

Against Negativity: Deleuze, Wahl, and Postwar Phenomenology

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Attentive readings of Deleuze's works alongside the projects of his teachers show that they often share a common problem or set of problems. One of the most innovative and influential of these projects is the work of Jean Wahl. Wahl's analysis of French existential phenomenology, here approached through a representative essay published in 1950, focuses on the problem of the pre-personal, pre-subjective elements of thinking and worldly existence. Deleuze's philosophical project, already visible in his early essays on Bergson, is a critique of the phenomenological presuppositions that determine this problem in terms of negation.

Not long ago we used to ask: What is Existentialism?
— Gilles Deleuze, “À quoi reconnaît-on le structuralisme?”

When Deleuze comments on the relation of his work to the history of philosophy or on its significance vis-à-vis the projects of his contemporaries, his remarks are often as rhetorically striking as they are almost devoid of useful information.¹ Portraying himself as a kind of philosophical maverick, Deleuze seems to have pursued a philosophical project that is *sui generis*. Having suffered through an education in which he was “bludgeoned” by the history of philosophy, Deleuze sets himself apart from and also against French academic philosophy.² However entertaining these remarks are, they can be equally misleading. Attentive readings of Deleuze's works alongside those works that formed the milieu of his philosophical education show that they often share a common problem or set of problems that Deleuze transforms via his own distinctive and innovative interventions. To understand Deleuze's relation to his contemporaries and to the French philosophical tradition, then, one must look to his texts, not his commentary. Indeed, such readings reveal that Deleuze's philosophical preoccupations are often so tightly interwoven with his teachers and contemporaries that one might usefully substitute for Deleuze's image of the philosopher-artist the image of a philosopher-botanist: grafting his philosophical compositions

¹ Deleuze discusses philosophical portraiture in his extended interview with Claire Parnet, recorded in 1988 and now published as *L'abécédaire de Gilles Deleuze* (Montparnasse: Arte Video, 1997). The remarks on portraiture occur during a discussion of the history of philosophy (“H comme Histoire de la philosophie”). In the jointly authored *Qu'est-ce que la philosophie?*, Deleuze and Guattari declare at the outset that “philosophy is the art of forming, inventing, and fabricating concepts.” See Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *Qu'est-ce que la philosophie?* (Paris: Éditions de Minuit, 1991), 12, tr. by H. Tomlinson and G. Burchell as *What is Philosophy?* (New York: Columbia UP, 1994), 2.

² In the rhetorically complex “Lettre à un Critique Sévère,” Deleuze writes that he “belong[s] to a generation...more or less bludgeoned to death [*assassinée*] with the history of philosophy.” See Gilles Deleuze, *Pourparlers* (Paris: Éditions de Minuit, 1991), 14, tr. by M. Joughin as “Letter to a Harsh Critic” in *Negotiations* (New York: Columbia UP, 1995), 5. In a later conversation with Claire Parnet, Deleuze develops the idea that “the history of philosophy has always been the agent of power in philosophy, and even in thought.” See Gilles Deleuze and Claire Parnet, *Dialogues* (Paris: Flammarion, 1977), 19, tr. by H. Tomlinson and B. Habberjam as *Dialogues* (New York: Columbia UP, 1987), 13. At the same time, it should be noted that Deleuze published admiring reviews and essays on several of his contemporaries including Hélène Cixous, Jean-Francois Lyotard, François Châtelet, and, of course, Michel Foucault.

onto others and experimenting with new forms of thinking. For all its novelty, Deleuze's philosophy of difference is, in its inception, a hybrid.

In the early twentieth century, French philosophy could be characterized as “a general reaction against “the systematic spirit”” and a renewal of the problematic of the *cogito*.³ So it was that from the late 1930s through the Second World War and into the 1950s the most fruitful philosophical plant in the hothouse of Paris was existential phenomenology. The story of the emergence and development of French existential phenomenology in the early twentieth century used to be told in one of two ways: either as an attempt to resolve the conflict between rationalism and spiritualism or as a result of the miraculously disruptive importation of Hegel, Husserl, and Heidegger into France. The former interpretation, advanced as recently as 2004 by Alain Badiou, highlights common motivations but also obscures different problems and projects beneath homogenizing slogans.⁴ The latter interpretation, pioneered by scholars such as Judith Butler and Michael Roth, is to some degree parasitic upon the former—the role of the imported German philosophy, in the guise of “the three H's,” is to suture conceptual and vital knowledge. This interpretation allows for the differentiation of various philosophical projects but risks overlooking the often unstated problems that put them in dialogue with each other.⁵ Inspired by this earlier work, but also critical of it, a more complicated story of the philosophical debates in France has recently emerged. Works by Dominique Janicaud and Frédéric Worms and, across the Atlantic, works by Bruce Baugh, Alan Schrift, Stefanos Geroulanos, and others, have shown the diversity, richness, and dazzling complexity that informs and subtends the philosophical problems that

³ “L'existentialisme en France depuis la Liberation,” Robert Campbell, in *L'Activité Philosophique contemporaine en France et aux États-Unis*, (ed.) M. Farber (Paris: PUF, 1950). Campbell's claim is widely shared even among the other contributors to Farber's anthology. In René Le Senne's contribution to the same volume, “De la “Philosophie de l'esprit,” he writes that “the fecundity of Cartesianism” remains “the invariable axis of a tradition that the thinkers of different ages have taken more care to adapt to the conditions and the needs of their times than to replace. Even today, more than any other doctrine, Cartesianism inspires the philosophical teaching of the *lycées* and faculties and one may think that, if France forgot Cartesianism, it would change its soul [*âme*].” (113) And Louis Lavelle notes in his “Les trois moments de la métaphysique,” that “[f]rom Descartes to Husserl one can say that the indivisibly ontological and gnoseological primacy of the self-affirmation of the subject has not ceased to be recognized.” (133) Bruce Baugh describes the preceding period in French philosophy, against which the existentialists were reacting, as one in which the “order of the day was to create a new epistemology or philosophy of science adequate to recent scientific developments, and it was thought that Hegel's dialectical method and concept of a “concrete universal” could be used to this end.” See Bruce Baugh, *French Hegel: From Surrealism to Postmodernism* (New York: Routledge, 2003), 10.

⁴ “To think the philosophical origins of this moment [of French philosophy, in the sense that Badiou gives it of designating French philosophy from Sartre's *Being and Nothingness* through Deleuze and Guattari's *What is Philosophy?*] we need to return to the fundamental division that occurred within French philosophy at the beginning of the twentieth century, with the emergence of two contrasting currents.... In Bergson we find what might be called a philosophy of vital interiority.... In Brunschvicg's work we find a philosophy of the mathematically based concept.... From the start of the century, then, French philosophy presents a divided and dialectical character.” See Alain Badiou, *The Adventure of French Philosophy*, (tr.) B. Bosteels (New York: Verso, 2012), lii–liii. This description of French philosophy as essentially dialectical is, of course, quite useful for Badiou's own project but ultimately difficult to neatly reconcile with the complexity of French academic philosophical relations and commitments.

