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Reframing Scientific Recognition: The Role of Migrant Outsiders in the Transformation of French Philosophy

Abstract

This article examines the dynamics of philosophical knowledge production and the quest for recognition within the framework of Merton and Bourdieu's sociology of scientific recognition, focusing on the role of émigré intellectuals in 20th-century French philosophy.

The political upheavals of the interwar period led a significant segment of the Russian intelligentsia to emigrate to Europe, where they established academic institutions and integrated into intellectual networks in France, playing a pivotal role in philosophical transformations through the transfer of German ideas.

This paper argues that understanding the mechanisms of recognition and misrecognition within institutions of knowledge production is crucial for analysing the history of philosophy and ideas. This study highlights how Russian émigrés like Alexandre Kojève, categorized as “socially unattached intellectuals,” functioned as Outsiders within the French academic field, yet as Insiders within their own philosophical traditions, facilitating the convergence of German and French thought. The institutional, generational, and existential dimensions of Kojève's career demonstrate the significant influence he exerted on post-war French philosophy and for the rethinking of the philosophical canon. Drawing on critical histories by Descombes, Roth, Rockmore, Kleinberg, Geroulanos and others, the study explores how émigrés reshaped intellectual norms and contributed to the enduring relevance of their reinterpreted philosophies.

Keywords: *sociology of recognition, Merton, Bourdieu, migrant scholars, Alexandre Kojève, Russian émigrés, interwar France, Outsiders and Insiders, knowledge transfer, French philosophy*

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Nowe ujęcie naukowego uznania: Rola emigrantów w transformacji francuskiej filozofii

Abstrakt

W artykule tym analizowane są dynamika tworzenia wiedzy filozoficznej i dążenie do uznania w ramach socjologii Mertona i Bourdieu.

Polityczne wstrząsy okresu międzywojennego skłoniły znaczną część rosyjskiej inteligencji do emigracji do Europy, gdzie zakładała instytucje akademickie i integrowała się z sieciami intelektualnymi we Francji, odgrywając kluczową rolę w transformacjach filozoficznych poprzez transfer niemieckich idei.

Artykuł dowodzi, że zrozumienie mechanizmów rozpoznania i błędnego rozpoznania w instytucjach tworzących wiedzę ma kluczowe znaczenie dla analizy historii filozofii i idei. Niniejsze studium uwypukla to, że rosyjscy emigranci, tacy jak Alexandre Kojève, określani mianem „intelektualistów niezależnych społecznie”, funkcjonowali jako outsiderzy we francuskim środowisku akademickim, a jednocześnie jako insiderzy we własnych tradycjach filozoficznych, ułatwiając konwergencję myśli niemieckiej i francuskiej. Instytucjonalny, pokoleniowy i egzystencjalny wymiar kariery Kojève'a ukazuje jego znaczący wpływ na powojenną filozofię francuską i na ponowne przemyślenie kanonu filozoficznego. Opierając się na krytycznych pracach historycznych Descombasa, Rotha, Rockmore'a, Kleinberga, Geroulanosa i innych, badanie to analizuje, w jaki sposób emigranci przekształcali normy intelektualne i przyczyniali się do trwałej aktualności swoich zinterpretowanych na nowo filozofii.

Słowa kluczowe: *socjologia uznania, Merton, Bourdieu, uczeni migrujący, Alexandre Kojève, rosyjscy emigranci, Francja międzywojenna, outsiderzy i insiderzy, transfer wiedzy, filozofia francuska*

1. Introduction

Contemporary theory of recognition¹ prompts inquiries into knowledge production under conditions of social inequality. Inequality and injustice in knowledge production are a classic subject for the history of ideas, which seeks to reconceptualize the canonical authors and themes. As Rorty noted, effective historical-philosophical work abandons a linear, doxographic² vision of history in favour of a critical rethinking of the history of the Spirit, that is, a rethinking of the canon of the history of philosophy. Indeed, the contemporary history of philosophy, using the critical methodology of sociology and history³ makes rediscoveries of little-known facts, authors, and indicate the conditions under which existing knowledge becomes self-evident. These conditions are the institutional facts of knowledge production: the structure of the Faculty of Philosophy, the mechanism for selecting academicians and teachers, philosophy programmes in schools, and specialized examinations (*Agrégation*⁴), belonging to scientific schools, publications in prestigious journals, etc. The answer to the question – why this or that philosopher is included in a university programme, and how a new philosophical method begins to dominate in a conservative academic environment – depends on the methodology for studying the activities of the professors themselves, the mechanisms of their selection, and recognition of their authority. Therefore, the task of a critical approach to the history of philosophy, or more broadly, the history of ideas, is to analyse the mechanisms of recognition within the institutions of knowledge production.

¹ See Honneth 1996.

² Doxography is, according to Richard Rorty, a type of history of philosophy that does not involve a critical reading of it but is a retelling of opinions presented in chronological order. See: Rorty 1984.

³ See Bourdieu 2000; Pinto 2002; 2013; Fabiani 2010; Rorty 1984.

⁴ The *agrégation* is a national competition that gives the right to teach in France after passing a specialized examination.

The history of French philosophy illustrates the processes of knowledge production both within and outside the university, extending beyond the mere preservation of academic traditions. The political events of the interwar period led to a significant part of the Russian intelligentsia, including professors, emigrating to Europe. These émigrés from the Russian Empire established new academic institutions and publishing houses, while also integrating into existing academic networks. At the same time, the involvement of émigrés in scholarly activity significantly influenced the transformation of philosophical canons, the content of theories, and facilitated timely cultural and intellectual transfers of ideas between countries.

Researchers of 20th-century French philosophy, such as Descombes, Roth, Rockmore, Kleinberg, Geroulanos⁵, and others, emphasize the crucial role played by émigrés in the transformation of philosophical thought in France during the interwar period and its subsequent influence on postwar philosophy. This raises the question: why do émigrés play a key role in this specific transformation of philosophy? To answer this question, the factors and conditions of émigré activity (academic structures, generational gap, political boycotts, limited scholarly mobility, etc.), identified by historians of French philosophy, will be examined through the lens of Merton⁶ and Bourdieu's sociology of scientific recognition.⁷

However, when applied to émigrés, these concepts should be supplemented by an analysis of the relationships between insiders and outsiders, "socially unattached intellectuals," who shape the conditions for knowledge production. Consequently, the academic recognition of insiders within conservative communities differs from the recognition of the influence of outsiders who transformed the intellectual environment.

Both the aforementioned scholars of this transformation in French philosophy and the biographers of the Russian émigré Alexandre Kojève⁸ find points of convergence in the critical analysis of the transformation of Hegelianism and Heideggerianism in France. Since Kojève is central to this intersection, this article will explore his path to recognition as a French philosopher of Russian origin through an analysis of the institutional conditions both within the émigré community and within the French academic sphere.⁹

2. The sociology of scientific recognition and the function of “socially unattached intellectuals”

2.1. A study of scientific recognition in the sociology of Merton and Bourdieu

Merton's approach to the study of scientific recognition is reflected in his work in the 1960s, and a continuation of this study was published in 1988.¹⁰ Merton says that the concepts of recognition and excellence define each other. In the context of recognition theory, this demonstrates an important implication. In science, as in a special institution, recognition is not just the acknowledgment of one subject by another, but the recognition of a subject within

⁵ See Descombes 1979; Roth 1988; Rockmore 1996; Kleinberg 2005; Geroulanos 2010; 2011.

⁶ See Merton 1972; 1974; 1988.

⁷ See Bourdieu 1975; 2000.

⁸ See Auffret 1990; Filoni 2010; 2021; Love 2018.

⁹ In recent years, several new publications on Kojève have appeared, including biographical studies. Filoni has published an English translation of the Italian edition of his 2021 book (see Filoni 2025). Groys has published an intellectual biography of Kojève; however, this essay does not address the issue of the institutional relations of émigrés (see Groys 2025). Two further books on Kojève in the context of Russian philosophy have also appeared (see Wilson 2024; Nicolas 2025). Wilson analyzes Kojève's philosophical ideas in the context of the Russian diaspora, demonstrating the “specter” of Russian philosophy that haunts Kojève throughout his intellectual biography. The connection between Russian thought and Kojève's philosophy is also examined by Nicolas, the French translator of Kojève's most recently published manuscript *Sophia. I. Philosophie et phénoménologie* (see Kojève 2025). Thus, scholarly interest in the origins of Kojève's thought, including in its institutional context, remains strong and reflects the continuing publication of previously unpublished manuscripts.

¹⁰ Merton 1974; 1988.

a hierarchical system. This definition of recognition through excellence suggests that the structure of the recognition mechanism is revealed through inequality. From the viewpoint of the Hegelian mechanism of recognition, self-consciousness is formed through the struggle for recognition. However, as will be shown below, the analysis of the struggle for recognition (in the Hegelian sense) is less applicable to Merton's approach, in contrast to Bourdieu's approach, since Merton's approach is focused on building "scientific hagiography,"¹¹ that is, praising the life story of a scientist.

