

The Crisis of Reason and the Sovereignty of Limits. A reading of Pascal, Kant, Sartre and Michel Henry

''Ainsi toute notre dignité consiste dans la pensée. C'est de là qu'il faut nous relever, non de l'espace et de la durée. Travaillons donc à bien penser. Voilà le principe de la morale. Il est dangereux de trop faire voir à l'homme combien il est égal aux bêtes, sans lui montrer sa grandeur. Il est encore dangereux de lui faire voir sa grandeur sans sa bassesse. Il est encore plus dangereux de lui laisser ignorer l'un et l'autre. Mais il est très avantageux de lui représenter l'un et l'autre.
Pascal, *Pensées*, fragment 418

''Die geschichtliche Welt dunkler und in dem Charakter ihres fernerer Verlaufs ungewisser und gefährlicher vor uns, als [Ranke.....] sie sah. Denn ihre Natur- und Nachtseite hat sich für unser Denken und unsere Erfahrung als mächtiger herausgestellt. Aber der Geist darf nicht ablassen, sich gegen sie zu behaupten''
Ranke

The world in which we live is traversed far and wide by the work of man and the implementation of modern technology. Technology, as it were, is itself the implementation of modern thinking. Our world is humanized in a sense; in the sense that it has become the result of our thinking. There is pride in contemplating the works of the mind that thought has produced. We can revel, but sometimes we express serious apprehension about it, for if it has produced grandiose achievements in the field of technology and in the field of culture, it has also been able to implement formidable instruments of abuse and annihilation. We are not sure that thought alone can solve the confusion that reigns in our current world, because precisely, confusion is the confusion of thinking. In an evil hour, thought may well lack intelligence, be too short sighted and produce illusions. Thought can shut the mind up into a doctrine, system, and ideology. It can even lead us to believe that reality is in the representation it proposes. This study is concerned with the thought of Blaise Pascal, Henry Michel, and Immanuel Kant; their significant conception of the limits of thinking and how they address the problem of our age. The study also examines the phenomenology of Husserl and that of Sartre and their failure to resolve the crisis in our thinking. On the one hand, Blaise Pascal has been decried as being too religious to be a philosopher. On the other hand, the profound originality of Michel Henry's thought and his radical novelty in relation to previous philosophy, explains the limited reception of his philosophy. A philosopher, who is however, admired by specialists for his rigor and requirement and for its profoundness. In this paper I show their attempt, including Immanuel Kant, to speak to the crisis of reason and the sovereignty of the limits of thinking and they toil to transcend such limits.

Keywords: Thinking, limits, Kant, Sartre, Blaise Pascal, Edmund Husserl, Michel Henry

Controversy on Blaise Pascal's status as Philosopher

Blaise Pascal's philosophy is, as it were, anthropocentric and Christocentric. The latter thinks of man in a dialectical way, under the double seal of misery and greatness. Man can by his reason understand the world, rise above animality, but this reason is not free, it remains dependent on the passions, and it is only the heart that reaches definitive truths, miserable, we forget to make time the occasion for diversions. Faced with this errancy, wandering, this vanitas, this madness, the only wisdom proposed by Pascal's philosophy is to find the truth in charity.

In *Le Rationalisme de Pascal* (the Sorbonne publication of 2007) Tamas Pavlovits¹ remarks from the introduction of the work that the philosophical commentaries consecrated to Pascal systematically raises the problem of the philosophical value of Pascal's thought. The author then proposes a closely argued and a tight analysis of the role of reason in Pascal's work, who has sometimes been considered as an irrationalist, nay a mystical thinker. In this sense, his thinking has been viewed as being opposed to philosophy. The question of knowing if, yes or no, Pascal is a philosopher is not a fortiori trivial or insignificant.

Emile Brehier's reaction to this question without detour in his famous *Histoire de la philosophie*² in 3 volumes is that Pascal is not a philosopher; he is rather a scholar and a catholic religious apologist. It is willingly admitted that he has offered philosophically engaging texts, but he is rejected within the philosophical community. Why? Incontrovertibly thanks to the diversity of his themes, the absence of apparent unity, the shortness of his writings. But do these disqualify him as a philosopher? No. If Pascal is not a philosopher, then, it is so because he consecrated himself, we are told, to the apology of Christian religion, turning his back on research in physics and mathematics by directing his energy to a God of charity, a God who must be loved without reservation.

Martin Heidegger brilliantly remarks that Pascal attempts to fix and to hold together pure thought and pure faith, each with its own originality and its own rigor. Next to the logic of understanding arises the logic of the heart. Is Blaise Pascal then a philosopher? Yes, and in what sense? First, in the sense of the word "philosopher" as it was understood in the epoch. Philosophy was not separated from the exact, experimental, and social sciences; it was as well physics, mathematics, logic, morality, and politics. The famous definition that Rene Descartes gives it in his letter-*Préface aux Principes de la philosophie*³ (preface to the principle of philosophy) confirms it, in which he shows it as a tree drawing its roots in metaphysics, ascending by physics, and branching out into medicine, mechanics and morality. In this sense, Pascal the scientist really did the work of a philosopher. Second, in another sense, not exclusive of the first besides and drawing from the Greek origin of this discipline, philosophy is the search for wisdom, by way of knowledge (Plato, Descartes), ignorance