⁵ Judith Butler, *Subjects of Desire: Hegelian Reflections in Twentieth-Century France* (New York: Columbia University Press, [1987], 1999); Michael Roth, *Knowing and History: Appropriations of Hegel in Twentieth-Century France* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1988). Butler's and Roth's books coincide with the high point of the development of French theory in the US academy as described by François Cusset in his *French Theory: How Foucault, Derrida, Deleuze, and Co. Transformed the Intellectual Life of the United States*, (tr.) J. Fort (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2008).

preoccupied a generation of French thinkers.⁶ According to these readings, existential phenomenology attained the prominence that it had in France because its common foundation, intentionality as characteristic of intuition, effected the reduction of two scientific projects (mind and world) to one (the worldly mind). Through their books, articles, reviews, seminars, and conferences, philosophers such as Emmanuel Levinas, Alexandre Koyré, Gabriel Marcel, Alexandre Kojève, Maurice Merleau-Ponty, Jean-Paul Sartre, and others conducted a series of indirect debates, engaging one another sometimes directly but also obliquely, presenting an innovative reading of a text or a philosopher as a challenge and rejoinder to their colleagues.⁷ The phenomenological account of the intuitive *cogito* became a problematic onto which a wide range of philosophers sought to graft their questions, while others, conversely, spliced phenomenology onto their own problems.⁸ As Jean Hering remarks, phenomenology in France was less the triumphant apotheosis of either vitalism or conceptual rationalism than it was a kind of method that determined the form of a number of projects.⁹

⁶ Dominique Janicaud, *Heidegger en France* (2 vols) (Paris: Albin Michel, 2001); Gary Gutting, *French Philosophy in the Twentieth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001) and *Thinking the Impossible: French Philosophy Since 1960* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011); Bruce Baugh, *French Hegel*; Samuel Moyn, *Origins of the Other: Emmanuel Levinas Between Revelation and Ethics* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2005); Ethan Kleinberg, *Generation Existential: Heidegger's Philosophy in France, 1927–1961* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2005); Alan Schrift, *Twentieth-Century French Philosophy: Key Themes and Thinkers* (London: Blackwell, 2006); Frédéric Worms, *Philosophie en France au XX^e siècle* (Paris: Folio, 2009); Stefanos Geroulanos, *An Atheism That is Not Humanist Emerges in French Thought* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2010); Knox Peden, *Spinoza Contra Phenomenology* (Cornell: Cornell University Press, 2014).

⁷ An important example of this is the debate between Jean Wahl and Alexander Koyré on Hegel. Following the publication of Wahl's *Le Malheur de la conscience dans la philosophie de Hegel* in 1929, Koyré reviewed the book for *Revue Philosophique de la France et de l'Étranger* in 1930, in which he also published "Note sur la langue et la terminologie hégéliennes" in 1931. In 1930, Koyré also presented "Rapport sur l'état des études hégéliennes en France" at the First Hegel Congress in The Hague. Wahl responded to Koyré in the essay that he presented to the Hegel Congress in Rome in 1933, "Hegel et Kierkegaard" (later published as a central chapter of Wahl's *Études kierkegaardiennes*). The exchange concluded with Koyré's "Hegel à Iéna," published in 1934, again in the *Revue Philosophique de la France et de l'Étranger*. Whereas Wahl claimed that Hegel's mature system ultimately betrayed the important insights of the young Hegel, Koyré countered that Hegel's mature philosophy, especially the *Logic*, was his true philosophical achievement precisely because it overcame Hegel's earlier philosophical views. The stakes of this debate were not the proper interpretation of Hegel but rather the question of whether rationality could ever overcome the concrete diversity of lived experience. This debate, and specifically Koyré's position and the importance he accords to language in Hegel's system, would have a decisive effect on Jean Hyppolite's *Logique et existence* (Paris: PUF, 1953).

⁸ Excellent overviews of the development of French phenomenology are found in Herbert Spiegelberg's official history, *The Phenomenological Movement*, 3rd rev. and enlarged ed. (Boston: Martinus Nijhoff, 1982), esp. Part Three: The French Phase of the Movement, and in Christian Dupont's *Phenomenology in French Philosophy: Early Encounters* (Springer, 2013). Janicaud's *Heidegger en France* is also a rich source of information, often from philosophers that participated in the development of French phenomenology.

⁹ Hering's essay, "La phénoménologie en France," in *L'Activité Philosophique contemporaine*, is divided into six sections (plus a brief introduction) which treat first, under the general heading "Tendances et Méthodes," phenomenological theology (Karl Barth), phenomenology and the history of philosophy (Koyré), phenomenology and existentialism (Sartre), and Gabriel Marcel's phenomenology; then, under the heading "Problèmes et Recherches," two concluding sections deal with Merleau-Ponty ("Une étude critique du 'cogito': M. Merleau-Ponty") and Marcel (again) and Maurice Nédoncelle ("Le 'Moi' et le 'Toi.' De Gabriel Marcel à Maurice Nédoncelle"). In his essay, Hering describes phenomenology as "a particular attitude toward problems" not "a philosophical system" (*L'Activité Philosophique*, 80).

One of the most innovative and influential of these projects is the work of Jean Wahl.¹⁰ Wahl completed his education in 1920 and became a professor at the Sorbonne in 1936 where, aside from the interruption caused by the war, he would continue to teach until 1967. Alongside his work in the academy, Wahl collaborated with a wide range of intellectuals outside the ivory tower, including Georges Bataille, with whom Wahl participated in the *Collège de Sociologie*, as well as the esoteric group *Acéphale*.¹¹ During the Second World War, Wahl was imprisoned by the Nazis in the internment camp at Drancy in 1941, but he was able to escape and make his way to the United States in 1942. In the U.S.A. from 1942 until 1945, Wahl helped to establish the *École Libre des Hautes Études* and taught at several colleges and universities including the New School in New York and Mount Holyoke College. At the latter institution, he organized a series of colloquia (the *Décades*) that were attended by prominent intellectuals such as Karl Löwith and Hannah Arendt.¹² Returning to France immediately after the war, Wahl founded the *Collège philosophique* in 1947, and in 1950 he became the head editor of the *Revue de Métaphysique et de Morale*.¹³