Merton calls *the Matthew effect*¹² in science the uneven distribution of recognition among scientists. This inequality is based on the fact that a scientist who already has advantages receives more and more recognition each time, in contrast to those scientists who have not yet received fame. The main characteristic of the Matthew Effect is that scientists fall into the estimation trap. The scientific community attributes merit to scientists who are already famous; moreover, they exaggerate the achievements of famous scientists and downplay the importance of little-known scientists. Therefore, to analyse the situation of uneven distribution of recognition, Merton uses the concept of the accumulation of advantage. Uneven recognition is found in institutional policy for encouraging talented youth, the number of publications, and citation index. It seems that these three points fairly reflect career inequality: a scientist's talent is expressed in publications that are cited as the most significant for science. However, Merton notes that developing a strong reputation early in one's career will be a prerequisite for later success. For example, referring to study of the status of scientists and scientific discoveries, Merton argues "that the greater their authors' scientific reputation, the more likely that papers of roughly equal quality (as assessed by the later number of citations to them) will receive rapid peer recognition (by citation within a year after publication)".¹³

Institutional factors for the accumulation of advantage reduce to the following: working at a prestigious rather than a peripheral university, and "favouritism" in relation to young talents. Merton notes that in this process, latent social problems are observed, namely socio-economic inequality. In the case of an early career, if a young scientist is not included in the group of young talents, he risks forever losing the opportunity to build a career in science. Only financially secure young scientists can afford to devote additional time to research, while a poor person will be forced to find another job. That is, the usual mechanism for encouraging young talents forms a system that only exacerbates the issue of the Matthew Effect, or the recognition trap.

However, this accumulation of advantage has a limit, which is expressed in the structure of the research group. Only talents and leaders competing for the position of leader cannot work in one group. Therefore, an institution is formed in which there is a hierarchy of "patriarchs" with scientific authority and their students.

But why is this uneven distribution of recognition accepted by scientists themselves? From Merton's point of view, scientists are more interested not in material rewards (salary, position at the university), but in symbolic recognition. What is important for a scientist is his own contribution to science (in the form of a publication) as to the general communal fund of knowledge. This communality of knowledge is the environment for the formation of a scientist and the environment for his recognition. Citation of publications creates and keeps intellectual traditions.

The question of individual research in the context of a team is considered by Merton from the point of view of communality, which is the norm of scientific research and the basis for

¹¹ Bourdieu 1975.

¹² The Matthew Effect gets its name from a passage in the Bible that is used as a metaphor for inequality: "For unto everyone that hath shall be given, and he shall have abundance; but from him that hath shall not be taken away even that which he hath" (Matthew 13:12 and 25:29). Merton 1988, pp. 608–609.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 613.

him. Therefore, the issue of recognition should also be shifted from recognition of the contribution of individuals towards the collective work of scientists. Merton describes this position as creating individual work “on the shoulders of giants,” that is, based on the preceding tradition.¹⁴

Recognition is the result of relationships within the scientific community, for which collective work in the search for truth is significant. We find the opposite assessment of the recognition mechanism in Bourdieu. Bourdieu criticizes Merton’s sociology of science, which uses “scientific hagiography,” that is, the praise of intellectual biographies and the construction of the concept of a scientific community. Bourdieu, abandoning the idea that science is a struggle of pure ideas, shifts the emphasis to the real struggle of interests and capital.

According to Bourdieu, scientific truths are social products that are produced through the competition of scientific agents. Unlike Merton, who talks about the accumulation of advantages, Bourdieu suggests talking about a monopoly of scientific authority, that is, a type of social power, which is “a particular agent’s socially recognised capacity to speak and act legitimately (i.e. in an authorized and authoritative way) in scientific matters”.¹⁵ The struggle for a monopoly on scientific authority is the struggle for recognition. That is, in contrast to the Mertonian concept, Bourdieu demonstrates a discourse of struggle and power, which is characteristic specifically of French Hegelian-Marxist philosophizing.

Bourdieu rejects the opposition between immanent (analysis of the transformation of scientific ideas) and external (analysis of social and political conditions) analysis, stating that scientific strategies are political strategies. The struggle for scientific authority is a struggle for a dominant position, and scientific authority is one of the types of capital.

Bourdieu, as well as his followers Pinto and Fabiani, wrote key texts on the functioning of the philosophical field in 20th-century France. Since the sociological approach of Bourdieu’s school involved identifying mechanisms of recognition in the academic environment, the subject of the study was not only the publications and mentions of philosophers, affiliation with institutions, journal editors, and publishing houses, but also their origin, the social and economic capital of their families, personal connections, and the patronage system.

The main feature of the research of Bourdieu’s school is that the activity of scientists in choosing a subject of research, methods, and argumentation is not conscious, but determined by the field. Bourdieu showed that the choice of a scientist is dictated by his position within the field of science, and the creation of a new discipline is equated to a revolution within the community, a denial of the authority of the patron, that is, his criticism, and the struggle for symbolic capital that ensures recognition.

The task of the sociology of philosophy, then, is to identify the unconscious elements that strengthen the scientific tradition and to characterize the moments of rupture that lead to the creation of new authorities and schools.

It is evident that Bourdieu’s approach is more suitable than Merton’s for analysing the struggle for recognition within the Russian emigrant community in France. Bourdieu presented an analysis of the specific French institutions that facilitate integration into the academic community. However, the two analyses address disparate aspects of recognition. In contrast to Merton, who emphasises the stability of established mechanisms, Bourdieu’s work is centred on the process of seeking recognition. This approach can be applied to the study of Russian emigration, which has historically been a marginalised group within the French academic community. Furthermore, an examination of the French practice of building an academic career

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 621.

¹⁵ Bourdieu 1975, p. 19.

will be conducted, as presented in Rockmore¹⁶ and Kleinberg's¹⁷ monographs. A further key topic is the transformation of French philosophy through the activities of migrants.

2.2. The case of Russian emigration between the world wars in France in the context of the struggle for recognition

Pinto and Fabiani, using the approach proposed by Bourdieu, explored the history of French philosophy. Both authors drew attention to the biographies of emigrant philosophers from the Russian Empire, who not only achieved recognition in the new environment but also became the creators of new concepts and had a significant influence on the emergence of new interpretations of classical philosophy.

Pinto describes the situation of emigrants who, lacking the necessary capital in the French academic environment, created the only possible competing philosophical program – a philosophy based on the latest German thought, as an alternative to the French one.¹⁸ That is, the mechanism of recognition through traditional French tools (being a *normalien*¹⁹, *agrégé*²⁰, having an academic patron) did not work for emigrants. And the emigrants created their own instruments, which were in demand in France between the world wars: translations of new German sources, reviews of these books, the organization of a journal that will be a conductor of new knowledge for a new team, as well as research work based on the national culture of the philosopher (at an early stage of their career, emigrant philosophers from the Russian Empire taught Russian philosophy). The sociology of philosophy allows to see that the content of philosophical concepts is dictated by the mechanism of the struggle for recognition in the philosophical field. The emigrants served as channels through which German philosophy entered France. Thus, the new German philosophy is contrasted with recognized French thought through the assertion of opposing positions within the philosophical discussion. The positivist orientation of French academic philosophy is criticized with the help of German phenomenology and existentialism.

As a result of the emigrants' struggle for recognition within the French philosophical field of the 1920s and 1930s, a platform for discussion and criticism emerged, leading to the subsequent transformation of European philosophy. For example, the journal of little-known emigrants *Recherches philosophique* (1931–1937) had a Patronage Committee, which included some of the most authoritative French philosophers: Léon Brunschvicg, Abel Rey, Jean Wahl and others. This allowed the journal to exist not only as an initiative of little-known authors (Alexandre Koyré, Henri-Charles Puech, Albert Spaier, Alexandre Kojève), but as an undertaking that received approval from academicians, honorary professors, the leader of the French Philosophical Society (Brunschvicg), etc. However, this patronage was only formal and did not ensure any inclusion in the institutions for the redistribution of symbolic scientific capital. Young authors were practically not mentioned in the leading French journals controlled by their patrons, which made it possible to draw a clear line between the recognized figures of French science and its new agents.

The question arises: if emigrant philosophers were on the periphery of the academic world, and patronage from recognized French masters was largely formal, how exactly did the transformation of knowledge and the struggle for recognition take place? An earlier study²¹ had already proved that the greater impact of the cultural transfer from German to philosophical

¹⁶ Rockmore 1996.

¹⁷ Kleinberg 2005.

¹⁸ Pinto 2013, pp. 60–61.

¹⁹ A *normalien* is a graduate of one of the most prestigious educational institutions in France, the *Ecole Normale Supérieure*.

²⁰ *Agrégé* is a title that is awarded after passing the *Agrégation* competition and gives the right to teach.

²¹ See Shashlova 2020.

thought was on the younger generation of French philosophers who, like the emigrants, were struggling for recognition in the academic world. The younger generation of French philosophers in the 1930s chose German philosophy as their leading research program, as a result of the transfer implemented by emigrants.

To analyse the status of migrants, one should turn to the concepts of Outsider and Insider, Stranger, which describe the marginal status of migrants located outside the boundaries of recognized communities.

