

Chapter 21

Koyré as a Historian of Religion and the New French Phenomenology

Anna Yampolskaya

Abstract The aim of this article is to explore the influence that Koyré's early work on history of religion had on the development of French phenomenology, with focus on Emmanuel Levinas and Michel Henry. Although Koyré's affiliation to the phenomenological movement is debatable, his thought owes much to Husserl's phenomenological method. In his books on St. Anselm and Descartes, Koyré focuses on the idea of God and the idea of the infinite. I trace the influence of Koyré's analysis of the infinite in its relation to the finite on the development of the idea of the infinite in Levinas. I also show that Levinassian approach to the idea of God as "the idea of the Infinite in me" goes back to Koyré's interpretation of the ontological proof of St. Anselm. Next, I explore the influence of Koyré's book on Böhme on the philosophy of Michel Henry. Koyré's reading of Böhme makes Böhme essentially a precursor of German idealism describing the Absolute that wishes to manifest itself and distinguishing between the manifestation and what is made manifest in this manifestation. Henry applies this approach to phenomena in general, which leads him to a criticism of intentionality loss of a cosmological dimension. I would like to argue in favour of a more balanced phenomenology that wants to be not only prescriptive but also descriptive and sensitive to a certain scientific dimension.

Keywords History of phenomenological movement • Ontological argument • Idea of the infinite • Cosmological dimension of human experience • Anselm • Böhme • Descartes • Husserl • Michel Henry • Levinas

A. Yampolskaya (✉)
National Research University Higher School of Economics, Staraya Basmannaya ul., 21/4c1,
Moscow 105066, Russian Federation
e-mail: ayampolskaya@hse.ru

21.1 Introduction

Alexandre Koyré, although a former student of Husserl, never described himself as a genuine phenomenologist; neither did he formally apply intentional analysis or phenomenological reduction in his studies of medieval or modern thought (Jorland 1994). In this paper I would like to put aside the question whether Koyré's method was truly phenomenological or not as that would require a clear definition of what phenomenology is; I would rather concentrate on the impact his work made on his contemporaries as well as on the next generation of thinkers.

It is well known that Koyré's life and work are closely linked to the history of the phenomenological movement. Indeed, young Koyré was a student in Gottingen in 1909–1911¹ where he attended Edmund Husserl's and Adolf Reinach's courses in philosophy and started lifelong friendships with Edith Stein, Jean Hering and Hedwig Conrad-Martius. Despite being close to Husserl, Koyré failed to produce a thesis in logic and foundation of mathematics that Husserl would have approved (Zambelli 1999). Eventually Koyré decides to interrupt his studies in Gottingen, and in 1912 he moves to Paris. He enrolls into the *École pratique des hautes études* (EPHE) and reads history of religion under the supervision of François Picavet. Koyré subsequently receives his first, second and third degrees from EPHE for his research on the history of religious and mystical thought. Throughout his entire career, he would be returning to Section V of EPHE. Nevertheless, in the 1920s and 1930s, Koyré did his best to create and maintain the reputation of a leading French expert on phenomenology² and even of an “agent of influence” of phenomenology on French soil. In 1953, in his famous letter to Spiegelberg, Koyré declined to call himself a phenomenologist while admitting his phenomenological lineage:

Now your question, how far I am still a phenomenologist – I don't know myself. I have been deeply influenced by Husserl [...] But, probably, he would tell that all this is very far from the meaning of phenomenology as philosophy. And that I have never understood it. *Now* I assume that he knew better than anyone else what ‘phenomenology’ really meant. (Jorland 1981, p. 28, *italics added*)

However, in the 1920s, he did exactly the opposite. Indeed, Koyré regularly published German versions of his research papers in important phenomenological volumes, such as *Jahrbuch für Philosophie und phänomenologische Forschung* (Koyré 1922b) and Husserl's *Festschrift* (1929b), as well as the German translation of his book on Descartes. Koyré also maintained his personal contact with Husserl: he visited Husserl several times,³ and alongside other members of the Gottingen circle, he attended Husserl's 70th anniversary event in April 1929. On 1 March 1929,⁴

¹For more details regarding Koyré's early biography, including new archive materials, see Drozdova 2012.

²Jan Patočka, who attended Koyré's courses in EPHE, also mentions him among his phenomenological contacts (Patočka 1976, p. vi).

³Summer 1921, Summer 1922 with Jean Hering, October 1928, Summer 1929 (Schuhmann 1977).

⁴According to Kojève (Koyré 1929a), in the “Husserl Chronik”, the date of the *soutenance* is indicated as 23–25 February (Schuhmann 1977, p. 342).

Husserl was seated among the jury in Koyré's public defence in Sorbonne as an "honorary guest" (Kojève 1929) and witnessed "his former student's triumph" (Patočka 1976, p. vii). Koyré also made a lot of effort to introduce phenomenology to the French philosophical scene. He gave a talk at the very first French conference on phenomenology, held in 1932 in Juvisy; he also revised Levinas' and Pfeiffer's translation of *Cartesian Meditations* and was praised by Husserl as the book's "true translator".⁵ Also, he smoothed out Husserl's election as a corresponding member of the *Académie des Sciences Morales et Politiques* (Schuhmann 1997: 392). In the 1930s Koyré used his position as a managing editor of the leading French periodical *Recherches philosophiques* to advertise the new German thought, especially phenomenology. However, the phenomenology he promoted was not necessarily Husserl's transcendental phenomenology but rather a kind of "fusion" between Husserlian, Heideggerian⁶ and Hegelian phenomenology; Koyré's efforts to hegelianize the phenomenological method were applauded by Kojève (see Kojève 1934)). While Spiegelberg accuses Kojève, "a Russian Marxist", of this "misinterpretation" or even "misinformation" (Spiegelberg 1982, p. 441), it was indeed Alexandre Koyré who was responsible not only for the anthropological but also for neo-Hegelian twist in early French phenomenology (cf. also Baugh 2014, pp. 25–28).

Husserl was well aware of some of these nonorthodox interpretations of his doctrine, and he even found it appropriate to forewarn his current and future students against them. He wrote to one of his prospective adepts, E. Parl Welch:

The fact that someone was my academic student or became a philosopher under the influence of my writing does not therefore mean that he has penetrated to a real understanding of the inner meaning of *my*, the original phenomenology and its method and does research into the new horizons of problems which I have opened up, to which the future belongs (of which I have become completely certain). It is true to almost all the students of the Gottingen and the first Freiburg period, even of such famous men as Max Scheler and Heidegger, in whose philosophies I see merely ingenious relapses into the old philosophical naïvetés. I have to refer in this context even to my close friend Jean Hering...you would go astray if you rush at any of the literary accounts of my phenomenology (not even at the latest by Levinas [...]) who puts my phenomenology on the same plane with that of Heidegger and thus deprives it of its proper meaning. (Spiegelberg 1981, p. 181)

Indeed, Alsatian philosopher Jean Hering was another member of the Gottingen circle who after the First World War had much contributed to the development of the French phenomenology. He fiercely defended Husserl in his polemics with the

⁵ Husserl wrote to Koyré on 22.VI.1931: "Immer wieder hörte ich die Luzidität Ihrer Übersetzung rühmen (auch in den Zuschriften), man meinte sogar, in Ihrer französischen Sprache und der ihr eigenen Durchsichtigkeit, kämen meine Gedanken zu einem wirksameren Ausdrucke als in meiner deutschen Sprache. Natürlich habe ich nachdrücklich darauf hingewiesen, dass Sie der eigentliche Übersetzer seien" (Husserl 1994, p. 359). This was a dubious compliment as Husserl did not like the translation at all: on 19 August 1932, he wrote to Roman Ingarden (1893–1970) that "die französische Übersetzung voll Hemmnisse des Verständnisses" (Husserl 1994, p. 288).

