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Phenomenology of Space and Time

The Forces of the Cosmos and the Ontopoietic
Genesis of Life: Book Two

Edited by

Anna-Teresa Tymieniecka



Springer

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ANALECTA HUSSERLIANA
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Anna-Teresa Tymieniecka
Editor

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The Forces of the Cosmos
and the Ontopoietic Genesis
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Anna-Teresa Tymieniecka
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Anna-Teresa Tymieniecka

Contents

Part I

Communicative Virtues of A-T. Tymieniecka's Phenomenology of Life	3
Daniela Verducci	
Towards a Phenomenology of Life and the Invisible: Generativity and Sonship in the Thought of Michel Henry	17
Giovanna Costanzo	
Intentionnalité, Telos, Transcendentalité en tant que Forces Ontopoiétiques du Cosmos	31
Francesco Totaro	
Pythagoras in the Sacred Cosmos of Chartres Cathedral.....	37
Patricia Trutty-Coohill	

Part II

Le chaos du monde sensible et la quête du sens rudimentaire (à partir de Plotin).....	57
Róbert Karul	
Intentionality of Time and Quantum – Phenomenological Sense of Space.....	67
Mamuka Dolidze	
Duality and the 2011 Nobel Prize in Physics	87
Tsung-I Dow	

Part III

Ontopoietic Process of Life in Kierkegaard's Books: Zoe and Bios..... 95

Elodie Gontier

Edifices 105

Semiha Akinci

The Cave, the Lifeworld and the Tradition:

The Transcendence-Immanence Contrast Perspective..... 111

Abdul Rahim Afaki

***Wahdat Al-Wujud* and Logos of Life:**

The Philosophical Comparison 135

Konul Bunyadzade

Consciousness of the Cosmos: A Thought Experiment

Through Philosophy and Science Fiction..... 149

Sibel Oktar

Part IV

The Open Void – Embodiment and Experience – In Film/

Video/Numeric-Computer Art and Immersive Environments 167

Marguerite Harris

Ontopoiesis of Eidolon and Transcendental Schematism

in Cassirer and the Concept of Ontology in Meinong and Quine 179

Giuseppina Sgueglia

Dia-Log(os): The Genesis of Communicological Virtues

in the Phenomenology of Life, with the Reference

to the Advaita Vedānta of Ādi Śaṅkara 193

Olga Louchakova-Schwartz

The Cosmos and Bodily Life on Earth Elucidated

Within the Historicity of Human Existence..... 207

Konrad Rokstad

Evolution of Matter and Spirit, Rediscovering Slowacki's

Mysticism and Teilhard de Chardin's Theology 221

Piotr Popiolek

Part V

Novel as a Path: Mamardashvili's Lectures on Proust..... 231

Mara Stafecka

Artist's Personal Cosmogony: Andre Gide and Jaroslaw Iwaszkiewicz's Concept of Cosmos, Experience of Artist and Origin of Art.....	241
Daria Iwona Gosek	
Phenomenological Elucidation of Any Self Demonstrative Form of Expression.....	247
Erkut Sezgin	
Part VI	
Comment on Max Scheler's Thought and Philosophical Counseling.....	263
Lucrezia Piraino	
RETRACTED CHAPTER: Hyper Klein Bottle Logophysics Ontopoiesis of the Cosmos and Life	275
Diego Lucio Rapoport	
Retraction Note to	E1
Program from The 62nd International Congress of Phenomenology: <i>The Forces of the Cosmos and the Ontopoietic Genesis of Life</i>, held in Paris, France, 2012	351

Part I

Communicative Virtues of A-T. Tymieniecka's Phenomenology of Life

Daniela Verducci

To the memory of my dear friend and talented scholar
Romana Martorelli Vico†

Abstract It did not seem truly possible that Nietzsche's expectations could be met: that being and becoming could converge in one λόγος/*logos* and that the latter in turn, freed from both the confines of monism and the reductionism of dualism, could unfold in the previously unknown metamorphic form, which is able to draw together (=λέγειν/*legein*) the entities that change and become, in the infinite multiplicity of their states, passages, forms and conditions. Yet this is precisely what the phenomenology of life is able to announce: the search for the principle of all things has been reanimated and has begun again to dare to know, according to the Kantian motto: "Sapere aude!". Between the animate and inanimate, the human and non-human, and the numerous polarities that have crystallized in the modern course

Translated by Serena Rossi

† Romana Martorelli Vico was teaching History of Medieval Philosophy at the University of Urbino (Italy). She focused her studies and research interests on the medical aspects of Medieval thinking, giving editions of texts like: Mondini de Leuciis, *Expositio super capitulum De Generatione embrionis Canonis Avicennae* (Rome 1993); *Aegidii Romani Opera omnia* II. 13. *De formatione humani corporis in utero* (Firenze 2008). As a member of "The World Phenomenology Institute", she published: *L'apport de la Scolastique à l'élaboration d'une philosophie de la vie*, in «Actes du 35ème Colloque International de Phénoménologie», Paris 7–9 October 1994, «Analecta Husserliana», L (1997), pp. 131–142 and *Phenomenological points of departure in medieval thought: reflections for study*, in *Phenomenological Inquiry*, The World Phenomenology Institute, Belmont (Mass.) 2001, pp. 58–60. In addition to various essays on Italian and foreign journals, she published the volume: *Medicina e filosofia. Per una storia dell'embriologia medievale nel XIII e XIV secolo* (Milan 2002). She was a member of the Italian Scientific Commission for editing "The Medical School of Salerno".

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of thought, the new ontological hermeneutics made possible by the onto-poiesis of life is building new logoic bridges that open Post-Modernity to a new Enlightenment. The work of intuitive re-sowing of the terrain of Husserlian phenomenology that A-T. Tymieniecka has carried out for 40 years, and which culminates in the development of the phenomenology of life, has in fact manifested the metamorphic *logos* in the creative acts of the individual living human being; it presides over every inorganic, organic and conscious make-being. From this communicative discovery the precious possibility of a new inquiry of *philosophia prima* arises.

Beyond Ontological Incommunicability

Although the phenomenon of «exchange/interrelation» (*Wechsel*) concerns not only the human and living's environment but also the whole cosmos, as Max Scheler demonstrated (Scheler 1954, pp. 475–476), the pulsating heart of “a communication universe” (Klyukanov 2010) appears inaccessible to us who acknowledge to be hermeneutically confined in the so-called “standard theory of communication” (Shannon – Weaver 1949) and moreover jammed in the bronzed chains of a metaphysics which does not want to deal with «the abundance and variety that our present state of human experience reveals, to say nothing of the expanding perspectives on our horizons» (Tymieniecka 2009, p. xxvi). For this reason, as A-T. Tymieniecka observes, «the most concretely felt concern emergent at the present, and this is universally so, is with ‘communication’» (Tymieniecka et al. 2009, p. xxv).