2.3. Outsiders, strangers, and “socially unattached intellectuals”

The study by Merton on Insiderism (first published in 1969)²² complements his theory of scientific recognition based on superiority. Insiderism is a doctrinal position according to which access to certain types of knowledge is achieved based on identity and specific experience. In one possible interpretation, this approach is applicable to immigrant scholars, as evidenced by Merton’s statement: “A somewhat less stringent version of the doctrine maintains only that Insider and Outsider scholars have significantly different foci of interest”²³. This is confirmed by the thematic difference between the publications of Insiders – those who have already received recognition within the academic community – and Outsiders – those who are striving to achieve this recognition, being migrants. Such a view of the distribution of access to knowledge production finds confirmation in the study of national groups. Merton provides an example of the situation during the First World War and between the world wars to demonstrate how philosophers subordinate their research to the “glorification of the internal group”²⁴, which can lead to national chauvinism. In philosophy, this was expressed in accusing “enemies” of dishonesty, in completely denying the merits of national philosophical schools that found themselves on the other side of the military front.

Research on the contribution of migrants, various groups to knowledge production cannot ignore historical examples of support for and justification of war and the national question. As in our previous research²⁵, and in Merton, Kusch²⁶, the process of defining professional identity through the national question is observed. That is, what was characteristic of the situation from the beginning of the 20th century until the end of the Second World War in Europe was the question of the national specificity of philosophy. This was one of the main parameters for finding oneself within the European academic community for immigrant philosophers. For example, immigrants Georges Gurvitch, Koyré, and Kojève began their philosophical path with the interpretation of Russian philosophy. They were Insiders of this knowledge, which provided them with a path to a career as specialists in Russian philosophy. However, regarding access to European philosophical institutions, immigrants were Outsiders, despite their education in European universities. That is, as knowledge translators, they had to find corresponding institutions. And already being knowledge translators – Insiders of the latest German phenomenology – they pursued their path as Outsiders. These immigrants had the same trajectory: using the transfer of German philosophy to France, transitioning into the French academic world, and ceasing publications in Russian in favor of French since 1933. The trend of this trajectory – from national to universal – helped immigrants become, in this case, “French” philosophers, as they are sometimes called, or ultimately, they entered into various histories of French philosophy, that is, into a certain canon. Unlike older generation migrants (Berdyayev, Lossky, Karsavin, etc.), the younger generation managed to transition from one

²² Merton 1972.

²³ *Ibid.*, p. 16.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 18.

²⁵ See Shashlova 2020.

²⁶ Kusch 2000.

group to another by abandoning the study of Russian philosophy. Therefore, the strategy of the younger generation of immigrants was to create knowledge in French and in the context of universal issues.

In the situation of the boycott of Germany in the field of science and education, the younger generation of emigrants in France played an important role in returning philosophical discussion to the international level. If it was impossible for recognized academics to transmit ideas of German philosophy to France, then it was precisely the group of immigrants who could take on this function, especially considering that the main activity of the journal *Recherches Philosophiques* group fell on the 1930s. The “hostility” between German and French culture reached such a level that it was not just a cultural opposition between “the ‘light-hearted French’ and the ‘heavy German’,” as Levinas said²⁷, but collective self-glorification, reaching chauvinism, as Merton noted. Einstein was one of the exceptions to the general boycott of Germany, and European states did not refuse to cooperate with him. And Merton, characterizing Outsiders in a new migrant environment and speaking about the “socially unattached intellectuals,” gives the example of Einstein, who in his speech at the Sorbonne said,

If my theory of relativity is proven successful, Germany will claim me as a German and France will declare that I am a citizen of the world. Should my theory prove untrue, France will say that I am a German and Germany will declare that I am a Jew (Merton 1972, p. 28).

However, a scientist like Einstein is not an ordinary migrant aspiring a position in the university. Relying on Mannheim, who raised the question of the “classless” position of intellectuals and their ability to produce knowledge beyond their social position, Merton writes that

Mannheim in effect claims that there is a category of socially free-floating intellectuals who are both Insiders and Outsiders. Benefiting from their collectively diverse social origins and transcending group allegiances, they can observe the social universe with special insight and a synthesizing eye (Merton 1972, p. 29).

That is, it is also about the special significance of the activity of such an intellectual – producing universal, or synthesizing, knowledge. Mannheim proceeded from the situation of the interwar period (*Ideology and Utopia*, 1929), and from his point of view, synthesis is carried out only by “socially unattached intellectuals,” while other classes think only from within their ideology. Therefore, immigrant philosophers during the interwar period constantly transitioned from Outsiders to Insiders and back again; they were a special category. Simmel also spoke about the production of universal knowledge by Strangers, to whom Merton refers. The Stranger is more objective and has fewer prejudices and habits,

It is the stranger, too, who finds what is familiar to the group significantly unfamiliar and so is prompted to raise questions for inquiry less apt to be raised at all by Insiders’ (Merton 1972, p. 33).

That is, immigrants are described by Merton not only as a special social group among others but also as a group possessing advantages in situations of social conflicts and wars. By renouncing national superiority, an immigrant becomes an effective researcher of universal issues.

It is precisely this existential problematic of the production of universal knowledge by émigrés that Kleinberg takes as his subject, analyzing the institutional factors of knowledge production and resistance to it from the “generation of 1933” (Jean-Paul Sartre, Maurice

²⁷ Levinas 1998, p. 10.

Merleau-Ponty, and Jean Beaufret). The core of Kleinberg's research approach is Heidegger's philosophy as a "Strange" philosophy, which young French intellectuals, facing an existential crisis, needed to domesticate. Kleinberg's research can be divided into three components: an analysis of the French academic environment and the activities of émigrés, the "domestication" of Heidegger, and the creation of a "French Heidegger" to rethink the crisis of philosophy and history. We will consider these three situations in order to characterize the factors of the philosophical transfer from Germany to France.

3. Factors of the implantation of German philosophy in France through migrants

In the first part of the article, approaches to understanding scientific recognition and special mechanisms that contribute to building an academic career and influencing students were outlined. Merton, Bourdieu, Fabiani, Pinto drew attention to the special situation associated with strangers who have the status of outsiders in the academic environment. But it is precisely due to this status that migrant outsiders perform special functions. Beginning in 1988,²⁸ a number of monographs were published on the interwar period in French philosophy. And in all these monographs (Roth, Rockmore, Kleinberg, Geroulanos), the role of émigré philosophers in the transformation of knowledge is analyzed through the analysis of institutional and sociological factors, and the 1933–1939 seminar of Alexandre Kojève in 1933–1939 at the EPHE (*École pratique des hautes études*) is at the center of a new free space of thought at the intersection of Hegelianism, Marxism and Heideggerianism. Kleinberg uses the term "Generation 1933" to characterize the generation of young Frenchmen who overcame the authority and institutional demands of the French academic institutions and state examinations to engage in free and critical philosophical work. Continuing Rockmore's line of inquiry, Kleinberg identifies Heidegger as the central figure in this transformation, since postwar French thought had incorporated Heidegger's philosophy into its tradition of existentialism as well as critical reflection on political issues (the "Heidegger Affair"). And Kleinberg identifies as one of the most important factors in this transformation of French intellectuals between the world wars a group of foreigners who were engaged in introducing new German ideas. For our own purposes, we will focus on the specific institutional conditions for the career of émigré philosophers that Kleinberg describes.

Next, we will outline the main factors of the outsider status of migrants in France that influenced the transformation of philosophical knowledge:

- the specificity of the rigid system of the French academy and the higher practical school as a refuge for foreigners; these conditions include: belonging to institutions accessible to graduates of French lycées, but not to émigrés; state examination and teaching in higher schools, journals of authorities, reforms of higher education; this should also include the content of the programs of the philosophy class and the control of the state inspectorate over teaching in schools;
- generational differences among the French, which are associated with the historical situation and the need to rethink history; the existential consequences of these generational differences and the war, as well as an interest in the Strange, the foreign, the need to rethink history;
- Heidegger's role in the existential rethinking of his own historical and political life.

Based on these factors, it becomes obvious that emigrants and young Frenchmen found themselves at the intersection of French tradition and its criticism through German philosophy and new scientific discoveries, rethinking science. Being inside critical institutions (free

²⁸ Roth 1988.

seminar at the EPHE, journal, translations) was the only way to influence French thought in France in the 20s and 30s.

