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For an Epistemology of the Human Sciences

The Case of the Phenomenology of Interpellation

Philosophical Manifesto · Version 2

Call · Response · Resonance · Triadic structure of interpellation (known as the Mahoukou Law)

Update Note — Version 2 · 8 May 2026. This manifesto has been updated following the terminological stabilisation of the corpus, after dialogue with a HDR phenomenologist. Six adjustments have been made: (1) replacement of "genuine interpellation" with "accomplished interpellation"; (2) definition of Resonance as "phenomenological index of a structural modification"; (3) replacement of "what ought to be" with "that without which the phenomenon ceases to be recognisable as such"; (4) clarification that "structure" designates a descriptive configuration and not an ontological entity; (5) explicit naming of the fourth property of Resonance (possible unilateral accomplishment); (6) addition of the displacement toward the phenomenology of being-interpellated. Canonical reference definitions are recorded in the separate document: Canonical Definitions — Triadic Structure of Interpellation (known as the Mahoukou Law), v2, 2026.

Abstract

The human sciences have been traversing a silent epistemological crisis for several decades, caught between scientism and postmodern relativism. This manifesto proposes a third way founded on the recognition of the proper object of the human sciences and their proper validity criteria. The central thesis: the human sciences and the natural sciences differ by their register, not by their rigour. The exemplary case invoked is the phenomenology of interpellation and the triadic structure of interpellation (known as the Mahoukou Law), whose analysis yields three validity criteria proper to the human sciences: eidetic coherence, structural universality, heuristic fertility. The manifesto concludes on the horizon of a science of interpellation as a constituted discipline, capable of responding to the great contemporary anthropological crises — including those that the digital turn imposes on hermeneutics and dialogical phenomenology.

Keywords: *epistemology of the human sciences · phenomenology of interpellation · triadic structure of interpellation (known as the Mahoukou Law) · eidetic structure · immanent normativity · Call-Response-Resonance · scientism · relativism · third way · digital hermeneutics · dialogical phenomenology · dialogical impediment*

I. Preamble — The Urgency of a Question

There are questions one can defer for a long time, not because they lack importance, but because they are disruptive. The question of the epistemological status of the human sciences is one such. One prefers to work — observe, describe, interpret, theorise — rather than stopping to ask: in the name of what is this work scientific? What are its proper criteria of rigour? How does it differ from literature, speculative philosophy, or the brilliant but non-binding essay?

This evasion has a cost. It leaves the human sciences exposed to two symmetrical attacks. The first comes from scientism: the human sciences would be truly scientific only insofar as they imitate the natural sciences. The second comes from postmodern relativism: since the human sciences cannot attain the objectivity of the natural sciences, they would be condemned to subjectivity and the dissolution of all normative pretension in the infinite play of perspectives.

Between these two dangers — the scientism that betrays the object of the human sciences in trying to save it, and the relativism that abandons all pretension to rigour in trying to emancipate it — there exists a third way. This manifesto intends to trace it. This third way is a position of principle founded on a precise thesis: the human sciences have a proper object — sense, relation, interpellation — that calls for a proper method and proper validity criteria, not inferior to those of the empirical sciences, but different.

The case that will serve as the guiding thread throughout this manifesto is that of the phenomenology of interpellation and the triadic structure of interpellation (known as the Mahoukou Law) — founded on the triad Call · Response · Resonance. This case is exemplary in the precise sense Husserl gave to this term: it reveals, in its singularity, something universal about the nature of the human sciences and the conditions of their rigour.

II. The Heritage and Its Limits

1. What positivism contributed — and what it missed

Positivism — in its Comtian, Viennese, and Popperian versions — rendered a considerable service to the nascent human sciences by imposing on them a demand for rigour, method, and verifiability. Auguste Comte posed a legitimate question: why should human behaviour escape all law, all regularity? What is not legitimate is the answer: that the only possible scientificity is that of the hypothetico-deductive model of the natural sciences.

What positivism missed is the irreducible specificity of the object of the human sciences. An electron has no relation to itself. But the human being — speaking, interpreting, interpellating and being interpellated — is a being who has a relation to itself, to others, and to the world that must be understood from within, in its structure of sense.

