

Judgement, Responsibility and the Life-World

Perth Workshop 2011 Conference Proceedings



*Held at Murdoch University
28-29 November, 2011*

The workshop was part of the ARC funded project Judgement, Responsibility and the Life-world

ISBN 978-1-921877-03-2
Copyright at Murdoch University, 2012
<http://philosophy.murdoch.edu.au/jrl/termsandconds.html>

Contents

Judgement, Responsibility and the Life-World _____	1
Lubica Učník and Anita Williams	
Jan Patočka’s Project of an Asubjective Phenomenology _____	6
Ivan Chvatík	
Patočkian Reflections on the Life-World and the Space of Manifestation _____	16
Lubica Učník	
Questions about Jan Patočka’s “Originary Totality” _____	23
Inês Pereira Rodrigues	
Jan Patočka and the Three Movements of Human Existence: From Asubjective to Trans-Subjective Contexts _____	29
Suzi Adams	
Listening Responsibly: Reflections on Music and Ethical Experience in the Thought of Jan Patočka _____	37
Anthony Backhouse	
The Nostalgic Movement of Responsibility in Patočka’s Later Teaching _____	43
Peter McDowell	
Death and Responsibility: Socrates and Heidegger _____	52
Ingo Farin	
Situated Reason, Contextuality, and the Limits of Formalism: A Critical Hermeneutic Perspective _____	62
Paul Healy	
Telling Time Together: Hannah Arendt and the Temporal Condition of Human Beings in the World _____	69
Lucy Tatman	
Husserl’s Arguments against Logical Psychologism and his Conception of Ideal Objects ____	74
James Burrowes	
Formal Brain Science and Real People: Husserl’s Critique of Psychologism _____	83
Anita Williams	

Judgement, Responsibility and the Life-World

Lubica Učník
Philosophy
Murdoch University

Anita Williams
Psychology
Murdoch University

The Perth workshop “Judgement, Responsibility and the Life-World” aimed to address a philosophical account of the nature of self-responsibility as a critical, self-reflective and ethical practice which is required to correct the increasingly value-free formalism of knowledge. The idea was to base his concept of self-responsibility on the critical analyses of the philosophical contributions of Edmund Husserl and Jan Patočka, both of whom argued that the idea of self-responsibility must take into account the notion of the “life-world” (*Lebenswelt*), the world in which we live.¹ The point is to argue that both Husserl’s and Patočka’s visions represent a startlingly modern and relevant assessment of the current critical situation of our technologically advanced but morally challenged and unevenly developed human culture.

Introduction

The critique of knowledge is nothing new. However, Edmund Husserl’s project is not simply the critique of knowledge but the critique of a formalized knowledge which has forgotten its origins in the life-world. When we dismiss the life-world, the assumption that formalised knowledge can solve the problems of society becomes prevalent and this leads to a crisis of culture. Jan Patočka, following Husserl, suggests that we live in a double world: (1) the world of formalised nature stripped of everything subjective and (2) the everyday imprecise world. Our understanding of the world is turned up-side-down. The everyday world is explained in terms of scientific models that were originally constructed by idealisation of our world but now become the measure of it. Severed from the everyday world, formal judgement then leads to objective knowledge bereft of everything human. Yet this formal knowledge does not relate to our everyday concerns.² Patočka suggests that unless we acknowledge the life-world as the starting point where formalism begins then nothing will change. Both Husserl and Patočka argue that we must reflect on the problematic nature of formalised knowledge expressed in the belief in the superiority of abstract models over human judgement.

One pertinent example of the problem with formal knowledge substituting our everyday experience of the world might be the global financial crisis. The current global financial crisis shows the way in which a mode of formalism embodied in systems of financial transaction can become isolated from the life-world in problematic ways: not only (1) in the obvious sense of being removed from the real valuation of companies on which actual wealth depends, but also (2) in the way that we understand it to be possible to govern and manage investment behaviour, company operations and even individual performance through structured and systematic models. Thus the economic system not only functions mechanistically, but is also divorced from any real sense of personal responsibility. Yet, we take the economic system as a more or less accurate description of decisions

¹ See Patočka, Jan. *Přirozený Svět Jako Filosofický Problém*. Praha: Československý Spisovatel; Patočka, Jan. "Přirozený Svět' v Meditaci Svého Autora po Třiatřiceti Letech." *Přirozený Svět Jako Filosofický Problém*. Praha: Československý Spisovatel, 1992a, 167-251 and Husserl, Edmund. *The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology: An Introduction to Phenomenological Philosophy*. Trans. David Carr. Northwestern University Studies in Phenomenology & Existential Philosophy. Evanston: Northwest University Press, 1970.

² Patočka, “Přirozený Svět' v Meditaci”, 9.

we make about money, not as a formal model that cannot speak of human decisions. We invest mechanistic models with pretend life-world legitimacy. We forget that these formal models stripped of the actual authenticity of living in the world. We, thereby, naively accept the mechanisms as more “real” than our relationships with others in the world of our living. In this way, we construct the formalised models that we then apply back to the life-world, as if the life-world was frozen in time, perfectly predictable and uniform. We delude ourselves that economic models can give us solutions to the real worldly problems. In this way, we lose a sense of real worth of things as well as our labour and increasingly operate within a framework oriented to the maximisation of notional gain as the only goal. Furthermore, individuals see pure competition and financial reward as the only criteria governing success. Mechanism replaces real human relationships.

Focusing on the failure of judgement that formal models give rise to—especially evident in the current financial crisis—we intended to develop a new narrative of the relation between judgement and responsibility; one that is applicable in the sphere of knowledge as well as in ethics: a narrative where responsibility and judgement go together. We contend that connecting the responsibility and judgement gives us a critical edge in relation to the present day crisis, not only in the sphere of economics and the environment but also in other facets of everyday life.

Everywhere we see the replacement of the capacity to judge with the capacity merely to calculate. By using computer models, for example, we reduce human interactions to a mechanistic model and assume that perfect causality also applies to humans living in the world. Responsibility and judgement are misplaced by mechanism. By way of a preliminary illumination of the problem with replacing responsibility and judgement with mechanism, we propose returning to a concept of knowledge which requires self-responsibility and self-critique.

Self-responsibility and self-critique have been themes in philosophy since Socrates endorsed the demand to “know thyself”. In the modern philosophical tradition, however, self-critical reason, a reason which gives the law to itself, has been at the very centre of the practice of both epistemology and ethics. In the twentieth century, the European phenomenological philosophers Husserl and Patočka brought new clarity and a sense of urgency to the need for critical thinking and responsibility. Speakers in the workshop worked through Husserl’s and Patočka’s accounts of knowledge, linking these to judgement and responsibility and presenting their accounts as coherent and relevant theory for the present age.

At the heart of our discussion is Husserl’s concept of the life-world. Husserl’s conceptualisation of the “life-world” is central to the analysis of the nature of formal knowledge and the manner in which formalised knowledge tied to technological advances have shaped modern culture. Husserl claimed that in order to understand responsibility for knowledge, formalised or everyday, we must acknowledge that all our claims have their starting point in the life-world. Hence, Husserl’s stress on responsibility is intimately tied to his discovery of the importance of the life-world. This insight has important implications for philosophical reflection on the role of formalised knowledge in contemporary culture.

Husserl acknowledges the extraordinary dominance and success of the natural sciences based on their rigorous application of theory, the discovery of the infinity of knowledge, and the use of a certain formalistic method, especially in his seminal work, *The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology: An Introduction to Phenomenological Philosophy*. However, we argue that the nature of the scientific attitude has not been reflected on sufficiently since the time of Husserl’s writing. Natural science has developed into a kind of applied technicity which increasingly dominates and controls all aspects of life. Hence, we feel it is timely to return to Husserl’s discussion of science.

Husserl stresses the idea of responsibility in connection with the idea of infinite tasks. The idea of the infinite task—which can never be achieved but must always be revised through the cooperation

of many thinkers—is at the heart of Husserl’s understanding of responsibility. Only by exposing the architecture of our argument, can we present them to others and allow them to participate in the further development of knowledge. However, we need to refer back to our starting point, the life-world, to ground our insights and understanding. To fail to do so takes us into the domain of formal thinking turned into technique. When we accept the infinite task, without emphasising the importance of the life-world, we use the formalised outcome of the previous tasks and proceed. However, we are only proceeding at the level of abstraction only and the life-world as the ground of our understanding is lost. Leaving the life-world behind, we assume that this formalised account of the world is more accurate, and therefore more true. We then proceed to use it to understand the life-world. Yet the starting point of philosophy, from which sciences grew, is “nothing other than a life” dedicated to “a fully responsible thought”.³

Patočka explains and develops Husserl’s project. He claims that a “responsible attitude makes possible the *life in truth*”, in other words, life dedicated to account for every step of the task must be based on self-critical and, therefore responsible, rationality.⁴ Patočka agrees with Husserl that knowledge must start by being about the world of our living, but questions what Husserl means by this concept.

Ivan Chvatík, Lubica Učník and Inês Pereira Rodrigues take up the question of the life-world in Patočka’s work. Chvatík discusses Patočka’s asubjective phenomenology as serious and critical engagement with the work of Husserl and Martin Heidegger. Chvatík argues that Patočka’s asubjective phenomenology overcomes the persistent subjectivism of Husserl’s phenomenology by staying true to Husserl’s concept of the life-world (the “natural world” in Patočka’s words) as the horizon that makes possible all appearances, including ourselves. Chvatík also argues that Patočka emphasises the primary nature of appearing, as opposed to Being, and, thereby instates a conception of human knowledge that is aware of its limitations and is, hence, a responsible knowing. Along similar lines, Učník discusses the importance of history for Patočka’s understanding of the life-world. She argues that it is only through the encounter of a being who understands with a world in a historical situation that the meaningfulness of things can shine as well as grow dim. Učník emphasises the importance of understanding that scientific understandings—based upon formalisation—have informed our historical situation: the life-world cannot be recovered, but we are responsible for questioning and revealing the meaningfulness of the world for us. Rodrigues clarifies the difference between Husserl’s concept of life-world and Patočka’s notion of “originary totality”. She argues that the key difference is that Husserl starts from the world of given things, while Patočka understands the world as the possibility of all manifestation. For Patočka, the life-world is a historical world that makes possible manifestation.

Suzi Adams, Anthony Backhouse and Peter McDowell focus on Patočka discussion of the three movements of human existence. Adams focuses upon a similar theme to Učník, emphasising the importance of the movement of history as part of Patočka’s three movements of human existence. She particularly focuses upon the necessity to understand that Patočka’s three movements happen against the backdrop of interdependent and historical human affairs and the relevance of this insight for social theorists. Backhouse focuses on the movement of music as an analogy for Patočka’s three movements of human existence because music emphasises our dependence upon, participation with and responsibility for other people. McDowell outlines the importance of Patočka’s discussion of movement and responsibility for contemporary pedagogical theory. For Patočka, it is vital to understand the movement of human existence and to distinguish this living movement from the mathematical concept of movement as a formulaic description of a trajectory taken from A to B.

³ Patočka, Jan. "Edmund Husserl's Philosophy of the Crisis of the Sciences and his Conception of a Phenomenology of the 'Life-World'." Trans. Erazim Kohák. *Jan Patočka. Philosophy and Selected Writings*. Ed. Erazim Kohák. Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1989 [1971], 226.

⁴ Ibid.

Drawing the distinction between the movement of existence and the mathematical conception of movement illustrates that natural science cannot speak to genuine human concerns.

To summarize the discussion of Patočka, the papers found in these conference proceedings highlight the importance of Patočka's thinking, not only as a translator of Husserl, but as a significant thinker in the phenomenological tradition. Patočka helps us to clarify Husserl's concept of life-world. Arguably, he also expands Husserl's notion of life-world to include a shared history that informs and shapes our experience of the world. As such, through Patočka's work, we can make sense of how we can understand the life-world as a ground of science as well as saturated with the products of natural scientific thinking. For Patočka, our responsibility lies in questioning the taken for granted assumptions that we make as part of living.

Husserl's concept of the life-world as distinct from the ideal world of natural science was also influential on thinkers such as Heidegger, Hans-Georg Gadamer, Jürgen Habermas and Hannah Arendt. Ingo Farin discusses the relationship between death, life and responsibility through comparing Heidegger's discussion of death with Socrates' discussion of his own death in the *Apology*. For him, Heidegger's argument for death as an existential structure of life is not enough to ground a full discussion of ethics and human responsibility. Paul Healy argues that the hermeneutics of Gadamer and the work of Habermas are fruitful for understanding the limitations of formalism and aid in reawakening concern for the life-world and our responsibility for our knowledge. Lucy Tatman discusses the concept of time in Hannah Arendt's work and its relation to phenomenology. She argues that worldly time is an aspect of the life-world that is crucial to think about, so that calendar time, a succession of numbers, does not replace meaningful human story telling. For Tatman, our responsibility to confront the crisis of our times is to become the tellers of time. Through the different thinkers' discussions of formalism, the life-world and responsibility, we can see the continued relevance of the phenomenological tradition to understanding contemporary issues.

To finish where phenomenology started, James Burrowes and Anita Williams engage with Husserl's argument against psychologism and his distinction between the real and the ideal. Burrowes outlines Husserl's argument against logical psychologism with particular focus on arguing for the Husserlian distinction between the real and the ideal. Burrowes draws out the significance of Husserl's distinction between the real and the ideal—as well his argument against logical psychologism—for contemporary philosophy. He shows that strong naturalism continues to overlook the difference between the real and the ideal. Similarly, Williams discusses Husserl's argument against logical psychologism and his notion of categorical intuition in order to critique the idea that thoughts can be reduced to a material brain. Burrowes and Williams argue for Husserl's ongoing importance to debates within contemporary philosophy and psychology.

In our discussions of Husserl and Patočka as well as Heidegger, Arendt, Gadamer and Habermas, we hope to have made some headway in clarifying Husserl's concept of the life-world. In particular, we hope to highlight the importance of understanding the formal models of natural science as distinct from the world of our living. Our knowledge always starts from the life-world and, as such, we are responsible for the claims we make and must question our own and other's assumptions.

Conclusion

Patočka suggests that a major problem of modern times is the belief that it is possible to extend a successful scientific model into the midst of human affairs to predict human behaviour. This type of thinking is based on a mechanistic metaphysics using the "law-like calculus and working directly with a mechanical model of human relations".⁵ He further argues that because formal models are an

⁵ Patočka, "Edmund Husserl's Philosophy of the Crisis", 245.

abstraction from the life-world, they are devoid of responsibility. In short, it is not possible to rely on formal knowledge without, at the same time, requiring the technician to be responsible for the knowledge that computers produce.

As Husserl and Patočka acknowledge, science is successful and we cannot live without it: but the starting point from which science proceeds appears forgotten, leading to a crisis of culture. We have taken science as separate from the everyday world. We accept efficaciousness of reason in the domain of science but in the cultural world reason is questioned. Husserl shows that this is a misunderstanding of reason: reason is not only efficacious but also existential. We need to take into account the life-world for “merely fact-minded sciences make merely fact-minded people”.⁶ Patočka’s extension of this critique is to point out that formal models, based on mechanistic metaphysics and erroneously applied in the sphere of human affairs have consequences that are not accounted for.

Husserl stresses that responsibility should provide evidence of our thinking/knowledge and, as Patočka emphasizes, for our acting in the world. When we use computer models, we reduce human interactions to a mechanistic model and assume that perfect causality also applies to this domain. In this way, responsibility is replaced by mechanism. These models are used in every sphere of human affairs in a manner that elides the problematic nature of this type of thinking. However, Husserl and Patočka’s focus on responsibility as a key concept enables an account of the nature and limit of formalised thinking that has important implications for contemporary scientific and cultural practices.

Dr Lubica Učník is a lecturer in philosophy at Murdoch University. Her research interests are the study of Jan Patočka, the Czech philosopher, student of Edmund Husserl and Martin Heidegger, whose work is becoming influential in English phenomenological studies. She is currently pursuing links between Jan Patočka and Hannah Arendt, and the victory of formalised thinking in the modern age that is an extension of the project initiated by Husserl in his late writing on the *Lebenswelt*, life-world.

Dr Anita Williams teaches psychology at Murdoch University. Her research interests are in using phenomenology to understand psychological research methods. In particular, she is interested in the limitations of neuroimaging.

⁶ Husserl, Crisis, §2, 6.

Jan Patočka's Project of an Asubjective Phenomenology

Ivan Chvatík
Philosophy
Charles University

The paper gives a short review of Patočka's personal contacts with Husserl and reviews his position within the phenomenological movement by explaining what sort of criticism on Husserl Patočka develops in his own concept of an "asubjective" phenomenology.

Introduction

As the title of Patočka's project indicates the task in question here is to disengage philosophical thought from the vestiges of traditional Cartesian subjectivism. Patočka sees this Cartesianism not only in philosophy but in the self-understanding of the whole of modern technical civilization.

Let us first briefly recall what Cartesian subjectivism is all about. Descartes' *ego cogito, ergo sum* is a statement which is absolutely certain. It cannot be refuted. Its certainty lies in the fact that the content of its assertion is immediately evident. Whatever I think—however uncertain, vague or absurd it may be—the certainty that, in thinking it, *I am* is indubitable. This knowledge depends on nothing else, I draw it directly from myself; it is, as Plato would have said—and as Patočka reminds us in one of his last finished texts, "Cartesianism and Phenomenology"¹—a *mathēma*. In the same passage, Patočka stresses that the significance of this corner-stone of modern rationality is not simply that it offers "a model of all certitude" but also and above all that it is the starting point of the mode of thinking "for which certitude is the very essence of truth, identical with it".²

It is interesting that Descartes' principle has "a peculiar ambiguity" about it, "consisting in its being the starting point of both modern subjectivism and [the] mathematical objectivism"³ which has not only triumphed in physics but has become a model for the scientisation of all other branches of human knowledge.⁴

Descartes' next step is to ask what is the ego which draws from its *cogito* the certainty of its own being, and he answers logically that it is a *res cogitans*. He then concludes that everything that is not a *res cogitans* is necessarily a *res extensa*. This spatial determination of things has the advantage of being totally universal. It covers all material things and renders superfluous the need to take into account the more specific traits which distinguish them from one another and, according to Descartes, are all fraught with the possibility of delusion. A much greater advantage is, however, that spatial determinations are a sphere of possible idealization which can be handled with the same certainty discovered in reflecting on the *cogito*. Idealized spatial determinations are objects of geometry, and as both Plato and Kant have shown, geometrical knowledge is drawn from within us, it is a *mathēma*. Everything that can be reduced to spatial determinations is mathematisable: "coming to understand spatial relations is what opens our access to things...as capable of being

¹ Jan Patočka, "Karteziánství a fenomenologie" (1976), in *Sebrané spisy*, vol. 7: *Fenomenologické spisy II*, ed. P. Kouba and O. Švec, Prague: Oikoymenth, 2009, 461: "Jistota *Cogito* předchází zajisté všechny ostatní; je to však nicméně jistota mathematická, protože nepřichází 'zvenčí,' zjišťuje se v samotné, čisté reflexi".—See English translation by E. Kohák, "Cartesianism and Phenomenology", in *Jan Patočka. Philosophy and Selected Writings*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989, 292: "The certitude of the *cogito* precedes all others, surely; it is, however, a mathematical certitude nonetheless, because it does not come from 'without' but rather is ascertained in pure reflection".

² Ibid.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid., 458-9; Eng. trans., 290.

construed and calculated. To construe and calculate means at the same time to predict".⁵ The objectivism of the tendency toward mathematisation that asserts itself in all disciplines is thus, in last resort, founded subjectively.

It is easier to understand how modern subjectivism in philosophy stems from Descartes' certainty. Let us consider how Edmund Husserl succumbed to subjectivism and how this circumstance brought Jan Patočka to his idea of asubjective phenomenology.

Patočka first met Husserl and his philosophy while working on his doctoral thesis on stipend in Paris in 1928. Husserl, recently emeritus, was invited at the same time to hold in Paris a series of lectures summing up his philosophical work. (The lectures were initially published in Emmanuel Levinas' French translation under the title *Méditations cartésiennes*.) It was then that Patočka definitely chose phenomenology.

His second meeting with Husserl was not matter of chance. In the academic year 1932/33, he was awarded a Humboldt Foundation scholarship and studied first in Berlin, then in Freiburg, where Husserl greeted in him his only fellow countryman to show interest in phenomenology. (Husserl's native town of Prostějov, or Prossnitz, is part of the same country as Patočka's Prague.) Officially, of course, Patočka had to enrol in Martin Heidegger's philosophy courses (at the time of his rectorship and compromise with National Socialism). The experience reaped during this year in Germany was extremely rich. Patočka not only witnessed Hitler's coming to power but personally met both of the philosophical titans who were to determine his own work. He also struck up a life-long friendship with yet a third great figure of twentieth century philosophy, Husserl's then assistant, Eugen Fink, only two years his senior.

Patočka was then preparing his Habilitation thesis on the "natural world". Immersed in the detailed study of Husserl's phenomenology, he also began to become acquainted with its critics. The most outstanding among them was, of course, Heidegger, though Patočka in the 1930s did not yet fully appreciate his critique. That was to come later. But in studying the problems of the *Lebenswelt*, he acquired a basis enabling him to take an active part in constructive criticism of Husserl.

Basically, neither Patočka nor Heidegger set out to refute Husserl's phenomenology. What they wanted was to distinguish and grasp the guiding idea thanks to which Husserl succeeded in opening up an entirely new and extremely fertile horizon for philosophy, and to identify the points in Husserl where he was—in good faith—unfaithful to his original project. And then, of course, to suggest and work out an alternative solution to the ensuing problems. Heidegger's grandiose attempt is now nearly completely available in the impressively long series of volumes of the *Gesamtausgabe*. It is, however, no easy reading and many believe that Heidegger, in time, betrayed Husserl's project. Patočka, too, was partly of this opinion. Nonetheless, he took Heidegger's philosophy extremely seriously, drew considerable inspiration from it, and set out to amend it as well as Husserl's.

"Husserl's phenomenology claimed to be a new beginning in philosophy", states Patočka at the outset of his 1969/70 lectures on phenomenology at Charles University in Prague, "it was meant from the start to be an entirely new mode of empiricism in philosophy".⁶ Why empiricism?—Husserl was a mathematician by training. He had a sense of precision and an aversion to fantastic philosophical speculations. He wanted to build solely on what he could really see, what presented itself to his eye in genuine, live experience. He was used to this from mathematics. In mathematics we cannot accept as true anything that we do not directly see—see, of course, with the mind's eye, with the eye of the soul.

⁵ Ibid., 460; Eng. trans., 292.

⁶ Jan Patočka, *Úvod do Fenomenologické Filosofie*, ed. Jiří Polívka and Ivan Chvatík (Praha: ISE, Oikoyomenh, Edice Oikúmené, ve spolupráci s Archivem Jana Patočky, 1993), 5.

This is why Husserl, from the very start, had to broaden the concept of experience from the sensual sphere, in which we encounter individual things, to what he calls the *categorial* sphere, where we experience universals, generalities. He was, of course, obliged to distinguish here two kinds of generality. One is obtained by generalization from many experiences of particulars, the other by considering and analysing one single case. The first kind is called *empirical generality*; it is, of course, hypothetical—there can always appear a black swan that will abolish the universality of the white swans. Husserl calls the second kind of generality *eidetic*: what we *see* in a thing as valid for all things of the same kind is *eidos*, the general aspect; it obtains necessarily—not hypothetically—of all relevant particulars. It is, once again, a kind of *mathēma*.

Only after this broadening is it possible to understand Husserl's "principle of all principles" which phenomenology is supposed to respect:

every originary presentive intuition is a legitimizing source of cognition...everything originally (so to speak in its 'personal' actuality) offered to us in 'intuition' is to be accepted simply as what it is presented as being, but also only within the limits in which it is presented there.⁷

What comes into play here is a difference we are familiar with from everyday experience, and whose importance already caught Plato's attention, namely, the difference between empty meaning and its fulfilment. It is clear that this difference makes itself felt both in the sensual and in the categorial sphere. And it is the main factor which led Husserl to the above-mentioned broadening of the concept of experience.

Of course, things are not as simple as they may seem in this brief account. In reality, the task set here involves the questions: What is experience? What are its domains? What is its lawful structure? How does experience in general become possible?

Experience is always experience with or of something. For experience to be experience this something must somehow be given to us, as stated in the principle of principles; we cannot just dream it up. Something must appear, manifest itself to us. To ask what is experience is thus to ask how things are given, how they manifest themselves to us. The study of appearance as such, of manifestation, of the phenomenon—such is the task of phenomenology.

This, of course, requires a method. For Husserl, as we all know, the method is that of phenomenological reduction followed by constitution. Patočka recounts in detail the history of the birth of the idea of reduction and constitution in the essay "Epochē and Reduction".⁸ In a first approximation, Husserl means to exploit Descartes' doubts about the possibility of acquiring knowledge of the outside world, as opposed to the certainty of our *cogito*, our thinking, and, consequently, our *cogitationes*, our thoughts. Leaving aside the problematicity of "transcendent content" (what we want to know about the things of the world in the naïve attitude), we shall study rather our *thoughts* about these transcendent things. We reduce transcendent content to how it appears in our *cogitationes*—this is what Husserl calls reduction. And that once done, we will be able to study how our experience is built in these *cogitationes*—this is constitution. According to Husserl, our thoughts are immediately at our disposal; they are given to us directly as such, we have but to take notice of them, to direct our attention at them in reflection. Husserl thus reduces the transcendence of things of the world to absolute self-presence in the immanence of consciousness. This is a lived-experiential structure given in original, so that it is possible to apply to it the principle of all principles. And, as we do not have original access to anything other than this

⁷ Edmund Husserl, *Ideen zu einer reinen Phänomenologie und phänomenologischen Philosophie. Erstes Buch*, ed. K. Schuhmann, Husserliana III/1, The Hague: M. Nijhoff, 1976, § 24, 43. Cf. English translation by Fred Kersten, *Ideas Pertaining to a Pure Phenomenology and to a Phenomenological Philosophy, First Book*, Dordrecht: Kluwer, 1998, 44.

⁸ Jan Patočka, "Epoché und Reduktion. Einige Bemerkungen" (1975), in *Die Bewegung der menschlichen Existenz*, ed. K. Nellen, J. Němec and I. Srubar, Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1991, 415-23.

structure, Husserl claims that the whole of the reduced world is founded in the accomplishments of consciousness which, in this sense, precedes the world.⁹

We would now expect him to do something like Kant, i.e., to show by his own means how what we understand as a *transcendent, independent object* is constructed in our subjective accomplishments. But this Husserl does not do. He does not want to repeat Kant's procedure and logically construe what the synthetic activities of the subject must be like in order to result, as Kant says, in objective reality, in "the production of phenomenal objects for us".¹⁰ Husserl studies only "factually observed eidetic structures"¹¹ and finds in immanent self-giveness indications of two different modes of being. One is the mode of being of lived-experience, which, as we have seen, is directly accessible in original; the other is the mode of being of reality, which "presents itself always only one-sidedly and incompletely through a certain stratum of lived-experience, the 'hyletic data.'"¹²

Patočka takes up here an objection formulated by others before him, namely, that this ontology "presupposes reflection as an immediate act of self-apprehension without accounting for its possibility".¹³ What does this mean? What exactly is disputed here? Not that we apprehend in reflection our lived-experiences. These are guaranteed by the Cartesian starting point. What is questionable is the presupposition that, in apprehending these lived-experiences, I apprehend myself as experiencing, that my apprehension is self-apprehension. To put it differently, the self-certainty of my lived-experiencing, the *cogito ergo sum*, the certainty of the fact *that* I experience and, therefore, am, is taken as the certainty of immediate access to *what* I am qua experiencing, how I experience my experiencing. This implies, of course, an infinite regress: I experience that I experience that I experience... It can be seen as a vestige of Cartesianism. The experiencing ego is understood as a thing, as a *res cogitans*, which—unlike a *res extensa*—can be adequately viewed, in pure evidence. It is supposed to be the ultimate, absolute ground, on which alone true knowledge can be erected.

Another Husserlian motif is connected with this, namely, the motif of *epochē*. The term was introduced as early as 1907, in the five lectures published under the title *The Idea of Phenomenology*, as complementary to the motif of reduction to the immanence of consciousness: if we want to "know scientifically...what is knowledge", we cannot let any pre-given knowledge obtain, we cannot "accept any being as pre-given"—except, of course, those that are absolutely certain, i.e., our own *cogitationes*.¹⁴ The concept of the *general positing*¹⁵ of the world was first introduced in the *Ideen I*. It means the positing that we automatically accomplish in the natural attitude, the positing of the facts and things of the surrounding world, i.e., their apprehension as "factually existent actuality". Only here, in the *Ideen I*, is "*epochē*" explicitly distinguished from "reduction" and it now means to abstain from this positing: "while it in itself remains what it is, we, so to speak, 'put it out of action,' we 'exclude it,' we 'parenthesize it.'"¹⁶ We do not make use of the belief that these things of the natural attitude are transcendent beings, without thereby in the least losing sight of their content. The content remains valid. Nevertheless, according to Husserl, we cannot perform this parenthesizing universally, because we would then exclude from being "the

⁹ Ibid., 419.

¹⁰ Patočka, *Úvod*, 72.

¹¹ Ibid., 73.

¹² Patočka, "Epoché und Reduktion", 420.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Edmund Husserl, *Die Idee der Phänomenologie*, ed. W. Biemel, Husserliana II, The Hague: M. Nijhoff, 1950, 29-30, Cf. English translation: Edmund Husserl, *The Idea of Phenomenology: A Translation of Die Idee der Phänomenologie. Husserliana II*, trans. Lee Hardy, Edmund Husserl: Collected Works. Volume VIII (Dordrecht, Boston, London: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1999), 22-23.

¹⁵ Husserl, *Ideen I*, § 30, 53; Eng. trans., 56.

¹⁶ Ibid., § 31, 54; Eng. trans., 59.

whole world, including ourselves with all our *cogitare*".¹⁷ This, of course, Husserl cannot admit. By doing this, he would lose the above-mentioned absolutely existent ground of all knowledge. Therefore, *epochē* must be limited: "consciousness has, in itself, a being of its own which, in its own absolute essence, is not touched by the phenomenological exclusion".¹⁸

However, once he refuses the possibility of an absolute reflection which could study this absolute ground of consciousness in original, Patočka must also refuse the limitation of *epochē* demanded by Husserl. He is now determined to perform the *epochē* in a truly universal manner, so as to include lived-experiencing itself. In consequence, we no longer believe that the reflection of our lived-experiences gives us access to our actual experiencing. Only then does it become possible to fully thematise what Husserl originally had in view, namely, how anything at all, *including ourselves*, appears.

This "including ourselves" is important. As long as Husserl supposed that we and our experiencing are immediately accessible in reflection, this accessibility was not included under the heading of appearing. On the contrary, all appearing, i.e., the accessibility of every content of our experience, was grounded in our own accessibility, more precisely in the core of our subjectivity—the supra-individual "transcendental subject". This is where Patočka begins his critique: in Husserl, appearing is based on a particular being and is not thematised in itself. According to Patočka, Husserl thus betrayed his original phenomenological project. The universalisation of the *epochē*, its extension to the sphere of subjectivity, first makes it possible to study appearing as such, only thus do we "make appearing itself appear".¹⁹ And since subjectivity is thus divested of the function of exclusive ground for appearing, Patočka calls his version of phenomenology *asubjective phenomenology*.

In the universal *epochē* it becomes apparent too that, just as the self is the condition of possibility of the appearing of mundane things, so the world, as the horizon of horizons (not as the totality of realities), is the condition of possibility of the appearing of the self. The egoic is, of course, never perceived or in any way immediately experienced in and of itself but rather only as the organizational center of a universal structure of appearance which cannot be reduced to anything appearing as such in its individual being. For this reason, we call this structure the world.²⁰

The refusal of the absolute ground of consciousness entails the abolition of the difference between the transcendence of mundane things and the immanence of the lived-experiences of consciousness. It becomes apparent that the world is not simply the sum of what appears to us but rather a special *a priori* horizon-structure *by means of which* anything can appear to us, precisely in our lived-experiences. This *a priori* world as the horizon of all horizons is, of course, nothing existent, or better: it is no existent thing, just as our lived-experiences are not existent things. Both are necessary components of the structure of appearing.

In our experiencing, which we are in principle always in a way secondarily aware of, we are with the appearing things. Without this possibility of secondary awareness, our experiencing would not be experiencing, nor would it be appearing. The structure of appearing thus implies the possibility for us to become aware of our experiencing. However, we stress once more that this does not mean that I can experience my *experiencing* self as something *experienced*. It must be understood that experiencing as such does not appear.

If I want to say nonetheless, with Descartes, that I, the experiencing self, the *cogitans*, am—and this is clearly what I do want to say, this is where we started from, I am surely no mere nothing—I must

¹⁷ Ibid., § 33, 57; Eng. trans., 63.

¹⁸ Ibid., § 33, 59; Eng. trans., 65.

¹⁹ Patočka, "Epoché und Reduktion", 421.

²⁰ Ibid.

necessarily say that I am otherwise than things, being does not mean the same thing for me as for things. Heidegger goes this way and attempts to describe this mode of being in explicit contrast to the mode of being of things. Patočka largely approves of his endeavour but demands that Heidegger's "structures of experience—the self, freedom, possibility, corporeity, perception, the other...—[be] explained not as a *ground* but rather as that which is *grounded on* the original event of the openness of time",²¹ i.e., in a new, non-subjectivist way.

What does this new, asubjective conception of the subject consist in? In order to answer this question, we shall have to consider, with Patočka, the manner in which anything at all appears to us. This "how" of appearing is something he pays considerable attention to, describing it over and over again. Sometimes he starts from Plato's Seventh Letter with its description of the steps leading to knowledge of the thing itself. Plato discovered in these steps different modes of appearance of an object, but Patočka criticizes him for not having developed a doctrine of appearing as he himself would have it. *Onoma, logos, eidōlon, alēthēs doxa, epistēmē*—these are for Patočka *different* modes of appearance of the *same* thing. The difference can, of course, be further and more finely differentiated, distinguishing various sorts of recollection and imagination, all the multiple aspects in which real physical things show themselves to us, but, no less, our groupings in the sphere of idealities in attempting to grasp a constant *eidos*. This is the first step of the consideration: the *same* thing appears in *different* ways.

The second step is fairly simple. The different modes of appearing, or characters of appearance, do not belong to the determination of what the appearing thing or ideality *is*. (For example, that rails converge in the distance or that we have wrongly visualized the steps of the demonstration of the theorem of Pythagoras and failed to prove it.)