The Ancients attributed this pulsating heart to the life of being itself and its spontaneously communicative generative capability, as Hans Jonas teaches (Jonas 1966, p. 7). For this reason they could – although ingenuously – rely on the fact that virtue communicated itself in the simple human living together, and they could also entrust the generation and transmission of the fruits of the highest theoretical activity to the community of life. Philippe Hadot well highlighted how much the whole ancient philosophy “ethically” understand itself as «way of life» and «living action» (Hadot 1996).

But Modernity damaged the ancient certainty of the living communicative unity among the different levels and forms of being, and since its late medieval beginning, with the advent of the theory of double truth – which divided truth in two incommunicating levels, theoretical and practical (Landucci 2006) – it deprived the communicating flow of life of being in human experience of its natural spontaneity; this fact led to dis-communicative ontologies – dualistic, such as the Cartesian one, which opposes *res cogitans* against *res extensa*, or monistic ontologies such as the materialistic reductionism or the spiritualistic one – to be established on both the primitive panvitalism and the later philosophy of being. The so-called dis-communicative ontologies of Modernity, have been highlighted – apart from some significant exceptions like Leibniz – for the tendency to position in the sphere of abstract speculation, so as to consider all experiences which did not possess the pre-established standards as illusionary.

After all, metaphysics, which teaching went on until the *Schulphilosophie* of German Enlightenment (Wundt 1964), was transferred to Modernity not as living and evermore updating research of the principle of all things, but rather in the “dead” and dis-communicative way of a discipline objectivized in the manuals produced by the Second-Scholastic for a didactical purpose (Courtine 1990).

It was noticed too late that the surprising scientific and technological progress, which still occurs nowadays with a higher increase in the field of communication, could have developed only because it relied on that mysteriously given but efficient communicative spontaneity of being, which ancient-medieval traditional philosophy was able to understand and safeguard in its historical flow, in a way that even the rationalistically Modern reductionism could profit from it.

Only in the late Enlightenment Kant was able to acknowledge that the “metaphysic” but not scientific «to unify the manifold of concepts by means of ideas» for a *focus imaginarius* by reason (*Vernunft*), had «an excellent, and indeed indispensably necessary, regulative employment» for the build-up and progress of science (Kant 2007, p. 533); and it was also acknowledged that this synthesizing process intrinsically depended on a natural, spontaneous and «irresistible» (*unhaufhaltsam*) force/disposition of the reason itself to metaphysics, called by Kant *metaphysica naturalis* (Kant 2007, p. 56).

In this way it became evident that Modern people deprived themselves of the edifying enjoyment of spontaneous flow of vital/communicative being with their own hands: they wanted to apply on the corrosive criticism and the rationalization of life, surrendering to their compulsive enthusiasm of “rebuilding” the whole natural being according to what they presumed to be the true *logos*, which instead produced even more sectorialization. In fact they established on being the only logic of «instrumental rationality» (*Zweckrationalität*), as Max Weber called it (Weber 1978, p. 24), that is a purposive-rationality/means-end rationality; it is teleological only in a subjective sense (*telos* in an objective sense=*Ziel*) and thus it results voluntaristically not truthfully imposed to the being; therefore dis-communication, a growing fragmentation and dis-synergy were produced everywhere: knowledge and actions began more and more incapable to grasp life, that in turn was perceived as uncontrollable, or with a contemporary expression: “liquid”, (Baumann 2005) thus leading to the anthropological “disenchantment” (*Entzauberung*) (Weber 2004, p.13), to decadence and nihilism of meaning, as F. Nietzsche first foresaw for the Europeans of XX and XXI centuries (Nietzsche 1968, Preface § 2) and as J. Habermas recently underlined and stigmatized in relation to the uncontrolled power of Niklas Luhmann’s systemic theory of society and culture (Habermas 2010; Id., 1990, pp. 368–385).

Beyond the inter-subjective level, incommunicableness affects many other levels of both being and experience, as demonstrated by the spreading relativistic multiculturalism, the epistemological and practical specialism, the growing diffusion of macro- and micro-conflicts. Human subjects find a growing difficulty to conceive themselves as intrinsically being-in-communication with the flow of being or the flux of cosmic meaning, which riverbed actually every new experience immediately enters.

To Resume Ontological Communication

All the things said above show that a serious «debilitation of the I» occurred: it expresses through the existential difficulty of present man in experiencing the true ontological and ultra-rationalistic richness of reality, insofar as it is «proceeding by a mysterious foundation» with which he is however «involved in a constitutive relation [...] through his own being within reality» itself (Prades 2007, pp. 62–63). In fact the typical post-industrial society's man appears as *anima technica vacua* (=empty technical soul) (von Balthasar 2004, p. 3), inasmuch as his meta-technical capacities of knowing the meaning of the world, of other men and himself are weakened and also as he is forgetful of the specie-specific communicative-of-being quality, which makes him a universal operator of development with an increasing/decreasing effect on the real world. The loss of man's «ontological security», in the benefit of an almost exclusive trust in the so-called “expert systems”, as asserted by A. Giddens (Giddens 1990, p. 92), seems to confirm that a potentially lethal *vulnus* for humanity was produced in that communicative ultra-sociality which enhances being and in which the identity of the human living being consists, given that it supported the anthropological philogenesis and it is still supporting the ontogenesis of human individuals, as clearly documented by M. Tomasello (Tomasello 1999).

In order to adequately answer to the criticalnesses arisen from the universe of communication it is thus necessary to deal with men and their unique natural skill which makes them able to *λέγειν* that is «to collect/to select», according to the happy ambiguity of the root <leg> in Homer which seems to suggest for that action the polysemic meaning of a sort of “creatively bringing *λόγος* to light”, which grasps and gets-in-communication the world's potentialities, which progressively are revealed by the historic glance matured in intra-subjective relations (Fattal 2001; Heidegger 2000), so as to converge them toward the result of an increase of the overall being.

