

The Grammars of Mystical Experience in Christian Theological Dialogue

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The philosophical horizon of this essay is theoretically comparative and hermeneutically *dialogic*. Its main philosophical and theological tonality expresses, in first person and through three discursive moments, the differentiated fusion of horizons between phenomenological and grammatical description and understanding of experience. After a philosophical *overture*—outlining the *éthos* of the dialogic problematic and situating it within the contemporary diverse and dialogic dynamic of phenomenology—I will expose the consistent, possible modalities of convergence between Husserlian phenomenology and Wittgensteinian grammar of the *mystical shapes of experience*. The tense, responsorial dialogue among Husserl, Heidegger, Levinas, and Wittgenstein's styles of thinking, far from being anymore limited to the debates between the analytical and phenomenological, will be considered from the crossed categorial spaces of Austrian philosophy and German culture in general. In a second section, I will show how the styles of phenomenology today are advancing into a cautious micro-logical grammar of comparative inquiry. This thematization will first consider some precise semantic clarifications: Experience, the mystical, extasis, evidence, and truth; in a second section, the theoretical levels of grammar and phenomenology of mystical experience are heralded in the context of the Christian theological dialogue, where I emphasize the rebirth of French theological thinking and dialogic transcendence, beginning with Maritain and de Chardin to Marcel, de Lubac, Levinas, and Marion. Finally, I consider the *aesthetic* expressions of mystical experience, both from the visual and musical dimensions. I will conclude this talk by highlighting theological perspectives drawn from my research in musico-philosophical problematics, through an awakening to the resonance of Being and the Divine in sonic and musical life. Through a theology of the musical *λογος*, the grammar of mystical experience reveals the sacramentality of music and the mystery of silence.

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Only with Phenomenological understanding, a new way for theology is opened up.

(Martin Heidegger, *Phenomenology of Religious Life*, 1920-21)

Grammar tells what kind of object anything is (Theology as grammar).

(Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, § 373; 1929)

In the same act of knowledge in which God knows himself, the soul receives without mediation its essence from God.

(Meister Eckhart, Sermons)

Ipseity of ipseities is a mystery that is the contrary of a thing. Mystery is what is not res, but aliquid; not even aliquid
but nescioquid.

(Vladimir Jankélévitch, *First Philosophy*, 1953)

I hear the sound of my birth. The sound of my birth is the sound of Life, the unbreakable silence in which the Word of life does not cease to talk to me about my own life, if I hear the word which speaks in it, never ceases to talk to me about
the Word of God.

(Michel Henry, *C'est moi la Vérité*, 1996)

1. French Overture and Counterpoint between the Phenomenology and Grammar of Experience

The double relevance of the phenomenology and grammar of mystical experience corresponds to the dissonant intensity of the unpredictable styles in the contemporary lifeworld and to the crucial relevance of the theological dialogue for the dramatic facticity of the interreligious and diplomatic dialogue on a global scale.

After a philosophical *overture* drawing from the *éthos* of our dialogic problematic, situating it in the contemporary openness and dialogic condition of phenomenology, we will thematically expound upon the fusion of horizons between Husserlian phenomenology and Wittgensteinian grammar of the *mystical configurations of experience*. I will situate the semantic and philosophical approach to this delicate categorial perspective within the context of the *Christian theological dialogue in its intersections with philosophy*, approaching the indirect but explicit thematizations of religious life and theology in both the Husserlian and Wittgensteinian traditions of inquiry into the human experience. In this context, which opens outward into an investigation of the internal structures and styles of immanence, parousia, manifestation, givenness and grace, our primordial *formal orientation* and delineation of the topic is double:

(a) Heidegger's phenomenology of the *faktische Leben* (life in its facticity), as conceived in the courses of 1920-21, essentially led to the *Phenomenology of Religious Life* and the philosophical foundations of Medieval Mystic.

(b) On the other hand, I will comparatively counterpose to this phenomenological starting point the complex, contemporaneous, aporetic, non-theoretical, and evolving line of thinking which Wittgenstein dedicated, as a philosopher, as a religious man and reader of the theologians of his time, to faith in God, the Mystical, and theology from at least 1916 to his death in 1951.

The hermeneutic framework for our problem, following the historically, *phenomenologically and grammatically* complex category of *mystical experience*, is closely tied to the historical, theological, and philosophical research conducted in French beginning in the 19th century on the theme of mystical experience, lived experience of sacredness, and epiphany of God.

Three main scientific processes must be considered in this respect, with their extremely diverse intersections and historically epistemic implications:

(1) First, the fundamental contribution is made by Jean Héring, in his theological thesis of 1928, to the field of phenomenology of religious experience¹ (and phenomenology as such), during a period when French

philosophical life was institutionally dominated by a strict intellectualism and the exclusive cult of scientific reason.

(2) Second, the decisive historical and theological impulse given since 1932 by Father André-Jean Festugière (1898-1982) to the knowledge of Christian mysteriology and *mystic theology* was subsequently followed by Henri de Lubac, before dedicating rigorous research specifically into the concept of the *Supernatural* and the origins of *Mystical Theology*.

(3) Third, the function of mediation represented by the intellectual career of Emanuel Levinas represents—as fundamental pioneer of phenomenological thinking in France (after Héring and with Gurvitch and Merleau-Ponty)—a mediation in which the theological dialogue with Christianity (*Christentum*) in Heidegger was ontologically exposed to the ethical epiphany of the Other and Talmudic meditation.

My specific hermeneutic emphasis, textually connected to these three axial formal indications, will focus on the *aesthetic* modalities of revelation and *resonance*. This delineation, conceived in first person, must be understood as a continuity of several inspiring orientations from such French phenomenologists as Merleau-Ponty and Gabriel Marcel, and theologians or thinkers who focused on the study of revelation like Jacques Maritain and Hans Urs von Balthasar, who both analyzed through symbols and forms of art over propositions and concepts.

I will also focus on a phenomenological and grammatical approach to divinity based on the *voice* of revelation and mysticism, not only as a poetic attestation of the sacred, but also as an *acoustic condition*, which is considered as fundamental throughout the entire genealogy of *mysticism*, and which requires as such a precise ontology of the *sonic* and *musical* event. This emphasis on the Christian acoustic and musical knowledge of reality, opening with a Paulinian invocation of “fides ex auditu,”² is part of the phenomenology and grammar of the syncretic religious experience in line with a comparative history of religions and, topically, the histories of Western Christian Mysticism.

