

The French Reception of Husserl: Between Existence and Knowledge

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§1. Introduction

PHENOMENOLOGY AS A PHILOSOPHICAL MOVEMENT CAN BE UNDERSTOOD IN TWO WAYS. On the one hand, we define phenomenology as the philosophy of the philosopher Edmund Husserl (1859-1938), which was inaugurated with the publication of his work *Logical Investigations* (1900-1901) and further developed in the first half of the 20th century. On the other hand, we also define phenomenology as the application of the phenomenological method. This second meaning extends the influence and production of phenomenology beyond Husserl. In terms of the extension of phenomenology, France is considered the second homeland of phenomenology.

Some historical events could explain this francisation of phenomenology. One of the most significant events could be the constant conflicts in Europe during the 20th century (the First World War, the Russian Revolution and the Second World War), which led to the migration of many intellectuals to France. This army of intellectuals thus played a fundamental role in the spread of phenomenological philosophy in France.

First, we will present the main concepts of the different phases in the development of Husserl's thought and relate them to their reception in the different groups of students formed under his inspiration, namely those of Göttingen and

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Freiburg. In this study, the term “Husserl's students” refers to those followers of phenomenology who were directly trained and influenced by Husserl. Among the many intellectuals associated with the Husserlian school, both in Göttingen and Freiburg, were Alexandre Koyré (1892-1964), Jean Héring (1890-1966) and Emmanuel Lévinas (1906-1995), who later settled in France. These three names represent the first germ of the phenomenological movement on French soil; years later, new thinkers appropriated and worked with the phenomenological method, giving rise to what is known today as French phenomenology. Second, we will consider the presence of the father of phenomenology in France as an important milestone in the history of phenomenology¹. From this moment on, the receptive phase gave way to an assimilative phase and a creative phase, which included both the syntheses linked to the tradition of Lévinas-Sartre (philosophy of subject) and those of Koyré-Cavaillès (philosophy of concept)².

¹ Our distinction between *phenomenology in France* and *French phenomenology* echoes Spiegelberg's division between the *receptive* and *productive phases*. Cf. Herbert Spiegelberg, *The Phenomenological Movement: A Historical Introduction* (The Hague/Boston: M. Nijhoff, 1982), 426–27. Christian Dupont identifies four phases in the reception of phenomenology in France: the phase of criticism of psychologism (Léon Noël and Victor Delbos), the phase of polemics (Chestov and Héring), the phase of popularisation (Bernard Groethysen and Georges Gurvitch) and the phase of original appropriation (Lévinas and Sartre). The last of these phases would correspond to our concept of French phenomenology. Cf. Christian Yves Dupont, *Phenomenology in French Philosophy: Early Encounters* (Dordrecht: Springer, 2014), 103–59.

² In 1985 an article written by Michel Foucault was published, in which he describes the development of Husserlian philosophy in France as follows: “Without ignoring the divisions that have existed in recent years and since the end of the war between Marxists and non-Marxists, Freudians and non-Freudians, specialists in a particular discipline and philosophers, academics and non-academics, theorists and politicians, it seems to me that there is another dividing line that runs through all these oppositions. It is the one that separates a philosophy of experience, meaning and subject from a philosophy of knowledge, rationality, and concept. On the one hand, there is the tradition of Sartre and Merleau-Ponty, and on the other, that of Cavaillès, Bachelard, Koyré and Canguilhem. This division undoubtedly goes back a long way and could be traced back to the nineteenth century: Bergson and Poincaré, Lachelier and Couturat, Maine de Biran and Comte. In any case, it was so well established in the twentieth century that it was through them that phenomenology was received in France. The *Cartesian Meditations*, published in 1929, revised, translated and published shortly afterwards, were very soon at the centre of two possible readings: one that sought to radicalise Husserl in the direction of a philosophy of the subject, and one that was soon to encounter the questions of *Being and Time*: Sartre's article on the *Transcendence of the ego*, in 1935; the other, which would return to the fundamental problems of Husserl's thought, those of formalism and intuitionism; this would be Cavaillès's two theses on *The axiomatic method* and on *The formation of set theory*, in 1938”. Cf. Michel Foucault, ‘La Vie: L'expérience et La Science’, *Revue de Métaphysique et de Morale* 90, no. 1 (1985): 4.

§ 2. The reception of phenomenology in France: Koyré, Héring and Lévinas

Husserl published his *Logical Investigations* in two volumes, in 1900 and 1901, respectively³. The publication of this work is considered the founding act of phenomenology as a philosophical movement. The main feature of this book is the defence of the realm of essences and the access to it thanks to the intentionality of consciousness. Phenomenology is understood as an opening to things themselves through the study of what is directly given to consciousness. Thus, Husserl's project was first presented as a descriptive psychology of the phenomena of consciousness⁴.

Two fundamental ideas structure the content of the first volume of *Logical Investigations*: the existence of pure logic as a formal and autonomous science⁵ and the overcoming of psychologism⁶. At the end of the text, Husserl explains the importance of a pure theory of multiplicity (§ 69)⁷, which enables concepts to multiply into different subjects and, at the same time, to retain the same form, that is, to remain identical in form while being materially different (§ 70)⁸. According to Husserl, this passage from the formal to the material is possible thanks to the existence of the realm of truth in itself and the activity of the subject as a passive producer of the experience of truth in consciousness. Based on all these fundamental ideas, Husserl aimed to develop his phenomenological investigations in the second volume.

In 1907, the *Philosophical Society of Göttingen* was founded⁹, whose main aim was to carry out philosophical research using the method set out in *Logical Investigations*. Among its members were the young Jean Héring and Alexandre Koyré. This Circle

³ Edmund Husserl, *Logische Untersuchungen. Erster Theil: Prolegomena zur reinen Logik* (Halle: Max Niemeyer, 1900), Hua XVIII, pp. 16-258; *Logische Untersuchungen. Zweiter Theil: Untersuchungen zur Phänomenologie und Theorie der Erkenntnis* (Halle: Max Niemeyer, 1901), Hua XIX, pp. 537-775.

⁴ Husserl, *Logische Untersuchungen. Zweiter Theil: Untersuchungen zur Phänomenologie und Theorie der Erkenntnis*, § 6, p. 18.

⁵ The first chapter, *Die Logik als normative und speziell als praktische Disziplin*, the second, *theoretische Disziplinen als Fundamente normativer*, and the eleventh, *Die Idee der reinen Logik*, clearly express this intention.

⁶ The development of this overcoming takes up most of the text. It runs from the third to the tenth chapter.

⁷ Husserl, *Logische Untersuchungen. Erster Theil: Prolegomena zur reinen Logik*, 247–48, Hua XVIII, pp. 248-249.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 249, Hua XVIII, p. 251.

⁹ Jean Héring, 'Edmund Husserl. Souvenirs et Reflexions', in *Edmund Husserl, 1859-1959. Recueil Commémoratif Publié à l'occasion Du Centenaire de La Naissance Du Philosophe*, ed. H. L. van Breda (La Haye: M. Nijhoff, 1959), 26–28.

carried out the project of creating an official organ for the dissemination of phenomenology in the form of a journal, which was founded in 1912 by Husserl and his students. The first issue of the journal appeared in 1913 under the name of *Jahrbuch für Philosophie und phänomenologische Forschung (Yearbook of Philosophy and Phenomenological Research)*¹⁰. It contained publications by prominent philosophers such as Max Scheler, Martin Heidegger, and Dietrich von Hildebrand and writings by Koyré and Héring.

Phenomenology was presented as a “descriptive science”. The next stage of its development was transcendental phenomenology. The consolidation of this new stage of Husserlian philosophy took place in 1913 with the publication of Husserl's *Ideas I*. However, Husserl's lectures of 1907 on *The Idea of Phenomenology*¹¹ and his lectures of 1912 on the *Introduction to Phenomenology*¹² were two earlier presentations of the new path he was taking. The Göttingen years proved to be very productive and gave concrete form to transcendental phenomenology. Many readers of *Logical Investigations* found this approach dangerous since it led to the conclusion of the irreducibility of consciousness. Husserl's first disciples interpreted this gesture as an abandonment of eidetic objectivity and a return to a sort of modern subjectivism. The most controversial thesis of this new step of phenomenology was the primacy of consciousness, as stated in § 49 of *Ideas I*¹³.

After the early controversy, the new disciples associated with the Freiburg Circle pursued a development which, as some will understand, was demanded by phenomenological philosophy itself. They found in the philosophy of the young

¹⁰ This publication will henceforth be referred to as the *Jahrbuch*.