The third step is decisive: the different modes of appearing, which do not belong to the determination of what the thing is, are not something subjective, something of our own that we add to—or, in fact, more often subtract from—the thing; rather, to quote Patočka: "characters of both kinds [i.e., those that belong to the determination of the thing and those that belong to its mode of appearance] appear in the world, in the phenomenal field 'before me,' they are not there as lived-experiences and things subjective",²² as Husserl persisted in vain in conceiving them. Husserl insisted that the characters of appearance are a subjective accomplishment of apperception of the object, that such accomplishments are in fact "the origin of the appearance of the transcendent",²³ and that in phenomenology, i.e., after the reduction, these accomplishments can be made "again the further object of a possible 'inner perception' apprehending it 'in original.'"²⁴ This Patočka refuses—and many others with him.

In the fourth step of the consideration we ask then what the subject—as that *to which* appearing appears, as a component of the field of appearance—does, admitting that it neither appercepts, nor intends, nor throws a spiritual garb over hyletic data. This is where Patočka's conception is least clear. It could perhaps be summed up as follows: the accomplishment of the subject in appearing consists in understanding that *the same* thing appears in different modes of appearance. He understands that appearance is "seeing through perspectives the one thing presenting itself in them... This seeing through the perspectives, this transcending of the sensibly given is, after all, an accomplishment that must be performed by someone, an accomplishment brought about by a

²¹ Jan Patočka, "Husserlova transcendentální filosofie po revizi" (1969) [Husserl's Transcendental Philosophy after Revision], (Archiv J. Patočky, Ms. 1992/004), 2. See French translation by E. Abrams, "La Philosophie Transcendentale de Husserl Après Révision", in Jan Patočka, *Introduction à la Phénoménologie de Husserl*, (Grenoble: Millon, 1992), 225.

²² Jan Patočka, "Der Subjektivismus der Husserlschen und die Forderung einer asubjektiven Phänomenologie" (1971), in *Die Bewegung der menschlichen Existenz*, 300.

²³ *Ibid.*, 301.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 300-1.

recurrence and, in this recurrence, by the maintaining of an identical which then becomes the object".²⁵

One can see here a lack of clarity in that this accomplishment looks, at first sight, very like Husserl's apperception, constitution, etc. But we must read Patočka attentively. The main difference is that these subjective activities are not themselves "accessible in original by means of an objectifying act of reflection".²⁶ For Patočka, these activities of the subject are accessible only in what they contribute to, i.e. the progressive appearing of the thing as something identical in itself. The subject, of course, does not create the thing. The phenomenal characters themselves ask to be identified by the subject. There is in the subject as such "nothing that could be 'objectively' grasped, but simply a realizability of the demanding characters that address the ego in the field of appearance and make the egoic appear as realizer".²⁷ So once again: the *ego cogito* is immediately certain but it has no content. Everything that seems to be its content takes place—as it does itself—in the field of appearance. The "phenomenal field", the "being of the phenomenon as such...can neither be reduced to a being appearing within it, nor...explained on the basis of a being of whatever sort it may be, whether natural-objective or egoic-subjective".²⁸

*

In conclusion, I would like to recall an important passage of Plato's dialogue *Theaetetus* where I believe Plato thematises our problem of appearing, I would go so far as to say in a (perhaps) "asubjective" conception. In this dialogue, Socrates is debating with the young mathematician Theaetetus on what is knowledge.

Socrates refutes Theaetetus' first answer, i.e., that knowledge is perception, by identifying it with the famous thesis of Protagoras that "man is the measure of all things, of the existence of the things that are and of the non-existence of the things that are not",²⁹ then reformulating this in a sensualist manner, as if Protagoras meant to say that "individual things are for me such as they appear to me and for you in turn such as they appear to you".³⁰

This becomes problematic if we hold what appears differently to different people to be true knowledge of things in themselves (speaking with Kant). Socrates attempts to dispose of the problem, which leads to contradiction, by taking up Heraclite's thesis that "nothing whatever is one, either a particular thing or of a particular quality; but it is out of movement and motion and mixture with one another that all those things become which we wrongly say 'are'".³¹ Things themselves continually change. Not only do they appear differently to different people, they *are* never the same, and hence Protagoras' relativist thesis is valid. Of course, it does not apply to things in themselves. With everything in perpetual becoming and change, there are no such things. But perhaps it could apply to phenomena.

A phenomenon, according to Socrates, comes into being as a result of the mutual encounter of the motion of the thing with that of the sense organ. For example, the phenomenon of colour is neither in the thing itself nor in the eye nor in any other determinate place; rather, it arises from the impact of the motion of the eye on the motion of the thing and is, so to say, "something between"

²⁵ Ibid., 301.

²⁶ Ibid., 302.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Here and in the following, we quote (modifying it if need be) the English translation by H. N. Fowler in *Plato in Twelve Volumes*, vol. 12, (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 1921), 154 A.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Ibid., 152 D.

(*metaxu ti*),³² we could almost say in a kind of neutral phenomenal field which is neither purely objective nor purely subjective.

But this still does not save the reformulation of Protagoras' relativist thesis. Phenomena, too, are in perpetual change, since the person to whom things appear is "never exactly the same"³³—here Socrates is undoubtedly thinking of our corporeity. And here Theaetetus begins to hesitate as to his definition of knowledge as perception. When Socrates makes him see that even the domain of quantity, where the mathematician feels most at home, is not concerned with the properties of things themselves, since things become either large or small depending on the scale we choose to measure them,³⁴ he exclaims that he is "lost in wonder".³⁵ Socrates praises him for this and utters the famous statement, so often quoted, on the origin of philosophy: "this feeling of wonder shows that you are a philosopher, since wonder is the only beginning of philosophy".³⁶—This also confirms Patočka's repeated statement that the problem of appearance is the fundamental task not only of phenomenology but of philosophy in general.

There is, in the world, nothing fixed, "nothing exists as invariably one, itself by itself, but everything is always becoming in relation to something, and 'being' should be altogether abolished".³⁷ What is more, "we ought not, the wise men say, to permit the use of 'something' or 'somebody's' or 'mine' or 'this' or 'that' or any other word that implies making things stand still, but in accordance with nature we should speak of things as 'becoming' and 'being made' and 'being destroyed' and 'changing'".³⁸ But even this is still not exact. The fact is that all words tend to make things stand still; otherwise they could have no meaning. Since things cannot be made to stand still, it follows that it is altogether impossible to speak, and even more so to know, to come to know about anything.

That being the case, Socrates wishes once more to "look into the real essence of our thoughts"³⁹ and inquire what the things we think about (*ta tōn phrenōn*) are in themselves. Inconspicuously, he thus shifts the inquiry from the changing whirligig of outward things, via the neutral sphere of phenomena, to the realm of thought. He wants to "consider again the nature of these appearances within us",⁴⁰ to ask what they are (*hatta pot' esti tauta ta fasmata en hēmin*). He says that matters of thought are "something else than what can be grasped firmly with the hands"⁴¹—they are invisible, yet it would be incorrect to "deny their participation in being" (*hōs en ousias merei*).⁴² We are surprised to learn that all the concepts we have been using in speaking of the things around us—becoming, arising, whirligig, activity, passivity, etc.—have their origin in the soul.

To speak means to use words, to give names "to both particular objects and collective designations".⁴³ For example, to speak of "'mankind' and 'stone' and every animal and class"⁴⁴ means to bring the whirligig to a halt and to say about the thing in question whether or not it is, and what it is or is not.

³² Ibid., 154 A.

³³ Ibid., 154 A.

³⁴ Ibid., 154 C.

³⁵ Ibid., 155 C.

³⁶ Ibid., 155 D.

³⁷ Ibid., 157 A.

³⁸ Ibid., 157 B.

³⁹ Ibid., 154 E.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 155 A.

⁴¹ Ibid., 155 E.

⁴² Ibid., 155 E.

⁴³ Ibid., 157 B.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 157 C.

This is precisely the task of the soul. The various bodily senses are mere instruments *through* which we perceive; they are not properly speaking that *by* which we perceive. The different sense perceptions must be somehow evaluated and compared, so as to ascertain that they have something in common, i.e., the thing they belong to. In order for this to be possible, all our senses must converge and “unite in one single form (*eis mian tina idean*), whether we should call it soul or something else, by which we perceive”.⁴⁵ There must be “some one and the same power within ourselves by which we perceive black and white through the eyes, and again other qualities through the other organs”.⁴⁶ “But through what organ”, Socrates now asks,

Is the faculty exerted which makes known to you that which is common to all things...that which you call being and not-being (*to estin, to ouk estin*)...and likeness and unlikeness, and identity and difference, also unity and plurality...and the odd and the even, and everything else that is in the same category?⁴⁷

Theaetetus himself then realizes that “there is no special organ at all for these notions, as there are for the others; but it appears to me that the soul views by itself directly what all things have in common”.⁴⁸ Strictly speaking, it is thus the soul that perceives. Only because the soul is continually one and the same⁴⁹ can it ascertain what is common to all perceptions, “reflecting within itself upon the past and present in relation to the future”⁵⁰ and, on the basis of this reflection, by and through itself,⁵¹ “in the process of reasoning about the sensations” (*en tōi peri ekeinōi syllogismōi*),⁵² constitute the thing, i.e., say whether it is or is not, whether it is beautiful or ugly, good or bad,⁵³ etc. For this reason, the soul can also ascertain that something changes, and say that change *is*. This actually means making change “stand still” and thereby first letting it *be* change.

So we can say that Protagoras’ thesis is valid in its original form. By his soul, man is indeed the measure of all things; he “decides” by an act of his soul whether things exist or not. His decisions are, of course, not arbitrary. This is where dialectic—the Socratic art of discussion—comes into play. In this discussion, we reflect upon the past and present in relation to the future,⁵⁴ distinguishing cause and effect, etc.; we examine “in the process of reasoning”⁵⁵ what comes to mind *by itself* along with our bodily sensations, and only “with difficulty and slowly, through many troubles, if at all”⁵⁶ do we succeed in eliminating contradiction⁵⁷ and acquiring the insight that all parts of our discourse are truly in agreement, fit and match one another. Only then can we call our discourse a definition and rightly believe that we possess knowledge.

I would say that Plato thematises here, in his own way, the problem of appearance as such, and that the solution he proposes is similar to Patočka’s: the accomplishments of the soul are invisible, since, when all is said and done, they take place in the very object they identify; despite this, their existence cannot be denied, just as Patočka grants the empty *ego cogito* an indubitable existence and joins in Heidegger’s quest of what this existence amounts to. We also see here quite clearly why the question of appearance is, in a certain sense, even more primordial than the question of being.

⁴⁵ Ibid., 184 D.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 184 D–E.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 185 C–D.

⁴⁸ Ibid., 185 D.

⁴⁹ Ibid., 184 D.

⁵⁰ Ibid., 186 A–B.

⁵¹ Ibid., 186 A.

⁵² Ibid., 186 D.

⁵³ Ibid., 186 A.

⁵⁴ Ibid., 186 A.

⁵⁵ Ibid., 186 D.

⁵⁶ Ibid., 186 C.

⁵⁷ Ibid., 186 B.

Dr Ivan Chvatík conducted graduate study under supervision of leading Czech philosopher Jan Patočka between 1968-1977. Since Patočka's death (1977), he has been head of the clandestine Jan Patočka Archive which, since 1990 and the fall of the Communist regime, has become part of the Institute of Philosophy of the Academy of Science of the Czech Republic. Since 1993, he has been the co-director of the Center for Theoretical Study (an interdisciplinary institute for advanced study at Charles University and the Academy of Science). He is the author of the first complete Czech translation of Martin Heidegger's *Being and Time* (1996). Since 1996, he has been in charge of editing Patočka's *Complete Works* (fourteen volumes published to date out of a planned twenty-five). He completed his doctor of philosophy honoris causa at Charles University, Prague in 2008.

Patočkian Reflections on the *Life-World* and the Space of Manifestation

Lubica Učník
Philosophy
Murdoch University

In this paper I reflect on the meaning constitution in phenomenology and Jan Patočka's attempt to reconcile two different phenomenologies by proposing that neither Husserl nor Heidegger succeeded in harvesting the biggest discovery that phenomenology offers: the investigation of appearance as such. As Patočka notes, Husserl begins his investigations of meaning by showing the problematic nature of modern theories of knowledge and ends with a reflection on the life-world. For Husserl, the problem of epistemology is how to explain the connection between our thinking and the world. In the end, the space of meaning-constitution is in the immanence of the transcendental *ego*. Heidegger rejects the consciousness as the ground of meaning, but he also rejects the privileging of objects based on the model of mathematical modern science. In a reaction against Cartesian presuppositions of Husserl's investigations, he posits the world as the ground from where the ontological inquiry must begin. The world is the space where we let beings be as they are and what they are. This relatedness between *Dasein* and beings is the meaning-constituting horizon. In opposition to both, Patočka claims that they forget the most important discovery of Husserl's phenomenology, the appearance–manifestation–as such and concentrate on something already manifested.

Introduction

We live in a meaningful world. Yet what does it *mean* to say that a world is meaningful. To say that something is meaningful presupposes someone for whom things show themselves in a meaningful way. Yet, to say “showing to someone” is already problematic. A thing does not show itself differently to different people; or does it? Does each of us see a different thing or it is one thing that we see through different aspects? If it is the latter, can we *see* a thing in itself, as it is? Do we see things or we can only access ideas about them in our mind? Is a meaning of a thing in the thing or in us? This is the paradox of modern knowledge: how could we know things as they are in themselves if they are outside of our thinking. It begins with modern philosophy. Edmund Husserl tries to overcome this puzzle between things as they are and our knowledge about them by investigating phenomena, things as they appear to us. Nevertheless, questions do not stop here.

Does a study of the appearance of a phenomenon tell us anything about existing things we encounter in a world? How is it that we see a table, a bottle, a computer? Do we really understand when we say, following Martin Heidegger, that if there were no *Dasein*, there would not be a meaningful world? There would be φύσις [*phusis*], perhaps, but not the world. In other words, humans constitute the meaning of things around them as tables, chairs, mountains, bottles, as things meaningful to them. Yet what does this mean? How can we think of this meaning-constitution? Is it the sun that I see above me, or is it Apollo on his chariot cruising through the sky? Does Iris build a rainbow as a path between the world of humans and Gods; or is it a refraction of light caused by a sun shining on droplets of water? How can we think about our *historical situation* as leading to a difference in our understanding of the world?

For Husserl, our speaking, our language is the model for phenomenology.¹ We speak of a thing that reveals itself in different ways, in different perspectives. We speak of a thing that is not in front of us but we can still recall it through speech. Things can be unclear, far away from us, hidden partially from view. We are not always sure if what we see is exactly what we say about it but we can correct ourselves. A word, a sentence, a judgement encompass differences that we experience

¹ See Jan Patočka, “‘Přirozený Svět’ v Meditaci Svého Autora po Třiatřiceti letech”, in *Fenomenologické Spisy II: Co je Existence. Publikované Texty z Let 1965-1977, Sebrané Spisy Jana Patočky. Svazek 7* (Praha: Oikoymenh, Filosofia, 2009 [1969]), 304.

by reducing a thing to sameness. A table we experience is given to us in different perspectives, but the word “table” is not. Language makes understanding and communication possible. We can pass judgement about a thing we speak about even if we are not entirely sure if the judgement is certain, but we can clarify it by getting closer to a thing, by correcting our judgement or changing it when we realise that a thing is different from what we thought about it.

The insight of Husserl is to show how an object is given to us in many different ways, leading to his discovery of the empty and fulfilled intuition. As Patočka notes, for Husserl, an intuition is already meaningful. It is not a datum I “perceive”, it is the thing itself. Husserl’s investigations are already in the space of meaning, to use Stephen Crowell’s expression.²

In what sense? What is a meaning of a thing? Is the idea of a thing in my mind or is it an already meaningful thing in a world? Can we encounter things in a world or can we only be sure of them as *cogitata* in my *cogito* as René Descartes thinks. Does experience paint ideas of things on our minds, turning them into “*the object of thinking*”, thereby, as John Locke asserts, furnishing the mind through “the operations of our minds”³ with ideas? Or are things given to us in themselves through different manners of givenness, as Husserl claims?

As Patočka notes, Husserl’s phenomenological discovery is that a thing or its idea is not in my consciousness. Ideas are not like words, as Locke says.⁴ Our awareness of things is not on a model of a picture or a word. A thing is not “stamped” on our mind. It is we who constitute the meaningful thing through different acts of thinking (*cogitationes*). From this insight, in order to secure the safe ground of knowledge, through bracketing out the world and the epistemological egos, Husserl posits the transcendental *ego* as the space of meaning-constitution. As he explains, “transcendental life and the transcendental Ego cannot be born, only man in the world can be born...this means in itself that the Ego was from eternity”.⁵ Husserl thus inherited the Cartesian intensions for philosophy to be the science that provides the clarity of knowledge.

However, Descartes’ aspiration is not about objects and their givenness, but about the certainty of knowledge that he builds on his idea of the foundational structure based on the self-certainty of the *ego*, which from then on, was taken as consciousness.⁶

The idea of the “I” starts with Descartes. The Ancient Greeks and medieval thinkers speak about “αἴσθησις [aisthesis], φαντασία [phantasia], μνήμη [mneme]”⁷, but they never speak of the “I”. With Descartes, thinking becomes thinking of the “I”. The only certainty I have after I doubt everything. *Dubito ergo sum* leads to *cogito ergo sum*.⁸ I am certain that I doubt and, therefore, that I think; but because I am a finite human being, I cannot be certain of everything. I am certain about my *cogito*, my thinking, I am certain about my *cogitata*, my thoughts or ideas, but I cannot be certain about what my *cogitata* are about. Thoughts are only mediators between the world and my

² See Steven Galt Crowell, *Husserl, Heidegger, and the Space of Meaning: Path Toward Transcendental Phenomenology*, Northwestern University Studies in Phenomenology and Existential Philosophy (Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 2001).

³ For all quotations above, see John Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, ed. Andrew Seth Pringle-Pattison, Abridged ed. (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1924 [1690]), Book II, I, 1, 2, 4, 42-43.

⁴ Locke takes ideas and words as equivalent. As he says, “men have in their minds several ideas, such as are those expressed by the words, ‘whiteness, hardness, sweetness, thinking, motion, man, elephant, army, drunkenness’, and others” (Ibid., Book II, I, 1, 42.).

⁵ Edmund Husserl, “The Apodicticity of Recollection”, *Husserl Studies* 1985, 26.

⁶ Jan Patočka, *Úvod do Fenomenologické Filosofie*, ed. Jiří Polívka and Ivan Chvatík (Praha: ISE, Oikoyomenh, Edice Oikúmené, ve spolupráci s Archivem Jana Patočky, 1993), 85.

⁷ Perception, fantasy, memory.

⁸ Patočka, *Úvod*, 82.

thinking.⁹ The world is split between *res cogitans*, the thinking thing, and *res extensa*, the extended thing, in other words, things in the world.

The connection between *res extensa* and *cogitata* is secured through a thinking thing that exists. It is “I” that is a secure ground of knowledge. I must be certain about my own existence that I discovered when I reflected on my own process of thinking. This process of thinking maintains a thing I think about in its identity. Hence, knowledge of things is based on a thinking being who is in no doubt about its own thinking. In order to think about something, I have to be certain that I am thinking. Things I think about can be unclear, doubtful, confused; but I know that I cannot doubt that I think. And if I think, I exist. Where are else would thoughts be and who would be thinking them?

For Descartes, my thinking is indubitable; I have direct access to my thoughts, while I never have direct access to things in a world. Things are given to me through thinking, through ideas, which represent things that are outside of me. I have direct access to my thinking; indirect—through the ideas that I am thinking—to the things themselves.

The Cartesian theory is obsessed with knowing the world of objects, a world which can be built from its basic axioms. These secure axioms can only be secured in my thinking, in my reflection. The outcome of this procedure is that it forgets about both the things themselves and the one who thinks. It substitutes ideas for the world of things and oversteps the “I”. These ideas are “images” in our soul. This is the beginning of the idea of consciousness, of mind as a space of mental experiences. The ideas become real components of our mental processes. Mental process is composed of *cogitationes* (the acts of thinking), which are really part of my thinking.¹⁰ The “I” becomes the process of *cogitationes*. Each act of thinking [*cogitationes*] secures a thought [*cogitatum*] in its process. The point is there is no possibility to connect this flow of *cogitationes* to my historical situatedness.¹¹

In English empiricism, the connection between really existing ideas in my mental process and things in the world recedes even further. The real moments of my thinking are taken as primary. From this idea, modern psychology begins. These real moments of my mental process are interpreted on the model of physics¹² and taken as obeying the laws of causality. Another, later, take on this understanding is in John Stuart Mill, an understanding that Husserl names psychologism.

Husserl, while criticising psychologism, discovers a difference between our acts of judgement, that are particular, and the content of judgement, that is ideal. For Patočka, despite Husserl’s transcendental turn, the most important discovery of phenomenology is his recognition that phenomena show themselves and that it is important to inquire *how they show themselves*. As Husserl realises, there is a difference between “the *appearance and that which appears*”.¹³ We tend to focus on the appearance, forgetting that the thing is never given to us in its entirety. We think that a melody is appearance and really in our thinking process. However, it simply cannot be, because the tones pass away even though they are still a part of what I hear.

Patočka points out that even this insight overlooks appearing as such, which he wants to rethink. According to Patočka, different ways of manifestation belong to the thingness of a thing. It is a thing that is given to us in these different ways. If our judgement is not certain, or is controversial, it

⁹ Ibid., 83.

¹⁰ Ibid., 29, 82.

¹¹ Patočka, “‘Přirozený Svět’ v Meditaci”, 270.

¹² Patočka, *Úvod*, 29.

¹³ Edmund Husserl, *The Idea of Phenomenology: A Translation of Die Idee der Phänomenologie. Husserliana II*, trans. Lee Hardy, Edmund Husserl: Collected Works. Volume VIII (Dordrecht, Boston, London: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1999), 67, italics in original.

is because the thing we are speaking about is not clear to us in the first instance. It is not the “I” that is problematic or uncertain; it is the thing that we speak about that is not given to us in full.¹⁴

To reject transcendental phenomenology does not mean to reject phenomenology.¹⁵ Phenomenology is about manifestation as such. In order for us to encounter things and for things to reveal themselves, we need three aspects: things themselves, a thinking being, and the situation where they encounter each other. We need to think about things and how they manifest themselves; we need to think about historical human beings who enable things to manifest themselves so that they, historically situated human beings, can encounter them in a particular situation that is delimited by what is given to them through the things’ manifestation. We should realise that phenomenology is *not about* what already manifests itself, in other words, a phenomenon and how it shows itself, the eidetic moments of the noetic and noematic structure of a phenomenon. *Neither* is it a manifestation of a phenomenon in the psychic life of an individual. *Phenomenology is about the possibility of the manifestation of a world.* We cannot reduce this manifestation to transcendence in immanence. Likewise, manifestation precedes also *pragmata* that we use in our everyday dealings.

Heidegger is not interested in the meaning-constitution of the life-world; his question is different. However, his investigations brought to light *the importance of a questioner*. Heidegger transforms the life-world and the transcendental *ego* by shifting the focus from consciousness to a being living in a world.¹⁶ Very schematically, we can say that Heidegger recasts Husserl’s intentionality by substituting the world as the meaning-constituting horizon for consciousness. Heidegger also realises that categorial intuition is important; yet we need to reconsider the traditional understanding of categories. As he claims, categories can only define things but never human beings.

As Patočka suggests, the revealing of things cannot depend on us. Neither consciousness nor the disclosure of things as we deal with them in our everyday life is enough to account for the manifestation as such. This way of thinking overlooks the structure of appearing and explains meaning from the things already revealed. Patočka wants to show that it is not just a matter of a questioner and things, there must also be a third aspect, which is world that allows humans to understand themselves, things and the possibilities they have in each situation. As Patočka says, “a philosophy founded on *ego cogito cogitatum*, on self-knowing consciousness, comes to grief on the question of my situatedness in a world”.¹⁷ Humans are historical, so is the world. It is neither the *Geschichte* of Being that lets things be revealed or concealed for us, as later Heidegger will claim. Historical beings are always in a historical situation and *it is this disclosure* that will guide their understanding of a sun either as a chariot kept on its way by Apollo, or as the centre of the solar system.

So, what is phenomenology? For Patočka, phenomenology is a study of showing and manifestation, a study not only about what is but also how it shows itself. This study is at the same time a study of our experience, of how we encounter things. Human experience is nothing else but the way we encounter things through the different ways they show themselves to us to let us become familiar with them. So, how can we resolve this quandary of manifestation? Is meaning in things or is it in us? This is the old traditional question. Can we change our approach to it?

According to Patočka, phenomenology is not about already revealed things, as the tradition has it; but neither it is about consciousness as Descartes posited.¹⁸ Phenomenology is the study of showing

¹⁴ Patočka, *Úvod*, 78.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 98.

¹⁶ Patočka, “‘Přirozený Svět’ v Meditaci”, 310.

¹⁷ Jan Patočka, *Body, Community, Language, World*, trans. Erazim Kohák, ed. James Dodd (Chicago, IL: Open Court, 1998), 172.

¹⁸ Patočka, *Úvod*, 85.

and manifesting that is prior to things already manifested. It is a study of how this showing makes things to shine forth, to come out of nowhere so we can encounter them, and then making them dim on their way to disappear again. One of the questions is can there be a manifestation without a being who can encounter those things as they show themselves? Surely, there would be “things” in the world, even if we were not here, but no one could let them shine in their meaningfulness. For things to shimmer or to become lustreless there must be a being who can encounter them in the historical situation within the meaningful world.

However, the question remains: where can we “locate” this meaning? Is it, as in the modern tradition, *ego cogito* that leads to *ego sum*? As Patočka, notes, *ego sum* is correct, but it does not tell us anything about what *ego* is.

The problem is two-fold: for Descartes, the quest for certainty leads him to equivocate *ego sum* with *ego cogito*. At the beginning, *ego sum* is indubitable, but Descartes leaves *sum* behind for certainty of knowledge. The thinking *ego* replaces the being of an *ego*. What *ego* is we do not know; we only know that *ego* can doubt, think, desire, will. The modes of *cogito* become the indubitable starting point. *Sum* is there but out of the view. Moreover, my access is to my thinking only, not to things I think about. I know that I am thinking thoughts, but they cannot be clear because they are given to me not immediately but indirectly. Descartes, then in his search for certainty of knowledge, neglects even his discovery of thoughts and asserts that *cogitata* stand for extended things.

By contrast, for Husserl, *cogitata* are important. He investigates their modes of givenness. He shows how phenomena are given to us in different manners through empty or fulfilling intentions. We forget that we see things through different perspectives and modes and bypassing those aspects, we simply think that we see things as such. All his investigations are focused on showing, how we encounter phenomena and not things as such. Yet in his move to bracket the world, to perform the transcendental reduction, cutting the other side of the meaning constitution, he himself overlooks the importance of appearing as such. Husserl’s reduction proceeds in terms of a reflection in the immanent sphere. How did we get there? Patočka points out that our doubting, desiring, and willing cannot be reduced to investigate immanence because “I” can doubt, desire or judge, but “I” must doubt something. We must somehow take into account the obscurity of an object not given to us in its fullness. We cannot account for *cogitatum* without *a relation to a world*. We need the genitive and dative of appearance. Husserl would agree and yet, the transcendental reduction to the sphere of transcendental *ego* as a meaning constituting space remains.

According to Patočka, the structure “*ego–cogito–cogitatum*” is not primary, but it is based on the primordial structure of *ego sum*. In this regard, Descartes is right about the primordial understanding of *ego sum* as the basis of our understanding. Yet he oversteps this insight, going straight to *cogito*. *Sum* and *cogito* are not equivalent. Starting with *sum*, we realise that it cannot “contain” *cogitatio* that we supposedly discovered through reflection by analysing the immanent sphere. *Sum* is the original relation to a world.¹⁹

Heidegger’s rejection of the structure of *ego–cogito–cogitatum* leads him to reconsider the structure of *ego sum*. His phenomenological analyses about our engagement with the things we encounter in our everyday living leads him to consider human existence through his analysis of boredom and anxiety. As Patočka notes, it is not important how we name this mood. The point is that there are moments in our lives when things suddenly cease to have meaning. They are here, they are all around us, but their meaning is gone. We are thrown upon our own being, our *sum*. Our life-world, the things we use, the projects we have, the people we love, even our work to be finished somehow makes no more sense. We feel trepidation and anxiety about our own being. Modern psychology has cures for this and other types of conditions when we feel lost, but is an anxiety—an ontological

¹⁹ Ibid., 107-08.

structure of our being in a world—something that we want to pathologise?²⁰ It is precisely, according to Heidegger and Patočka, this silent world, mute things and the meaninglessness of our projects that can bring us face to face with our own being, our own existence.

Things are here but they are suddenly meaningless; they fail to illuminate our existence; we are thrown upon our bare “*sum*”. Without understanding our own existence, our own being, we cannot understand others, things and the world. We need to have clarity about ourselves and our own engagement with things around us. Without human beings who understand their “*sum*”, no things and no world in its meaningfulness can shine, or grow dim eventually.²¹

Conclusion

Patočka begins his book *Přirozený Svět Jako Filosofický Problém* [The Natural World as a Philosophical Problem] with a claim that we live in “a double world”.²² We have two different understandings of the world: one scientific and one that we experience every day. The manner of reduction of the one understanding to the other is done in favour of the scientific world. We speak today of thinking and meaning as reducible to brain operations. Yet, are those two understandings separate and if yes, how? Do we not accept that the brain thinks and that a table in front of us is not solid but composed of electric charges? We accept scientific explanations as somehow more accurate and, then, despite accepting those explanations, proceed to put a cup of coffee on those swirling electric charges.

Husserl, in his last years, undertakes to approach systematically this discrepancy in our understanding of the world. As he shows, the life-world (Patočka’s natural world) is our primordial ground. We need to comprehend how modern natural science presupposes this primordial ground and then proceeds to use its formal schema to explain it away. Newton’s law of inertia or Stephen Hawking and Leonard Mlodinow’s “M-theory” as “a complete theory of the universe”²³ cannot explain the world of our living. Modern science, through formalization, reduces the life-world into a mathematical manifold and empties it of its meaning. $E=mc^2$ cannot help us in our everyday chores, worries or enjoyments. It can add to knowledge of scientists and technicians who then build some new gadgets that we can use in our world of living but the gadget itself will be either useful or not. It will not tell us anything about $E=mc^2$. Despite my knowledge that matter and energy are really same—those swirling electric charges again—I will still put my cup of coffee on the table. So will you.

There are, at least, two issues here: the emptying of meaning from our everyday living to scientific formulas and how science has changed the life-world. For Patočka, following Heidegger, the issue is that we cannot simply recover the *Lebenswelt* from oblivion. We have already constituted the life-world through the modern mathematical project of sciences and the essence of technology.

We are historical beings; hence, the meaning of a world cannot possibly be reduced to some common underlying meaning. There are different ways to understand things. I could not understand Heraclitus’ invitation to join him to sit next to his oven because Gods dwell there too. Likewise, Heraclitus would not understand that a brain thinks or that all things—such as pendulums, heavenly bodies and rocks—obey the law of gravity.

²⁰ See also Hannah Arendt, “Epilogue”, in *The Promise of Politics*, ed. Jerome Kohn (New York: Schocken Books, 2005).

²¹ Patočka, *Úvod*, 107, 09, 15.

²² Jan Patočka, “*Přirozený Svět Jako Filosofický Problém*”, in *Fenomenologické Spisy I: Přirozený Svět. Texty z Let 1931-1949, Sebrané Spisy Jana Patočky. Svazek 6* (Praha: Oikoymenth, Filosofia, 2008), 129, trans. by Erika Abrams.

²³ Stephen Hawking and Leonard Mlodinow, *The Grand Design* (London: Bantam Press, 2010), 181.

Dr Lubica Učník is a lecturer in philosophy at Murdoch University. Her research interests are the study of Jan Patočka, the Czech philosopher, student of Edmund Husserl and Martin Heidegger, whose work is becoming influential in English phenomenological studies. She is currently pursuing links between Jan Patočka and Hannah Arendt, and the victory of formalised thinking in the modern age that is an extension of the project initiated by Husserl in his late writing on the *Lebenswelt*, life-world.

Questions about Jan Patočka's "Originary Totality"

Inês Pereira Rodrigues
Philosophy
University of Beira Interior

Jan Patočka speaks of an "originary totality", that is, the whole which would be presupposed in the manifestation of any particular or individual being. This originary totality would not be a being as particular beings, and would therefore not appear as and of itself, but only concealed in the manifestation of the particular things appearing.

However, what this totality is, exactly, or what is its range, is not clear. It does not seem to be equivalent to a notion of a "life-world", to be the horizon of meaning in which all things appear, since the totality is not of the order of what is given, what is present for us. At the same time, it also does not seem to be the "structure of appearing", since that structure refers only to a legal, *a priori* structure of a condition of possibility for appearing, but which has no ontological value.

This totality, on the other hand, although it is characterized by absence, by concealing itself, *is*, nevertheless, the all-encompassing whole and the source of all individuated beings. It is of essential importance and it is capable of revealing our specific role in the world.

The following paper will attempt to unveil it, to determine its role and importance, and its relation to appearing. Another important manner of understanding totality is via Jan Patočka's three movements of existence, and specifically, the third, as an explicit relation which allows the totality, and our fundamental possibility within it, to become manifest.

Introduction

Jan Patočka writes of an "originary totality". This totality is, according to him, the unified total which each particular sensible experience implies, which it points to: all particular things appear within sensible experience, and are inscribed in this totality; all experience occurs from and within this totality. Nevertheless, although the totality must, therefore, be necessarily present in each appearance, it is not present as itself—it cannot be the object of an intuition. The totality, precisely because it is such, can only appear "hidden" within the appearing of "partial" experiences.

Experience, in its unified and serene march, presupposes not only an invariable style of laws ruling over the meeting with the conditioned singular, but also an 'unconditioned' totality in the midst of which each experience unfolds and towards which it is directed, being nothing other than a moment of continuous unfolding of that total horizon.¹

The "originary totality" could be thought then, as quoted, the "total horizon" from which all things appear. We understand our experience as occurring over a plurality of horizons—the horizons being sensory, affective, historical, etc. These partial horizons would, in turn, point to a final, *total* horizon. For example, as I write on my computer, my experience appears out of and reveals the horizon it is in: I can see the bookshelves appearing behind the screen, other tables and chairs in my periphery vision, I feel and hear the quiet bustle of a university library. This horizon—which places me not only in a sensory field, but also affectively, historically, etc.—through its limits, points beyond itself, to what is not presently given: the sunshine from the window beckons me outside, and reminds me of rest, home, and other horizons I live in. These partial horizons would all be part of a final, total horizon.

