thinking

togetherness

Andrej Božič (*Ed.*)

THINKING TOGETHERNESS

Phenomenology and Sociality

Dr. **Andrej Božič** is research fellow at the Institute Nova Revija for the Humanities (Inštitut Nove revije, zavod za humanistiko; Ljubljana, Slovenia).

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INR | INSTITUTE NOVA REVIJA
FOR THE **HUMANITIES**

Ljubljana 2023

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Dean Komel — Andrej Božič

Thinking Togetherness
Foreword

Phenomenology has, from first foundation at the beginning of the 20th century onwards, developed into one of the mainstay streams within the comprehensive and complex landscape of contemporary philosophy: as a special and specific orientation of thinking, as a movement, which gained adherents among authors of utmost heterogeneous provenances, it has—with its under- and with its over-, as well as its counter-currents—become a richly ramified field of research that entails not only fundamental considerations concerning epistemology or ontology, but also critically and crucially touches upon—(almost) all—other realms of human—theoretical and practical—agency.

Since commencement with the works of Edmund Husserl, phenomenological philosophy has, thus, evolved from the discussions of initially maybe predominant, throughout its history continuously refined methodological issues of (—assumingly—scientifically acquired) knowledge and has, upon such a basis, come to encompass the attentive, inter- and trans-disciplinary scrutiny of a multitude of phenomena defining the horizons of humanity in the different dimensions of its worldly situatedness. However, both the tradition and the actuality of phenomenology, its miscellaneous formulations and its manifold transformations, bear witness to the circumstance that precisely the deliberation upon sociality can be observed as one of the paramount problem domains of its philosophical investigation. In effect, in fact: it is an almost staggeringly strenuous task to, at least, re-count not only all—the names of—thinkers, but also all—the names of—scientists as well as artists alike, both intellectuals as well as humanists, who can be associated with the movement either quite directly or solely indirectly, yet who, nonetheless, share the essential principles of the distinctively phenomenological approach to the question(s)—and questionability—of the social. The theoretical analyses of the

sociable character of the human being, of its capability to constitute—beyond the self-sufficient solipsism of solitary existence—communal ties of societal coexistence, the wealth of which, equally many-layered as the phenomenon itself, ranges from extensive examinations regarding the singularly concrete occurrence of inter-personal relationships, through thorough contemplations on the convolutions of the ir-reducible, un-deniable alterity of the other, to systematical conceptualizations of the ontologically integral and integrative, cogently universal elements of societies, of society as such, led, moreover, also, occasionally—as the renowned, in-famously ill-reputed "cases" of (the destinies of) personalities, such as Martin Heidegger, on the one hand, or, on the other hand, Jan Patočka demonstrate—with diametrically opposed, even tragically obfuscated repercussions, to the efforts of practical effectuations and political realizations of the "projects," the "projections" of (the representatives of) the philosophical thought: phenomenology—within the countries of the Central and Eastern Europe, especially during the turbulent transitional processes of democratization—did, indeed, albeit merely as a minute part of the atmosphere of spiritual turmoil, help shape the paradoxically contradictory "image" of the 20th century.

Insofar as the movement of phenomenological philosophy is significantly co-determined by the elaboration of the multifarious facets of sociality, which—through the passage, and the impasses, of times, of places and of spaces re-tracing (out) the forever shifting accents and the evermore discerning nuances—connects its original inception with its transfigured instantiation within the 21st century, which, therefore, de-marks the entirety of its (self-revealing) histor(icit)y, the theme of the relation between phenomenology and sociality demands and deserves, always anew, with various voices again and again conceding to the conversation, a constantly re-iterated elucidation: a repetition: such is the purpose of the present publication.

The contributions collected under the title *Thinking Togetherness* (would like to) offer, each one from its own authorial perspective, detailed studies of distinguishing features inter-linking phenomenology and sociality that, rather than bridging beforehand the abyss of the in-between by stipulating the dis-position of social phenomenology or of phenomenological sociology, above all, seek—as the conjunction of the subtitle suggests—to dis-close the denoted

relation itself, the proximities and the distances designated therethrough, as the openness of a question. Likewise, the headings of the seven separate sections, which organize the contents, the chapters of the book, attempt—with the usage of the dis-banding "and" between the two con-tested concepts con-noting the topic center—to articulate, instead of forcefully unifying the dis-similarity of debated standpoints, the dialogicality of (all) philosophical circumscription.[*]

The essays of the first section, "Presuppositions and Implications," introductorily—*in nuce*—outline the main contours of the thematic scope of the whole. Whilst the second section, "Transcendentality and Intersubjectivity," is altogether devoted to the discussion of Husserl's insights that have been, and remain, an indispensable influence on the phenomenological comprehension of the social, the third, "Developments and Refinements," focuses on some of his followers, students and successors, who never simply imitatively pursued the teacher's thought, but, applying it also to novel provinces of reflection, approached, and reproached, it with self-critical earnestness. However, the outlook of the book is decidedly not directed strictly towards re-telling bygone accomplishments of the movement: the subsequent sections, "Collectivity and Community" as well as "Particularities and Totalitarities," make manifest that the confrontation with the opulent tradition of phenomenology dis-covers its senseful pertinence for a requisite response to the exigencies of contemporary society, primarily perhaps to the alarming re-emergence of authoritarianism within the globalized world; in this respect, the (political) reverberations of Heidegger's and of Hannah Arendt's philosophical concerns necessitate cautious attention. If the experience of the work of art, at the heart of the section "Individuality and Expressivity," promises the potentiality of

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[*] The majority of the papers of the monograph were, in the form of first drafts, presented at The 6th Conference of the Central and East European Society for Phenomenology (CEESP), which was organized by the Institute Nova Revija for the Humanities (INR) and which took place under the title *Phenomenology and Sociality* as an online event on December 2–4, 2021. During the preparation of the book, however, prospective authors were additionally asked to substantiate the contributions in concordance with the conventions of academic scientificality. The videos of the lectures delivered at the conference are freely accessible at the YouTube channel of the INR: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hthT0bir8AI&list=PLV6uJba1sev4Qs2hNheSGEz1RMEhohM-U.

an anticipated alternative to the concerning, disconcerting realities today threatening the fragile fabric of human co-existence, the now pervasively encountered technological mediation, as the concluding chapters within the final section "Technologies and Controversies" seem to, without re-solution, propose, further confound the perplexities affecting prolific and peaceful conviviality among people(s).

The composition of the publication, hence, endeavors, by itself, to rend asunder and to render apparent, in a meaningful manner, the capacious intricacies of the panoramic mosaic of phenomenological re-cognition(s) of sociality. Insofar as the overwhelmingly disparate, ostensibly recently ever escalating—medical and military, migratory, economic and ecological—crises endanger (the certainty and the security of) the human(e) world, the im-permanence of the im-possibility of dwelling with others, together, the abundance of conclusions and of consequences that can be adduced from the access towards the social appertaining to phenomenology, tying—through the present—its past with its future, ensures not only succeeding and successful (academic) advancement of its research, but, hopefully, likewise contributes to the humanities, to the society of humanity as such. The gathered essays of the present book (would like to) attest, through the plenitude of portrayed topics and through the generational array of authors, to the liveliness, to the relevance of con-current phenomenological philosophy.

What does it mean, what does it *do*, then, now: to think togetherness?

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The editor as well as the publisher of the collective monograph *Thinking Togetherness. Phenomenology and Sociality* would like to extend cordial gratitude for the kindness of generosity to all the scholars who graciously participated in the preparation of the book not only by cor-relating the benefit of exhaustive expertise, but also by offering to it, to us the patience—the heart—of humanity.

presuppositions

&

implications

Dragan Prole

Sociality in the Husserlian Cave

Abstract: Husserl's philosopher leaves the cave by, paradoxically, remaining in it, but no longer shares the beliefs of his silent, inactive neighbors. Unlike their attachment, the phenomenological inhabitant of the cave will reflect the degree of the justification of his beliefs, but at the same time he will come out of his individuality, varying his individual ego in accordance with various variations of himself that open with the temptation of otherness. In order to get rid of the cave limitations, it is not necessary to leave the cave ambience. It is enough to change our attitude. Husserl's idea of sociality examines the intersubjective constitution of the subject, including theories of strangeness and otherness. If we come to our senses, let us be convinced that the experience of a foreigner has already done its job. The rationality of phenomenological politics becomes detectable by recognizing others in oneself. Its peaceful assumption rests in recognizing others, even strangers, as variations of myself. The capacity to acquire enemies is largely neutralized by such an approach.

Keywords: Husserl, Plato, cave, sociality, natural socialization, enemy, alien.

A new awakening of humanity

The standard key to understanding Husserl's phenomenology emphasizes its logical and methodological contribution. The political issues were not very much in the phenomenological spotlight. A favorite general stance concerned the discussion of *pro et contra* of the possibility of philosophy to become a strict science, the leading science of all sciences, *mathesis universalis*. "Political reasons" remained in the background, and in the eyes of Husserl politics was considered, which is especially recognizable in his correspondence, as a distant and remote scene of power. What was linked with madness and lacking in *ethos* could certainly not have been ranked higher than "strictly scientific reasons": "Madness rules the whole world, but it has a different flag in every

country." (Husserl 1994, 87.) Husserl's phenomenology has been traditionally interpreted by both his admirers and his opponents as being restrained in the matters of politics; this is evidenced by the fact that of all individual philosophical disciplines the most insignificant phenomenological production took place in the field of political philosophy. Moreover, little by little, the attitude that: "The phenomenological school (in which Heidegger was active as Husserl's assistant) was not interested in politics. This is a fact" (Janicaud 1990, 20), became almost self-evident.

Truth be told, most of Husserl's published books and articles fit in perfectly with such a picture, as they very rarely mention the notion of politics. If we summarize the basic program and conceptual sketches, we will notice that the topics of phenomenology are primarily related to the concept of science, to the radical reform and renewal of knowledge, and not to politics. However, following a specific trace of phenomenological idealism, it is possible to sense a significant kinship between phenomenology and politics. The search for a new science is political, insofar as it implies *a new awakening of humanity*. Husserl's notion of science is by no means limited to theoretical work. When science and rationality come under the scrutiny of phenomenological reduction, traditional disciplinary divisions are erased. This becomes a type of science that is both logical and political, simultaneously ethical and historical.

By its origin, this type of science belongs to classical antiquity, and is therefore necessarily "conservative." With Husserl, as with Nietzsche, the equation, by which philosophy "justifies" the philosopher, remains in force. On the other hand, life, the very life of a philosopher, is the ultimate "courtroom," in which the validity of philosophy is judged. In short, idealism in its purest form seeks the realization of an idea in the life of a philosopher. The separation of the philosophical goal and the life goal is not justified. The purpose of philosophy must simply not be alien to the efforts of human life, because otherwise both life and philosophy suffer. Thus, for example, at the beginning of the *Cartesian Meditations*, Husserl repeats three times the enormous merit of Descartes, that is, his "eternal significance" (Husserl 1960, 1, 4). In a solemn tone, he attributes a classic status to *Meditationes de prima philosophia*, in other words, their immunity to historical changes. However, he also states that, despite "eternity," it has become questionable whether these thoughts can provide a suitable

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stimulus to the "vital forces of the present." Despite previous praise, Husserl's objections to Descartes are sometimes surprisingly harsh and ruthless. Husserl observes historical heritage from a certain distance, he is not interested in an antique collection of philosophical ideas of the past. Tradition is interesting to him only as a contribution to a philosophy that has yet to emerge, and it is always oriented towards an original stimulus. That stimulus was genuinely Plato's. When we mention Husserl's "conservative" science, we primarily think that its leading motives are like Plato's, for whom politics was also not placed on the opposite side of the notion of science.

For both Plato and Husserl, there is an equality, according to which the form of political life of a community is directly dependent on the degree of rationality that has been achieved in it. Although Husserl's idea of theory is ancient in its origin, its realization is extremely contemporary. Claiming that it harmonizes Plato's legacy with current requirements, we primarily aim at cultivating the sensibility to meet new and unexperienced aspects of the phenomenon: "phenomenological reduction is unthinkable without a subject capable of receiving the givenness of phenomena that this reduction makes manifest for the first time" (Bernet 1994, 245). Novelty is a key methodological criterion: if only the familiar and already known appear during reflection, the reduction was not carried out in an appropriate manner. Cognition is not based on memory anymore, but on methodologically prepared openness to the unexperienced and still unreflected. Phenomenology is not just about intimate experiences and private subjectivity. Reduction not only opens the door to new possibilities of individual subjectivity, but also points to new possibilities of socialization.

What is rationality for Husserl, what is science? Unlike the everyday view, which may or may not be true, the scientific one is one that meets the criteria of the absolute rendering of accounts. Only the individual who has fully elaborated his views can practically act completely responsibly, while partially explained knowledge necessarily results in confusion, inconsistency, and misunderstanding. Husserl's scientific rigor implies the final self-responsibility of phenomenologists. Any idea of theoretical autonomy is meaningless, the key is in the active mind capable of not stopping halfway to see all the perspectives and genetic aspects of the phenomenon it is researching.

The only relevant thought is the one that stimulates vital forces, that strengthens us, encourages us, directs us to share responsibly. This is the germ of the political responsibility of philosophy. The responsibility of contemporary philosophers lies in the requirement to adapt or, better, to "translate" the classics into the current context so that their thought is as effective as possible in the ongoing moment. In this spirit, Husserl calls his phenomenology "new," on the one hand, but at the same time abandons the old-fashioned, "twentieth-century Cartesianism," on the other. In order to provide something new, the phenomenologist remains grey-haired.

If philosophical tradition also knows the legacy of thoughts that are not a matter of the moment, are not temporary and time-limited, but are eternally valid, it is necessary to establish a connection between the eternal and the temporal. By itself, such a connection does not exist. To be a contemporary philosopher means to mediate heterogeneous registers of temporality with thought. The impassable should be approached in such a way as to ensure its effect in the current. It is worthwhile to make the best of the tradition modified in such a way as to help it act as a stimulus to modern life.

Husserl's capability of a political fight

Disharmonious, tired times cannot cope with their own problems, and that is exactly how Husserl saw the interwar period. When he looked at the European emergency, the troubles did not have its final reason in the political, but in the scientific address. According to him, the origin of the crisis could not be linked to the lack of will for far-reaching political dialogue. It was pointless to look for it in the unequal position of Germany suffering from huge inflation and unemployment after the *Versailles Peace Treaty*. The emergence of increasingly radical political ideologies was interpreted only as a second-class surrogate and consequence, rather than the origin and source of contemporary challenges. The real reason for concern was the lack of a strict rational common thread. Only a single, methodologically disciplined thought, systematically connected with other thoughts, can offer a basis for a stable political life. The confusion of unrelated thoughts in political reality causes uncontrolled clashes of different ideologies, which crash against each other as unstoppable natural elements.

Under such circumstances, "Husserl returns to his homeland to attack none other than naturalists (*Naturforscher*), proving that he has become capable of political fight" (Vlaisavljević 2013, 21). The struggle for scientific policy contains the key to shaping contemporary subjectivity. It contains a vague landmark for everything that society wants to achieve, a label for what it essentially cares about.

The unspoken premise of Husserl's phenomenology was that philosophy was more politically necessary than ever. The motivation is clear: *scientific policy is indisputably crucial*, presuming there does not exist a more competent judge on the question of the justification of certain types of science than philosophy. Thus, for example, naturalism is the leading scientific paradigm, in spite of it being philosophically completely meaningless and illegitimate. Its strength stems from its closeness to the dominant pursuit of exact science, but:

> naturalism dominates the age […] in a form that from the ground up is replete with erroneous theory; and from the practical point of view this means a growing danger for our culture. It is important today to engage in a radical criticism of […] the absurd consequences of a naturalism built on strict empirical science. (Husserl 1965, 78.)

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The rule of empirical demands hands naturalism over to relativism, and by doing so to political manipulation. Hence, it is not surprising that the discomfort in contemporaneity did not rest in the lack of ideas, but rather in their excess. Instead of a philosophy capable of offering support for responsible action, the main phrase on the public stage was the so-called "philosophical literature," an ideologically unrelated set of heterogeneous philosophical thoughts that "grows indefinitely," but does not offer any support to the zeal of life. Due to its principled fragmentation and incoherence, it rather brings unrest. In short, rationality, which should be the guide of human life, both on the individual and the collective, political level, in reality brings confusion, disagreement, lack of common ground. Husserl turns out to be an old-fashioned thinker even when he claims that only in systematic unity can philosophy reach true rationality. Where there is no systemic whole, there is no truly rational thinking or acting. It seems that philosophers have given up their vocation to be "specialists in

generality" and that the spirit of specialization poses the greatest threat to both the scientific and political impact of philosophical thought. The trouble with the spirit of scientific specialization is that it gets the guidelines of its work from the outside. If the leading idea of science is not the responsibility of scientists, then it is a matter of agreeing to heteronomy. Paradoxically, phenomenology acquires its political relevance by successfully demonstrating the capacity to turn its back on social influences (Berger 1964, 146). To be a phenomenologist means to come to yourself, to regain yourself from being lost in the world. Husserl is convinced that one is lost, literally every one of us who knows nothing about creative subjectivity.

