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Into the World.
The Movement of Patočka's Phenomenology

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Introduction

Jan Patočka is without a doubt the most influential and arguably the most important Czech philosopher of the 20th century and one of the principal members of the second generation of the phenomenological movement. For Patočka, philosophy is not only theory, but rather a way of responsible life, of life responsible to truth. His acceptance of becoming one of the spokesmen for Charter 77, which criticized the Czechoslovak communist government for violating human rights, then seems a logical consequence of his philosophical way of life. Yet, during his lifetime Patočka was not actively engaged in politics, not even in non-political politics. Rather, he philosophically reflected on ontological fundamentals of human being in the world. His thought was inspired mainly by two founding thinkers of phenomenology Edmund Husserl and Martin Heidegger. Yet, he followed these thinkers by quite radically criticizing them, and developed his own, original and inspiring, phenomenologically based philosophy.

In the last decade, there has been a growing interest in Patočka's thought. In English, Francesco Tava (2015) published a book on Patočka's philosophy emphasizing its political dimension and James Mensch (2016) a monograph focusing on Patočka's asubjective phenomenology. In German, Filip Karfík (2008) offered an interpretation of some of the key dimensions of Patočka's philosophy. In French, there are two books by Renaud Barbaras (2007 and 2011c), monographs written by Émilie Tardivel (2011), Emre Şan (2012), Karel Novotný (2013), and, recently, Marion Bernard (2016b) and Frédéric Jacquet (2016).¹ One finds also some collective volumes, such as Abrams and Chvatík (2011) or Meacham and Tava (2016), or special issues focused on Patočka's philosophy (Hagedorn – Dodd 2016).

There is only a limited amount of Patočka's works available in English. Until recently, there have been four books translated into English, all of them written by Patočka in the second half of the 1960s or in the 1970s: *An Introduction to Husserl's Phenomenology* (Patočka 1996a); *Heretical Essays in the Philosophy of History* (Patočka 1996); *Body, Community, Language, World* (Patočka 1998); and *Plato and Europe* (Patočka 2002a). Now, also Patočka's habilitation *The Natural World as a Philosophical Problem* from 1936 is available in English (Patočka 2016a). Some of Patočka's shorter essays and studies can be found in Kohák (1989) and Manton (2007). Fortunately, many important works by Patočka unavailable in English are found in French. And, there is also a representative selection of Patočka's writings in German.²

¹ One could also mention the book by Učník (2016).

² For an overview of Patočka's available texts, see Tava (2016: 156–158).

Cause

Acknowledging the growing interest in Patočka's philosophy and considering the character of available primary and secondary literature, I find a comprehensive, in-depth, and contemporary presentation of Patočka's phenomenology in English to be a missing but indeed necessary addition to the overall discourse.

I deliberately focus on phenomenology as the fundamental dimension of Patočka's thought. Although there might be some disagreement about the core of Patočka's philosophy, it is obvious that phenomenology is continuously its methodological point of departure and in this sense the basis of it. Yet it is far from being a steady basis. Rather, it was, implicitly or explicitly, a constant problem for Patočka. His concept of phenomenology was permanently evolving and it is crucial to fully appreciate the motives behind, and grounds for, its different transformations.

The growing interest in Patočka notwithstanding, there is no monograph on Patočka providing with a complete picture of the developments of Patočka's phenomenology. Therefore I seek to offer, in the first half of my book, a succinct reconstruction of Patočka's phenomenology throughout its evolution. Such a survey is important, and interesting, not only because it makes it possible to comprehend the internal logic of the development of Patočka's thought. It also provides the contexts necessary for everyone who wants to appropriately understand Patočka's concerns and intentions, and hence the meaning of his propositions, in different phases of his thought.

Besides this reconstruction, I also intend to demonstrate how, and why, Patočka's phenomenology is relevant for contemporary thought, while this importance cannot be reduced to ethical contexts and political problems of Europe in the post-European world. Hence, in the second half of the book, I focus on Patočka's concept of the movement of existence, which I find the most promising part of his asubjective phenomenology. I do not only interpret this concept but rather rethink, and appropriate, it to make it useful for analyzing contemporary existence.

Overview

Part I of the book explicates the main phases of Patočka's phenomenology.

Chapter 2, which presents crucial thoughts of Patočka's rarely discussed dissertation, explains why Husserl's phenomenology was so attractive for young Patočka. Phenomenology as a transcendental theory of experience discovers the conditions of the possibility of reality while grounding its findings on intuition, or evidence. Taking a closer look, however, one can see that Patočka's early phenomenology, which primarily describes the conditions of our knowledge of reality, is unable to disclose reality itself. One can formulate it also this way: his concept cannot disclose life. Highlighting this problem, the chapter identifies a reason for the conceptual shift between Patočka's dissertation and his habilitation.

Chapter 3 explicates Patočka's habilitation on the natural world as radically transforming Husserl's concept of *Lebenswelt*. I summarize Patočka's analysis of the natural world to focus on the concept of transcendental subjectivity. How can this subjectivity be achieved and, even more importantly, what *is* this subjectivity? I suggest interpreting Patočka's identification of the concept of constituting subjectivity with that of "intermeshing monads" as pointing to a trans-individual process of life embodied by the monads ontologically grounding the world.

Patočka's manuscripts written during World War II are analysed in Chapter 4 as antitipating Patočka's late asubjective phenomenology. After explicating the key concept of inwardness, with which Patočka substitutes Husserl's notion of an "ego," I inspect Patočka's method: his attempt to capture the life of inwardness subjectively. Although the war manuscripts factually point to, and call for, the desubjectification of phenomenology, Patočka's methodological focus on the subjective acts of an ego does not allow for it.

Chapter 5 analyses the book-length study *Eternity and Historicity* from the middle of the 1940s, which offers an interestingly contextualized polemic with Husserl's phenomenology while developing an important concept of the dialectic of spirit, and hence also of the dialectic of appearing. In contrast to the war manuscripts, Patočka sees no possibility of spirit's being in harmony with the world. He deprives the given in the world of any positive value so that he can claim that the negative reaction of (the human) spirit to objectivity is "being in the full meaning of the word." *Eternity and Historicity* thus presents a radically subjectivist form of absolute humanism: it is the human being itself in its transcending activity that is the meta-physical here.

The concept of "negative Platonism" from the 1950s, considered by some scholars as capturing the essence of Patočka's philosophy *in toto*, is articulated in Chapter 6. I elucidate the basic intention and explicate the essentials of Patočka's concept by placing attention on the experience of freedom as the fundament of metaphysics. I clarify the "idea" as both identical or reducible to freedom and as the "no-thing" experienced in freedom. In "Negative Platonism," not the human being, but Idea is the meta-physical – interpreted non-metaphysically. By demonstrating Idea as conditioning human experience, Patočka categorically rejects integral humanism.

Patočka's study on space from around 1960 is examined in detail in Chapter 7. By developing a phenomenological analysis of space, Patočka offers another explication of the lifeworld. He clarifies the lifeworld, or space, by describing human being *inside*: this being inside is determined by the so-called law of the personal pronoun. Patočka's approach certainly seems more "worldly" than that found in "Negative Platonism," yet he himself highlights (the building of) the world as having its foundation beyond itself. Even more importantly, and in contrast to his previous approach, Patočka now emphasizes the body as cofounding the (transcendental) structure of the world.

After introducing Patočka's project to renew the ontological concept of movement, Chapter 8 explicates fundamental elements of the concept of the movement of existence. I demonstrate as crucial the question of the source of possibilities without which movement would be impossible. Identifying this source with the so-called "Seinsverständnis," I specify how, in order to fully understand Patočka's concept of the movement of existence as the core of his late asubjective phenomenology, existence is to be interpreted as *the* place of this understanding.

Elucidating Patočka's revisiting and appropriating the ideas of Husserl, Heidegger, Fink, and Merleau-Ponty, the aim of Chapter 9 is to indicate both the importance of, and tensions within, Patočka's late asubjective phenomenology. I draw attention especially to the relation between phenomenology and ontology, and indicate the reasons why asubjective phenomenology should primarily focus on the movement of *existence*.

Part II focuses, in a more systematic way, on Patočka's concept of the movement of existence.

Chapter 10 weighs the importance of the body in Patočka's phenomenology: to what extent is appearing conditioned by the body? I critically assess Barbaras' and Novotný's interpretations of Patočka's late concept of the body, and emphasize that not all the activities of the human being are centred around and performed by the body. Subjective corporeity can sufficiently account neither for human individuation nor for appearing. And,

one can meaningfully distinguish, even in Patočka's late phenomenology, between the body and "the soul."

Following up on this conclusion, Chapter 11 focuses on the much-discussed topic of the care of the soul and develops an unconventional interpretation of it. Connecting the notion of the soul with that of (the movement of) existence, I demonstrate the impossibility of identifying the care of the soul/existence with the third movement, whether exemplified by philosophical theory or by political action. The care of the soul does not consist in caring for one "part" of the human being or in realizing one of its possibilities. Following both Aristotle's and Arendt's emphasis on action, I outline a concept of the care of the soul where the soul is identifiable, paradoxically, with the very caring itself.

Chapter 12 draws attention to the movement of existence as being conditioned by factors unaccountable by phenomenology, and argues for deepening phenomenology by "fusing" it with the approach of media philosophy. Such a linkage is needed if we are to fully appreciate how existence, in (its) appearing, is conditioned not only by subjects but also by objects in the world and by objective processes. Discussing, and appropriating, the concepts of cultural techniques and tacit knowledge, I suggest connecting cultural techniques theory with Patočka's phenomenology to think existence in a both less subjectivist and less anti-humanist manner, or to acknowledge it as both objective and free.

Chapter 13 reconsiders Patočka's concept of the movement of existence in its contribution to understanding (the movement of) history. It questions one essential feature of Patočka's approach, namely his drawing a firm line between a free, truly historic way of life, and unfree, earthbound living. To clarify the ontological foundations of Patočka's concept, I pay special attention to the concept of *polemos*, but I accept neither an onto-polemical nor a moral interpretation of Patočka's (political) philosophy. Instead, I push for the full appreciation of the positive meaning of *all* the three movements, of their meaning-bestowing disclosure contributing to the meaning of individual human existence and of history.

Picking up the threads of the previous one, Chapter 14 concentrates on *the present* phase of history. I reconstruct Patočka's interpretation of the present world as that of supercivilization, and critically assess his idea of the solidarity of the shaken as the way out of the contemporary crisis. I question Patočka's emphasis on spirituality, and suggest de-spiritualizing freedom as defining existence. We need to overcome the duality of the technology and spirituality implicit in Patočka's concept and accept the irreducible technicity of existence.

The final chapter focuses on intersubjectivity, on Patočka's *absolute* emphasis on intersubjective relations: he "localizes" infinity to these relations. Elaborating on the concept of love, the chapter demonstrates that human relation to infinity does not need to be interpreted as the relation to the unconditioned. Instead, it can be understood as the relation between conditioned, finite human beings.

Argument

Each one of the two main parts of the book is written differently. Part I, by synthetically presenting the main phases of Patočka's phenomenology as they can be traced historically, seeks to discover a sort of inner logic in the development of Patočka's thought. I aim to identify the substantial reasons of the transformations of Patočka's phenomenology especially by paying attention to his recurrent attempts to overcome the subjectivist shortcomings of transcendental phenomenology.

First of all, I highlight Patočka's emphasis on *life*. I explicate how Patočka creatively adopts Husserl's transcendental phenomenology clarifying both human existence and non-human beings exactly in their lives and in their living in the world. To simplify the twists of Patočka's thought in the 1930s and in the first half of the 1940s, Patočka on the one hand doubts the existence of *the* ontologically constitutive transcendental subjectivity, yet on the other hand he wants to utilise Husserl's transcendental phenomenology to distinguish different types of subjectivities to be able to speculate, thus overstepping the limits of phenomenology proper, on the intermeshing of these "monads" as "constituting" the world.

Patočka's effort to *overcome both idealistic and subjectivist biases* of transcendental phenomenology can be documented especially by his reflecting on the relation between subjectivity and "things" in the world. Patočka is worried about a transcendentalist predisposition to reduce appearing to the idealistic constitution of everything by absolute subjectivity, and his reflection hence points to reality irreducible to the constitutive acts of subjectivity, no matter how conceived.

One can say that, seeking to avoid idealism, Patočka conceives spirit, or intentionality, not as constituting reality but rather as opening for it, yet he also needs to ascribe ontological dignity to the performance of intentionality in order to ensure for phenomenology, or rather for phenomenological philosophy, the possibility of articulating reality. To accomplish both these goals, Patočka points to life as being beyond both subject and object: it is life, in its performative intentionality, which opens, if not constitutes, the world.

Yet, although Patočka criticizes the reduction of everything to subjectivity, he puts emphasis on spirit in its difference, and even opposition, to the world. In other words, though accentuating life, he does not deny the specificity of *human* life. In its freedom, the way of life of the human being differs from that of other beings of the world. Yet, whereas in the second half of the 1940s, this emphasis issues in a radically subjectivist form of *absolute humanism*, at the beginning of the 1950s Patočka grounds the specificity of spirit in its intrinsic relation to non-metaphysically interpreted Idea, which is both trans-subjective and trans-objective. By pointing to Idea as conditioning human experience, Patočka does not abandon transcendentalism, yet he rejects the alleged self-sufficiency of (human) spirit and points to human, or "spiritual," experience as being *based on Idea*.

Hence, no later than in the 1950s, life loses its primacy and is ontologically subordinated to Idea. More concretely, Idea grounds the world *as* the world. Now, even if Patočka had been interested in the notion of the world from the very beginnings of his thought, it was no sooner than in the 1950s that the world took methodological, if not ontological, precedence over life (or spirit). Yet, just as importantly, in "Negative Platonism" the world is not the world by itself but *thanks to Idea*. Also at the beginning of the 1960s, the world is based beyond, but Patočka now de-subjectifies and de-spiritualizes his transcendental concept not only by pointing to "something wholly different" but also by putting emphasis on the body, and not only of the living body but of the body as an object in the world.

In contrast to some influential interpretations of Patočka, my explication of the development of Patočka's phenomenology does not point to the world as its most important principle. Rather, by taking *movement* as his methodological point of departure, Patočka's late thought finally becomes able to overcome both subjectivist and idealist flaws of phenomenology. And, importantly, it does so without losing the importance, indeed indispensability, of a corporeal "subject." Patočka's concept of the movement of existence allows for a more concrete exposition of being in the world than his older emphasis on life, while this exposition proceeds *from the inside of the world*, and not from the (presupposed) world itself.

Also in the context of his late asubjective phenomenology, Patočka minds the relation between that which is approachable by phenomenology, namely appearing, and reality. Attracted especially by Fink's ideas, he also speculates on the possibility of phenomenological *cosmology*. But, though hypothesising on it, he never really develops the cosmological concept of appearing but respects the limits of phenomenology and the internal contradictoriness of describing as appearing that which cannot be pursued as a process of appearing. This does not mean, however, that phenomenology has nothing to say about reality: yet, instead of speculating on it, phenomenology can describe it by taking the movement of existence as its clue.

This is concretely demonstrated in Part II, which seeks to offer a non-speculative refinement of Patočka's concept of the movement of existence. First of all, acknowledging the increased importance of the body in Patočka's late thought, I demonstrate that not all the experiences of existence are centred around the body, and that there is an ontologically relevant duality between the physical individuation of the body and the meta-physical identity, or the soul, of an embodied existence. Since subjective corporeity can sufficiently account neither for human individuation nor for appearing, I focus on the soul as that by which the identity of existence is performed. The soul does not precede existence, but is rather, paradoxically, achieved through the very (corporeal) movement it performs. The soul is enacted by movement, while the three movements of existence allow for understanding the conditions of such an enactment.

Having clarified the indispensability of the body and the primacy of the soul, I demonstrate that, even if one sticks to the methodological priority of an experiencing self, the analysis of its experiencing/appearing points to its being conditioned by factors unaccountable by a purely phenomenological approach. I suggest neither naturalizing phenomenology nor merely enriching it by findings from other disciplines, but deepening it by media philosophy, which can help phenomenology to disclose, and elucidate, some objective processes in their, paradoxically, non-objective conditioning appearing. In this context, the leading question is: insofar as existence is always already contained in a situation, in what ways does this situation, or its "settings," condition it? The concept of the movements of existence can provide a general framework which is to be concretized by "ontic" practices which intrinsically mediate existence. Such an approach accentuates the dependence of humans on objectively bound techniques, yet it also allows for understanding that it is exactly due to its being conditioned, and by "feeling" its conditions, that existence can move freely in the world.

In accordance with such an approach, I critically assess Patočka's thoughts on history, and politics, connecting them with his concept of the movements of existence. Generally, I demonstrate the necessity of de-absolutizing and de-spiritualizing freedom as defining existence. To think existence accurately, which also means historically, one cannot separate the presumed inner core, or the "soul," of existence from the trans-subjective factors intrinsically defining it. On the other side, I do not argue for objectifying existence: although existence can be neither absolutized nor spiritualized, it is reducible neither to objectivity nor to physicality. Existence appears as a meta-physical "entity," while being always already objectively mediated. More concretely, instead of thinking the relation between, to use Patočka's own terms, "man as a power" and "man as an exponent of the non-real" as oppositional, or as the relation between what is merely superficial (technique) and what is deep (spirituality), we must conceive this relation rather as that of intertwining.

Finally, arguing against the interpretations accentuating Patočka's late praise for *polemos*, I demonstrate that it is love which gives being to the world. It is through love between finite beings, which is manifested by finite appearances, that the infinite of life is revealed. In this sense, love is the non-existent ground of our existence.

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Part I

The Developments of Patočka's Phenomenology

2

Seeking Evidence

Phenomenology Analysing Absolute Consciousness

Patočka's thought, as many of the following chapters will demonstrate, is in incessant dialogue with Husserl's phenomenology. According to Patočka's dissertation *The Concept of Evidence and its Significance for Noetics* (1931),³ Husserl's *Logical Investigations* protests "against that primitive ontology according to which being is manifoldness united in one framework of space-time by the only one bond of causality" (Patočka 2008a: 104–105). Husserl demonstrates that the world must follow (also) other rules than causal ones: the laws of logic demonstrate the limit of the naturalist notion of the world. Yet, the real world cannot be conceived of as rationally or logically constructed: Husserl advocates neither the "rationalist genesis" nor the "deductive creationism" of the world. His philosophy is not speculative, it is a "true positivism or empiricism" (Patočka 2008a: 106): it does not seek to construct the world but only to observe things as they present themselves.

How to guarantee, however, that one observes things *evidently*, i.e. that one observes them as (presenting) themselves? Following Husserl, Patočka solves this problem – the problem of evidence – by referring to the immanence of consciousness: "Consciousness is the sphere of absolute positivity in which everything presents itself in the way it really is" (Patočka 2008a: 106). It is just and only within the sphere of consciousness that evidence is possible. The consciousness in question, however, is not a consciousness of any particular human being living in the world. It is not worldly but non-worldly, not created but creative subjectivity. In other words, phenomenology – much like Hegelianism – "proceed[s] from absolute being. The phenomenological field is something like *intellectus dei infinitus*" (Patočka 2008a: 118). This phenomenological field is made accessible by the method of transcendental reduction, which does not reject the world, but only suspends its ontological validity to reveal its essential structures, or rather the essential structures of appearing.

More concretely, on the basis of this reduction a phenomenologist observes the field of "reduced experiences": the field of the experiences of an "ego" whose basic characteristic is *intentionality*, i.e. directness to objects, as it is always conscious *of* something. Here, the main task of phenomenology arises: to clarify the constitution of objects in and for consciousness, which means, more precisely, to describe the cooperation of hyletic data and intentionality. The basic moment of this analysis is, Patočka explains, "the discovery of unreal components of consciousness" (Patočka 2008a: 109): experience has, besides certain real content, also an unreal meaning which Husserl calls noema.

Noema is not an object in the world but rather a *meaning* constituted by intentional activity: it is neither a psychological nor material fact but a component of experience without which experience would be impossible. Phenomenology, then, examines how, on the basis of hyletic data with the aid of intentions, the meaning of the world is constituted.

³ So far as I know, the only paper focused exclusively on Patočka's dissertation has been written by Učník (2015). In German, a concise interpretation of Patočka's dissertation is offered by Novotný (1999: esp. 137–142).

After this brief summary of Patočka's earliest interpretation of Husserl's phenomenology, it is desirable to clarify why Husserl's philosophical concept was so attractive to the young Patočka. For what reason is the "phenomenological standpoint ... the genuine condition of the possibility of science and philosophy" (Patočka 2008a: 118)? It is such a condition because, although it "cannot say what is real," it shows "what reality is, what sort of conditions must be met to take something as real" (Patočka 2008a: 118). Phenomenology as a transcendental theory of experience discovers the conditions of the possibility of all reality and such discovery can be practiced as a pure science because its method is not constructive but intuitive, observing.

Finite Consciousness and Reality

Although the phenomenological field is something like *intellectus dei infinitus*, Patočka's dissertation offers no speculation about how the real world is created by the infinite mind of God. What it primarily describes is not the relationship between absolute consciousness and the world but the relationship between reality and concrete, i.e. finite human consciousness. It does so by analysing two main dimensions of the epistemic process: invention and systematization.

Although inventing might have some "immanent principles," the whole process, Patočka says, "would be senseless, if we were able to know in advance where it would lead and how" (Patočka 2008a: 18). But still, there is a "fore-knowing"⁴ at work in the process of invention, which is to be described, according to Patočka's quite exalted portrayal, "from the deep, from the very beginning of intellectual life. Those who become scientists or philosophers do not come to it by chance": "the vocation is often irresistible; take a look how fatally Pascal, Huyghens, J. Bertrand followed it in their earliest years; back then, an object had presented itself in the distance as something inviting one towards itself, as something on the horizon" (Patočka 2008a: 19).

These statements must be taken literally. That "fatality," the idea of a "calling," plays a key role in Patočka's (rather implicit) argument that there is an essential connection between the sphere of fore-knowing, finite *consciousness* (e.g. of the above-mentioned scientist or philosopher) and *reality* experienced, or becoming known, by this consciousness. Patočka identifies here "a moment necessary in overall appearance" by which he means an essential aspect of the process of appearing as such: "cognizance of having our aim in the object, of entering into a relation with it that is adequate for life" (Patočka 2008a: 20). Patočka elaborates on this idea: "In this regard, the object of knowledge is nothing independent or inaccessible to me. On the contrary, it is something pertaining to the subject in the sense that the subject experiences its absence as a defect in itself. Here, the *task* of knowing arises, characterized by a practical necessity for the subject to proceed from the mere indefinite form of the object to more definite forms, and to realize itself more fully in this process, too" (Patočka 2008a: 20).

Thanks to this fore-knowing, the subject experiences the absence of the fore-known, i.e. its in-complete knowledge, as a deficiency. In this way, fore-knowing is unsettling for the subject. The living subject cannot live in such unrest, and so seeks to eliminate this deficiency. This process is tantamount to the process of seeking truth, i.e. of knowing. In other words, the subject in its dependence on objectivity is led by a practical necessity to seek a more definite objective world, and through this movement it realizes itself.

⁴ Regarding this fore-knowing, cf. also Učník (2015: 35–36).

In this rather introductory chapter, I cannot scrutinize Patočka's idea of human self-realization in any detail, yet it would be inexcusable not to mention what Patočka has to say on this topic at the end of his dissertation: "Knowing is the natural movement of our existence toward the idea, a manifestation of the kinship of our being with the idea. Only here do we satisfy our longing for unity, for the whole and infinity ... This longing eternally manifests itself in the life of humankind in more or less clear forms. Longing for knowledge, for the good, and for God are different sides of the same thing" (Patočka 2008a: 119). As one can see, Patočka very closely connects different dimensions of the human being: knowing, (ethical) praxis, and religiosity. In the systematic part of this book, I will come back to the question of where unity and infinity are to be searched for.

Here, let us return to epistemic questions. Patočka concludes his reflection on fore-knowing stating that it is not only "the sense of mere possibilities" but "the sense of reality" (Patočka 2008a: 20). For this reason, the inventor, i.e. the one who goes through the inventing part of the process of knowledge, is "necessarily a realist" (Patočka 2008a: 26). Invention, however, is only one part of knowledge. The necessary second part lies in systematization. As Patočka puts it, for knowledge to be not only rich but also firm, the uncovered richness of reality must be systematized: nothing shall remain unclear, hence firm principles and clear construction are needed. Whereas an inventor is necessarily a realist, "for a systematizer, there are above all her principles, the ideas from which she proceeds to objectivity by construction. Her affinity for idealism has something to do with this" (Patočka 2008a: 26–27).

As one can see, Patočka connects the two sides of the process of knowing with two opposite philosophical concepts: intuitive invention is associated with realism, logical (re)construction with idealism. Yet, he explicitly refutes both of these conceptions. It is incorrect to think, as realists do, that reality is absolutely independent of the subject, but it is likewise mistaken to think that the process of knowledge is "the creative process of the spirit;" if the spirit is absolute then "the entire struggle it has with itself is completely incomprehensible" (Patočka 2008a: 29).

No Passageway from Ideas to Things

One can surely sense a discrepancy between this rejection of absolute idealism and the aforementioned idea that phenomenology, similarly to Hegelianism, has its point of departure in something like *intellectus dei infinitus*. One might try to ease this tension by specifying that, in fact, absolute consciousness approached by phenomenology is only *something like* Infinite Spirit. Yet, even such moderation does not solve the problem; it is necessary to explicitly focus on the question of the reach of phenomenology.

As Patočka explains in the chapter called "Ideal Being and Real Being," what can be evidently revealed by the phenomenological analysis of the field of absolute consciousness are non-empirical meanings, but these meanings, and the system of them, cannot be identified with the real. "The ideal world is, so to say, the system of coordinates in which the process of real being takes place. This process can be described by these coordinates but cannot be reduced to them. ... Everything which is and can be experienced has a certain place in the realm of meaning; but ... there is more in life, there is the realisation of selection that, from an immense number of possibilities, weaves reality in a particular, individual way" (Patočka 2008a: 47–48).

Life seems to be here the very essence of the process of being: life as “that realising, that which is active in time, is *the* genuine reality [*ta pravá realita*] we incessantly experience and whose part we are at the same time” (Patočka 2008a: 48). This is not the only statement bearing witness to the fact that Patočka was influenced by (Bergson’s) philosophy of life.⁵ This influence will be demonstrated more concretely in following chapters. At this point, it should only be noted that the emphasis on life effectively weakens the ontological claims found in Patočka’s earliest concept of phenomenology: phenomenology can describe systems of meanings, conceived as possibilities of life, but it cannot describe the real process of being. More precisely, as Patočka formulates it at the end of his dissertation, “phenomenology cannot say what is real, but only ... what conditions must be met so that anything can be taken as real. In phenomenology, there is no passageway from ideas to things” (Patočka 2008a: 118).⁶

Limited Transcendentalism

One might wonder, then: Does this idea do justice to Husserl’s dictum “back to the things themselves”? Is Patočka saying that his kind of phenomenology does not describe things in their reality? As a matter of fact, it describes what can be given to consciousness and what conditions must be met for it to be given. In other words, phenomenology primarily describes here the possibilities, and necessities, of our experience of things or, more precisely, of our evident knowledge of them. To echo Patočka himself, “if we conceive evidence more broadly than usual, i.e. as transcendental evidence, which heads from me as a part of real being toward ideal or ever deeper layers of objectivities” (Patočka 2008a: 119), we develop a concept of philosophy (namely that of Husserl) for which “correlative to each ‘really existing’ object there is an idea of a possible consciousness, in which the object is given originally and adequately” (Patočka 2008a: 117). Conceived this way, phenomenology describes the possibilities of our *experience* of things as real; but it does not describe, in the strict sense, the possibilities of things themselves, i.e. *their own* possibilities.

In this context, Patočka’s statement that transcendental idealism may lead to “intellectual despair” when interpreted as hermetically separating the subject and reality (Patočka 2008a: 118) is worth mentioning. His own concept seeks to avoid such a separation by insisting on “the openness of existence for spirit and the openness of spirit for the world” (Patočka 2008a: 118). Clearly, Patočka does not accept the idealist identification of the principle of reality with the spirit. In Karel Novotný’s interpretation, he identifies this principle, in a sense the other way round, with the world (Novotný calls it: “das Ganze”) conceived as “the other of spirit, which nevertheless reveals itself only to the spirit” (Novotný 1999: 142). Interpretatively, such a reading seems valid, and perhaps in accord with Patočka’s own intentions. Yet, although Patočka is certainly unwilling to reduce everything to the spirit, the only reality accessible in, and to, his approach remains after all a spiritual reality, i.e. just and only the reality accessible to the spirit.

⁵ The importance of the notion of life in Patočka’s early philosophy has been emphasized by Novotný (1995) and Hagedorn (2015a).

⁶ Accordingly, one can say with Novotný that “[d]er Wirklichkeitsbezug der Evidenz ist für Patočka nicht als das Bergsonsche Koinzidieren mit dem schaffenden Prozeß des Geistes aufzufassen“ (Novotný 1999: 140).

Patočka's early concept of phenomenology thus struggles with the problem of how to get along with transcendental idealism which seems to be, in the form of Husserl's phenomenology, the only viable way of doing philosophy (cf. Patočka 2008a: 119), even if this concept can account neither for the world nor for life in their non-identity, if there is any, with the spirit.

Facing this inability, one can understand the shift Patočka makes in his habilitation *The Natural World as a Philosophical Problem* (1936) where he explicitly states that phenomenology should "assume the hubris of transcendental idealism" (Patočka 2016a: 52). Here, transcendental idealism gains a different meaning. In his dissertation, Patočka sticks to an *epistemic* idea that "correlative to each 'really existing' object there is an idea of a possible consciousness, in which the object is given originally and adequately" (Patočka 2008a: 117), thus making phenomenology a theory with limited ontological claims. In contrast, in his habilitation Patočka suggests the idea of "the historization of the universe," of explaining the world as creative evolution, or of "an *interpretation* of the whole world process on the basis of the fundamental structures of possible subjectivity" (Patočka 2016a: 114), thus implying an ontologically more demanding concept of philosophy. This concept is to be specified in the next chapter.

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3

Hubris of Transcendental Idealism

Overcoming the Crisis

In Patočka's early phenomenology,⁷ as in Husserl's mature one, we need to turn to the lifeworld because of a crisis,⁸ which is conceived by Husserl himself as primarily the crisis of the European sciences (Husserl 1970). In Patočka's interpretation, however, the crisis is not only and not so much a crisis of the sciences but rather of the human being in the world:⁹ "Modern man has no unified worldview. He lives in a double world, at once in his own naturally given environment and in a world created for him by modern natural science ... The disunion that has thus pervaded the whole of human life is the true source of our present spiritual crisis" (Patočka 2016a: 3).

Whereas the world of the "naturally given environment" is the world of our ordinary experiences, the world of the modern natural sciences is a world of mathematically constructed objectifications. Yet, what the sciences propose as true being is not evident givenness but rather something constructed insofar as "our natural science is not simply a development but rather a radical *reconstruction* of the native and natural world of common sense" (Patočka 2016a: 8). According to Patočka, this reconstruction of the naturally experienced world effectively leads to the reification not only of nature but of humans as well because it claims to be *the only truth* while the lived world is defamed as a mere illusion. Patočka's description of the outcome of this situation is quite impressive: "an objective barrenness [spreads] into our very lived-experience. It is as if all the diversity of life were ringing with an unvaried tone of indifferent nothingness" (Patočka 2016a: 10).

Should we refute the worldview of the sciences and turn back to the naturally experienced world to overcome this crisis? Not at all. We must turn somewhere else. This crisis is to be solved neither by reducing the world of science to the natural world nor *vice versa*, but by reducing both to something third. According to Patočka, there is an "entity" which is the source of *both* the naturally lived world and the world as presented by the sciences. "This third term can be nothing but the subjective activity that shapes both worlds, in different, yet, in both cases, lawful, ordered ways" (Patočka 2016a: 3).

Patočka is, of course, following Husserl in pointing to this subjective activity, to transcendental subjectivity as the source of the meaning of the world. Yet, his own concept of this subjectivity cannot be simply identified with that of Husserl.

⁷ This chapter has already been published as "The Hubris of Transcendental Idealism: Understanding Patočka's Early Concept of the Lifeworld," *Journal of the British Society for Phenomenology* 50(2), 2018, 171–181.

⁸ Recently, Dermot Moran (2015) offered an interesting reconsideration of Husserl's concept of the lifeworld.

⁹ According to Ludger Hagedorn, reading Patočka's book one realizes "that the 'Crisis of Modern Sciences' is not seen as the source and origin of a general crisis: on the contrary, the falling apart of the natural and the scientific world views is a mere indicator, the epi-phenomenon of a bigger crisis that is characterised by the general loss of meaning" (Hagedorn 2015a: 97).

Transcendental Idealism

The easiest way to basically delineate Patočka's early approach is, a bit paradoxically but logically, to turn to his late criticism of Husserl's transcendental phenomenology; in criticizing Husserl, Patočka implicitly criticizes his *own* early approach. He especially disapproves of Husserl's "subjectivism which sees in man ultimately the absolute itself": this concept is a form of idealism, which "deepen[s] the movement of existence in the world into a movement by which the world is first constituted" (Patočka 1989a: 271).

Whereas in Patočka's mature phenomenology there is *no* world-constituting subjectivity approachable by humans, in his early concept the method of phenomenological reduction is identified with a turn to absolute consciousness. By such a reduction, one shall be able both to transcend its limitedness and to approach transcendental subjectivity as the (foundational) ground of the world since, as Patočka puts it, "transcendental ... subjectivity *is* the world" (Patočka 2016a: 20).

Patočka's *late* phenomenology explicitly disapproves of the very idea of transcendental reduction.¹⁰ And, in "'The Natural World' Reditated Thirty-Three Years Later," he formulates quite a few principal critical remarks regarding his habilitation. To cite some concrete examples: the world cannot be described by analysing "the correlation of what is actually lived in the first person – that is, real – and what is intended – that is, ideal" (Patočka 2016b: 184); the problem of the lifeworld is to be freed "from the fixation on the subject-object dualism and cumbersome schemes such as that of noema/noesis" (Patočka 2016b: 184); we "shall have to look for a guideline other than Husserl's object for our analyses of the natural world" (Patočka 2016b: 184). Yet, these critical comments do not "strike" the *ontological* core of his early concept that is in fact more daring than his later criticism suggests.

Patočka's early phenomenology, approving of transcendental idealism, is *not* (only) fixated on the subject-object dualism but (also) intends to demonstrate that the world is not "a dead object. Rather, it is a meaning created in eternally flowing activity" (Patočka 2016a: 20). As a correlate of activity, the universe not only cannot be reduced to dead objectivity; it does not have any predestined law or fate either. Fundamentally, the world is "a law drawn from our innermost core ... a creation which offers a certain space of freedom also for upsurges of new creativity" (Patočka 2016a: 20). It is this "hubris of transcendental idealism" (Patočka 2016a: 52) that grounds Patočka's phenomenology in his habilitation.

In this approach, the natural world needs not to be identified only with the world of humans. Indeed, Patočka formulates the task of explaining the whole world as a "creative evolution," of presenting "an *interpretation* of the whole world process on the basis of the fundamental structures of possible subjectivity, as brought to light by constitutive analysis" (Patočka 2016a: 114). Unfortunately, he does not specify how to fulfil this program, which "blends" ideas of Henri Bergson's philosophy of life with those of Husserl's phenomenology. In the concluding parts of this chapter, I intend to shed some light on this "mixture."

¹⁰ Inspired also by Heidegger, in the 1970s Patočka emphasized the distinction between reduction and *epoché*. In his interpretation, to put it simply, Husserl degrades the meaning of *epoché* by reducing its reach to that which is accessible, and how it is accessible, by phenomenological reduction. *Epoché* cannot be reduced to reduction. Cf. Mensch 2016: 38–42 or Karfik 2008: 21.

Analysing the Natural World

Before turning to the concept of the world as a creative evolution, allow me to summarize the development of Patočka's argumentation in his book on the natural world.

(A) Firstly, Patočka's *pre*-phenomenological description of our living in the world points to human *corporeity* as closely connected with our finitude and dependency. "Finitude grounded in interaction is the set situation of humans in the world" (Patočka 2016a: 54). In this situation, humans are dependent on things and are interested in them. These things are in broader contexts: when I turn from one thing to another, there is always "a kind of basic coherence" without which we would not live in a unitary whole, "we would have individual things, but we would not have *the world*" (Patočka 2016a: 54).

Patočka likens the world to a perspective preceding things and making possible their being: "Being-in-the-world is a perspective, but of a kind which first makes it possible for things to be what they are – a perspective which extends beyond things and prior to them as well" (Patočka 2016a: 57).¹¹ The idea of perspective makes it possible to identify another fundamental feature of the world: the perspective of the world goes from the centre outward, containing the part of an intimate acquaintance on the one side, and the part of the unfamiliar on the other.

In addition to this spatial dimension, Patočka also identifies temporal and subjective dimensions of the world. The subjective dimension relates to our, so to speak, global sense of the world. The world is "globally" presented through moods: "though the mood is in fact always our own inner 'state,' it colours the things surrounding it at the same time, so that our objective environment, too, seems to partake in it" (Patočka 2016a: 59). Moods are always moods to do something (and not to do something else), and hence the "possibility of our activities" lies in them.

(B) Patočka's descriptions summarised so far have *not* yet been phenomenological. As we already know, according to Patočka's early concept, to engage in phenomenology is to assume a "reductive attitude" (Patočka 2016a: 63). Then, an analysis based on this reduction has two main forms: firstly, a static description of the above indicated structures of the world from the perspective of the transcendental ego; secondly, a genetic explication of these structures (cf. also Novotný 1999: 153–154).

Importantly, already Patočka's early phenomenology grasps the *specificity* of the world in contrast to the things in the world. Patočka points out "one important fact of doxic life" (Patočka 2016a: 63): one can cast doubt on each individual thing, but one can never cast doubt on the whole. The whole is always presupposed since any "explicit singular belief in a singular existent is possible only on the basis of a general belief in the whole" (Patočka 2016a: 63). Hence, as stated by Patočka, "there lives in us, too, an activity of a different nature, which does not include this watchful regard of egoity" (Patočka 2016a: 63). To account for the immense sphere of the non-actual implicated in consciousness, we must presuppose a "potential consciousness" that is not a "mere actual intention of indeterminacy" (Patočka 2016a: 65) and certainly not an *appendix* to immediate intentionality. On the contrary, the intentionality of acts is possible only when based on this "horizon-intentionality."

The "horizon-intentionality," or rather the phenomena correlative to it, are of great consequence for Patočka, who focuses on them in the second half of the 1930s and in the 1940s.¹² Here, it is only important to note that Patočka, already in this early analysis, is

¹¹ Since Patočka does not mean exclusively Heidegger's concept of "being-in-the-world," the translation might be misleading: in the Czech original, one reads simply "being in the world."

¹² For some indicia of this development, see Novotný 1999: 166–169.

quite able to describe what he would later, in the 1960s, identify as both the key characteristics of living in the world *as a world*: the horizontal openness of the non-given on the one hand and perceptual givenness on the other. In his 1967 study, Patočka states that the consciousness of the world is a special mode of consciousness, a *horizontal* consciousness that “can never be translated into non-horizontal consciousness, even though every act is an act within a horizon” (Patočka 1989a: 253); yet the horizon is only one *non-independent* pole of the world that *needs* another one: “the perceptual, actual presence [that] ... constitutes the *whole of the world* ... in interaction with the non-present” (Patočka 1989a: 254).

(C) In the *genetic* explication of the natural world, Patočka identifies *time*, in the sense of an “original inner passing” as *the* source of being: everything arises and passes, i.e. presents itself in time. Hence, “[t]ime is ... the universal condition of being in general” (Patočka 2016a: 68). “Time is the incessant genesis of a manifold of phases. These phases ... are parts of a unitary process of elapsing, which, eternally renewing itself, producing in it all consistent givenness, gives being” (Patočka 2016a: 69). Patočka explicitly identifies time with consciousness: “Transcendental consciousness *is the flow of time*, it is time” (Patočka 2016a: 69). It is no surprise, then, that the characteristics of time are tantamount to those of consciousness insofar as the “givenness of being (*byti*) is ... *receding*, this *doing and undoing* (*odbyvání*). Consciousness can have givenness, i.e., can ‘be,’ only in receding, and thereby ... things too recede” (Patočka 2016a: 69).

Since the world has been identified as transcendental consciousness, and transcendental consciousness is time, time is *the* constitutive basis of the world. Yet, what does it mean *concretely* in and for Patočka’s early phenomenology?

Achieving Transcendental Subjectivity

Transcendental consciousness revealed by phenomenological reduction cannot be identified with the consciousness of any concrete (human) being. Patočka describes it also in the following way: “Monadic transcendental subjectivity has no existence properly speaking; it is not given to itself, nor is it the object of any ontic thesis; rather, it ‘exists’ only for the transcendental onlooker who, on the basis of the process of reduction, lifts this productive subjectivity out of self-forgetfulness and transposes it into a mode of ‘pre-existence’ while developing, through ideation, the universal essence of possible constitution in general” (Patočka 2016a: 50).

This is at once a key and ambiguous, if not inherently contradictory, statement. On the one hand, transcendental subjectivity does *not* exist; on the other, it is *lifted* out of self-forgetfulness, and hence it seems to have already been there. In a similar way, explicating that the phenomenological onlooker does not take anything for granted, Patočka says that “[t]he ‘belief’ of the phenomenological observer is not reception; rather, transcendental life first *arises* and *holds good for him* in his view” (Patočka 2016a: 40).

Does absolute subjectivity exist independently of the observer, which seems to be needed if this subjectivity is to serve as an *absolute* basis, or is it rather *created* by a concrete observer? According to Filip Karfík, it is the activity of the reflecting phenomenologist which “allows for the whole game of transcendental subjective life to appear” (Karfík 2008: 17). Is it possible for the absolute basis, i.e. transcendental consciousness, to be conditioned by a contingent subject? And, even if this is the case, how can this subject transcend its particularity and approach the absolute?

According to Karel Novotný, Patočka is following Fink in conceiving the cognition of the transcendental onlooker as a kind of *productive* activity.¹³ In this interpretation, it is not only possible for the finite subject to participate in this productive activity; this activity is, according to Novotný, even grounded in the *finite* human subject (Novotný 1999: 162–163).¹⁴

The Development of Theory

Both Karfík and Novotný's interpretations are sophisticated and stimulating. However, they hardly offer a definite solution to the problems Patočka's concept evokes. Let me focus only on the following one: how is it possible for a concrete, finite human consciousness to access transcendental subjectivity? Or, regarding time as the fundament of the world: What does it mean, if it is possible at all, to access the time of transcendental consciousness from a finite, temporal life?

Clearly, transcendental consciousness is not accessible from the beginning of the life of a particular consciousness, rather this consciousness must be specifically developed to *achieve* it. More concretely, it must both (1) attain freedom and (2) develop truth. Let me substantiate these claims.

Ad 1. Human consciousness is first (and foremost) unfree. Patočka reveals the unfreedom of the “primary” life of consciousness, and of the natural world correlative to it, by demonstrating the human natural world as initially based in subjective tendencies: firstly in organic and affective tendencies, secondly in the tendencies of disposition and communication.¹⁵

Although *all* structures of the world are supposed to be constituted by (transcendental) subjectivity, the structures based in the above-mentioned tendencies are constituted “without the contribution of spontaneity”: in constituting them, a subject does not feel “to be the real author of his own actions” (Patočka 2016a: 83). Most importantly, perceiving the world through these categories, the subject is caught by what is immanently given, and gains “a more intimate relationship with the things of its surroundings” (Patočka 2016a: 86). By doing so, the subject remains *unfree*.

The part of the natural world based on the above-mentioned tendencies is *not* grounded in freedom. In contrast, in the last part of his book, Patočka analyses *language* seeking to demonstrate “how language rests on human freedom (as determining the human life-form) and how it can be explained from the principle of free activity” (Patočka 2016a: 111). Contrary to the “mediums” of organic or affective tendencies, language is a medium of freedom, it even rests on freedom.

¹³ According to Patočka's own memoirs, in the 1930s Fink intended to conceive phenomenological transcendental idealism as a sort of creative idealism (Patočka 1999a: 275). Cf. Novotný 1999: 150 and 154.

¹⁴ Novotný himself is aware of the difficulties of this interpretation (see Novotný 1999: 163, n. 23).

¹⁵ On these tendencies, some *a priori* structures of the world are based. The communicative tendency constitutes the category of fellow against the category of the thing of practical usage. The fellow is such a being “whose work we could do too” in contrast to categories of animal, plant, and, finally, nature in its three forms: nature as material, as an order, and as predominance. All these categories are “*a priori*”; they occur in our experience due to the simple fact of our being-in-the-world, and they contain fundamental possibilities of human understanding of reality” (Patočka 2016a: 82).

Yet, not only language is based on freedom. For Patočka, freedom is *the* precondition of all the higher “spheres” of constitutive activity,¹⁶ especially of those by which the world is approached in theory. These spheres, however, are not analysed in Patočka’s book because to articulate them, Patočka explains, “the consideration of human history, the philosophy of history” would be necessary as a basis for “a consideration regarding the development and creation of a theoretical consciousness” (Patočka 2016a: 21–22).

Ad 2. The idea of truth as *developed* is in tension with the idea of phenomenology as “true positivism or empiricism” as Patočka portrays it in his dissertation (Patočka 2008a: 106). Still, this tension between, if you will, intuitivism and constructivism seems to be an essential part of Patočka’s concept.

