Life's self-generation cannot come about without generating within itself this Son at the very mode in which this process takes place; the Son is as old as the Father, being, like him, present from the beginning" (Henry 2003, pp. 57–58). Therefore, Christ is "the Arch-Son" (Henry 2003, p. 58). The only difference between Christ and human beings is that Christ is the firstborn, the first result of God's self-generation or self-enjoyment. "*Life has the same meaning for God, for Christ, and for man*. This is so because there is but a single and self-same essence of Life, and more radically, a single and self-same Life" (Henry 2003, p. 101, Henry's italicization). Henry emphasizes that there is but only a single and self-same life, which means that there is no gap between God and Christ on the one hand, and human beings on the other hand. As Rudolf Bernet clearly shows that even Henry makes an essential

difference between a strong and a weak self-affection of Life, his philosophy still reduces “the event of incarnation of Christ to the experience of a transcendental Flesh experiencing itself in the intimacy of the absolute self-affection of divine Life” (Bernet 1999, p. 330).

From the human point of view, for Henry, the only difference between Christ and human beings is that human beings forget that “*they are sons*” of God (Henry 2003, p. 135, Henry’s italicization) just as Christ was. In illustrating this point, Henry has essential reasons to appeal to Plotinus’s words. Henry’s phenomenology of Life is much closer to Plotinus’s philosophy than to Christianity because for Henry, essentially speaking, Christ and salvation are not necessary because man eternally enjoys his eternal life as God Himself does. Henry says, “there is only one Life, that of Christ, which is also that of God and men, and that, to this single and unique life that is self-revelation—and, moreover, the self-revelation of God himself” (Henry 2003, p. 36). In *The Essence of Manifestation*, Henry quotes Eckart’s words, “*God and I are one in process*” (Henry 1973, p. 324, Henry’s italicization), and “*God and I are One*” (Henry 1973, p. 311). Henry’s understanding of God and man is not far from Plotinus or Eckart (Depraz 1999). Rudolf Bernet in “Christianity and Philosophy” raises one of such questions: “Is the engendering of the Son by the Father nothing other than a ‘process’ (a notion with strong neo-platonic connotation of Life” (Bernet 1999, p. 328)? James D. Hart also notices this neo-platonic element: “Henry . . . is closer to Plotinus” (Hart 1999, p. 210). As Hart says, for Henry, “all must be reborn because of their forgetfulness of ‘the essence’. The forgetfulness is inseparably a lostness in the world” (Hart 1999, p. 209). How can one recognize such forgetfulness? This is a paradox for Henry. Frédéric Seyler comments on such a Henrian paradox: “In the recognition of absolute Life, what has previously been unknown knowledge is that individual life is and always was living through absolute Life. This is a new discovery and requires a change that can only take place in immanent affectivity. But why and how does such a change occur? For Henry, there is no answer to this question” (Seyler 2013, p. 282).

In order to see clearly why the role of Christ is unnecessary in Henry’s philosophy of Christianity (I would say his un-Christian philosophy), let us take a look at his characterization of Christ. Even though he admits that “Christ offers about himself to be the essential content of Christianity”, Henry immediately emphasizes that Christ is no different from human beings in the sense that “they exist only in Life, engendered by it. All sons are Sons of Life and, and inasmuch as there is only one Life and this Life is God, they are all the Sons of God” (Henry 2003, p. 71). Christ has no privilege over human beings in terms of Life because they are on the same status as the Sons of Life. “Christ’s designating of himself as the Son of God *merely comments on his condition as Arch-Son*, in the way that a radical phenomenology of life could establish it” (Henry 2003, p. 64, my emphasis). We do not need God to say that Christ is the only begotten Son of God; that is, it is a truth that can be established by phenomenology. Christ is merely the firstborn; he did not come to the world to save human beings from their sinfulness. Christ is not the God-man: “But Christ incarnate, made a man, is like any man” (Henry 2003, p. 81). According to Henry, “because ‘God engenders himself as myself,’ and because ‘God engenders me as himself,’ then, truly, because it is his life that has become my own, my life is nothing other than his own: I am deified according to the Christian concept of salvation” (Henry 2015, p. 260). Henry not only denies that human beings are created, but also thinks that humans are not sinful. If human beings are not sinful, there is no need for Christ to save them. His concept of salvation is philosophical rather than Christian: “The salvation . . . consists of *rediscovering this absolute life*” (Henry 2003, p. 153, my emphasis). Our question is: without Christ being the Mediator between God and man, is Henry’s phenomenology of life a Christian philosophy? If “man is the Son of God”, and Christ is the Son of God, and “the expression ‘Son of God’ is tautological” (Henry 2003, p. 98), then a human being himself is God, and there is no role for Christ to be a bridge between God and men. Here we have to ask ourselves: is Henry’s philosophy not a form of blasphemy, religiously speaking?

