Koyré as a historian of religion and the new French phenomenology

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*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. It is well known that Koyré played a prominent role in spreading Husserl’s phenomenology in France, for example, as the editor of the French translation of Husserl’s *Cartesian Meditations* and the managing editor of the revue *Recherches philosophiques*. Although Koyré’s affiliation to the phenomenological movement is debatable, his thought owes much to Husserl’s phenomenological method: what matters to him is not the problem of existence, whether in the intellect or outside of the intellect but the ways in which our consciousness deals with certain fundamental ideas and the ways in which such ideas affect consciousness. In his books on St Anselm and Descartes, Koyré focuses on the idea of God and the idea of the infinite. He praises Descartes for giving the infinite priority over the finite, thereby making the notion of the finite dependant on that of the infinite, much as in Cantor’s set theory. 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 and the optical metaphor. In line with much of post-Heideggerian philosophy, both Levinas and Henry prioritise affectivity (be it by the Infinite, God, or the Self) over intentionality. I show that in doing so they lose a cosmological dimension: the concepts of truth as the truth of Being (Heidegger), the truthfulness of the word to the Other (Levinas) or the truth of Life (Henry) supplant the mere truth of knowledge, that is, the truth of the world. Following Koyré’s guiding principle of “the unity of human thought” 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.

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 (сf. 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 1909-1911[[2]](#footnote-2) where he attended Edmund Husserl’s and Adolf Reinach’s courses in philosophy and started life-long 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 *l’École pratique des hautes études* 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 phenomenology[[3]](#footnote-3) 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 whilst 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: 28, italics added).

 However in the twenties 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 1922a)and Husserl’s *Festschrift* (1929a), as well as the German translation of his book on Descartes.

Koyré also maintained his personal contact with Husserl: he visited Husserl several times[[4]](#footnote-4), and alongside other members of the Gottingen circle he attended Husserl’s 70th anniversary event in April 1929. On the 1 March[[5]](#footnote-5), 1929 Husserl was seated among the jury in Koyré’s public defense in Sorbonne as an “honorary guest” (Kojève 1929) and witnessed “his former student’s triumph” (Patočka 1976: VII). Koyré also made a lot of effort to introduce phenomenology to the French philosophical scene. He revised Lévinas’ and Pfeiffer’s translation of *Cartesian Meditations*, and was praised by Husserl as the book’s “true translator”[[6]](#footnote-6). 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, Heideggerian[[7]](#footnote-7) and Hegelian phenomenology. While Spiegelberg accuses Kojève, “a Russian Marxist”, of this “misinterpretation” or even “misinformation” (Spiegelberg 198: 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: 25–28).

Husserl was aware of some of these non-orthodox 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 naivités. 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: 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 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: 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: 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: 71).

**1. The idea of the Infinite in me: Koyré and Lévinas**

Hering’s opinion is of a particular importance to us, as in the late twenties he was an informal mentor to the young Lithuanian student Emmanuel Lévinas. It is the affinity between Koyré’s and Lévinas’ interpretations of the ontological argument that I would now like to explore in detail. Lévinas personally knew Koyré quite well[[8]](#footnote-8) 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[[9]](#footnote-9). In the thirties Lévinas published several book reviews in the *Recherches Philosophiques* and his most important paper of that period, *De l’evasion*, also appeared there. Levinas never referenced any of Koyré’s works, apart from his postwar review of Heidegger’s *On the essence of truth*[[10]](#footnote-10), however there is a noticeable similarity between the interpretations of the ontological argument in Koyré and in Lévinas. I would suggest that there are elements of the phenomenological method in Koyré’s early works on Descartes and Anselm, and that Lévinas has mainly inherited his approach.

For both Lévinas and Koyré the infinite was a matter of greatest philosophical importance; both of them 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 in Lévinas’ 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, 1922a), 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[[11]](#footnote-11). 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: 31). Indeed, the existence problems of the infinite and the continuous *in intellectu* or *extra intellectu* (Koyré, 1980: 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[[12]](#footnote-12). 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 apologist”[[13]](#footnote-13); 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[[14]](#footnote-14). 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 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 centered 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*[[15]](#footnote-15), as a being endowed with the idea of God[[16]](#footnote-16). 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 1922: 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[[17]](#footnote-17).* 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 givennes, 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[[18]](#footnote-18), and that is why the act of self-reflection could become the fundament of truth.