The very problem of “the development and creation of a theoretical consciousness” indicates that truth is not (only) given but must (also) be *developed* insofar as a theoretical consciousness, which is the place of truth, must be created. In fact, although Patočka seems to conceive the performance of transcendental reduction as an *ahistorical* act, his book suggests that all theory, including the theory of phenomenological reduction, is rather an outcome of historical development. Or, to express it from a different perspective, although Patočka does not offer a *systematic* consideration of the philosophy of history, he describes, in chapter 2 of his book, the historical *development* of the concept of consciousness between Descartes and Hegel, thus realizing, in a way, the above-mentioned consideration of the development of theoretical consciousness, and implicitly suggesting not only that phenomenology can overcome the defects of the previous tradition but that it can even satisfactorily conclude it.¹⁷

Moreover, Patočka elaborates not only on the problem of the development of the *notion* of theoretical consciousness.¹⁸ Even more importantly, he identifies, in a similar, if you will, *developmental* way, transcendental inter-subjectivity as the “level of subjective reduction achieved so far.”¹⁹ Here, “so far” does not refer merely to the development of Patočka’s argument in the book. Rather, Patočka means here that phenomenology *as such*, and hence probably *the* theory as such, had at that point reached the idea that it is an *inter-subjective* constitution that “sets the rules of existence,” (Patočka 2016a: 50) or that “[t]he concrete concept of subjectivity ... is the transcendental universe of monads that intermesh with one another and harmonically constitute both being and its *a priori* lawfulness” (Patočka 2016a: 50).

¹⁶ As for the fundamental importance of freedom in Patočka’s early phenomenology, see Petříček 1991 and Lehmann 2004: 24–26.

¹⁷ Cf. his likening of Husserl’s concept to the ideas of Fichte and Schelling: “Considering the productive character of its cognition and its typically extra-existential givenness, the I of the transcendental onlooker could be likened to Fichte’s absolute I. Schelling’s I, on the other hand ... would be comparable to the full constituting flow” (Patočka 2016a: 50). It seems worth recalling in this context that, according to Patočka’s dissertation, phenomenology proceeds similarly to Hegelianism. See also Karfik 2008: 16.

¹⁸ It is no coincidence that Patočka closes chapter 3 of his habilitation with the following: “The passage through phenomenological reflection has thus made possible at least a cursory outline of continuity in various modern problematics of subjectivity, concluded here, after having reached by it, so to speak, the summit of the curve by a look back at our starting point” (Patočka 2016a: 50). At its peak, we can see the whole path of the notion of subjectivity.

¹⁹ The English translation (Patočka 2016a: 48) omits an important part of the title of the 7th section of chapter 3. In the Czech original (Patočka 2008b: 185), the title reads “7. Námitka solipsismu. Transcendentální subjektivita jako prozatím dosažená etapa subjektivní redukce,” i.e. “The Objection of Solipsism. Transcendental Intersubjectivity as the Level of Subjective Reduction Achieved So Far.”

On the Method

As one can see, Patočka thinks Husserl's phenomenology through by identifying the concrete concept of constituting subjectivity with that of a transcendental universe of monads that intermesh with one another.

This concept could be interpreted non-idealistically, or, as it were, pragmatically: being and its lawfulness are settled by the communication between human beings, by their being in agreement. But, of course, Patočka would not accept such a "communicative" concept. In his habilitation, he advocates the idea of phenomenology as identifying the "essential possibilities" of the world. By the methods of both reduction and eidetic variation, a phenomenologist can reveal essential structures that are *a priori* in the sense that they, as essences (*eidé*), define "in advance" what *can* be given as a fact: any factual givenness must be essentially, and not by agreement, in conformity with them.

But, how to guarantee that the essences we identify are the right ones? As demonstrated above, Patočka's explication of the natural world has three steps and it is already the first, *preparatory* description that contains, in a sense, the crucial methodological problem. Although this description is *not yet* phenomenological, it remains the basis of phenomenological analyses: in "transforming" an already given world, through phenomenological reduction, to the field of transcendental consciousness, a phenomenologist not only does not lose its content; on the contrary, she works exactly with it.²⁰

Then, how to assure that the data we work with, i.e. the given, is not mistaken, incomplete, or tendentious from the very beginning? One might think that it is exactly the concept of the natural world that guarantees an unquestionable, indisputable basis. Yet, this *cannot* be the case. Exactly insofar as the natural world, in its very naturality, is supposed to be constituted through the interaction of monads, it cannot serve as an indisputable basis.

Is Richard Rorty correct, then, to deny the pretension of "Husserl's ... 'phenomenology of the life-world' ... [as describing] people in some way 'prior' to the [description] offered by science" (Rorty 2009: 382)? Reading Patočka's habilitation, one realizes, or at least can realize, that the natural world cannot be identified with the realm of primordial evidence. Rather, identifying the ground of the world with subjectivity, Patočka comes to the conclusion that it must be, as grounding the world, identified with intersubjectivity – there is *no unique absolute* subjectivity constituting the natural world.

Yet, we still can, *pace* Rorty, conceive phenomenology as offering a description of the world "in some way 'prior' to that offered by science": phenomenology reveals the fundamental *conditions* of the disclosure of the world. It neither reconstructs nor develops "the natural world of common sense" but rather identifies the conditions of possibility of any appearing of the world, the common sense and scientific worlds included. One of its most fundamental conditions is that of its being founded intersubjectively.

²⁰ Regarding this problem, an observation of Theodor Adorno seems worth mentioning: "The strange fact in Husserl ... is that what gazes out at us when I extract the pure entities from the individuations or the individual phenomenon ... that what gazes out is at bottom nothing but the good old concepts of classificatory logic" (Adorno 2008: 72).

Transcendental Subjectivity, or Intermeshing Monads?

By identifying the principle of the world appearing with intersubjectivity, Patočka does *not* locate one single principle, i.e. *the* principle of the world, but rather an inter-subjective *process* of the constitution of the world in which the finite human being takes part.

It must be emphasized that, by developing such a concept, Patočka does not simply adopt Husserl's idea of intersubjective constitution. Claiming that the intermeshing monads "constitute both being and its *a priori* lawfulness" (Patočka 2016a: 50), his philosophy intends rather to describe the *ontological* constitution of being. In other words, it seeks not only to analyse the laws of the appearing of things, but to describe their own being. To put it otherwise, Patočka understands the term constitution not only epistemologically but ontologically as well: phenomenology as the theory of constitution shall be able to describe the ontological "constitution" of the world. In what way?

As already indicated at the end of the previous chapter, Patočka seeks to utilise "all the fundamental structures of possible subjectivity, as brought to light by constitutive analysis," for "an *interpretation* of the whole world process on the basis of the fundamental structures of possible subjectivity" (Patočka 2016a: 114). To put it simply: the reconstruction of all possible subjectivities should allow for *speculating* – Patočka himself differentiates between the just-mentioned interpretation and phenomenology proper – on their inter-activity, or more precisely on their intermeshing, as ontologically "constituting" the world.

This intermeshing naturally cannot be reduced to rational communication about the world. Following the logic of Patočka's book, one sees that, insofar as the idea of the constituting subjectivity is tenable at all, this subjectivity does not constitute the world as different from itself. Rather, the intermeshing monads must be parts of the world. With this in mind, Heidegger's fundamental ontology might seem to be, after all, more in concert with Patočka's own project insofar as it does not take a world-constituting consciousness as its point of departure. But, in contrast to Heidegger, it is rather a trans-individual concept of *life*, not the concept of *Dasein* as "always mine," that is crucial in Patočka's early phenomenological approach.²¹ In his use of Husserl's phenomenology, Patočka describes neither consciousness, nor *Dasein*, but *life*.

Life First!

Above, I have tried to demonstrate that Patočka's book points to both the question of how an *individual* consciousness develops into (the "level" of) theoretical consciousness and the question of how this individual process is embedded into a broader, *trans-individual* process of (the history of) the world. And the book suggests an answer, or at least appears to. Although "theoretical consciousness" is achieved by the activity of an *individual* human being, the contents of this consciousness are not constituted individually but are rather part of a more general, trans-individual process of *life* itself. And its theoretical grasping through phenomenology might be conceived – though Patočka does not formulate it this way explicitly – as a self-interpretation of life, as a process by which life, similarly to Hegel's Spirit, reveals itself to itself. Theory is prepared, historically through humans, by life itself.

²¹ Of course, Heidegger's own early concept, especially before the publication of *Being and Time*, puts strong emphasis on the notion of life.

The concept of “the transcendental universe of monads that intermesh with one another” anticipates in many respects Patočka’s subsequent thought and throws down a challenge to it. How to think these monads and their intermeshing? Is the activity of the monads identifiable with the intentional activity of consciousness, or do we have to conceive it otherwise? How do non-human monads participate at the world?²² Unsurprisingly, Patočka was impelled to address all of these and many other questions in his subsequent thought.

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²² There seems to be an important dichotomy at work here, namely that of entities that are meaning-*constitutive* on the one side and of those that are only *constituted* but not meaning-constitutive on the other. Of course, this dichotomy has far reaching ethical significance.

4

Life of Inwardness

This chapter shall demonstrate²³ both the developmental and systematic importance of Patočka's still rather overlooked manuscripts written during World War II.²⁴ These manuscripts extensively deal with topics relating to the philosophy of history,²⁵ but I focus here on a different part of them, namely on Patočka's ontological and phenomenological studies.²⁶ I seek to demonstrate correspondences between Patočka's early transcendental phenomenology, as presented in the manuscripts, and his late asubjective phenomenology. Although Patočka's point of departure was, in the first half of the 1940s, the notion of inwardness (in Czech: *nitro*), he explicitly sought to overcome some of Husserl's subjectivist shortcomings through this concept and through a specific form of transcendental phenomenology. By putting emphasis on life and seeking to give the subject back its liveliness, Patočka's concept both called for, and simultaneously made impossible, the desubjectification of phenomenology.

Inward Existing

Let me begin by accentuating that Patočka, when speaking of the possibility or even requirement of *asubjective* phenomenology in the 1970s, does not mean that such phenomenology has no place for a subject. On the contrary, since appearances appear to *someone*, appearing necessarily includes *something like* a subject. To put it more concretely, abandoning Husserl's concept of absolute consciousness constituting the phenomenological field, one still must conceive this field as "a project of every possible encounter with being," (Patočka 1991a: 282) and, as such, this field is linked to a being who *lives in possibilities*, who exists as a possibility (of its own being).

The field of appearing is surely not constituted by a being which lives in possibilities. Rather, each "subject" who lives in possibilities, i.e. each existing *sum*, comes to itself, realizes itself through the field of appearing. In fact, "not we, but phenomenological being indicates the possibilities of our being" (Patočka 1991a: 307). According to Patočka, existence is not a "stepping out of oneself ... but an essential being-outside-onself and finding-onself [*Sich-empfangen*]" (Patočka 2015a: 39). Hence, although my existence, my

²³ This chapter has already been published as "The Life of Inwardness. Asubjectivity in Patočka's War Manuscripts" in *Interpretationes. Studia Philosophica Europeanea*, 2017, 47–59.

²⁴ Both a complete list of the manuscripts and their general interpretation is presented by Karfík (2006: 31–63).

²⁵ The essential part of these reflections has been published in German in Patočka (2006a).

²⁶ Patočka's shorter essays on these topics have been translated into German and published in *Studia Phaenomenologica VII: Jan Patočka and the European Heritage* (2007). The more extended and most systematic studies, however, are available only in Czech. So far as I know, this part of the manuscripts has been discussed (in print) only in the Czech Republic. See Puc (2009), Ritter (2010), Frei (2010), Ritter (2011).

movement of existence, can be called “subjective” insofar as it is, as Heidegger would put it, always *mine*, I am or rather become myself through the asubjective field of appearing.

After these preliminary remarks, let me turn to the war manuscripts themselves. They were in many respects inspired both by Heidegger and by the philosophy of life (cf. Karfik 2008: 41–43), yet from the methodological point of view they present an original and intricate version of the transcendental phenomenology²⁷ inspired by Husserl. This phenomenology, however, also modifies Husserl’s concept in many respects.²⁸

Above all, the concept of consciousness is replaced by that of non-objective and unobjectifiable *inwardness*. Secondly, Patočka does not conceive its fundamental activity as a *constitutive* activity. The third change, which can hardly be interpreted as merely a change in emphasis, consists in Patočka’s concept becoming much more existentialist or *personal*: it focuses on how the individual human being personally performs its own existence.

Moreover, Patočka’s concept is quite radical not only regarding subjects but also regarding “objects” in the world. Not only can human inward existence not be objectified, but nature too – and this must be explicitly identified as the fourth important modification of Husserl’s transcendental phenomenology – cannot be conceived as the outcome of intentional activity constituting objects *as* objects. Analogously to inwardness, *nature* in its essence is irreducible to objectivity.

Due to both “subjective” and “objective” non-objectivity, i.e. the non-objectivity of both inwardness and nature, Patočka must deal with a difficult methodological problem: how to describe, by means of transcendental phenomenology, something objectively inaccessible? Inwardness seems to be more easily approachable than nature since any “subject” should have, one would presume, an immediate, inner access to itself. Insofar as inwardness is non-objective, however, it is unreachable by introspection. In what way, then, is transcendental phenomenology supposed to grasp it?

Patočka explicitly differentiates his concept from that of psychology. Psychology conceives inwardness as an object, as a psychological object. It analyses various kinds of experiences through introspection. In doing so, however, the psychologist inevitably misses, according to Patočka, what is essential. For inner life is life “interested in something, and this going after this something ... is a source of involuntary and invincible interest; we are interested, captured in this tension of life” (Patočka 2014a: 17, Patočka 2007a: 53). But this tension is *lost* in experiences as described by psychology: “lifeless, indifferent are all these occurrences even though they are the experiences of tension, passion, emotion, and avidity” (Patočka 2014a: 17; Patočka 2007a: 53).

The main weakness of *any* psychological approach is this indifference. In introspecting our experiences, “what constitutes our own interest in life” is not captured, and hence the essence of inner life, or of inward living, is passed by. Interest and similar phenomena, such as seriousness, tension, or preoccupation, characterize us (as inward existences) in our *specificity*, not only in our objectively graspable properties. As Patočka puts it, interest cannot be *principally* “objectified by [psychological] self-mirroring, although it is an essential part of our inner life” (Patočka 2014a: 17; Patočka 2007a: 53).

Interest conveys one essential feature of any inward existence: its “lack of distance,” since an inward existence necessarily means “putting the content of one’s own life into a certain sphere, an as it were self-identification with a certain thing or with a certain

²⁷ Cf. Patočka (2014d: 61); Patočka (2007a: 46). (In the following, I will refer primarily to the Czech edition and secondarily to German translations when available.)

²⁸ Hence it is too risky, I believe, to say that Patočka “follows Heideggerian motifs with Husserlian means” (Karfik 2008: 37).

field of things in which only one feels one is really living” (Patočka 2014a: 18; Patočka 2007a: 55).

Being interested, inwardness is essentially in *unrest*. Also in this unrest it differs from anything merely objective: in contrast to movement as conceived, and objectified, by physics, i.e. as a transition from one state or place to another, the movement of inwardness is *not* a motion measured in relation to something but movement “by itself and in itself.”²⁹ Patočka emphasizes that a “true *relationship*, i.e. the relationship ... as not only an accidental description of things”³⁰ (Patočka 2014a: 20; Patočka 2007a: 56), can arise only if there is something which is principally and fundamentally in unrest.

Meaning-Performing and World-Disclosing Understanding

As explicated above, psychology is unable to understand the dynamic of inwardness³¹ which must be apprehended, if one seeks to explicate it, as the “residuum of natural non-objective self-understanding [*reziduum přirozeného nepředmětného sebebepohopení*]” (Patočka 2014c: 41). What is this exactly?

Characteristically, Patočka does *not* associate this self-understanding with Heidegger’s concept of understanding but with Husserl’s notion of intentionality emphasizing that this intentional “performance” (in Czech: *výkon*) cannot be reduced to the successive experiencing of particularities.³² He claims that the most fundamental performativity/intentionality of inward life is *hidden*, but it is possible to shed some light on its peculiarity (1) by reflecting on the relationship between this performance and the ego, and (2) by elucidating what the most fundamental “effect” of this performance is, i.e. what this performance performs.

Ad (1). Reflection on the relationship between the just mentioned “non-objective self-understanding” performance and the ego demonstrates that, and how, Patočka seeks to maintain the method of transcendental phenomenology centred on the concept of the ego. He “broadens” the scope of the ego, i.e. of inwardness, to literally incorporate into it phenomena usually considered as not being *performed* by it: he conceives the performance of inwardness as also “that about which the ego does not even know but which still ‘unconsciously’ codetermines it ... and which, personified, appears almost as another, alien life inside the life of one’s own” (Patočka 2014c: 46).

Accordingly, not only the doings of a self-aware, self-centred ego are the performances of inwardness: paradoxically, even “a sort of passivity” which is “a necessary background to every explicitly active grasping and realizing of one’s own possibilities” is,

²⁹ Already here, Patočka explicitly connects this idea of movement with Plato’s definition of the soul as self-movement.

³⁰ Patočka emphasizes the very same idea in his study on space from 1960.

³¹ Patočka concedes that poetic, moral, and religious depictions of inwardness can be not only inspiring but also quite apt. For the same reason, psychoanalysis is attractive in its offering a much more “active and dramatic” image than older psychology. However, according to Patočka, there is still one essential weakness of psychoanalysis: the dynamic of inwardness is depicted there as “a drama of mighty forces which ... does not differ fundamentally from a drama offered by natural catastrophes” (Patočka 2014c: 38). The problem is, fundamentally, that psychoanalysis attempts to capture the non-objective through objective principles.

³² Rather, “[t]he intentionality of singular objective ‘acts’ is an outcome of simplifying the function performed by the original non-topicality, by the hiddenness of the proper performative nature of intentional life” (Patočka 2014c: 43).

according to Patočka, a kind of performance (Patočka 2014c: 46). In other words, everything “which internally determines my choice, possibility, and impossibility” is to be regarded as performance that “decides about the formation and consequently about the meaning of particular phases of our life” (Patočka 2014c: 46), i.e. of the meaningful dynamic of *ourselves*.

Ad (2). A similar overlapping of, or an impossibility to clearly distinguish between, active constituting (or conditioning) and passive being constituted (or conditioned) is also discernible regarding the most fundamental “outcome” of the performance of inwardness. Inwardness is fundamentally correlated to the *world*, it *discloses* the world; but, again, it would be wrong to conceive the world as constituted by inwardness. One may recall here Heidegger’s idea of the world from *Being and Time*: the world is certainly not constituted by *Dasein*, yet it is *here* only through it. Analogically, the world is here only through inwardness, yet it is not constituted by it.

Ana Santos captures the relation between the “subject” and the world thus: “The world ... cannot be separated from us, yet we need not conceive it as identical to our subjectivity. The world is neither inside nor outside the subject; the world is ... a primordial ... ‘light of life’ ... illuminating the way of the human being” (Santos 2007a: 19). Most importantly, insofar as the world is that in which inwardness finds itself, or insofar as the world is, as Santos quotes, “the light of life,” it surely cannot be conceived of as constituted by inwardness – inwardness is rather, as it were, enlightened by it.

Patočka’s description of the relation between meaning-disclosing performance and the ego indicates that this performance of the self is, paradoxically, non-transparent to the self itself, and his description of the relation between the world and inwardness indicates even the priority of the world and its irreducibility to the self. Both descriptions suggest that inwardness finds itself as a living being *in* the world rather than being the principle of world-constitution.

To Capture Life Subjectively?

Patočka’s thesis that it is *life* which “discloses the ‘meaning’ of objectivity in the whole and in the particular ... life in its basic characteristic that makes it performance” (Patočka 2014c: 47), is in accordance with the aforesaid. Or, to express it again in Patočka’s own words, “life is that which gives meaning to the existent as such [*co jsoucímu vůbec dává smysl*], to which ‘being’ [*bytí*] means anything at all, [and hence] it is only from there where one can set out to the very central philosophical problem” (Patočka 2014c: 48). To put it in a simplified manner, it is rather on the concept of life than on the concept of the conscious ego that we should base phenomenology.

This emphasis on life as the principle of world-disclosure leads, from the methodological point of view, to a tricky situation: Patočka attempts to capture life by analysing living experiences, methodologically sticking to Husserl’s *subjectivist* phenomenology, and thus effectively “subjectifying” life by attempting to grasp it *in* the subject, while he simultaneously emphasizes that life is beyond the subject-object dichotomy. Although his concept is often reminiscent of Heidegger’s overcoming of the subject-object dichotomy through the concept of “being-in-the-world,” “the very central philosophical problem” in the war manuscripts is not the (Heideggerian) problem of Being but exactly the problem of the meaning-performing *subjectivity* which is supposed to be identifiable, it seems, with meaning-performing *life*. Yet, Patočka himself concedes that Husserl was *unable* to solve

the key problem of subjective being and concludes his considerations on Husserl's phenomenology declaring that "Hegel's phenomenology of spirit was an attempt to solve this problem" (Patočka 2014c: 50).

Unfortunately, Patočka neither describes this Hegelian solution in any detail nor declares whether, or in what form, he would accept it. Putting this question aside, the methodological problem of Patočka's approach can be expressed in the following way: is it possible to describe the life of inward beings through analysing subjectivity?

Similarities with the Concept of the Movement of Existence

As indicated above, at least some of the meaning-constituting performances of the self do *not* come, strictly speaking, from inwardness *itself*; rather, inwardness finds itself as being conditioned by them instead. Through this, for lack of a better word, "dispossessing" of the performances of the self, the concept of performance, i.e. the concept through which Patočka develops the fundamental phenomenological concept of intentionality, anticipates what will be later, in the 1960s, conceptualized as the movement of existence.

To put it in a simplified way, both the early concept of performance and the later concept of the movement of existence describe a performance/movement that is "always mine," but both of these concepts reveal this inward or personal movement as asubjectively conditioned. Put into the terminology of Patočka's mature asubjective phenomenology, both concepts imply, although the war manuscripts do *not* duly appreciate it, that "not we, but phenomenological being indicates the possibilities of our being" (Patočka 1991a: 307).

Moreover, both concepts indicate that an inward existence, or *sum*, is neither constituted, nor constitutes itself. It rather, *by performing* its way of existence, *finds* itself as a living being in the world. Accordingly, Patočka quite accurately captures human inward existing through the collocation "the way of our life" (Patočka 2014b: 68; Patočka 2007c: 68). Firstly, the term *way* emphasizes the processual nature of inwardness in both its temporal and spatial dimensions: ontologically speaking, inwardness is not an entity but rather a kind of self-forming practice with world as its field. Secondly, in performing this practice one goes the way of *life* wherein this singular life is a part of all living beings.³³ Thirdly, this way of life is *my own* way of life: it is by living and performing it that I singularize, *ontologically*, my own being.

One can say, paradoxically indeed, that Patočka's transcendental phenomenology articulated in the war manuscripts has *no* transcendental subject to analyse, i.e. no fundamental subject as conditioning (the experience of) the world. Rather, this phenomenology must read the "essence" of inwardness, i.e. its way of life, *in* the world. Accordingly, Patočka says that the only possible *positive* concepts capturing inwardness (besides the already mentioned negative ones, namely the concepts of interest and inner unrest)³⁴ do not describe it directly but rather elucidate how inwardness "understands its own meaning

³³ As will be explicated below, it is primarily through the concept of life that Patočka accounts for the possibility of inwardness to understand other beings not only as objects but as subjects as well. Santos justifiably considers "Phänomenologie der Lebendigkeit" as the most original feature of Patočka's war manuscripts (Santos 2007a: 17).

³⁴ Both these concepts are negative ones also insofar as they point to a "non-being in itself, a non-resting of oneself in oneself" essential to inwardness; accordingly, inwardness is "a kind of rising out of oneself together with being bound to oneself: an unrest and interest, and the tension arising from it" (Patočka 2014a: 20; Patočka 2007b: 56).

through the meaning of the world in which it finds itself” (Patočka 2014a: 18; Patočka 2007b: 54).

These meaningful structures, of course, may be considered as correlative to inwardness but they are not its constituted products. They are rather, as Patočka puts it, its “orienting signs”: “everything that is not this pilgrimage [of inwardness] obtains its meaning of being ... an orienting sign”; and the very content of inwardness is to be identified with the non-objective movement itself proceeding within this framework: “the *moments* of the way, its peripeteia ... naturally creates the genuine ‘content’ of inner life” (Patočka 2014c: 48). It is only through these signs and moments that one can capture the meaning of the life of inwardness.

Nature

The insufficiency of the concept reducing appearing to subjectivity is revealed also by Patočka’s reflection on the relation, or encounter, between the subject and object, or between inwardness and the “contents” of the world.

As was already mentioned, things in the world are not constituted by (transcendental) subjectivity. Ontologically, natural beings must be conceived of as forms of the “undifferentiation” [*nerozlišenost*] of the subject and object” (Patočka 2014d: 64; Patočka 2007a: 46). Describing the encounter between “subject” and “object,” or rather between inwardness and nature, Patočka considers it necessary to presuppose two undifferentiations, i.e. both the undifferentiation of inwardness and the undifferentiation of nature, to account for the possibility of an understanding *contact* between inwardness and beings of the world. It is thanks to this common undifferentiation that “concrete contact with concrete beings [is possible]; all of life is based on this sympathy, and there is no sympathy without this essential, deep identity” (Patočka 2014b: 68; Patočka 2007c: 69).

Patočka supports this speculative concept by, positively, (1) describing our (natural) perceiving of things in the world and, negatively, by (2) criticizing Husserl’s idea that things in the world are constituted by intentional activity “animating” impressions or “hyletic data.”

Ad (1). Considering our (natural) perceiving of “objects” in the world, Patočka emphasizes that there is no *mere datum* in our perceiving of the world: “An aesthesis is never a ‘pure presentation,’ there is always an ‘expression’ in it; an aesthesis is possible only as an expression” (Patočka 2014d: 61; Patočka 2007a: 43). Reading Patočka’s formulation that “face to face with another inwardness, this other inwardness makes its appearance as an *exhibition*, an *expression*”³⁵ (Patočka 2014f: 101), one might wonder to what degree does Patočka anticipate here Lévinas’ concept of face. However, he is not describing “something” which breaks any form, but rather an elementary perception: any perception is “more than only subjective”; there is “an undifferentiation of subject and object” contained therein (Patočka 2014d: 62; Patočka 2007a: 44).

Ad (2). In accordance with the aforesaid, things in the world cannot be conceived of as constituted by intentional activity “animating” impressions. As Patočka puts it, his transcendental phenomenology “glimpses, at the borderline of human understanding for things, pure nature, pure undifferentiation of subject and object, undifferentiation enclosed in itself” (Patočka 2014d: 64; Patočka 2007a: 46). Ontologically admitting this sphere, one

³⁵ According to Patočka, “inwardness perceptible from the outside” is a “universal pre-signifying” of “a synthetic process of perception” (Patočka 2014f: 102).

must conceive our contact with the given as “a harmonic resonance of nature with ‘inwardness’ and inwardness with nature thanks to the original undifferentiation of subject and object” (Patočka 2014d: 66; Patočka 2007a: 49).

Dissimilarities: Life, not the World

The concept of nature, and especially that of life, points to a crucial ontological dimension of Patočka’s war manuscripts that, in my reading, calls for and simultaneously makes it impossible to desubjectify Patočka’s early concept.

Inwardness, just as natural beings, is a *living* “subject” and as such – as participating in life – is beyond the subject-object dichotomy. Due to this being beyond, and in this being beyond, inwardness in its experiencing cannot be conceived as, or reduced to, an objectively accessible entity. As explicated above, Patočka avoids its objectification, besides other things, by conceiving the world in its appearing to inwardness as an outcome of performances including, to reiterate, also “that about which the ego does not even know but which still ‘unconsciously’ codetermines it ... and which, personified, appears almost as another, alien life inside the life of one’s own” (Patočka 2014c: 46).

In stating this, however, Patočka himself actually indicates as artificial the identification of life in its performance with unconscious codeterminations performed *by the ego*. Perhaps life does not belong to any ego but actually to something “else,” to something *beyond* the ego as the subject of experience. Due to this, and in this sense, one can speak, paradoxically, of an implicit desubjectification of Patočka’s transcendental phenomenology based in Patočka’s emphasis on *life*. As explicated in previous chapters, already in his dissertation and habilitation Patočka conceives life, and *not* consciousness, as *the* principle of being. The war manuscripts, then, can be interpreted as seeking to fulfil the task laid out in the final part of Patočka’s book on the natural world: “the task of interpreting all existence from the inner sources of life itself” (Patočka 2016a: 114).

Yet, whereas Patočka surely does not detach inwardness, or the subject, from *life*, he detaches it from the *world*. To be more precise: by recurring to life, Patočka is quite able to offer a livelier, or more natural, concept of appearing, but he does not conceive the possibilities of a living being as indicated by “phenomenological being” but as performed by life itself. To use a spatial metaphor, although Patočka conceives the world as that in which “the content of inner life” appears, it is life itself, life *inside* us, and not the world *outside* which, allow me to quote again, “discloses the ‘meaning’ of objectivity in the whole and in the particular ... life in its basic characteristic that makes it performance” (Patočka 2014c: 47).

Allow me here to summarise a bit: Patočka points to the desubjectification of phenomenology through emphasizing life as *beyond* the difference of subject and object. Simultaneously, however, from the perspective of his transcendental phenomenology, this beyond lies at the *bottom of the self*. From the methodological point of view, then, the lesson Patočka might have taken from his war manuscripts is that it is impossible for phenomenology to proceed analytically by reflecting on the ego; on the contrary, phenomenology can decipher any living self only by reflecting on its way through the field of its appearing. By abandoning the idea that the principle of appearing can be identified with life, Patočka’s late concept of existence then allows for explicating “the way of inwardness” but not by reducing it to the principle of life. In fact, as I intend to demonstrate in the second part of this book, Patočka’s late concept does not reduce existence to the world, when conceived as *the* principle, either.

(In)Personality

One last point must be emphasized here: there remains a very important difference between natural beings and *human* selves. In the case of human inwardness, we cannot get by with the concept of nature only: its interest and unrest seem to entail, or call for, a different kind of ontological *singularity* than non-human, natural entities. Human inwardness, to put it a tad idiomatically, makes a difference in the world, in the world of merely *natural* life,³⁶ and it is this specificity of human inwardness which is of utmost importance to Patočka.³⁷

In the war manuscripts, Patočka emphasizes the singular, personal character even of the performance of *philosophy*. He differentiates two kinds of philosophy: one disinterested and objective, the other subjective, obviously preferring subjective, i.e. a “personal, intimate,” philosophy with its subject “nothing other than a human being, yet not the human being as such but every one individually struggling and penetrating themselves in thought” (Patočka 2014e: 10; Patočka 2007d: 27). Such an intimate philosopher, maintains Patočka, “has no ‘conceptions,’ no ‘thoughts,’ or if he has any, then only *en passant* as findings he irresistibly encounters on his way into his own inwardness, as instruments without which he cannot break into what is essentially and only his own [*nástroje, bez nichž se nejvlastněji nedolomí*]” (Patočka 2014e: 10; Patočka 2007d: 27).

Nevertheless, despite these somewhat grandiloquent expressions that suggest the absolute singularity of inward human movement, even Patočka’s phenomenology of *human*³⁸ inwardness is not as individualist as one might conclude. His own thoughts are not presented as instruments founded *en passant* but rather, analogically to Heidegger’s analyses in *Being and Time*, as universally valid structures, i.e. as valid exactly for *each* human being individually penetrating itself. However, these general structures, which do not seem to have been found at random, are not to be used, and interpreted, as “indifferent” concepts but rather as expressions of an un-resting, interested, performing self. Indeed, Patočka’s war manuscripts clearly demonstrate this personal earnestness and interested-ness.

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³⁶ One can suspect here, reading “of a pure nature, of a pure indifference of subject and object, of an indifference enclosed in itself” (Patočka 2014d: 64; Patočka 2007a: 46), two different kinds of processes as an anticipation of Patočka’s later proposal of renewing the concept of *physis* as different from the concept of inwardness as humanly singularizing performance.

³⁷ Accordingly, Patočka emphasizes that the phenomenologist must be specifically, and rather un-theoretically, well-equipped to be able to understand human inwardness: “The meaning, and hence the content of the inner life can be clear only to one who, at the utmost risk of oneself, alone seizes meaning [*dobývá smyslu*] in the end” (Patočka 2014c: 48).

³⁸ As already indicated, “the task of special metaphysics is to determine the place of particular districts of being in relation to its most fundamental layer of meaningful inwardness” (Patočka 2014g: 289). Cf. Karčík (2008: 39).

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Basically Negative Being in the World

From the phenomenological point of view, there are four main reasons to pay attention to Patočka's book *Věčnost a dějinnost* (Eternity and Historicity) written in 1947 (unpublished during his life).³⁹ Firstly, it offers an interestingly contextualized polemics with Husserl's phenomenology. Secondly, it develops the important concept of the dialectic of appearing while this dialectic implies, thirdly, a quite fundamental transformation of phenomenology in comparison with his war manuscripts. Finally, Patočka's considerations in *Eternity and Historicity* not only anticipate, but rather necessitate, the concept of "negative Platonism."

Husserl's Phenomenology vs. the Phenomenology of Spirit's Struggle

According to Patočka in the second half of the 1940s, contemporary philosophy is stuck in a dilemma: either there is no autonomous philosophy or, if there is any, it reduces all being to an absolute subject (Patočka 2007e: 67). More concretely, Patočka asks whether, along with the fruitless "renaissance of the classical tradition," "the hopelessness of a purely negative existentialism" (this is how Patočka labels Sartre and Heidegger in the book) and an unproductive "understanding of ... incomprehensibility" (Jaspers), it is still possible for metaphysics to exist (Patočka 2007e: 98).

Patočka effectively identifies metaphysics as the only possible autonomous philosophy, convinced that it "has not been deprived of its role in the life of humans as it is inseparable from it" (Patočka 2007e: 98).⁴⁰ In the metaphysical approach, the world is conceived as a "question, problem, enigma, mystery," not as a fact, and hence "objectivity is not the last word" (Patočka 2007e: 99). Accordingly, metaphysics necessarily questions the exclusive validity of the objectively given, of objectivity as such. This questioning can be done e.g. by means of methodical scepticism, a form of which is, according to Patočka, Husserl's phenomenological reduction.

Husserl's philosophy, however, is insufficient for several reasons. (1) Although Husserl questions one givenness, i.e. that of the world, he replaces it with another one, namely the givenness of consciousness conceived as an object. (2) The objectivity of objects in the world is downgraded to the "intersection of subjective intentionalities." As a consequence, Husserl does not fully appreciate the objectively given as such. (3) Since Husserl's philosophy is concerned with *a priori* structures, "the question of the realization of this *a priori*, of contingency and occurrences, of the events of reality, remains out of its scope" (Patočka 2007e: 101). To sum things up: apart from the problematic assumption of

³⁹ I only touch on other important topics, such as the question of (the end of) metaphysics or the systematically relevant problem of the "place" of Socrates and Plato in Patočka's interpretation of (the history of) philosophy. These issues have been addressed (unfortunately only in Czech) by Ritter 2008, Jíra 2010, Sladký 2010, Ritter 2013 and Sladký 2015.

⁴⁰ The different meanings of metaphysics and the relation of "metaphysics" to "philosophy" in Patočka's thinking in the 1940s are discussed by Sladký 2015: esp. 59–62.

the *objectifiability* of consciousness, Patočka emphasizes that Husserl fails to duly appreciate the *given* and that his phenomenology, although quite able to analyse logical or semantic structures, fails to give a true picture of the real *course of events*.

Not one of these objections is new in Patočka's thought. The first two problems had been explicitly addressed in the war manuscripts. Comparing his present approach with the previous one, one can say that, regarding the first problem, Patočka sought in the war manuscripts to reinterpret Husserl rather than to simply disprove him and that the second objection created the opportunity for him to develop the concept of non-objective natural being. As will be demonstrated in the following, in the present approach Patočka emphasises quite a different aspect of the given. Regarding the third problem, it can be traced back to Patočka's dissertation with its duality between the *possibilities* of appearing, discoverable by phenomenology, and the real course of events. In *Eternity and Historicity*, Patočka certainly seeks to describe the real course of events but this *process* of reality is that of the spirit's transcending the given which presents, as will be elucidated in this chapter, a very different picture of the world than that of the war manuscripts.

Fundamentally, Patočka takes all the weaknesses of Husserlian reduction as indicating that the "method of reduction" does not pose the question of being radically enough, thus being unable to deal with reality itself. That said, Patočka does *not* claim, accepting Heidegger's idea from *Being and Time*, that we need to pose the question of Being again. As indicated already in the previous chapter, what Patočka has in mind is rather the problem of the relation between subjectivity and objectivity. Let us recall that Husserl was unable, according to Patočka, to solve just the problem of subjectivity.

Now, Patočka states that even in front of the allegedly definitive ground of the absolute consciousness gained by the reduction "our elemental unease is being reborn, as well as the question which attempts to shake it loose" (Patočka 2007e: 103). This elemental unease confirms that even the reductive method is "a part of a specific dialectic belonging to the essential structure of spirit and thus to the nature of reality" (Patočka 2007e: 103). "The basis of such dialectic," Patočka writes, "is the spirit's struggle against objectivity" (Patočka 2007e: 103).

Struggle: Negative Affection and Protest

Regarding these formulations, which seem to imply a sort of idealism of Spirit, one should turn back to the war manuscripts in which Patočka remarks that Husserl's transcendental reduction "is not defined unequivocally as a reflexive act; there is the spontaneity of absolute freedom in it" (Patočka 2014c: 49). Patočka formulated this idea considering the philosophical possibilities of transcendental philosophy and observing that "Hegel's philosophy of spirit was an attempt to solve the problem" (Patočka 2014c: 50).

Did Patočka accept, a few years later, the Hegelian solution? This question is hardly answerable, I think, primarily because Patočka does not specify how he interprets Hegel; and one can trace here, perhaps, the reason for his growing interest in Hegel's philosophy (cf. Karfík 2007: 131). Be that as it may, not only Hegelian influence⁴¹ but also one of the most important dissimilarities between the war concept and the current one can be seen in Patočka's emphasis not only on dialectic but also on *struggle*: the dialectic consists exactly in the spirit's struggle. Whereas the war manuscripts conceived inwardness rather as a pilgrimage through the world, with its painful but also harmonious and joyful moments,

⁴¹ Mediated by French appropriations (esp. by Sartre) and interpretations (esp. by Kojève) of Hegel.

spirit as the key principle of the present approach is rather an *opponent* struggling against, if not against the world itself, then certainly against objectivity. There can be no harmony, no resonance between spirit and objectivities.

Undoubtedly, the war manuscripts and the book *Eternity and Historicity* have many points in common. For example, in the same way as inwardness, spirit too cannot be objectified. In its “objective” content, however, it seems to be more “vacant,” or to be more one-sidedly conceived, than inwardness: it is “nothing else than a protest against objective being” (Patočka 2007e: 103). Importantly, this protest is primarily *not* a determined and purposeful activity. Initially, it manifests itself affectively: an essential part of spirit, or rather of the experience of spirit, is “a negative affection, the affection of the object by negation” (Patočka 2007e: 103). One can distinguish, I contend, two sides of this affection: it is, subjectively, a negative experience of dissatisfaction, but simultaneously it ascribes objects negativity, an ontological deficiency of sorts.

As soon as spirit “enacts” among beings, it inevitably protests, it *is* a protest against (the validity of) objectivity. Negative affection thus “manifests itself in the fact that even though we posit the all of things (and our difference to them), we simultaneously cannot, and do not, believe that we could have a full, real being in them” (Patočka 2007e: 103); and, insofar as spirit protests against the reduction of being to objectivity, “it springs another being to mind” (Patočka 2007e: 103). Accordingly, the transcendence of spirit is simultaneously “the *transcensus* of a certain concept, a certain idea of being”: “we are on the way to a different being than the pure object” and because of that “the mere object is affected by negation, by an ontic weakness, by a lower degree of being” (Patočka 2007e: 106).⁴² The transcending subject necessarily has another idea of being than that of objectivity.⁴³

Against the World

Recalling the war manuscripts, one cannot but ask why there can be no harmony between spirit and the things of the world. Although Patočka still admits that all things may be endowed with inwardness,⁴⁴ he conceives objectivity (without explicitly defining the extension of the term) as something “indifferent to being and non-being” (Patočka 2007e: 108). This indifference⁴⁵ seems to be the basic reason for the impossibility of spirit being able to be in harmony with objects in the world and even with the world itself: Patočka

⁴² Patočka likens this duality to the “inner temporal horizon” of consciousness with its two non-actual dimensions: on the one side, there is the “dimension of a postulated ‘higher being,’ of that which we are awaiting, longing and fighting for”; on the other side, there is the “dimension into which all of the present necessarily falls, into which objective reality disappears” (Patočka 2007: 106). In this duality, time is “an image of our basic movement to true being, to being in the true sense: on the one side, the affection of an object by a negation, its depreciation and emptying; on the other side, a plan and an *élan* toward pure positivity” (Patočka 2007: 106).

⁴³ It can be said, preliminarily, that the basic difference between *Eternity and Historicity* and “Negative Platonism” consists in the different answering of the question from where does this idea (of another being) “come.”

⁴⁴ “Mere outer-ness is pure abstraction; ... even pure matter may have a certain inwardness, albeit only remotely analogous to our own” (Patočka 2007: 106).

⁴⁵ In Czech, Patočka uses the word *indiference*, and not the *nerozlišenost* of the war manuscripts (I have translated this as “undifferentiation”). Whereas “indifference” here means, to put it simply, to be indifferent to (one’s “own”) being, “indifferentiation” meant being beyond (or “before”) subject-object dichotomy.

speaks of “the great silence and deadness of the all-embracing [*všeobjímajícího*]” (Patočka 2007e: 108).

This indifference is demonstrated or rather exemplified, in its negativity, by experiences in which the intimacy of the familiar world, i.e. the world we are accustomed to, collapses. In this collapse, according to Patočka, the emptiness of the objective world is revealed: “In this presence [of the world], there is a great absence, often covered up by the opulence of assemblage and detail ... Everything is here, but as if it had come back to itself, as if it were shown its empty inner side at once” (Patočka 2007e: 110).

Undoubtedly, Patočka utilizes here Heidegger’s and Sartre’s analyses of anxiety and boredom.⁴⁶ Yet, he interprets these experiences neither in Heidegger’s nor in Sartre’s way. What he seeks to demonstrate with them is that the objectively given “is not simply given ... as the true reality”: “to the contrary, it is, in its naturalness, basicness, and self-sufficiency, affected by a negative pre-signifying and ... must fight for its recognition, namely on a foreign land and by means of foreign forces” (Patočka 2007e: 111).

In the last instance, Patočka connects “objectivity,” in its dominion over us, with pain and death,⁴⁷ thus indicating that by objectivity he does not mean primarily things in the world as such, but rather the petrified in them or, even more precisely perhaps, that which is petrifying in them. Nonetheless, his concept includes the notion that the world and the things in it are ontologically deficient. In other words, non-spiritual objectivities cannot achieve recognition by themselves; humans must do it instead, or, in their name. To put it as Patočka does himself: it is on us, i.e. on human beings, to “carry in ourselves what this indifference neglects, to supply through our lives its essential lack: it is inside of us where things come to ‘themselves,’ to a living centre, it is only in us where their indifference becomes real, becomes experience” (Patočka 2007e: 108). Protesting against objectivity, humans testify to the existence of things while, paradoxically, not only transcending but also negating them.

The Given beyond Mere Givenness?

Importantly, Patočka’s assertion that, although there might be inwardness in everything, eventually we “have to come to something which is only given, and though it might be the exterior or expression of life (who can say, for sure, that it is not?), at least it is not this very life itself” (Patočka 2007e: 108), is in tension, if not in contradiction, with the war manuscripts according to which nothing in our experience is “only given.” Accepting that we *never* perceive a “pure presentation” but always already an “expression,” we cannot justifiably presuppose *mere* givenness. To perceive is, in line with the war manuscripts, to perceive in the medium of “an indifferenciation of subject and object”: Thanks to this common and basic indifferenciation, the world and its contents is experienced by inwardness as a world of beings exhibiting and expressing themselves, even *being* in their expressions.

To put it differently, “inwardness perceptible from the outside” was, according to the war manuscripts, a universal “structure” of appearing. By contrast, the concept developed in *Eternity and Historicity* presupposes, and must presuppose, the appearance of the merely given insofar as it is the condition of possibility of the dialectic of spirit. And, of

⁴⁶ Regarding Heidegger, cf. already in Patočka’s war manuscripts: Patočka 2014f: 125.

⁴⁷ “The inevitability of death is the dominion of the object over that which protests against it” (Patočka 2007: 111).

course, this given is not taken as self-presenting and *in its self-presenting*; on the contrary, it must be presented, paradoxically, by spirit itself.

In this concept, Patočka does *not* reduce all being to an absolute subject. But he allows himself to get caught up in an even more dangerous idea: The problem lies not so much in the *methodological* ignoring of the given. Rather, it consists in the *substantial* underestimation, in the *disrespect* of the given. The given is seen, “accepted” as given, but not taken as “equal” to spirit.

Historic Humanism

To interpret Patočka properly, however, one should take into account that in *Eternity and Historicity* he is primarily interested not in ontology but in the *ethical* life of humans and, more broadly, in *humanism*.

Responding to Emanuel Rádl’s posthumously published book *Útěcha z filosofie* (The Consolation of Philosophy), Patočka argues against Rádl’s thesis that Socrates founded metaphysical humanism. Patočka admits that humanism, in which “the fundamental question of philosophy ... is the question of the human being, namely the moral question of the human being” (Patočka 2007e: 24), is the fundament of the entire tradition of philosophy, but he resolutely disagrees with the idea according to which Socrates was the founder of *metaphysical* humanism. Whereas in Rádl’s interpretation Socrates’ philosophy includes eternal ideas which give (moral) meaning to human existence, according to Patočka Socrates discovers human *historicity*, not eternal ideas, as the basis of the fundamental (moral) question (Patočka 2007e: 7).

Generally, in *Eternity and Historicity* Patočka gives priority to historicity “at the expense” of eternity, which also implies that he emphasises the subjective and active approaching of (not only) that which is assumed to be eternal and objective: He disagrees with Rádl and Scheler insofar as they are unable to account for our personal relation to values (Patočka 2007: 59). Their “essentialism” and “eternalism” do not do justice to “the moment of moral seeking and struggling, of invention and uncertainty – in short, the whole severity, pain, effort, and work of the negative principle” (Patočka 2007e: 28).

Here, again, Patočka’s emphasis on human *negativity* is visible in all its radicality. To put it little bit roughly, the subject presented in *Eternity and Historicity* not only cannot find satisfaction in the world but nor should it seek it. According to Patočka, spirit must never forget “the basically negative and painful character of being in the world” (Patočka 2007e: 106). Saying this, Patočka wants to warn, of course, against ease and the decline of everydayness, but he goes too far. Characteristically, he formulates a sharp dichotomy: spirit can turn *either* to what is already given, *or* it can turn to what is not yet; and Patočka leaves behind no doubt that only the second option is the right one.