⁶ Koyré published a review of *Sein und Zeit*; he was also the author of the preface to the very first French translation of Heidegger, which was *Was ist Metaphysik?* translated by Henri Corbin. The first issue of *Recherches Philosophiques* contained the French translation of *Vom Wesen des Grundes*. For more details regarding Koyré's role in the French reception of Heidegger's philosophy *de l'entre-deux-guerres*, see (Janicaud 2001, pp. 33–43) and (Geroulanos 2010, pp. 54–57).

Russian emigrant philosopher Leon Shestov; Hering's book on phenomenology of religious life (Hering 1926) was among first French publications on the subject (which were not very numerous at that point). In the bibliography, Hering includes Koyré's books on St. Anselme and Descartes under the rubric "the most important works that can serve as an initiation to the phenomenological philosophy" (Hering 1926, p. 145). Hering also claims that Koyré's approach provides a good example of how an application of the "Husserlian eidetic" method can lead to a "rehabilitation" of the ontological argument (Hering 1926, p. 136). It is worth noting that Hering includes a special section on Koyré in his post-war review of French phenomenology. There he adds some important details to his description of Koyré's phenomenological and historical method: instead of merely "studying the influences of the surroundings", Koyré "put[s] us in immediate relation not only to the era of those philosophers but also with a certain field of philosophical problems itself"; the problems "treated by the great thinkers of the past" are "often proved identical" to the problems rediscovered by phenomenologists (Hering 1950, p. 71).

21.2 The Idea of the Infinite in Me: Koyré and Levinas

Hering's opinion is of a particular importance to us, as in the late 1920s he was an informal mentor to the young Lithuanian student Emmanuel Levinas. It is the affinity between Koyré's and Levinas' interpretations of the ontological argument that I would now like to explore in detail. Levinas personally knew Koyré quite well⁷ and mentioned his name with great affection and respect. They had a lot in common – both were originally from the Russian Empire, both were native Russian speakers, both were Jewish, both played an important role in spreading Heidegger's popularity in France and both changed their enthusiastic attitude to Heidegger's philosophy once his notorious involvement with the Nazism became known.⁸ In the 1930s Levinas published several book reviews in the *Recherches Philosophiques*, and his most important paper of that period, *De l'évasion*, also appeared there. Levinas never referenced any of Koyré's works, apart from his post-war review of Heidegger's

⁷ Levinas' biographer, Marie-Anne Lescourret, writes that Levinas and Koyré used to drink coffee together (Lescourret 2005, p. 108), and there is an uncut copy of Levinas' *En découvrant l'existence avec Husserl et Heidegger* with Levinas' inscription "à Monsieur Koyré et à son ironie" in Koyré's personal library in Paris (I would like to thank Daria Drozdova who informed me on this matter).

⁸ According to Levinas, it was Koyré who brought from Germany the unsettling news about Heidegger: "I learned very early, perhaps even before 1933 and certainly after Hitler's huge success at the time of his election to the Reichstag, of Heidegger's sympathy toward National Socialism. It was the late [*le regretté*] Alexandre Koyré who mentioned it to me for the first time on his return from a trip to Germany" (Levinas 1989). In the original version, this paper had a subtitle "Alexandre Koyré avait averti les Français", which was omitted in the English translation. In his unpublished letter to G. Spiegelberg from 10 August 1956, Koyré, describing how highly successful 1953 Cerisy's event on Heidegger was, also adds "Jean Wahl and, of course, myself, did not go there" (Fonds Koyré at the Centre Alexandre Koyré, Paris).

On the Essence of Truth;⁹ however, there is a noticeable similarity between the interpretations of the ontological argument in Koyré and in Levinas. I would suggest that there are elements of the phenomenological method in Koyré's early works on Descartes and Anselm and that Levinas has mainly inherited his approach.

For both Levinas and Koyré, the infinite was a matter of greatest philosophical importance; both used the word "infinite" in the titles of their major works. Of course, there is a huge difference between the cosmological and mathematical infinity studied by Koyré and the ethical and theological infinity of Levinas' own philosophy; nevertheless, they have a lot in common in how they treat this concept.

In his early article on the paradoxes of Zeno (Koyré 1922b), Koyré claims that the scientific breakthrough of Descartes is that he not only established the legitimacy of actual infinity but, moreover, made it a theoretical foundation of finitude.¹⁰ It was the genius of Descartes the mathematician (who is "superior to Cantor") to treat the infinite as a primary concept and to relegate the finite to a secondary position of what can be defined in terms of the infinite. Furthermore, Koyré states that Descartes was the first to understand that *the finite as such* cannot be properly grasped outside of its relation to the infinite and that this is indeed a metaphysical and not a mathematical claim. Indeed, no finite entity can grasp itself without recourse to the infinite. Descartes is driven by the desire to understand how to think the unthinkable, which cannot be imagined or conceived mentally: the ideas of the infinite and the continuous be it in the realm of philosophy, metaphysics or theology. One encounters here "the eternal problem of *me on*"; its difficulty is the difficulty of the "constitution of being itself" (Koyré 1980, p. 31). Indeed, the existence problems of the infinite and the continuous *in intellectu* or *extra intellectu* (Koyré 1980, p. 31) are of no importance to Koyré, because the only thing that matters is *how* we think the infinite and the continuous. Similar assertions can be found in Koyré's pre-war writings on Descartes. In his Cairo lectures, Koyré says that although not much remains of Descartes' metaphysics or his proofs of the existence of God, his greatest discovery – the intellectual primacy of the infinite – is still valid today.¹¹ It is this redirection of the focus of attention from an infinite object to the manner in which we encounter it that constitutes the principal novelty of Koyré's analysis of the ontological proofs of Anselm and Descartes. In these early works, Koyré presents Descartes primarily as a theologian and even as a "mystical

⁹At least in his published works, while there are testimonies that he used Koyré's studies on the philosophy of science in his teaching (Lescourret 2005, p. 108).

¹⁰"Supérieur à Cantor par la puissance et la profondeur de ses vues, il a pu établir non seulement la légitimité essentielle de l'infini actuel, et montrer l'impossibilité de le remplacer par la notion de l'indéfini, mais, en plus, il en a fait le fondement et le principe de la théorie du fini" (Koyré 1980, p. 26).

¹¹"Il ne reste plus grande chose de la métaphysique de Descartes, et ses preuves de l'existence de Dieu sont allées rejoindre les preuves d'Aristote et de saint Thomas. Et pourtant, la grande découverte cartésienne, la découverte de la primauté intellectuelle de l'infini, reste vraie. Il reste vrai que la pensée enveloppe et implique l'infini, il reste vrai que la pensée finie – toute pensée finie – ne peut se saisir, ni se comprendre qu'à partir d'une idée infinie (Koyré 1962, p. 227).

apologist”¹²; he tries to show how Descartes’ purely theological thesis, that is, the infinity of God and His incomprehensibility, prompts the destruction of the old scientific worldview and the establishment of a new one.¹³ Koyré’s approach to Descartes is strikingly phenomenological: instead of studying *what is* the infinite in itself, whether it is real or subjective, one examines *how* we think about it. In more technical terms that Koyré himself preferred not to use, one takes the infinite *not as an object which is intended but as an intentional object, that is, as the object as it is intended* (Husserl 1970, p. 113). Then one can legitimately concentrate on the intentional relation to this object, because this relation makes sense even when the object itself does not exist.