Henry says, “The only thing that matters is the salvation of all mankind as not defined by means of thought but by Life” (Henry 2003, p. 62). God, Christ, and man have to

be defined in terms of Henry's phenomenological Life, and Life is the screen on which all things have to be thought. Heidegger's critique of metaphysics can also be used to understand how God and Christ enters into Henry's phenomenology: "the deity can come into philosophy only insofar as philosophy, of its own accord and by its own nature, requires and determines that and how the deity enters into it" (Heidegger 2002, p. 56).

## 6. The Boundary of Phenomenology and the God of the Bible

If we say that in classic phenomenology (Husserl, Heidegger and others) the idea of truth is understood as the separation between appearing and what appears, then in Henry, the idea of truth is the identification of appearing and what appears, and for Henry this is the final and ultimate form of truth because it absolutely excludes any possibility of un-truth, and in this sense we can say that the movement of phenomenology reaches its last and absolute goal. The essence of manifestation is the manifestation of essence. For Henry, however, his radicalization of phenomenology and his concept of the pure phenomenological truth as Life is identical with the truth of Christianity. In what way should we understand Henry's Christianity? To use Kierkegaard's words, Henry's Christianity is a form of "professorial-scholarly Christianity" (Kierkegaard 1990, p. 195). In *Judge for Yourself!* Kierkegaard says, "Anyone with any eye for Christianity will certainly see that no one is as qualified to smuggle Christianity out of the world as 'the professor' is, because the professor shifts the whole viewpoint of Christianity" (Ibid.). From "I know" to "I feel", phenomenology does not change its fundamental conceptual framework: When Henry defines Life as the absolute field or horizon (auto-affectivity as the absolute a priori condition), God is defined as the feeling of oneself, and in feeling or enjoying oneself God reveals or manifests himself; that is, God as God can only reveal Himself in Life and as Life. God's revelation of Himself is in accordance with the conditions set up by Henry the phenomenologist. According to the New Testament, however, when Jesus Christ as the only begotten Son of God was sent to this world, Christ, as God's Revelation, is the Redeemer and the Savior for all human beings who are both created and sinful. If Henry is right that Christ is the First-Living as the self-enjoyment of God Himself, then the crucifixion of Jesus would be meaningless or unnecessary. As Kierkegaard says in "Should One Suffer Death for the Truth?", for Jesus Christ, "for him, the Holy One, the world was evil, sinful, ungodly . . . His death is the Atonement for the whole race" (Kierkegaard 1997, p. 64). In Henry's "professorial" philosophy of Christianity, we could not find the essential elements of human beings understood by Christianity: the anguish of a contrite conscience, the need for grace, inner struggles and sufferings, the hope for eternal blessedness, and peace for conscience (Kierkegaard 1990, p. 201).

According to Henry, the truth of the world is destruction or death because time or temporality as the transcendental horizon for all worldly things signifies that nothing can be eternal in the world. Life as the essence of God, Christ, and men is eternal. In the relation between God and man, the question is not how God as the eternal truth becomes the temporal, but how man can jump out of temporality and enter into the realm of eternity. Life is eternal for Henry because in the identification of appearing with what appears as the phenomenological truth of Life, the essence of Life excludes time or temporality. Even if we agree with Henry that man is eternal, can we conclude that man is not created? Being an eternal being does not necessarily mean that it must not be created; there is an essential difference between creation and being created even for eternal beings. Even if we say that Life has the same meaning for God and man, we still cannot deny that for God Life is uncreated while for man Life is essentially created. Descartes, in the Fourth Meditation, shows that in terms of the will, we human beings resemble God because our will is infinite, but this does not mean that our human will is not created. Both our will and intellect are created by God. When Descartes says that God's will "does not seem any greater than mine when considered as will in essential and strict sense" (Descartes 1984, p. 40), he does not realize that even our human will can choose whatever it wants, God's will, however, can create things from nothing. Human beings may bear the mark of the infinite in their

existence, but they cannot ignore or deny that there is an essential gap between God and human beings in terms of creation. It is only because of human pride or sinfulness that the act of the creation of God is denied or ignored, as we see in Henry's philosophy. To deny the concept of creation is an act of sinfulness, we may say that what makes human beings decisively and essentially different from God is sin, a "thorn in the flesh", the sinful characteristic of human life. It is sin that makes human beings blind about what makes God as God.