But this is a false dichotomy. There is no either–or here. Despite being aware that “life, consciousness, meaning can simply be there, can be *given*,” or even that they *must* be given if life is to be able to develop (Patočka 2007e: 112), Patočka claims that “there is no *given* aim, until consciousness by itself decides on it, that also the supposedly imposed and assigned purposes and functions of life remain ... its mercy” (Patočka 2007e: 113). This concept, problematic as it regards values (are values reducible to the mercy of consciousness?), becomes even more problematic when generalized to the spirit’s relation to the world as such. One might imagine a spirit fully free to decide on its essence and the world it inhabits, but such a spirit would not be, as I will show in more detail later, human. Accordingly, the humanity of life cannot be reduced to the ability to negate the given; the

humanity of life consists just as fundamentally in the ability to accept, or even to “embrace” it.

Overcoming Husserl?

To encapsulate and evaluate Patočka’s approach in the second half of the 1940s, let me address two questions. (A) Is his concept able to overcome the above described weaknesses of Husserl’s approach? (B) Is it possible to conceive of a philosophy based on the above described approach? In brief: Patočka’s concept is unsatisfactory in both regards.

Regarding the first objection identified in the introductory part of this chapter, Patočka surely does not objectify spirit. But, is he able, as for the second problem, to fully appreciate the given? As a matter of fact, *any* objective givenness is conditioned by the non-given spirit: “struggle for being is a presupposition for the givenness of the objective being itself” (Patočka 2007e: 106). Simultaneously, however, it is also necessary to *pre-suppose* the given as being different to spirit: this “principle,” different from spirit and experienced as (the) emptiness (of the given), is the motor of the dialectics of spirit. To put it paradoxically, although spirit conditions objectivity, it also needs (it) to be perturbed by it. In fact, the given irritating spirit seems quite similar to Fichtean not-I; but by presupposing such a not-I, Patočka does *not* fully appreciate the given.⁴⁸

The third problem of Husserl’s concept consisted in its inability to describe “the events of reality.” More concretely, Husserl transposed the problem of the relation between subject and object to the layer of *meaning*, and accordingly he was inclined “to idealist metaphysics which make beings always and only part of the realm of meanings conceived as something self-sufficient, something closed off to itself” (Patočka 2007e: 65). This concept is problematic not only because the problem of being differs from the problem of the meaning of being (Patočka 2007e: 65); even more importantly, by locating values in us, Husserl cannot explain, or even evaluate, “the meaning of moral experience” insofar as “any ‘raising above oneself’ [*pozvednutí nad sebe*] is to drown in ever subtler – but nonetheless still – subjectivity” (Patočka 2007e: 66).

Not even Patočka, however, offers a description of the real course of events; he does *not* explicate the just-mentioned “raising above oneself.” Although he himself emphasizes that “every philosophy of the human being ... must clarify our subjective relation to ‘values’” (Patočka 2007e: 59), which also means to duly appreciate the already mentioned uncertainty, severity, and pain, he does *not* clarify this subjective relation.⁴⁹ Obviously, he would like to avoid subjectivism: values are neither above us, as Platonists think, nor *in* us. Yet his concept, quite explicitly identifying spirit with the human being, becomes subjectivist in another sense: it is, as humanistic, anthropocentric. With this observation, let me proceed to the second question formulated at the beginning of this section.

⁴⁸ Furthermore, admitting that the given is dependent on the non-given (spirit), one might justifiably conclude, I believe, that the *negativity* described above is not the negativity of the given but rather of spirit itself. At this point, it is possible to ask the question: how to decide, when spirit experiences “negative affection,” whether the ontological weakness is to be ascribed to the given *or* to spirit, to its, to put it more ethically, concrete, and changeable, way of life? Is the problem, the deficiency, inevitably on the “objective” side?

⁴⁹ Not only does he *not* specify this struggling process of inventing values, but he positively states that, unsurprisingly, the negative principle, which is the fundamental motor of the course of events, offers *no* positive values. It gives only *negative* directives which prevent the human being from identifying itself with any “given, empirical determination of the human being” (Patočka 2007e: 114). His concept is evidently, and explicitly, inspired by Socrates (cf. Patočka 2007e: 23–24).

Absolute Humanism

Is it possible to conceive of a philosophy based on the above described approach? Patočka is surely able to show that “objectivity is not the last word” (Patočka 2007e: 99). What transcends objectivity, however, is not something *above* human beings. Transcendence “dwells” in human activity itself while the “essence” of this activity performed in the world lies in overcoming the given. Hence, Patočka revives metaphysics not by grounding temporality in eternity but by suggesting that, to the contrary, everything supposedly eternal must be tested by the temporal activity of humans.

I have already mentioned that the given Patočka speaks of in *Eternity and Historicity* resembles the Fichtean not-I. Indeed, Patočka’s concept of the dialectic of spirit, in which the given plays a crucial role, seems to have its roots rather in the thoughts of German Idealists than in Husserl’s phenomenology. Looking back at the development of Patočka’s phenomenology reconstructed so far, one can say that his rethinking and/or criticism of Husserl’s phenomenology goes hand in hand with his rethinking of the (im)possibilities of German idealism.

Now, Patočka explicitly rejects not only the reduction of all being to an absolute subject but also the identification of the world with spirit. Effectively, then, he disclaims objective idealism. With its emphasis on both spirit and the irreducibility of the world to spirit, his concept can be called limited idealism, yet this limited idealism is also radical subjectivism and even radical humanism.

In objective idealism, the given, or the objective, can be spiritual, and it can be spiritual as opposed to subjective non-spirituality, or to its merely pretended (or false) spirituality. In Patočka’s concept, such a spiritual predominance of the given is unthinkable: the subjective, in its protest against the given, is always in the right. In other words, Patočka’s concept has no place for the ontologically valuable given in its irreducibility to the subjective. This is why I call this concept limited idealism: it is idealistic in its putting emphasis on spirit, yet it is (self)limited by accepting/presupposing the world as (yet) unspiritual. But this limited idealism is also – in contrast to objective idealism – radical subjectivism, since it recognizes as valuable only that which is subjective.

In a sense, such a concept radicalizes the philosophy of inwardness, in which anything given, or objective, is valuable only as correlated with the subjective. Whereas the war manuscripts, however, pointed to the (paradoxical) asubjectivity of, and in, the subjective, and sought to subjectively grasp this asubjective (life), the concept of *Eternity and Historicity* emphasizes the (negating) activity of spirit and, additionally, brings the subjective and the human close together. Due to it, his concept becomes radically humanistic, and this historic humanism does not accept anything transcending the human being.⁵⁰ In short, it is the human being itself in its transcending activity that is *the* meta-physical in this concept. Patočka deprives the given of any positive value so that he can claim that the negative reaction of (the human) spirit to objectivity is a fundamental position or “plus,” i.e. “being in the full meaning of the word” (Patočka 2007: 113). It is the movement of spirit itself, i.e. the movement of the human being, which is the only “metaphysical” entity in this approach.⁵¹

⁵⁰ And as soon as spirit is identified with the human, there is no place for nature (as “the given”) to have its own meaning, albeit less valuable than that of the human being.

⁵¹ Patočka states that his concept shall offer “an ethics of orders, of duty” (Patočka 2007e: 114), yet he does not specify these orders or even the logic of this duty. The only duty here can actually be the spirit’s duty to be (faithful to) itself, i.e. to transcend all objectivity, and especially not to conform to any *given* rules or values. As Patočka puts it, only if the activity of spirit is based on *nothing* objective, can its “fruit ... be being

As we will see in the next chapter, the concept of “negative Platonism” corrects this radical form of humanism by postulating a (metaphysical) principle that is neither subjective nor objective, let alone human, a principle different from spirit: Idea.

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in the full meaning of the word” (Patočka 2007e: 113). Not only can the activity of spirit be objectively ungrounded, it in fact *must be* without objective grounding if it is to be really “pure.”

6

Call of Transcendence

In *Eternity and Historicity*, Patočka maintains that metaphysics is inseparable from the life of human beings (Patočka 2007e: 98). Only a few years later, however, in the text I will examine in this chapter, he takes the death of metaphysics for granted and asks whether philosophy can survive beyond it.

Nevertheless, taking the death of metaphysics in “Negative Platonism” (1953)⁵² as his point of departure, Patočka does *not* mean that the metaphysical “part” of the human being has also died. On the contrary, he conceives two contemporary lines of thought as approaches which do not take away, as did older anti-metaphysical tendencies, any essential aspect of the human being, and hence are able to “understand even metaphysics itself, taking from it, in a purified form, its essential philosophical thrust and carrying it forward” (Patočka 1989a: 188). These two approaches are “theology, seeking to free itself from the metaphysical and thus the anthropological habit,” and “the philosophy of existence insofar as it is an expression of the revolt against anthropologism, against integral humanism” (Patočka 1989a: 187–188).

As one can see, Patočka now, at the beginning of the 1950s, separates the philosophy of existence from humanism. “With its desire to become the ‘ultimate humanism,’” he writes to Václav Richter in 1951, “French existentialism has misrepresented and destroyed the whole meaning of existential philosophy; the very meaning of existentialism is the effort to break this integral humanism which is developed most sharply and elaborately in Hegel and in the Hegelian understanding of the human being and history” (Patočka 2001: 37). Paradoxically, this anthropocentrism can be overcome by grounding philosophy in the analysis of existence, i.e. in rightly understood existentialism.

The Experience We Are

Patočka partially accepts the criticism of metaphysics as formulated by logical positivists: there are indeed *no* metaphysical entities or facts (Patočka 1989e: 189). However, the positivists presuppose linguistic expressions as making sense only if they reproduce objective facts.⁵³ Patočka casts doubt on this assumption. In front of positivist ontology, he argues, we must decide: either we accept the experience *we have* as the sole arbiter in questions of meaning and truth, or we acknowledge the primacy of the experience *we are* (Patočka 1989e: 192).

⁵² “Negative Platonism” is one of the most discussed texts written by Patočka. Several scholars even consider the concept of negative Platonism as capturing the essence of Patočka’s philosophy. See e.g. Rezek (2010: 86), Ullmann (2011: 71). Broader historical contexts of Patočka’s project are addressed by Arnason (2011). In a sense, Ladislav Hejdlánek’s concept of “non-objectival thinking” (see e.g. Hejdlánek 2010) can be seen as developing Patočka’s project.

⁵³ The same assumption is made also by “rationalists.” Based on it, rationalists construe metaphysical entities, whereas positivists unveil their fictitious character (Patočka 1989a: 189).

The “experience we are” is clarified by Patočka by pointing to the fundamental experience of humans as *historical* beings, namely the experience of *freedom*. The experience of freedom is “not an experience of fact, of object,” but “of a risk which we can take or avoid” (Patočka 1989e: 193).⁵⁴ Besides emphasising the experience of freedom as the experience of “*an achievement* ... not of the peaceful possession of it” (Patočka 1989e: 193), Patočka also describes a more elementary form of freedom: it is “the experience of dissatisfaction with the given and the sensory, intensified by the growing awareness that the given and the sensory are neither all there is, nor definitive” (Patočka 1989e: 193).

Not only here, “Negative Platonism” can and should be linked with *Eternity and Historicity* in which Patočka conceives the experience of dissatisfaction as “a negative affection, an affection of the object by a negation” (Patočka 2007e: 103). This affection, as explicated in the previous chapter, has two sides: it is not only the experience of dissatisfaction; it also ascribes objects ontological deficiency. In “Negative Platonism,” this deficiency is expressed in the following way: “the content of passive experience [i.e. of the experience we have] is trivial, transient, and insubstantial” (Patočka 1989e: 193). It is only the experience of freedom which enables us to transcend this insubstantiality. One can put it also this way: only thanks to the experience of freedom does the “question of the overall meaning of life” make any sense (Patočka 1989e: 193).

The Experience of Freedom as the Fundament of Metaphysics

In and through the experience of freedom, one distances oneself from the given and, insofar as a free being principally transcends *every* objectivity, this experience has a global or general character. Patočka speaks about “the ‘act’ of a global drawing back,⁵⁵ of a global dissatisfaction, of un-resting in mere objectivity”: only thanks to this “act,” “only because we are always *beyond* all objectivity,” does experience form a *whole*, “since as an actual aggregate of all finite beings it is, naturally, quite inaccessible to us” (Patočka 1989e: 196).

It is crucial, regarding (the problem of) metaphysics, that only thanks to freedom as founding the specifically human experience can one meaningfully speak about the whole, not merely about singularities, and, insofar as metaphysics is the effort to understand the whole,⁵⁶ it necessarily stems from the experience of freedom. Freedom is thus a kind of gateway to metaphysics being a form of relationship with the non-objective.

The fatal mistake of traditional metaphysics, however, lies in the fact that, “[o]n the one hand, it is aware of absolute transcendence, of the relation of the human to the whole” (Patočka 1989e: 182) but, on the other, it tries to approach it as an object, which subsequently leads, as Patočka very briefly indicates, to the concept of transcendence as a transcendent deity. Even this metaphysical idea, however, bears witness to the fundamentally anthropocentric or “humanistic” character of metaphysics. The question of *the good* is grounded on human seeking of good, and only on such a basis can the teleological con-

⁵⁴ Tava named his book on Patočka after this very idea (Tava 2015).

⁵⁵ This possibility of drawing back is discussed by Patočka also in his text on Husserl’s phenomenology from the beginning of the 1950s (cf. Patočka 2016d: esp. 255–266).

⁵⁶ Cf. e.g. the following rhetorical question: “What ... was traditional metaphysics if not ... a conception of the whole?” (Patočka 1989a: 176)

ception of the universe be conceived, i.e. of the universe whose purpose is *the* good identified with God.⁵⁷ Metaphysics thus asks, to put it in a Nietzschean manner, “the question of the whole from the perspective of good and evil” (Patočka 2007e: 16).

Pointing to (in “Negative Platonism”) the experience of freedom or to (in *Eternity and Historicity*) the dialectic of spirit, Patočka turns the positivist view on its head: objectivity cannot be the criterion of everything. Conceiving the free human being in “Negative Platonism” as “the relationship to the whole,” Patočka seeks to show that objectivity is only possible thanks to the non-objective (dimension of experience). Hence, if Patočka, on the one hand, refuses traditional metaphysics, then he disagrees, on the other, with the idea that philosophy should make way for the sciences. The topics and issues traditionally dealt with metaphysically were *not* mere pseudo-topics or pseudo-issues. They were not pseudo-problems inasmuch as the experience of freedom is not a fiction. Accordingly, it is necessary to explain that, and especially how, metaphysics *misinterpreted* the experience of freedom if we are to be able to understand, and to save, what remains valuable in metaphysics.

Idea Identical to Freedom

Taking seriously “the primacy of the experience we are” (or the experience of human beings as historical beings), which metaphysical ideas can one “transcend and preserve” (*aufheben*) (Patočka 1989e: 197)?

In the final part of “Negative Platonism,” Patočka interprets the theory of the founder of metaphysics, i.e. of Plato. At first, he mentions some criticisms of the theory of separately subsisting ideas⁵⁸ and briefly analyses some of the modern proposals of a non-metaphysical interpretation of it, namely the (neo-Kantian) interpretation of ideas as values or as conceptual tools for comprehending reality.⁵⁹ The main flaw of *all* these interpretations, however, lies in their inability to justify that which is most important: *chorismos*, or “the separation between Ideas and our reality” (Patočka 1989e: 198).⁶⁰

Patočka is convinced that “*chorismos*, this separation ... is an important phenomenon, an authentic phenomenon that we cannot ignore or silence” (Patočka 1989e: 198; translation corrected). This separation, however, must not be understood as the separation of two realms but, to avoid the fateful metaphysical objectification, as “a separateness without a second object realm” (Patočka 1989e: 198).⁶¹ As we already know, the given (objectivity) is not everything, but it does not mean that there is another realm (of objects) somewhere beyond the world. The mystery of *chorismos* “must be read out of itself, found purely within itself,” which means it must be found in freedom: “the mystery of *chorismos* is the same as the experience of freedom” (Patočka 1989e: 198; translation corrected).

⁵⁷ See Patočka 1989a: 182–184 and Patočka 2007e: 15–16.

⁵⁸ Idea as an ontologically separated name, the theory of ideas as an insufficiently elaborated logical theory (Patočka 1989a: 197).

⁵⁹ We might speak, on the one hand, of a theoretical and, on the other, of a practical (or moral) way of interpreting the Idea.

⁶⁰ It is worth noticing that, otherwise, modern interpretations “can preserve and understand everything about the Idea” (Patočka 1989a: 198).

⁶¹ One might argue that neo-Kantian interpretations (not to mention their non-transcendental successors) misinterpret ideas inasmuch as they understand them as objects.

Based on this identification of *chorismos* with the experience of freedom one can criticize the interpretations of the Idea as an absolute object. It is necessary “to strip it [i.e. the Idea] of its presentational, objective, iconic character” (Patočka 1989e: 199). Importantly, already in Plato’s own concept, Idea is not only a (mentally) perceivable absolute form but also that which enables such a perception; more concretely, Idea makes it possible for us to “see something more than is contained in the given” (Patočka 1989e: 199).

Patočka points here to a specifically *human* perception, which is “historical,” and thus *changeable*, when “in the same, or nearly the same, observed we see ever the new” (Patočka 1989e: 199). This is only possible when the “power of dissociation is available to [us], the power of dissociation from mere givenness and presence, the power of liberation from the purely objective and given,” which, as Patočka puts it, “in Platonic usage ... is the power of the Idea” (Patočka 1989e: 199).

As already indicated, Patočka’s intention is not just to interpret Plato’s theory but rather to offer its phenomenological re-interpretation in order to reveal its philosophically and non-metaphysically relevant “core.” Yet, to better understand the specificity of Patočka’s interpretation, it is helpful to determine why this interpretation cannot be accepted as fully compatible with Plato’s original concept.

In fact, Idea as conceived by Plato is not power, even less the power of *distance*. In Patočka’s reading, Idea is “the origin and wellspring of all *human* objectification ... only because it is first and foremost the power of de-objectification and de-realization” (Patočka 1989e: 199). As one can see, Patočka seeks to base the objectifying power of the Idea strictly in its de-objectifying power and he does so, I contend, exactly because he “grounds” the Idea *just and only* on the experience of freedom. The problem is, however, that such a concept makes it possible to show the Idea as the ability to *dissociate oneself from the given*⁶² but not as the power enabling us *to see more*. To “do” this, Idea would have to mean more than *mere* distancing.

What is the source of the *objectifying* “power” of freedom? In other words: where is the wellspring of the “something more” in human experience to be found? Be the answer of *metaphysics* what it may, Patočka, who sees the basis of the theory of ideas in the experience of freedom, necessarily seeks this “more” *within it*. This is why he cannot but interpret Idea as *power* – insofar as freedom is the power of dissociation/distance – and likewise to interpret its “power” of objectification (i.e. the power of the historical appearing of objects) paradoxically, if not contradictorily, as based on the power of de-objectification.

Idea as No-thing

To account for the “more” in the experience of freedom, one probably should assume, it seems, something “more” to be present in this experience than only negative and subjective distancing from the given. In accordance with this, and explicitly seeking to *avoid subjectivism*, Patočka states that “the experience of freedom ... takes place in man, man is its locus – but that does not mean that he is self-sufficient in it” (Patočka 1989e: 201; translation corrected).

The experience we are, namely the experience of freedom, bears witness to something, though this “something” differs from both the objective beings and the (subjective) content of consciousness. Viewed from the perspective of objectivity, this “something” is

⁶² As “the power of dissociation from mere givenness” or even as “the power of liberation from the purely objective” (Patočka 1989a: 199).

like nothing, but this does not make it mere fiction. On the contrary, it is a non-being which is “*essentially* concealed” and which “more primordially ... appears as a power determining our life” (Patočka 1989e: 201).

How can this power be demonstrated? Patočka points to the already mentioned human relation to the whole: since the whole fundamentally cannot be an object of experience, our relation to it cannot be interpreted but as being caused by the Idea. More concretely, it is only thanks to the Idea that our life does not “become fragmented into a simple series of discontinuous events” (Patočka 1989e: 202). As one can see, truly human relations, especially the relation to the whole, are *not*, in the present concept, subjectively based: the specificity of human experience is conditioned by something other than subject, namely by Idea as “the fundamental source from which our life flows” (Patočka 1989e: 202).

Hence, Idea cannot be reduced to freedom, it rather *conditions* freedom. This distinction grounds the difference between the concept of *Eternity and Historicity*, where “spirit,” in its protesting, “springs to mind another being,”⁶³ and the concept of “Negative Platonism,” wherein such springing to mind is conceived of as conditioned by the Idea.

The (Dubious) Ground of Human Freedom

Above, I have sought to present Patočka’s concept as persuasively as possible. To begin my evaluation of it, let me start by recalling that philosophy, according to Patočka, should take from metaphysics, “in a purified form, its essential philosophical thrust and carry it forward” (Patočka 1989e: 188), since metaphysics “was aware of the phenomena” which it unfortunately “moulded ... constructively and speculatively” (Patočka 1989e: 197). These phenomena are, more concretely, “the experience of transcendence and ... the inner drama of freedom” (Patočka 1989e: 197).

One can certainly argue that by explicating the Idea, or rather by re-reading Plato’s concept of the Idea, Patočka describes “the experience of transcendence” and identifies the basis of “the inner drama of freedom.” But, Patočka’s interpretation fails at the very point at which it should be most sound: it does not concretely demonstrate how Idea is the “fundamental source” of human experience (Patočka 1989e: 202). Patočka neither describes concretely *how* the Idea conditions our human life nor does he address the objection – and the quite obvious objection – that both the distance from objectivity and the wholeness of experience might simply be *without* any source.

Without a concrete demonstration of *how* Idea conditions freedom, Idea is only postulated as the transcendent condition of the possibility of specifically human existence. Moreover, although the philosophy of negative Platonism “knows only the One,” this one cannot be “communicated directly as an objective knowledge,” and hence this philosophy “can make no assertions of positive content about the Idea or about man” (Patočka 1989e: 205). One can surely cast doubt on such a concept: if philosophy is to keep its autonomy, it should have its own positive content be articulated in a controllable way.

Patočka conceives philosophy as the interpretation of experience which “discovers, uncovers, sheds light on this, our given life-world uncovering ... its hidden meaning, its intrinsic structure, its internal drama” (Patočka 1989e: 197). But his reinterpretation of Idea does *not* describe the lifeworld, but rather rereads Plato’s concept. And whereas the

⁶³ Similarly, in the final part of the book on the lifeworld, Patočka interprets, in 1936, human freedom as the precondition of language without basing this freedom on anything transcending it.

interpretation of experience shall *uncover* the intrinsic structure of the life-world, the Idea Patočka speaks of is “*essentially* concealed” (Patočka 1989e: 201), and hence *no* interpretation can lift it from the dark.

Why Idea?

There seem to be two main reasons for postulating Idea. Patočka seeks to avoid (1) pragmatism (Patočka 1989e: 204) or, more generally, “relativism of forms and values” (Patočka 1989e: 206) and, more importantly, (2) subjectivism or humanism, i.e. the notion that the (human) subject is the principle of all (cf. Patočka 1989e: 200).

The Idea which “stands above both subjective and objective existents” (Patočka 1989e: 200) should demonstrate to the human being “the limits he cannot transcend,” and give it the possibility of “trusting a truth that is not relative and mundane” (Patočka 1989e: 205). We can schematically say that, contrarily to the “immanentization” of values and truth, Patočka insists on irreducible transcendence as “something” which conditions humanity (positivism and pragmatism being different ways of *reducing* this dimension).

In other words, Patočka refuses the principal role of the subject, but he still seeks a fundament, i.e. *another principle*, which is transcendent to both the subject and objects.⁶⁴ Obviously, he is inspired by Heidegger, or more concretely by his idea of “ontological difference”: one may say that Patočka reads Plato’s “Idea” from a Heideggerian perspective as *das Sein* in its difference to *das Seiende*, or, conversely, that he, as it were, platonizes Heidegger’s “Being” by the “Idea.” Of course, he does not simply adopt Heidegger’s philosophy, yet his closeness to Heidegger is worth emphasizing especially regarding their shared interest in ontology.

Henology?

I have claimed above that Patočka does not exactly explain how Idea conditions freedom, or how it “ensures” our relation to the whole. Actually, Patočka *does* describe how Idea “works.” Although Idea fundamentally transcends the possibilities of this world (of objectivities), which is what makes it “incapable of being seized and ineffable, an eternal mystery” (Patočka 1989e: 202), it is *effective* in the world: it “pronounces its NO ... asserts its transcendence” (Patočka 1989e: 202). Idea manifests itself in the power of negation, and this power is supposed to be *simultaneously* a unifying power; as Patočka puts it, Idea “unifies all finite being for us with its resistance” (Patočka 1989e: 202). It should be clear by now that, and why, the *unity* of the Idea cannot be interpreted logically, i.e. from a logical point of view. Rather, it must be interpreted from the perspective of the experience

⁶⁴ Reading Patočka’s book-length study *The Supercivilisation and Its Internal Conflict* from the 1950s, one realizes that the identification of the experience of freedom as the experience of “Idea” is of a great political (and historical) importance for Patočka. In this study, Patočka distinguishes two forms of supercivilization: the moderate one, exemplified by, though irreducible to, liberal societies, and the radical one, exemplified by Soviet bloc countries. Whereas the moderate supercivilization accepts its non-totality, admitting that its rationality can deal only with means and not aims, the radical one denies the very existence of anything transcending the sphere of humanly manageable rationality.

of freedom. Idea “is more absolute than the unity of any genus whatever” (Patočka 1989e: 200), but it does not mean that it is one of the transcendentals.

According to Renaud Barbaras, Patočka “discovers Neoplatonism and its phenomenological scope at the heart of Platonism” (Barbaras 2011a: 107). Even more: Patočka’s phenomenology *itself is* “a henology insofar as it brings to the fore unity as the very condition of appearing, so that Being means nothing other than this unity which Patočka also characterizes as world” (Barbaras 2011a: 100–101). Barbaras claims that “the foundation of all ontology is phenomenology” (Barbaras 2011a: 102) and that, since every appearing thing appears as *one* thing, “[p]henomenology is the one and only locus where unity between ontology and henology can be accomplished” (Barbaras 2011a: 103). Patočka’s criticism of traditional metaphysics is then closely connected with his criticism of Husserl:⁶⁵ “On the phenomenological level, the critique of metaphysics ... merges with the critical discussion of Husserl’s phenomenology” (Barbaras 2011a: 105). To put it simply, “the critique of Platonism is the counterpart, on the object side, of the critique of Husserl’s phenomenology on the subject side” (Barbaras 2011a: 107).

Barbaras suggests that Patočka’s ruminations in “Negative Platonism” should be connected with his phenomenological analyses also because the experience of freedom is “the prerequisite for accessing the question of appearing, or rather, it *is* this question itself” (Barbaras 2011a: 108). *Chōrismos*, in which lies the truth of Platonism, “must ultimately be understood as delivering the true meaning of *epoché*” (Barbaras 2011a: 109). To put it generally, “*chōrismos* is to the positing of the Ideas as *epoché* is to the reduction to the region of consciousness” (Barbaras 2011a: 109). In other words, it is thanks to *freedom* that appearing can be disclosed, but this disclosure must not be reduced to the givenness of some fundament of appearing, whether in the form of Ideas or of consciousness.

To sum up: “Henology, brought to light in the heart of Platonism by means of a critique of its metaphysical dimension, thus opens the way to phenomenology: making it possible to go beyond being toward the One, the doctrine of the *chōrismos*, truth of the doctrine of Ideas, leads us back to phenomenality by exposing its ultimate apriori. The One delivers the true meaning of appearing, just as the *chōrismos* delivers the true meaning of the *epoché*” (Barbaras 2011a: 110).

Against Speculation

I do not intend to discuss here Barbaras’ inspiring and thoughtful interpretation in detail. Barbaras rightly suggests that Patočka’s criticism of Plato’s absolute ideas is analogical to his criticism of Husserl’s absolute consciousness. And he also rightly indicates that freedom plays a crucial role in both these criticisms. But it is far from evident that Patočka interprets freedom identically in the 1950s, when interpreting Plato, and in the 1970s, when emphasizing the difference between *epoché* and reduction. As a matter of fact, Patočka’s emphasis on freedom does not necessarily include, as we have already seen in the previous chapters, postulating Idea. One can agree with Barbaras that the question of freedom is “the prerequisite for accessing the question of appearing,” yet one still needs to pay attention to Patočka’s different interpretation of freedom in different stages of his thought: highlighting

⁶⁵ Similarly, Pierre Rodrigo sees a twofold radicalization in Patočka’s philosophy, namely “the joint radicalization of Platonism as ‘negative Platonism’ and of Husserlian phenomenology as an ‘asubjective’ phenomenology. In fact, Patočka builds his own thought on one and the same critique aimed against both Plato and Husserl” (Rodrigo 2011: 87).

the difference between *epoché* and reduction in the 1970s, Patočka does not point to Idea as presupposed, or revealed, by *epoché*.

But even more importantly, regarding “Negative Platonism” itself, there is no ontological henology, or henological ontology, implied in Patočka’s reflections on Idea. The key, and misleading, step of Barbaras’ interpretation lies in his proclamation that ontology is, and must be, founded on phenomenology. Patočka’s “Negative Platonism” does *not* make such a claim. In it, Patočka rethinks the fundamental concept of Plato’s metaphysics responding to the end of metaphysics itself and trying to understand, *ex post*, its nature. Metaphysics is interpreted by him as a form of philosophy seeking to capture the world as a whole. In accordance with this focus, what Patočka principally aims at in “Negative Platonism” is to demonstrate that and how our relation to the whole is provided for by Idea.

Now, of course, in his rethinking of Plato, Patočka proceeds phenomenologically. And to make his concept phenomenologically verifiable, he inseparably links Idea with the human being, or more precisely with its experience. It is our experience which is, both trans-subjectively and trans-objectively “holistic,” and it is Idea, according to Patočka, which provides for our relation to the whole primarily by preventing the fragmentation of our experience. Hence, Idea is essentially a relative, if not reactive power, since it reacts to the mere givens in the world by negating them, and is relative to our life, to which it gives, or rather can give, its unity.

Patočka does identify Idea itself with unity, yet what he primarily demonstrates is that Idea is the *source* of unity, and *not* unity itself; more precisely, it is the source of the unity of our, namely human, life. What Patočka has in mind, then, is not that any being must intrinsically be one, but rather that the world appears, from the perspective of the human being (in its intrinsic relation to the Idea), as deficient in relation, and when related, to Idea.

To evaluate the interpretative (in)accuracy of Barbaras’ reading of “Negative Platonism,” one would have to develop a systematic reconstruction of the whole project of the same name. This was done, for the first time, only lately by Pavel Sladký (2018), whose findings do not confirm Barbaras’ speculation. Simply put, whereas for Barbaras ontology is necessarily henology, insofar as any being must be one, Patočka’s fragmentary ontological considerations rather show not only that being is said in many ways but also that beings *are* in many ways, and are not necessarily unified, or made one, by the Idea.⁶⁶ As a matter of fact, they rather appear, in their own, if you will, non-ideal, being as *not* unified by Idea.

Non-Subjectivist Transcendentalism

Many of Patočka’s ideas, those on the world included, surely can be interpreted speculatively (cf. Karfik 1998). But instead of developing Patočka’s concept even more speculatively than he did himself, we should deal with the question of why the concept of “Negative Platonism” was considered by Patočka himself, in 1958, as untenable. Whereas Barbaras seeks to highlight the positive potentials of it, one should not ignore that Patočka himself labelled it “an incomprehensible naivety” (Patočka 2001: 73). Why did he do so?

⁶⁶ The project of negative Platonism was supposed to include also the explication of inorganic and organic nature. But Patočka’s rather fragmentary analyses of nature (and also of human being) are not based on the Idea as interpreted by Barbaras. Cf. Sladký 2018: esp. 90–100. This is not in contradiction with Patočka’s determined declaration that the human being should serve the Idea.

Recently, Jan Frei has demonstrated, building on the work of other interpreters and critics,⁶⁷ that in explicating “Negative Platonism” we finally have to “decide between two incompatible interpretations which are both problematic for certain reasons”: either to connect the concept of “negative Platonism” with more positive ones,⁶⁸ thus “amputating from it its ‘negativity’ and the pathos of the transcendence of all worldly being,” or to conceive it as “the philosophy of pure transcendence which, however, says nothing to concrete action *in the world*” (Frei 2017: 882–883).

Frei is certainly right in saying that Patočka would like to evade such a dilemma: he would like to have the call of transcendence *simultaneously* distancing from all that which is, and saying “yes to all that which is” (Patočka 1996c: 443). In short, Patočka would like to make negativity positive, to make the negation of the given a positive source of beings, or rather of the appearing of beings. And although he speaks of this negative power as if it were “something,” he explicitly states that nothing can be said about that which transcends the world of objectivities.

In fact, it is only understandable taking into account that Idea is not a part of our experience. Now, let me recall that, at the end of the previous chapter, I claimed that Patočka’s one-sidedly subjectivist approach did not do justice to the possibility of the given, or the world, being in the right against the human being. And I also suggested that, by reducing “spirit” to subjectivity, Patočka did not take into account the possibility of such a form of (absolute) idealism in which Being would be reducible neither to subject nor object. “Negative Platonism,” however, leaves no doubt that Patočka, when overcoming subjectivism, does not want to deepen idealism.

To precisely capture the shift between Patočka’s approach in “Negative Platonism” and his earlier thought, one can, paradoxically, use a spatial metaphor: whereas Patočka’s analyses have so far been concentrated on the intentionality, or performance, heading from a (subjective) centre outwards, the Idea functions in the opposite direction, namely from the outside towards the centre. And, more precisely and more importantly: the outside, from which Idea comes (or functions), is absolute. Idea does not belong to the world but makes the world as a whole possible by being absolutely beyond. Yet, although being absolutely beyond, or rather exactly in its being beyond, it fundamentally conditions our experience.⁶⁹

Here, one can see why Patočka’s approach, even when emphasizing Idea and abandoning subjectivism, can still be called transcendentalist. Though being based on the “existence” of the Idea, it demonstrates it (just and only, if ever) in our experience, not exactly as its part but rather as its fundamental condition of possibility. Hence, “Negative Platonism” does not differ from Patočka’s *Eternity and Historicity* by abandoning a transcendental approach but by forsaking the one-sided, as it were, apotheosis of spirit and by highlighting human, or “spiritual,” experience as based on Idea.

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⁶⁷ See Hejdánek (1992), Landa (2007), Rezek (2010), Ritter (2013), Kouba (2014) and Sladký (2015).

⁶⁸ As Barbaras does, too, connecting “Negative Platonism” with Patočka’s ideas from the 1970s.

⁶⁹ It must be mentioned, however, that Patočka still puts emphasis on life: Idea is “the fundamental source from which our life flows” (Patočka 1989a: 202). He also states, regarding the question of the whole, that to demand “scientific objectivity in all things, means to sacrifice the autonomy of life and its relation to the whole” (Patočka 1989a: 177–178).

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At the Heart of Space

Together with the book *Aristotelés, jeho předchůdci a dědicové* (Aristotle, His Predecessors and Inheritors), published in 1964, the long study “Prostor a jeho problematika” (Space and its Problematics),⁷⁰ written around 1960, reconsiders two concepts fundamentally formed, or rather reformed, by modern physics: movement and space. By developing an alternative, phenomenological analysis of space, the study from 1960 offers another explication of the lifeworld, anticipating Patočka’s later reconsiderations of the lifeworld through the concept of the movement of existence.

Towards Space in its Realization

According to Patočka, the Newtonian concept of space, although successful to a certain point in time, is based on making independent and self-sufficient “a non-independent geometric side of the concrete” (Patočka 2016e: 26). This abstract “space” is actually only “the abstracted geometric, relational, structural side of space,” or even “the aggregate of relations between any components” (Patočka 2016e: 26). This aggregate can be called “space,” but we usually mean by this word a “*completely definite* reality, a reality endowed with the typical quality of extension, as it is realized by our sight, our touch, our kinesthetics” (Patočka 2016e: 27).

Patočka argues against the idea that we can conceive “the relationship between ... a physical space and an experiential space” as that of a model and its illustration or realization: experiential space is not the realization “of an abstractly geometrical structure by the material of our perceptually experienced things” (Patočka 2016e: 30). Not only must it be stressed that, to the contrary, we “come to an objective space from a psychological space by its gradual objectification,” but also that an original experience of space is that of “an immensely rich sensual world united by relations whose majority is the opposite of objectivity while a logical interpretation, a logical frame ... is almost completely missing” (Patočka 2016e: 32).

In short, although it seems possible to explicate both the physical and psychological space on the basis of geometry, geometry itself came to exist on the basis of the “purging space of anything which is not geometry” (Patočka 2016e: 33). We must go back, according to Patočka, before this purification, to the basis “of that relational scheme which makes possible the overall capturing of realities ... in their lawful order” (Patočka 2016e: 33). This turn is also a return to a *concrete* space, i.e. to a space before the purification of all its non-geometrical properties.

If we are to understand space in its concreteness, we must focus not “on a relational structure, on geometry, but ... on realization” (Patočka 2016e: 33). And this realization

⁷⁰ There is no English translation of the study, but it is available in German (Patočka 1991b) and in French (Patočka 1988). I refer here to its recent Czech edition (Patočka 2016e; all translations are my own).

can be studied, according to Patočka, only “where it presents itself to us: in the union of a structure and a quality, namely the quality connected to a living being orientating itself in its surroundings” (Patočka 2016e: 34). Relations, obviously fundamental to space, “are real only in the context of a realization, and this realization is experientially known to us only as a realization by the subject” (Patočka 2016e: 34).

The Primacy of the Subject as the Realizer of Relations

In this concept, the subject has not only methodological but also *ontological* primacy: it is “*more fundamentally* the realizer of relations than the component of the relational structure”; this relational structure “can exist only through the subject, but the subject *can exist also apart from it*”; even more: “an ordering ... does not constitute the subject; on the contrary, the subject, or rather subjects, *constitute the ordering*” (Patočka 2016e: 34-35; my emphases). It would be premature to discuss here the justifiability of this separation and privileging of the subject. The negative aim of these statements, however, is clear: to refuse the idea that in order to understand the ontological nature of space one can get along with relational structures only. The ontology of space must include those who realize it, namely subjects.

The activities of the subject are irreducible to those of its consciousness: “‘The realizing subject’ is essentially practical, acting ... cognizance and understanding are parts of its acting, not the other way round” (Patočka 2016e: 35). Importantly, the activities by which the subject relates to the world are not some additional but rather intrinsic characteristics of it. “Already in the inner structure of the subject there must be a connection with other beings; only such a ‘subject’ can be a realizer of relations. The more manifold, large, and meaningful the sphere of relations the subject can realize, the more rich its inner ‘life’ must be, consisting in ‘disclosing’ the spheres of these relations” (Patočka 2016e: 35).

In other words, the subject in its *intrinsic* structure is always already opened to the world, it is internally *outside*. A living being orientating itself in its surroundings has already *disclosed* the world by this very orientation; it has already *realized* some of its relations. Yet, although the subject realizes itself in the world, it is irreducible to *objective* relations. Why so?

Inside

According to Patočka, “the primordial *relation* that establishes space,” namely, the “relation by which the subject singles itself out from the whole of other things and integrates itself into it again,” “cannot itself be a spatial relation” (Patočka 2016e: 36). This relation, called by Patočka “the primordial and primal ‘inside’ or ‘in’” (Patočka 2016e: 36), is *not* geometrical insofar as it implies both being *outside* and *in*: “it is the *outside* necessary for the existence of any web of relations into which the relating being puts itself in a certain place; the singling out [vyčlenění] without which the *dividing* [členění] and thus also the *integrating* [začlenění] of oneself is impossible” (Patočka 2016e: 36).

It is especially on this idea that Barbaras bases his impressive reading of Patočka’s study on space as an explication of the first movement of existence, i.e. of the movement

of rooting (Barbaras 2007: 100, n. 1).⁷¹ Importantly, this movement is, according to Barbaras, a more fundamental movement than the other two insofar as it is the movement by which the “subject” transcends its mere physical individuation and becomes a “centre,” i.e. an existence (Barbaras 2007: 98). Or more precisely, it is exactly through this movement that the (physical) individuation *by* the world and the movement by which the world appears (to the existent human being) are joined together (Barbaras 2007: 96).

For Barbaras, Patočka’s reflection on the “inside” offer an even more developed explication of the first movement than Patočka’s later texts in which the concept of the movements of existence is *explicitly* formulated. I will come back both to Barbaras’ emphasis on the first movement as well as to his specific interpretation of it. At this juncture, I would only like to point out that by reading the study on space as containing an even more “deep” articulation of the concept of the first movement, Barbaras does not consider other potential, and more likely, readings of Patočka’s sometimes rather dark statements.

When describing our being “inside” as involving both our being in the world, i.e. our being *part* of it, and our transcending the world, Patočka does *not* want to say that we must perform the (first) movement by which, and only by which, we can “fuse” these two “facets” of our being. When talking about the “inside” as involving, paradoxically, also our distance from that which is, i.e. our distance to that which is close to us, he is emphasizing the *specificity* of the subject, as he has emphasized it many times and in different ways (see the previous chapters). To put it simply: any subject is an “entity” *negating* mere objectivity, *transcending* it, but simultaneously bearing witness to it. In this way, any subject is both inside and outside: it is in *any* objective, or objectively describable relation, only insofar as not being entirely identical with it. *This* is why Patočka emphasises the specific “inside” being of humans.

Considering this, we can specify, and modify, the aforesaid thesis that the subject exists *apart* from relations. Of course, it is never identifiable with (and hence: reducible to) objective relations, but simultaneously it is never apart from relations, insofar as it is always “inside,” and hence always already related. This relation, however, being a *distanced* relation, simultaneously proves that the subject cannot be reduced to any objective relations. It is exactly in this sense that any subject is *more fundamentally* the realizer of relations than a *component* of the relational structure.⁷²

Patočka describes this *inside*, more concretely, as having, “besides relational characteristics, also those of quality and those of influence” (Patočka 2016e: 36). Accordingly, the differences experienced “inside” are rather the differences of intensity than those of extensity. The subject which is “inside” is “rather *more dependent* on certain beings than ... more or less distanced from them, is rather somehow mixed into things ... than exactly demarcating the reach of itself and of things” (Patočka 2016e: 36). In other words, *extensional* relations, usually connected with space, are secondary. Primary are, in the “inside,” the relationships of larger or lesser dependency, and the relationships in which things and the subject merge instead of being spatially demarcated.

⁷¹ Dragos Duicu, by contrast, seeks to identify all of the three movements in Patočka’s study on space (see Duicu 2014: esp. 232–235).

⁷² In a similar context, Pavel Kouba has emphasized that the question of the “meaningfulness of experience” cannot be answered by “social activities, whether intersubjective or inter-objective” because the world must be experienced by someone “who is the *subject* of this world. Only the subject of the lifeworld can adopt a stance which has a clear and simultaneously *changeable* meaning” (Kouba 2010: 131–132).

The Law of the Personal Pronoun

Patočka conceives the “inside” also as “the general relation of the disposition for contact” (Patočka 2016e: 36)⁷³ and, seeking to capture it more concretely, he conceives it as “primordial ‘environs’” identifiable with a room of possibilities. These “environs,” by which the “inside” is specified, have two basic poles: on the one side, there is a centre, i.e. “an addressed and responding organism,” on the other “a periphery” or “a permanent *horizon*” (Patočka 2016e: 37).

It is of utmost importance, however, that Patočka in the last instance does *not* conceive the centre as consisting only of one person, i.e. of the already mentioned organism. As a matter of fact, there is not only *one* person in the centre of the “inside” but always already *two* of them. “The centre has two persons, an addressing one [*oslovující*] and an addressed one [*oslovovanou*], you and me; both are in the centre, both are ‘embraced’ by the periphery” (Patočka 2016e: 37).

Describing the relation between me and you, Patočka specifies that by being addressed “we are being introduced into a relation” (Patočka 2016e: 61). This is an important statement emphasising that it is not me who creates the relation; it is rather you who *introduces* me into one. Yet, it is not because the you, i.e. my counterpart, is ontologically more fundamental, but because the relation I perform is *led* by that which, or rather by who, I encounter. The subject remains the realizer of relations, it performs this relation, but this realization is “defined” (Patočka 2016e: 62) by what the subject is introduced to.

“Hence relating is simultaneously rooting,” writes Patočka and adds: “The one who relates [*vztahující se*] and the very relating [*vztahování*] have no centre in themselves; they are defined only by their counterpart. This relating becomes defined by the addressing and this addressing is simultaneously a rooting. Only due to my being addressed am I something” (Patočka 2016e: 62). What Patočka wants to say here is, as we have seen repeatedly in the previous chapters analysing human spirit or freedom, that there is no objective determinacy in the addressed subject before it is addressed; it is only through answering the you that one gains its “own” determinacy.

The primordial “scene of addressing” can be structurally captured in the following way: “from the context, constantly closing down around the scene,” i.e. ultimately from the horizon, “a second person steps out, the not-I addressing me ... This Ur-structure [*prastruktura*] me-you-it is the primordial character of every ‘inside’ ... its Ur-form [*prформа*]. ... ‘Me-you’ are the primordial forms of closeness; ‘that’ is the form of distancing or distance” (Patočka 2016e: 39). This structure is not derived from experience, on the contrary: “The law of the personal pronoun is the Ur-law [*prákon*] of experience” (Patočka 2016e: 39).

⁷³ Patočka seems to rethink here Heidegger’s idea according to which the specificity of the human being, as a being which is “inside,” consists in its touch-ability. Cf. Heidegger (1996: 51–52): “It is true that, at times, we are accustomed to express linguistically the being together of two objectively present things in such a manner: ‘The table stands ‘next to’ the door,’ ‘The chair ‘touches’ the wall.’ Strictly speaking, we can never talk about ‘touching,’ not because in the last analysis we can always find a space between the chair and the wall by examining it more closely, but because in principle the chair can never touch the wall, even if the space between them amounted to nothing. The presupposition for this would be that the wall could be *encountered* ‘by’ the chair. A being can only touch an objectively present being within the world if it fundamentally has the kind of being of being-in.”