¹ Jan Patočka, "Réflexion sur l'Europe", *Liberté et Sacrifice*, trans. Erika Abrams (Grenoble: J. Millon, 1990) 192: "L'expérience, dans sa marche paisible et unie, présuppose non seulement un style invariable des lois qui régissent la rencontre du singulier conditionné, mais encore un tout 'inconditionné' au sein duquel chaque expérience se déroule et par lequel elle est dirigée, n'étant rien autre chose qu'un moment de déploiement continu de cet horizon total".

Husserl conceived of the "life-world" as the "final horizon of all horizons". Could Patočka's "originary totality" then correspond to Husserl's "life-world"?

Husserl's Life-world

At times, Patočka himself writes as if the two concepts could overlap:

The world is sometimes defined as the horizon of all horizons: horizon of the totality of reality in which each partial horizon, each closed connection of sense and understanding fits in its own place.²

And in an essay about Husserl's "life-world", writing that: "the life-world has no other function but to eclipse itself in face of the things and people it reveals and manifests".³ Nevertheless, Patočka is also openly and explicitly critical of Husserl's conception of "life-world", saying it is *secondary*, and, therefore, indicating a more originary, more primal, order (of "world hood"): "The life-world (or natural world) is a secondary concept of world, despite all the intuitive concretion it hopes to gather".⁴

According to Patočka, what Husserl's concept of "life-world" lacks is not anything factual, that could be said to be here in front of us, but rather something only perceivable in its "negative" form, in its absence or concealment:

What is lacking in the life-world as Husserl presents it? Why is it not originary? The lack does not regard anything that is present, anything present there in front of us in "flesh and bones" ... What is missing in Husserl's natural world is nothing 'positive', but rather the *world itself, in its primordial project*, which keeps itself hidden behind the *doxa*.⁵

The problem with Husserl's conception of "life-world" seems to be that it still corresponds to what is here in front of us—the "positive". It is still, it seems, too close to the conception of a factual totality of beings and, as such, their (total) result, rather than the condition for their possibility. The problem could lie, not in thinking the totality as a "final horizon", but rather of the way we think "horizon". "Horizon" is, however strong its illustrative power, an ambiguous term: it can point to the limit of my perception, the final line of my experience, or it can point to a condition, to a prior openness from which the particular experiences gather: "the world as *the collection of all objectivities* and the world as *the condition for possibility of all experience* are not identical and do not have the same type of evidence".⁶ In other terms, we can think of totality, or total horizon, either as the totality of beings, something we anticipate from the singularities—as I did in the description above, anticipating a total horizon from the partial ones—or we can conceive of it as the

² Jan Patočka, *Papiers Phénoménologiques*, trans. Erika Abrams (Grenoble : J. Millon, 1995), 64: "Le monde est défini parfois comme horizon de tous les horizons : horizon de la réalité en totalité dans laquelle chaque horizon partiel, chaque connexion fermée de sens et de compréhension s'insère à la place qui est la sienne".

³ Jan Patočka, "Phénoménologie du 'monde de la vie'", *Le Monde Naturel et le Mouvement de l'Existence Humaine [MNMEH]*, trans. Erika Abrams (Dordrecht : Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1988), 242.

⁴ Patočka, "Réflexion sur l'Europe", *Liberté et Sacrifice*, 196: "Le monde de la vie (ou monde naturel) est un concept de monde secondaire, malgré toute la concrétion intuitive qu'il prétend réunir".

⁵ Ibid.: "Qu'est-ce qui manque au monde de la vie tel que Husserl le présente? Pourquoi n'est-il pas originaire? Le manque ne concerne rien de présent, rien que se présente là-devant nous en chair et en os ... Ce qui manque au monde naturel de Husserl n'est rien de 'positif', mais bien plutôt *le monde même, en son projet primordial*, qui se tient caché derrière la *doxa*".

⁶ Jan Patočka, "Les Méditations Cartésiennes", *Qu'est-ce que la Phénoménologie ?*, trans. Erika Abrams (Grenoble: J. Millon, 1988), 175: "le monde comme *l'ensemble de toute objectivité* et le monde comme *la condition de possibilité de toute expérience* ne sont pas identiques et n'ont pas le même type d'évidence".

condition for their possibility, as something which is prior to the appearing of particulars, as something which is *presupposed* rather than *indicated*.⁷

And so we must descriptively characterize the consciousness ‘of horizon’ and its totality, the most extreme horizon, the horizon of the world, as something originary which cannot be composed from impressions, from their represented layers, and from a combinations of the two.⁸

In both conceptions, horizon does not appear of itself or in the same manner as particular entities do, they are both “hidden” in the appearance of things. However, the total horizon as antecedent, as condition for possibility—or in these terms, the originary totality, or the “world”—is the “*negative*” presence which Husserl’s “life-world” lacked.

“Negative Platonism”

What lies “hidden behind the world of doxa”, in Plato’s famous dividing line, is the intelligible world of ideas, reigning over the first. In a proposal he calls “negative Platonism”, Patočka suggests that the problem in the history of philosophy has been to continuously interpret this division as one marking out domains of being, pointing to a region where beings “are more”. Patočka wants, like Heidegger, to overcome metaphysics, and proposes, thus, not to think this division as indicating levels of being, but to consider it radically, as a “proper division”, without a “beyond”.

The χωρισμός [*Korismos*] is a separation, a distinction in itself, absolute separation as such. The mystery it holds is not one of a new continent that could be discovered beyond an intermediary ocean, but rather a mystery that is to be deciphered and discovered in the χωρισμός as such, without making intervene anything beyond.⁹

The division has as its correlate a genuine human experience which Patočka calls the “experience of freedom”. He describes it as “the experience of dissatisfaction regarding what is given and the sensible”¹⁰ and that it “has the negative character of a distance, a distancing, a surpassment of all objectivities, of all that is content, representation or substrate”.¹¹ According to Patočka, the Platonic division evidenced this human capacity and inclination to distance ourselves from what is immediately given towards what is not (but can be present in another manner), and the metaphysical problems arose when another world of “truer being” was postulated. Patočka’s proposal is to think instead of a “negative idea”: that is, the distance between entities, of which we say *is*, and what is besides all entities. What happens if we step back from all entities? Do we reach “absolute nothing”?¹²

We have come again to the two different conceptions of totality: to take a step away from beings is either logically impossible, when we conceive of making an object out of the totality of all that is,

⁷ This difference regarding these two conceptions of horizon is also pointed to, for example, by Dermot Moran, “Fink and Speculative Phenomenology: Between Constitution and Transcendence”, *Research in Phenomenology*, 37 (2007), 3-31.

⁸ Jan Patočka, “La Préhistoire de la Science du Mouvement”, *MNMEH*, 5: “Ainsi nous faut-il caractériser descriptivement la conscience ‘d’horizon’ et sa totalité, l’horizon le plus extrême, l’horizon du monde, comme quelque chose d’originaire qui ne peut être composé à partir des impressions, de leur calques représentés et des combinaisons des deux”.

⁹ Jan Patočka, “Platonisme Négatif”, in *Liberté et Sacrifice*, trans. Erica Abrams (Grenoble: J. Million, 1993), 87 : “Le χωρισμός est une séparation, une distinction en soi, la séparation absolue comme telle. Le mystère qu’il renferme n’est pas celui d’un nouveau continent qui serait à découvrir au-delà d’un océan intercalaire, mais bien un mystère qu’il s’agit de déchiffrer et de découvrir dans le χωρισμός comme tel, sans faire intervenir rien au-delà”.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p.79.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p.84.

¹² *Ibid.*, 90-91: “L’Idée n’apparaîtra-t-elle pas nécessairement comme quelque chose de principiellement inexistant—en raison précisément du *korismos* qui nous oblige à la poser dans une opposition absolue à la totalité de tout étant, à la fois subjectif et objectif? Et si nous éliminons tout étant, que reste-t-il d’autre que le néant absolu?”

or it leads us towards the condition for possibility of all beings (which can be considered "nothing", from the point of view of entities). This condition for possibility is what Patočka calls the "originary totality":

One is confusing here two conceptions of totality: the concept of totality as the collection of beings (which is unrealizable) and the concept of a whole as phenomenon without which the appearing as such would be impossible, that is the condition of possibility of appearing.¹³

***Epochē* and "Appearing as Such"**

The "experience of freedom" appears, from its description, to be nothing more than the *epochē*, specifically in its universalized version Patočka develops in the project of an asubjective phenomenology. In the essay on "Negative Platonism", Patočka describes the "negative" experience of freedom writing that "one may not only suspend the belief in each sensible experience, bracket each sensorial domain taken by itself, but also surpass the *ego* as such".¹⁴ The universalized *epochē*, in Patočka's texts, in including the thesis of the "I" (or *ego*) would lead us not to a realm of transcendental consciousness, to the (ontic) domain of a being, but rather away from *what* appears to the "appearing as such". The *epochē*, if taken to its full consequences, is able precisely to shift our attention from the things appearing towards the field of appearing, to the sphere where all phenomena take place. Is the "original totality" then the "sphere of appearing as such"?

In an article titled "Patočka and Artificial Intelligence",¹⁵ James Mensch writes that the "appearing as such" is the formal structure which determines how all appearing appears—i.e. that all appearing includes a "what" that appears, a "someone" it appears to, and a "how"—and that it is, therefore, a set of laws without any metaphysical or ontological value. According to Mensch, Patočka's claims that Plato's "dividing line" was the first instance of the mistake of confusing modes of appearing for levels of being¹⁶ expresses the intention to take the overcoming of metaphysics even further than Heidegger, and to break the tie between being and appearing, "it would entail our abandoning the attempt to speak of appearing in terms of being, i.e. to link it to some ontological commitment".¹⁷ But while Patočka's negative Platonism was a criticism directed at the metaphysical construction of another "higher order", this does not necessarily mean that it is an ontological depleting of appearing. In fact, it seems that what Patočka is doing is reverting the hierarchy between being and appearing: "one must ask: are the characters of manifestation made manifest because they are characters of being, or are they characters of being because they are made manifest?"¹⁸

Patočka moves away from metaphysics and towards a sphere of appearing as such, but what we finally reach is not entirely void, ontologically speaking. While there may be structures of

¹³ Jan Patočka, "Qu'est-ce que la Phénoménologie?", *Qu'est-ce que la Phénoménologie?*, 294 : "on confond ici deux concepts de la totalité: le concept de la totalité comme l'ensemble de l'étant (ce qui est irréalisable) et le concept d'un tout comme phénomène sans lequel l'apparaître en tant que tel serait impossible, qui est la condition de possibilité de l'apparaître".

¹⁴ Jan Patočka, "Platonisme Négatif", 79-80: "on peut non seulement suspendre la croyance à chaque expérience sensible, mettre hors de circuit chaque domain sensoriel pris à part, mais encore dépasser l'*ego* comme tel, pour autant qu'il est soumis à la passivité des sens, le laisser au-dessous de soi comme simple objet d'observation et d'étude".

¹⁵ James Mensch, "Patočka and Artificial Intelligence", *PhilPapers*, <http://philpapers.org>.

¹⁶ Patočka, *Papiers Phénoménologiques*, 126.

¹⁷ Mensch, "Patočka and Artificial Intelligence", 7. Since the presentation of this paper I have had the pleasure to speak to James Mensch who pointed out, with reason, that to say the appearing as such is free of ontological commitments is not the same as to say it is ontologically void. In the following argument, I run the risk of implying he holds a position he did not affirm. For the current purpose of publishing this communication, I have left this as it was presented.

¹⁸ Patočka, *Papiers Phénoménologiques*, 209: "Il faudrait demander: les caractères de manifestation rendent-ils manifest parce qu'ils sont des caractères d'être, ou bien sont-ils des caractères d'être parce qu'ils rendent manifest?"

appearing, determining *a priori* what is necessary for the appearing of anything, it seems that there is yet a pre-condition for appearing and that is an (ontological) originary totality, prior to the individuation of particular phenomena.

In the first quotation used, Patočka writes that, in the course of experience, there are laws ruling over the appearance of singularities (in which we are a part, being the ones to which things appear), but also that there is an “unconditioned” whole—which is as if the ocean out of which each sensible experience arises from, falls back to, and in this movement manifests all at once. James Mensch’s article helps us see this imprecision or ambiguity in how to conceive “appearing as such”: we can think of a structure of appearing as the first, an *a priori* lawful structure regarding the appearing, but that there would be also the ontological depth, manifest *in* appearing, and this would be the originary totality.

What appears here is not a being, but precisely the whole, and that totality is not an entity but being. It is a ‘non-thing’ that, as such, can be considered a ‘nothing’.¹⁹

We can renew the path and follow Patočka’s criticism of the metaphysical division of orders of beings, but maintain ontological relevance in the shift by combining the previous criticism with the subordination of Being to appearing.

Being and(in) Appearing

The originary totality *is* in its appearing. In speaking of the transcendence of the world, Patočka writes:

That will be established by conceiving being itself from appearing, instead of taking the appearing for something that would happen in regards to being. Being would be in itself concealment, but concealment is a mode of appearing. The totality would be the totality of appearing, between the poles of concealment and non-concealment. Therefore, far from being distinct from appearing, the totality *is* the appearing itself.²⁰

In this way, *Being is appearing*. The sphere of appearing is ontologically as rich as could be, and it is instead, Being outside of manifestation that has no value, or place, whatsoever. “Negative Platonism” suggests precisely this reversal: it is not a negation of Being, but a negation of Being as something other, higher, beyond the appearing. Being, for Patočka, seems to be nothing other than Being manifest. But what does this mean?

The criticism to Husserl can now be read as being levelled at understanding world as a domain of the actual, rather than the possible.

If we do not understand the sense of origin of possibilities, and therefore, of the future, the primordial character of the world is lost, which is necessarily the case there where one attaches oneself above all to the *given* character of the appearing. The world itself as ‘horizon’ can then be interpreted—and that’s what Husserl does—as indifferent to orientation and temporalization, as simple horizon ‘intentionality’.²¹

¹⁹ Ibid., 221: “*Ce qui apparaît ici n’est pas un étant, mais justement le tout, et cette totalité n’est pas étant, mais être. C’est une ‘non-chose’ qui, en tant que telle, peut aussi être désigné comme un rien*”.

²⁰ Patočka, *Papiers Phénoménologiques*, 224: “Cela serait établi en concevant l’être lui-même à partir de l’apparition, au lieu de prendre l’apparition pour quelque chose qui ferait vis-à-vis l’être. L’être serait en lui-même retrait, mais le retrait est une modalité de l’apparaître. Le tout serait le tout de l’apparition, entre les pôles du retrait et du non-retrait. Ainsi, loin d’être distinct de l’apparition, le tout *est* l’apparition elle-même”.

²¹ Patočka, “Réflexion sur l’Europe”, *Liberté et Sacrifice*, 195: “Si on ne comprend pas le sens d’origine qui est celui des possibilités et, partant, de l’avenir, la caractère primordial du monde se perd, ce qui est nécessairement le cas là où l’on s’attache avant tout au caractère de *donnée* de l’apparaissant. Le monde lui-même en tant qu’ ‘horizon’ peut alors être interprété—et c’est ce que fait Husserl—comme indifférent à l’orientation et à la temporalisation, comme simple ‘intentionnalité’ d’horizon”.

The criticism is, then, close to Heidegger's or at least presents a thesis that could be associated to him. This means, concretely, to conceive Being as being-possible, as possibility itself. Traditional metaphysics presents Being not only as dwelling above, but also as static, complete, achieved. To think Being in terms of appearing means, on the contrary, to think it as possibility (and, as such, as *dynamis*). The sphere of appearing, Being as appearing, could thus be conceived as field of possibility, in which the singular phenomena emerge and disappear, the totality present in its concealment (and in which this appearing is determined by a certain structure). We ourselves are an active part in this totality: as all-encompassing it includes us, and we are a part of its appearing (realising and existing in possibilities). The totality, or Being, is not something resting in another plane beyond, but is in its Being manifest in which we participate. The absolute is here, in problematicity. And as such, it is in our responsibility.

Inês Pereira Rodrigues is a PhD student with the Institute of Practical Philosophy (IFP) at the University of Beira Interior, in Portugal, completing a dissertation focused on the notion of "movement" in Jan Patočka. She completed masters at the University of Lisbon, with a dissertation also on Patočka, titled "Possibilities of meaning: Jan Patočka and the care of the soul".

Jan Patočka and the Three Movements of Human Existence: From Asubjective to Trans-Subjective Contexts

Suzi Adams
Social Theory
Flinders University

Czech philosopher, Jan Patočka is increasingly considered to be one of the most important phenomenologists of the 20th century. As with Merleau-Ponty, Patočka's intellectual path is shaped by an enduring critical engagement with Husserl and Heidegger's respective versions of phenomenology. The present paper takes up Patočka's later thought, which is characterized by the interplay of three interrelated but incomplete trends: the turn towards an asubjective phenomenology, the elaboration of the "three movements of human existence", and a phenomenological philosophy of history. In turn, these emerge from his dissatisfaction with his earlier elaborations of the "natural world", his unfinished attempt to elucidate a negative Platonism, and his enduring interest in the world horizon. The present paper seeks to reconstruct Patočka's turn towards movement and its connections to the temporality of history and the asubjective field, as part of a broader project to reconsider modalities of trans-subjective doing and the institution of social worlds.

Introduction

Only an examination of the mutual relations of all these movements would provide a picture of the natural world, the *Lebenswelt*, the world of human life. We are still far from having resolved this problem.¹

Jan Patočka's later work in the 1960s and beyond saw him pursuing different, but overlapping, lines of thought.² They include his turn towards an asubjective phenomenology, the elaboration of the three movements of human existence, and his rethinking of the meaning of history. These are to be understood within the overall context of the most permanent problematic for Patočka's thought: the phenomenology of the world. Although Ludger Hagedorn argues that "movement" is to be regarded as the "*Leitmotiv*" of Jan Patočka's thought,³ the present paper suggests that, as the problematic of movement first becomes apparent as a theme in the 1960s, it is better regarded as interwoven with his asubjective phenomenology.⁴ Patočka's interest in an asubjective phenomenology and the three movements of existence emerged as ways of exploring phenomenology beyond Husserl and Heidegger, through shifting phenomenology away from a disproportionate focus on the subject/subjectivity. This aspect emerges gradually—and not always systematically—in Patočka's thought. In particular, it arose from his critique of Husserl's philosophy of consciousness, and what he called Heidegger's "anthropologism", which for him indicated the over-emphasis on the "humanness" of *Dasein* in relation to the manifestation of Being and the world. More broadly, both the three movements of existence and asubjective phenomenology are to be understood as part of Patočka's continued engagement with the problematic of the world, which, as Dominic Jervolino

¹ Jan Patočka, *Heretical Essays in the Philosophy of History*, trans. E. Kohak, edited by J. Dodd, (La Salle, Ill.: Open Court 1996), 11

² In marking the emergence of Patočka's later thought, various dates suggest themselves. For the purposes of this paper, 1967 seems the most convenient, as it was the year in which he wrote "The 'Natural' World and Phenomenology", which contains an important discussion of the three movements of existence. Jan Patočka, "The 'Natural' World and Phenomenology", in *Jan Patočka, Philosophy and Selected Writings*, trans. Erazim Kohak. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989).

³ Ludger Hagedorn, "'Bewegung' as Leitmotiv von Patočkas Ideengeschichte", in Hagedorn, L. and Sepp, HR (Eds) *Andere Wege in die Moderne: Forschungsbeiträge zu Patočkas Genealogie der Neuzeit*, (Würzburg: Königshausen und Neumann, 2008).

⁴ For further discussion of Patočka, the world and movement, see, for example, Filip Karfík, *Unendlich werden durch die Endlichkeit*. (Würzburg: Königshausen und Neumann, 2008), and Renaud Barbaras, *L'ouverture du monde. Lecture de Jan Patočka*. (Paris: Vrin, 2011).

put it,⁵ is the “great speculative theme” of Patočka’s life.⁶ Indeed, the increasing emphasis on *movement* was part of Patočka’s aim to argue for the problematic of the world as a non-subjective horizon of dynamic manifestation.⁷

The present paper brings these interlocking threads together, although it has a particular focus on the shift in Patočka’s articulation of the “three movements of human existence”. Through hermeneutical engagement with two central texts in which Patočka elaborates the three movements of human existence—the lectures in *Body, Community, Language, World*⁸ and the later *Heretical Essays in the Philosophy of History*⁹ respectively—this paper argues that a further, emergent thematic is discernible in Patočka’s thought that sees an expansion of his non-subjective phenomenology from *asubjective* contexts—as the relation of the “human condition” to the world through *embodiment* (be that singular or intersubjective)—to include *trans-subjective* contexts, as the domain of *sociality*, properly speaking (I return to this).¹⁰ Thus, for present purposes, I shall refer to Patočka’s late work as a “non-subjective” in an overarching sense. The underlying argument of this paper is that the trans-subjective dimension of sociality, as the work of the “anonymous collective”, is fundamental to the human condition (and irreducible to intersubjective contexts). As such, any philosophical anthropology (which generally has focussed on the “human person” as subjective or inter-subjective) requires a sociological anthropology to do justice to human condition in the plurality of its modalities, regions and dimensions.¹¹ In this sense, the present paper is less interested in the human condition as the embodied self (*asubjective*), but, rather, in its instituted (in the broadest sense) *openness* as a condition of *being-in-the-world*, and its trans-subjective horizons. These anonymous, trans-subjective horizons 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 (as *social imaginary significations*, to draw on Castoriadis), which are concretized and articulated as the self-institution of society itself, and *in* the socio-political institutions of each society.

The importance of the conception of “movement” is discernible in Patočka’s thought from about 1964 (the Aristotle book) and is apparent in a number of other essays, whilst the emergence of the “three movements of human existence” starts to appear in his thought around 1967, and, again, is elaborated in a number of different places.¹² The present paper takes up two of Patočka’s different articulations of the three movements: the 1967 lectures of *Body, Community, Language, World* and the 1975 *Heretical Essays in the Philosophy of History*.¹³ Patočka’s overall aim is to place the concept of “movement” as its “basic concept and principle”¹⁴ at the centre of a *non-subjective*

⁵ Dominic Jervolino, “Langage et phénoménologie chez Patočka”, *Les Etudes Phénoménologiques*, 15 (1999): 62.

⁶ This is seen from Patočka’s earliest work onwards, most notably his 1936 *Habilitationsschrift*.

⁷ Jan Patočka, *Body, Community, Language, World*, trans. Erazim Kohák, ed. James Dodd (Chicago, IL: Open Court, 1998), 153.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Patočka, *Heretical Essays*.

¹⁰ The term “trans-subjective” is taken from Johann P. Arnason’s phenomenological sociology. (See, for example, Johann P. Arnason, *Civilizations in Dispute*. (Leiden, Boston: Brill, 2003), especially chapter 4. The argument to be pursued here focuses on the “trans-subjective” as part of an approach to the human condition that understands culture as an “element of the world”, and, in a radicalization of the phenomenological critique of the subject/object divide, articulates the world as both a trans-subjective and trans-objective horizon. In this sense, the shift from *asubjective* to trans-subjective contexts in Patočka’s thought as a shift away from a focus on “the self” or the “human person” to the properly social domain of the trans-subjective sphere, onto which the world, as an articulation of culture, opens. This occurs in interplay with the proto-movement of the world as a trans-objective horizon.

¹¹ Cornelius Castoriadis refers to this domain of human social reality as the “collective anonymous”.

¹² The Aristotle book has now been published in French: Jan Patočka, *Aristote: ses devanciers, ses successeurs*. trans. Erica Abrams, (Paris: Vrin, 2011).

¹³ A systematic reconstruction of these texts goes beyond the scope of this paper; as such what is offered here can only be considered the preliminary contours of a larger problematic and research project.

¹⁴ Patočka, *Body, Community, Language, World*, 153.

phenomenological philosophy of the world as a qualitative, dynamic process of manifestation. However, he wants to go one step further and argue that “it is not just that movement belongs to existence, rather, existence is movement”.¹⁵

In *Body, Community, Language, World*, Patočka’s elaboration of the three movements of existence is found primarily in “Lecture 17” and “Lecture 18”.¹⁶ Building on the previous lectures in *Body, Community, Language, World*, “Lecture 17” begins with a general acceptance of Heidegger’s understanding of “care” as the core existential structure of *Dasein*. “Care” is a “project in a given situation which brings us into contact with things, a situation in which the things with which we deal and which we modify are revealed”. Patočka’s aim is to theorize “care” not as a threefold moment but as a trinity of interrelated movements that are essential to human existence. Central to his articulation at this time (and, indeed, during the 1960s more broadly), is the importance of “lived experience” as the fundamental corporeity of our existence.¹⁷

Patočka then goes on to summarize the main philosophical approaches to movement. As with Husserl and Heidegger before him, he aims to go beyond the subject/object dichotomy.¹⁸ As he saw it, philosophical modernity, represented by Descartes and Galileo, inaugurated the reduction of movement to locomotion as quantifiable, uniform, and static. The significance of (qualitative) transformation is excluded from this understanding of movement; instead the sense of “governed and governable” (which can be more generally understood as forms of *rational mastery*) was paramount and provided the basis for the expansion of technology.¹⁹ Bergson provides the prime example of a *subjective* conception of movement, which Patočka articulates as a perpetually “lived temporal structure” that is organized around an inner synthetic unity rather like a “melody” in which the “actually present lived experience unfolds against the background of former lived experiences, of what remains alive of the former. The past flows into what is present. The former lingers on, there is an accumulation of what has been”. Yet it is precisely this “passive cumulation of experience” as the basis of life which Bergson overemphasizes, in Patočka’s view (although he does not further elaborate).²⁰

Patočka finds a deeper, stronger sense of movement in Aristotle’s conception as “transformation, as possibility being realized”,²¹ that is drawing on the notion of *dynamis* and *alloiosis*. In turn, he links this back to Heidegger’s understanding of life as a realization of possibilities: “ours is a life of possibilities which are not indifferent, lifeless possibilities, rather, the possibilities in which we are involved, in which we transcend the ... movement is not a result, as sediment, but rather a process of realization”,²² although he is later careful to unpack the differences between Aristotelian and existentialist notions of movement and possibility of change as “life as a possibilities in a process of realization”.²³ The proto-model of movement is the living being, where “life itself is the goal of each individual movement” and the realization of certain (determinate) possibilities.²⁴ Unlike Bergson, for Aristotle movement is *futural*: it unfolds something that is not yet as the “movement of a self-constituting being”. Nonetheless, Aristotle’s elaboration of movement (as qualitative change)

¹⁵ Ibid., 143. Patočka’s non-subjective phenomenology of movement and existence is increasingly important for contemporary phenomenological debates, especially in the French context. Perhaps the most prominent is Renaud Barbaras’ phenomenology, most recently developed in Barbaras, *L’ouverture du monde*.

¹⁶ For reasons of space, I will primarily focus on his discussion in “Lecture 17” in Patočka, *Body, Community, Language, World*.

¹⁷ Patočka, *Body, Community, Language, World*, 143, emphasis in original.

¹⁸ Ibid., 153.

¹⁹ Ibid., 144.

²⁰ Ibid., 144-45.

²¹ Ibid., 145.

²² Ibid., 145.

²³ Ibid., 154.

²⁴ Ibid., 146.

involves an unchanging substrate as its precondition and is in this way still too “static” and “objective” to be helpful in the human realm of existence, for Patočka. He thus proposes to radicalize Aristotle: “the possibilities that ground movement have no pre-existing bearer, no necessary referent standing statically at their foundation, but rather all synthesis, all inner interconnection of movement takes place within it alone”.²⁵ In so doing, Patočka identifies the corporeity of lived experience (drawing on the Husserlian distinction between *Körper* and *Leib*) and *dynamis* as a possibility the not yet present, “that can take the given into itself and forge a unified meaning”²⁶ as essential aspects of this phenomenologised, radicalized sense of movement as existence: “the key to the answer lies in the concept of lived corporeity ... Lived corporeity is precisely something living, a part of life, of the vital process, and so is itself a process, not only something at the base of the process of living but its condition in a sense wholly different from that of a *hypokeimenon*”.²⁷

Patočka now arrives at the three movements of existence proper, although he does not articulate any of them at great length. They are the movements of, first, *anchoring*; second, of *self-sustenance*; and, third, of *transcendence*. Each movement comprises a distinctive temporal dimension, has a particular referent, and, in Heideggerian fashion, displays authentic and inauthentic modes. In addition, the first two movements display a particular *boundary situation*. The first movement Patočka refers to is that of *anchoring*, or *sinking roots*. Patočka elaborates it as an instinctive-affective movement that is in “harmony with the world”, whilst exerting control over our bodily self. It is primordial in that it co-determines life in all other human regions, yet it is repressed and different from animal modes in that it takes place within—and is refracted through—the clearing of the second and third movements. Nonetheless, for Patočka, this first movement is in some sense the most fundamental as it is that which allows humans to have a world not only “individual entities” (as per animals, although this remains implicit).²⁸

Patočka understands the three movements as interrelated, shared and intersubjective.²⁹ In the case of the first movement, this is evident in the human dependence on another for safety, warmth, sympathy, protection, etc. For both the first and second movement the *earth*—“that is motionless, that is eternally the unshakable ground”—is the referent for bodily movement, as such.³⁰ Its boundary situation (which Patočka takes from Jaspers) is contingency, of which Patočka lists: biological, situational, traditional (customs), and individual (skills).³¹ Its inauthentic side—a kind of self-concealment, “a primordial inauthenticity”—becomes apparent in interaction with the second movement as it is repressed and marginalized by the “utilitarian, pragmatic” movement of work.

The second movement is that of self-sustenance and self-projection, and it corresponds to the region of work (although in the context of *Body, Community, Language, World* it is always understood in terms of an embodied self). It is the sphere of purposiveness, production and reproduction (the reproduction of life, not biological reproduction, the extension of what Patočka calls “our inorganic body, our existing into things”, as the sphere of “meaning”. The temporal dimension to which it corresponds is the present, and is characterized by our “coming to terms with what is given in the form of things”. Its boundary situation is evinced in conflict, suffering and guilt, whilst its inauthenticity is shown as the failure to understand oneself which blinds others and oneself, and is connected to these interweaving situations of conflict, suffering and guilt. This is because this domain of human existence is “interested”, where people are anonymous in that they are reduced to

²⁵ Ibid., 146-47.

²⁶ Ibid., 147.

²⁷ Ibid., 155.

²⁸ Ibid., 148-49.

²⁹ Ibid., 149.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Ibid., 150.

their social roles. These first two movements find their self-realization within human finitude, submitting to the rule of “power” of the Earth.³²

The third movement of existence in a stronger, narrower sense that “seeks to bestow a global closure and meaning on the regions and rhythms of the first and second movement”,³³ which he elsewhere characterizes as the movement of “truth” (e.g. *Heretical Essays*), but which here seems to carry with it more a notion of “transcendence”. It is the movement of “self-achievement”, and seeks to break through our “earthliness”. It seeks to integrate finitude, situatedness, mortality into existence, was that to which we were previously blind. Existence in this strong sense comes to term with all the different aspects of the various movements and integrates them into a whole. Here Patočka identifies its inauthentic mode as being blinded by finitude, whilst its corresponding temporal dimension is the future: “existence in the sense of the third movement, is neither a matter of sinking roots in the world nor the prolongation of being but rather a task for all of life in its integrity”.³⁴

*

As we have seen, “lived corporeity” forms the basis of Patočka’s elaboration of the three movements in the 1967 lectures in *Body, Community, Language, World*. More broadly, he tells us that “to understand existence as movement means to grasp humans as beings in and of the world. They are beings that not only are in the world, as Heidegger tells us...but rather are themselves a part of the world process”.³⁵ Although each movement is “shared” with others, this is conceptualized in terms of *intersubjectivity* rather than *sociality*, properly speaking.³⁶ When we consider his elaborations of the three movements in *Heretical Essays*, which he wrote almost a decade later, however, the situation seems somewhat different. Here the three movements are contextualized in terms of *history* instead of *corporeity*; this brings into relief not only the *asubjective* but also the *trans-subjective* contexts of the human condition and the world process. Indeed, the three movements are not so much contextualized within but embedded into a broader consideration of historical modalities and the trans-subjective modalities of the “sphere of openness” as central to the human condition. Although Aristotle’s articulation of the tripartite soul (vegetative, animate, rational) is one source for Patočka’s three movements, his shift to a rethinking of history (which sits between a philosophy of history and the history of philosophy) can also be understood as his way of making sense of the Axial Age (he referred to Jaspers, for example), the “civilizational condition” more generally, and the uniqueness and significance of the ancient Greek breakthrough to political freedom and institution of the democratic *polis*, in particular. As such, an account of human existence as “lived corporeity” requires articulations of broader institutional and social dimensions of existence that have their basis in *trans-* rather than *asubjective* contexts. This is the domain of social reality proper—of culture and institution—that is irreducible to embodied and intersubjective analyses and as such requires its own articulation.

The first essay in *Heretical Essays* elaborates Patočka’s understanding of the *natural world* as the “pre-historical” world rather than the “pre-scientific” world in the Husserlian sense.³⁷ Here he finds Husserl’s idealism wanting. Heidegger’s notion of “openness” is something that Patočka finds more congenial for his own thought: “humans in their inmost being are nothing other than this

³² Ibid., 149-51.

³³ Ibid., 148.

³⁴ Ibid., 151.

³⁵ Ibid., 155-56.

³⁶ There are some incipient openings towards the trans-subjective dimension of life, especially in Lecture 18, Patočka, *Body, Community, Language, World*, but these are clearer again in Patočka, *Heretical Essays*.

³⁷ Patočka, *Heretical Essays*, 1ff.