Henry denies that there is a qualitative difference between God and man. He says, "*Life has the same meaning for God, for Christ, and for man*" (Henry 2003, p. 101). Kierkegaard's Anti Climacus would say that Henry's point of view is paganism: "God and man are two qualities separated by an infinite qualitative difference. Humanly speaking, any teaching that disregards this difference is demented—divinely understood, it is blasphemy. In paganism, man made god a man (the man-god); in Christianity God makes himself man (the God-man)" (Kierkegaard 1980, p. 126). This is exactly what Henry does: He takes God to be human's phenomenological truth, to be a man. God, in Henry's philosophy, is an idol. Kierkegaard says, "The existence of an infinite qualitative difference between God and man constitutes the possibility of offense" (Kierkegaard 1980, p. 127). This means that God and the world are essentially in conflict. In Henry's philosophy, it is impossible to see that there is any conflict between the world's truth and the truth of life; that is, it is just a theoretical issue on whether it is a separation or identification between appearing and what appears.

In what sense could man be offended by God? The concept of offence is closely related to the Christian faith. There are two ways that human beings could be offended by Christ. First, when God as the Infinite comes into time as an ordinary man, that is, Jesus Christ as the God-man is the paradoxical truth, a truth which is "the objective uncertainty" (Kierkegaard 1992, p. 205), it requires for the passion of inwardness of being a Christian. Christ as the Revelation of God to human beings is not a phenomenological truth in which appearing and what appears are identical, and man can in feeling himself, such as in pain, be sure that Christ is the Son of God. To believe Christ as the Son of God requires faith. For all human beings, whether as Christ's contemporaries or later followers, they can never know for sure that Christ as a man before them is the Son of God. From the human point of view, the Christian truth is the absurdity. "The absurd is that . . . God has come into existence, has been born, has grown up, etc. has come into existence exactly as an individual human being, indistinguishable from any other human being" (Kierkegaard 1992, p. 210). In the Bible there are many occasions in which Christ criticized his disciples for lack of faith. In Matthew 14: 22–33, Mark 6: 45–50, and John 6: 16–21, it is written that when the disciples saw Christ walking on the sea, they were terrified, saying, "It is a ghost" (Holy Bible 1995, Matthew 14: 26, p. 26)! Christ said to them, "You of little faith, why did you doubt" (Holy Bible 1995, Matthew 14: 31, p. 27)? When Jesus healed a paralytic, some of the scribes are described "sitting there, questioning in their hearts, 'Why does this fellow speak in this way? It is blasphemy! Who can forgive sins but God alone?'" (Holy Bible 1995, Mark 2: 6, pp. 58–59). The scribes and others were offended by Christ's playing the role of God. Christ was persecuted by those who thought that they were doing service to God in the name of God. In other words, they were offended by Christ. Second, man is offended by the fact that when Jesus Christ was executed by the world as a criminal, when he was crucified with two criminals, people derided, mocked, and disdained him: "You who would destroy the temple and build it in three days, save yourself! If you are the Son of God, come down from the cross"; "he saved others; he cannot save himself" (Holy Bible 1995, Matthew 27: 40–41, p. 53). Even his disciples cannot understand this, and feel offended. Peter denied Christ three times. Kierkegaard comments on Peter's denial: "That a human being falls into the power of his enemies and then does nothing, that is human. But that the one whose almighty hand had done signs and wonders, that he now stands there powerless and paralyzed—precisely this is what brings Peter to deny him" (Kierkegaard 1991, p. 104). How can the Son of God not save himself? "He wanted to save all, quite literally all—and all were offended at him, quite literally all!" (Ibid. p. 105). For

Kierkegaard, this is exactly how faith comes into the world: “the possibility of offenses is precisely the repulsion in whom faith can come into existence—if one does not choose to be offended” (Kierkegaard 1991, p. 121). Human beings feel offended because of two reasons: first, how can such an individual human being be God, and second, if Christ is God, why he is so powerless! “Without faith one remains in the offense” (Kierkegaard 1991, p. 120). There is a gap between Christ and the human beings. In Christ there is an “abysmal suffering, unfathomable to human understanding—to have to be the sign of offense in order to be the object of faith” (Kierkegaard 1991, p. 105). As we saw in Henry, if life has the same meaning for God, Christ, and man, there is of no necessity for faith. For Henry, faith, however, is not just a mode of the pure feeling of absolute Life. This is a very strange definition of faith. It “eradicates the basic creature-Creator distinction so important to the Christian tradition as well as the essential temporal structure of faith, one that St. Augustine takes as an axiomatic theological principle” (Rivera 2011, p. 215).