Husserl's caveman has no contact with the source and origin of his consciousness, i.e., himself. When he wants to change that, he is forced to stop, abstain, interrupt, and start again. When he puts the *epoché* into operation, Husserl presents himself to us as a thinker of radical contemporaneity. Phenomenology is inconceivable without time sections, without cuts, without discontinuities in relation to the reason of the natural attitude. The *epoché* names different types of withdrawal or rethinking, both at the level of asking questions and changing attitudes. To be a contemporary philosopher, first, means to change oneself by recognizing and breaking down one's own naïveté (Eley 1962, 65). Almost all terms from the semantic register of the *epoché* were extremely well received in contemporary philosophy, especially among those who never had a nice word for Husserl, such as the students of Jean Hyppolite, like Gilles Deleuze and Michel Foucault. Admittedly, there is no mention of the *epoché* among them, but that is why there are all the nuances that this term covers: cut, gap, breach, discontinuity, change, time slice.

Husserl's captive in the cave is unimaginably chained. Despite all similarities in the inherent philosophical goals, the status of sensuality in Plato and Husserl is incomparable. There is no talk of static observation, there is no scene of the human body fixed to the ground, chained around the neck and thighs. Movement and perception go hand in hand, bodily movement is not external, but is immanent to thinking: "the kinesthesias pertaining to the organs flow in the mode 'I am doing,' and are subject to my 'I can'; furthermore, by calling these kinesthesias into play, I can push, thrust, and so forth, and can thereby

'act' somatically immediately, and then mediately" (Husserl 1960, 97). In addition to the fact that Husserl's sensuality and corporeality are not shackled, there is also the intentional nature of consciousness that is tireless, and cannot be satisfied with permanent faith in unexplored scenes.

When one of them is liberated …

Despite the sufficiently detailed anthropological scene, unambiguous metaphors, Plato still does not show how one comes to the epistemological turn, to become a philosopher. Following Kant's teaching in practical reason, there is no theory of liberty; only consecutive steps in personal liberation could have illustrated freedom. Nevertheless, the neuralgic weakness of the cave allegory lies in the hypothesis: "when one would be freed" (515c), while it remains unclear how the shackles are removed and even more, what motivated some individuals to abandon the comfort of their genuine situation. It is only clear that they are individuals. Seduction can be collective, sophists and poetic demagogues are conceivable as seducers of the masses, but group, collective emancipation is not conceivable for Plato. This lesson is one of the classics of political philosophy: a common totalitarian psychosis is conceivable, but a guide to collective freedom is not possible. For Plato, the path of redemption remains in the pedagogical relations of teachers and students. Namely, it is quite certain that the process of leaving the cave is difficult and arduous, and that a successful exit requires help of another, more experienced "climber," who has already been lucky enough to successfully leave the cave.

In order to get out of the cave, Husserl's phenomenologist must first change their mind. At the same time, physical removal is not necessary at all. *A phenomenologist can come out of the cave by, paradoxically, still remaining in it.* Instead of remaining fascinated by what appears to them, it is enough to reflect on their experiences to understand that appearance is always necessarily subjective. The phenomenologist understands consciousness as intentional, which, in other words, means that they remain eternally dissatisfied with what simply appears. To be a phenomenologist means to be impatient and annoyed with what is presented and seemingly self-evident. Horizontal intentionality simply drives embodied consciousness to look from the other side, to illuminate

various possibilities of emergence, to examine possible statuses and various forms of modification. In such conditions, the shadows have no chance to hide that they are, indeed, shadows. At the same time, it turns out that the ego is not an immutable substance, but a stream of consciousness, a subject that flows through time. When they realize that transcendental subjectivity is not tied to the existing one, and notice that they can practice different kinds of attitudes they usually do, the phenomenologist is ready to face the cave existence:

> What is educational in the phenomenological reduction, however, is also this: it henceforth makes us in general sensitive toward grasping other attitudes, whose rank is equal to that of the natural attitude (or, as we can now say more clearly, the nature-attitude) and which therefore, just like the latter, constitute only relative and restricted correlates of being and sense. (Husserl 1989b, 189.)

In this "educational" line of reduction lies Husserl's advantage—the only way Plato can lobby for a change of attitude is to tell the natural consciousness a story (*mythos*) about the possibilities of change. On the other hand, Husserl is able to clarify in detail the methodological steps that need to be taken so that the change towards the natural attitude really happens. Now, it is only a matter of the phenomenologist's making sure that the neighboring inhabitants of the cave become "sensitive towards grasping other attitudes." But, if a definite parting of the phenomenologist and the cave would be possible, it would, on the one hand, mark a complete success of reduction and the triumph of the methodology of "beginners," which ensures fortunate and permanent entry into a completely different world. Furthermore, Plato's request that "one must try to escape from here to there as quickly as possible" (*Theaetetus* 176a) (Plato 2015, 47) would imply a completely different society, in which the rules, norms, and customs of natural attitude no longer apply. However, Zagorka Mićić, a few years before Merleau-Ponty, sees insurmountable difficulties in the "total" implementation of reduction. They occur primarily because the phenomenologist constantly must fight with oneself, that is, with all those insights and beliefs that came to be in the natural attitude.

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To be a phenomenologist, in other words, means to swim upstream:

> In every description we must beware of knowledge from the natural attitude, which in fact is constantly imposed on us as already known and native-born […] we must constantly fight with the current that pulls us in the opposite direction. Therefore, phenomenological examination means not only work, but also struggle. (Mićić 1937, 151.)

Furthermore, a phenomenologist cannot only count on the company of like-minded people. Being-with-others always delivers them into the lap of the natural attitude. If there is no complete reduction, the question arises, whether a philosopher can remain in the cave without ceasing to be a philosopher? Is not a philosopher doomed to impersonality and anonymity by being with others who still nurture a natural, cave-like attitude? Contrary to Rudi Visker's position, according to which "[p]hilosophy will always die in the cave, that it will remain powerless in the ruling domain of self-evident" (Visker 1999, 24), we advocate here the thesis that *philosophizing in the cave is not only possible, but necessary, in order to know what the cave actually is.* Unlike as in Plato, where it is true that one cannot within the cave find out what the cave is, because the world of sensory illusion receives its name only after getting to know the true reality of ideas, Husserl does not acknowledge the conflict between illusions, images, fiction, and essential contents. A phenomenological caveman simply must not leave the world of shadows to get records of them.

It is indisputable that most people are completely satisfied in the world of shadows. A permanent focus on the lowest level of reality is not a sufficient motive for the search for something different. Heidegger's idiom also applies to Husserl: we are all cavemen of the natural attitude, first of all and most of the time (*zunächst und zumeist*). We do not have an innate *a priori* of the higher and better world, because if we had it, we would all be philosophers, or at least try to become ones. If a permanent stay in the existing world is acceptable to the vast majority, individuals are still looking for something else. According to Hans Blumenberg, the motive should be sought in the exhaustion of the empty, illusory, and superficial reality of moving images, and not in the enthusiastic need for the better: "Development is not a secret longing for something higher;

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it is the overcoming of difficulties, which the lower creates itself and which can no longer solve with its means. Dynamism arises from exhaustion […]." (Blumenberg 1996, 64.)

Certainly: the one who has confidence in the sensory world, feels safe and secure in it, will not follow the path of a philosopher. There must be a crisis of security. Our future philosopher should express an uncanniness in the surrounding visual world. He starts with a dissatisfaction with parasitic existence in scenes that are prepared from beginning to end in the exterior about which we know nothing.

Destruction of habit-based existence

Although Plato's allegory was conceived as being timeless, Husserl's version takes place in a specific historical period. Drafts of phenomenological reduction were sketched at a time when the sense of existential security was not domesticated. On the contrary, the prevalence of a radical effort to destroy all certainties, to question everything, is perhaps most recognizable in Husserl's countryman, Franz Kafka. For a lawyer, whose career was tied to working in an insurance company, the degree of our sense of security is identical to the degree of our stupidity. Thus, his most famous work *The Process* "narrates the destruction of existence based on habits" (Gliksohn 1971, 61). Helmuth Plessner's impression during his stay with Husserl in Göttingen also did not fail to notice that "the epoch of security should come to an end" (Plessner 1985, 351). The historic situation, in which Husserl found himself, was "cave-like," because enthusiasm and inexhaustible work ethic were necessary for the time, but, instead, he found only exhaustion and fatigue in the surrounding world.

Perhaps unexpectedly, the war lectures on *Fichte's Ideal of Humanity* (1917) also brought a dramatic sketch of the endangered subjectivity. According to war psychosis, the lecturer presented the philosophy he teaches as "the only way to salvation." The real existential fear of general endangerment and the first encounter with a total-war slaughterhouse were translated into the standards of the Platonic–Christian conflict. This was a dispute between a deadly devotion to the senses that betray us and a saving mind, a magic

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of enjoying the world and a healing collective devotion to the spiritual life. Together with the effects of encouraging rhetoric of the battlefield, which above all appreciated the "heroic decision" and was unusually familiar to the listeners, Husserl stylizes the phenomenological hero. Who started the war, who is to blame and responsible for it, was completely irrelevant, only the possible, that is the desirable outcome was calculated: the miraculous birth of a new type of humanity.

The phenomenologist leaves the cave by remaining in it

The old type of humanity is incurably ill, it suffers from the alleged "affect of being." However, the reevaluation of Fichte's ontological-existential notion had nothing to do with the new image of human bliss. However, one simply cannot overlook the sermonic tone, in which Husserl addresses his audience— German soldiers on leave, many of whom were shocked and traumatized by witnessing unprecedented massacres, such as the battles at the Somme and of Verdun. To the well-known and even old-fashioned opposition between the seductively sensual and the spiritually saving, Husserl adds another, a new one, a more contemporary opposition of distracted–focused, that is, disoriented– oriented:

> As long as man gives up on himself in the pain of the sensual lusts of the diversity of earthly things, he necessarily lives a scattered, to some extent a poured-out existence. The distraction of the unhappy sensual man is transformed through rebirth into the concentration of a new spiritual man. (Husserl 1989a, 280.)

There is no place for fatigue during the war. It is not yet allowed in public speech; Husserl mentions it only in his later works, however not as a reality, but as a danger, even the "greatest danger." Years before Kracauer and Benjamin, the founder of phenomenology introduced the term *Zerstreuung*, which has been considered to this day as one of the most present and most general signs of contemporary subjectivity. However, unlike his fellow Berlin and Frankfurt journalists, for whom *Zerstreuung* was a direct consequence of the

"experiential poverty" caused by the new media montage and the means of film and newspaper assembly editing, for the phenomenologist *die Zerstreuung* was the insight of subjectivists shaped by scientific ideals.

Namely, Husserl's metaphor of the "poured-out" (*ausgegossen*) subjectivity should be taken seriously. The poured-out subject is lost in naturalistic objectifications; thus, it happens to them that they advocate the thesis that there is blood as a consequence of soil, "German blood," which firstly opposed the "French" and "Russian" or later the "Jewish blood." At the same time, they forget that there are only O, A, and B blood groups with positive and negative rhesus factors. A phenomenologist cannot be indifferent to the dominance of such a way of thinking. Namely, where naturalism reigns, scientific ideals that are contrary to fundamental phenomenological premises are at work.

Instead of exploring subjectivity, naturalism prefers to ignore and forget personal life in the world. Phenomenological idealism also calls for protest, because *naturalism is another word for a complete denial of the absolute and undeniable primacy of the spirit over nature*. The title of the paragraph 64 of *Ideas II* simply states: "Relativity of nature, absoluteness of spirit," and thus undoubtedly claims dependence and subordination of every natural being to the spiritual:

> […] if we could eliminate all spirits from the world, then that is the end of nature. But if we eliminate nature, "true," objective-intersubjective existence, there always still remains something: the spirit as individual spirit. It only losses the possibility of sociality. (Husserl 1989b, 311.)

The struggle against objectivism is also a struggle for the dignity of the individual. Where subjectivity is not explored and where it becomes unimportant, the inevitable consequence is that man becomes treated as a thing among other things (Guenaracia 2018, 201).

Husserl was among the first to recognize the danger of the unhappy coalition between scientism and Nazism. A naturalized politician is able to carry out self-evident, natural socialization. It is inevitably based on selection, on separating the compatriots from the foreigners, the healthy from the sick, the sexually correct from the sexually delinquent. This can be illustrated by

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means of the extremely unusual concept of democracy, advocated by Carl Schmitt: "Democracy therefore necessarily requires firstly homogeneity and secondly—if necessary—the elimination and destruction of heterogeneity." (Schmitt 1932, 14.) The natural community substantiates the individual; it acquires unchanging "real" essence, eternal properties, core characteristics of the utmost importance. It becomes subject to natural causality, like all other natural beings. Husserl dismissed all those moments as "nonsense" of naturalism: "that is the pure absurdity, no better if one wanted to ask about the casual properties, connections, etc. of numbers. It is the absurdity of naturalizing something whose essence excludes the kind of being that nature has." (Husserl 1965, 106–107.) Scientism has no dilemmas; based on the notion of unchanging human nature, different types are deduced, i.e., race, subspecies, or nations. Racial institutes, founded all over the Western Europe, showed the perfect harmony of naturalism and Nazi-like political agendas. As a result, science was put in the function of political madness. The common goal of their existence and work was to prove that they are not all the same, that there are more valuable, "original" races (*Wurzelrassen*) and that there are the less valuable ones. The eugenics project began in 1890, first in England and Germany, then in the United States and Scandinavia.

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Following Husserl, the philosopher is forced to "take it upon himself to act as a denaturalized politician" (Vlaisavljević 2015, 49). The philosophical politician questions Trân Đức Thảo's thesis that the transcendental ego is not a real historical human (Tran-Duc-Thao 1951, 217), because even if they were not, all the material of conscious experiences that would be the subject of their reflection would inevitably be historically determined. *Husserl's phenomenologist leaves the cave by, paradoxically, remaining in it, but no longer shares the beliefs of their silent, inactive neighbors.* The double subjectivity is a consequence of phenomenological reduction: "phenomenological reduction makes manifest a subject that, on the one hand, clings to the world and, on the other, turns away from it" (Bernet 1994, 247).

The phenomenological cavemen certainly always acquire their orientation in contact with contingent factual experiences. Unlike the naturalistic attachment of their fellow citizens, the phenomenological inhabitants of the cave will reflect on the degree of justification of their beliefs, but at the same

time they will come out of their individuality. Their individual egos will vary in accordance with the countless variations of themselves that are opened by the temptation of otherness. In order to get rid of the cave limitations, it is not necessary that we leave the cave environment. It is enough to change our attitude. By practicing indulgence, we can also emancipate ourselves by "experiencing" the dishonesty of others. This experience will teach us that the structure of otherness is again twofold: on the one hand, the other is the individual, and, on the other, there are many others. Others are not originally close as objects of special intentionality. They are present and function in every intentionality, because "I" came to the other through introspection. If Descartes could say: "I think, then God is," then Husserl's version should certainly be: "I think, so others are." This brings us to the culmination of Husserl's implicit policy. It examines the intersubjective constitution of the subject, including theories of strangeness and otherness. The rationality of phenomenological politics becomes evident by recognizing others in oneself. Its peaceful assumption rests on recognizing others, even strangers, as variations of oneself. The capacity to acquire enemies is largely neutralized by such an approach.

Being sensitive towards grasping other attitudes does not mean expressing the emphatic understanding and friendly support for each and every standpoint. It rather helps to understand the genealogical becoming of a certain way of thinking and doing, including the radical ones. For that reason, a phenomenologist would easily resist the temptation of essentializing the enemy. Quite apart from all the phenomenological hermeneutics, there is a starting methodological point, which excludes our existing prejudices about others: "At no time should the alter ego be explicitly or implicitly presupposed." (Franck 1981, 90.) One of the inevitable outcomes of the phenomenological reduction should be stepping on the unfamiliar soil of new forms of socialization.

Plato's caveman was at home in his autochthonic natural community. The one who dares leaving the cave is going to face the fact that, despite all educational interventions and efforts, "the prospects for human improvement seem bleak […] The demand to help all, to benefit all, is an unreasonable hope, given human limitations." (McBrayer 2019, 262–263.) On the other hand, being a phenomenologist means going through a series of identity crises. It begins with neutralization of, or even conflict with, the logic of natural

socialization. Total questioning erases all security, opening the possibility of spirituality and sociality that are no longer parasitic and implicit, but reflexive, based on the experience of the stranger as another self. In Husserl's cave, the discovery of another self does not arise from the experience of the outside, but is a consequence of *inspectio sui*. Instead of a safe haven, the phenomenological caveman perceives only uncertainty. Freeing oneself from natural socialization enables the constitution of others through the category of the possible: "The a priori other is the very existence of the possibility in general." (Deleuze 1969, 369.) The possibility, thus, turns out to be the key word and the key experience of sociality in the Husserlian cave. In it, one may encounter myriad variations of self/other configurations, but none of the enemy.