Also much later, in the 1950’s, 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: 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”[[19]](#footnote-19). The attention is relocated from the object of thought to the very act of thinking. The crucial thing 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”[[20]](#footnote-20) is an “abyss” (Koyré 1922: 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*. It so far surpasses the level of our finite understanding that we can neither comprehend nor even analyse it completely.” (Koyré 1957: 106, italics by Koyré)[[21]](#footnote-21). To think of God, to speak about God requires 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: 201). We are not capable to comprehend the non-existence of God because this is a thought impossible to think, a thought that contradicts inherent laws of thinking itself[[22]](#footnote-22).

In other words, Anselm’s argument is not an ontological proof in the proper sense of this term”, it is a purely logical one[[23]](#footnote-23). 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: 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 in 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 neo-platonic mysticism. It is impossible to think the finite unless one makes the infinite one’s starting point, 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 1929: 305). These concepts are contradictory (Koyré 1929: 303), as they cannot be properly delimited and determined (Koyré 1923: 132).

Levinas, too, tries to escape the domain of the thinkable to *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[[24]](#footnote-24).

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[[25]](#footnote-25). I am not able to comprehend the Infinite[[26]](#footnote-26), and this very inability constitutes “the condition – or non-condition – of thought” (Levinas 1998: 65). The idea of the infinite cannot be attained by any intuition whatsoever; it is not controlled by the noesis-noema structure of consciousness (Lévinas 1969: 264). Infinity belongs to the realm of the meontological (Kearney, Levinas 1986: 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: 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[[27]](#footnote-27). So in Levinas one also finds the ‘anthropological’ reading of the idea of the Infinite, used by him to define the “humanity of humans”[[28]](#footnote-28). 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 and it is only this responsibility 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 (Lévinas 1998: 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[[29]](#footnote-29). Levinas, as Koyré before him, uses here a kind of phenomenological *epoche*:the thesis of God’s 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” (Lévinas 1969: 62).

This expression of Anselm (*majus quam cogitari possit* ), repeated by Levinas a number of times (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” (Lévinas 1998: 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, 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, 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 (Lévinas 1998: 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” (Lévinas 1969: 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.

**2. 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[[30]](#footnote-30), 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 historico-philosophical views.

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, their modes of appearance. To each type of phenomena belongs a particular mode of phenomenalization. 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 *outre-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 twenties he 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, expression as objectivation – those 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, 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”[[31]](#footnote-31). 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 annoyed by Böhme that eventually his ability to read medieval texts “emphatically” fails him[[32]](#footnote-32). However, it is the very power and clarity of this conceptual scheme that 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 1929: 394) who is “fighting himself” in order to resolve “the central problem of metaphysics, that is, the problem of the Absolute” (Koyré 1929: 307). How can one reach the Absolute[[33]](#footnote-33), 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[[34]](#footnote-34). 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 way[[35]](#footnote-35): one can say that the Absolute manifests itself in the world and through the world, that the world was created in order to become its medium of phenomenalization”.

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[[36]](#footnote-36)*. 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”[[37]](#footnote-37).

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[[38]](#footnote-38). 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: 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: 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[[39]](#footnote-39). 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: 196). Characteristically, Henry also holds Böhme responsible for the primacy of the idea of *Scheidichkeit*, the reflective splitting of Being, in the German Idealism and, consequently, in the modern thought in general[[40]](#footnote-40).

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 1929: 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, so long as there is no object in a strict sense, there can be no vision: indeed, then a reflection in the mirror is not a genuine vision but only “a mere possibility of vision” (Koyré 1929: 332). Light itself is not visible; it is just a medium of vision, “wherein something can become manifest, visible in itself” (Heidegger 1962: 51), a “horizon of visibility” (Henry 2008: 84) for phenomena, or rather for “true objects”[[41]](#footnote-41). 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: 112, 119, italics by Henry). 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 1929: 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”[[42]](#footnote-42), constitutes a “fundamental philosophical error” (Henry 2008, 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: 90), although Henry imputes this identification of manifestation with objectification to the entire philosophical tradition[[43]](#footnote-43). 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”[[44]](#footnote-44). Koyré ascribes this proto-Hegelian thesis not only to Böhme, but also to the German thought in general[[45]](#footnote-45). 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, 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, 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 1929: 347). God *imagines Himself* in the Wisdom, making it the 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 1929: 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 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 1929: 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[[46]](#footnote-46). 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 Böhmian 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 vision and intuition but this vision comes from a feeling, which is a non-intentional act. Henry insists that intuition is no direct access to the world and to the self – intuition requires mediation by a primary feeling, by a pathetic impression. According to Henry, subjectivity is capable of “feeling itself by itself” which is something Böhme’s God is unable to do.