Me as That

Taking this law into consideration, Patočka criticizes two philosophical (dis)interpretations of how the I understands other beings. Firstly, Patočka confronts the modern idea that the I and the not-I are two *essentially* different entities. Secondly, he argues against the (Husserlian) concept according to which I ascribe to another being the same character as I have by an “appresentation,” i.e. by ascribing an analogue of my own experiencing to another body.

In the first case, Patočka points out that if the I would be an activity and the not-I an object only, then the I “would not be *in the world* but *before* it, before perspective and beside it” (Patočka 2016e: 40). For the I to be a *part* of the world, there must be (possible) “a real and essential interchangeability of beings despite all the non-changeability of functions” (Patočka 2016e: 40). More concretely, it must be possible for me to have my self “also in the form of *you* ... I must receive myself also from outside as something other, as *that*. ... And this duality of our I ... is based in its *corporeity*” (Patočka 2016e: 40).

Considering this corporeity,⁷⁴ we can once again specify, and even modify, the subject’s presumed independence from relations. Were the subject separable from them, it would not be in the world but exactly *beside* or before it. The subject *finds* itself in the world due to, and thanks to, its corporeity. Accordingly, the subject is not only active *against* objectivity, it is also a *part* of an objective world, of the world of objects.

The second polemic further develops the just-mentioned ideas. “The I, when compared to the *you*, has a ‘spiritual’ character only because it is initially indeterminate, indefinite, it receives its determinations due to the addressing from the *you* which is given both objectively *and personally* because its objectivity is the objectivity of the same reacting” (Patočka 2016e: 64). I “ascribe” the “I” to another being (or body) *not* on the basis of my own inner experiences but due to perceiving its own “captivation [*upoutanost*]”; this kind of expression is here, again, primarily owing to “the tendentiousness, the intentionality of the body” (Patočka 2016e: 65).

Seeing the attention of another being caught by objects, I realize that I am objective, too. One can say, then, that it is the “captivation I perceive quite similarly in me as ‘the *that*,’ as the subject of reacting or of being addressed” (Patočka 2016e: 64) which makes it possible to “switch” between the I and the you. Based on this “reciprocity,” there is an “equilibrium” between persons that, subsequently, makes it possible to understand persons “as only different perspectives of beings within each other” (Patočka 2016e: 40).

Building

Clearly, the primordial inside is *personal*. Accordingly, spatial phenomena are “inseparably linked with the personal role of the bodily subject in the phenomenal field” (Patočka 2016e: 44). Regarding one of the main questions of Patočka’s study on space, namely that

⁷⁴ In the study on space, Patočka *presupposes* (human) corporeity. I disagree both with Barbaras’s interpretation that “the body is not required but created by rooting” (Barbaras 2007: 70) and with his general idea according to which Patočka, thanks to his emphasis on movement, somehow explains, in contrast to Merleau-Ponty and Heidegger, embodiment (Barbaras 2007: 45, 61). One can claim, of course, that Patočka demonstrates the indispensability of the body, yet he does *not* explain its genesis. I will come back to this problem in Chapter 10.

of the genesis of the geometrical notion of space, one can see here that objectively geometrical relations are originally “only a certain ingredient and facet of its [i.e. the subject’s] *personal* relations” (Patočka 2016e: 44).

Since personal relations become transformed into geometrical relations, Patočka states, in a *sensual world* (Patočka 2016e: 44), he turns attention to it by emphasizing that sensuality, as e.g. Goethe accentuated against Kant, is not without its own internal meaningfulness. However, what Patočka primarily emphasises is a structural contrast between kinesthetic-tactual and visual fields. Any experiencing tactual motion “goes on to emptiness”; it is “a sort of searching and groping [*hledání a tápání*]” in an openness “running away from the I without return” (Patočka 2016e: 46), while the visual sphere is structured *oppositely*. In contrast to the tactual groping in/toward the dark, the visual always sets a limit. It is, however, an infinite limit (one of horizon), of which one can say that “it faces me and comes to me, embraces me” (Patočka 2016e: 47).

By demonstrating this “correspondence in opposition,” Patočka seeks to prove that the order of this field “is the work of *spatium ordinans*” (Patočka 2016e: 48). This correspondence “as a first architecture” indicates, according to Patočka, that the primordial inside means also *building*.

Sacral Transubstantiation

Probably the most challenging part of Patočka’s study is the description of a “sacral transubstantiation” as the most fundamental shift in the process of the building of space.

This transubstantiation includes two fundamental transformations. Firstly, the building becomes *conscious*, i.e. human beings become aware of it: in its initial (self-)understanding, however, the role of humans is seen as “completely inferior, negligible, imitative, and without initiative” (Patočka 2016e: 49). Secondly, space becomes radically restructured. In sum, “there is not only the reality of space but also the *notion* of space” (Patočka 2016e: 50) while the most important part of space is “that part which is absolutely different ... beyond closeness, beyond our formally-personal relations” (Patočka 2016e: 49).

For the mythical people Patočka obviously has in mind here, the all-embracing periphery steps out to the centre at a concrete place, and the world is then organized from this site: the more distanced from the place of theophany, the less valuable the location. This transubstantiation of space is an activity of the transcendent itself: “only from its own will can the magical and sacral *that* reincarnate into the *you*, ... i.e. manifest itself as the *you* willing to be the *we*” (Patočka 2016e: 50).

Transcendent(al), and Bodily, Structuration

Although Patočka depicts this mythical building of space quite impressively, he surely does *not* accept it as *the* notion of space. It is rather the personal space which remains the determinant of building: “Both the sacral and the ours resides in the primordial personal space, in its tendencies and dialectic heading from the *that* through the *you–me* to the *we* where it stills” (Patočka 2016e: 50). Yet, the mythical notion of space “demonstrates clairvoyantly that the *foundation* of building, which is the whole world, takes place in the deep

of *transcendence*, of something wholly different to that which can occur *inside*” (Patočka 2016e: 52). This idea might seem to be in tension with both the *personality* of space and with Patočka’s emphasis on the subject which “installs relation to the world, roots itself to it, and orientates itself in it” (Patočka 2016e: 61). Can this subjective performance be founded in something other than the subject?

The answer can be read from the course of the previous explications. At the beginning of his study, Patočka indeed emphasizes the primacy of the subject. In his own analyses, however, the subject has *not* been the principle of the structuring of the world. Accordingly, the above mentioned “settling apparatus” *cannot* be conceived of as having its *principle* in the subject. Rather, the “installing” is based on introducing into the world by which the subject, thanks to its counterpart (initially its parents), begins to appear in the world. And the subject is, from the very beginning, not only subject but *both* subject *and* object. The above described law of the personal pronoun then demonstrates that the subject, or the *I*, is already a part not only of inter-subjectivity but also, and co-fundamentally, of the *objective* world. Hence, although the realization of space is accessible only in subjective experience, the subject is surely *not* the basis of the structuring of the world.

Now, although Patočka’s approach in the study on space certainly seems more “mundane” than in “Negative Platonism,” he clearly indicates, and even emphasizes, that the world is founded “in the deep of transcendence.” One cannot, of course, thoughtlessly identify this transcendence with Idea, yet it is critical not to miss that the world, identified with building, is neither self-sufficient nor self-structuring; on the contrary, its structuration has its fundament *beyond* the world itself.⁷⁵ To put it schematically, the concept developed in the study on space does *not* differ from the previous one by its “worldliness” in contrast to “unearthly” Idea. Rather, it differs by putting positive emphasis on the body. Claiming that “the I has a ‘spiritual’ character only because it is initially indeterminate, indefinite,” he effectively overcomes the duality he has usually worked with between negatively connotated objectivity and spirituality. His concept implies the *foundational* necessity of the body, and not only of a living body but of the body as an *object* in the world.

The Undifferentiated (and the) Emptiness of the Heart

In the study on space, transcendence, which grounds the world, exhibits itself differently than Idea. As Patočka states, “the undifferentiated *that*,” this “undifferentiated fullness that is not managed,” is “nonetheless drawn into dialogue, which is the original inside” (Patočka 2016e: 43). The undifferentiated, this ultimate impersonality conditioning our personal being in the world, manifests itself, paradoxically, in the relation between me and you, to which “the whole *emptiness of the heart* intervenes, which is not only after singularities but the whole, after the trans-singular, the all-encompassing content. So, there is an emptiness between you and me, impossible to fill – the emptiness necessary for this original relation to open and operate” (Patočka 2016e: 43).

What is meant by this “emptiness of the heart”? In a sense, Patočka seems to agree with Scheler that “the emptiness of space and time is ... originally drawn from the unfulfilment of instinctive expectations ... – it is the basic emptiness of the heart projected

⁷⁵ Let me recall here that Patočka’s inquiry into space seeks to find that which “founds [*co zakládá*] that relational scheme which makes possible the overall capturing of realities ... in their lawful order” (Patočka 2016e: 33).

unto the universe, toward things” (Patočka 2016e: 13). But, he actually does *not* conceive this emptiness as only a subjective *projection* onto the universe.

This emptiness is not an arbitrary feeling. In fact, we are not so far here from Patočka’s reflections on “negative affection”:⁷⁶ “the undifferentiated that,” standing not only at the periphery but also at the heart of the world, should remind us of the “indifference” presupposed in *Eternity and Historicity*. What is crucial here is that the human being *experiences* the emptiness in the world, it *appears* to it. Neither the fact that it is experienced nor the fact that it appears imply that it is only subjective. In fact, what Patočka says of space-time can be said also of this emptiness: it cannot be the “solely *subjective* form of the sensibility of organisms” (Patočka 2016f: 101). The emptiness of the heart, without which the building tendency would lack its drive, rather *bases* our own being within space.⁷⁷

Being in, and Being beyond, Appearing

It should be clear by now that by analysing space Patočka analyses the world itself in its spatiality. It can also be said, regarding the being who lives in the world, that by analysing spatiality Patočka explicates the worldliness of this being. Accordingly, saying that “the essential spatiality of a being originally consists in addressing and building” (Patočka 2016e: 46), Patočka describes this being in its *ontological* determinations. Yet, a question poses itself: is Patočka describing here an ontological individuation, or rather the spatial experience of an already individuated being?

In fact, Patočka denies that space is an *ontological* principle: it is only “the necessary general framework without which a being cannot appear (*not* not be!)” (Patočka 2016f: 99). But is it necessary to strictly separate the *being* of things and their *appearing*? Is it not *ontologically* significant for beings how they appear and how the world appears to them? Patočka’s answer, as far as it can be inferred from the study on space, is not unambiguous. It is quite obviously *human* spatiality Patočka speaks about in his (seemingly) general reflection on space, and appearing seems to be ontologically determinative in the case of *human* beings since the “Ur-law of personal pronoun” conditions them in their existence. In the case of non-human beings, however, Patočka’s concept implies the idea that they are *not* in space insofar as they are not, strictly speaking, “inside.”

I will come back to this problem in the chapters to come. At this point, it only must be said that Patočka, on the one side, does not simply “reduce” the question of being to the question of appearing, but that does not imply, on the other side, that his phenomenology, i.e. his theory of appearing, becomes totally unable to make ontological claims. Things *are* also *without* appearing (to humans), but appearing is still ontologically significant for these beings and humans alike.

⁷⁶ See above, Chapter 5.

⁷⁷ In Barbaras’ reading, the distance between me and you, constitutive of space, is assured by the emptiness of the heart by giving rise to desire (Barbaras 2007: 88). The concept of desire does seem applicable here especially because Patočka conceives the fundamental personal space also as an *affective* space; yet, Patočka does not develop his concept in this direction. Let me add that desire plays a crucial role in Barbaras’ own philosophy of life as he develops it in explicit connection with Patočka’s thought; cf. e.g. Barbaras 2011b and Barbaras 2011c.

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8

Movement of Existence

The most important achievement of Patočka's phenomenological thought in the second half of the 1960s is his concept of the movement of existence. In this chapter, I identify and clarify its fundamental elements. I also intend to indicate that this concept can and should be considered the core of Patočka's late asubjective phenomenology insofar as existence is the place of the understanding of being.

Although existence must hold the central place in Patočka's phenomenology, this chapter shows that existence is not a principle of appearing but rather exactly the place, or the medium, through which, due to its specificity, all the beings of the world appear.⁷⁸ Generally put: the human being is a being disclosed by and *to* Being, which is roughly tantamount to saying that it is disclosed by and to time. Being disclosed by time, the human being is not a centre, let alone the principle of its own being; it is rather a process finding itself conditioned by that which it is *included* into and related to.

Being Itself as Dynamic

In the first half of the 1960s, in the book *Aristotle, His Predecessors and His Inheritors*,⁷⁹ Patočka declares that, although a mathematical model of movement allowed humans to dominate nature, an ontological concept of movement was lost, i.e. the concept of movement as a process without which being cannot be what it is. Hegel tried to reinstate movement as an ontological process, but a defensible concept must *not* reduce movement, according to Patočka, to the dynamic of subject: "It is the task of the present to build, on the remains of the ideas of German classic philosophy, such an asubjective concept of movement ... in which movement would be again, like in Aristotle, that which internally builds the being of entities ... and makes possible to understand ... both the most elementary and the highest; nature, the human being, and society as well" (Patočka 2011b: 404). The ontological concept of movement describes the movement which does not merely happen *to* beings (as in the mathematical model) but by which they realize, or become, themselves.

⁷⁸ Fundamentally, this appearing of things through existence also means that they, literally, *appear* in their *own* being *only* thanks to existence.

⁷⁹ I must emphasize that I do not intend to reconstruct here in detail Patočka's interpretation of Aristotle. Lately, quite a few monographs on this topic have been published; see Duicu (2014), Spaak – Stanciu 2015 and Spaak 2017.

Subjective Movement

In the case of the movement of *existence*, the human *body* plays a crucial role.⁸⁰ To think the movement of existence as *real*, one must put emphasis on living corporeity which transcends the duality of subjective experiencing and objective reality: the lived body is not only an objective or objectively moved entity, and bodily experience is not only a subjective experience but also a real process.

But, one might object: is not the bodily experience, even if real, questionable as being *only* subjective? To meet this problem, and generally the objection of subjectivism, Patočka differentiates, in his study “On the Prehistory of the Science of Movement” from the middle of the 1960s in which the concept of the three movements of existence is explicitly developed for the first time,⁸¹ between that which is the subject’s, or of the subject, being a part of it, and that which is subjective: whereas experiences are the subject’s insofar as they belong to it as its acts or perceptions, the subjective is oriented givenness appearing in the world. The aspects of an appearing thing are given subjectively, yet they have their own reality or, as Patočka puts it, their own “thinghood” given “in subjective relation and aspects, in situatedness” (Patočka 2015c: 66).

Patočka takes here as a criterion of reality the (common sense) idea that “reality lies in perception, in things ‘given to the senses’” (Patočka 2015c: 66). Beings are, or are *real*, insofar as they are immediately given. It needs to be directly added, however, that every given fact, and hence every reality, is a part of a broader context: “concrete experience knows no such thing as a single sense-datum or an aggregate of such data” (Patočka 2015c: 66). Everything exists in an antecedent whole while this whole is here as “the undiscoveredness of what can be brought to light, the inexplicit presence of what can be made explicitly present” (Patočka 2015c: 66). It is exactly insofar as things come out of this whole, or insofar as we encounter them as parts of the world, that our relation to the whole and to things should be characterised, according to Patočka, by the concept of movement.

Our movements, then, are “endowed with meaning exceeding beyond any of their phases; this meaning belongs to them essentially as *movements*” (Patočka 2015c: 69). If we are to understand this intrinsic meaning, which is constitutive for the *reality* of movement, we must analyse “the overall meaning prefiguration they [sc. movements] enter into” (Patočka 2015c: 69). To describe this prefiguration, Patočka sketches a kind of topology of the world with two basic referents, namely the earth and the heavens.

The World of a Moving Existence

The earth and heavens can be considered as constituting the “objective” framework of human movement.⁸² Yet, they are not only objects but rather the most fundamental *powers*

⁸⁰ “The key ... lies in the concept of lived corporeity” (Patočka 1998: 155). “Here again the phenomenon of human corporeity might be pivotal since our elevation out of the world ... is an individuation of our subjective corporeity” (Patočka 1998: 178). The body will be analysed in more detail in the next chapter.

⁸¹ For the sake of brevity, I shall put aside the problem, quite an important problem indeed, of the different versions of the concept of the movement of existence. Rezek rightly points out this diversity. Cf. esp. Rezek 2010c and 2010d. A concise and unified interpretation of the concept of the movement of existence is offered by Kouba 2007. Cf. also Hagedorn 2006.

⁸² Rezek interprets Patočka’s concept of the movement of existence as “topological” and methodologically based on the correlation “movement – referent” (cf. Rezek 2010b: esp. 126–131).

“objectively,” or rather trans-subjectively, conditioning the movement of the singular human being. “The earth ... is the power even in everything living which draws on it, for all its strivings against it. ... Ultimately, it is she, with her elements, that sustains life, that is life as well as something other than life. She bears it, sustains it, lets it arise and perish, she covers herself with it and cloaks her ultimate stark and merciless aspect” (Patočka 1989a: 255). The earth is the power influencing everything by being its solid basis: it is “that with regard to which we move, that which provides the criterion of motion and rest” (Patočka 2015c: 68). The power of the earth, her domination over us, relates to our corporeity (our bodies are out of the earth) and is manifested by the fact that the “self-evidently (‘instinctively’) given aim of life’s movement ... is bodily life itself, its reproduction” (Patočka 2015c: 68).

Whereas the earth is close to us, and bodily accessible, the second referent of human movement is essentially intangible including “all that is essentially out of reach – heaven, light and dark, the heavenly lights and ‘bodies,’ everything which encloses our horizon without a closing, everything our horizon encloses without closure, and which shapes the outside as an inside constantly encompassing us” (Patočka 2015c: 69).

As already indicated, our relation to the earth and heavens demonstrates the specificity of *human* sensory contact: this contact “is possible solely in the movement of a world-being that come[s] to terms not merely with particularities but rather with the fundamental powers of reality” (Patočka 2015c: 69). Patočka connects this humanity defining relation to the non-particular with another essential dimension of the human being, namely that it “takes its meaning from the overall direction of life’s movement” (Patočka 2015c: 69). Duly, human movement does not proceed, or is not realized, merely in sensory contact but “unfolds in yet another dimension, a depth dimension” (Patočka 2015c: 69).

Besides the earth and heaven as two basic referents of human movement, “the overall prefiguration of meaning” has two other, and equally fundamental, aspects: a singular human being is always with others, and hence exists inter-subjectively, and is, as already indicated, embodied.

Without denying Patočka’s taking inspiration from Heidegger’s world-earth duality, one might say that he creatively develops Heidegger’s central concept of *Dasein* as *being* in the world conceiving it as *movement* in the world where the world is basically stratified into the earth and heaven. Besides this, allow me to call it, *cosmic* stratification, Patočka emphasizes (again similarly to Heidegger) human *sociality* as well as (similarly to Merleau-Ponty) its physicality or, to put it more precisely, *corporeality*. Every human being exists on the earth and under heaven, in and through the body and with others.

Movement as a Realization of Possibilities

From the ontological point of view, however, the most important aspect of the concept of the movement of existence is not how it describes the framework and intrinsic structure of existence but rather that it conceives movement as a realization of possibilities. Patočka brings this Aristotelian⁸³ concept of movement together with Heidegger’s concept of *Dasein*: “Heidegger says that our life is a realization of possibilities – of possibility which we do not visualize, in which we transcend what we are at the moment. ... [This] is very much like Aristotle. For Aristotle, movement is the act of a being which has certain possibilities, if it has these possibilities” (Patočka 1998: 145).

⁸³ “Aristotle is our starting point and inspiration” (Patočka 1998: 154).

Of course, Patočka is well aware that Heidegger's concept of possibility is different to that of Aristotle: "Aristotle's concept of *dynamis* has a whole range of aspects that do not fit the conception of possibility used by the analysts of existence" (Patočka 1998: 154). Most importantly, "[t]he possibilities that ground movement have no preexistent bearer ... but rather all synthesis, all inner interconnection of movement takes place within it alone" (Patočka 1998: 146–147). Whereas in Aristotle, to put it simply, possibilities are immanent to a substance, Patočka refuses such "localization."

Aristotle, according to Patočka, "objectifies movement" through his presupposition of "*a changeless something*," "making it into something that requires an objective bearer to make its dynamic aspect possible" (Patočka 1998: 154). But human movement "is not a possibility belonging to something that already exists but rather of something that is not yet present and that can take the given into itself and forge it into a unified meaning" (Patočka 1998: 147). I will focus on the last-mentioned idea in the chapter on the care of the soul. At this point, let me only identify the problem to be solved here: without a substance as the bearer of possibilities, how to account for the possibilities without which movement, as a realization of possibilities, would be impossible?

The Source of Possibilities

In Heidegger's concept, the "place" of possibilities is (in) understanding: understanding "throws possibility ... as possibility, and as such lets it *be*" (Heidegger 1996: 136). Patočka's concept can be apprehended as struggling to give meaning to this rather obscure idea of Heidegger. And, while interpreting this idea, Patočka suspects Heidegger of subjectivism. The possibilities of my existence/movement appear in the phenomenal field, yet the phenomenal field, Patočka argues against Heidegger, "is no way our projection; it is not a product of our subjectivity. It is rather a field that we must presuppose as the ground of all clarity" (Patočka 2015a: 38). Accordingly, our living in the world is not a "stepping out of oneself or projecting oneself somewhere outside oneself. In this sense, it is not a 'project,' but an essential being-outside-oneself and finding-oneself [*Sich-empfangen*]" (Patočka 2015a: 39).

One can certainly argue that not even in Heidegger's concept is "the project" the product of our subjectivity: the possibilities of *Dasein* are *not* in any "subject" but rather in the world, giving themselves through understanding. In Heidegger's concept, there is no ontological dichotomy between subject and object, and hence one can hardly conceive "the project" as the work of our subjectivity.⁸⁴ As I will argue in the second part of this chapter, Patočka indeed develops an asubjective interpretation of Heidegger's concept of *Dasein*.

Yet, Patočka *does* have a point here. He highlights that Heidegger's *Dasein* is "in the world ... (in the sense of understanding the world)" but is *not* "a part of the world process" (Patočka 1998: 155–156). What is the difference between being *in* the world and being a *part* of it? Patočka has in mind, again, primarily human corporeality: due to it, human existence is, as it were, made of the world.

⁸⁴ Karfík rightly emphasises that Patočka's interpretation of this idea of Heidegger is rather ambivalent. Sometimes, Patočka acknowledges Heidegger's standpoint as non-subjectivist; see esp. Karfík 2008: 57, n. 11.

Das Seinsverständnis

Yet, Patočka does *not* conceive the possibilities of movement as “given” by the *corporeal* world, he does not reduce them to corporeity. In this regard, to simplify, he differs from Merleau-Ponty.⁸⁵ I will come back to the role, and the essence, of human embodiment in Chapter 10. Here, let me focus on the movement of existence as presupposing a sort of *understanding*, which is not subjective cognition; rather, it must be conceived of as a process *beyond* both object-ness and subject-ness.

To elucidate this admittedly suspicious idea, let me turn, preliminarily, to Patočka’s late texts explicitly promoting a subjective phenomenology. Therein, appearing is *not* constituted by any subject; on the contrary, any existent being appears in and through the field of appearing. This field of appearing makes possible also human, self-related beings: this field is “the project of being in the whole, i.e. including *ego sum* as *sum*: as a centre that relates to itself through all the rest” (Patočka 1991a: 283). Importantly, Patočka states that the phenomenal sphere, “from which both appearing things and we ourselves take on those determinations that are characteristic of things and of us as beings” (Patočka 2015a: 38), i.e. the phenomenal sphere as somehow determining appearing things in their being, is called by Heidegger the “understanding of Being [*das Seinsverständnis*]” (Patočka 2015a: 38).

The crucial question here is how to conceive a human being as the place of this *Seinsverständnis*. As already shown, Patočka decidedly denies that the human being projects itself into the world; it is rather “an essential being-outside-oneself and finding-oneself [*Sich-empfangen*]” (Patočka 2015a: 39). Primarily, the human being does not actively *interpret* the world to understand it; it rather finds itself in the “passively” understood world. But, of course, this duality of activity and passivity is inaccurate regarding the relation between the human being and the world.

One should rather speak, more precisely, of the principally dual character of Patočka’s late philosophy that has been captured, always a little bit differently, by many Patočka scholars: considering the relation between the world and the human being, Tardivel distinguishes two autonomies (Tardivel 2015: 134), Novotný heteronomous and autonomous moments of ontological difference (Novotný 2000: 29), and Karfík and Barbaras two movements (Karfík 2008: 64–65; Barbaras 2007: 72). In my reading, the duality in question should be primarily, and on the most abstract level, interpreted along the following lines: the human being is a being disclosed by and *to* Being, which is roughly tantamount to saying that it is disclosed by and *to* time;⁸⁶ being disclosed *to* time, this being must, and can, *temporalize* time.

In his paper on the possibility of a subjective phenomenology, Patočka says that a subjective phenomenology, on the one side, *ascends* to dimensions inapproachable by subjective phenomenology – to “time as such” – and is also able, on the other side, to *descend* to “the life movements which are performed by our ‘sum’ and through which the phenomenal sphere gains its concrete face [*Ausgestaltung*]” (Patočka 1991a: 284). Hence, admittedly, Patočka indicates the possibility of analysing “time as such” without recurring to human existence. But I insist, in part against Patočka’s own intentions, that insofar as phenomenology “stems from an understanding of three fundamental ecstases of temporality and of the movements of existence anchored in them” (Patočka 2016b: 127), these ecstases of time cannot be, *de facto*, analysed otherwise than through these three movements, i.e. in their realization by an existing being.

⁸⁵ As is rightly emphasized, if only with different accents, also by Barbaras 2007: esp. 67–68, 86–87.

⁸⁶ As a matter of fact, a similar idea is expressed already in Patočka’s habilitation. See above, Chapter 3.

It is only thanks to human freedom, as realized through the movement of existence, that one can speculate on a process independent from existence. And I argue that it is the *ultimate* task for a philosophy focusing on appearing, i.e. for phenomenology, to concentrate on the medium through which things appear to us; this medium is approachable, I insist, only through analysing the movement of existence. The task, then, is to properly understand existence as *the* place of “the understanding of being,” the place of *Seinsverständnis*. This task is to be fulfilled in all of the chapters of Part II.

Discourse on Possibility

Now, before paying more attention, in the next chapter, to Patočka’s attempt(s) in the 1970s to make phenomenology asubjective, let me explicitly address the problem of whether it is even *possible* to unify the concept of the movement of existence, as explicated above, with the Aristotelian idea of movement as a realization of possibilities. Some scholars would say that Patočka in fact does *not* utilise Aristotle’s concept at all.⁸⁷ Others see Patočka’s phenomenological appropriation of Aristotle based on even more basic, fundamentally non-Aristotelian, ontology.⁸⁸ In my opinion, by connecting Heidegger with Aristotle, Patočka invites us to radically *rethink* Aristotle’s concept of *dynamis*.⁸⁹

Correlatively to three temporal dimensions, Patočka distinguishes three movements of existence. Each of the three movements *does* realize possibility so long as it remains possible. Yet, importantly (and confusingly), the three possibilities are not *concrete* possibilities of action in the world but rather three *overall* or *general* possibilities. By correlating them with three temporal dimensions, Patočka conceives these three ecstases as *providing for* different kinds of possibilities.

In this sense, the three temporalities can be interpreted as three *dynameis* or even souls, *psyches* of the concrete motions of the human being.⁹⁰ In compliance with Heidegger, then, one can define the human being as the being of possibility,⁹¹ yet it is such due to its being “an essential being-outside-oneself and finding-oneself” (Patočka 2015a: 39) while the “outside” is disclosed primarily due to *time*. Existence finds different kinds of possibilities in the field of appearing depending on the temporal dimension it puts emphasis on in its very existing. We are opened by time to time and the three ecstases thus become three fundamental *dynameis* of human existence.

The concept of movement as a possibility being realized acquires here, of course, a radically different meaning than that of Aristotle’s original concept. Human movement is not a realization of a concrete pattern of possibilities; it does not have its possibilities pre-scribed. It is rather, to echo Kierkegaard, the possibility of being able, or, to put it more

⁸⁷ “Patočka takes from Aristotle merely a verbal definition and fills it with a new content” (Rezek 2010b: 128).

⁸⁸ Cf. Barbaras 2007: 72–76. Barbaras, however, accentuates other dimensions of Aristotle as influencing Patočka’s concept.

⁸⁹ As already mentioned, in the last years there has been a considerable interest in Patočka’s interpretation of Aristotle. Regarding the problem in question, see esp. Duicu 2014: 79–102, 141–184.

⁹⁰ I will come back to this idea in Chapter 11. Importantly, according to Patočka, in Aristotle “*psyche* is what sustains an animate being in a particular kind of movement” (Patočka 1998: 155).

⁹¹ “Possibility as an existential is the most primordial and the ultimate positive ontological determination of Da-sein” (Heidegger 1996: 135).

simply, the possibility of freedom (cf. Kierkegaard 1980: 44–45). It does *not* mean, however, that the human being can freely create itself. On the contrary, human existence has its internal structure that identifies, quite literally, *the conditions* of possibility of existence. The three temporal dimensions are these three most fundamental conditions of existence: no existence can evade its being past, present, and future; it can only, as Patočka shows, put emphasis on one of them, thus suppressing the others.

This is also why Patočka can use the image of a musical composition to describe the coinfluence of the three movements: “Just as a polyphonic composition is a movement of movements, so the movement of our existence unfolds in a series of relatively autonomous sequences which modify each other and affect each other” (Patočka 1998: 147). In the same lecture, Patočka also states that “our life, our existential movement, takes place in a polyphony of three voices” (Patočka 1998: 148). The three movements co-found the unity of an existing human being by being always here, yet they are not actually performed simultaneously; the human being always, so to speak, identifies with *one* of them, putting emphasis on one of the three temporal dimensions. Hence, saying that “[w]hen one becomes dominant, the others are there, albeit in the mode of absence” (Patočka 1998: 163), Patočka means that it permanently remains possible to begin actualising one of the two other presently non-actualised possibilities. Even if one identifies oneself with one of the three basic possibilities of existence, the others are still present, suggest themselves as possible, and at least in this sense they still “present” their influence, too.

To Be Continued

The concept of the movement of existence as the most promising part of Patočka’s asubjective phenomenology is to be specified, developed, and refined in all of the chapters of Part II. By distinguishing and describing the three movements, Patočka offers a very rich and multifaceted depiction of the field of appearing in which human existence proceeds. Patočka’s concept clearly demonstrates that existence, though always mine, does not have its principle (or rather principles) in the centre of experience, namely in an ego. By pointing to the principality of corporeity, of others and of the relation to the whole, the descriptions of the three movements reveal that, and *how*, a human being is originally and irrevocably a conditioned being. The human being is not a centre, let alone the principle of its own being; it is rather a process finding itself conditioned by that which it is *included* into and related to. Any human being, though experiencing itself (sometimes) as sovereign, is in fact fundamentally conditioned by the field of appearing, as it discloses itself through the three movements of existence.

As will be shown especially in Chapter 12, it seems possible to base the theory of *society* on the concept of the movement of existence insofar as existence is decidedly, in Patočka’s approach, a *social* being. But in the case of natural beings, or of nature, I doubt the possibility and desirability of an attempt to develop their *phenomenological* theory. I do not find it possible to describe how natural beings *appear* independently from existence.⁹² This problem as well must be addressed in the final chapter of Part I.

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⁹² What I *do* find required, however, is to ask the question of how to approach, or encounter, those beings without violating them.

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Asubjective Phenomenology

The aim of this chapter is *not* to trace the real development of Patočka's asubjective phenomenology at the end of the 1960s and in the 1970s.⁹³ I will rather focus, in its first part, on how Patočka's late phenomenology drew inspiration from other phenomenological thinkers, namely from Husserl, Heidegger, Fink, and Merleau-Ponty. I will pay attention to these thinkers insofar as they can be connected with different ideas of how phenomenology shall proceed and what it is capable of.

In the second part, making use of the first one, I will indicate the reasons for the impossibility of presenting Patočka's late asubjective phenomenology as a unified concept by pointing to internal tensions between incompatible approaches Patočka pursued at the same time. I will demonstrate that the systematically most important question concerns the ontological reach of phenomenology: Is phenomenology able to disclose beings in their being, or does their life exceed its reach?

The Idea of Phenomenology (Between Husserl and Heidegger)⁹⁴

(1) In Patočka's late thinking, phenomenology certainly has no absolute, self-assuring point of departure in the subject. Correspondingly, Patočka refuses Husserl's idea of phenomenology as a positive science able to reveal "pure phenomena" through "reflexive self-grasping" (Patočka 2009b: 509). According to Patočka, Husserl did not overcome Descartes' ontological concept: he "restores Cartesian metaphysics through the Kantian concept of the transcendental" (Patočka 2009b: 513).

Heidegger, on the contrary, makes possible a radical ontology. Although Patočka identifies in Heidegger "a clear refutation of the basic idea of philosophy as a strict science" (Patočka 2009b: 523), he also claims, conceiving phenomenology in a Heideggerian way as "a methodological concept, [that] we do not need to abandon the concept of philosophy as a strict science" (Patočka 2009b: 513). For this science, however, the criterion of truth cannot be but "Being itself in its self-concealing self-disclosing, in its anchoring in an unground" (Patočka 2009b: 523). In this concept, indeed, phenomenology is not a positive science (Patočka 2009b: 513); its strictness is based on something else: in its ability to be in accord with the fundament of everything, i.e. with Being as "the ground and measure" (Patočka 2009b: 523).

Importantly, this ground is not an *ahistorical* fundament; rather, it is disclosed or it discloses differently in different epochs. Phenomenology, accordingly, must be *historical*.

⁹³ At the beginning of the 1970s, Patočka wrote two papers explicitly containing in their titles the phrase "asubjective phenomenology." Yet, of course, his efforts to make phenomenology asubjective can be traced back at least to his manuscripts from the 1940s. Novotný (2000: 12–18) offers a short survey of the "prehistory" of asubjective phenomenology in Patočka's earlier texts.

⁹⁴ In Barbaras' reading, Patočka's asubjective phenomenology is rather "before" Husserl and Heidegger (Barbaras 2007: 30).

More concretely, Patočka conceives it, at the end of his study “What is Phenomenology” from the middle of the 1970s, not as a turn to an ahistorical fundament but rather as a historically conditioned “reflection on a crisis” or on “the crisis of humanity” (Patočka 2009b: 521).

(2) Yet, though admitting not only that we can “never claim to gain the limit of knowable, some sort of the ultimate *a priori*” (Patočka 2009b: 512) but also that “the attempt to disclose the original structures of experience is undertaken always anew” (Patočka 2009b: 500), Patočka does not simply deny Husserl’s vision of phenomenology by adopting Heidegger’s version of it. In fact, he also sees quite a few weaknesses in the Heideggerian approach.

Most importantly, Heidegger’s concept, to express it with a text written a decade earlier in the middle of the 1960s, is in danger of “the irrationalism of that prevenient being at whose mercy the meaning of being human then is” (Patočka 1989a: 271). Not only Heidegger underestimates “what man is and can be to man” (Patočka 1989a: 271), i.e. the importance and import of human intersubjectivity, but he also disconnects the problem of appearing and the problem of truth: “That the world shows itself is of course the most important, the most profound fact and problem *with which* philosophy operates, and *in which* it operates. But showing in and of itself is only the ground for the problem of truth, because truth is the showing-itself as things are. ... In Heidegger, the phenomenon ... is seen entirely *outside* this problem” (Patočka 2002a: 175). In Patočka’s eyes, “being does not disclose itself independently and arbitrarily, with that metaphysical haphazard, but ... in accordance with the mode of being of [the soul] – which is either responsible, or irresponsible” (Patočka 1999c: 79, note a). This objection accentuates the fact that the addressee of appearing is not a passive receptor but *takes part* in appearing, and hence it must, as Patočka formulates it, care for its soul insofar as the soul is the medium of the appearing of truth.

I will come back both to the fundamental intersubjective-ness of appearing⁹⁵ and to the necessity of caring for the soul due to the human relation to appearing.⁹⁶ On an even more basic level, however, Patočka criticizes Heidegger’s making phenomenology the method of ontology.⁹⁷ “Since Heidegger’s own philosophy went such a way where it was possible to address the issue of ‘appearing as such’ exclusively in connection with the restoration of the problematic of being ... it never came up to a reprise of Husserlian problematics though it does not seem to have been simply finished off and overcome” (Patočka 1991a: 267–268). For Patočka, “the problem of *appearing* is in reality *more fundamental* and deeper than the problem of being” (Patočka 2002a: 133; translation corrected), and hence phenomenology is not a servant of ontology. On the contrary, it must be conceived as more fundamental.⁹⁸

⁹⁵ See esp. Chapter 15.

⁹⁶ See Chapter 11.

⁹⁷ As a method of ontology, Heideggerian phenomenology analyses being itself, or Enowning, and the one who is in relation to being, i.e. *Dasein* or, in Patočka’s own words, a human soul or *sum* (Patočka 2009b: 511; cf. also Patočka 1991a: 283–285).

⁹⁸ Cf. Barbaras’ interpretation of this fundamentality (Barbaras 2007: 32–37).

Ontogenetic Appearing (Rooted in Fink)

The relation between phenomenology and ontology is one of the most controversial topics in Patočka's asubjective phenomenology.⁹⁹ In any case, phenomenology is closely connected with ontology insofar as, to formulate it using the first of Patočka's two papers on asubjective phenomenology, "the field of appearing does not project possible beings into some abstraction in itself but exactly in the relation to *sum*. Since it is the project of being in the whole, i.e. included *ego sum* as *sum*: as a centre that relates to itself through all the rest" (Patočka 1991a: 283).

One can claim that phenomenology is not independent from ontology, and *vice versa*, because the *sum* is fundamentally a *being*, not only a ("subjective") correlate of an ("objective") appearing.¹⁰⁰ Moreover, it is only in relation to the human being that things can appear in their own being. As Patočka formulates it in his lectures *Plato and Europe*, "it is only because man, the human *psyche* (soul), discovers them [i.e. things], do they then come ... to a true showing of themselves. ... The movement of our life is also this helping of all other things to be" (Patočka 2002a: 193).

However, the concept described so far is sometimes seen, by Patočka *himself*, as too anthropocentric. As he puts it in his lectures *Body, Community, Language, World*, speaking primarily of Heidegger's approach, "the event of being [is] understood too much from the perspective of human phenomena"; but we should consider also "an antecedent whole even in a purely objective sense," i.e. "the universal space-time" as the precondition of both human and non-human or, as Patočka calls them, "mute entities" (cf. Patočka 1998: 168–169). As Patočka expresses it in 1972, the phenomenology of such an antecedent world, inspired especially by the ideas of Eugen Fink,¹⁰¹ is "not a metaphysics" but "an attempt to make transparent appearances themselves in that sole wholeness which is present within them" (Patočka 1991c: 264).

Such phenomenology should analyse worldly diversity to see "what makes it the world, i.e. the universal, unsurpassable whole containing all the factual realities and possibilities," or to articulate "the root making appearances possible" (Patočka 1991c: 260–261). Most importantly, this articulation does not need to take into account (human) existences or, generally, the *recipients* of appearing: "the whole of the world is surely imaginable without appearing-to-me; it does not need for its being such a thing like a centre to whom to appear" (Patočka 1991c: 261). In other words, the philosophy of the "root" of appearing¹⁰² does not conceive the field of appearing as necessarily related to *sum*. It is not based, from the methodological point of view, on the correlation between appearances and the recipient of their appearing.

⁹⁹ Cf., besides others, Patočka's letter to Fink quoted by Novotný 2000: 23.

¹⁰⁰ This does not mean, of course, that phenomenology must be based empirically.

¹⁰¹ A short and concise explication of Fink's concept and its comparison with Patočka's ideas is offered by Kerckhoven 1998.

¹⁰² In his lectures from 1968-1969, Patočka formulates a rhetorical question: "Is there not ... within us some understanding – unclear, anticipatory, unobjectifiable – of this antecedent whole?" (Patočka 1998: 169)

Appearing Corporeal (Merleau-Ponty's Subject)

I will come back to the question of whether it is possible to offer a *phenomenological* theory of “the antecedent whole” or of “the not-manifesting universe” as Patočka sometimes calls it.¹⁰³ At this point, let me turn our attention to “a kind of peculiar and also precarious situation of man in the world”: “After all, man is a being, in whom is displayed on the one hand a predominance of the contingency of that not-manifesting universe and, on the other hand, another side of the universe breaks through in man” (Patočka 2002a: 34), i.e. exactly its appearing.

In Patočka's concept, it is first and foremost by their *corporeity* that “humans stand at the boundary between being, indifferent to itself and to all else, and existence in the sense of a pure relation to the totality of all there is” (Patočka 1998: 178). Placing emphasis on human embodiment, Patočka follows especially Merleau-Ponty in showing that “the ongoing self-integration into the world, which makes us spatial and in space, takes place by means of our subjective corporeity which is horizontal, manifesting itself as corporeity in the strongest sense of the word” (Patočka 1998: 176).

To be able to integrate ourselves into the world, the body must have, it seems, its own understanding. Not only does the body seem to obtain here, similarly to Merleau-Ponty's concept, a sort of its own subjectivity.¹⁰⁴ Just as importantly, this concept seems to transcend the duality indicated above, i.e. the duality between “the predominance of the contingency of that not-manifesting universe” and the subjective, understanding relation to the world. Since the (human) body is neither only a physical entity nor only an entity living in truth, it seems to transcend, or perhaps *re-unite*, the duality between mere “physicality” and relating to the world. Following Merleau-Ponty, then, it might seem possible to develop a *non-dualistic* phenomenology of the world, and of the human being in the world, putting emphasis on the corporeality of the world and of the human being.

Barbaras' Unification

Above, I mentioned Patočka's polemics with Heidegger's making phenomenology, to put it simply, a servant of ontology. Now, it should be clear that Patočka still does *not* want to deny the ontological claims of phenomenology but the contrary: by the concept of appearing without appearing-to-me, he would like to renew the theory of *physis* or even of *cosmos*. Postulating this ontogenetic appearing, Patočka effectively speaks of two different appearings, or movements of appearing, not only of “physical” but also of “reflective” appearing (see Karfik 2008: 66–67; cf. Barbaras 2007: e.g. 72).

This duality, of course, evokes the question of the relation, and possible unification, of this double appearing. This question, or this problem, might be solvable, as indicated above, thanks to, and by, corporeity, or, to be more precise, by *human* corporeity in which both of these movements would coincide. Elaborating (not only) on this idea, Renaud Barbaras develops, in his first monograph on Patočka, the concept of a *phenomenological dy-*

¹⁰³ Novotný rightly emphasises other statements by Patočka in which the possibility of such an approach is called into question (cf. Novotný 2000: 22–23).

¹⁰⁴ I will come back to not only this problem in Chapter 10.

namic. He connects Patočka's book on Aristotle with Patočka's later ideas on the movement of appearing, yet he interprets Aristotelian ontology as based on another, more basic one, namely henology, in which unity – *to hen* – is the principle of all principles.¹⁰⁵

In Barbaras' concept, the cognizing identification of any being by the subject "refer[s] to the unification made by ontogenetic movement which determines the being by unifying it" (Barbaras 2007: 77). And, most importantly, one must *not* distinguish here two *essentially* different movements of unifying, the objective one and the subjective one: the subjective movement only prolongs the ontogenetically determining (and unifying) movement. Barbaras puts it radically: "it is the *same* movement apprehended at two different degrees or stages" (Barbaras 2007: 80). To express it otherwise, movement is, in Barbaras' interpretation, "always the movement of appearing while determination and disclosure are its modalities" (Barbaras 2007: 83).

Undeniably, Patočka speaks of "appearing as coming forth into individuality, as coming to be" (Patočka 2016b: 159). But, he does *not* associate this process with the process of the unification, or even the synthetization, of determinations. Whereas Patočka, following not only Fink, wants to transcend the subjectivism of phenomenology, Barbaras' concept still conceives things "from the viewpoint of human understanding, ... from the perspective of meaningful language, from the viewpoint of those possibilities we can read from a being" (Patočka 1995: 202). In other words, whereas Barbaras *assimilates* the movements of *physis* and of subject, Patočka rather seeks to *discriminate* them. By conceiving the ontogenetic process of things as the synthesising of determinations, Barbaras evokes, to put it plainly, idealism, i.e. the most radicalized *subjectivism*.

Barbaras considers the genesis of subjectivity as a transformation, or passage, from the disclosure which has the world as its subject to the disclosure which has the human being as its subject (Barbaras 2007: 90). For Barbaras, this genesis is closely connected, if not identified, both with the body¹⁰⁶ and with the first movement of existence. This movement is, according to Barbaras, not only first but rather *primary*, and cannot be put on the same level as the other two. It is the movement "which *leads* to the very existence, which gives it birth" (Barbaras 2007: 96), and can also be interpreted as "the movement by which living in the world (*Leben*) becomes experiencing (*Erleben*)" (Barbaras 2007: 98). As one can see, the first movement is, in Barbaras' reading, rather the movement *to* existence than one of the movements *of* existence.

Barbaras, however, misinterprets Patočka. In a sense, of course, the human being really *becomes* existence by performing the movement of existence, but this is true of *all* of the three movements: it is by all of them that the human being realizes the possibility of being human. Nevertheless, Patočka does *not*, through his concept of the first movement, describe the process by which a non-subjective entity *becomes* subjective or human.¹⁰⁷ Of course, it is *exactly* to explain human "subjectivity" that Patočka develops his concept of the *three* movements of existence, but he does *not* offer, for better or worse, an *ontogenetic* but an *ontological* account of existence. Accordingly, one cannot claim that it is through the first movement that an entity begins to experience or becomes an experiencing entity; one cannot, to articulate it differently, interpret Patočka's above-mentioned statements *ontogenetically*. Existence, as described by him, is *always* an experiencing process of becoming, while already being, human.

¹⁰⁵ See above, Chapter 6.

¹⁰⁶ I will come back to this in the following chapter.