Koyré’s interpretation of the ontological argument is centred on what can be called its “anthropological aspect”: he puts aside the theological problem of the existence of God, while focusing on the human being as *capax Dei* (Koyré 1971, p. 31), the expression itself belongs to St. Augustin’s *De Trinitate* XIV, 8, as a being endowed with the idea of God.¹⁴ The “Third Meditation” is important for Koyré not because it is a valid proof of the existence of God. The logical structure of Descartes’ proof was borrowed from St. Anselm; this structure has been made explicit already by St. Bonaventura. The argument has two parts: the discovery of the possibility of the infinite being and the transition from the possibility of this being to its existence. *Deus cogitatur – ergo Deus est*: this is Koyré’s summary of the logic of Descartes (Koyré 1922a, p. 150). Like Levinas, Koyré does not pay much attention to the second part of the syllogism (the transition from a possible existence to the actual existence); he is entirely focused on the first part: the discovery of the *idea of God* as the most perfect, or infinite, being. According to Koyré, this idea constitutes the very core of Descartes’ philosophical system, where both the world and the cognition are to be understood *sub specie deitatis*.¹⁵ Indeed, *cogito* itself is not an independent reality. In the radical doubt, *cogito* is given to us; psychologically, we experience this givenness as an absolute certainty. However, the philosophical status of this givenness remains unclear: it has to be confirmed by another act of givenness, that is, the givenness of *ego sum, ego existo*, where God and I are accessed in the very same act of immediate intuition. It is in this act that we reach the unity between being and thought,¹⁶ and that is why the act of self-reflection could become the fundament of truth.

¹² Méditations [...] œuvre hardie d’apologétique mystique” (Koyré 1922a, p. 1).

¹³ L’infinité de Dieu et l’impossibilité de connaître ses raisons [...] – voilà tout ce qui est. nécessaire pour le fondement métaphysique de la physique des causes efficientes (Koyré 1922a, p. 1).

¹⁴ Ferdinand Alquié is even more radical: “L’homme n’a pas d’idée de Dieu, il est. l’idée de Dieu” (Alquié 1950, p. 236).

¹⁵ “[...] l’idée de Dieu est. au centre du système, parce que la pensée cartésienne part de Dieu et revient à Dieu, envisage le monde et la connaissance *sub specie deitatis*, en fonction et par rapport à Dieu” (Koyré 1922a, p. 61).

¹⁶ “Nous ne pouvons point les mettre en doute — non seulement parce qu’il nous est. impossible de les penser sans éprouver chaque fois que nous les pensons le même sentiment de certitude absolue —; ce n’est. pas seulement un fait psychologique qui se renouvelle chaque fois — nous voyons bien qu’il ne peut pas en être autrement, parce qu’en nous pensant nous-mêmes nous saisis-

Also much later, in the 1950s, Koyré writes:

The idea of the infinite plays an important part in the philosophy of Descartes, so important that all Cartesian philosophy may be considered as being wholly based upon this idea. Indeed, it is only as absolutely infinite being that God can be conceived; it is only as such that He can be proved to exist; it is only by the possessing this idea that man's true nature – *of a finite being endowed with the idea of God* – can be defined. (Koyré 1957, p. 106, *italics added*)

So, the originality of the Cartesian proof consists in “the idea of God as I find in myself, or I myself in so far as I possess this idea, or, if one wants to be even more precise, the fact that I possess the idea of God”.¹⁷ The attention is relocated from the object of thought to the very act of thinking. The crucial moment here is the manner in which consciousness intends and represents God or perhaps the gap between the representation and the represented in this act of consciousness.

Koyré emphasises that God as infinite being cannot be an object of intuition: “the infinite distance separating everything that is finite from the infinite”¹⁸ is an “abyss” (*l'abîme*, Koyré 1922a, p. 129) that cannot be “filled” by the intuition, and a distinct perception of divine essence cannot be attained by the finite human spirit. The idea of the infinite God:

[...] is certainly a *clear* and *positive* one—we do not reach infinity by negating finitude; on the contrary, it is by negating the infinite that we conceive finiteness, and yet it is not *distinct*.¹⁹ It so far surpasses the level of our finite understanding that we can neither comprehend nor even analyse it completely. (Koyré 1957, p. 106, *author's italics*)

sons directement notre propre être, parce que dans ce cas privilégié notre pensée et notre être ne font plus qu'un, non pas que notre pensée soit absolument identique à notre être” (Koyré 1922a, b, p. 58).

¹⁷ “[...] l'idée de Dieu en tant que réalisée en moi, ou moi-même en tant que je possède cette idée ou, si l'on veut être plus précis encore, le fait que je possède une idée de Dieu – voilà la base de démonstrations de la III^e et IV^e Méditations” (Koyré 1922a, b, p. 149).

¹⁸ “Personne n'avait pas aussi bien compris la différence, la distance infinie qui sépare tout fini de l'infini” (Koyré 1922a, b, p. 126). Cf. in *Totality and infinity*: “[...] the distance that separates *ideatum* and *idea* constitutes the content of *ideatum* itself... it is infinitely removed from its *idea* [éloigné de son idée]” (Levinas 1969, p. 49). For Levinas, as well as for Koyré, the most important point in the *Third Meditation* is the inadequacy between the idea of the infinite and the finite being that has this idea, that is, “[...] une [...] disproportion entre cette idée et nous-mêmes” (Koyré 1922a, b, p. 157). Of course, Levinas is concerned here not with the mathematical infinity but with the infinitely transcendent, that is, the absolutely other, but the logical structure of his argument is borrowed from Koyré.

¹⁹ Jeangène Vilmer spotted that Koyré is literarily wrong here, as Descartes repeats several times that the idea of God is *maxime clara et distincta* (Jeangène Vilmer 2009, p. 505). But how could Koyré make such a blatant mistake? Perhaps one can find an explanation in his earlier version of the same thesis: “Dieu, dans l'infinie et absolue clarté de son essence, reste quand même inaccessible à notre entendement, qui ne peut en ce monde (in *statu viae*) en avoir une connaissance intuitive et complète. L'idée de Dieu, tout en étant la plus claire de nos idées, reste indistincte malgré, ou peut-être, à cause de sa trop grande clarté. Elle est, trop claire, trop lumineuse; *elle nous aveugle*” (Koyré 1922a, p. 23, *italics added*). The idea of God is too bright for us and so its light makes us blind; in the same manner as Marion's “saturated phenomena” “blind” the gaze and thus cause the “bedazzlement”, *aveuglement* (Marion 2002, p. 206).

To think of God and to speak about God require an indirect representation of God. That is why Koyré claims that Anselm's proof is superior to that of Descartes in this respect. Indeed, the argument of *Proslogion* does not prove the existence of God; it rather proves only the "impossibility to comprehend" God's non-existence. "Not just the metaphysical impossibility, but first and foremost the logical impossibility", emphasises Koyré (Koyré 1923, p. 201). We are not capable to comprehend the non-existence of God because this is a thought impossible to think and a thought that contradicts inherent laws of thinking itself.²⁰

In other words, Anselm's argument is not an ontological proof "in the proper sense of this term" (Koyré 1971, p. 69); it is a purely logical one.²¹ This is a logical exercise pointing at intrinsic problems of thinking. What happens when the fool says in his heart *non est Deum*? According to Koyré, the fool

[...] says something he does not even understand himself, something that has no meaning whatsoever. In fact, his statement is not just false – it is contradictory to the extent that it cannot even be thought – as long as to think means anything different from a purely verbal thought. (Koyré 1923, p. 201)