The problematic of the *Mystical*, expressed together with religious experiences, sacred gesture, and aesthetic understanding, is exposed to major conceptual confusions in the frame of a comparative investigation of the *intentional* dimensions implied in the corresponding semiosis. We will see that this complexity is partly due to the mathematical and logical powerful relevance of the category, located in a highly controversial debate opened in opposite ways by Russell, Brouwer, and Wittgenstein, in which the religious or esoteric interpretations of *das Mystische* can always be semantically misleading. However, the comparative approach to a Wittgensteinian self-awareness of the *mystical*, and the mystical hyletics and noetic dimensions phenomenologically revealed, may disclose multiple perspectives of thinking.

The metamorphic process which Dominique Janicaud identified in his groundbreaking study *La Phénoménologie éclatée* (1998)—which poly optically advanced the analysis he began with *The Theological Turn of Phenomenology* (1990-1991)³—led to the establishment of a polymorphous relationship among phenomenology, ontology, and theology, perhaps beyond the author’s claim for theological “neutrality” in the analysis of phenomenological givenness.⁴ The essence of the phenomenological inquiry into religious consciousness was *ab initio* taken into consideration and, in a sense, theologically *pre-thematized*. The internal development and culmination of this tendency corresponded to the phenomenological claim of an embodied spirituality grounding the responsibility for the community, the acknowledgment of the transcendental intersubjectivity as an “open community of monads” and finally as a community of personhood/personalities (*Gemeinschaft von Personalitäten*).⁵ In the late manuscripts defining *Gemeinschaft*, community, and

personhood, Husserl redefined this community, in the civilizational and also political sense, as a community of love (*Liebesgemeinschaft*). The irradiant concept of community, earlier analyzed by Edit Stein,⁶ should be thought of through the semantic prism of its traditional value in German culture: the sense of an *axiological imperative* philosophically explicated by Schiller, Fichte, and Hegel's teleology of freedom. We have the foundations to theoretically consider the philosophical relevance of Husserl's conversations (and correspondence)⁷ describing his philosophical work as *a path toward God*. Moreover, apart from the private corpus of conversations commented upon by Ingarden, Stein, Cairns, Strasser, Zahavi, and other scholars, the givenness of God through experience and the teleological idea of God did culminate for Husserl in the telos of the community of personalities. In the case of the first original Christian facticity and mystical experience, this correlation recognizes the epistemic horizon of *universal consciousness*, personal ethics, theology, and the teleology of civilization.

The scope of our problematic points is to the recent prism of French theology and philosophy of religion since the beginning of the 20th century, including topical references to the complete tradition. The phenomenological understanding of faith, religious life, and mystical experience corresponds to the extremely rich rebirth of religious thinking and the geopolitical ramifications of French theology. In fact, this post-positivist renaissance has evolved from thinkers or theologians such as Jacques Maritain, Jean Héring, Étienne Gilson, Gabriel Marcel, Henri de Lubac, and Teilhard de Chardin to Paul Valadier, Michel Henry, Claude Tresmontant, Michel de Certeau, Jean-Luc Marion, and Jean-Louis Chrétien. This polymorphous rebirth cannot be dissociated from the understanding of important mystical figures of the 20th century, such as Father Charles de Foucauld, the hermit of Tamanrasset.

2. Expositio/Ex-position of the Mystical Experience: Beyond Apophaticism and Kataphaticism

Whereas philopsychia, ever anxious for the future, accelerates time and exchanges one empty present for the next Whereas philopsychia, ever anxious for the future, accelerates time and exchanges one empty present for the next the stability of the individual preoccupies infinite time in presentness and arrests time. Each of its instants is the century in the life of others—until he makes of himself a flame and comes to consist in the final present. Then he will be persuaded and in persuasion have peace. Through activity to peace. (Carlo Michelstaedter, *Persuasion and Rhetoric*, 1909)

Listen, bring that cheek.

Without fear liberate the wing of your heart.

And that, finally, in the shadow let our memory play

while it restores a world of vibrant colors. (Jules Supervielle, *Forgetful Memory, III*, 1949)

The concept of mysticism remains today an incandescent *foyer* for semantic ambiguity, a source of ongoing controversies in the intertwined debates among theology, continental philosophy, and the analytical philosophy of religion. In the determinant field of psychology (and the epistemology of psychology), the elaboration of Husserlian *pure eidetic psychology* is fundamental for the problematic of any anthropological insight, as Husserl underscored in 1931. The turn represented by pure phenomenological psychology for the investigation into any human experience was conceived by Husserl as an extremely complex shift on a philosophical level, one that presupposed a fixed working procedure (*einer festen Arbeitsordnung*) for the complex task of theoretically stratifying the transcendental sphere. Similarly, Wittgenstein's philosophy of psychology, seeking the description of each *Erlebnis* excludes the application of the scientific-objective

paradigm to the sphere of human phenomena. For both phenomenological and grammatical accounts of the essence of the expressions of human life, the *clinical* definitions of mystical and ecstatic experiences as diverse kinds of *illusion* remain exposed to the risk of losing scientific thought, psychic experience, and cognitive facticity, shaping in an objectifying *nosology* the rich multiplicity of religious phenomena. Michel de Certeau beautifully referred to the genealogy of this entirety of experience: *the fable of mysticism*.

