JEAN-LUC MARION

Translated by
STEPHEN E.
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GIVENNESS &
REVELATION

Givenness and Revelation

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Foreword

Jean-Luc Marion: A Reflection

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Jean-Luc Marion's Gifford Lectures, delivered at the University of Glasgow in 2014, represent both the unity and the deep continuity of his thinking over many decades. That unity finds its heart, perhaps, in the phenomenological trilogy known to the English-reading world as *Reduction and Givenness*, *Being Given: Toward a Phenomenology of Givenness*, and *In Excess: Studies of Saturated Phenomena*. A significant part of his argumentation in the recent series of lectures draws on the re-definition of the notions of "possibility" and "impossibility", the critique of the reification of the subject, and the unpredictability of the "event" in its relationship to the phenomenology of the gift which Jean-Luc Marion has elaborated in his recent work, *Negative Certainties*.

The scope of the current investigation into the origins and evolution of "givenness" and "revelation" arises from an initial reappraisal of the tension between "natural theology" and the "revealed knowledge of God" or *sacra doctrina*. The preliminary review of the historical debates on the topic, encompassing the medieval period (Thomas Aquinas) and the "late scholasticism" of Francisco Suárez, brings to light the gradual "decoupling of revelation" from faith and the "science of the blessed", but also the "resistance to this drift" which opens up the possibility of a non-propositional definition of revelation; that is, of a manner of conceiving revelation without imposing on it the epistemological limitations that Kantian reason sets to possible experience. This radical attempt at re-defining the bounds of speculative discourse (and re-shaping our understanding of what is considered impossible for reason, but which does not similarly limit the possibility of the unthinkable, of God) extends to Jean-Luc Marion's engagement

with phenomenology; in particular, it underlies his critique of the pre-conditions set by the Husserlian methodology to the possibility of anything appearing or becoming manifest. Throughout the long list of books which have marked, since the publication of *The Idol and Distance*, Jean-Luc Marion's conceptual reframing of the question of God and his re-configured "return to the things themselves" through the notions of "givenness" and of the "gift", the aim has been to enhance not only our understanding of religious experience, but to enlarge the horizon of possibility of phenomenology itself, as the author argued in *Being Given*:

> My entire project has been directed to liberating possibility in phenomenality, to unbinding the phenomenon from the supposed equivalences that limit its deployment (the object, the being, common-law adequation, poverty of intuition).[1]

In this context, the distinction between metaphysics (or "natural theology") and "revealed theology" brings out the former's inability to resist phenomenological reduction (insofar as it is based on transcendence, causality, substantiality, and actuality), whereas the latter displays an unexpected resilience due to its grounding in "facts which are given positively as figures, appearances, and manifestations (indeed, apparitions, miracles, revelations)", so that it actually "takes place in the natural field of phenomenality and is therefore dependent on the competence of phenomenology".[2] From this perspective, when the question of the "forbidden" application of phenomenology to religion is raised, in light of the undeniable exclusion of all transcendence by reduction, Jean-Luc Marion provides an answer which cuts right through to the heart of the debate between epistemological and revealed knowledge, in pointing at the original aspiration of phenomenology to become "the science of true principles, of the sources, of the ριζώματα πάντων [the roots of all things]", according to Husserl[3]

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[1] Jean-Luc Marion, *Being Given: Toward a Phenomenology of Giveness*, trans. Jeffrey L. Kosky (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2002, new preface 2013), p. 234.

[2] Jean-Luc Marion, *In Excess: Studies of Saturated Phenomena*, trans. Robyn Horner and Vincent Berraud (New York: Fordham University Press, 2002), p. 28.

[3] Edmund Husserl, "Philosophy as Rigorous Science," in *Phenomenology and the Crisis of Philosophy*, trans. Quentin Lauer (New York: Harper and Row, 1965), p. 146.

This aspiration in itself is no different from the historical aim of metaphysics and of the "sacred doctrine" itself, although it is apparently driven by the need to provide new grounding for "philosophy as rigorous science" beyond the realm of theology and "revealed science". Some of the earliest commentators of Husserl in France already pointed out this striking, if unintended, coincidence between the aims of theology and those of phenomenology: "When a modern scientist speaks of principles, of the roots of things, it is obviously God that he has in mind, but a God whose existence he places outside of every theological or even metaphysical system."[4]

It is not surprising then to find, in more recent times, a similar reminder of the inherent predisposition of the Husserlian project in Jean-Luc Marion's response to the critics of the so-called "theological turn" in phenomenology: "If phenomenology could 'turn' to theology...this turning itself would remain impossible without some phenomenological predisposition."[5] And this "predisposition" resides in Husserl's decisive attempt at clearing a path toward the things themselves, despite Kantian prohibitions, and in keeping not so much with the principle of a strict correlation between signification and sensible intuition, but with the notion of "givenness" as such, which "precedes intuition and abolishes its Kantian limits", as Jean-Luc Marion argued in *The Visible and the Revealed*:

> To return to the things themselves amounts to recognizing phenomena as themselves, without submitting them to the (sufficient) condition of an anterior authority (such as thing in itself, cause, principle, etc.). In short, it means liberating them from any prerequisite other than their simple givenness, to which consciousness bears witness before any constitution.[6]

Therefore the question is no longer that of determining the legitimacy of a phenomenological reading of the events of revelation, but that of the possibility of a mutual enhancement of two complementary,

[4] Lev Shestov, "*Memento Mori.* Husserl's Philosophy", in *Potestas Clavium*, trans. Bernard Martin (Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press, 1968), p. 298.

[5] Marion, *In Excess*, p. 27.

[6] Jean-Luc Marion, *The Visible and the Revealed*, trans. Christina M. Gschwandtner (Fordham University Press, 2008), p. 5.

though seemingly incompatible, fields of enquiry: "Can phenomenology contribute in a privileged way to the development of a 'philosophy of religion'? In other words, can 'philosophy of religion' become a 'phenomenology of religion'?"[7] From the outset, this type of investigation aims to problematize the concept of givenness itself, rather than the effects of phenomenological reduction.[8] Enlarging the horizon of phenomenality and suspending the Kantian presupposition of the constituting transcendental "I" thus arise from the need to overcome methodological limitations which otherwise exclude "from the field of manifestation not only many phenomena, but above all those most endowed with meaning and those that are most powerful".[9] And it is in light of this new, radical understanding of manifestation as "saturated phenomenon" that Jean-Luc Marion believes "only a phenomenology of givenness can return to the things themselves".[10]

One of the advantages of this decisive move beyond the framework of intentional constitution is that it allows for a range of paradoxical notions and contradictory relationships to emerge within a philosophical discourse whose fundamental principles for truthful reasoning seemed designed to exclude any alternative epistemological model, not grounded in evident certitude and reason. This enables, for instance, Jean-Luc Marion to point out that, whereas "a phenomenon only shows *itself* to the extent that it first gives *itself* . . . . [T]he reverse is not the same: all that which gives *itself* does not show *itself* necessarily".[11] Revelation, as the overarching saturated phenomenon, which encompasses the four other types of saturated phenomena (the event, the idol, the flesh, and the icon), pertains to a unique regime of manifestation which requires the "anamorphosis" or "the conversion of the gaze" of the subject before the subject can see and understand that which gives itself as *mystērion*, as hidden. And the elegant interpretation of the interplay of invisibility and manifestation, hearing and seeing in Caravaggio's *The Calling of St. Matthew* in the final part of *Being Given* similarly bears witness to the double paradox of a

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[7] Marion, *The Visible and the Revealed*, p. 1.
[8] Marion, *In Excess*, p. 29.
[9] Marion, *Being Given*, p. 4.
[10] Marion, *Being Given*, p. 4.
[11] Marion, *In Excess*, p. 30.

phenomenality of the audible rendered visible, and of a call which "gives itself phenomenologically only by first showing itself in a response".[12] It is not only the artist who "must show in silence a call that is invisible",[13] it is first and foremost the viewer through the intermediary of Saint Matthew, as the intended recipient of the call, who ultimately renders the invisible manifest by lifting his eyes to cross the gazes of two characters standing by the window (Christ and Saint Peter), just as he points at himself with his left hand, in response to the complex web of visual signals (from the ray of light to the gaze and the gesture of the two characters) which single him out. The conversion or the "anamorphosis" of the gaze is accomplished by a surprising overturning of the relationship between truth and "belief grounded in reason", which Jean-Luc Marion exemplifies in his second Gifford Lecture with reference to William of Saint-Thierry's assertion, according to which "it is not so much the reason that draws the will [toward the evidence], as the will that draws the reason toward faith". It is perhaps in the example of *The Calling of St. Matthew* that one can best grasp the paradox of an "impossible" convergence between the uncovering of truth which natural theology can hope to attain here and now, *in via*, and the eschatological meaning of revelation as *apokalypsis*. The call, as pre-eminent event, displays the irreducible aporia of revelation and of Christ as saturated phenomena: both historical and abstracted from time, both given and unseen, excessive, like "the hyperbolic love of Christ which surpasses knowledge", and which requires an "epistemological break . . . according to the place of listening" which allows the disciples "to be in the right place, where hearing may happen" (Lecture Three). Ultimately, revelation "does not belong to history . . . , but is registered in, or rather *through*, events, i.e. saturated phenomena, which are not objectifiable by concepts", and the coming of which requires a complete transformation of the human gaze that places the witness "at the precise point where (like a two-dimensional image that, under a precise angle of view with the light reflected, just so suddenly makes the third dimension spring forth)" the iconic model of the Trinity is rendered manifest (Lecture Four).

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[12] Marion, *Being Given*, p. 285.
[13] Marion, *Being Given*, p. 283.

The careful and precise narrative of the present Gifford Lectures, beginning and ending in the concept of revelation, thus addresses the very heart and soul of his theology, concluding with a phenomenological approach to the Trinity that rests in the Spirit as gift. Marion is a gifted philosopher, eminent above all in his readings and re-readings of Descartes from within the ambivalence of Cartesian metaphysics, who travels carefully and meticulously to theology, a journey framed by a deep sense of the Christian liturgy and prayer, and the fundamental, indeed ubiquitous, presence of charity—or love. In an essay which corrects our understanding of what is (wrongly) called "negative theology" within the Christian mystical tradition (and which, incidentally, clearly demonstrates also the deeply literary and artistic qualities of Marion's thought), he writes that the "suspicion that modern philosophy has bred of the encounter with theology in general and mystical theology in particular differs little from its disinheritance of the question of love in all its forms".[14] Nor is it by any means an accident that a comparative reflection upon the nature of mystical theology, on the one hand, and erotic discourse, on the other, finally testifies to a "gesture of love revealing Love" that is drawn from within the depths of the $\delta\upsilon\nu\alpha\mu\iota\varsigma$ $\tau\upsilon\upsilon$ $\theta\epsilon\upsilon\upsilon$ that is exposed thrice in liturgy, contemplation, and dogmatic theology.[15] The order is highly significant as, it might be said, it is impossible to understand Marion without acknowledging his language as always, in some sense, prayer, as is most carefully articulated at the end of his response to Jacques Derrida in the essay "In the Name: How to Avoid Speaking of It", in the section on praise and prayer and its move beyond metaphysics. Marion here writes, acknowledging the presence of Levinas in his thinking:

> It is no longer a matter of naming or attributing something to something but rather of aiming in the direction of . . . , of relating to . . . , of comporting oneself towards . . . , of reckoning with . . . —in short, of dealing with . . . . By invoking the unattainable as . . . and inasmuch as . . . , prayer definitively marks the transgression of the predicative, nominative,

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[14] Jean-Luc Marion, *The Essential Writings*, ed. Kevin Hart (New York: Fordham University Press, 2013), p. 337.

[15] Jean-Luc Marion, *Prolegomena to Charity*, trans. Stephen E. Lewis (New York: Fordham University Press, 2002), p. 55.

and therefore metaphysical sense of language. We find again here the affirmation of Levinas: "the essence of discourse is prayer".[16]

Discourse begins and ends in love and, as is stated quite clearly in the first of the Gifford lectures, God is known and therefore loved, by revelation. This prior revelation, which encompasses all natural knowledge, projects thinking necessarily towards the eschatological, towards that which is yet to come, and from this beginning Marion embarks upon the phenomenal re-appropriation of revelation, writing and speaking from within his profound inhabiting of Christian theology from the Bible and the Church Fathers, to Thomas Aquinas, Duns Scotus, and philosophical reflection from Descartes and Pascal to Husserl, Wittgenstein, and Heidegger. But nor should one omit the profoundly poetic nature of his enterprise, his continual references to writers and poets from Stendhal, Baudelaire, Mallarmé, Péguy, and Proust and to artists from Claude (Lorrain), J. M. W. Turner, and Mark Rothko. For his description of the key term "saturation" he precisely and accurately describes the task which Turner set himself in his painting, *Decline of the Carthaginian Empire*, as he seeks to "bring the sun itself to the centre of the painting", though its flux (*lumen*) cannot be borne directly, any more than death itself, and yet may be "rendered", its "bedazzling fulguration (*lux*)"

> [a]n unbearable circle diffusing a fiery whiteness, where nothing can any longer be distinguished or staged. To show the sun in effect demands showing what cannot be designated as a thing and what *has* as its own peculiarity to forbid showing not only anything else, but also itself . . . Thus, the eye experiences only its powerlessness to see anything, except the bursting that submerges it—almost metallic and vibrating—which blinds it.[17]

The same could be said of Turner's remarkable *The Angel Standing in the Sun*, another painting which enacts the bedazzlement within the intuition which is characterized by an intensity that no gaze can sustain.

From such an illustration we are led to return to the Glasgow lectures, to Jesus Christ as saturated phenomenon and to the Icon of the invisible God. But before we move too quickly and with

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[16] Marion, *In Excess*, p. 144–5; Emmanuel Levinas, *Entre Nous: Essais sur le penser-à-l'autre* (Paris: Éditions Grasset et Fasquelle, 1991), p. 20.

[17] Marion, *The Essential Writings*, pp. 112–13.

unwarranted eagerness (Marion is always deliberate in his guidance of our thought, so that prayer remains intelligent and thought-full), we need to attend to that which frees theology from metaphysics, and to the reversal of the hierarchy of cause and effect, the first (cause) referring to metaphysics and the second (effect) to phenomenology, pushing that paradox to its necessary conclusion. The issue is that of the "event", and here Marion is quite clear.

> The event *precedes its cause* (or its causes). The temporal privilege of the effect—it alone arises to and in the present, gives *itself*—implies that all knowledge begins by the event of the effect; for without the effect, there would be neither meaning nor necessity to inquiring after any cause whatsoever.[18]

The chiasmus within the event of cause and effect was, Marion notes, perfectly observed by Descartes (and afterwards noted by Kant). The effect, which is alone certain, offers us the possibility of thinking back to the cause. On the other hand, the event, as a given phenomenon, "*does not have an adequate cause* and cannot have one".[19] Marion has suggested two widely divergent examples to illustrate this.

(i) For the historian, the First World War comes to us with an over-abundance of causes though its effects are all too painfully evident, and Marion quotes François Furet to bring his point home: "The more the event is fraught with consequences, the less it is possible to think it in terms of its causes."[20] This overabundance of causes precisely releases the event to become independent of any cause, and, typically, Marion resorts to the poet, to Péguy, to describe what he terms the "perseity" of the event[21]: "Nothing is more mysterious . . . than these points of profound conversion, these overturnings, these renewals, these profound new beginnings. This is the very secret of the event." Péguy's very terms—conversion, new beginnings, secret—are

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[18] Marion, *Being Given*, p. 165.

[19] Marion, *Being Given*, p. 167.

[20] François Furet, *Le passé d'une illusion* (Paris: Laffont/Calmann-Lévy, 1995), p. 49.

[21] Marion, *Being Given*, p. 168; Charles Péguy, *Clio, dialogue de l'histoire et de l'âme païenne*, in *Œuvres en prose complètes*, vol. 3 (Paris: Gallimard "Pléiade", 1992), p. 1208.

significant in themselves as we begin to return to the saturated phenomenon that is Christ in the third of the Gifford Lectures.

Before we leave the historical example of war, however, it needs to be noted that the saturated phenomenon, in terms of the flesh saturated with intuition, can also be an event of the darkest sorrow and the evil of suffering, as for the survivor of the extermination camps of the Second World War that are, in effect, beyond any recoverable cause (theologically). The consequence might then be only silence, as Theodor Adorno famously suggested (though his thinking was very different), and as Marion dramatically describes in the case of his own father.

> As soon as they returned—those who did return—to our world, where, even after the war or under real socialist regimes, we live, breathe, eat, take pleasure, in short, speak, they immediately saw that the phenomenon that had saturated them in their flesh—evil and suffering—could not be said, understood, or therefore appear in our world, that our world could not do justice to theirs—that it was not necessary to try and superimpose these two worlds separated by an abyss. Almost despite himself, the survivor, even the one closest to us—even my father— therefore denies: he says nothing because we could not imagine it or form the least idea of it—in short, *because we could not phenomenalize what is nevertheless given to the survivor.*[22]

(ii) The second example is more specific and individual. Returning to Marcel Proust in *À la recherche du temps perdu*, we visit the "event" of the tasting and ingestion of warm tea and crumbs of food as a moment of exquisite sensual pleasure "with no suggestion of its cause".[23] It is an example of what Marion terms a "given phenomenon", found in the self of the given moment but extending further, in the *Remembrance of Things Past*, into the whole summer of 1914 and from thence into world history, as the drop of water is inseparable from and part of the ocean which could not exist without it.

And so we are called back to the key term of "givenness" and at the outset the concern for phenomena that remain hidden or not yet

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[22] Marion, *Being Given*, p. 317, emphases added.
[23] Marion, *Being Given*, p. 169; Marcel Proust, *Du côté de chez Swann*. Ed. P. Clarac and A. Ferré (Paris: Gallimard "Pléiade", 1954), p. 45.

seen. Marion takes us back, initially, to the *res quae non videntur* of St. Augustine, seeking to recover the too often distorted originality of Augustine's theological thinking under the auspices of givenness— gift, call and response, saturated phenomenon—concentrating in the last term in its aspects of invisibility: "undefinable man, impossible God, all-powerful gift, unforeseeable event".[24] Marion's infinitely careful explorations of givenness inevitably come to embrace his key terms of "intuition" (that now makes perfect sense in the context of the saturated phenomenon), "excess"—and, above all, love or charity.

Let us take a familiar example from the New Testament. The Gospel of Mark opens with the verse: "The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God." (1:1). Jesus's formal teaching of his disciples, and in this gospel they are notoriously lacking in comprehension, begins later with the assurance that "unto you it is given to know the mystery ($\mu\nu\sigma\tau\eta\rho\iota\sigma\nu$) of the kingdom of God." (4:11). That which is given to them as "insiders", is present before them, remains mysterious as an event of, in Marion's terms, "absolute self-referral": Christ as saturated phenomenon. The hermeneutic key to the first words of the gospel narrative lies in the very last words of the acknowledged text (16:8), as the women flee from the empty tomb, "for they trembled and were amazed: neither said they anything to any man; for they were afraid ($\epsilon\phi\sigma\beta\sigma\nu\nu\tau\sigma$ $\gamma\alpha\rho$)". The note of fear does not quite catch the tone of the Greek in these last two words, for it is also a moment of recognition and apocalypse, which yet holds the women in silence. It is the same, and yet (in a pure paradox) the very opposite, of the silence of the Holocaust survivor who, you will recall, cannot speak "because we could not phenomenalize what is nevertheless given to the survivor". Yet within the text of the Gospel of Mark the light of the women's amazement shines upon those first words of the narrative, "the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God." In the *absence* in the tomb of the body, in the angelic and unearthly voice of the young man clothed in white (the antithesis of the young man who fled naked from Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane), in the overwhelmed and overwhelming, amazed silence of the women (whose testimony would not have been believed anyway), the intuitions of the Gospel's opening

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[24] Marion, *Being Given* (2013), p. xi.

words, a still nonobjective but now certain phenomenon, find a response, a hermeneutic whereby the narrative can be read, enclosed now within the first necessary but uncomprehending reading. The reader is no longer one of those "without", but an insider to whom has been given the mystery of the Kingdom of God.

But we return to Jean-Luc Marion and his Gifford Lectures with their specific theme. In the second lecture concerning the phenomenological re-appropriation of revelation, Marion reminds us once again of what he has called the three original figures of phenomenality. In a section of *Being Given*, entitled "Sketch of the Saturated Phenomenon", he notes, apart from the *saturated phenomenon*, the category of *poor phenomena*, that is a phenomenon which is poor, or merely formal, in intuition, and which he describes as that which "shows itself in and from itself [and] does not need much more than its concept alone, or at least just its intelligibility . . . to give itself".[25] To the poor phenomena metaphysics grants the privilege of certainty, such that the contrast with the saturated phenomenon and its freedom from metaphysics in its intuitive excess is perfectly clear. Second, the *common-law phenomenon* is distinguished by its variance in terms of givenness. Its objectivity is sustained even inasmuch as "signification (aimed at by intention) is manifest only to the extent that it receives intuitive fulfillment. *In principle, this fulfillment can be adequate (intuition equaling intention)*".[26] It is in his third lecture ("Christ as Saturated Phenomenon") that Marion, under the term *anamorphosis*, addresses the overturning of all such intentionality and the escape, on the horizon of charity, from its mastery.

That, then, leaves us with the saturated phenomenon and the Icon of the invisible God. As always in his writings, Marion's phenomenology, beginning with revisionary readings of Husserl, is located deeply within the literature of the Bible and the Church Fathers, above all, perhaps, St. Augustine. At the same time he never neglects his readings in Descartes and philosophy from Kant to Heidegger and his contemporaries Derrida and Levinas. In the lectures, beginning with Thomas Aquinas, he also acknowledges the place of Vatican II and *Dei Verbum* in his thinking, while never far away also is another great

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[25] Marion, *Being Given*, p. 222.
[26] Marion, *Being Given*, p. 222, emphases added.

theological narrativist of the twentieth century, Karl Barth and his *Church Dogmatics*, alongside Hans Urs von Balthasar and his theological aesthetics. Yet Marion's voice remains staunchly independent and radical in its theological call, perhaps, it might be audaciously claimed, its most remarkable ancestry being found in the *theologia negativa* of Nicholas of Cusa, above all in his work *De docta ignorantia*, of which there are clear echoes in the first of the Gifford Lectures in its description of how "ignorant" people "know" through revelation. In the essay already referred to entitled "In the Name: How to Avoid Speaking of It", Marion reminds us that in Nicholas of Cusa there is no apophasis pure and simple, but rather an infinity that is discovered in God: "*Et non reperitur in Deo secundum theologiam negationis aliud quam infinitas* [According to negative theology, infinity is all we discover in God]."[27] In such infinity we do not return to affirmation but it "rather lays bare and circumscribes the divine truth as the experience of incomprehension".[28] Thus from the thought of the incomprehensible is opened the way, in Nicholas of Cusa (and in Marion) for a dogmatic theology which acknowledges the negative way in which the "triplicity", that is the "eminence, cause, and incomprehensibility of God each dominate".[29]

This brings us properly to the last of the four Gifford Lectures, which is concerned with the Trinity. It might be said that the subject of the Trinity appears relatively rarely throughout Marion's voluminous writings. It is true that the careful and intense narrative followed in *The Erotic Phenomenon* brings us to a Trinitarian conclusion. There is also the extended discussion of the Trinity in the essay "The Gift of a Presence" which takes us back to the Last Supper discourses in the Gospel of John in which we learn that "if Christ leaves, it is in order to free the Trinitarian site for the disciples".[30] But at the same time, *all* of Marion's phenomenological thinking draws us, inevitably, in this Trinitarian direction, even where it remains, perhaps deliberately, largely understated. In this final lecture its "triplicity" is bound within

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[27] Nicholas of Cusa, *De docta ignorantia*, I, c. XXVI, in Nicholas of Cusa, *Philosophisch-theologische Schriften*, ed. Leo Gabriel, vol. 3 (Vienna: Herder, 1964), p. 292; English translation in Nicholas of Cusa, *On Learned Ignorance*, trans. Germain Heron (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1954), p. 61.

[28] Marion, *In Excess*, p. 136.   [29] Marion, *In Excess*, p. 137.

[30] Marion, *Prolegomena to Charity*, p. 143.

the "unicity" of a unity that is called forth in reflections that link Boethius with the theology of Karl Barth, Basil of Caesarea and St. Augustine, and comes to rest in a doctrine of the Spirit that enables us, by grace, to see: the Spirit as gift, Spirit as givenness. Thus it is, in the sanctification of the Spirit that we come to see and to "know" Jesus as the Icon of the invisible Father.

We are brought to rest in these lectures in doxology, enabled in the *practice* of praise and prayer without submission to the metaphysics of presence. In a crucial discussion of the writings of Denys the Areopagite on the *Divine Names*, Marion reminds us that "at issue is not so much a strict denomination, since, according to the same text, prayer does not consist in causing the invoked one to descend into the realm of our language (he or she exceeds it but also is found always already among us) but in elevating ourselves toward the one invoked by sustained attention".[31]

In this brief reflection on Jean-Luc Marion's Glasgow Gifford Lectures we have deliberately avoided mention of what remains, perhaps, his best-known theological work in the English-speaking world, the relatively early *God Without Being*. For it is in this landmark volume that he begins to disengage the existence of God from the metaphysical concept of Being (and the discourse on the "death of God"), and at the same time relate it to the notion of "givenness", which not only exceeds intentional constitution and restores ontological difference to the field of phenomenological analysis, but also has the potential to resist the deconstruction of the metaphysics of presence, undertaken by Derrida. In any case, throughout Jean-Luc Marion's trilogy, from *Reduction and Givenness* onwards, this has been the strategy for arguing in favor of the possibility that "Christian theology as a theology provoked by Revelation" can "remove itself in principle, if not in what it really accomplishes, from the 'metaphysics of presence'", which amounts to saying that Christian theology, in the form of a phenomenology of givenness, may not be subject to deconstruction.[32]

Within the scope of Jean-Luc Marion's early work, starting with *God Without Being* and *The Idol and Distance*, there is much that could be

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[31] Marion, *In Excess*, p. 144.
[32] Marion, *In Excess*, p. 134.

added to the comments made here, above all, perhaps, in its concern with the Eucharistic site of theology and the Eucharistic hermeneutic, but that would be to stray beyond the Gifford Lectures and their theme of revelation. In the present Gifford Lectures, Marion exhibits clearly his concern for what he has named *theo*-logy rather than theo-*logy*, and in brief space has brought to fruition, at its present stage in his on-going thought, the richness of phenomenological reflections made over many decades in the gentle and charitable flow from philosophy to a Christian theology that is at once learned, traditional, challenging, and deeply radical.

Translator's Acknowledgments

Contents

Introduction

Givenness and revelation: this title may provoke, or rather *must* provoke, a certain amount of surprise. At first glance, nothing seems to join an apparently old and steadfastly theological notion together with a philosophical concept drawn from the most recent phenomenology.[1] However, if we wanted to consider better their respective features, the two terms could instead converge—especially if we refrain from masking the formal difficulties of each.

Let's begin with revelation: perhaps no other term seems to designate so clearly the specific claim of a religion to having received communication of what God himself wanted (or would have wanted) to make known of his presence among men. Revelation becomes a distinguishing characteristic, to the point of constituting the preeminent criterion for differentiating between religions *stricto sensu*, those which lay claim to a revelation, partially or totally recorded in a text, and those which do not. This division determines the origin and, thus, the bearing of these religions: either they result from the effort and the impetus of their adherents—that is to say, *from below*—or they arise *from above*, from the divinity in person itself determining its manifestation to witnesses. Among various differences, we must single out two that are decisive.

Indeed, revealed religions do not presuppose devotees who are already convinced, as the result of their sole efforts and desire to adhere; rather, revealed religions assert themselves upon witnesses who, to begin with, find themselves neither prepared for nor most often convinced of this communication—indeed, they are often hostile to it. The revealed character of a religion: to the exact extent that the revelation comes from elsewhere, it exceeds the religion and thus

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[1] In spite of the imprecise polemic surrounding the supposedly "theological turn in French phenomenology", I had nevertheless sketched this rapprochement in *Le visible et le révélé* (Paris: Cerf, 2005); English translation: *The Visible and the Revealed*, trans. Cristina M. Gschwandtner and others (New York: Fordham University Press, 2008).

confers on it only a very ambiguous privilege. Admittedly the religion can lay claim to an authority that is exterior and seemingly superior to the human condition, but this very exteriority and superiority give rise to the obstacles and the resistance that the eventual witnesses to its coming experience in terms of their capacity to receive and thus accept it. Far from lessening the resistance, on the contrary the dispute over the authenticity of this revelation increases it. A strange situation follows: if with a claim to revelation there is in the end only a deception or fraud, the object of the conflict disappears, and the resistance with it, and everything goes back into the order of immanence closed in upon itself; but if, on the contrary, the revelation surmounts the doubt about its origin and winds up proving its authenticity, then the resistance to its reception could increase all the more— so much so that the gap and the disproportion which separate the divinity revealing itself from the humanity of the witness presumed to receive it deepen. A formal paradox results: a correct understanding of the concept of revelation must account for the inevitable resistance that it cannot help but encounter. Admittedly, this resistance is not enough to authenticate it, but at the very least a reception without resistance would be sufficient to disqualify it as revelation. This resistance, which is an intrinsic feature of every revelation, implies (and explains) that it may, and in a certain sense must, provoke conflict. Conflict, moreover, that is multiplied: conflict between the revelation and its witness, who is surprised, upset, and divided in his responses; conflict between the witnesses who receive the revelation and those who oppose it; conflict between the witnesses and those who did not have direct experience of it and must refer themselves to the witnesses, to writings, and to traditions; and conflict between the witnesses of competing revelations or competing interpretations of a same revelation. In short, without this conflict and this *resistance*, there cannot even be the possibility of a revelation.

But the very notion of revelation is characterized just as much by another tension. For this notion implies that a kind of knowledge comes *from elsewhere*, and that we should consider the possibility that this other origin lies beyond common experience; otherwise, in order to know it, it would be enough to have recourse to the exercise of the ordinary faculties of knowing (intuition, perception, understanding, reasoning, etc.). By definition, a revelation claims at the very least to

add to this ordinary exercise of knowledge an excess of factual information, and probably as well a more complex and complete hermeneutics that corresponds to it. Now, this claim, already out of the ordinary, cannot avoid an objection in the form of a contradiction: if what arises as information and hermeneutics that are out of the ordinary is worthy of this title and this status, how does it still figure within the continuity of that which it completes and contradicts at the same time? What coherence can hold in continuity what we know without revelation and what we know with revelation, if this revealed indeed comes, as by definition it must claim to do, *from elsewhere*? What common intelligibility, or rather, what (by definition) universal rationality can be maintained in matters of religion (and morality) if we assign to them (as we must) two such heterogeneous sources? The histories of philosophy and of theology show that two tactics have been employed in the attempt to escape from this aporia. Either we accept de facto the consequence that the heterogeneity of the two sources imposes de jure: we thus disqualify one of the two terms, knowledge without revelation or knowledge by revelation of the divinity, and thus the first falls beneath the accusation of impiety, idolatry, atheism, etc., while the second gives way under the accusation of illusion, irrationality, fanaticism, etc. Or, we re-establish a continuity that is minimal, yet forced, between the two instances: revelation would indeed come from elsewhere, but it would only end up saying without a concept what reason itself will end up saying once again with a concept (or inversely, revelation will say again without a concept what reason was saying with a concept); revelation is thus limited to making something accessible by other means that reason already knows or will soon know, but through shortcuts that are pedagogically more effective, and which leave the reason for the effects unknown. Thus, for a time, there was a desire to make Christianity *reasonable*—Christianity, doubtless through revelation, would have had nothing to say other than what human consciousness already knew, albeit confusedly, through pure reason. That these two tactics failed is hardly in question. But the essential lies in the single motive behind their double failure: if it must have a meaning and a concept, the thinking of revelation has to accept a distance from the rationality that it comes to subvert or complete, or in other words, it must *maintain a rationality compatible with rationality without revelation*. No concept of

revelation can assert itself without remaining to a certain extent problematic, yet just as necessary, as a revelation in the concept, which nevertheless cannot dissolve into the common logic of the concept. In other words, a correct concept of revelation must remain a concept, even and above all if it contradicts that which, of itself and according to common logic (that is, according to metaphysics), the concept can conceive. A concept that contradicts the concept by remaining a concept is called a *paradox*. We will conclude from this that no revelation can be received without a paradox that is accepted as such. This demand confirms the preceding remark: no revelation can dispense with the resistance of the witnesses that it elicits and who can, in one way or another, challenge it; it must be able to explain the possibility of this refusal, not as a contingent incident and a collateral loss, but as one of the possibilities that its very *rationality* implies. A genuine revelation imposes such novelty that its being challenged is intrinsic, and not accidental, to it. This *rational* rule holds for every revelation, in the sciences, in the arts, in history, in the erotic phenomenon, etc., and consequently also, and therefore first and foremost, in a religious happening [*dans un avènement religieux*].

But how do we conceive the rationality of such a paradox as constitutive of what is proper to a revelation?

To answer this question about revelation, it is necessary to take into account the very notion of revelation from a point of view that, at first glance, is foreign to it—that of phenomenality. Indeed, a paradox, in this case that of revelation, is not resolved by a mere logical correction, as a purely formal contradiction. Instead, it is located and disclosed according to its strange mode of appearing: indeed, a para-*dox* always and first of all designates an appearing [*apparition*] that deviates (or *appears* to deviate) from itself to the point of risking degradation into a mere appearance [*apparence*]. An appearance of appearing: the paradox thus arises from phenomenality more than from logical formalism. Disclosing itself in the dimension of phenomenality is worthy of paradox, and thus also of what most often unfolds in paradoxes: revelation. For revelation, and in particular biblical revelation (Jewish and Christian), plays out in terms of phenomenality. This is precisely because "No one has ever seen God (*theon oudeiseōraken pōpote*)" (Jn. 1:18), because he remains "the only God, invisible (*aoratō monō theō*)" (1 Tm. 1:17), dwelling "in unapproachable light, and whom no

one among men can ever see (*hon oudeis anthrōpōn oude idein dynatai*)" (1 Tm. 6:16), and of whom "the only Son, who is turned toward the Father's bosom, has made the exegesis (*eikeinos ezēgēsato*)" (Jn. 1:18), under the pre-eminently paradoxical title of "icon of the invisible God (*eikōn tou theou tou aoratou*)" (Col. 1:15; see 2 Cor. 4:4). From this a first conclusion follows: in the final instance, all the manifestations of God in Jesus Christ, all the biblical "theophanies" (here provisionally allowing this too imprecise term) consist only in this paradox which defines revelation in terms of phenomenality: the appearing, among the phenomena that our world never tires of making bloom, of a phenomenon coming forth *from elsewhere* than from the world, the appearing of the pre-eminently inapparent, the visibility of the invisible *as such, and which remains so in its very visibility*. No serious theology of revelation can be developed without tackling this phenomenological paradox. Revelation, if it can ever be conceived, arises from the question of phenomenality much more than from the question of beings and their being (existence), and certainly infinitely more than from the question of a knowledge of objects (demonstration). What do we see, what can one ever see, of the invisible? That is the question.[2]

But how do we conceive that at least *one* phenomenon could make not only the unseen visible (like every other phenomenon, which always adds to the already seen visible a new visible, until then unseen), but render an invisible visible, an unseen which appears *as invisible*, and remains so? Can we accept the possibility of such a privilege? Probably, provided that we see in it not merely an exception, but rather the confirmation of a definition of every phenomenon in general. Indeed, since Husserl's *Logical Investigations*, and in response to a difficulty formulated by his contemporaries and predecessors (especially Natorp, Twardowski, Rickert, Meinong, and Lask), the question of the completion of phenomenality is defined in terms of givenness[3]: not only is intuition of consequence only insofar as it is

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[2] See my sketch, "Qu'attend la théologie de la phénoménologie?" in Nicolas Bauquet, Xavier d'Arodes de Peyriargue, Paul Gilbert, eds., *"Nous avons vu sa gloire." Pour une phénoménologie du Credo* (Brussels: Lessius, 2012), pp. 13–34.

[3] On these points see Jean-Luc Marion, *Réduction et donation. Recherches sur Husserl, Heidegger et la phénoménologie* (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1989), English translation: *Reduction and Givenness*, trans. Thomas A. Carlson (Evanston: Northwestern

giving, as Kant had established; but, as Husserl showed, its giving power extends to the categories, as much through the so-called categorial intuition as through the likewise given character of conceptual significations. As a result, the radical definition of the phenomenon proposed by Heidegger—the phenomenon shows itself from itself and in itself, and thus shows *itself*—only radicalizes that of Husserl—a phenomenon only shows itself to the extent that it *gives itself*. For presence itself is accomplished (assuming that it can do so without being forever deferred until later, according to the objection of Hegel and of Derrida) only by becoming a present—in the sense of present time, but also, inseparably, in the sense of a gift. The degrees of manifestation are measured on the scale of givenness. So much givenness, so much manifestation: this rule holds for all phenomena and allows for their registration and their hierarchization. In this way distinctions emerge between objects and events, between poor phenomena, common-law phenomena, and saturated phenomena. And then, among the saturated phenomena, there bursts forth the hypothesis of phenomena that recapitulate and combine the different types of saturation, those that I was able to name the (saturated) phenomena of revelation.[4]

Now, within this nevertheless strictly philosophical (and indeed phenomenological) context, the question of revelation becomes at once both much more intelligible and compelling. Much more

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University Press, 1998); and Jean-Luc Marion, *Figures de phénoménologie* (Paris: J. Vrin, 2012), chapter 1, translated into English by Stephen E. Lewis as "The Phenomenological Origins of the Concept of Givenness", in John R. White, ed., *Selected Papers on the Thought of Jean-Luc Marion*, *Quaestiones Disputatae* I, no. 1, 2010: pp. 3–18.