3.1. Institutional factor: French academic environment and opportunities for foreigners

Rockmore, building upon the research of Bourdieu and Fabiani, offers an analysis of the institutional characteristics of the philosophical field in France, including lycées (the *Khâgne*, preparatory classe), the state examination and aggregation, the state doctoral dissertation, and the prestige of the *École Normale Supérieure* (the ENS). The aforementioned list of conditions is employed to demonstrate the manner in which Russian émigrés were excluded from this academic path of recognition. On the whole all four points²⁹ were inaccessible to Russian émigrés, despite the fact that these educational components constituted the basis of scientific recognition, as Merton describes it. Of these conditions, only a state doctoral dissertation was more accessible (as in the case of Koyré, who defended his dissertation in 1929). In other words, from this perspective, émigrés were entirely excluded from the educational system unless they passed the Agregation exam and received the right to teach at universities. They are engaged in continuous research dialogue exclusively with established scientists and other émigrés. It is also pertinent to note that the younger generation of Russian émigrés constituted a group of outsiders in two senses: in relation to the French, and in relation to the older generation of Russian emigrants. This can be attributed to a generational gap with their older counterparts. This gap also played a pivotal role in the professional advancement of the younger cohort of emigrants.³⁰

The French academic environment is characterised by a conservative approach and a focus on maintaining the status quo of the existing educational system. From the level of secondary education onwards, a system of “allegiance to the French educational establishment” is formed.³¹ This reproduction is based on a rigorous competitive selection process and state examinations. As Rockmore observes,

The system leads to a clear co-optation of its most important members who, having been identified and fostered through it, naturally tend to defend and to propagate it. The result is a strong, sometimes unconditional loyalty to the very restrictive, rigid academic system, heavily tilted towards a numerical few, the academic elite, in which they themselves have succeeded (Rockmore 1996, pp. 16–17).

Sirinelli³² highlighted the special status of the graduates of the preparatory classes (*the Khâgne*) for the competition at the ENS (*École Normale Supérieure*), pointing to the special political circumstances of the interwar period. In Sirinelli’s view, the generation born around 1905, the future graduates of the *khâgne* and the *normaliens*, is the generation that will become politically active in the 1920s and 1930s and change the intellectual landscape of post-war France. It is this “generation of 1905” that Kleinberg will call the “generation of 1933”. Sirinelli does not analyze groups of migrants, but only French graduates of elite educational institutions. However, Sirinelli’s study pays attention to Franco-German relations and the academic boycott of Germany between the world wars³³. It is in this aspect that the special role of migrants appears – to be a transfer of German philosophy to France. Kleinberg, following Rockmore in outlining the main characteristics of the French conservative system of higher education, places emphasis on the EPHE, a special institution that enabled migrants to carry out research and teaching activities. But what role did the EPHE play for the French themselves, including the *normaliens*, who could build their excellent careers under the guidance of the

²⁹ Rockmore 1996, pp. 15–16.

³⁰ Shashlova 2020.

³¹ Rockmore 1996, pp. 15–16.

³² Sirinelli 1988.

³³ *Ibid.*, pp. 539–543.

leaders of the French Academy? In our opinion, it was the lack of direct access to the German academic environment that became the source of interest in the émigrés who received a German education and transmitted modern German philosophy. Therefore, in addition to recording the conditions of the French academic path, we will describe in interconnection two of the most important factors in the transformation of this conservative academic environment: the EPHE and overcoming the academic boycott of Germany.

Using the example of Alexandre Kojève we can demonstrate how a migrant, without being either a graduate of the *Khâgne* or *normalien*, becomes an important element of this system of criticism of the conservative philosophical environment.

To explain the trajectory of Kojève's career, we will point out some facts demonstrating the specific position of a graduate of the University of Heidelberg in France. Kojève, having written a dissertation on the religious philosophy of Soloviev at the German University of Heidelberg under the supervision of Karl Jaspers in the period from 1924 to 1926,³⁴ passed the doctoral exam, but did not publish the text of the dissertation and for this reason did not receive a diploma because he didn't have the money to print his thesis.³⁵ In the same 1926, Kojève moved to Paris, where he attended various courses, including one under the supervision of Koyré at the EPHE.

The EPHE was a special educational and research institution that did not require a special diploma to enroll in courses. Researchers without a state dissertation, but at least certified, could also conduct seminars at the EPHE. These conditions turned out to be decisive in Kojève's biography. The documents regulating the activities of the Fifth Section of Religious Sciences³⁶ indicated that this section was created to manage and prepare scientific papers (*les travaux d'érudition*). Teaching was conducted by research directors appointed by the Minister, and students and listeners attended conferences. Students were divided into categories: an *élève titulaire* and an *élève diplômé*. And the status determines the submission of works, including dissertations, to the collections of the Library of the EPHE, as well as requests for a scholarship for an *élève titulaire*. Most importantly, there are no age, degree or nationality requirements for enrolment as a student, and after completing an internship, a student can apply for an *élève titulaire* status. In this case, the time spent studying or researching abroad can be taken into account. And after two years of attending conferences, including an internship, and defending a thesis, an *élève titulaire* can become an *élève diplômé*. This status as an *élève diplômé* allows to give conferences, as well as be responsible for reviewing the dissertation of another *élève titulaire* together with the director of research, and an *élève diplômé* can also apply for research trips abroad and a salary. Teaching at the EPHE was the only possible teaching for emigrants. This title of *élève diplômé* did not allow working in a lyceum or at a university, where teaching was regulated by the state inspection, but only in research institutes, including conducting seminars, and in fact, teaching. As Kleinberg notes, "the EPHE was consistently underattended," since the courses attended did not help prepare for the exams and complete the entire state program before the doctoral dissertation: "Students were discouraged from taking courses that had no bearing on the national exams and thus on their future".³⁷ But *normaliens* could participate in the free discussions of the EPHE, and in general feel freer compared to the more regulated procedures of the ENS.

The aforementioned regulations governing the conferment of official status in a French scientific institution constituted the only opportunity for Kojève to commence teaching a seminar in 1933, having received the status of an *élève diplômé*.³⁸

³⁴ See Auffret 1990; Filoni 2010.

³⁵ Filoni 2010, p. 164.

³⁶ See «Documents Relatifs à l'École Des Hautes Études» in Anon. 1933.

³⁷ Kleinberg 2005, p. 51.

³⁸ Koyré, Kojevnikoff 1933, p. 54.

However, initially, without a German diploma, Kojève intended to obtain a State doctorate by defending a dissertation at the Sorbonne. An analysis of this situation demonstrates an attempt to gain recognition from a prestigious state university, thereby fully integrating into the state academic structure of France. In 1926, Kojève commenced research in mathematics, physics and the philosophy of science, as documented by Filoni. By 1932, he had completed the text *The idea of determinism in classical and modern physics*. There is a discrepancy in the accounts of how Kojève intended to defend his dissertation. Auffret indicates that Abel Rey was to be his supervisor, this statement was repeated by F. de Lussy.³⁹ Furthermore, Geroulanos indicated that Kojève wrote this work under the supervision of Koyré.⁴⁰ However, the dissertation was ultimately rejected, and Kojève did not resume work on the project, which was published only posthumously.⁴¹

The history of Kojève's interactions with French academics in the field of the philosophy of science is illustrative of the fact that he engaged in all the requisite interactions with scientists. He participated in meetings of the *French Philosophical Society*, which included renowned physicists such as Louis de Broglie, Max Born, Hendrik Anthony Kramers and Paul Langevin, studied the works of recognized French specialists in the philosophy of science (Léon Brunschvicg, Abel Rey, Émile Meyerson) and referred to them in his unpublished notes and manuscript text. However, Kojève presented reports on this topic only at the meetings of the *Russian Society for the Philosophy of Science* in Russian, and was even considered by émigré scientists as a specialist in physics.⁴² It is important to note that Kojève had not previously studied mathematics and physics, and according to Filoni, "and even, rightly, one can assume that he knew almost nothing".⁴³ Kojève received tuition in mathematics in private lessons and did not have the challenging academic background that is typical of students in France who pursue a degree.

In the text of this dissertation on the idea of determinism, Kojève describes the current discussions of physicists at that time, which allowed philosophers of that period to rethink the foundations of science. Abel Rey shared the idea of Einstein and Henri Poincaré that science "is either deterministic or not at all",⁴⁴ meaning that scientists will eventually be able to resolve the contradiction of quantum physics and the idea of indeterminism. Kojève believed that the problem was related to the complexity of concepts and that his work needed to be modified to retain the idea of determinism. In essence, Kojève indicated that he would remain within the framework of the positions of Paul Langevin, Abel Rey and Poincaré. Most importantly, Kojève correctly described the problem of future discussions in epistemology, as Filoni noted. It is noteworthy that, being a recognized, albeit beginning, specialist in the philosophy of physics among Russian émigrés, this stage of Kojève's philosophical work would remain in the shadows for his French colleagues. Filoni, Geroulanos and Kurilovich⁴⁵ make the relationship between Kojève's research on physics, the manuscript "Atheism", the course on Hegel and other works a separate subject of study. Since the analysis of this topic is beyond the scope of the article, we will limit ourselves to indicating only important institutional moments associated with the recognition of Kojève as the author of a work on the philosophy of physics.

Geroulanos suggests considering this topic of Kojève as a condition for winning his popularity, recognition and subsequent influence on French philosophy. That is, Geroulanos

³⁹ Lussy 2007.

⁴⁰ Geroulanos 2011, p. 99.

⁴¹ See Kojève 2024, translated into English by Robert B. Williamson. First edition of the French manuscript: Kojève 1990, edited by Dominique Auffret.

⁴² Riabouchinsky 1931.