¹⁰⁷ For Barbaras, it is by the first movement that a (human) being acquires its humanity (Barbaras 2007: 97).

Let me add that the concept of the movement of existence demonstrates as doubtful, or at least misleading, both the above-mentioned ideas of the world as the *subject* of appearing and of the human being as the *subject* of the world (cf. Barbaras 2007: 90). In fact, as Barbaras himself sees, the human being can be called the subject *neither* of its own appearing *nor* of the appearing of the world; it rather becomes oneself in and through the world. Even more importantly, it is also unnecessary to speak of the world as the subject, or the principle, of the appearing of the human being in its physical being (cf. esp. Barbaras 2007: 107–110). It is not only highly speculative but also excessively abstract to think the world as *the* principle of my singular being. Although Patočka sometimes tends to such an abstract speculation, in his more concrete phenomenological analyses he demonstrates that it is not the world which singularizes me but rather my own corporeal movement between others in relation to the whole. I will explain these dimensions in more detail in the next chapters.

Appearing does not Constitute Reality

I do not intend to examine here in detail all the intricacies and internal difficulties of Patočka's late phenomenological thought. His late ideas on the possibilities of phenomenology throw down a great challenge and one can find quite impressive rises to it, not only those by Barbaras, but also those by Karfik 2008: 55–68 or Émilie Tardivel 2015.¹⁰⁸ As a matter of fact, all the thinkers dealing with Patočka's late phenomenology must not only interpret Patočka but think his concept through *independently* since Patočka's various reflections themselves do *not* form a united concept. Also the most elaborated interpretation, namely that of Barbaras, rather expands on Patočka's thoughts than simply interpreting them.

Now, Patočka undoubtedly took inspiration from some of the key metaphysical thinkers, such as Plato or Aristotle; and he certainly had a penchant for speculation. Just as certainly, he was attracted, especially at the end of the 1960s and at the beginning of the 1970s, by Fink's philosophy. But, he did *not* actualize Aristotle's philosophy of nature, just as he did *not* accept the Finkean speculative idea of phenomenology as identifiable with, simply put, cosmology. At this point, let me distinguish my approach to Patočka from that of Barbaras. Generally, whereas Barbaras welcomes Patočka's proclivity to speculation, I rather turn attention to the fact that this proclivity is not easily compatible, and in accord, with his phenomenological method. Accordingly, to give one example, whereas for Barbaras Patočka's asubjective phenomenology is necessarily cosmology (cf. also Barbaras 2017), I rather highlight that Patočka *himself* indicates that cosmology exceeds the reach of phenomenology.¹⁰⁹

To justify my approach, let me explicitly identify two problems of Patočka's late phenomenology, or rather its internal tensions, due to which I find it impossible to present it as a unified concept.

¹⁰⁸ Cf. also Rodrigo 2007.

¹⁰⁹ This is also why I do not take into account Barbaras' more elaborated, and creative, interpretation developed in his second monograph on Patočka (Barbaras 2011c). I do not argue against it, since it would take me too far from the line of thought I pursue here. To put it simply, Barbaras' *L'ouverture du monde* is even more speculative than his first book on Patočka; and hence is incompatible with the approach, which is typical of Patočka himself, distinguishing between phenomenology proper and speculating philosophy.

The first problem concerns the relation between the process of appearing and reality. On the one hand, Patočka *does* speculate on the movement of appearing as an ontogenetic movement, as the movement by which beings are what they are,¹¹⁰ on the other hand, he says that the field of appearing “is in principle not autonomous,” that it “indeed does not have an autonomous being, but does have its own being, which consists precisely in its revealing function” (Patočka 2015a: 33).

Tardivel (2015: 131–132) discusses the second mentioned formulations trying to prove that they are compatible with the idea that appearing *is*, Patočka notwithstanding, autonomous as “the opening of being” (Tardivel 2015: 132). In other words, Tardivel conceives appearing, similarly to Barbaras, as giving being. However, the just quoted formulations rather show that Patočka *hesitates* regarding the possibility of conceiving appearing as an ontogenetic or onthurgic process.

It is no coincidence, then, that in his lectures *Plato and Europe* he implicitly excludes the possibility for the theory of appearing to account for *cosmos* (or *physis*). He clearly distinguishes between phenomenology and phenomenological philosophy¹¹¹ and *speculates*, doing phenomenological philosophy but *not phenomenology*, on the relationship between the world in its reality and the world of appearances or, to quote Patočka himself, between the “universe as a pure physical fact” and the realm of phenomena as “an autonomous *unreal* region of the universe” (Patočka 2002a: 33).

According to this speculation, “somewhere within the foundations of the factual universe is a kind of *codetermining* of the phenomenon as the phenomenon” (Patočka 2002a: 34), and since “the phenomenon as such does not have any strength, this codetermination must lie in the very foundations of physical being as such” (Patočka 2002a: 33). At first glance, Patočka brings here appearing and reality close together. But there is an either-or here: either “physical being as such” is *the same as* (a certain form of) appearing, or “the factual universe” *only codetermines* appearing. Hence the idea of phenomenology formulated in *Plato and Europe* effectively *excludes* the possibility for phenomenology to articulate reality as the process of appearing.¹¹²

Patočka’s reflections (or as he himself names them: speculations) in *Plato and Europe* remind one of the duality between the given and spirit, or between the given and freedom, as formulated by Patočka in the second half of the 1940s and in the first half of the 1950s.¹¹³ Novotný is right to claim that Patočka, in his late asubjective phenomenology, does *not* presuppose, in contrast to “Negative Platonism,” idea as the principle of appearing (cf. Novotný 2000: 16). But we come across the similar problem here: how is appearing related to the given? Whereas in “Negative Platonism” appearing or, to be precise, spirit, somehow *arises* against the given, in the texts from the 1960s and 1970s appearing *is*, *somehow* again, already *in* the given codetermining it.¹¹⁴

¹¹⁰ In this approach, the world is not only autonomous, it is autonomous exactly as the process ontologically individuating beings: “it gives them definiteness, determination” (Patočka 1991c: 260).

¹¹¹ “Phenomenological philosophy differs from phenomenology in that it wants not only to analyse phenomena as such but also to derive results from this; it wants to derive *results*, as is said, which are *metaphysical*” (Patočka 2002a: 32–33).

¹¹² This conclusion might be in harmony with the idea expressed also in Patočka’s above-mentioned study on Fink that the world is “dark in the ground of its uniting” (Patočka 1991c: 260).

¹¹³ See Chapters 5 and 6 above. Cf. also Novotný 2000: 14–16.

¹¹⁴ And another “old” problem again rears its head, namely the problem of *freedom*, which plays a crucial role especially in Patočka’s (re)consideration on “Epoché and Reduction” (Patočka 2015b). To put it bluntly, there would be no appearing in a true sense without freedom.

Recently, Patočka's statements regarding the relation between appearing and reality have been minutely interpreted by Dragoș Duicu and Ovidiu Stanciu. Duicu rightly emphasizes that appearing (to me) is not *external* to the world (Duicu 2017: 349); it is rather *inherent* to it (Duicu 2017: 353). Yet, he also rightly concludes that "the metaphysical conclusion of Patočka's asubjective phenomenology ... is poor and ... rather tautological, because it amounts to saying that, since something is present in the world [namely appearing], ... it must be possible" (Duicu 2017: 354). According to Stanciu, phenomenology "cannot avoid the question of the inscription of the appearing in the world," but it cannot answer this question "without exceeding its own limits" (Stanciu 2017: 303). I fully agree that Patočka's thought *necessitates* the question of the relation between appearing and the world, but I contend, in accord with Patočka, that it is *not* phenomenology that would be able to answer it.¹¹⁵

Transcendentalism versus Thinking of Being versus Life

The second problem is close to the first one, yet it has more to do with Patočka's rather equivocal idea of the method of phenomenology.

As I have indicated, in Barbaras' radicalisation, appearing is identifiable with the world as a cosmological process (Barbaras 2007: 83 and 90), while this process is completed by appearing to humans (see e.g. Barbaras 2007: 72; cf. Karfík 2008: 66). Phenomenology can reveal this process. But, as indicated by Novotný, Patočka's concept of asubjective phenomenology, at least in its second phase,¹¹⁶ is not cosmology but rather a *transcendental* theory of appearing, a sort of formal transcendentalism (Novotný 2000: 19 and 26).¹¹⁷

The world, or "Weltapriori," is not a *cosmological* process but rather a universal structure of appearing. According to Novotný's reconstruction, it is only in the third phase, when Patočka's concept becomes more deeply influenced by Heidegger's later thought and ceases to be formal transcendentalism.¹¹⁸ Transcendentalism must be abandoned due to both (human) facticity, irreducible to any abstract conditions of possibility, and the self-concealing character of Being. For both reasons, appearing is inapproachable as such and, to use Husserl's favoured term, "in original"; rather, phenomenology can approach only hermeneutically re-constructed forms of "Epoché *des Seins*" (cf. Novotný 2000: 31–33).

Again, the problem is whether, and in what way, phenomenology can, to put it simply, describe the world in its reality. But the question is to be asked not only against the background of Fink's (or Aristotle's or Plato's) ideas but also against the background of the difference between Husserl's and Heidegger's concept of phenomenology. One can

¹¹⁵ According to Stanciu, phenomenology must exceed its limits "in the direction of a philosophical cosmology and of an 'ontic theory of the existence'" (Stanciu 2017: 303).

¹¹⁶ According to Novotný, Patočka developed his late asubjective phenomenology in three phases while finally, in contrast to an originally more Husserlian approach, he deepened his approach by Heideggerian hermeneutics of the understanding of Being (Novotný 2000: 11)

¹¹⁷ Novotný rightly emphasises that Patočka, also at the beginning of the 1970s, does not disclaim Husserl's phenomenology but rather seeks to revise it (Novotný 2000: 18–19). A stimulating interpretation of Patočka's late transcendentalism (and its shortcomings) was offered by Steven Crowell (2011).

¹¹⁸ It is worth mentioning that Barbaras, at first, accepts the possibility of speaking of the transcendental of the (necessarily also empiric) subject, yet he immediately adds that the very duality of the transcendental and the empiric must be abandoned (Barbaras 2007: 64).

either think, in a more Husserlian manner, that phenomenology should reveal, reflectively, universally valid transcendental structures (of appearing), or one can think, in a more Heideggerian manner, that to be close to reality is to think, taking part in the process of being, how being “is” right now.

It must also be mentioned that, compared with his earlier phenomenology which intended to account for *life*, Patočka’s late asubjective phenomenology ceases to (attempt to) think living beings other than existences in their subjectivities/inwardnesses. In other words, putting emphasis on (radically de-subjectified) appearing as such, or on the world as the field of appearing, Patočka belittles the ontological importance of the intentionality/performance of inwardly beings *themselves* or, to put it otherwise, takes as neither possible nor desirable thinking *non-human beings* in their appearing in the world or, more precisely, in their performing their lives in the world.

Developing the concept of the movement of *existence*, Patočka certainly *is* capable to think the *life* of existence – exactly as its *movement*. And even more: by articulating existence *phenomenologically*, he is quite able to develop an *ontological* concept of it.¹¹⁹ But he does not conceive such a possibility regarding non-human beings in the world. In his late asubjective phenomenology, Patočka conceives them, in contrast to existence, as appearing (to existence) but not as *relating to* appearing by *themselves*.¹²⁰ From a different point of view, one can say that Patočka draws a sharp line, putting emphasis on the *freedom* of existence, between the process of *physis* and the movement of existence without explicating how to *phenomenologically* describe, in view of this duality, non-existential forms of ontological individuation.¹²¹ Consequently, not only can one have only *speculative* ontology regarding beings other than existence, but such an ontology undervaluates their being by denying them their own relation to appearing.

Back to Existence

In contrast to Novotný, I doubt the possibility of dividing Patočka’s late asubjective phenomenology into three different phases, thus removing the tensions in Patočka’s thought. To read Patočka’s manuscripts from the second half of the 1960s and the 1970s with the intention of making them into a unified concept is a frustrating experience:¹²² to make this phenomenology united, one must not only think Patočka’s ideas through but also ignore, or disclaim, some of them. And, though it seems justifiable to do so insofar as Patočka

¹¹⁹ I do agree with Crowell that even in Patočka’s asubjective phenomenology “transcendental subject cannot be a mere empty position” (Crowell 2011: 19). Yet, Crowell’s conjecture that “Patočka came to understand this and tried to flesh out his conception of the subject by way of his theory of the three movements of life” (Crowell 2011: 19) is misguided: the concept of the movement of existence *predates* Patočka’s late asubjective phenomenology.

¹²⁰ Patočka names them “mute entities” (cf. Patočka 1998: 168–169). In the Czech original, he uses the term *tupá* to describe these beings. This word should rather be translated as “dull” or “obtuse” as it has more to do with “dullness” or “numbness.”

¹²¹ Importantly in this context, Barbaras identifies the problem of *life* as a “blind spot” in Patočka’s (late) phenomenology (Barbaras 2007: 112, n. 1). Allow me to add that, as should be clear from the aforementioned, I cannot agree with Crowell that Patočka “sees no tension between the transcendental and something like the ‘natural’” (Crowell 2011: 9, n. 5). Rather, one can suspect Patočka, as Crowell himself insinuates, of “crypto-naturalistic constructions deriving from an unholy mixture of the ontic and the transcendental” (Crowell 2011: 20, n. 21).

¹²² Simultaneously, it is exhilarating to read the unified interpretations, such as those of Barbaras or Karfík.

rather *attempts* to conceive asubjective phenomenology than present it in its completed form, it is also beneficial, I think, to seek to identify the reasons, as I have tried to do above, why he never completed, and maybe never could complete, the project of asubjective phenomenology.

Of course, I have my own ideas regarding the defensible and useful concept of asubjective phenomenology. What I suggest, seeking to develop the most promising version of asubjective phenomenology, is to focus – also because of Patočka’s own emphasis on being – on a special being, i.e. on the human being who cares not only for its own being but also for being as such. In the previous explications I have pushed aside the question of both the role and the essence of the subject, or the addressee of appearing.¹²³ Not due to its unimportance, quite the contrary: it is so important that it needs a separate explication. In the last instance, it is through existence, i.e. through the existential relation to the world that also things can appear in their being. This is why the movement of existence is of fundamental importance for asubjective phenomenology.

Hence I suggest paying special attention to Patočka’s analyses of human existence, as developed especially in the second half of the 1960s. Importantly, also in 1974, in a letter to Ludwig Landgrebe, Patočka depicts the concept of the movement of existence not only as correlative to the analysis of the lifeworld but also as standing “in the middle” between the notion of the universe on one side and the ontological notion of the world on the other (see in Novotný 2000: 18).¹²⁴ It is only through the movement of existence, and its concept, that one can access, both practically and theoretically, “the universe” and “the world.”

The lifeworld is correlative to existence, which does not mean, of course, that existence constitutes the world but rather that the “subject” discovers its ontological identity through moving in its lifeworld. Analysing this movement, then, it is possible to articulate how the world appears to a *sum*. Such an analysis does not begin with an asubjective world, or with appearing as such, it comes out of the “subject,” yet from an embodied subject that is a part of the world, and not (only) its correlate. More concretely, this analysis begins with, similarly to the study on space, “personal situational structures” (Patočka 1998: 43) framing our “self-localization in the world” (Patočka 1998: 55).

In contrast to the approach seeking to describe appearing *as such*, or the appearing of *the* world, this concept has not only a different starting point, namely a human individual in its situation, but also a different course or destination. It does not begin with the whole to articulate its “parts”; it instead articulates from within, or from the *inside*, the conditions of (human) being in the world. But, even if one takes existence as the point of departure, or rather as “the middle,” it does not exclude but rather makes possible speaking of appearing as such.

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¹²³ Of course, this question plays a crucial role also in all the above-mentioned approaches of Patočka scholars.

¹²⁴ The very same duality seems to be spoken of also in this formulation from 1969: “Is not the antecedent whole of all that is an essential presupposition of mute entities as well as of entities such as we, who relate to being? Here, in the universal ‘content’ (containing all else) is the condition of the possibility of (i) the individualization of things and (ii) the appearing of existents in the light of being” (Patočka 1998: 169).

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Part II

Rethinking Existence

(Dis)Appropriating (the) Body

Introduction: Body, World, and Meaning

Anyone wanting to understand Patočka's phenomenology, and especially his late concept of the movement of existence, must weigh the importance, or the fundamentality, of the body in it. Let me start such an investigation a bit hastily by quoting Karel Novotný's apt depiction: "Embodiment and the relation to the world belong together, there is no relation to the world without embodiment and embodiment ... is impossible apart from the relation to the world" (Novotný 2011: 48). One of the questions I would like to answer in this chapter is whether the body is indeed *just as* fundamental as the relation to the world. According to Novotný, one can speak of "the superiority of the transcendental function of the horizon of the world in relation to the situatedness of body as the base of the finitude ... i.e. of the superiority of a sort of 'in-finity' of the world as the horizon of meaning in relation to the situation of embodied existence" (Novotný 2011: 51). Is this really so?

In his lectures on Husserl's phenomenology from the 1960s, Patočka says that although consciousness is in the body, it is not always the consciousness of bodily acts, and that by taking a closer look one can see that in such non-bodily acts "the *I* transcends its integration into a present actuality, thus escaping the field of bodily presence" (Patočka 1996a: 150, n. 27). Hence, one might ask the question: is the *I* able to, so to speak, leave its body behind and act on its own in relation to the world, or is all its activity necessarily performed by the body? Or, to put it otherwise, is "all the performance of meaning ... a bodily performance" (Patočka 2016h: 153), as Patočka states in his study "Phenomenology and Metaphysics of Movement"? This question shall also be answered in this chapter.

Husserlian Variation: Body and I

Although Patočka surely intends to overcome Husserl's approach to the body, it is helpful to begin by summarizing his interpretation of it.

As is very well known, Husserl distinguishes two attitudes toward the body: a naturalistic one conceiving the body as an object and a personal one (Patočka 1996a: 140). In the perspective of the personal attitude, the body appears as "a complex of sensing and will ... and as an object" (Patočka 1996a: 140). This object, i.e. the body as my own, is "the only object that can be spontaneously mobile, immediately available to the will of the pure *I*" (Patočka 1996a: 143). For Husserl, only the *I* is the principle of experience; the body is neither the principle nor the subject but (only), to say it with Husserl himself, a "means for producing ... movements in other things" (Husserl 1989: 159); in this sense, it is also the place of our "can" or "cannot" (Patočka 1996a: 143).

As a means, the body is necessarily an object, and as an objective means it is the place of contact with the world of objects. Hence, the body not only makes finite the transcendental subject, but it also makes contact with objective world possible. More con-

cretely, the “constitution of the body is a constitution of ... constantly available habitualities. The body can thus integrate its activity into the coherence of the material world without the subject penetrating this coherence in its understanding” (Patočka 1996a: 144).

In the second part of this chapter, I will focus on this ability of the body to integrate the I into the material world. But, first of all, we must examine another problem implicated in Husserl’s approach: “What is the relation of the subject, in its innermost sense, as the center of experience, of the living present source of the stream of time, to corporeity?” (Patočka 1996a: 145).

Patočka describes two radical viewpoints as formulated in modern philosophy. On the one hand, in Descartes’ philosophy, the I is pure spirit with an utterly external relation to the body;¹²⁵ on the other hand, for Nietzsche, the I is identical with the body. By phenomenologically evaluating both concepts, Patočka outlines a moderate concept stating that, unsurprisingly, the I cannot be identified with “the body object”: “With respect to the body-object we are always at a distance” (Patočka 1996a: 147). More concretely, and more interestingly, he indicates that the I is to be distinguished from the body insofar as the I “is not possible except as transcendence or, more precisely, as a dominance in time” (Patočka 1996a: 144). Yet the I, in its distancing freedom, is identified by Patočka not only with a dominance in time; the I is also the “subject of a living present which in principle is always new as on the first day of creation” (Patočka 1996a: 148). In contrast to this “absolute presence,” the body is connected rather with “a substrate of what I have accumulated already”; as already stated, through the body, I am “the subject of corporeal habitualities” (Patočka 1996a: 148).

One can see that the body is correlated with one of the dimensions of temporality, namely with the past. The body is what is already here, what I already have, whereas I am, or the I is, never identifiable with what I have. “The primordial I, the primordial freedom is something I *am* in the purest sense of the word, never something I *have*” (Patočka 1996a: 148). Nevertheless, the “availability” of the body, and, thanks to it, the availability of the world, is only one side of the body. Although I can say that I have my body, the body is not under my control, but quite the contrary. There are several dimensions in which the body escapes my own free existence: the body contains “presuppositions, instinctual matrices, situational moments which are never fully *before* us, finally even a purely objectively material substrate which as a dark, naturally causal bearer of its *own* vitality is also in some sense coextensive with me” (Patočka 1996a: 148).

However, these dimensions which surpass the reach of my freedom are not the main reason why the body cannot be identified with the I. Most fundamentally, Patočka denies the body the ability of, as it were, self-integration, or, more simply, it denies it its own self. “My body is I in the sense of belonging with me, insofar as I cannot be without it; I presuppose it, but it is not the same as I – for simply for itself it is only a lifeless abstraction which only *I* make what it is” (Patočka 1996a: 148). The body is, in its (self) identity, dependent on something to unify it by experiencing through it as through *its* body. This uniting “entity” is the I as freedom, the I able to *distance* itself from its own body while integrating it (Patočka 1996a: 147).¹²⁶

Yet, a question suggests itself: where does the very I come from? Is it not conditioned, or even somehow enacted, by the body?

¹²⁵ In other texts, Patočka presents a much more complex picture of Descartes’ ideas on the body. Cf. esp. Patočka (2016i: 186–188).

¹²⁶ Of course, this duality of distancing and uniting is nothing new in Patočka’s thought. Cf. above, Chapter 6.

The Mind-Body Problem

Interpreting Maine de Biran's reflection on "the primordial phenomenon of effort," Patočka says: "That effort can stand out of the world, that it can say *I*, rests on the reality that we can will freely – and that we are able to act freely. Willing is meaningless when I *can* not" (Patočka 1998: 25). For willing to be meaningful, I must be *able* to act, and hence "the I is possible *only as corporeal* – the I is a willing, striving I and, *consequently*, a corporeal one," i.e. "possible only in a biological organism" (Patočka 1998: 25). More concretely: "There is a double mutual relation here: the I is conditioned by the organism; on the other hand the I is no less real than a sheer biological reality" (Patočka 1998: 25).

In the just quoted lectures from the second half of the 1960s, Patočka does not analyse this "double mutual relation" between the I and the biological organism. In his manuscripts from the 1940s, however, we can find an interesting analysis pointing *beyond* this very dichotomy. As we have seen in Chapter 4, in the war manuscripts Patočka presupposes the existence of "nature," which is not "pure objectivity, but a subject-object" (Patočka 2014d: 64). Assuming this self-reliant nature, one can pose the psycho-physical problem otherwise than as the problem of the relation between two substances: we must "project this problem back into ... a primitive undifferentiated domain in which there are no objects, objective characteristics, and 'lawful' causal relations, but solely the unity of qualitatively-dynamic influencing" (Patočka 2014d: 65).

The mind-body problem arises only because "sensing [*čítí*], perceiving," though being originally a form of "sympathetic harmony," is "tied, in an objective world, to the activity of the organism" (Patočka 2014d: 65). Accordingly, it is only in relation to the objective world that the question can be posed: does the body/organism somehow "participate" in the experience of "inwardness" and is "this participation experienced in a certain way" (Patočka 2014d: 65)?

Patočka, taking inspiration from Henri Bergson, answers this question in the affirmative: we are accorded with that activity of the organism which is "the attentiveness to life"; it is exactly by this activity that "our most own, essentially inward being is gripped" (Patočka 2014d: 66). As one can see, the psycho-physical problem is localized here into the distinction between the organism with its attentiveness to life and the I "gripped" by it.

Is this distinction to be explained in such a way that the mind and body *mutually influence* each other? Or are they rather *parallel* phenomena? As was already indicated, both of these theories accept the fundamentally wrong objectification of "the original undifferentiatedness of subject and object" (Patočka 2014d: 66). In the theory of parallelism, inwardness is objectified and identified with psychological unities: only based on this objectification can psychical units be correlated with physical ones (Patočka 2014d: 66–67). And the theory of mutual influence is an inconsistent concept because "on the level of pure objectivity we are body and nothing more than body" (Patočka 2014d: 67).

As elucidated in Chapter 4, the experiencing and experienced life of the "subject" is, according to the war manuscripts, objectively inaccessible; in accordance with that: objectively, we are "nothing other than body." However, one can ask the question: is there not also something like a non-objective natural body?

Magic: the I, Body, and World

I will come back to this question in the second part of this chapter taking into consideration Patočka's later studies. In the war manuscripts themselves, Patočka does *not* describe the

body as a non-objective fundament but rather (only) as the *milieu* of the life of inwardness. Analogically to the approach presented in his lectures on Husserl, also here Patočka takes for granted that “what takes place in the body through the body belongs to my I” (Patočka 2014f: 95).¹²⁷ More concretely, he describes the relationship between the I and the body as follows: “as if direct consciousness, setting out to the surroundings by its dominance over the body ... has been acquiring, in this ‘inner’ consciousness, specific modifications allowing or impeding its journey” (Patočka 2014f: 96).

The body is the milieu by which the intentionality of the I is modified by passing it through. Having described the body as this milieu, Patočka concludes that the body is “the most basic tap of the stream of our inner life regulating it closest to its source” (Patočka 2014f: 96). Our being is, exactly due to our being embodied, not only “in front of the perspective of the world” [*před perspektivou světa*] but “amidst the perspective” [*uprostřed perspektivy*]: being in the body, a finite being is “amidst the perspective that it exerts with certain effort and with success or failure – this most basic success and failure is the body” (Patočka 2014f: 96).

One might wonder: if the body so deeply regulates our life, can one reasonably claim that it “must always be at our disposal, must be obedient, docile”? (Patočka 1998: 45) What Patočka wants to say by this and similar statements is not that the body is always in compliance with what I would like to do or even to feel; obviously, it is not. He has in mind a more general, and more fundamental, idea: the body, and through it also the things of the world, are and must be “obedient” to our consciousness. In what sense?

Patočka shows that we (or the I) primarily master things and only secondarily can we reflect that to do so we (or the I) must master our body as well: “The entire dynamism is a thrust beyond itself, toward matters” (Patočka 1998: 45). And this dynamism somehow connects, or unites, our consciousness, our body, and things in the world. Following Merleau-Ponty, Patočka states: “it is as if our movement had a magic power, as if our *fiat!* had a magic effect” (Patočka 1998: 45). The term “magic” designates here the fact that the “fiat” is efficient without being “mediated by anything objective”: “I will, and my hand moves” (Patočka 1998: 45).¹²⁸ The magic consists exactly in the docility of my body to this willing: I have my body at my disposal without any intentional effort. One can express it also this way: my consciousness experiences something and, simultaneously, something objectively happens. “There is here something like a mutual coincidence of lived experience and reality” (Patočka 1998: 45).

And it is the body which makes possible, magically, the coincidence between the experiencing I and the world in its reality.

Appropriating the World or Making the Body?

In the previous explications, both the methodological priority of the I and the gap between the I and the world (to be bridged by the body) have been presupposed. Yet, Patočka’s reflections show the I as fundamentally conditioned by the body. Is it not dubious, then, to take the priority of the I as the point of departure? Should not we presuppose, as suggested

¹²⁷ Although there are, of course, many processes in the body of which the I has no idea, these processes do *not* take place through the body as *my* body. It does not mean, of course, that the I is the principle of these processes. I will come back to this problem.

¹²⁸ More precisely: “I do not intend the movement of my hand: what I will is to write a few words on the board, I will to reach an apple” (Patočka 1998: 45).

above, rather a (non-objective) body as *the* fundament of experiencing and of appearing? To start answering these questions, let me turn our attention to two creative interpretations of Patočka's late concept of the body.

In his lecture "Phänomenologie und Metaphysik der Bewegung," Patočka says that "it seems necessary to ... presuppose a form of original accordance [*Entsprechung*], a certain joining of the non-appearing [*Fügung des Nichterscheinenden*] to ourselves, its appropriating [*Eignung*] to the subjective" (Patočka 2016k: 730). Although Patočka explicitly states that this "Fügung" or "Eignung" "can never be brought into explicit awareness," Novotný hypothesises that it is made by our body as it, "in its finitude, with its inner and outer limits, ... in advance appropriates the structure of that which will appear and how it will appear in the world" (Novotný 2011: 59).

Whereas in Novotný's speculation the body appropriates the world to make possible its appearing, Barbaras reads Patočka's reflections on the body as overcoming Merleau-Ponty's idea of corporeity incorporating us into the world (Barbaras 2007: 67–68). What in Merleau-Ponty's philosophy is a result of his thought, namely the idea of "chair du monde" as making possible both the world and its appearing through subjectivity, is for Patočka only the beginning of his reflection (Barbaras 2007: 87). In Barbaras' reading, Patočka comes from the body to "the condition of its own possibility, to movement through which it arises as a perceiving body"; Patočka shows "how a certain part of the world becomes a perception of the world, how *Körper* transforms into *Leib*" (Barbaras 2007: 88).

As mentioned in Chapter 8, Barbaras very closely connects the body with the first movement of existence suggesting, among other things, that "the first movement is the condition of possibility of embodiment; it is corporeity itself conceived from the existential point of view" (Barbaras 2007: 99). For Barbaras, "the body is not required for embodiment but is created by [the first] movement" (Barbaras 2007: 104). This is no slip of the pen. Earlier in his book, Barbaras formulates the same idea: "the body is much more the product of its own movement than that movement would be some property of the body" (Barbaras 2007: 69, n. 1). Is this interpretation, or that by Novotný, tenable?

Barbaras reads Patočka's reflections as explicating how, on the basis of movement, *Körper* becomes *Leib*, i.e. how one corporeal part of the world becomes an experiencing part of the world, and hence how *Leben* transforms into *Erleben*. However, when Barbaras says that "the body is much more the product of its own movement than that movement would be some property of the body," he seems not to take into account, or not sufficiently, that *Körper* must already be there for the movement to be possible, that *this kind* of body is *presupposed* by movement: to put it little bit roughly, there can be no movement without a body "full" of energy. Patočka repeatedly identifies the body with the ability to move, but this ability cannot be *produced* by its own movement; accordingly, the body cannot be accounted for by movement.

Moreover, in Barbaras' reading, Patočka describes how subjectivity or, to be more precise, a subjective bodily being is *born* from something pre-subjective. But, although Patočka's analyses do demonstrate "the I" as a *discovery* based on contact with other people (see e.g. Patočka 2016j: 211), subjectivity is here, implicitly or unreflectively, from the very beginning being "the horizontal condition of the possibility of an appearance" (Patočka 2016j: 204). In fact, by talking of a "centrifugal" or "seeing energy," Patočka does *not* discriminate between movement, the body, and the I correlative to appearing, but quite the contrary: he bases his explications on the I as corporeal, and hence able to move, or on the body as subjective, and hence able to "see." Yet, it is quite possible, as I will demonstrate in the next section, to discriminate, *logically*, between what is "accomplished" by the body itself (in the sense of *Körper*) and what is performed by the I (when, due to this activity, the *Körper* becomes the body of an existent human being).

Generally, whereas Barbaras is looking for an *ontogenetical* account of the subjective, experiencing body, Patočka develops an *ontological* account, in which subjectivity is not something to be generated but rather (only) elucidated in its intrinsic structure. And although one can meaningfully ask the question of how to conceive the relation between “seeing energy,” the I, and the body, based on Patočka’s descriptions one can *neither* answer that *Leib* is *generated* by (corporeal) movement, as Barbaras implies, *nor* that *Körper* appropriates the world to allow for its appearing, as Novotný suggests.

Allow me to add that it indeed *is* tempting to read Patočka’s considerations on the body ontogenetically also because Patočka demonstrates the embodied I as, for lack of a better word, being “evoked” – but it is not evoked by myself, let alone by *Körper*, but rather by others. Patočka effectively shows that the I is not *the* principle of my being myself because the I rather “consolidates” itself through the process of being addressed by others. Already in the study “Space and its Problematics” (analyzed in Chapter 7) Patočka states not only that “in the centre” there is “an addressed and responding organism” but even that “the centre has two persons, an addressing one [*oslovující*] and an addressed one [*oslovovanou*], you and me” (Patočka 2016e: 37). Hence, paradoxically, the centre is intrinsically split into two. And, in addition to that, Patočka also says that “the one who relates [*vztahující se*] and the very relating [*vztahování*] have no centre in themselves; they are defined only by their counterpart” (Patočka 2016e: 62). What he seeks to emphasize by these rather paradoxical statements is that the unity and “centredness” of the I is irreducibly conditioned by plurality and “decentralization”: the unity of the I is *performed* only in and through, to put it sharply, disunity.

In his later considerations on the body, Patočka formulates a similar idea regarding a personal body: “The personal body is a being not as a thing but as a relation to itself that, to be such a peculiar subjective relation, must make a detour through a foreign being [*musí jít oklikou přes cizí jsoucnost*]. That is exactly why, however, it must be a body, i.e. why it must localize itself between things as one of them” (Patočka 2016j: 196). Here again, as in the study on space, Patočka stresses the necessity to *presuppose* the body as an *object* (and as a responding organism): to be *able* to make the above mentioned detour, and thus to become a personal (or subjective) body, *Körper* must be already here. But, the personal body is *not* generated by the movement of *Körper*, or of a responding organism, itself: the above mentioned (rooting) localization is *not* achieved, exactly due to its necessary “detour through a foreign being,” by the body *alone*, but rather due to, or thanks to, other embodied *subjectivities*.

Body and (Embodied) Soul

I have already mentioned that, even if Patočka takes as his starting point the I as corporeal, or the body as subjective, it is quite possible, and even desirable, to discriminate, *logically*, between what is performed by the body itself and what is performed by the I. After all, it is not matter-of-course to conceive all activities of the human being as being *centred around* and *performed by* the body. And it indeed *is* possible to distinguish, also in Patočka’s texts from the 1960s and 1970s, the part played, so to say, by the body itself and the part irreducible to it.

As a matter of fact, Patočka describes a *personal* body which is not only “subjective” body but, as he meticulously demonstrates, the body localized in personal, namely intersubjective or social relations. Insofar as it is “personalized” primarily due to other *subjects*, one can justifiably say that my personal body, or more precisely my embodied

personal I, is “made” personal not because of the body but due to these *intersubjective* relations. The body is a necessary but not sufficient condition for my becoming a personal embodied being.

Hence, one surely can claim that the above-discussed “magic *fiat* has this magical quality only for one who abstractly separates the I from a subjective body and from movement, whereas the I is only a horizontal implicitness of that subjective energy, of that dynamism, which synthesises on the new level an organic wholeness by turning it to the world and through the world again towards itself” (Patočka 2016j: 208). But, it *also* holds true that the just described dynamism in its “self-conscious, reflected form, personally shaped [*personálně vyhraněné*] against other such centres” (Patočka 2016j: 202), is *irreducible* to mere bodily movement – it cannot be accounted for *merely* by the body.

In accordance with the aforesaid, yet without explicitly taking into account the intersubjective dimension, Patočka states: “Because our body is a situational concept, it has also traits of the human situation as such, that is, we cannot speak of it without noting that it places us in a certain reality which is already present while at the same time lifting us out of it, in a way distancing us from it. Maine de Biran’s hyperorganic power actually means that in certain sense we are entirely body, nothing more, but in a certain sense also that we *elude facticity*” (Patočka 1998: 27). As the “hyperorganic power,” we are *both at once*: the body “places us in a certain reality which is already present,” but we simultaneously elude this facticity, we transcend givenness insofar as through the body “I *can do* something on my own (i.e., move)” (Patočka 1998: 25).

It is *the I* which does something on *its own*, and it *can* do it thanks to the body. Strictly speaking, it is not the body itself which places us into the non-factual: “Humans, by the attitudes they assume, are constantly placing themselves into situations other than the directly present ones, into the past, into the future ... into imaginary worlds, into the world ... of thought sequences ... of duties that place us into a special space which is and yet is not. At the same time we must be always actively localized where we are, integrating ourselves into the now” (Patočka 1998: 33). The body integrates us into the now and into the past, whereas our placing ourselves into situations other than the directly present ones is not, strictly speaking, made by the body but rather by the I.

A similar duality to those indicated above between the dynamics of the body and the dynamics of an embodied personal being, or between integrating into the now and transcending this integration, remains palpable also in Patočka’s concept of the movement of existence. Although Patočka generally conceives *all* the movements of existence as unthinkable without the body, he closely links the body with the first movement¹²⁹ as well as with the second one while it seems to be rather a hindrance to the third one. The body, in its connection to “the earth,” is effective especially in the movements of rooting and of work as correlated by Patočka with the temporalities of the past and of the present. The body turns us, or makes us attentive, to what already is (the past) and urges us to its prolongation (in the present): one can recall here “the attentiveness to life” of the war manuscripts mentioned above and the connection between the body and habitualities described in the second section of this chapter.

As will be shown in the next chapters, Patočka is inclined to draw a line dividing the first two movements from the third: it is only the third one which is to be called “the movement of existence in the true sense” (Patočka 1998: 151). This does not mean, of course, that the third movement is, or even should be, non-bodily; obviously, it cannot.

¹²⁹ Through the first movement “we are individuals, separated out of the whole of nature, but at the same time nature permeates us internally, determines us through internally given needs which rule us” (Patočka 1998: 160). A concise explication of the first movement in the context pursued here is offered by Novotný 2011: 63–67.

Yet, it is fully justifiable to say that its principle cannot be the body but rather existence itself. It is the task of the following chapter to explicate the exact meaning of “existence itself,” or of “the soul,” which is at stake here.

Physis and the Meta-Physical

All the dichotomies identified in the previous section can be connected, but not identified, with the difference between “physical” processes and the reality experienced by, or appearing to, an embodied existent being.

Although I find Barbaras’ thesis according to which, “principally, rooting is not my movement” (Barbaras 2007: 101), too rough, Barbaras has a point in conceiving the body as made *not* by existence. Barbaras has a point insofar as there *is* a fundamental difference between the individualization of the body by *physis* (identifiable with *genesis kai phtora* of the body) and its individualization by, let me say, “its” personalization. Whereas in the first case the individualizing movement of the body is not performed *by* the movement of existence, in the second case it *is* the performance of *my* personal body, of me.

According to Patočka, “our elevation out of the world, our individuation within the world, is an individuation of our subjective corporeity” (Patočka 1998: 178). Reading this sentence, one can understand Barbaras’ attempt to explicate our subjective corporeity as *ontogenetic* movement. But, although Patočka nicely depicts the structure and “genesis” of the *personalized* body, he not only does *not* describe the genesis of *Leib* out of *Körper* but he never elucidates how his descriptions of the “personal body” are to be united with the idea of ontogenetic movement (of *physis*). Yet, obviously, the body is not only my *Leib* but also the *Körper* individualized by the movement of *physis*.¹³⁰

The problem to be solved here, or at least to be articulated more lucidly, can be specified by pointing to Barbaras’ idea that “the world thus conceived,” namely the world as individuating living being, “is called by Patočka the earth” (Barbaras 2007: 107). Obviously, an embodied human being is conditioned, due to its corporeity, by the earth, but can one also claim that it is *individualized* by it? But the problem lies deeper. Barbaras cannot but point to the earth if he is to connect the *physical* individuation with the individuation performed by the movement of existence. However, we can neither dismiss the body as a *physical* entity nor try to explain it away by “incorporating” its individualization into the individualization of an existent human being. The body *does* have its own individualization, irreducible to embodied experiencing. In other words, there remains a duality – a phenomenologically palpable duality – between the physical body and our subjective corporeity.

There is no need to deny that “our individuation within the world is an individuation of our subjective corporeity” (Patočka 1998: 178), or that the I “is nothing else than the term expressing, in an implicative, global way, one’s own functioning and bodily being” (Patočka 2016j: 198), but corporeity in the sense of physicality, and even of earthliness, cannot *sufficiently* account for our individuation.

¹³⁰ In fact, it is Patočka himself who says: “What makes it possible for us to perceive is the transformation of nature into something that is already more than nature – life is the middle term, life is capable of going along with the other” (Patočka 1998: 134). The problem is, however, that he sharply differentiates between the process of *physis* and the movement of existence without explicating how to think *life* as standing “in the middle.” His reflections on the body do *call for* phenomenology of *life* but do *not* offer it.

The I, or the soul, cannot be conceived of as enlivening the body by uniting it. On the contrary, the body bestows the I with its life, makes possible its existence, but this existence *transcends* its “physicality.” Yet, it transcends it neither smoothly nor *fully*. Rather, we are ontologically torn apart since there remain *inside of us*, and in our being *inside the world*, all of these “presuppositions, instinctual matrices, situational moments which are never fully *before* us, finally even a purely objectively material substrate which as a dark, naturally causal bearer of its *own* vitality is also in some sense coextensive with [us]” (Patočka 1996a: 148). In this sense, the body, too, *transcends* existence.

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Performing the Soul through Movement

In the previous chapter, I have paid special attention to Patočka's late studies emphasizing the indispensably bodily nature of human existence. In a certain sense, the present chapter¹³¹ is a counterpoint to the previous one, since it focuses on what was traditionally seen as an adversary of the body, namely the soul. As indicated in the previous chapter, Patočka himself does not reduce human existence to its corporeal dimension and even calls for counteracting the predispositions of the body. Yet, he does not simply adopt the concept of the soul but connects this age-old idea, or more precisely that of the care of the soul, with the contemporary concept of existence. One of the main aims of this chapter is to elucidate this connection.

Obviously, Patočka seems "to contradict his own stated aim to avoid metaphysics by making use of concepts that are clearly metaphysical in content, as ... the notion of the 'soul'" (Findlay 2002: 62). According to Findlay, to eliminate this contradiction, we must read the soul *symbolically* (Findlay 2002: 62), i.e. to interpret it as the ability to act responsibly and to understand freely. Nevertheless, one still can, and even must, ask the question: where from does this ability come? In other words, one must concentrate on the soul as the principle of human *being*.¹³² And, since the concept of taking care of the soul is identical with that of human *freedom* (Patočka 2002a: 13), the question can also be put this way: what does it mean, ontologically, to *be free*?¹³³

Michel Foucault, developing his (late) concept of the care of the self, elaborates on similar topics as Patočka.¹³⁴ Yet, mentioning the famous Delphic maxim "know thyself," which is interpreted by Patočka, following Plato, as an appeal to know the soul in its immortality, Foucault puts emphasis on the care of one's own *life*. This leads to a radically different concept of such care: it is the care of *creating* one's own life as a work of art (see e.g. Foucault 2009: 149–152). To put it as extremely as possible: In Foucault's concept, there is *no* soul to be cared for; the "self" is not a principle of human life to be cared for, but rather its achievement.¹³⁵

Patočka's standpoint might seem the very opposite one. By identifying the soul, Platonically, with self-movement (*autokinesis*), he conceives the soul as the *principle* of movement. But, as I seek to demonstrate in this chapter (partially *against* Patočka though elaborating on his own ideas), the soul cannot be identified with the *cause* of movement: it is just and only *in* movement, without being its origin. Moreover, and accordingly, (active) self-moving is in no sense prior to (passive) responding. The human being is *not* a

¹³¹ This chapter is a reworked version of the paper "Patočka's Care of the Soul Reconsidered: Performing the Soul through Movement," *Human Studies*, 40(2), 2017, 233–247.

¹³² The only exception is Karfik (1993).

¹³³ Of course, Patočka tackles this question in many of his studies, perhaps most famously in "Negative Platonism" from the 1950s (see Chapter 6).

¹³⁴ A comparison of Foucault and Patočka is presented by Szakolczai (1994). Cf. also Forti (2015: 267–305).

¹³⁵ Accordingly, Foucault does *not* "return" to the subject: he is writing "a history of reflexive practices, rather than practices which target a substantial entity called 'the self'" (cf. O'Leary 2002: 120).

souled being by having an “innate” self-moving soul; it rather *performs* the soul in responding to the world.

Firstly, I describe some key aspects of Patočka’s phenomenological reinterpretation of the Platonic concept of the soul and clarify the Aristotelian emphasis on action as the basis of Aristotle’s (and Patočka’s) criticism of Plato. Then I pay attention to Patočka’s privileging the soul transcending life in contrast to the soul(s) as the principle(s) of life. I sketch the concept of the three movements of existence and demonstrate the impossibility of identifying the third movement with true existence, or with the care of the soul, whether exemplified by philosophical theory or political action. I elucidate how, or in what sense, the three movements of existence can be interpreted as three souls. Following Aristotle’s and Hannah Arendt’s emphasis on action, I finally outline the concept of the care of the soul where the soul is inherent in action and is identifiable, paradoxically, with care itself.

Platonic Concentration and Aristotelian Action

I cannot consider here all the contexts in which Patočka speaks about the care of the soul. Especially, I have left aside Patočka’s deliberations on this care as the basis of European tradition.¹³⁶ Rather, I will reflect on the ontological aspects of Plato’s and Aristotle’s concepts of the (care of the) soul in Patočka’s interpretation.

The Platonic soul¹³⁷ is “not a thing, not a *res cogitans*, but movement putting itself into performance” (Patočka 1999b: 375). One can see here the already mentioned identification of the soul with self-movement. This self-movement has two basic ways of performing, and hence the souled human being has two basic possibilities: it can either disperse into the diversity of the sensual world, or it can make its existence like the unity of ideas. This duality can also be described, more phenomenologically, thus: “man can *either capitulate and degenerate into mere existence*, or he can ... realize himself as a *being of truth, a being of phenomenon*” (Patočka 2002a: 36).

Patočka’s interpretation of the soul is based on the phenomenology of human conduct (Patočka 2002b: 747) which seeks to avoid, following also the ideas of both Plato and Aristotle, not only Husserl’s Cartesianism but also Heidegger’s undervaluation of human responsibility: “One can say with a modern thinker [namely Heidegger] that the soul appears to itself ... in accordance with how, and if, Being is disclosed to it, but one also must emphasize the *auto-kinesis* of the soul: Being discloses itself to the soul ... correspondingly to the mode of *being* of the soul, correspondingly to its responsibility or irresponsibility, i.e. according to a non-arbitrary decision” (Patočka 1999c: 79).