¹Tamas Pavlovit, *Le Rationalisme de Pascal*,

²Emile Brehier, *Histoire de la philosophie*, pp

³Descartes Rene, *Préface aux Principes de la philosophie*,

(Nicholas of Cusa, Montaigne), asceticism or other determinate modalities of conduct (the Stoics and Kierkegaard). Therefore, what is Pascal the scientist and Pascal the apologist doing if not the search for wisdom? Or rather the search for truth. Here is the right word, the central motif of Pascal's writings which gives them unity. Pascal is a philosopher in that he searches for the truth, at the risk of going back to philosophy in its claims (Stoics, Cartesian for example). But does Nietzsche, certainly very differently, not make the same remarks as to the "prejudices" of philosophers? As to Kierkegaard, does he not think that the religious stage is the only one that gives meaning to human existence? And Pascal by recognizing that the truth is his only goal, in his scientific works as well as in the wake of his conversion to God, is he not in this sense, a philosopher? As we acknowledged earlier, Pascal is not always considered as a philosopher and it is without doubt that Pascal has not constructed a system like that of Malebranche or Leibniz. In the great philosophical systems, he only sees a *libido sciendi*, the pride of reason. He is, however, in an original sense, in a sense that could be called today, not only "existential", but also "phenomenological", in our sense of speaking of the phenomenology of life.

Originary manifestation and the thought of being

Michel Henry, the contemporary French philosopher, appertains to a group of phenomenologists who were influenced by Edmund Husserl. He renewed phenomenology, the question of the pure subject, by questioning the place of the Husserlian intentionality. In his major work, "*l'Essence de la manifestation*?"⁴, he seeks to overcome the principal lacuna of intellectualist philosophy, which is the ignorance of life as everyone perceives or experiences it. Michel Henry defines from a phenomenological point of view as something that possesses the faculty and the power of feeling and experiencing oneself in all point of one's being. For Michel Henry life is essentially force and affect, it is essentially invisible. Life does not see itself from the exterior; life does in no circumstances appear within the exteriority of the world. Life feels itself and experiences itself in its invisible interiority and in its radical immanence. Thinking is only for him a mode of life for it is not thought that gives us access to life, but it is life that allows for thinking to attain the self. Michel Henry's thesis on "*L'Essence de la manifestation*"⁵ was warmly received by members of the jury who recognized the intellectual value and the seriousness of the author. But this thesis has hardly had any influence on their future works. Furthermore, his book, "*la barbarie*"⁶ was considered by some as an anti-scientific discourse a bit simplistic and too peremptory. Be that as it may, technology pursues its blind development and without limits in disregard for life.

⁴Michel Henry, *L'essence de la manifestation*

⁵Michel Henry

⁶Michel Henry

1 **Pascal and the destination of thinking**

2
3 We might begin by looking at Pascal's thought, as it addresses the
4 problems of our age. Pascal is our companion and our contemporary, and as
5 such the world in which we live, so to speak, here and there goes through the
6 works of man and the implementation of modern technology. Technology itself
7 is the realization of modern thinking. This world was humanized in a sense, in
8 the sense in which and is nothing else but the result of our thinking. There is a
9 human pride in man having been able to conquer nature. There is a pride in
10 seeing that thought has been able to conquer in all domains of knowledge, then
11 in other epochs which man intended to keep secret. There is specially a pride in
12 contemplating the works of the mind that thought has been able to produce. We
13 can rejoice about it, but we can also be alarmed by it, for if thought has
14 produced impressive accomplishments in the arena of technology and in that of
15 culture, it has also been able to employ extraordinary instruments of
16 exploitation and of destruction. We are not assured thought alone is able to
17 provide a solution to the confusion that is prevalent in our current world. Alas,
18 thought can very well fall short of intelligence, be short-sighted and produce
19 illusions. Thought can confine the mind in a doctrine, a system and in an
20 ideology. It may even give us to believe that reality is in the representation it
21 offers us. The question here is, to what extent, in Pascal's thought, can thought
22 reach or fail to grasp the reality it seeks to analyze or describe?

23 In his work, *les Pensées*⁷, Pascal rejects philosophers: Epictetus, because
24 he thought man is a sovereign who can sometimes do what he can; Montaigne,
25 in that he saw only in man's fallibility and did not perceive, rightly so, his
26 greatness. The error of philosophers generally is their having left out the *juste*
27 *milieu*, by ceding to their egocentrism. By either raising themselves to the
28 center of everything or making a God out of themselves. He castigated
29 Descartes for persistently being ignorant of the limits of reason and his
30 confidence in mathematics signals the blindness to which he led his
31 contemporaries.