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Iaan Reynolds

Abstraction and Self-Alienation in Mannheim and Husserl

Abstract: In this paper, I explore the approaches to methodological abstraction and self-alienation developed respectively in Karl Mannheim's early sociology of intellectuals and in Edmund Husserl's late transcendental phenomenology. In Mannheim's early and experimental works, the resistance to abstraction and alienation is located in a stratum of intellectuals able to meaningfully combine diverse cultural currents in a social process of cultivation (*Bildung*). In Husserl, to contrast, this resistance is grasped as a constant crisis in the methods of pursuing philosophical truth. While these approaches seem difficult to reconcile, I suggest in closing that this difficulty can be related to their shared emphasis on a theoretical response to the practical and historical reality of self-alienation.

Keywords: Mannheim, Husserl, sociology of knowledge, phenomenology, alienation, abstraction, reification, detachment, methodology.

This paper is an exploratory investigation into methodological abstraction and self-alienation. If we understand these two processes to underlie objectification, reification, detachment, and alienation, we can see the way in which this problem complex is at the core of many contemporary concerns. When experience itself is increasingly ironic and detached, how can we cultivate the possibility of another kind of experience, a dereifying form of life? What would a methodology of dis-alienation require? These questions become particularly urgent, if we grant self-alienation the power it has in many of its earliest expressions, recognizing how even common strategies for

resisting it still fall under its power.[1] In an apparent renaissance of earnestness and vulnerability—seemingly non-alienated manifestations of social life—, the prevailing mode of objectivity and self-objectification can be still traced beneath apparently authentic displays of self-expression. Since contemporary attempts to resist objectification and reification often do not affect the deeper self-distancing process underlying these phenomena, the modification of this process becomes an important philosophical theme in itself.

Here, I investigate the approaches to self-alienation found respectively in Karl Mannheim's early sociology of intellectuals and Edmund Husserl's transcendental phenomenology, two research programs viewing methodological alienation as a fundamental problem. In each case, the possibility of working critically under conditions of reification and self-alienation is located in the experience of intellectual work. I begin with an experimental essay composed on the cusp of Karl Mannheim's turn to the sociology of knowledge, titled the "Sociological Theory of Culture and Its Knowability (Conjunctive and Communicative Knowledge)" (1982 [1924]), in which intellectual work is understood as a form of cultivation (*Bildung*). Here, Mannheim specifically ties the reversal of detachment—de-reification or dis-alienation—to the intellectual function and its bearers in society. Understanding the "intellectual stratum" in terms of conjunctive and communicative knowledge furthers our ability to grasp the importance of this social group in Mannheim's notorious and often-misunderstood later works on the sociology of intellectuals. The intellectual function is central to the sociology of intellectuals, because it represents the possibility of working through reification without succumbing to its temptations. At the same time, the location of this function in a real sociological group raises other problems. What is distinctive in the intellectual's perspective? Is not a wealth of intellectual perspectives unable to synthesize a new relationship to being and thinking? Is there not a need to

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1 An early statement of this problem can be found in Hegel's discussion of the unhappy consciousness in *The Phenomenology of Spirit* as the moment, in which self-consciousness transcends the opposition of pure abstraction and pure individuality only in order to find itself split between these two moments without any immediate possibility of transcending them (Hegel 1977 [1807], 126 ff.). The interplay of methodological abstraction and self-alienation is also developed by Marx in his *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844* (1988 [1844]).

think methodically and fundamentally about the myriad potential directions for intellectual development, specifically with regard to their inner possibility?

In order to build on the account developed in the first section, I will turn in the second section to Husserl's *Crisis of the European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology* (1970 [1938/1954]). This text is an attempt to outline a methodology that does not yield to the tendencies of abstraction and distance characterizing scientific thought. Taking the distancing function of methodology and turning it against thinking itself, Husserl sees phenomenological methodology as an ever-renewed attempt to cultivate a systematic form of philosophical reflection without succumbing to methodology's essential propensity to become, as methodology, superficial. In this way, I view Husserl's later phenomenology as a project productively addressing some of the problems raised by Mannheim's early sociology of intellectuals, but deepening the core antagonisms found there into the object of an infinite task. I close by noting the apparent incompatibility of Mannheim's and Husserl's solutions to methodological self-alienation, and suggest that this is related to their shared attempt to seek the solution to this problem in theoretical consciousness.

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1. Mannheim's intellectuals and the "common stream of cultivation"

Early in its development, Karl Mannheim's sociology of knowledge experimentally blended sociology, political economy, and philosophies of experience (including phenomenology, *Lebensphilosophie*, and neo-Kantianism). We can begin to understand Mannheim's view of intellectual work and alienation when we look to an unpublished text written five years before *Ideologie und Utopie*, in his 1924 essay on conjunctive and communicative knowledge. Predating the discussion of the "relatively free-floating intelligentsia [relativ freischwebende Intelligenz]" that would be developed in his most famous text and in the years following it,[2] this posthumously-published investigation develops an account of intellectuals from a reflection on the philosophy of culture.

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2 See Mannheim 1936 [1929], 158, 161.

Beginning with a treatment of social experience and its role in forming the concepts found in a field such as sociology, Mannheim draws a distinction between two kinds of knowledge: conjunctive and communicative knowledge. Communicative knowledge is the kind that epistemology seeks to secure, with an agreement or correlation between the subject and object as its touchstone. It is "communicative," because the ideal form of this knowledge would be communicable to all subjects, and valid for all objects.[3] This form of knowledge underlies revolutionary breakthroughs in natural and social sciences, according to which increasing shares of nature and society are able to be operationally defined, quantified, and predicted. The scientific mode of thinking, facilitating these discoveries, subjects nature to a thoroughgoing mathematization, according to which qualitative experience is progressively understood to result from quantitative changes.

But the ideas and concepts of the natural-scientific worldview are limited in their scope. By pretending towards universality, the quantitative and calculative methodological vision masks the fact that, "from the very outset it had set about, in attempting to render the world calculable, to know only so much about the world as might be so rendered" (Mannheim 1982 [1924], 155). The dominance of mathematized nature is thus only an illusory dominance, and the "return to nature" represented in the modern rejection of scholasticism is a mere "self-deception" (ibid., 152). The ascendancy of quantitative over qualitative thinking is won at the temporary expense of other "ways of experiencing and knowing, arising out of an altogether different kind of relationship between subject and object" (ibid., 155). Instead of a steady and progressive forward march of quantitative empirical science, the history of thought is presented here as a conflict of various *Weltanschauungen*, in which the defeated force—in this case, qualitative knowledge—is never defeated once and for all, but remains a latent possibility:

> Intellectual tendencies battle and conquer one another, but every possibility remains stored up for experience. It is always only a matter of

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3 "Universal knowledge is general in both senses of the word: it is valid for many objects and many subjects." (Mannheim 1982 [1924], 155.)

victory for the time being, and of the unfolding of one of the tendencies: the other one, the one defeated, does come back at a later form of development, if also in altered form. (Ibid., 152–153.)

The ascendancy of the calculative worldview is only possible on the basis of a "repressed" form of life and thought.[4] The increasing prevalence of abstraction and calculation over all things human and inhuman—which is here aligned with Marx's treatment of the commodity in the first volume of *Capital* and Lukács's discussion of reification in the previous year's *History and Class Consciousness*—thus does not extinguish the possibility of a noncalculative view of nature. Qualitative elements and methods of knowing are crushed by the "structural change in attitude toward things" designated as commodity fetishism or reification, but the old attitudes remain stored up for experience, and capable of redevelopment (ibid., 156).

Mannheim refers to the form of knowledge repressed by the scientific attitude as "conjunctive knowledge." Conjunctive knowledge is not exhibited through the mathematical description and prediction of objects by a knowing subject, but through the immediate unity of the subject and the object. Mannheim first describes this form of knowledge with regard to a stone:

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> At the moment of touching or bumping up against a stone, for example, I form a unity with it, which then immediately splits up into a duality of the self and the *vis-à-vis*. But our duality is only possible on the ground of this existential contact and the unity which occurs in it. (Ibid., 187.)

In contrast to the universalizing tendency of communicative knowledge, conjunctive knowledge always begins from a partial perspective on nature. It works through a form of essential contact or "contagion" that precedes the splitting of the world into individual objects and subjects (ibid., 188). Mannheim describes contagion as a "kind of existential relatedness, a specific union with the object," which we can observe in the phenomenon of style or the intuitive

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4 "But before we turn our attention to the continued existence of these elements repressed by natural-scientific thinking, we must first elucidate the sociological function of the style of thought we have been treating." (Ibid., 156.)

understanding of the alien other (ibid.). The existential contact between individuals in a community thus gives rise to conjunctive knowledge, which is inaccessible to those outside of this community, but which nevertheless has a distinctive and objective structure. Much of the remainder of Mannheim's text in the following sections describes the dynamics of "conjunctive communities," in an attempt to supplement a sociological perspective of objective social structures with a phenomenological account of the attitude of subjects:

> As long as these two types of inquiry are carried on in isolation, and are not set into a broader framework, they remain individual specialized studies. They turn into a new type of philosophical regarding of the world, however, as soon as they are employed as parts of a striving for a totality to comprehend the world. (Ibid., 169.)

We can understand Mannheim's aim in this essay as a synthesis of social sciences that study "objective cultural formations," and phenomenological analyses that extend rationality to the subjective "factors which precede objectification and out of which objectification first emerges" (ibid.). The synthesis is ventured through renewed attention to the underlying vital (conjunctive) basis, from which objective social forms are generated, or what Mannheim calls the "contexture of life [Lebenszusammenhang]" in his 1930 "Introduction to Sociology" course (Mannheim 2001 [1930], 3). The objectifications of the mathematized natural sciences are accordingly related to the shared life of a stratum of society, in whose communal existence these ideas attained their initial provenance. The "will brought to the world" by the rising bourgeoisie thus systematizes its form of perception and thought the more thoroughly this stratum attains dominance over the society (Mannheim 1982 [1924], 157). From this perspective, the abstractness and detachment characterizing the natural-scientific worldview is understood as an initially conjunctive formation of a particular group, which, through the dialectical transformations of life and thought, becomes a possibility for all thought in general, irrespective of its conjunctive context.

The way, in which conjunctive knowledge is overtaken by communicative knowledge in the modern world, explains why the former is never fully

extinguishable. In the competition among forms of life and consciousness, earlier possibilities are never lost, but are merely suppressed and stored up for consciousness. The historical and contemporary prevalence of critiques of abstract and calculative rationality across various theoretical and political perspectives betrays the fact that conjunctive attachments—which technical and calculative knowledge always repress—do not have an ideal form, and are not strictly speaking capable of systematization: "While these modes of thinking were once in sole command, fashioning a unified world picture, they now form part of an under-current of our thinking and experience of the world: the thinking of everyday." (Ibid., 264.) This allows us to make sense of the fact that, even today, the lament over alienation is not found in one part of the social order, but is articulated across otherwise starkly different sectors of the right and the left. The always-partial form of knowledge possessed by individuals as members in a living community mounts an incipient resistance to the quantitative knowledge structuring increasing parts of the social and cultural sphere, but cannot articulate itself into the decisive opposition expressed as a system, as this form of knowledge is unable to transcend the particular conjunctive attachments upon which it is grounded.

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Mannheim turns, towards the end of the essay, to the possibility of resisting the tendency to abstraction implicit in the capitalist worldview. In one of his earliest treatments of the importance of intellectual work, he distinguishes the intellectual stratum—here described as the group producing "cultivated culture [Bildungskultur]"—by the fact that it is comprised of individuals from various conjunctive groups.[5] The duality between conjunctive and communicative knowledge present in each individual[6] is further developed by a group of intellectuals capable of taking this duality itself up into reflection: "the phenomenon we are calling 'cultivated culture' arises partly out of the

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5 This is the way in which the treatment of the intellectuals found in this early essay is helpful for understanding Mannheim's later theory of intellectuals. See Reynolds 2023, 139–140.

6 "If a layer of conjunctive knowing which is relatively unspoiled, even if flecked with scientific insights, remains present in us, and if a communicative layer is added to this quite soon, what results in practice is a duality in the ways in which individuals bear themselves in relation to concepts as well as to realities." (Mannheim 1982 [1924], 265.)

widening of the community, but also from a mixing of social spheres" (ibid., 265). Due to its heterogenous nature, and its relative detachment from the conjunctive communities from which its members originate, the intellectual stratum names a group of people for whom self-alienation is a persistent possibility. Mannheim thus suggests that this type of community is potentially able to develop the necessary self-alienation of culture in a productive way. Thinkers in such a stratum are still just as conditioned by their conjunctive life, but they experience other kinds of conjunctive ties as well as other world-volitions (*Weltwollen*), allowing them to loosen these attachments. The community of intellectuals is thus a group capable of contextualizing and limiting the various world-volitions, consciously developing a polyphonic and dialectical "common stream of cultivation" (ibid., 267). The possibility of a sociology of culture synthesizing structural and experiential, sociological and phenomenological dimensions of life is thus predicated on an existential community bearing a multiplicity of attachments. Within this community, the ability arises—not on any one individual's part, but within the community as such—of clarifying the overall composition of conjunctive and communicative knowledge through an intentional and systematic study of their orientation.

Here, however, we encounter a problem different from that typically found in Mannheim's treatment of the intellectuals. It lies in the possibility of such a synthesis from out of a "common stream" of varied elements—many of them mutually antagonistic. How is the self-clarification meant to be attained in this sociology of culture guaranteed? Are there not overwhelming tendencies— already apparent to Mannheim, but perhaps more prominent now—towards the operationalization and quantification even of the humanities? From this perspective, is it sufficient to designate a sociological group as the standpoint, from which social reflexivity—or the "new philosophical regarding of the world" (ibid., 169)—can become possible, or is it necessary to further designate a methodological account of the inner process of such a "cultivation of culture"?

2. Detachment from detachment in Husserl's transcendental phenomenology

It is from a similar set of problems that Husserl's final unfinished work, *The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology*, undertakes

its discussion of the method and aims of phenomenology. Here, too, the prevalence and dominance of a mathematized form of rationality is thematized with an eye to its limitations. Husserl understands the limitation of the natural scientific perspective to relate to its need to idealize nature. The perspective able to discern laws and correlations between natural objects is only able to do so by falsely taking these objects as "given"—thus adopting an uncritical perspective towards experience. Husserl writes:

> Thus all the occasional (even "philosophical") reflections which go from technical [scientific] work back to its true meaning always stop at idealized nature; they do not carry out the reflection radically, going back to the ultimate purpose which the new science, together with the geometry which is inseparable from it, growing out of prescientific life and its surrounding world, was from the beginning supposed to serve: a purposes which necessary lay *in* this prescientific life and was related to its life-world. (Husserl 1970 [1938/1954], §9, 50.)

As in Mannheim's account of conjunctive and communicative knowledge, the technical methods of the sciences are understood to arise from out of the needs and volitions of a broader life-context. In the same way that communicative knowledge's origin in a conjunctive community becomes obscured by its apparent universalizability, the philosophical and scientific worldview outlined here becomes so ubiquitous as to forget its original orientation in this context. Problematically, the mathematical methods of the natural sciences presuppose the being of the world, and its being in such and such a way, without establishing this world's distinctive possibility in itself.[7] In this sense, the abstractions of science rest on prescientific forms of experience. Since the work of abstraction requires taking distance from prescientific life,

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7 "Objective science […] asks questions only on the ground of this world's existing in advance through prescientific life. Like all praxis, objective science presupposes the being of this world, but it sets itself the task of transposing knowledge which is imperfect and prescientific in respect of scope and constancy into perfect knowledge—in accord with an idea of a correlative which is, to be sure, infinitely distant […]." (Husserl 1970 [1938/1954], §28, 110–111.)

however, these sciences tend to cover over their own starting point, rendering it utterly inarticulable in their own terms.

Through a historical account, Husserl seeks to re-vitiate the originary impulse, the *meaning*, underlying this philosophical and scientific worldview. This work of meaning-formation (*Sinnbildung*) must move back and forth, between the methods and aims of scientific understanding in the present, and those historical events, through which its sense was initially realized.[8] The fidelity to intuition required by this method of "historical critique" is thus unable to express itself in purely scientific terms (ibid., §9, 58). Bringing "original intuition to the fore—that is, the pre- and extrascientific life-world, which contains within itself all actual life, including the scientific life of thought, and nourishes it as the source of all technical construction of meaning— […]" (ibid., 59), requires an abdication of technical or operational scientific language, and a commitment to the naïve sense of everyday life.