The responsibility of the *Platonic* soul consists in its decision *either* to regain its original identity and unity, *or* to remain degenerated after being immersed into the sensual world. Platonic care of the soul, then, consists primarily in the movement through which the soul makes itself united by reason: “Thinking takes place in the soul and binds it, makes it obliged: it is the action of the soul influencing the soul, namely ... a determining, and thus forming action” (Patočka 1988a: 262; my translation).¹³⁸

¹³⁶ See, for example, Cajthaml (2014).

¹³⁷ For a more detailed analysis of Patočka’s approach to Plato, see Karfík (2008: 101–129).

¹³⁸ In this sense, the movement of the soul is the movement of concentration. The concentricity of this movement is also visible in Patočka’s emphasis on Plato’s discovery of the soul’s inwardness: in Plato, “the being of the soul for itself and in itself became explicit for the first time ... The soul has its own real, essential

Are there any problems with this Platonic concept?¹³⁹ According to Patočka, weaknesses appear in Plato when compared with Aristotle who is “the first philosopher in the entire tradition who thematizes *action* ... This ... analysis ... [leads] Aristotle to bend into the *horizontal* that vertical movement that the Platonic philosopher carried out” (Patočka 2002a: 197).¹⁴⁰ What is meant by this metaphor? What does Patočka mean by saying that “Aristotle sees something Plato did not see” (Patočka 2002a: 218), or that it “is an entirely different philosophical terrain before us” (Patočka 2002a: 221)?

In Plato, the movement of the soul is *vertical* insofar as the human being moves upwards, i.e. towards ideas.¹⁴¹ From another perspective, it is a circular movement of the soul which is, non-metaphorically, the movement of thinking. Yet, Patočka critically remarks, this movement of the soul is *not* an action but only the measuring of human action by ideas (Patočka 2002a: 219). And, regarding action, ideas “will not help us at all. For the Platonic idea regards what is always, *what already is*, but we need principles for the realization of something that *is not yet*, that does not exist” (Patočka 2002a: 199–200). According to Patočka, it is impossible to conceive of *acting* as a movement led or measured by a previously given measure: acting can be identified neither with seeing ideas nor with an activity based on such seeing. Fundamentally, eternal entities are unable to determine a non-eternal action.

Following Aristotle, one must fully appreciate that “man is [a] finite being which does that which does not yet exist, and which does this according to principles that are not eternal, which it itself still has to constitute” (Patočka 2002: 209). In Patočka’s reading, Aristotle’s criticism of Platonic ideas results from his different phenomenology of human conduct: “In that man is a substance that creates something that is not here, contingent things, and that it creates them freely and in this forms and comes to know itself – in this is the foundation of that bending into the horizontal” (Patočka 2002a: 212).

Of course, Patočka is aware that Aristotle agrees with Plato regarding the life of a philosopher as the highest form of life, modelled upon the divine life “of constant spiritual discernment” (Patočka 2002a: 212). In this regard, Aristotle is very close to Plato. However, there is also the entirely different philosophical terrain discovered by Aristotle, that “man is something of his own, which in its own way holds itself besides the divine in a kind of amazing autonomy” (Patočka 2002a: 208–209).

Patočka himself declares that this is an unorthodox interpretation of Aristotle. It puts emphasis on the fact that the human soul is distinctive neither by being able to relate to something *other* than this world (i.e. to ideas) nor by being able to become *similar to gods*, but rather by being able to specifically relate to *this world* and to be *dissimilar* to gods.

Gods are eternal and blissful beings because “in their life, there is nothing disturbing, nothing that should indicate some kind of peak and some valley, some possibility to find oneself or miss oneself” (Patočka 2002a: 207). Human freedom certainly seems deficient compared to this divine existence. However, since gods cannot miss themselves, they

life as an inner life. The soul received its inwardness, the human being itself became inward” (Patočka 1988a: 266; my translation).

¹³⁹ Let me emphasize that Patočka usually presents Plato’s ideas as providing *the* concept of the care of the soul.

¹⁴⁰ Recently, Ivan Blecha (2015) emphasized the importance of Aristotle regarding Patočka’s concept of the care of the soul.

¹⁴¹ Of course, Patočka emphasizes, following Plato, that a philosopher must *return* to this world, i.e. perform the vertical movement also the other way round. In Aristotle’s concept, however, there is no place transcending this world the philosopher can return from.

cannot *find* themselves either; and the ability to *creatively* seek oneself is, according to Patočka, valuably exceptional. “Here we have something ... like comprehending, understanding, which at the same time forms what still is not, and which forms – or misses – the human *psyche* (soul) as human, as its own” (Patočka 2002a: 206). What does it mean to “form” the human soul “as its own”? To be able to answer this question, we must take some preparatory steps.

Soul as That Which Transcends Life

For both Plato and Aristotle, there is not only *one* soul “in” the human being but *three*.¹⁴² Patočka, however, denies that there are, from the ontological point of view, three different souls in the human being. Accordingly, he seeks to *reduce* the Platonic trinity,¹⁴³ interpreting the three souls not as three basic principles constituting the human being but rather as three different manifestations of one “entity,” i.e. of *the* soul, which is, as already described, *not* an entity but a self-movement.

This approach is very closely connected to Patočka’s emphasis on the *responsibility* of human being/movement. As indicated above, this being/movement can either lose “immortality” by becoming the principle of mere (sensual) life, or regain it by turning to (the appearing of) truth. Following this basic pattern, Patočka tends to interpret the very existence of three souls as effected, or produced, by a (mis)conduct of *the* soul; accordingly, he speaks, e.g., of the soul which “through the movement of its appetite gives itself another, alien self, namely the bodily self of appetite” (Patočka 1999b: 378).

Crucially, although the two lower souls can remind us that the soul is not only the principle of “living in truth” (i.e. of attaining or realizing truth), but also the principle of *life*, Patočka recognizes as *the* soul, or as the soul in its *true* movement, only the soul *different* from the principle of life. Accordingly, the care of the soul is the care “of that in the being of humans which transcends the sphere of the preservation of life” (Patočka 1988b: 194–195; my translation). To care for the soul is not to care for life, but for that which *transcends* life.

I intend to demonstrate that this idea should be abandoned. Yet, of course, it seems quite justified to emphasize the care of *this* (kind of) soul. After all, both Plato’s idea of the movement in correlation with ideas *and* Aristotle’s concept of action in the world are based upon “something” different from the activities of the lower souls. Even if the human being need not, or even cannot, turn elsewhere (to ideas), it still turns to the world in a manner *different* from that of non-human beings. What is it by which the human being “makes a difference”?

¹⁴² I cannot discuss here the question whether there are three different souls in the human being, or whether these souls are only (inseparable) parts of one soul.

¹⁴³ Of course, there is a long scholarly discussion dealing with the tripartition of the soul. See, for example, Burnyeat (2006), Cooper (1985), Ferrari (2007), Karfik (2005).

Three World- and Self-Disclosures

In the following, I will connect Patočka's interpretation of the care of the soul with his concept of the movement of existence to allow for a better understanding of the human soul. First of all, let me sketch the three movements in their specificities.

The first movement, usually called the movement of anchoring or rooting, is essentially an instinctive-affective movement. It is closely connected with our embodiment, yet it cannot be reduced to particular and purely individual corporeal processes and experiences. It includes also more "developed" emotive constitutions or, rather, "institutions" connected with our being *given* in the world. Like all of the movements, it is socially mediated, primarily by (widely conceived) family.

The second movement does not let the "aesthetic" face of the world appear. It rather discloses the world as the realm of "self-projection into things, of self-objectification, and of the humanization of the world" (Patočka 1998: 157). Patočka identifies this movement with that of work and struggle: in it, we struggle to extend ourselves, while this struggling necessarily involves "guilt, oppression, and suffering" (Patočka 2016b: 185). Again, and perhaps to a larger extent, this movement involves also symbolic institutions (e.g. the social "roles" we "play") and objective powers tied to things.

In Patočka's understanding, the first and second movements are "movements of finite beings which self-realize fully within their finitude, wholly plunging into it, and therein surrendering themselves to the rule of a power – of the Earth" (Patočka 1998: 151). Only the third movement, which is described by Patočka, for example, as opening "a new realm ... whose meaning does not spring from things but nonetheless touches them in their core – the realm of spirit and freedom" (Patočka 2015c: 72), transcends this surrendering. Accordingly, it is only through the third movement that people can "care for the soul, i.e. for that in the human being which transcends the sphere of the preservation of life" (Patočka 1988b: 194–195).

As one can see, in accordance with his reducing the trinity of souls in favour of that soul which transcends life, the soul in the collocation "the care of the soul" does not refer to all the three movements but rather only to the *third* movement which is, as Patočka puts it, "the movement of existence in the true sense" (Patočka 1998: 151). In the following, I will critically examine this idea.

Neither Philosophy...

Patočka identifies the third movement with that of caring for the soul since it is the only movement which is free and, as was indicated at the beginning of this chapter, taking care of the soul is tantamount to human *freedom* (Patočka 2002: 13). In contrast to the third movement, the first two movements are unfree because that which they disclose is "dictated" by the Earth. What makes the third movement different? In what way does this movement disclose "the realm of spirit and freedom"?

Patočka usually exemplifies the third movement by politics and philosophy.¹⁴⁴ This is because to practise philosophy is to think *freely*, to distance oneself not only from given entities and meanings but also from given tasks and aims, whether mythical or pragmatic. Politics, too, is based on freedom and it cares only about freedom: politics is *not* about

¹⁴⁴ And also by history, which is to be addressed in the next chapter.

preserving “the continuum of life,” its “goal [is] a *free* life as such, one’s own or that of others” (Patočka 1996: 39).

However, there are two problems with the just-mentioned beliefs. Firstly, it is questionable that one can realize freedom *only* through philosophy and politics (and history). Secondly, this “exclusivist” idea of freedom presumes too idealized notions of both philosophy and politics. At first, I will pay attention to the (more particular) second problem, then I will come back to the first one.

It would be possible, I think, to identify *philosophy* with *the* care of the soul only if philosophy were to mean *the* relation to truth or, to put it in a more phenomenological way, if it were possible, through philosophy, to relate to how the world *truly* appears: if the activity of the philosopher could connect with the Truth or as if the phenomenologist could disclose appearing of reality *itself*. Yet, Patočka himself admits, in his early thinking, the ineffability of life (cf. Patočka 2016a: 111), and emphasizes, later, that philosophical reflection is always finite and conditioned. Accordingly, his late concept of appearing *as such* cannot be interpreted as pointing to *the* appearing, let alone to appearing of *reality itself*.

As indicated in Chapter 9, Patočka certainly intended to analyse “appearing as such” but he revised this very idea realizing that phenomenology can only proceed hermeneutically, by re-constructing different ways of appearing. There is no appearing *itself*, there are only historically variable ways of appearing necessarily connected with, and conditioned by, that which they let appear. I will say more regarding the inseparability of appearing and appearances in the following chapter. Here, it only must be said that philosophy, when conceived in accord with Aristotle’s bending “into the *horizontal* that vertical movement that the Platonic philosopher carried out” (Patočka 2002a: 197), is a *worldly* philosophy, which is *not* a theory of *the* world. Following Patočka himself, philosophy can be conceived then, for example, as a historically conditioned “inquiring way” (Patočka 1991d: 452) or as the “forming of the openness of spirit to the object, creating frameworks for its comprehensibility” (Patočka 2009a: 112).

... Nor Politics

For both Plato and Aristotle, the life of a philosopher is the highest form of living because to know philosophically is to participate in Truth, and practising philosophy has frequently been identified with taking care of the soul. Yet, of course, philosophy is only one exemplification, or realization, of the third movement, and since Patočka draws inspiration from Aristotle’s emphasis on action, should not we focus rather on *politics*, conceivable as the medium of doing what *truly*, or justly, should be done, as the most proper “place” of the care of the soul?

Patočka’s idea of politics as caring only for “a *free* life as such, one’s own or that of others” (Patočka 1996: 39) is close to that of Hannah Arendt. When Patočka speaks about “life unsheltered, life of outreach and initiative without pause or ease,” (Patočka 1996: 39) he probably has Arendt’s idea of action in mind. For Arendt, any human being can begin something unpredictable, unexpected, and it can do so thanks to its natality. In other words, thanks to natality, a human being can *act*. “Action as beginning corresponds

to the fact of birth”; it is “the actualization of the human condition of natality” (Arendt 1958: 178).¹⁴⁵

One can say that the human being actualizes the “principle of freedom” by performing meaningful action, yet it must also be said that, in Arendt’s concept, there is no *given* bearer of this free movement. Rather, this “bearer” itself, i.e. the “who” of an existing being, is *performed* by the very actions of this being. For the very same reason, however, I *cannot* fully create my identity: the “who” of action is non-transparent to the agent and is deeply conditioned by the intersubjective space of appearances, or by the “web of relationships,” into which it intervenes (cf. esp. Arendt 1958: 175–188).¹⁴⁶

I will pay attention to Patočka’s ideas on politics, as inspired by Arendt, in Chapter 13. What is important here is Arendt’s clear intention to identify *true* action with *political* action and her decisive separation of action from the other two forms of *vita activa*, namely from labour and work. Patočka shares the idea that one must separate true movement, namely the third one, from the first two movements of existence.¹⁴⁷ Now, I fully agree with Arendt’s thesis that “to *be* free and to act are the same” (Arendt 1961: 153). But to develop a persuasive concept of the care of the soul as taking care of freedom, or taking care of action, one must *not* limit action to political action in Arendt’s sense. One acts, or realizes freedom, by *all the three* movements of existence.

Three Movements and Three Souls

Let me emphasize that I do *not* question the plausibility of interpreting Patočka’s care of the soul as identifiable with practicing philosophy or politics. But Patočka’s considerations on the care of the soul allow for, as I want to demonstrate, a different, both more general and more original, concept.

Allow me to recall here, as explicated in Chapter 8, that Aristotle is one of the main sources of the concept of the movement of existence. Yet in Patočka’s approach, as in Arendt’s, and in contrast to that of Aristotle, “the possibilities that ground movement” have “no pre-existent bearer” and even “all synthesis, all inner interconnection of movement takes place within it alone” (Patočka 1998: 146–147). One may say that movement arises here *ex nihilo*, or rather *from itself*, insofar as it has no pre-existent bearer and unites itself by itself. This idea seems to be in accord with Plato: the movement of the soul is self-movement. From the Aristotelian point of view, however, any performed movement presupposes some realizable possibility. Where do these possibilities come from?

As also explicated in Chapter 8, Patočka refines Heidegger’s idea of existence as the being of possibility (Heidegger 1996: 135) by distinguishing three movements of existence as three ways or “modes” of realizing existence in its three most fundamental possibilities. By correlating each of the three movements with one temporal dimension

¹⁴⁵ Arendt’s notion of freedom, presupposed by this concept of action, has theological connotations: “With the creation of man, the principle of beginning came into the world itself, which, of course, is only another way of saying that the principle of freedom was created when man was created but not before” (Arendt 1958: 177).

¹⁴⁶ It is also worth mentioning that, as Dana R. Villa puts it, “[f]rom Arendt’s point of view, the self that *precedes* action, the biological or psychological self, is an essentially dispersed, fragmented, and plural self; it is a self whose lack of appearance deprives it of both unity and reality” (Villa 1995: 90).

¹⁴⁷ This problem will also be examined in more detail in the next chapter.

Patočka points to these three ecstasies as three fundamental *conditions* of the possibility of existence: existence is disclosed to these three temporalities, it even *is* (in) their disclosure.

The three movements, then, have a peculiar ontological status. As movements, they are supposed, *ex definitione*, to *realize* possibilities (as long as they remain possible). But by distinguishing them, Patočka does *not* distinguish three *concrete motions* of an existent being, but rather three *overall movements* enlightening, and in their “generality” even conditioning, the meaning of the real movement of existence. Hence, the three movements are neither identifiable with concrete motion of existence nor do they provide for it by “supplying” its possibilities, but they still make it possible to clarify that which *gives impetus*, or more precisely three different impetuses, to existential moving in the world.

Indeed, by speaking of the three movements, Patočka “ha[s] in mind precisely something like the overall vital lines which to Aristotle appear as the impetus of living from birth to death” (Patočka 1998: 156). In Aristotle, as Patočka densely summarises, movement of a being is made possible by its *physis* which is, in the case of an *animate* being, the same as its *psyche*: “*psyche* is what sustains an animate being in a particular kind of movement – *psyche* is in that movement” (Patočka 1998: 155). By transposing this substantial ontological model to an “entity” with neither *physis* nor *psyche* in the Aristotelian sense and by seeking to identify, through the three movements, the “impetus” of existence, Patočka effectively points to, to use his own peculiar formulation, “precisely something like” the *psyche*, or rather three *psychai*, of existence.

The Soul of/in Action

Existence cannot but realize all of these three general possibilities: it must perform all the three movements of existence. Yet, Patočka identifies *one* of the possibilities, as Heidegger had before, as its most own. In other words, similarly to Plato, Aristotle, and Arendt as well, he identifies *true* existence with one of its “parts,” or with one possibility of its movement. In such an approach, existence “makes a difference” by actualizing its specifically human constituent, and by suppressing its non-human components.

But what is this specifically human part? Answering this question, Patočka makes use of traditional ideas, yet he clearly points to a different direction. Identifying humans with *free* beings, or with beings *of freedom*, he rightly emphasizes, radicalizing Aristotle’s thoughts, that humans can and must not only seek themselves but also, literally, “form” their souls as their “own” (Patočka 2002a: 206). Here, Patočka effectively reads Plato’s definition of the soul as *to autokineton* (the self-moved) in an “existentialist” way: to be self-moved does not mean only to be an (impersonal) *cause* of one’s own movement but, literally, to move by *oneself*. This shift in meaning then allows for conceiving the soul not (only) as a principle but (also) as an achievement, and even as a task; and this task, namely to form one’s own soul exactly as one’s own, can never be finished, insofar as the soul is always (only) in movement.

Now, *pace* Patočka, I do not think that to be *oneself*, or to form one’s *own* soul, one must, or even could, realize its “most own” possibility. Philosophy and politics undoubtedly are noble practises, yet the “task” of existence cannot be reduced to focusing on the third movement. Rather, it consists in “being at one” with oneself, or in unitizing oneself through all the three movements of existence. In fact, of course, it is Patočka himself who emphasizes *the indispensability of all the three movements* and who actually appeals (only) for *the emphasis on the third movement* (as correlated with the future). But this emphasis, I insist, effectively leads him to undervaluing the task of bringing a being performing the

three movements into unity with itself. To put it otherwise, there is no need to question the emphasis on the third movement, yet it is just as important to do justice to the first two movements and, especially, to *the task of forming one's own soul* by performing all the three movements. For the soul as my own is not in the third movement, but is rather enacted by performing all three.

In this approach, the soul is not, *pace* Plato, prior to the body and animating it: the soul rather forms itself through the very movement(s) it performs. From the ontological point of view, Patočka's concept does not allow for saying *when* life (or spirit) begins, or *where from* the movement, or the soul, comes: one can only say that, as soon as there is existence, it is in movement, and cannot but perform it(self). And the theory of the three movements is able to offer a framework for explaining how existence "attains," or *performs*, its soul. With reference to Foucault mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, one can say that Patočka's idea of existence as becoming oneself through the three movements certainly differs from Foucault's concept of subjectification, but both concepts are similar in that they think the soul/the self as *mediated* by certain practices/movements. However, in contrast to Foucault's concept, the soul cannot be ontologically separated from the three movements, it is *in* them. There is no soul/self detachable from the bodily, intersubjective, and whole-related movement of existence.

Regarding the identity of the soul, Arendt's concept of action can beneficially be put into play. For Arendt rightly perceives that the who of action is, as it were, disowned to its performer. Simultaneously, however, by putting emphasis on human initiative, she in a sense revives Plato's idea of self-movement. Of course, Arendt's concept is not, or at least not primarily, *ontological*. Particularly, she describes the "who" of the human being without identifying it with the soul of that being. Yet, Arendt clearly demonstrates, in accord with Patočka's "Aristotelian" criticism of Plato, that the soul of the human being is to be "localized" to its worldly activity. And through this worldly activity, even if being initiative, the soul can have its identity, or rather strive for it, only as *intrinsically* conditioned by that in which it moves.

In short, the soul of existence is just and only *in* movement, and hence intrinsically conditioned by that which is revealed by the concept of the three movements of existence. Let me emphasize here that, whereas my soul, is, or at least appears to be, individual and subjective, the three movements transcend, in a sense, both my individuality and subjectivity, and hence can be called both trans-individual and trans-subjective. To put it more precisely: my movement is, of course, singular, but it proceeds in frameworks, identifiable by the analysis of the three movements, unaccountable for by my subjectivity. Considering *intersubjectivity*, whether in the context of the family or in a more public domain, my singular performance of the movement of existence is conditioned by proceeding in a medium which the I cannot have under control. Also as a whole- or world-related movement, I am conditioned and *transcended* by the world, while this conditioning, of course, points to the body of existence which can never be fully appropriated by myself and as such *transcends* me.

These, and other, trans-subjective moments need further elucidation, and I will return to them in the next chapters. Here, let me conclude by saying that the three movements of existence are invaluable as a *methodological tool* for analysing the conditions of existence.¹⁴⁸ What we reveal by following Patočka's descriptions of them is a multi-layered

¹⁴⁸ Patočka's concept does not pre-empt the incorporation, in analysing each of the movements, of non-phenomenological approaches to the human being. Psychoanalytic and Marxist approaches especially can be inspiring regarding the first and second movements respectively. In the case of the third movement, one might consult, besides others, other interpretations of Patočka's favoured myth of the God-man, *Deus homo*. This would be interesting also regarding Patočka's late emphasis on sacrifice.

“space” through which existence moves, thus attaining/appropriating its self. Indeed, the I, while being conditioned by the three movements and their, so to speak, centres of gravity, appropriates them as its “own.” It is in this space that the I “arises” as, and at, the intersection of activity and passivity, of egoity and anonymity, individuality and sociality.

Caring as the Soul

The “subject” of existence *appears* in this “multiplicity” of the movements of existence taking care of itself through it. To understand this multiplicity and its “dialectics,” thus making possible a conceptualization of the care of the soul, one must abandon the preconception that the first two movements are untrue and only the third one is the movement of existence in the true sense. One must benefit, instead, from Patočka’s idea that *each* of the movements has both its truthfulness and untruthfulness.

In other words, one must disclaim Patočka’s identification of the “care for the soul” with the care “for that in human being which transcends the sphere of the preservation of life” (Patočka 1988b: 194–195). To conceive the care of the soul as forming “the human *psyche* (soul) as human, as its own” (Patočka 2002a: 206), it is unnecessary to devalue the earthliness of the first two movements. Considering its fundamental responsivity, the human being must be considered as a being *of* the world, i.e. as being opened, to oversimplify Patočka’s much more concrete descriptions, by the world for its appearing.¹⁴⁹ Accordingly, true activity, i.e. the *caring* action of the self, consists in overtaking a living, corporeal, and intersubjective movement as *my own* movement, and hence in accepting that although I can never be autonomous, I can be responsible: I can take care of my “own” responsivity and responsibility.¹⁵⁰

Considering Patočka’s “Aristotelian” criticism of Plato and especially its “Arendtian” emphasis on action, one must acknowledge that the soul of the human being is only *in* its activity, *in action*. For this reason, it cannot be substantialized. Neither can it be identified, *pace* Arendt, with only one human activity. The care of the soul does not consist in the care of one “part” of the human being, whether conceived as the immortal soul or as the third movement or as political action. To take care of the soul is *not* to take care of something. *The soul consists rather in the very “taking care.”* It is possible only thanks to one’s responsivity to the world, and is performed when one assumes responsibility for one’s own responsive action, by appropriating it as one’s own.

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¹⁴⁹ As Patočka puts it, “that Being not only is but also appears, that is the soul” (Patočka 1988a: 282).

¹⁵⁰ Recently, Michael Staudigl (2015) offered an inspiring and thoughtful re-reading of Patočka’s concept of the movement of existence seeking to outline a phenomenological anthropology that articulates selfhood in a non-foundational way.

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Thinking (A)subjectivity through Mediality

In Chapter 10, I demonstrated that the body can neither be conceived of as the centre of experience nor can its participation in experiencing/appearing be fully clarified by phenomenology. In Chapter 11, then, I focused on the soul as that which by its appearing in the world performs its (self-)identity. I also indicated that the soul, or the self, cannot but take care of itself, insofar as it “arises” at the intersection of activity and passivity, of egoity and anonymity, individuality and sociality. To put it otherwise, an existent being is *not* freely and self-sufficiently determining its singularity but rather is, even in its being initiative, determined by otherness and by others: in Patočka’s approach especially by corporeity and inter-subjectivity.

The fundamentality of intersubjective relations in Patočka’s concept of existence will be clarified in the final chapter. In this one, I want to indicate that Patočka’s phenomenological approach should be linked up with non-phenomenological ones to do justice to the dimensions that condition existence in its appearing in the world but are unaccountable by phenomenology. More concretely: Patočka’s theory makes it possible for us to see the “space” any human being is going through, or moving through, realizing itself when acting in the world, but his phenomenology is unable to fully articulate this space in its trans-subjective conditions.

Exemplifying the Trans-Subjective

What I mean by the trans-subjective? Negatively, and broadly, the trans-subjective points to all that in the movement of existence, or to all that inseparably connected with this movement, which can be accounted for neither by subjective nor by intersubjective acts. Let me exemplify it a bit in the three movements themselves.

The first movement, as the movement of sinking roots, in its fundamental emotivity, is closely connected to our corporeity or, as Patočka also puts it, to our earthliness. Ye existence, when realizing the Earth in us, never fully *appropriates* it: existence is never, so to say, at one with its “own” earthliness. As stated, it is Patočka himself who points to corporeity as essentially conditioning existence. But he does not do justice to, let me say, phenomenological invisibility of this conditioning. And not only the Earth, in its conditioning of the “subject” in the first movement, remains outside the reach of subjectivity. Through the first movement, an existent being appropriates its own being in the world thanks to being accepted by others. But phenomenology is unable to duly appreciate that the appropriating of oneself, in the first movement, through being accepted by others does *not* proceed as it were *immediately* between *subjects*, i.e. inter-subjectively: it is always mediated by something non-subjective. Even at the level of the family, we should not overlook that it does *not* denote only relations between singular human beings but also “cultural patterns” with no clearly determinable (inter)subjective foundation. These patterns only become more palpable when considering educational institutions, such as (pre)schools,

with their functioning. Also in this, let me say cultural, dimension, one can sense the “operating” of the trans-subjective.

Not only in the first movement can one *not* be oneself by oneself alone. Regarding the very possibility of performing the first movement, it is of utmost importance that, since the first movement depends also on objectivities, the others taking care of the being who sinks roots (performing the first movement) must already participate in the *second* one, namely the movement of work, without which they would not be able to sustain a household as the place, or the centre, which makes possible the very sinking of the roots of that being, of the very *self* of it.

In the second movement, in this much less intimate sphere, the trans-subjective conditioning of a singularly existing being appears more clearly especially, but not only, as the logic, an unfeeling logic indeed, of economic mediation. Patočka does not say much on this topic and would perhaps not accept how this medium has been analysed by such thinkers as Karl Marx, Max Weber, or Theodor Adorno. But there is no reason for not utilizing their ideas to understand the trans-subjective logic of an economic “space.” The second movement can be considered the movement of the naturalization of humans and of the humanization of nature, and as a technically and technologically realized movement it seems to make possible quite radical transformations also of human *selves*.

The third movement is usually associated by Patočka with a breakthrough; accordingly, one might incline to conceive it not as a process, but rather as a rupture. Yet, the third movement also must have the “space” of its performance or, to put it otherwise, its medium. Patočka, in fact, exemplifies the third movement by several “activities,” such as philosophy or politics, or by historical action. But again, he does not take into account the “objectivities” conditioning these undertakings. What I have in mind here is not the impossibility of absolving or separating the third movement from the first two, but rather what is captured, in the case of philosophy, by Nietzsche’s famous remark according to which “our writing equipment takes part in the forming of our thoughts.” We like to imagine philosophy as immaterial activity, but it should be conceived of, just as fundamentally, as cultural technique that presupposes its “tools” and is conditioned by them; which holds true for the third movement as such.

All these phenomena, whether they point to natural, cultural, or economic frameworks of existence, indicate something irreducible to (inter)subjective intentionality. To elucidate these factors in their conditioning existence, one cannot get along with a phenomenological approach only.

Non-Objectifiable Objective Existence

Let me be clear here: I suggest neither naturalizing phenomenology nor merely enriching it by findings from other disciplines. Rather, I suggest deepening phenomenology by “fusing” it with an approach which I find akin to it, namely with that of media philosophy. Media philosophy can be considered as adopting the leading idea of phenomenology, insofar as it takes as its fundamental problem the fact that beings in the world, humans included, do not merely are but appear: that they must appear to be. Seeking to interconnect phenomenology with media philosophy, I propose such an approach, unorthodox not only from phenomenological but also from media philosophical view, according to which media philosophy is able to open for phenomenology such “fields” of appearing unapproachable by traditional phenomenology. Or, to put it otherwise and perhaps more accurately, media

philosophy is able to disclose, and elucidate, some *objective* processes in their, paradoxically, *non-objective* conditioning of appearing. This is my assumption, and hope, which is to be tried out in this chapter.

Now, even if Patočka seeks to make phenomenology asubjective, he still takes the self, or inwardness, as fundamental in human experiencing of the world: “In its chief dimension, human life is a seeking and a discovering of the other in oneself and of oneself in the other. The point of the entire drama of a human life is whether that which implicitly already contains that primordial, purely situational contact will or will not be discovered – the interior [*nitro*] concealed behind all that manifests itself” (Patočka 1989a: 260). I do *not* doubt the importance of inwardness, yet at least two questions must be answered regarding this inward, or subjective, dimension. In what sense is inwardness *fundamental*? And how is it *contained* in the primordial situational contact?

In fact, Patočka tends to conceive inwardness as ontologically *preceding* the situation, and hence, in principle, as unconditioned by objectivity. More concretely, whereas he demonstrates three fundamental ways, in different movements, of the *inter-subjective* conditioning of one’s own identity, he does *not* take sufficiently into account this intersubjective “intermeshing” as proceeding in the *objective* world. He does not analyse how it is conditioned not only by subjects but also by objects in the world and by objective processes irreducible to those of inter-subjectivity. To what degree is the subject conditioned objectively? Does it make sense to claim that this inward existing, as *contained* in the situation, is objectively *produced*? I do not think so. And this chapter shall shed some light on this question by connecting Patočka’s phenomenology with media philosophy.

Three Asubjective Temporalities

In Patočka’s phenomenology, of course, the subject does not constitute the world. It rather appears, and comes to itself, in the world. Yet, Patočka does not conceive the subject as (also) *objectively* conditioned, but exactly as having an *asubjective* ground while this ground is identified as *time* (Patočka 2000: 52). Allow me to take a closer look at the asubjectivity of Patočka’s concept.

In the previous chapters, I delivered a decidedly non-subjectivist reading of Patočka’s concept of the movement of existence emphasizing that, on the one side, we *cannot but accept* a sort of, if you want, egocentricity of phenomenology, namely its being centred around the experience of existence. Yet, on the other side, we must also acknowledge that existence is not an entity: it does not denote any subject, let alone substance, but *movement*. Taking into account this movement as proceeding in the world, to accept the concept of existence as the core of phenomenology implies neither subjectivism nor anthropocentrism but rather an attempt to *overcome* anthropocentric prejudices of an inevitably experience-centred, and hence existence-centred, phenomenology.

Patočka, however, would like to be more radical. He adopts, criticizing *his own* concept of the movement of existence, Heidegger’s late criticism of the early concept of *Dasein* as too anthropocentric. More concretely, he wants to explicate, obviously inspired by Heidegger, the main structures of human experience, such as the I or freedom, “not as a *ground* [*Grund*] but as something *grounded* on the primordial process of temporal disclosure: as something to which this disclosure turns and which it fills [*was auf dem ursprünglichen Geschehen der zeitlichen Offenheit gegründet ist: als das, dem sich diese Offenheit zuwendet und das sie erfüllt*]” (Patočka 2000: 52).

In other words, Patočka would like to have “ontological truth” as the ground [*Grundlage*] of “the movement of the truth of existence” (Patočka 2000: 52), while this ontological truth is, in the last instance, identical to time. But, in fact, Patočka never explicates, let alone phenomenologically describes, how the I or the body are grounded on this just-mentioned “temporal disclosure.” I am convinced that he does not demonstrate it because it is *impossible* to demonstrate: to put it bluntly, the very idea of grounding existence on “the primordial process of temporal disclosure” is *speculative* pure and simple.

Nevertheless, of course, the three movements are shown by Patočka as *related* to, but not grounded on, three basic dimensions of time. Clearly, the tripartition of the movements is based on the tripartition of time, and this idea *has* an experiential basis: it seems determinative for a human being that it, and how it, relates to the past, to the present, and to the future. In my opinion, Patočka justifiably emphasizes that each one of these three relations imply a different kind of opening itself to the world, and that these different openings bring into view or *implicate*, vaguely put, different worlds. In other words, insofar as each one of the three temporalities necessitates a different basic “orientation” of existence, they differently condition how not only others and things, but also my own being, appear to me in the world.

Three Forms of Mediality

The concept of the movement of existence is inspired by Heidegger’s concept of *Dasein*, but Patočka fundamentally changes Heidegger’s idea by conceiving the structure of *Dasein*, i.e. of existence, not only as “a trinity of undifferentiated moments but rather [as] a trinity of *movements*” (Patočka 1998: 143). This radical reinterpretation, challenging as such, becomes even more perplexing insofar as Patočka wants to utilize also Aristotle’s concept of movement as a possibility being realized. Existence must have possibilities so that its movement can take place. One can even say that the “subject” is made possible by the possibilities it can realize. The question then is: due to what are the possibilities given in the world? What grounds or conditions them?

At this juncture, to answer not only these questions, I suggest accepting the tripartition of the movements as the point of departure and rethinking it by linking it to certain ideas of media philosophy. I suggest connecting these two fundamentally different concepts because I *accept* the basic idea of distinguishing the three movements of existence, but I find it necessary to desubjectify Patočka’s concept *otherwise* than he himself did. Instead of speculating on how time grounds the three movements, one can focus on these movements not as *caused by* the subject but rather as processes through which the “subject” arises in the decentred, and from the subjective perspective disowned, field of appearing. I suggest taking the three movements, heuristically, not so much as the movements *of existence* but rather exactly as *movements*, namely as processes conditioned by that through which, or in which, they proceed. The distinguishing of the three movements allows for identifying three different “in which” of existence, and their “logics” can be elucidated by drawing inspiration from media philosophy.

I must specify, of course, what I mean by media philosophy, or rather what kind of media philosophy I intend to “fuse” with Patočka’s concept. I have in mind current German media philosophy as a quite broad “movement” including, in fact, very different, sometimes incompatible or competing, ideas on media and mediality. All these approaches,

however, have in common that they do not take for granted, or decide in advance, what is the purpose of media or even what is and what is not medium.¹⁵¹

This kind of media philosophy focuses on mediality in its different forms. And, insofar as it acknowledges that everything in the world is mediated, this way of thinking might be interpreted as developing phenomenology because it takes as its fundamental problem the fact that things in the world, humans included, are not merely and immediately given but are given medially. Insofar as things must appear to be, they cannot be but mediated.

Taking this assumption as my point of departure, I suggest thinking the three movements as three forms of mediality through which a singularly existing human being realizes its being. As one can see, Patočka's phenomenology needs to be, in my opinion, neither naturalized nor socialized, yet it can be medialized.

Media Feeling

To think the three movements as three forms of mediality is to think them as different yet inseparable from the being, or the I, existing through them. Indeed, the human and the medial must not be thought of separately from each other. In this regard, I agree with Tim Othold and Christiane Voss that we should not "conceive of media as an external factor, but as one of many interdependent basic aspects of being in general, [and should] not look for the *causal* effects of certain forms of media, but examine how they enable different and new modes of existence" (Othold – Voss 2015: 79).¹⁵²

I take inspiration from this approach, yet I make the term medium even more broad and indeterminate than Othold and Voss by attempting to conceive as media the three movements of existence. Interestingly, Othold and Voss speak of the media as enabling different "modes of existence," yet they do not explicate what *exactly* is meant by these modes. Elsewhere, Voss offers this definition: "The forms of existence arising from the anthropo-media relations are neither things nor living beings, but moving modifications [*bewegliche Veränderungen*] of situationally-constellative, psychical, physical and/or practical points of departure [*Ausgangszuständen*]" (Voss 2010: 177). Patočka, who has a different ontology to that implied in the just-cited description, would certainly find it rather misleading to speak of psychic or physical entities, yet his idea is analogical to that of Voss: it is through the "media" of our existence that it gains its concrete character.

Although Othold and Voss deny any essence of "the human," they still have their ideas regarding what human "interaction" with media is based on: they want to analyse, giving the example of a diorama, its "potential to affect the visitors' imagination of and epistemic approaches to the world, causing them to frame their 'being-in-the-world' differently than before" (Othold – Voss 2015: 80). Generally, Voss claims, arguing against an instrumental concept of the relation between a human being and medium, that all media, or all forms of mediality, have in common their *affective* potential. All media affect or, to

¹⁵¹ Cf. Engell – Vogl 1999: 10: "The first axiom of the media theory perhaps might be ... that there are no media, or in any case no media in a substantial and historically stable sense."

¹⁵² Although I do not intend to reduce Patočka's phenomenology of existence to a merely anthropological concept, I agree with Othold and Voss' idea formulated in the context of media anthropology that we should not, in contrast to most theories of media anthropology, "employ a hierarchical and often dichotomic pre-conception of the two poles of media-human relations, by analysing the operationalities and ontologies of *the human* and *the media* independently from one another" (Othold – Voss 2015: 75).

express the same idea otherwise, they put in motion (Voss 2010: 175): “Media *affect* [*sind affizierend*]. Media put something and/or someone to motion” (Voss 2010: 175–176). For this reason, in my opinion, we can as it were *feel* a medium; and it is also why, according to Voss, we should focus, regarding anthro-media relations, on their phenomenal and qualitative dimensions (Voss 2010: 177).

I find this emphasis on phenomenal qualities *crucial*. For the very same reason, however, I would be more cautious in assimilating this concept with that which conceives the medium as self-sufficient. Although I do agree with Voss that the broadly conceived “affections” cannot be reduced to psychological or material entities or events (cf. Voss 2010: 179), they still need their *experiencing* bearer or sufferer. In other words, I have no problem admitting, in accord with Voss, that affectivity is more basic than reflexivity, yet this affectivity cannot *fully* produce itself medially or, to put it from the other side, a medium cannot affect itself by itself. To put it simply, medial processes are not self-experiencing (even if they can be, in their technicity, self-transforming). It is *us* who live through them (in) the mediated world. Yet, we need to think this “us” otherwise than by traditional models.¹⁵³

In the following, I focus on two concepts of media philosophy seeking to connect them with Patočka’s phenomenology (without suggesting that these are the only suitable ones), namely on the concept of cultural techniques, insofar as each of the three movements can be considered as involving such techniques,¹⁵⁴ and on the concept of tacit knowledge.

Who is Afraid of Technique?

Media philosophy allows for drawing the very concept of technique, rather excluded from phenomenology or at least unappreciated by it, back into discussion in its originally very broad sense. Of course, I do not propose focusing on the *technological* mediation of humans in an instrumental sense.¹⁵⁵ Rather, I understand the concept of cultural techniques as an appeal to focus on the inseparability of culture and technique and on the founding function of technical practices in structuring our being in the world.

Let me begin an explication of how, in my opinion, the concept of cultural techniques might be useful in thinking Patočka’s concept through, by approvingly quoting Le-

¹⁵³ In the context of media anthropology, Lorenz Engell and Voss point to the far-reaching relationality of human existing and draw attention to the dynamic between tendencies to centralize and decentralize (the concept of) existence (Engell – Voss 2015: 8–9). They connect these two tendencies also with different philosophical approaches opting for such an approach which analyses the (decentralized) human being in the mirror of that by which it is surrounded or to which it is linked. The question I ask here in relation to Patočka’s concept is: what kinds of “links” of the I to its “surroundings” are implied in the three movements?

¹⁵⁴ Regarding the concept of cultural technique, cf. e.g. Schüttpelz 2006 and Maye 2010. An invigorating interpretation of the place of this concept in the development of German philosophy is offered by Siegert 2013: esp. 48–54. One can also quote Geoffrey Winthrop-Young’s summation according to which, “originally related to the agricultural domain, the notion of cultural techniques was later employed to describe the interactions between humans and media, and, most recently, to account for basic operations and differentiations that give rise to an array of conceptual and ontological entities which are said to constitute culture” (Winthrop-Young 2013: 3).

¹⁵⁵ I do not suggest putting transhumanism on the agenda. The very idea of transforming the human condition by developing sophisticated technologies and technical tools to enhance human intellect and physiology *misses*, in my opinion, more fundamental layers of our being mediated.

ander Scholz's statement according to which "it is one of the central achievements of media philosophy that it formed a self-understanding corresponding to the technical era for which the antithesis between nature and technique is no more determinative" (Scholz 2015: 127). Scholz analyses this very antithesis, and more concretely the duality between the supposedly natural body and supposedly unnatural technique, demonstrating that, whereas one might think the human body as a necessary point of departure for developing any technique, "the sense of technique seems to consist, to the contrary, in making possible the comprehension of the human body" (Scholz 2015: 134). According to Scholz, then, one can clarify the essence of the human being only "by recurring to its technical works that function as a medial anthropology insofar as they allow for conclusions [*Rückschlüsse*] on the essence of this being" (Scholz 2015: 134).

I certainly would not reduce the technicity of existence to using technical instruments, and its analysis cannot consist in inferring from their instrumentality to the essence of the human being. Patočka's concept of the three movements clearly demonstrates that one cannot reduce human relating to the world to instrumental or, more broadly, pragmatic relations. Importantly, Scholz points also to Jacques Lacan's famous analysis of the "mirror stage" which demonstrates the very identity of the I, or of the body, as conditioned by its medially given image. For Scholz, insofar as the body is originally *not* an integral unity, it cannot function as the natural framework of technical praxis (Scholz 2015: 136). Obviously, the mirror is *not*, strictly speaking, a technical instrument, and hence the Lacanian mirror stage does not refer to technique in the sense of using technical instruments. Yet, I opt for using the term cultural technique exactly in this *broader* meaning. As already stated, what I find important in this concept is that it accentuates both the dependence of humans on, to put it simply and vaguely, objectivities *and* the acculturational function of these objectively and trans-subjectively bound techniques.¹⁵⁶

Ontic Techniques First?

In my approach, the concept of cultural technique is necessarily connected to the notion of tacit knowledge insofar as the latter concept (partially) answers the question of how cultural techniques are practiced, or realized, by a human being. They are not realized, if one may generalize here, on the basis of explicit knowledge but rather habitually.¹⁵⁷ The notion of tacit knowledge, which does *not* denote, strictly speaking, knowledge but rather the ability to do something¹⁵⁸ and hence to move (oneself and/or things in the world) in a certain way, allows for connecting the reflection on cultural techniques with that of our affective relation to mediality: the I which tacitly knows how (to move), i.e. the I habitually

¹⁵⁶ By speaking of "the impossibility of the medial outside" (Scholz 2015: 137), Scholz denies not only any primordial, non-mediated naturalness but also assimilates technicity with mediality. So far as I know, the most elaborated reflections on the technical *as* medial, and in its mediality, are offered by Christoph Hubig, esp. in Hubig 2006: 143–171. Hubig also develops valuable reflections on various ways of possible differentiating between nature and culture (see e.g. Hubig 2011), and addresses the relation between technique and (Husserl's idea of) the lifeworld (Hubig 2013).

¹⁵⁷ In their acquiring, *mimesis* perhaps plays a crucial role. Allow me to mention here the famous dictum of Walter Benjamin according to which "there may be no single one of their [i.e. of humans] higher functions that is not codetermined by the mimetic faculty" (Benjamin 1999: 694).

¹⁵⁸ Sybille Krämer and Horst Bredekamp seem to be of the same opinion. According to them, cultural technique refers to "implicit know-how" or to "bodily habitualized and routine ability [*Können*], which is at work in everyday, fluid practices" (Krämer – Bredekamp 2003: 18).

performing cultural techniques literally *is* in these technics, and is in them rather *affectively* than reflectively.

This approach, which will be described in more detail below, can so to speak *counterweight* the radically post-humanist and anti-hermeneutic standpoint of cultural technique theory as advanced prominently by Bernhard Siegert. It is desired to focus on Siegert's approach because his radicality allows for indicating some tendencies of the cultural technique theory which impede its being connected with Patočka's phenomenological approach.¹⁵⁹

According to Siegert, “[a]s a historically given micro-network of technologies and techniques, cultural techniques are the exteriority and/or materiality of the signifier” (Siegert 2013: 58),¹⁶⁰ and hence they should be analysed by “reconstructing the discourse networks in which the real, the imaginary and the symbolic are stored, transmitted and processed” (Siegert 2013: 52). “From the point of view of the cultural techniques approach,” as Siegert expressively formulates it, “anthropological differences are less the effect of a stubborn anthropo-phallo-carno-centric metaphysics than the result of culture-technical and media-technological practices” (Siegert 2013: 55).

What elements of this (particular) culture technique theory do I find questionable? Firstly, I suspect the distinction between the signifier and the signified as being too rough and oversimplified in implying that there is a non-sensical materiality on the one side and a sense-full immateriality, i.e. meaning, on the other (the task, then, would be to explicate how meaning is produced by the non-sensical material). Although Siegert describes “German media theory” as “an attempt to overcome French theory's fixation on discourse by turning it from its philosophical or archaeological head onto its historical and technological feet” (Siegert 2013: 50), the very distinction of the signified and the signifier does not overcome, it seems to me, French theory's approach.

Although Siegert wants to base his theory empirically and rather dismiss philosophy as overly abstract, his own idea of “the production of ontological distinctions by means of ontic cultural techniques” (Siegert 2013: 57) can hardly be read otherwise, I think, than as philosophical. When inverting, to put it in a simplified manner, the logic of ontic-ontological dichotomy, Siegert identifies the ground of our existing precisely with (ontic) cultural techniques: he analyses concrete objects and operations to find that which establishes the meanings of culture in the empirical. According to Sybille Krämer, cultural techniques gain in this approach a *transcendental* status and function (cf. Krämer 2017: 133).¹⁶¹ This is also because they are conceived of as *grounding* the culture of existence. Hence, cultural techniques are, paradoxically, in the (cultural) world but simultaneously ground the very meaning of this world.