[4] See Jean-Luc Marion, *Étant donné. Essai d'une phénoménologie de la donation* (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1997, corrected edition in the collection "Quadrige", Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 2013); English translation: *Being Given: Toward a Phenomenology of Givenness*, trans. Jeffrey L. Kosky (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2002). And Jean-Luc Marion, *De surcroît. Etudes sur les phénomènes saturés* (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 2001, "Quadrige" edition 2010); English translation: *In Excess: Studies in Saturated Phenomena*, trans. Robin Horner and Vincent Berraud (New York: Fordham University Press, 2002). Also, see Jean-Luc Marion, *The Reason of the Gift*, introduction and translation Stephen E. Lewis (Charlottesville: The University of Virginia Press, 2011).

intelligible, to begin with: revelation figures within the phenomenality of the given as the exceptional case, certainly, yet also as one that is perfectly coherent with all the others, a phenomenon that would bear in its excess the increase of intuition over every concept (or ensemble of concepts) deemed to regulate and constitute it; it would thus be a question of *the pre-eminent saturated phenomenon*, un-constitutable and giving itself by itself to the point of showing itself absolutely in itself and through itself. Doubtless it is an exception when compared to other phenomena, but an exception confirming the general definition of every phenomenon as that which shows itself only to the extent that it gives itself. Much more compelling, as well, because the privilege of the phenomenon of revelation, which allows it to *show itself* in itself and through itself in an unmatched way, would depend on its other privileged feature: *giving itself* in an unmatched way. In fact, biblical revelation puts into operation the privilege of a givenness that surpasses every expectation, every prediction, and, finally, every reception: "If you knew the gift of God . . ." (Jn. 4:10). Indeed, gift and givenness offer a perfectly univocal concept: givenness in phenomenology (the excess of intuition and the advent of significations unthinkable by men) is found again and prolonged in "every perfect gift that comes from above" (James 1:17). Paradoxically, but logically, revelation, by virtue of the givenness that it alone performs perfectly, would accomplish the essence of phenomenality.

This, in any case, will be our guiding thread. The difficulty will lie in neither losing it nor breaking it.

How can we conceive the paradoxical phenomenality of a revelation approached formally in this way? This will be our question. I will pose it in four instances, and in the form of four questions: Does dogmatic theology allow the conception of the paradoxical rationality of a revelation? Does modern metaphysics succeed in doing so? Do the attainments of contemporary phenomenology open a new path? Could the biblical texts, especially the New Testament, offer immediate access to such a concept of Revelation, under the name of *apokalypsis*?

1

The Aporia of the Concept
of Revelation

The Epistemological Interpretation

In making a simple lexicographical study of the term "revelation" in the history of Christian theology, we uncover several surprises.

The first surprise lies in the finding, widely accepted by the best scholars, that the very term "revelation" is rather *late* in imposing itself as a major concept in dogmatic theology. Thus, regarding its mention by Vatican Council I, Heinrich Fries notes that this expression arises "on principle view at a relatively later date." Avery Dulles confirms the point: "Since revelation did not emerge as a major theological theme until after the Enlightenment, . . . in most early theologians, as in the Bible itself, there is no systematic doctrine of revelation." Likewise for Bernard Sesboüé: "Revelation was not the object of special consideration in the patristic period, either. The idea went without saying: God had spoken to men through the prophets, and then in His Son Jesus Christ. The term itself (*apokalypsis*) referred instead to a particular literature: apocalyptic literature. Scholastic theology spoke of revelation relatively little in its doctrinal statements, but more often in scriptural commentaries and in reflection on prophecy."[1] One might be even further surprised, and rightly so, that such a late-arriving concept, considered for so long as marginal if not useless,

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[1] Respectively: Heinrich Fries, "Offenbarung, III. Systematisch", in *Lexikon für Theologie und Kirche*, 2nd ed., eds. Josef Höfer and Karl Rahner, vol. 7, col. 1110 (Freiburg im Breisgau: Herder, 1962): ". . . zwar in grundsätzlicher Sicht zu relativ später Zeit"; Avery Dulles, *Revelation Theology: A History* (New York: Herder, 1969), p. 31 (see also *Models of Revelation* [New York: Orbis Books, 1983], p. 19); Bernard

took on in a very recent era (starting in the seventeenth century, and above all in the German nineteenth century), an ever-growing import-ance, to the point of appearing to be almost a synonym for "the-ology".[2] Jean-Yves Lacoste soberly notes this time-lag: "A central reality of Christian experience, and yet a long-marginal concept, revelation certainly is looked at as an organizing idea in contemporary theology."[3] But can we or should we content ourselves with these contradictory determinations—belatedness, and then the dominant role in theological discourse? What is more, it is not enough simply to juxtapose these two features to overcome their at least apparent incoherence: "Everything depends on divine revelation, everything refers to it, nothing is explained except in its light, and this is perhaps the reason why it remains *paradoxically* as one of these great truths that are so radiant and so certain that they do not need to be explained."[4] Indeed, revelation, as a concept, truly "needs to be explained" for several reasons: it burst forth only belatedly, for a long time remaining presupposed, implicit, or even ignored in the Scriptures, and above all

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Sesbouë, *in* Bernard Sesbouë and Cristoph Theobald, *Histoire des Dogmes*, vol. IV, *La Parole du Salut* (Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, 1996), p. 109.

[2] The discovery of this delay would surprise us less if we recognized that the term "theology" itself was gloriously unknown (when it was not explicitly rejected, for instance by St. Augustine) to the first twelve centuries of Christian thought, which we nevertheless view, and rightly so, as the centuries of the greatest *theology*. We could make the same remark regarding other concepts, which appear all the more frequently in the lexicon in proportion to the gradual disappearance of what they speak of (such as *metaphysica*, *ontologia*, *analogia entis*, etc.).

[3] Jean-Yves Lacoste, ed., *Dictionnaire critique de théologie* (Paris: Presses universi-taires de France), 1988, p. 999.

[4] Augustin Leonard, "Vers une théologie de la parole de Dieu," in *La parole de Dieu en Jésus-Christ* (Cahiers de l'actualité religieuse, 16) (Tournai: Casterman, 1961), p. 12, quoted by René Latourelle, *Théologie de la Révélation* (Bruges: Desclée de Brouwer, 1963), p. 10 (my emphasis), who himself echoes this point further on: "It is the first time that a council [Vatican II] studies, in so conscious and methodical a manner, the *fundamental and first categories* of Christianity: namely, those of Revelation, Tradition, and Inspiration. These notions, omnipresent in Christianity and implied in every theological approach, are also the most difficult to define, precisely because they are *primary* notions. [. . . W]e live by these realities, but they are the last to become the object of a critical reflection" (p. 369).

its rampant development in modern theology can seem like an "infla-tion",[5] to the point that this concept in its current state would seem more imprecise than useful.[6]

As so often in the history of Christian theology, it is necessary here to go back to Thomas Aquinas in order to set our feet on solid ground— indeed, as it happens, to go back to one of the first uses of a precise concept of *revelatio*. But, as is also so often the case, Thomas Aquinas makes the difficulty that will follow arise in the concept's very origin. Let us begin with the opening of the *Summa Theologiae*, Ia, article 1, which asks whether the knowledge of God can come from philosophy alone, or if it requires another authority, *sacra doctrina*. Thomas arrives at the conclusion that, alongside philosophical approaches to God through pure reason, another doctrine must necessarily be accepted, *sacra doc-trina*, which proceeds by revelation ("It was therefore necessary that, besides the philosophical disciplines investigated by reason, there should be a sacred doctrine by way of revelation").[7] By right, and in fact, the *theologia* that is included in *metaphysica* does not exhaust the notion of theology; for the "theology included in sacred doctrine differs in genus from that theology which is part of philosophy".[8] This is what Thomas

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[5] Paul Althaus, "Die Inflation des Begriffs der Offenbarung in der gegenwärti-gen Theologie", *Zeitschrift für systematische Theologie*, v. 18 (1941): pp.134–49. See Avery Dulles, denouncing those who "inordinately intellectualized the notion of revelation" (*Revelation Theology*, p. 51).

[6] F. G. Downing, *Has Christianity a Revelation?* (London: SCM Press, 1964). This discussion is pursued by the entire current of "narrative theology", for example in George W. Stroup's "Revelation under Siege", chapter 2 of his *The Promise of Narrative Theology* (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1981, and London: SCM, 1984), and in Basil Mitchell and Maurice Wiles, "Does Christianity Need a Revelation? A Discussion", *Theology*, 83 (1980): pp.103–14.

[7] "*Necessarium igitur fuit, praeter philosophicas disciplinas, quae per rationem investigantur, sacram doctrinam per revelationem haberi*", *Summa Theologiae*, Ia, a.1, *resp.*, in Sancti Thomae de Aquino, *Summa Theologiae* (Cinisello Balsamo, Italy: Edizioni San Paolo, 1988), p. 4; English translation: Anton Pegis, ed., *Basic Writings of Saint Thomas Aquinas*, vol. 1 (Indianapolis, IN: Hackett Publishing Company, 1997), p. 6.

[8] "*Unde theologia quae ad sacram doctrinam pertinet, differt secundum genus ab illa theologia quae pars philosophiae ponitur*", *Summa Theologiae*, Ia, q. 1, a. 1, *ad 2m*, in Sancti Thomae de Aquino, *Summa Theologiae* (Cinisello Balsamo, Italy: Edizioni San Paolo, 1988), p. 5; English translation: Anton Pegis, ed., *Basic Writings of Saint Thomas Aquinas*, vol. 1 (Indianapolis, IN: Hackett Publishing Company, 1997), p. 6.

Aquinas had already clearly established in a previous commentary: theology is split, "...*theologia sive scientia divina est duplex*—theology, or divine science, is twofold."[9] And only theology in the sense of *sacra doctrina* can claim to know divine things in themselves, since it alone receives them as they manifest themselves "...*secundum quod ipsae se ipsas manifestant...secundum quod requirit rerum divinarum manifestatio*".[10] More precisely, *sacra doctrina* takes them as the direct subject of its knowing, because it receives them from the outset as such: "...*ipsas res divinas considerat propter se ipsas ut subiectum scientiae, et haec est theologia, quae in sacra scriptura traditur*—of another sort is that theology which considers divine things on their own account as the very subject matter of its science, and this is called Sacred Scripture".[11] As for philosophical or metaphysical theology ("*quam philosophi prosequuntur, quae alio nomine metaphysica dicitur*"),[12] it can reach the divine things only indirectly, through their effects ("...*secundum quod per effectus manifestantur*"), insofar as they come under the only legitimate subject of *metaphysica*: the *ens in quantum ens*: "...*res divinae non tractantur a philosophis, nisi prout sunt rerum omnium principia. Et ideo pertractantur in illa doctrina, in qua ponuntur ea quae sunt communia omnibus entibus, quae habet subiectum ens in quantum est ens*—"divine things are not dealt with by philosophers except in so far as they are the principles of all things; and hence they are considered in that science in which things common to all beings are studied, which has being as its subject, inasmuch as it is being."[13] The science of beings as such can deal with divine things only to the very narrow extent that they enter in as the principle of their effects; and since only their effects (and not they themselves) are articulated according to beingness, it is necessary to conclude that the divine things *do not* lie directly within metaphysical

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[9] Sancti Thomae de Aquino, *Expositio super librum Boethii De Trinitate*, q. 5, a. 4, *resp.*, ed. Bruno Decker (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1965), p. 195; English translation: St. Thomas Aquinas, *The Trinity and The Unicity of the Intellect* trans. Sr. Rose Emmanuella Brennan, SHN (St. Louis and London: B. Herder Book Co., 1946), p. 164.

[10] Ibid. pp. 194, 195; Ibid. p. 164: "according as they manifest themselves", p. 165: "because the manifestation of divine things requires this".

[11] Ibid. p. 195; Ibid. p. 164.

[12] Ibid. p. 195; Ibid. p. 164: "that theology which the philosophers sought to master, which, according to another name, is called metaphysics."

[13] Ibid. p. 194; Ibid. p. 164; "as they are made manifest through their effects", pp. 163–4.

theology, but only enter it indirectly, as the principle (substratum) of these things—"...*omnium rerum principia*"—but not as these things as such: "...*non tamquam subiectum scientiae, sed tamquam principia subjecti*".[14] In other words, the divine things are recognized as subjects only of *theologia sacrae Scripturae*, which alone makes them directly accessible, while *theologia philosophica* limits itself to noting their effects in the *ens in quantum ens*, and deals with them only as the principle of these effects.[15] From this first distinction, there follows a first conclusion: the duality of the theologies is defined through the limiting of metaphysical theology to the *ens in quantum ens*, which, by contrast, opens the possibility for a theology of *sacra Scriptura* or *sacra doctrina*. And yet, this conclusion raises a difficulty, since this unquestionable *possibility* has an indeterminate status: the fact that revelation according to Scripture is opposed to, completes, and surpasses the philosophical science of God is not enough to assure it the status of a science *as well*, despite its function of *going beyond* philosophical science. Thus, the insufficiency of non-revealed knowledge does not allow us to confirm right away the merely postulated concept of revealed knowledge.

And yet this possibility is enough for Thomas Aquinas to develop an *epistemological* interpretation of revelation, however essentially indeterminate it may remain. The body of the response in *Summa Theologiae*, Ia, q. 1, a. 1 establishes, develops, and privileges the epistemological function of *sacra doctrina* (or *theologia sacrae Scripturae*) by two arguments. First, through an implicit syllogism: (a) God constitutes man's final end, without any alternative or the consideration of any *duplex beatitudo*; (b) now, man can neither desire nor love anything that he does not first know (according to the principle that one may love only what

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[14] Ibid. pp. 194, 195; Ibid. pp. 163, 164: "not so much as the subject of the science but as the principle of its subject matter".

[15] See "...*hoc modo* [namely, *procedere ex principiis notis lumine superioris scientiae*] *sacra doctrina est scientia: quia procedit ex principiis notis lumine superioris scientiae, quae scilicet est scientia Dei et beatorum*" (*Summa Theologiae*, Ia, q.1, a.2, c., p. 5; English translation, p. 7: "So it is that sacred doctrine is a science because it proceeds from principles made known by the light of a higher science, namely, the science of God and the blessed.") On this double status of theology, see the excellent account by Michel Corbin, *Le chemin de la théologie chez Thomas d'Aquin* (Paris: Beauchesne, 1974), chap.2, especially section 2.

one knows[16]), and God, as we have just seen, remains unknown to the merely natural light of *theologia philosophica*, or *metaphysica*; (c) therefore it is necessary that, beyond the natural light of reason, another source of knowledge allow the natural desire for God to know what it necessarily loves: this will be knowledge by a revelation, coming from God, and thus exceeding human reason ("...*per revelationem divinam, quae rationem humanam excedit*"). This first argument rests on a strong point, the essential paradox, made evident by Henri de Lubac, that man as a rational creature *capax Dei* enjoys the privilege of naturally desiring a supernatural end, which he cannot attain without the supernatural aid of a divine revelation; the epistemological insufficiency (the inability to know by the means of his nature, nor attain his naturally supernatural end) nevertheless constitutes, from the point of view of beatitude and the final destiny of man, an infinite gift; in other words, "Therefore, the rational creature then excels every other creature in this that he is capable of the highest good (*quod capax est summi boni*) in virtue of having as his ultimate end the vision and enjoyment of God, although the principles of his own nature are not sufficient to attain this but he needs the help of divine grace."[17]

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[16] A principle taken up from St. Augustine ("*Certe enim amari aliquid nisi notum non potest*", *De Trinitate*, X, 1, 2; English translation: "It is quite certain that nothing can be loved unless it is known", in Saint Augustine, *The Trinity*, trans. Edmund Hill, OP [Brooklyn, NY: New City Press, 1991], p. 287) under the form "*nullus potest amare aliquid incognitum*" (*Summa Theologiae*, Ia IIae, q.27, a.2, *sed contra*, in Sancti Thomae de Aquino, *Summa Theologiae* [Cinisello Balsamo, Italy: Edizioni San Paolo, 1988], p. 673; English translation: "none can love what he does not know", in St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, trans. Fathers of the English Dominican Province, vol. 1 [New York: Benziger Brothers, Inc., 1947], p. 707). But, while Thomas Aquinas here determines a principle, St. Augustine has in this way stated a problem, which he will end up resolving by making an exception to the rule, precisely in the case of the love of God, where the *appetitus* already constitutes a manner of knowing (see *Confessiones*, X, 20, 29, and *De Trinitate*, IX, 12, 18, with my commentary in *Au lieu de soi. L'approche de saint Augustin*, § 16 [Paris: PUF, 2008], p. 149 and following; English translation: *In the Self's Place: The Approach of Saint Augustine*, trans. Jeffrey L. Kosky [Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2012], p. 101 and following).

[17] St. Thomas Aquinas, *Quæstiones disputatae de malo*, q.5, a.1, resp.: "*Creatura ergo rationalis in hoc praeeminet omni creaturae, quod capax est summi boni per divinam visionem et fruitionem, licet ad hoc consequendum naturae propriae principia non sufficiant, set ad hoc indiget auxilio divinae gratiae*", in *The De Malo of Thomas Aquinas*, with facing page translation

Against all the seemingly neo-Thomist but in fact, in the end, Suárezian deviations of a theology of double beatitude, Thomas Aquinas holds firmly to the patristic paradox of human nature's supernatural end: he thus takes his place within a tradition that is uncontestable and absolutely sure. And yet the paradox of this vocation is joined at a point that is less sure, and more contestable: not only does the *privilege* of the supernatural destiny of man here immediately result in a *deficit* of knowledge, but the help of divine grace, aimed at divinizing man, is fulfilled through a revelation (through the intermediary of the Scriptures) that is immediately assimilated to a (different) source of knowledge, in victorious competition, certainly, with human reason, but therefore, *in that very way*, comparable to it, and sharing its function. The help of grace thus comes at the price of a strictly and initially epistemological interpretation of revelation itself.

This *epistemological* interpretation of divine revelation is immediately confirmed in the second argument: it disqualifies the natural knowledge of God by pure human reason (which the *theologia* of philosophy exercises) because of its epistemological insufficiency. The argument works like this: supposing that God could be known by human reason pure and simple, revelation would nonetheless be necessary ("*Ad ea*

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by Richard Regan; ed., intro., and notes Brian Davies (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), Latin p. 408, English translation p. 409 (modified). See: "*Et ideo creatura rationalis, quae potest consequi perfectum beatitudinis bonum, indigens ad hoc divino auxilio, est perfectior quam creatura irrationalis, quae huiusmodi boni non est capax, sed quoddam imperfectum bonum consequitur virtute suae naturae*" (*Summa Theologiae*, Ia IIae, q.5, a.5, *ad* 2, in Sancti Thomae de Aquino, *Summa Theologiae* [Cinisello Balsamo, Italy: Edizioni San Paolo, 1988], p. 585; English translation: "And therefore the rational creature, which can attain the perfect good of happiness, but needs the Divine assistance for the purpose, is more perfect than the irrational creature, which is not capable of attaining this good, but attains some imperfect good by its natural powers", in St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, trans. Fathers of the English Dominican Province, vol. 1 [New York: Benziger Brothers, Inc., 1947], p. 613). Here I am following Henri de Lubac, *Surnaturel* (Paris: Aubier, 1946), and *Le Mystère du Surnaturel* (Paris: Aubier, 1965) (and *Augustinisme et théologie moderne* [Paris: Aubier, 1965]). On this point, see my study in *Questions cartésiennes. Méthode et métaphysique*, (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1991), especially p. 141; English translation: *Cartesian Questions: Method and Metaphysics* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999), p. 88 and following.

etiam quae de Deo ratione humana investigari possunt, necessarium fuit hominem instrui revelatione divina"); if such were not the case, if the knowledge of God were summed up by what human reason restricted to its own light could say of him, there would follow a triple limitation: only certain people (*pauci*: the experts, the learned, the philosophers) would know God, after a very long search (*per longum tempus*) and not without the admixture of many errors (*cum admixtione multorum errorum*).[18] Put otherwise, if philosophical theology held exclusive ownership of the knowledge of God, the great majority of men would have very little of it and very poor access to it; revelation, therefore, must enter in immediately after the natural light, for an imperative pastoral reason: the ignorant also have the right to salvation. The superiority of revelation over human reason thus proves itself to be double, but always epistemological: first of all because it alone allows us to know God (directly) as *subjectum scientiae* (*theologiae, sacrae doctrinae*), and not only (indirectly) *as principium subjecti*; and next, because it allows everyone to know God, and know Him with certainty, by substituting itself for or completing the deficient contributions of the natural light of human reason.

The answers to these arguments confirm that revelation must first and above all extend itself as a communication of sciences, without either the equivocity of the knowledge thus dispersed by the two sources, nor especially the other functions of this revelation being taken directly into consideration, foremost among these the grace of the sanctification of its witnesses. In this way, the answer to the first argument emphasizes that the revealed truths must not be examined by reason ("*non . . . per rationem inquirenda*"[19]), thus already setting up an opposition between the truths known by revelation and those known by pure reason. The answer to the second argument goes further, attempting to join epistemologically these two competing modes of

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[18] *Summa Theologiae*, q. 1, a.1, *resp.*, in Sancti Thomae de Aquino, *Summa Theologiae* (Cinisello Balsamo, Italy: Edizioni San Paolo, 1988), p. 4; English translation in Pegis, ed., *Basic Writings of Saint Thomas Aquinas*, p. 6. See also St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa contra Gentiles*, I, 4. Here we can recognize, in addition to arguments that go back to the patristic apologists, the description of the knowledge of the principles upon which the *endoxa*, or probable, syllogisms rest, according to Aristotle, *Topics*, I, 1, 100b20.

[19] *Summa Theologiae*, Ia, q.1, a.1, *ad 1m*, in Sancti Thomae de Aquino, *Summa Theologiae* (Cinisello Balsamo, Italy: Edizioni San Paolo, 1988), p. 4.

knowledge, according to the principle that "sciences are diversified according to the diverse nature of their knowable objects" ("*diversa ratio cognoscibilis diversitatem scientiarum inducit*"). At issue, in fact, is the Aristotelian principle of the subordination of the sciences: for instance, the roundness of the Earth can be demonstrated mathematically, abstracting from matter, but it can also be demonstrated physically, by consideration of matter; it follows then that physics is subordinate to mathematics. Consequently, concludes Thomas, "there is nothing to prevent that on the same things, *nihil prohibet de eisdem rebus*", in this case God, the two sciences be brought to bear at the same time: the science of the light of natural reason (the human reason of the philosophers), and that of the light of divine revelation (*sacra doctrina*).[20] In this way, the supremacy of *theologia sacrae doctrinae* over *theologia philosophiae* comes at the price of an assimilation of the former to the epistemological function of the latter: revelation makes us know (better and more) than the natural light, and thus it makes us (first and above all) *know*, without any specification about what "to know" means *here*. Moreover, it will be objected that this epistemological principle of the subordination of the sciences among themselves itself remains purely philosophical, since it joins two sciences that are equally human and philosophical, and therefore cannot be applied to two perfectly heterogeneous forms of knowledge, one that is human, and one coming from *elsewhere*, from a revelation by God. The relation between a human knowledge and a divine knowledge from God cannot be sorted out by a device appropriated from human sciences of the same status, even though they are hierarchically distinguished. Perhaps sensing the audacious incoherence of this assimilation, Thomas Aquinas seems prudently to attenuate it by suggesting that "the habit of faith . . . is *comparable* to the habit of principles" ("*habitus fidei . . . est* quasi *habitus principiorum*"), or that "those truths that we hold in the first place by faith are for us *quasi*-first principles in this science" ("*ipsa, quae fide tenemus, sint nobis* quasi *principia*")[21]—in

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[20] *Summa Theologiae*, Ia, q.1, a.1, *ad 2 m*, in Sancti Thomae de Aquino, *Summa Theologiae* (Cinisello Balsamo, Italy: Edizioni San Paolo, 1988), pp. 4–5; English translation in Pegis, ed., *Basic Writings of Saint Thomas Aquinas*, p. 6.

[21] Respectively: Saint Thomas Aquinas, *Scriptum super libros Sententiarum*, I, q.I, a.3, Latin original and English translation in Hugh McDonald, trans., *On the First*

short, this is a *quasi* subordination. In any case, the ambiguity of the primarily epistemological interpretation of revelation here takes a further step: henceforth, revelation as science joins itself to the *philosophical* science of God and fits itself to what will become, as the constitution of the system of *metaphysica* develops, the system of the sciences; that it does so by claiming to rule this system only secures it a primacy that is as provisional as it is, in principle, fragile.

The most obvious indecision (not to say imprecision) in this interpretation of revelation bursts out in the Thomistic doctrine of the *revelabile*. A *Thomistic* rather than a *Thomasian* doctrine, moreover, since it has to do simply with a *hapax* in the body of the work,[22] upon which the tradition of commentators, from Cajetan to Gilson, has conferred an inordinate importance, but one that signals an immense ambiguity. At issue is the maintaining of a rational commerce between the two ways of knowing God, the assumption being that revelation also constitutes first of all a(nother) way of knowing; thus it is said that, "because Sacred Scripture . . . considers certain things under the formality of being divinely revealed, all things whatever they may be insofar as they are revealable by God, have in common the formal reason of the object of this science — . . . *omnia quaecumque sunt divinitus* revelabilia *communicant in una ratione formali*

Book of the Sentences, prologue and question 1, articles 1–5. E-text, <www.hyoomik. com/aquinas/sent1.html>, accessed 15 June 2015, emphasis added; and Sancti Thomae de Aquino, *Expositio super librum Boethii De Trinitate*, q. 2, a. 2, *resp.*, ed. Bruno Decker (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1965), p. 87, emphasis added; English translation in St. Thomas Aquinas, *The Trinity and the Unicity of the Intellect*, trans. Sister Rose Emmanuella Brennan, SHN (St. Louis and London: B. Herder Book Co., 1946), p. 53 (modified). Marie-Dominique Chenu, while insisting on the importance of this *quasi*, interprets it as a confirmation (*La théologie comme science au XIIIe siècle*, Paris: J. Vrin, 1927, 1969, p. 13) and, perhaps, gets carried away about it, as if it went without saying that revealed theology has much to gain from setting itself up as a *rigorous science*. It is not at all clear that even philosophy has gained by making this claim.

[22] According to the *Index Thomisticus* (eds., Roberto Busa, SJ, *et alii*, web-based version published 2005, <www.corpusthomisticum.org/it/index.age>, accessed 15 June 2015), entry: *revelabilia*, which in fact points out two occurrences, but both in the same text, the *Summa Theologiae*, Ia, q.1, a.3, *resp.* & *ad 2m*.

obiecti huius scientiae."[23] In other words, all that is, whatever it may be (and therefore all things as beings, the entire domain of the *theologia* of the *philosophers*) can fall under the authority of *sacra doctrina* (*theologia revelata*) in as much as "all that is" is already related implicitly to a same formal object *of knowledge*, in this case God. Reciprocally, therefore, every natural knowledge becomes *ipso facto* a potential revelation that does not know itself, or in short, an *anonymous revelation*. For, between the *demonstrabilia* and the *revelata*, the *revelabile* assures a continuity, if not an *epistemological* univocity.

But once again, what does *scientia* mean here, insofar as it is assumed to be common to these two domains and applied to revealed theology on the model of philosophical theology? The difficulty emerges clearly in a number of texts—for example, in the opening of book IV of the *Summa contra Gentiles*. Here we distinguish no longer two, but three sciences or, more prudently, three possible ways of knowing God. (a) First there is the knowledge by *lumen rationis*, weak (*debilis*) because it depends on the always confused sensation that ascends from creatures toward God ("*naturalis ratio per creaturas in Dei cognitionem ascendit*"), partially and obscurely; we recognize here the *theologia philosophica*. (b) Then revealed knowledge enters in, which proceeds from hearing ("*fides ex auditu*" Rom. 10:17) and elicits faith: it *descends* from God ("*fidei vero cognitio a Deo in nos e converso divina revelatione descendit*"); but it remains unintelligible ("*revelantur ut tamen non intelligantur, sed solum quasi audita credantur*") to reason alone, and rests only on the accepted authority

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[23] *Summa Theologiae*, Ia, q.1, a.3, *resp.*, in Sancti Thomae de Aquino, *Summa Theologiae* (Cinisello Balsamo, Italy: Edizioni San Paolo, 1988), p. 5; English translation in Pegis, ed., *Basic Writings of Saint Thomas Aquinas*, p. 8 (modified)—see Étienne Gilson, "Note sur le *revelabile* selon Cajetan," *Medieval Studies*, 15, Toronto, 1953, collected in *Humanisme et Renaissance*, ed. Jean-François Courtine, Paris: J. Vrin, 1983. Gilson shows clearly that Cajetan established, in patent opposition to the intention of Thomas Aquinas, a formal distinction between the *demonstrabilia* and the *revelabilia*, so as to ground a distinction between man's (natural, philosophical) finality according to simple *esse* and his supernatural (revealed, "theological" in the modern sense) finality according to *esse bonum*. But Gilson neither explains nor justifies the point that to my mind is crucial: the Thomasian integration of the *demonstrabilia* into the *revelabilia*, as simply made possible by the epistemological interpretation of revelation itself.

of the Scriptures ("*auctoritate sacrae Scripturae, non autem ratione naturali*").
(c) Finally, and above all, added to these two is knowledge through the
vision (*intuitus*) of the blessed: "*non sicut credita, sed sicut visa*".[24] It is
possible that, on the contrary, the juxtaposition holds only through the
assimilation of these three attitudes to the same and single epistemo-
logical model: in all cases, the question would be simply that of
knowing, to various degrees; as if our relation to God played out
first of all in the more or less exact, more or less evident, more or less
clear and distinct knowledge that we would, or would not, have of
Him. But St. Thomas Aquinas himself recognizes that such an equi-
vocity of the modes of knowledge of God cannot, without other
precautions, result in the univocity of the divine science: if it is
necessary to allow at least *two* definitions of science ("*duplex est scien-
tiarum genus*"), and the first must be valid for all sciences whose subject
is accessible to us, and therefore not for God as such ("*Omnis enim
scientia procedit ex principiis per se notis. Sed sacra doctrina procedit ex articulis
fidei*"), then it is necessary (so as to assure the quasi subordination of
theologia philosophica to *theologia sacrae doctrina*) to resort to the second
meaning of science: a *sacra doctrina* that is itself derived from the
sciences of the blessed, "*ex principiis notis lumine superioris scientiae, quae
Dei et beatorum propria est, derivata*".[25] Thus there would be not just one,
but in fact two subordinations among the sciences of God: the subor-
dination of *theologia philosophica* to *theologia sacrae doctrinae*, and above all
the subordination of the knowledge of faith (the revelation through the
Scriptures, *theologia sacrae Scripturae*), which receives without under-
standing, to the *scientia Dei et beatorum*, which, alone, sees (*intuitus*) the
first principles that make of it, at last, an authentic "*scientia Dei*" ("*quae
scilicet est scientia Dei et beatorum*—namely, the science of God and the

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[24] *Summa contra Gentiles*, IV, 1, in S. Thomae Aquinatis, *Summa Contra Gentiles*
(Turin: Marietti, 1935), respectively pp. 416, 416, 415, 416, 415; English transla-
tion in: Saint Thomas Aquinas, *On the Truth of the Catholic Faith (Summa Contra
Gentiles)*, Bk. 4, trans. Charles J. O'Neil (Garden City, NY: Image Books, 1957),
pp. 39, 39, 37, 39, 38.

[25] Here I've followed *Summa Theologiae* Ia, q.1, a.2, successively *obj.* 1, *conclusio*,
and *resp.*, in Sancti Thomae Aquinatis, *Opera Omnia*, vol. 1 (Parma: Fiaccadori,
1852), p. 2.

blessed").[26] It is not a question of a failure of Thomas Aquinas's argument, but on the contrary the difficulty of the thing itself, which St. Thomas uncovers with his typical rigor, and which here must be taken firmly into account: what makes revealed theology a science consists in the final analysis not only in its subordinating of the natural (philosophical, achieved by human reason) knowledge of God, but above all in its subordinating itself to the *scientia beatorum*. And from this there arises the inevitable problem: when we, *in via*, here and now, try to develop a *theologia sacrae doctrinae*, revealed to us by God in his Word, we do not have access to the "science of the blessed", which is by definition still to come, eschatological. Revealed theology, therefore, cannot have access to principles that would make it a science.

Once again, let me make clear that this conclusion does not disqualify the Thomistic argumentation; rather, it perfectly displays what is at stake in it. This stake can be formulated, at this point, in the following question: Can, and *must*, revelation, examined in its unquestionable characteristic of proceeding, mediately or immediately, from the Word of God, particularly as transmitted by the Scriptures (*sacra doctrina, sacra Scriptura*), insist on the status of a science? Thomas Aquinas claims it de jure, but on a condition (subordination to the *scientia Dei et beatorem*) that is de facto impossible to satisfy here and now, *in via*. Thus we should consider whether Thomas Aquinas, rather than settling the question, instead brings it fully to light. If this is so, there are two possible responses: that of validating the *epistemological* interpretation of revelation, or that of challenging it, provided, of course, that a more fitting interpretation—that is to say a more powerful one—can be provided.

The first response has been the most prevalent in the history of modern theology, probably because it has seemed the simplest and most *rational*. It results in an even more significant aporia, in the form of the propositional theory of revelation. Its best formulation can be found in the effort made by Francisco Suárez, at the turn of classical modernity (sixteenth to seventeenth centuries), to disengage from the whole of the act of revelation that which would remain if we were to

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[26] *Summa Theologiae*, Ia, q.1, a.2, *resp.*, in Sancti Thomae de Aquino, *Summa Theologiae* (Cinisello Balsamo, Italy: Edizioni San Paolo, 1988), p. 5; English translation in Pegis, ed., *Basic Writings of Saint Thomas Aquinas*, p. 7.

leave aside the act of faith, and which, according to the most ancient Christian tradition, must always respond, affirmatively or negatively, to the act of revelation. Suárez accomplishes this, as usual through allusions and scattered indications, by isolating a *sufficiens propositio*: if we ask what defines revelation, Suárez suggests in response that it requires only the single sufficient proposition of the revealed object, whether *or not* the one to whom it comes believes in it, and without it mattering whether it comes to him directly through an inner, direct movement of God, or through an exterior intermediary.[27] There can most certainly be revelation, as long as there is a *sufficiens propositio*, and it doesn't have to be believed; he writes: "I point out that two things are necessary to the knowledge of faith: one is the apprehension of the things to believe, insofar as they are proposed as said by God and, consequently, are credible due to divine testimony; the other is consenting to the proposed things, which is precisely that in which faith consists."[28] Thus the rule is that there can always be an *apprehensio* of

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[27] Francisco Suárez, SJ, *De Trinitate*, I, c.12, n.4: "*nomine revelationis interdum significari solam objecti revelati sufficientem propositionem, sive credatur ab eo, cui fit talis revelatio, sive non, et sive revelatio fiat mere interius ab ipso Deo per se ipsum, vel per angelos, sive fiat exterius per hominum praedicationem*—meanwhile by the name of revelation only the sufficient proposal of the object revealed is able to be signified, whether it be believed by the one to whom such a revelation is made *or not*, and whether the revelation is made purely by God through himself or through angels, or whether exteriorly through the preaching of men . . ." (*Opera omnia*, vol. 1, ed. M. André [Paris: Ludovicus Vivès, 1857], p. 571, emphasis added). And he continues by explaining: "*quia cum hac revelatione stat, hominem non assentire veritati revelatae, et tunc dici non potest cognoscere illam, sicut qui audit, astra esse paria et non assentit, nec judicat esse paria, non cognoscit esse paria, sed tantum apprehendit et audit, id affirmari, vel dici*—because it obtains with this revelation that a man does not assent to the truth revealed, and then it is not possible to say that he knows it, just as one who hears that the stars are even in number and does not assent, and neither does he form a judgment that they are an even number, does not know that they are even, but he only apprehends and hears this fact to be affirmed or stated" (ibid.). In short, one can form a conception of a revealed statement without adhering to it, in the same way that one can form a conception of a statement of positive science (in this case, astronomy) without understanding it. The revealed statement belongs to the same epistemology as the statement of natural reason.