On the one hand, then, as far as our problem complex of methodological abstraction and self-alienation is concerned, Husserl points out that the methods of the natural sciences, including the sequence leading from the origin of geometry, through various developments, finally to the system of universal physical laws expressed as mathematical relationships, take their start from a form of distantiation. The abstraction, upon which geometry rests, necessarily sets aside the particular qualities of any of the bodies it studies, understanding them only according to the ideal constructions of shape, magnitude, number, etc. An entire ideal world can be built on the basis of such a separation—one which is understood to map at every point with the world of experience. But the division making the construction of this ideal world possible—which is that between the perceiver and the perceived, or between the body as a physical object and the body as the lived site of perception (ibid.,

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8 In an illuminating reading that understands Husserlian phenomenology as critique "through and through," Andreea Smaranda Aldea describes the "zig-zag pattern" between present scientific consciousness and its historical genesis as a "critique of the present," which is "oriented toward *clarifying* precisely what binds and conditions us" (Aldea 2022, 57). Even on a superficial level, this conception of phenomenological methodology has a striking consonance with Mannheim's reflections on the conditioning of consciousness in the 1936 English introduction of *Ideology and Utopia* (Mannheim 1936).

§9, 50)[9]—can in no way be indefinitely maintained, since the sense taken by this division is hidden from view in the course of the ensuing investigations, with their endless stream of results.

On the other hand, however, phenomenology repeats the distancing gesture of the natural sciences, creating a space between the methodologies of the latter and its own, developing and thematizing this space as a philosophical problem. The phenomenological reduction, which sets aside both the scientific and prescientific perspectives to stay with the achievement of perception itself, can in this way be understood as a *detachment from detachment*. The separation between *epistemē* and *doxa*, initially adopted by scientific theory in opposition to everyday experience and opinion, is thus radically extended to take distance from every instantiation of the natural attitude, including its methodological elaboration in science. This kind of separation is unavoidable, however, as it is the condition for the possibility of theoretical knowledge itself. So, while Husserl is critical of certain ways, in which scientific thinking distances itself from the prescientific attitude, the problem he identifies in these modes of thinking lies more in the specific kind of separation they effect than in its status as a separation. This is the sense, in which Husserl describes the intention to return to the naïveté of life, "in a reflection which rises above this naïveté," by transcending the "philosophical naïveté" of objective natural science (ibid., §9, 59). Phenomenological methodology strives to work through its simultaneous participation in and distance from naïveté through a historical-critical apprehension of this self-alienation.

The way in which phenomenological methodology sets aside the natural attitude causes a well-known set of problems related to the ability of such a distancing gesture to meaningfully sustain itself. In his discussion of Descartes, Husserl thus shows how an early and radical separation of *epistemē* from *doxa* nevertheless reverted to a common-sense belief in the objectivity of the world:

> We can see how difficult it is to maintain and use such an unheard-of change of attitude as that of the radical and universal *epochē*. Right away "natural common sense," some aspect of the naïve validity of the world,

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9 On these two irreconcilable senses of the body, see also: Merleau-Ponty 1968 [1964].

breaks through at some point and adulterates the new kind of thinking made possible and necessary in the *epochē*. […] This nearly ineradicable naïveté is also responsible for the fact that for centuries almost no one took exception to the "obviousness" of the possibility of inferences from the ego and its cognitive life to an "outside," and no one actually raised the question of whether, in respect to this egological sphere of being, an "outside" can have any meaning at all—which of course turns the ego into a paradox, the greatest of all enigmas. (Ibid., §18, 80.)

Phenomenology is able to effect a distance from the methods of the natural sciences and the more encompassing natural attitude, but it is thus still subject to what Husserl calls the "tendency to superficialize itself in accord with technization" belonging "[t]o the essence of all method" (ibid., §9, 48). The perennial struggle against this tendency, against the encroachment of common sense and its scientific articulations, is the reason, because of which phenomenology must ever begin anew, viewing its task—a methodological and systematic attempt to think inner experience—as an infinite one. We can see here that transcendental phenomenology develops the inner methodological possibility of an essential grasp of the lifeworld that Mannheim tied to external, sociological factors. The aim of this methodological work is a form of reflexive clarification:

> […] a transcendental philosophy is the more genuine, and better fulfills its vocation as philosophy, the more radical it is and, finally, that it comes to its actual and true existence, to its actual and true beginning, only when the philosopher has penetrated to a clear understanding of himself as the subjectivity functioning as primal source […] (Ibid., §27, 99.)

What is also clear here is the way in which this vocation results in a *constant methodological crisis*, whose horizon is a mode of philosophical study never terminating in clarity and distinctness once and for all, but instead in a continually growing form of historical self-awareness.

3. Conclusion

We have seen the way in which two early twentieth-century projects conceive of the intellectual response to methodological abstraction and self-alienation—relating this response in Mannheim's case to a concrete sociological stratum, and in Husserl's to a constant crisis in methodology. Questions remain concerning the ability to unite these aspects under a single project. Is the critical historical view of phenomenology found in Husserl able to transcend a small group of intellectuals, and to become a generalized process of historical transformation? How is this inner possibility related to the intellectual stratum, either the one developed in Mannheim's account, or in other treatments of intellectuals? In closing, we might recognize the apparent perplexity faced by the combination of these aspects to be related to their shared emphasis on the intellectual side of this response to abstraction and self-alienation, rather than the practical and historical side. This suggests that the treatments of the intellectual reaction to methodological abstraction and self-alienation found in these works might be productively brought into conversation with the philosophies of praxis developed in the same time period, for which dereification is not merely a matter of transformed theoretical consciousness, but a matter of knowing practical action.[10]

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10 An example of a philosophical account, in which the resistance to methodological self-alienation can be found in the work of practical struggle, is Lukács ([1923] 1971). I touched upon this connection in Reynolds 2021a.

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Filip Borek

Schwingung at the Heart of Phenomenon
Intersubjectivity and Phenomenality

Abstract: In the article, we propose a reformulation of the Husserlian question of intersubjectivity, starting from phenomenon-as-nothing-but-phenomenon (Richir). Our aim is to show how at the most profound level of phenomenality there is something like intersubjectivity already at play. To clarify this dimension, we use the German term *Schwingung* as a proper movement of the phenomenon as such that constitutes the phenomenological basis of intersubjectivity, which enables us to preserve both the moment of transcendence (irreducible alterity) and communication of *ego* and *alter ego*. Such a radicalization approaches its theme in a genetic-phenomenological way, disclosing a transcendental fiction at the origin of intersubjectivity.

Keywords: anonymity, genetic phenomenology, phenomenality, intersubjectivity, transcendental oscillation.

1. Introduction

Embodying one of the "basic problems of phenomenology," the question of intersubjectivity comes to light at various levels of phenomenological architectonics. Philosophical investigation of *alter ego* presented by phenomenologists of all generations, e.g., by Husserl, Fink, Sartre, Merleau-Ponty, Henry, Waldenfels, or Richir, seems to occupy a *central* position in their theoretical projects, although it usually emerges not as an *independent* problem, but it is rather determined by the inner logic of their works. For instance, in Husserl's transcendental phenomenology the inquiry into the question of intersubjectivity becomes ineluctable within the context of a *transcendental* problem of world-objectivity or world-transcendence. As it is known, Husserl

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claims that the objectivity of the world reveals its transcendental *Seinssinn* as "thereness-for-everyone" (*Für-jedermann-da*) (Husserl 1982, 91). According to the methodological constraints of phenomenology, the starting point of every analysis is *my own* transcendental ego. Notwithstanding, in order to avoid the objection of a "transcendental solipsism," it is necessary to explicate, "in what intentionalities, syntheses, motivations, the sense 'other ego' becomes fashioned in me and, under the title, harmonious experience of someone else, becomes verified as existing and even as itself there in its own manner" (Husserl 1982, 90). The whole problem of the *alter ego* in Husserl consists therefore of two—seemingly contradictory—requirements: to think intersubjectivity as a necessary condition of world-experience, in its *transcendental*, not solely *mundane* character, though starting from the *ego* and its primordiality, but also without positing intersubjectivity *dogmatically*. The meaning of the transcendental question of intersubjectivity in Husserl was adequately captured by Schnell:

> […] how is it possible to keep together two apparently contradictory statements—i.e. one according to which the world is presented "for everyone" (*für jedermann*), therefore *objectively*, and another according to which any sense is constituted within the life of the consciousness *ego*, that is, in the transcendental *subject* […]? (Schnell 2010, 11.)

Comprehensive and systematic studies on the theme of intersubjectivity—which are loaded with obscurities, ambiguities, and sometimes even contradictions—, as exhibited above all in the fifth Cartesian meditation and the volumes XIII–XV of *Husserliana*, play a crucial role in Husserl's transcendental phenomenology, redefining its basic concepts (such as *Subjektivität*, for instance), methods, and tasks. Nevertheless, the question of transcendental intersubjectivity *receives* its function and sense *only* within a broader problematic (and methodological) context that, for its part, is receptive and responsive to further modifications and transpositions.

In the paper, we aim, so to speak, to *dislocate* the question of transcendental intersubjectivity within the environment of phenomenological inquiry, in order to incorporate it into a *different* chain of questions, without leaving,

at the same time, the achievements and demands springing forth from the Husserlian phenomenology behind our back. In the first chapter, we present some acquisitions of Husserl's thought that will serve as *guidelines* for our sketch of the problem. For this reason, the presentation of his wide and dense studies devoted to intersubjectivity will be necessarily very brief and general. However, the task here is not solely to provide some guidelines for further investigations, but also to localize some *aporias* in Husserl's inquiry that will motivate us to pose the question of intersubjectivity anew. For the elaboration, inevitably of preliminary and sketchy character, of the question of intersubjectivity, the *fundamental question* of phenomenology, i.e., that of *phenomenality* and its *genesis*, will be taken as a *Leitfaden* (chapters 2 and 3). The aim here is to demonstrate phenomenologically that something like "intersubjectivity" is already at play at the most primordial level of the phenomenon, and that it, for this reason, possesses irreducible and decisive significance within the whole architectonics of phenomenology.

2. Husserl and transcendental intersubjectivity

Husserl's pursuit to think intersubjectivity has a *transcendental* character. As we mentioned above, this means, first, that the phenomenological inquiry into intersubjectivity must necessarily start with the meditating *ego*. Transcendental intersubjectivity "is neither a systematic structure that *grounds* consciousness nor a '*collective consciousness*' […] it does not characterize a 'social' (*mundane*) relationship that would be noticed *from the outside*" (Schnell 2010, 10–11). In other words, intersubjective relations must be apprehended from *the inside*, i.e., from the perspective of a part of this relation. Secondly, like every *transcendental* philosophy, phenomenology inquires into the problem of *the conditions of possibility* of a relationship between the *ego* and the *alter ego*, rather than considering the questions of *concrete* intersubjective relations (Zahavi 2001, 150). Having these principles in mind, let us ask the following question: what does Husserl understand under the term "transcendental intersubjectivity"? As was shown in detail by Zahavi (Zahavi 1996; Zahavi 2001), Husserl does not operate with *one* meaning of this term, but one can rather distinguish its *three* meanings: (1) "open intersubjectivity" (*offene Intersubjektivität*), which

forms a structural *a priori* of the transcendental subject (Zahavi 2001, 53); (2) first constitution of the sense *alter ego* for an ego, first *Fremderfahrung*, *Erstkonstitution* (Lohmar 2017, 130), or its *Urstiftung*; (3) "anonymous publicity," which consists of historically grounded norms, conventions, etc., and makes, for this reason, the institution of sociality possible. Without taking the third meaning of the transcendental intersubjectivity into consideration, let us focus, in general, on the first two meanings. What is "open intersubjectivity" and how is it related to the concrete experience of *alter ego*?

In "Beilage XXXV" in volume XIV of *Husserliana*, Husserl writes: "*Ontologisch gesprochen, jede Erscheinung, die ich habe, ist von vornherein Glied eines offen endlosen, aber nicht explizit verwirklichten Umfanges möglicher Erscheinungen von demselben und* die Subjektivität dieser Erscheinungen ist offene Intersubjektivität." (Husserl 1973, 289.) Open intersubjectivity is nothing but the structural openness of our experience towards other *actual* perspectives that makes the experience of an *object* (object as experienced *actually* from different perspectives; see Zahavi 2001, 32) possible. This *a priori* structure—as Zahavi argues—is *independent* from concrete, factual experiences we have of other subjects. It serves, nonetheless, as a *foundation* for these experiences. This first "intersubjectivity" could also be called "intra-subjective alterity," as long as it defines transcendental subjectivity *from the very beginning* and in its *essential structure* (Zahavi 2001, 161) and does not result from any experience. Subject is in its essence in relation with other subjects, even if they are not corporeally present *in propria persona* in our experiential field. In other words, transcendental subjectivity is potentially, though not *habitually*, related to *alter ego*, it is "transcendental coexistence" (Husserl 1973c, 370). Although Husserl himself never analyzed systematically the relations between "open intersubjectivity" and the constitution of the first *Fremderfahrung*, Zahavi's thesis—based on certain passages from Husserl's manuscripts—on the *Fundierungsverhältnis* between these two notions of intersubjectivity seems to be plausible. Nevertheless, it is not quite clear, if the priority of open intersubjectivity over concrete experiences of the other has only *static-phenomenological* or likewise *genetic-phenomenological* character. Furthermore, open intersubjectivity cannot be taken *in advance*, but should rather be *concretely* attested and verified in "transcendental experience." Schnell

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speaks in this context of "phenomenological construction"—in order to "verify" the construction of the fact that "subjectivity is structured inter-subjectively," "it is necessary for *me* to be given an account of the concrete experience of the other" (Schnell 2010, 12). And this is precisely the task of the fifth Cartesian meditation. Before we delve deeper into the problems that are signalized but not fully developed in Zahavi's reading of Husserl, we must underline *three moments* that—according to the author of *Logical Investigations*—are necessary, in order to think intersubjectivity *as intersubjectivity*.

First, the constitutive experience of the other must be precisely the experience of the other in *its otherness*. The other subject cannot be understood as a mere "mirroring" of my *ego*, since it would be nothing but a *copy* of myself. As Husserl admits: "if what belongs to the other's own essence were directly accessible, it would be merely a moment of my own essence, and ultimately he himself and I myself would be the same" (Husserl 1982, 109). An *alter ego* must be experienced, given exactly *as the other*, in its *insurmountable transcendence* or *inaccessibility* (Husserl 1982, 124). This does not mean, however, that the inaccessibility in question is a *negation* of the givenness of the other. Rather, it constitutes its peculiar *mode of appearing*. The other *as other* is *given through its absence*. Exclusively under these *two* conditions, the *inter*-subjective relationality is possible—the other must *appear*, but its mode of appearing has the necessary character of withdrawal (*Entzug*). When there is no *relation* between *different* subjectivities, then speaking of *inter*-subjectivity is devoid of any sense. Therefore, these two moments indicate what should be necessarily avoided while constructing a phenomenologically adequate intersubjective field. When one denies any possibility of "communication" of the ego with an *alter ego*, then intersubjectivity cannot be phenomenologically attested and verified. When one negates any difference between the ego and the *alter ego*, then the *alter ego* loses its whole sense. Therefore, the question of intersubjectivity becomes a question of *irreducible* transcendence of the other as a possible mode of *phenomenality*.

Even if these conditions of constructing a phenomenologically relevant theory of intersubjectivity have systematic and methodological validity, one can ask—not without a reason—if the Cartesian-like starting point in the *ego cogito* already determines the *impossibility* of inter-subjectivity and leads

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inevitably to the transcendental solipsism. If one presupposes an absolute, transparent, and self-coinciding *ego cogito* for whom the whole world exists as its *Geltungsphänomen*, then how is a multiplicity of other egos possible? One way of getting out of this aporia is to admit that the *ego cogito* (or the individual monad) is definitely not the most profound layer of the transcendental. Such a viewpoint, however, runs the risk of falling into one extremity.