Nevertheless we have to go back to men's logoic capabilities relativizing the metaphysical abstraction of subject, which dominated Modernity with the Cartesian dualism and the polarizing practices occurring not only between leading *élites*/rulers and overmastered categories/workers, but also and moreover between spirit and life, as A. Touraine underlines (Touraine 2006). The anthropological identity has been so invaded by such a modern polarization of spirit and life, that the same coming out of human free cultural capabilities was considered a mark of discommunication. For example Ernst Cassirer affirmed that man is an *animal symbolicum*: man is endowed with an active freedom of creating his own socio-cultural world through relationships, communication, interaction and division of work, thus he is capable of going beyond the boundaries of biological needs and practical interests of animal life. Yet, according to Cassirer, exactly for having such a cultural capability, man continuously experiments (Cassirer 2005a, pp. 393–394, 415–416, 474–475) both the struggling separation from “natural life” and the loss of “immanence in reality” (Cassirer 2005b, pp. 185–186). Moreover he fears of being

defeated by the self-destructive tendencies of spirit which, contrarily to life, is a critical force of self-negation always fighting against itself. According to Cassirer, from the distancing and emancipating process of symbolization the «tragic mark of the entire cultural development» emerges, being it influenced by the tragic psychological experience for which it seems that the movement of the “I” breaks “on its own creations” and its original vital flow blows over as the extent and power of this creation grow (Cassirer 2005b, p. 172).

Communicative Virtues of the Phenomenology of Life

On the contrary the phenomenology of life found out that the function of logicoic creation and ciphering/symbolization does not belong to the spirit of man in spite of his organic dimension and in dis-communication with it; rather, the creative human condition appears at a certain stage of cosmic evolution and it crowns the deterministic autopoietic constructivism of life with the ontopoiesis which “generates being” according to the freedom of *imaginatio creatrix* but at the same time it maintains a strict cosmic immanence (Tymieniecka 1988a, p. 28). As Tymieniecka unveils surprisingly:

«the elementary condition of man – the same one through which Husserl and Ingarden attempted in vain to open a breach, extending the expansion of its intentional nexuses and at the same time turning to ante-reduction scientific data – appears to be constituted by the blind element of nature, and yet at the same time this element shows itself to have virtualities for individualization on the vital level and, what is more important, for a specifically human individualization. The latter virtualities we could call ‘subliminal spontaneities’» (Tymieniecka, 1988, p. 28).

Thus man is represented as a «micro-cosmos» not just statically specular and analogous to macro-cosmos, rather as “ontopoietic living being”, which by his enactions «expands life into possible worlds of life» (Tymieniecka 1988a, p. 6) and therefore is creative/diffusive of being at a cosmic level; according to A-T. Tymieniecka, man is the «vortex of the universal sense», (Tymieniecka 1986, p. 10) inasmuch as he is active in the heart of «turmoil of a generating progress [...] of the immensurable stream of life» and his dynamism is consistent with the unique onto-poietic *logos* of being which, thanks to its metamorphic capacity, presides over every stage of development: from the inorganic to the organic one, from the natural living being to the free one, from the natural being to the supernatural one.

The stress on these new unknown evolutionary transitions of being, which put in touch within the conscious experience epistemologically different worlds as metaphysics and anthropology, is the result of the exercise of communicative virtues of phenomenology of life improved by Anna-Teresa Tymieniecka during her last 40 years of research. Through her analysis the communication between being and becoming has involved again all the levels of experience; it was already longed for by F. Nietzsche as he asserted that: «To impose upon becoming the character of being--that is the supreme will to power» (Nietzsche 1968, § 617).

New Communicative Connections Among Consciousness, Body and Life

The winning move of A-T. Tymieniecka was accepting the challenge of creating a more radical phenomenological criticism than the mostly gnoseologic one based on Kant by Husserl and also by many of his followers; one of them was E. Fink, who in his *Sixth Cartesian Meditation*, approved by Husserl himself, almost compulsively tended to pursue «a ‘last’ transcendental reduction of transcendentality, of transcendental constitution as such» (Tymieniecka 2005, p. xiv).

Yet, this setting based only on «intentional/cognitive rationality» (Tymieniecka 2005, p. xiii) did not give the expected results and the numerous phenomena described lacked a logico support which could protect them against dispersion: but “saving the phenomena” was still required by philosophy which was originally meant to be the research of the principle of all things, as well as phenomenology itself was (Verducci 2007, p. 11). Even in the conferences of Prague and Wien, Husserl complained – as reported in the § 53 of *The Crisis of European Sciences and the Transcendental Phenomenology*, where those conferences were collected – the persistent and unsolved discommunication expressed by the «paradox of human subjectivity: being a subject for the world and at the same time being an object in the world» (Husserl 1970, p. 178). For this reason, rather than proceeding with one more effort to interpret phenomenology through its own method, according to the Husserlian proposal of a self-critique of phenomenology upon its very own transcendental/subjective assumptions (Tymieniecka 2005, p. xv), Anna-Teresa Tymieniecka sets out to achieve an «enlarged inquiry that will advance in virtue of rationalities that are not identical with constitutive/cognitive/intentional transcendentality», but express a further and more originary «talent/disposition of consciousness» (*Uranlage des Bewusstseins*) (Tymieniecka 1971, § 1, pp. 4–7). In this A-T. Tymieniecka seconded the tendency present in the late Husserl to break with «the early theoretic-methodological restrictions that his focus on intentionality [had] imposed on him» (Tymieniecka 2002, p. 685a). In addition she relied upon the results of the most recent phenomenological psychiatry (Ey, ed. by, 1966) according to which constituent transcendental consciousness is not closed in its absoluteness, but engages a fruitful relationship with forming spontaneity (*bildende Spontanität*) of normal and pathological conscious living that develops beyond the system of constitution, for example, in the typical elementary formations of the collective imagination or in states of dreaming or mental confusion (Tymieniecka 1971, § 1, pp. 4–7). Furthermore, since developments in the natural sciences have overturned the assertion of corporeality as the zero-point (*Nullpunkt*) (Husserl 1989, § 41, p. 165) of the transcendental constitution of the life-world, revealing that “what is conscious” (*das Bewusste*) is rooted in “what is corporeal-natural” (*in dem “Leiblich-natürlichen”*), it is possible to ascertain that consciousness possesses a peculiar modality of “embodiment” (*Verleibung*), where, through the living experiences of the psychic processes in general, their succession, interweaving, and motivation, it comes into the entire spectrum of nature (*Naturgefüge*), in turn understood as autonomous (Tymieniecka 1971, pp. 2–3).

The Husserlian theoretical inheritance is thus assumed by Tymieniecka, not just speculatively but more deeply, through empathy, according to the new way of ideas' living genesis already introduced by W. Dilthey and borrowed both from Edith Stein and Max Scheler. Empathy was also considered by Husserl as the fundamental enigma of intra-subjective relationships (Verducci 2010).