2. The hermeneutical turn and its acquisitions

The hermeneutical reaction to positivism — from Dilthey to Gadamer, via Ricœur — established that understanding (*Verstehen*) is not explaining (*Erklären*), and that the understanding of texts and human actions obeys a logic proper to it — the hermeneutical circle — irreducible to hypothetico-deductive logic. This contribution is irreversible. But by insisting on the circularity of all interpretation, hermeneutics tends to dissolve the possibility of trans-subjective validity criteria.

3. The impasse of postmodern relativism

Postmodern relativism — from Lyotard to Rorty — pushed the hermeneutical logic to its most radical consequences: if all knowledge is situated and "perspectival", there is no legitimate meta-narrative. This critical service is real. But relativism leads to a practical impasse: if no criterion of truth transcends contexts, how is one to justify the struggle against injustice? It also contradicts itself theoretically by universally affirming that there is no universal truth.

4. The necessity of a third way

The third way this manifesto proposes is the path of a critical epistemology of the human sciences founded on the recognition of their proper object and their proper validity criteria. This path has been prepared by Husserl's transcendental phenomenology and by Lévinas's ethical phenomenology. The triadic structure of interpellation (known as the Mahoukou Law), by articulating these two heritages and surpassing them in the direction of a phenomenology of interpellation, offers the exemplary case from which this third way can be traced with precision.

III. What the Human Sciences Are — and What They Are Not

1. Their proper object: sense, relation, interpellation

The human sciences have as their object the human being insofar as it is a being of sense. This object has three irreducible characteristics. It is reflexive: the human being has a relation to itself, understands and interprets itself. It is relational: it is constituted in and through its relations to others — in interpellation, recognition, conflict, love. It is normative: it evaluates, judges, distinguishes good from evil and just from unjust.

2. Their proper method: neither measurement nor pure interpretation

The proper method of the human sciences is normative structural analysis: the disclosure of the necessary structures that organise human phenomena, including the normative dimension immanent to these structures.

Terminological note: the term "structure" designates here a stable descriptive configuration disclosed by eidetic variation, and not an independent ontological entity. This precision is essential to correctly situate the epistemological claims of this method.

This method combines the rigour of Husserlian eidetic analysis with attention to Lévinassian normativity. It does not exclude recourse to empirical data — but situates them in their proper place: data illustrate, corroborate, or interrogate eidetic structures; they do not ground them.

3. Eidetic structure as a legitimate epistemological foundation

An eidetic structure is a necessary structure: that without which a phenomenon of such a type cannot give itself as such. It is obtained through eidetic variation. Its epistemological legitimacy rests on three pillars: it is universal (holds for every phenomenon of the type considered), necessary (expresses that without which the phenomenon could not give itself as what it is), and fertile (generates new distinctions and questions).

IV. The Phenomenology of Interpellation as Exemplary Case

1. The triadic structure of interpellation (known as the Mahoukou Law): reminder

Call · Response · Resonance

The triadic structure of interpellation (known as the Mahoukou Law) states that every phenomenon of interpellation necessarily presents a triadic structure: Call · Response · Resonance. This triad is not an empirical description — it is an eidetic structure. Resonance, the most original moment of the structure, 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 is neither an emotion nor a secondary psychological effect, but the internal criterion of accomplished encounter.

The decisive originality of the law is the introduction of impediment as a structurally constitutive dimension: deficient forms (Call without Response, Response without Resonance) are not external anomalies — they are the negative modalities that reveal a *contrario* the necessity of the complete structure.

The triple contribution of this structure to phenomenology is: the triad as co-originary organic structural law; Resonance as an autonomous phenomenological category — the phenomenological index of a structural modification produced by the encounter; dialogical impediment as an immanent normative category — not an empirical anomaly but a structure that reveals a *contrario*.

2. What it reveals about the nature of laws in the human sciences

A law in the human sciences is a normative structural law: it says *that without which something cannot be recognisable as what it is*, and implies that the absence of this condition is significant. Rigour is not quantification — it is conceptual precision: the capacity to rigorously distinguish the elements of a structure, to articulate their necessary relations, to analyse accomplished and deficient forms.