[28] Francisco Suárez, SJ, *De Necessitate gratiae*, II, c.1, n.8: "*Sed quaeret aliquis primo, quid nomine revelationis intelligamus. Respondeo breviter intelligi omnem* sufficientem fidei propositionem, *sive interius tantum fiat, sive per exteriorem praedicationem. Ut hoc autem magis*

revelation without an *assentio*. What status should be given to this *propositio sufficiens*? Or in other words, to whom and in whom does it reveal itself to be *sufficient*? Particularly insofar as one can receive this supposed revelation without believing in it, and without having to believe in it: "*posset enim primus fidei praedicator doceri a Deo per scientiam infusam vel beatam, et tunc non esset necessarium proprium objectum fidei, quatenus tale est, alicui proponi a Deo immediate, sed solum ut* objectum scientiae vel visionis—for a first preacher of the faith can be taught an infused and blessed science by God, yet in the same moment it is not necessary that the proper object of faith, as such, be proposed to anyone immediately by God, other than as an *object of science and of vision*."[29] Through a stupefying reversal of the Thomist position, but one that makes clear that that position *could* lead to this result (against the intention of Thomas Aquinas, of course, but nevertheless ...), the revealed becomes independent of *scientia beatorum*, precisely so as to attain the status of a *sufficient* scientific proposition. *Scientific sufficiency* assumes the decoupling of revelation from faith, as will be confirmed in the division between the treatise *de revelatione* and the treatise *de fide*. Going forward, one can say, quite literally, that revelation is, so to speak, a piece of information ("*Revelatio autem est quasi informatio*"[30]). Thus everything is in place for revelation to be understood as that

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intelligatur, adverto ad cognitionem fidei duo esse necessaria: unum est apprehensio rerum credendarum, quatenus homini proponuntur ut dicta a Deo, et consequenter ut credibilia ex testimonio divino: aliud est assentio ad res propositas, in quo proprie fides ipsa consistit*" (Suárez, *Opera omnia*, ed. C. Berton, vol. 7 [Paris: Vivès, 1857], p. 588, emphasis added). Or: "*Sic enim contingit multis revelari fidem qui non credunt, quamvis sine praevia revelatione nemo credat*—Thus, in fact, it happens that faith is revealed to many who do not believe, although no one believes without revelation leading the way" (ibid.). Also see Francisco Suárez, *De Fide*, IV, sec.1, n.2: "*Non est necessarium ad credendum, ut fidei objectum per ipsum Deum immediate proponatur*—It is not necessary for the purpose of believing that a object be proposed without mediation to faith through God himself" (*Opera omnia*, vol. 12, ed. C. Berton [Paris: Vivès, 1858], p. 112). Or ibid. n.4: "*hunc modum propositionis fidei posse esse sufficientem*—It is possible for this mode of proposing the faith to be sufficient" (ibid. p. 113).

[29] Suárez, *De Fide*, IV, sec.1, n.5, vol. 12, p. 113, (emphasis added).

[30] *De Fide*, III, sec.2, n.6, vol. 12, p. 44. Of course, *information* here *also* has the technical meaning of giving a form, but, as the form in question consists in nothing more than the *propositio sufficiens* without *assentio*, the *informatio* is well and truly

which makes information about God known, without its science owing anything to the science of the blessed, that is to say, to the vision of God in God.

The hold of its interpretation as a *science* over the concept of revelation leads not only to the abstraction of the revealed statement as a *propositio sufficiens* independent of the adhesion of faith; it also leads to such an approximation of revelation, henceforth informative, to natural knowledge by pure reason, precisely under the relation of their common scientific character, that the dependence is, or could be, reversed between them. In the same line of reasoning that imposed the concept of the *propositio sufficiens*, Suárez suggests that the natural knowledge of God, far from remaining weak and insufficient (the explicit position of Thomas Aquinas), could on the contrary ground supernatural (revealed) knowledge: "From which it follows that, while these things [known by the natural light] can be known naturally about God, nevertheless, because they are like the ground for those that are known supernaturally (*veluti fundamenta eorum quae supernaturaliter cognoscuntur*), it was thus necessary that they also were known and revealed in a supernatural manner (*illa etiam supernaturali modo cognosci et revelari*), because supernatural faith cannot ground itself according to the judgment and the certainty of natural knowledge."[31] The argument seems completely made up, but the intention is clear: if the natural and the supernatural ways of knowing overlap, this is not (or at least, not at first) because revealed knowledge would reinforce or ensure natural knowledge, itself always incomplete and mixed with errors, but on the contrary because (a) natural knowledge serves as a ground (*fundamenta, fundari*) to revealed knowledge, which, effectively, (b) remains unable to justify itself according to the criteria of natural science (certainty and judgment); its epistemological weakness, then, is

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limited to transmitting what we call today information, which one may *or may not* accept.

[31] *De Necessitate gratiae*, II, c.1, n.7: "*Unde quamvis haec possint de Deo naturaliter cognosci, tamen quia illa sunt veluti fundamentum eorum quae supernaturaliter cognoscuntur, ideo necesse fuit illa etiam supernaturali modo cognosci et revelari, quia non potest supernaturalis fides in judicio et certitudine cognitionis naturalis per se fundari*" (F. Suárez, *Opera omnia*, vol. 7, p. 588).

compensated for by the epistemological sufficiency of natural science. This stupefying reversal of the traditional (and thus Thomist) position, making natural knowledge the ground for supernatural knowledge, ought not to surprise us: it simply results from the interpretation of revelation as a science, an interpretation that subjects it to the characteristics of the only science that is accessible and definable for us: the science of natural reason. And moreover, Suárez extends this reversal to the whole relation between theology and philosophy, the latter itself understood as *metaphysica*. On this subject, the rather solemn prologue to the *Disputationes Metaphysicae* leaves no doubts about the radicality of the thesis, which is set out in three stages: (a) "Even though divine and supernatural theology relies (*nitatur*) on the divine light and on principles revealed by God, still, because it is perfected through human discursivity and reasoning, it is also aided (*etiam . . . juvatur*) by truths known by the natural light, and, in order successfully to carry out its reasonings and shed light on the divine truths, it makes use of them (*utitur*) as its means and, so to speak, as its instruments"; in other words, theology depends as much on natural knowledge as it does on supernatural knowledge, on reason as much as on revelation. (b) More precisely, natural science enters into the theological discussion in the form of metaphysics: "in the discussion of the divine mysteries there arise these *metaphysical dogmas*, without the knowledge and intelligence of which it is *hardly, or not at all, possible* (*vix, aut ne vix quidem possunt*) to treat these higher mysteries in a suitable manner." The mixture (*admiscere*) of theology and metaphysics therefore cannot, indeed must not be avoided. (c) It only remains, then, to suppose this mixture as a cohesion and a necessity: "In this way, these metaphysical principles and truths (*haec principia et veritates metaphysicae*) form a whole so coherent (*cohaerent*) with the theological conclusions and demonstrations that to do away with the science and the perfect knowledge of the former necessarily also involves the complete ruin of the science of the latter."[32] Thus the conclusion stands out clearly that, without

[32] The extraordinary text of the *Proemium* of Suárez's *Disputationes Metaphysicae* is worth quoting in the original Latin: "*Divina et supernaturalis theologia, quanquam divino lumine principiisque a Deo revelatis nitatur, quia vero humano discursu et ratiocinatione perficitur, veritatibus etiam naturae lumine notis juvatur, eisque ad suos discursus perficiendos, et divinas veritates illustrandas, tanquam ministris et quasi instrumentis utitur. . . . Cum enim inter disputandum de divinis mysteriis* haec metaphysica dogmata *occurrerent, sine quorum cognitione*

metaphysics, *revealed* theology would lose its grounds and its principles. In fact and in principle, *metaphysica* imposes its epistemological demands on theology, which owes to revelation nothing more than some informative content (some *propositiones sufficientes*), and neither its procedures nor its proper logic.

Faced with this fundamental orientation of Christian theology (for here the Reformers, especially the Calvinists, will not remain behind the Catholic evolution for long), the resistance of the Roman magisterium, or at least its passive prudence, stands out all the more. First, one notices that the term *revelatio* remains absent from the texts of the Council of Trent (session of 1546), which, when it treats of the relation between tradition(s) and Scripture(s), refers only to the "*puritas ipsa Evangelii*" ("purity of the gospels").[33] Next, it is only during the First Vatican Council, in 1870, that this very question of the sources of faith is taken up again under the chapter title—used for the first time—*De revelatione*, in the dogmatic constitution *Dei Filius*. With an ostentatious fidelity to the thematic of Thomas Aquinas (and of the *Summa Theologiae Ia*, q.1, a.1), the council distinguishes two modes of knowledge: one, which invokes Romans 1:20, allows that "God, the beginning and end of all things, can be known with certainty from the things that were created through the natural light of human reason (*naturali humanae rationis lumine*)"; the other, relying on Hebrews 1:1, assures that God "reveal[s] (*revelare*) himself (*se ipsum*) and the eternal decrees of his will in another and a supernatural way (*supernaturali via*)".[34]

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et intelligentia vix, aut ne vix quidem, *possunt altiora illa mysteria pro dignitate tractari, cogebar saepe . . . divinis et supernaturalibus rebus inferiores quaestiones* admiscere. . . . *Ita enim haec principia et* veritates metaphysicae cum theologicis conclusionibus ac discursibus cohaerent, *ut si illorum* scientia ac perfecta cognitio *auferatur, horum etiam scientiam nimium labefactari necesse sit*" (*Opera omnia*, vol. 25, ed. C. Berton [Paris: Vivès, 1861], p. 1, emphases added). If it were necessary to situate the decisive moment of the submission of revealed theology to the (onto-theo-logical) constitution of *metaphysica*, it would be here.

[33] *Dei Filius*, chapter 1 (*De revelatione*), no. 1501, in Heinrich Denzinger, *Enchiridion symbolorum definitionum et declarationum de rebus fidei et morum / Compendium of Creeds, Definitions, and Declarations on Matters of Faith and Morals*, ed. Peter Hünermann, 43rd edition (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2012), p. 370.

[34] *Dei Filius*, no. 3004, pp. 601–2.

Nevertheless, this dichotomy calls for several explanations. (a) Certainly, in keeping again with the thesis of Thomas Aquinas, the knowledge by *revelatio* is seen to have a double validity, with regard to the very mystery of God, but also with regard to all "things divine that of themselves are not beyond human reason (*humanae rationi per se impervia non sunt*)".[35] And yet, at no point is reference made here to the subordination of the sciences, nor to the identification of natural knowledge with *philosophia* (much less with *metaphysica*), nor to the third way of the *revelabile*, nor especially to the epistemological interpretation of these two ways of knowing: to my knowledge, never is the revealed *cognitio* assimilated to a *scientia* of any sort whatsoever (much less to a *demonstratio* of any kind). Finally, not only does *supernaturalis revelatio* appear only in order to name, in explicit reference to the "universal belief of the Church, declared by the sacred Council of Trent", the question of the relation between tradition(s) and Scripture(s),[36] but above all the sole authority admitted for this (non-*scientific*) knowledge of these "true revealed things, *vera . . . revelata*" comes "not because the intrinsic truth of things is recognized by the natural light of reason (*intrinsecam rerum veritatem naturali rationis lumine perspectam*)", but exclusively from "the authority of God himself revealing, *ipsius Dei revelantis*".[37] There is no better way to show, through this re-centering on the biblical texts, that Suárez's drift into concordism, and even the epistemological interpretation of revelation, are, at the least, held to the margins, if not rejected outright. The silence, here, weighs heavily.

Does Vatican Council II, in its constitution *Dei Verbum* (1965), alter this reserve? Not at all, since it takes up (and probably ends) the debate on the relation between revelation through tradition (written and non-written) and the Scriptures, issuing from the councils of Trent and Vatican I, solely on the basis of the revelation of God himself by himself, and not, first of all, on the basis of a knowledge (and much less on the basis of a *scientia*): "*Placuit Deo . . . Seipsum revelare et notum facere sacramentum voluntatis suae* (God chose to reveal Himself and to make known to us the hidden purpose of his will.")" "*Semetipsum manifestavit*

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[35] *Dei Filius*, no. 3005, p. 602.

[36] *Dei Filius*, no. 3006, p. 602. See also chapter 3 (*De fide*), nos. 3009–11, pp. 603–4.

[37] *Dei Filius*, chapter 3 (*De fide*), no. 3008, p. 603, translation modified.

(He manifested himself)" in effect through an "*oeconomia . . . gestis verbisque intrinsece inter se connexis* (plan of . . . deeds and words having an inner unity)."[38] First and above all, God reveals only Himself, and the economy of salvation. The goal of Revelation is not to grant us the knowledge of something else, or even a growth in our knowing, or a mere extension of our *scientia*, because God has a design that is otherwise radical: He "Himself wanted to communicate Himself to us, *Ipse nobiscum communicare voluerit.*"[39] The clearly non-epistemological intention of revelation aims to manifest God in person; God's intention is not so much to make himself known as to make himself *re*-cognized, to communicate himself, to enable men to enter into a communication that puts them in communion with him. The term "communication" used by *Dei Verbum* perhaps echoes an especially precise formula of Paul VI, found in his contemporary encyclical *Ecclesiam suam*: "Revelation . . . can be looked upon as a kind of colloquium (*quasi quoddam colloquium*), through which in the Incarnation and in the Gospel God's Word speaks. . . . [It is t]hat fatherly, sacred colloquium between God and man, . . . like a conversation of Christ with men (. . . *quasi sermocinatione*)", following a verse from Baruch 3:38.[40] But, one might object, *Dei Verbum* still maintains the distinction between natural and supernatural knowledge of God. On the contrary, the two adjectives do not appear, even if, of course, Romans 1:19–20 is cited: "what can be known about God is plain to them [men], because God has shown himself to them. Ever since the creation of the world the invisible things of God are seen, *ta gar aorata apo ktiseōs kosmou tois poiēmasin nooumena kathoratai.*"[41] But *Dei Verbum*

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[38] *Dei Verbum*, chap. 1, no. 4202 and no. 4203, respectively, in Denzinger, ed., pp. 918, 919, and 918. See: "*Divina revelatione Deus Seipsum atque aeterna voluntatis suae decreta circa hominum salutem manifestare ac communicare voluit* (Through divine revelation, God chose to show forth and communicate himself and the eternal decisions of his will regarding the salvation of men)" (*Dei Verbum*, no. 4206, p. 920).

[39] *Dei Verbum*, chap. 3, no. 4217, p. 923 (translation modified).

[40] Paul VI, *Ecclesiam Suam (6 August 1964)*, *Acta Sanctae Sedis* 56 (1964), paragraph 70, p. 632 and following. The astute connection is made (indeed, this verse is quoted in *Dei Verbum*, chap. 1, no. 4202, p. 918) by René Latourelle, *La Révélation*, p. 332, who shows here "the dialogal character of revelation", or even its "dialogal structure" (p. 333).

[41] Cited in *Dei Verbum*, chap. 1, no. 4203, p. 919.

places this text, which certainly validates the knowledge of God in his creation by "the natural light of human reason", within the ("supernatural") revelation of God by Himself, by first citing the canonical texts of St. Paul on the *mystērion* of God revealed in Jesus Christ.[42] And in fact, this famous verse, deemed to establish first and paradigmatically the possibility of the *natural* knowledge of God on the basis of creation, if it fulfills this role well (and one can neither contest this fact, nor the verse's constant role in the theological tradition), does so quite rightly by including this knowledge deemed *natural* within the economy of the revelation (*apokalypsis*) of God by himself (*supernaturally*, if you will). Indeed, how can it not be admitted that Romans 1:19–20, which I have just quoted, follows immediately on a double mention of the *apokalypsis*? "I am not ashamed of the gospel: it is the power of God for salvation to every one who has faith, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. For in it the righteousness of God is revealed (*apokalyptetai en autō*) through faith for faith; as it is written, 'He who through faith is righteous shall live.' (Ps. 119: 46). For the wrath of God is revealed (*apokalyptetai*) from heaven against all ungodliness and wickedness of men who by their wickedness hold the truth [prisoner] in injustice" (Rom. 1:16–18). In other words, Vatican II understands what the textual evidence requires to be understood, and what the scholastic reading missed or masked: knowledge of God on the basis of creation, even if it is exercised (perhaps) through the "natural light of human reason" alone, does not precede revelation (which is thus called "supernatural"); instead, it finds itself preceded by and comprised in it. Moreover, it is only under this condition that the Pauline argument becomes intelligible: God reveals himself on the basis of faith (Rom. 1:17), and so men, who "naturally" have knowledge of this truth (vv. 19–20), are "without excuse" for "holding [prisoner] in injustice" (v. 18) a "truth" (v. 18) that has "shown" itself (v. 19) to them. Consequently, "the wrath of God is revealed" (v. 18), because men "knowing God did not glorify God or give thanks to him as such a God" (v. 21). The question does not bear on the knowledge of God: Paul holds *that* to be established and obvious; the question does not bear on the recognition of what men know already, but instead on

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[42] *Dei Verbum*, chap. 1, no. 4202, p. 918.

their refusal to glorify and give thanks for what they know. God thus reveals himself *before* knowledge (in faith), and *after* it in wrath (in front of the failure to understand this knowledge). "Natural" knowledge does not constitute what is at stake in revelation, but rather what revelation produces, and that in relation to which it unfolds its economy (faith, wrath). Revelation encompasses all "natural" knowledge and, in every sense, comprehends it.[43]

From this attempt to approach revelation epistemologically, from this drift and the resistance to this drift, I draw out a first conclusion: in order to conceive a concept of revelation correctly, we are required, at the very least, not to think of it through reference to that which it cannot become, short of thereby disappearing as such—that is, a complement to or a substitute for knowledge, at least knowledge understood as a science. We can put this another way, in the form of questions: Does God reveal himself in order to make himself known and take a place within our rationality? Or does he instead reveal himself in order to allow himself to be loved, and to love us?

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[43] Here I note that William of Saint-Thierry, among others, understood Romans 1:18–20 in this way: "*Deus enim illis revelavit, qui sic eos creavit, ut in seipsis habeant, unde Deum cognoscant*" (*De Natura et Dignitate amoris*, § 41, in *Patrologiae cursus completus, Series Latina*, ed. Jacques-Paul Migne [Paris: Migne, 1879], vol. 184, col. 404; English translation: "For God, who so created them that they might have within themselves the means of recognizing God naturally, has revealed Himself to them", in William of Saint Thierry, *The Nature and Dignity of Love*, trans. Thomas X. Davis [Kalamazoo: Cistercian Publications, Inc., 1982], p. 103).

An Attempt at a Phenomenal Re-Appropriation of Revelation

The separation of the question of revelation from that of faith, plainly assumed in modern theology by the distinction between the two treatises *de revelatione* and *de fide*, afforded theology (or rather, as Kant lucidly amended it, afforded the *faculty* of theology) an advantage: the claim to be able to state rational theses, intelligible in themselves, and thus to establish itself as a science, or even to count itself among the "higher faculties" (to speak, again, like Kant), to the very point of claiming, by virtue of the operation of the subordination (or subalternation) of the sciences borrowed from Aristotle, to reign over all the other sciences. But this advantage had a price, which had to be paid in the end: because the scientificity laid claim to by theology remained unspecified and, above all, invalidated by the inaccessibility in this life of the *scientia Dei et beatorum* (which alone could ground it), revelation had to submit its supposedly "sufficient" propositions to the interpretation of the only reason actually available—the reason of the "natural light", at least as it was made available by the metaphysical system. This counter-interpretation occupied the entire movement, first, of the English Enlightenment (from Herbert of Cherbury, beginning in 1624, to Locke with *The Reasonableness of Christianity* of 1695, and on to Hume, with his *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion* of 1779, not to mention John Toland, *Christianity Not Mysterious*, 1696, and Matthew Tindal, *Christianity as Old as the Creation of the World, or the Gospel a Republication of the Religion of Nature*, 1730), and then of the period of French *Lumières* (above all in *La confession de foi du vicaire savoyard*, in the fourth chapter of Rousseau's *Emile, ou de l'éducation*, 1762), up to the *Aufklärung*, which closes the debate by raising it to the level of the concept (in Johann Gottlieb Fichte's *Versuch einer Kritik aller Offenbarung*

of 1793, which anticipates the conclusions that Kant, one year later, was bound to draw from his own critique of pure reason in the *Religion innerhalb der Grenzen der bloßen Vernunft*). This counter-interpretation of revelation triumphed, at least apparently, because the most conservative defenders of "revelation" themselves came to invoke reason as a "natural revelation". Apparently only, however, because at the very moment of this triumph, the victor revealed, in multiple ways, the imprecision of the very concept of "reason" it was employing to authorize its right to critique "revelation" (understood as a science).

This imprecision was revealed in "multiple ways"—or at least in two quite identifiable ways—particularly through the notions of "critique" and of "concept". "Critique" lays claim to the limits of "reason", either in order to challenge biblical affirmations (or affirmations supposed to be biblical) as irrational (Spinoza called them thoughts of the imagination, Hume mere beliefs), or in order to reformulate them according to its norms (sometimes by consciously straining the texts, as Kant claimed the right to do[1]). But, in thus laying claim to "reason", the question arose of the status and the legitimacy of the very limits that "reason" was imposing on "religion" (understood as "revealed"), without, however, this polemical contrast fixing the concept of the one or the other. Of course, from the Kantian point of view, the limits that "reason alone" imposes on the biblical texts are justified because they come from the limits that pure reason imposes on itself in its own theoretical exercise: to claim to know nothing by concepts (a priori) except that which intuition (in the forms of space and time) can give

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[1] Kant: "*Diese Auslegung mag uns selbst in Ansehung des Texts (der Offenbarung) oft gezwungen scheinen, oft es auch wirklich sein, und doch muß sie, wenn es nur möglich ist, daß dieser sie annimmt, einer solchen buchstäblichen vorgezogen werden, die entweder schlechterdings nichts für die Moralität in sich enthält, oder dieser ihren Triebfedern wohl gar entgegen wirkt* —This interpretation may often appear to us as forced, in view of the text (of the revelation), and be often forced in fact; yet, if the text can at all bear it, it must be preferred to a literal interpretation that either contains absolutely nothing for morality, or even works counter to its incentives" (*Religion innerhalb der Grenzen der bloßen Vernunft*, in *Gesammelte Schriften* [1907–; repr., Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1968], vol. VI, p. 110 [hereafter, references to this edition of the works of Kant will be abbreviated "AA" followed by the volume number]; English translation in Immanuel Kant, *Religion within the Boundaries of Mere Reason, And Other Writings*, ed. and trans. Allen Wood and George di Giovanni [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998], p. 118).

and thus validate: reason imposes on the epistemological claim of revelation only the limits that it imposes on its own epistemological function. But this argument is overturned immediately. For by what right can reason, which only legislates by virtue of its essential finitude, and which, with respect to this finitude, strictly confines itself to knowing only *objects*, claim to impose its limits, these norms of its finitude, on that which, on principle, proposes itself as a transgression of finitude through the intervention of the infinite? We do not have to wait for Hegel to oppose the question of the infinite and of the absolute to the "critique"; it is enough to listen to Schleiermacher: "Everything that exists is necessary for religion, and everything that can be is for it a true indispensable image of the infinite."[2] And moreover, when philosophy imposes, in the name of *its* "reason", a strictly moral interpretation of "revelation" (by thus validating it within its own limits, as everyone, from Locke to Kant, including Rousseau, tries to do), does it still respect its own limits? Doesn't it surpass them by qualifying in this way finite morality with the advantageous title of a "moral god", crowning finitude through "the acknowledgment of God as moral lawgiver"?[3] In a word, if "reason", as exercised in the end by the system of metaphysics, remains finite and "reason alone", can it still impose, or claim to impose, without any other justification, its limits on that which is defined formally by the absence of or indifference to limits? Is what appears impossible *for "reason"*, which is to say, *for us* mortals, still impossible for the gods, or for those taking their place, *for whom everyone agrees* that, *if there are any gods*, nothing is impossible?[4] Thus "reason", by extending the

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[2] Friedrich Schleiermacher, *Über die Religion. Reden an die Gebildeten unter ihren Verächtern, II* (Berlin: Unger, 1799), p. 65; ed. Hans-Joachim Rothert (Hamburg: Meiner, 1958, 1970), p. 37; English translation: *On Religion: Speeches to its Cultured Despisers*, trans. Richard Crouter (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988, 1996), p. 28.

[3] J. G. Fichte, *Versuch einer Kritik aller Offenbarung*, in *Sämmtliche Werke*, ed. I. H. Fichte (Berlin: Veit, 1845), V, p. 53; English translation: *Attempt at a Critique of All Revelation*, ed. Allen Wood, trans. Garrett Green (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), p. 40.

[4] On this status of the impossible *for us*, which is yet possible *for the gods and for God*, see my analysis in *Certitudes négatives*, chapter II (Paris: Grasset, 2010), pp. 86–137; English translation: *Negative Certainties*, trans. Stephen E. Lewis (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2015), pp. 51–82.

jurisdiction of its finitude to that which at the very least claims to be free of it, namely the infinite, attests to the indecisiveness of its own concept.

Now, the concept we are left with when we question the concept of "reason", namely the very concept of a "concept", likewise offers a similar indetermination. Hegel, still more directly than Fichte and Schelling, had seen and wished to surmount the Kantian difficulty: finite reason can legislate only within the field of what it can know—finite objects—as well as its own intuitions, concepts, and apperception. In order to become actually universal, finite reason will have to embrace the infinite itself *through a concept*: an infinite henceforth real, actually known in an absolute knowledge. Solely on this condition will finite reason be able to take on the domain of the infinite as it unfolds, among other instances, in "religion", which will thus be legitimately called "revealed". Once again, revelation will reveal nothing other than what reason itself had known, but this time, rightly so, since with regard to "reason", we are now dealing with an absolute knowledge. Still to be justified is the extension of the concept of the finite to the infinite. This crucial difficulty defines the ultimate ambition and the deep-seated ambiguity of this positive realization of the system of metaphysics attempted by Hegel, before it collapses beneath its own weight in a negative realization (triggered by Feuerbach and completed by Nietzsche). Linked to "revelation", every "philosophy of religion" (Hegel) understood as the elevation of the concept of the "philosophy of revelation" (Schelling), allows for the ambiguity of uniting in the same concept two terms that are *almost* equivalent: *revealed* knowledge (*geoffenbarte*) and knowledge that is *revelatory* or *uncovered* (*offenbare*) [*découverte*], evident and certain, or, as Descartes would say, clear and distinct.[5] But can the uncovering [*découvrement*],

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[5] This equivalence, which is never explained, punctuates Hegel's analyses; for example: "*In dieser Religion ist deswegen das göttliche Wesen* geoffenbart. *Sein Offenbarsein besteht offenbar darin, daß gewußt wird, was es ist. Es wird aber gewußt, eben indem es als Geist gewußt wird, als Wesen, das wesentlich selbst* Selbstbewußtein *ist. . . . Dies—seinem* Begriffe *nach das Offenbare zu sein,—ist also die wahre Gestalt des Geistes*" (G. W. F. Hegel, *Phänomenologie des Geistes*, ed. W. Bonsiepen and R. Heede, *Gesammelte Werke*, vol. 9 [Hamburg: Meiner, 1980], p. 405 (eds. H.-F. Wessels and H. Clairmont, "Philosophische Bibliothek" no. 414 [Hamburg: Meiner 1998], p. 495). English translation: "Consequently, in this religion the divine Being is *revealed*. Its being

the unveiling, and the putting into light that revelation works still be registered, even as an utmost crowning and final variation, within the *same* arrangement as that which, in the "reason" of metaphysics (even as it is taken up by the speculative dialectic), results in the showing, or even the taking clear possession of a statement disclosed without remainder to the absolute spirit as a truth that is itself definitively established? Can and *must* whatever is *un*covered by revelation still be registered within the field of what reason unfolds, *ex*plains, and *un*-conceals in the truth? When reason *unconceals* the truth (*alētheia*), does it proceed according to the same procedures and the same operations as revelation (*apokalypsis*) when it *uncovers* what it gives to be known?

This question has until now never been asked, because the epistemological interpretation of revelation has always seemed to be obvious. This obviousness has masked the originality and the difficulty of the concept (if it is still necessary to speak of it in this way) of *revelation*, since its *uncovering* has been assimilated, without any critical precaution, to what the truth works when it *explains and unconceals*. Up to now, because of the fact of the epistemological interpretation of revelation and its consequences (the *propositio sufficiens*), the proper character of revelation as *apokalypsis* is itself still missing, masked by the obviousness of the truth as *alētheia*. Here it is necessary to make a clarification and a choice. The confrontation cannot and must not, in a preliminary inquiry, take place between the Greek meaning of *alētheia*, such as Heidegger, in a still unique or almost unique example, attempted to stage it with regard to Aristotle, Plato, and earlier thinkers, and the Jewish and Christian meaning of *apokalypsis*. This cannot be the issue here, not only because it goes beyond what *I* can merely sketch, but also because it is not what is actually required. As we already saw, the ordinary (and undetermined) concept of revelation remains modern and the result of a recent polemic between

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revealed obviously consists in this, that what it is, is known. But it is known precisely in its being known as Spirit, as a Being that is essentially a *self-conscious Being.* . . . This—to be in accordance with its *Notion* that which is revealed—this is, then, the true shape of Spirit, and this its shape, the Notion, is likewise alone its essence and its substance" (G. W. F. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, trans. A. V. Miller [Oxford: Oxford University Press], 1977, pp. 459, 460).

theologians and metaphysicians; it follows, then, that what "revelation" was deployed against and, at the same time, what it obscured—because the obviousness of its antagonism with "reason" closed access to its own determination or, at best, left it fundamentally undetermined—is not found in *alētheia* in its original meaning, but in the figure that it took at the moment of the constitution of the polemic between "reason" and "revelation". This is to say that the dissimulation of revelation as *apokalypsis* takes its origin from the interpretation of *alētheia* as truth, in the sense of certainty's showing of a clear and distinct representation in evidence. This moment—that of philosophical modernity initiated by the last of the scholastics and the philosophy of the Cartesian period—is identified with and as the constitution of the metaphysical system. It defines truth according to the conditions of the possibility of bringing something to certain evidence, or the two principles of metaphysics, as fixed by Leibniz in their paradigmatic formulae: the principle of contradiction and the principle of sufficient reason.[6] These two principles, like two doors of bronze, frame access to the true proposition, which is henceforth the object of a possession, at the very least possible, in evidence that is certain. The proposition henceforth known according to this metaphysical definition of the truth can then elicit assent, become a belief grounded in reason, and, in short, receive the sanction of the will, according to Descartes's formula: "a great light in the intellect was followed by a great inclination in the will—*Ex magna luce in intellectu magna consequuta est propensio in voluntate.*"[7] If one extends this epistemological model to "revelation", by following, for example, the drift of Suárez, one gains a *propositio sufficiens*, which proposes the "revealed truth" in all its evidence to a

[6] G. W. Leibniz, *Les principes de la Philosophie, ou monadologie*, §§ 31–32 (English translation in *G. W. Leibniz's Monadology: An Edition for Students*, trans. Nicholas Rescher [Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1991], p. 21; original French is found on pp. 113 and 116).

[7] René Descartes, *Meditatio IV*, in *Œuvres de Descartes*, ed. Ch. Adam and P. Tannery (1908; new edition, Paris: Vrin, 1996), VII, p. 59 (subsequent citations of this edition will be indicated by the abbreviation "AT", followed by the volume number in Roman numerals and, in Arabic numerals, the page number and, in some cases, the line number[s]); English translation: *The Philosophical Writings of Descartes*, vol. II, eds. John Cottingham, Robert Stoothoff, and Dugald Murdoch (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), p. 41.

will that, provided that it remains in good faith, and thus in faith, should approve it and hold it for true, so as, potentially, to love it.

Yet there is another conceivable determination of revelation as *apokalypsis* that not only differs from the truth understood according to the system of metaphysics, but inverts its terms. Although apparently marginal in the texts, its tradition crops up rather regularly, and with a perfect coherence. Thus we find, for example in William of Saint-Thierry, the two Cartesian terms, yet perfectly reversed: "...*non tam ratio voluntatem, quam voluntas trahere videtur rationem ad fidem*— for it is not so much the reason that draws the will [toward the evidence], as the will that draws the reason toward faith."[8] This reversal was thematized with the utmost clarity by Pascal, who knew quite well how to oppose Descartes's adage: "Hence, instead of speaking about human matters that they have to be known before they can be loved, which has become a proverb, the saints, speaking of divine matters, say

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[8] William of Saint-Thierry, *Speculum Fidei*, § 25, in Marie-Madeleine Davy, ed., *Guillaume de Saint-Thierry, Deux traités sur la foi* (Paris: Vrin, 1959), p. 46; English translation in William of Saint Thierry, *The Mirror of Divine Faith*, trans. Thomas X. Davis (Kalamazoo: Cistercian Publications, Inc., 1979), p. 33, modified. Gregory the Great describes this quite precisely: "*Sed inter haec sciendum est quia saepe et pigras mentes* amor ad opus excitat, *et inquietas in contemplatione timor refrenat....Unde necesse est ut quisquis ad contemplationis studia properat, semetipsum prius subtiliter interroget,* quantum amat. Machina quippe mentis est vis amoris, *quae hanc dum a mundo extrahit, in alta sustollit.* Prius *ergo discutiat, si summa* inquirens diligit, *si diligens timit, si novit incognita aut* amando comprehendere, *aut non comprehensa timendo venerari. In contemplatione etenim mentem si* amor non excitat, *teporis sui torpor obscurat; si timor non aggravat, sensus hanc per inania ad nebulam erroris levat*" (*Moralia in Job*, Bk. VI, 58, PL 75, cols. 762, 763, emphases added); English translation: "But herein it is necessary to know, that often at one and the same time *love stimulates inactive souls to work,* and fear keeps back restless souls in the exercise of contemplation....Whence it is necessary that whoever eagerly prosecutes the exercises of contemplation, *first* question himself with particularity, *how much he loves.* For *the force of love is an engine of the soul,* which, while it draws it out of the world, lifts it on high. Let him then *first* examine *whether in searching after the highest things he loves,* whether in loving he fears, whether he knows either how to apprehend unknown truths, while he loves them, or not being apprehended to reverence them in cherishing fear. For in contemplation, *if love does not stimulate the mind,* the dullness of its tepidity stupefies it. If fear does not weigh on it, sense lifts it by vain objects to the mist of error" (Saint Gregory the Great, *Morals on the Book of Job,* trans. Charles Marriot and James Bliss [Oxford: John Henry Parker, London: J.G. F. and J. Rivington, 1844], Vol. I, Parts I and II, p. 358, emphases added).

that you have to love them in order to know them, and that you enter into truth only by charity, which they have made into one of their most useful pronouncements."[9] And in fact, these two authors were commenting on a noteworthy formula of St. Augustine, which we must read in its full context:

> *Probamus etiam ipsum* [*sc.* Spiritum Sanctum] *inducere in omnem veritatem, quia non intratur in veritatem, nisi per caritatem: "Caritas autem Dei diffusa est," ait apostolus, "in cordibus nostris per Spiritum Sanctum qui datus est nobis"* (Ro. *5, 5*).[10]

In other words: just as revealed truth does not in fact and by right emerge [*ne se découvre*] except because the Holy Spirit, poured out in our hearts (according to St. Paul), leads us to it (*inducere*, echoing the *entrer* of Pascal and the *trahere* of William of Saint-Thierry), so the

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[9] See Blaise Pascal, *De l'art de persuader*, in *Œuvres complètes*, p. 355: "Et de là vient qu'au lieu qu'en parlant des choses humaines, on dit qu'il faut les connaître avant que de les aimer, ce qui a passé en proverbe, les saints au contraire disent en parlant des choses divines qu'il faut les aimer pour les connaître et qu'on n'entre dans la vérité que par la charité, dont ils ont fait une de leurs plus utiles sentences"; English translation in *Pensées and Other Writings*, trans. Anthony Levi (Oxford: Oxford World's Classics, 1999), p. 193 (I have commented on this thesis in *Sur le prisme métaphysique de Descartes*, § 25 [Paris: PUF, 1986], p. 360 and following, and in *Au lieu de soi. L'approche de saint Augustin*, ch. III, § 21 [Paris: PUF, 2008], p. 190 and following, to which I refer for the whole Augustinian horizon of this reversal). Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit*, §29, p. 139 also quotes this fundamental text, which should be completed by reference to a subsequent remark: "Scheler first made it clear, especially in the essay 'Liebe und Erkenntnis,' that intentional relations are quite diverse, and that even, for example, love and hatred ground knowing. Here Scheler picks up a theme of Pascal and Augustine" (Heidegger, *Metaphysische Anfangsgründe der Logik*, §9, *Gesamtausgabe* 26 [Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1978], p. 169 [subsequent references to this edition of the works of Heidegger will be indicated by the abbreviation "GA" followed by the volume number]; English translation: *The Metaphysical Foundations of Logic*, trans. Michael Heim [Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press], 1984, p. 134).