Anna-Teresa Tymieniecka wanted to come into contact with «the seminal virtualities engendered by [husserlian] thought». She believed that making “live again” (*nacherleben*) in herself the founder's theoretical intentions, as intentions from which to start out and carry forward in a theoretical continuation with organic breadth, even the *logos* which presided over their living deployment would have emerged thus reestablishing the organic connection between «the historical body of phenomenological learning» and «the horizons for future programs» (Tymieniecka 2002b, p. 685a). In this way A-T. Tymieniecka supported the growing of the germ of *mathesis universalis*, that was sowed at Gottinga's time. So she originally intended

«to follow the progress of the method in order to inquire into its very *logos* and its yieldings [...] to learn, from the strengths and the weaknesses of the specifically phenomenological rationalities, the nature of the universal rationality that is involved in the emergence and run of our reality that subtends its genesis – the *logos* reaching beyond it and yet essentially engaged in the constitution of ourselves within our lifeworld and its horizons» (Tymieniecka 2005, p. xv).

It is precisely with an application to phenomenology as a historical living body (*Leib*) working to a new “phenomenology of phenomenology”, that the inquiry on the *logos* of what manifests itself gains a new and wider horizon of exploration: it is the horizon of life and its self-individualizing dynamics. Therefore Tymieniecka's philosophy can be now defined as phenomenology of life, which communicative virtualities soon become evident.

The story of «integral Husserl» (Tymieniecka 2002a, p. 2b) contextualized in the perspective of phenomenology of life manifests itself under a new light, which reveals connections where there was only dis-communication. For instance: Husserl's disciples of Munich and Göttingen were quite astonished when, after his moving to Freiburg, their teacher turned from upholding the absolute objectivity of the essential structure of things to an exclusive focus on their constitution in subjectivity (Tymieniecka 2002a, p. 2a). They didn't understand that by doing so Husserl simply made his thoughts follow a unifying *logos* which surprisingly is not speculative at all. Husserl «follows an analysis to an obvious end and then takes up deeper questions», because «each stage of his thought seems to have been for him a springboard for inquiry in a more profound direction». Husserl, Tymieniecka continues,

«might call the regional ontologies ‘naive’ as they stand alone, but he never disclaimed the eidetic insight through which we distinguish objects. He tacitly included it in the ascending noetic steps in the process of originating and forming the ideal structures of beings as they are constituted in the subjective transcendental processes of the intellect. And then he immersed the singular mind with its set of constitutive procedures within the intersubjective lifeworld. The concatenations of the lifeworld open yet another field of investigation, but the nature of the constitutive process in the singular individual mind remains valid,

however much apprehension of the reality of the lifeworld modifies the appreciation of it» (Tymieniecka 2002a, p. 3a).

Husserl didn't provide to this developmental sequence any apparent links among its phases but, Tymieniecka observes, «the planes of the human reality are intrinsically legitimated in that sequence, for Husserl adjusted his assumptions as he went without dismissing any set of them» (Tymieniecka 2002a, p. 3a). By doing so he positioned himself at «the core» of the project of phenomenology which aim is to be «an attempt to make reality foundational and thought immediate» and therefore it is «the better to focus and rites sites, to see reality in the round». Through such a conformity to life phenomenological inquiry «may the entire horizon of human interrogation and reflection on the world, life and the human place and role in it find legitimate ground and be linked» (Tymieniecka 2002a, p. 1b). It is not about a mere speculation, since what is described here is «the specific dynamism of the constructive logos of the real as it deploys itself», producing real transformations in individual, social and cosmic life; in fact, «in this natural onward flow of consciousness, logos' constructive acts bring forth their very own dynamisms and forces. Reason/logos is not a mere structuring line of construction, it is simultaneously its prompting force» (Tymieniecka 2002a, p. 4a).

This very close communication of being and becoming, of which the human living is an effective agent, thanks to his capacity to make being something which is not yet, was thematized even by Husserl in his so-called “philosophical last will”, *Teleologie in der Philosophiegeschichte* (in three chapters, the first two dated June/July 1937 and the last the end of August, 1936) (Husserl 1993, pp. 362–420). Here Husserl outlines the phenomenological meaning of philosophy as an infinite «teleological movement toward reason» (Volontè 1997, p. 143) achieved through cooperative effort by those who practice the craft or the profession (*Beruf*) of philosopher. The idea of philosophy as a task has broken into European history through an “originary foundation” (*Urstiftung*) laid by the first philosophers, men who first conceived the completely new “intention” (*Vorhabe*) of Philosophy and whose realization became their “primary mission” (*Lebensberuf*). They determined its “reproduction” (*Fortpflanzung*) in the social community through succeeding generations. Of course, for the new profession (*Beruf*) of philosopher to be handed down through history, it had to retain, unaltered in time, its “ideal aim” (*Zweckidee*) which has always defined it beyond all single philosophical expressions linked to specific ages and personalities (Husserl 1993, p. 363). Equally indispensable, however, for the historical transmission of the craft of philosopher has been the circumstance that real individuals internalize the *telos* “philosophy” as their task (*Aufgabe*), that is both a purpose of their own habitually constant will (*habituell verharrende Willensziele*) (Husserl 1993, p. 364) and a purpose for its concrete realization (*Vorhabe zu einer Werk*). The *telos* “philosophy” is so rooted in an “I”, in which just this *telos* assumes its place in an effective existence, that is to say it finds a practical, apodictic driving force that leads it to realization (*Ich, in dem eben dieses Telos eine Stätte wirklichen Daseins, praktischer apodiktischer Richtkraft hat*) (Husserl 1993, p. 411).

Thus: since, the history of philosophy, as produced by the work of philosophers, is ruled by a teleology analogous to that which is active in other crafts and since philosophy's perennial task is to reveal the «originary foundation» (*Urstiftung*) of

every human experience, an extraordinary possibility arises. Through the phenomenological self-reflection (*Selbst-Besinnen*) we may reach an awareness of the dynamics of the very living «reproduction» (*Fortpflanzung*) and of its logicity. Specially we can understand the *logos* according to which the special form of the final ideas, present in the assignments of the crafts, may be transmitted intersubjectively, entering/penetrating the lives of human individuals so profoundly that they are able to determine a new concrete historical level, produced by the praxis of their «professional humanity» (*Berufsmenschheit*) (Husserl 1993, p. 363).

Therefore J. Habermas found its mark as he found out the origin of the lasting vitality of phenomenology, its being «permeated with existential topicality», through its capability of running together a broad anthropologizing and a deep ontologizing (Habermas 1998, p. 4); but this capacity derives from the fact that methodologically phenomenology has to draw on the living experience (*Erlebnis*), as unexhaustible human resource and basis of every fruitful speculation.