According to Fink (Fink 1976, 223; Schutz 1970, 86), "late" Husserl was an advocate of such an extreme position. Despite a certain *textual inadequacy* of this interpretation (as Zahavi has convincingly pointed out in Zahavi 2001, 65–77), it is worth saying what such an extremity consists of and what difficulties it may generate. Its main idea could be summarized as follows: at the primal, absolutely *anonymous* level of constituting subjectivity there does *not yet* exist a difference between *ego* and *alter ego*—they emerge in their *distinctiveness* in the self-pluralization of this primal life. Such a view may appear appealing, for it seems to solve the problem of absolute distance between subjects. But one can easily see, as Merleau-Ponty already did in his *Phenomenology of Perception*, that it does not *solve* the problem, but rather *eliminates* it (Merleau-Ponty 2012, 372) by *dissolving* the insurmountable difference between subjects in the monism of the anonymous primal life. But as we know, Husserl himself operates with terms such as "anonymous" or "anonymity." "Anonymous" means "nameless" in Husserl. One can argue that anonymity means a lack of any reference to subject or ego. Nevertheless, in Husserl, such a "radical concept of anonymity" is rather impossible. Anonymity is not a *negation* of the egological consciousness, it is not a consciousness without ego, but rather a *pre-reflexivity* and *non-thematicity* (Zahavi 2002). In this strict sense, one can speak of "anonymous (or anonymously functioning) intersubjectivity," and hence passively, pre-reflectively, and non-thematically operating intersubjectivity.

Husserl's theory of intersubjectivity can, therefore, be summarized as follows: it assumes that at the basis of the world-constitution there is an infinite *plurality* of monads that are transcendent towards each other, and this *Ineinander* of egos takes place passively, pre-reflectively (non-objectively), and non-thematically in the "background" of transcendental consciousness. Furthermore, such a transcendental absolute cannot be reached solely using "descriptive analysis," but it requires a new form of reduction (e.g., "primordial

reduction" in *Cartesian Meditations*) and "phenomenological construction" (Schnell 2010, 12). There are, however, certain ambiguities and obscurities in Husserl's theory that motivate us to develop his analysis in a strictly systematic manner (as was previously done by many other phenomenologists, including Merleau-Ponty, Henry, or Richir). In this short article, there is not enough space to discuss all of them. Nevertheless, it is useful to point out two such ambiguities. As we already said, Zahavi's interpretation of the conditioning relation between open intersubjectivity and concrete *Erstkonstitution* of *alter ego* is ambiguous in respect of genetic–static distinction: should this conditioning be understood solely *statically* or should it be radicalized in the form of *genetic* priority? Is primordiality, of which Husserl speaks in fifth Cartesian meditation, only "static primordiality" or also "genetic primordiality" (see Kern 2021, 36)?[1] Is "genetic primordiality," as concrete self-presence of the ego without *Urstiftung* of other egos, possible? Is it not genetic phenomenology that ultimately legitimates the intersubjective structure of subjectivity (e.g., when it refers to phenomena such as instincts or drives)? But how could one, then, conceive phenomenologically such a phenomenon as *Urstiftung* of the other I? Furthermore, even if one admits that ego is intersubjectively structured, then the question arises: how such a structuration can be attested and verified from the point of view of the I itself? Since intersubjectivity is a necessary condition of the possibility of ego, one must go beyond the ego to understand this ego. But how such a movement can be called "phenomenological" after all? All these questions lead us to reformulate the question of intersubjectivity beyond Husserl's approach.

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3. Phenomenon-as-nothing-but-phenomenon as oscillation

Before we perform the concrete analysis (or rather a sketch of such an analysis) of intersubjectivity from a transcendental-phenomenological point of view, it is necessary to exhibit methodological tools that will be of use for such a purpose. The following question deals with the problem of the

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1 One should admit that the analysis in fifth Cartesian meditation is neither fully static nor fully genetic. It is, as Sakakibara rightly defines it, "half-genetic" (Sakakibara 2008, 8). Compare also Lee 2002.

phenomenological *origin* of intersubjectivity. In this sense, it is a part of *genetic phenomenology*. Intersubjectivity cannot be merely posed and presupposed as a *factum*, but it must be *genetized* (Schnell 2012, 470). To perform such a genetization, the merely descriptive method is insufficient. Description—that, however, constitutes both the methodological beginning and constant foothold of further elaborations—must be supplemented by *Abbaureduktion* and "phenomenological construction" (which are the negative and positive aspects of the same operation).

The *constructum* must be constructed in two steps: firstly, it has to be constructed through "dismantling" (*abbauen*) of all that can be excluded from the phenomenon as "unnecessary." This is the *fictive* moment of the method. Secondly, however, since the *constructum* is in service of *explaining* what is accessible to us pre-constructively (i.e., descriptively), it has to be constructed in a very specific way—namely, having such "properties" that make the *generation* of the "given," "phenomenal" layer possible. In other words, what the first (negative) moment tries to capture is, so to speak, the "minimal" dimension of a given phenomenon, i.e., nothing other than its *necessary* conditions of possibility, while the second aims at *sufficient* conditions of the *explanandum*. Therefore, the construction must follow some kind of *retrojection*—thinking the origin of something should be performed as a thinking that concerns what comes from it. The project intended here is *genetic*, *constructive*, and *retrojective*. The task is to *genetize* intersubjectivity in a transcendental-phenomenological manner. Where should such a genetization start from? Our answer: from the phenomenon as such.

When one considers the proper "object" of transcendental phenomenology (distinct from something one may call "phenomenological realism"; see Schnell 2021, 21) as "phenomenon-as-nothing-but-phenomenon" (*phénomène comme rien que phénomène*; Richir) or as "appearing as such" (*Erscheinen als solches*; Patočka), or as "self-appearing of appearing" (Henry), then the question of intersubjectivity needs to be placed within the specific architectonics of the problem of phenomenality. The aim of phenomenology—understood as "radical transcendental phenomenology"—is to think "phenomenon with reference only to its phenomenality" (Richir 1987, 19). The reduction of phenomena to *nothing-but-phenomena* requires of us the bracketing of the

reference of phenomena to something alien to it, namely to the *thing* or *object* that appears in it. The phenomenon, pre-phenomenologically conceived, is always a phenomenon-*of…* This moment of reference, this "of," should be parenthesized.[2] The question at stake could be formulated then as follows: how does phenomenon-as-nothing-but-phenomenon phenomenalize itself, in order to *generate* something like transcendental *intersubjectivity*?

The pure phenomenon is a phenomenon taken without being a "phenomenon-of…" To the structure of appearing belongs—besides that *what* appears—also *to whom* it appears (Patočka 2000, 129). Every appearing has its genitive (appearing-*of…*) and its dative (appearing-*for…*) aspect. The genitive–dative dyad should now be parenthesized, in order to let the pure phenomenon as such appear. Such a reduced phenomenon is *not yet* a phenomenon of *something* for *someone*. What is, then, left, when we exclude both the subject and the object of appearing? Are we left with pure nothingness? One can argue that appearing—to "be" appearing—implies a redoublement *of itself* and *in itself* (Henry 2003, 109), briefly: appearing must itself somehow appear. Taking that into consideration, one must admit—standing against Henry in this respect—that there must be an inner *difference* in appearing itself. Phenomenon phenomenalizes itself only as "divergence" (*écart* in the terminology of "late" Merleau-Ponty) or "non-identity." But what does this divergent self-manifestation of phenomenon-as-such mean?

First, "what" appears cannot be identified with any object. "What" appears is rather absent. And yet, should we understand it as an "absent object" or the "absence of object"? In a sense, the phenomenon-as-nothing-but-phenomenon is to be *retrojectively* determined as the "absence of object." At the same time, following the necessity of *Abbaureduktion*, the pure phenomenon cannot, however, be determined by the *factum* it tends to explain. We cannot presuppose on this genetic level any prior presence of an object (its *Vorgegebenheit*) that is *negated* afterwards. Therefore, the absence of object is rather an "absence

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2 One of the problems with the Husserlian phenomenology of intersubjectivity is that most of its considerations are conducted on the basis of *intentionality*, which is precisely this "phenomenon-of…" (at least technically), whereas we suggest—following *inter alia* Henry and Richir in this respect—that phenomenon-as-nothing-but-phenomenon should be understood in its *non-intentional* or *pre-intentional* dimension.

without absent." This absence, however, cannot be a *simple* absence, otherwise it would "be" nothing but a "lack of phenomenality," "non-phenomenality." Since the essence of the phenomenon belongs to something like "redoublement," it is necessary to speak in this case of "absence of absence" or "doubled absence," which never perfectly coincide with each other, but are rather "different" or "polarized." Phenomenon is a movement between "two" absences. This means, first, that phenomenon comes from *nothing* and sinks into *nothing* again. This coming-from-nothing-and-sinking-into-nothing—which are the movements of *Anwesen* und *Abwesen*—implies, hence, the movement of coming-into-*presence*. In other words, absence "presentifies" itself into absence. It should be stressed that this original absence does not crystallize itself into an object, it does not reach any *stability*, but it disappears the very same moment, when it appears.

We choose to name the movement *in* the phenomenon itself (which is nothing but *this phenomenon*) with the German term *Schwingung*. In the phenomenological tradition, it was used previously—in different configurations and meanings—in Heidegger, Fink, and Richir.[3] The term *Schwingung* must be understood, not as a movement between two already-present poles, but rather as a movement wherein the *polarization* happens, that is: the *origination* of the poles in question. In this sense it refers to what Heidegger calls in *Contributions to Philosophy* "oscillation" (*Gegenschwung*) and "coming to be of the oscillation" (*Erschwingung*): "that oscillation [*Gegenschwung*] between beyng and Da-sein in which the two are not objectively present [*vorhanden*] poles but are the pure coming to be of the oscillation [*Erschwingung*] itself" (Heidegger 2012, 225). In other words, the poles of the movement of the phenomenon are not "stable," but are co-generated *within* and *by* the very movement itself.

And now the question arises: how does such a concept of phenomenon affect the notion of (transcendental) subjectivity? In what sense is phenomenon-as-nothing-but-phenomenon *presubjective* or even *asubjective*? Further: how can such an understanding of the phenomenon as a "phenomenological basis" be successfully used within the transcendental problem of intersubjectivity? If one wants to speak of subjectivity within the context of the pure phenomenon, it

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3 See Richir's article on the question of *Schwingung* (Richir 1998).

is necessary to notice that such a subjectivity would be devoid of any reference to an object (would be *non-intentional* then), and it could not apprehend itself in the prism of any objectivity. As such, it would not have any *Habitualitäten*, as long as there would no *Stiftungen*. Does this mean, however, that such a phenomenon-as-nothing-but-phenomenon, as an interplay of presence and absence, is asubjective? We argue that such a characteristic might be misleading. First, the pure phenomenon should serve as a condition for the possibility of an *ego*. Second, what is at stake in the pure phenomenon is precisely the structure of subjectivity, namely *reflexivity*. The phenomenon is reflexive or, better: it is its *reflexivity*. It refers to itself, as long as it does not coincide with itself, and does not coincide with itself, as long as it refers to itself. The phenomenon is an endless play of iterations and repetitions. And only under this condition, it can phenomenalize itself. As long as it "plays" with "itself," it possesses an "ipseity," a *Selbstheit*, which nevertheless is utterly "anonymous" and "pre-personal."

4. Intersubjectivity and phenomenality

How can, then, intersubjectivity be genetized from the oscillation of the movement of the phenomenon? How does the ipseity of the pure phenomenon coincide with the structure of intersubjectivity? Based at first on the intentional experience, we must admit that the constitution of objectivity requires a double movement of the phenomenon: its *centralization* and *decentralization*. What should be understood under these terms? A phenomenon is constituted as an object, when it is *the center* of the manifold of experiential points of view (= centripetality). But, in order to be constituted as an object, it has to be de-centralized in manifold perspectives upon it (= centrifugality). To create an object, the phenomenon centralizes itself, insofar as it is decentralized in different perspectives. Centralization and decentralization—like movement and countermovement—create in reality one single (paradoxical) movement. As one can argue, the centralization of my perspective (which is synonymous with the origination of perspective) is possible only as a simultaneous *de-* and *co-*centralization of other perspectives: *de-*centralization, insofar as they are not *my* perspectives, and *co-*centralization, insofar as they are other *absolute* perspectives *for themselves*.

There are, here, two different meanings of centralization/decentralization. The first one refers to already constituted intentional experience, where the center of regards (= object) serves as a "pivot" for the determination of perspectives. However, such centralization of regards requires a prior process of double co- and decentralization of perspectives, of, as Husserl calls it, *absolute Hier* (taken in plural). This double movement of de- and co-centralization takes place in the phenomenon-as-nothing-but-phenomenon in its "oscillation," "vibration," or "blinking" (Richir's *clignotement*). The sphere where this de- and co-centralization occurs could also be named—following Richir in this respect—"transcendental interfacticity" (*interfacticité transcendantale*), which is defined as the "'transcendental coexistence' of an original plurality of absolutes as an absolute Here, which does not mean their mutual relativization through another absolute from a higher register" (Richir 2006, 36–37). What motivates Richir to substitute the term "inter*subjectivity*" with "inter*facticity*"? Richir claims that Husserl—being *methodologically* forced to do so—understands intersubjectivity within the horizon of the eidetics of one's own *Erlebnisse*. By doing so, he has to suspend the *facticity* of the *ego* which, as he himself was fully aware of, is phenomenologically impossible (see Husserl 1973c, 385). In other words, the transcendental intersubjectivity as eidetic modification of my own I is possible only on the grounds of its *facticity* which, in turn, is intrinsically connected to other facticities. The proto-movement of phenomenon-as-nothing-but-phenomenon, its infinite oscillation, is nothing but the genetization of absolutes (of *absolute Hier* [in plural]). It enables their *Ineinander*, as long as it creates a "space" where their communication becomes possible, and guarantees, at the same time, their *transcendence*, since the phenomenon never coincides absolutely with itself.

What is an advantage of such a solution? First of all, it, in a way, *deformalizes*—still too formal—the concept of *offene Intersubjektivität*, bringing it back to its genetic roots (phenomenon-as-nothing-but-phenomenon serves as a genetic matrix of intersubjective relations) beneath intentionality. Secondly, it requires from us a modification of our phenomenological methodological tools. In Schnell's terminology, the problem of *alter ego* cannot be solved at the level of *immanence*, but it necessarily requires us to go deeper to the level of pre-

immanence or pre-phenomenality. The entire problem is here merely sketched and requires a more detailed analysis.

5. Conclusion

To conclude, let us formulate two final questions. What is the methodological status of such a transcendental interfacticty understood as the oscillation of the phenomenon in itself? How is the crucial notion of *anonymity* then redefined? In order to answer the first question, we have to keep in mind that the *Rückfrage* towards genetic primordiality of interfacticity starts from the already instituted (in sense of *Sinnstiftung*) phenomena *a posteriori*, which are *retrojectively* brought back to their phenomenological origin. Interfacticity is accessible as *a priori* that is nowhere to be found at the level of these institutions; it cannot even be conceived through the consequent and subsequent *Erinnerung* of past experiences that lie "at the bottom" and "at the beginning" of our experiential life. In this sense, transcendental interfacticity is entirely *fictional*, as it does not function at the level of intuitive-intentional attestability. On the other hand, it is *a necessary fiction*, if we want to fully *understand* and *legitimate* intersubjectivity in a phenomenologically relevant way, and—in consequence—make phenomenology as science possible (which requires intersubjective communication and validation). As entirely "beyond memory," it could be described—using Merleau-Ponty's term—as "a past that has never been present"—(Merleau-Ponty 2012, 252) or—following Levinas— as "immemorial past" (Levinas 1986, 355). Transcendental interfacticity is a phenomenological fiction, however: a *transcendental* fiction.

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Such characteristics enable us to determine more precisely the phenomenological meaning of anonymity. The transcendental interfacticity of phenomenon-as-nothing-but-phenomenon is an *anonymous interfacticity*. First, this means that it cannot be *objectified*. Second, it is, however, something more radical than "anonymity" as understood by Husserl (at least as interpreted by Zahavi). The reflexivity of the phenomenon as such is *not yet* pre-reflexivity of consciousness, since the latter is coextensive with intentionality, whereas the former operates at the pre-immanent level. The former makes the latter possible.

And then the question arises: how such an anonymous, pre-egoic, though *always already differentiated* (in contrast to Fink's "absolute life") field can be appropriated *personally*? How can the anonymous and the personal be coupled together (as is the case in Merleau-Ponty; see 2012, 476–477) in one single structure? Though crucial and fundamental to the present case, this question transcends the limited scope of our paper, and thus represents a task for further investigations.

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transcendentality

&

intersubjectivity

Zixuan Liu

What Is the Irreality of Social Reality?
Higher Visibility Transcendental Intentionality

Abstract: Social reality is distinct from brute physical reality. Its irreality is neither fictional, eidetic, nor idealized; nor is it irreducibly imposed on physical objects. Taking linguistic form as an example, I propose a transcendental, anti-naturalistic account: the irreality of social reality results from the higher visibility of intentional correlation, which is transcendental in the sense that it is not located in real spacetime; rather, the latter is located within the former. The article shows that mainstream accounts of collective intention (content, mode, subject, and relation) do not have to be mutually exclusive, and can complement each other. The article also proposes a mechanism for pre-reflective plural self-awareness in its most basic form: congruence with like-minded individuals. Our fear of the group mind is rooted in the metaphysical mystification of the mind–body relationship through naturalism, which rejects transcendentality in favor of an increasingly technological concept of humanity.

