

# The Triadic Structure of Interpellation (known as the Mahoukou Law)

## Call — Response — Resonance

Towards a Triadic Phenomenology of Encounter

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**Update note — Version 2 · 2026.** This founding article has been revised in light of the terminological clarifications brought to the corpus following dialogue with a HDR phenomenologist. Five adjustments were made: (1) the definition of Resonance integrates the canonical formulation as "phenomenological index of a structural modification of the subject's relation"; (2) "genuine interpellation" is replaced by "accomplished interpellation"; (3) immanent normativity is formulated as "that without which the phenomenon ceases to be recognisable as such"; (4) the adopted academic formulation is "the triadic structure of interpellation (known as the Mahoukou Law)"; (5) the conclusion mentions the displacement toward the phenomenology of being-interpellated and the fourth property of Resonance. Canonical reference definitions are recorded in the separate document "Canonical Definitions v2" (Christian Mahoukou, 2026).

### **Abstract.**

This article presents and grounds the *triadic structure of interpellation (known as the Mahoukou Law)*, articulated around the structural triad Call–Response–Resonance. This law advances three original contributions to contemporary phenomenology: (1) the triad as a structural law of every interpellative event; (2) Resonance as an autonomous phenomenological category, defined as the *phenomenological index of a structural modification of the subject's relation to itself, to the other, or to the situation*, irreducible to mere response; (3) dialogical impediment as an immanent normative category revealing the conditions of rupture in encounter. Taking stock of the contributions of Husserl, Heidegger, Lévinas, and Ricœur while surpassing them, this law proposes an unprecedented framework for thinking the structure of every encounter between subjects.

**Keywords.** *Interpellation · triadic phenomenology · Call · Response · Resonance · dialogical impediment · encounter · alterity · phenomenological law · conditional necessity · being-interpellated.*

## I. Introduction: Interpellation as a Phenomenological Problem

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Phenomenology has constituted itself, since Husserl, as a rigorous science of lived experience. Yet one of its most fundamental phenomena remains insufficiently thematised: that of interpellation. To be interpellated — that is, to receive a call that places one under obligation to respond and whose echo transforms the one who responds — constitutes one of the most originary structures of human existence. The phenomenological tradition has certainly recognised the importance of the call (Ruf) in Heidegger, of assignment by the face of the Other in Lévinas, of the narrative capacity of response in Ricœur; but it has not elevated the articulation of these three moments — Call, Response, Resonance — to the status of a structural law.

It is this lacuna that the present contribution seeks to fill. In formulating the *triadic structure of interpellation (known as the Mahoukou Law)*, we propose a trilogical conceptual framework that accounts for the complete structure of every accomplished interpellative event. The triad Call–Response–Resonance is not a simple three-stage description but a phenomenological law in the Husserlian eidetic sense — a structure whose alteration or interruption at any one of its moments constitutes precisely what we call dialogical impediment. The term "structure" designates here a stable descriptive configuration disclosed by eidetic variation, and not an independent ontological entity.

We shall proceed in four stages. We shall first situate the law within the phenomenological heritage (§ II), before expounding the triadic structure itself (§ III). We shall then develop Resonance as an autonomous category (§ IV), followed by dialogical impediment as an immanent normative category (§ V). A conclusion will open onto possible extensions of this law (§ VI).

## II. Heritage and Surpassing: Situating the Mahoukou Law within the Phenomenological Tradition

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### 2.1 The Call in Heidegger: an Opening without Triad

In *Being and Time* (1927), Heidegger thematises the call (Ruf) of conscience as the summoning of Dasein to take hold of its own existence. This call is without determinate

content: it speaks in the mode of silence, assigning Dasein to its ownmost possibility of being. But the Heideggerian call remains fundamentally solitary: it does not address the other, it does not require an intersubjective response, and above all it leaves no place for Resonance as reciprocal transformation. Interpellation there is intransitive.

## **2.2 Lévinassian Assignment: the Other before the Self**

Emmanuel Lévinas, in *Totality and Infinity* (1961) and then *Otherwise than Being* (1974), radically reverses the priority: it is the face of the Other that interpellates, that commands, that constitutes me as a responsible subject. The response — "Here I am" — is the ethical response par excellence. Lévinas thus approaches the structure of the Call and initiates that of the Response. But he does so under the sign of a radical asymmetry: the Other always dominates the self, responsibility is infinite and non-reciprocal. There is no place, within this framework, for Resonance as a transformative category. Lévinassian interpellation remains unilateral.