3. The heuristic fertility of the triad: first fields of application

The broadest eidetic variation confirms the structural universality of the triad. In clinical situations, therapeutic Resonance reveals the quality of the received Call. In institutional dynamics, the crisis of political, religious, and educational organisations is readable as a structural deficit of Resonance: Calls are launched, Responses are registered, but Resonance — the reciprocal transformation that would signal that something has genuinely been received — is absent. This is a formally complete and existentially empty triad.

IV bis. The Triadic Structure at the Test of the Digital Turn

One of the most revealing tests of the robustness of an eidetic law is its capacity to traverse territories its designers had not explicitly foreseen. The digital turn constitutes such a test for the triadic structure of interpellation. It is not merely a technical transformation of the supports of dialogue — it is a profound mutation of the conditions of possibility of the Call, the Response, and Resonance themselves.

A. New hermeneutical questions

1. Who speaks in digital language?

The classical question of the author — *quis locutus est?* — presupposed a unified intentionality. Digital language explodes this presupposition. In an algorithmically generated text, enunciation is distributed across at least four heterogeneous levels: the training corpus, the model, the user who formulated the prompt, and the platform. The hermeneutical question shifts: one no longer asks what did the author mean? but what sense emerges from this process?

2. What does it mean to "understand" a digital text?

Gadamer defined understanding as a fusion of horizons (*Horizontverschmelzung*): to understand a text is to allow one's horizon to enlarge at the contact of the other's horizon. An algorithmically generated text bears a statistical trace of millions of human horizons — but this trace is un-lived. Two regimes must be distinguished: hermeneutical

understanding in the classical sense (deciphering a lived sense) and computational understanding (identifying correlations in data flows).

3. Does digital language transform sense itself?

Yes — in precise modalities. Fragmentation: digital platforms produce formats that cut sense into brief, detachable units. Acceleration: digital sense is subject to a temporality of radical obsolescence that forbids interpretive depth. De-symbolisation: recommendation algorithms optimise immediate engagement, not interpretive depth. But there also exists digital re-symbolisation: certain practices reintroduce opacity and delay — a labour of sense not without analogy to symbolic work.

4. Does interpretation become automatable?

This is the most radical question. Interpretation, from Schleiermacher to Gadamer, is an act that engages the totality of a subject — their finitude, their history, their being-in-the-world. An algorithmic system can analyse and generate — but to interpret in the strong sense presupposes a vulnerability that the machine does not have. What Gadamer names *Geschichtlichkeit* — historicity: one understands from a finitude, from a past that precedes us.

B. Impacts on dialogical phenomenology

1. Alterity weakened or multiplied?

Martin Buber distinguishes two fundamental regimes of relation: I-Thou and I-It. The digital produces a quantitative multiplication of alterity while weakening its quality. When the other becomes an AI system, the asymmetry is structural: I can be transformed by the exchange — the AI cannot. The reciprocity at the heart of Buberian I-Thou is structurally impossible.

2. Presence and absence redefined

The phenomenology of presence — from Husserl to Lévinas — makes the face-to-face the originary structure of encounter. The digital produces a deferred and filtered presence: I perceive the other through an interface that mediates, transforms, and selects what reaches me of them.

3. Temporality of dialogue transformed

Dialogue, in its originary structure, is a constitutive ephemeral event. The digital produces a radical transformation: everything is archived, stored, replayable. Digital dialogue is often asynchronous: the spontaneity, the risk of speaking in the presence of the other, the possibility of fertile silence — all of this is distanced.

4. Responsibility and engagement redefined

Dialogical ethics — from Buber to Lévinas — rests on responsibility: to respond to the call of the other is to engage, to bind oneself, to expose oneself. The digital dilutes this responsibility through anonymity, through the distribution of enunciation, and through the substitution of Ricœurian attestation by self-image management.

C. Reading through the A2R triad: overall diagnosis

The digital Call: a structural mutation

The digital Call has undergone three profound mutations. It has multiplied to the point of saturating space: in the regime of hyper-interpellatory stimulation of permanent notifications, a Call that is everywhere is no longer anywhere. It has become algorithmised: the digital Call is no longer necessarily the fruit of human intentionality — it targets me as a profile, not as a singular subject. It has lost its event-character: designed to produce a measurable effect, it no longer arises — it is programmed.

A2R Diagnosis: The digital Call tends toward the degenerate form of the Call — a Call that has lost its power of interpellation to become stimulation or masked injunction. The condition of possibility of the triad is threatened at its very first moment.