32 As an elaboration of mental constructions that constitutes representation,
33 thinking is a specifically human characteristic and as such constitutes limits.
34 Thus, Pascal affirms that thinking enables man's greatness, for it enables him
35 to represent what is. And he instantly reckons that it is not greatness as such
36 that really grows us, for thought discloses our finitude, it puts us back into the
37 order of reality in which we only grasp at what point we are less of things in a
38 universe that surpasses us far and wide. By reason of thought being inseparable
39 from the human condition:

40
41 *‘‘La grandeur de l’homme est dans sa pensée:’’Quand l’univers l’écraserait,*
42 *l’homme serait encore plus noble que ce qui le tue, parce qu’il sait qu’il meurt et*
43 *l’avantage que l’univers a sur lui, l’univers n’en sait rien.’’⁸.Travailler à bien penser*

⁷Pascal Blaise

⁸Fragment Grandeur no 10/14-Original paper:RO 165-2, Copies of the XVII century manuscripts.:
Grandeur no 155 p.39 :v/C2:p.60

1 *est le seul le seul principe de la morale; cela ne signifie nullement qu'il faille*
 2 *s'appuyer sur la raison: 'Deux excès: exclure la raison, n'admettre que la raison.'*⁹

3
 4 Pascal concludes that working to think rightly must be our morality. Not a
 5 morality in the habitual sense of current good manners in such or such region
 6 or land. But the morality essential to every human being gifted with reason,
 7 therefore gifted with thought. The rapport between thinking and representation
 8 is worth understanding here. Thinking supposes the subject/ object duality by
 9 which the subject distinguishes itself to posit it in vis-à-vis. Thinking
 10 establishes a separation to represent what is and representation includes a
 11 system of concepts. It is for the intellect to carry out this separation and it is
 12 also the intellect that could conceptualizes difference. The tree, explains
 13 Pascal, does not know itself to be miserable.¹⁰ It is, it does not represent itself
 14 what it is. Then, man is great in that he knows himself to be miserable, this
 15 greatness appertains to thought that posits the concept of misery(finitude) by
 16 comparing man's existence with the immensity of the universe, within the
 17 immensity of time and space. From the viewpoint of immensity, man is a finite
 18 creature; he can neither embrace the infinity of space, nor the infinity of
 19 duration. Misery such as Pascal describes it, is order of the reflection of the
 20 intellect on its object, man. We know, furthermore, that in *Les pensées*, Pascal
 21 has an intuition of the limits of thinking which he describes as the limits of
 22 reason. There is infinity of things that surpass reason and which reason does
 23 not understand. Reason should be fallible if it were not able to recognize it. It
 24 would only show its pride and its power if it would not want to recognize what
 25 surpasses it. The intellect that claims for itself the ability to understand
 26 everything only shows one thing, its own stupidity! It is more intelligent for
 27 reason to concede its limits than to refute it. We should attempt to be precise
 28 here. The problem of reason does not concern the right it ought to have to
 29 reason. It would be an absurdity to refute the value of reasoning as such, for
 30 reason is used to demonstrate. The problem of the limits of reason does not
 31 concern either its calculating power, its capacity to develop infinitely its power
 32 of reasoning, but rather to know whether it can attain reality.

35 **Kant and the furthest bounds of reason**

36
 37 Relating to the limits of reason, let us attempt to be specific. First point:
 38 the problem of the limits of reason does not concern the right it would have to

⁹Porte Royal editions:Chap XXIII-Grandeur de l'homme: 1669 et janv.1670 p.178-179/1678 no3 p.174-175

¹⁰Orcibal Jean, *La spiritualité de Saint-Cyran*, p.174.This idea does not only an apologetic significance.It also expresses a truth that is universally valid.The greatness of man reveals itself, even to the Christian, in the moments in which he keenly feels his humiliation with respect to God.Moreso, does not know itself to be miserable in fragment *Grandeur* 7(laf.111,Sel.143), begins from human nature by imagining what it would become if a thought and sentiment were dared him.Here, Pascal begins from the nature of the tree and emphasizes what it lacks in order it to be compared to man.

reason. Irrationalism is claimed to negate the value of reason as such. Quite literally, this is absurd, because we would use reason to demonstrate it.

Second point, the problem of the limits of reason does not concern its power of calculation either, its ability to develop infinitely its power of reasoning, rather to know whether it can get as far as reality.

On this theory, we cannot leave out the efforts shown by Kant who warns us to guard against falling into misology (Misologie)¹¹, the fact of loathing an instrument that enables us to know, the faculty of the synthesis of reason. Taken from Plato (for whom it means the hatred of reason that nourishes itself on the disappointment of experience¹², the term misology connotes for Kant the naturalist attitude of pure reason that prefers common sense, that is to say, the common reason that goes without science and, for example, asserts that one can more surely determine the magnitude and distance of the Moon visibly than by the mathematical detour, going as far as to say that all technical means are abandoned as the true method for extending knowledge¹³. If fact, note Kant, we notice that the more cultivated a reason is occupied with pursuing the enjoyment of life and happiness, the more man moves away from true satisfaction. That is why, among many, and among those who have made the use of reason the greatest experience, there is a certain degree of misology, provided they are sincere enough to admit it, in other words, of the hatred of reason¹⁴.

In *Kritik der Reinen Vernunft*¹⁵ (Critique of Pure Reason), he however, undertakes a criticism against claims which reason (*Vernunft im weiteren Sinn* Reason in a larger sense) wrongly attributes to the power of knowledge beyond the narrow limits assigned to it. On what does Kant intend to restrict the use of reason? Does it mean through Kant's work "reason" which summons a tribunal to question the claims of reason? Is it about Kant's speculation on the nature of reason and its limits?