Keywords: social ontology, irreality, transcendentality, naturalism, collective intention, pre-reflectiveness.

1. Introduction

Social reality embodies a paradoxical ontological status. On the one hand, nothing is more real than the work we do and the money we use every day in our living world. On the other hand, we cannot perceive an institution or promise in the same way as we perceive brute, physical reality. Through enactment, "something changes in the world" (Reinach 1989, 247), and legal realities, like property, begin to exist, but nevertheless unfulfilled claims would remain even if all humans died (Loidolt 2016). Legal judgements are irreal objects, insofar as they do not belong to nature (Schreier 1924, 44), and, for Husserl, the cultural meaning of a piece of music is irreal (*Hua IX*, 116–117, 398–399). Some theorists even hold that there are no real social groups (cf. Ritchie 2015, Thomasson 2019).

How can this this irreality be understood? Various approaches are possible:

(1) A strong naturalistic account: Searle (2010, 201) claims that economic and physical realities are distinct, as the former are "products of massive fantasy […]. As long as everyone shares the fantasy and has confidence in it, the system will work just fine." According to this view, only physical objects are real, and therefore social realities are irreal. Nonetheless, this approach fails to do ontological justice to social reality (Smith 2014), and is inconsistent with Searle's commitment to describing the *status quo* without challenging it (Buekens 2014).

(2) It could be argued that social reality is irreal, because it is eidetic. However, this is not convincing: for example, the UN is a social reality, but also an individual institution.

(3) Another approach would be to argue that social reality is irreal, because it is idealized, like a perfect mathematical triangle that is nowhere to be found in the real world, in which all objects are vague. However, race and occupation—both forms of social reality—lack precise boundaries.

(4) A weak naturalistic account: despite its irreducibility to physical reality, social reality requires a physical basis. In other words, social reality is irreal, because it is irreducibly superscribed on its physical underpinnings (Smith 2014; Smith and Searle 2003).

Although a few lines from Husserl may support this "superscribed" account (nature exists at a lower level than culture [*Hua XXV*, 97]), I would argue against it in favor of a transcendental account: *the irreality of social reality originates from the higher visibility of intentional correlation*, which is irreal because of its *transcendentality*. Intentionality is transcendental in the sense that it is not located in real spacetime; rather, the latter is located within the former.

To illustrate, Section 2 provides an excellent example from Husserl: the linguistic form of natural language. A state of affairs ("the tree is green") is irreal, that is, it is not located in real spacetime. This is not because of the eidetic concepts "tree" and "green," or because the logical form is idealized, since it is an individual state of affairs described in natural language. What differentiates a state of affairs from a perceived physical object is that, while the congruence (*Deckung*) between the attended objects (the tree is the dominating [*herrschend*] aim, while its leaves are the serving [*dienend*] aims)

is implicit in perception, the very "teleological" relationship between different aims becomes explicit in linguistic forms like "subject," "predicate," "is," or "has." The linguistic form is not imposed on the physical percept, but merely makes explicit what was implicit. Thus, the irreality of a state of affairs results from the greater visibility of the congruence, i.e., the "teleological relationship" between the attended objects, and not from superscription.

With this in mind, Section 3 introduces Husserl's account of cultural items. Cultural meaning is purpose-property (*Zweckbestimmung*) and is intelligible only with reference to correlative subjectivity. While echoing the above example, Husserl's account reveals that cultural meaning is in fact intentional correlation. This leads us to the central thesis: social reality is irreal, because it makes transcendental intentionality more visible. Intentional correlation is transcendental in the sense that it is not located within real spacetime, but rather encompasses it. Physical objects are also intentional achievements, but their irreality is less visible, because the corresponding intentional activities are more passive. Hence, irreality is not imposed upon physical reality, but stems from the higher visibility of transcendental intentionality. Section 3.2 demonstrates the advantages of this account: it bridges the gap between intentionality and the irreality of social reality, and renews our understanding of meaning and information while upholding social ontology's commitment to description. Section 3.3 responds to potential objections that: (1) intentionality is located in objective time and thus my account overlooks the historicity of social reality; (2) intentionality can be naturalized.

Within this framework, Section 4 critically examines four mainstream accounts of collective intentionality (content, mode, subject, relation), drawing these accounts back to the congruence (*Deckung*) of various aims and selves within an individual mind, and considering whether collective and individual intentions are in fact analogous. The analysis shows that in practice these accounts are complementary rather than mutually exclusive, and that analytic philosophers are often misled by linguistic differences. Nonetheless, social reality does not necessarily originate from collective *objectual* intention, since we have pre-reflective plural self-awareness (Schmid 2014, 2016), for which I propose a mechanism in its most basic form: congruence with like-minded individuals (*meinesgleichen*) as a form of *non-objectual collective intention*.

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Why are we afraid of the group mind? In addition to the "substantivization" of the adverbial self (Schmid 2018) and the commitment to phenomenal consciousness (Szanto 2014), a further source of fear is the metaphysical mystification of mind–body relations through naturalism. Section 5 aims to demystify this *qua* an intentional achievement of association, arguing that increasing technologization of the concept of humanity (*Technologisierung des Menschenbildes*) (Grunwald 2009, 2010) has led naturalists to abandon transcendentalism. This is our *Krisis*.

2. Irreality of the linguistic form

In comparison with the perceived tree and its greenness, a state of affairs (*Sachverhalt*) in the linguistic form of natural language, like "The tree is green," seems to be "irreal," given that it is not located within the real spacetime. How should we understand this irreality? The first attempt may appeal to the ideality of *eidos* like "tree" and "green." Nonetheless, even though the eidetic account applies to "tree," the linguistic copula "is" is individual, since this proposition describes a particular state of affairs. Then we may say that "is" is similar to the idealized exact triangle that is nowhere to be found in the living world, where there are no clear-cut boundaries between various concepts. Still, the linguistic form of this state of affairs is typical; namely, it belongs to natural language, not the idealized, artificial language applied in exact mathematics and logic. If we take a step back, the question becomes: what makes the difference between an individual typical state of affairs described in natural language and a perceived physical thing?

Husserl's answer consists of two steps. The first is pre-linguistic attention in perception, the foundation of linguistic form. Before attending to a particular intentional object, we already have "global perception" (*Gesamtperzeption*, *Gesamtwahrnehmung*) (*Hua XXXVIII*, 282–283, 292; *Hua XXIV*, 249–251), also called "intentional/objectifying state" (*intentionale Zuständlichkeit*) (*Hua XLIII/I*, 266–267). Such perception is directed towards the whole surrounding world as the "global object" (*Gesamtgegenständlichkeit*) (*Hua Mat VII*, 138–141). The global perception is the ready-made (*bereitliegend*) substrate (*Hua XLIII/I*, 218–219, 321) for attention, which seizes (*erfassen*) an object out and

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makes it an object for itself (*Gegenstand für sich*) (*Hua XXXVIII*, 116). Further, I can keep this object "in my grasp" (*im Griff halten*), keep hold of it (*festhalten*) while attending to another (Husserl 1939, 116–123; *Hua XLIII/I*, 34–35, 119, 508, 518). Different events may happen:

(1) The previously attended object is the dominating theme (*herrschendes Thema*), while the present one is the serving one (*dienendes Thema*). For example, I am investigating a plant and attend to it. For the sake of the entire plant, I notice its flowers, trunk, and leaves. The former is the aim I always keep in mind, while the latter are means (*Mittel*) to achieve this aim. When some whole is the dominating aim, Husserl calls this process explication (*Explikation*), the whole *Explikand*, and the parts *Explikat*.

> […] dass sie [die schlichten thematischen Akte] etwas Gegenständliches als Thema für sich, *als herrschendes* (*auch freies absolutes*) *Thema* setzen. Ihnen stehen gegenüber Akte, die nicht "Gegenstände" oder Themen für sich, sondern dienende Themen (Mittel-Thema, abhängiges) setzen. (*Hua XLIII/I*, 139; Husserl's emphasis.)

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> […] that they [the simple thematic acts] set something objective as theme for itself, *as dominating* (*also free absolute*) *theme*. Opposite to these acts are those which do not set "objects" or themes for themselves, but serving themes (means-theme, dependent theme).

> Immer haben wir zu unterscheiden *schlichte und explizierende Objektivationen* und innerhalb der explizierenden, die ihrem Wesen nach kompliziert sind, herrschende und dienende, wobei aber die herrschenden in den dienenden herrschen und diese den herrschenden einverleibt sind. Eine dienende, einverleibte Objektivation objektiviert nicht als Objekt an und für sich, primär als Abgesehenes, sondern nur als Explikation eines selbständigen, herrschenden Objektivierens. (*Hua XLIII/I*, 184; Husserl's emphasis.)

> We always have to distinguish simple and explicating objectivations and within those explicating, which are complicated by essence, the dominating and serving ones, where the dominating ones are dominating in the serving ones and the latter are incorporated in the dominating

ones. A serving, incorporated objectivation does not objectivate *qua* object in and for itself, primarily as the aimed one, but only as an explication of an independent, dominating objectivating activity.

But serving themes are not necessarily real parts of the dominating one. The soil, air, and sunlight can serve the dominating theme, as well. And Husserl calls this process "connecting" (*beziehen*) or "observation that goes out" (*hinausgehende Betrachtung*) as opposed to explication, the observation that goes in (*hineingehende Betrachtung*) (*Hua XXXI*, 20, 67–70).

(2) Different themes may enjoy equal status. I am appreciating a canvas, both entirely and in detail (*Hua XLIII/I*, 136). A better example would be a collection: I pay attention to a bird, a cloud, and a piece of music. Each is equally "object for itself." (*Das Zusammengenommene ist jedes Gegenstand für sich.* [*Hua XXXI*, 190.])

(3) Furthermore, a whole can be a mere "passage" (*Durchgang*) to its parts, namely the former is serving the latter. For a fruit cultivator *qua* fruit cultivator, a boulevard is of interest only for the sake of the trees (*Hua XXXI*, 136).

(4) A formerly serving theme can now become a dominating one. As an example, I develop an independent interest in the flowers, so I ignore the tree (*Hua XXXI*, 140). These parts alienate themselves from their motherland (*sich seinem Mutterboden entfremdet*), and are rendered objects for themselves (*zu einem Gegenstand für sich gemacht*) (*Hua XXXI*, 169). Of course, some kinds of objects have a stronger disposition to be a dominating theme (*Hua XXXI*, 140–141).

Nevertheless, at this level, there is still no predicative synthesis like "the tree is green/has flowers" (*Hua XXXI*, 124). Indeed, the attended objects are the first step, the necessary foundation, but the second one is indispensable. Something new must take place (*Hua XXXI*, 127). For example, during the explication, the partial congruence (*Deckung*), the form of synthesis between the dominating aim (the tree) and the serving one (a flower) takes place *implicitly*. I am paying attention to the themes but not to their congruence. It is in the predication that this congruence, this thematic relation is made *explicit* in "is," "has," "and":

> Der "Blick" richtet sich, wird man sagen, auf das G, das als das durch die Explikationsbewegung als weiß Bestimmtes bewusst ist und in der Wiederholung dieses Übergangs auf die Einheit, auf das "Identische",

auf das "Ist", in dem das explizierte G sich mit dem Explikat identifiziert: und das kommt in der Prädikation zum Ausdruck […]. (*Hua XXXI*, 125–126; my emphasis.)

The "gaze" points, man will say, to the G, of which one is conscious of as something determined as white in the explication-movement, and in the repetition of this transition to the unity, to the "identical", *to the "Is," in which the explicated G identifies itself with the Explikat*: and that comes to the expression […].

Der erfassende Blick lebt im Identifizieren, *im Erfassen des Ist*, im Erfassen des Sich-Bestimmens als weiß. Im Explizieren bestimmt sich das Objekt *implicite* als weiß, nämlich es verdeutlicht sich, *aber das "Sich-Bestimmen-als" ist nicht erfasst*. Erfassend im Blick sich bestimmen kann nur, was explikativ schon bestimmt ist. Das originäre Erfassen von "G ist weiß" setzt die Explikation voraus, und das als weiß explizierte G erhält die Funktion des Subjekts und ist der notwendige Anfang für den prädikativen Prozess, der nur verlaufen kann in der Form "G ist α". (*Hua XXXI*, 128; my emphasis.)

The seizing gaze lives in the identifying, *in the seizing of Is*, in the seizing of being determined as white. In explication, the object is determined *implicite* as white, namely it is elucidated, *but the "being-determined-as" is not seized*. Only what is already determined through explication can be determined during seizing in the gaze. The original seizing of "G is white" presupposes the explication, and the G explicated as white receives the function of subject and is the necessary start for the predicative process, which can only run in the form "G is α."

Im Ist kommt die Form der Synthese zwischen Explikand und Explikat zum Ausdruck (und zwar jedes in seiner Form), und sie ist in der Prädikation Bestandstück des ganzen, zur Setzung kommenden "Sachverhalts". (*Hua XXXI*, 129; my emphasis.)

The form of synthesis between *Explikand and Explikat comes to expression in Is* (and each in its form), and in the predication, the form is a part of the entire "state of affairs" that is set.

In this way, different implicit thematic relations are made explicit in different linguistic forms: (1) "dominating–serving" is made explicit in the subject–predicate form (the tree is green/has flowers) or attributive form (the greenness of the tree); whereas (2) "equal" is made explicit in the conjunctive or disjunctive form (a book and/or a bike).

Therefore, it is the more explicit relations between aims or the higher visibility of "teleological"[1] relations that differentiate a state of affairs from the attended percept, that differentiate the irreal from the real. The irreality is not superimposed, but results from the higher visibility of "*Deckung*."

3. Irreality of cultural meaning

3.1. Visibility of transcendentality

Undoubtedly, linguistic form is a cultural item. According to Husserl, cultural meaning (*kultureller Sinn*) or spirituality (*Geistigkeit*) is "purpose-property" (*Zweckbestimmung*) and involved in "purpose-active doing" (*zwecktätiges Tun*) (*Hua IX*, 113–118). Further examples would confirm this view. (1) Using the sun as a *Zeitgeber*, I endow it with cultural meaning without shaping it physically. (2) According to Reinach (1989, 247), it is enactment from a third party that creates the social reality "property." But such "something [which] has changed in the world" is not physical but teleological: a mediation of a third party becomes necessary. The same goes for Schreier's (1924) legal interpretation. (3) I am eating a cake that I bought from a seller who purchased it from a manufacturer. The aims of consumer, seller, and manufacturer coincide in this cultural item. This still holds, even if I bake the cake on my own and eat it.

Back to our starting question: if purpose-property characterizes cultural items, how can it account for the irreality of social reality? The sun used as *Zeitgeber* and legal modifications involved have cultural meaning thanks to the purpose-property, and at least they involve no literal physical change. Ritchie's (2013) definition of a social group provides a further example. A chess club and a debate club can have extensionally the same members, yet they are different groups. Ritchie argues that this is, because they are realizations

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1 Here, "teleological" does not imply a final end or theological meaning.

of different functional structures—and function as means for a purpose is a purpose-property.

But what enables purpose-property to establish irreality? Cultural items have a particular connection with subjectivity, with the subjectivity that has a purpose (*Hua IX*, 384). However deep a cultural item seems to be incorporated in the physical world, it can only be what it is with reference to the subjectivity that brings about the cultural meaning (*Hua XXXVII*, 308). Thus purpose-property indicates a special, a more visible form of intentional correlation. And here is the origin of irreality: *intentionality is not located in physical spacetime; rather, the latter is a component of the former. In this way, intentionality "transcends" real spacetime and is thus "transcendental."*

However, this argument by no means implies that physical objects have no purpose-property and no transcendentality, no irreality. On the contrary, physical nature is also an intentional achievement—color and extension are both conditioned by the normality of perception. The reason, why we believe that physical reality is independent of subjectivity, objective "*an sich*," is that many intentional mechanisms involved in the constitution of physical nature are *more passive* (like the fusion of sensation fields or the aforementioned global perception) than those for social reality, so the purpose-property is *less visible*. For this reason, traditionally, *Geisteswissenschaften* only attempted to understand the more visible purpose-property; hence, the nature seems to be "unintelligible" (*Hua VIII*, 239). By contrast, Husserl delineated his transcendental phenomenology as "*absolute, universale Geisteswissenschaft*" (*Hua VIII*, 276–280, 287, 361), which seeks not only to understand cultural items, but also physical and biological nature as intentional achievements.

Therefore, the irreality of social reality is not superscribed on physical objects, but results from the higher visibility of intentionality that transcends the physical spacetime by encompassing it. Visibility can increase in several ways:

(1) As a higher level of consciousness, e.g., from the fusion of sensation fields to global perception, to perception with attention, and, finally, to linguistic form in natural language, conceptualization, and idealization in exact mathematics and logic.