The digital Response: between engagement and simulation

The Response, in the A2R triad, is the act of a free subject who engages from their own existence in accomplished interpellation. The digital transforms it: it is often pre-formatted (like, heart, thumbs — forms that quantify what was qualitative); it may be delegated to a machine (a phantom-response, the existential act absent); it is subject to image management (the constitutive vulnerability of the genuine Response is masked behind the digital persona).

A2R Diagnosis: The digital Response oscillates between impoverished response and response-simulation. In both cases, what is lost is the existential engagement of the subject — the very heart of the Response in the triad.

Digital Resonance: the most fragile moment

Resonance is the most profoundly threatened moment. It is confused with reverberation (digital metrics measure views and shares — but a piece of content may have ten million views without having resonated in a single life). It is short-circuited by acceleration (Resonance takes time; digital acceleration replaces depth with speed). It nevertheless remains possible — but as exception, as resistance, as grace within a system that had not foreseen it.

A2R Diagnosis: Digital Resonance is structurally threatened by confusion with reverberation, by acceleration, and by the absence of embodied presence. It remains possible — but requires active resistance to the logics of the platform.

D. Digital dialogical impediment: new categories

The digital produces unprecedented forms of dialogical impediment. Impediment by saturation: when everything calls at once, nothing interpellates. Impediment by simulation: when the Response is produced by a machine, the subject is not engaged. Impediment by short-circuiting of Resonance: acceleration and algorithmic feed management prevent the Call and Response from meeting in depth. Impediment by dissolution of alterity: when the other is reduced to an avatar or profile, I-Thou slides toward I-It.

One must also name plethoric impediment — impediment by excess of simultaneous Calls. When ten Calls arrive simultaneously, none can be received in its singularity. Saturation is not the fullness of dialogue: it is one of its most effective and pernicious forms of impediment.

E. Dialogue in absence: death, archive, and algorithm

The digital has introduced a phenomenologically unprecedented question: dialogue with the absent, the deceased, and soon with algorithmic simulacra of deceased persons. The triadic structure of interpellation allows thinking this with a precision no other framework attains.

The posthumous message reveals by compression what the triad contains of the dynamic and the living. The Call is there, but irremediably closed. The addressee's Response is profoundly transformed by this irreversibility. Resonance, in this case, is entirely interior to the addressee — unilateral, often of a particularly intense quality, but without the possibility of closing the triad in its fullness.

► **Fourth property of Resonance — explicitly named.** These situations reveal that Resonance may be accomplished unilaterally — occurring in only one of the two subjects, without the other being able to be transformed in return — without this constituting an impediment. Unilaterally accomplished Resonance is a modality proper to radically asymmetrical situations (minimal consciousness, prayer, dialogue with a deceased person through their work, mourning). It is not a failed triad — it is a triad accomplished under the conditions that asymmetry imposes. What the triadic structure reveals about mourning: to grieve is to learn to live with a structurally unclosable triad.

The algorithmic avatar of a deceased person constitutes the most radical case. The algorithm may preserve the Call better than any human memory. It may simulate the form of the Response. But it cannot produce Resonance — because Resonance presupposes a structural modification, and the algorithm cannot be structurally modified. What the triadic structure reveals: the algorithmic avatar of a deceased person is not an interlocutor — it is a sophisticated mirror.

The triadic structure of interpellation is a law of presence, not of trace. It describes what happens when living subjects interpellate each other in the reciprocity of their existence. Exchanges between archives, traces, and simulations may have value — but this value is not dialogical in the strong sense of the triad.

F. The triad as a compass for a positive digital ethics

Beyond critical diagnosis, the triadic structure of interpellation can ground a positive ethics of digital dialogue. If the triad is an eidetic structure — a condition of possibility of every accomplished interpellative phenomenon — then it can serve as a compass for the very design of digital spaces: designing spaces that protect the singularity of the Call; spaces that allow an engaged Response; spaces that leave time for Resonance.