Husserl, as well as R. Ingarden and M. Merleau-Ponty «sought vainly to bring nature, body, soul and spirit under the aegis of transcendental intentionality» (Tymieniecka 1988a, p. 4), because – as Tymieniecka perceptively observes- «in the focus either on the givenness of the human factor or on the ways in which the givenness is established, the crucial point has been overlooked»: in other words, despite phenomenologists extremely deepened the description of life, lately they did not consider that man «constitutes an inextricable segment within the unity-of-everything-there-is-alive» and consequently his givenness «is only in its virtual state and is suspended in its actualisation upon the entire complex in which it is existentially woven» (Tymieniecka 1988a, p. 5).

On the other hand, this «first awareness- self-awareness- of beingness, which carries all the virtualities of its entire unfolding» comes last to the reflective awareness of the mind and an entire phenomenological course until Tymieniecka was necessary in order to make it manifest. Nevertheless, the success of this new procedure of investigation will make revealed – Tymieniecka underlines – «the way in which philosophy is called upon to perform its fundamental task» (Tymieniecka 1988a, pp. xxiii–xxiv).

A New Solidarity Between Logos and Life

Activating this new intuitive level, directed at living humanity, that is carrier of consciousness, Anna-Teresa Tymieniecka frees herself from the hobbles that limited Husserlian phenomenology, which, submitting «to the sovereign rule of intentionality», limited the field of inquiry, concentrating on «a misleading focus: human consciousness». At the same time, she also takes the step out of the dominion of rationalistic despotism, inherited from Modernity, but does not lose its achievements, neither from the point of view of consciousness, nor from that of reason. If anything, she integrates both, contextualizing them in the vaster sphere of investigation constituted by the «universe of human existence» (Tymieniecka 1971, p. 6) «within the unity-of-everything-there-is-alive» (Tymieniecka 1971, p. 4); she also radicalised

their interrogation, giving rise to an inquiry that can engage the metaphysical question regarding the «origin of forms of this [new] involvement, that is, of life itself» (Tymieniecka 1971, p. 6), according to its *logos*.

By doing so, Tymieniecka conducted an intuitive descent to the most primitive level of being, that which precedes the very act of asking any philosophical or scientific questions, and in which, therefore, both philosophy and science find their authentic and common root; she attained therefore the pre-ontological position of being, that in which being generates itself and regenerates. From this point of view, she has been able to untangle the *logos*, which presides over the evolution of the life of being, indicating it with a term of her own coinage as «ontopoiesis», that is, «production/creation of being». Going back to Aristotle's *Poetics*, the «ontopoiesis» of life indicates the becoming of life as a 'poietic' process of self-individualization (Kronegger and Tymieniecka 1996, p. 15). This term includes both the natural constructivism of life and its freely creative increase which occurs when the level of «human condition» appears, where life achieves a stage of individualization so that both it gains self-consciousness and it performs as capacity of self and hetero-modeling (Verducci 2004, p. 6).

Therefore, while in the past we focused upon «the structure of things and beings», now we may follow «the POIEIN, the making, the becoming, the unfolding of these structures themselves in their circumambient context of resources, forces, intergenerative energies in their basic self-individualization-in existence»; *logos* of life itself, inasmuch as *vis vitale*, pushes them along this road, promoting their unfolding and controlling their course (Tymieniecka, 2007b, p. 8). The absoluteness of the constituting transcendental dimension of consciousness is therefore rooted in the vision of Tymieniecka in a more «intimate operating, as place from which *eidos* and fact simultaneously flow» (Tymieniecka 1986, p. 3). Also from within the human condition, in fact, there radiates, grafted on the natural self-individualizing flow of life itself, a dynamic of creative vital expansion, upon which every intellectual dimension is based (Tymieniecka 1988a, p. 392). For this, the cognitive act, which points to the structures of beings and things, in order to give rise to static ontologies, must give way to the creative act, during which man manifests the same *vis vitale*, at work in the becoming of beings (Tymieniecka 2007b, p. 8): establishing ourselves at the level of creativity, it is possible to follow the *poièin* of those same essential structures that knowledge identifies, isolating them.

In this way for the Modern rationalistic subjectivity the first post-modern overcoming of dis-communication unfolds: no more subjectivity appears as a hyper-uranic self-referential, abstract entity with no history, but it is rather alive and vital because it is never separated from a human living beingness! (Tymieniecka 2006, p.xii). Beyond the «ossified view of things, beings», which mostly proceeds from the «so-called "ontology"», or from the «path usually called "epistemology"» or, at last, from the same «highly elevated sphere of spiritual speculation», consciousness sees now «a more fundamental grounding, a firmer and more indicative point of departure» in «life itself», as «undeniable primal state of living beingness», for which «to be means to be alive». This state cannot be identified with any experience and yet it underlines all experiences (Tymieniecka 2007a, pp. 15–16), because «it is

not reason that brings order into life». On the contrary, «it is life which brings forth the multiplicity of ratios, rationalities, and reasons in order to unfold its constructive course» (Tymieniecka 1988b, p. 195).

Going back to the Logos of Life as «filum Ariadnae» (Tymieniecka 2007b, p. 17), which determines «the dianoiac thread» (Tymieniecka 1988b, p. 181) and the productive order of evolutionary energy, discovered at the basis of rationalistic reason/*ratio* and transcendental consciousness, as their propulsive source, Anna-Teresa Tymieniecka has thus isolated «the spark of life» as the event of its manifestation in reality. It «radiates from the coalescence of the propitious factors of life that favour dynamic consolidation in self-individualization». Starting from it «the living being recognizes itself as “himself” or “herself”, not by a cognitive act but by “being alive”» that is both: «by experiencing oneself within one's milieu of beingness, directing one's instincts and appetites, recognizing the element of circumambient world in their vital relatedness to oneself» and lastly, but mostly,

«by recognizing oneself as the acting center of the universe of existence, as self-sustaining agent who directs within this universe of existence through experience, observation, reflection and deliberation his or her own course and who, finally, endows that course with moral and aesthetics values, and upon the wings of the spirit seeks to understand the reasons of it all and soars to the metaphysical and spiritual realm above, carrying within a thoroughly felt self aware conviction that to be is to be alive» (Tymieniecka 2007b, p. 16).