Principally known now for his 1929 work on Hegel, *La Malheur de la conscience dans la philosophie de Hegel*, Wahl authored an impressively diverse number of works over a span of fifty years. In his 1938 *Études kierkegaardienne*s, Wahl describes his philosophical project as the pursuit and development of a “qualitative logic” that rebels against the desire to integrate difference and diversity into a monistic, purely “quantitative” system.¹⁴ This project extends from Wahl’s doctoral theses (on the genealogy of Anglo-American pluralism with a complementary thesis on time and the instant in Descartes), through his study of Hegel, and across his major works of the 1930s and 1940s.¹⁵ Hegel’s development of the situation of the unhappy consciousness is, for Wahl, the exemplary dialectical extension of intuition: the thinking self is divided from itself by its own judgments. However, when Hegel posits a moment of synthesis that restores the self to

¹⁰ Although Wahl has long languished and his importance is often overlooked, there are signs that this may be changing. Bruce Baugh’s *French Hegel* recognizes the importance of Wahl, as does Samuel Moyn’s *Origins of the Other*, which details Levinas’s indebtedness to his friend. Following his death in 1974, three significant memorial essays were published: one by Maurice de Gandillac in the *Annuaire de l’Association des Anciens Élèves de l’École Normale Supérieure*, 38–45 (Paris, 1975), another by Ferdinand Alquié in *Les Études philosophiques*, no. 1 (YEAR): 79–88; and, finally, Emmanuel Levinas’s contribution to *Jean Wahl et Gabriel Marcel*, (ed.) E. Levinas, X. Tilliette, and P. Ricoeur (Paris: Beauchesne, 1976), titled “Jean Wahl: Sans Avoir Ni Être,” tr. by M. Smith as “Jean Wahl: Neither Having nor Being,” in *Outside the Subject* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1994), 6–83.

¹¹ For details on Wahl’s involvement with Bataille and his intellectual projects, see Michael Surya, *Georges Bataille, la mort à l’oeuvre* (Paris: Gallimard, 2012), as well as Chapter 5, “Bataille: Negativity Unemployed,” of Baugh’s *French Hegel*.

¹² An extensive collection of material from the *Decades* at Mount Holyoke is available online at: <http://asteria.fivecolleges.edu/findaids/mountholyoke/mshm283.html>.

¹³ Emmanuel Levinas characterizes the *Collège philosophique* as “a kind of institutional counterweight to the Sorbonne.” *Ethics and Infinity*, (tr.) R. Cohen (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1985), 47.

¹⁴ Jean Wahl, *Études Kierkegaardienne*s (Paris: Fernand Aubier, 1938), 157.

¹⁵ Near the beginning of his first book Wahl writes: “The *Cogito* is an intuition (*simplici mentis intuit*). ... The *Cogito* is the affirmation of an instantaneous certitude, a judgment, a reasoning [*raisonnement*], taken up [*ramasse*] in an instant.” See *Du Rôle de l’idée de l’instant dans la philosophie de Descartes* (Paris: Felix Alcan, 1920), 5. This “instantaneous reasoning” is a central concern of Wahl’s in the 1929 book on Hegel, *Vers le concret* (Paris: Vrin, 1932), a series of three linked essays on William James, Gabriel Marcel, and Alfred North Whitehead, in *Études Kierkegaardienne*s, a book that was largely responsible for introducing Kierkegaard to French philosophy and that also included several essays on Jaspers and Heidegger, in *Existence humaine et transcendance* (Neufchâtel: La Baconnière, 1944), published during the war but extending work that Wahl had presented at a meeting of the *Société Française de Philosophie* in 1937 (see note 18 below), and in *Introduction à la pensée de Heidegger* (Paris: Poche, 1946), based on a course Wahl taught at the Sorbonne in 1946.

itself on the other side of this action of self-alienation, Wahl sees the intrusion of the young, Romantic Hegel's dream and thus what Bruce Baugh aptly terms only "the transposition into philosophical thought of a personal ideal."¹⁶ Against this false ideal, Wahl sets thinkers such as James and Kierkegaard who conceive instantaneous intuition as the concrete experience of the self-destruction of conceptual judgment. He writes: "Philosophy is a movement not toward truth but toward ecstasy."¹⁷ The project of thinking the positivity of the impossibility of synthesis is what Wahl calls—in *Études kierkegaardiennes*—the project of a "philosophy of difference."¹⁸

The Subterranean Passages of Intuition

In 1950, a two-volume collection of essays entitled *L'Activité Philosophique Contemporaine en France et aux États-Unis* was published simultaneously in French and English.¹⁹ Divided according to nationality, each volume includes eighteen essays by prominent philosophers of one country followed by a concluding response from a representative of the other.²⁰ Taken as a whole, this work provides a valuable document not only of comparative philosophy but also of the status of professional philosophy in each country immediately following the devastating disruption of the Second World War. The collection was edited by Marvin Farber, then a professor of philosophy at SUNY Buffalo, whose *vitae* made him almost uniquely suited to undertake and supervise such a project.²¹ Between the world wars, Farber studied in Germany—including for a time with Edmund Husserl and Martin Heidegger—returning to the United States to take a position at Ohio State University in 1925 and then joining the philosophy department at Buffalo in 1927. Although his relationships with other phenomenologists and, indeed, with phenomenology itself—as a philosophical school or program—would become quite complicated, there is no doubt that Farber, like Wahl in France, was an energetic and influential force whose work was vital in securing a

¹⁶ Baugh, *French Hegel*, 22

¹⁷ Jean Wahl, "Realism, Dialectic, and the Transcendent," *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, vol. 4, no. 4 (1944): 496-506, here 506. A version of this essay was first presented at a meeting of the *Société Française de Philosophie* in 1937 and published, along with a transcript of the discussion and an Appendix of letters received in response to Wahl's letter—was first published as "Subjectivité et transcendance" in the *Bulletin de la Société française de philosophie* vol. 37, no. 5 (1937): 161-211. A longer version was published as *Existence humaine et transcendance*.

¹⁸ Wahl, *Études Kierkegaardiennes*, 122-23. This is the first reference to such a project. In 1946, at the end of his presentation of French philosophy in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, Wahl writes: "Let us say, there is a moment, that French philosophy is a philosophy of differences. Naturally, nothing is true, in the history of philosophy, with an absolute truth. D'Holbach, Bergson, the one materialist, the other spiritualist, insist on the unity of being. But this unity does not, in either, negate qualitative differences and, in each, is enriched by them." See Jean Wahl, *Tableau de la philosophie française* (Paris: Gallimard, 1946), 144.

¹⁹ In French by Presses Universitaires de France and in English by The Research Division of the State University of New York under the title *Philosophic Thought in France and the United States*. See also note 3 above. The English edition was republished in 1968. Hereafter referred to parenthetically in the text as PT.