¹¹ Between 26 April and 2 May 1907, Husserl gave five lectures on *The Idea of Phenomenology* in a seminar entitled *Introduction to Key Fragments of Phenomenology and the Critique of Reason (Einleitung zu Hauptstücke aus der Phänomenologie und Kritik der Vernunft)*. During this period, Husserl devoted himself to the study of Kant. It was in this context that the programme of transcendental phenomenology and the study of two of its fundamental concepts emerged: phenomenological reduction and the constitution of objects. For a study of Kant's influence, see Iso Kern, *Husserl Und Kant: Eine Untersuchung Über Husserls Verhältnis Zu Kant Und Zum Neukantianismus*, *Phaenomenologica* 16 (Den Haag: M. Nijhoff, 1964). For an explanation of the text of the five lessons and the emergence of transcendental phenomenology, see also the introduction to *Husserliana II*. Cf. Edmund Husserl, *Die Idee Der Phänomenologie: Fünf Vorlesungen*, ed. Walter Biemel (Haag: M. Nijhoff, 1950), VII–XI.

¹² Volume 10 of *Husserliana Materialien* has recently been published, containing the text of the two-hour lecture given by Edmund Husserl in Göttingen in the summer term of 1912 under the title *Introduction to Phenomenology*. This new book offers scholars and students interesting insights into the development and content of Husserl's transcendental phenomenology. Cf. Edmund Husserl, *Einleitung in Die Phänomenologie: Vorlesung 1912*, ed. Thomas Vongehr (Dordrecht: Springer, 2023).

¹³ Edmund Husserl, ‘Ideen Zu Einer Reinen Phänomenologie Und Phänomenologischen Philosophie’, *Jahrbuch Für Philosophie Und Phänomenologische Forschung* 1, no. 1 (1913): 92, *Hua III/1*, p. 104.

Heidegger the realisation of the Husserlian project in which the young Lévinas was involved.

§ 2.1. *The place of A. Koyré in the school of phenomenology*

Alexandre Koyré arrived in Göttingen in the winter term of 1909-1910¹⁴ and stayed until the summer term of 1911-1912, still a member of the *Göttingen Circle*¹⁵. He returned to Göttingen in the summer term of 1912-1913 to take part in the discussions on the text of *Ideas I*, which had just been published in the *Jahrbuch*. During his student years in Göttingen, Koyré was also an active member of the phenomenologists between 1909 and 1913¹⁶. As a *Privatdozent*, Adolf Reinach could not supervise Koyré's research on *Paradoxes*. For this reason, the young Koyré decided to ask Husserl to become his thesis supervisor (*Doktorvater*). Koyré's dissertation was entitled *Insolubilia: A logical study of the foundations of set theory*¹⁷. It seems that Husserl read Koyré's thesis in March 1912¹⁸ and in the same month communicated to him his disagreement and rejection of the research.

¹⁴ There has been much debate about when he began his studies at Göttingen. See, for instance, Jean-François Stoffel, 'Introduction à l'oeuvre d'histoire de La Pensée Scientifique d'Alexandre Koyré. Sa Biographie Intellectuelle, Sa Philosophie de La Physique, Sa Philosophie de l'histoire' (Université Catholique de Louvain, 1992), 6–8. We can establish this date by following the opinion of Schuhmann and Spiegelberg. Professor Paola Zambelli also believes that Koyré visited Paris before coming to Göttingen. However, like all Koyré researchers, we have to admit that we do not know anything about this hypothetical stay in Paris before the Göttingen years. See also Jimmy Hernández Marcelo, 'Koyré y Husserl: De Las Matemáticas a La Fenomenología', *Revista Portuguesa de Filosofia* 78, no. 3 (2022): 851–74.

¹⁵ Karl Schuhmann, *Husserl-Chronik: Denk- Und Lebensweg Edmund Husserls*, Husserliana Dokumente 1 (Den Haag: M. Nijhoff, 1977), 168.

¹⁶ Paola Zambelli, 'Alexandre Koyré Alla Scuola Di Husserl a Gottinga', *Giornale Critico Della Filosofia Italiana* 19, no. 3 (1999): 306.

¹⁷ Alexandre Koyré, 'Insolubilia. Eine Logische Studie Über Die Grundlagen Der Mengenlehre', *Giornale Critico Della Filosofia Italiana* 19, no. 3 (1999): 323–45.

¹⁸ The manuscript in the *Husserl Archive* in Leuven, Signed A I 35, is entitled *Menge und Begriffsumfang. Paradoxien. Allheit. Dazugehöriges. über Umfang und Wissenschaftsgebiet etc. in 0 II. Gebiet einer Wissenschaft. Allgemeines zur Lehre von der Funktional - überhaupt - Urteilen. Auch Limes und Approximationsintentionalität. Auch überhaupt-Urteile*. It consists in its entirety of 75 pages. Of these, pages 5-17 of the manuscript are dated March 1912 and are entitled *Die Paradoxien. Die Insolubilia Insbesondere auch die Paradoxien der Mengenlehre*. Page 15b gives an account of Husserl's conversation with Koyré on the concept of ensemble. Cf. Karl Schuhmann, 'Koyré et Les Phénoménologues Allemands', *History and Technology. An International Journal* 4, no. 1–4 (1987): 165, note 51. At present, only pages 31a-34b of manuscript A I 35 have been published in Husserliana XXXII. Cf. Michael Weiler, ed., *Husserliana: Edmund Husserl Gesammelte Werke XXXII. Natur und Geist. Vorlesungen Sommersemester 1927* (Den Haag: M. Nijhoff, 2001), 210–16.

Because of this disagreement, Koyré's dissertation project was frustrated, and he decided to leave Göttingen. He returned to Paris in 1912 and enrolled at the Collège de France to study the history of philosophy. His academic work during this period shows the transition from the history of philosophy, *via* the history of religion, to the history of science. In 1934, Koyré began translating the works of Nicolaus Copernicus, which marked his turn to the history of science. From then on, new studies on the history of scientific thought were published, such as *Études galiléennes* (1939), *From the closed world to the infinite universe* (1957), *La Révolution astronomique* (1961), and *Études d'histoire de la pensée philosophique* (1961).

Koyré was not always seen as the intellectual heir of the Husserlian phenomenology linked to the method of *Logical Investigations*. Nevertheless, it is possible to discern an application of the eidetic method to historical studies as an approach to problems. Koyré rejected relativism, historicism, psychologism, positivism, and Marxism in his historical study of science. It should be noted that the phenomenological approach, with which the young Koyré was associated, focused on the logical study of phenomena as concretisations of the world of essences. Therefore, researchers had to be careful not to psychologise or subjectivise the contents of consciousness. This Husserlian heritage can be found in Koyré's historical studies as an attempt to reject the relativism and the psychologistic and positivistic reduction of historical studies. In other words, Koyré's studies focused on the nature of scientific truth in its concrete manifestations in the course of human history. This means that Koyré stressed the difference between historical events and the truth of scientific knowledge. Husserl himself presented a similar scheme in *Philosophy as Rigorous Science*¹⁹.

In addition, the role of Koyré as a disseminator of phenomenology in France is recognizable. First, in 1931 he founded and edited the journal *Recherches Philosophiques* as an extension of the *Jahrbuch*, whose last issue was published in 1930. This new journal served as a means of disseminating phenomenological ideas in France and was the appropriate place for the publication of phenomenological research. Finally, Koyré and Husserl agreed on Galileo's place in the history of science. Husserl presented his view of Galileo in § 9 of *The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology*²⁰. At that time, Husserl was already providing a key to the interpretation of the work of Galileo²¹ almost simultaneously with Koyré's research

¹⁹ Edmund Husserl, 'Philosophie als strenge Wissenschaft', *Logos: Internationale Zeitschrift für Philosophie der Kultur* 1 (1911): 289–341.

²⁰ Edmund Husserl, 'Die Krisis Der Europäischen Wissenschaften und Die Transzendente Phänomenologie. Eine Einleitung in Die Phänomenologische Philosophie', *Philosophia* 1 (1936): 77–176. This text will henceforth be referred to as *Krisis*.

²¹ Aron Gurwitsch, *Phenomenology and the Theory of Science*, Northwestern University Studies in Phenomenology & Existential Philosophy (Evanston,: Northwestern University Press, 1974), 39.

on the same author –his *Études galiléennes* were published in 1939²². The starting points of both authors, from mathematics to philosophy, coincide, as do the investigations that conclude their philosophy: the mathematisation of nature and Galileo's place in the history of Western science.

All these elements allow us to affirm that there is a line of continuity between Koyré's phenomenological training in the school of phenomenology and his research in the history of science. In this sense, Koyré could be considered the founder of a phenomenological tradition linked to the history of science: an epistemological phenomenology.

§ 2.2. Jean Héring: Pioneer of Phenomenology in France

Husserl's second student, who played a key role in France, was Jean Héring. Héring began to study with Husserl in Göttingen around 1909 and remained there until the summer term of 1912²³. The young Alsatian confessed that Husserl's lectures made an extraordinary impression on him²⁴, since they were presented as a particular way of studying consciousness²⁵. Héring quickly joined the *Göttingen Circle*²⁶, which focused on eidetic phenomenology²⁷. In the winter term of 1912-1913 he became president of the group²⁸.