Employing phenomenological terminology, one could say that the fool stays at the level of pure indication and never reaches the level of signification, a level where meaning is achieved. Indeed, a genuine thought attains the being itself. This definition of thinking reminds one of Husserl rather than the Archbishop of Canterbury, but this is a very important point for Koyré, who inscribes St. Anselm in the general perspective of Neoplatonic mysticism. It is impossible to think the finite unless one makes the infinite one's starting point, and it is impossible to think the non-existence of God; however, the concepts of God, the infinite and the continuous, are not properly conceivable either. Above all, they are not to be conceivable rationally (Koyré 1929a, p. 305). These concepts are contradictory (Koyré 1929a, p. 303), as they cannot be properly delimited and determined (Koyré 1923, p. 132). Levinas, too, tries to escape the domain of the thinkable *otherwise than knowledge*; his philosophical task can be described as *a spiritual intrigue quite different from the gnosis*. Any philosophy of knowledge is inferior to first philosophy, the philosophy of affection by the transcendence that has an ethical character. A closer look at this ethics reveals a deep relation to a reading of Descartes' *Third Meditation* that strongly reminds that of Koyré. It is the Cartesian idea of the infinite that Levinas uses as a structure of relation to the Other.²²

²⁰Il suit de ses considérations que *l'ens majus cogitari nequit* ne peut pas être envisagé comme n'existant pas; et cela non seulement parce que c'est. une impossibilité *quoad rem*, mais aussi et surtout parce que c'est. une pensée impossible à penser, une pensée qui contredit les lois immanentes de la pensée elle-même (Koyré 1923, p. 202).

²¹Gilson reiterates this observation in his polemics with Karl Bart (Gilson 1934); later, this point has been developed by J. L. Marion (Marion 1991, p. 221 sq.).

²²"This relation of the same with the other, where the transcendence of the relation does not cut the bonds a relation implies, yet where these bonds do not unite the same and the other into a Whole, is in fact fixed in the situation described by Descartes in which the 'I think' maintains with the Infinite it can nowise contain and from which it is separated a relation called 'idea of infinity'" (Levinas 1969, p. 48).

What are the key features of this relation to the Other? Firstly, this relation cannot be described in terms of intentionality, because it is not a relation to an object.²³ I am not able to comprehend the infinite,²⁴ and this very inability constitutes “the condition – or non-condition – of thought” (Levinas 1998, p. 65). The idea of the infinite cannot be attained by any intuition whatsoever; it is not controlled by the noesis–noema structure of consciousness (Levinas 1969, p. 264). Infinity belongs to the realm of the meontological (Kearney and Levinas 1986, p. 25) – that is why we are not able to represent the infinite through the intentional structures of consciousness. Secondly, this is a relation to something different that precedes me – not merely in ontological sense but above all in the order of constitution of my own subjectivity. Levinas writes:

[...] a separated being fixed in its identity, the same, the I, nonetheless contains in itself what it can neither contain nor receive solely by virtue of its own identity. Subjectivity realizes these impossible exigencies—the astonishing feat of containing more than it is possible to contain. (Levinas 1969, p. 27)

I cannot bypass the Infinite if I try to get access to my own self – this is indeed very similar to Koyré’s description of the argument of Descartes.²⁵ Therefore, in Levinas one also finds the “anthropological” reading of the idea of the infinite, used by him to define the “humanity of humans”.²⁶ The idea of the infinite is remarkable not because it gives us a knowledge of God – such a knowledge cannot belong to philosophy, since God cannot become a theme of our discourse; in thematising God we reduce Him to a “conceptual idol”, as Jean-Luc Marion would put it. The idea of the infinite is remarkable in the first place because it awakes the I to responsibility for the Other that constitutes me as a subject.

Thirdly, it is not the idea of the infinite as such that matters for Levinas, but “the idea of the infinite in me” (Levinas 1998, p. xiv). Here again one notices the same displacement of the meaning of the ontological argument – from God as such to the subject that finds herself or himself endowed with the idea of God.²⁷ Levinas, as Koyré before him, uses here a kind of phenomenological *epoche*: the thesis of God’s

²³To think the infinite, the transcendent and the Stranger is hence not to think an object. But to think what does not have the lineaments of an object is in reality to do more or better than think “[...] *the difference between objectivity and transcendence will serve as a general guideline for all the analyses of this work*” (Levinas 1969, p. 49, author’s *italics*).

²⁴Cf. “[...] le fini ne peut ‘comprendre’, ne peut embrasser et contenir l’infini” (Koyré 1922a, p. 137).

²⁵Cf. “Nous ne pouvons nous voir sans voir Dieu, nous ne pouvons nous voir autrement que dans la lumière divine, et notre existence nous apparaît désormais donnée dans l’évidence absolue de l’intuition immédiate, justifiée et garantie par la clarté de la lumière divine qui, se manifestant comme telle, porte en elle-même sa justification et sa garantie” (Koyré 1922a, p. 59).

²⁶ “[...] by the idea of the infinite in us or by the humanity of man understood as the theology or the intelligibility of transcendent” (Levinas 1996, p. 149).

²⁷Cf. “La base réelle de ces preuves, et leur sens profond, est. très simple – c’est. Descartes lui-même que le dit –: *la conscience de soi implique la conscience de Dieu*. Le ‘je pense’ implique ‘je pense Dieu’. J’en eu donc une idée. Et c’est. une idée innée, une idée sans laquelle nous sommes impensables” (Koyré 1962, p. 224–225).

existence is suspended, and thus the structure of subjectivity comes into light as an instance capable of thinking God. But for Levinas this thinking is “a thought that at each instant thinks more than it thinks” (Levinas 1969, p. 62).

This expression of Anselm (*majus quam cogitari possit*), repeated by Levinas a number of times (Cf. Kienzler 1990), marks a point of divergence. For Levinas the ontological proof of the existence of God, while proving nothing, reveals to us the secret of our own subjectivity. It shows that we, the humans, are capable of the “breakup of consciousness” (Levinas 1998, p. 63). Koyré would never admit such a breakup. Undoubtedly, there are objects that are not properly representable; in such cases the corresponding acts may lack adequacy, the correlation between an act and its content may fail, and logical paradoxes may appear, but the structure of consciousness as such remains intact. There are thoughts too complicated, too difficult to think – such as the idea of the infinite and the idea of the continuous – but there are no thoughts too “big” for consciousness to contain them, there are no thoughts that would make consciousness explode.

What Levinas describes under the term of “the-idea-of-the-infinite-in-me” is the affection of the finite by the infinite; it is desire. This desire is at the same time an intrigue of three players: a kind of love triangle between the I, God and the Other (Levinas 1998, p. 68). In other words, the idea of the infinite comes in “two copies” given to us as two modes that cannot be reduced to one another: as the idea of God and the face of the Other. “The way in which the other presents itself, *exceeding the idea of the other in me*, we here name face” (Levinas 1969, p. 50). The alterity of the Other is given to me in the same manner as the idea of the Creator; it is given to me by the same structure as the idea of the infinite. It affects me simultaneously from the outside and from the inside: from the outside, because I am affected by an independent reality, and from the inside, because I am affected by my own thinking (and my own speech). This notion of thought as affection is completely foreign to Koyré. Koyré remains an essentially pre-Heideggerian philosopher; for him the subject means a free and autonomous being.

21.3 Self-Manifestation of the Absolute: Koyré and Michel Henry

In the second part of the paper, I would like to investigate the influence of Koyré on the work of Michel Henry, one of the most important French phenomenologists of the generation that followed Levinas. Henry was an attentive reader of Koyré’s book on Böhme,²⁸ and it seems that his reading (or, perhaps, his misreading) of the great German mystical thinker played an important role in the development of Henry’s own views on the history of philosophy.

²⁸As Grégori Jean writes in his commentary on the transcription of one of Henry’s unpublished manuscripts, Koyré’s Böhme was an “[...] ouvrage, qui si l’on en croit les notes préparatoires à *L’essence de la manifestation*, avait beaucoup impressionné Henry” (Henry 2013, p. 49).