(2) As a special case of (1), with the help of Shaftesbury, Husserl described "active motivation," "active control," or "free will" as reflective (self-)regulation

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(*Regelung*), (self-)determination (*Bestimmung*), (self-)shaping (*Gestaltung*), (self-)normalization; the "self-" is in brackets, since it is also possible to regulate others (*Hua XXXVII*, 159–165; *Hua VIII*, 105, 154–155). By contrast, passive motivation is the non-reflective one, like habits are the passive one (*Hua XXXVII*, 110–111, 331).

(3) On reshaped physical objects (artefacts), purpose-property is more visible than the ones without reshaping (the sun used as a *Zeitgeber*).

Intentionality is less visible in perceived physical reality in all these three manners. It is an interesting fact to notice that the more visible the intentionality is, the more likely one would ascribe polarized descriptions like "fiction" and "construct" or "absolute" and "sacred" at the same time to the intentional object—mathematical concepts, the theoretical substance in natural science.

3.2. Advantages

The first advantage of this account is a natural bridge from irreality of social reality to intentionality. Since the collective intention is believed to play a central role in social ontology, Section 4 will further expound upon it within this framework.

The second advantage concerns meaning. In fact, a dominant sense of "meaning" in Husserl is *the intended as such* (*Vermeintes als solches*), which is opposed to "*der Gegenstand schlechthin*" (the object plainly). The latter is the object when someone is perceiving or judging, whereas the former is found in reflection upon the previous perception or judgement, namely, by regarding what was previously perceived or judged now becomes a part of intentionality, as the intentional correlate of the (external) object. Such objectivity *qua* intentional correlate is termed "the intended as such" (*Vermeintes als solches*), which Husserl considered to be identical with *meaning* (*Sinn*), as an "object" in quotation marks.

> […] Naiv urteilend vollziehen wir einfach das überzeugte Meinen, es sei das und das; unser Bewußtsein ist dabei das des Wahrhaftseins des betreffenden Sachverhalts. Ebenso wie unser naives Wahrnehmen, das schlichte Bewußtsein ist vom Dasein und sogar leibhaftigen Dasein

des Wahrnehmungsgegenstands. Was so bewußt ist, heißt *schlechthin Gegenstand* bzw. *Sachverhalt.*

Wesentliche Veränderung geht vor in unserer Bewußtseinsweise, wenn wir vom naiven Wahrnehmen oder Urteilen übergehen in die Einstellung, bei der das vermeinte Was, *der Sinn* des eben noch naiv vollzogenen Aktes zum Thema gemacht, also eine eigene Art der Reflexion geübt wird. […] Aber nun ist er nicht mehr *Gegenstand*, *Sachverhalt schlechthin*, da er nun nicht mehr als seiende Wirklichkeit einfach dasteht. […] Und nun sehen wir uns an und machen zu einem eigenen Thema *das vermeinte Was, und das ist der Sinn* (<gleichsam> in *Anführungszeichen*).

Wir brauchen übrigens, um den puren Sinn zu erfassen, nicht gerade in Frage zu stellen, wir brauchen nicht kritisch gerichtet <zu> sein […]. Wir brauchen nicht zu zweifeln, zu negieren […].

[…] Wir betrachten bloß das *Wahrgenommene als solches*, den "*Wahrnehmungssinn*" […].

[…] Wir können den Blick rein auf das *Vermeinte als solches* fixiert halten: Diese Einstellung ist die schlicht noematische. (*Hua XXX*, 49–51; my emphasis.)

[…] Judging naively, we carry out simply the convinced meaning activity that it is this and that; our consciousness is here the consciousness of the truthfulness of the related state of affairs. It is the same with our naïve perceiving activity, which is the simple consciousness of the being-here and even lively being-here of the perception-object. What is conscious in such a way is called *object plainly* or *state of affairs*.

Essential change takes place in our manner of consciousness, if we transit from naïve perceiving or judging activity to the attitude, in which the intended what, *the meaning* of the act that was still naively carried out before, is made into a theme, namely, a particular sort of reflection is exercised. […] But now it is no more *object, state of affairs plainly*, since it stands no more simply here as an existing reality. […] And now we observe closely and make *the intended what* into a particular theme, *and that is the meaning* (<as if> in *quotation marks*).

Besides, to grasp the pure meaning, we do not need to put [something] into question, we do not need to critically point towards [it]. […] We do

not need to doubt, to deny […].

We observe merely the *perceived as such*, the "*perception-meaning*" […].

[…] We can fixate the gaze purely on the *intended as such*: this attitude is the plainly noematic one.

Admittedly, Husserl's theory of meaning is not consistent. In another context, Husserl describes meaning as what stands in an identifying congruence (*Deckung*) relation, e.g., Napoleon as the defeated at Waterloo and Napoleon as the victor of a different battle, whereas the object (*Gegenstand*) is identified in this relation (*Hua XXX*, 199–202). A third description of meaning is the intentional correlate whose validity (e.g., doubtful existence) is abstracted away (*Hua XXX*, 100–101). Such ambiguity may be traced back to *Logical Investigations*, where Husserl argued against psychologism in logics by proposing the irreality and irreell-ity of meaning. Nonetheless, logical concepts are (1) exact, (2) idealized, and (3) eidetic, while Husserl inherited Brentano's intentionality. Hence, it is not astonishing that these different senses of irreality come into play in a confusing way and result in the notorious debate concerning noema and meaning.

In addition, one can identity meaning and information, since the latter is irreal, because it is defined as being invariant through various speakers, listeners, and physical bearers (Janich 2006, 158). As invariant as it might be, information still requires the intentionally correlated (at least potential) speakers and listeners. And I argue that such irreality results precisely from the transcendentality of intentionality.

This still holds true even in Shannon's (1948) paper. An information system consists of (1) an information source, (2) a transmitter, (3) the channel, (4) the receiver, and (5) the destination. If the system should function for human communication, then the final information source and destination are the analogues of speaker and listener, which are the *users* of this system (cf. Gutmann *et al.* 2010). In addition, Shannon proposed an observer "who can see both what is sent and what is recovered" and "notes the errors" so that the receiver is able to correct the errors. The symbols are meaningful only correlative to the users and observers, but this subjective dimension is exactly

what Shannon abstracted away by binding the meaning to symbols for the sake of quantification. In this way, he realized, materialized the irreal information and naturalized the transcendental intentionality. Thus, there can be no wonder that the information processing metaphor becomes such a strong weapon of naturalism in cognitive psychology.

The third advantage is to uphold social ontology's commitment to description. As Buekens (2014) notes, the holiness of a sacred mountain—not created by the group, but understood as imposed by a supernatural event—is incompatible with Searle's commitment that social ontology should be descriptive and would not question the *status quo*, since arguing that the holiness is a product of collective intentionality instead of the sacred will is already a criticism. By contrast, according to our account, the holy aims set by a holy will and those of the locals coincide; this purpose-property is visible in the sacred mountain. It is not the belongingness to human intention, but the visibility of intentionality (whether god's or human's) that establishes the irreal cultural meaning. Hence, we do not have to impose observer's value on the local inhabitants and revise their ideology.

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3.3. Objections

The first possible objection concerns time. It seems wrong to claim that intentionality is not located within the objective time, since all subjects are historical. And if we insist on the irreality of social reality, the historical dimension would be abstracted away. Three replies can be offered to this objection:

(1) Admittedly, one *can* localize intentionality and cultural meaning within objective spacetime, but this very localization is an intentional achievement, as well, namely enworldening (*Verweltlichung*) (*Hua IX*, 293–294). One may ask again: can this localizing activity localize itself in objective spacetime? I argue not. We require another enworlding experience to localize this one, so that the final one in this chain is always free from localization.

(2) As Flaherty (1991, 1993) argues, conventional time unit like second or year is a product of socialization, hence an *achievement* of collective intentionality. Individuals wish to coordinate with themselves and others so

that one can make plans and take control over one's life. Meanwhile, certain physical processes (stars, pendulum, atoms, etc.) repeat themselves at the same speed under normal conditions. Hence, they are utilized for the sake of coordination.

(3) Irreality of intentionality does not harm historicity. Rather, the historical dimension of intentionality is a transcendental one.

The second objection argues that the attempt to naturalize intentionality is successful so that it is not transcendental. A thorough treatment of this problem is impossible here due to the limit of space, but the critique has a general potency. Representationalism and enactivism are two mainstream naturalistic interpretations of intentionality. The former proposes that an organism uses representation—an image, a symbol (Fodor's language of thought), an activation pattern in a connectivist network, or a state variable/parameter in a dynamic system—to "represent" the intended object. For the latter, intentionality means that a self-organizing organism enacts its environment, whether endowing glucose with the sense "nutrition" (Varela *et al.* 1993; Thompson 2007) or giving an interest-driven response to the environment (Hutto and Myin 2013).[2]

I contend that there are serious reasons to doubt both representationalism as well as enactivism. On the one hand, representationalism assumes that the subject is using certain physical processes to "represent," but it is in fact the wiretapping researcher who deciphers the meaning of the physical processes for the subject. In other words, the physical processes are representations only for the researchers, but this does not guarantee that they are also representations for the subject. On the other hand, enactivism simply maps intentional correlation onto the organism–environment relation. Nonetheless, intention can also be directed towards the interior, towards its development and reproduction—that is quite normal. If these attempts to localize intentionality and meaning in a certain physical area ultimately fail, then transcendentality is unavoidable and deserves serious consideration.

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2 The version of enactivism as proposed by Noë and O'Regan (2002) focuses primarily on perception and has no direct implication for intentionality in general. Hence, it will not be discussed here.

4. Collective intentionality and pre-reflective plural self-consciousness

Collective intention plays a central role in current accounts of social reality. As summarized by Szanto (2016), four mainstream explanations of collective intentionality are: (1) the content-account: each individual intends that we-X (Bratman 1993); (2) the mode-account: each individual has the mode "we-intend" (Tuomela 2013); (3) the subject-account: jointly committed individuals intend to act as a body, a singular subject "we" (Gilbert 2009); (4) the relation-account: the collective intention is nothing other than the relations between individuals. Literally, they are different, but are they *de facto* competing against each other? "One shall not let oneself be too guided and possibly misled by language," but "go after the structure of consciousness in lively intuition" (*Geht man der Struktur des Bewusstseins in lebendiger Intuition nach, so lasse man sich nicht durch die Sprache zu sehr leiten und eventuell irreführen.*) (*Hua XLIII/I*, 85). How is this possible for collective intention? Even if collective intention is not a projection of individual minds onto a group—the critique of Schmid (2000) of Husserl's higher-order-person theory—, it is nonetheless an analogue of the individual one, so that a retro-jection onto individual minds possibly provides us with this "*lebendige Intuition*" to examine these four explanations.

In *First Philosophy* and elsewhere, Husserl proposed that each act or even each experience corresponds to a self; these different selves are unified as an identical self:

> Warum sprechen wir aber von *demselben Ich*, das sich auf sich selbst zurück bezieht, seiner selbst in der "Selbstwahrnehmung" inne wird und seines Aktus: wo doch evident ist, daß verschiedene Akte sich übereinander schichten und daß *jeder* Akt *sein* gesondertes Ich, sozusagen als seinen *gesonderten Aktpol* hat—? (*Hua VIII*, 90; Husserl's emphasis.)

> But why are we speaking of *the same self*, which connects itself back to itself, is aware of itself and its actus in the "self-perception": when it is indeed evident that different acts layer themselves on each other and *every* act has *its* separate self, so to speak as *its separate act-pole*?

[…] daß die "*vielen*" *Aktpole in sich evident dasselbe lch sind* […] ich sehe, daß es, sich in eine Vielheit von Akten und Aktsubjekten spaltend, doch ein und dasselbe ist, dasselbe Ich, das *sich* da spaltet. Ich sehe, daß Ichleben in Aktivität durchaus nichts anderes ist als ein *Sich-immerfort-in-tätigem-Verhalten-spalten* und daß immer wieder ein allüberschauendes Ich sich etablieren kann, das <ein> alle <jene Akte und Aktsubjekte> identifizierendes ist […]. (*Hua VIII*, 90–91; Husserl's emphasis.)

[…] that *the "many" act-poles in themselves are evidently the same self* […] I see that it, splitting itself into a multitude of acts and act-subjects, is indeed the same one, the same self, which splits itself there. I see that self-living in activity is completely nothing other than an *in-operative-conducting-constantly-self-splitting* activity and that an all-overlooking self can always be established again, which is <a> self that identifies all <those acts and act-subjects> […].

Husserl called this unifying process the identity-synthesis of self, which goes through all experiences, correlatively to the synthesis of objective unity:

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[…] Korrelativ geht durch diese Synthesis [Synthesis der gegenständlichen Identität] nicht nur, sondern durch alle Bewußtseinserlebnisse *die Identitätssynthese des Ich* und durch alle Modifikationen der Erlebnisse, durch unbewußte, hindurch. (*Hua IX*, 480; my emphasis.)

[…] Correlatively, *the identity-synthesis of self* not only goes through this synthesis [synthesis of the objective identity], but through all consciousness-experiences and through all modifications of the experiences, through the unconscious experiences.

To note is that this synthesis of selves takes place "without any identifying activity"; namely, it is *pre-reflective*; it is not the identification in reflection:

Der Ichpol ist konstituiert in der Ichsynthese, die alle aktuellen und potentiellen Akte beständig und *ohne jede identifizierende Aktivität* zur einheitlichen Deckung bringt […]. (*Hua IX*, 481; my emphasis.)

The self-pole is constituted in the self-synthesis, which constantly and *without any identifying activity* brings all actual and potential acts to the unified congruence […].

Parallel to the synthesis of intentional objects is not only the identity-synthesis of the self, but also the unification of experiences, which Husserl calls "*universal synthesis,*" whose "index" is the self:

Und wieder muß gesehen werden, daß parallel mit derjenigen beständig waltenden Art der Synthesis, die Einheit und Selbigkeit dieses oder jenes, und so überhaupt *Gegenstände*, als Gegenstände für das Ich, bewußtmacht, umgekehrt das *Ich* selbst der Index einer *universalen* Synthesis ist, durch die all das unendlich mannigfaltige Bewußtsein, das das meine ist, eine universale Einheit hat, nicht die gegenständliche, sondern die *ichliche* bzw. es muß gesehen werden, daß durch diese Art der Synthesis das "stehende und bleibende Ich" dieses Bewußtseinslebens immerfort konstituiert und bewußtgemacht ist. (*Hua VII*, 109; Husserl's emphasis.)

And again it must be seen that parallel to the constantly functioning kind of synthesis, which makes aware the unity and sameness of this and that, and in general makes aware *objects*, as objects for the self, while, on the contrary, the *self* is itself an index of a *universal* synthesis, through which all the limitlessly manifold consciousness, which is my consciousness, has a universal unity, not the objective one, but the *self-ic* one, or it must be seen that through this kind of synthesis the "standing and remaining self" of this conscious-life is constantly constituted and made aware.

Hence, there are analogues of collective intention within an individual mind: there are various selves for an individual, and the synthesis/congruence/unification of these selves is parallel to the one of experiences and the one of objects. To illustrate, in a normal perception of a physical object, the visual and the tactile modules are in a congruence relation, parallel to the congruence of the visual selves and the tactile ones. And if there is

disharmony between the visual and the tactile aspect, the corresponding selves are involved in the dispute. Here, the physical object is the "collective" intentional object of different selves. (Of course, we do not require pathological dissociation [Laird 1923] to establish these selves in an individual mind.)

With the "collective intention" at the individual level, we can now proceed to examine the above four explanations:

(1) The content-account: do visual and tactile selves in a normal perception intend that *they* should perceive the same object? Of course not. The selves do not enter the content. But, *nota bene*, the context of Bratman (1993) is planning and agency. As mentioned above, agency, active control or free will is the reflective (self-)control/determination/regulation. For example, I bake a cake badly and I force myself to eat it. For the controlling self, the baking and eating one are objects to be controlled, hence in the content. Here, one should do justice to Bratman's account.

(2) The mode-account: an excellent example to demonstrate why originally separate intentional modes alter when they enter a congruence in disjointed (*zusammenhangslos*) fantasies: a dog in Alice's Wonderland and another dog with the same properties in Cinderella's world are not identical, since they are in different worlds. Even if these two worlds are the same (*gleich*), they are not identical as long as the corresponding intentions are in a separate mode. If two worlds merge into one, the intentional modes become "collective," coinciding in the same object.

(3) The subject-account: as illustrated above, congruence-synthesis of selves occurs parallel to the synthesis of objects and experiences, and thus as a result of the synthesis we have a "higher-order-subject," e.g., visual and tactile selves act as a singular self, as "one body." Nonetheless, a higher-order-subject is far weaker than a higher-order-agent, a subject with the ability of reflective self-control.