‘openness’”.³⁸ In turn, “the structure of openness entails a double conception of the phenomenon. The openness of human being-in-the-world, first of all, lets what-is appear, manifest itself, become a phenomenon”.³⁹ The term “openness” also seems to refer to Heidegger’s *Lichtung* (although Patočka does not explicitly use this term), which take on a trans-subjective hue through a philosophical rearticulation of the domain of history that is irreducible to intersubjective modalities. It is worth quoting him in full:

If we strip Husserl’s ‘noematic sphere’ of the sense of the immanent transcendence we come close to what Heidegger calls the open region (overlooking Husserl’s one-sided preoccupation with objects). It is this sphere which represents, in a particular ‘epoch’, the possibilities of the phenomenalization of what-is uncovered. The region of openness is not identical with the universe of what-is, but is, rather, that which can be uncovered as existent in a particular epoch. That means that it is the world of a particular epoch, if by ‘the world’ we understand the structure of the way that what there is can appear to humans at a particular age ... In the play of manifestation’s unconcealment, they [the things] show themselves as what they are, thus demonstrating their seriousness. Their manifestation, however, is itself historical, and that in two ways: as the uncovering of what is and as the emergence of the structures of being which thus cannot stand out into openness other than historically.⁴⁰

From the above passage, we can see that the “natural world” is elaborated as historical (or *pre-historical*, strictly speaking), that the world manifests itself in and as historical constellations as the domain of social meaning, and can be understood neither via materialism nor idealism. Indeed, according to Patočka, it can only be understood as the totality of basic modes of human behaviour, and in turn, of their presuppositions and sedimentations.⁴¹ In *Heretical Essays*, the first movement of existence is understood as “non-historical”, the second as “pre-historical” and the third as “historical” in the strong sense of the term. Each movement is still considered to have its own temporality, but these are no longer considered as “temporal-historical”, and the “world” in question is the “common world of humans”, no longer in the sense of all human *persons* (as in *Body, Community, Language, World*) but all human *societies*.⁴²

The most systematic articulation of the three movements in *Heretical Essays* is found in the second essay. Identified as the movement of *acceptance, defence* and *truth*, respectively, here he articulates them as having their own original form, meaning and temporality. Each movement has two aspects, although Patočka no longer characterizes these in terms of “authenticity” and “inauthenticity”. The first movement is still seen in terms of a harmony and introduction to the world, but here the “interested” (as opposed to “indifferent”) aspect involved the demand for justice and a co-existence with others (especially the patriarchal family of Hellenic or Roman antiquity): “the father, raising up from the ground the infant laid at his feet, carries out an act of acceptance which bears within it a relation to all the horizons of temporality”, that introduces the child into a world that is not only embodied but socio-cultural, even at that micro level.⁴³

The second movement of defence (which he also sometimes calls “self-surrender”)⁴⁴ is entwined with the first, and is still characterized as “work”. The emphasis on his articulation of work is its mode as oriented to the present, and its oscillating sense of “burdensome” and “alleviation”. Included in the first two movements explicitly include the early empires that involves “all that has

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 6. The “sphere of openness” is clearly linked to the “field of manifestation”, and, as such, its articulation is fundamental to Patočka’s later thought. The sphere of openness provides another way into the articulation of trans-subjective contexts of the human condition.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 7.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 7-8, 9-10.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 10.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 11, more particularly, in the sense of all human *societies, civilizations* and *polities*.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 29-33.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 30.

to do with the order, sustenance, and organization of society”,⁴⁵ as well as “high civilizations” with “writing, with its petrified memory, does not arise in the context of human acts aimed at endowing life with a new meaning”.⁴⁶ Nonetheless, Patočka goes on to tell us, “it brings about a new presence of the past and the possibility of the far-ranging reflection that is exhibited in poetry and its immense influence throughout the entire *oikoumene* at the time”.⁴⁷

The third movement—the movement of “truth”—is always present in some way in the first two movements.⁴⁸ Patočka also articulates the three movements in terms of the trans-subjective nature of their historical context and relation to the world: the “nonhistorical” first movement takes place in the anonymous past; the second movement of prehistory sees collective memory (or, perhaps, following the recent work of Egyptologist Jan Assmann, “cultural memory”) preserved in a “written tradition”;⁴⁹ and the third movement, as the level of history proper, as the emergence into “truth”. Interestingly, Patočka goes on to briefly discuss Oskar Becker’s analysis of three civilizational types—“basal”, “low”, and those of the historical age—“in which the principal theme is the unfolding of the possibility basic to human beings, to win or lose themselves”.⁵⁰ Here Patočka wants to continue to prepare a space for the uniqueness of the ancient Greek trajectory, and the entering into “history proper” as the movement of truth and political freedom (from which his later “care for the soul” is directly linked).⁵¹ Patočka’s elucidation of the three movements of life in the *Heretical Essays* also draws on and reconfigures Hannah Arendt’s tripartite social-political ontology of *labour, work* and *action* as “free human activity”: “this new human possibility is based on the mutual recognition of humans as free and equal, a recognition which must be continuously acted out, in which activity does not have the character of enforced toil, like labour, but rather of the manifestation of *excellence*”.⁵² A life of freedom is essentially an “unsheltered” life:

Such life does not seek to escape its contingency, but neither does it yield to it passively; since it has glimpsed the possibility of authentic life, that is, life as a whole, the *world* opens itself to it for the first time—it is no longer merely an involuntary background against which that which concerns us shows itself; rather it itself can now stand forth, as the whole of that which opens up against the black backdrop of closed now. This whole now speaks to humans *directly*, free of the muting effect of tradition and myth, only by it do they seek to be accepted and held responsible. Nothing of the earlier life of acceptance remains in peace; all the pillars of the community, traditions, and myths, are equally shaken, as are all the answers that once preceded questions, the modest, yet secure and soothing meaning, though not lost is transformed.⁵³

Clearly, we are here far removed from the asubjective contexts of lived corporeity. Rather we find ourselves in the domain of history (and the “civilizational condition”) as trans-subjective modalities. Patočka’s articulation of the three movements in the *Heretical Essays* still situates them in an existential sense (which, for reasons of space, I have glossed over here), but they overwhelmingly emphasize the trans-subjective articulation of particular social-historical

⁴⁵ Ibid., 34.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 35.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 34-5. Art is a futural modality and thus belongs to the third movement of truth.

⁴⁸ Ibid., 33.

⁴⁹ Jan Assmann, *Religion and Cultural Memory: Ten Studies*, trans. Rodney Livingstone, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2006).

⁵⁰ Patočka, *Heretical Essays*, 35-36.

⁵¹ One of the limitations of Patočka’s thought is the hierarchical ordering of civilizations, and, concomitantly, the view that “world history” begins with the Ancient Greek breakthrough to political freedom. Interestingly, in his discussion of the third movement in *Body, Community, Language, World*, his examples come from the Christian and Buddhist traditions rather than the Greek. But, in line with the argument developed in this paper, the Christian and Buddhist examples in Patočka, *Body, Community, Language, World* were to illustrate modalities of *corporeity*, whereas in Patočka, *Heretical Essays*, the Greek example is anchored in the region of *history*.

⁵² Patočka, *Heretical Essays*, 37-9, emphasis in the original.

⁵³ Ibid., 39-40.

formations in the diversity and particularity (and promise) of historical trajectories and instituted “articulations of the world”. These historical trajectories are vital to understanding the human condition as a “unity in diversity”. There is a further aspect to trans-subjective contexts, however: the more strictly anthropological layer of the human condition that he begins to articulate as part of his asubjective phenomenology as “the sphere of openness” (which Patočka begins to elucidate in the *Heretical Essays*), or what he elsewhere terms the “field of manifestation”, and which we might also term a “cultural clearing”. But further discussion of this aspect is beyond the scope of this presentation.

Acknowledgements: Preliminary research for this was made possible by a research sojourn at the Centre for Theoretical Studies and Jan Patočka Archives (Prague) in 2010 as the recipient of a Junior Scholar Fellowship (Czech Academy of Sciences), kindly sponsored by Ivan Chvatík (Director, Patočka Archives). I would also like to thank Johann Arnason (Charles University, Prague) for his helpful comments on an earlier draft, and ongoing conversation about all things Patočka; and Jan Frei (Patočka Archives/CTS, Prague) for locating and dating additional primary sources for this paper, in particular, as well as broader conversations on Patočka’s trajectory, in general. I would also like to thank Lubica Učník (Murdoch University) for organizing the workshop, and for opportunities for dialogue on Patočka in Australia and beyond.

Dr Suzi Adams is a Lecturer in social theory at Flinders University, and the recipient of a Junior Fellowship (awarded by the Czech Academy of Sciences), hosted by the Centre for Theoretical Studies and the Jan Patočka Archives (Prague) in 2010. Her research focuses on a phenomenological-hermeneutic of modernity that rethinks the human place within the natural world, Enlightenment and Romantic varieties of world hood, non-subjective forms of movement, the cultural imagination, and a phenomenology of the world horizon. Her monograph, *Castoriadis’s Ontology: Being and Creation* has recently been published by Fordham UP (New York).

Listening Responsibly: Reflections on Music and Ethical Experience in the Thought of Jan Patočka

Anthony Backhouse
Philosophy
Murdoch University

Phenomenologically speaking, to listen to music is to interpret a moving whole which encompasses the movements of distinct individual notes, melodies, harmonies and rhythms. In listening, we notice that there is not simply a distinct sequence of auditory events but an unfolding of both future and past temporal moments that allows us to concentrate on different aspects of its performance. We might concentrate on just one instrument or part, or extend our listening to the piece as a whole, always moving back and forward along a temporal horizon which transcends any singular or particular “now” moment. For Patočka, the being of music can be thought of in this very movement, its tension, the rising and falling of its activity which is open to our interpretation. To listen to a piece of music could then be said to keep open this temporal transcendence of the present which refuses to yield one particularity over another and allows the experience of the movement itself to be what is fundamental to music as a whole. In this paper I suggest that a similar metaphor or analogy of appreciating music underlies Patočka’s own concern regarding understanding our shared experience and actions with others. Thus ideas such as temporal unfolding, movement, dissonance, amplitude, harmony and rhythm become central concepts in understanding ourselves and our relationships to other people which refuses to interpret human beings as particularities or objectivities that can be ordered or valued in separation from the actions and performance of human life as a whole.

Introduction

In its chief dimension, human life is a seeking and a discovering of the other in oneself and of oneself in the other.¹

In his book *The Improvisation of Musical Dialogue*, Bruce Ellis Benson argues that the way a musical work comes into existence is “best described as improvisatory at its very core” because it is “not merely the act of composing but also the acts of performing and listening”.² Music is always in one sense or another, and to different degrees, performed in an improvisation of different concrete human actions that constantly evolve, shape and change the possibility of any individual musical work. To name just a few, a particular piece of music is realised in the interplay between the composers’ motivation and musical understanding, the performers’ capabilities, and the audiences’ historical situation and expectations. Inspired by the hermeneutical analysis of Gadamer, Benson suggests that the goal of music understanding is fundamentally “a dialogue” played out in a “fusion of horizons” between the composers, performers and listeners.³

However, Benson is also careful to point out the danger in using a metaphor of a “fusion of horizons”, in “that—in fusing with the other—the ‘otherness’ of the other is lost”.⁴ This danger is plausible because “since music making is something that we inevitably do with others (whether they are present or not), musical dialogue is fundamentally ethical in nature”.⁵ The multiple “voices” of any musical situation become distant when, through a sort of “deafness” to the influence of other people, we only replicate and repeat them through a passive absorption and

¹ Jan Patočka, “The ‘Natural’ World and Phenomenology”, in Jan Patočka, *Philosophy and Selected Writings*, trans. Erazim Kohák. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989), 260.

² Bruce Ellis Benson, *The Improvisation of Musical Dialogue: A Phenomenology of Music* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 2.

³ *Ibid.*, 168.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 169.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 163-64.

appropriation of their participation. The influence of composers, performers and listeners must somehow be heard. The danger is that “mere repetition does not usually compel us to *listen*”.⁶

In response to this, Benson suggests that the improvisational and dialogical nature of musical works have at base an ethical responsibility, which in a certain manner must be constantly protected and secured.⁷ A securing which is expressed through an explicit commitment to listen to the plurality of music practice itself that precedes the aesthetic goals of any individual work or artist. Yet such a listening is difficult because it demands not just paying attention to the multifarious modes of musical engagement but also simultaneously “responding” to them, being responsible for them. Being responsible is possible because we make a difference in what we play, never entirely repeating, nor wholly ignoring. We are compelled to perform in dialogue, to a listening that simultaneously assumes responsibility through an explicit attentiveness to others.⁸ In this sense our attentiveness is a willingness to perform or participate with others in the renewal of musical works that both seeks to understand what is being played as well as contribute anew to its style and character. Such an act requires a careful sensitivity to the influence of others as well as the desire to participate in a unique way. Benson describes this bi-directional interplay between the passivity and activity of musical dialogue as a type of performative “tension”, a tension which is necessary for giving voice to the plurality of participants in music. For Benson,

A dialogue can only be maintained if there is a pull exerted by both sides. The danger for genuine dialogue, then, is not the presence of tension but its loss or imbalance. A dialogue is only possible when each partner both holds the others in tension—that is, holds the other accountable—and feels the tension of accountability exerted by the other ... Of course, in order to “feel that pull”, one needs to be able to listen to the other.⁹

Musical responsibility, as Benson portrays it, should seek and promote the tension of listening that is at the heart of any dialogue, in which the plurality of participants is explicitly acknowledged and all are equally held accountable for its unfolding.¹⁰

I suggest, in a parallel with these ideas that such a responsible listening to others as a “performative tension” is of benefit when considering Patočka’s understanding of responsibility in connection with the primacy of the plurality of human existence. Taking up Patočka’s own conception of human existence as a movement that is akin to the unfolding a melody,¹¹ the ethical commitment to a renewed understanding of listening might well be relevant in all facets of human life, not just musical life.

For Patočka, like music, our individual life is not something substantial, given before hand, as if we could simply read the notes of our own predefined score. Instead, it must be constantly improvised, played, performed. Resembling the dynamics of music, we express our life through the tensions,

⁶ Ibid., 188, emphasis in original. To give one possible broad example might be the “lack of feel” that we often attribute to musical performances that seemingly just “repeat” the music in an almost automated fashion without the necessary expression or engagement in the audience and between the performers themselves.

⁷ His own word for this ethical motivation in musical practice he calls “stewardship”. See “The Responsibility of Stewardship”, Ibid., 187-191.

⁸ I suggest Benson’s claim is here equivalent to Gadamer’s understanding of openness to the other where “this openness does not exist only for the person who speaks; rather, anyone who listens is fundamentally open. Without such openness to one another there is no genuine human bond. Belonging together always also means being able to listen to one another”. Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, trans. Joel Weinsheimer and Donald G. Marshall, 2nd ed. (London: Continuum, 2004), 355.

⁹ Benson, *The Improvisation of Musical Dialogue*, 171.

¹⁰ Benson himself makes no claims about the aesthetic value of such “performative tension” in music but I believe it would be an interesting further study to think through the influence of tension as an integral part of what makes a musical performance influential or moving.

¹¹ Jan Patočka, *Body, Community, Language, World*, trans. Erazim Kohak, ed. James Dodd, (Illinois: Open Court Publishing, 1998), 47.

style and rhythms of the many moments that punctuate it. Yet our own life is not an entirely individual and spontaneous act either. We are necessarily confronted with other people's styles and rhythms that constantly counter punctuate and augment our own. To perform our own existence then presupposes a song that is already underway and in which we must first join in through learning and listening to those close to us.

Given such a musical analogy, I suggest that when Patočka says "it is this structure of the other, as nearer to us than we ourselves and correspondingly near to themselves through us" he is emphasising not only an inter-subjective formal structure but also an ethical possibility.¹² In describing the differing depths of our relation towards others, Patočka explains that originally we are met with the other in the form of an "acceptance" or "prepared warmth" that covers our lacks and needs before we can do so for ourselves.¹³ Before we are capable of our own lives as independent thinkers and actors we first rely on those who accept us into the world and procure and provide for that which we cannot achieve for ourselves. For example, we are fed, bathed, and imitate and repeat others walk, talk and play. This is not an unimportant or insignificant aspect of our life. Patočka explains how such a "past" is un-thematically withheld in the movements of our own body—for example the particular bodily dexterity that needs to be imitated and learnt from others in order to play a violin.¹⁴ Our movement within the world always expresses and incorporates others with whom the styles and techniques of life are handed down to us in the form of a passive acceptance of tradition. Tradition can only be "procured" through the hands and arms of others. Thus, for Patočka, we are,

From the start of life immersed, rooted, primarily in the other. This rootedness in the other mediates all our other relations. The other is primordially those who looks after our *needs* before we can and do begin to look after them with them.¹⁵

To begin to "look after" our own needs means we overcome such a passivity of learning from others and take up our own practical dealings in life as an individual. We begin to explicitly understand our own existence in terms of what we need and desire and take up things in a meaningful way in relation towards our own independent life *as a whole*.

However, as with our originary mode of sensing the other in terms of need, such a meaningful situation in which we use and make things always presupposes our life with other people. In this type of mode of relating to things in the "present", we are equally compelled to procure and provide for those who cannot. In this practical mode of being with others Patočka says:

We can only accept the other by risking ourselves, by attending the other's needs no less than our own, by *working*. Work is essentially this self-disposal of ourselves as being at the disposal of others.¹⁶

From our passive acceptance into the world of others develops a secondary acceptance of the mutual responsibility to respond to other people's needs (as well as our own) in the mode of "active" work. The very foundation of our lives then seems to have a certain mutual tension of being in the world in two different senses of relating to the needs and interdependencies of each other in that "it has its source in the factual dependence of life on itself".¹⁷ On one hand, we relate to others in a mode of aesthetic and emotional dependency, an acceptance of bodily individuation and survival; on the other, a burdening and weight surfaces as we accept the need to work and

¹² Patočka, "The 'Natural' World and Phenomenology", 258.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 264.

¹⁴ Patočka, *Body, Community, Language, World*, 44.

¹⁵ Patočka, "The 'Natural' World and Phenomenology", 260.

¹⁶ Jan Patočka. *Heretical Essays in the Philosophy of History*, trans. Erazim Kohák, ed. James Dodd (Chicago, IL: Open Court, 1996), 31.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 31.

secure for others those things which they made available to us. One is a passive receiving and the other an active procuring. What emerges is a certain dialectic of our belonging with others in which the dual modes of intimate need and self-disposal in work form a rhythmical foundation.

Yet this rhythm presupposes a certain bondage to repetition at this level of shared meaning that Patočka thematises as characteristic of the nourishing and sustaining “cyclical earth”.¹⁸ Our experience of one another is not explicitly orientated but rather lived at the level of an iterative and particular responding to one another in the name of living. To give just one example is the punctuation of life in the dual modes of the everyday and the holiday. I move in the day of my work to secure the monetary needs to enjoy myself in the sphere of recreation. At work, I order myself and others in the mutual task of efficiency in order that I can release from such burden and submerge into the festival, the world with others in the mode of mystical bonds and aesthetic desires, resisting objective work roles, placing us back in our originary need for emotional comfort in the acceptance of others. Patočka explains that we sense this movement between these two ways of being with other people as a type of “burden” and “alleviation”:

The burden which humans accept and which inevitably accompanies them throughout life is itself accepted in an atmosphere of alleviation; the rhythm and interpenetration of burden and relief are the scale of the sense of life on which we oscillate as long as we live.¹⁹

This “oscillation” or rhythm between burden and relief demonstrates a particular dependence on others for our own self-understanding. That is, when we oscillate through the world of work and play we are presupposing a certain sensitivity to the inherent social modes of providing and receiving. The pressure to work, which compartmentalises the meaning of our lives and the meaning of others around us into an endless array of particularities and tasks alienates and subjugates an originary dimension of belonging that seeks out a “non-objective” embracing—a meaning and relation to others that resonates deeper than the simple accounting for and working alongside other people. Yet such a relief can only be temporary. The problem is we never truly escape a cycle or repetition of mutual dependence on each other. We end up ever repeating the same phrases and the same notes where the movement of human life is subverted to the rhythmic cycles of organic life. To put it in other terms, we are not really “performing together”, “truly listening to one another”, but rather taking turns at responding to the routine needs of individual wants and desires (be it an individual, community, or empire). For Patočka, this understanding of human existence organises into power relations, which think human beings “as a helper or an obstacle in access to the things that are the means of life”.²⁰

Patočka, however, believes that inherent to these modes of being with others is born a third possibility, a certain *freedom* in relating to other people, one in which we mutually grasp and make explicit the feeling of responsibility towards others through a living which is in dedication to them. What is important is here the level of cyclical and particularised repetition is re-appropriated and made problematic. Whereas the first two regions of relating to others is inherently acted out in the oscillations of mutual interdependence and need, this third possibility seeks to respond to others explicitly by asking what is unique about human life as a life lived together.²¹ Rather than co-dependence, the shift is towards co-existence, which “shakes our bondage to life” and in which

¹⁸ Patočka, “The ‘Natural’ World and Phenomenology”, 260.

¹⁹ Patočka, *Heretical Essays*, 31.

²⁰ Patočka, “The ‘Natural’ World and Phenomenology”, 261.

²¹ Patočka sees a definitive rupture in responsibility towards others and the questions of living together in a community that was founded in the Ancient Greek polis: “In the community, the polis, in life dedicated to the polis, in political life, humans make for an autonomous, purely human meaningfulness, one of a mutual respect in activity significant for all its participants and which is not restricted to the preservation of physical life but which, rather is a source of a life that transcends itself in the memory of deed guaranteed precisely by the polis”., Patočka, *Heretical Essays*, 63.

we seek to affirm the distinctness and difference of each human life as something universal and whole rather than coincidental and particular. Patočka, in noticeably evocative language, says that:

at the centre of our world the point is to reach from a merely given life to the emergence of a true life, and that is achieved in the movement that shakes the objective rootedness and alienation in a role, in objectification—at first a purely negative movement, one that shakes our bondage to life, setting free without revealing anything further; then with a movement that positively 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 them again to infinity”.²²

I suggest that Patočka means here when proposing an idea of a true life that is free of “objectification” that there is always a possibility in the plurality of human life to consistently reaffirm this very plurality which characterises and makes possible any individual person. Thus, I suggest that for Patočka, the terms “universal” and “infinite” are not meanings that depend on only insight or careful reflection, or a type of self-clarification, which with patience or artistic sensitivity we could uncover absolutely or certify. Rather, what is infinite and universal is the task of being with other people in a finite way that does not depend on them in the cycle of need. What is “essential” is that we live together, this we can never escape or transcend. But in order to become responsible for this essential structure of existence we must always think again “how” this living might be achieved. If it is simply left to the machinations of need and desire we never explicitly come to see other people as equal and open to the same question.

Hence, I argue, that for Patočka, the question of responsibility lies in the tension or dissonance between the rhythm of passive and active modes of belonging with others: between the passive need for acceptance (thematized in the temporal mode of the past, desiring, aestheticism, festival) and the active task to secure life for others and oneself in work (making present, asceticism, ordering, and objectification of people into modes of production). What is problematic for Patočka is not either mode of being with others but rather the ignorant vacillation of one mode to the other. Put differently, it is the cyclical rhythm of life towards itself which needs to be brought into question in the way that we understand and listen to each other. What is truly human is holding open and also making accountable everyone in the very question of what being human means. This means to no longer defer the meaning and significance in the relationship of our being with others to the function of an organic or industrial system. But because we cannot simply dismiss or remove ourselves from these aspects of our meaningful belongingness to other people what is needed is to resist the implicit rhythmic cycle of alleviation and burden and instead constantly withhold them as two different and “dissonant” modes of belonging together. That would mean that to give “birth to all in all” and to “evoke life in the other” could only be achieved if we are capable of withholding both the passivity and activity of our relationship towards others. In other terms, that we explicitly pay attention to the depth of our dependence on others in the shaping of our individual lives through a responsible “listening”, which both “passively accepts” and simultaneously “reacts”.

For this reason, I propose that this is what Patočka refers to when talking about a type of “active tension” that moves beyond “acceptance” and instead moves towards “initiative and preparation”.²³ A life of active tension for Patočka means “one of extreme risk and unceasing upward striving in which every pause is necessarily already a weakness for which the initiative of others lies in wait”.²⁴ Although such evocative terminology gestures towards an action of individual strength and autonomy, I believe it is in fact the “extreme risk” of a life in its explicit exposure towards others that shapes Patočka’s concern for responsible life. A life exposed amplifies the tension of belonging in the world in which “its chief dimension, is a seeking and a discovering of the other in oneself and

²² Patočka, “The ‘Natural’ World and Phenomenology”, 263.

²³ A type of initiation and preparation that Patočka argues is thematic of the existential temporal modality of the “future”. See Patočka, *Heretical Essays*, 38.

²⁴ Patočka, *Heretical Essays*, 38.

of oneself in the other". Such a "dialogic" tension presupposes a listening to others in which we must seek to understand each other and yet never fail to make this understanding problematic. Or perhaps put differently, to never let the music stop unfolding.

I contend that a similar type of active tension could very well describe the situation of musicians performing in a band or orchestra. At any moment every individual is both listening and acting, hearing the movement and unfolding of the shared experience of the music, as well as equally responding, reacting in their own unique style to contribute and renew the musical piece.²⁵ In an argument that is similar to what Benson suggests for music, we could say to perform responsibly in our own life could be described as withholding the tension at the boundary of passivity and activity which seemingly amplifies the shared experience and possibilities of all who are involved. Such a performance escapes repetition and holds open the possibility and problems of true improvisation that "compels us to listen" and inspires others to the shared responsibility inherent in the very movement of human life as a question that we are all accountable for—a responsibility that not only Patočka's work but also political acts stand as example.

Anthony Backhouse is a PhD student and participant in the *Judgement, Responsibility and the Life-World* ARC funded Research Project at Murdoch University. Current research interests include Patočka's existential consideration of being with others in relation to ethics and the phenomenological critique of modern technology. Completed an Honours Degree at Murdoch University in 2009 entitled *Movement, Meaning, Emotion* on Jan Patočka's appropriation and critique of Heidegger.

²⁵ This is particularly true of so called "free" improvisation.

The Nostalgic Movement of Responsibility in Patočka's Later Teaching

Peter McDowell
Education
Charles Darwin University

In evaluating Jan Patočka's last writings, Erazim Kohák discerns a subtle deviation from the phenomenological programs established by Husserl and Heidegger, namely the absorption of elements readily identifiable as Romantic or Nietzschean or otherwise attributable to Heidegger's later thinking; or classical motifs, like the tradition of consolatory writing after Augustine (and reappearing in Comenius).

While not wishing to invalidate Kohák's interpretation, the paper claims that these components reflect, more fundamentally, a nostalgic dimension within Patočka's late philosophy, which, rather than signalling, say, an apocalyptic fissure in his philosophical style, derives instead from the abstract regulation of European civilisation (as Patočka conceives it).

The paper argues that Patočka's final works, especially *Plato and Europe* and the *Heretical Essays in the Philosophy of History*, comprise coordinated attempts to establish a 'teaching' that challenges contemporary philosophy to recapture the dire significance of technologically-mediated cultural decadence, and to appreciate that varieties of nostalgia, and consonant acts such as sacrifice, form an important means of disturbing the *status quo*.

As a teaching, a substantive philosophical curriculum emerges, centred around the interdependent topics of "care of the soul", phenomenology of history, the concept "Europe", and the metaphysics of phenomena (supported by clarifying investigations of the life-world). A dialogic pedagogy accompanies this curriculum, interleaving philosophical responsibility with sustained reflection. Moreover, recalling Patočka's earnest attempts to reconfigure Aristotle's philosophy of movement, autochthonous transitions between the three movements of human existence punctuate the general progression of topics, systematically so in *Body, Community, Language, World*.

Introduction

To reiterate means to attempt to, through new ways, new words, new methods, say the same thing. *We have to say what is, again, over and over, and always in a different way, but it always has to be the same thing!*¹

This paper is attempting to convey a particular reading of Jan Patočka's later teaching.

Inspired by the way Erazim Kohák introduced Patočka to English-speaking readers in the 1970s, '80s and '90s, emphasising a commonality of purpose spanning five decades, the writer is wanting to show that there is a strong programmatic aspect to Patočka's late works, a program that becomes essentially pedagogic—pedagogic but not didactic.

The paper will try to explain how Patočka, in his late works (which, we must remember, comprise an assortment of published articles, lecture notes, reportata of unofficial gatherings, privately circulated typescripts, and so on),² makes his emerging pedagogy absolutely central to his personal philosophy. In other words, it is argued, in the period from the late 1960s until his untimely death in 1977,³ Patočka is trying to establish a teaching—just like his great philosophical predecessors (Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, etc.)—who established teachings that Patočka is in constant, critical conversation with.

¹ Jan Patočka, *Plato and Europe*, trans. Petr Lom (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2002), 90; italics in the original.

² Erazim Kohák, *Jan Patočka: Philosophy and Selected Writings* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1989), 351.

³ *Ibid.*, 3.

As Paul Ricœur emphasises famously in his preface to Patočka's *Heretical Essays in the Philosophy of History*,⁴ Patočka had a real status as a teacher, and since, by definition, inspirational teachers develop a teaching somehow, we might ask ourselves, what precisely is Patočka's teaching?

We turn now to the guiding thread of the paper.

In his summaries of Patočka's work, prepared for English readers over the course of some twenty years, Kohák detects several discordant or extraneous elements, elements that could be described as non-phenomenological, Romantic, and so on (to be discussed further in a moment). In response to these perhaps not invalid findings, the paper argues that the appearance of these elements (or motifs), which we can admit as discordant or extraneous if we wish, is not so much the result of a fundamental rupture, or a fresh, errant impetus within Patočka's mature thinking—in response to shifting political circumstances⁵—but rather, elements that relate, fundamentally, to the formation of Patočka's teaching.

So, to ask again, why is the teaching important?

Because the pedagogy helps to consolidate and redirect the philosophy. Indeed, the nature of the teaching can be foreshadowed here. It is characterised by movement, dynamism, dialogism, and heteroglossia.⁶ Yet, unexpectedly, there is a certain nostalgic element,⁷ which, in effect, helps to promote this movement and dialogue, though, importantly, avoiding systematisation and didacticism.

The nostalgia, if pursued in a constructive manner, enables sustained critique, recovery, and reconstruction of the context (or “concrete situation”⁸) needed to understand where European thinking has arrived—arrived at today for its inheritors.⁹ Indeed, in a way, this nostalgic movement could easily appear as a Nietzschean genealogy,¹⁰ or a rhapsodic application of genetic phenomenology,¹¹ but again, there is a pedagogic motive behind the appearance of these motifs, which we will now explore in more detail.

Unfortunately, given the constraints of the occasion, many relevant topics will only be touched upon, and, of course, the manifold barriers of language, cultural distance, professional status (the author being a lecturer in Education), and so on, will all play their part in influencing the reception of this particular reading.

Kohák's Reading

We first turn briefly to Kohák's reading of Patočka.

Kohák's homage to Patočka in English has spanned several decades. His wide-ranging critical commentary is generally affirming, recognising Patočka's long-running faithfulness to Husserl's phenomenological program; but from its earliest expression onwards, there has been a certain uneasiness underlying Kohák's comments, stated and intimated in various ways, which largely

⁴ Paul Ricœur, “Preface to the French Edition of Jan Patočka's *Heretical Essays*”. In Jan Patočka *Heretical Essays in the Philosophy of History*, trans. Erazim Kohák, ed. James Dodd (Chicago, IL: Open Court, 1996).

⁵ Kohák, *Jan Patočka*, 106.

⁶ See M. M. Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays*, trans. Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 1981).

⁷ See Svetlana Boym, *The Future of Nostalgia* (New York, NY: Basic Books, 2001).

⁸ Patočka, *Plato and Europe*, 181.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 9.

¹⁰ Friedrich Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morals*, trans. Walter Kaufmann (New York, NY: Random House, 1967).

¹¹ Jacques Derrida, “‘Genesis and Structure’ and Phenomenology”, in *Writing and Difference* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1978).

indicates that, in the latter stages of his career, Patočka begins to deviate inauspiciously from the phenomenological enterprise, especially as practiced by Husserl and the “pre-turn” Heidegger.¹²

In his interpretive study of Husserl’s *Ideas I*,¹³ titled *Idea and Experience*, Kohák detects that Patočka, the Husserlian disciple, has ostensibly, under Heidegger’s subtle influence, become afflicted with a “mystical skepsis”,¹⁴ by entertaining the “heresy” that the central notion of “evident givenness” might be somehow questionable.¹⁵

Subsequently, in his exquisite meditation on “the moral sense of nature”, the monograph *The Embers and the Stars*, Kohák discerns in Patočka’s later writings a deeper Heideggerian “kinship”, this time in relation to Patočka’s epochal approach to the philosophy of history.¹⁶

Then, in a subsequent article in *The Review of Metaphysics*,¹⁷ introducing Patočka’s oeuvre to the international community of English-speaking academic philosophers, Kohák notices an unresolved tension in Patočka’s late work, emerging, more-or-less, from having endured the influences of the pre- and post-war (fascist and communist) periods. Kohák proceeds to argue that the prevailing hopelessness of the Soviet era¹⁸ brought forth a sequence of politically tolerable postures, including various classical studies and consolatory writings in the manner of, for example, Saint Augustine¹⁹ and Comenius.²⁰

Finally, in the translator’s postscript to *Heretical Essays*, there is explicit recoil.²¹ There, Kohák notices extraneous, pre-Socratic motifs, unfittingly dialectical, such as the Heraclitean emphasis on war and strife, interpretable somehow as either Romantic, Nietzschean, or even apocalyptic.

For Kohák, the Patočka of *An Introduction to Husserl’s Phenomenology* (mid 1960s)²² and *Body, Community, Language, World* (late 1960s, in a more “hopeful” political climate)²³ seems to be the phenomenological “high-water mark”, with subsequent works somehow drifting away from the Husserlian, and even the Heideggerian, approaches to phenomenology.

In general terms, this progression of critical views is reaffirmed in Kohák’s sustained intellectual biography,²⁴ where the trajectories of Patočka’s thinking are placed in far richer historic-political

¹² Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson (Oxford, UK: Basil Blackwell, 1962).

¹³ Edmund Husserl, *Ideas Pertaining to a Pure Phenomenology and to a Phenomenological Philosophy. First Book: General Introduction to a Pure Phenomenology*, trans. Fred Kersten (The Hague, Netherlands: Martinus Nijhoff, 1983).

¹⁴ Erazim Kohák, *Idea and Experience: Edmund Husserl’s Project of Phenomenology in Ideas I* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1978), 106.

¹⁵ See Husserl, *Ideas I*, 326.

¹⁶ Erazim Kohák, *The Embers and the Stars: A Philosophical Inquiry into the Moral Sense of Nature* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1984), 20.

¹⁷ Erazim Kohák, “The Crisis of Rationality and the ‘Natural’ World”, *The Review of Metaphysics* 40, no. 1 (1986): 79-106.