Héring's entire philosophical project must be read and interpreted from the conception of phenomenology as a description of things as they appear in consciousness. According to Héring, phenomenology has a liberating character that provides an epistemological objectivity for research. The clarity of the concepts and descriptions presented in the first investigation of *Logical Investigations* is the keystone of the whole conceptual edifice of science and rational knowledge. For this reason, ontology must be based on solid epistemological foundations provided by phenomenology. Héring's phenomenology is undoubtedly based on this specific interpretation of Husserl's thought. The first version of Héring's phenomenological

²² Alexandre Koyré, *Études galiléennes*. 3 Vols. (Paris: Hermann, 1939).

²³ Schuhmann, *Husserl-Chronik: Denk- Und Lebensweg Edmund Husserls*, 123.

²⁴ Jean Héring, 'La Phenomenologie d'Edmund Husserl Il y a Trente Ans. Souvenirs et Reflexions d'un Etudiant de 1909', *Revue Internationale de Philosophie* 2, no. I (1939): 366.

²⁵ Ibid., 367.

²⁶ Héring, 'Edmund Husserl. Souvenirs et Reflexions', 26.

²⁷ Jacek Surzyn, 'Jean Hering and Early Phenomenological Ontology', in *Phenomenology World-Wide: Foundations, Expanding Dynamisms, Life-Engagements: A Guide for Research and Study*, ed. Anna-Teresa Tymieniecka, vol. 80 (Dordrecht; Boston: Kluwer, 2002), 74.

²⁸ Nicolas Monseu, *Les Usages de l'intentionnalité: Recherches Sur La Première Réception de Husserl En France* (Louvain-la-Neuve; Edition de l'Institut supérieur de philosophie; Dudley, MA: Peeters, 2005), 19.

approach can be found in his early writing *Remarks on Essence, Essentiality and Idea* published in 1921 in the *Jahrbuch*²⁹.

Héring is a model for the application of the phenomenological method to a field of reality such as the world of religious phenomena. His licentiate thesis in Theology, *Phenomenology and Religious Philosophy*³⁰, published in 1925, is a testimony to the foundational character of Héringian thought in France. The main purpose of this text is to present the contributions of phenomenology to the philosophy of religion, but also to serve as a phenomenological initiation³¹. To achieve this goal, the author presented a proposal articulated in three parts: (1) the crisis of the religious philosophy, (2) the phenomenological school, and (3) the contributions of phenomenology to the reconstruction of the religious philosophy³².

Héring defended the fundamental methodological and epistemological character of phenomenology³³ and stated that this method is characterised by the use of intuition³⁴. According to this, Héring was a faithful disciple of Husserl for whom the intuitionist principle was the principle of principles³⁵, and he also recognised the perfection of the intuition of the Cartesian *cogito*³⁶. Moreover, Héring had no qualms about accepting the phenomenology of both *Logical Investigations* and *Ideas I*, with only one exception, which is the primacy of consciousness as presented in § 49 of his *Ideas I*³⁷. For this reason, Héring did not hesitate to affirm that all the analyses of *Ideas I* could be accepted and, at the same time, to reject the primacy of consciousness, since nothing obliges one to see the necessity of consciousness as Husserl does³⁸.

²⁹ Jean Héring, 'Bemerkungen Über Das Wesen, Die Wesenheit Und Die Idee', *Jahrbuch Für Philosophie Und Phänomenologische Forschung* 4 (1921): 495–543. For a study of Héring's phenomenology, see Alan Gustavo Hernández Marcelo, *La Idea de La Fenomenología de Jean Héring* (Madrid: Apeiron, 2023).

³⁰ Jean Héring, *Phénoménologie et Philosophie Religieuse* (Paris: Alcan, 1926).

³¹ *Ibid.*, XI.

³² From the beginning of his research, Jean Héring made a clear distinction between “philosophy of religion” and “religious philosophy”. The former studies religion as such. The latter studies all entities (God, Man, World) from the point of view of religion, whether natural or positive. It is this second philosophy that Héring defends throughout his work. Cf. *Ibid.*, 7.

³³ *Ibid.*, 32.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 36–37.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 43.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 45.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 83. Héring later stated that “neither Schapp, nor Reinach, nor Hildebrand, nor Conrad-Martius, nor Koyré, nor later Marvin Farber or Fink have claimed to deny the epistemological value of the second phenomenological reduction nor the importance of the analysis of consciousness as philosophia prima. What they rejected was only the metaphysical thesis of the primacy of consciousness, lapidary exposed in *Ideas*”. Cf. Héring, 'Edmund Husserl. Souvenirs et Reflexions', 27.

³⁸ Héring, *Phénoménologie et Philosophie Religieuse*, 86.

Héring therefore proposed to make a descriptive analysis of religious consciousness based on the religious experience of the subject³⁹. According to the author, religious experience should be understood as the set of experiences that lead to the knowledge of a religious truth; it is thus different from scientific experience⁴⁰. As can be seen, the value and autonomy of religious experience were defended by Héring⁴¹. Applying the Husserlian phenomenology of intentionality, Héring claimed that God is the intentional correlate of the act of affection (religious experience)⁴².

Héring then openly opposed the existentialist interpretation of phenomenology made by Léon Chestov (1866-1938)⁴³. He also undertook a remarkable activity of spread phenomenology in France. In 1926 he reviewed his own thesis⁴⁴, the following year he presented a review of Lévinas' book *The Theory of Intuition in Husserl's Phenomenology*⁴⁵, in 1952 he published another review of Volume II of Edith Stein's works⁴⁶, and, finally, in 1962 he commented on Spiegelberg's text *The Phenomenological Movement*⁴⁷. He also published a *Report on Recent Phenomenological Publications* in 1943⁴⁸, the *Bulletin of Phenomenological Philosophy* in 1950⁴⁹, and an *Exposition of the Theory of Values* in 1960⁵⁰.

An important contribution is Héring's writing "Phenomenology in France" as a section of Marvin Farber's text on *Contemporary philosophy in France and the United*

³⁹ Ibid., 121.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Ibid., 124.

⁴² Ibid., 130.

⁴³ On the Chestov-Héring debate, cf. Monseu, *Les Usages de l'intentionnalité: Recherches Sur La Première Réception de Husserl En France*, 128–62; Jimmy Hernández Marcelo, 'Héring y Chestov: El Primer Debate Sobre La Fenomenología En Francia', *Cuadernos Salmantinos de Filosofía* 43 (2016): 137–56.

⁴⁴ Jean Héring, 'Recension de J. Héring, Phénoménologie et Philosophie Religieuse', *Revue d'histoire et de Philosophie Religieuses* 6 (1926): 73–79.

⁴⁵ Jean Héring, 'Recension d'E. Levinas, La Théorie de l'intuition Dans La Phénoménologie de Husserl', *Revue Philosophique de La France et de l'Étranger* 5–6 (1932): 474–81.

⁴⁶ Jean Héring, 'Recension de E. Stein, Werke, t. II: Endliches Und Ewiges Sein, Édité Par L. Gelber, Louvain, Nauwelaerts, 1950', *Revue d'histoire et de Philosophie Religieuses* 32 (1952): 157–59.

⁴⁷ Jean Héring, 'Recension de H. Spiegelberg, The Phenomenological Movement. A Historical Introduction', *Revue d'histoire et de Philosophie Religieuses* 54 (1962): 74–76.

⁴⁸ Jean Héring, 'Littérature Phénoménologique Récente', *Revue d'histoire et de Philosophie Religieuses* 23 (1943): 237–45.

⁴⁹ Jean Héring, 'Bulletin de Philosophie Phénoménologique', *Revue d'histoire et de Philosophie Religieuses* 30 (1950): 51–55.

⁵⁰ Jean Héring, 'De Max Scheler à Hans Reiner. Remarques Sur La Théorie Des Valeurs Morales Dans Le Mouvement Phénoménologiques', *Revue d'histoire et de Philosophie Religieuses* 40 (1960): 152–64.

States, published in 1950⁵¹. He also coordinated Husserl's lectures at the University of Strasbourg during his stay in France after the *Paris Lectures*⁵². Finally, his contribution to French phenomenology can also be found in his reflections on the phenomenology of the dream, as a result of his debate with Chestov⁵³. In conclusion, Héring's place in the history of the reception of phenomenology in France is undoubtedly that of a pioneer –he is probably the real father of French phenomenology. From his first presentation of phenomenology in France, a second application of the phenomenological method to the field of religious phenomena can be found.

