TO INSTITUTE, TO PRIMALLY INSTITUTE
/STIFTERN, URSSTIFTERN/

Husserl’s first readers and translators in France.
A possible origin of continental philosophy


Stichworte: Institution, Institutionalisierung, Stiftung, Urstiftung, Archiv, „Kontinentale Philosophie“.

In front of this esteemed institution and in one of the most important institutes of the institution of philosophy (I mean this seminar, the hospitality and openness of the institution to invite, to donate, to accept others, to generate and regenerate through others, but also the institution’s ability to calculate and prepare to guard itself...

1 Članak je raden u okviru naučnoistraživačkog projekta Instituta za filozofiju i društvenu teoriju u Beogradu Regionalni i evropski aspekti integrativnih procesa u Srbiji: civilizacijske pretpostavke, stvarnost i izgledi za buduènost, koji finansira Ministarstvo nauke i zaštite štovne sredine Republike Srbije (br. 149031). Prva verzija ovoga teksta prezentirana je 13. jula 2007. na University College u Dablinu.
from others and leave them on its threshold), I would like to present some of the terms of my project. Within the title itself I immediately specify three directions of research, and my task is to show the unconditional relation between them. The first part of the title concerns a specific segment of Husserl’s phenomenological investigations: apart from the verb stiften, urstiften or gestiftet, Husserl uses the German nouns Stiftung, Urstiftung, Nachstiftung or Endstiftung. Even today, despite the fact that there is still a great deal of time, before we can expect all of Husserl’s manuscripts to be published, it is relatively easy to defend the importance of Husserl’s idea and the importance that these, still strange, words have for Husserl’s work in general. This importance is revealed in the second part of the title. When the newly built archive opened its doors to its first visitors in Leuven, before the Second World War (one of the first visitors being Merleau-Ponty) or right after the war (the first one certainly being Paul Ricoeur), it was impossible to imagine the strength of Husserl’s investment and insistence on the pair Stiftung/Urstiftung. The responsibility for concealing the uniqueness of these words is borne by Emmanuel Lévinas, who translates the word Urstiftung in Cartesian Meditations (1929) in two ways. Lévinas, who never worked in the archive, could be a very good example of several possible suppositions, (1) that the importance of Husserl’s “unknown” strategies can only be found in unpublished manuscripts, (2) that completely different generations of users of Husserl’s archives (in Leuven or Paris) witness an identical belief in the importance of Husserl’s discovery (Derrida or Lyotard; Richir or perhaps Depraz), (3) that Merleau-Ponty’s translation (Stiftung is institution) dominates and has a

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2 Merleau-Ponty visited Louvain for the first time on 1 April 1939 (he returned in 1946). Of the many texts, he consulted Die Krisis, followed by a series of manuscripts marked D (primordiale Konstitution, Urkonstitution) which still remain unpublished, etc. Cf. H. L. Van Breda, “Maurice Merleau-Ponty et les Archives-Husserl à Louvain”, Revue de Métaphysique et de Morale, No. 4, 1962, pp. 410-430.

bigger influence on the latter interpretations of Husserl than, for example, Ricoeur’s first solutions of the translation
d (4) that precisely the translation of Stiftung as institution, makes Husserl a purely “French matter” not only because it comes directly from the archives without any influence of German reception or German scholars, incorporates Husserl into the juridical and political milieu of France and enables it to be interpreted from leftist and Marxist positions
and finally, (5) (Ur)Stiftung as a (proto)institution, brings phenomenology into completely differing texts of important French philosophers who haven’t read Husserl in the archive, but who then “with him” necessarily think institution as such.
This final point is supposed to introduce the third part of the title which concerns the origin of Continental Philosophy. The idea is that the reading, translating

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4 Ricoeur, immediately upon his arrival from Leuven with the first translation of Husserl’s 1935 “Vienna Conference”, in his first text concerning Husserl “The Sense of History,” from 1949, speaks of history as a most important moment in the understanding of ourselves and cites § 15 of the book Crisis whose title is “Reflections on the Method of our Historical Considerations”:

“That sort of elucidation of history by which we return to ourselves in order to question the original foundation /die Urstiftung; la fondation originelle in French original/ of the goals which connect the chain of the generations to come…, this elucidation, I say, is only the authentic coming to awareness by the philosopher of the true end of his willing, of what is willing in him, comes from willing, and is willing as such from his spiritual ancestors.”