In Henry, not only is faith redundant, but so is Christ’s death of Atonement. For Kierkegaard, the whole of Christianity is centered on the death of Christ. Henry does not see this, and for him, the significance of Christ is merely that he is the first born, the Arch-Son, and in essence he is no different from man. What man needs to do is to rediscover that he is the Son of God just as Christ is. And, according to Henry, the truth of the world is death, while Life has no death. It is meaningless to talk about the death of Christ. Henry has no concept of sin in his philosophy. From the proposition that Life is self-manifestation or self-enjoyment, we can deduce that creation and sin have no meanings in the self-generation of Life. According to Kierkegaard, however, there is a heterogeneity between Christ and human beings: “Every human being is himself a sinner. Thus he does not relate himself as a pure one to sinners but as a sinner to sinners, because this is the common fundamental relation of all human beings to Christ” (Kierkegaard 1997, pp. 83–84). All human beings are sinners while Christ is the only individual human being who is pure and good. Christ “was not only the Loving One, he was the Truth. And for him, the Holy One, the world was evil, sinful, ungodly” (Kierkegaard 1997, p. 64). It is in this relation that we can say that Christ’s death “was indeed the Atonement and consequently also atones for the guilt of crucifying him . . . His death is the Atonement for the whole race” (Kierkegaard 1997, p. 64). Kierkegaard argues that no human being has the right to let himself be put to death for the truth because Christ’s “free decision to will to die is in eternal agreement with the Father’s will . . . no human being dares to presume such an agreement with God” (Kierkegaard 1997, p. 65). It is for the sake of Atonement, for the Redemption of the guilt of all human beings, that Jesus Christ willed to die. “In love he wills to die the death of Atonement, but in order for him to die, the contemporary generation must become guilty of a murder—which he, the Loving One, with all his heart would very much have wanted to prevent, but if it was prevented, then the Atonement would become impossible” (Kierkegaard 1997, p. 64). It is out of love that Christ died for the guilt of all human beings, for their eternal happiness. “He could not prevent his death; it was indeed for this that he came to the world. However, since he sacrificed himself out of love, he also lovingly bore in mind in his enemies’ cause (and this again is why he is called the *Sacrifice*). This is the unity of *truth* and *love*” (Kierkegaard 1997, p. 88). As Saint Paul says, “God proves his love for us in that while we still were sinners Christ died for us” (Holy Bible 1995, Romans 5: 8, p. 252). Christ, as the one who was sent by God, came to the world in order to show God’s love for human beings through the death of Atonement. For any form of Christian philosophy, without Christ’s death of Atonement as one of its central topics, it would be a Christian philosophy without Christ, a pseudo-Christian philosophy.

For Kierkegaard, Christ is Truth, and he is also Love. We can never say that we ourselves are truth or love. It is in Christ that we see the unity of truth and love. Christ is also the Way. “Christ’s life here on earth is the paradigm; I and every Christian are to strive to model our lives in likeness to it, and this is the primary subject of preaching” (Kierkegaard 1991, p. 107). Since “Christianity teaches that the world is evil” (Kierkegaard 1997, p. 76), to be a Christian, to follow the way of Christ, would be seen by the world

as a criminal. There is constantly an essential conflict between being a Christian and the world. It is not in self-enjoyment or feeling of oneself that one becomes a Christian. From the point of view of Kierkegaard, a Christian faces an essential, difficulty choice: “will you be offended or will you believe” (Kierkegaard 1991, p. 115). Being a Christian, you would accept Christianity on any terms, even though you would be despised, ridiculed, spat upon, and regarded as a criminal. “Whether it is a help or a torment, I want only one thing, I want to belong to Christ, I want to be a Christian” (Kierkegaard 1991, p. 115).

## 7. Conclusive Remarks

In this paper, I showed that Henry’s radicalization and absolutization of phenomenology focus on the way to understand the concept of truth: is the phenomenological truth the separation of appearing and what appears or the identification of the two? I have challenged Henry’s claim that his phenomenological truth is identical with the truth of Christianity and argued that Henry’s Christian phenomenology does not touch on the central issues of Christianity, and thus, it is not a Christian philosophy. My aim is to show that if we take Henry’s phenomenology to be an ultimate or absolute form of phenomenology, then we can draw the conclusion that what is taught by Christianity is outside of the boundary of phenomenology. In Henry’s phenomenology, life as the self-manifestation is the only screen on which all things have to be defined. And in this way, Henry provides just another idol based on philosophical terms. We may use Augustine’s words to point to the central flaw of Henry’s philosophical thinking: “My sin consisted in this, that I sought pleasure, sublimity, and truth not in God but in his creatures, in myself and other created beings. So it was that I plunged into miseries, confusions, and errors” (Augustine 1998, pp. 22–23). Henry has neutralized the central issues of Christianity through his phenomenological understanding of truth and life.

**Funding:** This research received no external funding.

**Institutional Review Board Statement:** Not applicable.

**Informed Consent Statement:** Not applicable.

**Data Availability Statement:** Not applicable.

**Conflicts of Interest:** The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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