In contrast to Siegert's idea of ontically produced ontology,¹⁶² I would stress that, respecting Heidegger's usage of the ontic-ontological dichotomy, ontological distinctions *cannot* be ontically produced insofar as (1) the relation between the ontic and the ontological cannot be meaningfully thought of as that of causality and (2) ontological determinations are not produced *significations* but rather *identifications* of a way of being. These

¹⁵⁹ Other forms of culture technique theory, especially those programmatically outlined by Bredekamp – Krämer 2003, seem to be more easily compatible with phenomenology.

¹⁶⁰ Importantly, due to this “post-hermeneutic turn towards the exteriority/materiality of the signifier there is no subject area, no ontologically identifiable domain that could be called ‘media’” (Siegert 2013: 51).

¹⁶¹ Analogically to Krämer, Petra Gehring also criticizes this idea; see Gehring 2017: esp. 148.

¹⁶² Regarding Siegert's (and Engell's) reasons for retaining this terminology, see esp. Engell – Siegert 2017: 7–8. Criticisms of Siegert's concept, and of the idea of “operative ontology,” are offered e.g. by Krämer 2017 or Gehring 2017.

identifications, of course, use distinctions available in or extractable from language,¹⁶³ but they are supposed to point, or turn one's attention, to the intrinsic structure of *Dasein* in the case of Heidegger's *Being and Time*, or of existence in Patočka's approach.

Of course, ontic practices *in a sense* determine our way of being. Yet, from the perspective of Heidegger and Patočka, the world, and our being in the world, is not *produced*: it is neither the product nor the effect of our cultural practices. Acknowledging that cultural "meanings" are not outside the materialities of cultural techniques but *within* them, we should also admit that they not so much *ground* meanings but rather *perform* them. But, most importantly, they do *not* perform these meanings solely *by themselves*; they do this rather as connected with their performer. And this *performer* is neither the effect nor result of cultural techniques interpreted as fundamental (albeit empirical) processes. Yet, I do *not* suggest conceiving a singular being performing cultural techniques as grounding them either. What I do suggest instead is abandoning, or overcoming, such an either-or perspective.

The More of/in Existence: Freedom

Heidegger and Patočka, to put it in a very simplified manner, *reconstruct* the structure of existence pointing to a general, invariant "framework" that cannot be *produced* by ontic practices. Identifying the "structure" of *Dasein* with care, or the meaning of being with time, Heidegger identifies the un-produced structure of incessantly variable existence. Similarly, by identifying the three movements, Patočka points to the invariant structure of existence. I do not keep secret my agreement with both Heidegger and Patočka's conviction that, ontologically, existence is *care* – this care is *not* produced by any techniques. Simultaneously, however, I acknowledge the necessity to concretize what this caring includes by pointing to cultural techniques through which we ontically realize our existence.

Hence, although I find it possible to claim that culture is a "human-technical hybrid," I would not reduce culture, let alone existence, to the "world of the symbolic, which is the world of machine" (Siegert 2010: 152). In my re-interpretation, the very *cultural* character of cultural techniques is not grounded only in their being recursive or involving symbolic work,¹⁶⁴ but rather in their being cultures of *existence*. This proclamation, of course, amounts to nothing without specifying what existence is. Negatively, this claim means that there is *more* in existence, despite its being objectively decentred, than the symbol-constituting performance of technique. This "more," however, is not outside our mediality but within it. What is this more?

Patočka himself answers this question by pointing to human freedom, which he associates especially, if not exclusively, with the third movement of existence (as realizing the relation to the non-given).¹⁶⁵ In my reading, existence *is* free, yet I do not conceive its freedom as *absolute*. Freedom is rather, as indicated in the previous chapter, the ability *to*

¹⁶³ I cannot address here the undoubtedly crucial problem of language.

¹⁶⁴ The question of why cultural techniques can be called cultural and how to distinguish them from non-cultural techniques is repeatedly discussed by the thinkers developing this concept. Cf. e.g. Macho 2008, Siegert 2013: esp. 59–61, Krämer 2017: esp. 126–133.

¹⁶⁵ Cf. above, esp. Chapter 11 and also Chapter 6.

move oneself by oneself,¹⁶⁶ but this ability is *inherent* to all the three movements and, as such, is both enabled and limited by the possibilities *they* offer.

Freedom as *the more* of existence is inexplicable by anything.¹⁶⁷ Yet, this freedom is always conditioned, and mediated. As already mentioned, in Patočka's own concept, both human corporeity and intersubjectivity prove the "soul" as not freely determining itself, but rather as being determined by otherness and by others. Just how I point *beyond* Patočka, is by suggesting that we should take the self also as conditioned by, besides others, cultural *techniques* mediating and concretizing the movement by which we *accept* our place in the world in the first movement, the movement of *work* in the second movement, and the movement relating to, simply put, transcendence. It is necessary to acknowledge all the techniques at work here, yet they should not be separated from their, for lack of a better word, "subject," but the contrary: they must be articulated in their providing for different responsivenesses and responsibilities, or simply different "senses" for the world.¹⁶⁸

Temporalities, Techniques, and Medialities

One substantial problem regarding the possible connection between the cultural technique theory and Patočka's phenomenology consists in their very different concepts of time. From the perspective of cultural technique theory, the very tripartition of the movements, insofar as it is based on three temporalities, can be criticized as culturally relative and arbitrary: different cultures have different temporalities.¹⁶⁹

In my re-reading of Patočka's concept, it is not necessary to take this tripartition as ontological truth, but it is also unnecessary to simply dismiss it. Rather, I perceive it as a tool pointing to three, if not fundamental then at least irreducible, ways of existing (roughly analogical to Arendt's distinguishing of three forms of *vita activa*). Patočka's tripartition is not based on the idea that time was, is, and will be, but rather that our existence, i.e. our movement (or simply our life) is always related to its "already," its "now," and its "will be," while these three relations imply different ways, and different techniques, of existing.

As a matter of fact, Patočka's description of the three movements of existence remains rather *vague*. Although what Patočka has in mind when describing the three movements is *roughly* understandable, it is difficult, and might even seem nonsensical, to identify each of them with one concrete activity or with a certain set of activities. This general, or abstract, character of Patočka's concept is both its strength and weakness. One can see it as its strength insofar as it captures *general*, "ontological," ways of existence. Yet, this generality is also its flaw when it comes to the question of how the three movements are *concretely realized*. Obviously, however, they must be concretely, or "ontically," realized: they have no reality outside this realization. Therefore, I take the liberty of reinterpreting

¹⁶⁶ Or to move "on one's own" as stated here: "A biological organism becomes a real person in the moment when I *can do* something on my own (i.e., move)" (Patočka 1998: 25).

¹⁶⁷ Patočka might perhaps say: explicable by Nothing.

¹⁶⁸ Whereas the first movement allows for arising of a world-accepting being, through the second one a spirited I is "constituted," and the third one presupposes the I not only as accepting but also as believing (in the future as different to, and non-predetermined, by the present). An analogy to Plato's tripartition of the soul is not incidental. Cf. Ritter 2015.

¹⁶⁹ According to Siegert, "time *as such* does not exist independently of cultural techniques of time measurement" (Siegert 2013: 57).

both Patočka's and cultural technique theories not only to lessen the vagueness (or generality) of Patočka's concept but also to indicate that as soon as we try to think the three movements in their concrete realizations, we come upon their being not only embodied and intersubjective but also materially-technical.

Insofar as cultural technique theory accentuates the dependence of humans on objectivities *and* the acculturational function of objectively bound techniques, it makes graspable the impossibility of correlating existence only with embodied intersubjective experience. When analysing existence, we must understand our embodied intersubjective life as always already technically mediated. This mediation, however, cannot be reduced to instrumental relation: we *are* in the media of existence *neither* as their self-assured "users" *nor* as their mere effects.

Another problem in connecting media philosophy with Patočka's concept, however, consists in the fact that, whereas e.g. Voss' media anthropology describes (one) *concrete* medial relation, in the case of Patočka's concept each one of the movements includes *varied* processes "encapsulated" by those three general notions of "anchoring," "self-sustenance," and "self-achievement" (see, e.g., Patočka 1998: 148). Is it possible to connect the three movements as three forms of mediality with three empirically identifiable cultural techniques?

The answer, of course, seems to be *negative* even if it might be possible to connect each one of the movements, its "material" variety notwithstanding, with one specific form of mediality. But the aim of the "fusion" of Patočka's concept with media philosophy is not, let me emphasize, to *convert* the three movements into three cultural techniques. The idea is rather to use the possibilities of both of these concepts to think existence in a both less subjectivist and less anti-humanist manner, and to acknowledge existence as both objective and free.

Postscript (and Prospect): The Cultural and the Social

According to Siegert, Theodor Adorno may seem to be practicing cultural technique analysis, but this appearance is deceptive insofar as Adorno does not overcome the traditional idea of culture as high culture (cf. Siegert 2010: 151). In my opinion, although it is (too) easy to identify in Adorno quite a few, if you will, bourgeois prejudices, I would not underrate his reflections on the mediality of thought and, more concretely, on the (im)possibility of critically reflecting on one's own culture.

In *Minima Moralia*, Adorno writes: "An uncompromising mind [*Unversöhnliche Gesinnung*] ... presupposes experience, a historical memory, the nervousness of thought and above all an ample measure of satiety" (Adorno 2005: 52; translation modified). Adorno describes here what he understands as an appropriate relation to one's own culture: such a relation requires both an intimate, as it were immediate acquaintance with it, but also a distance from it, while this distance is impossible without having close relation.

I mention this idea since I see an analogical structure also in the case of our being conditioned by cultural techniques: to be able to reflect on them, we need to *participate* in them. More generally: we are not outside mediality, we rather *are* our mediality, but it is thanks to being mediated that we can *reflect* on this conditioning. This does *not* mean, of course, that there is, after all, an independent subject opposing its conditions (external to it); rather, one must seek to elucidate this conditioning/mediating of the "subject" as *positively* contributing to its ability to turn against what it *feels* as *negative* in this conditioning.

I have sought here to reinterpret the concept of the movement of existence so that it can serve as a tool for a more comprehensive¹⁷⁰ not only cultural but also social analysis acknowledging our technically cultural mediality. I suggest focusing on the very *present* by tracing what is felt as unbearable in our mediated being in the world. However, Patočka's own interpretation of our current situation is based rather on historical reflections on the essence of Europe in its decline. These reflections are to be inspected in the following two chapters.

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¹⁷⁰ For the very same reason, I do not accept what I see as a reductionist tendency of (Siegert's) culture technique theory. Existence is not simply produced by cultural techniques; these techniques rather shape the media in which our singular plural (to speak with Jean Luc-Nancy) movement proceeds its sensitive life.

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Passing Through the World (as) Crisis

According to Patočka, the concept of the movement of existence allows for understanding not only of an individual human being but of history as well: “Only by starting out from these three fundamental lines ... can we ... achieve a certain insight into the way in which these three strands ... make up the overarching human movement we call history” (Patočka 1998: 161). This chapter¹⁷¹ pays attention to this possibility by identifying the fundamentals of Patočka’s philosophy of history and his political philosophy, which must be based, in the last instance, on his ontological ideas.

First of all, I summarize Patočka’s reflections on the current situation of the world, which is that of crisis, and connect them with his idea of the origin, and the essence, of history. I probe both these closely connected conceptions and identify their shortcomings. After delineating the idea of politics as the “building of the world that is based in an invisible area” (Patočka 1988b: 186), I problematize one essential feature of Patočka’s approach, namely his drawing a firm line between a free, truly historical way of life, and unfree, earthbound living. This separation is also illuminated by pointing out similarities between Patočka and Arendt’s concepts of political action. To think the ontological foundations of Patočka’s concept through, I discuss the concept of *polemos* as the principle, or, rather, as the groundless ground, of the world. But, I accept neither an onto-polemical nor a moral interpretation of Patočka’s political philosophy. In other words, I suggest declining the possibility of *grounding* politics, whether morally or ontologically. Subsequently, I explain how the idea of freedom should be de-absolutized: Patočka’s harsh dichotomy between earthliness and freedom, corresponding to the contrast between the first two movements and the third, is to be refuted by emphasizing not only the inseparability of all of the movements of existence but also the historicity of each of them. On such grounds, it is possible to fully appreciate the positive meaning of all the three movements, their meaning-bestowing disclosure that contributes to the meaning of individual human existence and of history.

The History of the World

Patočka’s reflections on the current situation, and the history, of the world are most tangibly presented in his book-length studies *The Super-civilisation and Its Inner Conflict* from the 1950s, *Europe and Post-Europe* from the early 1970s and, most notably, *Heretical Essays in the Philosophy of History*. Naturally, it would be misleading and unproductive to interpret all of these texts as developing one and the same concept. In the following, I do not intend to offer a detailed analysis of the aforementioned studies. Instead, I seek to

¹⁷¹ This chapter is a revised version of an article “Towards a Non-Eurocentric Analysis of the World Crisis: Reconsidering Patočka’s Approach,” *Research in Phenomenology*, 47(3), 2017, 388–405.

identify *the philosophical grounding* of Patočka's approach to his contemporary situation and to the history of the world.

Since both the notions of *world* and *history* are equivocal, let me narrow down their polysemy. The world is here to be identified neither with the totality of beings nor with any objective principles determining this totality. Patočka is interested in the world of appearing, or the world *as* appearing. If the world appears, there must be someone to whom it appears. Who is this? Is the world identical with the process of God's (or a Notion's) self-appearing?

To put it preliminarily and in a simplified manner, the world appears, according to Patočka, to human beings, but not all people relate their lives to the appearing of the world. Such a relation is conditioned by the shaking of life as simply accepted. And, it is in the West where this shaking took place. "The *Western spirit and world history* are bound together in their origins: it is the spirit of free meaning bestowal, it is the shaking of life as simply accepted with all its certainties" (Patočka 1996: 41). One can claim, though this claim undoubtedly needs further clarification, that the appearing of the world is fundamentally historical. World history, then, is primarily (in) the process of the free bestowal of meaning, and its origins are in the West.

As one can see, Patočka's concept of appearing of the world is not only anthropocentric but also Western- or Eurocentric.¹⁷² However, Patočka's Eurocentrism is philosophically grounded. It is based on the idea that *truly human* existence consists in the life of the free bestowal of meaning, in the overcoming of the bonding of life to itself, and that this free and historical way of living is the essence of European life. In the second part of this chapter, I shall critically examine the dichotomy between a free, truly historical way of life and unfree, earthbound living on the basis of Patočka's concept of the three movements of existence.

The Essence of Europe and the Crisis of the World

Without scrutinizing Patočka's idea of the "quasi-simultaneous origin in western Europe of *politics, philosophy, and history*" (Ricouer 1996: viii), the common ground of all these "activities" must be explicitly identified as *freedom*.

Importantly, when speaking about philosophy and politics, Patočka has in mind *western* philosophy and politics. He explicitly asserts that "philosophy ... as the radical question of meaning based on the shaking of the naïve, directly accepted meaning of life ... developed *only* along western lines" (Patočka 1996: 143). Speaking of politics, as will be explicated in the second part of this chapter, he means the western "life dedicated to the *polis*" (Patočka 1996: 63). It is only in the milieu of western philosophy and politics where, according to Patočka, *history* could emerge. "We can speak of history where life becomes free and whole, where it consciously builds room for an equally free life ... where ... humans dare to undertake new attempts at bestowing meaning on themselves in the light of the way the being of the world into which they have been set manifests itself to them" (Patočka 1996: 40–41). The light of the being of the world refers to what is disclosed and articulated by philosophy, while building the room for an equally free life denotes politics in its Greek origins.

Accepting the possibility of the free bestowal of meaning, human beings accept their historicity as the basis of history. Socrates, as "the discoverer of human historicity"

¹⁷² The problem of Patočka's Eurocentrism has been addressed, e.g., by Novotný (2007).

(Patočka 2011a: 32), is an incarnation of this moment. It is he who discovers the human being as an entity that is yet to be completed but able to form itself, to care for itself. By discovering the possibility of care, Socrates discovers, to put it simply, the *soul* of the human being as that which is cared for. Hereafter, Europe is associated with care for the soul. To put it more precisely: “The West and history have ultimately arisen from the care of the soul, i.e. of that in the being of humans which transcends the sphere of the preservation of life” (Patočka 1988b: 194–195).

After this very brief and schematic sketch of the origins of Europe, allow me to turn directly to the present day.¹⁷³ Patočka creatively adopts Heidegger’s interpretation of the contemporary crisis:¹⁷⁴ “technology, organization, and the accumulation of power into a concentrated force is in accordance with the intentions of the present world conception” (Patočka 1988b: 200). More specifically, Patočka perceives the present world as the place where “power and ... the force of life” reign, the key point being that this is tantamount to the fact that “the history-making element in the history-making continent declares the negation of historicity” (Patočka 1988b: 201–202). The present “history” of Europe, then, is *not a history at all*: the process taking place in Europe is not based on freedom because the people of Europe no longer care for their soul(s), i.e. of that which *transcends* the sphere of *life*.

Patočka perceives the “reign of Force” (Patočka 1996: 116–117) as a manifestation of the original conflict in Being, or in appearing as such: to put it quite generally, “the disclosing must increasingly close itself as it discloses more and more universally” (Patočka 1990a: 297).¹⁷⁵ Although this conflict is fundamental and ineliminable, there is a chance of its solution, of the “solution of conflict by conflict” (Patočka 1990a: 284). Characteristically, this solution is based on freedom: it consists in *free* sacrifice. Patočka describes this sacrifice, more specifically, thus: “to go through the emptying of life till the end ... to the utter limit where the human being overcomes this binding [to life]” (Patočka 1990a: 284). The sacrifice of one’s own life is the overcoming of the bonding of life to itself and, as such, it enables one to “show that what does not exist reigns over all which is” (Patočka 1990a: 298). In this sense, it is conceived by Patočka as a “sacrifice for nothing.”

This sacrifice¹⁷⁶ is not a victimization of (a part of) humankind,¹⁷⁷ but the free self-sacrifice of concrete individuals (Patočka mentions Solzhenitsyn and Sakharov; Patočka

¹⁷³ A concise but fitting summary of the “principles” conditioning the history of Europe is offered by Dodd (2016: 89–90).

¹⁷⁴ I cannot discuss this topic in detail. See, at the very least, Patočka (1989b) and Heidegger (1977). I will come back to this problem in the next chapter.

¹⁷⁵ Speaking of conflict, Patočka evokes several meanings and contexts. Apart from the, if you will, sociological meaning of conflict (conflict in the sense of “the Twentieth Century as War” indicated by the title of the sixth *Heretical Essay* or by the title of *The Super-civilisation and its Inner Conflict*), there is also an existential meaning: each human being is in a conflict between authentic and declining life. However, at the deepest level, there is an ontological or *phenomenological* meaning of conflict – the conflict in Being.

¹⁷⁶ For a more detailed and contextualized articulation of Patočka’s idea of sacrifice see esp. Schuback 2011.

¹⁷⁷ Cf. Heidegger’s vision (Heidegger 2014: 238) of “the ultimate fulfilment of enframing,” i.e. “the destruction of Earth and the vanishing of contemporary human being” as “the first cleansing of Being from the deepest deformation caused by the dominance of being.”

1990a: 314) bearing witness to the fact that the reign of Force is breakable.¹⁷⁸ The possibility of *free* sacrifice is substantial because the concept of all-embracing Force might serve as an excuse: one cannot influence the present crisis as it is the work of trans-human powers. Patočka *criticizes* Heidegger exactly for his conceiving of Being as a trans-human “entity”: we must avoid “the irrationalism of that prevenient being at whose mercy the meaning of being human then is” (Patočka 1989a: 271). According to Patočka, it is impossible to distinguish, in Heidegger’s concept, between truthful and untruthful appearing (Patočka 2002a: 174–175). Patočka, on the contrary, stresses the *responsibility* of human beings: “Being does not disclose itself independently and arbitrarily ... but depending on how [the soul] *is* – whether it is responsible or irresponsible” (Patočka 1999c: 79).

In stressing the responsibility of humans with regard to the appearing of Being, Patočka seeks to ensure for human beings the possibility of taking part in the overcoming of the crisis. Thus in *Heretical Essays* he proposes *the solidarity of the shaken* as an intersubjective way out of the crisis: “the solidarity of those who are capable of understanding what *life* and *death* are all about, and so what history is about” (Patočka 1996: 134). The community of the shaken “can and must create a spiritual authority, become a spiritual power that could drive the warring world to some restraint” (Patočka 1996: 135). We might speak here of a spiritual front as the authority restraining the reign of Force. Against the ongoing degradation of humanity into the mere reproduction of life, Patočka proposes a shaking and a reversal, a *metanoia* of those who are able to understand what history is about (cf. e.g. Chvatík 2011: 275–276).

At the End of the History of the World: The Need for (New) Ground

Although the crisis of Europe is simultaneously a world crisis, it should be reflected, according to Patočka, “not by those who are entering the historical arena but by Europeans in the broadest sense” (Patočka 1988b: 203).

This idea seems to be based on Patočka’s belief that only Europeans understand what history is about because other cultures were not and are not really *free*, and thus were not and are not really *historical*. Indeed, Patočka says quite explicitly that all the rest of the world is a-historical: at the end of history, “non-European people can ... put aside their present way of pre-historicity ... and replace it by post-historical rationality” (Patočka 1988b: 202). Taking into account *Heretical Essays*, one can interpret this idea as proclaiming that non-European civilizations have been, in common with early civilizations, only “great households aiming at no more than the preservation of life” (Patočka 1996: 23–24): “What else has China been up to now than being a country devoted to the functioning of biological survival and its cult?” (Patočka 1988b: 202).

Of course, one might conceive our global era as revealing the non-reducible plurality of historical substances (cf. e.g. Cajthaml 2010: 124). Indeed, it is Patočka himself who speaks about a “pluralism ... nourished by different historical substances” (Patočka 1990b: 223). Yet, Patočka inclines to treat non-European cultures *not* as cultures with alternative histories but rather as *ahistorical* cultures. At the risk of oversimplification, one can put it schematically and provocatively: in the East, there is an ahistorical life in “[t]he world in which the bonding of life to itself takes place on the basis of a concealed freedom” (Patočka

¹⁷⁸ In *Heretical Essays*, one can find the motif of the sacrifice of the sacrificed (Patočka 1996: 130), but in speaking of “understanding for the positive task of suffering and for the positivity of this negativity” (Patočka 1990: 298) Patočka does not mean the sacrifice of *others* but rather self-sacrifice.

1996: 15); in the West, there is a historical world in which Being is, or rather was, experienced as such.¹⁷⁹ Indeed, it rather *was* experienced as such; in the present post-historical epoch, the world looks like a “highly industrialized China” (Patočka 1988b: 202), in which “China” is tantamount to a non-historical, unfree “entity.”

As indicated above, the solidarity of the shaken should reopen, or reinstate, post-European history. The question is, however: on what basis can the shaken create a spiritual authority and become a spiritual power? Importantly in this regard, Patočka conceives (human) freedom not only as the ability to distance oneself from the given but also as a relation to “something” other than what has been given in the world.¹⁸⁰ In the political or historical context, the fundamental importance, and the founding function, of the non-given is expressed, for example, by the idea of history as the “building of the world that is based in an invisible area” (Patočka 1988b: 186).

In speaking about this invisible area, or about Being (Patočka 1988b: 186), Patočka seeks to support human living in the world with a non-worldly grounding. In fact, the above mentioned “sacrifice for nothing” is a sacrifice “for” Being or, more precisely, it is a way of *presenting appearing*: through sacrifice “appearing shows itself as what is the most forceful and powerful ... since it seizes that by which it is otherwise seized i.e. the bond to life” (Patočka 1990a: 298). Factually, appearing shows itself as that which is the most forceful only insofar as it is “actualized” by human beings; yet, without the “invisible” or Being, the activity of those who are able to understand what history is about, namely their *metanoia*, would lose if not its ground then surely its correlate. But what exactly is this correlate and how does it help in overcoming the crisis?

Freedom versus Earthliness

To answer this question, I suggest paying attention to Patočka’s utilization of the concept of the movement(s) of existence in the context of history: Patočka actually sees only the third movement as a history-making one. In the final part of this chapter, I will not only criticize this approach but also reinterpret the concept of the movement of existence in hopes to make Patočka’s approach more persuasive.

Both the first and second movements are, according to Patočka, bounded by life, or by the Earth: they are “movements of finite beings which self-realize fully within their finitude, wholly plunging into it and therein surrendering themselves to the rule of a power – of the Earth” (Patočka 1998: 151). On the contrary, the third movement as “the movement of existence in the true sense” is “an attempt to break through our earthliness” (Patočka 1998: 151).

In my interpretation, this drawing a line separating the earthbound from true existence (namely a line between the third movement and the other two) needs to be put into question. In Chapter 11, I have already suggested that, and how, both philosophy and politics, as two exemplary activities of the third movement, should be conceived as *worldly* activities. In the present context, this discussion can be elaborated on. At first, I will focus on the *political* realization of the third movement. Again, I seek to highlight the similarities

¹⁷⁹ Symptomatic, in this context, is how Patočka differentiates western Christianity from eastern Buddhism: whereas Buddhism proposes the overcoming of life by its denial, in Christianity one overcomes the self-enclosure of one’s life, but “life remains unbroken, the world as world retains its validity” (Patočka 1998: 160).

¹⁸⁰ Cf. already the concept of “negative Platonism” explicated above in Chapter 6.

between Patočka and Arendt's concepts, especially regarding the (questionable) exclusivity of political action.

In *The Human Condition*, Arendt distinguishes labour, work, and action as three basic human activities. She puts emphasis on action as non-productive activity by which human beings disclose their uniqueness and, as Dana R. Villa puts it, "endow the world with meaning ... give it a significance and beauty it would otherwise lack" (Villa 1996: 11). Action, necessarily connected with speech, needs a public realm as a space in which people can freely express themselves and encounter one another, in all of their plurality and uniqueness, as equals. Arendt distinguishes very sharply not only between the public and the private but also between the political and the social. The problem of modern societies lies, according to Arendt, precisely in the fact that their "dividing line is entirely blurred, because we see the body of peoples and political communities in the image of a family whose everyday affairs have to be taken care of by a gigantic, nation-wide administration of housekeeping" (Arendt 1958: 28).

Arendt seeks to separate action from work since she fears "the substitution of making for acting and the concomitant degradation of politics into a means to obtain an allegedly 'higher' end" (Arendt 1958: 229). In Arendt's concept, only action can transcend the horizon of instrumentality (just as the activity of *homo faber* transcends the "logic" of labour driven by the needs of mere life): political action is self-sufficient or self-contained activity; its end is (in) its performance (cf. Villa 1996: 17–25, 42–49, 52–59). Thus, action and action alone can give meaning to human existence (cf. Arendt 1958: 204) and as such can help to overcome nihilism.¹⁸¹

Importantly here, it is only through action that truly *human* existence is possible. "Speech and action ... are the modes in which humans appear to each other, not indeed as physical objects, but *qua* men" (Arendt 1958: 176).¹⁸² When labouring and working, human beings do *not* realize freedom insofar as they are not freely disclosing themselves. The human being can be human without labouring and working, but "a life without speech and without action ... [ceases] to be a human life" (Arendt 1958: 176).

Here, I will identify some parallels between Patočka and Arendt's concepts of (political) action. Sharing the understanding of the Greek *polis* as an exemplary political "body," both Arendt and Patočka place emphasis on political action as embodying freedom. Moreover, Patočka's separation of the third movement from the other two and its identification as the movement of freedom is *analogical* to Arendt's separation of action and its identification as that which makes a being a *human* being.¹⁸³

According to Arendt, to assure the "purity" of action, it must *not* be conditioned by "the social": "the best 'social conditions' are those under which it is possible to lose one's identity. This unitedness of many into one is basically antipolitical" (Arendt 1958: 214). Although Patočka's analysis of our contemporary situation and its prehistory certainly cannot be reduced to that of Arendt, her central idea, and criticism, of the modern promotion of life to the most important principle is similar to Patočka's criticism of the reign "of the *day*, of life merely accepted" (Patočka 1996: 44). Whereas for Arendt, however, the problem of our present lies in the *contamination* of what is at stake in *freedom* (no social con-

¹⁸¹ Accordingly, Arendt's theoretical "restoration" of action can be interpreted as her contribution to overcoming the present world crisis (cf. Arendt 1958: 5).

¹⁸² Arendt continues: "This appearance ... rests on [an] initiative ... from which no human can refrain and still be human" (Arendt 1958: 176).

¹⁸³ I do not claim, of course, that the first and second movements can be identified with labour and work as Arendt conceives them.

cerns shall intervene in our actualization of freedom), Patočka instead speaks of the forgetting, or veiling, of the disclosing. Yet, this forgetfulness, which might be called the forgetfulness of Being, makes it impossible, in the form of the “reign of Force,” to act historically/freely exactly insofar as it *contaminates* action by the “interests of peace, of life, of the day” (Patočka 1996: 130).

Interestingly, this contamination or “veiling” of the disclosing reminds one of the way the third movement is realized, before the beginning of history, by non-historical peoples: they realize it only in the form of an “ontological metaphor” (Patočka 1996: 32) because what is missing here is the disclosure of Being *as such*: “Amid the world of beings there manifests itself a presence of Being which is understood as higher, incommensurate, superior, but which is not yet clear *as such*” (Patočka 1996: 33). Like the *pre*-historical or mythical world, also the *post*-historical world does not disclose Being as such. Or, to express the same problem from a different angle, this disclosure is theoretically grasped and practically realized through inadequate, contaminated, “impure” means.

Participating in *Polemos*

In *Heretical Essays*, Patočka explicitly refers to Arendt’s ideas (Patočka 1996: 37–39), yet his own thoughts on the crisis of the world, as already stated, are certainly not identical to those of Arendt. Most palpably, Patočka puts much more emphasis on the *spirituality* of those who might be able, by their activity, to overcome the crisis or rather to avert the worst. Whereas for Arendt the focal point of true politics lies in an agonistic interplay of ideas in the public sphere, Patočka seems to propose rather the spiritual politics of spiritual people (cf. Chvatík 2016). Reading Patočka’s texts connected with the Charter 77 (e.g. Patočka 1989c), one can even conclude that politics must be, according to Patočka, morally based and that this morality is Kantian (see Čapek 2009). Both ideas are far away from, indeed opposite to, those of Arendt.

Patočka’s idea of politics cannot be reduced to an Arendtian, agonistic concept. Yet, can it be reduced to a “moralist” or apolitical politics based on a change of heart or spiritual conversion? Is this what Patočka has in mind when speaking of the *metanoia* of those “who understand what history is about”? Interpreted in this way, Patočka’s ideas could hardly stand the objection of being ineffective and lacking solid foundation. In what way do the shaken effect the overcoming of the crisis? I will discuss the idea of “the solidarity of the shaken” in the next chapter. Here, let me focus on a possible *ontological* basis of Patočka’s concept, namely on the idea of *polemos* as the principle, or, rather, as the groundless ground, of the world.

By putting emphasis on *polemos*, Patočka is inspired not only by Heidegger’s reading of Heraclitus but also, again, by Arendt’s incorporation of this motif into her agonistic concept of politics.¹⁸⁴ However, while Heidegger’s concept makes bold ontological claims, Arendt describes conflict primarily in the political context, and her concept of the world as built by work and illuminated by action is rather weak from the ontological point of view. What does it mean, ontologically (or even cosmologically), to participate in *polemos* as the “principle” of the world?

For Patočka, in accordance with Heraclitus, *polemos* is the power or law binding all to all, and as such it is “at the same time that which constitutes the *polis* and the primordial insight that makes philosophy possible” (Patočka 1996: 43). In designating *polemos*

¹⁸⁴ Regarding this incorporation, see e.g. Villa (1995: passim).

as the “principle” of the world, Patočka is not worshipping war. As James Dodd puts it, what is at stake here is “a profound transformation in the *meaning* of the violence of war: no longer merely the work of destruction necessary for preservation, war now becomes an essential dimension of the pursuit of the possible in a new and open horizon of the significance of what it *means* to fight” (Dodd 2016: 88). Dodd also plausibly shows that the history of the decline of Europe can be read, if one allows for oversimplification, as the history of the forgetting and suppressing of *polemos* which leads, paradoxically (only) at first sight, to the wars of the 20th century: here “the *night*, that reserve of the exceptional, of what lies outside of the techno-economy of the day, itself becomes pressed into the service of the day” (Dodd 2016: 90). Not only due to conceiving *polemos* ontologically, Patočka’s idea of truly political – or simply of *true* – action cannot be read as only *agonistic*, but rather as *radical*, i.e. presupposing a *radix* of action (cf. Caraus 2016: esp. 244–248).¹⁸⁵

Hence, *Heretical Essays* indicates that Patočka’s ideas of caring of the soul or of living in truth should be interpreted as including the participation in *polemos*. One could perhaps speak here of an *ontological*, and necessarily polemical, morality: as both Dodd and Marion Bernard nicely show, “*politics* is an unprecedented form of power, emerging with the Greek polis and philosophy together as ‘history,’ a form of openness where a community of equals is not based on anything other than itself” (Bernard 2016a: 264). Here, politics is a way, or even *the* way, of realizing the polemical essence of the world.

Polemical World Is Not Enough

Permit me to continue by discussing Bernard’s intriguing interpretation¹⁸⁶ according to which Patočka’s political thought is “based on a complex ontology of the *common*, which makes the definition of politics itself and its borders problematic, referring them to an event that is both anthropological and cosmological” (Bernard 2016a: 259). The common is, according to Bernard, the world itself,¹⁸⁷ yet not the world in an Arendtian sense but the world as cosmos: “the cosmic power in which human freedom roots is none other than *polemos*” (Bernard 2016a: 267).

Taking a closer look at Patočka’s own statements, Bernard’s idea that Patočka outlines an ontology of the common turns out to lack both textual and factual basis. What is it, actually, that “the shaken” of *Heretical Essays* have in common? Referring to an experience at the front and following Jünger, Patočka states that the “person on the front line is gradually overcome by an overwhelming sense of meaningfulness which would be hard to put into words” (Patočka 1996: 126).

What Patočka has in mind here is certainly *not* an agonistic politics modelled after the Greek *polis*. What is at stake in the experience of the frontline,¹⁸⁸ however, is not the common arising from and through the “community” of warring soldiers either, but the same insight acquired individually by each one therein. In other words, the “common” here

¹⁸⁵ According to Tamara Caraus, “in Patočka’s political thinking, the insights of ... radical political theory, which accounts mainly for the radicality and singularity of the event, merges with the insights of agonistic political theory, which account mainly for disagreement and conflict as a practice” (Taraus 2016: 248).

¹⁸⁶ Her overall interpretation of Patočka can be found in Bernard (2016b).

¹⁸⁷ “[T]he world is what men have, in [the] proper sense, in common” (Bernard 2016a: 260).

¹⁸⁸ Importantly, the “front-line experience ... is an absolute one” (Patočka 1996: 129).

is not something arising through, or produced by, *community*, but the same experience suffered *separately*.

Moreover, Patočka describes not only this experience but also the activity of the shaken *negatively* (and in the same way as in “Negative Platonism”): “the solidarity of the shaken can say ‘no’ to the measures of mobilization which make the state of war permanent. It will not offer positive programs but will speak, like Socrates’ *daimonion*, in warnings and prohibitions” (Patočka 1996: 135). Here, the basic idea, and urge, seems to be of averting the worst, of rendering “some acts and measures impossible” (Patočka 1996: 135). Of course, this plea is fully understandable considering the atrocities of the world wars, yet it does *not* correspond to the idea of *polemos* as a *positive*, meaning-bestowing principle.¹⁸⁹

I do not deny, of course, that the solidarity of the shaken as “the solidarity of those who understand” (Patočka 1996: 135) involves – perhaps as its most important “part” – understanding for the polemical character of the world. Yet it remains unclear how this understanding can bring any positive, and common, meaning.¹⁹⁰ Not only due to this unclarity it seems plausible, and even necessary, to look for another, rather *moral* basis of true action in Patočka (as indicated above). Yet, as will be explicated in more detail in the final chapter, Patočka clearly indicates that *polemos* cannot have, and cannot be, the last word. *Love* can be considered the highest “principle.”

Love, in fact, is not a ground of action. According to the interpretation, which will be developed in more detail below, we should *abandon* the idea of *any* ground, whether conceived as “an invisible area” (Patočka 1988b: 186), as “the open night of what-is” (Patočka 1996: 42–43), or as Kantian morality. Whereas Patočka clearly presupposes a kind of ground, and Bernard identifies it with the world itself, seeing in it the “cosmological foundations” of Patočka’s concept (Bernhard 2016a: 269), I suggest “radically” refusing the idea of any ground, even a *groundless* ground.

Let me add that Bernard is, of course, aware of Patočka’s *limiting* the relation to *the* world to the third movement (Bernhard 2016a: 270–271), yet she suggests rereading Patočka’s concept as implying that also the first two movements are “responses to the polemical power of the world” (Bernhard 2016a: 260). I agree that also the first two movements must be included if we are to think through the world and its crisis, but I disagree with the idea that the first two movements reveal the world as *polemos*. The first two movements are important, *pace* Patočka, if one seeks to understand the world, but they do *not* reveal, *pace* Bernard, the world as *polemos*. And even the third movement need not to be considered *polemical*.

Freedom De-Absolutized

Patočka leaves no doubt that, in his own approach, to relate to the appearing of the world, one must *transcend* one’s uprooting in the world (the first movement) and “economic” concerns (the second movement) to *free* oneself to disclosure *as such*. To put it in a different way, both political activity and philosophy are processes overcoming nature, i.e. they

¹⁸⁹ Pavel Kouba (1998), interpreting and evaluating Patočka and Fink’s phenomenologies, outlined an important concept of appearing as a “conflict in being.”

¹⁹⁰ To put it in the terminology of Caraus, how to think of the grounding affectivity of this *radix* remains unclear.

demonstrate that the Earth and heavens as the basic referents of the natural world have their “trans” and that they can become a place for “the realm of spirit and freedom.”

While for Patočka the crisis of the world is to be overcome by a sort of spiritual politics, in my re-reading we should rather turn our attention to all the movements of existence and analyse how they contribute to “the overarching human movement we call history” (Patočka 1998: 161). I suggest utilizing the concept of the three movements of existence as a tool for analysing the necessities, and possibilities, of the human being in the world. To be able to think, as Patočka proposes, the “dialectical interrelation” and (possible) unity of the movements, one must also forsake Patočka’s own hints at a more “Hegelian” approach (in which the third movement somehow “incorporates” the other two) and conceive of all the movements as functioning simultaneously. Only then does it become possible to explore how *all* three movements contribute to the whole movement of existence.

Here, again, Arendt’s differentiating of labour, work, and action serves as an inspiration. Admittedly, the instrumental logic of work cannot be imposed on the logic of action: action and politics can be reduced neither to an ends-means calculation nor to the negotiating (or even ordering) of how to organize labour and work. Nevertheless, and of utmost importance from the political and also the social point of view, *none* of the activities of *vita activa* could be performed if the others were not carried out and cared for. We labour using the products of work, and any concrete action proceeds in the world conditioned, and even sustained, by both labour and work; even our personal (and social) relations, this “web of relationships,” are conditioned by the world of labour and work. Accordingly, although the (political) space of appearance is abstractly distinguishable from the world of work and labour, there is no public space, no *polis*, untouched by them.¹⁹¹

Analogically, the movements of existence are separable only *in abstracto*, yet it would be counterproductive to deny a *relative* autonomy to each of the movements. There is, to be sure, no need to deny the extraordinary character of the third movement. But, it can be identified *neither* with “the movement of existence in the true sense” *nor* with the ground of “history in the true sense.” Both the idea of history *in the true sense* and the idea of the movement of existence *in the true sense* need to be called into question by examining in what way *all* three movements of existence are historical and how they all three contribute to the history of humankind.

One must not conceive of the first two movements as being natural and ahistorical, and the third as spiritual and historical. With regard to the second movement, Arendt’s explicit and Patočka’s rather implicit criticism of Marxism should be tested by asking whether self-reproductive and objectivity-making activity is or is not, and to what a degree, a history-making activity.¹⁹² Even in the case of the first movement, it seems quite possible to distinguish different ways of rooting in the world and its contribution to the historical variety of the whole movement of existence.¹⁹³ To deny *the* history of Being, then, is *not* to deny history and historicity as such. On the contrary, it is possible to (re)open and

¹⁹¹ When Arendt quotes the watchword of Greek colonization (“Wherever you go, you will be a *polis*”; Arendt 1958: 198), one can add that the colonizers, by bringing the *polis* with them, also brought along its habits and economic interests.

¹⁹² Possibilities of such a comparison are indicated by Tava (2016).

¹⁹³ Regarding the first movement, I agree with Bernard (2016a: 262): “Dependence is not only biological, but also phenomenological, since the phenomenon itself is first opened via others. The phenomenon is not only historicized through *epochs*, but also socialized, through the different social opportunities of those who introduce us to the world.”

(re)think the possibility that *all* of the movements of existence contribute to the history, or rather *histories*, of mankind.

In this context, both Patočka and Arendt's emphasis on freedom and equality too should be critically examined. Although it is necessary, in many cases, to fight against inequality and a lack of freedom, it would be short-sighted to think that *inequality* and *boundedness* are only negative in human life. On the contrary, our boundedness might be seen as a condition for the possibility of the meaningfulness of (positively limited) freedom. Furthermore, inequality is likewise an essential element of the *positive* meaning of human existence: there are many human relationships in which we are *not* equal (e.g. the relationship between child and parent) – and we become, and are, human also through these, and in these, asymmetrical relationships.

Living through the Crisis

In accordance with the aforesaid, I find it neither necessary nor even possible to take care of Being itself to find a definitive solution to the world crisis or a “right way” out of it. Temporary solutions and negotiable ways would be quite sufficient. And in seeking them out, we should not overlook European values, principles, and morals that have appeared in the past. These values might be shaken, and Europeans probably need shaking, but we should not conceive of this shaking, this *worldly* shaking, as the *ultimate* termination of Europe and the opening of something *absolutely* new. We do not need an absolute reflection but rather a (historically) conditioned, finite reflection.

However, this reflection need not, and must not, be reduced to looking only for European possibilities. The shaking we experience is essentially connected with the fact that Europe is confronted with the non-European sphere without being able – due to diminished economic and geopolitical power – to simply *impose* its own values and way(s) of life. In this context, it is necessary to abandon the prejudice, or the conceptualized preconception, that non-Europe has nothing to say and nothing to offer regarding the present crisis. This idea can be justified neither historically nor philosophically. Philosophically, we should analyse the difference between the East and West as the difference between various forms of life in the world. Patočka's concept of the three movements of existence can serve as a methodological tool for such analysis.

As mentioned in the previous explications, Patočka himself occasionally speaks about “plurality of historical substances that present something totally positive, carried out of the depth of existence” and imagines their “mutual understanding” where such understanding is not based on “sceptical tolerance” but rather on “understanding that all our keys are not enough for the treasure disclosing itself to us” (Patočka 1999d: 28). Yet, this praiseworthy intention can hardly be realized, I believe, if it is just and only their *spiritual* dimension which is to be understood. To the contrary, such an approach is a part, and not an insignificant part, of the problem of the present situation of the world. Not only might the identification of the elements of other cultures *as* spiritual be implicitly Eurocentric,¹⁹⁴ but the variations found in the first and second movements also importantly contribute to the specificity of other cultures' being in the world, and as such they should be understood and respected.

¹⁹⁴ The most elaborated analysis of these issues, and a defence of Patočka regarding his Eurocentrism, is offered by Novotný (2016).

The (reinterpreted) concept of the movement of existence enables one to approach the present and future of Europe, and of all humankind, otherwise than by looking for “a *metanoesis* of historic proportions” (Patočka 1996: 75). Let me recall that this *metanoesis* should be made by “that part of humanity ... capable of understanding what was and is the point of history,” while the fundamental question is whether these people are “also capable of the discipline and self-denial demanded by a stance of uprootedness in which alone a meaningfulness ... might be realized” (Patočka 1996: 76). Seeing the *positive* meaning of rooting and of work as movements disclosing the world, we can evade the abyss of such a formulation of the problem. Patočka puts too much emphasis on the necessity to go through *nihil*, through the “experience of utter meaninglessness of what-is” (Patočka 1996: 77), but it is even more important to articulate the meaning-bestowing disclosure of all of the three movements of existence to understand their contribution to the meaning of individual human existence and of history. In this way, Patočka’s phenomenology, solidly rooted in Europe, might help with analyzing the crisis of the world – a crisis that also essentially concerns the very meaning of humanity.

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Super-Civilized Existence

This chapter picks up the threads of the previous one and concentrates, paying attention again to Patočka's reflections on the dynamic of history, on *the present*.

After depicting Patočka's interpretation of the present world, in the 1950s, as that of supercivilization, I focus on how the contemporary crisis of the world is to be overcome according to Patočka in the 1970s. I emphasize that Patočka did not embrace liberalism as a way out of the crisis but rather conceived it as a part of it, insofar as liberalism does not do justice to the essence of freedom. Discussing Patočka's idea of the solidarity of the shaken, I insist on the necessity of overcoming the duality of technology and spirituality implicit in Patočka's thought; one must accept the irreducible technicity of existence.

Generally, discussing the deficiencies in Patočka's approach, I indicate "adjustments" necessary for this concept to become persuasive and useful for analyzing the specifics of contemporary super-civilized existence. I accentuate the dimensions which demonstrate (subjective) existence as being determined by that which is trans-subjective. In this context, I critically evaluate Suzi Adams' "sociological" reading of Patočka's concept of the movement of existence. I decline her idea of the trans-subjective anonymous subject of history, yet I do acknowledge the dimensions of existence that can be accounted for, and managed, neither by subjective nor by intersubjective acts.

Supercivilization

In the 1950s, in the book-length study *The Supercivilisation and Its Internal Conflict* (Patočka 1996e),¹⁹⁵ closely connected with his concept of "negative Platonism,"¹⁹⁶ Patočka offers, inspired by Arnold J. Toynbee and Max Weber besides others,¹⁹⁷ what might be called a civilizational analysis introducing the concept of "supercivilization."