¹⁸ See Leszek Kołakowski, “Hope and Hopelessness”, *Survey: A Journal of East & West Studies* 17, no. 3 (1971), 37-52.

¹⁹ Augustine, *Confessions*, trans. R. S. Pine-Coffin (London, UK: Penguin, 1961).

²⁰ John Comenius, *The Labyrinth of the World and the Paradise of the Heart*, trans. Howard Louthan and Andrea Sterk (Mahwah, NY: Paulist Press, 1998).

²¹ Jan Patočka, *Heretical Essays in the Philosophy of History*, trans. Erazim Kohák, ed. James Dodd (Chicago, IL: Open Court, 1996), 159.

²² Jan Patočka, *An Introduction to Husserl’s Phenomenology*, trans. Erazim Kohák (Chicago, IL: Open Court, 1996).

²³ Jan Patočka, *Body, Community, Language, World*, trans. Erazim Kohák, ed. James Dodd (Chicago, IL: Open Court, 1998).

²⁴ Kohák, *Jan Patočka*.

context (an expansive story to which others have made important contributions).²⁵ Unfortunately, we cannot go into these matters here.

The present paper, however, is making a counter-claim, namely, that of the two works just mentioned, the latter especially, *Body, Community, Language, World*, is combining with important subsequent works, *Plato and Europe*, the *Heretical Essays in the Philosophy of History*, and other contemporaneous published writings, to establish Patočka's teaching, a teaching that has its own accompanying pedagogy and philosophical curriculum.

An Alternative Reading

At the very the end of *Plato and Europe*, originally conducted in lecture-cum-seminar format, right where the discussion between the participants finally breaks off, there is an interesting impromptu comment from Patočka that suggests an alternative (but still mutually consistent) reading to Kohák's:

All sorts of nostalgia, which in European life always surface with periodical urgency—which we call Renaissance or romanticism—they are all related to the sentiment that something is not quite right with this peculiar abstract civilisation, that somewhere, it has a deep 'wound'.²⁶

Although quoted here largely out of context, the passage is mentioning, ostensibly, the same things that Kohák is having trouble assimilating: incongruent or unanticipated romanticism and Renaissance (which might also allude to Husserl's Cartesianism²⁷), and since Patočka himself is identifying their presence, we do not really need to deny Kohák his reading.

Actually, the status of this interesting passage is ambiguous, as it follows some rhetorical questioning surrounding the work of Lévi-Strauss, who features at key points in *Plato and Europe*, and so whether this nostalgic position is attributable to Lévi-Strauss, or rather, whether Patočka is rehearsing a critique of Lévi-Strauss, or actually presenting his own view, is a moot point.

But, nonetheless, in making these comments, whether referring to his own thinking or not, Patočka is foreshadowing the crucial appearance of nostalgic elements within the history of philosophy.

From this passage, the items specifically identified by Kohák appear to be somehow historically structural, that is, directly related to the history of Europe. In other words, this brief passage can be read as more than simply a personal view. Rather, Patočka is signalling the importance of nostalgia—nostalgia that is variegated—identified here with two explicit labels, Renaissance and romanticism.²⁸

Actually, the text of *Plato and Europe* breaks off here—these are literally the final comments—with a claim that the problem of the “wound” and its affiliated nostalgia is particularly urgent. Of course, a deeper historical interpretation of this urgency is developed directly in the *Heretical Essays*.²⁹

²⁵ Ludwig Landgrebe, “Jan Patočka”, *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 38, no. 2 (1977): 287-290; Ivan Chvatík, “Geschichte und Vorgeschichte des Prager Jan Patočka-Archivs”, in *Jan Patočka and the European Heritage*, ed. Ivan Chvatík, Studia Phænomenologica (Bucharest, Romania: Humanitas, 2007); Václav Havel, “Remembering Jan Patočka: Opening Speech at the Conference in Prague, April 23, 2007”, in *Jan Patočka and the Heritage of Phenomenology: Centenary Papers*, ed. Ivan Chvatík and Erika Abrams (Dordrecht, Netherlands: Springer, 2011).

²⁶ Patočka, *Plato and Europe*, 223.

²⁷ Edmund Husserl, *Cartesian Meditations: An Introduction to Phenomenology*, trans. Dorian Cairns (Dordrecht, Netherlands: Kluwer Academic, 1965).

²⁸ See Paul Oskar Kristeller, *Renaissance Thought and the Arts: Collected Essays* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1990); Anthony K Thorlby, *The Romantic Movement* (London, UK: Longmans, 1966).

²⁹ See the Sixth Essay.

From here, notwithstanding the potential ambiguity in the quoted passage, the present paper is affirming, on the basis of evidence accruing elsewhere in *Plato and Europe*, and in the other late works mentioned, that nostalgia and nostalgic moves are integral to Patočka's philosophical rhetoric, and significantly, to the establishment of Patočka's pedagogy and teaching.

However, at this point we need to recognise the abstraction, or formality, also mentioned in the passage, formality which is covered concisely in the Patočka's Warsaw Lecture (delivered in 1971).³⁰ There Patočka summarises Husserl's mature phenomenological position and its consequences, particularly the discovery of the significance of "indirect mathematisation" and the ongoing hypothesis that accompanies it: that there are formal, mathematical correlates to the full spectrum of subjectively experienced qualitative content.³¹

A curtailed, but very interesting analysis follows in this Warsaw Lecture, traversing the principal theme of Husserl's *The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology: An Introduction to Phenomenological Philosophy*,³² leading through a summary of Patočka's lengthy analyses of the life-world, and ending with the claim that a dynamic historicity, incorporating a fundamental situatedness and orientation to tradition, underpins our deepest philosophical account of human existence.³³ In this context, with European history ever-unfolding, ever-refolding and combining tradition with novelty in both familiar and unexpected ways, a nostalgic move (such as romanticism) becomes at once a signal and a trigger for initiating the kind of responsible "inner conduct"³⁴ that Patočka is advocating in these later works.

Nostalgic Movement

With the suggestion that there are varieties of nostalgia, and that nostalgic movements are somehow related to the formal structure of "Europe", an obvious question arises: how does this understanding help the phenomenological enterprise?

Further, how would following a nostalgic movement, however initiated, help to us to notice and understand the formal structure, the abstract regulation of European civilisation, and deal pragmatically with the consequences of this understanding? And further, how should the nostalgic movement be followed?

To once again clarify the claim that is being made here: Patočka's identification of the nostalgic motif—or, alternatively, his recognition of the continuous refolding of history—is part of a broader attempt by Patočka to establish a teaching. And as we'll see shortly, so is the recommended approach to following the nostalgic movement: adopting a certain "vigilance" (assuming a position of responsibility) to appraise matters for ourselves—we cannot just rely on tradition ...³⁵

Consequently, in the context of this purported teaching, an initial challenge for the teaching, in terms of a desirable philosophical outcome, would be to recapture the significance of technologically-mediated cultural decadence, a central theme of Husserl's final writings.³⁶

³⁰ Jan Patočka, "Edmund Husserl's Philosophy of the Crisis of the Sciences and his Conception of a Phenomenology of the 'Life-World' (Warsaw Lecture, 1971)", in *Jan Patočka: Philosophy and Selected Writings* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1989).

³¹ Ibid., 229; see also Jan Patočka, "Cartesianism and Phenomenology", in *Jan Patočka: Philosophy and Selected Writings* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1989), 289.

³² Edmund Husserl, *The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology: An Introduction to Phenomenological Philosophy*, trans. David Carr (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1970).

³³ Patočka, "Edmund Husserl's Philosophy of the Crisis", 236.

³⁴ Patočka, *Plato and Europe*, 1, italics in original.

³⁵ Ibid., 77.

³⁶ See Husserl's 1935 "Prague Lecture", in Edmund Husserl, *Phenomenology and the Crisis of Philosophy*, trans. Quentin Lauer (New York, NY: Harper Torchbooks, 1965).

Consistent with the challenge, the theme of decadence forms a significant portion of the lengthy and intricate argument that underlies *Plato and Europe*. Indeed, the book opens with the notion of decadence—more specifically, decay—both in societal terms, and in scientific, thermodynamic, terms.³⁷

Again, consistent with the notion of establishing a teaching, prior to introducing this theme, Patočka establishes the ground rules of this philosophical encounter, outlines the essentials of a preferred pedagogy: he expresses a desire that the forum be conversational and dialogic; and also, foreshadowing the mode of inquiry, he requests that the dialogue be reflective³⁸—in combination, a prototype of philosophical responsibility.

Very soon, among the prevailing mood of decay, Patočka invokes the apocalyptic vision of the “Club of Rome”—that contemporary civilisation will outstrip the earth’s carrying capacity within the coming century³⁹—and announces the stalling of Europe’s ascent, asserts that we are somehow now its inheritors. Moreover, urges Patočka, this idea of decay combined with inheritance punctuates Europe’s history, with important precedents in the respective fates of Greek and Roman civilisations.⁴⁰

Patočka goes on to discern these precedents within the philosophical tradition itself, tracing how, earlier, on notable occasions, “care for the soul”—in differing configurations in the teachings of Democritus, Plato, and Aristotle—emerged as a specifically Greek (and ultimately European) response to the situatedness of Greek civilisation and the Athenian polis.⁴¹

Indeed, through his nuanced analysis, Patočka is suggesting that “care for the soul” remains relevant in important ways today. But he is at pains to point out, through sustained dialogue with the phenomenological philosophy of Husserl and Heidegger, and commentators on their works, that the moderns, despite their careful scrutiny of the philosophical tradition, nonetheless, have not adequately appreciated this notion of inheritance through decay; have not adequately appreciated that the European heritage has been (and still is) “kept alive” through ongoing catastrophes; have not adequately appreciated that fundamental responses, such as “care of the soul” in its variants, need to be taken up, again and again, following the example of Socrates, in new ways, with efforts always different.⁴²

Essentially, Patočka is arguing that the modern attempt to somehow re-establish the European philosophical tradition, with its nuances and problematics internalised and reconstituted through a novel methodological approach (lately termed phenomenology), that ultimately embodies the “truth” of the tradition itself (e.g. Hegel⁴³ or Husserl⁴⁴), is not a fully adequate means of grasping what is at stake here.⁴⁵ Nor is the approach Patočka attributes to the later Heidegger, labelled as “defeatism”;⁴⁶ an approach which asserts the incommensurability of distinct metaphysical systems, and, in effect, produces the “horror” of philosophy without dialogue.⁴⁷

³⁷ Patočka, *Plato and Europe*, 3.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 1.

³⁹ Donella H. Meadows, et al., *Limits to Growth: The 30-Year Update* (White River Junction, VT: Chelsea Green, 2004).

⁴⁰ Patočka, *Plato and Europe*, 88-89.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 89; see also the fourth *Heretical Essay*.

⁴² See the epigraph.

⁴³ G W F Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, trans. A. V. Miller (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 1977), 27-28.

⁴⁴ Husserl, *Crisis*, 70-73.

⁴⁵ See Patočka, “Cartesianism and Phenomenology”.

⁴⁶ Patočka, *Plato and Europe*, 177.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 175.

Responsibility

Now that the idea of Patočka's teaching is starting to emerge—that there is a need to reiterate, responsibly, in new ways, vital elements of the European inheritance—a second challenge for the teaching arises: how can the teaching help us to appreciate nostalgia in its varieties, help us to realise that consonant acts such as sacrifice can help disturb the *status quo*? Here, the *status quo* might be considered as the various collective responses to European tradition—including prominent, modernist insights into cultural-historical crises⁴⁸—but it also includes the accompanying inadequacies just mentioned: the horror, defeatism, decadence, the difficult political situation, and so on.

In his Varna Lecture (1973) on “The Dangers of Technicization in Science according to E. Husserl and the Essence of Technology as Danger according to M. Heidegger”,⁴⁹ Patočka concludes his discussion of Husserl and Heidegger's respective diagnoses of the contemporary technological context with an unexpected analysis of sacrifice. Consonant with nostalgic movement, to be effective, sacrifice has a persistent, repetitive element to it, which, through the sacrificial act itself, brings to light hidden or obscured aspects of technologised manifestation, thereby confronting the cultural misunderstanding that is somehow misconstruing the human experience lying at stake.⁵⁰

At this point, we can recall the sustained passages from *Plato and Europe*, where Patočka spends considerable time explaining the significance of manifesting, and how this inquiry, too, is coupled with the history and inheritance of Europe.⁵¹ Finally, after elaborate analyses, covering wide-ranging topics, including the centrality of myth and mythology,⁵² Patočka reaches the conclusion that, notwithstanding the phenomenological emphasis on the modalities of appearance, the manifold structures of manifestation have largely resisted the lengthy European tradition of metaphysical inquiry—in contradistinction to something showing itself within the reaches of subjectivity, or, alternatively, having pragmatic significance.⁵³ The structure of manifestation remains something that we have to question, but question ourselves, without relying on tradition, but not ignoring tradition, either, given that it forms part of our cultural situatedness.⁵⁴

For example, in the Thirteenth Lecture of *Body, Community, Language, World*, Patočka speaks of a conversation between Husserl and Heidegger that never took place.⁵⁵ However, not letting this situation deter him, Patočka retrieves the conversation nostalgically, and uses Gerhard Funke as a foil to bring out a key element of his (Patočka's) emergent curriculum: grasping the vital importance of reflection as practice, especially as a means to help us think through the philosophical tradition for ourselves. And this “practice of self-discovery”⁵⁶ is exactly what Patočka proceeds to demonstrate (or teach) by carefully reconstructing Husserl and Heidegger's respective postures towards reflection.

As with the discussion on sacrifice and myth, Patočka's sustained analysis becomes interleaved with the metaphysics of phenomena, which, once again, requires additional clarifying investigations, this time on the nature of the “world” as the horizon of responsible thinking. The result of this nostalgic movement of responsibility is the finding that Husserl, despite his intensive

⁴⁸ These insights would include fundamental contributions by Freud, Bergson, Lukács, Adorno, and Scheler.

⁴⁹ Jan Patočka, “The Dangers of Technicization in Science according to E. Husserl and the Essence of Technology as Danger according to M. Heidegger (Varna Lecture, 1973)”, in *Jan Patočka: Philosophy and Selected Writings* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1989).

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 338-39.

⁵¹ Patočka, *Plato and Europe*, 42.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 43-49.

⁵³ For more background, see Patočka “Fourteenth Lecture” from Patočka, *Body, Community, Language, World*.

⁵⁴ Patočka, *Plato and Europe*, 41.

⁵⁵ Patočka, *Body, Community, Language, World*, 109.

⁵⁶ This phrase is from the title of the “Thirteenth Lecture”.

“drive to responsibility”,⁵⁷ and despite his repeated clarifications of the phenomenological reduction as the principle means of ultimately validating this responsibility, for all that, Husserl was unable to produce a theory of reflection;⁵⁸ or at least, not a theory of reflection able to conceive of reflection as a responsible act (as opposed to revealing “truth”). Instead, Patočka sees merit in interpreting reflective acts via pragmata,⁵⁹ a thread to be further investigated with guidance from Heidegger.

The discussion of pragmata again raises the question of responsibility, a topic that is also covered (famously) in the fifth *Heretical Essay*,⁶⁰ and earlier in the second *Heretical Essay*, as a conclusion to Patočka’s meditations on the birth of history.

Conclusion

Indeed, recapitulating our analyses, with a growing understanding of Patočka’s pedagogy, of the nostalgic movement of responsibility in Patočka’s later teaching, we can see in this controversial, subsequent text the outlines of familiar pedagogical features.

The textual development of the *Heretical Essays* follows a rough schema that corresponds more or less to the three movements of human existence. In summary terms, the three movements of human existence comprise a profound and elaborate theoretical construct that is attempting to both criticise and re-establish the metaphysical tradition, especially as this concerns the nested problematic of manifestation in its human, worldly context.

Patočka does this by reanalysing some relatively unexplored clues lying dormant in Aristotle’s philosophy of movement, which, despite its faults, remains the most viable and potent account of movement in the European tradition.⁶¹

Patočka’s chief goal here is to avoid, if possible, the notion of substrate underpinning Aristotle’s ontological approach, but this depends on further analysis of substantiality and objectivity, which further relies on clarifying investigations of manifestation, which (hopefully) in a virtuous circle, depends on greater understanding of dynamism, and so on.

With this tightly knit curriculum, with the study of movement at its heart, we can now understand why the three movements of human existence punctuate Patočka later writings; because they provide autochthonous transitions between the interdependent topics of Patočka’s philosophical curriculum: “care of the soul”, phenomenology of history, the concept “Europe”, and the metaphysics of phenomena (supported by clarifying investigations of the life-world). As we have seen, a dialogic pedagogy accompanies this curriculum, interleaving philosophical responsibility with sustained reflection. And underpinning this dialogism is the movement of nostalgia, which provides essential dynamism to the process of inquiry.

It is fitting, then, that *Plato and Europe* ends inconclusively, in situated, responsible dialogue that is self-reflexive and suggestive of ongoing, open-ended, thematic discussion.

To make this more explicit, it is important to understand that *Plato and Europe* is unfinished as a conversation. In the last thematic impetus, right at the point of introducing Aristotle as another, key philosopher recasting the Greek project of “caring for the soul”, and thereby strengthening Patočka’s interpretation of the European heritage, Patočka suggests that there is room for

⁵⁷ Ibid., 84.

⁵⁸ Ibid., 165.

⁵⁹ Ibid., 116.

⁶⁰ For an idiosyncratic interpretation of this essay, see Jacques Derrida, *The Gift of Death*, trans. David Wills (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1995).

⁶¹ To further explore the range of these preparatory studies, see Jan Patočka, *Aristote, Ses Devanciers, Ses Successeurs*, trans. Erika Abrams (Paris, France: Vrin, 2011).

investigating the historical epoch once again, once again as inheritors, but not necessarily the way it has been invoked so far, by invoking “care of the soul”, which is the Greek motif, and which spawned Europe in its catastrophic problematicity.⁶²

To reiterate, in a way Europe as a formal concept has reached its end (this is explicitly stated);⁶³ there is something else at stake now. Exactly what this might be is not taken up directly in *Plato and Europe*, but knowing something of Patočka’s teaching, we can pursue the impetus in the *Heretical Essays* and elsewhere in various later writings. Nonetheless, Patočka gives a hint in the final discussion of Aristotle’s unique contribution to “care of the soul”, and this is where Patočka isolates the importance of movement as both a concept and a metaphor underpinning so much of the European philosophical tradition.⁶⁴ But, says Patočka, even more than metaphor, “our own life is movement”.⁶⁵

Peter McDowell is Lecturer in Education at Charles Darwin University. He is a graduate of the University of Sydney (General Philosophy) where he studied phenomenology and wrote a prize-winning honours thesis on Bergson’s philosophical method. His current research is in educational theory, centred on the topic of transdisciplinary pedagogies.

⁶² Patočka, *Plato and Europe*, 181.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 9.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 197.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 193.

Death and Responsibility: Socrates and Heidegger

Ingo Farin
Philosophy
University of Tasmania

In my paper I investigate how moral responsibility is related to death. For Hobbes, fear of violent death is a motivating factor in submitting to Leviathan. For Heidegger, anxiety in the face of death throws Dasein back onto itself and lets it assume a self-responsible life. By contrast, Socrates considers fear of death an instance of ignorance masquerading as “human” wisdom. Not afraid of death, he dies for his conviction and Athens. In discussing these positions, I hope to clarify the connection between “responsibility” and a “happy death”, or, what is the same thing, “resistance” and a “good life”.

Introduction

Death is always one’s own. If one overlooks this, one will miss the point.

Heidegger

Then I showed again, not in words but in action, that, if it were not rather vulgar to say so, death is something I couldn’t care less about, but my whole concern is not to do anything unjust or impious.

Socrates

In the first part of this paper I shall revisit Heidegger’s analysis of death in *Being and Time* and argue that Heidegger’s embrace of existential anxiety before death involves a polemical rejection of the Socratic overcoming of the fear of death. This opens the door to potentially unethical decisions. In the second part I will discuss an opposite view on Heidegger advanced by Haugeland. According to Haugeland, Heidegger’s conception of death must be understood as a necessary condition for the possibility of responsibility. I shall argue that even if Haugeland’s ontological interpretation of death is defensible, it fails to show that there are normative constraints at work in Heidegger’s conception of responsibility, meaning that it cannot rule out unethical decisions.

Heidegger’s Analysis of Death

Any discussion of Heidegger’s concept of death in *Being and Time* must not ignore the most advanced interpretations available today, i.e., Carol White, Hubert Dreyfus, and John Haugeland. Carol White has suggested that “it is a mistake to understand Heidegger’s discussion [of death] as dealing only or even directly with the personal level”.¹ Instead, she holds that Heidegger’s “existential death” “occurs when old worlds die and new ones are born”.² In an insightful and sympathetic preface to her book Dreyfus summarizes White’s reading of Heidegger as follows:

Death is equated with the sort of world-collapse that can befall a cultural epoch, and dying is striving to preserve the culture’s understanding of being while being ready to sacrifice it when confronted with anomalous practices that portend the arrival of a new cultural world.³

White’s view is predicated on the thesis that “reading Heidegger as any sort of an existentialist was a mistake on our part”.⁴ Rejecting this “personalist misreading” of *Being and Time*,⁵ she holds that

¹ Carol J. White, *Time and Death* (Burlington: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2005), 101. For an insightful critique of White, see Iain D. Thomson, “On the Advantages and Disadvantages of Reading Heidegger Backwards: White’s *Time and Death*”, in *Inquiry* 50, no. 1 (2007), 102-120.

² *Time and Death*, 89.

³ Hubert L. Dreyfus, “Foreword” in *Time and Death*, xxxi.

⁴ *Time and Death*, li.

Heidegger must be read in light of his later writings, which show his dominant concern for reopening the question of being. Even the prominence of Dasein in *Being and Time* must be seen as standing in the service of the question concerning being.

[Heidegger] is interested in the entity that *we* are and its being. Thus we need to focus on the peculiar character of Dasein that makes an issue of what it is to be in general, not just Dasein in its everydayness and certainly not just the individual person.⁶

According to White, “Dasein” is the defining ontological property or essence “we” happen to have; yet “‘Dasein’ is not equivalent to ‘a human being’ or ‘a person’ any more so than ‘what-is-ready-to-hand’ is equivalent to ‘a hammer’”.⁷ Since Dasein is not the same as “human being”, there is no reason to assume that Heidegger’s analysis of Dasein’s death is primarily an account of personal death.

Prior to White’s book Haugeland advanced a very similar view, arguing that there is not “a separate and unique Dasein for each person”⁸ and that “Dasein as such is not individual or personal”.⁹ On this reading it might appear as if “Dasein” is Heidegger’s successor concept for what the tradition identified as “reason”. And no one in his right mind would equate “reason” with an individual man or woman. So why assume such a restriction in the case of “Dasein”?

Indeed, White astutely notes that Heidegger’s insistence on personal pronouns in referring to Dasein “would be a very odd point to make, if ‘Dasein’ simply denoted ‘a person.’”¹⁰ Therefore, White proposes to take Dasein as an ontological category that describes the being of my I and your I, the being of I’s in general.¹¹ In support of this view, White quotes from *The Letter on “Humanism”*, where Heidegger writes that “the personal, no less than the objective, misses and misconstrues the way of being of ek-sistence as being-historical”.¹²

Nonetheless, although it is clear that Heidegger indicates reservations about an exclusive identification of Dasein with the personal human being, it is far less clear that he abandons all reference to the individual person. This can be shown by revisiting Heidegger’s analysis of death in *Being and Time*. Without a doubt, the greatest challenge that Heidegger faces in the analysis of death, or Dasein’s being towards death, to use his ontological language, is the proper demarcation of the phenomenon under investigation. Heidegger concedes that “death”, taken in its broadest sense, is a “phenomenon of life”.¹³ “Life”, Heidegger continues, “has to be understood as a kind of being to which being-in-the-world belongs”.¹⁴ Death befalls what is living in the world. Just as being in the world is characteristic of organisms—they cannot exist outside their environment—, so death is characteristic of organic life. Death is the cessation of living-in-the-world; it is the departure of life from its world, “*das aus-der-Welt-gehen*”,¹⁵ literally “walking away from the

⁵ *Time and Death*, 117.

⁶ *Time and Death*, 101.

⁷ *Time and Death*, 33.

⁸ John Haugeland, “Truth and Finitude: Heidegger’s Transcendental Existentialism”, in *Heidegger, Authenticity, and Modernity: Essays in Honor of Hubert L. Dreyfus*, Vol.1, ed. Mark Wrathall & Jeff Malpas (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2000), 46.

⁹ “Truth and Finitude”, 58.

¹⁰ *Death and Time*, 35

¹¹ See *Death and Time*, see 37.

¹² *Death and Time*, 38. White does not consider that if we let go of personal Dasein, we cannot find refuge in “a collective character of Dasein” (*Death and Time*, 38, note 29), as it is precisely *The Letter on “Humanism”* which shows that “culture” or “society” is just the subject writ large, and hence still beholden to the metaphysics of subjectivity. Nevertheless, White is quite right in insisting on the ontological level of the investigation in *Being and Time*, this side of all edification, existentialist or otherwise.

¹³ *Sein und Zeit*, Gesamtausgabe, Bd. 2 (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1977), 328.

¹⁴ *Sein und Zeit*, 328.

¹⁵ *Sein und Zeit*, 320.

world". Death is an exit or exodus from the world of the living. The crucial point is that as phenomenologist Heidegger links the phenomenon of death to life, and that means organic life.

However, although organic life is the reference point for death as a phenomenon, Heidegger omits a full analysis of life in the first place. The reason proffered is that life assumes its full and actual form in Dasein, such that the ontology of Dasein logically precedes the "ontology of life".¹⁶ But Heidegger fails to explain why "life" is fully developed in Dasein alone such that all other life is privatively related to it. Heidegger leaves behind the entire biological and physiological level of life or death, subordinating it to the ontology of Dasein instead, which ontology in turn is entirely purified of all organic materiality. This curious abstraction from the full spectrum of the phenomenon of "life" truncates and limits Heidegger's approach to death. For it is one thing to focus on "existential death" as what is characteristic of "Dasein", and it is quite another thing to bypass altogether Dasein's manifestation in humans and the messy business of organic death in human life. Hans Jonas' observation that in the wake of Cartesianism *as well as* anti-Cartesianism the phenomenon of life was lost sight of is also true of Heidegger's attempted overcoming of Descartes.¹⁷ This omission of (organic) life haunts Heidegger's analysis of death with a vengeance, as is evidenced in his introduction of a whole set of new categories.

Thus Heidegger stipulates that "the ending" of a living thing is called "*Verenden*", or "perishing".¹⁸ It is not to be confused with "*Sterben*" or "dying" which refers to the phenomenon in which Dasein's kind of being, existence, relates to death by being towards death.¹⁹ Only "living things" perish and Dasein qua Dasein is not a living thing. Hence Dasein cannot perish. But one wonders how Dasein can manifest the highest form of life, when it turns out not to be a living thing at all. In any case, because of this construction Haugeland can remark that "Dasein never perishes—not because it is immortal or everlasting, but because it is not a living organism in the biological sense at all".²⁰ But surely, Dasein is also present in some life, human life to be precise, and it is only *in* human life that we know of Dasein in the first place. Indeed, precisely because Dasein also "has" life, not just existence, Heidegger is forced to argue that "qua living thing" Dasein can also "end", which he calls *Ableben*, "demise". He writes:

Insofar as Dasein 'has' its physiological death corresponding to its life, though not ontically isolated, but co-determined by its original kind of being, and Dasein can come to an end without actually dying, while, on the other hand, it does not simply perish [*verendet*] qua Dasein, we call this intermediate phenomenon *demise* [*Ableben*].²¹

However, at this juncture where Heidegger joins up the analysis of Dasein with biology and organic life he also separates the domains by saying that Dasein can come to an end without existentially dying. Yet Heidegger is careful not to argue for the reverse view that Dasein can die without coming to an end. Dasein cannot exist without living; but it can live without "existing". In other words, Dasein can die only to the extent that it has life, which is what is lost at death. There is no absolute division between natural life and existential dying, at least in human Dasein.

When Heidegger writes: "Dasein dies de facto as long as it exists",²² he puts into his own language a saying in the Middle Ages which he himself had quoted a little bit earlier: "as soon as a human being comes into life, he is old enough to die".²³ The certainty but indeterminacy of death is here founded upon life, not upon an existential structure of Dasein. Life is Dasein's natural, organic

¹⁶ *Sein und Zeit*, 328.

¹⁷ Hans Jonas, *Das Prinzip Leben* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1977), 40-49.

¹⁸ *Sein und Zeit*, 328.

¹⁹ *Sein und Zeit*, 328-29.

²⁰ "Truth and Finitude", 66.

²¹ *Sein und Zeit*, 328.

²² *Sein und Zeit*, 334.

²³ *Sein und Zeit*, 326.

underground. To be sure, this natural facticity is a matter for Dasein's care, thus always a matter of interpretation. Still, this does not dissolve the issue of life (and its loss at death) into thin air. Put differently, by attempting to divide death into a problem of life and biology on the one hand (perishing or demising), and an existential comportment on the other hand (dying), Heidegger effectively spiritualizes or intellectualizes death, abstracting from its ontic or historical and biological reality as an occurrence in the world.²⁴

Despite these problems, Heidegger's analysis of existential death is convincing in one respect. Heidegger successfully immanentises death. "Being towards the end [*Sein zum Ende*] does not come about by way of an occasionally emerging attitude, but, rather essentially belongs to thrownness of Dasein, [and] is revealed in this way or that way in one's attunement (mood)".²⁵ Death belongs to Dasein, not as "conclusion" or "cessation", or the yet-outstanding "part" or event in life which would make it whole, but, rather, as an intrinsic way in which life is lived—constantly. Death shines into Dasein and Dasein "comports itself" to death.²⁶ Death "is" only as a possibility; for when death finally arrives there is no Dasein to experience it. Death is the always possible annihilation [*Vernichtung*] of the being of Dasein.²⁷ Death only exists to the extent that Dasein "assumes" this possibility as its own.

Death is a possibility of being [*Seinsmöglichkeit*], which Dasein has to assume each time. Through death, Dasein is confronted with its *ownmost* ability-to-be. What is at stake for Dasein in this possibility is its being-in-the-world *simpliciter*. When Dasein runs up against this possibility, its possibility, it is totally turned back to its ownmost ability-to-be. Thus facing itself, all other relations to other Dasein are severed. This ownmost, non-relational possibility is at the same time the ultimate one [*äusserste*]. As ability-to-be, Dasein is not able to surpass the possibility of death. Death is the possibility of the total impossibility of Dasein. Thus death is revealed as the ownmost, non-relational, non-surpassable possibility.²⁸

Death is a limit beyond which Dasein cannot go, but as such limit, death falls under the remit of care [*Sorge*]. Concerning its ontological possibility, then, "dying" is founded upon "care".²⁹ In fact, because care is the projection of possibilities into the future, there would be no existential death without care. In *Being and Time*, Heidegger does not advance the reverse conception to this view, i.e., that without death or an ultimate limit, there would be no disclosing of the world at all. We might call this the *alethic* view according to which the dark side of death or nothingness provides the foil for the light in the clearing in which Dasein stands. But in *Being and Time*, Heidegger resolutely sidesteps any metaphysics of death, let alone "the theodicy and theology of death".³⁰ There is no vindication of the necessity of death. Death is not a necessary condition for the possibility of truth. The finitude of Dasein is part of the phenomenological account of Dasein's thrownness.

On the other hand, Heidegger clearly views death as a catalyst of sorts. Death collects and focuses Dasein. Death is not just any odd possibility, but an ultimate one. It calls Dasein back to itself from its dispersion in *das Man*. Hence death is a prerequisite for authentic Dasein. Heidegger writes:

Not only is death not "owned" in indifference by one's own Dasein, but, rather, death takes Dasein to task as a singular Dasein. Death's non-relationality, which is realized in anticipating

²⁴ It seems to me that in their respective interpretations White, Dreyfus, and Haugeland exploit and indeed exacerbate this weakness in Heidegger's analysis, for they totally ignore the natural, physiological side of death altogether, in order to advance their argument that the proper subject of death is not the human being or person, but rather cultural worlds or epochs and/or the defining scientific and cultural paradigms governing these epochs.

²⁵ *Sein und Zeit*, 334.

²⁶ *Sein und Zeit*, 332.

²⁷ See *Sein und Zeit*, 315.

²⁸ *Sein und Zeit*, 333.

²⁹ *Sein und Zeit*, 335.

³⁰ *Sein und Zeit*, 330.

it, singularizes Dasein. This singularisation amounts to a way of disclosing the “there” for existence. This reveals that all dealing with the [public matters of] concern and all being together with others fail when it comes to one’s own ability-to-be. Dasein can be genuinely itself if and when it empowers itself for just that.³¹

This account by Heidegger is hard to square with White’s interpretation of death. Singularisation and non-relationality refer to a person’s increasing isolation from his or her environment, not the cultural self-interpretation by a civilization. There is no meaningful surrounding of *das Man* in the context of civilizations and cultural worlds. Therefore, existential death is not applicable to these social entities. On the other hand, to pre-empt the often-heard charge that Heidegger manoeuvres himself into some absurd solipsism, one needs to clarify that Heidegger has in mind a kind of self-finding and self-binding to the projects that one finds worthwhile pursuing—within the environing- and with-world. Heidegger writes:

Dasein is genuinely itself only to the extent that, as concerned engagement at...and considerate being with...it projects itself primarily upon its ownmost ability-to-be, and not the possibility of the they.³²

Death helps Dasein to concentrate its life around the projects it finds worthwhile. It thus forces personal decisions. But every positive engagement entails the rejection of endless others. Death singularizes Dasein—it brings out that Dasein lives its own non-substitutable life—and it forces Dasein to assume its own finitude by opting for the finite number of projects it can realistically strive for. But contrary to the widespread view according to which Heidegger favours rugged individualism and “decisionism”, he actually contends that the realization of Dasein’s finitude will result in a form of humility and self-relativisation. For a project, embraced as finite, opens itself up to be surpassed by others.³³ Thus, finitude can certainly cultivate a sense of through and insurmountable provisionality.

And yet, there is anything but peaceful tranquillity in Heidegger’s discussion of death. The chief reason is that Dasein is thrown into utter anxiety when facing its certain but always pending perdition. The mood is sombre, reminiscent of what Dürer expressed in his painting *Knight, Death and Devil*.



³¹ *Sein und Zeit*, 349-50.

³² *Sein und Zeit*, 350.

³³ *Sein und Zeit*, 350.