⁴³ Filoni 2010, p. 194.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 200.

⁴⁵ Kurilovich 2024.

considers the transformation of the philosophical field in France not only within the framework of the development of phenomenology and existentialism, but much more broadly, including the analysis of modern science. This view of the history of the German philosophical transfer to France allows us to show with even greater confidence that the younger generation of Russian emigration in France opposed themselves to the recognized French academics. For example, Geroulanos points to the vibrant criticism of Brunschvicg in Kojève's manuscripts, and this criticism lies in the field of modern physics, which Brunschvicg did not take into account.

The journal *Recherches Philosophiques* attempted to bridge the gap between Heidegger's new phenomenological philosophy and Husserl's scientific project, and in general, the gap between existential and scientific philosophy. Geroulanos describes precisely this process of reception of Heidegger through contemporary physics. One of the problems of the German-French philosophical-scientific transfer, indicated by Geroulanos, should be especially emphasized – "phenomenology's need for epistemological legitimacy in a hostile academic domain".⁴⁶ Here it is necessary to pay attention to two possible parallel and related processes: this is the legitimization of a new philosophical theory of science, opposed to Brunschvicg, but also the legitimization of a new parallel academic environment (the seminars of Koyré and Kojève, as well as the journal *Recherches Philosophiques*, publishing new materials on contemporary science and German phenomenology). Thus, based on the study of Geroulanos, it can be seen that it was not only German phenomenology that allowed the younger generation to achieve success in the French environment, but also the parallel criticism of the old Brunschvicg philosophy of science. This attack on the "old" theory took place in two scientific fields and was effective. For example, Koyré's biography combines the study of mathematics and the phenomenology of Husserl, a dissertation on Jacob Böhm and an analysis of Hegelian philosophy in France. This allowed Koyré to substantiate the connection between Christianity and modern science. This path is partly repeated by Kojève, starting from following Koyré's ideas on Hegelian philosophy to many years of discussions with Father Gaston Fessard on religion. In 1964, Kojève published an article on the Christian origins of science in a collection in memory of Koyré, work on which he had begun in 1961, being in dialogue with Koyré himself. It may be the case that it is precisely the interconnection of ideas between modern science, Christianity and philosophy that allows these connections to be elucidated, and that this is the crux of the philosophical success of Koyré and Kojève. It is, however, important to note that this success was achieved within the French context and in opposition to the most prominent philosophers of the interwar period.

Thus, being recognized as a specialist at the EPHE Kojève remained an outsider in the academic field of France. This status certainly gave Kojève maximum freedom. As de Lussy noted, Kojève's "recognition" lies in the fact that his original and provocative ideas were not admitted to the university by the masters of dogmatic thought (namely, Abel Rey; de Lussy most likely took the fact about Abel Rey from Auffret).⁴⁷

One might well ask why Kojève became a highly sought-after lecturer, attracting not only other émigrés but also the future intellectual leaders of post-war France. On the one hand, Kojève's Russian background was important for his individual experience and what he conveyed in his course on Hegel. But, on the other hand, he was educated in Germany, and having an excellent knowledge of German, having listened to Rickert's lectures and being a student of Jaspers, he had access to the German academic environment, unlike his colleagues in France. As de Lussy noted, in the 1930s Hegel was excluded from university programs,⁴⁸ which made Koyré and Kojève's course a timely and in-demand addition to the academic

⁴⁶ Geroulanos 2011, p. 91.

⁴⁷ Lussy 2007.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

landscape. And in addition to this, such academic renewal allowed for the “reconceptualization of French thought”.⁴⁹ And this is not only about Kojève’s specific seminar, but about the formation of a field of philosophical reflection free from academics.

Sirinelli⁵⁰ describes the absence of Franco-German academic mobility and ways out of this isolation, starting in 1927. The beginning of the end of the academic boycott was the Locarno Treaties. It was the governments that initiated Franco-German exchanges for their “the beneficial influence of the spirit of Locarno”.⁵¹ As Schröder-Gudeus points out, it was Locarno’s political initiative that was the basis for scientific cooperation, and not the other way around.⁵²

Sirinelli provides evidence of the limited mobility faced by French students wishing to study in Germany, including Germanic studies scholars seeking to improve their language proficiency. In 1927, student mobility began to resume, with several students securing scholarships, and in 1930 the French Institute was established in Berlin. As Kleinberg notes, continuing one’s philosophical education in Germany was a long-standing tradition for French scholars. However, Kleinberg does not address the institutional limitations on this mobility during the 1920s. Among the *normaliens* awarded French Institute scholarships to study in Germany were Sartre and Aron.⁵³

In 1928, Franco-German meetings began in Davos, followed by the renowned university meeting there in 1929, which included the famous debate between Cassirer and Heidegger – a significant event for the transfer of German philosophy to France. Léon Brunschvicg attended this meeting, though he left no record of it. Leading French journals ignored this event despite its important academic and political implications for the renewal of Franco-German relations. Sirinelli notes, however, that many *normaliens* were present at Davos, highlighting the interest of the “generation of 1905” in German philosophy. Testimonies by Jean Cavaillès⁵⁴ also record the presence of prominent figures from France, including Leon Brunschvicg, a young Levinas, and Speyer, one of the founders of the journal *Recherches philosophique*.

According to Sirinelli, the need to renew contact with German scholarship was a particular concern of the pacifist “generation of 1905.” The following section will examine the role of the concept of generation in the transformation of French thought.

3.2. The generational question and the role of the “Stranger” in the transfer of Philosophy

As noted above, Sirinelli uses the term “generation of 1905” to refer to the approximate year of birth of the French intellectuals who received a prestigious education at the *Khâgne* classes and then at the ENS. This generation is distinguished by the fact that after the First World War, young intellectuals formed a powerful intellectual opposition to the conservative academic environment. Sirinelli emphasizes the political character of this generational transformation, and Kleinberg emphasizes the existential one. And Kleinberg, rejecting the characterization “by birth,” emphasizes the intellectual formation of the group that in 1933 made a turn toward critical understanding of the French past. The select group of the “generation of 1933” (Raymond Aron, Jean-Paul Sartre, Maurice Merleau-Ponty, and Jean Beaufret) “turned away from the institutions of their formative years and toward alternative venues for critical and philosophical thought.”⁵⁵ Furthermore, it can be observed that the same principle is evident

⁴⁹ Kleinberg 2005, p. 57.

⁵⁰ Sirinelli 1988, pp. 540–545.

⁵¹ Cavaillès, Quoted in: Sirinelli 1988, p. 542.

⁵² Schroeder-Gudehus 1986.

⁵³ Bosquelle 1991, pp. 243–245.

⁵⁴ Sirinelli 1988, p. 542.

⁵⁵ Kleinberg 2005, p. 4.

among the younger generation of Russian emigrants, both in terms of year of birth and in the radical transformation of philosophical interests in 1933. The younger generation of Russian emigrants, beginning in 1933, ceased publishing in Russian and commenced the process of their formation as French philosophers.⁵⁶

Roth identifies a generational political conflict, specifically noting the stance of intellectuals who positioned themselves outside politics (such as Julien Benda on the role of values in philosophical texts in *The Treason of the Intellectuals*, 1927) and the critique of this political detachment expressed by the ENS graduate and *agrégé* Paul Nizan in 1932. The criticism of Nizan was directed against such “watchdogs” of the French Academy as Henri Bergson, Émile Boutroux, Léon Brunschvicg, André Lalande, Gabriel Marcel, and Jacques Maritain. Roth places Kojève’s 1947 book on Hegel within this political context, suggesting that Kojève, as a representative of the 1930s–1940s generation, advocates for a philosophy grounded solely in political orientation, wherein the value of life is found in the willingness to risk it in mortal danger.⁵⁷

As Kleinberg notes, the “generation of 1933” felt compelled to theorize war and senseless violence within a teleological framework before embarking on practical political paths in the postwar era.⁵⁸ If French philosophy could not adequately address these issues, young intellectuals sought answers from the “three H’s”: Hegel, Husserl, and Heidegger. To sever ties with the philosophical education of their youth, “For the generation of 1933, the move away from the *heimisch* grounds of the traditional French canon led to Kojève.”⁵⁹ Kleinberg devotes significant attention to the concept of *heimisch* (‘familiar’ or ‘home’) to explain both why Heidegger became the central figure of this new philosophy and to characterize the position of Russian émigrés in this new intellectual environment. Thus, Kleinberg interprets the outsider status of Russian émigrés as an existentially real factor that influenced the production of new knowledge.

The search for “home” and the experience of being “outside of home” was a common theme across the entire “generation of 1933,” encompassing both migrants and French intellectuals. However, Heideggerian philosophy in France not only found refuge but also encountered postwar criticism for its political affiliations. As Kleinberg notes regarding the inevitability of this critique, it stemmed from an internal contradiction in France’s reception of Heidegger’s philosophy:

The peculiar nature of the reception of Heidegger in France lies precisely in the fact that the site that has become the “home” of his appropriation in philosophy is entirely uncomfortable with the *un(heim)lich* nature of that philosophy and the means by which it entered—through a continental drift of Eastern European and German emigres who found positions within the French universities and publishing industries but were outside the mainstream of French academic thought (Kleinberg 2005, pp. 286–287).