The famous injunction made by Wittgenstein in the *Philosophical Investigation* is also shared by all of Husserlian phenomenological psychology: “Denk nicht, sondern schau!” (Don’t think, but look!)⁸

This aphoristic command corresponds to the therapeutic idea expressed in the *Remarks on the Foundations of Mathematics*, stating that *philosophical dissatisfaction disappears when we are seeing more*. It is clear that this extension in the capacity of seeing was also very Husserlian in spirit, if we recall, for instance, the contexts in which Husserl diagnoses Hume’s *blindness* concerning intentionality.⁹

In this situation of conceptual ambiguity and self-limitations in the use of a scientific predicament to understand and interpret the *mystical* (associated with distinct religious experiences), the intentionally simple and quasi-autobiographical statement proposed by Michel de Certeau shows a clear way of seeing: “He or she is mystic who cannot stop walking and with the certainty of what is lacking, knows of everyplace and object that is *not* that; one cannot stay there nor be content with *that*” (299).¹⁰

Far from immediately introducing a theoretic lemma for defining the mystery of God and the mystical shape of experience, through any definition the *essence of mysticism*, chosen from within the corresponding theological *corpus* from Philo of Alexandria to Henri de Lubac, Michel de Certeau surprises the reader by this sort of non-rhetorical and concise statement, the style of which reminds us more of the Kierkegaard’s *Diary* or Gide’s *Paludes* than an essay on mysticism. Of course, the author had in mind to prelude an atypical itinerary toward the Unknown, the Supernatural, and the absolute Holy through four stages: *Historicities*, *content*, *theoretic unfolding* and dispersion of the science. De Certeau’s concrete and personified approach to the internal excess that characterizes religious experience was connected to the critique of *modern fragmented Christianity*, abandoned to the dictates of callous scholars. This transformation of the historical and theoretical vision was inspired by the call for a renewed hermeneutic *communion*, one that could to unify the scientific dimension of *exegesis* and the original evangelic source. This tortured nostalgia for primordial times in which the Church was organized around a specific *terrain*, “that is to say an incorporated land, (where) one had the social and cultural warranty to live in the field of truth,” characterizes all of de Certeau’s work, particularly in *The Weakness of Believing* (1987).¹¹ This eloquent search for a new source was expressed by de Certeau in first person, but at the same time in subtle counterpoint with the entire history of the call for an *experiential and social relevance of theology*, through the prism of the history of *Christian mystical theology* and from a comparative perspective. De Certeau seemed to infer a kind of theological *betrayal of the scholars* in the spirit of Julien Benda. The story of Christian theology, including its complex intersections with philosophy, already had several crucial examples of such criticism and nostalgic despair for the earliest moments of the Christian Church. Like Pascal, Chestov, and Unamuno, Michel de Certeau is primarily on an infinite quest: While Jesus Christ *is in agony until the end of the world*, we cannot sleep at all and need to remain awake throughout this time, trembling and suffering. But, as Wittgenstein observed in 1950, the mystical and religious serenity of Christian redemptive Love presupposes a given struggle: Thus, if you want to stay within the religious sphere (*Religiösen bleiben*), you must struggle (*kämpfen*).¹² No calm, no rest is allowed by any heuristic firmness. We never may stop walking, just listening to the call from the Biblical texts. The possible sources of illusion and

deceptive nostalgia granted by de Certeau reminds us certainly the Thomist “anti-modern” (and potentially “ultramodern”) diagnosis made in 1922 by Jacques Maritain,¹³ while also specifically dramatizing the fact that the loss of what was once the Church is partly due to secularized exegesis, as pointed out by de Certeau even in the era of hermeneutic subtlety: “It [exegesis] is no longer interested in the social reality of the current reading, public or private, of the Bible. The essence of Christianity belongs to *scholars* (new clerics) and becomes a historical *object* (buried in documents nearly two thousand years old)” (256-7).¹⁴

The aim of a *restitution* of the harmony between theological *exegesis*, by recapturing the original sense of δίακρισις (*diakrisis*), the mystical sphere, and original theology, reveals not only affinities with an *apocalyptic* configuration of the epoch in the very spirit of the first Christian *paideia* and the *theology in action* dear to Origen, but also the conception that religiosity and mystical experience are dimensions of the self-awareness awakened by the *kerygma*. In the *Prophetic Sayings*, Clement of Alexandria defined the spirit of any *lived exegesis* of the Scripture, synthesizing the sense of Biblical normativity in relation to faith, which is also developed as well in his *Hypotyposes* as mainly in *Stromata*, defining clearly the intellectual and mystical experience of the *gnosis* as a gradual illumination:

We must, then, search the Scriptures accurately, since, as they are admitted to be expressed “in parables” (*en paraboleis*), and from the names seek out the ideas... So the “gnosis” shedding its light and brightness on things, shows itself to be in truth divine wisdom (*theia Sophia*), the pure “light” (*to phos*) which illuminates the men whose very eye is clear, unto the sure vision and comprehension of truth. (32)¹⁵

As Jean Héring observed, Husserl defined the primordial relationship between lived religious experience and *gnosis*, understood as *theoretical knowledge*: *In this sense, faith precedes gnosis*.¹⁶ Adolf Reinach and Heidegger also stressed the fact that lived experience always contains already the religious givenness of sense. Religious experience and knowledge cannot be deduced from any extra-religious criterion, be it *scientific* or *philosophical*.¹⁷ The phenomenological inversion of the relationship between experience and knowledge postulated by the *dogmatic epistemology of evidence* leads us to the idea of *an intrinsic value in religious knowledge*.

Our *ex-position* of the problematic, reveals, as in a mathematical sense, its own *roots* and *exponents*. The *power* of the *Sacred* within this dimension, leads to the imaginary. But it escapes from the purely numeric or temporal as well. The mystical experience, which should be specified following phenomenology and grammar in order to be properly understood in its polysemy, is strictly *infinite*.

With regard to this line of open contemporary hermeneutics of culture, we, however, seek today to topically respond to the double exigence of speaking about theological *Grammars of the Mystical*, and at the same time, to approach the phenomenology of religious life in *first person*. This Augustinian, Kierkegaardian and Wittgensteinian claim leads me to consider here relevant *Christian* modalities of givenness and mystical experience of the *sacred*, understood as the ontological and open *criterion of humanity*.

2.1. *The Mystical: Phenomenology, Grammar, and Mystical Hyletics*

The grammar of a categorical term necessarily encounters the domain of etymology, even if defiance regarding what the French writer Jean Paulhan called the “the proof by etymology” must be one of the first duties of anyone who philosophizes. However, Greek etymology reveals to be of definite relevance considering the history of Classic Christian mysticism since Plato’s textual importance in the interplay between of the Greek religious ideal and the early Greek theology inspired by the Gospels. The linguistic Greek element of

meditation reveals to us *ab initio* a connection with the domain of philosophical and theological research, in its horizons of phenomenological description of what Husserl called the true “ideal possibilities” linked to the mystical experience of givenness, and invite to display the grammatical transparency of crucial, lived experiences—as well epistemically problematic spaces—including a mental space in cognitive terms.