It is Heidegger's contention that anxiety in the face of death answers to the "threat" of losing one's existence.³⁴ As this anxiety reveals the very being of Dasein, namely its utter destructibility or possible and always pending annihilation, anxiety cannot be mastered or domesticated, although one can of course give in and avert one's eyes and flee into the world of show business or academia or what have you. Heidegger is quite adamant that anxiety in the face of death is, as it were, incurable. He writes:

Being towards death is essentially anxiety. The indubitable, if "only" indirect testimony for this stems from the being towards death itself, namely when it inverts anxiety as cowardly fear and, then, with the overcoming of this fear makes known its cowardice before anxiety.³⁵

This is a tortured sentence in German as much as it is in my English translation. Who would recast anxiety (understood in Heidegger's sense) as fear before death, and then announce that this fear can be overcome, which freedom from fear, according to Heidegger, would then attest to the cowardice in the face of anxiety? Although it is an improvable conjecture at this stage, I suggest that Heidegger has Plato's testimony concerning Socrates' death in mind. After all, in *The Phaedo*, Socrates declares that philosophizing is a training in dying, which puts him in a certain dialectical relationship to Heidegger's focus on anticipating death as a precondition for authentic Dasein. Now, in *The Apology*, Socrates imagines that someone could charge him with recklessly endangering his life through his pursuit of philosophy. Socrates says:

But perhaps someone might say: "Are you then not ashamed, Socrates, of having followed such a pursuit, that you are now in danger of being put to death as a result?" But I would make to him a good reply: You do not speak well, man, if you think a man in whom there is even a little merit ought to consider danger of life or death, and rather regard *this* only, when he does things, whether the things he does are right or wrong and the acts of a good or bad man.³⁶

Socrates clearly indicates that the philosophical stance implies an overcoming of the fear of death. But Socrates adduces an ethical argument for this. For he observes that if we focus on the fact that time runs out, we might miss on the much shorter window of opportunity given for an ethical life and lapse into what he calls "wickedness". Socrates says to his judges: "But, gentlemen, it is not hard to escape death; it is much harder to escape wickedness, for that runs faster than death. And now I, since I am slow and old, am caught by the slower runner [i.e., death], and my accusers, who are clever and quick, by the faster, wickedness".³⁷ Socrates' second argument is that to fear death presupposes that death is intrinsically evil. But we have no knowledge about that. Socrates tells his judges:

For to fear death, Athenians, is nothing else than to think one wise when one is not; for it is thinking one knows what one does not know. For no one knows whether death be not the greatest of all blessings to man, but they fear it as if they knew that it was the greatest of evils. And is not this the most reprehensible form of ignorance, that of thinking one knows what one does not know?³⁸

For Socrates, then, philosophy is a project that overcomes the fear of death. But does it betray, as Heidegger suggests, cowardice before the deeper anxiety of death? One can easily see why Heidegger would perhaps think so. After all, in *The Phaedo* Socrates undertakes to prove the immortality of the soul—no less than five times. That looks like an idealism that does not believe itself. Given Heidegger's inveterate distaste of cultural idealism, it is safe to assume that he would reject this as philosophical grandstanding against the fear of death. Plato's flight of reason simply facilitates the cowardly escape from reality. But in *The Apology* Socrates faces death without any

³⁴ *Sein und Zeit*, 352.

³⁵ *Sein und Zeit*, 353.

³⁶ *Apology*, 28b.

³⁷ *Apology*, 39a.

³⁸ *Apology*, 29a-b.

arguments about the immortality of the soul. In fact, he realizes what Heidegger calls “running towards death”, which allows Socrates his extraordinary resoluteness in dealing with his accusers. But unlike Heidegger’s dogged search for an authentic life *before death* or *in light of one’s permanent dying*, Socrates does not make life (or the finiteness of life) an unquestioned and unqualified good, such that the always pending loss of it informs his decisions. From Socrates’ perspective, the anxiety about the loss of life is a fearful reversal of philosophical *sophrosune* in the face of death, leading to the undue prioritizing of life (being-in-the-world) over ethics. If we follow Socrates, life or the loss of life (dying) is not the most important thing. At the end of *The Apology*, Socrates says: “but now the time has come to go away. I go to die, and you to live; but which of us goes to the better lot, is known to none but God”.³⁹ It seems to me that Socrates’ attitude in preparing to drink the cup of hemlock—as shown below in Canavo’s famous sculpture—expresses a mature philosophical attitude that shows courage in the face of imminent death, but also courage and equanimity in relation to the ontological anxiety concerning the inevitable loss of one’s life or existence.



It may well be that, in contrast to his early writings, the later Heidegger, following his turn towards *Gelassenheit*, develops a more accepting attitude towards death. It is highly instructive that later Heidegger no longer foregrounds authenticity or the anxiety of death. Yet in *Being and Time* Heidegger is still on his way to develop his highly polemical critique of the philosophical tradition and its alleged metaphysical flight beyond the temporal world and history. His anti-Socratic valorisation of the anxiety concerning death (and the always pending loss of life) or the attendant valorisation of the temporal and finite life as such sits perfectly well within that overall anti-metaphysical framework.⁴⁰

Of course, we must not confuse the ontological anxiety of death with the mere ontic fear of our demise. Moreover, it is also clear that Heidegger argues that the immersion in anxiety will ultimately result in a better grip on life. I have argued above that Heidegger’s position does not explain how necessary ethical constraints come into play to ensure that choosing one’s life issues in an *ethically* responsible life. However, in contrast to this position, Haugeland has argued that anxiety of death is a necessary condition of the possibility of an ethical life of responsibility. To this we now turn.

³⁹ *Apology*, 42a.

⁴⁰ In his debate with Cassirer in Davos, Heidegger himself polemical embraced finitude against all metaphysical inspirations to infinitude in the tradition. For an excellent discussion of this, see Peter E. Gordon, *Continental Divide: Heidegger–Cassirer–Davos* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2010), especially 182-83.

II Haugeland

In his essay “Truth and Finitude: Heidegger’s Transcendental Existentialism”,⁴¹ Haugeland presents nothing less than a comprehensive interpretation of *Being and Time*, which aims at presenting a unified account that establishes the inner coherence between Division One (dealing with everydayness, being-in-the world, and care) and Division Two (devoted to the more “existentialist” themes such as death, resoluteness, and history). I shall focus here on only two claims of Haugeland’s highly ambitious project. The first claim is “that death, as Heidegger means it, is not merely relevant but in fact the fulcrum of his entire ontology”.⁴² The second claim is that “resolute Dasein takes responsibility not only for ontical but also ontological truth”,⁴³ which means, among other things, that during a systematic or catastrophic breakdown of ontological truth, resolute Dasein is where the buck stops. It is responsive, because it is responsible for ontological truth. It is Haugeland’s view that discarding a “failed” ontological truth—the unsuccessful paradigm of a culture or a way of life—is possible only because Dasein is finite and bounded by death, which in turn enables it to let unsuccessful disclosures of the world go, let them “die”. In Haugeland’s words, death “is the protagonist who makes it possible”.⁴⁴ In this regard, Haugeland’s account is very similar to White’s with which we started out. Death is not primarily the death of a person, but the death of a culture or scientific or cultural paradigm that has outlived its usefulness or fruitfulness.

Haugeland’s overall strategy is, first, to draw out Heidegger’s implicit transcendental commitments and, second, to argue that Heidegger essentially historicizes and existentialises the transcendental. As every reader of *Being and Time* knows, Heidegger stipulates that Being “is that which determines entities as entities”, or that Being is that which “renders intelligible entities” beforehand, staking out the horizon of possible claims that can be made about these entities.⁴⁵ Haugeland interprets this to mean that Being is a paradigm or theory in the light of which we first locate certain entities as possible objects of human comportment. Being is thus a transcendental horizon, and not to be confused with the entities that can be disclosed within it. Ontical truth or what Heidegger calls “correctness” pertains to the disclosure of entities within the already disclosed transcendental matrix of Being.

As an illustration, suggested by Haugeland himself many years ago, we might take a chess board and the rules of chess. It can be determined that with *White* making the first move, *Black* cannot be checkmated in two moves, while it is logically possible to checkmate *Black* after the third move. Theories work in the same way. They project a field of possible encounters with entities which are then discovered as such (together with the laws connecting them). The same holds true for social practices. Discovering entities as entities “involves grasping them in terms of a distinction between what is possible and impossible for them”.⁴⁶

Next, Haugeland notes that any discovery of ontical truths requires at the same time self-disclosure of Dasein. For instance, I can grasp that a student has failed to come to class, only if I understand myself as a teacher or a researcher or timetabling expert investigating tardiness behaviour in students, etc. I can get things “right” and “wrong” precisely within this double-context of self-disclosure (understanding my role or function) and world-disclosure (understanding the world in which I function). If I note the absence of a student, I may get it wrong, for instance, when I mistakenly register someone as “late”, when that person is not even enrolled in my class. But only the prior projection of myself as a teacher and the classroom as part of the teaching environment in

⁴¹ “Truth and Finitude”, 43-77.

⁴² “Truth and Finitude”, 44.

⁴³ “Truth and Finitude”, 74.

⁴⁴ “Truth and Finitude”, 77.

⁴⁵ *Sein und Zeit*, 8.

⁴⁶ “Truth and Finitude”, 53.

which I teach allow me to get ontic things right. In other words, an ontological framework has to be in place before I can discover an ontic truth about a late student.

To continue with this example, as a teacher, one can fail to discover (read) the genuine desire to learn in a student. In that case the full phenomenon of the student would still be hidden, waiting to be brought out into the open. A “true comportment” as a teacher would be to allow the student to show himself or herself as a fully competent, capable, and genuinely interested student. Such a discovery would not be a construction. But specific discoveries about the student, for instance, her ability to grasp ideas fast, is dependent on the prior ontological disclosure of the entity’s being a student. Getting things right about the student matters, because I understand myself as a teacher of that student. My practice and self-understanding as a teacher depends on there being students and getting things right about students’ particular aptitude. In this regard, I am invested in the student’s learning. Haugeland holds that “discoveries are beholden to the entities they discover”.⁴⁷

According to Haugeland, ontic discoveries and ontological disclosures can be either routinely executed or they can be “owned” as a project of one’s own individual ability-to-be. Following Heidegger, Haugeland then claims that it is only by running towards death that I can “own” a particular project as my sole responsibility, as something worth my effort, because as a finite being I cannot do everything, that is to say, I have to single out the things I can do and want to do. My death individualises me and pushes me to select priorities in the one and only life I have to live. In Haugeland’s gloss of Heidegger, Dasein’s existential responsibility is “responsibility for its own self as a whole, for who it is”.⁴⁸ The owned disclosure of Being in which entities show up as entities is called resoluteness. Just as I am beholden to the entities as they show themselves within the field of Being, I am binding myself to the ontological disclosure of Being by way of resoluteness. Haugeland writes:

Taking responsibility resolutely means living in a way that explicitly has everything at stake. Heidegger’s way of saying this is: Dasein is the entity for which, in its being, that very being is an issue.⁴⁹

Next, Haugeland asks whether the ontological disclosure of Being, and not just the ontic discovery of entities in it, can go wrong. Put differently, what would it mean for ontological truth to “fail”. We already know that one can make ontic mistakes, such as noting a late student who is not a student in one’s class. But what happens when the overall ontological framework fails? Haugeland writes:

A failure of ontological truth is a systematic breakdown that undermines everything—which just means a breakdown that cannot be ‘fixed up with a bit of work;’ which means that life, *that life*, does not ‘go on.’⁵⁰

A failure in the ontological disclosure of Being shows itself in that things get “out of control”, that things make no longer sense, lose their intelligibility altogether.⁵¹ But since resolute Dasein depends and “owns” the disclosure of Being (through its self-disclosure within disclosed Being), it faces its own impossibility in this crisis or disintegration. Resolute Dasein recognizes that in such a crisis it faces its own existential death, as the inability to be. The crisis is the possibility either to go under or to disclose Being in a more successful way, presumably by drawing on marginal practices and understandings already developing under the old and encrusted disclosure of the world.

If social practices no longer make sense, if things go out of control, then Being has been disclosed in a way that has simply failed. However, since Dasein “owns” the ontological disclosure of Being

⁴⁷ “Truth and Finitude”, 51.

⁴⁸ *Sein und Zeit*, 65.

⁴⁹ “Truth and Finitude”, 73.

⁵⁰ “Truth and Finitude”, 75.

⁵¹ “Truth and Finitude”, 76.

and, furthermore, is self-implicated in it through its dependent self-disclosure in Being, Dasein's own self-understanding is called into question, if and when the ontological disclosure breaks down. Dasein "dies" with the breakdown of the world that it has disclosed and owned in the first place. It is here where Haugeland and White agree. White writes:

[Existential death] occurs when old worlds die and new ones are born. A change in the understanding of being leaves old possibilities behind and lets new ones take their place in the 'there' of being. Hence, impossibility becomes possibility and possibility turns into impossibility. When the medieval world died and was transformed into the modern one, that is, when the new version of being of what-is became that of Anyone, there was no going back to the old understanding again.⁵²

I think that both Haugeland and White are right in seeing that the ontological disclosure of Being is transcendental "only as existential"⁵³ or, what amounts to the same thing, that the finitude of existence is the necessary condition for the resolute disclosure of the world. Both see that Dasein is responsible for the world it discloses, that it is invested in this project, and that it can fail, once things get out of control and too many anomalies show up, for instance, the market economy's being creating not wealth for everyone, but poverty for millions.

However, the responsibility at issue in the ontological disclosure of the world that Haugeland and White identify falls short of anything like ethical responsibility. After all, the failed disclosure of the world of Nazism was wrong even before it was defeated by the military invasion in the 1940s. In fact, for both White and Haugeland, "success" of a disclosure of the world is automatically a sign of its rightness. That will hardly satisfy anyone interested in ethical responsibility. Finitude and death alone do not generate any ethical rules—unless we want to take the insight into the finiteness of all world-disclosures as an index of ontological provisonality, that is to say, of being prepared to let go, of relaxing our investment at the right moment—and to walk away from the old world to new shores when it is the right time.

Dr Ingo Farin studied philosophy in Germany and the US. He gained his PhD from Indiana University. Since 2008 he has been at the University of Tasmania.

⁵² *Time and Death*, 90.

⁵³ "Truth and Finitude", 77.

Situated Reason, Contextuality, and the Limits of Formalism: A Critical Hermeneutic Perspective

Paul Healy
Philosophy
Swinburne University of Technology

Of the several possible meanings of formalism, I relate to it here as pertaining to the justification of knowledge claims and/or the making of socio-political decisions using strictly rule-determined procedures, often in response to systems imperatives. Of particular concern with reference to the workshop theme are the ways in which such restrictive formalism negatively impacts life-world decision-making, denies a role to judgement, and erodes intersubjective communication and responsibility. I address these concerns from a critical hermeneutic standpoint, drawing on the complementary insights of Jürgen Habermas and Hans-Georg Gadamer.

With regard to Habermas, I contend that while his critiques of positivism and of instrumental/systems rationality constitute a major contribution to diagnosing the limitations of formalism and to validating the need to accommodate ethics and intersubjectivity as indispensable factors in reclaiming the life-world, his response is marred by its failure to do justice to the reality of reason's situatedness. To correct for this, we need to have recourse to key themes in Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutics; in particular, his recognition of the ways in which our hermeneutic situation conditions the possibilities at our disposal, his emphasis on the indispensability of *phronesis* (or good judgement) in attuning us to what the situation requires by way of a response, and the importance of conjoint dialogical inquiry as a basis for deciding a way forward that is appropriately attuned to the situation both ethically and epistemically.

It is hoped that elaboration on the foregoing themes will pave the way for fruitful dialogue about the convergences and differences between critical hermeneutics and phenomenology in regard to the limits of formalism and the corresponding importance of judgement, responsibility and intersubjectivity for responding effectively to the challenges posed by formalist intrusions on the life-world.

Introduction

The present paper seeks to foreground the important role that critical hermeneutics¹ has to play alongside phenomenology in testing the limits of formalism. The strength of this approach derives from its contribution to formulating a response that recognises the need to factor in situatedness and contextuality, along with judgement and responsibility, as correctives for the excesses of formalism. To this end, it focuses on the phenomenon that Habermas terms the "colonisation of the life-world". In critically assessing the adequacy of Habermas's communicative response to this, it contends that notwithstanding its merits, it falls short of what is required. Indeed, given its acontextuality and proceduralism, the Habermasian discourse model ultimately threatens to replicate the abstract formalism it is intended to counteract. As a corrective, it needs to draw on key hermeneutic insights, most notably, the indispensability of *phronesis*, the significance of differences in hermeneutic standpoints, and the situated mutuality and responsiveness of genuine I-Thou interactions.

¹ As employed here, "critical hermeneutics" is intended to connote an expanded conception of hermeneutics encapsulating the work of contemporary theorists such as Jürgen Habermas and Michel Foucault alongside that of more established hermeneutic thinkers like Gadamer. Palmer, amongst others, confirms the tenability and value of such an expanded conception, which aspires to embrace cultural critique alongside other, more traditional, hermeneutic endeavours. See Richard Palmer, "What Hermeneutics Can Offer Rhetoric", in *Rhetoric and Hermeneutics in Our Time*, ed. Walter Jost and Michael Hyde (New Haven, CN: Yale University Press, 1997). Kögler provides a prototype of what is at issue. See Hans Herbert Kögler, *The Power of Dialogue: Critical Hermeneutics after Gadamer and Foucault* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1996); see also Paul Healy, *Rationality, Hermeneutics and Dialogue* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005).

The paper thus highlights the merits of reading Habermas and Gadamer as complementary rather than as oppositional in the interests of formulating a response that would truly assist with reclaiming the life-world from the formalist intrusions that impede life-world decision-making, deny a role to judgement, and erode intersubjective responsibility. Albeit reappropriated in socio-cultural terms, the Husserlian concept of “life-world” is thus seen to have a central role to play in the hermeneutic diagnosis of and response to the contemporary limits of formalism.

Habermas

Given his advocacy of the “project of modernity”, that is, of the reconceptualised continuation of the Enlightenment project into the contemporary era, the rationalisation of society has been a pervasive theme in Habermas’s work.² In this he follows in the footsteps both of eminent social theorist, Max Weber and of Adorno and Horkheimer, his predecessors at the Frankfurt Institute. But challenging his forebears’ highly pessimistic diagnosis about where the rationalisation of society might lead—as epitomised in Weber’s famous “iron cage” dictum, whereby we become prisoners of the very rational structures that were put in place to foster freedom and emancipation—in true Enlightenment spirit, Habermas remains optimistic that such drastic outcomes can be averted. Nonetheless, he readily concedes that reason is a two-edged sword and that the ineluctable advance of instrumental reason and impersonal systems rationality has resulted in the damaging and debilitating “colonisation of the life-world”.³ Such colonisation results when impersonal systems, regulated only by the relentless pursuit of systems imperatives such as money and power, intrude on normal life-world decision making processes as well as on everyday interactions in ways that devalue, and threaten to negate, the cognitive, epistemic, and ethical resources available to life-world participants to control their own destinies. It thereby robs them of the ability to tackle the real problems needing to be resolved in ways that meet their legitimate needs and interests. Correspondingly, it cautions against undue optimism about where the rationalisation of society can lead. But refusing to succumb to his forebears’ pessimism, Habermas maintains that although reason may be a two-edged sword, it is not an irremediably destructive force, as the “iron cage” diagnosis might imply. Hence while the colonisation of the life-world by instrumental/systems rationality may dim Enlightenment optimism about the emancipatory powers of reason, it need not extinguish it. On the contrary, once it is recognised that instrumental reason does not exhaust the potential for rationalisation, it can be seen that the latter embodies the seeds of its emancipation in the form of a communicative conception of rationality, a theme to whose elaboration Habermas has consequently

² For a succinct elucidation of prominent Habermasian concepts and related scholarship, see Andrew Edgar, *Habermas: The Key Concepts* (London: Routledge, 2006); see also Andrew Edgar, *The Philosophy of Habermas* (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2005). In what follows, I elaborate only on those Habermasian concepts that are central to the development of this paper, and then only briefly.

³ Reflecting the influence of a variety of conceptual sources, the Habermasian life-world is an inherently complex and multidimensional phenomenon. Transcending Husserl’s transcendentalism, under the influence of engagement with Mead and Durkheim Habermas also goes beyond Schultz’s socially oriented stance toward a conception that integrates cultural reproduction, social integration, and socialisation. See Jürgen Habermas *The Theory of Communicative Action, Vol. 2: Life-world and System*, trans. Thomas McCarthy (Boston: Beacon Press, 1987), ch. VI.1 and cf., for example; William Outhwaite, *Habermas: A Critical Introduction* (Cambridge: Polity, 1994), ch. 6, especially 82-88. Theoretical complexities aside, however, the Habermasian life-world notably centres on the shared common understandings that have been developed over time through ongoing social interactions and that, although typically going unnoticed, form the indispensable backdrop to further successful social negotiations, including the legitimisation of social and political institutions. Correlatively, the negative impact deriving from its colonisation derives essentially from the disruptive effects it has on this ongoing, constitutive mode of social interaction and legitimisation, resulting in loss of autonomy for everyday life-world participants and in their inability to ensure that social and political institutions continue to meet their legitimate needs and interests. See Jürgen Habermas, *The Theory of Communicative Action, Vol. 2: Life-world and System*, ch. VI.2 and cf., for example; Outhwaite, *Habermas: A Critical Introduction*, ch. 6, especially 88f.

devoted a great deal of attention.⁴ In essence, Habermas's communicative proposal is intended to redefine rationality as a life-world resource inherent in ongoing communicative exchanges among its participants or denizens, thereby reappropriating this potent resource in the service of life-world needs and interests. Thus reconceptualised, it is intended to function as an antidote to the excesses of formalism by restoring to life-world participants the ability to control their own destinies through participating in interactive decision making processes oriented toward meeting their legitimate needs and interests. But notwithstanding its undeniable strengths in this regard, as elaborated below, Habermas's communicative proposal also suffers from a decisive weakness, namely its neglect of situatedness and contextuality, such that it lacks the traction it needs to truly engage with the life-world needs and interests of the participants in discourse. Hence, there is a need to draw on key Gadamer themes as a corrective. But to set Habermas's communicative response in context, it is also important to mention Habermas's early critique of positivism and scientism which, notably, took its cue from Husserl's related critique in his *Crisis of European Sciences*.⁵

Briefly stated, the intent of Habermas's Husserl-inspired critique is to enable him forcefully to contest a set of interrelated misconceptions to the effect that: (positivistic) science can provide ready-made answers to complex policy problems, that values are extraneous to rational inquiry, and that rational (especially scientific) inquiry provides objective solutions that are simply true to the facts and hence immune to contestation. As a corrective, the intent is to establish that rational, or indeed scientific, inquiry is not self-validating in a sense that would immunise it from scrutiny on ethical as well as epistemic grounds regarding its potential uses or life-world applications. On the contrary, while science qualifies as an autonomous domain of inquiry, as with other policy interventions, the appropriate application of scientific findings needs to be subject to critical scrutiny in communicative forums which include participants who stand to be affected by the outcomes. Notably too, in this connection Habermas vindicates the significance of an "emancipatory" knowledge-guiding interest. His later communicative proposal can be seen as advancing the emancipatory interest by shedding light on how we can reclaim life-world autonomy and self-direction in the face of formalistic intrusions. As already indicated, it is intended to do so by relocating the locus of rationality as a life-world resource inherent in ongoing communicative exchanges, and hence capable of being marshalled to counteract impersonal systemic forces through fuelling an interactive and accountable decision-making process. More specifically, communicative reason is intended to counteract instrumental reason's inherent scientism and decisionism—and correspondingly dehumanising effects—firstly, by making the justification of knowledge claims conditional on cogent life-world argumentation rather than on restrictive and exclusive positivistic criteria; and secondly, by further enshrining an ethical dimension as an ineliminable component of rational inquiry and decision making. In short, the intended net effect is that so-called systems imperatives can no longer be deemed self-justifying but can be held to account, ethically as well as epistemically, in argumentatively constituted forums wherein their life-world benefits, or lack thereof, can be critically assessed by those who stand to be affected by the outcomes. Moreover, in stressing the inherently intersubjective character of communicative rationality, Habermas aspires not only to correct for the modernist preoccupation with "the philosophy of the subject" and its dubious foundationalism, but also to further contribute to de-colonising the life-world by putting the socio-political decision making process, as well as responsibility for its outcomes, back in the hands of those who must live with its consequences. In effect, then, Habermas's intent has been to

⁴ See especially Jürgen Habermas, *The Theory of Communicative Action, Vol. 1: Reason and the Rationalisation of Society*, trans. Thomas McCarthy (Boston: Beacon press, 1984); see also Jürgen Habermas "Discourse Ethics", in *Moral Consciousness and Communicative Action* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1990); and Jürgen Habermas, *Justification and Application: Remarks on Discourse Ethics*, trans. Ciaran Cronin (Cambridge, UK: Polity, 1993).

⁵ See Jürgen Habermas, *Knowledge and Human Interests*, trans. Jeremy J. Shapiro (Boston: Beacon Press, 1972), especially pp. 301-17. See also David Detmer, "Habermas and Husserl on Positivism and Philosophy of Science", in *Perspectives on Habermas*, ed. Lewis E. Hahn (La Salle, IL: Open Court, 2000).

counteract the colonisation of the life-world by the instantiation of a vibrant “public sphere”, constituted by an engaged, concerned, and informed citizenry committed to reclaiming the life-world from the intrusions of instrumentalism and formalism, through vigorous rational argumentation and debate in the service of the needs and interests of its denizens.

On the debit side, however, the problem is that, for want of greater attention to reason’s situatedness and contextuality, the Habermasian proposal lacks the life-world traction it needs to carry through on its intended aims. More specifically, the limitations of the Habermasian proposal can be epitomised as deriving from a preoccupation with an “ideal speech situation” and a correlative emphasis on the “generalised” other to the neglect of the “concrete other”. As elaborated below, these defects mean that Habermas’s communicative response inadvertently mimics the disconnection between reason and life-world that characterises impersonal systems rationality and whose effects it is specifically intended to counteract. In effect, this undermines its intended aim of fuelling a rationally-grounded dialectical learning process capable of redressing the limitations of formalism and instrumentalism and hence its potential to reclaim the life-world from domination by instrumental/systems rationality. To correct for this lacuna, recourse is needed to Gadamer’s philosophical hermeneutics and in particular its textured embrace of situatedness.

Gadamer

As noted from the outset, the present paper defends the merits of reading Habermas and Gadamer as complementary in the interests of securing the communicative proposal’s emancipatory intent. Given that Habermas and Gadamer are typically read as oppositional, it is important to begin by registering the legitimacy of reading them as complementary. The tendency to read these thinkers as oppositional derives, of course, from Habermas’s explicit advocacy of a revitalisation of the Enlightenment project and its inherent faith in the powers of abstract reason, in contrast to Gadamer’s emphasis on reason’s finitude and situatedness and his inherently ontological orientation. But, as prominent contemporary commentators attest,⁶ a more textured reading reveals their complementarity about key themes such as rationality. In particular, notwithstanding Gadamer’s alleged antipathy to such epistemological considerations, significant convergences are discernible not only in these thinkers’ concerns about the dominance of instrumental rationality but also in their comparative “optimism” about the possibility of counteracting it. Specifically, as epitomised by Madison, these theorists are united in their unwillingness to “to subscribe to Weber’s pessimism” as reflected in his “iron cage” thesis. On the contrary,

What specifically binds Habermas and Gadamer together ... is the way in which they seek to contest the dominance of technocratic rationality. ... What both Habermas and Gadamer have in effect sought to demonstrate throughout their work is that instrumental rationality is only *one* form of rationality—and not the highest (or most basic) at that ... Reason is not, fundamentally, mere instrumental rationality.⁷

It can thus be seen that Gadamer’s trenchant critique of methodologism in *Truth and Method* mirrors and reinforces Habermas’s disaffection with positivism’s scientism, decisionism, and objectivism as outlined above. Moreover, paralleling the intersubjectivity of Habermas’s communicative stance and its disaffection with “the monological ‘philosophy of consciousness’”, Gadamer has also “sought to rehabilitate reason”, on an inherently intersubjective basis, “not as

⁶ See, e.g., Gary B. Madison, “Critical Theory and Hermeneutics: Some Outstanding Issues in the Debate”, in *Perspectives of Habermas*, ed. Lewis E. Hahn (La Salle, IL: Open Court, 2000). See also Richard Palmer, “Habermas versus Gadamer?: Some Remarks”, in *Perspectives on Habermas*, ed. Lewis E. Hahn (La Salle, IL: Open Court, 2000).

⁷ Madison, “Critical Theory and Hermeneutics”, p. 464; italics in original.

monological technique but as *dialogue* or ‘conversation’”.⁸ A commitment to discourse and intersubjectivity thus represents another major point of convergence.

But while such convergences underpin the possibility of complementarity, the differences between these two thinkers remain at least as striking as the similarities. With regard to our focal theme, the differences crystallise around the respective conceptions of discourse (Habermas) or dialogue (Gadamer) proffered as necessary to underwrite a conception of critical reason capable of counteracting the excesses of instrumentalism and formalism. More specifically, their differences revolve around Habermas’s relatively idealised, decontextualised, and procedural account of discursive reason as epitomised by his emphasis on the “ideal speech situation” and the related discourse conditions, compared to Gadamer’s advocacy of situated dialogue on the Socratic model.⁹ Epitomising the extent of his disaffection with the ideality of the Habermasian proposal, Gadamer uncharacteristically castigates Habermas’s “ideal speech situation” as a “highly abstract concept of coercion-free discourse which totally loses sight of the real conditions of human praxis”.¹⁰ Gadamer’s strong reaction to Habermas’s idealised discourse model is thus attributable to the fact that it fails to take due account of critical reason’s inherent situatedness and contextuality, of the hermeneutic recognition that: “Reason exists for us only in concrete historical terms, i.e., it is not its own master, but remains constantly dependent on the given circumstances in which it operates”.¹¹ But in postulating complementarity, the point is not to minimise or negate such differences in orientation, but rather to make the case that it is only by reading Habermas in light of Gadamer that discursive reason can provide an effective bulwark against the formalistic excesses of instrumental reason. In this regard two interrelated problems warrant particular attention here, namely, the discourse model’s ideality and its effective negation of differences in hermeneutic standpoint.

The ideality problem is aptly epitomised in the criticism that “the basic weakness of Habermas’s project is its lack of agreement between ideality and reality, between intentions and their implementation”, such that what results is a “utopia of communicative rationality”.¹² Although the ideality objection can be overestimated given that Habermas has always emphasised the counterfactual (and regulative) status of both the ideal speech situation and the related idealised rules of discourse,¹³ his position is nonetheless clearly open to charges of acontextuality and abstract proceduralism. In essence, the point is that while Habermas provides worthwhile ground rules for inclusive argumentative debate designed to re-empower life-world participants, his model cannot bridge the gap between their theoretical articulation and their contextualised life-world application. This acontextuality is exacerbated by Habermas’s abstract proceduralism, effectively his reliance on procedural rules to solve the problem of their own application. In both cases, these problems severely limit, if not negate, the ability of his discursive model to gain traction with the situated needs and interests of life-world participants. Instead, ironically, they threaten to replicate the excesses of formalism at another level. Hence the need to invoke key Gadamerian insights as a corrective.¹⁴ Thus, firstly, the futility of relying on an abstract proceduralism has been fore

⁸ Madison, “Critical Theory and Hermeneutics”, 464; cf. Paul Healy, “Hermeneutic Rationality: A Contradiction in Terms?”, in *Hermeneutic Rationality/La Rationalité Herméneutique*, ed. Maria L. Portocarrero, Luis A. Umbelino, and Andrzej Wiercinski (Münster: LIT Verlag, 2012).

⁹ For example, see Healy, *Rationality, Hermeneutics and Dialogue*, chs. 1 and 2.

¹⁰ Hans-Georg Gadamer, “Reflections on My Philosophical Journey”, in *The Philosophy of Hans-Georg Gadamer*, ed. Lewis E. Hahn (La Salle, IL: Open Court, 1997), 32.

¹¹ Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, trans. Joel Weinsheimer and Donald Marshall, 2nd ed. (New York: Continuum, 1989), 276.

¹² Bent Flyvbjerg, *Making Social Science Matter* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 92-93.

¹³ See further Paul Healy, “Making Policy Debate Matter: Practical Reason, Political Dialogue, and Transformative Learning”, *History of the Human Sciences* 17, no. 1 (2004).

¹⁴ It should be noted, however, that Habermas himself maintains that problems of application can be resolved without recourse to the kinds of hermeneutic insights invoked here. In particular, see Habermas, *Justification and Application*. But for the kinds of reasons outlined here, hermeneutic theorists vigorously challenge the cogency of

grounded by Gadamer in his reappropriation of Aristotelian *phronesis*. In differentiating between *episteme*, *techne*, and *phronesis* and elaborating with the aid of a judicial analogy, Gadamer convincingly contends that *phronesis* (effectively, the use of informed, contextually attuned judgement) is indispensable for the judicious application of whatever rules and principles are applicable in the actual situation at hand.¹⁵ The cogency of this assessment for rational decision making has been independently confirmed by American philosopher, Harold Brown, in his sustained critique of the abstract universality of what is termed the “classical model” of rationality. In particular, Brown persuasively argues that without recourse to informed, contextualised judgement attuned to the needs of the specific situation, appeal to abstract rules and principles will simply eventuate in an infinite regress of meta-rules rather than in effective adjudication of the case at hand.¹⁶ In short, then, the core insight here at issue is that the acontextuality of Habermas’s discourse model needs to be counterbalanced by contextualised judgement if it is to achieve its goal of attuning the decision making process to the actual needs and interests of life-world participants. Failing this, it is more likely to replicate the errors of formalism than to function as an effective bulwark against them.

Likewise, in his preoccupation with the generalised over the concrete other, compounded by his heavy emphasis on consensus as the anticipated outcome of deliberative discourse, Habermas fails to do justice to the importance of factoring in difference as a crucial stimulus to life-world learning.¹⁷ In hermeneutic terms, the discourse model’s failure in this regard is that it effectively negates significant differences among participants’ hermeneutic situations, as constituted by their prejudgements, prejudices, historico-cultural backgrounds, and lived experience, and hence ends up treating them as interchangeable “ciphers” in a decontextualised and depersonalised discourse process. In addition to reinforcing the problems of acontextuality, this neglect, or negation, of difference deprives the process of discursive interaction of the “contrastive foil” that participants need to cause them to question their initial assumptions, to learn from the contrasts embodied in the other positions, and to spark potentially transformative insights.¹⁸ Furthermore, in focusing one-sidedly on an idealised consensual outcome, Habermas also overlooks the *processual* dimension that real world learning actually requires.¹⁹ Here again, in its commitment to situatedness, its correlative endorsement of real differences in hermeneutic standpoint, and its embrace of a conjoint process of situated learning, grounded in interactive dialogue between diversely situated participants and culminating in a potentially transformative “fusion of horizons”, Gadamerian hermeneutics can provide a much-needed corrective, without which the Habermasian critique of formalism and instrumentalism inevitably falls short of achieving its intended outcome.