[10] St. Augustine, *Contra Faustum*, XXXII, 18, PL 42, 507; English translation: Philip Schaff, ed., *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers: Vol. IV: St. Augustine, The Writings Against the Manichaeans and Against the Donatists* (1887; repr. Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1979), p. 338, modified: "... He [the Holy Spirit] leads into all truth, for the only way to truth is by love, and 'the love of God', says the apostle, 'has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us'."

condition of the possibility of *uncovering* [*découvrement*] is no longer assured by the conditions of possibility of the experience of *finite* objects (namely critique, the principles of metaphysics, clear and distinct ideas, evidence that is certain), but by charity, which henceforth plays the role of a condition of knowledge of that which, for finite reason, continues to appear as inaccessible and *impossible*, or better: unthinkable, at least if one accepts it *as impossible*.

We must measure the radical yet strange impact of such an overturning of the terms, wherein going forward the will should command the understanding: for the issue here is no longer the mere usage of reason in practice, where no one (especially not Kant[11]) contests the precedence of the will over the understanding: I make a decision according to what I will, then I apply my intelligence to the means of attaining the chosen goal. Instead, it has to do with the use of reason within theory, assuming that a *theoria* still remains conceivable when it passes under the control of the will. It remains to be seen whether this overturning truly and explicitly concerns the notion of revelation, in particular in St. Augustine, who—it has frequently been noted[12]—

[11]   Kant, *Kritik der praktischen Vernunft*, AA, V, pp. 31–2: "*Reine Vernunft ist für sich allein praktisch, und gibt (dem Menschen) ein allgemeines Gesetz, welches wir das* Sittengesetz *nennen. . . . einen Willen, d.h. ein Vermögen haben ihre [sc. die Menschen] Kausalität duch die Vorstellung von Regeln zu bestimmen*"; English translation: "Pure reason is practical of itself alone and gives (to the human being) a universal law which we call the *moral law. . . .* a will, that is, the ability to determine their [*sc.* rational beings'] causality by the representation of rules" (Immanuel Kant, *Practical Philosophy*, trans. and ed. Mary J. Gregor [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996], p. 165). Or: "*Mit dem praktischen Gebrauche der Vernunft verhält es sich schon anders. In diesem beschäftigt sich die Vernunft mit Bestimmungsgründungen des Willens, welche rein Vermögen ist, den Vorstellungen entsprechende Gegenstände entweder hervorzubringen, oder doch sich selbst zur Bewirkung derselben . . . d.h. seine Kausalität zu bestimmen*"—"It is quite different with the practical use of reason. In this, reason is concerned with the determining grounds of the will, which is a faculty either of producing objects corresponding to representations or of determining itself to effect such objects . . . , that is, of determining its causality" (*Kritik der praktischen Vernunft*, AA, V, p. 15; Kant, *Practical Philosophy*, trans. Mary J. Gregor, p. 148).

[12]   "No more than the other Fathers did St. Augustine deal *ex professo* with the idea of revelation," notes René Latourelle (1963, p. 151). But how, then, are we to understand that "Incontestably, the theme of revelation is in the forefront of the Christian consciousness of the first three centuries" (Latourelle [1963], p. 152)? Would the *idea* be lacking when the *consciousness* of it was "incontestable"? Unless it

often speaks of it. The beginning of an answer to these two questions could emerge from an attentive reading of one of the rare Augustinian formulations of revelation, one that is rather surprising: "*Ista attractio, ipsa est revelatio*—This revelation itself is what draws."[13] This formula is grasped only as the result of a rather detailed commentary on John 6: 44: "No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him, *helkysē auton, traxerit eum.*" Yet an objection seems necessary: aren't those who "hunger and thirst for righteousness" the ones who, according to the Beatitudes, "shall be satisfied" (Mt. 5:6)? A desire, then, that is, a will, is indeed necessary if God is to fill it. In this case, how can one believe passively, through drawing and attraction ("*Nemo venit nisi tractatus*"), since we all experience that we believe only if we will it ("*credere non potest nisi volens*"[14]), and since if we do not will it, in fact we do not believe and, inversely, "to confess is to say what you have in your heart—*Hoc est enim confiteri, dicere quod habes in corde*"?[15] Yet there remains the declaration of John 6:44, which can be confirmed by the experience that "the soul is drawn also by love – *trahitur animus et amore*".[16] This aporia nevertheless opens the way to its surpassing: for in fact I am drawn very little through my will, and instead and above all through the desire for my pleasure ("*parum est voluntate, etiam voluptate traheris*").[17] This is verified not only by experience ("*Da amantem, et sentit quod dico* – Give me a man that loves, and he understands what I say"), nor even by Virgil's authority ("*Trahit sua quemque voluptas*—Every man is drawn by

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is precisely the case that what is retrospectively called the (modern) *idea* of revelation has but little in common with that of which the Fathers had an "incontestably" clear *consciousness*: it would be fitting, then, to reform our idea of revelation on the basis of this consciousness.

[13] St. Augustine, *Commentaire de l'évangile de Jean*, ed. H. F. Berrouard, "Bibliothèque Augustinienne," vol. 72 (Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, 1977), XXVI, 5, p. 496. English translation in *Tractates on the Gospel of John, 11–27*, trans. John W. Rettig. The Fathers of the Church: A New Translation (Patristic Series), vol. 79 (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 1988), p. 264.

[14] *Commentaire de l'évangile de Jean*, XXVI, 2, p. 486; *Tractates on the Gospel of John, 11–27*, p. 261 (modified).

[15] Ibid., p. 486; Ibid., p. 261.

[16] *Commentaire de l'évangile de Jean*, XXVI, 4, p. 490; ibid., p. 262 (modified).

[17] Ibid.

his own pleasure"[18]), but by the Psalms themselves: "Take pleasure in the Lord (*delectare in Domine*), and he will give you the desires of your heart" (Ps. 36:4), or even, "…they shall be well satisfied with the fullness of Thy house; and Thou shalt give them drink from the river of Thy pleasure, for with Thee is the fountain of life" (Ps. 35:8–10). Not only are we permitted (*licet*), but we must (*debemus*) admit that we are "drawn", swept along, pulled by the desire for pleasure when we love.[19] In the experience of being drawn, we experience nothing less than the logic of love: "*Amando trahitur*—By loving, one is drawn".[20] And yet, this attraction remains free, for without it we absolutely could not love. What is more: the spreading of this attraction into hearts (through the Holy Spirit) must be understood as what is proper to God in loving and causing love, for Christ would not draw if he did not make manifest the Father in himself, that is, if he did not reveal the Father: "*trahit revelatus Christus a Patre*—Christ revealed by the Father draws starting from the Father*" (for the ablative concerns the two verbs, *revelari/revelatus* and *trahere*). Or again: "*Trahit Pater ad Filium eos qui propterea credunt in Filium, quia eum cogitant Patrem habere Deum*—The Father draws to the Son those who believe in the Son, who consider him the Son having such a Father / the Father having such a Son" (for the two accusatives can each govern the verb).[21]

From this, two consequences, two essential features of a theological grasp of revelation, follow. (a) Revelation consists only in the attraction by the Father toward the Son, in order to see the Father in him: "*Ista revelatio, ipsa est attractio*".[22] Whether this attraction is felt as gentle or violent[23] changes nothing: revelation exerts these two effects,

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[18] Virgil, *Eclogues* 2, p. 65.

[19] *Commentaire de l'évangile de Jean*, XXVI, 4, p. 490 and 492; *Tractates on the Gospel of John, 11–27*, p. 262.

[20] *Commentaire de l'évangile de Jean*, XXVI, 5, p. 496; *Tractates on the Gospel of John, 11–27*, p. 264 (modified).

[21] *Commentaire de l'évangile de Jean*, XXVI, 5, pp. 496 and 494; *Tractates on the Gospel of John, 11–27*, pp. 263 and 264 (modified).

[22] *Commentaire de l'évangile de Jean*, XXVI, 5, p. 496; *Tractates on the Gospel of John, 11–27*, p. 264. See: "*Revelare se voluit quid esset*" (*Commentaire de l'évangile de Jean*, XXVI, 10, p. 504).

[23] *Sermo* 131, 2, 2, PL 38, col. 730. See the "*potestatem adducendi et trahendi*—the power to lead and to draw" (*Contra Julianum*, V, 14, PL 44, col. 793; English

simply because it brings itself to bear. We believe in God when we will it, clearly; but we will it only when we love that which we desire; and in the case of God, we receive this desire (desire for pleasure) from God alone: "A person is drawn to Christ who is given the gift to believe in Christ. . . . Unless this power is given by God, it cannot arise from free choice, because it will not be free for what is good if the deliverer has not set it free."[24] Revelation assumes a plot, in which the attraction acts first on the will, which then makes the reason choose to see what it would otherwise not will to see. Seeing is the result of the decision to see, and this decision, made by me, nevertheless comes to me from elsewhere. I must make the decision to make a decision, will to be willing, in order to arrive at seeing. Revelation comes to me *from elsewhere.* (b) Nevertheless, the attraction holds as revelation only because it allows seeing Jesus as the Christ, that is to say, as the Son of the Father, as the visibility of the invisible. There is nothing to add: "*Nisi ergo revelet ille qui intus est, quid dico, aut quid loquor?*—Unless he who is within should uncover, what do I say, or what do I speak?"[25] Thus we understand better why vision (uncovering) depends on a will (decision): I see the Father only if I interpret (in "the Holy Spirit poured out in our hearts") Jesus as the Son of God—if I *am willing* to interpret him in this way. Here we do not allow for any *propositio sufficiens objecti revelati*, known even without being believed (*et si non*

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translation in *The Works of Saint Augustine: A Translation for the 21st Century: Answer to the Pelagians, II: Marriage and Desire, Answer to the Two Letters of the Pelagians, Answer to Julian*, I/24, trans. Roland J. Teske, SJ [Hyde Park, NY: New City Press, 1998], p. 443).

    [24] "*Ille quippe trahitur ad Christum, cui datur ut credat in Christum. . . . Quae potestas nisi detur a Deo, nulla esse potest ex libero arbitrio: quia nec liberum in bono erit, quod liberator non liberavit*" (*Contra duas epistolas Pelaginorum*, III, 6, PL 44, col. 553; English translation in *The Works of Saint Augustine: Answer to the Pelagians, II: Marriage and Desire, Answer to the Two Letters of the Pelagians, Answer to Julian*, I/24, trans. Roland J. Teske, SJ [Hyde Park, NY: New City Press, 1998], p. 119). See: "*Nemo igitur potest habere voluntatem justam, nisi nullis praecedentibus meritis acceperit veram, hoc est, gratuitam desuper gratiam*— None, then, can have a righteous will unless they have received true grace without any preceding merits, that is, grace which has been gratuitously given from on high" (ibid., I, 7, col. 554; English translation: p. 119).

    [25] *Commentaire de l'évangile de Jean*, XXVI, 7, p. 500; *Tractates on the Gospel of John, 11–27*, p. 265.

credatur), for without the hermeneutic decision, there is nothing to see, nothing to believe, and nothing revealed. As regards revelation, the one who wants to see without yet having to believe sees nothing. Clement of Alexandria conceived of genuine *gnosis* in this way: "There is no knowledge without faith, nor faith without knowledge, no more than there is the Father without the Son—*oute g' gnōsis aneu pisteōs, outh' hē pistis aneu gnōseōs ou mēn oude ho patēr aveu uiou.*"[26] Revelation happens to me through hermeneutics, which is to say, through the *conversion* of one intentionality into another.[27]

A direct heir of St. Augustine, William of Saint-Thierry contributes to the reinforcement of the theological understanding of revelation. (a) Taking up (freely) the Augustinian adage drawn from Isaiah 7:9, "If you will not believe, surely you shall not understand", he contests, in terms that are already like those of Pascal, the notion that one could know the "divine things" without having first believed: "*In eis vero quae sunt ad Deum, sensus mentis amor est*—In those things which pertain to God, the sense that allows the mind to attain them is love".[28] Here, "this science consists only in a mode or disposition of the mind for receiving [and taking up] those things which derive properly from faith"[29]; consequently, it is first necessary to believe, and therefore first to love, for the same operation is at play in both acts (*idipsum*): "Who

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[26] Clement of Alexandria, *Stromates*, V, 1, 1, ed. A. Le Boulluec, "Sources chrétiennes" no. 278 (Paris: Cerf, 1981), p. 25.

[27] This is what is confirmed indirectly by the use of the word *revelare* in the discussion about the error committed by St. Cyprian regarding the possibility of re-baptizing heretics: the lack of revelation that impacts him gives him an opportunity for humility and conversion (St. Augustine, *De Baptismo contra Donatistas*, V, 6, PL 43, cols. 129–30). The argument is all the more significant in that St. Cyprian himself used it to explain how Paul was right against the initial position of Peter regarding the baptism of pagans (St. Cyprian, *Epistolae LXXI*, PL 4, cols. 410–11).

[28] William of Saint Thierry, *Speculum fidei*, § 64, in Marie-Madeleine Davy, ed., *Guillaume de Saint-Thierry, Deux traités sur la foi*, p. 76; English trans.: *The Mirror of Faith*, trans. Thomas X. Davis (Kalamazoo: Cistercian Publications, Inc., 1979), p. 71, modified. See: "*fides voluntarius est assensus mentis, in eis quae fidei sunt; credere vero cum assensu de eis cogitare*—faith is a voluntary assent of the mind to matters of faith, but to believe is to deliberate on, while assenting to them" (ibid., §23, p. 44; English trans., p. 31).

[29] "*Scientia vero haec modus quidam est vel habitus mentis, ad suscipienda ea, quae proprie fidei sunt*" (*Speculum fidei*, §50, p. 66; English trans. Davis, p. 58, modified).

knows without loving? Surely God is one and the same (*idipsum*)! To ponder him and to love him is the same (*idipsum*)! I say ponder *him* and not ponder *about* him. Many persons [only] ponder *about* him, because they do not love him. But no one ponders *him* without loving him."[30] Thus, to claim to know a *propositio sufficiens* without believing it would be equivalent to agreeing to be cared for and healed without trusting or loving one's doctor.[31] There follows, then, this first conclusion: *no one can see that which is uncovered (apokalypsis) unless she believes it.*

(b) Next, taking up the Augustinian commentary on John 6:44 on revelation as attraction ("…*nisi Pater traxerit eum*"), William of Saint-Thierry repeats its logic: "If you do not will to believe, you do not believe. Yet you believe if you will it; but you do not will it unless you are first helped by grace. For 'no one comes to the Son unless the Father draws him.'…But you do not will to [believe] unless you are drawn by the Father; and if you will it, you will it because you are drawn by the Father."[32] From this paradox he draws a significant consequence: willing consists in loving, and signifies nothing else. The

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[30] "*Quis cogitat, et non amat? Nimirum Deus est idipsum est, quod cogitare et amare idipsum est.* Ipsum *dico, non* de ipso. *De ipso enim multi cogitant, qui non amant, ipsum autem nemo cogitat, et non amat*" (*Speculum fidei*, § 73, p. 84, emphases added; English trans. Davis, p. 81, modified).—This rule is so important that William does not hesitate to correct a verse from John 2:23, "…*quia credebant* [*sc.* certain hearers] *in eum quem non diligebant*" (in fact an unfounded amalgam of two verses from the Vulgate: v. 23, "…*multi crediderunt*…" and v. 24, "*Ipse autem Iesus non credebat semetipsum eis*", where it is not the listeners who believe without loving, but Jesus who refuses his trust in those who *say* they believe and nothing more). William comments, "*Abusive quippe dictum de illis est, quia credebant in eum, quem non diligebant. Credere enim in eum, amando in eum ire est*—It has been said of them [those of whom it is said in the gospels that they believed in Jesus but he did not believe in them], incorrectly, that they believed in him whom they did not love. But to believe in him is to go to him by loving him" (*Speculum fidei*, §43, p. 60; English translation, Davis, pp. 50–1).

[31] *Speculum fidei*, §2, p. 26. In other words, "*Non credis, qui non diligis et non diligis, quia non credis* – You do not believe because you do not love; you do not love because you do not believe" (*Speculum fidei*, §12, p. 36; English trans. Davis, p. 18).

[32] "*Equidem si non vis credere, non credis; credis autem, si vis; sed non vis, nisi a gratia preveniaris; quia 'nemo venit ad Filium, nisi Pater traxerit eum.'…Sed si vis credis, sed non vis nisi a Patre traheris; et si utique vis, quia Pater traxeris*" (*Speculum fidei*, §12, p. 34; English trans. Davis, pp. 17–18, modified).

will only wills if it finds and experiences an attraction that puts it into operation; now, this attraction, always coming *from elsewhere* (generally, from the thing willed), comes, in the case of God, from that which gives itself all the more to be loved as it itself loves, and consists only in love. From this point I can only will by loving, by a universal rule, but all the more so because what is *here* loved identifies itself with love: "*Voluntas enim haec aliquantus jam amor Christi est*—this will is in a certain sense already the love of Christ."[33] This maxim, above all, must not be understood as a medieval anticipation of the implicit faith of the "anonymous Christian", as if every will were unconsciously oriented toward Christ; rather, precisely the opposite: as the recognition of the fact that no will comes to will except in proportion to what attracts it, and thus to what it loves; we understand, then, that it wills more the more it loves Christ, who is God revealing himself as loving. In this way William of Saint-Thierry is able to take up, and even deepen, the Augustinian definition of love: "*Voluntas enim initium amoris est. Amor siquidem vehemens voluntas est*—The will is the beginning of love. Love then is a vehement will."[34] Or: "*Nichil enim aliud est amor, quam vehemens et bene ordinata voluntas . . . bone voluntatis vehementia amor in nobis dicitur*— Love is nothing other than a will that is vehement and well-ordered- . . . we call love the vehemence of a good will."[35] From this, a second

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[33] *Speculum fidei*, § 12, p. 36; English trans. Davis, p. 18 (modified).

[34] *Speculum fidei*, § 12, p. 36; English trans. Davis, p. 18. St. Augustine said: ". . . *voluntatem nostram, vel amorem seu dilectionem, quae valentior est voluntas*—our will, or love or dilection, which is only a stronger will" (*De Trinitate*, XV, 21, 41, 'Bibliothèque Augustinienne,' vol. 16, p. 532; English trans. Hill, p. 427, modified). See ". . . *si tam violentia est [sc. voluntas], ut possit vocari amor, aut cupiditas, aut libido. . . .* if it [the will] is violent enough that one can name it a love, a desire, or a concupiscence" (XI, 2, 5, p. 172; English trans. Hill, p. 307, modified). Complementary material to this doctrine can be found in *Au lieu de soi*, IV, §28, pp. 250–1; *In the Self's Place*, pp. 181–2. In this sense, one can rightly say that "*Amore quippe illuminatus, caritas est*—love enlightened is charity" (William of Saint Thierry, *De Natura et dignitate amoris*, § 15, PL 184, col. 387, and in ed. M. M. Davy, *Guillaume de Saint-Thierry. Deux traités de l'amour de Dieu: De la contemplation de Dieu. De la nature et de la dignité de l'amour* [Paris: Vrin, 1953], p. 88; English translation: William of St. Thierry, *The Nature and Dignity of Love*, trans. Thomas X. Davis [Kalamazoo: Cistercian Publications, Inc., 1981], 67).

[35] *De contemplendo Deo*, § 18: *Deux traités de l'amour de Dieu*, pp. 52, 54. See: ". . . *vehementer velle, quod est amare*" (§21, *Deux traités de l'amour de Dieu*, p. 56).

conclusion follows: no one can see that which is uncovered (*apokalypsis*) unless he believes it; but no one can believe if he does not will it, and *no one can will unless he loves what he believes and wills to will*.

This leads to a third and decisive conclusion. No one can see that which is uncovered (*apokalypsis*) unless she believes it; but if no one can believe if she does not will to do so, and no one can will if she does not love, then no one can see unless she loves—and thus, in the end, *in a situation of revelation (apokalypsis, uncovering), knowing is the same as loving*, which is the contrary of the situation of truth (*alētheia, unconcealment*), where knowing means seeing and knowing directly: "*Ratio docet amorem, et amor illuminat rationem*—reason teaches love and love illuminates reason."[36] Or further: "...*amor ex fide spe mediante per cognitionem oriatur; et fides itidem in amore per cognitionem solidetur*— ...love arises from faith through the knowledge that hope mediates."[37] Love knows and makes itself known, but on *one* condition: that its freedom to set the conditions of *its* knowledge be recognized; that is, that it be free to begin with the will, insofar as it can first be converted and convert the mind. This condition defines what going forward we shall call *uncovering*, or in other words *apokalypsis*. Such an uncovering of love by itself puts into operation a rule known by the Church Fathers: "to learn one's knowledge *about* God *starting from* God, *para theou peri theou...mathein*." Put another way: "The Lord taught us that no one can know God unless God himself is the Teacher; that is to say, without God, God is not to be known—*Edocuit autem Dominus quoniam Deum scire nemo potest nisi Deo docente, hoc est, sine Deo non cognosci Deum*."[38]

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[36] *De Natura et dignitate amoris*, § 25, p. 102. See: "*Voluntas crescit in amorem, amor in caritatem, caritas in sapientia*—the will ...grows into love, love into charity and charity into wisdom" (§ 4, p. 74; English trans. Davis, p. 53).

[37] *Speculum fidei*, § 36, p. 54; English trans. Davis, p. 42, modified.

[38] Respectively: Athenagoras of Athens, *Legatio*, VII, 2, ed. W. R. Schoedel (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972), p. 14; and Irenaeus of Lyon, *Adversus Haereses*, IV, 6, 4, ed. Adelin Rousseau, "Sources chrétiennes", no. 100, vol. 2 (Paris: Cerf, 1965), p. 446. See also Clement of Alexandria: "it is only through divine grace and through the Logos alone, which is with Him, that one knows the unknown, *monô tô par'autou logô to agnôston noein*" (*Stromates*, V, 82, 4, p. 160); Gregory the Great: "*When we love* the supercelestial things we have heard about, *we already know the things we love, because love itself is knowledge*—Dum enim audita supercoelestia *amamus, amata jam novimus, quia amor ipse notitia est*" (*Homilia in evangelia*, II, 27, 4, PL 76, col. 1207,

Nevertheless, an objection arises here, all the more forceful in that it does not challenge the logic of uncovering (*apokalypsis*), but seems simply to draw from it the consequence that what is at stake here is the logic of faith, which assumes as secured the discourse that it affirms, according to its definition; this discourse and this logic in themselves remain legitimate, but they cannot be joined to concepts or to reason, which, for their part, must directly see in order to know, and know in order to will, according to the logic of unconcealment (*alētheia*). And yet, this division, traditional as it may seem, is not obvious; nor can it be accepted, even from the point of view of faith, without comment. For at issue here are two *logics*, each deriving from a *logos*; and the *logos tou staurou* (1 Cor. 1:18) is a *logos*, as well, to the point that God himself appears under the title of *Logos* (Jn. 1:1). Moreover the "wisdom of the world" could not contradict the "wisdom of God" (1 Cor. 1:20-21), nor could the two overturn each other in a "foolishness" (1 Cor. 1:18, 20, 24) if they were not first confronting one another under a single logic. In fact, the "foolishness" arises only because the logic does not succeed in consolidating itself; and it does not succeed because we, as "the world", as the Greeks that we pride ourselves on following in *our* understanding of logic, "look for wisdom" (1 Cor. 1:22), just as Aristotle searched for it; we never ask why the "ever sought-for science" still remains "aporetic" for us (*aei zetoumenon kai aei aporoumenon*)[39]; we never question the evidence of our conception

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emphasis added; English translation: Gregory the Great, *Forty Gospel Homilies*, trans. Dom David Hurst [Kalamazoo: Cistercian Publications, Inc., 1990], p. 215); and John of Damascus: "No one can know God unless God instructs him; that is, God is not known without God—*aneu theou mē ginēskesthai ton theon*," *Sacra Parallela* (ed. Pierre Halloix, *Illustrium Ecclesiae Orientalium scriptorum secundi saeculi vitae et documenta*, vol. 2, [Douai: Bogardi, 1633], p. 483, and Karl Holl, *Fragmenta vornicänischer Kirchenväter aus den Sacra Parallela* [Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1899], p. 61, quoted by Adelin Rousseau, in Irenaeus of Lyon, *Adversus Haereses*, p. 446; see also "Sources chrétiennes" no. 100, vol. 1, p. 54 and following). And of course, see Pascal: "God can well speak of God" (*Pensées*, ed. Lafuma, § 303; trans. A. J. Krailsheimer [London: Penguin, 1995], p. 95).

[39] Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, Z, 1, 1, 1028b3 (Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, *Books I–IX*, with an English translation by Hugh Tredennick [Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1968], p. 312, modified).

of either wisdom or logic. The *apokalypsis* of the uncovering does not appear without logic, as we have seen; but it places another logic, which it claims is more powerful, yet still logical, in opposition to the unconcealment of *alētheia*. The question of the relation between uncovering and unconcealment, between *apokalypsis* and *alētheia*, takes place not outside but inside of logic. Or, more precisely, the question is whether *our* conception of logic can lord it over every other *logos*, even the *logos* of the *Logos*, or if instead it can and must allow itself to be reshaped by the logic of the *Logos*.

Reformulated in this way, the weight of the question thus bears first of all on philosophy and on the limits of its logic. At issue is whether philosophical logic must reform its principles in order to avoid becoming foolish in front of the *Logos*. For, at least as the biblical event claims, the *Logos* uncovers itself, it phenomenalizes itself. But what philosophy, or rather logic as developed by the system of metaphysics, understands by a phenomenon does not allow us to conceive of the *Logos* phenomenalizing itself. Where does the difficulty lie? In the fact that the *Logos*, even and above all when it manifests itself ("coming in the likeness of men and found *as* a man in his figure, *skēmati heuretheis hōs anthrōpos*" Phil. 2:7), manifests itself precisely *as* a man, not as an object. Metaphysics, however, conceives the phenomenon first of all as an object, which appears according to the conditions of experience: "The *a priori* conditions of a possible experience in general are at the same time [*zugleich*] conditions of the possibility of the objects of experience."[40] That the phenomenon does not reduce to the object means that it does not necessarily appear based on the gaze that foresees it (in the pure forms of its intuition), which conceives it in advance (according to the a priori concepts of its understanding), and which synthesizes it (in terms of its active apperception); rather, it appears or *may* appear based on itself. Thus the phenomenon, or at least certain phenomena, would not only have to appear in the opening of the visible, but would have to appear there by imposing

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[40] Immanuel Kant, *Kritik der reinen Vernunft*, A 111; *Critique of Pure Reason*, trans. Paul Guyer and Allen W. Wood (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), p. 234. On the interpretation (including, among others, the Kantian interpretation) of the phenomenon as an object, see my *Certitudes négatives*, ch. V, § 26, p. 253 and following; *Negative Certainties*, p. 162 and following.

themselves in terms of themselves. And indeed, in its most radical ambitions, philosophy, in the form of phenomenology, has had no other goal than this one: to allow the phenomenon to broaden out itself in itself, and to show itself from itself (*das Sich-an-ihm-selbst Zeigende*).[41] But in order that the phenomenon show itself in itself and from itself—that is, in principle, in order that it abolish the Kantian interdiction that reserved the *in-itself* to the thing insofar as it *does not appear*—it is necessary that this appearing not owe its appearing to the conditions of possibility of a foreign experience (that of the transcendental *ego*), but that it draw its appearing from itself, and itself alone; it thus must happen from itself—in a word, it must give itself. Put another way, the phenomenon proposes itself (*sich darbietet*) in intuition and, in the limits of this intuition, it claims in principle that we receive it and accept it (*annehmen*) as it gives itself (*wie es sich gibt*).[42] The phenomenon *shows itself*, then, from itself and in itself, because and in as much as it *gives itself* in person from itself. From a synthesized or constituted object, it *transforms* itself into an event, sprung up from nowhere else than from its own abandonment to itself. Such a transformation, such a passage from one form to another can happen within the strict field of philosophy, and phenomenology aims at nothing other than describing such phenomena in general that veer from object to event. Phenomenology designates them under the name of saturated phenomena. It so happens that Christ, taken in his "figure as a man" (Phil. 2:7), also shows himself insofar as he gives himself. For Christ, once resurrected, shows himself in full phenomenality (*ephanerōthē*)[43] "among" men (Jn. 20:19). But exegesis has rightly remarked that he shows himself from himself, that he bursts forth into the visible on his own initiative, as the passive aorist (*ōphthē*)

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[41] Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit*, 19th ed. (1927; repr., Tübingen, Germany: Max Niemeyer, 2006), § 7, p. 28.

[42] Edmund Husserl, *Ideen zu einer reinen Phänomenologie und phänomenologischen Philosophie: Erstes Buch, Allgemeine Einführung in die reine Phänomenologie*, vol. III of *Husserliana: Edmund Husserl Gesammelte Werke* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1950–), p. 52, hereafter designated by the abbreviation "Hua"; English trans. F. Kersten, *Ideas Pertaining to a Pure Phenomenology and to a Phenomenological Philosophy: First Book, General Introduction to a Pure Phenomenology* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1982), p. 44.

[43] Mk. 16:12 and 14; Jn. 14: 21, 22 and 21:1, 14; 1 Jn. 1:1.

indicates: he *rendered himself visible, made himself seen*.[44] But this visibility comes from beyond death, since he *gave and thus received* his life absolutely, because freely: "For this reason the Father loves me, because I lay down [*tithēmi*] my life, that I may take it up again. No one takes it from me, but I lay it down [*tithēmi*] of my own accord. I have power to put it down [*theinai*], and I have power to take it up again" (Jn. 10: 17–18).[45] As resurrected, and thus as the pre-eminent phenomenon, because out of the ordinary, Christ shows himself in such an exceptional way because and insofar as he gave himself in an exceptional way. Thus, in the central phenomenon of biblical uncovering, we find the two characteristics of the phenomenon in its properly phenomenological (not metaphysical) definition: as event, and no longer as object.

It remains, then, to clarify this description of the One who is risen as a saturated phenomenon. I will limit myself to the succinct examination of three determinations. According to the first, the *saturated phenomenon*[46] is defined by the excess within it of intuition over the concept or signification, and contrasts with the common-law phenomenon (and even more, the poor phenomenon), which, according to metaphysical phenomenality, only allows two other relations among the terms: either the deficit of intuition with regard to signification, which intuition only validates partially (but sufficiently for the usage, or even the knowledge, of the technological object), or the equality between them (in the case of evidence, the intuition of the true which fills the whole signification). When on the contrary intuition, far from being exhausted in the concept, submerges the signification that it formalizes, as in the cases of an event, an idol (or, the maximum of the visible for a given gaze), my flesh, and the icon (the face of the other), the one who sees the phenomenon must accept to see it without foreseeing it (through an already known concept), without explaining

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[44] See Mt. 17:3; Mk. 9:4; Lk. 9:30 and 24:34; 1 Cor. 15:6, 7, 8.

[45] See also Jn. 5:26. It is from within this frame that one must hear, "he who loses his life [his soul, *psykēn*] for my sake will find it" (Mt. 10:39; see Mk. 8:35; Lk. 9:24). And again, Jn. 12:25: "He who loves his life will lose it, and he who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life."

[46] I refer the reader to the more detailed analysis provided in *Etant donné. Essai d'une phénoménologie de la donation* (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1997) IV, §§ 21–23, p. 329 and following; *Being Given*, trans. Jeffrey L. Kosky (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2002), pp. 199–233.

it (through a relation, whether causal or otherwise), and without repeating it (by fabrication). She must take note, with incontestable empirical evidence, of that which imposes itself without letting itself be understood. In this way the event leaves us speechless and with no way out, because in the event we are deprived of every signification that would make it conceivable, which is to say possible (in the metaphysical sense), and it imposes on us an actuality which, having never been possible or thinkable in advance, merits precisely the title of impossible. "That's impossible!" This cry in front of what nevertheless imposes itself on us as a fact rightly characterizes the saturated phenomenon. It leaves us literally without speech, without words for saying it, without concepts for understanding it. Of course, we will as a result talk about it all the more, but always after the fact, in order to find for it, or rather to find *again* for it hypothetical explanations, debatable causes, all drawn from effects that, alone, are indisputable. In short, we will talk about it, using endless hermeneutics that are ever in need of correction or completion, and without saying anything—or more precisely, without significations adequate to the excess of the given over what we might understand of it, or to the excess of the given over what we can organize as a visible that shows itself. This situation of the excess of the given *in itself*, over the showable as visible *for us*, which is already banal in common experience, is verified impeccably and paradigmatically in front of the phenomenon of the manifestation of Christ.

Thus at the Transfiguration, the disciples who were permitted to glimpse by anticipation the glory of the resurrection not only did not doubt that his "countenance became altered" (Lk. 9:29) "like the sun" (Mt. 17:2), and his garments "like light" (Mt. 17:3) "of a whiteness so intense [*lian*], as no fuller on earth could bleach them" (Mk. 9:3). Not only is intuition not lacking, but the difficulty in seeing on the contrary arises from its excess: the disciples fall on their faces, unable to bear the intensity of the vision, and they "are exceedingly (*sphodra*) afraid" (Mt. 17:6).[47] Consequently, the real difficulty in front of this saturated phenomenon arises from the "lack of divine names" (Hölderlin), or at

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[47] See Mk. 7:7. Moreover, this is like the women at the tomb after the Resurrection, in Mk. 16:8.

the least, the lack of words appropriate to this manifestation of divinity. When Peter tries to say something (about the three booths that it would be "well" to set up for Christ and the two figures assumed to be Moses and Elijah), he borrows a traditional concept, one at his disposal: probably the *philoxenia* of Abraham (Gen. 18:1–15), which is completely inadequate; and the texts specify immediately that "he did not know what to say, *mē eidōs ho legei*" (Lk. 9:33; Mk. 9:6). The adequate signification will not come from those who see the phenomenon but, in the end, from the phenomenon itself, since it is "a voice coming from the cloud"[48] that delivers the signification that is adequate to this excess of intuition, that is, a signification that is itself excessive and, literally, incomprehensible: "This is my beloved Son, listen to him." A signification that was already delivered at the time of the baptism in the Jordan,[49] but not truly understood by its hearers. A signification that was taken up again at the last public manifestation, at the Temple before the Passion (Jn. 12:27–8), and similarly misunderstood, or squarely refused. The quasi-impossibility of naming Jesus, of giving him a name, His Name, is the result, at least at the level of a phenomenological analysis, of a deficit of the concept at the very moment of the superabundance of intuition. Thus Herod wonders, in response to the report of "all that was done" by him: "Who is he?" (Lk. 9:7–9). Likewise, the man born blind healed at the pool of Siloam is astonished that the priests of the Temple, to whom, in accordance with the Law, he had made known his healing, and who accuse him, do not know how to identify his healer: "In all of this, what is so astonishing is that you do not know where this man comes from, *ouk oidate pothen estin*" (Jn. 9:30). After the Resurrection, the disciples on the road to Emmaus are not lacking in intuition ("…Jesus himself drew near and went with them")[50]; but, because they lack adequate significations (those, precisely, that Jesus gives them by interpreting to them

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[48] Mt. 17:5; Mk. 9:7; Lk. 9:35.

[49] Mt. 3:17; Mk. 1:11; Lk. 3:22.

[50] On this episode, see a more complete commentary in "Ils le reconnurent et lui-même leur devint invisible", in Marion, *Le croire pour le voir*, chapter IV (Paris: Parole et silence, 2010), pp. 195–205; English translation: "'They recognized him; and he became invisible to them'", trans. Stephen E. Lewis. *Modern Theology* 18:2 (April 2002), pp. 145–52.

the Scriptures in order to show how they apply to him and the events in Jerusalem), they understand nothing (*anoetoi*), and thus they *see nothing* (*bradeis tē kardia tou pisteuein*, Lk. 24:25). Only with a final signification, the sign of the eucharistic bread, will they understand: the uncovering takes place only when the signification come from *elsewhere* allows the intuition of the one who already gave himself from himself to show itself in a complete phenomenon. In fact, the same goes for Mary Magdalene, who certainly "sees, *theorei*" Jesus, but without recognizing him, at least before the adequate signification— the very voice of Jesus, who names her: "Mary!"—comes upon her and in this way he makes himself recognized (Jn. 20:14, 16). And likewise for the disciples who, having returned to being fishers of fish, see him on the shore of the Sea of Tiberias and "did not recognize him" (Jn. 21:4), until he gave them, with the grilled fish, the sign of the missing signification. As saturated phenomenon, and pre-eminently so because arising radically *from elsewhere*, the unveiling of Christ imposes an excess of intuition that provokes the deficit of signification that is in him: his very name becomes either the index of the absurdity of the phenomenon, or the signification itself that is come *from elsewhere*, heard, and yet inconceivable ("This is my Son, listen to him!", "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased"). This name can only be heard as an inconceivable absurdity, or as the Name itself. As a result, this signification is literally defined as a sign that contradicts what *we* consider as *our logic*, the "sign of contradiction, *sēmeion antilegomenon*" (Lk. 2:34–5), the *logos* which, in the name of the *Logos*, goes against the *logos*.