From the new theoretical position acquired, which has its starting point in «life poignant evidence of the self», we are able «to delineate life's course, retracing in the work of the mind the dynamic vital/existential lineaments of the logos of life» (Tymieniecka 2007b, p. 17). The intent of Anna-Teresa Tymieniecka of proceeding beyond the essential «givenness» of genesis constituting objectivity, in the seek of its «inner workings as the locus whence *eidōs* and fact simultaneously spring», had its success and the new graft of constitutive intentionality on «constructive advance of life, which carries it» brought us to the metaphysical way, on which the first principles of all things can be revealed again (Tymieniecka 1986, p. 3).

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Towards a Phenomenology of Life and the Invisible: Generativity and Sonship in the Thought of Michel Henry

Giovanna Costanzo

Abstract The philosophical reflection of the Twentieth century has drawn fruitful inspiration from Husserl's lesson on phenomenology, whose originality lies in the intentionality of consciousness. The possibility of observing the conscience reversed from inside out, aside itself, defined by objects of intent and not by our awareness of intentionalising them, has in fact worn-down the relationship between consciousness and self-awareness, paving the way towards a new philosophy of being and relating in the world. In particular, Michel Henry traces a pathway that leads from the superficial "outer" appearance, the exterior of the phenomenon to the discovery the invisible law of the life itself. The radical opposition between the phenomenality of the world and the phenomenality of life is thematized within the horizon of meaning offered by Christianity, where God manifests himself in giving life, in the Incarnation of the Word into flesh. Regaining our status as Sons allows us to achieve an ethical horizon in which the care and concern for others allows us to discover not foreigners but brothers, since we are sons of one Father in Christ. In this sense Generativity and Sonship become an indication to follow the path of sharing and joint participation, in pain and pleasure, in love and respect for that only Life, worthy to be honoured and defended in every respect.

1. The interest brought up by the experiments of young researchers at CERN on *the God particle* 'or *the Higgs Boson*, held responsible for the mass of all existing bodies, or the clamor over the possible knowledge of the entire sequence of the DNA code, indicate how the desire to grasp the unfathomable mystery of life, its hidden links and complex patterns have always not only interested scientists and researchers, but Man of all times, or simply thought. Of course, whenever the combination

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of power-knowledge has led human capacity towards the intelligibility of nature or better towards the hidden patterns which make up its vital system, modern science has fatally interrupted, as Adorno and Horkheimer¹ would say, the vital and virtuous circularity between man and nature, living beings and the life cycle. Matter has been reduced to its quantitative and mathematical aspects and every natural element has been bent to justify the ends and goals dictated by a ruthless logic of domination and exploitation. For this reason many nineteenth century thinkers have vigorously and forcefully asked themselves how to return to question the deepest well-springs of life, not only in the light of a reborn thought with an ecological vocation, that is, a philosophy which makes responsibilities the sum of its actions in the cosmos; but in light of a thought which attempts to re-examine the role of man in creation since the crisis of the Cartesian image ego cogito, understood as the principle of all certainty and truth. In particular, philosophical reflection has drawn fruitful inspiration from Husserl's lesson on phenomenology, whose originality, according to many interpreters, lies in the intentionality of consciousness, and in its opportunity to offer a critique of the Cartesian consciousness. The possibility of observing the conscience reversed from inside out, aside itself, defined by objects of intent and not by our awareness of intentionalising them, has in fact worn-down the relationship between consciousness and self-awareness, paving the way towards a new philosophy of being and relating in the world, "which has become the need to go beyond the safe limits set by the essential consciousness and its reality",² in order to help retrace the logos which guides the development of the existence, as according to the Polish Anna-Teresa-Tymieniecka, whose work this conference pays homage to; or in order to reveal the immanent principle which gives life to all beings, as according to the Frenchman Michel Henry's course of philosophical studies. Even if at different stages and in different ways, both thinkers, in fact, have dedicated "all of their research beyond the level of ideas, in search of the primordial propulsive energy of the phenomenological movement itself. They have thereby initiated a rethinking of critical consciousness, precisely of Husserl's method – re-elaborated on the constituent level in order to grasp that element of life, that creative and creating movement which is part of the life of every living thing".³ This need to reopen the innate consciousness to its vital dimension, this common interest in going beyond the given phenomenon towards vital energy or towards the immanent principle which makes any event possible, seems to be motivated not only by the need to get out of the doldrums of a thought limited to a logical and idealistic process, a thought which failed to grasp the profound connection between spiritual and material, between the world/nature and spiritual man, and the need to go beyond the limits with which science and biology claim to investigate existence. In fact, the image of a life

¹Max Horkheimer, Thodor. W. Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*; *Dialettica dell'Illuminismo*, Biblioteca Einaudi, Torino [Turin] 1966.

²Daniela Verducci, *The issue of development in perspective ontopoietica*; *La questione dello sviluppo in prospettiva ontopoietica*, «Etica ed Economia», Semestrale di Nemetria, 1 (2007), FrancoAngeli, Milano [Milan] 2007, p. 45.

³*Ivi*, p. 47.

analyzed through the lens of a microscope, often hides the conviction, in the words of Francois Jacob, “that biology does not consist in life but in algorithms”.⁴ Scientific interest tends to address the chemical and biochemical links rather than the fulfillment and amazement towards a Life which has been gifted by Others. Particularly interesting is Michel Henry’s phenomenological study in which he criticizes the dominant and widespread reduction of man to a ‘manifestation of the world’; scientific and technological thought has come to remove the interest in intuitive and original knowledge, the *knowledge of the bowels* as Maria Zambrano⁵ would say, while at the same time a widespread aesthetic culture has made us increasingly incapable of building authentic ethical bonds.

2. In order to achieve this, -and this seems to be the ethical inspiration which Henry’s entire phenomenological studies are based on, we need to trace an alternative route to those which Western philosophy offers, a pathway that leads from the superficial “outer” appearance, the exterior of the phenomenon, to the discovery of the invisible law of the universe and, therefore, of existence itself. If it is true, that life is phenomenized through a mass of cells, which is precisely what biologists study in the laboratory, we cannot have access to life through thought; we cannot explain life through the compelling logic of rational, reductionistic and deterministic thinking⁶:

Whether it concerns neurons, electric current, acid chains, cells, chemical properties or their end components – material particles, biology is characterized by the fact that it is foreign to phenomenology. Indeed, all of these physical, chemical or biological factors represent phenomena or refer to phenomena, because otherwise science would be powerless to discovery. Nevertheless, it is precisely these various phenomena that do not obtain their ability to reveal themselves to us, their phenomenality, from themselves. *The ability to reveal themselves and become objects of possible knowledge* is thanks to a power of revelation unknown to them, *they being blind in themselves*.⁷

To the philosopher from Montpellier, the “blindness” of such physical or chemical elements signifies that they do not possess the reasons behind their phenomenality in their appearance, but in something else which, however, is not visible. The idea, in fact, that the “truth of things must appear and be revealed” is a postulated product of Western thought, which from Plato to Kant and Husserl, has interpreted “truth as manifestation”, as that which appears on the mundane horizon of visibility. According to this classical conception, reflecting on the phenomenality of natural phenomenon means “that the world does not consist in the totality of things or bodies but in the horizon of light in which things appear as phenomena”⁸ and thus

⁴Michel Henry, *C’est moi la Vérité. Pour une philosophie du christianisme*, Seuil, Paris 1996; *I am the truth. Toward a Philosophy of Christianity*; trans. *Io sono la verità. Per una filosofia del cristianesimo*, Queriniana, Brescia [Brescia] 1997, p. 58.