Let us recall some of the crucial points of Henry's philosophy that will be important for us. According to Henry, rigorous application of the principle of reduction requires bracketing not only the objective world and the empirical I but also the phenomena inasmuch as *they show themselves*. Phenomenology is not the study of phenomena but rather the study of their manner of showing themselves and their modes of appearance. To each type of phenomena belongs a specific mode of phenomenalisation. In particular, there are two main types of phenomenality: the mode in which we perceive the objects of the world, the earthly things, and the mode in which we experience ourselves. Although the second mode is original and authentic, it has been completely obliterated from the history of philosophy. For Heidegger the black sheep of the history of being is Descartes, a French philosopher; but Henry gives this role to a figure from *outré-Rhin*, Jakob Böhme, the *Teutonicus philosophus*. It should be noted that in the works of Henry, one finds no trace of his reading of Böhme. Whenever Henry mentions his name, he means Böhme interpreted by Koyré; mostly he refers to the chapter devoted to the idea of God in Böhme (the same chapter that Koyré has republished in German in Husserl's *Festschrift*).

Koyré's book on Böhme is not a stand-alone piece of research but rather a part of a more ambitious project, that is, a history of the German mysticism: in the 1920s Koyré subsequently teaches different courses on this subject in the *EPHE*. Koyré's works on Schwenckfeld, Franck, Weigel, Paracelsus and Böhme represent those thinkers in the greater context of development of the German thought that has reached its highest point in the German idealism and the Romanticism. Describing their theological and mystical concepts, Koyré builds a certain perspective: all these authors represent the major trend of the German thought, where the magical worldview, based on the idea of the *imagination*, is gradually transformed into the philosophical, and then scientific, concept of the universe. The key notion for Koyré is the *principle of expression*, since it is central for the medieval mystics as well as for later thinkers like Schelling or Fichte. Expression as manifestation, expression as incarnation and expression as objectivation are the principal themes in Koyré's most important work of that period, that is, his dissertation on Böhme.

Koyré's book was highly praised by his contemporaries; to the best of my knowledge, the only negative reaction was that of Berdiaev (Berdiaev 1929), who complained that Koyré "fails to understand, that it is impossible ultimately to understand Böhme, it is impossible to convey him in the language of clear concepts".²⁹ I tend to agree with Berdiaev that Böhme was too foreign for Koyré, who tried to "tame" Böhme by imposing on him a certain conceptual scheme that does not exhaust the depth of Böhme's heritage; sometimes it may seem that Koyré is so much annoyed by Böhme that eventually his famous ability to read medieval texts "emphatically" fails him.³⁰ However, it is the very power and clarity of this conceptual scheme that

²⁹ However, Koyré did his best not to over-clarify Böhme's thought: "Nous ne voudrions pas [...] laisser notre lecteur sous l'impression d'une trop grande clarté" (Koyré 1929a, p. 392).

³⁰ Jorland calls Koyré's method "empathic" (Jorland 1994). Berdiaev also praises Koyré's ability to represent empathically Böhme's thought, although that thought remained largely foreign to him: "The author has made everything possible and even impossible to penetrate the world of visions

made Koyré's book so influential. Indeed, Henry's critique of Böhme is directed not so much towards Böhme but rather towards this scheme.

In a nutshell, Koyré's vision of Böhme's work could be described as follows: Böhme is "a great metaphysical genius" (Koyré 1929a, p. 394) who is "fighting himself" in order to resolve "the central problem of metaphysics, that is, the problem of the Absolute" (Koyré 1929a, p. 307). How can one reach the Absolute,³¹ transcendent to the world and to the thought? Böhme (as Sebastian Frank before him and all the German idealism after him) implicitly presupposes the difference between the expressed and its manifestation.³² The metaphysical question "How do we think the Absolute that is not properly thinkable?" is replaced by the question "How does the Absolute manifest itself?" The Absolute desires to manifest itself and, in order to do so, creates the world. As Michel Henry puts it, the apparently theological problem (why God created the world) here is dealt with in a purely phenomenological way³³: one can say that the Absolute manifests itself in the world and through the world and that the world was created in order to become its "medium of phenomenisation".

The structure of the manifestation is very complex and the whole development of Böhme's thought could then be described as an elucidation of this structure. Koyré follows Oetinger's breakthrough motto: the Absolute is *ens manifestavitum sui*, or, as Koyré puts it, *mysterium manifestans seipsum* (Koyré 1929a, p. 329).³⁴ The heart of this mystery is the will to self-manifest. The Absolute in itself is the source of all manifestation; apart from this the Absolute has no other essence. In a sense, the Absolute has no being outside its self-manifestation. In other words, one could apply to the Absolute the motto of Herbart, (mis)quoted in *Cartesian Meditations* and *Being and Time*: "so much semblance, so much being".³⁵

and thinking of the great Christian theosophist, the world which is so alien to him. He has revealed a substantial ability to empathise with the thinking of others (*sposobnost' vzhivaniya v chuzhuju mysl'*)" (Berdiaev 1929, p. 116).

³¹ Koyré translates "Ungrund" by "Absolu". This serves his main purpose: to inscribe Böhme in the tradition of Paracelsian Augustinism, or even in the Neoplatonic tradition in the broadest sense.

³² La solution de Böhme – suivi en cela par l'idéalisme allemand – consistera à poser comme principe d'explication le rapport d'expression dans toutes ses formes. L'avantage de cette méthode réside dans la position implicite de la différence entre ce qui est. exprimé et sa manifestation (Koyré 1929a, p. 306, n. 2). See also (Henry 1973, p. 159).

³³ "[...] à l'immense question en apparence théologique: pourquoi Dieu a-t-il créé le monde? – l'extraordinaire réponse avancée appartient à la phénoménologie: Dieu a créé le monde pour se manifester" (Henry 2000, p. 66).

³⁴ In his 1947 review, Koyré slightly changes the wording to emphasise the importance of the revelation *ad intra*: *mysterium revelans seipsum seipso* (Koyré 1947, p. 425). One would not fail to notice the word *revelatio* in this text. Indeed, in the book written in 1929, Koyré mostly translates *Offenbarung* as *manifestation* and avoids the word *révélation*. This translation strategy, an example of which we have seen in the translation of *Ungrund* by *Absolu*, systematically represents Böhme as a philosopher rather than a religious thinker.

³⁵ "The participation in apodicticity appears in the *formal law* (which is itself apodictic): so much illusion, so much being (*Soviel Schein, soviel Sein*) – which is only covered up and falsified thereby and which therefore can be asked about, sought, and ... found" (Husserl 1960, p. 103). "Yet so

But the very idea of self-manifestation implies a kind of “internal duality”. According to the “principle of expression”, by distinguishing expression and the expressed, the act of manifestation produces a certain splitting between the manifestation and the manifested.³⁶ Manifestation manifests something else, that is, the manifested. As Michel Henry puts it, “already with Böhme there was the thought that a manifestation [of the world as opposed to the manifestation of the life] could not but manifest something else” (Henry 1973, p. 107). In Heidegger’s terms, this kind of manifestation is not a phenomenon in the “positive and primordial” sense, that is “as that which shows itself”, but an appearance (*Erscheinung*): “appearance, as the appearance ‘of something’, does not mean showing itself; it means rather the announcing-itself by something which does not show itself, but which announces itself through something which does show itself” (Heidegger 1962, pp. 51–52). Such phenomenological structure can be described as self-reference or self-indication. Thus, God revealed *is* a phenomenon, albeit not a phenomenon “in the phenomenological sense”: it does not “show itself from itself”; it rather announces itself to itself through something else, that is, through its own manifestation. According to Michel Henry, this scheme describes the phenomenological structure of the manifestation of self-reflection as opposed to the self-manifestation of one’s inner life.