Plus, with reference to reason and the limits of experience, the principle which is the main thread of Kant's Critique of Pure Reason is astonishingly simple and downright trivial: human reason is condemned to remain in the narrow field of empirical experience, the only possible experience admitted by Kant, any use of reason beyond possible experience is a dialectical use of reason which is indeed a pure vain speculation based on nothing valid. In a nutshell, for Kant it is necessary to stay within the limits of the ordinary mind and not to venture above or below. Pure speculation, as Kant would have us understand, is only authorized in the field of mathematics, everywhere else it must be rigorously restricted¹⁶ and subjected to empirical experience. Kant has no idea of spiritual experience. What Kant denounces are the claims of metaphysics to be able to discourse without any possible experience on objects

¹¹Kant, AK111,551-552

¹²Plato, *Phaedo*, 89d sq

¹³Immanuel Kant, AK III, 551-552

¹⁴AK IV, 395

¹⁵Ibid

¹⁶AK 11, 167, 308

1 that are nothing more than simple concepts, formal abstractions that cannot
 2 receive any precise intuitive content. Kant is completely fascinated by the
 3 Newton of the theory of gravity, and he dreams of another life as a physicist.
 4 so, from this very biased point of view, Metaphysics, for Kant, is speculative
 5 knowledge altogether apart which rises entirely above the lessons of
 6 experience, relying only on simple concepts. And Kant makes a mockery of
 7 Plato, compared to a light dove that believes to fly more easily in the space of
 8 pure understanding, while there is no air to carry its flight. The air on which
 9 thought can support itself, is possible experience. Kant adds a restriction of
 10 size, because what he terms possible experience does not envelop any opening
 11 for intuition but nothing other than empirical experience, as circumscribed by
 12 the sciences of Nature. Henceforth, because Kant sees in metaphysics only
 13 speculation in the air, without understanding that there is a higher form of
 14 intuition, it only remains for him all the books which venture in this direction.
 15 He believes he can condemn Metaphysicians who are doomed to endless
 16 debate, each adopting a position, while his adversary adopts a contrary
 17 position. Fighting in the arena of metaphysics is endless and can never find a
 18 way out. Kant does not even question the origin of duality; he takes it for
 19 granted, he sees only right/wrong struggles between philosophers who bring
 20 together dialectics mounted on both sides. On the other hand, Kant is
 21 inexhaustible when it comes to praising physics. They confront dialectics
 22 mounted on both sides. He recognizes in it the virtue of having known to
 23 propose theories which can be submitted directly to the verdict of empirical
 24 experience, experimentation which has the last word and makes it possible to
 25 get rid of sterile quarrels, confronting irreconcilable theories. Indeed, the
 26 construction of objective knowledge lies entirely in representation and physics
 27 has a completely original method of proof, but just in its own domain.

28 Equally important, regarding positivism and the agnostic position, Kant
 29 thus clearly foreshadows what will be after him the positivism he announces: if
 30 we accept the results of the Critique of Pure Reason, it remains only to submit
 31 to the verdict of facts and to their explanation in the physical theories. It is
 32 forbidden to ask questions other than those to which science can answer, and if
 33 the questions of foundation remain, then, at the limit, we must appeal to belief.
 34 This is what Kant does besides saying that he must abolish knowledge to
 35 replace it with belief. Kant establishes that knowledge is assigned only to the
 36 order of phenomena and that we cannot know the noumenon, the thing-in-itself
 37 which is beyond phenomena. It is an object of thought and not of intuition.
 38 Knowledge is confined within the limits of the scientific representation of the
 39 world which is of the order of the phenomenon and for the rest we must believe
 40 in a beyond, a strange noumenon, inaccessible and mysterious that a reasoned
 41 faith makes it possible to postulate but not to understand. Thanks to its
 42 positions, Kant's philosophy is typically a metaphysics of representation.

43 On closer inspection, Pascal's criticism did not lead to this point of view at
 44 all. If Pascal questions reason it is by setting its limits, it is so above all
 45 because it distinguishes two orders, the order of knowledge, *l'esprit*

1 *géométrique*¹⁷, which is that of representation, and the order of the intelligence
 2 of the heart and *l'esprit de finesse*, to which he attributes a faculty of higher
 3 intuition¹⁸. We will be tempted to understand that he opposes the truths of Faith
 4 to the truths of reason. If we stop there, we can see in his statements only a
 5 negation of reason in faith. This is an interpretation that holds when we know
 6 Pascal's Jansenism. However, at the same time, Pascal also says that the truths
 7 of faith are above reason and not against it. If they were against it would be an
 8 admission of irrationalism, which is not really the case with Pascal. Pascal
 9 admits a source of supra-sensible intuition which he terms the heart, an
 10 intelligence of the heart, but what the thought of rational men like Kant cannot
 11 experience.