## **2.3 Response Capacity in Ricœur: Narrative Mediation**

Paul Ricœur, in *Oneself as Another* (1990), develops the concepts of attestation and ipse-identity: the subject is constituted in the narrative response it makes to its own existence and to the solicitations of others. The capacity to respond (*responsum*) is central. Ricœur thereby approaches a phenomenology of the Response, but within an essentially hermeneutical and narrative perspective. Resonance — this transformative return that affects caller as well as called — is not thematised there as a category in its own right.

## **2.4 The Lacuna and the Necessity of a Law**

This survey reveals a structural lacuna: none of these authors formalises the triad Call–Response–Resonance as the unitary law of interpellation. Heidegger thinks the Call without the other; Lévinas thinks the Call and the Response without transformative reciprocity; Ricœur thinks the Response without articulating its resonant dimension. The triadic structure of interpellation (known as the Mahoukou Law) proposes precisely to synthesise and surpass these contributions by formulating the complete structure of every accomplished interpellative event.

## III. The Triad as the Structural Law of Interpellation

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### 3.1 Status and Sense of a Phenomenological Law

To speak of a "law" in phenomenology calls for justification. Husserlian phenomenology distinguishes the contingent facts of experience from the necessary essences that eidetic variation enables us to discern. A phenomenological law, in this sense, is not an empirical regularity but an eidetic structure: it expresses a *conditional necessity* — what must necessarily be the case for a phenomenon of such a type to give itself as such. To affirm that interpellation obeys the triadic law Call–Response–Resonance is to affirm that in the absence of any one of these three moments, one is not dealing with an accomplished interpellation but with its simulacrum, its degradation, or its impediment. This necessity is conditional — not absolute: it holds for every phenomenon we can legitimately recognise as interpellation from within lived human experience.

### 3.2 The Call: Structure of Address and Excess

The Call constitutes the first moment of the triad. It is characterised by three essential properties. First, it is always addressed: it targets a singular addressee whose response it requires. Second, it is in excess of itself: the Call does not reduce to a transmitted piece of information; it carries a demand that engages the very existence of the addressee. Third, the Call opens a dialogical space, an in-between in which encounter becomes possible. The Call without response remains a dead letter, without phenomenological realisation.

### 3.3 The Response: Taking of Position by an Interpellated Subject

The Response constitutes the second moment. It is not a mere causal reaction to the Call but an *act* — a free gesture that engages the responding subject. To respond is to recognise oneself as the one to whom the Call was addressed, to assume the responsibility of the received interpellation. The Response may take multiple forms — verbal, gestural, silent, bodily — and it includes refusal, which is still a taking of position and not an absence of response. What constitutes the Response as Response is not its content but its structure: it is the act by which a subject positions itself in relation to the received Call.

### 3.4 The Triad as an Organic Unity: the Necessity of the Third Moment

The triad would not be a law if it could be accomplished in two moments. Yet precisely, Call and Response, without the third term, constitute a dyad closed upon itself: an exchange of information, a transaction, a formal dialogue. What makes interpellation a phenomenological event in its own right — what confers upon it its existential density — is Resonance. Accomplished interpellation is recognisable in this: it leaves a transformative trace in both parties. This is why the triad forms a co-originary organic unity and not a mere succession.

## IV. Resonance as an Autonomous Phenomenological Category

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### 4.1 Canonical Definition

The most original conceptual contribution of the triadic structure resides in the institution of Resonance as an autonomous phenomenological category. Its canonical definition is as follows: *Resonance is the phenomenological index of a structural modification of the subject's relation to itself, to the other, or to the situation — a modification through which interpellation leaves a trace in the very horizon of relational lived experience.* It designates neither an emotion, nor an affective intensity, nor a mere psychological effect — it designates the descriptive mark that this modification has taken place.

### 4.2 The Three Fundamental Properties of Resonance

Resonance is distinguished from the Response by three irreducible characteristics. It is **retroactive**: it affects the caller, not only the called — the one who launches a genuine Call takes the risk of being themselves transformed by the relation they open. It is **transformative**: it modifies the existential relation of both parties, not only their behaviour. It is **deferred**: it does not necessarily reveal itself in the instant of exchange, but in what the exchange has left behind — in duration.

A fourth property was subsequently disengaged through analysis of radically asymmetrical situations: Resonance may be accomplished **unilaterally** — occurring in only one of the two subjects — without this constituting an impediment. This fourth property is developed in the founding text *Resonance at the Frontier* (Mahoukou, 2026).

### **4.3 Resonance as the Revealer of the Accomplishment of Encounter**

Resonance is thus the internal criterion of the accomplishment of interpellation. An encounter without Resonance — in which both subjects exit the exchange exactly as they entered — reveals retrospectively that there was no genuine interpellation, but a simulation of interpellation. Resonance may be immediate or deferred. It may be liberating or, in cases of trauma, mutilating — its valence is not constitutive of its structure. But its absence is the sign of the phenomenological failure of interpellation.