The "supercivilization" differs from all previous civilizations by its specific kind of universality. It does *not* provide for the overall meaning of human life but focuses, seeking to be completely rational, on managing all the controllable powers of and in the world. As such, the supercivilization does not answer the question of *why* to live but only of *how* to live, i.e. how to manage objective problems of our lives. Thanks to this specificity, it can be, and is, adopted also by societies with different cultural backgrounds than those of its original birthplace, which is, to put it simply, modern secularized Europe.¹⁹⁸

¹⁹⁵ The book is available e.g. in a French translation (Patočka 1990c).

¹⁹⁶ Cf. above, Chapter 6.

¹⁹⁷ Jakub Homolka reconstructs similarities between Patočka and Weber's ideas in Homolka (2016).

¹⁹⁸ More concrete analyses, interpretations, and appropriations of Patočka's concept of the supercivilization are offered by Arnason (2010a and 2010b), Bělohradský (2010), Skovajsa (2010) and Šrubař (2010). See also Tava (2015).

The supercivilization as a rationalized and rationalizing civilization has two important features due to which Johann Arnason (cf. Arnason 2010b: 27–37)¹⁹⁹ speaks of a “civilizational paradox”: it is more universal than previous civilizations insofar as it is able to spread universally, yet it is also found lacking in its ability to give universal meaning to the human being in the world. For sure, this civilization too has its specific cultural values or visions, yet the very idea of rationalization and both main cultural goods it proposes, namely scientific truth and freedom (Patočka 1996e: 259–260), do not create, and are not supposed to do so, exclusive identities of previous civilizations.

Patočka distinguishes two forms of the supercivilization: the moderate one, exemplified by, though irreducible to, liberal societies; and the radical one, exemplified by the Soviet Bloc countries. Whereas the moderate supercivilization accepts its non-totality, admitting that in its rationality it deals only with, and decides about, means and not aims, the radical one denies existence of anything transcending the sphere of manageable rationality. And although these two versions of supercivilization have their origins already in the French Revolution, the conflict between them culminates only in the 20th century with the formation of the West and the Eastern Bloc. Patočka, who has sympathies neither for Marxist theory nor for Eastern Bloc politics, focuses on the moderate version of supercivilization with its problems and open possibilities.²⁰⁰

Whereas the radical supercivilization denies anything transcending humans and imagines, misguidedly, the possibility of a fully rational and rationally organized society, the moderate one, with its liberal individualism, overlooks what Patočka calls a deeper, or moral, dimension of the human being (see e.g. Patočka 1996e: 264, 281; cf. Homolka 2016: 178–180 and 205–206). In other words, whereas the radical supercivilization is, according to Patočka, anti-individualist, the latter does not have an accurate, or true, concept of human freedom. I will come back to this deficiency.

Two decades later, in the 1970s, especially in the books *Europe and Post-Europe* and *Heretical Essays in the Philosophy of History* as well as his lecture course *Plato and Europe*, Patočka continues reflecting on the current situation of the world. He also utilizes some thoughts of Geoffrey Barraclough who introduced the concept of a “post-European age.” What Patočka means when speaking about the post-European age is not only Europe having lost its hegemony but also that the spreading of European modernity, of its secularized rationality, leads to a situation in which the non-European world, formerly colonized and hegemonized by Europe, assimilates European rational techniques without accepting the basic values of Europe.

Yet this appropriation is not, in Patočka’s understanding, the main problem of our current situation. As explicated in the previous chapter, Patočka identifies this problem by creatively adopting Heidegger’s interpretation of the contemporary world as that of *Gestell*. Under the rule of *Gestell*, all beings in the world, human beings included, become interpreted, and interpret themselves, primarily as a disposable accumulation of power at disposal. Patočka writes: “Humans have ceased to be a relation to Being and have become a force ... Especially in their social being, they became a gigantic transformer ... It seems as if humans have become a grand energy accumulator in a world of sheer forces, on the one hand making use of those forces to exist and multiply, yet on the other hand themselves integrated into the same process, accumulated, calculated, utilized, and manipulated like any other state of energy” (Patočka 1996a: 116). And besides this Heideggerian influence, one can feel in Patočka’s concept also the “Arendtian conception of ... secularized human

¹⁹⁹ See also Homolka (2016: 104–108).

²⁰⁰ Patočka’s explications of the essence and the development of the supercivilization are concisely summarised by Homolka (2016: 166–181).

life as one whose only contents are ‘the desires, the appetite, and the unconscious needs of its body’” (Paparusso 2016: 209). Arendt’s central idea, and criticism, of the modern promotion of life to the most important principle is close to Patočka’s criticism of the reign “of the *day*, of life merely accepted” (Patočka 1996a: 44). “The interests of the day” veil that “that what does not exist reigns over all which is” (Patočka 1990a: 298).

Liberalism versus the Essence of Freedom

In *Heretical Essays*, Patočka proposes *the solidarity of the shaken* as an intersubjective way out of this crisis: “the solidarity of those who are capable of understanding what *life* and *death* are all about, and so what history is about” (Patočka 1996: 134). The community of the shaken “can and must create a spiritual authority, become a spiritual power that could drive the warring world to some restraint” (Patočka 1996: 135). We might speak here of a spiritual front as the authority restraining the reign of Force: Against the ongoing degradation of humanity into the mere reproduction of life, Patočka proposes a shaking and a reversal, a *metanoia* of those who are capable to understand what history is about and who are willing to sacrifice themselves because they know what is to be free.

Now, especially due to his involvement with Charter 77, Patočka is sometimes interpreted as a proponent of liberal democracy.²⁰¹ But not only his critical remarks on the moderate supercivilization, i.e. on liberal societies, indicate that his relation to liberalism is much more complicated. Also in *Heretical Essays* one can read: “Thus the real question concerning the individual is not at issue between liberalism and socialism, between democracy and totalitarianism, which for all their profound differences equally overlook all that is neither objective nor a role. For the same reason, a resolution of their conflicts cannot resolve the problem of setting humans in their place, resolving their wandering, alienated from themselves and from the place that belongs to them” (Patočka 1996a: 115).

I do not intend to, and do not need to, read much directly political meaning into these sentences. I do not claim that Patočka criticizes liberal democracy as a political system. In fact, he does not address here a political question and does not develop political philosophy either. Rather, at the most fundamental level, he points to the insufficiency of the very ground, one can say a pre-political ground, of liberalism, namely of its very idea of freedom. To put it generally, insofar as liberalism primarily takes care about the individual and his/her independent sphere, in which s/he can decide independently without any restrictions from society and the public sphere, it overlooks, or does not do justice to the *essence*, to put it with Heidegger, of freedom.

Which brings us back to the 1950s, to the already mentioned “negative Platonism.” By analysing the experience of freedom as the “ground” of metaphysics and, more concretely, by articulating the experience of freedom as the experience of “Idea,” Patočka tackles not only a theoretical problem but a problem of great political consequences. For Patočka, it is of crucial importance that freedom is based on the transcendence of Idea, on the transcendence of Being. Liberalism forgets this, even if it has in its origins (insofar as it sought to protect a direct, free relationship between the individual and God) what Patočka calls a “metaphysical awareness” (Patočka 1996b: 283) of the individual as “an exponent

²⁰¹ My discussion of Patočka’s relation to liberalism draws heavily on a paper written by Michal Zvarík (2016).

of the non-real” (Patočka 1996b: 295). But: “Liberal technology inevitably leads to decadent tendencies, ... neglecting the essential nexus between man as a power and man as an exponent of the non-real” (Patočka 1996b: 295).

The Shaken between Singularity and Universality

At this point, I can return to “the solidarity of the shaken,” i.e. of “those who are capable of understanding what *life* and *death* are all about, and so what history is about.” Obviously, the shaken are the ones who shall be able to realize their life-transcending freedom. But the concept of the solidarity of the shaken is by no means easily explicable and obviously cannot be reduced to the political ideas of liberalism. Many questions with no definite answers arise here: What is the *content*, if there is any, of their understanding? Are these people endowed with a certain knowledge at all, or do they rather “have” an indeterminate experience (of being shaken)? What is the *form* of the activity of the shaken? Is it, both in its essence and in its functioning, political, or rather ethical activity? *Who* are “the shaken”? Is it a certain group of people, or can anybody, and at any time, be shaken?

Both the content and form of the activity of the shaken remain indefinite, or equivocal, but the problem of Patočka’s concept can be captured most accurately regarding the question of *who* are the shaken. For Patočka implies two different, and in the last instance incoherent, answers to this question. On the one hand, the shaken are people experiencing singular and non-transferable experiences, as the soldiers in the world wars, but Patočka on the other hand universalizes this experience and prescribes it to every human being: each human being must be shaken to be really human.

Due to this ambiguity, Patočka actually dissolves the singularity of experience, for that matter of the front experience, in the universality of his philosophical concept. For on the most fundamental level, his identification of the world-transforming activity with the spiritually based collective agency of the shaken is supported by his *universal* concept of what is to be free. As already indicated, Patočka identifies freedom with being “an exponent of the non-real”; and one cannot realize one’s own being such an exponent without being shaken.

It is no coincidence, then, that the idea of the solidarity of the shaken can be connected with Patočka’s reinterpretations, or actualizations, of certain ideas, though less directly political ones, from the history of philosophy, first of all with the idea of the care of the soul, but also with John Amos Comenius’ concept of an “open soul.” By these concepts, Patočka suggests alternatives to the prevailing ideas of modernism.²⁰² In this way, he seeks to demonstrate that there still is in Europe or, to be more precise, in its history, even after the *end* of Europe, something valuable on which we can base a renewal.

These ideas are valuable insofar as they answer the question of how to realize human freedom. But when picturing the idea of a spiritual person, Patočka identifies the common denominator of Plato’s care of the soul, of Comenius’ open soul and of the shaken self-sacrificing person, rather than offering a *concrete* idea of how the *metanoia* of the shaken should proceed in the contemporary situation.²⁰³ In other words, he offers rather a

²⁰² Comenius himself developed his concept in a critical reaction to Descartes. Cf. Kohák 1989: 66–76.

²⁰³ In some texts from the early 1970s, Patočka tends to identify only a mass intelligentsia with the history-making element. Yet, in his very last texts, especially those connected to his engagement in Charter 77, he seems to accept not only the idea of a non-political politics, but also a democratic vision that all people shall perform the spiritual conversion (cf. Homolka 2016: 207–217).

formal structure, and arguably polymorphous structure, with no historically adequate content.

According to my interpretation, what is needed here is to re-singularize freedom. Patočka is unable to offer a persuasive concept because he does not do justice, to put it little bit pompously, to the singularity of historical events. It is, of course, only understandable since philosophy necessarily uses universal concepts. But it obviously is possible to think human freedom not, or rather not only, as an eternal structure but, as Patočka himself would like to do, as an open and historically variable process in the ever changing world.

Spirituality versus *Gestell*?

To recapitulate: Criticizing the modern idea of rationalization, Patočka points to the spiritual emptiness of the supercivilization. And, by indicating the idea of a non-political, or spiritual, politics, he construes a society-transforming activity as the process of a spiritually based collective agency. But, as indicated above, the spirituality or morality of the shaken do *not* offer any positive program:²⁰⁴ its leading idea, whether articulated as “the striving for upswing” (cf. Chvatík 2016: 36–37) or as “the motion of problematization” (cf. Mensch 2016: 126–127), is to freely question any *given* meaning while acknowledging, as the moderate supercivilization does, that there is “something” transcending and limiting human freedom.

Moreover, by “locating” the possibility of social change to the third movement only, Patočka duly appreciates neither all the factors conditioning the movement of society nor all the possibilities of the change of its current development.²⁰⁵ Of course, Patočka undoubtedly sees the dynamic of the current world as being significantly conditioned by what is going on in the “sphere” of the second movement. He is fully aware of the historically determining role of, so to speak, un-spiritual factors, yet unwilling to accept them as co-determining *true* history,²⁰⁶ he falls back onto the Heideggerian pessimistic view of the modern world as the world of “enframing” (*Gestell*),²⁰⁷ while this “destiny” (*Geschick*) is, as Patočka likes to emphasize *against* Heidegger, not independent of humans but rather conditioned by how they spiritually relate to Being. It is exactly for this reason, then, that both we and the world need a *spiritual* reversal: the crisis is, first and foremost, a spiritual crisis; we have forgotten our spirituality.

I do *not* suggest abandoning Patočka’s one-sided emphasis on the spiritual relation to Being in favour of, for example, an equally one-sided emphasis on the logic of work, or of the second movement, in its revolutionary potential. Such an either-or perspective completely misses the point. Both the logic of the second movement *and* that of the third one must be taken into account when considering the dynamic of existence in its entirety. Yet, instead of accepting the spectacular idea of facing the “reign of Force” by an ontically weak, but ontologically powerful spiritual force of the shaken, I suggest utilizing Patočka’s

²⁰⁴ Or, perhaps, rather does not *admit* to having one. It would be interesting to reconstruct the implicit political standpoint Patočka adopts, or the political values this concept presupposes.

²⁰⁵ One might argue that Patočka’s ideas proved their effectivity, after Patočka’s death, through such spiritual politicians as Václav Havel, but it seems hardly possible to me, to mention only one problem in this idea, to identify the revolution of 1989 and the subsequent development with what Patočka had put forward.

²⁰⁶ As demonstrated in the previous chapter, Patočka draws a sharp dividing line between history in the proper sense and between the processes that determine the state of the world yet do *not* make history proper.

²⁰⁷ See especially Heidegger (1977).

concept of the movement of existence to more concretely elucidate all the factors conditioning both our subjectivities and the world in its condition.

Freedom De-Spiritualized

As should be clear also from the previous chapters, I see the main flaw of Patočka's approach in his *narrowing down* the meaning of human freedom as defining existence. Instead, I suggest utilizing Patočka's own concept of the movement of existence to think existence, its economic and technological dimensions included, in a more comprehensive way. By saying this, as explained in Chapter 12, I do not plea for accepting post-humanism or trans-humanism, but rather for thinking our existing in the world in both a less one-sidedly spiritualist and less one-sidedly anti-humanist manner.

Let me recall that it is Patočka himself who speaks of "the essential nexus between man as a power and man as an exponent of the non-real." Instead of thinking the relation between "man as a power" and "man as an exponent of the non-real" as oppositional, or as the relation between what is merely superficial (technique) and what is deep (spirituality), we must conceive this relation rather as that of intertwining. In other words, instead of one-sidedly emphasising the human being as an exponent of the non-real, we must admit that it is just as essentially, and just as praiseworthy, an exponent of power. In other words, also its unspiritual dimensions must be taken into account in the concept of the contemporary, free, super-civilized existence.

Trans-Subjective Movements?

As mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, Patočka explicitly states that the concept of the movement of existence shall be able to account for the movement of history, which can hardly be conceived of as the movement of an individual being but rather as the movement of society. In accordance with that, Adams underlines that in *Heretical Essays* Patočka does not connect the three movements primarily with a lived corporeity but conceives them as shared movements of history (Adams 2016: 231; cf. also Adams 2012). Yet, whereas Adams sees here a *shift* insofar as the movements now denote "a domain of human life, not an attribute of the human being" (Adams 2016: 223), it must be said that, firstly, the concept of the movements of existence has never described an *attribute* of the human being, and that, secondly, it has included, from the very beginning, what Adams calls the "trans-subjective," namely that which transcends an individual existence.

Speaking of the trans-subjective, Adams refers to institutional and social dimensions of existence, which is "the domain of social reality proper – of culture and institution – that is irreducible to embodied and intersubjective analyses" (Adams 2016: 229). Adams elucidates this idea by pointing to Cornelius Castoriadis' philosophy, emphasizing that this trans-subjective dimension cannot be reduced to self-autonomous structures: it is rather "the anonymous collective as the social-historical [which] creates or auto-institutes itself as the very world of meaning (which Castoriadis terms social imaginary significations)" (Adams 2016: 230).

Adams emphasizes the role of social "institutions" inexplorable by (inter)subjective constitution (cf. Adams 2016: 230). More precisely, she identifies the trans-subjective

with “anonymous ... horizons [that] are historical (which speaks to cultural diversity) and anthropological (which speaks to a minimum of cultural commonality and the possibility of mutual understanding). They are manifest in the various social-historical cultural articulations of the world ... which are concretized and articulated as the self-institution of society itself, and in the socio-political institutions of each society” (Adams 2012: 30). Interpreting the trans-subjective in this way, Adams opens the possibility for utilizing Patočka’s concept sociologically as a tool for a comparative civilizational analysis: civilizations differ due to their *historic* specifics but they all have in common a universal *anthropological* basis.

Although I find this reading inspiring, it presupposes society, or more precisely “the anonymous collective,” as a quasi-entity able to institute itself. But, it is neither accurate nor desirable to perceive the movements of existence as those of *any* subject, albeit an anonymous one. As a matter of fact, Patočka’s concept demonstrates that, firstly, we cannot conceive the movement of existence as being performed by a self-sufficient subject and, secondly, the very movement is intrinsically conditioned by that which transcends the self, or the “subject,” of movement, and which as such can be called trans-subjective.

Hence, I definitely agree with Adams regarding the desirability to evolve Patočka’s theory of existence to *include* and duly appreciate also the “institutional,” “economical,” and any further impersonal and trans-personal conditions of our personal or “souled” or “always mine” way through the world. Such a concept has to admit that there are limits to the *phenomenological* account of existence, and to a phenomenological account of the world based on the analysis of existence. But these limits *appear* to phenomenology itself, thus allowing it to open itself to suggestions from other theoretical approaches to the world.

To make use of Patočka’s concept in reflecting on society, one needs not, and must not, ignore that Patočka accentuates, due to his phenomenological method, a first-person or, if you will, subjective perspective. But there is no subject of society, no personified society to have the first-person experience to be analysed by phenomenology. Against Adams, then, I emphasize that there is no anonymous collective auto-instituting itself to be described by phenomenology. Nonetheless, taking the perspective of an always personal being as its point of departure, Patočka’s phenomenology is quite able to see, and to show, that the I as always mine is trans-subjectively conditioned: performing its existence, it finds itself as, to put it as sharply as possible, also *being performed* by something transcending its singular subjectivity and subjective singularity. By clarifying this conditioning, one can also shed some light on the dynamics of society.

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Omnia Vincit Amor

Patočka's concept of the movement of existence allows for analysing the movement by which the soul of an existent body appears, and realizes itself, in its singularity. It describes an "entity" which is, by performing the three movements, at the intersection between being absolved, in its sovereignty, from the world and being caused, in its dependency, by the processes of the world it is embedded in. As for the processes on which this being depends, Patočka points especially to corporeity and, even more importantly, to inter-subjective relations, in which the self does not freely determine itself but is rather determined by others.

In Chapter 10, I paid attention to the body. In the previous three chapters, I sought to indicate that the otherness intrinsically conditioning existence can and should be seen at work also elsewhere than in the body and between subjects. I have deliberately left an analysis of intersubjectivity for the final chapter. Not due to its unimportance, on the contrary. Patočka puts, as will be shown in this chapter,²⁰⁸ virtually absolute emphasis on intersubjectivity: he "localizes" *infinity* into the relation between subjects. His reflections on intersubjectivity thus necessarily include, though mostly in an implicit way, some idea of the relation between finite beings and infinity.

Let me begin by focusing on this issue. Generally, the relation between the finite and the infinite can be conceived of in three ways. Their relationship can be seen either as negative (the infinite *excluding* the finite) or as privative (the finite *lacking* infinity), but the infinite can be also envisioned, and this is the idea of Patočka I seek to elucidate in this chapter, as being *in* the finite. It is not by chance that this idea provided for the title of one of the most valuable monographs on Patočka (Karfík 2008). Indeed, Patočka's considerations on this topic can be synopsised as "the odyssey of the absolute turned into finite," as Karfík named the perhaps crucial chapter of the just mentioned book (cf. Karfík 2008: 36–43).

Despite its merits, however, Karfík's interpretation does not formulate a number of questions as sharply as I wish to do here. If the absolute in Patočka's philosophy has really become finite, can we still meaningfully call it absolute?²⁰⁹ What is the relation between this idea and Christianity?²¹⁰ And since the problem of the finite-infinite relation is closely connected to that of transcendence (transcendence can at least be exemplified by the activity by which the finite being relates to infinity),²¹¹ also the problem of transcendence must be tackled in this chapter.

²⁰⁸ This chapter is based on a paper "Approaching the Absolute in Jan Patočka's Phenomenology," *Tijdschrift voor Filosofie*, 79(3), 2017, 499–515.

²⁰⁹ Karfík himself, if I understand him correctly, answers this question negatively. Cf. his "Post scriptum" to the Czech translation of the just mentioned chapter (Karfík 2016: 171).

²¹⁰ Regarding this issue, cf. Hagedorn 2011, 2014 and 2015b, Evink 2015, Warren 2015, Kočí 2016 and 2017.

²¹¹ A comprehensive analysis of the concept of transcendence in Patočka's philosophy is offered by Frei (2014). Cf. also San (2012).

At first, this chapter summarizes Patočka's early ideas on the finite-infinite relation, then it turns attention to Patočka's late concept of the movement of existence. After critically assessing the idea of "the realm of spirit and freedom," I focus on Patočka's speaking of the possibility of living eternal life. Yet, to realize such a possibility, one must dedicate oneself to others in love; then "the kingdom of God" can be among us. I argue that love, as the medium of self-transcendence towards infinity, can be performed also in the first and second movements of existence. It is by relating to other finite beings in their concrete situation, and not by relating to Being, that one lives in infinity. I concretize this concept by elucidating Patočka's notion of a "pure common inwardness" that can be realized only if the finite human being de-subjectifies and de-limits itself, and by emphasizing the infinite not as hiding behind appearances but rather as performed within them. Finally, I localize Patočka's concept of the finite-infinity relation in the context of related reflections of Feuerbach, Kierkegaard, and Nietzsche.

Infinite Life

Patočka's general idea of the finite-infinite relation can be aptly depicted by his early thesis according to which "the absolute is not outside but within us" (Patočka 2007b: 26). This idea, however, can be interpreted in very different ways.

This conviction seems to be implicit already in Patočka's dissertation, according to which phenomenology, by the method of reflection, is able to turn not to worldly but to world-constituting, not to created but to creative subjectivity. In other words, phenomenology, for Patočka similarly to Hegelianism, "proceed[s] from absolute being. The phenomenological field is something like *intellectus dei infinitus*" (Patočka 2008a: 118). Phenomenology analyses, to cite Patočka's habilitation, "the structures of transcendental subjectivity in which reality is formed" (Patočka 2016a: 20). The turn to transcendental subjectivity, which is a turn *away* from the world, is simultaneously a turn towards *its principle*: "transcendental ... subjectivity *is* the world" (Patočka 2016a: 20).

All of these quotations need to be read in the context of Patočka's emphasis on *life*, which "by its own sovereignty dictates itself tasks, determines values and laws. This autonomous life is a deity fighting its own dangers" (Patočka 1996d: 83). These words bear witness to the impossibility of identifying the absolute strictly with transcendental consciousness: rather, they demand it be identified with *life*.²¹² And it is of crucial importance that the just-mentioned dangers of the absolute are not only *its* dangers but *our* dangers since autonomous life, i.e. the absolute, is not outside of us: "the absolute itself is wholly contained within the finite ... One cannot rely on the gods because the absolute is not outside but within us" (Patočka 2007b: 26).

As stated, the exact meaning of "within us" here is the key problem of the present chapter. This bold idea is formulated in one of Patočka's shorter papers from the 1930s; these papers contrast, in both their content and diction, with the academic writings quoted above. As Karfík puts it: "in his papers, Patočka preaches heroism, taking finitude on one's own shoulders, whereas in *The Natural World* he enthuses about jumping into the absolute

²¹² Regarding the importance of life in Patočka's early phenomenology, see Chapters 2–4 above.

of transcendental subjectivity. The question of Patočka's own philosophical position suggests itself. Was he really split to such a degree or did he merely pretend one of these standpoints?" (Karfík 2008: 34).²¹³

In his habilitation, Patočka speaks of the infinite task of "a conscious reliving of the whole of reality" (Patočka 2016a: 21), which can be realized, of course, only partially. This concept implies a specific model of the (theoretical) relation to the infinite: there is one universal, infinite source – namely *life* – which realizes itself in the life-world, and the finite human being can *consciously* participate in this process of infinity by "reliving" it. As explicated in Chapter 2, upon closer inspection we see that the singular finite being is, according to this concept, participating in an inter-personal process of life; it is exactly due to being part of it that the finite being, or the finite consciousness, can theoretically "relive" it.

For this reason, I believe, there is no need to interpret Patočka's concept, as Karfík does, as demanding a "[jump] into the absolute of transcendental subjectivity." There is no need to leap into it – one must rather accept its participation therein, or, more precisely, in life in its trans-singular infinity. To put it a touch more crudely: it is not only unnecessary but mistaken to want to jump, as it were, out of one's own finite skin; rather, one must seek to realize the infinite through accepting one's own finitude.

Seen this way, the idea of a theoretical "reliving" of the world is *not* in contradiction with Patočka's papers emphasizing a non-theoretical, indeed "heroic" (cf. Patočka 2007b: 27–28) relation to the world. Rather, these papers contribute to making a fuller picture of Patočka's concept in which, in the last instance, the relation to the world is gained "not intellectually but through living [*nikoli intelektuálně, nýbrž životně*], through striking against the hard stones of our borders" (Patočka 2007e: 53; translation modified). Yet, this idea is sufficiently articulated only in Patočka's late thought, to which I now turn.²¹⁴

The Realm of Spirit and Freedom

Explicating the third movement of existence, which is the movement of transcendence, Patočka underlines that human "freedom for truth" entails "no need to jump head first into absolute reflection, to sever at once all bonds tying the reflecting I to the world – radical reflection is itself *motivated*, it is a *critical* reflection, its prejudice is true freedom from prejudice, since it is a negation of the *bad prejudice* of the mundane I, a negation of the interestedness that is not only theoretical but also practical" (Patočka 2016b: 126).

Above, I have sought to indicate that we do not have to read Patočka's early phenomenology as embracing the concept of an unmotivated absolute reflection. Yet, comparing Patočka's studies from the 1930s and 1940s with his late thought, one can identify,

²¹³ Karfík also cites a telling letter from 1933 in which Patočka speaks of a sharp difference between Husserl, who "makes philosophy in the absolute," and Heidegger, who "disclaims any approach to the absolute" (Karfík 2008: 27, n. 8).

²¹⁴ In one of his very last studies, Patočka formulates following observation which is implicit, I would argue, already in his early phenomenology: "Landgrebe grasped perceptively that the free act in which the *epoché* is rooted cannot ... be integrated into the overall conception of subjectivity as it appears in the view of the transcendental spectator, and showed a profound reason for it, in that freedom is essentially linked to the future-oriented extasis of temporality while insight, contemplation, and theoretical interest are by their very nature rooted in the past oriented 'already' which pertains to what is finished, to that into which a free being is set" (Patočka 1989d: 311).

as indicated in Chapter 4 and explicated in more detail in previous chapters, another important shift, namely the de-subjectifying “suppression” of the methodological priority of life, which in Patočka’s early thought “substituted” Husserl’s consciousness. In Patočka’s late thought, we cannot recur to transcendental subjectivity/life constituting the world as we cannot, and must not, overcome our interestedness in the world. In what way, then, does the movement of transcendence proceed?

In one of his descriptions of the third movement Patočka states that this movement opens “a possibility for the participants in one and the same revelation of the nullity of the earth up to then ... to conceive the idea of a new earth – the earth as revelation of a new realm, which is not dependent on them but coming to them, a realm whose meaning does not spring from things but nonetheless touches them in their core – the realm of spirit and freedom” (Patočka 2015c: 72). What *exactly* is meant by the “realm of spirit and freedom”?

Not only in these descriptions of the third movement does Patočka seem to come close to Hegel’s idea of Spirit realizing itself in the world.²¹⁵ In a similar way one can read also Patočka’s re-reading of Husserl’s phenomenology, which is basically another description of the third movement: “The goal Husserl meant to attain with his phenomenological reduction as a fact achievable in philosophical reflection is in reality a result of the communication of existences: their transcending into a chain of beings united not merely by an external link, of beings which are not mere islands of life in a sea of objectivity, but for whom things and objects emerge from the ocean of being in the service of which they commune” (Patočka 2016b: 179).

Patočka definitely sought to interpret Husserl’s idea of the transcendental universe of monads in a more “realistic” way. Speaking of existences, he does not mean “entities” defined by their consciousness or ego; he means those whose “determinations consist in [their] situation and [their] acts” (Patočka 1991a: 283). Yet, many questions arise here. What is that “realm of spirit and freedom” which is supposed to be the “revelation” of a new realm “coming to” people? Is it the same as the “ocean of being” from which things emerge for communicating existences? And especially: how to interpret that communicative “transcending into a chain of beings” in the service of being?

The Philosophy of Future

Patočka connects the third movement with the temporal dimension of the future. In the present context, we might read this as implying that the third movement is open to, or discloses, something irreducible to what is presently given. In Patočka’s own words, the third movement “discovers ... a fundamental dimension of the natural world, a dimension which is not *given* ... and yet essentially determines this world” (Patočka 2016b: 179–180). What does the future disclose to us?

Patočka constantly emphasizes the openness of the future as the openness of nothingness, or death, and stresses, following Heidegger, the confrontation with human finitude.²¹⁶ In some of his texts, however, he puts emphasis on the openness of the future

²¹⁵ According to Karfík, Patočka’s philosophy of history is an attempt to relive a philosophical project that has its origins in the German Enlightenment and that was realized most fully by Hegel. Yet, whereas Hegel’s realization is based on the ontology of the in-finite, absolute subject, Patočka actualizes it on the basis of Heidegger’s ontology. Cf. Karfík (2016): 168.

²¹⁶ See, e.g., these formulations: “That the third basic relation ... is also a temporal one follows from its relation to the future, to nonbeing, to death” (Patočka 1989a: 266). “The accent on the future requires, on the

as the openness for “eternal life.” In his two “Studies on Time” from the 1950s, he explains that the “future in the true sense is a *full* future, i.e. a future fulfilled, even overflowing with meaning” (Patočka 2002c: 640), and that, accordingly, “to believe in life is essentially to believe in eternal life” (Patočka 2002d: 647).²¹⁷

This proposition or rather this set of propositions according to which by believing in the future we believe in life and by believing in life we believe in eternal life is formulated by Patočka while reinterpreting the Christian concept of faith.²¹⁸ And although Patočka philosophically *reinterprets* faith, in the 1950s he does not philosophically justify it, and it is unclear whether he himself avows to it. However, at the end of the 1960s, especially in the context of Patočka’s reflections on sacrifice, his idea of the third movement as “life given in dedication,” which, “in a certain sense, [is] eternal life” (Patočka 2016b: 179; translation modified),²¹⁹ becomes quite explicit. It seems possible, then, not only to *believe* in eternal life but to really *live* it. But how?

Infinity in the Finite

By speaking of a “revelation” of the realm “unconditioned by them but coming to them” Patočka does not mean that the realm of eternity comes “unilaterally” from the future. For this realm to come, human beings must *turn* to it.²²⁰ It is through such a turn that the future *is* here or, as Patočka puts it, it appears as being *already* here: “the kingdom of God [has] already come, [is] already among us – but in such a way that each must *accomplish* his conversion to it” (Patočka 2016b: 179). Strictly speaking, “the kingdom of God” is neither, in terms of time, in the future nor, topologically, elsewhere; it is “among us,” yet only through our turn to it.

To understand how this “kingdom” can become manifestly present (or to understand how infinity realizes itself), we must *not* limit our attention to Patočka’s descriptions of “conceiving the idea of a new earth” or of the communication of existences in the service of Being. We must fully appreciate that Patočka also describes the third movement as the movement of *love*. It is true love that “answers” the question of how to *realize* human life, and this question arises from the disclosure of the future.

Whereas the idea of the communication of existences in the service of Being evokes one’s submitting to something *impersonal*, by identifying the third movement with the movement of love we get quite another idea of the relation between the finite singular being and infinity. Love needs not to be thought of as a devotion to the trans-human and (singularly) non-existent: rather, love is a relation to fellows, a movement among concrete finite beings who show and fulfil their being due to love as a performance “that positively

contrary, that the *already* existent cease to be regarded as the decisive instance of possibilities, that the possibility of not-being come to the fore and sharpen our eyes to that to which alone we can, and must, *give ourselves up*” (Patočka 2016b: 164).

²¹⁷ The two studies on time have been interpreted by Kouba (2015).

²¹⁸ Cf. Hagedorn 2015b: esp. 34–36.

²¹⁹ In the Czech original, Patočka uses the collocation *život věčný* which should be translated into English, due to its obvious Christian connotations, as “eternal life.”

²²⁰ Ivan Chvatík believes that, to overcome the present crisis of the world, Patočka seeks a *third conversion* after the first conversion from myth to philosophy and the second made by Christianity; cf. Chvatík (2011: esp. 272–277).

presents the essential – as life universal, giving birth to all in all, evoking life in the other, a self-transcendence toward the other and with him again to infinity” (Patočka 1989a: 263).

If we acknowledge that “life universal,” which is the infinite, can be manifested only by a “self-transcendence toward the other,” i.e. by the relation of the finite *to the finite*, we can also see that by this movement the finite human being does not relate to the trans-human but transcends its egocentricity and opens itself not so much to the world or to Being but to other appearing singularities encountered in the world. Only by this openness toward finite beings can any being transcend its finitude and manifest “universality.” In other words, the idea of “all in all” suggests a fundamentally different relation between the part and the whole: the finite human being is in infinity not as a small part in the huge whole but as a part which paradoxically makes the whole present if it opens itself to other finite “parts.”

Importantly, this concept allows one to overcome cardinal flaws of Patočka’s phenomenological predecessors. Firstly, the flaw of Husserl’s transcendental phenomenology, namely of “subjectivism which sees in man ultimately the absolute itself (so that man is for it an internally infinite being)”; secondly, Heidegger’s “irrationalism of that prevenient being at whose mercy the meaning of being human then is” (Patočka 1989a: 271). The human being is not an *internally* infinite being; it *manifests* infinity only when, so to speak, stepping *out* of itself. And Heideggerian Being is not, accordingly, independent of intersubjective movement. In other words, infinity is “in us,” but only in the sense of being *between* human beings; in this way, one can philosophically interpret the idea of the kingdom of God being already *among us*.

Describing the movement of love, Patočka explains that by “devoting myself I gain the *awareness of myself as essentially infinite*” (Patočka 1989a: 263). Considering the just mentioned criticism of Husserl, this idea certainly cannot be interpreted as suggesting that the human being is in itself and by itself an infinite being. The infinity I am “aware” of when giving myself to the other, or rather the infinity I manifest by this act, is the infinity between you and I. This infinity, which is between you and I, is neither in me nor in you. Hence, despite Husserl’s attempt “to show that the true approach to the absolute is a descent into subjectivity” (Patočka 2015c: 72), the absolute cannot be found there. In fact, it cannot be found at all. It can only be *performed*, again and again, in the *movement* among finite beings.

Works of Love

What I find profoundly problematic in Patočka’s concept, however, is his restricting of the intersubjective movement of love to the “area” of the third movement only. According to Patočka, the first two movements are “movements of finite beings which self-realize fully within their finitude, wholly plunging into it and therein surrendering themselves to the rule of a power – of the Earth” (Patočka 1998: 151). The third movement, then, is “an attempt to break through our earthliness” (Patočka 1998: 151). Since it is only in the third movement that human beings can realize their freedom, what is manifested through the first and second movements is, from the truly human point of view, unimportant.

This underestimation of the first two movements seems to be conditioned by the ambiguity of the concepts of finitude and infinity. On the one side, infinity is the *opposite* of finitude conceived as boundedness and mundaneness (associated by Patočka with the first and second movements); only the third movement, then, is infinite as the movement that *overcomes* this kind of finitude. But infinity can be conceived differently: not as the

opposite of thus conceived finitude but as that which is manifested *through* finite relations between you and me, so appearing *in* them. Here, infinity is not the opposite of finitude; on the contrary, it is due to our being finite that we can live in the infinite.

It suggests itself, of course, to exclude the possibility of living in infinity from the first and second movements, when the third movement is conceived as a relation to “something” other than that, or different to that, which is given in the world. And it is tempting to conceive Being, or the world, in such a way, namely not only as that which is other than beings but also as that to which we should *directly* relate. However, although one might say that we are, or at least can be, *loving* beings thanks to being disclosed by Being, we are such beings due to our *participating* in being and not our relating to it. As Patočka puts it in one of his latest texts: “Being is not what we love, but that *through which we love*, what *gives* us to love” (Patočka 2015d: 109).

Accordingly, when the human being is “full of love,” then its “participating” in love needs not to be performed by relating to Being or to Life, but by *loving* and *living* existence toward beings of this world.²²¹ It is in this way that I suggest interpreting also Patočka’s rather vague appeal “to sacrifice oneself so that something other could *be*, so that the earth and the sky would not only reveal themselves but would become a manifestation of something higher” (Patočka 1989a: 267).

Is this “stance” in contradiction with the first and second movements? Patočka himself connects the first movement with biological love, which he conceives as “merely an incomplete and inconsistent metaphor of this [i.e. of the third movement’s] true and final love” (Patočka 1989a: 268),²²² while in the second movement there is no place for love insofar as other human beings appear, and are approached, as atomized and objectified competitors through it. Moreover, by closely connecting the third movement with specific activities (such as philosophy or politics), Patočka indeed *separates* it from the others.

But, although true love, as interpreted by Patočka, cannot be thought of without its relation to “something” other than that which is disclosed by the first and second movements – without relation to the *future* – it would be shortsighted to limit its performance to any separate sphere of philosophical, political, or historical activity. Love, in its openness toward the future, transforms our relation to the world or, more precisely, to others in their concrete existence, and as such it is realized (also, if not just and only) in the world of the first and second movements, in the world brought to light by these movements. It modifies, by its performance, also their performance by turning to, or *returning* to, others in their concrete (affective) situation of (present) practice. The openness of love, this *unpolemical* openness,²²³ moves within this world, thus opening that “coming to us.”

A Pure Common Inwardness

According to Patočka, “the point of the entire drama of a human life is whether that which implicitly already contains that primordial, purely situational contact will or will not be discovered – the interior (*nitro*) concealed behind all that manifests itself” (Patočka 1989a:

²²¹ As is probably clear, I disagree with Hagedorn as well as Patočka’s idea that “human life is ‘unfree’ as long as it clings to something in the world, as long as it is preoccupied with beings” (Hagedorn 2015: 36).

²²² Interestingly, devaluating the mythical way of life, Patočka uses the same analogy speaking of prehistorical living as living in “ontological metaphor.” Cf. above, Chapter 11.

²²³ Of course, in loving others, one can also be polemical toward them, but it does not make *polemos* the principle of action, and much less that of love.

260). Patočka uses here the same word as in his war manuscripts, namely *nitro*, which I translate as inwardness. Elsewhere, when describing the third movement as the movement of dedication, he states that this movement is performed “for the sake of finding a pure common inwardness” (Patočka 2015c: 71). Here, as one can see, Patočka’s idea of sacrifice is formulated not so negatively, namely as the sacrifice for nothing, or for no-thing. Nevertheless, of course, this “pure common inwardness” is not a thing either.

More concretely, after describing the deficiencies of the first two movements, Patočka identifies two possibilities of “further” movement of existence: the human being who has faced its finitude can either become a master, as in Hegel’s dialectic of master and slave, to prolong its finite life, or it can “[turn] outwards ... to another life. Life which has won itself as existence cannot close off, since it would then sink back into mere self-prolongation; life which has acknowledged its finitude has won itself solely in order to give itself up in dedication” (Patočka 2015c: 71).

By giving itself in dedication, the subject in a sense de-subjectifies itself: it transcends its limited self, namely the self which delimits itself by the second movement, by de-limiting it otherwise – by opening itself to others. In this sense, the self appears here, in the third movement, not as the mightiness of self-asserting but of self-giving. Insofar as the living self overcomes here its natural tendency to self-assertion, one surely can speak of its transubstantiation or of the trans-substantiation of life: “The strength of the transubstantiation of life is the strength of a new love, a love yielding itself unconditionally to others” (Patočka 1989a: 268).

As Patočka’s reference to the “pure common inwardness” clearly indicates, this transubstantiation is not realized *singularly*, it rather presupposes interpersonal activity by which this shared inwardness is “found.” Exactly in this sense we should think limited, *finite* relationships to other finite being(s) as the place of the un-limited, *infinite*. Clearly, this infinity-evoking relation cannot be conceived of as “the communication in the service of Being,” since such communication is realized, as Rezek incisively conveys it, “through a generalized other – by this, however, an inner relation becomes completely lost” (Rezek 2010d: 121). Yet, it is Patočka himself who says, to the contrary, that “love means ... entering the most unique, the most unrepeatably relations” (2006b: 374, n. 367).²²⁴

As should be clear by now, Patočka’s description of “the interior concealed behind all that manifests itself” is easily misleading. Strictly speaking, this interior is not *behind* appearances. Rather, as being, albeit hidden, already *in* “that primordial, purely situational contact,” the very place of inwardness is in this *encounter*, in the encounter between beings, and hence rather outside: inwardness manifests itself outside and, even more importantly, it manifests itself not as being *already* behind appearances but as *being performed* through them.

The Human Condition

Insofar as inwardness, and especially that “pure common inwardness,” is performed through appearances, it both does and does *not* transcend finite beings. Yet it transcends all present human reflections including the transcendental one. Accordingly, the activity of a phenomenological philosopher should not be imagined as a self-contained activity

²²⁴ Obviously, Patočka comes close to Levinas’ idea that “the individual and the personal are necessary for Infinity to be able to be produced as infinite” (Levinas 1979: 218). This similarity, however, cannot be analysed here in more detail.

proceeding in an independent sphere of absolute consciousness; on the contrary, the medium of phenomenology is the concrete, experiencing human being reflecting its asubjective conditioning for the sake of others. In other words, phenomenology reflects *only* our *given* situation, thus participating in our human condition.

Taking into account Patočka's explicit reference to Hegel mentioned in the first part of this chapter, one can read Patočka's late criticism of Husserl analogically to Feuerbach's criticism of Hegel: to identify the principle of the world with spirit is to absolutize, to make infinite one side, and only one side, of the finite human being, namely its spirit; but that which phenomenology must analyse is not consciousness but life, life in its conditions and in its, for lack of a better word, mutuality, in its conditioned mutuality, which is essential and positive.

This is why I think that Feuerbach's description of the (rather projected than realized) philosophy of future is in concord with Patočka's own mature approach:²²⁵ "Desire not to be a philosopher if being a philosopher means being different to man; do not be anything more than a *thinking man*; think not as a thinker, that is, not as one confined to a faculty which is *isolated* in so far as it is *torn away* from the totality of the real being of man; think as a *living, real* being, in which capacity you are exposed to the vivifying and refreshing waves of the ocean of the world; think as one who exists, as one who is *in the world* and is part of the world, not as one in the vacuum of abstraction, not as a solitary monad, not as an absolute monarch, not as an unconcerned, extra-worldly God; only then can you be sure that being and thought are united in all your thinking" (Feuerbach 1972: §51).

Yet, it is necessary to mention not only Feuerbach but Kierkegaard as well. The ideas of these two thinkers, both developing their concepts *against* Hegel, demonstrate that the movement of love as opening "the kingdom of God" allows for (at least) two fundamentally different interpretations. Insofar as this kingdom is already among us, should we deny anything transcending humans and embrace simply a different "hubris" than that of transcendental idealism (Feuerbach)? Or shall we rather affirm humans as being conditioned by that which founds them by fundamentally transcending them (Kierkegaard)?

Although the idea of sacrifice for nothing can be read as "a kenotic sacrifice" and as "a unique Christian contribution to the history of ideas" (Kočí 2016: 164), neither Patočka's appropriation of this idea nor his interpretation of faith²²⁶ must be read as implying Patočka's acceptance of Christianity. And it is desirable to pay attention to the philosophical interpretation of Christianity Patočka might have relied on, primarily to that by Kierkegaard.²²⁷ In my reading of Patočka, Martin Kočí's description according to which "for Patočka, the sacrifice as yielding itself unconditionally to others—kenosis—overcomes finitude because it reveals to all that this life is not everything but rather nothing and that there is a greater no-thing which rules over everything" (Kočí 2016: 164) points to the very *problem*. Is there any "greater no-thing which rules over everything"? Patočka is not unaware, of course, of Nietzsche's subversive re-evaluation of crucial Christian

²²⁵ In fact, Patočka's image of "the ocean of being" sounds like an echo of Feuerbach's "vivifying and refreshing waves of the ocean of the world."

²²⁶ In the 1950s, when interpreting faith, Patočka connects it with the "conception in which the future takes priority" and identifies it with "the belief that no decision is ultimate and irrevocable" (Patočka 2015c: 9). Regarding the concept of faith, cf. Hagedorn 2015b: esp. 34–36, and Kočí 2016: esp. 113–114.

²²⁷ Especially because some of the fundamental thoughts of Heidegger's *Being and Time*, utilized by Patočka, are based on the reconsideration of Kierkegaard's thought, and Patočka's own concept of the movements of existence can be connected with that of Kierkegaard, as already pointed out by Kohák (1989: 284).

motifs, including those of faith, love, and sacrifice.²²⁸ Should we not rather accept, along with Nietzsche, that there is no greater thing than life?

When interpreting Patočka's appropriation of Christianity, this question seems to me unavoidable. I have no answer to it. In the last instance, I believe, Patočka's reflections suggest that only the movement of love itself as related to others in the given world of our concrete affective situation can "answer" it. It is through this movement that we find ourselves able to, "from a new meaning revealed to us ... glimpse something like divinity on the horizon of the newly discovered world, where we are not alienated from Being, from things, from the others around us, from ourselves. Yet non-alienation, proximity, gathering, this is ... happiness" (Patočka 2015d: 113–114).

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²²⁸ Regarding sacrifice, see e.g. this formulation: "I love those who do not first seek behind the stars for a reason to go under and be a sacrifice, who instead sacrifice themselves for the earth, so that the earth may one day become the overman's" (Nietzsche 2006: 8).

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