12 This difficulty brings back to the status of representation and its limits.
 13 What power should we concede to representation and what are its limits? Any
 14 representation is necessarily secondary in relation to that which it represents:
 15 which is Being; Being manifests itself, as originary presence, representation
 16 reflects to give it an object to think about, to analyze. By nature, therefore it
 17 offers more of a pseudo-presence than a true presence. Now, what happens is
 18 that, by a strange magic, this aspect of re-presentation is erased; and what tends
 19 to substitute on the front of the stage for the intellect is the representation
 20 alone; representation parading in the guise of presence. Representation, by a
 21 clever substitution, tends to make people forget that it is precisely a re-
 22 presentation and assume to be what is. It is no coincidence that this vocabulary
 23 of representation is that of the theatre. Representation as such is termed the
 24 very spectacle in which is given the second presentation, Life as it unfolds in
 25 our own lives, with its comic derision, and its dramatic play. The spectator in
 26 the theater automatically performs a reflexive doubling since he becomes the
 27 spectator of the unfolding of a life. It is however quite another thing to look at
 28 life, than to live. Life is lived only in the most complete immanence within the
 29 lived, in the originary sensible presence of what I feel at each moment and not
 30 in the distance of a representation. I cannot just watch life in pictures on
 31 television, it would only be dreaming without living it. It would be losing
 32 myself in a representation of life and of neglecting my most vivid
 33 consciousness within Life, the consciousness which experiences itself at every
 34 moment in the pathos of every moment.

35 Does this mean that life necessarily tends to forget itself in favor of
 36 representation? Should we raise this problem historically in the history of
 37 science? Should we accuse the cultural model of the West of having somehow
 38 tended to obscure life in favor of representation?

39
 40

41 **Representation and phenomenality**

42

43 All Michel Henry's work points to a unique direction; it carries out a
 44 radical critique of representation throughout the history of the West.

¹⁷Pascal, Blaise

¹⁸Pascal writes: " c'est le Coeur qui sent Dieu et non la raison"

Representation, in its radicality, refers to the same thing that occurs and appears. Phenomenology, following Husserl, intends to describe the phenomenon as it is given to us within the conscious experience. Husserl's instructions were always return to the things themselves, by which he meant going back tirelessly towards perception, within the experience of consciousness. It is not a question of wondering what is beyond, behind, what would be a hypothetical thing-in-itself, like Kant's. The phenomenon is the appearance of Being itself, giving itself on the scene of Time. It is true that we have made the habit of making a distinction and opposing on the moral plane appearing/Being. But it is part of the game of manifestation which encompasses it, only the appearing counts, as it is given to us within the arena of consciousness. If we have a clear and Lucid mind, if we have an open heart and we set aside presuppositions, preconceived ideas, ready-made opinions, there is no reason why the truth of Being will not be open to us. Intelligence is not confined within the limits of scientific observations, summoned to devote itself to the results of science. It rigorously explores in a pure intuition the phenomenon of the lived and in it the gift of Being. Hence, what Husserl very much understands, and of which he takes note, is that appearing is within the experience of vigilance structured by a fundamental duality, the subject/object duality. Perception in vigilance and all the acts of consciousness are crossed by a fundamental relation which is that of **intentionality**. All consciousness is consciousness of something, Husserl explains and by saying that he lays emphasis on "thing", namely, on the object of consciousness and on the subject/object duality. It is the essence of vigilance to project itself; vigilance is ek-static and posits an object in front of itself and posits itself in return as subject only in relation to this object. Husserl does not see, nor Michel Henry either, that this structure is valid only within vigilance. Husserl therefore develops the thesis of intentionality and applies it to all objects: perception, imagination, memory, the constitution of the body, etc. However, in its pure interiority, the fact of consciousness as each of us experiences it, the life of the lived, is never an object. I see the vase on the table, it is there, in front of me, distinct from me, it is for me an object and this object I incontrovertibly have a representation of it from the angle of utility: the vase is used to put flowers. What Michel Henry shows is that there are two forms of appearing: there is what I see, the order of the objects of consciousness, but there is also what I feel. There is the impression felt, joy, suffering, there is the coloring of the heart in feeling and that is always present at the same time and carries implicitly the apprehension of what I see as an object. This appearing in oneself is affective, it is of the order of sentiment.

The Phenomenology of life

All that Husserl has been able to elaborate as phenomenology is, in the final analysis, as Michel Henry clarifies, only a phenomenology of the world, a phenomenology of objects, and not a phenomenology of life. If we want to apprehend it in its entirety the experience of consciousness which constitutes the entire fabric of human existence, we must not only apprehend the constitution of the object, the visible, but above all, render justice to this

invisible dimension of appearing, which is the self experience of the subject. Inner experience has got nothing to do with empiricist physics.

The *I am*, is the invisible dimension of life given in the sense of the self and not in a representation. The insufficiency of the phenomenology of the world was inevitably revealed in the development of phenomenology, and it did so in Sartre's interpretation of intentionality¹⁹. Taking intentionality literally, Sartre claims that to exist for consciousness is to be only a current of air, a wind which projects itself towards its object. If I could enter a consciousness (the vigilant consciousness) I would be projected there in the tree, on which consciousness stops as object. Sartre denies therefore the existence of interiority and sees consciousness as perpetual wrenching from oneself.

The Self never leaves itself. However, what Sartre misses is what Husserl also missed, it is pure selfhood, it is the unfathomable depth of the self. The Self never leaves itself, but perpetually experiences itself amid feeling beneath all object of consciousness. It is within feeling- not of representation- that this self-consciousness, that this consciousness of the object can never give. In the West this misunderstanding of the scope of representation had begun with the ambiguity of Descartes' cogito. Descartes, in *Méditations Métaphysiques*²⁰ (Metaphysical Meditations), realizes that the world of vigilance and the world of dreams do not really chase away each other. It is possible to cast doubt on the appearance of the world and to regard it as an illusion. But only representation can establish it. Only logical coherence saves the phenomenon of the world of the day before and conversely it is the logical inconsistency that disqualifies the phenomenon of the dream world. However, it is awesome to insist on this, sensible impressions are the same in the dream and the day before. I can cry in dreams, be afraid, suffer, love, and hate, and in its essence the pathetic is the same. The self is experienced in the same way in each of the states it goes through. The phenomenon of the world can be qualified by doubt, that remains that Life continues to feel itself identically.