Thus, the “French Heidegger,” shaped through Kojève’s interpretation, became “a domesticated Heidegger,”⁶⁰ one that was opposed to the French academic tradition and helped form a new existential philosophy for the “generation of 1933” – Aron, Merleau-Ponty, and Sartre. Considering this existential reading of Heidegger’s transfer to France, it is essential to note that only the migrant, as both outsider and “stranger,” embodying what Heidegger

⁵⁶ Shashlova 2020.

⁵⁷ Roth 1988, p. 107.

⁵⁸ Kleinberg 2005, p. 57.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 109.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 108.

termed *Heimatlosigkeit* (“homelessness”), could reveal the concept of the *unheimlich* as a condition of strangeness, unfamiliarity, and foreignness.⁶¹

Thus, existential “homelessness” itself created a drive to appropriate and domesticate what was foreign, as opposed to adhering to the academic tradition of isolation and intellectual superiority. Kleinberg shows that not only institutional factors but also ideological factors – the very experiences of war and Germany’s cultural boycott – constituted fertile ground for the assimilation of German philosophy through the efforts of émigrés. In Mertonian terms, the French “generation of 1933” sought to move from being insiders within the French academic field to becoming outsiders and critics by engaging with German philosophy and culture. This is reflected in the keen French interest in travel to Germany in the early 1930s, in the acquisition of scholarships, and in the writing of dissertations and studies (such as those by Aron and Sartre) focused on German theories in opposition to the French tradition.

In this regard, it is necessary to answer the question of what significance Russian philosophy had for the adaptation of émigrés in France, and especially for the transfer of German ideas by Kojève. The biography of Kojève, written by J. Love, completely roots Kojève’s philosophy in the tradition of Russian literature and philosophy, as well as the Russian avant-garde. Since Love focuses on the interpretation of Kojève’s Hegelianism through Russian literature, both the relations with French academics and the influence of German connections disappear from the history of Kojève’s philosophical formation.⁶² In Kleinberg’s language, the search for a home by the younger generation and the experience of its homelessness signifies both a specific break with the Russian philosophical tradition (especially represented in the older generation of the Russian émigrés), and the need to find a new existential home in French culture. In this regard, it is rather necessary to emphasize not the rootedness in the Russian *heimisch*, but the detachment from it, the detachment from the authority of the older generation of the Russian émigrés.

3.3. “Conceptual transfer” or “terminological transplantation” Heidegger’s phenomenology by Russian emigration in France

Two important monographs, Rockmore’s and Kleinberg’s, on the transformation of French thought are devoted to Heidegger. Indeed, the content of French philosophical discussions in post-war France is located in a single field of phenomenology, existentialism and atheistic anti-humanism (Descombes, Geroulanos). The single field of Franco-German philosophy led to the fact that it became possible to speak of Heidegger as a “French” philosopher (Rockmore), or to pose the question “How did Sartre make Heidegger French?”.⁶³ The unity of the political, historical and philosophical context is revealed in Kleinberg’s thesis: “The reception of Heidegger’s philosophy in France is the story of a “generation” of French intellectuals who grew up in the shadow of World War I and subsequently turned away from traditional French philosophy and toward a new and different strain of philosophical thought imported from Germany through an influx of foreign intellectuals”.⁶⁴

Considering this Heideggerian transformation in unity with special attention to Hegel and Husserl, it is necessary to point out the specific strategy of the Russian emigration to win the interest of the French audience by turning to the latest German philosophical ideas. Understanding the philosophical activity of Russian emigrants of the younger generation as a strategy for gaining recognition allows us to see in philosophical texts not only “systems of knowledge,” but also specific career trajectories. And in Kojève’s case, this situation includes

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 154, 194

⁶² See Love 2018.

⁶³ Kleinberg 2005, p. 3.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 4.

both the use of Heidegger's philosophy to interpret Hegel and his dissertation project on modern physics.

It is obvious that without Heidegger's language, Kojève would not have been able to implement his interpretation of Hegel. If we rely on Bourdieu's analysis of academic recognition, it is clear that using the philosophy of Heidegger, the most authoritative and provocative German philosopher in France in the 1930s, was a natural way to create a seminar (Kojève) intended to distance itself from the French academy but also to create an alternative reading of contemporary philosophy. However, the departure from previous discourse and the adoption of a previously nonexistent interpretation of Hegel were only achievable through Kojève's opposition of the atheism of Hegel-Heidegger to Russian (Berdyayev) and French religious interpretations (Jean Wahl, Gaston Fessard). From our point of view, it is atheism as a philosophical attitude that allowed Kojève to realize his own philosophical project. However, it is also important to note the "terminological transplantation" conducted by Kojève.

To illustrate the significance of the philosophical activity of migrants, we will demonstrate some of the first responses to Heidegger's *Being and Time*. It is noteworthy that these responses were predominantly among Russian émigrés. Attempts to translate Heidegger's terminology were an important task, especially in the context of the aforementioned Cassirer-Heidegger debate of 1929. The reaction to Heidegger demonstrated a readiness for a philosophical turn and new discussions. Institutionally, these translations and receptions indicate the need to find a new space of ontological and existential problems for outsider philosophers gaining attention in the French environment. However, based on the studies of Roth, Rockmore, Kleinberg and Geroulanos, one can conclude that these first attempts, popular among émigrés, remained in the shadow of Kojève's seminar. On the one hand, authoritative French philosophers were practically not engaged in the adaptation of Heidegger's language, and among the emigrants there was a competitive struggle for the first translations and criticism. But as the post-war history of philosophy (Descombes) shows, Kojève's synthesis of Hegel and Heidegger, which created an atheistic anthropological interpretation of being, will have a decisive significance.

The reactions to the publication of *Being and Time* are as important for historical and philosophical research as the book itself. In France, critiques of Heidegger have been published in Russian and French. Before the publication of the first French translations of Heidegger,⁶⁵ works on phenomenology by Jean Héring, Georges Gurvitch, Emanuel Levinas, appeared in France.⁶⁶ The reception of phenomenology in France was mainly due to the activity of émigrés, who carried out the transfer of German ideas to France through the adaptation of new philosophical ideas. In other words, lacking a stable position in the cultural and academic environment, emigrant philosophers were able to propose the most original ideas, thereby gaining recognition within the insular environment of French academia.

Gurvitch's book *Les tendances actuelles de la philosophie allemande: E. Husserl, M. Scheler, E. Lask, N. Hartmann, M. Heidegger*⁶⁷ was the first attempt in French to make sense of Heideggerian concepts within the framework of the phenomenological movement. Gurvitch's study of Husserl, Heidegger, Scheler and Lask is accompanied by a critical note by L. Brunschvicg, who highlights the limits of these trends in philosophy. While Gurvitch, in his book, criticizes Heidegger's moralism (he thus makes, with Brunschvicg, a critical reading of phenomenology), Russian émigré philosopher Berdyayev, the most authoritative in this field, underlines the success of Heidegger's philosophy: "Heidegger [...] is incontestably the most

⁶⁵ Martin Heidegger "Qu'est-ce que la métaphysique ?" and "De la nature de la cause". See Heidegger 1931; 1932.

⁶⁶ See Héring 1926; Gurvitch 1930; Levinas 1930.

⁶⁷ Gurvitch 1930.

remarkable philosopher of modern Germany.”⁶⁸ Overall, Russian émigrés received Heidegger’s book much more favorably than the French public. Indeed, in the emigrant community in France, Heidegger is seen as a true revival of metaphysics.

Given the situation of cultural and institutional boycott of Germany in the interwar period, it can be assumed that the older generation of French philosophers was interested in new German ideas but reluctant to respond to them, leaving this new space of philosophical ideas to those on the academic periphery. After all, it was the patronage of new research that was exercised by those who shaped “official” French philosophy at the beginning of the twentieth century. As we indicated above, authoritative French philosophers were the patrons of the innovative journal *Recherches Philosophiques*.

Notably, there is no response to Gurvitch’s book in *Recherches philosophiques*. In this journal was published a translation of Heidegger’s “On the Essence of Ground” («De la nature de la cause») and reviews, mainly in German, of books on phenomenology. The author of most phenomenology book reviews is Kojève, which leads us to assume that the view on Heidegger’s interpretation in this review was dictated by the philosophical orientation of Kojève himself. The failure to take into account Gurvitch’s book is interesting as a fact revealing the specificity of institutional relations. However, we do not have enough documents to shed light on the relationships between Gurvitch, Koyré and Kojève. In any case, they all share the same trajectory: the use of the transfer of German philosophy to France, the passage into the French academic world and the cessation of publications in Russian in favor of French, from 1933.