### **4.4 Distinction from Rosa's Notion of Resonance**

The Resonance of the Mahoukou Law must be distinguished from the Resonanz developed by Hartmut Rosa (Resonanz, 2016). For Rosa, resonance designates a relation to the world characterised by mutual affect and transformation, in opposition to alienation — an essentially sociological and critical notion. Resonance in the sense of the triadic structure is phenomenological and structural: it designates a constitutive moment of the law of interpellation, not a general quality of the relation to the world. It is narrower and more precise: it qualifies the transformative echo proper to the interpellative event itself.

## **V. Dialogical Impediment as an Immanent Normative Category**

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### **5.1 What is an Immanent Normative Category?**

An immanent normative category is a norm that does not come to be applied from without to a phenomenon, but is inscribed in the very structure of that phenomenon. It expresses *that without which the phenomenon ceases to be recognisable as such*. Dialogical impediment is normative in this precise sense: it designates every situation in which the triad Call–Response–Resonance is structurally blocked, diverted, or simulated — and this designation is not merely descriptive; it is evaluative in the phenomenological, not the moral, sense. To say there is dialogical impediment is to say that an interpellation has failed its own law.

## 5.2 The Forms of Dialogical Impediment

Dialogical impediment may arise at each of the three moments of the triad. At the level of the Call, when the address is not sincerely engaged, or aims at manipulation rather than encounter. At the level of the Response, when the addressee refuses to recognise themselves as interpellated, or produces a purely formal response without existential engagement. At the level of Resonance — the most insidious form — when the exchange has apparently taken place, Call and Response have been formulated, but no transformative trace has been left.

Radically asymmetrical situations — the subject in a state of minimal consciousness, prayer, dialogue with a deceased person through their work — reveal that impediment is not the absence of accomplished Call: they show that the triad can be accomplished in non-ordinary forms. These situations are developed in the founding text *Being-Interpellated: Five Trials* (Mahoukou, 2026).

## 5.3 Dialogical Impediment and the Immanent Ethics of Encounter

In identifying dialogical impediment as an immanent normative category, the triadic structure opens a phenomenological ethics of encounter. This ethics is not deontological in the Kantian sense — it does not prescribe external rules — but emerges from the very structure of the phenomenon. To obstruct one of the moments of the triad is to commit a fault not against an external moral rule, but against the very phenomenality of encounter. Dialogical impediment can thus ground an immanent critique of contemporary forms of interaction that devitalise encounter.

## 5.4 Applications and Scope of the Category

The category of dialogical impediment finds applications across numerous domains. In philosophy of language, it enables analysis of situations of pathological communication. In clinical phenomenology, it illuminates certain forms of relational suffering. In law, it allows distinguishing formal failure (juridical remedy) from phenomenological failure (practical and formative remedy). In philosophy of education, it illuminates the difference between transmission of information and accomplished educational encounter.

## VI. Conclusion: The Mahoukou Law and its Extensions

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The triadic structure of interpellation (known as the Mahoukou Law), as we have expounded it, articulates three original contributions to contemporary phenomenology. The first is **structural**: the triad Call–Response–Resonance constitutes an eidetic law of conditional necessity of every accomplished interpellative event. The second is **categorial**: Resonance is instituted as an autonomous phenomenological category — phenomenological index of a structural modification — revelatory of the transformative character of encounter. The third is **normative**: dialogical impediment is thematised as an immanent normative category, enabling a phenomenological critique of degraded or simulated forms of interpellation.

These three contributions inscribe themselves within the phenomenological tradition while surpassing it. They dialogue with Heidegger on the structure of the call, with Lévinas on the asymmetry of responsibility, with Ricœur on the narrative capacity of response — but they add, in each case, what these traditions had not thematised: the resonant moment, its structural necessity, and the normative analysis of its impediment.

A decisive displacement has occurred since the first formulation of this law: the triadic structure does not only describe interpellation when it succeeds. It describes the human relational condition in its full reality — with its accomplished forms, its impediments, its wounds, and its impossibilities. This displacement — from the phenomenology of dialogue to the **phenomenology of being-interpellated** — is developed in the subsequent founding texts of the corpus, notably in *Being-Interpellated: Five Trials of the Triadic Structure and Resonance at the Frontier* (Mahoukou, 2026).

The extensions of this law are multiple and ongoing. A phenomenology of digital interpellation constitutes an urgent field of inquiry. A phenomenology of juridical interpellation enables thinking the relation between norms and encounters. A clinical phenomenology of interpellation illuminates certain forms of contemporary suffering. These perspectives, made possible by the triadic structure of interpellation, are developed in the Mahoukou corpus (2026).

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## Call · Response · Resonance

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