Only the Self can give that pure identity that the mind cannot establish. Yet Descartes will not explain the self this way. Like Galileo, he is wary of affectivity, he is wary of subjectivity and seeks the real in the idea. Whether I am awake or sleep, $2+4=5$. Mathematical relationships are simple natures that escape the variability of states of consciousness. But this is not where the power of the certitude of the cogito lies. There is in the cogito a self-certainty which resists all doubts, and which does not appertain to thought. The *I am* (*Je suis*) is the coherence of the intimacy of the Self given to the Self. Descartes claims that the cogito is a pure intention and does not owe its certainty to reasoning thought. But he is mistaking in equating pure consciousness with thought. '*Je pense donc Je suis*' (I think therefore I am). The ultimate Reality is certainly not *cogito ergo sum*, *Je pense donc Je suis* (I think therefore I am. I am, and it is because there is I am, that thought can exist. No 'donc' (therefore) which proves nothing and even less possible assimilation of '*Je suis*'

¹⁹Sartre Jean Paul, L'Etre et le Néant

²⁰Descartes René, Méditations métaphysiques

(I am) to '*Je pense*' (I think). I am, is the first evidence and the first truth. Alas, Husserl will follow suit and retain from the evidence only of simple natures in mathematics, that which one encounters in clear and distinct thought. Michel Henry sees in this shift a complete denaturation of the Cartesian cogito "Je suis" (I am) which points directly toward life, towards the self; but, the philosophy of representation will only see in the subject a subject posited by thought.

The unreality of the world of representation

In *La Généalogie de la psychanalyse* (Genealogy of psychoanalysis), in the chapter entitled *La Vie Retrouvée* (Life Regained), Michel Henry does justice to Schopenhauer for having carried out a radical break by calling to question the foundation of representation. The title of Schopenhauer's major work is *Die weltals Wille und vorstellung*, 1818 (The world as will and Representation), one might think that, compared to Kant, nothing has changed 'the world is my representation'. What is new is that Schopenhauer finds the very foundation of representation in what he terms the Will-to-live. The only universe that each of us truly knows he/she carries it within himself/herself, as representation that appertains only to him/her, that is why he/she is the center: it is not representation that founds anything, but the infinite power of life residing in man, this infinite life Schopenhauer calls it the Will-to-live. Schopenhauer even disqualifies the world of representation, relegating it to the realm of unreality, like the effect of the unfurling of the veil of *Maya*, a term he borrows from Hinduism. Schopenhauer even has the audacity to showcase that there is fundamentally no difference between the scientifically grounded phenomenon, mere appearance, and a dream, because it is all simply a matter of one thing: the representation of thinking, mental constructions. The waking world is homogeneous with the dream and together they compose the pages of the same book.

The precedence of Reality

But then what, there must be a Reality in itself. A noumenon to speak like Kant. And this is where Schopenhauer turns Kant on his head, in that instead of looking for the noumenon far away, beyond, outside, in objects, in some unknown thing-in-itself behind phenomena, he comes to find it below all phenomena, at the very heart of the subject, in the infinite power of the Will-to-live. This reality is the will, the will whose most intimate mode of expression is the flesh of the body. It is no longer a question of will in the sense of Cartesian voluntarism (not an intentional will), but rather of the primordial will to self by which all life tends to persevere, to will itself indefinitely. Will to live means the will of life to live. Of course, Schopenhauer will have some inconsistencies, he will facilitate the entry onto the scene of the unconscious

which, coming late, will be unearthed by Freud. However, he will have had a premonition of the most radical foundation of subjectivity in life, and he will also have perfectly understood that representation remains forever within the realm of phenomenality.

Pure subjectivity, an invisible gift

What is this gift, this living consciousness prior to representation, this consciousness that Michel Henry describes as life? Not a blind will to live nor the will to power of which Nietzsche speaks, nor is it Freud's drive. Life is the self-giving of feeling(sentiment), it is pure subjectivity and self-experience. It gives itself in individuality and experiences itself as life while remaining invisible. Nothing very rational, really. We cannot in fact represent a feeling nor ever measure it. Life has its own certainty. I can sometimes doubt what I see-what representation constitutes-but I cannot doubt what I feel at the moment I feel it, as a feeling even if I understand nothing at all when suffering is there, it is truly there, and I cannot dismiss it as illusion, I cannot doubt joy, I cannot doubt love nor anguish when it assails me.

The self-certainty of life within me is its own self-revelation, but the self-revelation of life within me is not of the order of thinking, but of the pathetic order of feeling, in the perpetual to itself of feeling.

The astonishing shift that Michel Henry accomplishes consists surprisingly, in using speculation against. Michel Henry is a critical speculative thinker. And what he insistently strives to show is that the limits of representation are the limits of intentionality. But what then becomes of the power of intelligence? Is intelligence not irremediably linked to representation? Is the intellect not put to test by the subject/object separation that it establishes within itself in thinking? Michel Henry maintains that thinking is the self-understanding of life, the self-manifestation of life as intelligence, and this manifestation is nothing other than philosophy in its most original sense.