**3. Conclusion**

Paul Ricoeur once said that the history of phenomenology is a history of Husserlian heresies (Ricoeur 2004: 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 really a problem. The true problem is the problem of truth: the necessity of the most banal, 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, 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 by-pass 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, should recover its scientific, epistemological, ontological dimensions and, most importantly, its cosmological dimension.

Key words:

History of phenomenological movement

Phenomenological method in history of philosophy

Theological turn in the French phenomenology

History of religion

German idealism

German mysticism

Intentionality of consciousness

Phenomenological reduction

Ontological Argument

Idea of the infinite

Structure of subjectivity

Meontology

Phenomenon

Self-reference

Self-reflection

Phenomenality of the world

Expression

Self-manifestation

Self-objectification

God

Splitting of the self

A-cosmic phenomenology

Cosmological dimension of human experience

Anselm

Böhme

Descartes

Husserl

Heidegger

Hegel

Reinach

Picavet

Spiegelberg

Kojève

Patočka

Marion

Henry, Michel

Levinas

Berdiaev

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iampolsk@gmail.com [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. For more details regarding Koyre’s early biography see (Drozdova, above). [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Jan Patočka,who attended Koyré’s courses in *EPHE*, also mentions him among his phenomenological contacts (Patočka 1976: vi). [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Summer 1921, Summer 1922 with Jean Hering, October 1928, Summer 1929 (Schuhmann, 1977). [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. According to Kojève (Kojève 1929). In the “Husserl Chronik” the date of the *soutenance* is indicated as 23-25 February (Schuhmann 1977: 342). [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Husserl wrote to Koyré on 22.VI.1931: „Immer wieder hörte ich die Lucidität Ihrer Übersetzung rühmen (auch in den Zuschriften), man meinte sogar, in Ihrer französ<ischen> 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: 359)*.* This was a dubious compliment as Husserl did not like the translation at all: on 19.VIII.1932 he wrote to Roman Ingarden that “die franz<ösische> Übers<etzung ist> voll Hemmnisse des Verständnisses” (Husserl 1994: 288). [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. Koyré published a review of “Sein and 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 Koyre’s role in the French reception of Heidegger’s philosophy *de l'entre-deux-guerres* see (Janicaud 2001: 33-43) and (Geroulanos 2010: 54-57). [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. Lévinas’ biographer, Marie-Anne Lescourret, writes that Lévinas and Koyré used to drink coffee together (Lescourret 2005: 108), and there is an uncut copy of Lévinas’ *En découvrant l'existence avec Husserl et Heidegger* with Lévinas’ inscription “*à Monsieur Koyre et à son ironie*” in Koyre’s personal library in Paris (I would like to thank Daria Drozdova who informed to me on this matter). [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. According to Lévinas, 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” (Lévinas 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 August, 10, 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 Centre Alexandre Koyré, Paris). [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. At least in his published works, while there are testimonies that he used Koyre’s studies on the philosophy of science in his teaching (Lescourret 2005:108). [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. « 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: 26). [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. « 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: 227). [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. « Méditations,... oeuvre hardie d'apologétique mystique » (Koyré 1922: 1). [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. « 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 1922: 1). [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. (Koyré, 1971: 31), the expression itself belongs to St Augustin (*De Trinitate* XIV: 8). [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. Ferdinand Alquié is even more radical: «L’homme n’a pas d’idée de Dieu, il est l’idée de Dieu » (Alquié 1950: 236). [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. « 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, 1922: 61). [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. « 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 saisissons 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 1922:58). [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
19. « 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 IIIe et IVe Méditations » (Koyré 1922:149). [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
20. « Personne n’avait pas aussi bien compris la différence, la distance infinie qui sépare tout fini de l’infini » (Koyré 1922 : 126). *Cf.* in “Totality and infinity”:“the distance that separates *ideatum* and idea constitutes the content of *ideatum* itself... it is it infinitely removed from its idea [éloigné de son idée]”(Levinas 1969: 49). For Levinas, as well 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 1922 : 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. [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