A second determination of the manifestation of Christ as saturated phenomenon now becomes conceivable: here the *I* takes on the status of a *witness*.[51] Under *alētheia* or unconcealment, the *I* always determines the phenomenon through anticipation, whether this is the anticipation of its apperception, or that of its intentionality; by definition, the phenomenon will be known to the *I*, since the *I* will organize its entire possible intuition according to the concept or signification that it will have assigned to it *in advance*. The *I* knows of what it speaks,

[51] Here I refer the reader to Marion, *Etant donné. Essai d'une phénoménologie de la donation*, V, §22, "Le paradoxe et le témoin," pp. 302–5; *Being Given*, pp. 216–19.

since in a radical sense it speaks of what it has itself rendered visible (if not already produced in visibility) on the basis of its aim. The concept or the intentional signification, moreover, would not sometimes turn out to be empty unless, precisely, it had not first been laid out in advance over the phenomenon that then might be given to sight (by sufficient intuition), or not. The *I* always knows more of its intentional object than it sees of it, since it has no need truly to see it (in full intuition) in order to know it, at least in its signification (or concept). The *I* knows (or can know) its phenomenon without the phenomenon fully appearing, or appearing as such. But in front of a saturated phenomenon, this posture becomes untenable for the *I*: indeed, the excess of intuition over the signification or significations (or concepts) available forbids not only knowing without having to see (everything), but above all knowing adequately, precisely because one foresees all too well. Without question, the witness sees, but without managing to inscribe the superabundant intuition in the synthesis (through recognition) of the concept, or in the (noematic) constitution of the signification. The witness knows what he says, quite certainly and surely, since he speaks of what he has received through intuition; but he *does not understand* what he says, since he cannot unify it in a comprehensive concept, or identify it in a sufficient signification (*propositio sufficiens*). What is more, when the witness (in the policing and judicial sense of the term) is interrogated, what he is asked to report and what he knows without understanding it helps the investigator to understand something else, which he, unlike the witness, foresees, guesses, and, to begin with, seeks: the concept, the signification, the last word of the affair (the crime, the guilty one, etc.). The investigator tries to re-qualify the saturated phenomenon, which has reduced the *I* to the role of witness, into an objectifiable phenomenon, one of common-law, where a concept would make the totality of the event understandable.[52] The

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[52] Re-transforming an apparently saturated phenomenon into a common-law phenomenon is the method of every detective, and pre-eminently of Sherlock Holmes: "This process," he says in laying out his method, "starts upon the supposition that, *when you have eliminated all which is impossible*, then whatever remains, however *improbable*, must be *truth*. It may well be that several explanations remain, in which case one tries test after test until one or other of them has a *convincing* amount of support" ("The Adventure of the Blanched Soldier," in Sir

witness, by contrast, in the posture, for example, of the man born blind, takes note, and makes all those around him take note, of the intuitive fact of his healing (from that moment he, the one blind from birth, can see), but he does not know its origin, or its signification, nor does he claim to know these at any moment: "They said to him, 'Where is he?' He said, 'I do not know, *Ouk oida*'" (Jn. 9:12). Similarly, all the interlocutors of this first witness, the cured blind man, go about repeating that they know even less (*ouk oidamen*, Jn. 9:21, 22, 30). What we have here is the phenomenologically normal and inevitable posture that every *I* in front of a saturated phenomenon must take, especially in front of the saturated phenomenon of the event type, indeed in front of the eventness of every saturated phenomenon. The posture of the witness proves itself to be so essential to uncovering that it marks the difference between the devil, "a murderer from the beginning" who, "when he says what is false, speaks from his own depths, because he is a liar" (Jn. 8:44), and Christ, who does not speak from himself ("The words that I say to you I do not speak on my own authority," Jn. 14:10). And so, the witness may *also* end up by saying the genuine signification, but it does not come from him, and thus it makes the saturated phenomenon appear precisely on the basis not of an intentional *I* but on that of this phenomenon itself. Karl Barth stated it quite well: "Why and in what respect does the biblical witness have authority? Because and in the fact that he claims no authority for himself, that his witness amounts to letting that other itself be its own authority."[53] Thus the man born blind ends up saying, "Lord,

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Arthur Conan Doyle, *The Complete Novels and Stories* [New York: Bantam Classics, 2003], vol. II, p. 556, emphasis added). Clearly, Sherlock Holmes runs up against the difficulties that Hume faced: how to draw a distinction between the impossible and the improbable, how to evaluate conviction, and even how to define the impossible? A good *Christian* exegete thus should define himself as an anti-Sherlock Holmes, as the one who knows how to recognize the impossible in the improbable, when at least he *sees* the signification of this impossible.

[53] Karl Barth, *Kirchliche Dogmatik*, I/1, *Die Lehre vom Wort Gottes. Prolegomena zur kirchlichen Dogmatik* (Munich: Chr. Kaiser, 1935), p. 115; English translation: *Church Dogmatics*, I.1, *The Doctrine of the Word of God*, § *1–7*, Study Edition, trans. G. W. Bromiley, G. T. Thomson, Harold Knight (London: T&T Clark, 2010), p. 110.

I believe", because Christ answers his question, "Who is the Son of God, that I may believe in him?" in the first person: "Jesus said to him, 'You have seen him, and it is he who speaks to you'" (Jn. 9:36–7). In this way the centurion at the foot of the cross ends up recognizing that "Certainly this man was innocent" (Lk. 23:48), and even that "Truly this man was the Son of God" (Mt. 27:54; Mk. 15:40), because he "sees"[54] "the sign and the events that took place, *ton seismon kai ta genomena*" (Mt. 27:54, *ta genomena*, Lk. 23:48) of themselves, like an event bursting forth from itself and in itself. And it is clearly not by chance that Christ's death, as a saturated phenomenon visible only to the witnesses who receive it without claiming to understand it, leads Luke to make the only usage, in the entire New Testament, of the word *theōria*: "And all the multitudes who assembled to see the sight (*theōrian*), seeing (*theōrēsantes*) these events (*genomena*), returned home beating their breasts" (Lk. 23:48).

Finally, there is a third determination of the manifestation of Christ as saturated phenomenon: this manifestation as the *paradox* that brings about counter-experience. A paradox is not the same thing as a logical contradiction of a proposition (or non-sense), nor is it an (empirical) impossibility of knowledge, nor an obscurity (a confusion) in phenomenality, which one could, by means of powerful elucidations, reductions, or corrections, lead back to an objective or ontic (in the metaphysical sense) scheme of manifestation.[55] Among the phenomena that I unquestionably experience, paradox defines those that happen (like events) only by *contra*-dicting the conditions of my experience, and therefore that impose themselves only by imposing on me a *counter*-experience. Here again we must follow Kierkegaard: "This seems to be a paradox. But one must not think ill of the paradox, for the paradox is the passion of thought, and the thinker without the

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[54] Mt. 27:54: *idontes*; Mk. 15:40 and Lk. 23:48: *idōn*.

[55] As in the tradition of Bertrand Russell, in *On Denoting* (1905, collected in *Logic and Knowledge: Essays 1901–1950*, ed. R. C. Marsh [London: George Allen & Unwin, 1956]), or of W. V. O. Quine, *The Ways of Paradox, and Other Essays* (New York: Random House, 1966): in each of these cases, the paradox is to be dispelled through a logical distinction (for example, of classes) in order to bring it back into common rationality. On the contrary, it is necessary to save and reinforce the paradox in the strong sense, so that it introduces us into an uncommon logic.

paradox is like the lover without passion: a mediocre fellow. . . . This, then, is the ultimate paradox of thought: to want to discover something that thought itself cannot think."[56] Transposed into the terms of phenomenality, this warning points out that the paradox offers the logical category that allows for the formulation of saturated phenomena, those phenomena, indeed, that no signification or concept can constitute as an object. Or, as Henri de Lubac rightly notes, it is necessary to distinguish between "the paradoxes of expression: one exaggerates in order to 'be striking'", and the "real paradoxes", which imply a resistant antinomy; thus the paradox is not the result of a logical difficulty in describing the phenomena, but alone describes logically the particularity of certain phenomena: "Paradoxes: the word thus designates above all the things themselves, not the way of saying them."[57] Or again: the paradox constitutes the correct logical form for describing the (saturated) phenomena that appear in experience by *contra*-dicting the (finite) conditions of the possibility of experience. Thus the paradox does not cancel experience, but renders it bearable and describable, even when a proven and experienced phenomenality refuses to take on the status of an object and of a common-law phenomenon (in which the intuition allows itself to be understood in the concept and the signification). The paradox thus extends experience, far from excluding it or excluding itself from experience; but it extends it by allowing us to describe an experience that is non-objectifiable and thus all the *more* manifest in that it comes from phenomena that manifest themselves in themselves, because they

[56] Søren Kierkegaard, *Philosophiske Smuler eller En Smule Philosophie*, in *Samlede Vaerker*, 2nd ed. (Copenhagen: Gyldendal, 1920–1936), vol. IV, p. 230; English translation: *Philosophical Fragments and Johannes Climacus*, in *Kierkegaard's Writings*, vol. VII., trans. Howard V. Hong and Edna Hong (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985), p. 37.

[57] Henri de Lubac, *Paradoxes*, in *Œuvres complètes*, vol. XXXI (Paris: Cerf, 1999), p. 13 and p. 72, respectively. See: "Whence the necessity of the paradox; or rather, the perpetual flavor of paradox that truth in its newness has for the one who attaches himself to a truth that is turning into a lie" (p. 153). See also Simone Weil: "The contradictions with which the mind collides, the sole realities, the *criterium* of the real" (*La pesanteur et la grâce*, ed. G. Thibon [Paris: Plon, 1948, UGE, 1962], p. 103).

give themselves from themselves. This experience can be called counter-experience.

This logical figure of phenomenality and experience that contradicts the conditions of experience of course cannot keep us from thinking of the radical description of Revelation that Karl Barth as theologian made widely known: the auto-manifestation of God by himself enters into the experience of men like a suddenly falling rock, undoing everything with its impact.[58] And yet, this legitimate brutality says not too much, but rather too little, and for two reasons. First, because it goes without saying that Revelation, in the sense of the irruption of God into that which is finite, limited, and without holiness, by definition cannot make itself received, conceived, or seen there. It cannot and *must never* find a dwelling place, an opening, or a temple fitting to its holiness in the world without holiness (*immonde*). No misinterpretation of Revelation could surpass that of Heidegger, in this respect a paradigm of the *Aufklärung* and more Hegelian than might seem to be the case, who wanted to submit the Revelation of God to the manifestation of the gods, that manifestation to the dwelling of the divine, that dwelling to the opening of the sacred, and that opening to the intact open region of Being.[59] There is

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[58] One may still think of Rudolf Bultmann, characterizing Revelation as the "*daß*" of the sending of the Word in the fact of Christ ("Der Begriff der Offenbarung im Neuen Testament" [1929], in *Glauben und Verstehen*, vol. III [Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck), 1960, 1965], pp. 1–34). See my sketch, "Remarques sur le concept de Révélation chez Rudolf Bultmann," *Résurrection*, no. 27, Paris, 1968.

[59] See, among other texts, the *Brief über den "Humanismus,"* in *Wegmarken*, GA 9, pp. 338–9 and 351; Martin Heidegger, *Basic Writings*, Revised and Expanded edition, ed. David Farrell Krell (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1993), pp. 242, 253–4. See the parallels and my diagnosis in *Dieu sans l'être*, chap. II, §§4–5, Paris, 1982, corrected and augmented "Quadrige" ed. 2014, pp. 58 and following; *God Without Being*, trans. Thomas A. Carlson (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991; second edition 2012), pp. 37–52.—The refutation that Karl Barth made of the claim presented by F. Gogarten ("Karl Barth's Dogmatik," *Theologische Rundschau*, 1929) of preparing the knowledge of God through "*eine existential-philosophische Begründung der Theologie*—a grounding of theology in existential philosophy" (*Kirchliche Dogmatik*, I/1, p. 129; English translation: *Church Dogmatics*, I.1, *The Doctrine of the Word of God*, § *1–7*, Study Edition, trans. G. W. Bromiley, G. T. Thomson, Harold Knight [London: T&T Clark, 2010], p. 124) in fact applies just as well to Heidegger.

Revelation not *because* the paths have been made straight, the valleys
filled, the hills made low, and everything straightened that was wind-
ing (Lk. 3:4–5, quoting Is. 40:3–5), as just so many preliminary
conditions to be filled before God *can* manifest himself. No: there is
Revelation precisely *while* these paths remain twisted—or even *so as to*
show that they are. If God shows himself as God, who can stand
before him, who can see him without dying, who can hear him? And if
one could hear him, and see him without dying, and stand before him,
would it be God we were dealing with, or an idolatry? The conditions
of possibility of Revelation not only are not and never shall be brought
together, but they must never be, if this revelation is to merit the title
of the Revelation of God by himself: "It does not stand, therefore,
under any condition—one can say this only of our knowledge of
Revelation—but is itself the condition"; in effect, "[a]bove this act
there is nothing other or higher on which it might be based or from
which it might be derived. . . . It is the condition which conditions all
things without itself being conditioned. This is what we are saying
when we call it Revelation."[60] Thus in theology, the question does not
consist in knowing *whether* Revelation contradicts the conditions of
finite experience—this contradiction characterizes it analytically, by
definition and a priori—but in conceiving *how* it contradicts them, and
how it nevertheless succeeds in perfectly and definitively being mani-
fested. It may be that so-called dialectical theology, with all of its
avatars, did not see or even catch a glimpse of this question. The

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[60]   Karl Barth, *Kirchliche Dogmatik*, I/1, pp. 121, 122; English translation: *Church
Dogmatics*, I.1, *The Doctrine of the Word of God*, § *1–7*, Study Edition, trans.
G. W. Bromiley, G. T. Thomson, Harold Knight (London: T&T Clark, 2010),
pp. 115, 116, modified [capitalization of "Revelation"]. See also: "*Offenbarung
wird von keinem Anderen her wirklich und wahr, weder in sich noch für uns. Sie ist es in sich
und für uns durch sie selbst*—Revelation is not real and true from the standpoint of
anything else, either in itself or for us. It is so in itself, and for us through itself" (*op.
cit.*, p. 322; English translation: *Church Dogmatics*, I.1, *The Doctrine of the Word of God*, §
8–12, Study Edition 2, trans. G. W. Bromiley, G. T. Thomson, Harold Knight
[London: T&T Clark, 2010], p. 11). Or: "Gott *offenbart sich. Er offenbart sich* durch
sich selbst. *Er offenbart sich selbst – God* reveals Himself. He reveals Himself *through
Himself*. He reveals *Himself*" (Barth [1935] p. 312; English translation: *Church
Dogmatics*, I.1, *The Doctrine of the Word of God*, § *8–12*, Study Edition 2, trans.
G. W. Bromiley, G. T. Thomson, Harold Knight [London: T&T Clark, 2010],
p. 1).

second reason follows from the first. This new question, the most incisive, is unappreciated for a fairly clear reason: it derives first of all from the study of phenomena in general and imposes itself only in a phenomenological approach to Revelation as a phenomenon—an exceptional phenomenon, but one which remains formally a case of a saturated phenomenon, or more exactly of a phenomenon of revelation, combining in it the four types of phenomenological saturation (the event, the idol, the flesh, and the icon).[61] How does Revelation make itself manifest by contradicting, as it *must*, the a priori conditions of experience? By what paradoxes is this counter-experience accomplished? These theological questions cannot be confronted without mastering the possibility of a phenomenality of saturated phenomena. And we must not claim to resolve them *too quickly*, by mobilizing, under the cover of theological categories, concepts and formulas that are derived directly from philosophy in its metaphysical state.[62]

Therefore we must try to describe the counter-experience of Revelation as a paradigmatic saturated phenomenon. And in making this attempt we shall respect two already secured certainties. First: we will never leave the position and the status imposed on the *I* by the saturated phenomenon, namely that of the witness. This implies always keeping in mind Christ's warning that "there are many other things to tell you, that you cannot yet bear, *ou dynasthe bastazein*" (Jn. 16:12). Not only keeping in mind "all the other things" (Jn 20:30,

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[61] On the distinction between the phenomenon/phenomena of *revelation*, and *Revelation* as a phenomenon, see Marion, *Etant donné*, IV, §24, p. 383 and following; *Being Given*, pp. 234–47.

[62] The marginal and much-criticized attempt by Louis Charlier to conceive Revelation in terms of a "given" ("The revealed is above all a given reality [*une réalité donnée*]," *Essai sur le problème théologique*, Bibliothèque Orientations—Section Scientifique, 1 [Thuillies: Ramgal, 1938], p. 50) would have accomplished a genuine breakthrough only if this "given" had itself been questioned and defined, instead of reducing it implicitly from the outset to the bare factuality of a problem set [*une donnée de problème*] or a given of consciousness, or even a sensation. But, since givenness is not seriously considered as such, one falls quickly into the false alternative of the "given-revealed-knowledge" and the "given-revealed-reality", where each term derives from the most common, the most settled, and the most fragile metaphysics. What does "reality" mean? What does "knowledge" signify? And what relation do they have with the "revealed", itself left completely undetermined, except by its epistemological interpretation and its modern philosophical origin?

21:25) that were not written in the biblical texts, but above all, among those things already reported, those whose excess of evidence our lack of concepts and our ignorance of the significations of God (*anoetoi*, Lk. 24:25) prevent us from bearing. Absolutely required, therefore, is "the Spirit of truth to open for us the path to all truth, *hodegēsei hymas en tēn alētheia pasē*" (Jn. 16:13); but showing the path defines the *method*: the Holy Spirit sets the method of interpretation for the saturation of the phenomenon of Revelation. A second certainty follows: we must always consider that that which reveals itself in the saturated phenomenon of Revelation involves, as its *alpha* and its *omega*, a single and unique excess: that of charity. The only concern is "to grasp with all the holy ones what is the breadth and length and height and depth, [or in other words] to know the hyperbolic charity of Christ, which surpasses knowledge (*gnōnai te tēn hyperballousan tēs gnōseōs*), so that you may be filled with God to the point of total saturation (*plērōthēte eis pan to plērōma tou theou*)" (Eph. 3:17–19). But in order to come to this, in order to *sustain* this saturation and this hyperbole, it is first necessary to allow oneself to be "rooted in and grounded on the foundations of charity" (Eph. 3:17). Thus Christ sets out the element with which the phenomenon of Revelation is both saturated and saturating: charity.

Provided that these two certainties of method are respected, it becomes possible not only to free the concept of theology from every metaphysical hold and every epistemological interpretation, but also, by making use of its resources, to manage at times to rectify them, and to contemplate Revelation as a phenomenon in the very details of the biblical texts.

3

Christ as Saturated Phenomenon

The Icon of the Invisible

As we saw in the first lecture, the authority of the *apokalypsis*, of the uncovering, encompasses and precedes all knowledge of God, however "natural" and arising from "pure reason" it may be claimed to be. But this does not imply that the uncovering is un-covered in immediate evidence, in the open air, accessible to every gaze. Moreover, there would be neither place nor need for uncovering if there had been nothing covered over or concealed to begin with. And, in fact, there are many "mysteries of the Kingdom of God, *mystēria tēs basileias tou theou*", that are also "*given to knowing*", at least to certain people. Before considering the decisive and detailed development of the notion of *mystērion* in the Pauline corpus, let us concentrate on this simple formulation, which only appears once in each of the synoptic Gospels (Matthew 13:11, Mark 4:11, and Luke 8:10), but which already tells us a great deal. For something has been *kept secret*, a *mystērion*; the term, which comes from the verb *myō*, to close (the eyes or the mouth), indicates that which cannot, or rather *must* not be said, what must be *kept quiet*, what is known only by the initiates of a confraternity (such as that of the *mystēria* of Eleusis): the initiate (*mystēs*) knows, and thus must keep quiet; he must say nothing about what he knows or experiences. The expression used in the synoptic gospels indicates this too: there are *mystēria* that are not to be told, at least not to those to whom they were not "given". Nevertheless, two characteristics are added to this sort of *omerta*. First, the *mystērion* comes from God and not from other initiates; God is in charge of uncovering it to whomever he wishes, and to whosoever can (and wills to) receive it, in order that, as such, this *mystērion* can be "made known to all nations" (Rom. 16:26). A question proper to the Christian *apokalypsis* therefore

follows: how *must* the *mystērion* be in principle un-covered to all, and why, nevertheless, is it that not all *are able* to recognize it? Second: if, then, this *mystērion* can in principle be "given" to all, this is because we are dealing with *mystēria* "of the Kingdom of God", of the Kingdom that "has come near" (Mk. 1:15; Lk. 10:9), that "is near" (Lk. 21:31). The *myustērion* comes towards us, comes *upon* us, *occurs* like the happening [*avènement*] of an event. That it comes near to all without all seeing it, expecting it, or, above all, willing it, confirms its phenomenal status: quite precisely, it is an event, or in other words, an unforesee-able, unrepeatable phenomenon, held to be impossible up until the very last minute and, once actual, it still remains impossible, in the sense that we are not successful in understanding it entirely as an object. The uncovering of the *mystērion* can and must be at once never unthinkable, and yet never complete, at once both possible and impossible, because the event of the "Kingdom of God" arrives as a happening. And the first happening of this event is already signaled by the ambiguous and unsettling fact that the *mystērion* unveils *that* it has come among us, even if we do not understand *what* it means; it happens indeed as still incomprehensible—already given, not yet understood; in the strict sense, known as unknown. Calm block here fallen from obscure glory, it shows forever its sign of contradiction to the blessings and blasphemies scattered to the future.

The *mystērion* of the "Kingdom of God" thus demands its uncover-ing, that is to say, its proclamation (the kerygma) and its reception (the hermeneutic), each to infinity. In this way, the very thing that was secret is declared publicly and proclaimed far and wide: "Lest you be wise in your own conceits (*en heautois phronimoi*), I want you to under-stand this *mystērion*, brethren" (Rom. 11:25); not only the Jews, who had refused the first manifestation of God ("For what can be known about God is manifest to them, *phaneron estin en autois*, because God has manifested himself to them, *autois ephanerōsen*" Rom. 1:19), but the pagans, too, receive the grace (and the difficult task) of uncovering what was concealed and secret: "…according to the good news that I announce and the proclamation of Jesus Christ (*kata to euangelion mou kai to kērygma Iēsou Christou*), according to the uncovering of a *mystērion* which was kept in silence for eternal ages (*kata apokalypsin mystēriou…sesigēmenou*) but is now manifested (*phanerōthentos de nyn*) and, through the Scriptures that prophesize it according to the command of the

eternal God, brought to the knowledge of all nations, to bring about their obedience by believing it" (Rom. 16:25–26). For the knowledge of God through the created world, albeit already manifest, was not sufficient to cause him to be recognized by men, who, "although knowing God did not give him glory as God or give thanks to him, *gnotes ton theon ouk hōs theon edoxasan ē ēukaristēsan*" (Rom. 1:21). Thus the order of the manifestations had to be inverted; it was fitting for the recognition to provoke the knowledge (and restore it after the fact); and, therefore, it was fitting that the manifestation (*phanerosis*) be radicalized into the uncovering (*apokalypsis*) of the totality of the *mystērion*, which until that point had remained in eternal silence. What is at stake here is a radical change in the modes of phenomenality: the truth (*alētheia*, unveiling) gives way to the uncovering (*apoka-lypsis*) of the phenomenon when we are dealing with the phenomenon of God. *The uncovering of the mystery over-determines the opening of truth.*

With the phenomenological horizon thus identified—a phenomenon uncovering itself on the basis of the *mystērion*—three questions emerge, still indistinct and awaiting confirmation. The first asks: *What* does the *mystērion* allow to be phenomenalized? From the depths of what unseen does that which comes to show itself on the basis of itself and as such burst forth? The second question asks: *How* is that which gives itself uncovered? By what operation does the invisible make itself recognized *as* visible? The third question asks *what* uncovers itself to the extent that it gives itself: *who* shows himself inasmuch as he gives himself, without remainder or reserve?

The first question asks *what* the *mystērion* allows to be phenomenalized: from the depths of what unseen does that which comes to show itself on the basis of itself and as such burst forth? Above all, and preeminently, the corpus of Paul's epistles responds to this question. It does so in three phases. The first phase, accomplished in the First Letter to the Corinthians, identifies the unseen *from which* the phenomenon as the *mystērion* of wisdom bursts forth, "a wisdom in the state of *mystērion*, wisdom that has remained secret, *sophian en mystēriō, tēn apokekrymmenēn*" (1 Cor. 2:7), such that it is first only defined negatively, by contrast with "the wisdom of this world, *sophian dè ou tou aiōnos toutou*" (2:6), which the masters (the *archontes*) of this world promote and put into operation. Indeed, the wisdom of God remains secret for as long as it is not uncovered by the very Spirit of God: "as it

is written, 'What no eye has seen, nor ear heard [*myō*, to be quiet], /
nor the heart of man conceived, / what God has prepared for those
who love him',[1] God has un-covered to us through the Spirit. For the
Spirit searches everything, even the depths of God" (1 Cor. 2:9–10,
quoting Isaiah 64:3). Only God uncovers God, and it is from God that
one can learn that which concerns God (*ta para tou theou peri tou theou*).
The "depths of God"[2] here correspond to what Christ uncovers to his
disciples in parables: "To you has been given the *mystērion* of the
Kingdom of God" (Mk. 4:11).[3] It is "not the blood or the will of
men" (Jn. 1:13), "nor flesh, nor blood, but my Father who is in heaven
who has uncovered" (Mt. 16:17) the *mystērion*. The Father who is in
heaven, or more precisely what the Father *gives*, namely the Spirit,
". . . the Spirit of his Son sent into our hearts, crying 'Abba! Father!'"
(Gal. 4:7), in keeping with the fact that ". . . God's charity has been
poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit which has been *given* to
us" (Rom. 5:5).[4] In order to see the uncovered *mystērion*, it is thus
necessary to pass from our spirit to the Spirit of God, so as to see it as
God sees it. This is nothing less than an overturning of intentionality:
taking the intentional gaze of God on God, instead of claiming to
retain our intentionality in front of the intuition of the *mystērion*. I have
identified elsewhere this overturning or transferal of intentionality as
an anamorphosis. This amounts to taking, with regard to a phenom-
enon such as it gives itself, a point of view that does not coincide from
the outset with the one that we would take when holding the central
position of a neutral and masterly spectator, who would constitute it

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[1] See also 1 Cor. 1:19, which quotes Isaiah 29:14 LXX: "I will destroy the
wisdom of the wise men and I will close up (conceal, *krypsō*) the knowledge of those
who know."

[2] And further: "The depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God"
(Rom. 11:33).

[3] See "To you it has been given to know the *mystēria* of the Kingdom of God"
(Mt. 13:11 and Lk. 8:10).

[4] See Rom. 8:4–9; and: "For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back
into fear, but you have received the spirit of sonship (*pneuma huiothesias*). When we
cry, 'Abba! Father!' it is the Spirit himself bearing witness with our spirit that we
are sons of God, and if sons, then heirs, heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ,
provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him"
(8:15–17).

transcendentally as her object. Instead, the aim here is to shift this gaze to the point of view—initially undecided and locatable only by successive approximations, by feel—that, on the basis of which and according to the demands of *this* sudden phenomenon giving itself, would succeed in showing itself, all at once and in its very own radiance.[5] To search for the anamorphosis in the case where what is trying to phenomenalize itself comes from God, assumes, therefore, as an hypothesis, a shifting of the intentional gaze, which implies nothing less than a *conversion* of the *I* that bears this gaze. In the case of the *mystērion* of God, the conversion (of the mind to the Spirit) defines the anamorphosis. That is, for the *mystērion* of God, no vision, no interpretation, no constitution remains possible, unless through God's intentionality, God's interpretation, God's constitution of his own phenomenon, which can be seen and received only as it is given. In this sense, literally, the Spirit decides and "judges all things, *anakrinei ta panta*" (1 Cor. 2:15). Consequently, by his power to bring to light the *mystērion* of God, the Spirit also lays bare what is hidden in the hearts of the witnesses: "He will illuminate, *phōtisei ta krupta*, the things hidden in darkness and will manifest the purposes of the heart, *phanerōsei tas boulas tōn kardiōn*" (1 Cor. 4:5).

The divide between intentional gazes, the divide between the transcendental point of view and the anamorphosis, thus opens the field of an inevitable conflict of interpretations. Paul defines it as the conflict between the "wisdom of this world" and the "wisdom of God" (1 Cor. 1:21; 2:6–7). The wisdom of this world must be understood even more precisely as that of the Greeks: "Greeks seek wisdom" (1 Cor. 1:22). Their "wisdom" is identified by another term, decisive because it is borrowed from Aristotle, in his famous definition of what philosophical thought seeks in its global and normative point of view: "What has been sought (*to zetoumenon*) for a long time and is sought today, and which has always been lacking, [namely the answer to the question] what is *on*, or in other words, what is *ousia*?"[6] Moreover Paul, during his discussion in Athens with certain "Epicurean and Stoic

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[5] See *Etant donné*, III, §13, pp. 174–7; *Being Given*, trans. Kosky, pp. 123–5.

[6] Aristotle, *Metaphysics* Z, 1, 1028b 2–4 (Aristotle, *Metaphysics, Books I–IX*, with an English translation by Hugh Tredennick [Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1968], p. 313, modified).

philosophers", defines them, in an ambiguous homage, with this same term: "they seek God, *zētein ton theon*" (Acts 17:18, 27), but they seek him as a being, like philosophers who know in advance what they want to find, according to the intentionality of their masterly gaze, which they never put into question. It may be that the angels who announce the resurrection of Christ make the same reproach implicitly to the women at the tomb: "Why do you seek (*zēteite*) the living one among the dead?" (Lk. 24:5, and see Mk. 16:6); for they too knew in advance what they were looking for, a corpse, and within what horizon, that of death, without having yet converted their gaze through the anamorphosis that God's point of view would have them take: for at issue was the one who defined himself as "the resurrection and the life" (Jn. 11:25). And there are numerous negative instances of "seeking": Herod "searches for the child" in order to kill him (Mt. 2:13), or "seeks to see" Jesus (Lk. 9:9); the Jews "seek to kill him" (Jn. 5:18; 7:1, 19, 25, and 30); man loses his soul because he "seeks to preserve his life" (Lk. 17:33), while love "does not seek its own interests" (1 Cor. 13:5), patterning itself after Christ who "does not seek [his] own will" (Jn. 5:30), nor his "own glory" (Jn. 7:18). It may be that this "search" is enough to condemn "philosophy", because it follows "human tradition according to the elemental powers of the world", following its never-questioned intentional point of view (Col. 2:8), challenging or quite simply not seeing that the "recognition of the *mystērion* of God" is found in Christ, "in whom are hidden, *apokryphoi*, all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge" (Col. 2:3). Let us also note that the Jews likewise "seek", even when, in place of the wisdom of the Greeks, they "seek signs" (Mk. 8:11; Lk. 11:16 and 29; Jn. 6:26). And these signs they seek remain under their power, since they feel themselves to be authorized to disqualify them when it is convenient (Lk. 16:27–31). In this way, even the resurrection of someone will not lead them to convert, since they already do not listen to Moses or the prophets. "Scandals will inevitably occur" (Lk. 17:1). Their refusal of the signs repeats the motif of the refusal of God's wisdom by the Greeks: they all refuse the anamorphosis of their intentionalities, or indeed the conversion of their gazes.

Such a conflict of interpretations results in a radical opposition, because it has to do not only with a divergence of opinions, or even with rival theses based on arguments, but with a rupture in rationality

itself, which ceases to ensure the common space of communication, even divergent communication. Certainly, it has to do with opposing a *logos*, that of the cross on which the *Logos* dies and from which he is resurrected (1 Cor. 1:18), to the "sublimity of the *logos* or the wisdom" (2:1) of the world; in this sense, there is reason against reason, rationality against rationality. But what makes the difference between each of these *logoi* finally lies not in the power (*dynamis* 1:18) of the kerygma stripped of the "convincing *logoi* of wisdom", "empty *logoi*" (Eph. 5:6), but rather in a *logos* endowed with *dynamis* (1 Cor. 2:5; 4:19–20), with "good news, *euaggelion*, . . . not only in *logos*, but also in *dynamis* and in the Holy Spirit" (1 Thess. 1:5). Where does this actual power come from? From the fact that, in this *logos*, and thus according to the anamorphosis of intentionality, and thus the conversion of heart, suddenly the gaze *sees* the *mystērion* uncover itself. This view (let's not too quickly and pointlessly call it a *vision*, which could lead us astray from a rigorous phenomenological approach) is something we will specify later. For the moment let it be enough for us to take note that in contrast it provokes *mōria*: "For the *logos* of the cross is folly to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power, *dynamis*, of God. . . . Has not God made foolish, *emōranen*, the wisdom of the world?" (1 Cor. 1:18, 20). Here it is important not to confuse inspired delirium (*mania*) with *mōria*, which instead designates slowness of mind, intellectual laziness, the stupidity that stands with leaden immobility in front of evidence, rational clarity, and the truth itself. This stupidity sees the evidence, the clarity, and the truth perfectly well, but it cares not a whit for them—it does not change its point of view for so little. It keeps to its uncertain certainties with an impassive immobility. There are plenty of instances. For example, the wise and educated philosophers of Athens: "Now when they heard [Paul speak] of the resurrection of the dead, some mocked; but others said, 'We will hear you again about this'" (Acts 17:32). Or the ridiculous dialog of Paul with Festus and King Agrippa: "'Paul, you are mad (*mainē*); your great knowledge of the Scriptures is turning you mad (*eis manian*)'", says Festus; Paul responds: "'I am not mad, *ou mainomai*'", adding: "'King Agrippa, do you believe the prophets? I know that you believe'". And Agrippa responds to Paul: "'A little while longer and you by your reasons will persuade me to make myself a Christian!'" (Acts 26:24–5, 27–8). And above all, in an exceptional moment of

involuntary depth, there is the response of Pilate to Christ, whom he condemns knowing he is innocent: "'What is truth?'" (Jn. 18:38). Everyone *knew* that Paul and Jesus were not mad, but instead spoke *logos*. And yet, they did not want, nor were they able, to change their point of view and pass from a masterly intentionality to one of anamorphosis. Paul's warning is understandable: "Let no one deceive himself. If any one among you thinks that he is wise in this age, let him become a fool (*mōros*) that he may become wise" (1 Cor. 3:18). How should we understand that "the foolishness of God is wiser than men" (1 Cor. 1:25)? This means that in front of those who deny the evidence and do not take into account the truth that they nevertheless see, it is necessary, as Aristotle advises, to avoid arguing: against the one who denies the very principles of rational argument, one can only point out his contradictions, or remain firmly within the evidence of the truth, by accepting and enduring the fact that the foolishness of the world treats as folly the "wisdom coming from God, *sophia apo theou*" (1 Cor. 1:30).

Between the intentionality of the world, on the one hand, and the intentionality which the Holy Spirit teaches to the gaze that it puts into anamorphosis, on the other, the divide is clearly infinite, and marks out a radical opposition between visions of the same phenomena. For the wisdom of the world, that of the Greeks, for instance, who "seek" the answer to the question "what is Being/being, *ti to on*?", it goes without saying that all phenomena, all that which shows itself, manifests itself within the horizon of Being/beings, and that, if the wisdom of God had not wished to become foolish, it would have made sense for it to unfold itself within this one and only horizon. God, in order to make himself understood and respected, ought to respect and follow the terms of phenomenality imposed by the horizon of Being—namely, by assuming the distinction between beings and non-beings, between that which is and that which is not. But Paul—and we must emphasize that his epistles have no ambition to supply even the meanest outline of an ontological treatise—insists, several times, on God's right to overstep the distinction between being and non-being, and to annul and disqualify it by virtue of his "power, *dynamis*". This is seen first of all in the "election" of the believers: "but God chose (*exelezato*) what is foolish (*mōra*) in the world to shame the wise, God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong, God chose what

is low and despised in the world, even things that are not, to bring to nothing things that are (*ta mē onta hina ta onta katargēsē*)" (1 Cor. 1:27–8). In other words, God made visible his phenomenon from a point of view absolutely different from that of the world: *his* point of view. According to this *radical* anamorphosis, the same phenomena appear *sub contrario*: wisdom as folly (and vice versa), strength as weakness (and vice versa), the noble as plebeian (and vice versa); and then, finally overturning everything, non-being as being, and being as non-being. God's ontic indifference (equivalency between beings and non-beings) even becomes an ontological indifference (equivalency between Being and beings/non-beings), once we understand that "God gives life to the dead and calls into existence the things that do not exist (*kalountos ta mē onta hōs onta*)" (Rom. 4:17). For, if God makes the dead to live, he in this way repeats in the resurrection what he accomplished in creation—*bringing* to being the non-being as a being—as master and Lord of all things, *including that which is not*. The difference between being and non-being is cancelled out because God excludes himself from Being, and thus from the very difference between Being and beings. Here, a sentence takes on its complete significance: "For there is no omnipotence (*exousia*) except from God, and those beings that exist have been instituted by God, *ousai hypo theou tetagmenai eisin*" (Rom. 13:1). This sentence must not be understood only in a political sense, but also in an ontic one (after all, doesn't the political derive from the ontic in the first degree?). The *ousai* of beings do not depend in the final instance on their grounds and power, but on the *exousia* of God. Every *ousia* comes from the *exousia*, and not the inverse, as the (philosophical) wisdom of the world would imagine. Seen from God's point of view, nothing is anything by itself, and it is necessary to universalize to every being the warning made to the man who is too sure of himself: "For if any one thinks himself to be something (*einai ti*), when he is nothing (*mēden ōn*), he deceives himself" (Gal. 6:3). Not because there is nothing, or because that which is is nothing, but because everything that is is only by virtue of receiving its existence from God: "What have you that you did not receive?" (1 Cor. 4:7). Being does not come to the being from itself, nor does it arise from Being, but from God's gift—even and above all if the being does *not know* God's gift. Thus the anamorphosis de-figures and re-figures even the being in its

Being. Being does not define the ground of the unseen that the *mystērion* harbors, but arises from it, among others.