“I can know who I am, continues Ricoeur, through uncovering an origin /Ursprung/, a primal institution /Urstitfung; une proto-fondation, in French/, which is also a project toward the future horizon, a final institution /Endstiftung; une fondation finale/.” P. Ricoeur, Husserl. An Analysis of his phenomenology, Evanston, Northwestern University Press, 1967, p. 155. Revue de Métaphysique et de Morale 54 (1949), pp. 293-294.

After five years, in the text “Kant and Husserl”, Ricoeur precisely locates the place in the Leuven archive where this, as he calls it, “l’interprétation idéaliste de la constitution” can be found.

“Hereafter, Husserl will look on the side of temporality for the secret of the constitution of all supposed being-in-self. Former evidences, destroying the movement of constitution where they were primally instituted /Urstitfung; où elles sont nées originairement/, present themselves as a mysterious transcendence. The in-itself is the past of evidence and the possibility of reactivation of it in a new present. An entire group of manuscripts, Group C, struggles at the breach opened by the Third Meditation.” P. Ricoeur, Husserl, p. 193.

5 A good example is the book La Phénoménologie (Paris, PUF, 1954) by Jean-François Lyotard, which is under a great deal of influence by Ricoeur.

and influence of Husserl, which began in his Belgian archive and continued in Paris, can institute what we call “Continental Philosophy”. This means that Husserl’s strategy with Stiftung/Urstiftung can be the source of this syntagma “Continental Philosophy” because the thinking of the institution of philosophy (the question “What is the institution of philosophy?” hides the fundamental question “What is philosophy?”) is structured as the thinking of Europe, as the thinking of humanity /Menschenheit/ and as the thinking of an encounter with the other (intersubjectivity, community).

Both Merleau-Ponty and Cairns translate the word Stiftung – “the beautiful word of Stiftung /le beau mot de Stiftung/ which Husserl used to signify the infinite fecundity of every moment in time” – as institution. What is therefore institution and does this Latin syntagma – in statuere – truly carry over Husserl’s intention to find one operation or one form which differs from all the previous ones he used? It is about a creative act which begins something, which provides stability to something and which should differ from the words Begründung, Letzbegründung, Konstitution, Setzung, Fundierung etc.

I will, preliminarily and without taking too long, list several meanings of the word institution, which should be compared to Edmund Husserl’s intentions: beyond giving a beginning to something (to originate, to initiate; in French instituer means an act through which something is inaugurated) and beyond building (establishing) something on the land of the master (institution is always connected to architecture, to an object), to institute shares the same semantic line as the Latin word status. In statuere is to make something stand up (without help, without holding it up, rather having it stand by itself) or hold itself up vertically. The institution secures its status through statutes, that is, through internal rules (institutes). The sec-

7 “Philosophy is the “innate entelechy” of Europe, the “proto-phenomenon” of its culture.” P. Ricoeur, Husserl. An Analysis of his phenomenology, p. 152.
9 Dermot Moran, in the book Edmund Husserl. Founder of Phenomenology (Cambridge, Polity, 2005), mentions the word Urstiftung seven times, and translates it in four different ways (in the Index of this book Urstiftung is translated as foundation). Urstiftung is the primal institution, primary instituting, primary founding and primal foundation.
10 Therefore, in contrast to the word “foundation,” which assumes sitting and the stability that sitting affords one (fundamentum is the back side, anus). Fund means money.
ond, equally important corpus of the meaning and use of the verb to institute, refers to the \textit{par excellence} openness of an institution to: (1) signify or create a successor (a deal between generations), (2) to institute means to give instruction, educate and (3) to institute presumes the creation of a reserve or the creation of a place for something that has yet to come, is forthcoming, and is still absent or invisible.