So, in order to self-manifest, the Absolute has to split itself into two instances: the manifested self and the manifesting self. This duplication occurs as the Absolute becomes a sort of a mirror, which is, at the same time, an eye. The eye that looks and sees, the “eye subject” and the “eye object”, says Koyré.³⁷ Interpreting the well-known passage from “six theosophical points”, Koyré imposes on the reader the language of the subject–object relation. It is no surprise that, thus interpreted, Böhme is no longer a mystic or a theosophist but looks rather like an average representative of the German idealism. As G. Jorland puts it, “Hegel *genuit* Marx, but Böhme *genuit* Hegel” (Jorland 1981, p. 196). Characteristically, Henry also holds Böhme responsible for the primacy of the idea of *Scheidichkeit*, the reflective

much semblance, so much ‘Being’” (*Wieviel Schein jedoch, soviel “Sein”*) (Heidegger 1962, p. 51). Michel Henry proclaimed this motto as “[...] the third principle of phenomenology [...]”. For more details on the history of the maxim, see (Benoist 2010).

³⁶ “C’est. une idée complexe et même paradoxale que cette idée de la manifestation. Elle apparaît, à première vue, comme presque contradictoire. En effet, elle implique une sorte de la dualité interne. Ce qui se manifeste, se manifeste nécessairement par quelque chose qu’il n’est. pas, et qui n’est. pas lui; inversement, une manifestation (un phénomène) ne saurait manifester qu’autre chose que soi” (Koyré 1929a, p. 243).

³⁷ “L’un Absolu est donc un œil qui veut regarder et qui désire voir, car, en effet, qu’est.-ce qu’un œil qui ne voit rien? ‘Autant que rien’, autant que miroir qui ne réfléchit rien; une simple possibilité de réflexion et la vision; nullement une vision réelle. L’Un est un œil qui veut voir. Mais que pourrait-il voir là où il n’y a rien? Rien, évidemment, si ce n’est soi-même. C’est donc soi-même qu’il regarde et soi-même qu’il voit, et étant ainsi sujet et objet de la vision, on peut bien dire qu’il se dédouble en se réfléchissant en lui-même. Il ne voit rien et pourtant il se voit” (Koyré 1929a, p. 332).

splitting of being, in the German idealism and, consequently, in the modern thought in general.³⁸

This double (or, rather, triple) structure *vision – the eye that sees – the eye that is seen* generates the personality, the mind (*mens, Gemüth*) and ego (*Ichkeit*) in God. More precisely, this is just a first step towards generating consciousness and personality in the Absolute, because so long as the Absolute is not fully reflected in the mirror, it has not yet become self-consciousness and self-understanding. Indeed, says Koyré, “pure thought cannot be given to itself” (Koyré 1929a, p. 235) until it has an object, which is separate from the thought. So long as there is nothing that can be reflected in the mirror, and so long as there is no object in a strict sense, there can be no vision: indeed, a reflection in the mirror is not a genuine vision but only “a mere possibility of vision” (Koyré 1929a, b, p. 332). Light itself is not visible; it is just a medium of vision, “wherein something can become manifest, visible in itself” (Heidegger 1962, p. 51), a “horizon of visibility” (Henry 2008, p. 84) for phenomena or rather for “true objects”.³⁹ As Henry puts it, since we cannot think of a consciousness that is not a consciousness of an object, it is precisely the (determinate) *object* that “*permits the consciousness to be what it is [...]* The transcendental can only appear under the form of the object in the internal sense” (Henry 1973, p. 112, p. 119, author’s *italics*). Moreover, without “real”, that is, finite, material, natural, determinate objects, the very personality of God becomes only “a scheme devoid of reality, a simulacrum, a shadow” (Koyré 1929a, p. 333). In other words, the structure of every consciousness, even of divine consciousness, is the structure of the “directedness towards [...]”, that is, of intentional consciousness in Husserl’s sense. Henry claims, however, that this analogy between divine and created consciousness is false; the very idea that the self-manifestation of the divine (or transcendental) consciousness somehow depends on a finite, ontic object, on “something else”,⁴⁰ constitutes a “fundamental philosophical error” (Henry 2008, p. 48) that goes back to Böhme.

It is to the God of Koyré’s Böhme even more than to anything else, that one can apply these words of Michel Henry: “the subjectivity of the subject” realises itself as “the objectivity of the object” (Henry 1973, p. 90), although Henry imputes this

³⁸ “Jacob Böhme’s intuitions guide German Idealism and thus modern thought [...] These intuitions must be called into question again” (Henry 2008, p. 97). “*Schiedlichkeit* is the condition of consciousness. The concept of consciousness is thought of by Böhme in its solidarity with the concepts of otherness, mirror, splitting, namely in its unity with the ontological process of the internal division of Being [...]. The interpretation of the concept of consciousness which arises from ‘splitting’ [...] does not show up, merely through the influence of Böhme, in the *System of Transcendental Idealism*; it actually dominates all subsequent work of Schelling and notably his final philosophy” (Henry 1973, p. 79, translation modified).

³⁹ La clarté diffuse de l’Un s’est concentrée et est devenue lumière, mais c’est une lumière irréaliste et invisible, puisqu’elle ne remplit point sa fonction d’éclairer. Il faut que quelque chose se place devant elle, que la pensée reçoive un objet véritable pour qu’elle se réalise dans le sens propre du terme et réalise ainsi son sujet (Koyré 1929a, b, p. 334–335).

⁴⁰ “The essence in its phenomenological realization is ‘something else’” (Henry 1973, p. 120; this is indeed a hidden quotation from Koyré 1929a, p. 243).

identification of manifestation with objectification to the entire philosophical tradition.⁴¹ What is striking here is the “impotence” of this objectification; the pure thought does not exist, because to “think” means to “think of something”. For Henry, intentional structure of consciousness is (self-)objectification.

Why are the ontic objects necessary to achieve the manifestation (and self-manifestation) of God? This is a particular case of a general law that Koyré calls “the law of oppositions” or the “*Mysterium Magnum* of being”. Manifestation is possible “only in the *other* and by the *other*”: manifestation ought to be limited, because the manifested manifests itself “in the limit and in relation to the limit”.⁴² Koyré ascribes this proto-Hegelian thesis not only to Böhme but also to the German thought in general.⁴³ However, the law of oppositions is not only logical or phenomenological law; it is a cosmological one. According to this law, God produces Sophia, the Divine Wisdom. Sophia is an eye and a mirror at the same time; reflected in the Wisdom, God feels Himself capable to create a genuine object (*Objectum*, *Gegenwurf*) that will oppose Him and that will be “other than” Him. It is according to the law of the opposites that God is finally able to see Himself as a subject and is able to juxtapose Himself to a project of a world – a project of a separate and independent being. However, these projected ideas are not quite real; to make them fully real, God has to use imagination, “a mysterious and magical act *par excellence*” (Koyré 1929a, p. 347). God *imagines Himself* in the Wisdom, making it the

⁴¹ “Jacob Böhme interprets divine Wisdom, as the first objectification of the divine essence, to be identical with its first manifestation” (Henry 2008, p. 97). Cf. also: “La structure phénoménologique d’une telle manifestation est clairement indiquée. Elle consiste dans une objectivation, dans cette objectivation qui est celle du monde, de telle façon que – en cette fin de Renaissance aussi bien qu’en Grèce – c’est la position de soi hors de soi qui fait surgir la manifestation. Puisqu’il s’agit en l’occurrence de la manifestation de Dieu – manifestation que Böhme appelle sa Sagesse (autre nom du Verbe) –, c’est donc comme objectivation du premier Dehors que celle-ci se produit” (Henry 2000, p. 67). Henry does not quote Koyré here, but he reproduces his formula “la Sagesse [...] est. [...] une première objectivation *ad extra* de la divinité” (Koyré 1929a, p. 297) almost literally.