²⁰ Richard McKeon contributed the American response to the French volume; André Lalande contributed the French response to the American volume as well as a contribution to the French volume, "Principales publications sur la philosophie des sciences parues en France depuis 1900." Lalande regularly contributed "Philosophy in France" to the *Philosophical Review* throughout the first third of the twentieth century and authored the important (and popular) *Vocabulaire critique et technique de philosophie*. Cf. Gutting, *French Philosophy*, 7. McKeon was a professor at the University of Chicago but had also advised UNESCO during the years 1946-1948. His "A Philosophy for UNESCO" was published in *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, vol. 8 no. 4 (1948): 573-86.

²¹ For details on Farber's career, see Helmut R. Wagner, "Marvin Farber's Contribution to the Phenomenological Movement: An International Perspective," *Philosophy and Science in Phenomenological Perspective*, *Phaenomenologica* vol. 95 (1984): 209-36. Wagner's essay is an excellent, detailed, and well-documented account of Farber's vital—and complicated—involvement in the early phenomenological movement.

place for phenomenology in the United States. In 1939, Farber helped to found the International Phenomenological Society and, in 1940, he founded the more long-lasting journal *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, which quickly became an important resource for the then-nascent phenomenological movement in the United States.²² As important as this work was, of equal or greater importance were Farber's efforts to secure the emigration of philosophers from Europe as the war spread. In the apt phrase of Helmut Wagner, one of the most important ways in which Farber "supported the phenomenological movement" and helped to keep phenomenological philosophy alive was by "helping keep phenomenologists alive."²³ One of these philosophers was Jean Wahl.

Wahl's contribution to Farber's anthology is entitled "La situation présente de la philosophie française"²⁴ and his wide range of interests made him well-suited to writing an essay that surveys the entirety of French philosophical activity in the wake of the Second World War. The article itself is almost encyclopedic—more than seventy-five philosophers are mentioned in the first six pages—but its focus is on existential phenomenology. Picking up the thread of the first essay in the collection, Jacques Havet's "La tradition philosophique française entre les deux guerres," Wahl begins with Bergson and his influence. This influence, Wahl notes, is being "eclipsed." However, Bergsonism does not merely refer to philosophers that adopt Bergson's conclusions; rather, it designates a philosophy that attempts to join contemporary science to the vital life of thought without reducing the latter to any sort of mechanism. (PT, 34–35) This enlarged conception of Bergsonism allows Wahl to find Bergson's influence even in the "intellectualist" tradition of French philosophy to which Bergson's vitalism is often opposed. Wahl notes that the chief exponent of intellectualism in France, Léon Brunschvicg, "after being so strongly opposed to Bergson," in his later thought perceived the "profound relation" between his own philosophy and Bergson's. (PT, 35) The emphasis on Bergson and his influence on the development of existential phenomenology in France is predictable given Wahl's own philosophical project, but it is by no means idiosyncratic. The continuing importance of Bergson for French philosophy is discussed by several different authors in Farber's volume, perhaps most notably by Jean Hering, whose essay, "La phénoménologie en France," opens with the assertion that "if we can sketch here the prehistory of phenomenology in France, it would naturally be necessary to speak of the influence of Bergsonian intuitionism, which has prepared the ground for a philosophy hostile to every abstract construction and to purely rational deductions." (PT, 76)

Wahl notes that the "French intellectual youth"—the next generation of thinkers—is divided into three factions: Catholics, communists, and non-religious existentialists, but passes over the first two groups quickly in order to reach Existentialism, which will be the focus of the remainder of the essay.²⁵ (PT, 38) If French existential phenomenology begins with Bergson, its exemplary practitioners, according to Wahl, are Merleau-Ponty and Levinas, two thinkers whose work is the "culmination" [*aboutissement*] of French philosophy and "is directed toward vital and

²² The IPS held its second and last meeting at Hunter College in 1946. *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* continues to publish, with Volume 90 released in 2015.

²³ Wagner, "Marvin Farber's Contribution," 224.

²⁴ In the English edition of Farber's anthology, the title of Wahl's essay is rather curiously translated as "The Present Situation and the Present Future of French Philosophy."

²⁵ Wahl also notes the importance of the "two Russians," Alexandre Koyré and Aron Gurwitsch, for the development of phenomenology in France. For details on the French reading of Husserl, and especially the debates surrounding the transcendental reduction, see Geroulanos, *An Atheism That is not Humanist*, esp. Chapters 1 and 4; Kleinberg, *Generation Existential*; and Leonard Lawlor, *Derrida and Husserl* (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2002), esp. Chapter 1.

original, concrete and metaphysical, conceptions of the real.” (PT, 40) The importance that Wahl ascribes to Merleau-Ponty’s philosophical work reflects a broad consensus among his peers and the frequency and centrality of discussions of Merleau-Ponty’s work throughout Farber’s anthology testifies to its immediate and broad impact on the French philosophical community. This makes it all the more striking that Wahl couples Merleau-Ponty with Levinas. There is no other discussion of Levinas in any of the essays in Farber’s book—although he is mentioned in passing by Hering—even in the essays devoted explicitly to Existentialism by Robert Campbell (“L’existentialisme en France depuis la Liberation”), Auguste Cornu (“Bergsonisme et existentialisme”), and Gaston Berger (“Expérience et transcendance”). This is likely due to Levinas’s reputation as a phenomenological expositor rather than a thinker in his own right. Wahl’s position as Levinas’s friend, however, meant that he knew of Levinas’s wartime writing, published in 1947 and 1948 as *De l’existence à l’existant* (*Existence and Existents*) and *Le temps et l’autre* (*Time and the Other*), the latter having first been presented in the form of lectures to Wahl’s *Collège philosophique* in 1947–1948.²⁶ In *De l’existence à l’existant*, Wahl claims, Levinas writes no longer as an exegete but “presents his own vision of the world.” (PT, 52) At the same time, even Wahl’s account of Levinas is framed and explicated by emphasizing the similarities between some of his philosophical preoccupations and those of the more widely-recognized Merleau-Ponty.