Both *Mustikós* (*mystic*) and *musterion* (*mystery*) should be considered together in relation to the probable etymological root *mu*, and the original Greek meaning of *mus* (hidden). *Mustikós* may derive from the verb *muo* (to close or to preserve silence) and was connected to the celebration of the *mysteria*, whose tradition and vectorial wisdom must be carefully considered from its hidden relevance in Greek wisdom commencing with Heraclitus, Xenophanes, Empedocles, and, from another point, Pythagoras. These linguistic features connote the *secret* ontological dimension, the *unconcealed*. Meticulous etymological and textual insight would connect the historical understanding of *initiation* experiences: *Initia* is the Latin term for Greek *mustéria*, as we can observe in Terence’s, Cicero’s, and Varro’s terminology applied notably to Eleusis. We know that the roots of such terminological evidence are linked to the Hebraic Scriptures during the Hellenistic period, notably in the *Book of Daniel*, 2. The translators of the Bible of the Seventy chose the word *musterion* to translate the Aramaic term *raz*, which refers to the eschatological secret which calls for being revealed. The theological use of this term shows that *musterion* also denotes the very origin of *wisdom* conceived as giving revelation of the secrets.¹⁸ The terms *mustes/mustis* (the initiated) and *mueisthai* (to initiate into a mystery) are from the same spiritual family. Christian Scriptures established the foundations of mysticism in which *musterion* refers theologically to the *Christian mysteryology of life, passion, death, resurrection and ascension*. The Gospel itself is presented in Paulinian writings as a mystery. Far from preaching a kind of elitism, the mystic lives and preserves the secret from the incursion of exteriority. He is not an initiate cultivating esoteric wisdom but unifying ecstatically his experience with God through an aporetic *unio mystica*.

While considering the problematic of *differential continuity* between the traditional interconnected roots of mystical, symbolic, and mysteryological experience, we need to remember the fundamental contributions of Fr. A.-J. Festugière in understanding the differentiation in the crossed sources of Christian wisdom in Antiquity and late Antiquity. This early teaching of a differential, methodological description is also a cornerstone for the defined perspective in this essay, which attempts to posit the relationships between mysticism and *Ipseity* through the dialogue between different religious traditions and visions of the structures of intentionality. By researching Christian facticity in pagan contexts, Festugière showed that the novelty of Christianity was its *criterion* of what *touched the hearts*. Not the *writings* but the *example*, or better, “The truth of the word and speech proved by the example.” His investigations disqualified the theories which traced a path of *dependence* from the pagan mysteries to Christian mysteries. Including the subject of the *Hermetica* neglected in France until 1867, Festugière sought to reach what he called “personal religion,” the individual lived experience of Divinity.¹⁹

Christian mysticism unpredictably redefined *orthodoxy* and *orthopraxis* in theological thinking. The deepest understanding of *Mystic Theology* from Dionysius onward—and the very logic of negative theology itself—does not require the formulation of any *alternative* between the *via affirmativa* and the *via negativa* in the *ascendant* dynamics established by Dionysius. Both ways are connected in the ascendant complexity set forth in the four works and epistles of the *Corpus Dionysiacum: The Mystical Theology, Celestial Hierarchy, Ecclesiastical Hierarchy and Divine Names*. A phenomenological and grammatical exposition of the union with God supposes a *dialectic* between *apophatism* and *cataphatism* in order to understand the modalities of *Henosis*. This union is the *ecstatic* union with God beyond intellection. In this complementary and dialectical perspective,

absolute divine simplicity could be ontologically demonstrated and subtly conceived as a property. An integral understanding of Dionysius's *via negativa*, which has seduced recent atheists intellectuals, does not lead textually to any kind of *exit from metaphysics*. On the contrary, this *paradoxical* understanding can lead to the formulation of a definition of the theological relationship between God and creature.

Our thematization of comparative phenomenology and mystical grammatical forms of experience is the direct result of the mystical experience as an irreducible experience, a kind of *excessus mentis*, developed through the polyphony of the religious call. It is in this sense that Wittgenstein referred, after Pascal, Kierkegaard, and Tolstoy, to the criterion of *life and practice* for the *acquisition of the concept of God*, and described religious life in first person as a *struggle*. We do need to have in mind the original sense of the *theoretical* in the divine givenness, namely through the modalities of the *theoria* of God established since Clement of Alexandria and the two dimensions of God's vision in Gregory of Nyssa: the intellectual *theoria* and the mystical *theoria*, sometimes termed *theognosia*.²⁰

Exemplary in this context is the conception of contemplation in Saint John of the Cross, which is equated to the secret dark night and *mystical theology*: "This is why we call contemplation, which gives us understanding of the highest knowledge of God, 'mystical theology'—that is to say, the secret wisdom of God, since it is hidden from the understanding that receives it" (II; VIII).²¹

At this point, as observed by both von Balthasar and de Certeau, the word "mystical" became the proper term to qualify any given object, "the existence or signification of which eludes direct knowledge" (de Certeau 1992, 96). This *criteriological* description of religious experience has been thematized without any reductionism as the domain of *psychological* experiences and the order of *mystical phenomena* by William James (1893; 1902). James famous cross-credal categorization of four psychic dimensions (Ineffability, Noetic quality, Transiency, and Passivity)²² were fundamental as well for Husserl and the phenomenological movement, as for Wittgenstein.

I will stress, for differential clarity, Wittgenstein's own use of *Phenomenology* beginning in 1929, at the turning point of his second philosophical phase, when he reinitiated a study of the space of *commensurability* between the expectation and the expected, its *Vor-Struktur* in the grammatical sense of phenomenological.