§ 2.3. *Lévinas' early ontological-existential phenomenology*

Emmanuel Lévinas was born in Lithuania in 1906 into a Jewish family that had been settled in the region for several generations. In 1923 he moved to Strasbourg⁵⁴, where he met Héring. Thanks to the influence of him, he decided to explore phenomenology in depth. Lévinas studied in Freiburg from the summer term of 1928 to the winter term of 1928-1929⁵⁵. During this period, he attended both Husserl's last lectures and Heidegger's first lectures⁵⁶. It is important to note that Heidegger had just published *Being and Time* and that Héring gave him a copy of this work, the content of which was interpreted as an extension of Husserl's work⁵⁷. Lévinas himself admitted that “Husserl's path was extended and transfigured by Heidegger”⁵⁸. At that time, the author of *Being and Time* was considered a bolder and more radical than Husserl⁵⁹. From then on, Lévinas read Husserl through the eyes of Heidegger.

⁵¹ Jean Héring, ‘La Phénoménologie en France’, in *L'activité philosophique contemporaine en France et aux Etats-Unis.*, ed. Marvin Farber, vol. II (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1950), 76–95.

⁵² Letter from Husserl to Ingarden dated 13 July 1928. Cf. Edmund Husserl, *Briefwechsel. Die Göttinger Schule*, vol. III (Dordrecht: Kluwer, 1994), 242.

⁵³ The Alsatian philosopher's contribution to the phenomenological movement is the formulation of a phenomenology of the dream, presented in three writings: Jean Héring, ‘La Représentation et Le Rêve. Remarque Sur Un Problème Phénoménologique’, *Revue d'histoire et de Philosophie Religieuses* 26–27 (1947–1946): 193–206; Jean Héring, ‘Concerning Image, Idea and Dream. Phenomenological Notes’, *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 8 (1947): 188–205; Jean Héring, ‘Quelques Thèmes d’une Phénoménologie Du Rêve’, in *For Roman Ingarden, Nine Essays in Phenomenology*, ed. Anna-Teresa Tymieniecka (Den Haag: M. Nijhoff, 1959), 75–89.

⁵⁴ François Poirié, *Emmanuel Lévinas. Qui Êtes-Vous?* (Lyon: La Manufacture, 1987), 68.

⁵⁵ Emmanuel Lévinas, ‘Séjour de Jeunesse Auprès de Husserl, 1928-1929’, in *Emmanuel Lévinas. Positivité et Transcendance. Suivi de Lévinas et La Phénoménologie*, ed. J.-L. Marion (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 2000), 3.

⁵⁶ Spiegelberg, *The Phenomenological Movement: A Historical Introduction*, 252.

⁵⁷ Jean-François Lavigne, ‘Lévinas Avant Lévinas. L’introducteur et Le Traducteur de Husserl’, in *Emmanuel Lévinas. Positivité et Transcendance. Suivi de Lévinas et La Phénoménologie*, ed. Jean-Luc Marion (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 2000), 52.

⁵⁸ Poirié, *Emmanuel Lévinas. Qui Êtes-Vous?*, 74.

⁵⁹ Lavigne, ‘Lévinas Avant Lévinas. L’introducteur et Le Traducteur de Husserl’, 53.

In Freiburg, according to the young Lithuanian, Husserl taught a transcendental programme of philosophy, while Heidegger developed a fundamental ontology⁶⁰. This contrast between the old Husserl and the young Heidegger would be decisive in the Lévinas's interpretation of phenomenology. Indeed, the professor who most influenced Lévinas was Heidegger, in whom he discovered the greatest exponent of the fruitfulness of the phenomenological method⁶¹. After his time in Heidegger's lectures, Lévinas recognised that Heidegger was one of the greatest philosophers in history⁶². Lévinas himself confessed that "Husserl was an old man compared to Heidegger"⁶³, since on every page of Heidegger's work he presented himself as a novelty⁶⁴. In Lévinas's own words: "I went to Husserl and found Heidegger"⁶⁵.

In 1929, Lévinas wrote *On Husserl's Ideas*⁶⁶ and in 1930, back in Strasbourg, he defended and published his dissertation, *The Theory of Intuition in Husserl's Phenomenology*⁶⁷. This text is an exposition of one of the fundamental concepts of Husserl's philosophy. This Lévinas's book was the real *Manifesto* of phenomenology in France. However, it should be noted that that Lévinas wrote many more texts on Husserl, such as *Reflections on the Phenomenological "Technique"* (1957), *Intentionality and Metaphysics* (1959), *The Ruin of Representation* (1959), *The Work of Edmund Husserl* (1940), *Intentionality and Sensation* (1965), *Discovering Existence with Husserl and Heidegger* (1967).

According to Lévinas, phenomenology is a project that leads from *Logical Investigations* to *Ideas I*⁶⁸. The unity of phenomenology lies precisely in the concept of intentionality, which in *Ideas I*, Lévinas stated, presupposes a new ontology perfectly designed by Heidegger. This means that Lévinas finds a line of continuity between Husserl and Heidegger through the transcendental openness to the existence of being as presented in *Being and Time*. The starting point of Lévinas's book is the primacy of

⁶⁰ Emmanuel Lévinas, *Éthique et Infini. Dialogue Avec Philippe Nemo* (Paris: Fayard-Radio-France, 1982), 34–35.

⁶¹ Emmanuel Lévinas, 'Fribourg, Husserl et La Phénoménologie', in *Les Imprévus de l'histoire*, ed. Pierre Hayat (Cognac: Fata Morgana, 1994), 105.

⁶² Poirié, *Emmanuel Lévinas. Qui Êtes-Vous?*, 74.

⁶³ Emmanuel Lévinas, 'La Ruine de La Représentation', in *Edmund Husserl, 1859-1959. Recueil Commémoratif Publié à l'occasion Du Centenaire de La Naissance Du Philosophe*, ed. H. L. Van Breda (La Haye: M. Nijhoff, 1959), 126.

⁶⁴ Poirié, *Emmanuel Lévinas. Qui Êtes-Vous?*, 75.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 74.

⁶⁶ Emmanuel Lévinas, 'Sur Les "Ideen" de M. E. Husserl', *Revue Philosophique de La France et de l'Étranger* 54, no. 3–4 (1929): 230–65.

⁶⁷ Emmanuel Lévinas, *La Théorie de l'intuition Dans La Phénoménologie de Husserl* (Paris: Vrin, 1930).

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 146.

consciousness of *Ideas I*. This transcendental phenomenology is based on an implicit ontology⁶⁹ that will give access to the question of being. According to Lévinas, the actualisation of the phenomenological project is this discovery that Heidegger made in § 44 of *Being and Time*⁷⁰. Lévinas criticised the fact that Husserlian intentionality does not imply direct contact with the object⁷¹. Thus, the constant claim to existence leads us to an ontological interpretation of intentionality, which consist of the conception of intentionality as identical to the being-in-the-world of Heidegger's *Dasein*⁷².

Lévinas's critique of Husserl extended to the excess of intellectualism, both in the form of the Platonic idealism of *Logical Investigations* and the transcendentalism of *Ideas I*⁷³. In both cases truth would separate us from life⁷⁴. The problem lies in the inability to connect consciousness with the being and existence of the world. The accusation of intellectualism is expressed as follows: "Being is presented as the correlate of the theoretical intuitive life of the evidence of an objectifying act"⁷⁵. Thus, a response to Husserl's transcendentalism is based on Heidegger's openness to existence. Lévinas himself acknowledged that *The Theory of Intuition in Husserl's Phenomenology* was written under the influence of *Being and Time*⁷⁶. This ontological and existential claim corresponds to § 9 of Heidegger's book: "The essence of being lies in its existence (*Das Wessen des Daseins liegt in seiner Existenz*)"⁷⁷. As is evident, "this reading of Husserlianism is based on a hermeneutic principle that does not emerge from Husserl's philosophy"⁷⁸. In the conclusion of his book, Lévinas stated that phenomenology seeks the very existence of being⁷⁹, clearly alluding to Heidegger.

Lévinas admitted to having been influenced by Husserl in his early writings⁸⁰; however, he was aware that, at the time of writing his dissertation, he was "influenced by *Being and Time* and tried to present Husserl as having perceived the ontological problem of being"⁸¹. Therefore, Lévinas's work cannot be considered, at least in a way

⁶⁹ Ibid., 217.

⁷⁰ Martin Heidegger, 'Sein Und Zeit I', *Jahrbuch Für Philosophie Und Phänomenologische Forschung* 8 (1927): 212–30.

⁷¹ Lévinas, *La Théorie de l'intuition Dans La Phénoménologie de Husserl*, 108.

⁷² Ibid., 70–71.

⁷³ Ibid., 147.

⁷⁴ Ibid., 148.

⁷⁵ Ibid., 141.

⁷⁶ Lévinas, *Éthique et Infini. Dialogue Avec Philippe Nemo*, 29–30.

⁷⁷ Heidegger, 'Sein Und Zeit I', 42.

⁷⁸ Monseu, *Les Usages de l'intentionnalité: Recherches Sur La Première Réception de Husserl En France*, 175.

⁷⁹ Lévinas, *La Théorie de l'intuition Dans La Phénoménologie de Husserl*, 217.