Parallel to the adaptation of Heidegger into French, older generation Russian émigrés in France wrote critiques in Russian. Most of the reviews in the Russian journals focused directly on Gurvitch’s book, alongside the analysis of Heidegger’s terminology. For example, Berdyaev wrote:

It is very typical that the Russian [Gurvitch] presents modern German philosophy to the French. [...] The French do not know these trends at all, even French philosophers know them by hearsay. [...] The average Frenchman, even if he is a philosopher, cannot understand and appreciate the German metaphysical genius (Berdyaev 1930, p. 115).

Berdyaev’s analysis of Heidegger’s book is once again an opportunity to describe the particular situation of Russian emigration in Europe. Berdyaev also relied on a widespread opinion regarding the separation between Germans and French, which was also discussed by Europeans themselves:

The separation between French and German philosophical culture is striking. They are completely different worlds of thought. With rare exceptions, the French do not understand German philosophy; it appears to them as barbaric, obscure, devoid of clarity, violating the secular intellectual order that the philosophy of Antiquity revealed. [...] Metaphysical genius dominates among the Germans and is lacking among the French, despite their other intellectual gifts (Berdyaev 1930, p. 115).

Therefore, it is surprising to observe such a unanimous description of the confrontation between German and French cultures in Berdyaev, Levinas and others. Emigrants attempted to find their place in these social and cultural hierarchies.

3.4. *Dasein* interpreted by Russian émigrés

One of the most studied and enigmatic concepts in Heidegger’s philosophy is that of *Dasein*. For example, V. Seseman wrote a review of *Being and Time* in Russian and translated *Dasein*

⁶⁸ Berdyaev 1930, p. 119.

as “being-consciousness” (“bytie-soznanie”).⁶⁹

N. Lossky, in his criticism of Gurvitch, translates the concept of *Dasein* as “the existence of man” or “the actual empirical being of man”.⁷⁰ In order to understand why Lossky translated the concept of *Dasein* in this way, we must turn to Hegel’s *Phenomenology of Spirit*. In the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, Hegel uses the concept of *Dasein*. The phrase “present being” is a translation of the concept *Dasein*, found in Hegel’s first Russian translation of 1913 as well as later translations. However, in the 1916 translation of *The Science of Logic*, we find the translation of *Dasein* as “existence”.

Heidegger’s first publication in French was accompanied by an introduction by Koyré. Koyré qualifies Heidegger’s philosophy as the philosophy of existence, thus distancing it from phenomenology. He considers Heidegger’s key issues (in *Being and Time*, «On the Cause of Nature», *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, and «What is Metaphysics?») to be the question of the “existent Self” (“*Moi existant*”). Gurvitch used the word “*Je*”. Koyré used “*être propre*” to translate authentic being. *Das Man* is translated by Koyré as “*On*”.⁷¹ Corbin translates *Dasein* as “existence”⁷² as well as “present being” (“*l’être présent*”),⁷³ “the very presence of man in the world” (“*la présence même de l’homme dans le monde*”),⁷⁴ “exist-in-fact” (“*exister-en-fait*”).⁷⁵

Gurvitch’s book is the first major publication on Heidegger in French, explaining the new philosophical terminology. Besides the article from Shūzō Kuki (1928),⁷⁶ a review by P. Wust appeared in 1930, mentioning Heidegger’s book, the title of which is translated as *Existence and Time* (*L’existence et le temps*).⁷⁷ This is due to the understanding of the content of Heidegger’s phenomenology and the problem of translating the concept of *Dasein*, which led to an emphasis on the problem of existence, which led the author of the review to translate Heidegger’s work in this way.

Gurvitch gives several translations of *Dasein* – human existence, the being of humanity (*l’existence humaine, l’être de l’humanité*):

Being for death, that is to say the finite character of temporality, is the true foundation of historical character of human existence (*Dasein*) (Gurvitch 1930, p. 223);

Thus in history, identical to the being of humanity, all of Heidegger’s existential analysis culminates, deepened by his theory of time (Gurvitch 1930, p. 223).

Hyppolite translates *Dasein* as “being-there” and *Existenz* as “existence”. Hyppolite emphasizes that “*Dasein* is the *immediately determined* being, the being which still has reflection outside of itself”.⁷⁸ And in the translation of *Phenomenology of Spirit*, we find, with the translation of *Dasein*, the following quote:

That which is limited to a natural life does not, of itself, have the power to go to the beyond its immediate being-there; but he is pushed beyond this being-there by another, and this being torn from his position is his death (Hegel 1939, p. 71).

⁶⁹ See Sezeman 1928.

⁷⁰ See Losskiĭ 1931.

⁷¹ See Koyré 1931.

⁷² See Heidegger 1931, pp. 16, 20.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, p. 17.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 18.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 20.

⁷⁶ See Shūzō 1928.

⁷⁷ See Wust 1930, p. 408.

⁷⁸ Hegel 1939. See the footnote 72 of Hyppolite, p. 36.

The same lines from Hegel are also quoted by Kojève:

What is limited to a natural life cannot by itself go-beyond (*hinausgehen*) its immediate [or given] empirical-existence (*Dasein*); but it is driven beyond (*hinausgetrieben*) this existence by something-else [than itself], and this fact-of-being-wrested[-and-projected-]beyond (*Hinausgerissenwerden*) is its death (Kojève 1973, p. 136).

Kojève deliberately separates *Dasein* in Hegel and Heidegger. We can say that Kojève uses the concept of *Dasein* in three senses:

- 1) “Empirical existence” is the fundamental notion of *Dasein* in Hegel. For example, when he contrasts Plato’s world of ideas or Hegel’s Notion with the empirical world: “The World of phenomena is what Hegel calls *Dasein*, empirical Existence.”⁷⁹
- 2) *Dasein* as a Heideggerian concept.
- 3) *Dasein* as the intersection of Heideggerian characterization and Hegelian «being» in the concept of man.

We can therefore conclude that all the translations of the concept of *Dasein* in the texts of Hegel and Heidegger form a whole field of meanings, including the “immediate”, the “concrete” and the “empirical”. It is certainly possible to question Kojève’s translation, or at least to define a new framework for the “empirical”. But it becomes clear that for Lossky, Heidegger’s “empirical being of man” is analogous to Hegel’s *Dasein*.⁸⁰

The philosophies of Hegel and Heidegger reveal their affinities not only in Kojève’s assessment, but also in that of Gurvitch and other philosophers, so that the language of Heidegger itself is interpreted through the Hegelian lexicon. In Lossky’s view, “Hegel’s dialectic [...] is a purely empirical method of thinking”. Despite existing attempts to characterize “man’s actual empirical being” as empirical in the Husserlian sense, our position is that in this assessment of Heidegger by Lossky we find an analysis of Hegel. Does this mean that Kojève’s notion of “empirical-existence” is linked to the Russian perception of Hegelian philosophy, notably through the prism of Lossky? There is no evidence or mention to suggest that Kojève was inspired by Lossky’s work. But we can find a basis for comparison between the empirical notions of Lossky and those of Kojève. Lossky writes in a text published in French in 1928:

The word “empiricism” (from the Greek word *ἐμπειρία*, experience) must designate any gnoseological current affirming that experience is the fundamental source of knowledge. Obviously, the most important differences between the different perspectives of empiricism are linked to what it means under this motif “experience” (sensible experience, non-sensible experience, etc.), this or that representative of this current. Here it is empiricism which believes that experimental knowledge of the external world is created by the causal actions of external things on the body and soul of the knowing subject (Lossky 1928, p. 21).

Thus, within French philosophy, a series of concepts from Heidegger’s phenomenological philosophy emerged, which were subsequently utilized not only for reinterpreting Hegel but also for critiquing Husserl and constructing French phenomenology. As Strangers and Outsiders, Russian emigrants between the world wars effected not only conceptual transfer or terminological transplantation but also a metamorphosis of philosophical concepts.

4. Problematising Kojève’s influence and recognition

⁷⁹ Kojève 1980, p. 103.

⁸⁰ For criticism of Lossky’s translation, see Plotnikov 1995.

After the end of World War II and after Kojève left the academic field for the political arena, his posthumous recognition as a leading neo-Hegelian has a difficult to define meaning. On the one hand, attention to Hegel's dialectic of Master and Slave, negativity and Nothingness do indeed fill the space of contemporary discussions. But very often without mentioning his name. However, it can hardly be said that Kojève's interpretation of Hegel became canonical, since it was too original. For example, Derrida, mentioning Kojève, characterized the period of the combination of Hegel, Marx, Husserl and Heidegger in pre-war France:

The anthropologic reading of Hegel, Husserl, and Heidegger was a mistake in one entire respect, perhaps the most serious mistake. And it is this reading which furnished the best conceptual resources to postwar French thought (Derrida 1982, p. 117).

These fruitful "mistakes" allowed Kojève to make a real revolution, but this is precisely why Kojève remains one of the non-trivial interpreters in this history of the transfer of German ideas, but not a classic. As de Lussy noted, "Kojève remains misrecognized."⁸¹ The paradoxical "an unknown classic" (Filoni) demonstrates not only the modern path of scientific recognition described by Merton, but also a completely incalculable thing – an intangible influence on the development of philosophy. As Rockmore noted, "It is difficult to measure something as nebulous as influence. Even the term is difficult to analyze precisely."⁸² This is characteristic of philosophy, since, unlike other sciences that require references and explanations in relation to previous collectives, philosophical texts are directed not so much at the study of predecessors, but at the ideas themselves.