More generally, as epitomised in his treatment of I-Thou relations, Gadamer’s model of conversation has the potential to correct for the decontextualising and indeed depersonalising influence of the more formalistic and proceduralist elements of Habermasian discourse through

this contention. For example, see Georgia Warnke, *Justice and Interpretation* (Cambridge: Polity, 1992), chs 5, 6; Georgia Warnke, “Communicative Rationality and Cultural Values”, in *The Cambridge Companion to Habermas*, ed. Stephen K. White (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995).

¹⁵ Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 312ff. Cf. Paul Healy, “Situated Rationality and Hermeneutic Understanding”, *International Philosophical Quarterly* 36, no. 2 (1996): 156-59.

¹⁶ Harold I. Brown, *Rationality* (London: Routledge, 1990), especially ch. IV. Cf. Paul Healy, “Rationality, Judgement, and Critical Inquiry”, *The Electronic Journal of Analytic Philosophy* 1, no. 3 (1993).

¹⁷ See Seyla Benhabib, “The Utopian Dimension in Communicative Ethics”, in *Critical Theory: The Essential Readings*, ed. David Ingram and Julia Simon-Ingram (New York: Paragon House, 1991). Cf. Healy, “Rationality, Judgement, and Critical Inquiry”, 297-98.

¹⁸ Paul Healy, “Rethinking Deliberative Democracy: From Deliberative Discourse to Transformative Dialogue”, *Philosophy and Social Criticism* 37, no. 3 (2011): 306-09. Cf. Kögler, *The Power of Dialogue: Critical Hermeneutics after Gadamer and Foucault*, especially ch. 5.

¹⁹ Cf. Madison, “Critical Theory and Hermeneutics”, 467-68 and Healy, *Rationality, Hermeneutics and Dialogue*, ch. 2.

underwriting a situated, interactive, and ethically responsible life-world learning process in ways that the latter alone cannot. Here, the difference is epitomised in the contrast between the Habermasian preoccupation with “symmetrical reciprocity” and the Gadamerian emphasis on mutuality and dialogical reciprocity, as epitomised in Gadamer’s treatment of I-Thou relations. While symmetrical reciprocity encourages us to treat the other effectively as a mirror image of ourselves, *dialogical* reciprocity discourages us from assuming that we can readily trade places with the other, and instead emphasises the need genuinely to listen to and learn from the other in an open-minded way truly attuned to what is stake in the context in question, as a prerequisite for a meaningful and productive learning process capable of yielding a potentially transformative outcome.²⁰ The potential for dialogical reciprocity to serve as a corrective for the abstract formalism of the Habermasian procedural model is succinctly epitomised in the following characterisation of a genuine I-Thou relationship, whereby:

The I not only recognizes the Thou to be a person but also listens to what the Thou has to say. The I is open to the Thou and to the truth of what the Thou claims. Ready to experience the limitations of its own original understanding of that which is called into question by the Thou, the I is a questioner open to questions; it is open-minded and prepared to change its mind. The truth is that which emerges in the course of this conversation. It is no longer that originally claimed by the I or that originally claimed by the Thou, but rather that which emerges out of the give-and-take of conversation.²¹

As related to present concerns, this passage epitomises in particular how the hermeneutic stance can effectively reinstate the concrete other sidelined by the ideality and abstraction of the Habermasian discourse model, and in so doing imbue the discursive (or better, dialogical) process with the life-world traction it must have truly to counteract the limitations of instrumentalism and formalism, as envisaged by both thinkers.

Habermas and Gadamer

While, as epitomised in his colonisation thesis, Habermas has been to the forefront among contemporary theorists in diagnosing and seeking to combat the limitations of instrumentalism and formalism, it has been contended that his proposed communicative corrective can only be effective when complemented by key hermeneutic insights. Hence, although Habermas and Gadamer have typically been read as oppositional, it is only when Habermas is read in light of Gadamer that the former’s communicative proposal can succeed in achieving its intended outcomes. More specifically, it has been contended that the life-world learning process needed to counteract the excesses of formalism, as envisaged by Habermas himself, can only be effective in so doing when it has factored in the hermeneutic recognition of the importance of *phronesis*, the significance of differences in hermeneutic standpoint, and the mutuality and ethicality of I-Thou relations. Without these, the Habermasian discourse model inadvertently threatens to replicate the abstract formalism it is intended to counteract. In conclusion it should, however, be noted that it is only against the backdrop provided by Habermas’s sustained defence of the need for a rationally-grounded communicative response to the limits of instrumentalism and formalism that the corresponding strengths of the Gadamerian contribution to this project come into clear relief.

Dr Paul Healy is Senior Lecturer in Philosophy and Coordinator of the Philosophy program in the Faculty of Life and Social Sciences at Swinburne University of Technology, Melbourne. He is the author of numerous publications on postfoundationalist epistemology and socio-political theory. As epitomised in his 2005 monograph *Rationality, Hermeneutic and Dialogue*, he works primarily in the tradition of critical hermeneutics embracing the thought of Habermas, Gadamer, and Foucault. The application of hermeneutico-dialogical thinking to a range of contemporary problems, both theoretical and applied, has been the primary focus of his research and teaching in recent years.

²⁰ Healy, “Rethinking Deliberative Democracy”, 303-09.

²¹ Kathleen Wright, “Gadamer: The Speculative Structure of Language”, in *Hermeneutics and Modern Philosophy*, ed. Brice R. Wachterhauser (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 1986), 201.

Telling Time Together: Hannah Arendt and the Temporal Condition of Human Beings in the World

Lucy Tatman
Philosophy
University of Tasmania

This paper is an analysis, via the thought of Hannah Arendt, of the temporal dimension of a life-world. The difference between worldly time and historical time is described, as are the various components of the phenomenon of worldly time. Although it is a rare occurrence, historically, for worldly time to “break down” and to go untold, Arendt certainly believed that worldly time had “stopped” in her lifetime, and at the end of her life she was wrestling with the question of “how to re-start time”. This question is perhaps even more pressing today. Although Arendt never gathered together all the threads in her thought concerning worldly time, this paper is a preliminary effort to do just that.

Introduction

Near the end of Hannah Arendt’s “Preface” to *Between Past and Future*, there appears, it seems, a most curious contradiction in her thought. On the one hand she straightforwardly claims that the “gap between past and future” which she had just been describing was an entirely mental phenomenon, or an experience humans have only when we are thinking.¹ As she explicitly states, “applied to historical or biographical time none of these metaphors can possibly make sense because gaps in time do not occur there”.² On the other hand, and on the very next page, she asserts that “the thread of tradition” has broken, and with the cutting of this thread “the gap between past and future ceased to be a condition peculiar only to the activity of thought and restricted as an experience to those few who made thinking their primary business. It became a tangible reality and perplexity for all; that is, it became a fact of political relevance”.³

Strikingly, this apparent contradiction between a gap in time as a purely mental phenomenon and a gap in time as a “tangible reality” appears again in Arendt’s final, unfinished work, *The Life of the Mind*. At the conclusion of volume 1, “Thinking”, she was again writing of the experience, when thinking, of a gap between past and future, and again she insisted that her metaphorical descriptions of this experience were valid only in the realm of thought. In her words from that text, “applied to historical or biographical time, these metaphors cannot possibly make sense; gaps in time do not occur there”.⁴ What then to make of the fact that two pages later she was writing of “a fragmented past”,⁵ and that the last twelve pages of volume 2, “Willing”, are devoted to the political problem of “how to re-start time within an inexorable time continuum?”⁶ What to make of the fact that in these pages she explicitly identified a “hiatus between a no-more and a not-yet”,⁷ and turned her attention toward “such gaps of historical time”.⁸

I suggest this apparent contradiction points to one of Arendt’s most profound insights into the temporal condition of human beings in the world. This insight has to do with the lived experience of

¹ Hannah Arendt, *Between Past and Future: Eight Exercises in Political Thought* (New York and London: Penguin Books, 1993), 13.

² Arendt, *Between Past and Future*, 13.

³ *Ibid.*, 14.

⁴ Hannah Arendt, *The Life of the Mind: Vol. 1, Thinking* (San Diego, New York, and London: Harcourt, Inc., 1978a), 210.

⁵ Arendt, *The Life of the Mind: Thinking*, 212.

⁶ Hannah Arendt, *The Life of the Mind: Vol. 2, Willing* (San Diego, New York, and London: Harcourt, Inc., 1978b), 214.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 204.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 205.

a *worldly* hiatus between a past that is no longer and a future that is not yet.⁹ To put it in language Arendt did not use, this gap between past and future is best characterised as *a time in which worldly time is not being told meaningfully together*. The key to unlocking her apparent contradiction is that in her thought worldly time is not the same as historical time. While it is true that occasionally she, or perhaps one of her “Englishers”,¹⁰ used the words “historical time” to refer to it, worldly time is a different temporal modality to history, albeit sharing with history the fact that it is far more expansive than any one individual’s lifetime. To put it simply, I am suggesting that worldly time is the temporal dimension of a life-world, one inter-subjectively shared by a diverse collection, indeed, a plurality, of inhabitants. Furthermore, I believe that if we take the reality (and perplexity) of worldly time as the standpoint from which to evaluate Arendt’s apparent contradiction, the contradiction evaporates, although admittedly it leaves in its place a host of questions concerning worldly time. Before addressing those questions, though, let me return to Arendt’s apparent contradiction in order to explain more fully the claims she was making.

Regarding the mental phenomenon of the gap between past and future, with Arendt I assume that anyone who has ever truly been lost in thought has indeed experienced the *nunc stans*, the standing now, or a moment of whatever duration in which they did not experience the passage of time.¹¹ Instead, and for however long as they were thinking, they were participating in a timeless present. They were, in that moment, “outside” of any temporality associated with movement, and were in this sense experiencing a gap between past and future. It is, in short, a real phenomenon. Likewise, with Arendt I am in full agreement that gaps in time do not and cannot occur in history *as history is currently conceived* (in western culture). The issue to keep in mind, however, is that history as currently conceived is inseparable from calendar time. Arendt made this point forcibly in her essay “The Concept of History”, in which she wrote, “this is what is manifestly expressed in our calendar; *it [our calendar] is the actual content of our concept of history*”.¹² To elaborate on her point, while it is perhaps possible for there to be weeks or months in which nothing much happens of worldly significance, nevertheless those weeks and months are present in the historical record. Put differently, in our time no stretch of time is unaccounted for: every minute, every hour, every day and week is included, its existence affirmed, if only by a series of meaningful numbers. From the perspective of the world we share in common, however, a series of meaningful numbers is scant meaning indeed. They reveal nothing of the fabric or texture of human life lived in that world at that time. They do not tell the story of any words or deeds that emerged and endured in the world within the span of that numbered sequence. Yet such stories, told together, are the very stuff of worldly time. It is when *they are not told* that a gap opens up between a world’s past and future; no matter how well-numbered are the days of that gap, what is missing is a meaningful account of the events of that world’s past and present, as well as a modest array of meaningfully imagined futures into which the living inhabitants of that world can promise themselves.¹³ The need for worldly time to include such anticipated futures is yet another important characteristic of worldly time that distinguishes it from historical time: worldly time includes shared retentions and protensions—on an epic scale. Again it is when these memories and future anticipations go missing that a gap between past and future opens up in worldly time. With Arendt I believe they truly have gone missing, that the reality of a gap between worldly past and worldly future is a fact of political relevance.

⁹ Hannah Arendt, *Essays in Understanding: 1930-1954*, ed. Jerome Kohn (New York: Schocken Books, 2005a), 158-160.

¹⁰ Jerome Kohn, “Introduction”. In Hannah Arendt, *Responsibility and Judgement*, ed. Jerome Kohn (New York: Schocken Books, 2003), xxxi.

¹¹ Arendt, *The Life of the Mind: Thinking*, 210.

¹² Arendt, *Between Past and Future*, 75, emphasis added.

¹³ Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition*, Second Edition (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1998), 247.

Contra Arendt, I do not believe this fact become a tangible “reality and perplexity for all” some decades ago, as she asserted. And I think this was primarily because *watches and calendars kept on functioning*. People still believed, with justified confidence, that they knew what hour and what day it was. The realisation that the meaningful content of the days of our world is increasingly resembling a kind of homage to the absurd is *only now* slowly beginning to dawn. For example, banks that have engaged in unscrupulous lending and investment practises are rewarded, while increasing numbers of people are made jobless, homeless, and desperate? This perplexing reality is beginning to sink in, and this “sinking in” may well foretell the survival of worldly time. In Arendt’s words, “no human world destined to outlast the short lifespan of mortals within it will ever be able to survive without [people] willing to do what Herodotus was the first to undertake consciously—namely...to say what is”.¹⁴

In part because it is, from my perspective, so timely, in the following pages I seek to provide a phenomenological sketch of Arendt’s worldly time, or of the temporal condition of human beings in the world.¹⁵ Although Arendt never explicitly discussed this temporal condition, time and again she alluded to it—in terse, dense ways. Perhaps one reason she never focused directly upon it is that tellers of worldly time are, almost simultaneously, thinkers, judges, makers and actors; they do not fit neatly into any division within or between the *vita contemplativa* and the *vita activa*. More likely, to my mind, she did not analyse at length worldly time because it was so very close to home, a “something” through which her own “who-ness” was revealed. Given that this conundrum can never be resolved, however, I will begin with what is incontrovertibly to hand: four dense quotes from Arendt. Taken together they begin to tell the story of the telling together of worldly time.

The story reveals the meaning of what otherwise would remain an unbearable sequence of sheer happenings.¹⁶

Everybody who tells a story of what happened to him [or her] half an hour ago on the street has got to put this story into shape. And this putting the story into shape is a form of thought.¹⁷

The ‘completion,’ which indeed every enacted event must have in the minds of those who then are to tell the story and to convey its meaning, eluded them; and without this thinking completion after the act, without the articulation accompanied by remembrance, there simply was no story left that could be told.¹⁸

Without [that]...which selects and names, which hands down and preserves, which indicates where the treasures are and what their worth is—there seems to be *no willed continuity in time and hence, humanly speaking, neither past nor future*.¹⁹

While all four quotes are deeply significant illuminators of worldly time, I need to own up to the exercise of my editorial discretion. I removed the word “tradition” from the last quote and replaced it with [that]. I did so because with Arendt I fully agree that the thread or chain of the western cultural tradition has been broken and cannot be mended.²⁰ Nevertheless, and again with Arendt, I do not believe the human capacity for judgement has been eradicated. Nor do I believe that the human capacity to tell stories and preserve them has evaporated. Instead, I think Arendt’s insights

¹⁴ Arendt, *Between Past and Future*, 229.

¹⁵ See Paul Ricœur, “Action, Story and History—On Re-reading *The Human Condition*”, *Salmagundi* 60 (1983), 60-72, for the first, and to this day one of the very few, analyses of “the most enduring features of the temporal condition of man [sic]” (60) in Arendt’s thought.

¹⁶ Hannah Arendt, *Men in Dark Times* (San Diego, New York, London: Harcourt Brace & Company, 1995), 104.

¹⁷ Hannah Arendt, “On Hannah Arendt”, in *Hannah Arendt: The Recovery of the Public World*, ed. Melvyn A. Hill (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1979), 303.

¹⁸ Arendt, *Between Past and Future*, 6.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 5, emphasis added.

²⁰ On the breaking of the thread of tradition see Arendt, *Between Past and Future*, 25, and Arendt, *The Life of the Mind: Thinking*, 212.

into the complexities of “willed continuity in time” transcend the function of tradition and are applicable to any attempt to tell worldly time together. As she put it at the conclusion to “Thinking”, in the absence of tradition what is lost is the “certainty of evaluation”.²¹ I take her point to be that the old evaluative forms and moulds, the old yardsticks may be gone, but the capacity to evaluate anew is not gone. The capacity to select and name anew, to tell the story of different treasures and their worth—this human capacity remains. The question is: will we exercise it? Put differently, what I have learned from Arendt is that in the absence of tradition it may well only be through *enduring stories* that meaningful continuity in worldly time can be created and maintained. What is noteworthy is that such stories are a tangible bridge between the *vita contemplativa* and the *vita activa*.

To explain briefly, no story about the world can be told unless and until a) an action or event occurs in the world *and* b) someone has *thought* about it, *judged* it worthy to be told, and then *willed* themselves to bring it into being through the *physical act* of setting it down on a page, or painting it, or sculpting it, or otherwise “reifying” that story into a durable, shareable object.²² The importance of such a combined mental and physical effort on the part of human beings lies in the fact that without such efforts, “the living activities of action, speech, and thought would lose their reality at the end of each process and disappear as though they had never been”.²³ In other words, unless the “unbearable sequence of sheer happenings” which we experience fleetingly as participants and spectators in the world is told meaningfully together *and* tangibly added to the world in common, then we lose those happenings, meaning is evacuated from our worldly present, and we can neither envision nor promise ourselves to a shared, meaningful future. Or, without the presence of physically enduring manifestations of “willed continuity in time”, worldly time is at risk, and so too is meaningful human life.

That is, if our individual lifetimes are to be understood as unique, meaningful lives lived out in a rectilinear line from birth to death, and if the world in which we dwell is to include meaningful, as opposed to sheer and unrelenting, change, then there must be a more or less stable backdrop to our lives, against which we each stand out as “unique, unexchangeable, and unrepeatable entities”.²⁴ This “backdrop” is the meaningful knitting together of disparate lives, words and deeds into a coherent and *temporally expansive* whole. Crucially, it is only within such a whole that any new event can even be recognised *as* a new, unexpected event. Apart from some kind of a meaningful whole, that is, each birth, each life and each event, whether word or deed, would simply be another meaningless component in an ongoing welter of “sound and fury, signifying nothing”.

One problem identified by Arendt is that worldly time is always precarious, always “out of joint”.²⁵ The crux of the issue, as mentioned above, is the fact that the content of worldly time consists to a large extent of a variety of human actions, or words and deeds. These actions are, in and of themselves, frail to an extreme. By themselves they leave behind nothing, and are thus utterly dependent for their meaningful temporal endurance in a world on those who tell their stories and put them into reified form. *That someone will tell the story of a worldly event is never certain. Nor is it certain that, once reified, the meaning of that event will in fact live on in the world.* As Arendt put it in *The Human Condition*, “the materialization [actions] have to undergo in order to remain in the world at all is paid for in that always the ‘dead letter’ replaces something which grew out of and

²¹ Arendt, *The Life of the Mind: Thinking*, 212.

²² Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 95. See also Sara Heinämaa, “Future and Others”, in *Birth, Death, and Femininity: Philosophies of Embodiment*, ed. Robin May Schott (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2010), 38ff & 147.

²³ *Ibid.*, 95.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 97.

²⁵ Arendt, *Between Past and Future*, 192; Hannah Arendt, *Responsibility and Judgement*, ed. Jerome Kohn (New York: Schocken Books, 2003), 28; Hannah Arendt, *The Promise of Politics*, ed. Jerome Kohn (New York: Schocken Books, 2005b), 203.

for a fleeting moment indeed existed as the ‘living spirit’”.²⁶ But the “dead letter” which is a reified, materialised story is not necessarily entirely dead. Rather, it is possessed of “a deadness from which it can be rescued...when the dead letter comes again into contact with a life willing to resurrect it, although this resurrection of the dead shares with all living things that it, too, will die again”.²⁷ In his “Introduction” to *The Promise of Politics* Jerome Kohn describes most eloquently what is at stake in this relational process. “What is crucial for Arendt is that the specific meaning of an event that happened in the past remains potentially alive in the reproductive imagination. When that meaning, however much it may offend our moral sense, is reproduced in a story and experienced vicariously, it reclaims the depth of the world. Sharing vicarious experiences in this manner may be the most efficacious way of becoming reconciled to the past’s presence in the world”.²⁸

At a minimum it would seem that in order for worldly time to be kept alive there must be a rather constant stream of newcomers to the world who are willing to resurrect, with their own living spirit, dead letter stories of worldly deeds. I suspect that such commitment to (and experience of) keeping “the depth” of their world’s past alive flows into the present and is made manifest in those witnesses’ willingness and ability to identify current words and deeds which are deserving of their own stories and materialisations. This is not an easy endeavour. Tellers of meaningful worldly time must confront what is all too often an unbearable sequence of happenings, and by means of thinking completion put those happenings into shape. They must dare to select and to name, to honour that which is praiseworthy and to condemn that which is not. They must judge what to preserve, what to hand down. In so doing, they wilfully, meaningfully re-constitute a world’s past and present, thereby affording the possibility, though not the certainty, of meaningful temporal continuity into the future.

As I conclude this brief sketch of worldly time, I cannot help but note that as I write these words great swathes of Cambodia and Thailand are under water. Wall Street is occupied, and the Great Wall of China is crumbling in spots. It is a matter of public record that a recent recipient of the Nobel Peace Prize has been ordering assassinations rather regularly—and they are being carried out as per his orders. Amidst this welter of happenings I remember and extend these words from Adrienne Rich: “when the staves of history fall awry and the barrel of time bursts apart, some turn to prayer, some to poetry”, yet others begin to tell the splinters of their time together again.²⁹ To put it in the terms of this colloquium, whether they know it or not, those tellers of worldly time are responsible for keeping alive the temporal dimension of their life-world. Theirs is an always uncertain, always epic endeavour.

Dr Lucy Tatman is a Senior Lecturer in the School of Philosophy, The University of Tasmania. Drawing on phenomenology and hermeneutics, her current research focuses on temporality in relation to human worlds and human meaningfulness.

²⁶ Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 95.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 169.

²⁸ Kohn, “Introduction”, xxi-xxii.

²⁹ Adrienne Rich, *What is Found There: Notebooks on Poetry and Politics* (New York and London: W. W. Norton & Company, 1993), 115.

Husserl's Arguments against Logical Psychologism and his Conception of Ideal Objects¹

James Burrowes
Philosophy
La Trobe University

Husserl's main arguments against Logical Psychologism (LP) are found in the *Prolegomena* to the *Logical Investigations*. The core commitment of LP is the thesis that logic is explanatorily reducible to psychology. This was the dominant view of the foundations of logic at the time Husserl wrote the *Logical Investigations*. The relevance of Husserl's arguments in the *Prolegomena* is not, however, restricted to the views of Husserl's contemporaries. Although it is rare for a contemporary philosopher to explicitly endorse LP (Kusch is an exception),² I will point out the ways in which LP is associated with strong naturalism (defined by the thesis that 'all of the facts are natural facts; all putative non-natural facts are to be i) reduced to natural facts or ii) taken as fictional entities'). If Husserl's arguments are convincing, then they will pose a problem for deflationary, Strong Naturalist views of apparently ideal sciences. Following Robert Hanna,³ I will classify Husserl's arguments against the three major commitments entailed by LP as:

- i. The Argument against Modal Reductionism in LP
- ii. The Argument against Epistemic Empiricism in LP
- iii. The Argument against Sceptical Relativism in LP

I will assess these arguments and consider the conception of ideal objects used to support key premises in them. I will also point out how this early conception is important to the conception in Husserl's later work (focussing on the *The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology: An Introduction to Phenomenological Philosophy* for the purposes of this talk).⁴

Introduction

Husserl's main arguments against Logical Psychologism (LP) appear in the *Prolegomena* to the *Logical Investigations* (1900/1901).⁵ At the time that the *Logical Investigations* were written, Logical Psychologism was the dominant interpretation of the foundations of logic. The basic commitment of the view is that logic is explanatorily reducible to psychological investigation. As I will set out, Husserl thought that this core commitment entails other problematic commitments about the nature of logic and our knowledge of it. I will consider Robert Hanna's reconstruction and defence of Husserl's arguments against these entailments. I will also set out the conception of ideal objects Husserl uses to support these arguments.

§I:

Husserl defines Logical Psychologism (LP) as the thesis that "the essential theoretical foundations of logic lie in psychology, in whose field those propositions belong—as far as their theoretical content is concerned—which give logic its characteristic pattern".⁶ The *prima facie* plausibility of the view is supported by the observation that logic is the science of the laws of thought, dealing

¹ This is a summarised version of a chapter from my MA thesis, "Husserl on Ideal Objects".

² Martin Kusch, *Psychologism: A Case Study in the Sociology of Philosophical Knowledge* (London: Routledge, 1995), 41-62.

³ Robert Hanna, "Logical Cognition: Husserl's Prolegomena and the Truth in Psychologism", *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 53, no.2 (1993).

⁴ Edmund Husserl, *The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology: An Introduction to Phenomenological Philosophy*, trans. David Carr (Evanston, IL: Northwest University Press, 1970), 357.

⁵ Edmund Husserl, *Logical Investigations*, trans. J. N. Finlay (London: Routledge, 1970). Subsequent references to this work will be set out by referring to the section—i.e. Prolegomena (Pr.) or Investigation Number (i.e. I-IV), sub-section and page number(s).

⁶ Husserl, *Logical Investigations*, Pr., §17, 90.

with phenomena such as, as Husserl points out, “concepts, judgements, syllogisms, deductions, inductions, definitions [and] classifications”.⁷ All of these are mental phenomena and are, therefore, objects of psychological investigation. As Robert Hanna⁸ points out, the basic commitment of LP is, then, that logic is explanatorily reducible to psychology, and is so in two senses:

- i. a complete knowledge of the empirical facts and laws of empirical psychology yields a complete knowledge of the existence and specific character of logic⁹
and
- ii. the empirical facts and laws with which psychology deals strictly determine the existence and specific character of logic¹⁰

This core commitment entails two further commitments,¹¹ both of which Husserl finds problematic. The two further commitments are:

- i. Modal Reductionism about Logic (MRL): that logical laws and logical truths are explanatorily reducible to merely causal laws and merely contingent, probabilistic truths
- ii. Epistemic Empiricism about Logic (EEL): that logical knowledge is explanatorily reducible to merely *a posteriori* knowledge and justification

These two commitments conflict with Husserl's assertions that i) logical laws and truths are necessary (unrestrictedly true) and ii) that logical knowledge is *a priori* and certain and justified *a priori*.¹²

§II:

Husserl's critique of LP is motivated by his view that logic i) involves a class of ideal entities¹³ (it is thus analogous to mathematics)¹⁴ and ii) is founded on pure logic¹⁵ (where pure logic acts as the theoretical basis from which any practical application of logic is derived). While arguing against MRL and EEL Husserl makes several moves to support this conception of logic. I will set out the arguments against the two entailments and then proceed to make clear how Husserl supports his conception of logic.

§II.i

The first argument is aimed against MRL in LP. The core thesis of LP entails MRL for the following reason. Asserting the core thesis of LP and holding that we can account for logical laws and truths by describing the empirical facts about actual acts of thought and the empirical, causal laws pertaining to them, commits us to holding that logical truths and laws are determined through methods which yield no more than probable truths. This is because, as Husserl puts it: “laws of thought, as causal laws governing acts of knowledge in their mental interweaving, could only be stated in the form of probabilities”.¹⁶ The proponent of LP is committed to restricting the scope of

⁷ Ibid., Pr., §18, 91.

⁸ Hanna, “Logical Cognition”, 251-275; Robert Hanna, “Husserl's Arguments against Logical Psychologism”, in *Husserl's Logische Untersuchungen*, ed. V. Mayer, 27-42 (Munich: Akademie Verlag, 2008).

⁹ Hanna, “Husserl's Arguments against Logical Psychologism”, 29.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Husserl and Hanna discuss three problematic entailments, but due to space constraints I will only treat two here, as they are most relevant to my concerns. The third is Sceptical Relativism about Logic (SRL): that logical laws, logical truth and logical knowledge are explanatorily reducible to either SRL-a) individually held beliefs or SRL-b) species-specific beliefs. These three labels (MRL, EEL and SRL) and their definitions are due to Hanna, “Husserl's Arguments against Logical Psychologism”; Hanna, “Logical Cognition”.

¹² Husserl in fact employs several arguments against Logical Psychologism in the *Prolegomena*. Treating all of these is outside the scope of this paper. For a summary of all of the arguments, see Kusch, *Psychologism*, 41-62.

¹³ For example: Husserl, *Logical Investigations*, Pr., §46, 181.

¹⁴ For example: Ibid., Pr., §46, 179 & 181.

¹⁵ For example: Ibid., Pr., §20, 97.

¹⁶ For example: Ibid., Pr., §22, 101.

logical truth and logical laws to empirical facts about the world and the mere probabilities we can ascertain about them.¹⁷

Husserl argues that MRL is untenable. Robert Hanna has reconstructed Husserl's argument against MRL in LP along the following lines:

- i. LP entails MRL—that logical truths and laws are at best probably true
- ii. MRL is inconsistent with the (absolute) necessity of pure logical laws and pure logical truths¹⁸
- iii. Therefore, LP is false¹⁹

The second argument is aimed against EEL in LP. LP entails EEL because by asserting the core thesis of LP and holding that empirical laws strictly determine our knowledge of logic and the actual character of logic commits one to treating logic in terms of natural laws. Given that all natural laws are *a posteriori*, one is committed to justifying logic solely in terms of *a posteriori* knowledge. The important premise here is, as Husserl puts it, that “no natural laws can be known *a priori* ... The only way in which a natural law can be established and justified is by induction from singular facts of experience”.²⁰ Robert Hanna has reconstructed Husserl's argument against the tenability of this commitment along the following lines:

- i. LP entails EEL—that logical knowledge is justified only observationally or by empirical induction
- ii. EEL is inconsistent with the *a priori*, non-empirical character of the kind of justification adequate to logical laws and logical truths
- iii. Therefore, LP is false²¹

§II.ii

The most evident problem with the arguments against MRL and EEL is that, as they stand, they are question begging.²² They each rely on an acceptance of the anti-psychologistic view of the epistemological and ontological status of logic. Paul Natorp raised this charge²³ in his review of the *Prolegomena in Kant-Studien*.²⁴ After reconstructing Husserl's two arguments Natorp points out that these positions are supported “clearly under the presupposition that one is already convinced that there are strict laws at least in logic and mathematics”²⁵ and are thus question begging. To resolve this issue, we would need to find further support for the assertions on which the second premise of each of the arguments rests.

Importantly for my interests here, the arguments against MRL and EEL have the same underlying form.²⁶ The general form is:

- i. LP entails *x*

¹⁷ Hanna, “Husserl's Arguments against Logical Psychologism”, 32.

¹⁸ Ibid., 34; Hanna, “Logical Cognition”, 261.

¹⁹ Looking at the argument in this form, it will be noticed that premise two requires further support on pain of begging the question. Later on I will show how Husserl's arguments rely on further support for his anti-psychologistic view of logic.

²⁰ Husserl, *Logical Investigations* Pr., §21, 99.

²¹ Hanna, “Husserl's Arguments against Logical Psychologism”, 35; Hanna, “Logical Cognition”, 263.

²² This is true for both Husserl's original formulation and Hanna's reconstruction in standard form.

²³ He raised the charge against all three arguments— i.e. the arguments against MRL, EEL and SRL. See Paul Natorp, “On the Question of Logical Method in relation to Edmund Husserl's *Prolegomena to Pure Logic*”, trans. J.N. Mohanty, in *Readings on Edmund Husserl's Logical Investigations*, ed. J. N. Mohanty, 59 (The Hague: Nijhoff, 1977).

²⁴ The essay translated as: Paul Natorp, “On the Question of Logical Method in relation to Edmund Husserl's *Prolegomena to Pure Logic*”.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ This is also true for the argument against SRL, which I have left aside. See the arguments against SRL in Hanna, “Logical Cognition” and Hanna, “Husserl's Arguments against Logical Psychologism”.

- ii. x is inconsistent with some apparent property of logical items, y , where y has an *ideal character*
- iii. Therefore, LP is false

With this general form made explicit, we can see that Husserl's arguments rely on asserting that there are items with an ideal character and that logical items are of this kind. The arguments against psychologism depend, then, on a central distinction in Husserl's thought at large, i.e. a distinction between the real and ideal. I will look at an argument that Husserl uses to support this distinction in the *Logical Investigations* and will later consider whether the two specific assertions in the arguments against MRL and EEL follow from this distinction, where the two specific assertions are that (at least some) logical items are i) absolutely necessary (unrestrictedly true) and ii) justified *a priori*.

§III

The core of Husserl's defence of the distinction between ideal and real objects and ideal and real sciences is the argument used to refute what he calls the "Second Prejudice" of LP.²⁷ The first step in this argument is to draw a distinction between the methodological and theoretical sides of any given science.²⁸ When we consider the methodology of any particular science, we are considering the set of practices and processes prescribing how to properly engage with the field or subject matter of the science. When we consider the theoretical content of any given science, on the other hand, we are considering the truths, rules and laws that the science establishes and the patterns able to be established between these.

The "Second Prejudice" is the denial of the importance of this distinction. On this view, even if we allow the distinction, the purely logical or theoretical aspect of a science still involves mental phenomena, and as mental phenomena, they can be investigated psychologically. The distinction thus has no bearing on the question of whether logic is explanatorily reducible to psychology. To refute the "Second Prejudice", Husserl uses mathematics and mathematical items as a model for his view of logic and logical items. Using arithmetic as an example, Husserl states:

Arithmetic sets up laws for numbers, for their relations and combinations: numbers, however, are the products of colligating and counting, which are mental activities...whatever may be determined in arithmetical propositions, are merely mental processes, and must as such obey mental laws.²⁹

The observation supporting the initial plausibility of LP³⁰ also applies to arithmetic, since both logic and arithmetic involve mental processes. This supports what could be called "Mathematical Psychologism"—the view that mathematics can be explanatorily reduced to psychology. Husserl uses the following important distinction to undermine the initial plausibility of such a view. There is a distinction between the act of thought (in this case the actual act of arithmetical thought) and the

²⁷ Husserl sets out three prejudices of Logical Psychologism in the *Prolegomena*, in Ch. 8, §41-51. I will set out the first and second here for reference; for the third see *Logical Investigations*, Pr. §49, 187: i). First Prejudice: "Prescriptions which regulate what is mental must obviously have a mental basis. It is accordingly self-evident that the normative principles of knowledge must be grounded in psychology of knowledge" (*Logical Investigations*, Pr. §41, 168). ii) Second Prejudice: In summary, this prejudice is "the distinction between purely logical and methodological propositions is pointless, the [Logical Psychologistic] objection affects both equally. Every attempt therefore to extrude even part of logic from psychology, on ground of its pretended 'purity', must count as radically mistaken". Husserl, *Logical Investigations*, Pr. §44, 177.