The intelligence of the heart and thinking

There is a need to make an important point: a West without the East is meaningless. The sun continues its journey from one to the other and its trajectory is one challenging representation in the West only makes sense if we explicitly acknowledge that this process could lose its meaning elsewhere in the East, it's implicit but it's what is never said. Very few academics have felt that this step, should be taken. Official thinking is western thinking because commonly, thinking is Western. If this process of representation has universal scope, it extends beyond Western thinking and concerns the very essence of thinking in its rapport with life. I am sorry, but unless one chose intellectual blindness, it is unavoidable to make connections because what Michel Henry discovers places him in close proximity to the radical approach of Vedanta.

Exploring the limits of thinking

If there is one constant question in Krishnamurti's work, it is that of the limits of thinking. The fundamental problem is the capacity of thinking to comprehend reality. Now, thinking is the ordinary mind in its empirical use and the ordinary mind undeniably has a mechanical character. Leibniz said that we are empirical three-quarters of the time. We commonly think based on memory, repeating past patterns, we commonly think with opinions that are the legacy of tradition and therefore still of the past. The ordinary mind is temporal, and always weighed down by the past and always struggling to encounter what is new in the present. What is original, fresh and alive. In a nutshell, thinking does not commonly encounter life, it constantly encounters its representation in the past.

Thinking operates withing routine habits and memories. The entire habitual structure of the mind rests on a basic mode of functioning that's, in fact, a form of conditioning. This form of conditioning can be individual(the weight of my past, my education, determining me to think in a certain way) or collective(I have ingrained opinions that have been instilled in me about what I am supposed to be: a Jew, an African, a Christian, a Westerner).David Bohm says that thinking is a bit like a programmed floppy disk that triggers a series of behaviors. What Krishnamurti highlights is the extent of our conditioning and the necessity of breaking free from it to encounter Truth directly, like touching a tree without going through thought and its layers of opinions and ingrained conditioning. What seems quite strange is that thinking does not realize its mechanical nature. Thought has gone astray, there is something erroneous in its content, so that thinking does not know that it is mechanical. Thinking, in its mechanical form, is not only truly conscious, sensitive. It does not intuitively coincide with the life that springs forth within it and precedes it, feeling precedes thinking. However, thought, cut off from life, can nevertheless provoke emotions because, in fact, the image of the self-shapes and triggers all sorts of emotional reactions that is merely the product of thinking. What Michel Henry failed to see on this point is the difference between the truth of feeling and the confusion of emotions. But can thinking even consider that it is not ultimately the seat of feeling? Why doesn't thinking realize that it is mechanical?

Thinking believes itself to be alive

The obvious answer: thinking believes itself to be alive. Which is a mistake. Thinking is not the flame of Life, the exuberance of the soul. It is merely the representation of Life in the fragmentation of concepts. To see this clearly, completely, is in itself a decisive revolution. This seeing, this insight, or profound vision is indeed a direct action of the intelligence. This seeing is accomplished in full lucidity. When it occurs what becomes of thought? It no

longer exists. Thought no longer has a place when there is total perception. It is no longer it is not divided subject/object perception woven by representation, it is a global perception, but for the subject/object division. Jean Klein uses the expression 'vision without object'. This vision is not produced by thought, but originates in the direct opening of the intellect to what is. Thus, seeing does not exclude feeling, on the contrary, it immediately possesses its warmth, pure lucidity and love becomes one and the same: fire, the fire of passion without motive as the fire without motive is the fire of compassion. Total perception is synonymous with compassion

Thought engenders the self

However, and this is what a Western-trained mind dreads, this necessarily implies the complete absence of a sense of the ego. Thought has engendered the self which has become- in appearance-independent of thought, this self which is always part of thought, constituting our psychological structure. However, authentic perception can only occur in the absence of the 'self'. Yet, the self gives thought a sense of permanence. But from the moment the 'ego is dominant, the vision becomes fragmented and limited. Thus, the ego is incapable of experiencing compassion. It can only say 'I love you, but not others', or conversely, 'I love others, but not you'. Where then is this intelligence located that simultaneously encompasses compassion. It is not contained within thought, it is not in representation. It is active in the act of seeing which is not divided by intentionality. We sometimes say of a person that they have an intelligent gaze. There is a glimmer of intelligence that is not of physical perception, it is only when the mind is, as it were, permeated by seeing that it is intelligence and that it can encounter essence.

Intelligence: crossing, Negation, and creativity

There exists a perception-and perception is intelligence-that allows for the blossoming like a flower of the essence, and there, perception is total. Or, in other words, things are grasped in their essence and their entirety. Contrary to what is commonly said, intelligence, intelligence is therefore, not a property, not an individual possession. We cannot have intelligence-that means nothing- we can only be intelligent and being so does not that I can in any way appropriate intelligence as my own. I can only be intelligent through participation in intelligence. Intelligence is communicated in openness; it is restricted in closure. The channel is in a sense opened or closed for vision to flow through.