2.2. Aporetical Logic and Grammars of the Ineffable

All the histories of Western theology relating to mysticism developed the vectorial importance of the Pythagorean definition of the harmonious mathematical order as a vector informing both the Platonic/Aristotelian categorizations of *Kósmos* and the entire Christian theological tradition, which we can also find paradigmatically in Gregory of Nyssa's presentation of the mimetic intercourse between soul and the hidden order of infinite and eternal creation through the dynamic of thinking. To fully understand the Wittgensteinian emphasis on mysticism and religion, deeply coherent, and transformative through the entire three main periods of his philosophical career—instead of trying to *compare* it directly for instance with the chapters II and V of Dionysius's *Mystical Theology*—we will outline what Wittgenstein might term a clear presentation (*Übersichtliche Darstellung*) of the entire dimensions of the mystical occurrence in his thought.²³ To provide such a connecting view, I first will recall an aphorism written on the front of the First World War, on October 20, 1916, in an illumination reminiscent of Chrysostom: "Das Künstlerische Wunder ist, daß es die Welt gibt. Daß es gibt, was es gibt. The artistic wonder (das Künstlerische Wunder) is that there is the world. That there is what there is" (1914-1916).²⁴

Such illuminations refer not only to aesthetic brilliance, but also the appearance of absolute value. The best way to describe it, observed Wittgenstein, is to say that when it is presented, *I marvel in front of it*. In a conversation with Friedrich Waismann in the 1930s, he states: “The facts are unimportant to me. What touches my heart is what men want to say when they say that the world exists.” The entire exposition, the stylistic *Darstellung* of the *Tractatus*, focuses on *the moment of revelation of religious, ethical and aesthetic significance*: There is, of course, the inexpressible. This is shown, and it is the *mystical (das Mystische)* (*Tractatus* 6.522). On the one hand, if we take into account the concrete faith of Wittgenstein from at least 1907 (when the “revelation” occurred during the performance of a piece by Tagore), the deepening of Kierkegaard’s sense of religiosity by contrast with secularized religion, and also his knowledge of the Scriptures, we can understand that he was not satisfied with secularized religion. Wittgenstein, from the cultural standpoint, is the sort of Austrian which even he would define as being *particularly difficult to understand*, quoting Grillpärzer, Lenau, and Bruckner. There is an internal correspondence between the *scene of the World* and the *space of events* analyzed by the young Wittgenstein, the *Tatsachenraum*. This correspondence follows logic of *showing*.

The connectivity between the various levels of understanding in the expression *Das Mystische* in the *Notebooks* and the *Tractatus* leads differentially to the Wittgensteinian conception of *mathematical propositions*, which do not express or describe any thought or reality.²⁵ While he was elaborating a new concept of *Bild* in the *Philosophical Observations* and the *Philosophical Grammar*, Wittgenstein was aware of the difficulties entailed by simple interventions of any *intuition* of life, and gradually began showing that all theories of the inadequacy between thought and knowledge were expressions of empiricist, solipsist, and nihilistic prejudice. The mathematical and philosophical thought of L. E. J. Brouwer, which he truly respected, represented, however, for him a major form of epistemological nihilism. Brouwer’s postulate of the “original intuition of Duality” has a field of validity in both mathematics and philosophy. The critique of logic and science undertaken in 1905 in *Leben, Kunst und Mystik* developed into a continuous *crescendo*. For Brouwer, the forms of representation are also absent from the *constitution of mind* and from the *a priori* structures of the world. They are only defined by the original temporal stream of the lived experience. The limitation in any analogy with Brouwer is, for Wittgenstein, his rejection of any simple *mentalism* (even depsychologized) in mathematical activity and philosophy: “For never has anyone been able to communicate his soul by means of language” (487).²⁶

However, after Brouwer’s decisive Vienna conference—which Wittgenstein attended—on March 3, 1928 (*Mathematik, Wissenschaft und Sprache*),²⁷ the opposition between the two thinkers also gives us an idea of what *powerfully linked their investigations*. In different philosophical directions and styles, mathematical thinking, philosophy, mystical theologies, art and music were conceived of having an *internal relationship* for both thinkers. The impossibility to reach any truth by means of language reveals that the world and speech are symmetrically illusory. What Wittgenstein contested was not obviously *introspection in itself*, which is essential in the human experiential order, but its introduction into *mathematical practice*, as demonstrated in the *Remarks on the Foundations of Mathematics*.²⁸ The Wittgensteinian face of description shows the conceptual reach of the contrast between saying and showing (*sagen and zeigen*). Wittgenstein’s use of the *via negativa* liberates negation, making it possible to rethink the Augustinian aporia of the *Ineffable* and the problematic ramifications of the expressible. His conceptual exposition invited, through a kind of “mise au point,” a confrontation with the *a-categorical* problematic, concentrating thought on a point, as Plotinus did. We conceive this point as the philosophical instant, the *vision* which is, at the same time, an active listening to the

cleavage between *lógos* and silence. For the understanding of the philosophical generativity and hermeneutic functions played by the grammar of *possible religious experiences* and *theological dialogue*, we ought to recall the cultural and philosophical importance of Carlo Michelstaedter's emphasis on the concept of *philopsychia* in *Persuasion and Rhetoric* (*La Persuasione e la rettorica*). I would like to recall as well the sense of other passionate imperatives in philosophy as a lived activity such as those of Michelstaedter, Weininger, Trakl, or Slataper. The word that scrupulously informed the ontology of each one of these thinkers and poets rolls toward us today, like an explosion of foam between possible worlds against the passing wall of time. Michelstaedter linked this own mystical way of *persuasion* with a mathematical clarification of the infinite, eventually illustrating mathematically the point of contact between justice and life.²⁹ This specific connection was transformed in contrasting ways by the construction of Brouwer and Wittgenstein's *syncategorematic* infinite,³⁰ and from a philosophical perspective in *Totality and Infinite* (1961). Such an exposition of the *infinite*, not merely conceived of as an *idea of the infinite*, leads us to the grammatical consideration of the categories of the *infinite*, *Highness* and the imperative acknowledgment of the *Other*. It is here that Levinas ultimately situates himself within a tradition, and specifically in the line of Gabriel Marcel and Martin Buber with regard to the relationship of I-You.