²⁸ Husserl first makes this distinction in the course of refuting the "First Prejudice" of Logical Psychologism. I will leave aside the refutation of the First Prejudice and focus on the distinction, as the refutation is not important to my aims here.

²⁹ Husserl, *Logical Investigations*, Pr., §45, 178.

³⁰ This observation is mentioned in §1: Logic deals with phenomena which occur within the domain of thought and which are, therefore, objects of psychological investigation.

object of thought (in this case the arithmetical object and the arithmetical law it falls under). An act of thought is an empirical, real fact that is open to psychological investigation. Since a mental arithmetical operation, such as counting, is a particular kind of act of thought, it is also an empirical, real fact. This is not so for arithmetic and its objects,³¹ or, more generally, for mathematics and its objects. Husserl thinks that we should be careful to separate mathematical items (numbers, laws, etc.) from their presentations on the grounds that:

The number Five is not my own or anyone else's counting of five, it is also not my presentation or anyone else's presentation of five. It is in the latter regard a possible object of acts of presentation, whereas, in the former, it is the ideal *species* of a form whose concrete *instances* are found in what becomes objective in certain acts of counting.³²

On Husserl's view a mathematical item is an individual item over and above any acts of thought it appears in.³³ It is, in other words, an ideal, multiply instantiable entity. Any presentation of a mathematical item (e.g. the presentation of the number 5 in the equation $5+7=12$) is a concrete instance of this ideal entity. Given that the mathematical item can be presented in many different instances of experience, the mathematical item itself should not be considered, as Husserl writes, "a *part or side* of a mental experience, and so not as something real".³⁴ Husserl uses this distinction between i) the act of thought which presents an instance of the ideal species and ii) the object of the act, i.e. the ideal species, to state that "propositions about arithmetical thought processes belong in psychology",³⁵ whereas arithmetical propositions are "concerned with absolute numbers and number-combinations in their abstract purity and ideality".³⁶

Earlier we saw that we can approach any given science in terms of either: i) its methodology or ii) its theoretical content and unity. Applying this to the act/object distinction, the methodological aspect of a science is constrained by the range of our actual acts of thought (as acts of thought are involved in practicing the methods of investigation) and by our physical constitution. Conversely, the theoretical aspect of a science is constrained by ideal species and the ideal logical laws prescribing the proper logical relations between these species. If we apply this to logic itself, there are two ways of approaching this discipline: i) in terms of logic as a technology and ii) in terms of "pure logic" as the theoretical basis for logic as a technology:

- i. Logic as a technology, or, the discipline concerned with how logic is to be applied to other domains of scientific knowledge or any rational thoughts, is an application of logic. Since it is concerned with how actual acts are to be carried out in accordance with logical laws, it lends itself to psychological investigation. As Husserl states, "naturally the methodology of scientific research and proof must take full cognizance of the nature of the mental states in which research and proof take their course"³⁷
- ii. Pure logic, on the other hand, is not concerned with mental facts. The range of pure logic (as with arithmetic) is ideal species, not empirical facts

There are two consequences to be drawn from this. The first is that pure logic is the basis from which the laws which constrain any given science are derived. When we consider the theoretical unity of any given science, we are considering the laws of pure logic that apply to the science's theoretical content. These are ideal laws. The second is that the theoretical side of logic is not only constrained by ideal laws, but is also a domain of ideal laws. There is a parallel, then, between mathematics and logic, where both disciplines have an ideal character and are concerned with ideal species. Because of this, what has been said about mathematics and mathematical items also applies

³¹ Husserl, *Logical Investigations*, Pr., §45, 178.

³² *Ibid.*, Pr., §46, 179-180.

³³ *Ibid.*, Pr., §46, 180.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, emphasis in original.

³⁵ *Ibid.*

³⁶ *Ibid.*, Pr., §46, 180-181.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, Pr., §46, 181.

to logic and logical items. Logical items are ideal species which can be presented as instances in acts of logical thought. As the proponent of LP takes the range of logic to be acts of thought with a logical character, they restrict their concerns to logic as a technology, overlooking its pure logical theoretical content.

With the distinction between the real instances and ideal species in place, we can draw two further consequences. The first is that Husserl has refuted the "Second Prejudice" of LP. It is true that the methodological aspect of a science is concerned with mental phenomena, but this is not true for the pure, theoretical aspect of a science. The second is that this distinction can be used to clarify Husserl's distinction between ideal and real sciences. Mental events, such as the presentation of an ideal species as in the thought that "5+7=12", are one example from the total class of real empirical items. Sciences of real objects deal with objects in the same general class as mental events—those items with a spatiotemporal determination. Ideal species³⁸ do not have spatiotemporal locations; rather, they are presented in distinct empirical cases with spatiotemporal locations. A science of ideal objects is concerned exclusively with ideal items and the ideal laws of combination and relation pertaining to them.

§III.i

The final stages in undermining the question begging charge are to show that LP presupposes this conception of logic and to support the assertions Husserl makes about logical objects. The latter are: i) against MRL, logical laws and truths are necessary, and ii) against EEL, logical knowledge is *a priori* and certain and justified *a priori*. Husserl supports the charge that LP presupposes his conception of pure logic with the following observation. Just as every science can be considered in terms of its methodology and in terms of its theoretical content and unity, it can be pointed out that psychology has a theoretical content which is constrained by logical consistency and lawfulness. Psychology presupposes what Husserl calls "pure logic", and to try to found logic on psychology would thus be circular. Husserl states this charge against LP at two points in the *Prolegomena*. While discussing the distinction between methodology and theoretical content, Husserl states that the proponent of LP should:

Admit that truths which have their roots in the concepts which constitute the objectively conceived Idea of Science, cannot also belong to the field of any particular science.... [These], being ideal, cannot have their home ground in the sciences of matter of fact, and therefore not in psychology.³⁹

Earlier in the *Prolegomena*, Husserl sets out the critique as:

Logic...can as little rest on psychology as on any other science; since each science is only a science in virtue of its harmony with logical rules, it presupposes the validity of these rules. It would therefore be circular to try to give logic a first foundation in psychology.⁴⁰

A pointed way in which the proponent of LP could reply to this charge, as Husserl anticipates, is to state that if we accept that any science presupposes the laws of pure logic, then not just psychology but also logic must presuppose these laws, meaning that logic falls into the same problem of circularity. As Husserl puts it:

The opposition will reply: That this argument cannot be right, is shown by the fact that it would prove the impossibility of all logic. Since logic must itself proceed logically, it would itself commit the same circle, would itself have to establish the validity of rules that it presupposes.⁴¹

³⁸ The example just mentioned involves the following five ideal species: 5, 7, 12, the arithmetical relation of addition and the sum resulting from placing the left-hand ideal singulars into the addition relation.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, Pr., §42, 172.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, Pr., §19, 95.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*

This is what Henry Sheffer called the “logocentric predicament”, that “in order to give an account of logic, we must presuppose and employ logic”.⁴² As Robert Hanna applies this to Husserl’s case, the problem becomes, specifically:

How can pure logic in Husserl’s sense ever be explained or justified, if every explanation or justification whatsoever both presupposes and uses pure logic in Husserl’s sense?⁴³

Husserl is well aware of this problem, noting that the logical laws make up both the form and object of logical science,⁴⁴ but also thinks it is easily resolvable.

Husserl argues that this apparent problem is due to an equivocation in the sense of “presupposing”. There are two senses in which we may presuppose logic and logical laws.⁴⁵ On the one hand, we may presuppose the logical laws in the sense of reasoning “from” them, i.e. using them as premises in arguments to deduce conclusions. On the other hand, we may presuppose them in the sense that we reason “according to” them. Using this distinction, we can point out that Husserl’s explanation and justification of pure logic only presupposes pure logic in the latter sense. This deflates the circularity charge because the circularity problem only arises if we presuppose logical laws in the former sense.

If we take account of the commitment underlying the distinction of reasoning from and reasoning according to logical laws and of Husserl’s positive account of logic set out so far, a problem is raised for the proponent of LP. If a proponent of LP were to admit the distinction in order to resolve the circularity problem, they would be committed to Husserl’s conception of pure logic, as a commitment to the distinction also entails a commitment to the latter. If the logical laws have a character whereby scientific thought, broadly construed, proceeds according to them and is constrained by them, then Husserl’s characterisation of pure logic is (broadly) correct.

Husserl thus supports his view that logic is an ideal discipline which deals with ideal objects, and which set out ideal laws for constraining all cases of science, where these latter are what Husserl calls the laws of pure logic. The pure logical laws are independent laws which constrain scientific thinking *a priori*, or, as Hanna describes them, “supreme constructive categorically normative meta-principles”.⁴⁶ These are the laws “according to” which any given science reasons and are “presupposed” by the sciences in this sense.⁴⁷ Husserl’s pure logic and pure logical laws are the necessary, *a priori* principles underlying all theoretical consistency and any explanation or justification whatsoever.⁴⁸ This is what Husserl is asserting when he says⁴⁹ that any scientific discipline:

as a scientific discipline, must itself presuppose certain items of theoretical knowledge...[i.e., the] *essential constituents of all science considered as an objective theoretical unity*,...the fundamental standards by which we can decide whether anything claiming to be a science...stand[s] in an *a priori* conflict with the ideal conditions of the possibility of theory and science as such.⁵⁰

⁴² Henry Sheffer, “Review of Principia Mathematica, Volume I, second edition” *Isis* 8 (1926): 228; cited in Hanna, “Husserl’s Arguments against Logical Psychologism”, 38.

⁴³ Hanna, “Husserl’s Arguments against Logical Psychologism”, 39.

⁴⁴ Husserl, *Logical Investigations*, Pr., §48, 186.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, Pr., §19, 95.

⁴⁶ Where the senses of these terms are set out as: “constructive (i.e., not *deductive*), categorically normative (i.e., not instrumental, causal, or merely descriptive) meta-principles (i.e., not *lower-order* principles)”. Hanna “Husserl’s Arguments against Logical Psychologism”, 40.

⁴⁷ Hanna puts it as that “the lower-order sciences are all...*constructed and operated* according to these supreme, constructive categorically normative meta-principles”. *Ibid.*

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

⁴⁹ Husserl makes this claim in regard to logical technology, but it is clear from the rest of §42, from which this passage is quoted, that he would also support my generalisation of his claim.

⁵⁰ Husserl, *Logical Investigations*, Pr., §42, 172.

As these laws are the necessary, *a priori* conditions of possibility of theoretical consistency, they provide the required support for Husserl's assertions about logical objects as i) necessary and ii) justified *a priori*.

§IV

There is, however, one further problem. With the distinction between the ideal species and its instances, and thus the characterisation of ideal objects as *universals*, Husserl appears to be committed to a Platonism about ideal objects, where Platonism is defined as a commitment to non-spatiotemporally existing entities that allow of multiple instantiations in real particulars. At the same time, though, Husserl rejects the interpretation of his position as Platonistic.⁵¹ While discussing the ideality of meanings in "Investigation I", Husserl states that his characterisation of ideal objects as "universal objects" is not meant to imply that they are "for that reason objects which, though existing nowhere in the world, have being in a *topos ouranios* [heavenly place]..." because "such metaphysical hypostatization would be absurd".⁵² Husserl also points out that "the point on which...psychologism differs from idealism",⁵³ is that the latter realises "the intrinsic right of specific (or ideal) objects to be granted objective status alongside of individual (or real) objects".⁵⁴ Importantly, Husserl proceeds to qualify the sense of "idealism" in a way that amounts to a rejection of the interpretation of his position as Platonistic:

To talk of 'idealism' is of course not to talk of a metaphysical doctrine, but of a theory of knowledge which recognises the 'ideal' as a condition for the possibility of objective knowledge in general, and does not 'interpret it away' in psychologistic fashion.⁵⁵

If the appeal to ideal species is not to be interpreted metaphysically, how is it to be understood? To solve this problem Husserl appeals to Lotze's revised form of Platonism as the basis for his view of ideal objects. Husserl mentions Lotze's influence in, for example, his 1903 review of Melchior Pelágyi's book.⁵⁶ Here, Husserl states that "Lotze's reflections about the interpretation of Plato's theory of forms (*Ideenlehre*) had a profound affect on...my concept of 'ideal' significations, and 'ideal contents'"⁵⁷ and describes ideal or abstract objects as universals.⁵⁸ Husserl takes universals to have "'ideal' being or validity", which is the kind of being "established, for example, in the 'existence proofs' of mathematics".⁵⁹ As such, "they do not have the real being of things, or of

⁵¹ He does so at several points in his work. I will focus on two examples from the *Logical Investigations*. There is a further, pointed example from Edmund Husserl, *Ideas I: General Introduction to Pure Phenomenology*, trans. W.R. Boyce Gibson (London: Allen & Unwin, 1969), 88: "It has ever and anon been a special cause of offense that as "Platonizing realists" we set up Ideas or Essences as objects, ascribe to them as to other objects true Being, and also correlatively the capacity to be grasped through intuition, just as in the case of empirical realities. We disregard that, alas!, most frequent type of superficial reader who foists on the author his own wholly alien conceptions, and then has no difficulty in reading absurdities into the author's statements". Husserl also mentions here that he thinks that this view of abstract objects existing in a third realm is "perverse 'Platonic hypostatization'". *Ibid.*

⁵² Husserl, *Logical Investigations*, I, §31, 330.

⁵³ The sense of "idealism" will be defined shortly.

⁵⁴ Husserl, *Logical Investigations*, II, Int., 338.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, my emphasis.

⁵⁶ Melchior Pelágyi's *Der Streit der Psychologisten und Formalisten in der Modernen Logik* ("The Dispute between the Psychologists and Formalists in Modern Logic") from 1902. Husserl's review has been translated as Edmund Husserl "A Reply to a Critic of my Refutation of Logical Psychologism", trans. Dallas Willard, in *Readings on Edmund Husserl's Logical Investigations*, ed. J.N. Mohanty (The Hague: Nijhoff, 1977).

⁵⁷ Edmund Husserl "A Reply to a Critic of my Refutation of Logical Psychologism", trans. Dallas Willard, in *Readings on Edmund Husserl's Logical Investigations*, ed. J.N. Mohanty, 36 (The Hague: Nijhoff, 1977).

⁵⁸ In the passages to be quoted, Husserl is in fact explaining his view of propositions by referring to universals, but we have already seen that he explains mathematical objects in the same way. As such, at this stage of his work (1900-1903) Husserl treats propositions, meanings, logical objects and mathematical objects as sharing the same status as universals.

⁵⁹ Husserl, "A Reply to a Critic of my Refutation of Logical Psychologism", 37.

dependent, thing-like moments—of temporal particulars in general”.⁶⁰ Given that Husserl explicitly rejects the idea of existing in a third realm as mythical and mysterious in this review,⁶¹ Husserl’s appeal to Lotzean Platonism in order to avoid full-blown Platonism in his view of ideal objects depends on the intelligibility of the distinction between “existing in a third realm” and “having validity”. Assessing Husserl’s and Lotze’s attempts to draw this distinction is outside the scope of this paper,⁶² but the distinction is central to supporting Husserl’s arguments against psychologism. Without it, we cannot conclude that Husserl’s arguments are successful.

§V

There are two major implications to be drawn from the arguments against LP and the concept of ideal objects in the *Prolegomena*. Firstly, they are relevant to clarifying other areas of Husserl’s work. The idea of ideal objects as multiply instantiable entities appears in the *Crisis*⁶³ and *Phenomenological Psychology*⁶⁴ and the idea that ideal objects are non-spatiotemporal entities appears in *Formal and Transcendental Logic*.⁶⁵

Secondly, as Robert Hanna points out,⁶⁶ although Husserl’s arguments were targeted at his contemporaries and their project of reducing logic to an introspectionist and empiricist psychology, LP is also a natural ally for contemporary, strong naturalist reductive accounts of logic and other apparently ideal sciences (e.g. mathematics). Where strong naturalism is defined by the thesis that “all of the facts are natural facts”, an adherent of strong naturalism is committed to anti-realism about these apparently ideal objects, either i) treating apparently abstract objects as fictional items or ii) reducing them to particular, empirical phenomena. If these arguments against psychologism are convincing, they create problems for the second approach—a position with wide support in contemporary philosophy.

James Burrowes finished his BA(Hons) at the University of Auckland in 2009. He is currently an MA candidate at La Trobe University, working on the topic “Husserl on Ideal Objects”.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² Lotze’s approach is to take both “having validity” and the distinction between “existing” and “having validity” to be primitives—that is, unanalysable brute facts. In Book III, Ch.2 of *Logic*, Lotze states: “As little as we can say how it happens that anything *is* or *occurs*, so little can we explain how it comes about that a truth has Validity; the latter conception has to be regarded as much as the former as ultimate and underivable” Hermann Lotze, *Logic*, trans. Bernard Bosanquet (Oxford: Clarendon Press).

⁶³ Edmund Husserl, *The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology: An Introduction to Phenomenological Philosophy*, trans. David Carr (Evanston, IL: Northwest University Press, 1970), 357.

⁶⁴ Edmund Husserl, *Phenomenological Psychology: Lectures, Summer Semester, 1925* (The Hague: Nijhoff, 1977). For example, see Edmund Husserl, “The Task and Significance of the *Logical Investigations*”, trans. J.N. Mohanty, in *Readings on Edmund Husserl’s Logical Investigations*, ed. J.N. Mohanty, 198 (The Hague: Nijhoff, 1977): “Irrespective of whether it is I or someone else who thinks or proves the Pythagorean theorem, the latter itself is a unique member of the realm of propositions”.

⁶⁵ Edmund Husserl, *Formal and Transcendental Logic*, trans. Dorian Cairns (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1969. See Husserl *Formal and Transcendental Logic*, §58, 156.

⁶⁶ Hanna, “Logical Cognition”, 256.

Formal Brain Science and Real People: Husserl's Critique of Psychologism

Anita Williams
Psychology
Murdoch University

My paper is an attempt to reflect upon the claim that the brain can think. Neuroimaging technology has led to an increased acceptance of the claim that the brain thinks because we can supposedly “observe” the “brain in action”. Although the more outrageous claims made by neuroscientists are critiqued by colleagues in the field, what is not addressed is the problematic reduction of human thinking to the material brain. Drawing upon Husserl's discussion of categorial intuition and his critique of psychologism, I will argue that thinking requires far more than an individual material brain. I will conclude by suggesting that taking responsibility for one's claims requires more than a critical interpretation of results: it requires one to question the presuppositions upon which research is based.

Introduction

These days, popular “wisdom” suggests that thinking can be explained through the physical mechanisms of the brain. As Raymond Tallis, who critiques the notion that the brain thinks, states, “it seems downright eccentric to profess” that we are something other than our brains.¹ Our understanding that our thinking can be explained through the processes of the brain has gained increased popularity with the invention of new technologies that seemingly present us with pictures of the brain in action. These technologies, such as functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI), are designed to study the functions of the brain, not just the physical structure of the brain. New techniques for studying the brain have led to astonishing claims about our ability to explain our thinking through the physical mechanism of the brain. For example, Alan Snyder, from the *Brain Mind Research Institute* from the *University of Sydney*, claims the aim of researching the brain is nothing less than “to understand the architecture of thought”.² It is true that these claims of brain scientists are not without criticism, but the problem is that the current critics generally focus on the misleading and irresponsible interpretations of neuroimages, leaving the basic notion that the brain can think unquestioned.

I will take up these current critiques of neuroimaging and point out that they do not go far enough in questioning the claims made by some neuroscientists. In addition to questioning the motives of individual neuroscientist's, sometimes, extraordinary interpretations of neuroimages, it is necessary to question the basic assumption that the brain can think. I want to stress here something that is overlooked in all these critiques: our ability to think requires far more than the brain. Given this fact, our primary responsibility lies in understanding the presuppositions of our tradition of thinking. Only then can we address our responsibility about ensuring that our claims are well grounded.

Current Critics of Neuroimaging

Currently, there are two predominant critiques of the claims made by neuroscientists on the basis of neuroimaging, but they do not bring into question the basic assumption that the brain can think. The first style of critique aims to show that there is not a one to one map between brain regions and mental states because each region of the brain has many functions. I will discuss this type of critique in reference to a response from neuroscientists to an article published in the *New York*

¹ Raymond Tallis, *Aping Mankind: Neuromania, Darwinitis and the Misrepresentation of Humanity* (Durham: Acumen Publishing, 2011), 29, italics in original.

² “Research Supervisor Profile for Professor Allan Snyder”, The University of Sydney:
<http://sydney.edu.au/research/opportunities/supervisors/822>

Times called “This is Your Brain on Politics”. The second style of critique aims to show that the statistics which underpin neuroimaging are complicated and can easily lead to false results. I will discuss this type of critique in reference to an article which presents a brain scan of a *dead* Atlantic salmon which shows “brain activity”. These two types of critique bring into question the validity of claims made on the basis of neuroimaging, but again they do not question the general project of explaining thinking through the physical mechanisms of the brain.

The article called “This Is Your Brain on Politics” was published in *The New York Times* on the 11 November 2007.³ In this article, Iacoboni and colleagues published the results from an experiment in which they used neuroimaging to “read” the research participants “thoughts” about presidential candidates who were running for the 2008 American presidential elections. The authors of this article claim to use fMRI to “reveal some voter impressions on which [the 2008] election may well turn”. The researchers claimed to “reveal” from the functional magnetic resonance image that “Mitt Romney shows potential” because “Mr Romney’s” speech “sparked the greatest amount of brain activity” in the swinging voters they tested. The publication of this article was followed by a letter of protest published in *The New York Times* on the 14 November 2007 written by 15 well-known neuroscientists.⁴ In the protest letter, the key criticism made by the critics is that “brain regions are typically engaged by many mental states, and thus one-to-one mapping between a brain region and a mental state is not possible”. Although the authors of the protest letter point out the problem with inferring thoughts directly from the results of neuroimages, they do not deny the possibility of doing so in the future. In fact, the critics conclude the letter of protest by stating that they “are very excited about the potential use of brain imaging techniques to better understand the psychology of political decisions”. In this claim, the authors of the protest letter not only reaffirm the basic project of investigating thinking through the brain, they also assume that psychology can be collapsed into brain science. The authors of the protest letter *do* bring into question the specific relationship made between the “brain activity” and Mitt Romney, but they do not bring into question the problematic nature of the relationship between the physical mechanism of the brain and thinking *per se*.

The second type of critique does not question the relationship between the physical mechanism of the brain and thinking, but instead critiques the statistical calculations used to make claims about the location of “brain activity”. Craig Bennett, Abigail Baird, Michael Miller and George Wolford demonstrate the problem with the statistics by showing that even a *dead* Atlantic salmon can show “brain activity”.⁵

Bennett, in an effort to test the reliability of the statistics he was preparing to use to investigate the location of people’s recognition of emotion, placed a dead salmon into an fMRI machine. The experiment that Bennett had prepared was to show a person a picture of people’s faces exhibiting different emotions while in the fMRI machine and compare the results of these scans to when the person was scanned without looking at pictures of people’s faces showing emotion. According to Bennett, if there is a statistically significant difference between when a person is shown a picture of faces showing emotion and when they are not, then this difference would show the location of emotional recognition in the brain. When Bennett scanned the dead fish in these two conditions, he found that the dead fish showed significantly different brain activity when pictures were displayed

³ Marco Iacoboni et al., “This Is Your Brain on Politics”, *The New York Times* November 11 (2007): <http://www.nytimes.com/2007/11/11/opinion/11freedman.html?pagewanted=all>

⁴ Adam Aron et al., “Letter; Politics and the Brain”, *The New York Times* November 14 (2007): <http://query.nytimes.com/gst/fullpage.html?res=9907E1D91E3CF937A25752C1A9619C8B63&ref=letters>

⁵ Craig Bennett et al., “Neural Correlates of Interspecies Perspective Taking in the Post-Mortem Atlantic Salmon: An Argument for Proper Multiple Comparisons Correction”, in *15th Annual Meeting of the Organization for Human Brain Mapping* (San Francisco: 2009).

in the fMRI machine to when they were not displayed. Hence, Bennett and his fellow authors humorously conclude from this that the *dead* Atlantic salmon could process human emotions.⁶

Bennett, Baird, Miller and Wolford use the picture of the *dead* salmon exhibiting “brain activity”, produced from the scans done by Bennett, to show a problem with the statistical procedures which are generally used in fMRI experiments. The authors claim that the normal protocols used in these experiments are not enough to stop the high rate of false results produced from fMRI. To demonstrate this further, they show that, if an additional statistical technique to control for the false results of fMRI is used, the dead fish no longer shows “brain activity”.⁷ However, what is overlooked by Bennett and colleagues is that, on the model that thinking is explained through the motion of oxygenated blood in the brain, which can be mapped via functional magnetic imaging, even a dead fish can be said to think.

The problem with both these critiques is that they continue to collapse thinking into the physical mechanism of the brain. In the first example, the “psychology of political decisions” is simply assumed to be located in the brain. We may not be able to accurately locate the “psychology of political decisions” in the brain yet, but we will be able to in the future. In the second example, it is simply assumed that thinking can be reduced to the motion of oxygenated blood in the brain that can be mapped through fMRI. Our techniques for tracking the motion of oxygenated blood in the brain may be sloppy at times, but, with the correct protocols in place, there is no problem. Hence, in both these critiques the notion that the brain thinks is not questioned, it is only the results of individual experiments that are queried.

As I noted, although there are a number of criticisms of the notion that we can “map” thinking through fMRI, these critiques do not question whether it is possible to explain thinking through the brain. To make my point clear, I will argue that we should question the basic assumption that the brain can think by understanding the historical trajectory of ideas that leads to this claim.

Modern Science and Psychology

The brain as the location of thinking is not a “fact” revealed by modern science, it is a taken for granted assumption that underpins the project of explaining thinking through the brain. According to Husserl, while Descartes splits *res cogitans* from *res extensa*, it is Locke who establishes *res cogitans* as a separate and self-enclosed realm.⁸ By establishing *res cogitans* as a separate and self-enclosed realm, Locke establishes the ground for *res cogitans* to become a separate domain of inquiry. It is for this reason that Husserl claims that modern psychology is underpinned by a Lockean understanding of the world. My claim in this section of the paper is that neuroscience continues to be underpinned by a Lockean understanding of the world because neuroscientists take the brain, which is seamlessly collapsed with the mind, as a separate domain of inquiry.

According to Husserl, modern psychology stems from Locke’s empiricism.⁹ For Locke all knowledge stems from experience alone. Experience, for Locke, is sense-data which announces the “external” world in the mind of the subject. Simple ideas arise from sense-impressions alone, while complex ideas are put together through laws of habit.¹⁰ The relationship between the external world, which is said to be represented, and the mental states, that are understood to be representations, is

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ibid. For a descriptions of the methods that Bennett and colleagues propose see: Craig M. Bennett, George L. Wolford, and Michael B. Miller, “The Principled Control of False Positives in Neuroimaging”, *Social Cognitive and Affective Neuroscience* 4, no. 4 (2009).

⁸ Edmund Husserl, *The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology: An Introduction to Phenomenological Philosophy*, trans. David Carr (Evanston, IL: Northwest University Press, 1970), 84-86.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ For a similar claim see: Jan Patočka, “Third Lecture: Body and Person-Modern Philosophy”, in *Body, Community, Language, World* (Chicago and La Salle, Illinois: Open Court, 1998), 22.

not explained, rather it is taken for granted in Locke.¹¹ Moreover, as later empiricists show, we do not need the world at all. All we need to do is to pay attention to how representational ideas are combined in the mind. Likewise, in contemporary cognitive neuroscience there is no explanation given of how concepts and thoughts come to be located in the mind which is taken as synonymous with the brain. There is no explanation of the relationship between the brain as *res extensa* and the mind as *res cogitans*. As Patočka states, the Cartesian split between *res extensa* and *res cogitans* leads to a situation where it is impossible to find a substantive relationship between the two domains.¹² Hence, cognitive neuroscientists simply collapse the mind into the brain, but the relationship between our thinking and the world continues to be a problem.

It is the split between *res cogitans* and *res extensa* that Husserl takes up in *The Idea of Phenomenology*.¹³ Husserl argues that once we question the link between *res cogitans* and *res extensa*, interminable difficulties for epistemology open up.¹⁴ Husserl explains the difficulty as the relationship between the immanent and transcendent. In his words, the problem is the assumption that “the immanent is in me...and the transcendent is outside of me”.¹⁵ As Husserl points out, if we understand the “immanent” as “in me”, how can we ever hope of reaching the “transcendent” which is supposed to be “outside of me”?¹⁶ In *The Idea of Phenomenology*, Husserl questions this understanding of transcendence and immanence and argues that the transcendent is always concealed in the immanent: that we always see more than we actually see, because it is through thinking that the world is rendered meaningful.

For Husserl, the psychic realm cannot be a separate domain because our thinking is always thinking *about* something.¹⁷ I am thinking *about* the tree that appears before me. As I move closer to the tree or further away from the tree I am directed towards one and the same tree. Each aspect of the tree not only indicates the tree which is before me, but the idea of “treeness” as well. For Husserl, I am not met with a stream of sense(less) data which I put together according to “concepts” and “habits” which economize thought.¹⁸ Instead, I am met with meaningful things that I actively constitute through seeing something *as* the thing that it is. According to Husserl, making sense of our experience is actively preformed by us through “adequate, categorially informed intuitions”, not a simple matter of economizing thought through making haphazard generalisations from the available sense-data. In other words, Husserl points out that thinking is already a part of our seeing.

To further clarify the claim that thinking is already a part of our seeing, I will discuss Husserl’s notion of categorial intuition. For Husserl, categorial statements, like “all swans are black”, are not facts, but are judgements about what we see. To explicate this claim, a discussion of both ideating abstractions and categorial intuition is important.¹⁹ However, I will only address categorial intuition here.

According to Husserl, our ability to make categorial judgements, such as “all swans are black”, is grounded upon categorial intuition: to see something *as* something. We do not have an idea of a

¹¹ For a similar claims see: Husserl, *Crisis*, 85.

¹² Jan Patočka, “Twentieth Lecture: Personal Spatiality, Husserl, Heidegger”, in *Body, Community, Language, World* (Chicago and La Salle, Illinois: Open Court, 1998), 174.

¹³ Edmund Husserl, *The Idea of Phenomenology: A Translation of Die Idee der Phänomenologie. Husserliana II*, trans. Lee Hardy, Edmund Husserl: Collected Works. Volume VIII (Dordrecht, Boston, London: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1999)

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 16.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 63.

¹⁷ Husserl, *Crisis*, 85.

¹⁸ Edmund Husserl, *Logical Investigations*, ed. Dermot Moran, trans. J. N. Findlay, 2nd ed., vol. 1 (London: Routledge, 2001 (1913)), 277.

¹⁹ According to Husserl, ideating abstractions underpins our ability to generalise (see: Husserl, *The Idea of Phenomenology*, 65.).

swan and an idea of black that we use to categorise sense data, and then combine these ideas according to the laws of habit, to posit that “all swans are black”. Instead we see a black swan; we see the thing before us *as* a black swan. Categorical judgements rely upon my acts of thinking that constitute a black swan as such. Our thinking is already a part of our seeing because what we perceive is not sense data, but meaningful things. Furthermore, for Husserl, categorical judgements cannot *solely* rely upon my individual acts of thinking.

For Husserl, while I perform individual acts of judgement, my ability to do so always relies upon something outside of my individual acts of judgement. Hence, while I may judge that “all swans are black” the content of this statement cannot be reduced to my act of judging that “all swans are black”. One example Husserl uses to illustrate the difference between the ideal content of judgement and real acts of judgement is the mathematical proposition $2+2=4$.²⁰ The content of the judgement that $2+2=4$ remains identical no matter who states it or where it is stated: the act of judging that $2+2=4$ is distinct from the adjudged content. The ability to judge the truth of $2+2=4$ relies upon the ideal content of the judgement and not *solely* the individual act of judging because the individual can be wrong. An individual may hold that $2+2=5$, but this does not change the truth of the claim that $2+2=4$.

Husserl’s analysis of categorial intuition and his distinction between the ideal content of judgement and the real acts of judgement are important aspects of his critique of psychologism. Drawing upon Heidegger’s summary of Husserl’s critique of psychologism, “‘truths of reason’ cannot be ‘shored up’ by ‘truths of fact’ because ‘truths of reason’ are ‘the conditions of possibility of a rational justification’ in the first place”.²¹ Neuroscientists cannot hope to explain the “architecture of thought” through observations of individual brains because the laws of thinking provide “the conditions of possibility of rational justification” in the first instance. Neuroscience contains the same basic contradiction that Husserl points out in psychologism: by stating that the physical mechanisms of the brain are the ground of laws of thinking neuroscientists overlook the very ground that makes any science possible in the first place.

Cognitive Neuroscience and Responsibility

The isolated material brain cannot think because thinking is always about something meaningful. Thinking is already a part of our seeing because we see meaningful things. In addition, our thinking requires ideal content that extends past the thinking of any one individual. Hence, while we may be able to study the physical structure of the brain with neuroimaging technology, we cannot unlock the mystery of thinking through colourful images of the brain.

While the current critics of neuroimaging rightly point out problems with the interpretation of the findings of neuroscience, they do not go far enough. The problem with neuroimaging is not simply a matter of irresponsible interpretations; there is a problem at the very heart of the project. The basic problem is that we cannot reduce thinking to brain states. Although a seductive project, investigating the brain will not unlock the secrets of our mysterious and inexplicable ability to think about, not just exist within, the world of our living. To take responsibility for our knowledge is not simply a matter of ensuring that our claims are well grounded in the data. To be responsible for our thinking as well as our knowledge is to take the more radical step of inquiring into the presuppositions of our tradition.

Dr Anita Williams teaches psychology at Murdoch University. Her research interests are in using phenomenology to understand psychological research methods. In particular, she is interested in the limitations of neuroimaging.

²⁰ Edmund Husserl, “Part I. The Idea of Pure Logic as a Formal Theory of Science”, in *Introduction to Logic and Theory of Knowledge: Lectures 1906/7, Edmund Husserl: Collected Works* (Dordrecht: Springer, 2008 (1906/07)), 44-46.

²¹ Martin Heidegger, *Logic: The Question of Truth*, trans. Thomas Sheehan (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2010), 38.