⁴² “La tendance à la manifestation, à la révélation est. une loi générale de l’être, une loi qui, non est seulement inhérente à l’être, mais qui, à vrai dire, le constitue et finalement l’explique [...] *L’un* ne peut arriver à s’exprimer et à se déterminer que dans *l’autre* et par *l’autre*. L’indéterminé aspire à une limite, non pour se limiter toutefois, mais pour se révéler. Il s’oppose une détermination et une limite, pour *se* révéler et *la* révéler en même temps; se révéler en elle, et par rapport à elle. C’est là le grand mystère de l’être, son *Mysterium Magnum*: les contraires s’impliquent et restent unis dans leur opposition révélatrice” (Koyré 1929a, p. 245).

⁴³ 24 November 1924 Koyré wrote to Meyerson from London, where he worked on Paracelsus and early German mystics (and not on Böhme): “Ce gens-là font du Hegel avant la lettre et, ayant remarqué que le même *s’exprime* toujours par et dans l’autre, bien que cela ne soit nullement compréhensible, ils mettent ce fait – *Mysterium Magnum* de la Parole – à la base de tout conception et explication, disant, tout à fait comme Hegel, que le seul moyen de se débarrasser de ce *mysterium* est. de le mettre au centre même du système et d’en faire le principe du pensée vivante. Je crois que tout l’idéalisme allemand est – historiquement – parti de là” (Meyerson 2009, p. 236, italics by Koyré). See also “Or [...] si le *Mysterium* forme l’essence et base du monde, de la vie, de nous-même et de notre raison, ne faut-il pas placer résolument le *Mysterium* au centre du système et, au lieu de chercher à l’illuminer, en faire le principe explicatif par excellence?” (Koyré 1929a, b, p. 312).

first step in the transformation of infinite divine ideas into finite being. However, the ideal (and non-fictional) Cosmos, imagined by God in Sophia, is not yet a proper creation. It is “semi-real”, like a plan of an artisan (Koyré 1929a, p. 348). Its existence is magical because it does not exist by itself but only in its relation to God and His imagination; it is not a genuine “real” thing but only *magia divina*. Nevertheless, the existence of this world (or, more precisely, not yet a world) enables God to begin a centrifugal movement: through it He becomes conscious of His own personality; He separates Himself from this world; and He thus begins cognition. God is expressing Himself into the imagined world in order to achieve self-knowledge. He knows Himself as His own expression in the magical world and also as something which resists this expression (Koyré 1929a, p. 348).

To know Himself, God needs nature. This is a crucial point in Koyré’s conceptual scheme: neither reflection nor imagination is capable of providing true access to one’s self. It is because God has a nature, that He can be a personality proper and not just a pure spirit unable to create anything new. It is because God possesses a nature, that Böhme’s cosmogony becomes cosmology: the knowledge of God is linked with the knowledge of the world and the knowledge of the self.⁴⁴ According to Böhme – that is, to Koyré’s Böhme – in order to know oneself, one has to know the world and its origin; the only path to one’s inner self goes through the world.

In Michel Henry’s interpretation, the Böhman cosmogony serves as a model for the genesis of transcendental subjectivity: the story of God becomes a story of the transcendental subject, produced by the splitting of the empirical subject into the phenomenological onlooker and the world-constituting consciousness. He completely ignores the theosophical and, more generally, the cosmological aspects of Böhme’s (and Koyré’s) thought: for Henry the cosmological dimension of human experience has nothing to do with the primary mode of subjective life, that is, with pure self-affection. Actually, Henry claims that any splitting of the self – be it the splitting in order to perform phenomenological reduction or just the splitting of the self in self-reflection – already presupposes self-alienation. When we reflect upon ourselves, we look at ourselves in the same way we look at things, at worldly objects – but the self is not a thing or an object. The way I manifest to myself and the way things appear to me are radically different. So, the optical metaphor of manifestation, the metaphor of reflection, is to be subjected to the tactile metaphor, the metaphor of touching, or, better, to the feeling of pain and of passion. We feel ourselves immediately, before any reflection. I look at things and see them: they are given to me in intuitive vision, but this vision itself comes from a feeling, which is non-intentional. Henry insists that intuition is no direct access to the world and to the self, because intuition always presupposes mediation by a primary feeling and by a pathetic impression. According to Henry, the embodied human subjectivity is

⁴⁴ “La connaissance de Dieu était liée à celle du monde: la renaissance, la naissance spirituelle était pour lui quelque chose qui, permettant à l’homme de se reconquérir lui-même, lui permettait aussi de voir le monde dans sa réalité profonde, de pénétrer dans le mystère de la nature et d’y voir Dieu, non son reflet ou son symbole seulement, mais de l’y voir lui-même, en tant, bien entendu, qu’il s’y exprime” (Koyré 1929a, p. 485).

capable of “feeling itself by itself”, the ability which Böhme’s disincarnated God is lacking.

21.4 Conclusion

Paul Ricoeur once said that the history of phenomenology is a history of Husserlian heresies (Ricoeur 2004, p. 182). If so, Koyré, an unorthodox phenomenologist, has his own rightful place in it. He is a supporter of intentionality. The unity of being and thought, accomplished in consciousness thanks to its intentional structure, attests that the exercise of thinking is more than a purely psychological fact, that in and by an act of thought one can achieve the truth. This necessity of truth for the being of humans is a lesson of Koyré that the French “theological” phenomenology would do well to retain. There are atheistic versions of the philosophy of Levinas or of Henry; the presence of the concept of God in the phenomenological discourse is not a problem. The true problem is the problem of truth: the necessity of the most banal and most humble truth – the truth of propositions, of statements regarding the world – is lost in the post-Heideggerian and, to an even larger extent, post-Levinassian French phenomenology. The truth of being, the truth of life and the veracity of speech addressed to the Other are very powerful, essential, even fundamental concepts of contemporary phenomenology; but if phenomenology wants to be a descriptive and not merely prescriptive philosophy, it cannot *completely* renounce the truth of the world and the truth of consciousness. Separating pure philosophy from “spirituality”, Michel Foucault said that pure philosophy has forgotten that in the search for truth the subject must undergo a certain transformation; however, the supporters of “spirituality” sometimes forget that the task of thinking is not just to transform the world and one’s own soul but also to understand and explain them too. The task of phenomenology is twofold, practical and theoretical at the same time; philosophical conversion differs from religious conversion because the former cannot be separated from epistemological and ontological work.

A phenomenology that would not be synonymous with pure ascetics should be situated in the bordering region between the world and the beyond. It seems, therefore, that one needs to bypass the jargon of the authentic and the original, as well as the metaphysics of the ultimate foundation. If Koyré was right to speak of the “unity of human thought”, then it is not possible to do phenomenological philosophy of subject without science, in particular, the science of the world. I would suggest that one should follow the way of Emmanuel Levinas and Michel Henry and go beyond them in order to regain the theoretical truth, the truth of the world – but starting from the practical truth, the truth of philosophical conversion. Indeed, the task is to reintegrate the disjointed parts of phenomenological heritage. A phenomenology that wants to be more than the philosophy of subject should stop being purely a-cosmic and should recover its scientific, epistemological, ontological dimensions and, most importantly, its cosmological dimension.

Acknowledgments I would like to express my gratitude to G. Pattison, D. Drozdova, J.-M. Salanskis, Z. Sokuler, F. Worms and G. Jean for comments and discussions.