The *Other*, discovered in his true essence through the encounter of his *Face* in its mortal nudity, before constituting any *givenness of sense*, opens the dimension of *highness*—which, following Levinas, “infinitely overflows the measure of knowledge.”³¹ And as Levinas subtly observed in *Ethics and Infinite*, the exposure and access to the *Face* also led to a certain idea of God.³² The enigmatic character of the Levinasian concepts of Face, Trace, passivity, fatigue, diachrony, inspiration, responsibility, wakefulness, insomnia, revealed its truth in the transcendence of God, whose intelligibility is not ontological. The metaphysical concept of Infinite never stops producing discernible harmonics drawn from the concept of *En Sof* of the Kabbalists and especially of *Tsimtsoum* in Rabbi Isaac Luria (1534-1572). As early as 1937, Levinas began outlining, after Husserl, Reinach, Heidegger, and Jean Herring, the prolegomena of a *religious philosophy* in a phenomenological key. By not grounding alterity in fundamental Ontology, Levinas pushed Ethics, or rather *the ethical meaning of the Other*. If no theology or mystic could account for the encounter with the Other, Levinas nevertheless proposes to call *Religion* the irreducible *invocation* of the Other.³³ Encompassing this term in the meditation, the philosopher did not intend to become a theologian, nor would he ever accept to consider himself boldly as a “Jewish thinker.” We do think, respecting a kind of *epoché* on the discursivity in metaphysics, that this antinomy between the problematic of *Being* and the *ethicity of consciousness* as a source of human axiological and juridical dimensions needs to be grammatically reevaluated. I do consider that such a *dialogue* could be explored in light of the theological and philosophical genealogy of the term *syneidêsis* from the first Greek sources, the Hellenistic Hebraic use—in Philo of Alexandria and other authors—and more topically taking in account the philological aspects of the translation of the Hebraic *leb* into *syneidêsis* and finally the Latin *conscientia* (*cum-scientia*). Our consideration of the powerful transversal role of *syneidêsis* reveals the possibilities the *active dialectic* crystalized in this dynamic term.³⁴ Merleau-Ponty, whose diacritical contribution to theology is explicit in the light of his late manuscripts, established a true ontology of the flesh, grounded in the idea of the Incarnation.

3. Modulatio: Eschatology, Kathekon-Drama, and Theological Dialogicity

“A being ‘Appears,’ it follows an epiphany: in that it is beautiful and we are delighted. Appearing he gives

himself, he gives himself to us: he is good. And, self-giving, 'it expresses itself,' he reveals himself: it is true (in and of itself, and in the other, in which he reveals himself)" (Hans Urs von Balthasar 1988).

In this crucial point of our itinerary, the multiple meditation of the infinite, ordering the ethical relation between *I* and the *Other*, leads me from mysticism considered as secret talismanic *sign of humanity and religiosity* to the primordial dialogue on *Eschatology* that I discern in the categorical *chasm* that articulates the greatest *theologies* and *philosophies* open to the essence of Revelation. The theological accomplishment offered by Hans Urs von Balthasar, especially in *Theo-Drama*, opened a deep dialogue with the most crucial *polyphonic* or *symphonic* perspective on the most burning problems of theology since World War II and Vatican II (1965) until this very day. His vibrant, exuberant, and rejuvenating eschatology—sometimes almost forgotten—developed the inspiration for one of the richest theological and philosophical movements for Christian theological reflection, *Ressourcement* Theology. Through the systematic study of the Holy Fathers, Balthasar investigated the *mystical mystery of being* and composed his own *symphonic* and *dramatic* eschatological perspective in very close intellectual and personal empathy with the major French theologians, such as Teilhard de Chardin and Henri de Lubac, as well as important philosophers like Maurice Blondel and the Catholic writers whom he admired, such as Péguy, Claudel, Emmanuel Mounier, and Bernanos—authors for whom he also served as translator, commentator and, sometimes, editor (in the case of Bernanos's *Correspondence* for the French edition).

The personalist and the *Renewal* movements were directly linked to Balthasar's theological, philosophical, and aesthetic thinking. It is essential to specify here the fundamental role attributed by the Swiss theologian to the entire work of Teilhard de Chardin, whose exposition of a *personal* and *living* Christian God in which is "strongly concentrated the mystery of Personality."³⁵ Teilhard distinguishes the *mystical* dimension from the *apologetic* one, thereby unifying *Personalism* with the scientific, evolutionist dimension, which he referred to as *energetics*. The fundamental predicaments and *forms* of the *Personal* were, for Teilhard, *at the same time divine and human*. Hyper-personality, personifying personality, these expressions correspond also to what Balthasar called in *The Glory and the Cross* (1965) an *infinitely determined figure*. This *Personal-Universal* appeared as the result of the process of cosmic Being. This vision of the *eschaton* was at the center of the *Ressourcement* (Renewal) movement and also of the *Correspondence* between Balthasar and the philosopher Maurice Blondel (1965), a philosopher whose importance for Merleau-Ponty was deep and constant. The *eschatological* question represented a crucial *locus theologicus* for the Christian theological dialogue, which had clearly opened between Karl Barth, Rudolf Bultmann, and especially Karl Rahner. Balthasar gave to this problematic a new and synthetic dimension, a *Theo-dramatic* mutation in which aesthetic, dramatic, and musical categories contributed in restaging the entire traditional structures of Christology, soteriology, and eschatology, illuminating the essence of God as Trinity through *drama*. For Barth, eschatology was not simply *one* dimension of Christianity and its dogmatics, but its criteriological definition: "A Christianity which is not wholly eschatology and nothing but eschatology has nothing to do with Christ."³⁶ In his monumental *Church Dogmatics*, Barth underlines the moments of this eschatology (through a "hermeneutics of the Eschatological assertions") and stresses the central function of Christ considered as subject and also object of God's *election* (II. 2). As a deep reader of Barth, whom he quoted, Wittgenstein was certainly moved to pursue reflections on soteriology and ethnicity based on this grammar of God's Lordship. Karl Rahner offered in this context a precise involvement of the counterpoint between philosophy and theology in the process of theological thinking, which privileged the *mystery of grace* and salvation. The historical and theological creativity and *exemplarity* of

Balthasar's Theology—in response to the apocalyptic crisis of contemporary civilization and the more strictly “agonic” life of Christianity responds, in our opinion, to the following principle motivations, which were true imperatives:

(a) First, the categorical capacity of his dialogic theological achievements in responding to the epochal lack of deep linkage between contemporary theology and philosophy, especially in the decisive dimensions of *ontology* and *hermeneutics*;

(b) Second, in the conceptual line of the previous, the identification of Christ as the personified *analogia entis* (the analogy of being) and perhaps leading to a denser *experiential*, noetic, and ontological *depth*;

(c) Third, including a recapitulation of our own exploration into mystical phenomena (authentically defined), the very grounding of Balthasar's theology on *mystery*, defined as the intimate sphere of communion, where God's *gift* is open to the duty of a common salvation which echoes empathy with the idea of mystery in Péguy, Claudel, and Jacques Rivière.