⁸⁰ Emmanuel Lévinas, 'La Conscience Non-Intentionnelle', in *Entre Nous. Essai Sur Pensée-à-l'autre*, ed. Emmanuel Lévinas (Paris: Grasset, 1991), 141.

⁸¹ Lévinas, *Éthique et Infini. Dialogue Avec Philippe Nemo*, 36.

that is faithful to Husserlian phenomenology, as an introduction to Husserl⁸². In any case, would be a “non-Husserlian introduction to Husserl”⁸³ or a “Husserl read from Heidegger”⁸⁴. For the same reason, Husserl's opinion on Heidegger's work could be extended to Lévinas: “I cannot integrate this work into the framework of my phenomenology”⁸⁵.

The influence of Lévinas's early work in the French academic world can be acknowledged in some significant cases. Paul Ricoeur recalled that his first encounter with Husserl was through the thesis of Lévinas⁸⁶. Also, it was through this text that Sartre came to phenomenology⁸⁷. In short, it could be said that an existentialist phenomenological tradition in French philosophy is present through Lévinas. This interpretation has existence as its central axis. Its scope takes us back to Sartre, Merleau-Ponty, Ricoeur and Michel Henry.

The presentation of the genesis and meaning of the young Lévinas's interpretation of Husserl's phenomenology, and how he integrates it in a perfectly coherent way into Heidegger's ontology, constitutes the essence of the main phenomenological line in France. This first line of French phenomenologists had as its backbone the Lévinasian interpretation of phenomenology, centred on the critique of transcendentalism and the recovery of the world of human existence, in accordance with the itinerary of *Being and Time*. It is therefore fair to say, as Jocelyn Benoist claimed, that the first reception of phenomenology in France was existentialist⁸⁸.

§ 3. Husserl in Paris: the phenomenological accounts of Sartre and Cavailles

Husserl began to elaborate the content of the *Paris Lectures* on 25 January 1929⁸⁹ and delivered them on 23 and 25 February in the Descartes Amphitheatre of the University

⁸² Monseu, *Les Usages de l'intentionnalité: Recherches Sur La Première Réception de Husserl En France*, 231.

⁸³ Lavigne, ‘Lévinas Avant Lévinas. L'introducteur et Le Traducteur de Husserl’, 59.

⁸⁴ Lévinas, *La Théorie de l'intuition Dans La Phénoménologie de Husserl*, 14–15.

⁸⁵ Letter from Husserl to Ingardem dated 2 December 1929. Cf. Husserl, *Briefwechsel. Die Göttinger Schule*, III: 253.

⁸⁶ Paul Ricoeur, ‘L'originare et La Question-En-Retour Dans La Krisis de Husserl’, in *Textes Pour Emmanuel Levinas*, ed. Fr. Laruelle (Paris: Jean-Michel Place, 1980), 167.

⁸⁷ Simone de Beauvoir, *La force de l'âge* (Paris: Gallimard, 1960), 142: “He bought Lévinas's book on Husserl on the Boulevard Saint-Michel ... Contingency did not seem to play an important role in Husserl's system, of which Lévinas gave only a formal and vague description”.

⁸⁸ Jocelyn Benoist, *L'idée de phénoménologie* (Paris: Beauchesne, 2001), 7.

⁸⁹ Schuhmann, *Husserl-Chronik: Denk- Und Lebensweg Edmund Husserls*, 241.

of Paris (the Sorbonne). Among the participants were Emmanuel Lévinas, Lucien Lévy-Bruhl, Jean Cavailles, Jean Héring, Alexandre Koyré, Gabriel Marcel, Lichtenberger, Andler, X. Leon, E. Meyerson, Léon Chestov and Minkowski⁹⁰. The title of the lectures given in Paris was *Introduction to the Transcendental Phenomenology*. These lectures were part of the consolidation of phenomenology and took the Cartesian path as a point of reference. They were also chronologically contemporary with another of Husserl's powerful books, *Formal and Transcendental Logic*, and with the taking of distance from Heidegger. It should also be pointed out that the theme of transcendental intersubjectivity was introduced precisely at this moment in the development of Husserl's phenomenology.

§ 3.1. *Monadological Intersubjectivity: Husserl and the Leibnizian-Cartesian Path*

Husserl begins his *Meditations* by acknowledging the Cartesian heritage in transcendental phenomenology⁹¹. The fundamental theme of Cartesian philosophy had already been revealed in *Ideas I*: the suspension of the existence of the world⁹². In this sense, *Descartes' Meditations* are the prototype of the philosophical return to the pure self and inaugurate a new way of doing philosophy⁹³, which could be defined as "le renversement cartésien"⁹⁴. Husserl would then try to meditate in the Cartesian way but avoiding Descartes' errors in order to transform the old Cartesianism⁹⁵. This means that transcendental phenomenology presents itself as a neo-Cartesianism⁹⁶ that makes the transition from pure interiority to objective exteriority⁹⁷.

This phenomenology, however, demands a critique without implying the danger of a return *in infinitum*⁹⁸. At the same time, Husserl reaffirmed that these meditations aim to show the concrete possibility of the Cartesian idea of a universal science from an absolute foundation⁹⁹. Moreover, he did not hesitate to state that there is only one form of radical self-knowledge, which is phenomenology¹⁰⁰. This transcendental phenomenology (concrete logic of being) is an authentic universal ontology that includes all regional possibilities of existence. Contrary to his earlier works, Husserl

⁹⁰ Ibid., 241–42.

⁹¹ Edmund Husserl, *Méditations cartésiennes: Introduction à la phénoménologie*, trans. Emmanuel Levinas and Gabrielle Peiffer (Paris: Colin, 1931), 1.

⁹² Ibid., 3.

⁹³ Ibid.

⁹⁴ Ibid., 5.

⁹⁵ Ibid.

⁹⁶ Ibid., 1.

⁹⁷ Ibid., 3.

⁹⁸ Ibid., 130.

⁹⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., 131.

now excludes only naive metaphysics but accepts a metaphysical approach to phenomenology in a more rigorous sense¹⁰¹.

Husserl presented a new conception of phenomenology called genetics¹⁰². This consists of analysing the essential constitution of the transcendental *ego* in order to reveal the structure of the universal *eidos* of the transcendental *ego* (§ 34)¹⁰³. It is now a matter of making explicit the universal genetic laws that determine the possibility of the concrete *ego* (monad). Through genetic phenomenology, the *ego* becomes comprehensible as an infinite set of systematically coherent functions in the unity of universal genesis (according to the universal and constant form of time)¹⁰⁴. The *ego* constitutes in itself the others, the objectivity and all that has existential value. For this reason, phenomenology is also a transcendental idealism¹⁰⁵.

In the last meditation –the fifth– Husserl introduced a new transcendental field called monadological intersubjectivity. These last pages are probably the most interesting and creative in the text, mainly because they respond to the accusation of solipsism and open the field of phenomenological research to the sphere of transcendental intersubjectivity through the study of the constitution of the sense of the *alter ego*, that is, the experience of others as intentional objects. In this way, the problem of alterity is addressed in its full scope¹⁰⁶. According to Husserl, the other is both an object of the world and a subject of the world. In this intersubjective shared world, objects are given as existences. For its part, the world of experience exists “in itself” in opposition to all the subjects who perceive it and in opposition to all phenomenal worlds¹⁰⁷. Therefore, the transcendental theory of the experience of the other –*Einfühlung*– also provides the basis for a transcendental theory of the objective world¹⁰⁸. Thus, the *ego*, the *alter ego* and the world are intimately related, and the study of one leads us intentionally towards the others.

This concrete understanding of phenomenology – from the *Paris Lectures*– was received by the French public in the 1930s. Since then, there have been two interpretations of transcendental phenomenology in France, that of Jean-Paul Sartre and that of Jean Cavailles.

¹⁰¹ Ibid., 133.

¹⁰² Ibid., 58.

¹⁰³ Ibid., 60–61.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., 68.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., 72.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., 75.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., 76.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., 77.

§ 3.2. Sartre and the Philosophy of Subject

In the history of phenomenology in France, the place of Jean-Paul Sartre (1905-1980) is particularly relevant. First, following Spiegelberg's reading, which draws the dividing line between the receptive and the productive phases around 1936¹⁰⁹, Sartre should be considered the first French thinker to make an independent study of Husserl's works. Sartre thus represents the turn to Husserl's originals and the use of Husserlian works first-hand¹¹⁰. Sartre was born in Paris and studied first at the Lycée Henry-IV (1922-1923), then at Louis-le-Grand (1923-1924) and finally at the École Normale Supérieure (1924-1928)¹¹¹. At this prestigious institution, he was a classmate of Raymond Aron, Georges Canguilhem (1904-1995), Jean Hyppolite (1907-1968), René Maheu (1905-1975) and Maurice Merleau-Ponty. He also formed an inseparable bond with his companion Simone de Beauvoir. Sartre himself embodies the image of the French intellectual who combines philosophy, literature and political activity.