As I pointed out earlier, the phrase \textit{in statuere} into which Husserl’s idea is suppose to be translated and transformed,\footnote{The colloquial meaning of \textit{Stifter} is Founder; \textit{Anstifter} is Initiator, while \textit{Stiftung} means a Foundation which provides stipends or grants for successful projects. The other two celebrated cases of Husserl’s use of these words should only briefly be mentioned: Heidegger’s “Die Ursprache aber ist die Dichtung als Stiftung des Seins”; and Kant’s concerning peace which is necessarily established /\textit{Frieden stiften}/. “Zum ewigen Frieden. Ein philosophischer Entwurf”, \textit{Kants gesammelte Schriften}, Band VIII, Berlin, Walter de Gruyter & Co., 1923, S. 349. Only in the last decade of his life does Kant frequently use the words \textit{stiften} or \textit{gestiften}. \textit{Stiften}, without a doubt, implies violence/force. Kant believes, and in many places clearly manifests (several times in the notes on his manuscripts) this belief, that something can be established, or rather institutionalized, through violence/force. That is to say that the act of violence/force is the inaugural act of any establishing, including the establishing of peace. For example, § 55 \textit{Metaphysics of Moral} begins with Kant’s hope that it is possible to establish a condition that comes close to right, through war /\textit{um etwa einen dem rechtlichen sich annähernden Zustand zu stiften}/. In the lectures from the winter semester of 1793/94, which were prepared for publication by Johann Friedrich Vigilantius (\textit{Metaphysik der Sitten Vigilantius}, Kant is quite distinct: “(…) because without violence right cannot be established, therefore violence must precede right, instead of rule based on rights founding force (strength/power). Take people \textit{in statu naturali}, they are \textit{ex leges}, apart from legal status, without any law, only some outside force, keeping them asleep.”(…) dass ohne Gewalt kein Recht gestiftet werden kann, so muss dem Recht die Gewalt vorausgehen, statt dessen der Regel nach das Recht die Gewalt begründet muss. An nehme Menschen \textit{in statu naturali}, sie sind \textit{ex leges}, in keinem rechtlichen Zustande, sie haben keine Gesetze, noch äußere Gewalt, die sie aufrecht erhält. \textit{Kants gesammelte Schriften}, Band XXVII, Kants Vorlesungen Band IV, Vorlesungen über Moralphilosophie, 2/1, Berlin, Walter de Gruyter & Co., 1975, S. 515.} already has a rich and fertile political-law tradition in France. Merleau-Ponty, in his notes on the course “L’Institution dans l’histoire personnelle et publique” (1954-1955), points out that it is precisely, Husserl, who through his pair \textit{Stiftung/Urstiftung}, manages to find the meaning of permanent revolution:

Revolution and institution: revolution is re-institution which has as its goal to overthrow /\textit{renversement}/ of the preceding institution (…) Revolution is a return to the source, the awakening of something that derails the founding idealizations,
their context, the future which is the past, the future which is a
much deeper comprehension of the past, which is gestiftet/institué/ instituted thought this past in a dual way. The double
aspect of institution: it is itself and it is on the other side of it-
self, restriction and openness.¹²

But these sentences don’t contain only Merleau-Ponty polem-
ics with Sartre, another French phenomenologist, nor does he just
evolve old questions in connection with Marxism or Trotsky. During
a course in which he meticulously analyses Marx, Proust and Freud,
Merleau-Ponty strives to show the advantage of the word “institu-
tion” (“An institution is not the position of a concept, but of a being,
the openness of a field”¹³) in relation to law, contract or constit-
tution.¹⁴ This is nothing else but the repeating of tradition: (1) while
listening to Merleau-Ponty we can hear Saint-Just’s celebrated calls
for the introduction of institutions into the Republic because they are
its soul;¹⁵ (2) when Merleau-Ponty speaks of a double aspect of insti-
tution he is in fact repeating Saint-Simon (the creator of the expres-
sion contre-institution “counter-institution” [1820]);¹⁶ (3) the rela-
tion of restriction and openness of the institution represents the de
facto convertible and incorporative power of the institution (within

¹² L’institution. La passivité. Notes de cours au Collège de France (1954-1955),

¹³ Ibid., p. 101. “L’institution, c’est le figure.” Gilles Deleuze, Empirisme et

¹⁴ This is Emile Durkheim’s position, but also that of French institutionalists
(Maruice Hauriou, Georges Renard, Joseph T. Delos), important jurists and
politicians between the two wars. “The essence of society is not the law but rather
institution.” (Ibid., p. 35; p. 45) writes Deleuze in 1953. In this book about Hume,
Deleuze copies portions of his introduction to a book he edited the same year. This is
his first book Instincts et Institutions (Hachette, 1953) in which he collects 66 ex-
cerpts of different authors concerning institution.

¹⁵ “Les institutions, qui sont l’âme de la République, nous manquent.” “Dis-
191. Alain Badiou begins his text “What is a philosophical institution?” (“Qu’est-ce
qu’une institution philosophique ? Ou : Adresse, transmission, inscription”, Condi-
we hear Husserl: “(…) the philosophical institution is not the guardian of philosophy,
rather it is the guardian of its historicity.”