The diverse engagements with Merleau-Ponty’s work in Farber’s book nonetheless characterize it in a strikingly common way: as a critical reproblematicization of the Husserlian *cogito*. This is clearest in Hering’s essay on phenomenology, which concludes by noting that Merleau-Ponty denies the necessary linkage of the phenomenological and eidetic reductions, while Campbell’s essay uses the recently-published *Sens et non-sens* (1948) to emphasize Merleau-Ponty’s radicalization of Marx, in which human freedom, in the form of social and political action, emerges from a “nonsensical ground.” (PT, 86–89; 154–56) For Wahl, Merleau-Ponty’s work, while certainly following the path opened by Husserlian phenomenology, also manifests “a characteristic trait of French philosophy:” that of beginning from particular psychological problems and then moving from those to more general philosophical issues. (PT, 40) His “anti-dialectical dialectic” is an attempt to chart a new path for thinking the *cogito* that aims to avoid the twin dangers of rationalism (“an interiority without exteriority”) and empiricism (“an exteriority without interiority”), each of which use categories derived from experience in order to explain the constitution of experience, thus leading to “negations of our real experience.” (PT, 41) However, whereas nineteenth century French philosophers developed their accounts of freedom from the initial position of habit, Merleau-Ponty begins from perception. (PT, 40) Perception is the worldly origin of reflection and of consciousness—the origin of the *cogito* that is, according to Wahl’s gloss, “the domain of quality.” (PT, 41) Our worldly being, in its constitutive origin as perception, is a largely unconscious and passive activity. This is a line of thinking that, as Wahl notes, draws from several significant philosophical projects: it is a “continuation of Husserl’s work in *Experience and Judgment*,” shares a great deal with Heidegger’s analytic of *Dasein* in *Being and Time*, and is also strongly resonant with Bergson’s intuition. (PT, 41)

²⁶ Emmanuel Levinas, *De l’existence à l’existant* (Paris: Éditions de la Revue Fontaine, 1947), tr. by A. Lingis as *Existence and Existents* (Pittsburgh: Duquesne UP, 2001); Emmanuel Levinas, *Le temps et l’autre* (Paris: Fata Morgana, 1979) tr. by R. Cohen as *Time and the Other* (Pittsburgh: Duquesne UP, 1990). Levinas’s wartime notebooks have now been published as the first volume of his *Oeuvres complètes, Carnets de captivité et autres inédits* (Paris: Grasset, 2009). In English, Moyn’s *Origins of the Other* details Wahl’s friendship with Levinas as well as his philosophical influence on him.

Beginning from a theory of perception, Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology "first supposes a theory of the body" in which perceptual synthesis is performed and achieved. (PT, 43) Such a theory sets Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology apart from other, earlier accounts of the *cogito*, notably Kant's description of transcendental apperception and Descartes's mental inspection. (PT, 43) The body is "the primordial habit that conditions every other," and this primordial habit "is a whole [*ensemble*] that extends from instinctive movements up to ideal meanings." (PT, 45) Against Kant, who sought to account for the origin of meaning in the infamous "hidden art" of the imagination, Merleau-Ponty argues that meaning does not arise by "forming the idea of some law of the object's constitution" but through a bodily engagement with worldly things. (PT, 45-46) This engagement entails an involvement with "a pre-world, a world without familiarity," an involvement exemplified by, for instance, reflection on a painting by Cezanne. (PT, 47) Substantial sense is shared by things and existing bodies in an "affective, existential space" that connects them with each other. (PT, 48) It is in this disclosure of a "more primordial spatiality," encompassing the perception and meaningful activity of existing bodies, that Wahl finds Merleau-Ponty in his closest proximity to the recent work of Levinas.²⁸

Merleau-Ponty's phenomenological and critical reworking of the philosophy of the *cogito* thus shows that the "essence [*proper*] of the human being is to transform nonsense into sense." (PT, 49) The analysis of perception as pre-objective spatiality and temporality shows, along lines already indicated by Husserl, that the *cogito* takes cognizance, thinks, the unconscious and the obscure and in doing so secures the ground of the transcendent, sense-giving acts of human freedom. Wahl notes that this pre-objective experience of perceptual motility is one in which "space is deeply united with time" such that this motility is primarily a unity and not a series of distinct or punctual stages." (PT, 48) Perception is both a primordial relation to things—one discovered, not forged, by the *cogito*—and a transcendent power of projection capable of creating multiple worlds of meaning. (PT, 50) These worlds are "projected," not caused. Freedom, for Merleau-Ponty, is the transcendental activity of existing bodies whereby ideas become acts. These acts are, in turn, grounded in the primordial temporality disclosed in pre-objective sensorial movement that Merleau-Ponty characterizes as "our participation in nothingness." (PT, 49)

Passing quickly over several philosophers whose disparate projects are in some way linked to existential philosophy, Wahl turns to Levinas. Wahl emphasizes that he is principally concerned not with Levinas's prewar writings on phenomenology but with his more recent work, particularly *De l'existence à l'existant* in which Levinas "presents his own vision of the world." (PT, 52) Although the discussion of Levinas is brief compared to that of Merleau-Ponty—four pages as compared to more than ten—it is considerably more substantial than any other philosopher mentioned in Wahl's essay, all of whom are given only perfunctory acknowledgement. Both existentialists, Merleau-Ponty and Levinas are nevertheless representatives of two different philosophical lineages: Merleau-Ponty is "the most significant and the most recent representative of the Existentialism formed in the same atmosphere as Sartre's," and Levinas "is the authentic representative of another form of new philosophy," linked to Husserl, Heidegger, and also—interestingly—to Blanchot.²⁹ (PT, 52) Nonetheless, Wahl insists, "multiple connections

²⁸ Wahl's reading of Merleau-Ponty here echoes Wahl's own *Existence humaine et transcendance* (1944) and *Poésie, pensée, perception* (Paris: Calman-Levy, 1948) which were important resources for Deleuze. Thank you to the anonymous reviewer who pointed out this connection.

²⁹ Wahl's essay is the only one in Farber's anthology that mentions Blanchot. Deleuze will refer favourably to Blanchot in several of his later works, including those coauthored with Guattari. Chapter 6 of Ethan Kleinberg's *Generation Existential* is an excellent treatment of Blanchot's activities and writing from the 1930s through the

[*rapprochements*]” can be found between Merleau-Ponty and Levinas. (PT, 52) The most significant of these connections are a common acceptance of the Heideggerian appropriation of Husserlian intentionality as being-in-the-world, the identification of a link or “communication” between intentional consciousness and the unconscious, and, finally, the disavowal of a Kantian synthesis of the understanding in favour of an immediate, sensible, and pre-subjective immersion in the world.³⁰