In the early 1930s, Sartre was introduced to phenomenology by his friend Raymond Aron. Then he read *The Theory of Intuition in Husserl's Phenomenology* of Lévinas. For this reason, Sartre did not hesitate to declare in 1961 that "I came to phenomenology through Lévinas"¹¹². Between 1933 and 1934, Sartre moved to Berlin and received a scholarship from the *French Institute* in the same city. During his stay on German soil, he deepened his knowledge of phenomenology. In 1946, together with Beauvoir and Merleau-Ponty, he founded the journal *Les Temps Modernes*, the official organ for the dissemination of his ideas and those of the circle close to French Marxism¹¹³.

Sartre's work is highly diverse and covers different areas of knowledge such as theatre, literary criticism, political essays, personal memories, literature and, of course, philosophy. This research focuses on his philosophical position in relation to phenomenology. For this reason, this study will look at the philosophical texts prior to the publication of *Being and Nothingness* (1943), where a break with the Husserlian project and a turn towards existentialism as ontology is evident, as expressed in the subtitle of this work, *Essay on Phenomenological Ontology*¹¹⁴.

Sartre's first philosophical work, *stricto sensu*, was *The Transcendence of the Ego*, published in the journal *Recherches philosophiques* in 1936¹¹⁵. We must agree with

¹⁰⁹ Spiegelberg, *The Phenomenological Movement: A Historical Introduction*, 426–27.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 433.

¹¹¹ This institution will henceforth be called *l'École Normale*.

¹¹² Jean Paul Sartre, «Merleau-Ponty vivant», *Les temps modernes* 184-185, numéro special sur Maurice Merleau-Ponty (1961): 306.

¹¹³ For a detailed account of Sartre's relationship with the journal, see Anna Boschetti, *Sartre et 'Les Temps modernes': Une entreprise intellectuelle* (Paris: Éditions de Minuit, 1985).

¹¹⁴ Jean-Paul Sartre, *L'être et le néant: Essai d'ontologie phénoménologique* (Paris: Gallimard, 1943).

¹¹⁵ Jean-Paul Sartre, 'La Transcendance de l'Ego. Esquisse d'une Description Phénoménologique', *Recherches Philosophiques* 6 (1937 1936): 85–123.

Vincent de Coorebyter, who considers the article *A fundamental idea of Husserl's Phenomenology: Intentionality*, published in 1939 in *La nouvelle Revue Française*¹¹⁶, to be a contemporary work to *The Transcendence of the Ego*. According to Coorebyter, this text embodies Sartre's first phenomenological work¹¹⁷. Both texts show the Parisian philosopher's first foray into the world of phenomenology. Around the same time, Sartre also wrote *The Imagination*¹¹⁸ and *The Imaginary*¹¹⁹, which were published in 1936 and 1940, respectively. These texts provide an initial idea of the conception of phenomenology adopted by Sartre and to which he reacts¹²⁰.

First, it must be pointed out that in Berlin Sartre read *Ideas I, Logical Investigations, Lectures on the Phenomenology of the Consciousness of Internal Time, Formal and Transcendental Logic*, and *Cartesian Meditations*. Neither *Philosophy as Rigorous Science* nor the works published after 1933 seemed important to him. Like many philosophers interested in phenomenology, Sartre confronted the *ego* in transcendental phenomenology. Thus, Sartre's brief article on intentionality placed Husserl historically in the struggle against all psychologism. However, Sartre also affirmed that Husserl is not a realist, since for him consciousness is irreducible. Within this dynamic, intentionality would be the consciousness of something other than itself. Sartre concluded by affirming that "Husserl has restored horror and enchantment to things". Already in this article, Sartre cited Heidegger and the concept of being-in-the-world¹²¹.

The Transcendence of the Ego radicalised Husserlian intentionality and applied the reduction to the *ego* itself. Sartre eliminated the *ego* from consciousness and defined it as pure activity. This conclusion led him to the liberation of the transcendental field and its purification of subjectivity¹²²; thus, to the overcoming of solipsism, which

¹¹⁶ Jean-Paul Sartre, 'Une Idée Fondamentale de La Phénoménologie de Husserl: L'intentionnalité', *La Nouvelle Revue Française* 304 (1939): 129–31.

¹¹⁷ Vincent de Coorebyter, *Sartre, face à la phénoménologie* (Bruxelles; Paris: Ousia, 2000), 27–28.

¹¹⁸ Jean-Paul Sartre, *L'Imagination* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1936).

¹¹⁹ Jean-Paul Sartre, *L'imaginaire: Psychologie phénoménologique de l'imagination* (Paris: Gallimard, 1940).

¹²⁰ For a study of Sartre's relationship to phenomenology, see Coorebyter, *Sartre, face à la phénoménologie; Sartre, avant la phénoménologie* (Bruxelles; Paris: Ousia, 2005). Other important works on the subject include Mohamed Jaoua, *Phénoménologie et ontologie dans la première philosophie de Sartre* (Paris: Harmattan, 2011); Jean-Marc Mouillie, *Sartre et la phénoménologie* (Fontenay-aux-Roses: ENS, 2000); Alter: *Revue de Phénoménologie, Sartre Phénoménologue*, vol. 10 (Fontenay-aux-Roses: Editions Alter, 2002).

¹²¹ Sartre, 'Une Idée Fondamentale de La Phénoménologie de Husserl: L'intentionnalité', 131.

¹²² Jean-Paul Sartre, *La transcendance de l'égo. Esquisse d'une description phénoménologique* (Paris: Vrin, 1965), 74–84.

Husserl failed to achieve¹²³. The opening up of the field of ethics and politics seemed to be established by this Sartrean movement¹²⁴.

Sartre's notion of consciousness is developed in the following texts: *The Imagination*, *The Imaginary* and *The Theory of Emotions*¹²⁵. In these works, Sartre's struggle against the Husserlian *ego* became an existentialist phenomenology through a renewal of dialectical materialism, based on the demand for a phenomenological ontology as presented by Heidegger.

Finally, existentialism entered the French world through Sartre. This path was definitively taken with *Being and Nothingness*, in which the “being-for-itself” played a fundamental role. Existentialist philosophy in general diverges from the scientific rigour of phenomenology, which can be found at the origin of Husserl's work, as its connection with literature relegates the scientific spirit to the background and concentrates on the experience of the world¹²⁶. At the same time, the rejection of the *ego* leads to an overestimation of human existence, as can be seen in Sartre's work.

Sartre places the subject and its existence at the centre of his reflections. His exclusive reading of Husserl's works focused on transcendental phenomenology leads him to claim ideas that the father of phenomenology does not support and that are incompatible with his philosophical proposal. However, this serves as a conceptual tool for the construction of his philosophy, which will be a rejection of the primacy of consciousness –as presented in *Ideas I*– and of the irreducibility of the transcendental *ego* –as presented in *Cartesian Meditations*.

§ 3.3. *Cavaillès and the philosophy of concept*

Jean Cavaillès (1903-1944), for his part, criticised and rejected the Husserlian *ego* in *Formal and Transcendental Logic*. This thinker was a mathematician who was familiar with Husserl's work. He was motivated by Tran Duc Thao to focus on the transcendental logic of phenomenology.

While Cavaillès was studying, he became particularly interested in the development of phenomenology. He attended the second Davos Meeting in 1929, where Cassirer and Heidegger had a passionate debate. He also visited Husserl in 1931¹²⁷ and attended Heidegger's lectures¹²⁸. During his intellectual training, he was associated with Léon Brunschvicg, who directed his early research, focused on mathematical

¹²³ Ibid., 84–85.

¹²⁴ Ibid., 85–86.

¹²⁵ Jean-Paul Sartre, *Esquisse d'une théorie des émotions* (Paris: Hermann, 1939).

¹²⁶ Spiegelberg, *The Phenomenological Movement: A Historical Introduction*, 443.

¹²⁷ Gabrielle Ferrières, ed., *Jean Cavaillès, philosophe et combattant (1903-1944)* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1990), 106.

¹²⁸ Ibid., 102.

studies. He was also a close friend of Gaston Bachelard and his daughter Suzanne. Thanks to the influence of Cavailles, Tran Duc Thao devoted himself to the study of Husserl's work. A fruitful exchange of ideas and interpretations of phenomenology took place between the two authors.

Cavaillès settled in Paris in 1920 and studied at the Lycée Louis-le-Grand in preparation for his admission to the École Normale, where he began his studies in 1922, after spending his holidays in Germany, a country for which he had a special affection¹²⁹. Around 1926 he obtained two diplomas (philosophy and mathematics)¹³⁰, and from 1927 to 1928 he did military service. In 1928, Cavaillès joined the École Normale as a secretary archivist at the Social Documentation Centre and was also asked to give some lectures on scientific philosophy and mathematics¹³¹. Merleau-Ponty was one of the students who prepared for the *agrégation* under his supervision during the winter of 1929-1930¹³². Cavaillès moved to the Lycée in Amiens from 1936 to 1938 to teach. In 1938, Cavaillès presented his two dissertations (principal and complementary) at the Sorbonne to obtain his doctorate¹³³. The same year he was appointed professor of logic and general philosophy in Strasbourg. In 1941, he was appointed associate professor of logic and philosophy of science at the Sorbonne.