The second moment, accomplished in the letter to the Ephesians, identifies the unseen *from which* the phenomenon bursts forth not only as the *mystērion* of wisdom, but also as the *mystērion* of charity. No longer are we concerned with the conflict-causing irruption of the *mystērion* received and refused (as in the opening of the first letter to the Corinthians), but rather with that of the *mystērion* henceforth received, if not conceived as such, on the basis "of God's purpose (*mystērion tou thelēmatos autou*)" (Eph. 1:9), according to "the plan of the mystery hidden, *oikonomia tou mystēriou tou apokekrymmenou*, for ages in God" (Eph. 3:9), such that it was manifested first to Paul ("made known to me by the uncovering, *kata apokalypsin egnōristhē moi to mystērion*," Eph. 3:3), and then "uncovered to his holy apostles and prophets, *nyn apekalyphthē tois agiois apostolois autou kai prophētais*" (3:5), and finally "made manifest to all his saints, *ephanerōthe tois agiois autou*" (Col. 1:26). The difficulty shifts: it is necessary to recognize as such that which in this way has made itself known in fact. Now, this "mystery, I mean that of Christ and the Church, is a great one, *mystērion touto mega estin*" (Eph. 5:32), intrinsically, radically, and massively great, "the unsearchable riches of Christ, *to anexikhniaston ploutos tou Christou*" (Eph. 3:8). What meaning should be given to this immeasurable, immense richness? Here the radical substitution of one horizon for another enters in. Nothing less is necessary than leaving the essentially *finite* horizon of Being and beings, the nullity of which we saw in the first letter to the Corinthians, and which could not harbor the unseen of God, much less disclose it and uncover it—in order to enter into, or rather to allow oneself to be submerged by the unlimited horizon of charity, by definition hyperbolic and excessive. And in fact, Paul asks for, recommends, and even demands one thing alone: to recognize "the hyperbolic riches of his grace (*to hyperballon ploutos tēs kharitos autou*)" (Eph. 2:7). There is only one prayer to address to the Father: that he give us the "spirit of wisdom and of the uncovered in the knowledge of Christ, *pneuma sophias kai apokalypseōs en epignōsei autou*, having the eyes of your hearts enlightened, that you may know (*eidenai*) what is the hope to which he has called you, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints, and what is the hyperbolic greatness of his power (*ti to hyperballon megethos tēs dynameōs autou*) in us who believe, according to the energy of his great

might which he accomplished in Christ when he raised him from the dead" (Eph. 1:17–20). To the question, "what is the being in its Being (*ti to on*)?", which is the question posed by the "wisdom of the world" and whose answer Aristotle "seeks", there is substituted another, which is posed in terms of itself, and which seeks us: "What is the hyperbole of his greatness (*ti to hyperballon megethos*)?" The hyperbole of the greatness "of his power" must not be understood according to the horizon of beings (the *dynamis* of an *energeia*), but instead according to the horizon of charity, which alone is hyperbolic in its unconditioned and indescribable power, "so that you may have power to comprehend (*katalabesthai*) with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth (*ti to platos kai mēkos kai hypsos kai bathos*), and to know the hyperbolic love of Christ which surpasses knowledge (*gnōnai te tēn hyperballousan tēs gnēseōs agapēn tou Christou*), that you may be saturated with all the saturation of God (*hina plērōthēte eis pan to plērōma tou theou*)" (Eph. 3:18–19). In the horizon of charity, knowing consists not in identifying that which shows itself to such and such object or being, which we would be able to constitute and define according to our intentionality, but in recognizing an excess which saturates the gaze and submerges it in its immeasurable hyperbole.

This new "knowledge of charity that surpasses knowledge" presents, moreover, a strange characteristic: hyperbolic charity is described according to four dimensions (breadth and length and height and depth), while the wisdom of philosophy has never mobilized more than three dimensions (breadth, length, and depth) to describe space. Does the Pauline addition (or rather, the division of height into height *and depth*), then, simply amount to a blatant error, or a bit of poetic license? On the contrary, such a question (hardly ever asked by the exegetes) receives a precise and clear answer: charity must not be conceived like a worldly space, because it does not belong to the world; but it can be conceived as a "divine milieu", in the strict sense. Indeed, it can be conceived as a milieu—a middle—because, if I consider it as an hyperbolic horizon, I absolutely cannot describe it as a space that would spread out in front of me, in the external sense (Kant), where I constitute and store the objects of my masterful gaze; instead I must allow myself to be situated in the midst of it, to be encompassed by it to the point of losing myself in it; as a result I will have to describe this inclusion in terms of four (and no longer three)

dimensions: amidst the breadth and the length, between the height and the depth, according to the azimuth along which I shall turn my gaze, without the reference point of an object, and encompassed by what saturates it. Tri-dimensional space allows us to see that which shows itself as an object, but the milieu requires us to experience saturation—namely, the saturation of charity—which fills me by encompassing me, the one who sees, without ever being able to phenomenalize that which gives itself in any way other than, precisely, as that which gives itself beyond all that shows itself to a finite gaze. The hyperbole of "charity that overabounds, *hypereperisseusen*" (Rom. 5:20) remains ever irreducible to all that shows itself as phenomena for me. It certifies the "many-colored wisdom of God, *polypoikilos sophia tou theou*" (Eph. 3:10), which is multiplied, for example, in "the multiple occasions and different ways, *polymerōs kai polytropōs*" (Heb. 1:1) of his utterances, or in the "variety of his charisms", which nevertheless remain a single word and "manifestation of the Spirit" (1 Cor. 12:4, 7). But if my gaze, encompassed and saturated, cannot phenomenalize the overabundance of what is given, and if, in the milieu of charity there remains for me no central point of observation from which to receive and see the fullness of that which shows itself, then how can the *mystērion* genuinely (*nyn*) manifest itself? *Where* does the hyperbole of charity that gives itself uncover and show itself, if it saturates every phenomenalization carried out by a human *finite* gaze? The answer, audacious yet inevitable and exceptionally logical, is unavoidable: in the only human gaze that is not merely finite, that of Christ, the ultimate and unique instance in which, once and for all, yet in an endless innovation ("Behold, I make all things new" Rev. 21:5), all that is given shows itself. For, in order to "make known to us the *mystērion* of his will", and so as to "set forth the saturation of events, *eis oikonomian plērōmatos tōn kaiōn*", God "recapitulated all things, things in heaven and things on earth, under a single head, in Christ (*anakepha-laiōsasthai ta panta en tō Christō*)" (Eph. 1:9–10). A head for the Church because he recapitulates in (and as) his body all that which is given, "saturated with the saturation of all in all, *plērōma tou ta panta en pasin plēroumenou*" (Eph. 1:23). The only gaze and the only point of view that can make the infinite hyperbole of the charity that gives itself show itself is found in Christ: the only infinite phenomenological gaze, yet in our flesh.

In order to respond fully to the first question (*what* does the *mystērion* allow to be phenomenalized?), we still need to understand, in a third moment, in what manner Christ can accomplish the function of a phenomenological gaze adequate to the hyperbole of charity, so that all that gives itself to that gaze can, in principle and in fact, also show itself in it. For the *mystērion* of charity actually operates only in the gaze of Christ, and it thus appears in the end as the "*mystērio tou Christou*, mystery of Christ" (Eph. 3:4). It is up to the letter to the Colossians to make the final step, not only by taking up again the phrase from Ephesians ("the mystery of Christ" Col. 4:3), but also by radicalizing it through the assimilation of Christ to God (the Father) with regard to the possibility of "knowing" charity, the hyperbole of which surpasses knowledge: " . . . for the knowledge of God's *mystērion*, the Christ" (Col. 2:3).[7] This is confirmed by another identification of the *mystērion* with the very person of Christ: "God chose to make known how great among the nations are the riches of the glory of this mystery, which is Christ in you, *ti to ploutos tēs doxēs tou mystēriou toutou en tois ethnesin, ho estin Christos en hymin*" (Col. 1:27). What content should be assigned to this *mystērion*? We have seen that, according to Ephesians 1:10, it consists in the fact that the hyperbole of charity opens the way to God for all, Jews and Greeks, in their restoration as a saturated body under the head of Christ. And the operation of this recapitulation is explained thus: "He [Christ] is himself peace (*autos gar estin hē eirēnē*), he who has made us both [Jews and pagans] one [people], and has broken down the dividing wall, by abolishing hatred in his flesh (*tēn ekhthran en tē sarki autou . . . katargēsas*), the law of commandments with its ordinances" (Eph 2:14). Making peace means that he " . . . has killed hatred in himself, *apokteinas tēn ekhthran en autō*" (Eph. 2:16). For Christ has perfectly accomplished the Law (in the double meaning of the word) by subverting it and fulfilling it at the same time; through the hyperbole of his charity, which satisfied the Law without consecrating it, he opens this hyperbolic fullness to all: even in his flesh, which was the same as ours, but which he, unlike us, assumed "without sin, *khōris hamartias*",[8] he cancelled out the reason for sin, the Law, and brought

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[7] Here I follow the Nestlé-Alland *Novum Testamentum Graece*, 25th ed. (Stuttgart: Deutsches Bibelgesellschaft, 1963), *ad. loc.*, critical apparatus, p. 511.

[8] See Heb. 9:28. See also Rom. 8:3; 2 Cor. 5:21; and Jn. 8:46 and 7:26.

together those that the Law was separating from one another, and sin was separating from God. Christ "recapitulates" all things because he carries out the "service of reconciliation, *diakonian tēs katallagēs*" (2 Cor. 5:18). In other words, "he has now really reconciled (*nyni de apokatēl-laxen*) [us] in his body of flesh" (Col. 1:22), a reconciliation, pacification, and unification that is sealed and manifested in his resurrection, as the "first-born from the dead" (Col. 1:18), and thus also as the "first-born of all creation, for in him all things were created" (Col. 1:16). This "new creation in Christ" (2 Cor. 5:17) allows and, at the same time, follows from the recapitulation of all things under the head of Christ, because he has in this way, in himself, made peace. Thus, "this *mystērion* hidden for ages and generations—now (*nyn*) . . . is made manifest to his saints, to whom God chose to make known how great among the nations are the riches of the glory of this mystery, which is nothing other than Christ in person among you, *ti to ploutos tēs doxēs tou mystēriou toutou . . . , ho estin Christos en hymin*" (Col. 1:27). Thus the Christ, become man, dead, and resurrected, makes the *mystērion* of peace that he recapitulates entirely visible and manifest, for the first time, and once and for all (Rom. 6:10). He appears as himself, as such, that is to say, as the unique phenomenalization of the Father, as the unique gaze in which is shown all that which gives itself, the phenomenal center of the glory of all things as given. Consequently, all visibility comes back to him (recapitulation), just as all givenness comes from him (creation). His phenomenal gaze thus concentrates all the possible phenomenality of the giving invisibility of God, and is established as "the icon of the invisible God, *eikōn tou theou tou aoratou*" (Col. 1:15). Or in other words, "splendor of his glory, *apaugasma tēs doxēs*, and effigy of his persistence" (Heb. 1:3). Christ appears, constituted in this way by the Father, who raises him from the dead, as the icon of his own invisibility, *as the hyperbolic phenomenon of charity*. In this way the "uncovering of the Lord Jesus, *apokalypsei tou kuriou Iēsou*" is accomplished (2 Thess. 1:7).[9]

We must now pass on to the second question, which asks *how* that which gives itself is uncovered. Put another way: by what operation does the invisible make itself recognized *as* visible? For the phenomenality

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[9] See also *apokalypsei tou Iēsou Christou* (1 Peter 1:7, and 4:13).

of the *apokalypsis* cannot continue to unfold according to the guiding thread, surprising but probably indispensable, of the manifestation of the *mystērion*: the *apokalypsis* is only spotted because the *mystērion* always ends up manifesting itself; even the dissimulation and the concealing of the *mystērion* can be conceived only by always already manifesting itself, even if simply *as concealed and encrypted*. The *mystērion*, at once hidden and yet already indicated as able (and having) to be detected, does not constitute the opposite of the *apokalypsis*, nor the obstacle that would resist it; instead, it defines the background, the reserve of the unseen, the ground that is recognized after the fact and in contrast to that which cancels it, illuminates it, and consecrates it, the *apokalypsis* itself. Thus the *mystērion* offers less the crossed out point of departure for the *apokalupsis* than its irreducible depth of field. The uncovering is only witnessed by witnessing the *mystērion*, for which it becomes the very principle. Now, this so-to-speak phenomenological principle—so much *mystērion*, so much *apokalypsis*—is found formulated and even formalized above all in the synoptic gospels. What is more, it is made explicit three times in nearly the same terms, a fact which confers on it an authenticity that is all the more impressive because in the synoptic gospels, according to widespread opinion, we gain access to concepts less often than in the epistles of Paul or in the gospel of John. A principle certified by the three synoptics, almost in the same terms, ought to be traceable back to a single common source (or even to the *ipsissima verbai*). Let's quote this triple sequence: Matthew 10:26: "For nothing is veiled (*kekalymmenon*) that will not be uncovered (*ho ouk apokalyphthēsetai, revelabitur*), or hidden (*krypton*) that will not become known (*ho ou gnōsthēsetai*)." Mark 4:22: "For there is nothing hid (*krypton*), except to be made manifest (*ean mē hina phanerōthē*); nor is anything secret (*apokryphon*), except to come to light (*elthē eis phaneron*)." Luke 8:17: "For nothing is hid (*krypton*) that shall not be made manifest (*phaneron*), nor anything secret (*apokryphon*) that shall not be known and come to light (*eis phaneron elthē*)." We note, nevertheless, a major difference: only Matthew ties this principle of phenomenality to the *apokalypsis* itself. But the commonality remains: it is thus a question first of all of a principle of the phenomenality of God, according to which not only the manifest always ends up by winning out over the hidden, but the hidden is also always destined in the final instance for manifestation. The event (and advent) of the *gesta Dei per*

Christum Iesum makes us experience the manifestation of that which, otherwise, would remain hidden.

What is indicated by this demand for manifestation without remainder of the previously hidden *myst ērion*? First of all, as we just said, that the hidden, the *myst ērion*, is destined from the outset, by God's will, for this manifestation, of which it constitutes not the contrary and the forbidden, but the reserve and the fund of the unseen, the condition of possibility and the background of manifestation. But above all, the entry of the *mystērion* into *apokalypsis*, the hidden into the manifest, strangely yet unquestionably nods toward the program that all of contemporary phenomenology has fixed for itself: to come to the point where that which is phenomenalized does not repeat, or double the *in-itself* of the thing itself, but renders the thing manifest *as such, and completely*. Either, in Husserl's terms, "everything originarily . . . offered to us in 'intuition' is to be accepted simply *as it gives itself*, but also *only within the limits in which it gives itself* "[10]; or, in Heidegger's terms: "Thus 'phenomenology' means *apophainesta ta phainomena*—to let that which shows itself be seen from itself in the very way in which it shows itself from itself (*das was sich zeigt, so wie es sich von ihm selbst her zeigt, von ihm selbst her sehen lassen*)."[11] But the chronological succession of these two essential determinations of the phenomenon must, for the sake of the necessity of the thing itself, be reversed. For Husserl in this case goes further than Heidegger, at least in the programmatic intention, if not in the realization. In a first phase, the phenomenon is defined (against Kant and his Marburg tradition) as that which *shows itself* from itself, and thus *in itself*, as the thing itself, without a double or a phenomenal re-presentation. In a second phase, the phenomenon shows itself *as and to the extent that it gives itself*. It follows from this that the principle formulated in its completeness says, or should say, that the phenomenon shows itself in itself and through itself only as much as it gives itself in and through itself. But then

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[10] Edmund Husserl, *Ideen . . .* , *I*, §24, Hua. III/1, ed. K. Schumann (The Hague: Nijhoff, 1976), p. 51; *Ideas Pertaining to a Pure Phenomenology and to a Phenomenological Philosophy*, Bk. 1, trans. F. Kersten (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1982), p. 44, modified.

[11] Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit*, §7, p. 34; *Being and Time*, trans. Macquarrie and Robinson, p. 58.

another question crops up: *what phenomenon* has ever, without remainder and without reserve, respected the phenomenological program? What phenomenon has ever *accomplished* it "to the end, *eis telos*"? The demand of Christian theology here takes on the entirety of its immense claim: only the one who "loved his own until the end, *eis telos*" (Jn. 13:1), to the point of saying in truth, "it is finished, *tetelestai*" (Jn. 19:30), manifested, uncovered *the phenomenon in itself and from itself*. This phenomenon *shows itself absolutely* because he, and he alone, *gives himself absolutely*. Christ not only offers himself to be seen as a phenomenon among others, fulfilling the program of phenomenology; he fulfills it for the first and only time in actuality, in his actions, and becomes the phenomenon of all phenomena. He, the total and saturated agent of the putting into evidence of the absolute unseen, of the *mystērion* of God hidden since the origin of the ages, he who "was manifested in the flesh, *ephanerōthē en sarki*" (1 Tim. 3:16), has at the same time spread the light everywhere around him. Thus he has provoked all things to be manifest: "I have always taught (*pantote edidaxa*) in synagogues and in the Temple, where all Jews come together; I have said nothing secretly, *en kryptō elalēsa ouden*" (Jn. 18:20).[12] Which does not mean that Christ provokes the manifestation at every moment and whenever it pleases him (like the irony of Socrates, which "his brothers" awaited, Jn. 7:3–7); for this depends on the time, and time depends on the Father. For it is above all on men that this manifestation depends, on whether they decide *or not* to allow themselves to manifest in the presence of the *apokalypsis* of Christ through himself. In a sense, Christ does nothing, needs to do nothing, other than to await and reach the decision of men: He, "in whom all the promises of God find their Yes" (2 Cor. 1:20), awaits the Yes or No of men: "Let your word be 'Yes, Yes' or 'No, No'" (Mt. 5:37).

We can now take stock of the three formulations of this single principle in order to interpret in them the three stages of manifestation. Let's take Mark first: the principle enters into commentary on the first parable mentioned by this gospel, the parable of the sower.

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[12] See Mt. 26:55; Jn. 7:26 (*parrhēsia lalei, palam loquitur*), Lk. 19:47–8, and even Acts 26:26: "for this was not done in a corner (*ou gar en gōnia*)!" See my "Remarques sur quelques remarques", *Recherches de Science Religieuse*, Paris, 2011/4 (vol. 99): pp. 489–98.

Now, this parable arises within the horizon of a paradigmatic text from Isaiah (6:9–10): "'Hear and hear, but do not understand; see and see, but do not perceive.'" Christ's warning increases the notice: "He who has ears to hear, let him hear!" (Mk. 4:9=4:23). The parable marks, then, the *mystērion* that normally (without Christ) no one can understand, because no one yields himself to the manifest narrative if he cannot first be made manifest to himself. Left to their double obscurity (that of themselves and of the manifested discourse), the hearers thus find themselves "outside, *exo*", and everything comes to them in parables, everything remains unintelligible to them. For the disciples, in contrast, there "has been given the *mystērion* of the Kingdom of God, *mystērion dedotai*" (Mk. 4:11; see also 4:34). Why to them, and not to the others? Because they, half-consciously but in fact, have taken the risk and made the choice to respond to the call to become disciples. An epistemological break has already taken place, precisely according to the *place* of listening, which allows them to be in the right place, where hearing is decided (and where mishearing appears). The uncovering opens—still only partly—against the background of the re-covering or covering over of the secret, of the *mystērion* experienced as such, unveiled as not yet uncovered. From this there arises the growing feeling of fear: "And they were in fear, with a great fear, *ephobēthēsan phobon megan*" (Mk. 4:41). The issue is fear in front of that which cannot be understood, except by satisfying a still unrealizable condition: taking the point of view of the one who says it and, especially, of what he says. Here fear designates the state of the one who guesses the *mystērion*, without yet being able to understand or comprehend it, like a *mysterium tremendum*, which overwhelms the women at the empty tomb (Mk. 16:8), or which Paul could not speak of to the Corinthians except "with fear and trembling, *en phobō kai en tromō*" (1 Cor. 2:3).

Luke takes up the question where Mark had left it: we are still dealing with the first parables (the parable of the sower along with that of the lamp, which introduce the principle of the inevitable manifestation of the hidden, with the adage from Isaiah 6:9, as in Jn. 12:40); and, of course, we have the reminder that "To you it has been given to know the *mystēria* of the kingdom of God" (Lk. 8:10), preceded by the same warning: "He who has ears to hear, let him hear" (Lk. 8:8). But here the principle (stated in 8:17) is prepared by the parable added to

that of the sower: the parable of the lamp. "No one after lighting a lamp covers it with a vessel, *Oudeis . . . kalyptei auton*, but puts it on a stand, that those who enter may see the light, *blepōsin to phōs*" (Lk. 8:16). Why does the statement of the principle follow immediately after this? Probably because of the analogy with the light, physical in the parable, spiritual (or rather, intellectual) in the principle. Nevertheless, the contradiction remains patent: everyone agrees that the lamp should be set up high, while the principle of manifestation is precisely not accepted by the "outside" hearers, since they have not received access to the *mystēria*. Luke sketches a response by introducing the hermeneutic moment and figure of the witness. The witness is defined first of all by his radical listening, by his attention focused precisely on what he does not understand. Jesus points it out with an extraordinary and enigmatic sentence: "Look after how you listen!" (Lk. 8:18). It perhaps means: Consider your listening, it will tell you if you are entering or not into the proclamation of the Kingdom of God, into familiarity with the *mystērion*. And so Jesus's family comes to see him, but after everyone else, for they were not present when he was speaking; they come to see him, as in a relation of equals, as kin, without any concern for listening; thus his response: "My mother and my brothers are those who hear the *logos* of God and do it, *hoi ton logon tou theou akouontes kai poiountes*" (Lk. 8:21), which publicly echoes a previous private warning, "Did you not know that I must be about my Father's business?" (Lk. 2:46–50). The comprehension, then, does not depend only on *what* one hears, but first of all on *the way in which* one listens to it. Not every hearer has the posture of the witness.

Several counter-examples confirm this. Take the example of the demon who, being "legion" in a man, will be driven into a herd of swine: it "sees" and hears Jesus perfectly well, to the point of recognizing him as "Son of the Most High God" (Lk. 8:28), but without welcoming him. Or take the spectators who, having also seen without believing, experience such "great fear" (Lk. 8:37) that, rather than following Jesus, they beg him to "go away, *apelthein*" (Lk. 8:37). What was Jesus expecting of those who listened to him without hearing him? He explains clearly to the possessed man whom he healed and who wanted to remain near him: "Return to your home, and declare how much God has done for you, *diēgou hosa soi epoiēsen ho theos*", and indeed he went away, "proclaiming, *kēryssōn*" (Lk. 8:39) what Jesus had done for him. Jesus

expects the hearer to be a witness, to expose and proclaim what he has seen: the *mystērion* appearing as such, even and especially *when he does not yet understand it.* In short, he expects the hearer to cross over the epistemological break by entering into what he does not understand and which nevertheless comprehends him, by exiting from his point of view in order to draw near to the point of view of anamorphosis. Similarly, in conclusion to the sequence, Herod, learning what has come to pass in Galilee, "found himself in complete aporia, *diēporei*" (Lk. 9:7) in front of the identity of Jesus, precisely because the Christ begins to uncover himself as such and because, to do so, he becomes all the *less* comprehensible for those who do not *want* and are not able to accept the radically new point of view that the uncovering of the *mystērion* imposes. The paradox of interpretation results: the miracles of Jesus, with all their manifest effectiveness, which no one can contest, nevertheless convince almost no one; either they "are afraid" and flee, or they attribute them to the Devil (Lk. 9:34; 11:15). The Pharisees, not unlike the demons, the mere spectators, and Herod, thus sin against the Holy Spirit (Lk. 12:10) by refusing to change interpretations, to pass to the point of view required by the *mystērion* and practice the anamorphosis. Jesus certainly appears, already and from the outset, as the Christ, but as the *impugned* Christ, as the *refuted logos*, as *the uncovering of the covering over* of the uncovered, "the sign of contradiction, *sēmeion antilegomenon*, . . . by which the thoughts that rattle about, *dialogismoi*, in many hearts will be uncovered, *apokalyphthosin*" (Lk. 2:34–5).

The gospel according to Matthew finally pierces through the aporia, and it is probably not by chance that only its formulation of the principle employs the word *apokalypsis* (*anakalyphthēsetai*), thus fixing the entirety of the phenomenon in its proper site. As in the other two synoptic gospels, this formulation first takes up the problematic of the refusal of the proclamation of the Kingdom of God: there is the indifference of the towns of Chorazin, Bethsaida, and Capernaum (Mt. 11:20–4), then the incomprehension of the parables (13:1–51), and finally the warning, "He who has ears to hear, let him hear!" (11:15). But what follows identifies what makes for the essential difference, the epistemological break: the crossing of the divide between the points of view on the *mystērion*, the passage from one interpretation (that of the men of this world) to another (that of

Christ), in short, the shifting of the point of view. Christ now reveals for the first time that this anamorphosis does not depend only or even at first on man, who nevertheless must accomplish it, but on the Father's grace: "At that time Jesus declared, 'I thank you (*exomologoumai*), Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that you have hidden (*ekrypsas*) these things from the wise and understanding and uncovered them (*apekalypsas*) to babes; yea, Father, for such was your gracious will. All things have been delivered to me (*paradothē*) by my Father; and no one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and any one to whom the Son chooses to uncover him (*apokalypsai*)'" (Mt. 11:25–7, and Lk. 10:21–2).[13] A question could arise here: is it the Father or the Son who gives what is to be uncovered? Yet this question is not pertinent, because nothing separates them, for "All things have been handed over to me (*paredothē*) by my Father" (Mt. 11:27).[14] And above all it masks the genuine question: why does the gospel of Luke add here that Christ "rejoiced, *ēgalliasato*" (Lk. 10:21)? He rejoices because this uncovering must come *from elsewhere*, "in the Holy Spirit" (ibid.), and thus from the Father, which would prove to be impossible for all those who know and only want to know by remaining in their own wisdom and point of view; but it becomes possible for the "babes" who know themselves to be without any wisdom to oppose to the *apokalypsis*. And further: Christ himself, in a sense having nothing to do with it, sees that certain people manage to form the decision to accept the gift of the Father (as he himself does, always and completely). The final, absolutely decisive moment follows: a "babe" (the first one) succeeds in accomplishing the anamorphosis. To the question that Christ asks regarding what people say about his identity (John the Baptist, Elijah, Jeremiah, or one of the prophets), and which he then specifies for them—"But who do you say that I am?"—, one of the disciples, Peter, indeed the first among all

[13] See Lk. 10:22. See also Jn. 10:14, which however does not tie this uncovering of the principle of the *apokalypsis* to Peter's confession of faith, which will follow and put it into operation in the gospel of Matthew.

[14] See Lk. 10:22, which results from the fact that "the Father and I are one" (Jn. 10:30). Consequently, "Everything that the Father has is mine, *panta hosa ekhei ho patēr ema estin*" (Jn. 16:15); "everything of mine is yours and everything of yours is mine, *ta ema panta sa estin kai ta sa ema*" (Jn. 17:10, and literally also in Lk. 15:31).

men, answers *correctly* (one could almost say, in the musical sense: his answer is in tune): "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." He is the first to perceive the uncovering (*apokalypsis*) of the *mystērion*, because he allows himself to be placed in the very place of its phenomenalization, the trinitarian site opened by the Spirit between the Father and the Son. In response, Jesus sanctions this accomplishment and names it as such: "Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah. For this uncovering did not come to you (*ouk apekalypsen*) from flesh or blood, but from my heavenly Father" (Mt. 16:13–17). The primacy of Peter—who nevertheless will tempt Jesus right afterward (Mt. 16:23 and Mk. 8:33), and later betray him and understand the Resurrection more slowly than John (Jn. 20:8)—is nevertheless decided definitively here; it lies solely in the privilege of his having first confessed the identity of Jesus as the Christ, Son of the Father, of his first having *known and been able* to be in the site in which the uncovering becomes visible to and bearable by a man's gaze. Why then does Jesus order the other disciples to be silent about this (Mt. 16:20, and see Mk. 8:30 and Lk. 9:21)? Because they must not divulge what they themselves cannot yet accomplish, or see, or, therefore, make known to people who also cannot succeed in doing so.

Now, then, we can respond to the second question, which asks *how* that which gives itself is uncovered: what shows itself gives itself in the mode of an anamorphosis, a shifting of the witness's point of view on the *mystērion*, a crossing of the epistemological break that makes him see Jesus as the Christ, as the Son of God—that makes Christ show himself to him as Christ gives himself, as Son *from the Father's point of view*.

With perfect logic, then, the third question imposes itself, asking to know *what* is un-covered insofar as it gives itself: *who* shows himself insofar as he gives himself, without remainder or reserve? The answer to this question comes above all and pre-eminently from the gospel according to John. For indeed, after (or at least *in accordance with*) Peter's confession reported in Mt. 16:16 ("You are the Christ, the Son of the living God, *sy ei ho Christos ho huios tou theou tou zōntos*"),[15] the question of this recognition is fully posed at the end of the bread of

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[15] Confirmation is found in Mk. 8:29 ("You are the Christ, *Sy ei ho Christos*") and Lk. 9:20 ("The Christ of God, *Ton Christon tou theou*").

life discourse: "You have the words of eternal life. We have believed and recognized that you are the Holy One of God, *rhēmata zōēs aiōniou ekheis, kai hēmeis pepisteukamen kai egnōkamen hoti sy ei ho hagios tou theou*" (Jn. 6:68–9). And this is all the more so since Peter speaks, this time, in the name of all the disciples, and no longer only in his own name; and also since he links the confession of Christ to the recognition of life in him (as only previously in the gospel of Matthew), in answer not to such or such parable, but to a "hard" discourse (6:60) on "the bread of life", which puts the faith of the disciples, as well as that of the other, more distant hearers, into crisis (Jn. 6:60–7). For here, the difficulty of phenomenality depends on a hermeneutical decision: in order to come to recognize Christ as "the bread of life" ("Does this shock you?" 6:61), it is necessary to cross the divide between the point of view of the flesh (*sarx*) and that of the Spirit (*pneuma*, Jn. 6:63; see Mt. 16:17). This crossing, this shifting, and this anamorphosis prove to be so radical that no man could, of himself, carry them out. We have to accept that only God can grant to man the accomplishment of the anamorphosis leading from man's point of view all the way to the point of view of God: "No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draw him, *ean mē ho patēr ho pempsas me helkysē auton, traxerit*" (Jn. 6:44); or: "no one can come to me unless it is granted him by my Father, *ean mē hē dedomenon autō ek tou patros*" (Jn. 6:65). Is there an aporia here, the admission of an impossible hermeneutics, of a logical circle, which would presuppose itself (God alone grants the taking of God's point of view, which permits the seeing of God phenomenalizing himself)? Unless, in order to exit the powerlessness to see the phenomenon that Christ offers, it were no longer necessary to try to avoid a logical circle, but instead to try to force ourselves as resolutely as possible into the hermeneutic circle: taking the correct point of view on the phenomenon that God gives us to see (in Jesus Christ) indeed can come only from God himself (the Father), who offers both the phenomenon (what gives itself) and the conditions of its visibility (what shows itself). No one sees the one who shows himself, the Christ, except by placing herself at the very point of view of the one who gives him to be seen, the Father. Christ is seen, then, only if the Father gives access to this point of view.

The question of Jesus' identity ("*Who* do you say that I am?") thus finds its correct answer only in terms of and from the point of view of

the Father, who gives us to see the one whom he gives; or more precisely, who gives so that what he gives shows itself. To recognize Jesus as the Christ implies referring him to the Father, twice over: first, because Jesus merits the title of Christ only insofar as he is Son of the Father, and thus by essential reference to the Father who *gives* him to himself; next, because Jesus can only *show* himself to, and make himself be seen and recognized by one who sees him from the point of view of the Father. The Father establishes the condition of the Christ, insofar as he gives him and insofar as the Christ shows himself. The Father thus constitutes both the ground of the unseen of the Son manifested in the visible of the Son, and the condition for the uncovering of the Son. The rule that governs the crossed phenomenality of the Father and the Son results: "No one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and anyone to whom the Son wishes to uncover him, *kai hō ean boulētai ho huios apokalypsai*" (Mt. 11:27, and see Lk. 10:22). The gospel of John puts it this way: "'I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. If you know me, then you will also know my Father. From now on you do know him and have seen him (*ei egnōkeite me, kai ton patera mou an ēideite, ap' arti ginōskete auton kai heōrakate*).' Philip said to him, 'Master, show us the Father, and that will be enough for us (*deixon hēmin ton patera, kai arkei hēmin*).' Jesus said to him, 'Have I been with you for so long a time and you still do not know me, Philip? Whoever has seen me has seen the Father (*ho heōrakōs eme heōraken ton patera*). How can you say, Show us the Father? Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me?'" (Jn. 14:7–10). Nothing confirms better that the Father constitutes the ground of that which gives itself in the Son and the condition for the Son to show himself, than the proof *a contrario*: without the reference to the Father, the identity of Jesus—his status as Son—immediately becomes illegible: "You know neither me nor my Father. If you knew me, you would know my Father also" (Jn. 8:19).[16]

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[16] The positive thesis, that "just as the Father knows me I know the Father" (Jn. 10:15), is confirmed *a contrario*: "Whoever hates me also hates my Father. If I had not done works among them that no one else ever did, they would not have sin; but as it is (*nyn*), they have [actually] seen them and hated both me and my Father" (Jn. 15:23; see also Jn. 9:41, and Rom. 1:20). And "...they will do this to you because they have not known either the Father or me" (Jn. 16:3).

An apparently surprising consequence follows: Jesus shows himself all the more as who he is (*the Son* of the Father) the more he refers himself to the one who he is not (the Son *of the Father*), and who gives him to himself and to us (in order that we can see him). Jesus appears as himself only to the precise extent that he shows himself as he gives himself, that is, in terms of the Father who gives him. Jesus shows himself in himself by not showing himself as if he were giving himself by himself, and even by showing that he does not give himself by himself. In this way he emphasizes that he does not speak for himself, but instead never says anything but the very words of the manifestation of the Father: "The words that I speak to you I do not speak on my own, *ap' emautou ou lalō*" (Jn. 14:10).[17] Thus, everything that his words provoke is referred to the one who sent him, the Father: "Whoever believes in me believes not only in me but also in the one who sent me (*ho pisteuōn eis eme ou pisteuei eis eme alla eis ton pempsanta me*). And whoever sees me sees the one who sent me (*ho theōrōn eme theōrei ton pempsanta me*)" (Jn. 12:44–5). In this sense, Christ speaks and acts with perfect *inauthenticity*, since he never says what he thinks from himself, nor does what he would like himself; he does not say what he thinks, nor does he do what he wills: "I cannot do anything on my own; . . . I do not seek my own will but the will of the one who sent me" (Jn. 5:30). "I came down from heaven not to do my own will but the will of the one who sent me" (Jn. 6:38). Inauthenticity understood in this way in fact defines the anamorphosis, and completes it: no one but Christ has completely accomplished the taking of the point of view of God in order to manifest it. And, moreover, to speak authentically, which is to say from oneself, or in a word to say what I think for myself and on the basis of myself alone, is what defines Satan: "When he tells a lie, he speaks on the basis of his own [*sc.* thoughts] (*ek tōn idiōn lalei*), because he is a liar and the father of lies" (Jn. 8:44). Or, "I came in the name of my Father, but you do not accept me; yet if another comes in his own name (*en tō onomati tō idiō*), you will accept him" (Jn. 5:43). The distance between the dispositions of authenticity and inauthenticity thus exactly defines the two poles of intentionality—the masterly point of view of the transcendental posture, and the displaced point of view

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[17] "I did not come on my own, *ap' emautou*, but he sent me" (Jn. 8:42).

of anamorphosis: "Whoever speaks on his own (*ho aph' heautou lalōn*) seeks his own glory, but whoever seeks the glory of the one who sent him is truthful, and there is no injustice in him" (Jn. 7:18). And, in fact, no one accomplishes the anamorphosis as perfectly as Christ in his absolute self-referral without remainder, as Son, to the Father's point of view. Men, and Peter to begin with, do nothing more than walk in his steps, from a worldly place to a trinitarian place, which, at the same time, is phenomenally operative.