⁵Cfr. Maria Zambrano, *Clear Forest; Chiari del bosco*, Bruno Mondadori, Milano [Milan] 2004.

⁶Cfr. Edgar Moren, *The Challenge of Complexity; La sfida della complessità*, a cura di A. Anselmo, G. Gembillo, Le Lettere, Firenze [Florence] 2011.

⁷Michel Henry, *I am the truth. Toward a Philosophy of Christianity*; trans. *Io sono la verità. Per una filosofia del cristianesimo*, cit., p. 54.

⁸*Ivi*, p. 33.

“the truth of the world is not only indifferent to what it appears to be but more importantly, focuses its attention to what it receives from its truth which is “true” only insofar as it reveals itself”.⁹ And this is what occurred in the

philosophies which place consciousness at the foundation of truth -defined as an active transcendence or the projection of the horizon in which the object becomes visible, beyond the object. Placing the entity in the condition of object or “frontally”, thus as phenomenon, is only made possible by producing a horizon of visibility, which is the world itself. The world therefore *is not*; it never ceases to occur, just as a horizon that continues to take shape, under the condition of a power that never ceases to plan it. In Kant, this power is called transcendental imagination – the placement into image of a world, which is nothing other than this placement into image. It is in this placement of image, in turn an imaginary place, where every entity appears to us as image, representation, object, placed frontally, phenomenon.¹⁰

If the “truth of the world is nothing but the self-production of the exterior as the horizon of visibility, in which and for which everything can become visible and therefore phenomenon for us”,¹¹ according to Henry what thought has obliterated and forgotten in its long journey of research, is the *why*, and not only the *how* phenomenon occurs; the “truth” of its manifestation, the truth of its existence is hidden *inside*, within the immanence of its existence, in the heart of its vital essence. In doing so, and only in this sense the “truth of the world”, projected towards the exteriority of phenomenality, (*phenomenality of the world*) is opposed to the “truth of life” (*phenomenality of life*). For this reason “truth” and “life” must become inseparable in a form of thought for which good and truth are not “ideas to be contemplated and searched for far and wide,” as Agnes Heller¹² would say, mimicking the platonic progress towards ideas. In fact, such “phenomenology of life” professes that life is not contemplated in theory, but is lived and suffered, because life is pathos and affection, and only through living and suffering can it become an object of thought: “it is always life to make its objectification possible in thought, that is to say, as a condition within it and its object”,¹³ and “whoever has access to life only in and through life, implies a crucial precondition: it is Life itself which comes to itself”.¹⁴

Life is thus understood as a process of self-generation in which it senses itself. For this reason its self-revealing form does not belong to the speculative or objectifying order. On the contrary, the way in which phenomenality is phenomenized is

⁹ Ivi, p. 35.

¹⁰ Ivi, pp. 35–36.

¹¹ Ivi p. 36.

¹² Agnes Heller, *Philosophie des linken radikalismus*, BSA-verlag, Amburgo, 1978; *Radical Philosophy*, Basil Blackwell, 1984, tr.it. e cura di L. Boella, *Filosofia radicale*, Il Saggiatore, Milano [Milan] 1979.

¹³ Michel Henry, *Incarnation. Une philosophie de della carne*, Seuil, Paris 2000; *Incarnation. A philosophy of the Flesh*; trans. *Incarnazione. Una filosofia della carne*, SEI, Torino [Turin] 2001, p. 110.

¹⁴ Michel Henry, *I am the truth. Toward a Philosophy of Christianity*; trans. *Io sono la verità. Per una filosofia del cristianesimo*, cit., p. 77.

the identity between sentient and sensed, the identity of who lives life and feels it in its pathic immanence.¹⁵

In this sense, the French philosopher attempts to make his thought a very “*meditatio vitae*”,¹⁶ or a reflection on life understood as absolute immanence and revelation. This apparent contradiction is, in fact, the question of issue which our philosopher seeks to unravel in his long career and in works as *The Essence of Revelation* (1963), *I am the truth. For a philosophy of Christianity* (1996), *Incarnation. A philosophy of the Flesh* (2000), through the instruments provided by historical phenomenology, particularly by Husserl, as well as in light of what has been Revealed. The radical opposition between the phenomenality of the world (the outer, transcendence) and the phenomenality of life (which is pathic immanence) is thematized within the horizon of meaning offered by Christianity. Life is revealed beginning from itself and in itself, outside the conditions of the world and regardless of any transcendental horizon, which would end up objectifying life itself. Christianity, in fact, unlike other wide-spread religions, tends to make its focal theme a truth of life which is distinctly opposed to the truth of the world (“*I’m not of this world*,” John 17, 14): the Christian God is something more and cannot be subject to the rules which govern the phenomenality of the world. And it is yet in the Christian God that appearance and what appears to be real are one: “God is pure revelation and reveals nothing but himself. God reveals himself”.¹⁷ To say that “God reveals himself” is to say that God reveals himself in life and as life: he reveals himself as the living God, (*1 Tim 3, 15*) as the living God who gives life, and is a manifestation of life through the generation of his Son (*Jn 14.6*). Thus this self-manifestation of God does not depend a priori on ontological or anthropological events, since God manifests himself in giving life, when He comes into the life of every believer, therefore life is the very essence of His manifestation: “*Life is nothing but that which reveals itself*, and not something that would also have the property of self-revelation; it is the very fact that it is able to reveal itself, self-revelation as such. There is Life wherever such a self revelation occurs”.¹⁸ Life is not only the place where the Father reveals himself, but also the place where the Son is revealed and it is the Son in the words of the apostle John to say: “I am the Truth, the Way, and the Life” (*Jn 14.6*).