Cavaillès played an active role in the Resistance during the Second World War. He was arrested, first in June 1940 and again in August 1942. On both occasions, he managed to escape. Cavaillès met Charles de Gaulle in London in February 1943. Once resettled in France, he was arrested in Paris in August 1943. He was tortured, imprisoned and finally shot in Arras (France) in February 1944. His remains were identified by his sister Gabrielle and placed in the Sorbonne Chapel.

The work of Cavaillès focused on the philosophy of mathematics, logic and the philosophy of science. His dissertations are evidence of this and encourage us to understand the meaning of his critique of Husserlian philosophy and his interpretation of phenomenology. His critique of Husserlian logic can be found in his book *On Logic and the Theory of Science*¹³⁴, published posthumously by Georges Canguilhem and Charles Ehresmann.

¹²⁹ Ibid., 43–46.

¹³⁰ Ibid., 52.

¹³¹ Ibid., 73.

¹³² Ibid.

¹³³ Léon Brunschvicg was the supervisor of both theses: *Méthode axiomatique et formalisme* (thèse principale) and *Remarques sur la formation de la théorie abstraite des ensembles* (thèse complémentaire).

¹³⁴ Jean Cavaillès, *Sur la logique et la théorie de la science* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1947).

This book has no introduction and is divided into three sections. The first section focuses on Kant's work and his doctrine of science¹³⁵. From that point, an interpretation centred on the notion of the demonstrative system (Bolzano and Husserl) and another interpretation centred on the notion of the mathematical *organon* (Brunschvicg and Brouwer) are presented¹³⁶. The second section begins with his logical proposal through the mathematical processes of paradigmatisation and thematisation¹³⁷ and his critique of the general syntax of Carnap's positivism¹³⁸. Finally, the third section is an ontological proposal whose centre of research is the critique of phenomenology¹³⁹. Cavailles's critique focuses on the reading of Husserl's *Formal and Transcendental Logic* as a solution to the ontological problem but which he considers inadequate because of its lack of formal analysis.

In contrast to Husserl, Cavailles stresses the need for a dialectical approach to science. As he explained, progress is material, and its motor is the need to overcome each of the singular essences that make up history. This is not a philosophy of consciousness, as in the case of phenomenology, but a philosophy of concept. This will be the only philosophy capable of providing a doctrine of science or a general epistemology. For Cavailles, "the generative necessity in which the historical progress of science takes place is not that of an activity, but that of a dialectic"¹⁴⁰. In other words, Cavailles tries to explain that logical construction is artificial; however, the ontology behind logical constructions responds to a dialectical necessity of the object's very being. For this reason, the theory of science and the history of science need the thematization of the object, that is, an ontology and not a logic, as Husserl proposes.

Cavaillès's legacy was taken up by several young students closely associated with him, such as Tran Duc Thao (1917-1993) and Suzanne Bachelard (1919-2007). The former, of Vietnamese origin, studied at the Lycée Louis-le-Grand and at the Lycée Henri IV in Paris to prepare for the École Normale, where he was ranked third. Thao began his training at this prestigious Parisian institution in 1939¹⁴¹. Thanks to the influence of Cavailles, he was introduced to the world of Husserlian phenomenology. In 1941 and 1942, Cavailles supervised the young Vietnamese philosopher as he wrote his Memoir on Husserl and the phenomenological method. In 1944, with the support of Merleau-Ponty, he undertook two research stays of three weeks each, in January

¹³⁵ Ibid., 1–14.

¹³⁶ Ibid., 14–26.

¹³⁷ Ibid., 26–33.

¹³⁸ Ibid., 33–43.

¹³⁹ Ibid., 44–78.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid., 78.

¹⁴¹ Daniel Hémery, 'Itinéraire I. Premier exil', in *L'itinéraire de Tran Duc Thao: Phénoménologie et transfert culturel*, ed. Jocelyn Benoist and Michel Espagne (Paris: Colin, 2013), 48.

and April respectively, at the Husserl Archive in Louvain¹⁴². As a result of his phenomenological research, he published *Phenomenology and Dialectical Materialism*¹⁴³, a work that had a strong influence on the generation of philosophers of the 1950s. Jocelyn Benoist stated that this book served as an introduction to Husserl's thought in France for thirty years¹⁴⁴.

Suzanne Bachelard, daughter of the famous philosopher and epistemologist Gaston Bachelard, came into contact with Cavaillès at an early age through her father's friendship with him¹⁴⁵. Suzanne studied philosophy and mathematics at the University of Paris. Her main areas of research were philosophy of science (epistemology) and phenomenology. This dual approach became evident during her years of teaching. She established a project of philosophy of science in continuity with the philosophy of Husserl, to whom she devoted her two doctoral theses presented in 1956 at the University of Paris. The main thesis was intitled *The Consciousness of Rationality* – published in 1958¹⁴⁶–, and the complementary Thesis had in two parts: 1) the French translation of *Formal and Transcendental Logic* of Husserl –published in 1957¹⁴⁷– and 2) the exposition of *Husserl's Logic* –published in 1957¹⁴⁸–. The common thread of his studies on Husserl is to be found in the critique of anti-psychologism as the unifying theme of Husserl's work. In addition, he attempted to combine the rationalism of his father, Gaston Bachelard, and Husserlian phenomenology with the intention of formulating a theory of mathematical experience.

Finally, Jacques Derrida (1930-2004) criticised Husserlian thought in a way that largely shares the criticisms of the heirs of Cavaillès. The figure of this philosopher also occupies a special place in the history of French phenomenology. First of all, it should be noted that, like many French philosophers, he studied at the École Normale (1952-

¹⁴² Jean-François Courtine, 'Tran Duc Thao et La Protofondation Des Archives Husserl de Paris', in *L'itinéraire de Tran Duc Thao: Phénoménologie et Transfert Culturel*, ed. Jocelyn Benoist and Michel Espagne (Paris: Colin, 2013), 23.

¹⁴³ Tran Duc Thao, *Phénoménologie et Matérialisme Dialectique* (Paris: Minh-Tân, 1951).

¹⁴⁴ Jocelyn Benoist, 'Une première naturalisation de la phénoménologie?', in *L'itinéraire de Tran Duc Thao: Phénoménologie et transfert culturel*, ed. Jocelyn Benoist and Michel Espagne (Paris: Colin, 2013), 25.

¹⁴⁵ Gaston Bachelard, 'L'œuvre de Cavaillès', in *Jean Cavaillès, philosophe et combattant (1903-1944)*, ed. Gabrielle Ferrières (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1990), 237.

¹⁴⁶ Suzanne Bachelard, *La conscience de rationalité. Étude phénoménologique sur la physique mathématique* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1958).

¹⁴⁷ Edmund Husserl, *Logique Formelle et Logique Transcendantale. Essai d'une Critique de La Raison Logique*, trans. Suzanne Bachelard (Paris: Presse Universitaire de France, 1957).

¹⁴⁸ Suzanne Bachelard, *La logique de Husserl. Étude sur Logique formelle et logique transcendantale* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1957).

1954) after spending a few years of preparation at the Lycée Louis-le-Grand (1949-1952).

Between 1943 and 1944, Derrida wrote his *Memoir on The problem of genesis in Husserl's Philosophy*¹⁴⁹ under the supervision of Maurice de Gandillac. As part of this research, he made a brief visit to the Husserl Archive in Louvain in February 1954. In his early writing, the young Derrida presented a completely original and revolutionary idea, namely a law of differential contamination, an original dialectic that is a clear inheritance of the dialectical approach previously adopted by Cavailles and Tran Duc Thao¹⁵⁰.

In his *Memoir*, the French epistemologist is one of the authors most cited by Derrida and least criticised by him. He does not hesitate, for instance, to stress the value and importance of *On Logic and the Theory of Science*. According to Derrida, this “masterful essay” shows the contradictions that genetic phenomenology constantly encounters when Husserl oscillates between the progress of consciousness and the consciousness of progress¹⁵¹. The contradictions are particularly evident when it comes to the foundation of a science of science –i.e., a doctrine of science or an absolute logic– as a requirement that teleologically directs the operations of transcendental subjectivity in its intuitive movement. Of course, it must be remembered that this foundation is, at the same time, a historical product of this same subjectivity, since without it no synthesis or proof would be possible *a priori*¹⁵². Derrida therefore agrees with Cavailles when he states that the relationship between absolute logic and transcendental logic leads inexorably to a formal antinomy, except when 'temporal-intentionality' is considered.

It is also worth noting that in 1956 Derrida received a fellowship from Harvard University as a special auditor to research Husserl's unpublished works. During this period, he began his translation of *The Origin of Geometry*¹⁵³, the publication of which

¹⁴⁹ Jacques Derrida, *Le problème de la genèse dans la philosophie de Husserl* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1990).