To know the one, the Father, then, is equivalent to knowing the other, the Son, and vice versa. But on the condition that we safeguard their difference without separation, their union without mixture. For what ties them together lies precisely in the reciprocal return of the one to the other—of the Father who *gives* the Son to himself, of the Son who in himself *shows* the Father. With this precaution, we will be able to conceive of Christ as the "icon of the invisible God" (Col. 1:15). Otherwise, how do we avoid the visible aporia that would want to make visible the invisible? Of course, there would be a contradiction in terms in imagining a doubled visible, which would claim to guard the vestiges of the invisible directly, by imitation or representation: between the visible and the invisible there is no continuity, image, or resemblance. However, the issue is not a doubled visible, but rather an overturned visible: Christ manifests the Father inasmuch as he is seen to be given by the Father and gives himself as such—as sent by the Father into the visible, consisting only in this sending and in the return that it allows of the manifest given to the invisible giver. Seeing Christ is equivalent to seeing that which, or rather, *the one whom* the Father manifests by giving him and who consists only in this gift seen and to be seen as given, in that which shows itself as given: "God so loved the world that he gave it (*edōken*) his only Son" (Jn. 3:16). That Christ shows (himself) (as) the gift that the invisible (the Father) gives in a visible icon means, for a man's gaze, to see oneself seen by the Father, in the gaze of Christ seen visibly and invisibly *as* the Son. In this way the putting of the Christ into an icon is accomplished, which properly defines the work of the Spirit.[18]

[18] As we shall see more precisely in the fourth lecture.

Peter's confession consists, then, in taking Jesus into view from the point of view from which the Father gives him and sees him—as the Holy One of God, who comes down from heaven to do the will of another, the Father, and who thus shows himself by showing how to accomplish the one and only anamorphosis: for him, taking the point of view of the Father (doing the will of the Father, and not his own), and for us, taking the Father's point of view on the Son, who is doing the will of the Father. When these two acts of anamorphosis coincide and the faith of the disciple takes its place within the movement of obedience of the Son to the Father, then the one who believes *in this way* obtains eternal life, because he sees the Son as Son of the Father, and thus enters into the Father's vision. "For this is the will of my Father, that all who see the Son and believe in him may obtain eternal life, *hina pas ho theōrōn ton huion kai pisteuōn eis auton ekhē zōēn aiōnion*" (Jn. 6:40). It is enough to believe it to see it, for the anamorphosis of faith repeats the trinitarian anamorphosis that makes Jesus appear as the Christ, Son to the Father. But "there are some of you that do not believe" (Jn. 6:64), or in other words, who, failing to accomplish the anamorphosis with their own gaze, cannot see the anamorphosis accomplished by Christ. Or, we can say that they see without believing (Jn. 6:36, *heōrakate me kai ou pisteuete*), and thus they see in Jesus only "the son of Joseph" (Jn. 6:42), that is, they do not see him at all as he shows himself, because they do not see him as the one that the Father gives to them.

Thus men find themselves provoked to see that which shows itself by the excess of that which gives itself; and, as that which gives itself gives itself between the Father and the Son, that which shows itself arises from a phenomenality *ad extra* of the Trinity itself. We must understand in this light the public *invocations* from the voice of the Father to the Son, or from the Son to the Father, which punctuate the gospel according to John, as just so many *provocations* by the Trinity toward men to believe in order to see, repetitions of the warning, "See to what you hear!" (Mk. 4:24). Thus we have the thanks given publicly to the Father by Jesus, before the resurrection of Lazarus, in order to make manifest to "the crowd, *ton okhlon*" what he knows takes place "always, *pantote*": "I thank you Father that you have heard [answered] me, *pater, eukharistō soi hoti ēkousas mou*" (Jn. 11:41–2, see *exomologoumai* in Lk. 10:21, and Mt. 11:25). And thus the "voice coming from heaven

(*phōnē ek tou ouranou*)" to confirm the Son in the Father's glory: "I have glorified it, and I will glorify it again" (Jn. 12:27–8, a voice that addresses itself above all to men, *di' hymas*, Jn. 12:30). And thus again, the final prayer before the arrest, in which Christ asks in front of his disciples to receive even (and above all) at this nadir the glory of his eternal zenith: "Glorify your Son that the Son may glorify you" (Jn. 17:1, *doxason sou ton huion, hina ho huios doxasē se*); and "Glorify me now with the glory (*nyn doxason me sy*) which I had with you before the world was made" (Jn. 17:5). For he is asking that the intra-trinitarian glory manifest itself to men in the world, that it show itself everywhere where it is given, which is to say, precisely, everywhere: "I have manifested your name to the men who you gave me, *ephanerōsa sou to onoma tois anthrōpois hous edōkas moi*" (Jn. 17:6). Such a manifestation *ad extra* of the Trinity to men (even the non-believing) does not imply any fading of the *mystērion* into some sort of negativity of spirit or worldly profanation; on the contrary, far from the Trinity being dissolved in exteriority, this manifestation provokes the "crowd", and especially the disciples, to believe that which shows itself as it gives itself, and therefore to *enter into* the Trinity. The trinitarian uncovering opens itself "[. . . so] that you may know and understand that the Father is in me and I am in the Father" (Jn. 10:38). This is what is accomplished in the one who keeps the commandments, and who therefore loves Christ and is loved by the Father as Christ is loved; thus Christ shows himself to him (*emphanisō autō emauton*, Jn. 14:20–1); and thus, in the end, it is the Father in person who loves (*autos gar ho patēr philei hymas*, Jn. 16:27, see Jn. 14:21) those who find themselves, in fact and even by right, included in the Trinity, ". . . that they may be one, even as we are one, *hen kathōs hēmeis*" (Jn. 17:11), ". . . that they may all be one; even as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be [one] in us, *hina kai autoi en hēmin ōsin*" (Jn. 17:21); ". . . that they be completed to their end in unity, *teteleiōmenoi eis hen*" (Jn. 17:23). The Trinity becomes the place of the uncovering as much as its stake: we can see that which shows itself only by receiving it as it gives itself, that is, only by receiving ourselves from the one who gives himself, and who gives . . . everything, including our seeing of it.

4

A Logic of Manifestation

The Trinity

The phenomenal approach to the "good news of Jesus Christ, Son of God" (Mk. 1:1) has enabled us to unfold the moments of its uncovering. And it is indeed an uncovering that is at issue, which we have allowed to open itself out according to its proper logic, in several stages: (a) what at first and necessarily remained covered, reserved, and inaccessible (the *mystērion* of the Father), namely the hyperbole of charity surpassing all knowledge, can be understood as a pre-eminent *saturated phenomenon*; (b) it goes into operation as a saturated phenomenon according to the principle that everything, no matter how secret, must be uncovered in the evidence of Christ and in view of the recognition of Christ as the Son of the Father; nevertheless, this uncovering of Christ's depths is not accomplished without requiring of one who wishes to see it that she be transformed into a *witness*, judged by what she reports. For in fact, (c) the question is not only that of seeing Jesus, but that of looking upon his face as that of the Christ, of recognizing in that face the depths of the Son—that is to say, of knowing in it, by viewing it through a certain angle, the icon of the invisible Father, in a phenomenon that is at once visible and invisible, a *paradox*. As a consequence, then, no witness can approach this putting into phenomenality of the face of Christ if she does not travel its depths—depths that allow the seeing of the invisible Father in his visible icon. It would be necessary, therefore, to acknowledge that what Christian theology calls the dogma of the Trinity belongs to the phenomenal field of the uncovering of Christ, as the paradox of the pre-eminent saturated phenomenon, Revelation. In other words, the question is whether or not we should allow for a phenomenal approach to the Trinity itself. But in what sense? The Trinity certainly

constitutes the ground and the dogmatic presupposition for the reve-
lation of Christ as the Son of the Father. But can we also (or even first
of all) understand it as the place encompassing the phenomenological
dimensions of the uncovering (itself considered as a phenomenon) of
the visible icon of the invisible God?

Now, this question arises at a moment, ours, in which the dogmatic
interpretation of the Trinity finds itself contested, not because of what
it allows us to think (the substantial unity and trinity of persons), but
because of what it leaves undetermined, or even un-thought. Thus,
what Athanasius defended under the title of the *hagion kerygma monar-
khias*,[1] differing from the Arians only over the means of its establish-
ment, runs the risk of a political objection, first articulated by
Erik Petersen: the monarchical interpretation of the Trinity (in favor
of the Father, according to "Greek theology" as well as strict Arian-
ism) leads to its being confused with power in the city of men.[2] But,
conversely, this monarchy is attacked from its first formulation as a
polyarchy, compromised by the *ditheism* or even the *tritheism* that the two
other persons impose.[3] Whence comes the conflict with the Koran,
which in the end is too hasty to be more than a symptom, the symptom
of another, much more serious problem: if God remains God only
under one title, and as the One (which Christians grant as much as
anyone), it is necessary not only to understand that no multiplication
occurs when the Son and the Spirit are joined to the Father; above
all it is necessary to make clear why, in order to avoid polytheism
and respect monotheism, one should *not* adopt an emanationist, or
at least a subordinationist, model (which would also authorize a
wider syncretism, and thus, in the popular sense, a wider ecumenism).

[1] Athanasius, *De Decretis Nicaeae*, 26, in *Patrologiae cursus completus, Series Graeca*, ed.
Jacques-Paul Migne, 161 vols. (Paris: Migne, 1857–66) (subsequent references to
this edition will be indicated by the abbreviation "PG" followed by the volume
number and column number in Arabic numerals), PG 25, col. 465, quoting
Denys of Rome.

[2] Erik Petersen, *Der Monotheismus als politisches Problem* [1935], included in Erik
Petersen, *Theologische Traktate* (Würzburg: Echter, 1994).

[3] Gregory of Nazianzus has recourse to these terms in order to turn against their
authors the Arian and Pneumatomachian objections that are precisely present within
the trinitarian discussion (*Orationes*, XXXI, 13, PG 36, 148c; *Discours théologiques*, ed.
P. Gallay, "Sources chrétiennes" no. 250 [Paris: Cerf, 1978], pp. 300–2).

Nevertheless, all these objections and possible responses seem to share a common point: under the title of the One, two different (if not divergent) questions are being merged together, that of unicity, and that of unity. Now, contrary to the almost arithmetic requirement that has brought us into the no doubt contestable habit of calling the two other religions (Judaism and Islam) "monotheisms", which suppose unicity as the paradigm of unity, Christian theology draws both its originality and its difficulty from the fact that it thinks unity on the basis of unicity. But why *must* it do so? Because it receives, through uncovering, the charge to think God's identity as the identity of love, or more precisely as love put into operation *in itself*, and thus put into operation as communion. Identity does not come purely and simply from unicity, nor is it reduced to it. Identity comes from unity, and unity comes in turn from the putting into operation of love. And this putting into operation is brought about through communion. The unicity of God is defined, then, by the unity of communion in God— well beyond the empty unicity of numeration, and thus well beyond the arithmetic multiplication of the divine. This properly theological demand has a consequence for the phenomenal understanding of the Trinity: not only should the phenomenality of the un-covering avoid contradicting the unity of communion of the one God, but it should corroborate it. Here, this means that phenomenality must corroborate unity by rendering it manifest *in its own way*—that is, phenomenally, by making the unity of the communion of the trinitarian terms appear as a phenomenon. That the communion *in operation* might appear is not a foregone conclusion, any more than is conceiving the unicity on the basis of the unity.

But these questions become all the more difficult when they come to light against the background of another, at least potential, difficulty that we ran into with the epistemological interpretation of revelation. That is, the distinction between, on the one hand, the natural know-ledge of God through the light of reason and, on the other, the supernatural knowledge through divine revelation, very quickly grew into a distinction between, on the one hand, the philosophical (that is, metaphysical) knowledge of the existence of God, and thus of his unicity, and, on the other, the revealed (supernatural, "theological") knowledge of his trinity. Thus, within orthodox Christian thought itself (including and, in a sense, above all after the Chalcedonian

formulation), the lack of connection between the plurality of persons and the unicity of the divine nature was reinforced with an apparently very clear distinction between the modes of knowledge, or between two sciences (or quasi-sciences). These added differentiations culminate in the scholastic, but also conceptual, distribution of the revelation of God into two separate treatises, *de Deo uno*, and *de Deo trino*. Thomas Aquinas already accepts this ontic distinction (God existing, and God in his essence), which is confirmed right away by an epistemological distinction (between natural reason and supernatural science): "*Virtus autem creativa Dei est communis toti Trinitati: unde pertinet ad unitatem essentiae, non ad distinctionem personarum. Per rationem igitur naturalem cognosci possunt de Deo ea quae pertinent ad unitatem essentiae, non autem ea quae pertinent ad distinctionem Personarum*—Now, the creative power of God is common to the whole Trinity; and hence it belongs to the unity of his essence, and not to the distinction of the persons. Therefore, by natural reason we can know regarding God what belongs to the unity of his essence, but not what belongs to the distinction of his persons."[4] The superposition of these two distinctions could not fail to produce an effect as radical as that of the epistemological interpretation of revelation, which we already glimpsed. This effect consists in nothing less than the division of the divine substance (precisely, that of the *Tractatus de divina substantia*) into two neatly distinguished parts: "*Dicemus igitur in hoc opere de Deo, ut unus est, et ut trinus, et ita duas habebit partes principales, prior de Dei Unitate dici potest, altera de Trinitate*—Thus in this work we discuss God as one and as triune; therefore it will have two parts, the first of which, one might say, is on the unity of God, the second on the Trinity."[5] The motive for this division goes even further: it is not only about distinguishing between two sciences, or marking the difference between unity and plurality; it is about deciding what belongs *or not* to the divine essence, which is to say, it is about considering the possibility that God can be and be known as such without regard for the

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[4] Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, Ia, q. 32, a. 1, *resp.*, in Sancti Thomae de Aquino, *Summa Theologiae* (Cinisello Balsamo, Italy: Edizioni San Paolo, 1988), p. 163; English translation in *Basic Writings of St. Thomas Aquinas*, ed. Anton Pegis (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing, 1997), vol. I, p. 316 (modified).

[5] Francisco Suárez, SJ, *Tractatus de divina substantia*, Prooemium, *Opera omnia*, ed. M. André (Paris: Ludovicus Vivès, 1856), vol. I, p. XXIII.

trinitarian communion. "*Contraria sententia mihi semper placuit, juxta quam assero, relationes, seu personalitates, vel personas divinas non esse de essentia Divinitatis, nec Dei, ut Deus est*—I have always preferred the contrary thesis, according to which I affirm that the relations, whether the personalities or the persons, *do not fall under* the divine essence, or under God as such."[6] In other words, the persons of the Trinity do not define the essence of God, and the divinity of God is thus set out as such, without the trinitarian communion. How do we assess this surprising (and, indeed, so minimally Christian) conclusion? In a sense, it is only the logical end-point of a decision that goes at least as far back as Boethius: "*Ita igitur substantia continet unitatem, relatio multi-plicat trinitatem*—So then, the divine substance contains the Unity, while the divine relation multiplies the Trinity."[7] In another sense, it is nothing less than a kind of monotheism by subtraction, affixed to revealed knowledge, and which leaves itself open to two equally formidable objections.

The first is a properly theological objection: rejecting the trinity of persons as a multiplication added on to a unity already gained by substance clearly presupposes that the *substantia* suffices to designate the divinity of God; and thus that God can be named as substance. But is the term *substantia* in fact proper for God? Strangely, Boethius himself does not think so: "*Nam substantia in illo [sc. Deo] non est vere substantia sed ultra substantiam*—For substance in Him is not really substance, but is beyond substance."[8] Moreover, here Boethius simply

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[6] Ibid., bk. IV, chap. 5, par. 2, p. 628 (emphasis added).

[7] Boethius, *Quomodo Trinitas unus Deus ac non tres dii*, ch. VI (PL 64, 1255a; Boèce, *Traités théologiques*, Bilingual Latin-French edition, ed. and trans. Axel Tisserand [Paris: Flammarion, 2000], p. 164); English translation: *On the Trinity*, in *The Theological Tractates*, Bilingual Latin-English edition, trans. H. F. Stewart and E. K. Rand, in *Loeb Classical Library*, *Latin Series* (London: Heinemann, 1918), p. 29, modified.

[8] Ibid., ch. IV (PL 64, 1252, ed. Tisserand, p. 153; *On the Trinity*, p. 17, modified). See my remarks in "*Substantia*. Note sur l'usage de *substantia* par St. Augustin et sur son appartenance à l'histoire de la métaphysique," in I. Atucha, D. Calma, C. König-Paralong, and I. Zavarrero (eds.), *Mots médiévaux offerts à Ruedi Imbach* (Fédération Internationale des Instituts d'Études Médiévales. Textes et Études du Moyen-Age, 53, Porto, 2011), and those of Axel Tisserand, in Boèce, *Traités théologiques*, p. 53. The question could go further: can *essentia* itself be understood univocally and properly of God?

repeats a reticence of St. Augustine: "*Unde manifestum est Deum abusive substantiam vocari, ut nomine usitatiore intellegatur essentia, quod vere ac proprie dicitur; ita ut fortasse solum Deum dici oporteat essentiam*—So it is clear that God is improperly called a substance, instead of understanding him by the more usual word essence, which is said truly and properly; such that perhaps only God ought to be called *essence*."[9] But if *substance* is not fitting for God (for every substance implies accidents, while everything that is in God is, according to the theological adage, God himself), what does it mean to set forth divinity as a substance, and how can this substance without the trinity of persons put forth the divinity of God?

A second objection follows—a philosophical one, but which draws out the consequence of the theological decision that we have just identified: if, in considering God, the persons do not constitute the unity of God, and above all if the unity of God owes nothing to the persons (which instead would weaken that unity), how exactly does this plurality of persons still qualify the essence of God? Didn't Kant give the only logical response to such a question? Namely: the Trinity allows us no understanding whatsoever of God as such, and the treatise *de Deo uno* must be examined before the tribunal of reason, without reference to the treatise *de Deo trino*, since the possible plurality of persons does not belong essentially or substantially to the divinity of God. In other words, "The doctrine of the Trinity, taken literally, has *no practical relevance at all*, even if we think we understand it; and it is even more clearly irrelevant if we realize that it transcends all our concepts. Whether we are to worship three or ten persons in the Divinity makes no difference: the pupil will implicitly accept one as readily as the other because he has no concept at all of one God in several persons (hypostases), and still more so because this distinction can make no difference in his

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[9]   St. Augustine, *De Trinitate*, VII, 5, 10, in *Œuvres de saint Augustin*, vol. 15: *La Trinité I (Livres 1–VII)*, eds. E. Hendrikx, M. Mellet, Th. Camelot (Paris: Institut d'Etudes augustiniennes, 1997), p. 538; English trans. *The Trinity*, trans. Edmund Hill, OP (Brooklyn, NY: New City Press, 1991), p. 228, modified. See: "…*substantia, vel, si melius dicitur, essentia Dei*—the substance, or to say it better, the essence of God" (*De Trinitate*, III, 11, 21; *La Trinité*, p. 328; English trans. Hill, p. 140, modified).

rules of conduct."[10] And further, if the plurality of persons only adds
after the fact to the unity of essence, not only does it teach nothing
about the one God (the only God that metaphysics can consider,
because it holds God to the sole determinations of being [*l'étant*],
and thus to substance or essence), but the number of this plurality
itself remains indeterminate, because lacking any theoretical valid-
ity. As a result there is nothing *to do* with the plurality of persons.
Obviously, this blasphemy against the mystery of the Trinity testifies
at once to a logic and a failure. To a logic, because it draws the
almost inevitable conclusion from the distinction accepted by the
majority of modern theologians, dividing the treatise *de Deo uno* from
the treatise *de Deo trino*. To a failure, because Kant does not for a
moment suspect that the Trinity, precisely as communion of per-
sons, could, against his conclusion, uncover God in the most radical
way for practice itself, "*schlechterdings . . . fürs Praktische*"; but in order
to conceive this, it would be necessary to recognize that what is at
issue in the plurality (in the number) of persons is not an optional

[10] Immanuel Kant, *The Conflict of the Faculties*, trans. and intro. Mary J. Gregor
(New York: Abaris Books, 1979), pp. 65, 67, modified; the original reads: "*Aus der
Dreieinigkeitslehre, nach dem Buchstaben genommen, läßt sich schlechterdings* nichts fürs
Praktische machen*, wenn man sie gleich zu verstehen glaubte, noch weniger aber wenn man
inne wird, daß sie gar alle unsere Begriffe übersteigt. Ob wir in der Gottheit drei oder zehn Personen
zu verehren haben, wird der Lehrling mit gleicher Leichtigkeit aufs Wort annehmen, weil er von
einem Gott in mehreren Personen (Hypostasen) gar keinen Begriff hat, noch mehr aber, weil er aus
dieser Verschiedenheit für seinen Lebenswandel gar keine verschiedenen Regeln ziehen kann*"
(Kant, *Streit der Fakultäten*, I, 1, Appendix II, 1, Ak. A. VII, pp. 38–9). See in the
same vein Friedrich Schleiermacher: "*. . . die Offenbarungen zeigen, durch welche sie* [*sc.
dichterische Gemüter*] *einen solchen Gott* [*sc. ein von der Menschheit gänzlich unterschiedenes
Individuum, ein einziges Exemplar einer eigener Gattung*] *kennen*—*einen oder mehrere, ich verachte
in der Religion nichts so sehr als die Zahl*—*so soll er mir eine erwünschte Entdeckung sein, und
gewiß werden sich aus dieser Offenbarung in mir mehrere entwickeln*—if they [that is, poetic
types] show me the revelations through which they know such a God [namely, an
individual being wholly distinct from humanity, the single example of a particular
type]—one or more revelations, for I despise nothing in religion as much as
numbers—that will constitute a desired discovery for me, and certainly from this
revelation several more will develop in me" (*Über die Religion. Reden an die Gebildeten
unter ihren Verächtern*, II, ed. H.-J. Rothert [Hamburg: Meiner, 1958], 1970, p. 70
[after the original edition of 1799, pp. 125–6]; English trans.: Schleiermacher, *On
Religion: Speeches to its Cultured Despisers*, trans. Richard Crouter [Cambridge: Cam-
bridge University Press, 1996], p. 51).

and arbitrary appendix added on to the unicity of God, but the economy of an apocalypse of love, such that it constitutes the essence, the *practical* essence, of God. Kant, who eliminates love from theory and above all from practical reason, had not the slightest inkling of this. Consequently, we will need a different guide.

It remains the case that Kant's thesis on the uselessness of the plurality of persons marks a decisive moment in metaphysical theology, even more decisive than his thesis on the impossibility of proving the existence of the one God. For the latter thesis will continue to be contested after him, while the indetermination of the Trinity will remain as the horizon of the question of God. Hölderlin, Schelling, and even Hegel, each in his own way, will remain faithful to the in fact Kantian position of the *Systemprogramm*: "*Monotheismus der Vernunft und des Herzens, Polytheismus der Einbildungskraft und der Kunst, dies ist's, was wir bedürfen*—Monotheism of the reason and of the heart, polytheism of the imagination and of art: this is what we need."[11] Schelling poses the question quite clearly. It is necessary to start from monotheism: ". . . the concept of *monotheism*, that is, the supreme concept of every true religion—but also, and consequently, the one from which it is necessary to start if one wants to propose an objective explanation of false religion." But this monotheism can be abstract, the simple numerical unicity of an essence perfectly equal to itself; it is therefore necessary to draw distinctions: ". . . thus, monotheism as idea from monotheism as dogma, or further, from actual monotheism. We are dealing with this latter form when the powers are mutually excluded and an actual plurality is posed in God." Still to be conceived is what makes the truth of this plurality in actual monotheism. To what authority do we entrust "the idea that God is not (as in mere theism) the One, pure and simple, but he who, *as* God, is one, or further, the idea that the affirmation of the unicity of God is not simply

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[11] *Das älteste Systemprogramm des deutschen Idealismus*, in G. W. F. Hegel, *Werke* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1970), vol. 1, p. 235. See Goethe: "*Wir sind naturforschend Pantheisten, dichtend Polytheisten, sittlich Monotheisten*—We are pantheists when we study nature, polytheists when we write poetry, monotheists in our morality" (*Maximen und Reflexionen*, § 807).

negative and that it is perhaps positive, that is to say, affirmative?"[12] Schelling undertakes to think this "affirmative" unicity on the basis of the difference of "powers (*Potenzen*)", and thus of Being in its (negative or positive) moments, just as Hegel undertakes to conceive it on the basis of the difference between logical figures (the concept, the negative), and thus, once again, on the basis of Being. Nietzsche too will remain within this horizon when he tries to raise up "new gods", and Heidegger will go even further when he awaits the "last god". For it certainly does not go without saying that philosophical reason can apprehend more of God than his essence (or his substance), or, in other words, more than his unicity, according to whatever Being allows us to conceive of it; nor that it can conceive this unicity on the basis of a more radical unity—the unity of a truly "affirmative" communion.

Can the theology of *sacra doctrina* undo, correct, and surpass what it first allowed—the distinction between the unity (essence) and the plurality (persons) in God—and then provoked—a God thinkable *without* the trinitarian communion, a unicity without unity or communion? We

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[12] F. W. J. Schelling, *Philosophie der Offenbarung*, II, 1, lesson XIII: "... *auf den Begriff des* Monotheismus *geführt, d. h. auf denjenigen Begriff, der der höchste aller wahren Religion ist – eben deshalb auch der, von welchem eine (objektive) Erklärung der falschen Religion auszugehen hat. . . . Wir unterschieden damals den Monotheismus im Begriff vom Monotheismus als Dogma oder dem wirklichen Monotheismus. Letzterer ist da, wo die Potenzen sich gegenseitig ausschließen, also eine wirkliche Mehrheit in Gott gesetzt ist. Denn vor der Spannung ist diese Mehrheit in Gott nur potentiell, und dies nannten wir den Monotheismus im Begriff. Diesem selbst aber liegt als letzter Gedanke zu Grund, daß Gott nicht (wie im bloßen Theismus) der schlechthin Einzige, sondern der* als *Gott einzige ist, oder daß die Behauptung der Einzigkeit in Gott nicht eine bloß negative, daß sie nur eine positive, d.h. affirmative sein könne*" (*Sämmtliche Werke* [Stuttgart: Cotta, 1858], vol. III, pp. 281–2; French trans.: *Philosophie de la Révélation*, directed by J.-F. Marquet and J.-F. Courtine [Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1991], p. 132). See also: "*Ist Gott seinem* Wesen *nach* Einer, *in seinen* Existenzformen *aber* Mehrere, *so enthält Polytheismus die Existenzformen, und der darauf folgende aus der Überwindung des Polytheismus hervorgehende Monotheismus ist die* gewußte *Einheit als Resultat. Der wahre Monotheismus ist ein* freies *Verhältniß des Menschen zu Gott als* absolut freiem *Geist*—If God is in his *essence* One, and in his *forms of existence several*, then polytheism includes the forms of existence, and the monotheism that issues from the overcoming of polytheism is the *known* unity taken as the result. True monotheism is a *free* relation of man to God as *absolutely free* Spirit." Schelling, *Philosophie der Offenbarung, 1841–42* (notes by J. Frauenstädt, WS 1841/42), ed. M. Frank (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1977), p. 381.

should probably understand the thesis posed in principle by Karl Rahner as such an attempt: "The Trinity of the economy of salvation *is* the immanent Trinity and vice versa."[13] Of course, the formula is not without ambiguity,[14] but one can (and must) hear it first as an echo of what Karl Barth was saying about the relation between Revelation and the Trinity: "We are not saying, then, that Revelation is the basis of the Trinity, as though God were the triune God only in His revelation and only for the sake of His revelation. What we are saying is that Revelation is the basis of the doctrine of the Trinity; the doctrine of the Trinity has no other basis apart from this."[15] And this is what we too

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[13] Karl Rahner, "Bemerkungen zum Dogmatischen Traktat 'De Trinitate'", *Schriften zur Theologie*, vol. IV (Einsiedeln: Benziger, 1960), p. 115; English translation: *Theological Investigations*, vol. IV, trans. Kevin Smyth (Baltimore: Helicon Press, London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1966), p. 87. See: "*Wir gehen von dem Satz aus, daß die ökonomische Trinität die immanente Trinität* ist *und umgekehrt*—We are starting out from the proposition that the economic Trinity *is* the immanent Trinity and vice versa" ("Einzigkeit und Dreifaltigkeit Gottes im Gespräch mit dem Islam" in *Schriften zur Theologie*, vol. XIII [Einsiedeln: Benziger, 1978], p. 139; English translation: *Theological Investigations*, vol. XVIII, trans. Edward Quinn [NY: Crossroad, 1983], p. 114).

[14] As Hans Urs von Balthasar notes clearly: "*. . . daß christlich die ökonomische Trinität gewiß als die* Auslegung *der immanenten erscheint, die aber als der tragende Grund der ersten mit ihr gerade* nicht einfach *identifiziert werden darf. Denn andernfalls droht die immanente und ewige Trinität Gottes in der ökonomischen aufzugehen, klarer gesagt, Gott in den Weltprozeß hinein verschlungen zu werden und nur durch diesen hindurch zu sich selbst zu kommen*—while, according to the Christian faith, the economic Trinity assuredly appears as the interpretation of the immanent Trinity, it may not be identified with it, for the latter grounds and supports the former. Otherwise the immanent, eternal Trinity would threaten to dissolve the economic; in other words, God would be swallowed up in the world process—a necessary stage, in this view, if he is fully to realize himself" (*Theodramatik*, II/2 [Einsiedeln: Johannes Verlag, 1978], p. 466, emphasis added; English translation: *Theo-Drama: Theological Dramatic Theory. Vol. III. Dramatis Personae: Persons in Christ*, trans. Graham Harrison [San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1992], p. 508. The same discussion of the "vice versa" ["*umgekehrt*"] is found in Ghislain Lafont, *Peut-on connaître Dieu en Jésus-Christ?* [Paris: Cerf, 1969], pp. 190sq.). At stake is a conception of the economy itself of the immanent Trinity as giving place to an *interpretation* that is not summed up in the chronological *unfolding* of the history of the world.

[15] Karl Barth, *Kirchliche Dogmatik*, I/1, p. 329; English translation: *Church Dogmatics*, I.1, *The Doctrine of the Word of God §8–12: The Revelation of God: The Triune God*, Study Edition. Eds. G. W. Bromiley, T. F. Torrance (New York: T&T Clark, 2010), p. 18, modified ("Revelation" capitalized).

understand in turn: Revelation is the basis of the Trinity, because the mode of uncovering (*apokalypsis*, *oikonōmia*) of the *mystērion tou Theou* (of the Trinity) is itself articulated in a trinitarian way, and mobilizes the three of the Trinity as such ("immanent"). Revelation reveals the Trinity and, above all, it reveals it in a *trinitarian way*; the Trinity's mode of uncovering remains so perfectly and integrally trinitarian, that the Trinity alone succeeds in revealing the Trinity, and wants only to reveal the Trinity itself. In a word, the Trinity offers not only the content of the uncovering, but also its mode of manifestation. Or better: the mode of manifestation (the phenomenal *wie*) coincides exactly with that which manifests itself (the *Sich-selbst-zeigende*). But this warning and placement is not yet enough to fix the place and the logic of a unity through communion which, in God, defines his unicity. It is not enough merely to recall a necessity to satisfy it, however unquestionable it may be (e.g., the un-covering of the Trinity happens in a trinitarian manner). In speaking of an economic Revelation, it is still necessary to determine exactly what economy we are talking about.

Here certain precautions are necessary. The economy includes history, but is not reduced to the common (metaphysical) concept of history, since we are not talking about a succession or a collection of objects, but rather a discontinuous diachrony of events. Now, in order to conceive (and receive) events correctly, it is not enough to substitute the *gesta Dei* of an imprecise historical interpretation of Revelation (one that is linear, chronological) for the *logia* of a propositional interpretation of Revelation. Moreover, and strictly speaking, Revelation does not belong to history (neither in the sense of the *Historie* of the historians, nor in that of the philosophical *Geschichte*), but is registered in, or rather *through*, events, that is, saturated phenomena, which are un-objectifiable by concepts, and the coming of which (unexpected arrival, *arrivage*) therefore imposes an unlimited hermeneutics on their witnesses. For lack of this phenomenological precision, the historical interpretation of Revelation fails to move beyond the aporiae of its propositional interpretation, merely repeating its idolatry—no longer an idolatry of concepts, but that of "facts", or worse, of the "direction of history". This temptation, by the way, is in no way modern, or even post-modern. When Schelling concludes his *Philosophy of Revelation* by dividing up the three successive Churches according to the three persons of the Trinity (the Church of the Father: Peter; then that of

the Son: Paul; and, finally, that of the Spirit: John), not only does
he give in to a *weak* (because merely chronological) historical inter-
pretation of the revelatory function of the Trinity, and ignore abso-
lutely the identification here between the revealed and the mode of
revelation (between the phenomenon and the *wie* of its phenomenal-
ization); but, above all, he returns, certainly echoing Joachim of Fiore,
to a famous, but already insufficient, interpretation of Gregory of
Nazianzus: "The Old Testament proclaimed the Father openly, and
the Son more obscurely. The New manifested the Son, and suggested
the Deity of the Spirit. Now and henceforth (*nyn*) the Spirit Himself
dwells among us, and supplies us with a clearer demonstration of
Himself."[16] Taken literally, the narrowly historical temporalization
of the Trinity flattens the economy into chronology, rather than
sanctioning history as revelatory in a trinitarian manner. There is no
objectivity that can define what is put into operation in the economy,
and this is even less so if this economy must be capable of being
unfolded in a trinitarian manner, in its phenomenal given as well as,
and perhaps above all, in its mode of phenomenalization.

Can such a model be conceived? At least we can fix the negative
conditions it would have to satisfy. First of all, since the issue is not one
of monotheism in the abstract sense of the word, but that of the unicity
of a unity, and of the unity of a union through communion, it is
necessary not to arithmetize the plurality more than the unicity. Basil
of Caesarea recalls it quite clearly: "We proclaim each of the hypos-
tases as unique (*monakhōs*); and, when count we must, we do not let an
ignorant arithmetic (*apaideutō arithmesei*) carry us away to the idea of a
plurality of Gods."[17] Second, if the unity that is at issue *here* cannot be
told according to number (unicity, plurality), how must it be told? As

[16] Gregory Nazianzen, *Orationes*, XXXI, 26, PG 36, 161c; *Discours théologiques*,
ed. P. Gallay, "Sources chrétiennes" (Paris: Cerf, 1978), p. 326.

[17] Basil of Caesarea, *Liber de Spiritu Sancto*, XVIII, 44, PG 32, 148a; *Traité sur le
Saint-Esprit*, "Sources chrétiennes" no. 17bis, ed. Benoît Pruche (Paris: Cerf, 1968),
p. 404; English translations throughout this lecture are adapted from: St. Basil the
Great, *The Book of Saint Basil on the Spirit*, in Philip Schaff and Henry Wace, eds., *The
Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church*, Series II, v. 8, trans. the Rev.
Blomfield Jackson (London: Rivington, 1894; reprint Edinburgh: T & T Clark,
and Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1996),
pp. 1–50.

the unity of an union, of an union as communion; that is to say, according to love (charity). In this context, the unity (and even the unicity that it makes possible) no longer contradicts the plurality of the persons, since this plurality instead constitutes the condition of the unity, and the unity the accomplishment of the plurality. Of course, within the horizon of the object or of beings, the principle of identity reigns, which imposes the conversion of the *ens* into *unum* and makes the unicity inversely proportional to the plurality. But things are otherwise in terms of the horizon of love (of charity); in this case, and only in this case, one can say: the more relation there is between the persons, the more unity there is in the communion. It of course remains actually to experience this paradox, and thus first of all to conceive it, without being limited to affirming it. Third, such a model must not attempt to approach the economic Trinity from an immanent point of view ("from the point of view of God"), as if we could begin from the Father, as if the monarchy had a meaning for us, as if we could have another relation to the Trinity than that of a witness in front of an uncovering that remains a paradox. On the contrary, it is necessary that this model describe our access to the uncovering of what by right remains nevertheless inaccessible to us.