For Levinas, as for Merleau-Ponty, being-in-the-world is a bodily, sensing inherence, a “hypostasis,” a non-ideal determination of “here” and “now.” (PT, 52–53) This hypostasis determines out of, and on the basis of, the undetermined and indeterminate *il y a*, the “there is” that, Wahl remarks following Levinas, “we grasp sometimes in insomnia and sometimes also in art.” (PT, 53) Wahl’s analysis of Levinas’s *De l’existence à l’existant* emphasizes its existential aspects while downplaying its ontological concerns. For Wahl, the nothingness of the *il y a* is grasped [*saisir*] by consciousness in insomnia and art, a grasp that yields “anxiety before being.” (PT, 53) Levinas, however, insists on the contrary: in insomnia, *being is not grasped by anyone*: “wakefulness is anonymous. It is not that there is my vigilance in the night; in insomnia it is the night itself that watches.” (PT, 66) Similarly, Levinas’s claim that art brings us before the nihilistic void of the *il y a*, of what precedes and persists through the hypostasis of consciousness, is refashioned by Wahl into a description that presciently captures “the ambition of contemporary art” that “presents a ruined world to us,” which goes to the end of things, not their beginning. (PT, 53–54) Refashioning Levinas’s starkly impersonal descriptions into existential experience allows Wahl to link Levinas and Sartre: the weight of the *il y a* experienced in art or insomnia is felt as a “responsibility” analogous to the kind described by Sartre. For Levinas, this responsibility is solitary, but this solitude can be surpassed through an analysis of the *cogito*’s relation to time and death that dispenses with the traditional language of light in favor of a language of sound and speech. In such a language, the traditionally solitary *cogito* is radically opened to the world(s) of others. In *De l’existence à l’existant*, the transition from solitude to the world(s) of others occurs through a careful investigation of temporality but, in Wahl’s account, the importance of subjective experience is emphasized whereas that of temporality is minimized. “Suffering,” Wahl writes, “is the absence of any refuge; it is the impossibility of nothingness.” (PT, 54) The extremity of suffering is death, “the limit of our hypostasis,” which is therefore something that is absolutely unknowable. (PT, 54) Because our (future) death is unknowable, our relation to the other is asymmetrical, and it is qualitatively different from—and not an extension of—the self-possessed presence of the *cogito*’s hypostasis. The other *is* as what I *am not*. At the limit of the hypostasis there is no transition to a mediating third term that could synthesize the *cogito* and the other. For Levinas, there is an ecstatic communication of contraries—of the *cogito* and the other—in a futurity irreducible to presence. Wahl’s existential reading downplays temporality and emphasizes the individual experience of this ecstasy. In erotic love, one finds “a relation with alterity, with mystery, with the future,” in which the absence of the other becomes its presence *as other*. (PT, 55) The presence of the other as other is developed by Levinas in his discussion of fecundity, a discussion that Levinas postpones in *De l’existence à l’existant* but that is taken up again in *Totalité et Infini: Essai sur extériorité* (1961). With fecundity, Wahl notes, the traditional resources of philosophy are surpassed, and he concludes his discussion of Levinas by pointing toward the new

1950s. For an interesting Deleuzian reading of Blanchot, see also Georges Préli, *La Force du dehors: extériorité, limite et non-pouvoir à partir de Maurice Blanchot* (Paris: Éditions Encres, 1977).

³⁰ As with his reading of Merleau-Ponty (see note 27 above) Wahl’s reading of Levinas reflects his own philosophical concerns.

path for thinking opened by *De l'existence à l'existant*: “Beneath the *il y a*, we have seen the hypostasis; but thanks to speech and to creation, the hypostases can pass to a new domain.” (PT, 55)

Concluding his discussion of the most recent innovations of existential phenomenology, Wahl pauses to note that “[a] characteristic of many of the preceding thinkers is their insistence on the idea of negativity. We find it equally in Sartre, in Merleau-Ponty, in Levinas, three philosophers whose philosophy on this point can be connected with Heidegger’s.” (PT, 55) Further, after noting recent works by Bachelard, Morot-Sir, Polin, and Jankélévitch, which “explore...what one might call the negative region of the real,” Wahl wonders “[i]f this interest placed on negation is a sign of the crisis of our time?” (PT, 55) This question is left hanging. Instead of pursuing it, Wahl links the projects of Merleau-Ponty and Levinas to “a more general movement” in French thought that has investigated, often with the help of poets and artists, the imagination, the unconscious, the “subterranean passages” that operate without conscious knowledge or awareness but nonetheless affect—and perhaps effect—human thinking. (PT, 56)

Wahl’s analysis shows that the development of French existential phenomenology leads to the problem of how to think the pre-personal, pre-subjective elements of thinking and of worldly existence. Within the idiom of postwar French phenomenology, which is still oriented by the *cogito*, this problem is that of negation and the negative. Deleuze’s philosophical project is an attempt to pursue the investigation of the pre-personal and pre-subjective by critiquing the philosophical presuppositions that lead such an investigation to take the form of a concern with negation. He thus attempts what may be described as a Bergsonian correction of a phenomenological error: the phenomenological method fails to adequately divest itself of the representing *cogito*, of intentionality, and therefore illicitly and without warrant imports finality, and also judgment, into its thinking of the differential articulations of the world. To correct phenomenology—and, importantly, not simply to discard it—requires a method that thinks difference without representing it. Deleuze’s early work is therefore a reinsertion of Bergson into the problematic developed by phenomenology, and the connections drawn between Hume and Bergson in *Empirisme et subjectivité* (1953) also bind that work to the same concern.³¹

Deleuze: From Intuition to Difference

In 1950, when Farber’s anthology appeared, Deleuze was just embarking on his professional career. After studying at the *lycées* Louis-le-Grand and Henri-IV in the mid-1940s, Deleuze enrolled at the Sorbonne and, in 1948, passed the *agrégation*, placing second overall. His first teaching position was at the *lycée* in Amiens, where he taught from 1948 until 1952. Deleuze was, by all accounts, an exceptional student and he made a variety of important and influential contacts throughout his education: via his friend, the novelist Michel Tournier, Deleuze met Maurice de Gandillac, who would direct his thesis in 1968; through Gandillac, Deleuze met Marie-Magdeleine Davy, at whose salon he met Pierre Klossowski and perhaps Georges Bataille; at Louis-le-Grand, Deleuze took classes from Jean Hyppolite and Ferdinand Alquié; at Henri-IV he attended Jean Beaufret’s courses on Heidegger; and, finally, at the Sorbonne, Deleuze took classes with Gaston Bachelard, Martial Gueroult, and Jean Wahl.

³¹ The present discussion focuses on Bergson rather than Hume because Deleuze is explicit about the methodological importance of Bergson.