21. Jeangène Vilmer spotted that Koyre is literarily wrong here, as Descartes repeats several times that the idea of God is *maxime clara et distincta* (Jeangène Vilmer 2009: 505)*.* But why did Koyré make such a blatant mistake? Perhaps one can find an explanation in his early 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 1922 : 23). 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 cause “bedazzlement”, *aveuglement* (Marion 2002: 206). [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
22. « Il 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 » (Koyre 1923 : 202). [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
23. (Koyré 1971: 69). Gilson reiterates this observation in his polemics with Karl Bart (Gilson 1934); later, this point has been developed by J.L. Marion (Marion 1991: 221sq.). [↑](#footnote-ref-23)
24. “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’.” (Lévinas 1969: 48). [↑](#footnote-ref-24)
25. “To think the infinite, the transcendent, 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*.” (Lévinas 1969: 49, emphasised by Lévinas). [↑](#footnote-ref-25)
26. Cf. « le fini ne peut « comprendre », ne peut embrasser et contenir l'infini » (Koyré 1922: 137). [↑](#footnote-ref-26)
27. Cf. « 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 1922: 59). [↑](#footnote-ref-27)
28. “...by the idea of the infinite in us or by the humanity of man understood as the theology or the intelligibility of transcendent” (Lévinas 1996: 149). [↑](#footnote-ref-28)
29. Cf. « 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 au donc une idée. Et c’est une idée innée, une idée sans laquelle nous sommes impensables » (Koyré 1962: 224–225). [↑](#footnote-ref-29)
30. As 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: 49). [↑](#footnote-ref-30)
31. (Berdiaev 1929). 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 1929: 392). [↑](#footnote-ref-31)
32. Jorland calls Koyré's method «empathic» (Jorland1994). 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 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 (*способность вживания в чужую мысль*)” (Berdiaev 1929: 116). [↑](#footnote-ref-32)
33. Koyré translates “Ungrund” by “Absolu”. This serves his main purpose: to inscribe Böhme in the tradition of Paracelsian Augustinism, or even in the Neo-Platonic tradition in the broadest sense. [↑](#footnote-ref-33)
34. « 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 1929 : 306 n.2). See also (Henry 1973: 159). [↑](#footnote-ref-34)
35. « à l’immense question en apparence théologique : pourquoi Dieu a-t-il crée le monde ? – l’extraordinaire réponse avancée appartient à la phénoménologie : Dieu a crée le monde pour se manifester » (Henry 2000: 66). [↑](#footnote-ref-35)
36. Koyré 1929*,* 329. In his 1947 review Koyré slightly changes the wording to emphasise the importance of the revelation *ad intra*: *mysterium revelans seipsum seipso* (Koyré 1947: 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. [↑](#footnote-ref-36)
37. “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: 103). “Yet so much semblance, so much ‘Being’” (*Wieviel Schein jedoch, soviel "Sein"*) (Heidegger 1962: 51). Michel Henry proclaimed this motto as «the third principle of phenomenology». For more details on the history of the maxim see (Benoist 2000) and (Chernavin 2013).  [↑](#footnote-ref-37)
38. « 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 » (Koyre 1929: 243). [↑](#footnote-ref-38)
39. « 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 1929: 332). [↑](#footnote-ref-39)
40. “Jacob Böhme’s intuitions guide German Idealism and thus modern thought ... These intuitions must be called into question again” (Henry 2008, 97). “*Scheidlichkeit* 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, 79). [↑](#footnote-ref-40)
41. « La clarté diffuse de l’Un s’est concentrée et est devenue lumière, mais c’est une lumière irréelle 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, 1929: 334-335). [↑](#footnote-ref-41)
42. “The essence in its phenomenological realization is ‘something else’” (Henry 1973: 120, quotation is from Koyré 1929: 243). [↑](#footnote-ref-42)
43. “Jacob Böhme interprets divine Wisdom, as the first objectification of the divine essence, to be identical with its first manifestation” (Henry 2008, 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: 67). Henry does not quote Koyré here; but he reproduces his formula « la Sagesse ... est... une première objectivation *ad extra* de la divinité » (Koyré 1929: 297) almost literally. [↑](#footnote-ref-43)
44. « La tendance à la manifestation, à la révélation est une loi générale de l’être, une loi qui, non est seulement est 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’impliques et restent unis dans leur opposition révélatrice » (Koyré 1929: 245). [↑](#footnote-ref-44)
45. On the 24.11.1924 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: 236, italics by Koyré). Cf. 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 1929: 312). [↑](#footnote-ref-45)
46. « 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 1929: 485). [↑](#footnote-ref-46)