Through to Descombes, Kojève is now studied as one of the main figures of French interwar philosophy. The image of Kojève as the main interpreter of Hegel was originally introduced in 1979.⁸³ Descombes assumed that since 1933, when Kojève began his famous seminar on Hegel, a number of themes have been emerging in French philosophy that have determined the content of the French postmodernist tradition: atheism, the concept of desire, the death of the author and man, the end of history. Pinto and Fabiani's studies, which point to his successful struggle for scientific recognition, were published after Descombes' investigation, so it can be assumed that their images of Kojève are a secondary reconstruction, but already an institutional history of philosophy.

The testimonies from the 1940s and 1950s indicate that Kojève's recognition peaked after the publication of his book in 1947.⁸⁴ Althusser published criticism of Kojève in 1947, at an early stage of his career.⁸⁵ Also, in characterizing French existentialism through Hegel and his concepts of man and history, Jan Patočka noted in one of his letters from 1951: "That is why we observe today how younger French philosophers, having gone through existentialism and phenomenology, turn again to Hegel – under the leadership of Kozhevnikov, the entire *Critique* group (especially Eric Weil and Bataille)."⁸⁶ This recognition of Kojève's leadership and influence was expanded to include the activities of Bataille's journal.

However, until his death in 1968, Kojève participated minimally in scientific discussions. In 1979, Descombes constructs a narrative in which Kojève seems to be the central figure of French neo-Hegelianism, existentialism, phenomenology, and Marxism all in one. Before

⁸¹ See Lussy 2007.

⁸² Rockmore 1996, p. 1.

⁸³ Descombes 1979.

⁸⁴ Kojève 2014.

⁸⁵ See Althusser 1994.

⁸⁶ «Proto také dnes pozorujeme, jak se mladší francouzští filosofové, prošli existencialismem a fenomenologií, obracejí znovu k Hegelovi – pod vůdcovstvím Koževnikova celá skupina *Critique* (zvláště Eric Weil a Bataille)». Patočka 2001, p. 37

Descombes, no one had paid such close attention to Kojève's philosophy. Nevertheless, after Descombes, Kojève continued to be regarded as one of the key figures of French philosophy, first by Roth, who published a list of participants in the Kojève seminar, then J. Butler (1987)⁸⁷ and later by G. Jarczyk and P.-J. Labarrière (1996),⁸⁸ who further solidify Descombes' theory.

It is necessary to raise the question to what extent Descombes' book should be considered a great exaggeration. For example, one of the book's main characters, Sartre and Foucault, representing contemporary post-Kojève philosophy, did not mention Kojève in their works. Sartre researcher Paolo Missiroli points out that, firstly, the concepts of Kojève and Sartre are fundamentally irreducible to each other and are opposed, and secondly, the anthropologization of phenomenology was a commonplace and is not Kojève's merit. For example, Sartre mentions Kojève only in the posthumously published "Notebooks for an Ethics" (1983),⁸⁹ and it is necessary to point out the fundamental theoretical and political differences between Kojève and Sartre, rather than substantiate the unity of their ideas. Contrasting the ontological concepts of Sartre and Kojève, namely their dualism, Missiroli comes to the conclusion that if for Sartre it is possible to overcome the distance between *Being-in-itself* and *Being-for-itself*, then for Kojève this distance is absolute.⁹⁰ In essence, the concept of freedom represents the fundamental contradictory. If for Sartre freedom consists in constructing one's own project, then for Kojève it is accepting the risk of death in the struggle, as well as in the subordination of Nature. Sartre criticizes Kojève in "Notebooks for an Ethics" precisely the absence of absolute freedom.

Actually, Merleau-Ponty characterized all post-war French philosophy as Hegelian:

All the great philosophical ideas of the past century—the philosophies of Marx and Nietzsche, phenomenology, German existentialism, and psychoanalysis – had their beginnings in Hegel; it was he who started the attempt to explore the irrational and integrate it into an expanded reason which remains the task of our century (Merleau-Ponty 1964, p. 63).

However, Merleau-Ponty offered a commentary on Jean Hyppolite's perspective on this matter.

Foucault also does not mention Kojève, and always speaks of Hyppolite's Hegel, following the academic tradition of recognizing authority. Foucault was a student of Hyppolite at the *Khâgne*: "Those who were in the *Khâgne* after the war remember Mr. Hyppolite's courses on the *Phenomenology of the Spirit*."⁹¹ Foucault paid tribute to Hyppolite in his inaugural speech at the *Collège de France* (1971): "I consider that my greatest debt is to Jean Hyppolite."⁹² Speaking specifically about the criticism of Hegel, Foucault, as a graduate of the prestigious class of *khâgne* and *normalien*, speaks of his teacher, who gave the foundation for both Hegelianism and anti-Hegelianism. Despite the fact that Hegel is the subject of the young Foucault's first dissertation, *The Constitution of a Historical Transcendental in Hegel's "Phenomenology of Spirit"* (1949)⁹³ and the bibliography includes a book by Kojève, there are no references in the text, no dispute or agreement with Kojève, no comparison of Kojève with Hyppolite. This is a clear example of how Kojève was excluded from the educational system and influenced more free and "socially unattached intellectuals."

These examples problematize the direct influence of Kojève on the philosophical ideas of the twentieth century. One of the essential reasons that we have considered in this article is

⁸⁷ Butler 2012.

⁸⁸ Jarczyk, Labarrière 1996.

⁸⁹ Missiroli 2022, p. 423.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 436.

⁹¹ Canguilhem, Foucault 1969, p. 131.

⁹² Foucault 1981, p. 74.

⁹³ See Foucault, Bouton 2024.

the institutional facts and the closed world of academic recognition in France. But the creation of a new understanding and popularization are two different things. Perhaps this is why Kojève's name gradually, during the 50s–70s, disappears from the philosophical field. Sartre becomes the Celebrity due to the popularization of Heidegger⁹⁴, but this popularization has a completely different form than a profound influence. In contrast, we find the recognition of Kojève by Heidegger in 1967. There are several references to Kojève in Heidegger's correspondence with Arendt, in which Heidegger assesses Kojève's understanding of his philosophy: "Kojève has a rare passion for thinking. French thought of the past few decades is an echo of these lectures. Even the abandonment of these talks is itself an idea. But Kojève only reads *Being and Time* as anthropology."⁹⁵ It is possible that it is Heidegger's recognition that is one of the most significant, despite the fact that he does not agree with the very interpretation of his work.

5. Conclusion

The considered concepts of the sociology of scientific recognition allow us to apply the concepts of Merton and Bourdieu to the history of French philosophy. It is not possible to analyse the transformations in the academic environment of France in the interwar period without understanding the contributions of outsiders and strangers – migrants who performed the most important function of transferring philosophical ideas, being in a situation of struggle for scientific recognition. That is why Merton's concept of scientific recognition finds its continuation in his study of insiders and outsiders, revealing the structure of the production of scientific knowledge. Taking as a basis the critical histories of modern French philosophy (Descombes, Roth, Rockmore, Jarczyk and Labarrière, Kleinberg, Geroulanos, etc.), we discovered a special function of migrants as "socially unattached intellectuals" – to create new knowledge on the periphery of the French academic environment due to the transfer of accumulated ideas in Germany. Merton describes the system of Insiders and Outsiders, indicating a social group of scholars. Merton's approach allows considering migrant scholars from the Russian Empire as Outsiders in a new environment, but simultaneously as Insiders regarding their own tradition of Russian philosophy. At the same time, being involved in German philosophical institutes, Russian émigrés were translators of German philosophy to France. While French scholars were limited in academic mobility during the interwar boycott of Germany, migrants from the Russian Empire first assimilated in Germany and then in France. Having commenced their academic studies with the examination of Russian philosophy, the young scholars subsequently directed their attention to German philosophy: Hegel, Husserl and Heidegger. This transfer between Insider and Outsider status enabled the younger generation of Russian emigration to shape new currents of French thought, departing from national issues. The most prominent philosopher in this process is Alexandre Kojève, whose career trajectory and thought became the subject of the above-mentioned studies of the history of philosophy. Having examined institutional, generational and existential factors in the formation of Kojève's career, the article raised the question of the possible study of the influence on the development of philosophy. On the one hand, a number of researchers point to the key role of Kojève, and even Heidegger recognizes him as the source of all modern French discussions. On the other hand, this is opposed by the analysis of (non)mentions of the philosopher. The continuing interest in the figure of Kojève and the growth of research into his manuscripts, as well as political activity, indicate that the "misrecognized classic" is getting his place in the academy. The rethinking of the philosophical canon, initiated by migrants in the

⁹⁴ Kleinberg 2005, p. 111.

⁹⁵ Arendt, Heidegger 2004, p. 133.

conditions of existential “homelessness” and the position of an academic outsider, this rethinking was so fruitful that it remains relevant to this day.

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