¹⁵⁰ Leonard Lawlor successfully devotes many pages to examining this legacy in depth. Cf. Leonard Lawlor, *Derrida and Husserl: The Basic Problem of Phenomenology* (Bloomington; Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2002), 47–87. On the Thao-Derrida relationship see Daniel Giovannangeli, 'Husserl Entre Tran Duc Thao et Derrida. Un Moment de La Phénoménologie En France', in *L'itinéraire de Tran Duc Thao: Phénoménologie et Transfert Culturel*, ed. Jocelyn Benoist and Michel Espagne (Paris: Colin, 2013), 133–46; Raoul Moati, 'Phénoménologie et Dialectique. Derrida Critique de Tran Duc Thao', in *L'itinéraire de Tran Duc Thao: Phénoménologie et Transfert Culturel*, ed. Jocelyn Benoist and Michel Espagne (Paris: Colin, 2013), 147–62.

¹⁵¹ Derrida, *Le problème de la genèse dans la philosophie de Husserl*, 207–8.

¹⁵² *Ibid.*, 209.

¹⁵³ Edmund Husserl, 'Die Frage Nach Dem Ursprung Der Geometrie Als Intentional-Historisches Problem', *Revue Internationale de Philosophie* 1, no. 2 (1939): 203–25, Hua VI, pp. 365–386; Jacques Derrida, 'Introduction', in *Edmund Husserl. L'origine de la géométrie* (Paris: Presses Universitaires

led him, together with Roger Martin, to win the Jean Cavailles Prize for Epistemology in 1964¹⁵⁴.

In 1967 Derrida published his first three books: *On Grammatology*¹⁵⁵, *Writing and Difference*¹⁵⁶ and *The Voice and the Phenomenon*¹⁵⁷. From that moment on, he began a period of international fame, especially in the United States of America. The most representative term of Derrida's philosophy and by which he became known worldwide was "deconstruction". Derrida's deconstructive project emerged in the 1960s, coinciding with his distancing from the Husserlian writings to which he had devoted his early research¹⁵⁸.

§ 4. Concluding remarks: the plurality of phenomenology in France

The first conclusion of this study is a consideration of Husserl's phenomenological project in relation to the inner circle of disciples that formed around him. First, Husserl is considered the father of phenomenology in a process of philosophical maturation that took him through several stages. The first was linked to *Logical Investigations*, whose interpretation involves a form of realism; the school around this first version of phenomenology (the Göttingen circle) adopts this work as its point of reference. The second phase began with the publication of *Ideas I* in 1913. This new phase was marked by the transcendental turn of phenomenology. Finally, Husserl's new place of work, the University of Freiburg, was home to a new group of students (the Freiburg circle), who expected a revolution in the field of phenomenology: the ontological turn, represented by Heidegger instead of Husserl. The three students of Husserl who came to France –Koyré, Héring and Lévinas– were directly influenced by phenomenology

de France, 1962), 3–171.

¹⁵⁴ The prize was awarded to Roger Martin for his work *Logique contemporaine et formalisation* and to Jacques Derrida for his translation and commentary on *Husserl's "L'Origine de la géométrie"*.

¹⁵⁵ Jacques Derrida, *De la Grammatologie* (Paris: Éditions de Minuit, 1967).

¹⁵⁶ Jacques Derrida, *L'Écriture et la différence* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1967).

¹⁵⁷ Jacques Derrida, *La voix et le phénomène. Introduction au problème du signe dans la phénoménologie de Husserl* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1967).

¹⁵⁸ Baring's research on Derrida's academic formation between 1945 and 1968 provides the first account of the connection between the tradition of epistemological phenomenology and Derrida's thought. He claims that "his readings of Husserl, in particular, brought him into close contact with the French tradition of epistemology, best represented by Jean Cavailles and Gaston Bachelard". Cf. Edward Baring, *The Young Derrida and French Philosophy, 1945-1968* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 2. For some recent studies on the young Derrida's phenomenology, see Alexander Schnell, *Der Frühe Derrida Und Die Phänomenologie* (Frankfurt am Main: Klostermann, 2021); Jimmy Hernández Marcelo, *Fenomenologia Dei Margini. Derrida Allievo Di Husserl* (Milano-Udine: Mimesis, forthcoming).

through personal contact with the master, although they were associated with a specific phenomenological school, Göttingen or Freiburg.

The second conclusion consists of classifying the different lines of communication between the different authors and traditions that were established on French soil with the arrival of phenomenology. The first phenomenological line can be established after Héring's arrival in Strasbourg. His thesis in theology was devoted to the relationship between *Phenomenology and Religious Philosophy*. A few years later, his debate with Chestov was held. Then Héring recommended the young student Lévinas to attend Husserl's lectures in Freiburg. The phenomenology that Lévinas, who was preparing his thesis in philosophy, received was closer to Heidegger's interpretation than to Husserl's philosophy. At this time Lévinas translated the *Cartesian Meditations* and, almost simultaneously, presented his dissertation on the concept of intuition in Husserl. These two events immediately made Lévinas one of the first to introduce Husserl's philosophy in France.

It is also known that Sartre came to phenomenology thanks to his reading of Lévinas' thesis. Likewise, the deep friendship between Sartre and Merleau-Ponty during their youth led the latter to approach phenomenology, enriching it with his knowledge of psychology. Finally, Paul Ricœur became interested in the text of *Ideas I* in its English version. He then worked on translating it into French from the German original during his years of imprisonment. Before completing his doctorate, he became acquainted with Merleau-Ponty's *Phenomenology of Perception* and decided to become involved in this project.

All these authors agree in their criticism of Husserlian idealism and in their demand for a way of opening up to human existence and the subject. For Merleau-Ponty and Ricœur, the recovery of the life-world of the late Husserl was attractive. Moreover, from Héring-Lévinas a first reception of phenomenology that maintains a critical position with respect to the primacy of consciousness presented in *Ideas I* was observed. At the same time, Sartre began his phenomenological approach from this critical perspective which led him to the primacy of existence and subject. This is what Foucault called the phenomenological tradition of the philosophy of subject.

The third and final observation is that this research invites us to consider the existence of a second line of communication linked to the critique of phenomenology from a global reading of Husserl's works and the recovery of the initial epistemological project of Husserlian philosophy. First of all, it is worth mentioning Koyré, who was a student of Husserl in Göttingen and was deeply involved in the eidetic phenomenology of *Logical investigations*. Then, Cavallès, whose object of reflection focused on *Formal and Transcendental Logic* and who advocated the recovery of the logical structure of the world through a philosophy of concept. Following this interpretation, the

Vietnamese philosopher Tran Duc Thao criticised phenomenology for its idealistic character. According to this author, the redemption of phenomenology comes from dialectical materialism and its ability to make the process of idealisation historical.

Suzanne Bachelard intended to establish an epistemological phenomenology, combining the epistemology of Gaston Bachelard and the philosophy of Husserl. Finally, Jacques Derrida devoted himself to the study of Husserl's work and presented a critique that was interpreted as a radicalisation of phenomenology. It should also be noted that many of these authors had a broad view of the Husserlian *corpus*, thanks to their access to Husserl's unpublished manuscripts and their consideration of the mathematical and logical texts that were barely known at the time.

In conclusion, it can be stated that this new line of interaction is linked, on the one hand, to the critical heritage of Cavailles and, on the other hand, to the systematic mastery of Husserl's work. This is the tradition that Foucault identified under the term “philosophy of concept”.

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The French Reception of Husserl: Between Existence and Knowledge

This study aims to describe the process of reception and assimilation of Husserlian phenomenology in France, articulated in two parallel traditions, namely the *philosophy of subject* and the *philosophy of concept*. The former is linked to the interpretation of Levinas-Sartre and the latter to the epistemological heritage of Koyré-Cavaillès. Finally, we briefly present the critical trace of Cavaillès in certain authors directly or indirectly related to his critique of phenomenology (Tran Duc Thao, S. Bachelard and Derrida).

Keywords: Epistemology · Existentialism · Subjectivity · Phenomenology · Materialism.

La réception française de Husserl : Entre existence et connaissance

Cette étude vise à décrire le processus de réception et d'assimilation de la phénoménologie Husserlienne en France articulée en deux traditions qui existent en parallèle, à savoir la *philosophie du sujet* et la *philosophie du concept*. La première est liée à l'interprétation de Levinas-Sartre et la seconde à l'héritage épistémologique de Koyré-Cavaillès. Enfin, nous présentons brièvement la trace critique de Cavaillès à l'intérieur de certains auteurs attachés directement ou indirectement à sa critique de la phénoménologie (Tran Duc Thao, S. Bachelard, et Derrida).

Mots-clés: Épistémologie · Existentialisme · Subjectivité · Phénoménologie · Matérialisme.

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