¹⁶ One of Jacques Derrida last lectures was “A Model of Philosophy as a Coun-
ter-Institution” (23 August 2002; S.I.E.C.L.E., Coloque de Cerisy, Paris, Editions de
l’IMEC, 2005, pp. 246-261.)
the institution consciousness (Bergson), custom, *habitus*, energy, instinct are converted). 17

In order to presently examine and explain institution of *(Ur)*Stiftung into this complicated field covered by the words *in statuere* and *institution*, in order to discover the strength of Husserl’s intention and how far his opinion exceeds this context – simply put, does introducing Husserl into French philosophy means to institute a new (absolute) *Urstifter* 18, Edmund Husserl, who then institutes not just continental or analytical but also pure philosophy 19 or the institution of philosophy as such? – I propose three different visions or versions of Husserl’s intervention. Only the third one, which was provoked by one of Ricoeur’s fragments, written more than 30 years ago, could possibly justify my humble endeavor.

(1) Ingarden, in his 1967 Oslo lectures, 20 insists that the gradually transformation of the word *Setzung* (position; setzen, to set up) into *Stiftung*, signifies Husserl’s path towards idealism. Husserl substitutes the word *Setzung* (which can easily be found in Kant and Neokantians) starting with *Meditations* and * Formal and Transcendental Logic*, in order to reinforce the active strength of intentionality. Idealism is not to find one thing, or to accept and confirm its existence; ide-

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17 “A drive is satisfied inside an institution. (...) In marriage, sexuality is satisfied; in property greed.” Deleuze, *Empirisme et subjectivité*, p. 37; p. 46.

18 The Frenchman Descartes is *Urstifter* (“the primal founder, not only of the modern idea of objectivistic rationalism but also of the transcendental motif which explodes it”). Cf. § 16 *The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology*, Evanston, Northwestern University Press, 1970, p. 73; *HUA*, Band VI, S. 74. At the very end of his life Husserl differentiates between the absolute and relative proto-institution (Document 33 “Die Unterscheidung zwischen absoluter und relativer Urstiftung”, *Sommer* 1937). Cartesian’s intention is radical and absolute, just as proto-institution of Greek philosophy (*HUA*, Band XXIX, S. 421-423).


alism is to create that one thing, to enable the revelation of its being, the revelation of the thing itself. Ingarden points out that this is true in some cases, for example when a university is instituted, when through an act (stiften) the being of a university is uncovered. But what if a thing is in question? Ingarden is pretty certain that, from 1929 Husserl changes the form of every act of comprehension and introduces into it a possibility to institute (stiften) something (in this way the transcendental and intentional overlap as they area able to create).

(2) Another perspective weakens Husserl’s idealism if it accepts\(^{21}\) his insistence of the importance of history. Namely, there exists no order of the ideal (geometry is Husserl’s celebrated example) which through language (written and spoken) doesn’t simultaneously secure its own objectivity and its own non-temporality. Language is what constantly re-actualizes and once more completes (Nachstiftung; reinstitution) what has already been originally instituted. However, this is precisely the fundamental paradox of every Stiftung which Husserl insists upon: how come that something which is at the beginning, which is potential, which is not present in this actual act, how come that this first and potential implicit something is in every work and in the actual (Husserl calls this leistend in act)? Three questions: “how does every Stiftung renew and repeat Urstiftung?” , “how is it that Urstiftung is in every Stiftung?” and “how is it that the future is anticipated within the telos of a proto-act (Endstiftung is already in Urstiftung\(^{22}\)”)? – open the door to a series of famous questions: how are possible potential, reserve, delay, surplus etc.?\(^{23}\) One more thing: during the reoccurrence of the proto-in-

\(^{21}\) “Here the concept of institution is seen as a remedy /un rémede/ for difficulties of the philosophy of consciousness.” “Here the development of phenomenology into metaphysics of history will be prepared.” Résumés de cours. Collège de France 1952-1960, Paris Gallimard, 1968, p. 59, 65.


\(^{23}\) These are all questions which originated with the readings of Husserl’s manuscripts and about which different philosophers have written in the past decades.
stitution /Urstiftung/ by every forthcoming Stiftung, language simultaneously opens a possible communal world in which I and another, the past and the present, cross paths.