This problematic of the divine self-gift, developed by von Balthasar in *The Glory and the Cross*, will represent a source of inspiration which is distinctly reformulated through phenomenology by Paul Ricoeur, Michel Henry, Jean Luc Marion, and Jean-Louis Chrétien.

The crucial question at the very center of the internal and external Christian theological dialogue is the way in which the essence of *manifestation* endows *Parousia* with revelation (which is not the result of a subjective inclination to the mystery or some sort of *Theurgia*), and the way in which revelation is given as the energy of God ecstatically experienced and phenomenologically described. The way in which Merleau-Ponty developed in 1956 his own approach to the fundamental questions of the *mystery* includes, in a reference to Claudel, the contradiction and negativity of human life that the Incarnation essentially expresses. Merleau-Ponty's last writings on ontology included, in a *phenomenological* sense, an approach to faith conceived as *perceptive*, interrogative, and *intellective*. In line with Husserl, yet transformed by Heidegger in *Being and Time* through the existential analytic of *Dasein* and the evidence of a truth attuned to very concrete experience, Merleau-Ponty's God is conceived of through *kenosis*. God in Merleau-Ponty's philosophical exploration is clearly *kenotic* in the sense of Paul,³⁷ and in the sense of Claudel's theater, where humans are glorified in their experience, suffering, struggling, and the injuries which have befallen them in the lifeworld. The achievement of Jean-Luc Marion's theological thought presents, from our perspective, a different phenomenological logic of the *human* and *mystical* experience, beginning at least with *Idol and Distance* (1977) with a consideration of the diverse meanings of the invisible and the visible. The publication of *God without Being*, where Marion subtly distinguishes between *God* and *Being*—referred to by the Heideggerian *Dasein* and the metaphysical and scholastic determination of *essentia* and *esse* defined in Aquinas—has represented a subject of intense debate in the philosophical and theological world. This position of the problem, diametrically opposed to Gilson's harmonization between *God* and *Being* (1962), and to Rahner's own distinct discussion on Being, also provoked new unitarian proposals, such as “God with Being” in line with theological ontology. The conception of intentionality set forth earlier in the *Prolegomena to Charity* embraces the *infinite multiplicity of possible experience*.³⁸ The transparent concept of “saturated phenomena” refers to intersubjective experience as *Erfahrung* and *Erlebnis*, consisting in a special phenomenon that could never be defined—following Marion—as a kind of *object/entity* following Husserl, or the experience of *Being*, following Heidegger. I would underscore the harmonic convergence of the multiple philosophical voices and religious sources arising from the phenomenological recognition of *possible experiences*. I do recognize empathy, in this line of thought with

the very French style of description which Jean-Louis Chrétien develops of the intentional acts involved in mystical or religious experience, in Christian life itself. His contributions to the phenomenology of prayer are particularly refined by the enrichment of the *intentional acts* structurally involved in praying. Chrétien realized an erudite *dialectical* intersection with the two concepts of the *Unforgettable* and the *Unhoped-for*, which confer upon the previous metaphysics of hope in the French philosophical world a fresh phenomenology of consciousness and memory, thus giving sufficient transcendence to the phenomenological approach to enable a fusion between Ancient Greek and Jewish traditions and to rethink the soteriological and eschatological dimensions of theology. To understand the *cantus firmus* of the *eschaton* question in emphasis of French culture, especially in the form of a theology of hope with the theological and mystical meditation of Grace proposed by Jacques Maritain and Simone Weil, we ought to briefly mention the necessary deep implication of the theologico-political question of the *Kathekon*. Contemporary eschatology internally involves the consideration of the essence of politics, beyond ideological simplifications, through the problematic of the *Kathekon*. Following Irenaeus and Tertullian, the finality of this reflection restages the unification of the *Theologia civilis* with the mystical theology. The delicate debate open by Carl Schmitt's political theology intensified the post war academic exploration of the category of *Kathekon* in the perspective of a theory of the political order that I recently commented in relation to the political and juridical *Nómos*.³⁹

Considering at this point the multiplicity opened by phenomenology and grammar of the experience as a phenomenological sketch of the possibilities of human attitudes toward the mystery, I personally indebt a Mozartian way of considering *dialogue* both from the great philosophical example given by Jankélévitch and from the theological descriptions offered by von Balthasar of the way in which God, through its revelation, realizes a symphony—considering that Truth itself is a *symphony*.

4. **Communio. The Experience of Musico-Theological Harmony and the Mystery of Silence**

The activity of the soul composed upon the tune of its own words!

The Intervention of the marvelous question, the transparent dialogue with inexhaustible silence.

(Paul Claudel 1910)

Sound (Klang) is the echo of the eternal affirmation of God in Nature, the first emanation of all things from God, not the spoken word, like matter, but the speaking Word the true Logos (*der wahre Logos*).

(Music is) the primal rhythm of Nature and the universe hear itself, which by means of this art break through into the world of representation.

(Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph von Schelling 1802)

As Vladimir Jankélévitch wrote, and used to exemplifying with a profusion of musical contexts: *Mystery is the element of Music*. In glossing this musicological and theological statement, the philosopher certainly referred to the explicit topos of the possible theology of music, which was alluded to in a variety of ways, yet along very Platonic lines, by St. Athanasius of Alexandria, St. John Chrysostom, St. Basil, Trismegist, St. Augustine, and especially Gregory of Nyssa. This fact strikes any reader of his *Philosophie Première*, particularly its two last chapters (*The Creation, Man*). However, Jankélévitch's musicological writings developed an utterly unique musical investigation of the metaphysical evidence of mystical experience in the compositions and interpretations of Chopin, Balakirev, Rimsky-Korsakov, Satie, Debussy, Albeniz, and Mompou. This constant double dimension of metaphysical inquiry that is both musical and philosophical, and which I described in a recent book,⁴⁰ is essentially linked to the inner *temporality* which corresponds to the self-awareness of consciousness at the moment of facing the mystery of the Great instant. The “semelfactivity”