Naturally, the topic of truth recalls the long philosophical tradition which considers it a matter of exclusive competence, in the sense that understanding reality and reducing it to a concept is a matter of thought, as Hegel argued; the truth Christianity speaks of, instead, does not belong to the speculative order, it is not

¹⁵ Carla Canullo, (a cura di), *Michel Henry: telling the pathos; Michel Henry: narrare il pathos* Eum, Macerata [Macerata] 2007.

¹⁶ Giuseppina De Simone, *The revelation of life. Christianity and philosophy in Michel Henry; La rivelazione della vita. Cristianesimo e filosofia in Michel Henry*, Il Pozzo di Giacobbe, Trapani [Trapani] 2007, p. 46.

¹⁷ Michel Henry, *I am the truth. Toward a Philosophy of Christianity*; trans. *Io sono la verità Per una filosofia del cristianesimo*, cit. p. 15.

¹⁸ *Ivi*, p. 47.

the result of reasoning, but of a truth professed by the person of Christ in the truth of his existence.¹⁹ Of course the difficulty of this theoretical approach, which intertwines philosophy and theology together in search of a living truth as opposed to a worldly truth, lies in the fact that philosophy proceeds exactly through reasoning, while “Christianity is a religion and, as such, legitimizes itself through its very existence”²⁰; therefore the Revelation does not disclose Himself to thought; indeed, it is only when thought gives way to the gift of faith, that man is open to God’s self revelation.

What motivates Henry in his attempt to understanding Christianity on philosophical terms, is not the comparison to the theological tradition, but the strictly phenomenological investigation²¹, in the conviction of the fruitful weave which joins theology and philosophy:

Therefore how does God revealed himself to us? Here the theological question is connected to the fundamental phenomenological question and identifies with it, as theology is only possible as phenomenology. The question of phenomenology is the way things give themselves, manifest themselves, so the theme of phenomenology, is never what gives or manifests itself, but its way of giving.²²

Even if philosophy and theology are two different disciplines, they do not oppose each other. The two starting points differ; for theology it is what has been revealed in Scripture, while philosophy, a self-knowledge, does not possess a predetermined starting point identified as truth. Yet, despite this, the method is common to both disciplines and that is: “in a movement of thought which achieves results- progressive steps part of a continually evolving theory, through the development of a series of evidence and the interaction of their implications(they too evident)”.²³

The movement of thought conceived by Henry and not Hussler, is the method offered by phenomenology; the “material phenomenology”,²⁴ or the science which has as its objective the self-revelation of Life. In such thought the question of the mystery of life leads to the mystery of the eternal origins of the Son in the Father; (“In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God and the Word was God”); as a phenomenological reading of the Prologue of John’s Gospel invites

¹⁹ Giuliano Sansonetti, *The phenomenology of the invisible Michel Henry; La fenomenologia dell’invisibile di Michel Henry*, prefazione a M. Henry, *Io sono la verità Per una filosofia del cristianesimo*, cit., p. 10.

²⁰ *Ivi*, p. 8.

²¹ Vittorio Peregò, *The French phenomenology between metaphysics and theology; La fenomenologia francese tra metafisica e teologia*, Vita&Pensiero, Milano [Milan] 2004, p. 150.

²² Michel Henry, *Transport to the question of God: proof of being or experiencing life; Acheminement vers la question de Dieu: preuve de l’être ou éprouve de la vie*, Archivio di Filosofia 58, 1990, p. 525.

²³ Michel Henry, *Incarnation. A philosophy of the Flesh*, trans *Incarnazione. Una filosofia della carne*, cit., p. 292.

²⁴ Michel Henry, *Phénoménologie matérielle*, PUF, Paris 1990; *A Material Phenomenology*; trans. *Fenomenologia materiale*, Guerini Associati, Milano [Milan] 2001.

us to do²⁵: “in its absolute self-generation, Life creates He whose birth is the self-fulfilment of Life, its self-fulfilment in the form of its self-generation”.²⁶ The first living being is the Arch-Son; whose birth originates through transcendental procreation, in the sense that his birth does not have an ontic empirical status, but belongs to the same process of self-generation of life. The birth of the first living being cannot be understood “as a coming into the world”; since what is manifest to the world is alien to life “birth is not coming into the world but coming into life”²⁷; in this sense, the first living thing is “generated and not created”, as stated in the Nicene-Constantine Creed. Therefore, Christianity perceives the revelation of life in a radically new way; that of self-revelation of the Arch-Son in life. Therefore, for every Christian, access to Christ is not through his worldly qualities, but through the essence of his divine origin. “This conception of Arch-Son has opened a new perspective to traditional Christology, intended as the conceptual understanding of the nature of Christ”.²⁸ In line with the word of John, we can better understand nature according to Christ, considering Him as self-generation of life when faced with the difficulty of thought regarding the dual divine-human nature of Christ through the idea of a pre-existing nature which is added to the divine. Understanding the nature of Christ is also fully understanding man, if it is true that man is the son of God²⁹; this too is expressed as an inner moment of self-generation of life. In fact, there is one invisible life that unites the Father, the Son and other living beings: “this means that the truth of Christianity is not to be sought on the historical or cultural level, but in that series of transcendental, acosmic, invisible relationships” which originated in Life and which constantly foster Life: “the relationship between absolute Life and the First-living being, between the Father and the Son, between God and Christ, between absolute life and all living things, between Fathers and Sons; the relationship between God and men, the child and children, Christ and the living; relationships of children, the living, or men amongst each other”.³⁰

In this sole invisible life, only a careful reading of the concept of self-affection, allows us to understand the specific and different relations between people, man and God, and man and the Son. If life defines and produces the content of its affection, the internal process of self-affection of life is consistent only in God. Even though man is capable of self-affection, of being affected by his impressions, he is unable to establish the condition of this self affection. In a certain sense, man is passive before himself: “I have given unto me without having such a gift, depend

²⁵ Giuliano Sansonetti, *Logos as on. The philosophical reading of John's Prologue; Logos come via. La lettura filosofica del Prologo di Giovanni*, «Filosofia e teologia», 1999, 1, pp. 112–123.

²⁶ Michel Henry, *I am the truth. Toward a Philosophy of Christianity*, trans. *Io sono la verità Per una filosofia del cristianesimo*, cit., p. 79.

²⁷ *Ivi*, p. 81.

²⁸ Vittorio Perego, *The French phenomenology between metaphysics and theology; La fenomenologia francese tra metafisica e teologia*, cit., p.153.

²⁹ *Ibidem*.

³⁰ Michel Henry, *I am the truth. Toward a Philosophy of Christianity*, trans. *Io sono la verità Per una filosofia del cristianesimo*, cit., p. 83.