References

- Alquié F (1950) *La découverte métaphysique de l'homme chez Descartes*. PUF, Paris.
- Baugh B (2014) *French Hegel: From Surrealism to Postmodernism*. Routledge, London.
- Benoist J (2010) Les vestiges du donné (Apparaître, apparences, aspects). *Revue canadienne de philosophie continentale* 14/1:85–103.
- Berdiaev N (1929) *Novaya kniga o Boeme*. Put' 18:116–122.
- Drozdova D (2012) Interpretatsiia Nauchnoi revoliutsii v rabotakh Aleksandra Koire: dissertatsiia na soiskanie stepeni kandidata filosofskikh nauk: 09.00.03. Natsional'nyi issledovatel'skii universitet "Vysshaia Shkola Ekonomiki", Moskva.
- Geroulanos S (2010) An atheism that is not humanist emerges in French thought. The Stanford University Press, Stanford.
- Gilson E (1934) Sens et nature de l'Argument de Saint Anselme. *Archives d'histoire doctrinale et littéraire du moyen âge* 9:5–51.
- Heidegger M (1962) *Being and Time*. Translated by John Macquarrie & Edward Robinson. SCM Press, London.
- Henry M (1973) *The essence of manifestation*. Translated by Girard Etzkorn. Martinus Nijhoff, Den Haag.
- Henry M (2008) *Material phenomenology*. Translated by Scott Davidson. Fordham University Press, New York.
- Henry M (2000) *Incarnation: une philosophie de la chair*. Seuil, Paris.
- Henry M (2013) Notes sur le phénomène érotique. Presentation, commentaires par G. Jean. *Revue internationale Michel Henry* 4:27–56.
- Hering J (1926) *Phénoménologie et philosophie religieuse. Étude sur la théorie de la connaissance religieuse*. Alcan, Paris.
- Hering J (1950) Phenomenology in France. In Farber M (ed.) *Philosophic Thought in France and the United States. Essays Representing Major Trends in Contemporary French and American Philosophy*. University of Buffalo Publications in Philosophy, Buffalo.
- Husserl E (1960) *Cartesian Meditations. An introduction to phenomenology*. Translated by Dorion Cairns. Martinus Nijhoff, Den Haag.
- Husserl E (1970) *Logical investigations*. Translated by J. N. Findlay. Edited by Dermot Moran. Volume II. Routledge, London.
- Husserl E (1994) Briefwechsel. In Verbindung mit Elisabeth Schuhmann. Herausgegeben von Karl Schuhmann. Kluwer Academic Publishers, Dordrecht; London.
- Janicaud D (2001) *Heidegger en France*. Albin Michel, Paris.
- Jeangène Vilmer JB (2009) Le paradoxe de l'infini cartésien. *Archives de Philosophie* 72/3:497–521.
- Jorland G (1981) *La science dans la philosophie: les recherches épistémologiques d'Alexandre Koyré*. Gallimard, Paris.
- Jorland G (1994) Koyré phénoménologue ? In Vinti C (ed.) *Alexandre Koyré: l'avventura intellettuale*. Edizioni Scientifiche Italiane, Napoli, pp. 105–126.
- Kearney R, Levinas E (1986) Dialogue between E. Levinas and R. Kearney. In *Face to face with Levinas*. Edited by R. Cohen. State University of New York Press, Albany, pp. 13–33.
- Kienzler K (1990) Die "Idee des Unendlichen" und das "ontologische Argument" bei Anselm von Canterbury und Emmanuel Levinas. *Archivio di Filosofia* 58:435–458.
- Koyré A (1922a) *Essai sur l'idée de Dieu et les preuves de son existence chez Descartes*. Ernest Leroux, Paris.

- Koyré A (1922b) *Bemerkungen zu den Zenonischen Paradoxen*. *Jahrbuch für Philosophie und phänomenologische Forschung* V:610–613. [French translation: Koyré 1980, pp. 9–35].
- Koyré A (1923) *L’Idée de Dieu dans la philosophie de St. Anselme*. Ernest Leroux, Paris.
- Koyré A (1929a) *La philosophie de Jakob Böhme*. Vrin, Paris.
- Koyré A (1929b) *Die Gotteslehre Jakob Böhmes: ein Fragment*. Übersetzt von Hedwig Conrad-Martius. In *Festschrift Edmund Husserl zum 70. Geburtstag*. Max Niemeyer Verlag, Tübingen, pp. 225–281.
- Koyré A (1947) *La philosophie dialectique de J. Böhme*. *Critique* 12/2:414–426.
- Koyré A (1962) *Introduction à la lecture de Platon. Suivi de Entretiens sur Descartes*. Gallimard, Paris.
- Koyré A (1957) *From the closed world to the Infinite universe*. The John Hopkins Press, Baltimore.
- Koyré A (1971) *Mystiques, spirituels, alchimistes du XVIe siècle allemand*. Gallimard, Paris.
- Koyré A (1980) *Études d’histoire de la pensée philosophique*. Gallimard, Paris.
- Kozhevnikov A (Alexandre Kojève) (1929) *Zaschita dissertatsii A.V. Koyré*. *Yevrasia* 16:8.
- Kojevinkoff A (Alexandre Kojève) (1934) *Recension de Phénoménologie*. *Journées d’Etudes de la Société Thomiste*. Cerf, Juvisy. 1932. In Kojevinkoff A *Recherches Philosophiques* 3:429.
- Lescourret MA (2005) *Emmanuel Levinas*. Flammarion, Paris.
- Levinas E (1969) *Totality and infinity; an essay on exteriority*. Translated by Alphonso Lingis. Duquesne University Press, Pittsburgh.
- Levinas E (1989) *As If Consenting to Horror*. Translated by Paula Wissing. *Critical Inquiry* 15:485–488.
- Levinas E (1996) *Transcendence and intelligibility*. In Peperzak AT, Critchley S, Bernasconi R (eds.) *Emmanuel Levinas: Basic Philosophical Writings*. The Indiana University Press, Bloomington, pp. 149–159.
- Levinas E (1998) *Of God who Comes to Mind*. The Stanford University Press, Stanford.
- Marion JL (1991) *Questions cartésiennes. Méthode et métaphysique*. PUF, Paris.
- Marion JL (2002) *Being Given: Toward a Phenomenology of Givenness*. Stanford University Press, Stanford.
- Meyerson É (2009) *Lettres françaises*. Édité par Bernadette Bensaude-Vincent et Eva Telkes-Klein. CNRS Éditions, Paris.
- Patočka J (1976) *Erinnerungen an Husserl*. In *Die Welt des Menschen — Die Welt der Philosophie: Festschrift für Jan Patočka*. Herausgegeben von Walter Biemel und dem Husserl-Archiv zu Löwen. Martinus Nijhoff, Den Haag, pp. VI–XIX.
- Ricoeur P (2004) *À l’école de la phénoménologie*. Vrin, Paris.
- Schuhmann K (1977) *Husserl–Chronik: Denk- und Lebensweg Edmund Husserls*. Martinus Nijhoff, Den Haag.
- Schuhmann K (1997) *Alexandre Koyré*. In Embree L et al. (eds.) *Encyclopedia of Phenomenology*. Kluwer Academic Publishers, Dordrecht–London, pp. 391–393.
- Spiegelberg H (1981) *The context of the phenomenological movement*. Martinus Nijhoff, Den Haag.
- Spiegelberg H (1982) *The Phenomenological Movement: a historical introduction*. 3rd revised and enlarged edition. With the collaboration of Karl Schuhmann. Martinus Nijhoff, Den Haag.
- Zambelli P (1999) *Alexandre Koyré alla scuola di Husserl a Gottinga*. *Giornale critico della filosofia italiana* 3:303–354.