V. For a Renewed Epistemology of the Human Sciences

1. Three validity criteria: eidetic coherence, structural universality, heuristic fertility

This manifesto proposes three validity criteria for the human sciences. Eidetic coherence: the structures disclosed are coherent, their elements rigorously distinguished and articulated. Structural universality: the structures hold for every phenomenon of the type considered, verifiable through eidetic variation. Heuristic fertility: the theory generates new questions and distinctions — a Lakatosian criterion of progressiveness transposed into the register of the human sciences.

The traversal of the digital-hermeneutical territory confirms these three criteria: the A2R triad maintains its eidetic coherence; it demonstrates its structural universality; and it proves its heuristic fertility (it allows naming unprecedented phenomena: the orphaned Call, plethoric impediment, phantom-response, truncated Resonance, the algorithmic mirror, unilaterally accomplished Resonance).

2. The possible dialogue with the empirical sciences

This dialogue is possible and fertile, provided one respects a fundamental rule: each discipline contributes from its own register. The empirical sciences bring data that can interrogate or enrich eidetic structures. The human sciences bring intelligibility frameworks that give sense to data. This dialogue is not a hierarchy — it is structural complementarity.

3. Human sciences and natural sciences: difference of register, not of rigour

The central thesis of this manifesto can now be formulated in its full precision: the human sciences and the natural sciences differ by their register — not by their rigour. The natural sciences measure the precision of their predictions and the reproducibility of their experiments. The human sciences measure the eidetic coherence of their analyses, the structural universality of their laws, and the heuristic fertility of their frameworks.

VI. Stakes and Perspectives — What This Manifesto Calls For

1. A research community around the phenomenology of interpellation

This manifesto is a call to constitute a research community around the phenomenology of interpellation as a research programme in the Lakatosian sense: a hard core of fundamental propositions — with the triadic structure of interpellation (known as the Mahoukou Law) at its centre — surrounded by a belt of empirical, theoretical, and applied research. This community should be resolutely interdisciplinary and international — because the structure Call-Response-Resonance is not a Western or African structure: it is a universal structure whose cultural modalities are infinitely diverse.

2. Applications across disciplines

In psychology, the triad offers a framework for analysing attachment dynamics and pathologies of the bond. In sociology, it allows rereading the crisis of institutions as a crisis of interpellation — structural deficit of Resonance in political, religious, and educational organisations. In theology, it enters into natural dialogue with the theology of revelation as divine Call. In pedagogy, it proposes rethinking the educational relation as a space of mutual interpellation where Resonance is the sign of accomplished transmission. In digital ethics, it provides the immanent normative criteria for a platform design respectful of dialogical structure.

3. The horizon of a science of interpellation

The most ambitious perspective is that of a science of interpellation: a constituted discipline, endowed with its own proper object, method, and validity criteria. The great contemporary challenges are, in depth, crises of interpellation: the crisis of the social bond is a crisis of collective Resonance; the crisis of democracy is a crisis of political interpellation; the religious crisis is a crisis of spiritual Resonance; the digital crisis is a crisis of the quality of Call and Response in environments designed to simulate dialogue while short-circuiting its structure.

► **Recent development — The phenomenology of being-interpellated.** The phenomenology of interpellation has been specified in a decisive direction: it is not only a phenomenology of accomplished dialogue, but a phenomenology of being-

interpellated — of exposure to address in all its forms, including refusal, stupefaction, trauma, avoidance, and undergone interpellation. This extension shows that the triadic structure is not a description of the ideal relation, but a description of the human relational condition in its full depth — with its successes, its impediments, its wounds, and its impossibilities.

Conclusion — The Manifesto as Call

A manifesto is, by definition, a performative speech act: it does not only describe — it calls, it engages, it opens. This manifesto calls for the recognition that the human sciences have a proper epistemological dignity. It calls for the recognition in the phenomenology of interpellation of a fertile research programme. It calls, finally, for the construction, patiently and rigorously, of a science of interpellation — not as a distant utopia, but as an immediate task.

The triadic structure Call · Response · Resonance is itself the form of this manifesto. It is a Call — addressed to all those for whom the question of the epistemological status of the human sciences is an intellectual and practical urgency. It awaits a Response — not passive acquiescence, but active engagement in research. And it hopes for a Resonance — that change in the manner of thinking and doing human science that would be the sign that the Call has been heard.

Finis coronat opus

The end crowns the work. But here, the end is not a closure. It is an opening.

Call · Response · Resonance

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