Deleuze's attitude toward Sartre is complicated. On the one hand, Deleuze's friends readily attest to his early admiration for *L'Être et le Néant* (1943).³² On the other hand, Tournier reports that he and Deleuze were shocked and disappointed after attending Sartre's 1945 lecture, "L'existentialisme est un humanisme": "We were floored. So our master had had to dig through the trash to unearth this worn-out mixture reeking of sweat and of the inner life of humanism."³³ The critique of interiority is an important theme of Deleuze's early work and, one year after Sartre's lecture, it was the focus of the single issue of *Espace*, a journal that Deleuze founded in 1946 with several of his friends, and to which he contributed the essay, "Du Christ à la bourgeoisie." Another early essay, published the previous year, reads like a parody of Sartre's existential phenomenology.³⁴ Whatever Deleuze's attitude toward Sartre was in the 1940s, he praises Sartre in several of his later works, although, significantly, he manages to do so without any reference to existential phenomenology.³⁵ The case is similar with Jean Wahl. In 1977, in one of the essay-interviews published in *Dialogues*—a text whose 1986 Preface to the English translation hearkens back to Wahl in its opening lines: "I have always felt that I am an empiricist, that is, a pluralist"—Deleuze pairs Sartre with Wahl as the two "most important philosophers in France" when he explains his interest in empiricism.³⁶ Even more striking is a letter from 1972 in which Deleuze writes that his opinion of Wahl is "one of complete admiration" and that "in everything that was important before and after the war, there are signs of Jean Wahl."³⁷ Favourable but oblique references to Wahl—such as that found in the Preface to the English translation of *Dialogues*—can be found throughout Deleuze's works. In both of the passages cited above, Deleuze signals the importance of major figures in the development of existential phenomenology without ever acknowledging existential phenomenology itself. Deleuze's antipathy toward existential phenomenology, with its adherence to the tradition of the *cogito* and the prioritization of the inner life of thought, is something that he seems to have developed quite early. At the same time, in his praise of Wahl and Sartre, Deleuze acknowledges that their work was not only important, but that it contained the resources for his own initial philosophical work.

In 1964, after Sartre declined the Nobel Prize for Literature, Deleuze published a short essay in *Arts* entitled, "Il a été mon maître."³⁸ Sprinkled with specific references to Sartre's works, the essay is primarily concerned with Sartre the person, a kind of philosophical or intellectual force, a "private thinker" whose position outside the academy allows him to speak without

³² According to Liane Mozere, even as a student Deleuze's philosophical ability provoked people to remark that "He'll be a new Sartre." See François Dosse, *Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari: Intersecting Lives* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010), 92ff.

³³ Quoted by Dosse, *Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari*, 95.

³⁴ "Description de la femme: pour une philosophie d'autrui sexuée," *Poésie*, vol. 45, no. 28 (1945): 28–29; "Du Christ à la bourgeoisie," *Espace* (1946): 93–106. The first essay has been translated into English as "Description of a Woman: For a Philosophy of the Sexed Other," (tr.) K. Faulkner, *Angelaki*, vol. 7 no. 3 (2002): 17–24.

³⁵ The most significant expressions of Deleuze's later regard for Sartre are a brief letter (written in the early 1960s, at the same time as "Il a été mon maître") now published in Jeannette Colombel, "Deleuze-Sartre: pistes," in *Deleuze épars: approches et portraits*, (ed.) A. Bernold and R. Pinhas (Paris: Hermann Éditeurs, 2005). In his published work, Deleuze mentions Sartre—briefly—in *Différence et répétition* (Paris: PUF, 1968), 89–90, tr. by P. Patton as *Difference and Repetition* (New York: Columbia UP, 1994), 64, where he contrasts Sartre with Merleau-Ponty. In *What is Philosophy?*, Deleuze and Guattari also discuss Sartre's "impersonal transcendental field" (See Deleuze and Guattari, *What is Philosophy?*, 47). The focus of the present essay—on the development of Deleuze's early conception of difference—precludes a more detailed consideration of these later discussions.

³⁶ Deleuze and Parnet, *Dialogues*, vii, 57–58.

³⁷ Quoted by Dosse, *Intersecting Lives*, 110.

³⁸ Gilles Deleuze, "Il a été mon maître," *Arts*, 28 November 1964, 8–9, tr. by M. Taormina as "He Was My Teacher" in *Desert Islands and Other Texts* (New York: Semiotext(e), 2004), 109–113.

representing a faction, group, or cause.³⁹ At the same time, Deleuze notes that Sartre was particularly adroit in drawing together the disparate questions and problems of an era, “totalizing” them and thereby creating not just a new idea to be added to the stock of already existing ones, but a new form of thought, a fruitful and untimely reconceptualization of the present.⁴⁰ Summing up the novelty of Sartre’s thought, Deleuze writes that “[h]is whole philosophy was part of a speculative movement that contested the notion of *representation*, the *order* itself of representation: philosophy was changing its arena, leaving the sphere of judgment, to establish itself in the more vivid world of the “pre-judgmental,” the “sub-representational.”⁴¹ On the one hand, this characterization is clearly marked by a number of Deleuzian tropes that will come to be essential features of his later philosophical work: the critique of the imposition or unthinking acceptance of a pre-thought or normalizing order; the rejection of mental representation in favour of a material account of conceptual thought (the critique of interiority); and the disavowal of judgment. On the other hand, Deleuze here looks back and situates Sartre in a historical moment of philosophical inflection that echoes Wahl’s account of Merleau-Ponty and Levinas. Existential phenomenology pursued the things themselves into their pre-perceptual ground, beyond the frames of consciousness and conscious identification. For all of its novelty, however, it remains a philosophy of the *cogito* for which the things themselves can therefore only be thought as what is other than thinking, as its negation. The negativity encountered by existential phenomenology and noted in passing by Wahl is, for Deleuze, a clue to the methodological critique needed to free speculative thought from the confines of the *cogito* and its privileging of the internal over the external. This enables Deleuze to engage with one of the central problems that organized postwar French phenomenological Existentialism: the problem of the genesis of representation.⁴²

In Merleau-Ponty’s account of human action and freedom as the transformation of nonsense into sense there is an affirmation of something other than thinking that nonetheless grounds thinking; and, in Levinas’s experience of the ontological night that is absolutely other than subjective consciousness, postwar existential phenomenology encounters the sub-representational, a concrete exterior that produces the diversity represented in thought without itself being able to be thought. The problem of the genesis of representation is formulated by a *cogito* that attempts to think its own condition without questioning the normative force of what is conditioned: the *cogito* itself. For Deleuze, the problem of negation is not a sign of the “crisis of the times” but the sign of a crisis of method. To secure its own development, existential phenomenology requires the development of philosophical resources capable of thinking the sub-representational without pre-determining it as the negation of the representational. Formulated in this way, the problem that confronts phenomenology is one that requires conceptual tools other than the dialectical figures of negation found in the philosophy of representation: contradiction, alterity, and negation itself. According to Deleuze, negation acquires these figurations from a concern for finality, a concern rooted in the privilege tacitly accorded to the constituted *cogito*, but one that is unjustified when carried into the domain of the pre-subjective. Existential phenomenology, then, in its pursuit of a thinking of things themselves, opens onto a thinking of difference, an *other* thinking. Deleuze’s early essays on Bergson, as well as *Empirisme et subjectivité*, splice existential phenomenology

³⁹ *Ibid.* 78–79

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 79.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 78.