(3) The third interpretation of Husserl’s pair Stiftung/Urstiftung, is provoked by a short excerpt, found on page 181 of the text “The problem of the foundation of moral philosophy”, authored by the long-time director of Husserl’s archive in Paris Paul Ricoeur.\textsuperscript{24} Despite not quoting Husserl, Ricoeur implicitly writes by Husserl’s hand, using a newly published manuscript.\textsuperscript{25} Not only does the existence of this text refute Ingarden’s statement (and not only his) – Husserl wrote about primal institution much earlier than 1929 – this text clearly confirms that Husserl’s thoughts about the community are at the beginning of this adventure concerning the Stiftung. Ricoeur writes:

With institutions a new factor of passivity appears which is compounded with the passivity of the self-actualization of each person by himself and with the other passivity which corresponds to the initial intersubjective situation of inequality which we never stop correcting. (…) I mean that we can only act through structures of interaction which are already there and which tend to unfold their own history which consists of inertias and innovations which themselves are sedimented in their turn. (…) I introduced the word institution here, continu–es Ricoeur, because it seemed to me to respond to a double criterion: On the one hand, every institution leads back to an Urstiftung – a primordial mythical founding – so that institution signifies that I am already within the instituted. (…) I am never before the beginning of every institution, I am always in an after-the-fact situation. A second indication is furnished by

\textsuperscript{24} This text, which has still not been published in French, was first released in Italian in 1975. It was published in English in the journal \textit{Philosophy Today}, 22: 3, fall 1978, pp. 175-192.

\textsuperscript{25} In question is a manuscript numbered 28 “Problem: Transfer (Tradition) and Urstiftung”  /Übernahme und Urstiftung. Gedanken kollidieren nicht in der Intersubjektivität, aber Zwecke kollidieren eventuell/, E. Husserl, Zur Phänomenologie der Intersubjektivität, Zweiter Teil: 1921-1928, HUA, Band 14, 1973, S. 222-225. Ricoeur might not have recognized this manuscript, before it was published, probably because it was seen as not-classified. Iso Kern found that it belongs to manuscripts concerning the community, it was written in the 20’s /zwanziger Jahre/, or more precisely between 1921 and 1922.
the failure of every effort, phenomenological or otherwise, to draw the social and the political from the immediate I-you relation and, as a consequence, to do without neutral term. This dream of immediacy, of face to face relations without the intermediary of a neutral term is well-known. It is the dream that that dialogue should be the measure for every human relation. But we also know that even the most intimate dialogical relation is possible only on the basis of institution (...) 

Apart from Emanuel Lévinas’s implicit critiques (now, it is completely visible why Lévinas doesn’t mention Husserl’s (Ur)Stiftung anywhere), it seems to me that, already at this point, the task of philosophy to institute, to generate and to regenerate the community, is revealed. This is the beginning which ends with Husserl’s final texts concerning the absolute and relative primal institution of the institution of philosophy (or pure philosophy). The first task of philosophy is not just, as Derrida wrote in 1954, “la réactivation de la genèse” (the genesis of anything else outside of philosophy), but also “la réactivation de SA genèse”.26 This task is one and the same.

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STIFTEN / URSTIFTEN I NJEGOVO PREVOĐENJE
Husserlovi prvi čitaoci i prevodioci u Fransuskoj.
Jedna moguća geneza kontinentalne filozofije.

Sazetak

U ovom tekstu se razmatra značaj Husserlovih fenomenoloških istraživanja o (prvobitnoj) instituciji i institucionalizovanju (osim glagola stiften, urstiften ili gestiftet Husserl upotrebljava nemačke imenice Stiftung, Urstiftung ili Endstiftung). Petpostavlja se da je važnost ovih Husserlovih nedovoljno poznatih „strategija“ mogla da bude pronađena jedino u neobjavljenim manuskriptima, da su različite generacije konsultanata Husserlovih arhiva (u Luvenu ili Parizu) svedočila identičnu veru u značaj Husserlovih otkrića, da Merleau-Pontyjeva verzija prevoda (Stiftung je institution) dominira i da upravo prevod reči Stiftung sa institution, čini da „Husserl“ postane čisto „francuska stvar“. Ideja je da ovaj teatar čitanja, prevodenja i uticaja Husserla utemeljuje „kontinentalnu filozofiju“. To znači da Husserlova strategija sa Stiftung/Urstiftung može da bude u poreklu ove sintagme jer je mišljenje institucije filozofije strukturirano kao mišljenje Evrope, kao mišljenje čovečnosti /Menschheit/ i kao mišljenje susreta sa drugim (intersubjektivnost).

Ključne reči: Institucija, institucionalizovati, Stiftung, Urstiftung, arhiv, „kontinentalna filozofija“.