and irreversibility of such events are therefore, as observed by the philosopher, “the two unfortunate forms that the mystery of the great instant holds for the creature.”⁴¹ When defining the experience of the supernatural mystery as a *criterion* of humanity, we also referred to the originary acoustic and musical perceptive givenness as a criterion of the mystical experience in all cultures. The phenomenology and grammar of experience led us to the ontology of the musical event as a primordial experience of the mystery of God and existence. Music as an intentional activity has always been the modality of revelation and understanding of the originary ontological and theological destination of music. It can be observed in many biographical itineraries namely in Schumann, Schopenhauer, Nietzsche, and Wittgenstein (for whom the *Opus metaphysicum* was essentially music). The reference to Paul Claudel’s Odes and also to the Claudelian theology expressed in the dramatic works so beloved by von Balthasar is closely related to the intrigue of saying understood by Kierkegaard and Heidegger. The Theology of Lógos seems to me to fully respond to the exponential verbal and originally musical energy of *lógos* in its relation to *mélos* (*song*). Musical semantics, with its capacity to interpret elements of a written and musical style, is ascribed to an infinitely open horizon of acts of consciousness, specifying an intentional rhythmizing, harmonic, and timbral activity. Facing the infinite givenness of subjectivity, the irruption of the other and the *Parousia* of God through music, the intentional modality opened by Husserl, Merleau-Ponty, and Levinas is preserved against any ontological and mereological postulation. The intersected spaces and temporality of the visual and musical experience of mystery require a renewed type of *topological ontology*. This topology includes the problematic of givenness, as Heidegger defined in his 1969 seminar in Le Thor. In an insightful analysis of the concepts of *Ort*, and *Ortschaft*, Martin Nitsche⁴² opened, in this fruitful direction, a phenomenological articulation between ontology and topology, in a close dialogue with Heidegger’s determination of the truth of Being (conceiving *Kontraphänomenalität* as *Ort*), and a parallel dialogue with Merleau-Ponty’s (1959) idea of “topological space” as a model of Being. A phenomenological and cognitive approach to the *ontology of music*, conceived since Boethius and formalized philosophically and grammatically as the invisible harmonization of Creation, operates through the generative consciousness of temporality and *melodic and rhythmizing intentionality*. The poets Claudel and Rilke and the composers Milhaud and Messiaen were all *creators of languages* evidencing a direct and deep acquaintance with non-European cultures, experienced with the same intensity as the affirmative theology of the saying.

The problematic of the grammatical approach to the potentialities of mystical experience *stricto sensu* is, in a responsorial way, linked to the theological implications of the phenomenology of resonance. The theological and philosophical horizon of the *possible community* and *symphony of true expressions of experience* requires, of course, the dialogic resistance of the *Kathekon*. It requires this first and foremost, in the intentional and hyperbolic gesture of music, in the sacred secrecy of musical praise, responding to the call of Silence.

Notes

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1. Héring, *Phénoménologie et philosophie religieuse*.
 2. Paul, Rm, 10; 17.
 3. Janicaud, *The Theological Turn of French Phenomenology*.
 4. Janicaud, *Phenomenology “Wide Open”: After the French Debate*.
 5. Husserl, Hua, XXVII, 48.

6. E. Stein, *Philosophy of Psychology and the Humanities*. Translated by Mary Catherine Baseheart and Marianne Sawicki (Washington, D.C.: ICS Publications, 2000).
7. See for example the letters to Erich Przywara and Rudolf Otto.
8. Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, 66; 126.
9. Husserl, *Philosophy as Rigorous Science*, § 57.
10. De Certeau, *The Fable of Mysticism*, Vol. 1, 299.
11. Certeau, de, *The Weakness of Believing (La faiblesse de croire)*, 299-305.
12. Wittgenstein, MS. 174/*Culture and Value*, 86.
13. Maritain, *Antimoderne*.
14. Certeau, de., "Misery of Theology," *The Weakness of Believing*, 256-7.
15. "Clement of Alexandria," *Prophetic Sayings (Eclogae propheticae)*, 32.
16. Héring, *Phénoménologie et philosophie religieuse*.
17. Heidegger, *Phänomenologie des religiösen Lebens*, 323.
18. Dn 9:9, 2:18-19, 2:27-28, 2:29-30, 2:47.
19. Festugière, *La Révélation d'Hermès Trismégiste; Hermétique et mystique*.
20. "Gregory of Nyssa," *Life of Moses*.
21. "Saint John of the Cross," *Ascent of Mount Carmel II, VIII*.
22. James, *Varieties of Religious Experience*, 380-3.
23. Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, § 122.
24. Wittgenstein, *Notebooks 1914-1916*, 20.10.16.
25. The logical possibility of verification of the years 1929-1932, already known intuitively in *Tractatus*, is the Wittgenstein's "phenomenological" language horizon, of the opening commensurability space, of the idea of a grammatical "a priori." The idea of a structure of grammatical anticipation or pre-comprehension, exposed on third section of the *Philosophische Bemerkungen* (Philosophical Observations) distinguishes itself from both, the Husserlian structured phenomenological horizon as well as from Heideggerian ontological comprehension. The analysis of Wittgenstein's *Big Typescript* shows that, in his road toward the *Philosophical Grammar*, the *Philosophical Investigations* and his investigations published as *Zettel* and *Observations on Philosophy of Psychology*, the concept of phenomenology could disappear or be melted in the concept of grammar, language games, and the form of life, in an irreducible sense to any terminology directly anthropological or sociological.
26. Brouwer, *Collected Works I*, 487.
27. Brouwer, *Collected Works*, 425.
28. Wittgenstein, *Remarks on the Foundations of Mathematics*, 99.
29. Michelstaedter, *Persuasion and Rhetoric*.
30. Wittgenstein's *potential infinite* is *syncategorematic* in the medieval sense, established since Priscien de Césarée since the Sixth's Century A. C., and discussed in the treatises *Syncategoremata* the 14th Century.
31. Levinas, *Transcendence et Hauteur*, 98 (my translation).
32. Levinas, *Éthique et Infini*.
33. Levinas, Emmanuel, *Autrui Comme Interlocuteur*.
34. Rom 2:15, 9:1, 13:5; 1 Cor 8:7.10.12, sq.
35. Von Balthasar, "Teilhard Spiritualität," 339-50.
36. Barth, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 314.
37. Paul, Phil, 2:6-8, 2:7.
38. Marion, *Prolegomena to Charity*, 80.
39. Jean-Bernard, *La aporía del Nómos mundial*.
40. Jean-Bernard, *Tractatus Musico-Philosophicus*.
41. Jankélévitch, *Philosophie Première*,
42. Nitsche, *Die Ortschaft des Seins*, 33-34.

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