The foolish mind has enclosed itself in a mutism, that renders it dull, in the stupor of inertia, as if the free and vibrant flow of intelligence had been shut off. But since all intelligence is participation in Being, a participation in the intelligence of what is, it is perfectly possible to awaken it in everyone, for it is

eternally available in the openness of consciousness, the presence of being. This cannot be achieved without an attempt to remove the obstacles that thought may have created. Krishnamurti terms negative thinking the critical path of destroying conditioning that leads to the supreme positive which is even beyond thinking.

This intelligence that flows through the mind in the act of seeing is also a creative intelligence. Creativity and perception are synonymous-Beethoven had brilliant insights that gave birth to new music in this in this sense he fostered the emergence of a new kind music. In fact, this infinity from which music springs, this dimension of infinity, is outside of time. Every human being can realize for themselves that compassion is outside of time, that truth is outside of time, and that this immense source from which all compassion flows is outside time.

The state of Wakefulness

But, what projects time if not the thought of the self located in daily vigilance? It is, vigilant thinking which poses the subject/object duality. This same thought which poses the condition for representation. It is in this duality of vigilance that I experience when I wake, me facing the world of objects, projected into a world, which seems foreign to me, me placed on the alert vis-à-vis the field of objects. It is vigilance, which sets in motion the ego, the ego which only exists continuously(apparently) in the waking state. Questioning representation amounts to questioning intentionality, but -and this is what Michel Henry does not see-questioning intentionality amounts to questioning the status of vigilance and the status of the ego. This is where the radical nature of the questioning on the limits of thinking is located. Such a questioning of thought in vigilance is only possible if there exists for intelligence an entirely different mode of understanding in a different state as high as vigilance and non-dual. This state does indeed exist and it is what we term lucidity, or vigilance without object, or even passive vigilance. In vigilance, I erect, because the sense of the ego is strongly present, a relationship to the world, which is based on subject/object duality, and thus, I myself feel separated from the world, just as I also feel a vivid separation from others. There is me and others, one and the world, me and things and I am on the defensive even as I am placed in a condition causes my consciousness to tear itself away from itself in order to be dominated by the consciousness of the object. This consciousness is, indeed, the one that Husserl describes, the one that Sartre caricatures, and for which all consciousness is obscured, because the fine relationship of the heart with what what is, is cut with an axe. What if it was possible to put an end to the subject/object separation? What if it was possible to live in the relationship in a seeing without an object which is at the same time a pure sensitivity?

1 **Wonder experienced and descending from the head to the heart**

2
3 According to Goethe the highest point that man can reach is wonder.
4 When a new phenomenon arouses this astonishment within him/her. He/she
5 should consider himself/herself satisfied. Nothing greater can be bestowed,
6 one could not seek beyond it. In non-dual presence there is no identification, no
7 division. There is only sentient unfolding -the self in its pure self-giving. But
8 when consciousness identifies with its object, a subject-object relationship is
9 created. We then speak of the suffering subject and an object of suffering. Yet
10 the knower of both is not an object.

11 The intellect gains nothing by attempting to conceptualize-by striving at all
12 costs to think the felt experience, rather, it has everything to gain by
13 descending into the realm of pure sensation. Thus, what is required for one's
14 awakening is a descent from the head to the heart. Give yourself over
15 completely-with the full intelligence of your heart-to whatever presents itself to
16 you from the one moment to the next: or, if you prefer, allow each passing
17 moment to fade away so that you may welcome the next.

18 This process unsettles the unfamiliar structures and habits that mind
19 maintains-habits designed to uphold the continuity of thought and, ultimately
20 to keep itself isolated from heart within its own intellectual realm of the mind.
21 Yet, there comes a moment when the game must cease. To avoid going in
22 circles within its own mental constructions, the mind must, at the same point
23 take the leap-the leap that consists of drawing near to the heart. This also
24 implies, quite radically, standing on the threshold of silence-taking the plunge
25 into the emptiness of thinking, which is the fullness of Life. It is entirely
26 understandable that the mind might be tempted to remain on its own side
27 driven by mental habits, it is inclined to churn out concepts and to seek security
28 within its thoughts. Yet, eventually one must acknowledge that there neither
29 life nor intelligence to be found within thought itself, pure life lies beneath the
30 constructs of the mental self. The intelligence that lends thought its relevance
31 actually precedes it and serves as its source.

32 Thinking has its limits. It is not intelligence rather, it is the mental
33 expression of intelligence within the realm of representation-a double that is,
34 very often, hallucinatory. Thinking is not Life.It is borne by life. Pure
35 intelligence cannot be confined within thinking any more than life itself can be.
36 It is precisely when thinking acknowledged its limits-and stands poised upon
37 the threshold-that the openings to a new intelligence of what is becomes
38 possible, an awakening of intuition.

39 Not everything the mind produces necessarily merits praise for the mind is
40 more is more often at the service of the ego's thought necessarily moves within
41 the narrow confines, in a state of unconsciousness. However, this is no reason
42 to reject thinking wholesale. Thinking can be restored to its rightful place, and
43 the intelligence inherent in in ma be awakened be awakened-watched over-so
44 that this time,, it n no longer severed from the heart, as, is so easily done in the
45 ordinary butchery of the intellect. The flame hat burns within objectless

1 lucidity is passion... and this passion is Life itself. Intelligence can have true
2 value only when it is illuminated by love.

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