We could count up the rival models that dogmatic theology has, in the course of its development, mobilized in order to thematize the Trinity. Apart from the most well-known models (ontic, chronological, deductive, etc.), it seems possible to expound another, vouched for by at least two "grave doctors" (Basil of Caesarea, and Augustine of Hippo), but which has nevertheless remained quite marginal. Aside from the fact that it better respects the negative conditions just mentioned than others do, this model also figures within the economy, but an economy that operates on the basis of phenomenality, since the Trinity effectively manifests itself there according to the logic of the icon. Basil's treatise *On the Holy Spirit* can, then, if one attentively considers one of its most significant passages, be read as more than a mere defense and illustration of the trinitarian ontic model (*ousia, hypostasis, prosōpon*), after the manner of the *Theological Orations* of Gregory Nazianzen: "For we do not count by way of addition, gradually making increase from unity to multitude, and saying one, two, and three,—nor yet first, second, and third. For 'I', God, 'am the first, and I am the last' (Rev. 1:8). And hitherto

we have never, even at the present time, heard of a second God. Worshipping as we do God of God, we both confess what is proper (*to idiazon*) to each hypostasis, and at the same time abide by the Monarchy. We do not fritter away the theology [of the Trinity] in a divided plurality, thanks to (*dia*) this: contemplating one and the same form, so to speak (*mian . . . tēn oionei morphēn theōreisthai*), in God the Father and God the Only begotten, [the form] put into an icon (*eneikonizomenēn*) by the invariable [mirror] (*aparallacto*) of the divinity."[18] This formulation calls for several remarks. If we wish to be liberated from an arithmetic model of the Trinity (presupposed by those who, in the name of their conception of "monotheism", only want, or rather *are only able* to see polytheism in the Trinity), it is necessary to pass on to a model in which an icon is at issue—precisely "one and the same icon, so to speak". The entire difficulty lies in this reserve or implicit restriction: how could one and the same form (*morphē*) hold for the Father *and* the Son—and then, what about the Spirit?

We find confirmation right away that the essential issue here is that of the icon, and thus of phenomenality, in the discussion about whether the Father and the Son are one or two; they are *both* one *and* two, depending on whether one considers the person (*prosōpon*) or the nature (*physis*), or even if one considers the icon of a king; for, in the icon of the king, we do not see a second king, but "a single authority (*hē exousia mia*)". Here Basil introduces a formula that has since become famous, because the second Council of Nicaea adopted it in order to resolve the iconoclastic quarrel: "The honor rendered to the icon is transferred to the prototype, *hē gar tēs eikonos timē epi to prōtotypon diabanei.*"[19] But, one might ask, how and why does the honor pass from the icon to its original? Answer: because, from a phenomenological point of view, the visibility of the icon is distinguished by a remarkable property: it bears not only on itself, but also, or even *first of all*, on another. The icon, a kind of double visible, or

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[18] Basil of Caesarea, *On the Holy Spirit*, XVIII, 44, PG 32, 149b; and *Traité sur le Saint-Esprit*, p. 406 (modified).

[19] *On the Holy Spirit*, XVIII, 45, PG 32, 149c; *Traité sur le Saint-Esprit*, p. 406, which is found in the canon of The Second Council of Nicaea (the year 787), in Denzinger, § 601, p. 207.

visible with a double effect, has the property of not appropriating its own visibility to itself alone, of not showing itself there exclusively, of not making seen that which every other visible limits itself to showing—a visible that shows only itself, as one numbered among all the others. By contrast, the visibility that the icon keeps refers it back to another term, puts it at the beck and call of that which, without it, would remain invisible, and which does not allow itself to be seen or aimed at except through it, the icon. This other term certainly appears *like* itself, but without showing itself directly *through* itself, since it borrows its visibility from the icon, with which it is nevertheless not identified. This phenomenal arrangement (the iconic model) can enter in here, in "theology", because it corresponds formally to the trinitarian model of the manifestation of the Father in the Son, understood himself *as* the Christ, according to Colossians 1:15: "He who is the icon of the invisible God, *hos estin eikōn tou theou tou aoratou.*"[20] Christ appears as the visible icon of the Father, who remains invisible, because the believer, in looking at his face *as it should be* looked at, not only sees Jesus, the son of the carpenter of Nazareth, *as* the Christ, but also the Christ *as* the Son, and thus, finally, the Son *as* the Father. Because the Father and the Son share the same face, or precisely, the same icon with double visibility, they not only manifest themselves "in, so to speak, one and the same form", but their trinitarian identity is uncovered in the process of their common manifestation, or rather, in the process of their communion in the manifestation. In this way we find accomplished, iconically and in a trinitarian manner, what is to be conceived in the foundational paradox of Revelation understood as an uncovering: "Whoever sees me, sees the Father, *ho heōrakōs eme heōraken ton patera*" (Jn. 14:9).

Nevertheless, a question, or even a massive objection, remains: neither the text of Basil I quoted a moment ago nor the argument that I drew from it mentions the Holy Spirit; they are limited to indicating that the trinitarian communion of the Son and the Father is uncovered phenomenally in the double visibility of the unique icon. And yet, we must not remain at the level of this appearance, but go

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[20] This text is a reference point, constantly quoted or presupposed, and to be confirmed by Rom. 8:29.

back to another characteristic element of Basil's text, which is added
to the first, already noted, of the "one and only form, so to speak", for
the Son and the Father. This other element qualifies the "one and only
form" as an icon, by attributing to it its being "put into an icon
(*eneikonizomeneē*) by the invariable mirror of the divinity". The verb,
the participle of which I am here translating literally as "put into an
icon", occurs rather infrequently.[21] Its import here, then, seems all the
more significant; it indicates that the image can remain "one and
only" for two faces (that of the Son, that of the Father) only to the
extent that it takes on or receives the status of an icon, or in short, finds
itself "put into an icon". In order to see the face of the Son *as* the face
of the invisible Father, it is necessary to cease looking at the face of
Jesus simply as such, and to see it *in a certain way*, according to a double
visibility, *as* putting into view the in-visible of the Father. The putting
into an icon of the image, as Basil describes it, thus consists not only in
qualifying the face of the Son as an icon, but reciprocally in inscribing
in the very same icon the Father's invisibility. This is, by the way, what
John of Damascus says explicitly when he comments on the formula
borrowed by the Second Council of Nicaea from this text of Basil:
"the prototype is what is found put into an icon (*to eneikonizomenon*), and
from which there comes the one who orients."[22] Thus one can say
equally that the Father and the Son find themselves put into an icon
precisely because only one is necessary for both, there is one and the
same form for the two—a visibility with double entry. Irenaeus per-
fectly understood this trinitarian function of the icon: "*Invisibile etenim
Filii Pater, visibile autem Patris Filius*—the Father is the invisible of the
Son, the Son the visible of the Father."[23]

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[21] Benoît Pruche's "Sources chrétiennes" edition, *Traité sur le Saint-Esprit*,
p. 406, upholds this lesson, attested to by the principal manuscripts, against
enizomenēn. Lampe devotes no entry to it in the *Greek Patristic Lexicon*, *ad. loc*. (Oxford:
Oxford University Press, 1961), while the *Dictionnaire Grec-Français* of Anatole Bailly
(4th ed., Paris: Hachette, 1903), which registers it (entry: *eneikonizo*, p. 675), only
mentions two occurrences: Stobaeus, *Ecl.*, IV, 334, and Plutarch, *Moralia*, 40d.

[22] John of Damascus, *Expositio Fidei orthodoxae*, IV, 16, PG 94, 1169a. See Basil,
Contra Eunomium, II, 16, PG 29, 605a.

[23] Irenaeus of Lyon, *Adversus Haereses*, IV, 6, 6, "Sources chrétiennes," no. 100,
ed. A. Rousseau, *et alii* (Paris: Cerf, 1965), p. 450; English trans.: *The Ante-Nicene
Fathers: The Apostolic Fathers. Justin Martyr. Irenaeus.*, trans. Alexander Roberts and

But once again, isn't the Holy Spirit absent from the phenomenal model of the icon? Moreover, can we assign to this model an authentically *trinitarian* function if it only puts into operation a *double* visibility (of the Son *as* of the Father), while the Spirit remains the pre-eminently *non-visible* hypostasis (neither directly visible like the Son, nor indirectly like the Father)? The biblical texts suggest a different conclusion. Asked by Jesus to respond to the question: "But who do you say that I am?", Peter confesses: "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." In other words, Peter is the first of all the disciples to succeed in performing the iconic double visibility of Jesus, verifying the rule that "He who has seen me has seen the Father" (Jn. 14:9). And Jesus reckons this very confession as a grace, for, regarding his trinitarian identity, he states, "flesh and blood has not revealed (uncovered, *apekalypsen*) this to you, but my Father who is in heaven" (Mt. 16:15–17). Which indicates that, in order to accomplish the phenomenal function of the icon (double visibility), it is necessary, beyond the two terms of the icon, to have grace, which is to say, to have at the same time the gift, the art, and the knack of taking it into view. It is necessary to know how to see the icon *as* such. This knowledge proceeds from the Father, and suffices for defining the *un*covered (*apokalyptein, apokalypsis*). And it is this grace, this gift, and this art that Christ himself receives and experiences through the action of the Holy Spirit: "In that same hour he rejoiced in the Holy Spirit and said, 'I thank you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that you have *covered over* (*apekrypsas*) these things for the wise and shrewd, and *uncovered* them for the simple'" (Lk. 10:21). The icon shows the Son *as*

James Donaldson (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1903), p. 469. This sheds light on another formula: "*Agnitio enim Patris Filius, agnitio autem Filii in Patre et per Filium revelata* – For the Son is the knowledge of the Father; but the knowledge of the Son is in the Father, and has been revealed through the Son" (IV, 6, 7, p. 453; English translation: *The Ante-Nicene Fathers: The Apostolic Fathers. Justin Martyr. Irenaeus.*, trans. Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson [New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1903], p. 469). St. Augustine takes this up and widens it to the entire Trinity: "*Visibilem namque Filii solius personam invisibilis Trinitas operata est*—the invisible three producing what is the visible person of the Son alone" (*De Trinitate*, II, 10, 18, "Bibliothèque augustinienne," vol. 15, p. 228; see also pp. 204, 206; English translation Hill, *The Trinity*, p. 110).

the Father only if God gives the grace, the art, and the manner of seeing it *as it should be* seen; and God gives it *as* the Holy Spirit, as *the one who remains invisible in the icon because he shows it*: "When the Paraclete comes, whom I shall send to you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, who proceeds (*ekporeuetai*) from the Father, he will bear witness to me" (Jn. 15:26).

It seems to me that the powerful originality of the doctrine developed by Basil of Caesarea lies in its showing the invisible and indispensable function of the Holy Spirit in the working of the phenomenal (iconic) model of the Trinity. Faced with the reticence of some, even of certain Christians, to recognize the divinity of the Spirit (for, indeed, the Scriptures never literally attribute to the Spirit the title of "God"), Basil undertakes to resolve this difficulty surrounding the status of the Spirit in the immanent Trinity (the Spirit's ontic status, if we dare to put it that way, in "theology") by demonstrating the Spirit's role in the divinization of men through the incarnation of the Son (according to the "economy"); and, in particular, by demonstrating the Spirit's phenomenal function—his function of putting into light Jesus *as* the Christ and *as* the Son, and thus Jesus's being put into an icon *as* the revelatory instance of the Father. The divinity of the Spirit absolutely must be admitted first, because the Spirit divinizes (particularly in baptism), but also because he divinizes by showing the Father in the Son—putting on stage the icon of the Father, the Son as the Christ, on the face of Jesus. "Fountain of and condition (*aitia*) for the goods",[24] the Spirit is so as the "necessary condition for the accomplishment (*aitia teleutikē*)"[25] of this divinization through the putting into an icon of the face of Christ *as* the gazing face of the Father. The Spirit imposes himself as the phenomenal way of access to the iconic vision of the Father in the Son *as* Jesus the Christ, functioning as the director of the trinitarian uncovering of God, the only economy of theology.

This function is described and explained in several moments. First, it must be recognized that without the Spirit no vision or revelation could take place: "And whence did he who was ordained to announce the mysteries of the vision (*optasia*) to the Man of Desires (Dn. 10:11)

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[24] Basil, *On the Holy Spirit*, XVI, 37, PG 32, 133d; *Traité sur le Saint-Esprit*, p. 376.
[25] Basil, *On the Holy Spirit*, XVI, 38, PG 32, 136b; *Traité sur le Saint-Esprit*, p. 378.

derive the wisdom whereby he was enabled to teach hidden things, if not from the Holy Spirit? The un-covering of the mysteries is indeed the peculiar function of the Spirit (*apokalypseōs tōn mysterēriōn idiōs tō Pneumati*). . . . One cannot see it without the Spirit (*to de blepein, ouk aneu tou Pneumatos*)."[26] Second, the Spirit allows *in himself* the showing (the uncovering, the revealing) of Christ *as* the power and wisdom of God. The Spirit shows Christ *as* God because he acts as a revealing agent (in the photographic sense of the term[27])—with him, *in him*, the face of Christ suddenly appears as the imprint of the Father, whose character it bears visibly: "Hence He [the Holy Spirit] alone worthily glorifies the Lord, for, says [Christ], 'He shall glorify me' (Jn. 16:14), not as the creature, but as 'Spirit of truth', clearly showing forth the truth in Himself (*tranōs ekphainon en heautō*), and, as Spirit of wisdom, in His own greatness uncovering (*en tō heautou megethei apokalypton*) 'Christ [as] the Power of God and [as] the wisdom of God'. And as Paraclete He bears in Himself the stamp (*en heautō kharaktērizei*) of the goodness of the Paraclete who sent Him, and in His own dignity manifests the majesty of Him from whom He proceeded."[28]

Third, and above all, we can describe the putting into light and the taking into view of the icon of the Christ *as* the gaze of the Father in a mode that is, so to speak, almost optic, or even phenomenological. "And when, by means of the power that enlightens us (*dunamis phōtis-tikē*), we fix our eyes on the beauty of 'the icon of the invisible God' (Col. 1:15), and through the icon are led up to the supreme beauty of the vision of the archetype, then the Spirit of knowledge is inseparably present, in Himself bestowing on those who love to see the truth the power to show the icon (*tēn epoptikēn tēs eikonos dynamin*) in itself; not making the [de-]monstration from without (*ek tou exothen tēn deizin poioumenon*), but in Himself (*en heautō*) leading on to the full recognition. . . . It results that in Himself (*en heautō*) He shows the glory of the Only begotten, and on true worshippers He in Himself

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[26] Basil, *On the Holy Spirit*, XVI, 38, PG 32, 137c; *Traité sur le Saint-Esprit*, p. 382.

[27] [Translator's note: the French term translated here by "revealing agent" is "révélateur," which is normally translated into English as "developer."]

[28] Basil, *On the Holy Spirit*, XVIII, 46, PG 32, 152ab; *Traité sur le Saint-Esprit*, p. 410.

bestows the knowledge of God [*sc.* the Father]."[29] This can be under-
stood in the following way: the visible manifests to the human gaze the
face of Jesus; the uncovering (the revelation) consists in apprehending
this visible face *as* that of the Christ, *as* that of the Son; and in turn, this
apprehension of the visible face of the Son must allow for discerning
there [*d'y viser*], as an "icon", the invisible gaze of the Father. In short,
this is about discerning in the visible face of Jesus the iconic invisibility
of the Father. This hermeneutics (see Lk. 24:27), or rather, this
exegesis (Jn. 1:18), cannot be carried out by any human, for "No
one has ever seen God" (Jn. 1:18). And yet, the rule remains: "He
who has seen me has seen the Father" (Jn. 14:9), and no one sees the
Father except through the Son. How then can this be possible? It is
possible because nothing is impossible for God (Lk. 1:37)—here, the
Spirit—who "will guide you" (Jn. 16:13), or in other words, who gives
the trinitarian *method* of "putting into an icon".

Indeed, the Spirit positions the human gaze at the exact place and
point of view where the visible face of Christ (Jesus *as* Son) can at
once, with a sudden and perfect precision, be uncovered as the very
axis where the gaze of the Father on the Son and that of the Son at the
Father pass; and yet, this place and this point of view remain inaccess-
ible to man, who is always the prisoner of his organization of the
visible, which is not only finite, but above all *closed*; the hold of his
perspective on the opening of the visible condemns him to remain at
the center of a spectacle that consequently brings to him only objects,
common-law phenomena, invisible mirrors of his own solitary gaze.
To reach another point of view and an axis for the gaze other than this
necessarily idolatrous perspective implies an overturning of the entire
phenomenal arrangement: the movement to a complete anamor-
phosis. Anamorphosis, or the arrangement wherein the gaze of man
would be placed at the exact site required by the icon itself for it to be
recognized in full manifestation; it would be necessary to be placed at
the axis of the iconic gaze, which, suddenly and all at once, comes

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[29] Basil, *On the Holy Spirit*, XVIII, 47, PG 32, 153ab; *Traité sur le Saint-Esprit*,
p. 412, modified. See in comparable terms: "And He, like the sun, will by the aid of
your purified eye show you in Himself (*en heautō*) the icon of the invisible, and in the
blessed contemplation of the icon you shalt behold the unspeakable (*arrēton*) beauty
of the archetype" (IX, 23, PG 32, 109b; *Traité sur le Saint-Esprit*, p. 328).

forth from the face of Christ at last apprehended *as* Son, and thus *as* the manifestation of the Father. Only the Spirit can place the gaze of a man at this point of anamorphosis: the Spirit "guides" and orients, "leads" the human gaze and places it at the precise point where (like a two-dimensional image that, under a precise angle of view with the light reflected just so, suddenly makes the third dimension spring forth), *in depth*, its "optic power", its "illuminating power", once and for all, "puts into an icon" the visible face and makes "the supreme beauty of the vision of the Archetype" burst forth. The Holy Spirit puts on stage, or in view, or in short uncovers and brings forth the filial glory of the Father.

The Holy Spirit does not appear as a third spectacle in the phenomenal (iconic) arrangement of the Trinity for two reasons. First, because already there are not *two* spectacles; the Son and the Father are "put into an icon in the one and only form", constituting only a single visible *in depth*—that of the Father *through* or rather *as* the Son, Son and Christ, the unique, unsurpassable and completed "reflection of the glory and the very stamp of the person—*apaugasma tēs doxēs kai kharaktēr tēs hypostaseōs*" (Heb. 1:3) of the Father. Next, the Spirit does not appear because, "as Paraclete, he bears in himself the stamp (*en eautō kharaktērizei*)",[30] not a second stamp, but the very stamp of the Father in the Son, the seal of which he, the Spirit, alone brings the reception, and which seals man in baptism. "For it is impossible to see 'the Icon of the invisible God' (Col. 1:15) except in the illumination (*en tō phōtismo*) of the Spirit, and impracticable for him to fix his gaze on the Icon to dissever the light from the Icon, because the condition of vision is of necessity seen at the same time as that which is seen (*aition tou oran sugkathoratai*). Thus fitly and consistently do we behold the 'Brightness of the glory' of God by means of the illumination of the Spirit."[31]—The Spirit, then, is not seen precisely because he alone makes it possible to see. But already the Father was not seen otherwise than in the unique icon that is offered in the face of Jesus, seen *as* the Christ and the only Son. There is only one visibility in the manifestation of the Trinity, which is shown singly insofar as it shows

[30] Basil of Caesarea, *On the Holy Spirit*, XVIII, 46, PG 32, 152b; *Traité sur le Saint-Esprit*, p. 410.

[31] *On the Holy Spirit*, XXVI, 64, PG 32, 185bc; *Traité sur le Saint-Esprit*, p. 476.

through the triple work of its persons. This staging by the Spirit, himself invisible, is called sanctification, through the phenomenal operator of holiness itself: "...not sanctified, but sanctifying (*oukhi agiazomenon, all'agiazon*)".[32] This is further reinforced by the parallel formula of Gregory of Nazianzus: "The Spirit is truly holy, the Holy (*to Hagion*)..., holiness in person (*autoagiotēs*)."[33]

This phenomenal model of the Trinity (which, once again, does not cover the quasi-ontic model of the "theology" followed by the ecumenical councils of the period) finds an unexpected confirmation (unexpected, at least, for those who adhere to the commonly accepted account of a dissension between the Latin and the Greek "theologies") from St. Augustine. This confirmation takes place in several ways. First, in response to the "one and only form, so to speak", of the Son and of the Father "put into an icon", St. Augustine underscores that the visibility of the Son is one with that of the Father: "*Cum Pater* ostenditur, *et Filius* ostenditur qui in illo est*; et cum Filius* ostenditur, etiam ostenditur *Pater qui in illo est*—when the Father *is shown*, the Son who is in him *is shown also*, and when the Son *is shown*, the Father who is in him *is shown too*."[34] There is only one visibility, and thus only one phenomenon in and for all the Trinity: the *persona* of Christ: "*Visibilem namque Filii solius personam, invisibilis Trinitas operata est*—For the invisible Trinity produced what is the visible person of the Son alone."[35] Indeed, only the Son can show himself to us, because he alone took on a visible body for us: "...*solus in Trinitate corpus accepit*."[36] Pushing the precision even further, he adds that it is even necessary to distinguish and conjoin in the iconic model of the Trinity not only the Son and the Father (each equally invisible in the immanent Trinity), but the invisible Son as much as the Father, on the one hand, and, on the other, the visible Son: "So it is that the *invisible* Father, together with the jointly *invisible* Son, is said to have sent *this same Son made visible*.... As it is, the

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[32] *On the Holy Spirit*, XIX, 48, PG 32, 156a; and *Traité sur le Saint-Esprit*, p. 416.

[33] Gregory of Nazianzus, *Orationes*, XXV, 16, PG 35, 1121; *Discours théologiques*, p. 196.

[34] St. Augustine, *De Trinitate*, I, 18, vol. 15, p. 138; *The Trinity*, trans. Edmund Hill, OP (Brooklyn: New City Press, 1991), p. 79 (emphasis added).

[35] *De Trinitate*, II, 10, 18, vol. 15, p. 229; *The Trinity*, p. 110 (modified).

[36] *De Trinitate*, XIV, 18, 24, vol. 16, p. 412; *The Trinity*, p. 390.

'form of a servant' was so taken on that the 'form of God' remained immutable (Phil. 2:7, 6), and thus it is plain that what was *seen* in the Son was the work of Father and Son *who remain unseen*; that is, that *the Son was sent to be visible by the invisible Father together with the invisible Son.*"[37] The invisible communion of Father and Son is thus extended in a communion (fully immanent to itself) between the invisible (where of course the Son dwells with the Father) and the visible (where the Son appears in flesh and blood, in this very way including the Father with him): the visible becomes, in the body of Christ made visible, the only place of manifestation for the entire Trinity, without the passage from the invisible to the visible inflicting upon him the least bit of extra-territoriality, exteriority, or alienation. The divide, or rather, the span of all phenomenality, namely the transition from the visible to the invisible, is thus taken up and comprised precisely *inside* the Trinity, and in no way constrained to be exteriorized (after all, in what place could God ever go other than within himself?) in order to be phenom-enalized, but recapitulating in itself the space and the opening of the visibility of the invisible itself (thus refuting, in advance, yet definitively, Hegel's speculative interpretation). St. Augustine, just as much or even

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[37] *De Trinitate*, II, 5, 9: "*Quapropter Pater* invisibilis, *una cum Filio secum* invisibili, eundem Filium visibilem *faciendo misisse eum dictus est. . . . Cum vero sic accepta est 'forma servi' ut maneret incommutabilis 'forma Dei,' manifestum est quod a Patre et Filio* non apparentibus *factum sit quod* appareret *in Filio, id est, ut* ab invisibili Patre cum invisibili Filio, idem ipse Filius visibilis *mitteretur*", vol. 15, p. 204, emphasis added; *The Trinity*, p. 103, emphasis added). See other texts unfolding the same iconic model of the Trinity: "*. . . inseparabilis est operatio Patris et Filii, sed tamen ita operari Filio de illo est, de quo ipse est, id est de Patre; et ita* videt *Filius Patrem, ut quo eum* videt, *hoc ipso sit Filius. Non enim aliud illi est esse de Patre, id est nasci de Patre, quam* videre *Patrem; aut aliud* videre *operantem, quam pariter operari*—the work of Father and Son is indivisible, and yet the Son's working is from the Father just as he himself is from the Father; and the way in which the Son *sees* the Father is simply by being the Son. For him, being from the Father, that is being born of the Father, is not something different from *seeing* the Father; nor is *seeing* him working something different from his working equally" (*De Trinitate* II, 1, 3, vol. 15, p. 188, emphasis added; *The Trinity*, p. 99, emphasis added). And: "*Non ergo eo ipso quo de Patre natus est, missus dicitur Filius, sed vel eo quod* apparuit *huic mundo Verbum caro factum . . . ; vel eo quod ex tempore* cujusquam mente percipitur—So the Son of God is not said to be sent in the very fact that he is born of the Father, but either in the fact that the Word made flesh *showed* himself to this world; . . . [o]r else . . . that he is *perceived* in time *by someone's mind*" (*De Trinitate*, IV, 20, 28, vol. 15, p. 410, emphasis added; *The Trinity*, p. 173).

more clearly than Basil, established in this way the possibility or even the necessity of a phenomenal approach to the Trinity, according to the unique visibility of the Father in the Son (and vice versa) in the mode of their one and only icon.

Consequently, it becomes possible to see why it is fitting that the Spirit remain necessarily invisible within this iconic model of phenomenality. For, when examining the mission of the Spirit (intervening *as* a dove, or *as* a clap of thunder), Augustine emphasizes his essential non-appearance: "This action, visibly expressed and presented to mortal eyes, is called the sending of the Holy Spirit. Its object was *not that his very substance might be seen,* since he himself remains *invisible* and unchanging like the Father and the Son; but that the hearts of men, stirred by outward sights, might in this way be converted *starting from the public manifestations* [namely *apokalypsis,* uncovering] *of his coming in time* to the hidden eternity of he who is ever present."[38] One may nevertheless ask, and rightly so, why it is that the Spirit *must not appear* when he brings about appearing: for "… *ipsa relatio non apparet in hoc nomine*—this very relationship *does not appear* in this particular name [the Holy Spirit]." But the same sentence immediately delivers the reason for this in-appearance: "… *apparet autem cum dicitur* donum Dei (Acts 8:20)—but it is apparent when he is called *the gift of God.*"

What does the naming here of the Holy Spirit as *donum Dei* signify? First, of course, the gift given (communion in charity, participation in the very *caritas* in which God is uncovered, 1 Jn. 4:8); but also and indissolubly the giving gift: "*Donum ergo donatoris et donator doni … vocatur donum amborum*—So when we say 'the gift of the giver' and 'the giver of the gift', we say each with reference to the other … the gift of both is called the Holy Spirit."[39] The gift given (charity) itself is only given in giving. The content of the gift (gift given) cannot be dissociated from the process of the gift (gift that is giving). If, effectively, "*gift* is said only

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[38] *De Trinitate* II, 5, 10: "*Haec operatio visibiliter expressa, et oculis oblata mortalibus, missio Spiritus Sancti dicta est;* non ut appareret ejus ipsa substantia, *qua et ipse* invisibilis *et incommutabilis est, sicut Pater et Filius; sed ut exterioribus visis hominum corda commota,* a temporali manifestatione venientis ad occultam aeternitatem semper praesentis *converterentur*" (vol. 15, p. 208; English translation: Hill, *The Trinity,* p. 104, modified).

[39] *De Trinitate* V, 11, 12, vol. 15, p. 452; *The Trinity,* p. 197 (modified); and see *De Trinitate* V, 12, 13, p. 454; *The Trinity,* p. 198.

of the Holy Spirit—*donum quod non dicitur nisi Spiritus sanctus*",[40] the Holy Spirit is worthy of this exclusive title only because he accomplishes, *alone*, the complete phenomenon of the gift—not only giving its result (a gift, in this instance charity), but giving the complete process of the gift. The Holy Spirit alone gives because he gives not only what he gives, like a delivery man or an intermediary (*donum donatoris*); he gives giving, giving in itself, the act, the art, and the secret of giving (*donator doni*).

This unique privilege is explicitly noted and confirmed by another distinction introduced by Augustine. For it could be objected that the Holy Spirit *is not* gift, since he draws, first of all, being from the Father (and from the Son), and thus being *before* being given; the giving function would then come to him after the fact, in an adventitious manner, only once given (while by contrast the Son is the Son by the very fact that he is born and is Son of the Father). The answer to this objection, albeit presented as conjectural, nevertheless dispels the ambiguity: the Spirit proceeds eternally as gift, because he is constituted from all eternity as *donabile*, essentially and exclusively in order *to give* [*himself*], before even happening to give (himself) as a given gift: "Or is the answer that the Holy Spirit always proceeds and proceeds from eternity, not from a point of time; but because he so proceeds as to be *giveable*, he was already gift *even before there was anyone to give him to*? There is a difference between calling something a gift, and calling it a given [gift]; it can be a gift *even before it is given*, but it cannot be called in any way a given gift unless it has been given—*An semper procedit Spiritus Sanctus, et non ex tempore, sed ab aeternitate procedit; sed quia sic procedebat ut esset* donabile, *jam donum erat* et antequam esset cui daretur? *Aliter intelligitur cum dicitur donum, aliter cum dicitur donatum. Nam donum potest esse* et antequam

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[40] *De Trinitate*, VII, 6, 12, vol. 15, p. 548; *The Trinity*, p. 231 (modified). See: ". . . *nec donum Dei nisi Spiritus Sanctus*—and only the Holy Spirit is called the gift of God" (XV, 17, 29, vol. 16, p. 504; *The Trinity*, p. 419). And: ". . . *rectissime Spiritus Sanctus, cum sit Deus, vocatur etiam Donum Dei*—it is most apposite that the Holy Spirit, while being God, should also be called the gift of God" (XV, 18, 32, p. 512; *The Trinity*, p. 421). And further: ". . . *donum, quod est Spiritus Sanctus*—the gift which the Holy Spirit is" (XV, 19, 34, p. 516; *The Trinity*, p. 422). Or: "*Donum Dei esse Spiritum Sanctum, in quantum datur eis qui per eum diligunt Deum*—the Holy Spirit is the gift of God, in that he is given to those who love God through him" (XV, 19, 35, p. 520; *The Trinity*, p. 424).

detur; *donatum autem nisi datum fuerit nullo modo dici potest.*"[41] In other words, while the other gifts are only accomplished in the contingency and the accident of the act of giving and of their giver, the Holy Spirit testifies to the paradigmatic gift in that he is ordered, without reserve and without remainder, to giving: essentially *giveable*, he leaves nothing within that does not pass into a gift, because in him what he gives (*donum* as *datum*) coincides with the very process of the gift (*donum donabile, donum doni*). And this coincidence in him of the given gift and the giving gift results from and implies that he gives *himself* and consists only in this *self-giving*: "*Ita enim datur sicut donum Dei, ut etiam se ipsum det sicut Deus*—He is given as 'God's gift' (Jn. 4:10?) in such a way that he *also gives himself*, like God does."[42]

But, it will be further objected, how does the fact, no longer contested, that the Holy Spirit completely accomplishes the gift by giving always and at the same time not only the gift given but the giving gift, not only the *donum datum*, but the process itself, the art and the very way of giving, the *donum doni*—how does this fact prevent him from appearing in the "one and only [iconic] form" of the Trinity? If in this way he gives *himself* absolutely, why can't he show himself? The answer, which is simple, comes from the very phenomenality of the gift. As I have laid out in detail elsewhere,[43] what is proper to the gift consists in the fact that the more it is perfectly accomplished, and thus the more it delivers with perfect abandonment and without return what it gives—the gift *datum* irreversibly placed at the recipient's disposition—the more the giver and with him the process of the gift must themselves withdraw from presence, disappear from the ontic (or even objective) evidence of the gift given, fade away from the scene of the gift, bereft now of the very given gift that opened it. The Holy Spirit enables the paternal depth of the filial icon to be seen, which no one can see without him and outside of him ("*in quantum datur eis, qui per eum diligunt Deum!*—in that he is given to those who love God through him"[44]), and *thus he does not show himself*. Recognizing the Holy Spirit

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[41] *De Trinitate* V, 15, 16, vol. 15, pp. 460–2; *The Trinity*, p. 200, modified.

[42] *De Trinitate* XV, 19, 36, vol. 16, p. 522; *The Trinity*, p. 424, modified.

[43] See in particular *Etant donné*, II, § 10, pp. 136–147 (*Being Given*, pp. 94–102), and *Certitudes négatives*, IV, §§ 19–24, pp. 187–241 (*Negative Certainties*, pp. 115–54).

[44] *De Trinitate* XV, 19, 35, vol. 16, p. 520; *The Trinity*, p. 424.

without ever being able to see him demands, as in the case of the gift, the re-giving of the gift to the giver by sacrifice. Here, this is rendering Christ to the Father—which repeats and completes the trinitarian icon, for "all is yours, but you are Christ's, and Christ is God's" (1 Cor. 3:23). And we do not know the Spirit by wanting to *see* him, but by *hearing* one another "cry 'Abba', Father!" in front of the "icon of the invisible God" (Col. 1:15), which "the Spirit of sonship" has taught us to see (Rom. 8:15).

The uni(ci)ty of the Trinity only shows itself to be seen in three: three operators of its manifestation, three works of its revelation: the invisible Father, to uncover in the visible face of the Son *as* "icon of the invisible", according to a point of view and a site defined by anamorphosis (or conversion of the human perspective), to which only the Spirit can lead. It is not *in spite* of there being three that the trinitarian communion is manifested, but precisely because it is unfolded in these three operators of phenomenality. "The path of the knowledge of God lies *from* One Spirit *through* the One Son *to* the One Father."[45] The three prepositions here, *apo*, *dia*, *epí*, do not define the Trinity from the Father, through the Son, and in the Spirit, according to the most habitual "theological" formula, but, according to the order of the operations of its manifestation, from the point of view of man in contemplation, from the point of his viewing, from his coming into vision, according to a strictly phenomenal "economy". "Giving glory from ourselves in the Spirit is not any proof of our dignity; it is rather a confession of our own weakness, indicating that we are not sufficient to glorify Him of ourselves, but our sufficiency (*hikanotés*, 2 Cor. 3:5?) is in the Holy Spirit."[46]

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[45] Basil of Caesarea, *On the Holy Spirit*, XVIII, 47, PG 32, 153b; and *Traité sur le Saint-Esprit*, p. 412.

[46] Basil, *On the Holy Spirit*, XXVI, 63, PG 32, 184c; and *Traité sur le Saint-Esprit*, p. 474.

Conclusion

In philosophy, the ambition to arrive at a conclusion doesn't make terribly much sense; for what the world makes happen as unceasingly new possibilities ought to be enough to teach those who write philosophy that the incompleteness of their doctrines is the direct result of the irreducible immensity of things. But in theology (if we must preserve this word, coming as it does at the end of a genealogy that is too philosophical for what it claims to hold in its sights), nonfulfillment and the impossibility of concluding prove not only inevitable in actuality, but even rightly *desirable*. Indeed, what is at issue when the issue is God either remains incomprehensible by definition, or is degraded into an idol. What disqualifies the attempts of theoretical atheism is found not in the weakness of their arguments, but in the senseless ambition that arguments, whatever their form, might grasp what is at issue when the issue is God. Theoretical atheism believes, with a rather irrational belief, that we could have done with the hypothesis of God through concepts, when in fact through such concepts we are by definition unable even to get that far. If God is the issue, the issue is never one of demonstrating his existence (and still less his non-existence), because his (possible) essence remains, and *must* remain, inaccessible to us. If one believes he understands God, it isn't God: this rule remains inviolable.

Are we thus condemned to the all too famous "wager", or to the disparagements of "fideism"? But both are still caught within the illusion of attaining to knowledge, knowledge that is this time simply without proof or demonstration, yet nevertheless a knowledge (at least a private one): personal certainty, which becomes all the more indubitable as it is reduced to a pure affirmation by which the believer affirms himself under the cover of what he calls God. In the end such a believer is mostly in agreement with the common atheist who, likewise, affirms himself by challenging that which—he *believes*—is worthy of the name of God, when it is indeed only his idol. A negative idol, a positive idol—at stake in the two cases is an idol, and thus an idol of the self.

How then could the question of God avoid sinking into idolatry? Precisely by remaining a question. Not, of course, the comfortable question that the professional agnostic leaves without any answer, but the hard and inevitable question posed by the one that, in the words of a melancholy and moody French writer (Jules Renard), "each of us knows—by Name", God—the question that we have all heard: "And you, who do you say that I am?" The biblical Revelation of God by himself does not come to give an answer (without proof) to the question of the existence of God. Instead, it comes to transform our idolatrous and therefore in this sense insignificant debates (about the existence and the essence of an other than us, who in the end does not really concern us at all) into a serious test, into a question that truly concerns us—the question that bears on the alterity of God, on what we make of this pre-eminent other. Faith does not enter in as an obscure replacement for the light of understanding, but in order to bring the understanding to decide to will or not to will to accept the coming of God who gives himself in and *as* the event of Jesus. The request of faith in front of Revelation opens the non-idolatrous space of alterity—this very space that we experience, within the limits of our finitude and egocentrism, in every other experience of the other, but which, in *this* case, can no longer play itself out in half-measures, or hide itself in polite neutrality. The "Yes" must be a "Yes", the "No" a "No" (2 Cor. 1:17, in answer to Mt. 5:37). But this decision, which puts into operation the structure of call and response, rhymes, according to a logic as rigorous as it is surprising, with the fundamental phenomenal structure of the event and of every phenomenon. For every phenomenon happens first as a call, which demands a response in return, and which always obtains it (even in the refusal to respond, since the refusal remains a response), and which, paradoxically, appears for the first time only in and through this very response.

Revelation manifests God insofar as he *gives himself*. But, in giving himself, God thus manifests himself, he takes on the flesh of a phenomenon and requires that we receive it. Whence comes the question.

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