⁴² The importance of the problem of genesis for French phenomenology is discussed in Lawlor, *Derrida and Husserl*, and in Edward Baring, *The Young Derrida and French Philosophy, 1945–1968* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011).

together with thinkers that contain the resources for thinking the sub-representational conditions of the *cogito*.

In 1956, Deleuze published two essays on Bergson: “La Conception de la différence chez Bergson” in *Les Études bergsonniennes*, and “Bergson, 1859–1941” in *Les philosophes célèbres*, edited by Merleau-Ponty. In the latter essay, the focus on intuition, and the concern with Bergsonian methodology more generally, clearly signal Deleuze’s engagement not only with certain contemporary philosophical problems but also with the problem of philosophical method. This same concern is also on display in Deleuze’s 1954 review of Hyppolite’s *Logique et Existence*, where Deleuze rather emphatically concurs with Hyppolite that “philosophy must be ontology.”⁴³ Taken together with the essays on Bergson, these texts show the way that Deleuze, in his earliest work, sought both to engage and to redirect the phenomenological debate. Deleuze follows Hyppolite’s move from the still-too-subjective *cogito* of existential phenomenology toward a historically-inflected phenomenological ontology but simultaneously rejects the anthropological traces that still marked and impeded Hyppolite’s work.⁴⁴ Resuscitating a thinker that paved the way for the enthusiastic importation of phenomenology into France before being cast aside and even forgotten, Deleuze turns to Bergson for a methodology that is adequate to the concrete generation of thinking and for a conceptualization of difference.

In “La Conception de la différence chez Bergson” Deleuze provides the clearest and most succinct account of his own interpretation and redeployment of Bergson within the problematic of postwar existential phenomenology.⁴⁵ As Wahl’s discussion of Merleau-Ponty and Levinas shows, the achievement of existential phenomenology is to have pushed through the subjectively existential and into the objectively existential, the sub-representational ontological domain that, in its indeterminability by the *cogito*, is marked principally by difference. Rejecting “finality,” which denotes the subjective thought of the conditions *of* the *cogito* as conditions *for* the *cogito*, Deleuze argues that it is Bergson’s philosophy that actually achieves the phenomenological goal of thinking things themselves, in their sub-representality, and also thereby effectively critiques the unthought presuppositions of existential phenomenology and the tradition of the *cogito* generally.⁴⁶

Internal difference will have to distinguish itself from contradiction, alterity, and negation. This is precisely where Bergson’s method and theory of difference are opposed to the other theory, the other method of difference called dialectic, whether it’s Plato’s dialectic of alterity or Hegel’s dialectic of contradiction, each of which imply the presence and the power of the negative. The originality of Bergson’s conception resides in showing that internal difference does not go, and is not required to go as far as contradiction, alterity, and negativity, because these three notions are in fact less profound than itself, or they are viewpoints only from the

⁴³ Gilles Deleuze, “Review of Jean Hyppolite’s *Logique et existence*,” *Revue philosophie de la France et L’Étranger* no. 144 (1954): 457–60, tr. by M. Taormina as “Jean Hyppolite’s *Logic and Existence*” in *Desert Islands*, 15–18.

⁴⁴ Hyppolite’s position is itself taken, in part, in response to Tràn-Duc Thao’s Marxist appropriation of Husserl in his *Phénoménologie et matérialisme dialectique* (Paris: Éditions Minh-Tân, 1951), tr. by D. Herman and D. Morano as *Phenomenology and Dialectical Materialism* (Boston: D. Reidel, 1986).

⁴⁵ Although not pursued here, a comparison of this essay with Deleuze’s contemporaneous review of Hyppolite’s *Logic and Existence* (see note 42 above) would show the opposition between difference to finality both negatively (in the case of Hegel) and positively (in the case of Bergson).

⁴⁶ Gilles Deleuze, “Bergson’s Conception of Difference,” in *Desert Islands*, 42–51.

outside. The real sense of Bergson's endeavor is thinking internal difference as such, as pure internal difference, and raising difference up to the absolute."⁴⁷

The phenomenological discovery of the sub-representational is marred by a reactive return to representational models of thought which, precisely as representational, are only able to think the sub-representational "from the outside." This is what gives existential phenomenology the particular and peculiar concern for the negative that is noted by Wahl. Contradiction, alterity, and negation are the three modes of representing the sub-representational for a constituted and representative subjectivity, for a *cogito*: as what is not representational, as what is other than the representational, and as what cannot be meaningfully represented. For Deleuze, these modes provide, in turn, two modes of thinking the sub-representational, the two valences of the dialectic: alterity and contradiction as the two representative determinations of sub-representational difference. As a representational thought of the sub-representative, any dialectical phenomenology is essentially ill-suited to the very problem that it is called upon to solve. Phenomenology's breakthrough to the sub-representational, as described by Wahl, requires a non-representational, non-dialectical method. It requires, in short, Bergsonism, and Deleuze's early philosophical project grafts Bergson's philosophy onto existential phenomenology—after it was phenomenology that had pruned Bergson—in order to adequately think the problem that it encounters beneath the occluding mask of negation: difference.⁴⁸

Texts such as Wahl's contribution to Farber's anthology, which Deleuze may or may not have read but that certainly reflects ideas that were circulating in the circles through which he moved, show the extent to which Deleuze's initial philosophical trajectory is deeply marked by debates concerning the prospects for existential phenomenology following the Second World War. From phenomenology, Deleuze accepts the imperative for thinking "the things themselves"—though preferring Wahl's term, "the concrete"—but seems to implicitly diagnose several authors—such as Merleau-Ponty and Levinas—with illegitimately falling back on an anthropological dialectic at precisely the point where such a style of thinking should have been decisively surpassed in the discovery of the sub-representational. The figurations that the latter assumes in the dialectic of representational thought—contradiction and alterity—mask internal difference beneath the determinative representation of negation. The sub-representational is what the *cogito* cannot represent but, Deleuze argues, to stop at this thought is to renounce thinking the sub-representational as such. Turning to Bergson's "true empiricism," and to Hume, Deleuze mobilizes the very method of intuition that was decried by phenomenologists as an unsuitably unscientific and irrational spiritualism, and he uses it to correct the anthropological backsliding of existential phenomenology. Deleuze is no existentialist. But the project of a philosophy of difference is inconceivable apart from the work of people like Wahl, from whom Deleuze adopted the very idea of a philosophy of difference but also against whose lingering commitments to dialectical thought Deleuze would set the organizing ideas of his own philosophical work.

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⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 38–39.

⁴⁸ The present essay is deliberately limited to showing the connection between Deleuze's early work and postwar Existentialism. A more extensive consideration of the development of Deleuze's early thought may be found in my *Between Immanence and Transcendence: Deleuze's Early Philosophy* (forthcoming).