(4) The relation-account: different selves are in congruence with each other— that is their "relation," but it does not have to be so strong as "commitment" or "agreement," which is only possible for an agent.

To summarize, the four accounts may capture different aspects of collective intention, but they are *de facto* complementary rather than mutually exclusive.

In this aspect, I suggest that analytic philosophers are often misled by differences in expressions.

However, collective intention is not necessarily "objectual" as we usually think. The other is Schmid's "plural pre-reflective self-consciousness" (2014, 2016) that is non-objectual, for which we may offer an account: *the minimum form of such consciousness is the congruence with "the like-minded"* (meinesgleichen*)*. In fact, this is a non-objectual form of intentionality, which includes association and motivation as elementary forms of intentionality (*Hua XXXVII*, 180) and as a tendency (*Tendenz*) between consciousness (*Hua XLIII/III*, 308–311). I term it "consciousness-with" as opposed to "consciousness-about," which has an object opposed to us (*Gegen-stand vor-stellen*). Thus, pre-reflective plural self-consciousness is a non-objectual collective intentionality.

"Like-minded" does not indicate similarity in all aspects, but the minimum possibility of coordination. A non-human creature can also be like-minded in this sense. "Coordination" does not have to be an agreement or harmony. A dispute also counts as a form of coordination.

The actual contact is not a necessary condition for "like-mindedness." For example, any *potential* subject that perceives that same world similarly can be like-minded. Hence, such pre-reflective congruence with "the like-minded" is more fundamental than empathy (*Einfühlung*).

Highly organized relations like "jointed commitment" (Schmid 2013) are not required for the minimum degree of pre-reflective plural awareness. Even a "feature group" (e.g., the Blacks) can pre-reflectively have the feature of "us." If we understand pre-reflective self-consciousness in terms of self-congruence, instead of Henry's (1990, 110, 118) and Zahavi's (2004) self-affection, we can perhaps clarify the mechanism of the plural one.[3]

5. Concluding remarks

In this article, I have argued against the weak naturalistic account concerning the irreality of social reality, which states that social facts are superscribed

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3 As far as I can see, there is no potential that self-affection could account for the plural one.

upon brute physical ones. Instead, with the example of linguistic form in natural language, I have shown that this irreality results from the higher visibility of transcendental intentionality: intentional correlation is not located in real spacetime, but encompasses the latter, and thus transcends it. The irreal transcendentality is more implicit in physical nature, but not imposed on it. This account bridges the irreality of social reality and intentionality, has significant implications for our understanding of meaning and information, and upholds social ontology's commitment to description. Within this framework, I argue that four explanations of collective intention do not exclude but complement each other. In addition, collective intention is not necessarily objectual considering the pre-reflective plural self-consciousness, which we describe as non-objectual collective intentionality: the congruence with "like-minded individuals."

Nonetheless, a ghost haunts social ontology on every corner: *why are we afraid of the group mind*? Besides historical instrumentalization, besides substantialization of the adverbial self (Schmid 2018) and the commitment to phenomenal consciousness (Szanto 2014), another reason lies deeply at the roots of our age: the metaphysical mystification of the mind–body relation through naturalism. By contrast, according to Husserl, the mind–body relation is an intentional achievement of induction-association, even in the case of one's own body:

> Es ist nun aber klar, daß jede derartige Erfahrung von Unphysischem als zu Physischem seinsmäßig Zugehörigem (ob nun in der Gleichzeitigkeit oder zeitlichen Folge) nichts anderes ist als Erfahrung desselben als *induktiv* <ihm> Zugehörigen. […] Das wiederum besagt nichts anderes: eine Einheit der verweisenden Erwartung geht von dem sinnlich Daseienden auf das Mitseiende über; und diese Erwartung erfüllt sich natürlich im wahrnehmungsmäßigen Mitgegebensein des Psychischen. So ist in der Wahrnehmung *meiner eigenen Leiblichkeit* die evidente Zugehörigkeit des inneren "ich bewege" zu der äußerlich erfahrenen physischen Handbewegung nichts anderes als innerer Verlauf im erwartungsmäßigen Mit-dasein-müssen mit der zugleich ablaufenden äußerlichen Handbewegung. Dieses erwartungsmäßige

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"muß" expliziert sich aber evidenterweise als entsprungen aus wiederholtem Zusammen-wahrgenommen-sein als zusammen daseiend und somit als Kraft eines induktiven "muß" […]. (*Hua IX*, 136–137; my emphasis.)

But now it is clear that every one of such experiences of the non-physical *qua* something belonging to the physical (whether at the same time or in temporal sequence) is nothing other than as the experience of the very same *qua inductively* belonging to the physical. This again means nothing other than: a unity of indicating anticipation transits from the one that is sensuously here to the one that is along-with; and this anticipation fulfills itself naturally in the being-given-along-with of the psychic. In this way, in the perception of *my own bodiness*, the evident belongingness of the internal "I move" to the externally experienced physical hand-movement is nothing other than the internal process in the anticipatorily must-be-there-along-with the simultaneously proceeding external hand-movement. This "must" can nonetheless be explicated as evidently originating from repeatedly being-perceived-together as being there together and therefore as the potency of an inductive "must" […].

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For example, some tactile sensations are relatively independent of other experiences, while a finger as an intentional object is relatively independent of the other, but these two invariants covariate. As a result, they are associated and the tactile sensation is localized in the finger. The same concerns the localization of a functional area in neuroscience, except that the latter association is done rather by the researcher than the subject.

This is a transcendental clarification of the mind–body relation. It by no means supports parallelism (*Hua IX*, 138), since the relation is an empirical achievement of association, not an *a priori* absolute metaphysical judgement. If an intentional object and, e.g., the pre-reflective We-consciousness covariate as relative invariants in a similar way, a group mind is nothing spooky. On the contrary, the naturalists' abandonment of transcendentality necessarily results in the mystification of the mind–body relation and in the fear of group mind, since they can hardly imagine a consciousness associated with a non-human-like body. Why do they abandon transcendentalism? It is not their own fault,

but the atmosphere of our time: one seems not to feel relieved and satisfied until one identifies the human being as a machine. Such technologization of the human image (*Technisierung des Menschenbildes*) is well justified, if limited within its boundaries (Grunwald 2009, 2010); but when we start to *define* the human being as a machine, that becomes our *Krisis*. And if Husserl responded to this problem with transcendentalism, my reply can only be the same.

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Noam Cohen

Subjectivity as a Plurality
Parts and Wholes in Husserl's Theory of Intersubjectivity

Abstract: In this paper, I claim that the structure of intersubjectivity as Husserl presents it in the *Cartesian Meditations* is articulated as being governed by a logic of parts and wholes rather than that of a phenomenology of empathy, and that the articulation of this logic demonstrates that the transcendental ego is intrinsically intersubjective. My main philosophical claim in this regard is that the way Husserl's account of transcendental empathy unfolds in the *Cartesian Meditations* implies a prior fundamental mereological structure, of which the individual transcendental ego is only a part. That is, the transcendental ego has an eidetic *a priori* intersubjective structure in the sense of being a moment of an intersubjectively structured transcendental whole. In this sense, rather than being a *singulare tantum*, it is more fitting to say that transcendental subjectivity is actually a *plurale tantum*.

Keywords: intersubjectivity, mereology, parts and wholes, *Cartesian Meditations*, monads.

It is well-known that in the fifth of his *Cartesian Meditations* Husserl puts forth a theory of intersubjectivity. Most commentators of Husserl have read his *Cartesian Meditations* as presenting a theory of intersubjectivity, the basis of which is empathy, in the form of a process of constituting the sense of "other" in one's own experience as the primary origin of the intersubjective layer of experience. In this paper, I claim that the structure of intersubjectivity as Husserl presents it in the *Cartesian Meditations* is articulated as being governed by a logic of parts and wholes rather than that of a phenomenology of empathy, and that the articulation of this logic demonstrates that the transcendental ego is intrinsically intersubjective. My main philosophical claim in this regard is that the way Husserl's account of transcendental empathy unfolds in the *Cartesian*

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I.

Before we delve into the technical depths of our analysis, we would do well to clarify its basic philosophical background and motivations. What is at stake for us in this inquiry is Husserl's account of the way others, i.e., other subjects, other egos, appear in our experience of the world. For Husserl, other subjects are a necessary condition for the being of the world as common and objective in the first place, since the sense of objectivity as such is "being-for-everyone." Thus, explaining how the transcendental ego constitutes the sense of the "other subject" is a crucial and essential part of grounding objectivity. In this regard, the task of phenomenology is to explain how the transcendental ego constitutes the sense of "other subject" within its flux of individual experiences, in order to show how objectivity is possible.

In the fifth of his *Cartesian Meditations*, Husserl does precisely just that: he puts forth a whole theory of intersubjectivity, in which he analyses acts of empathy, i.e., our attribution of intentional acts to other subjects. Among the many interpretations of his theory, however, we find contradictory approaches towards the status of the emergence of others through empathy in the experience of the transcendental ego. As I have mentioned, most commentators (e.g., Theunissen 1986 and Smith 2003) hold that the actual concrete experience of others constitutes the sense of the other ego and with it the intersubjective character of the world. Others (e.g., Zahavi 2001 and Taipale 2019) claim that the concrete experience of empathy, which Husserl describes in the fifth meditation, is only a *thematization*, a making-explicit of an *a priori* structure of an essentially intersubjective world, which already presupposes the sense of "other ego," and therefore empathy does not constitute it. It is easy to see that the former view regards the transcendental ego's relation to others as being *a*

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posteriori and presumptive, while the latter assumes that such a relation takes the form of an *a priori* and apodictically "open" intersubjectivity.

As the paper proceeds, my approach offers new support for the second view on the basis of a mereological analysis, but it then advances the proposition that the transcendental ego itself possesses an eidetic *a priori intersubjective* structure in the sense of being a moment of an intersubjectively structured transcendental whole. Not only is the concrete experience of the "other" a thematization of a prior possibility predelineated in the *a priori* nature of transcendental experience, but transcendental subjectivity from the very beginning must be considered as a community—what Husserl names the "community of monads."

II.

In the third of his *Logical Investigations*, Husserl presents what he takes to be the *a priori* eidetic structure of what it is to be an object, in general, in terms of mereology, i.e., the logic of parts and wholes: "Every object is either actually or possibly a part, i.e. there are actual or possible wholes that include it." (*LI* III, § 1, 4.) Husserl distinguishes between two senses of being a part. On the one hand, complex wholes can be composed of "pieces" (*Stücke*). Each piece can exist, at least in principle, on its own, while still being put together with other pieces to form a whole. For example, as I gaze upon the table before me, I see that it is comprised of different parts, such as its legs and its top. These parts can be separated from the table as a whole either in practice or in thought, so as to be themselves individual and independent beings.

On the other hand, we can understand complexity in a different way, as an interpenetration of parts, such that one can neither be separated from some or all the other parts nor from the whole of which it is a part. Husserl calls these interpenetrating parts "moments" (*Momente*). For instance, as I gaze again at the very same table, I perceive its surface, its extension, its color, and its brightness. These different aspects of the table permeate each other in the sense that one cannot be given without the presence of the others. It is impossible to perceive brightness without it being the brightness of the table's color. In similar fashion, the perception of color entails the perception of the colored surface.

And again, we can neither perceive nor imagine a surface without extension. The elimination or modification of at least one of these contents must modify or eliminate the others. Things that are moments cannot be presented without other moments upon which they *essentially* depend. It is precisely on this basis that Husserl coins the term of *foundation*. In Husserl's terms, when one moment necessarily requires the presence of another moment, we say that it is *founded* upon the latter, and that the latter is *founding*. According to Husserl:

> If a law of essence means that an *A* cannot as such exist except in a more comprehensive unity which connects it with an *M*, we say that an *A as such requires foundation by an M* or also that *an A as such needs to be supplemented by an M*. (*LI* III, §14, 25.)

Furthermore, Husserl calls an object that can be regarded as a whole a *concretum*, while something that is only a moment is called an *abstractum*.

III.

In the fifth Cartesian meditation, the first step in clarifying the sense of *other* subjectivity involves a new *epoché* with respect to the supposition of others, followed by a reduction of transcendental experience to its "sphere of ownness" (*Eigenheitsphäre*; *CM*, 92). This narrower reduction means to preliminarily distinguish between the sense of "mine" and the sense of "other," by abstracting from experience only what is specifically peculiar to the ego, the *non-alien*, in contrast to all *alien* experiences. I regard the world, accordingly, only in its bare appearance as a harmoniously private flowing experience, corresponding only to my own individual subjectivity. This means that the reduction singles out, within my own whole complex of experiences, the private experiences, which I experience as strictly individually subjective, as strictly my own and only mine.

Though this move seems pretty straightforward at first, once one gets down to the details it is not clear what this sphere of ownness exactly is, because this new reduction leaves us within a sphere of an ambiguous sense (cf. Bernet, Kern, and Marbach 1995, 156). It initially demarcates a "primordial sphere,"

which amounts to the totality of directly self-given experiences, i.e., *all* purely individual subjective experiences, but then restricts us to a "solipsistic sphere" that excludes any reference to others, even if these are privately and immediately given to the I. Due to limits of scope, I cannot discuss this ambiguity in depth here. For the purposes of my argument, it is enough to point out that after the methodical reduction to the sphere of ownness, Husserl's point of departure in analyzing the constitution of the sense of "other" is the solipsistic sphere, i.e., the sphere of ownness in the strict sense. Thus, following this reduction, the entrance of another person to my perceptual field of the solipsistic sphere is considered only as the emerging presence of a material body (*Körper*). At the level of the pure experiential stratum of the solipsistic sphere, I see another physical body, among many others, which is transcendent only in the minimal sense pertaining to my own primordial and immanent stream of experiences.

*How can we now explain the ability to turn from regarding something as a physical body (*Körper*) to seeing it at as an animate organism (*Leib*), as another ego? In other words, what constitutes the sense of another subjectivity?* One way of explaining this would be analogy. In analogical reasoning, I point out similarities between two things, and then on this basis I conclude that further similarities may be taken to exist. In the case of bodies, one can say that I perceive a similarity between my own body and other physical bodies, in terms of outward appearance and behavior, and therefore I conclude that these other bodies possess all that characterizes consciousness, since this is the case with my body. Husserl stresses, however, that *the apperception of others is by no means an inference from analogy*. Apperception is not an inference or act of thinking, but is a unitary apprehension, a grasp of something already given in the world as a *unity*.

Even though my own animate organism is the only body that I indeed understand originally and immediately as animate, I do apprehend other animate bodies as such, since I apprehend their physical bodies merely as *moments* of a whole of which consciousness is another moment. Put differently, the person's body and consciousness are intuited as *interpenetrating moments* of that person. What I perceive, or rather the intentionality of my perception of the other, is not just a body, but a unity of body and consciousness, i.e., a person. I apprehend the necessity of this part–whole structure alongside the basic perceptual experience.

Nevertheless, at the same time, Husserl names the original concrete experience of another human being an "analogizing apprehension," but not only that, he also states that the motivation for such analogizing apprehension is similarity! A similarity between my body and another body. How should we interpret this apparent contradiction in Husserl's account?

IV.

The understanding of things in the world through apperception (of any kind) according to Husserl points back to an *Urstiftung*—"*primal instituting*" of sense (*CM*, 111)—, in which an object with a similar sense was constituted for the first time, and with this constitution an ideal sense was instantiated. The so-called "analogizing" involved in the apperception of the alter ego is another case of repeating an *ideal* sense of another ego. The actual concrete apperception of the other is the fulfilment of a prior intention, an anticipation of encountering another ego. According to Husserl, in the original institution of the sense of the other, prior to "analogizing" apperception, "*ego* and *alter ego* are always and necessarily given *in an original 'pairing'*" (*CM*, 112). It is an occurrence in passive synthesis, in which the other is given as such only in relation to my own ego, i.e., only in respect of being part of a group of which I myself am also a part. Pairing is an association of at least two distinct data given in a unity of similarity. When we perceive two things as similar, they are associated for us as a pair. If there are more than two things, they form a group along the same principles of synthesis. It is crucial, however, to emphasize that this function is essentially neither conscious nor voluntary. When we actually come to perceive things united in similarity, then we merely become aware of an already existing unity. Pairing is *passive*, functioning at the general level of pre-reflective experience, that is, regardless of whether it actually enters awareness or not. The recognition of an alter ego, then, is not a contingent analogy, but rather a realization of a necessary, *a priori*, unity of sense.

Some commentators (Schütz 1970; Hutcheson 1982; Theunissen 1984) have understood Husserl's analysis as claiming that the basis for the association of pairing is similarity. However, if we follow Husserl's way of reasoning as early as the *Logical Investigations*, similarity as such cannot be the basis for the

passive synthesis of pairing. That is not to say that similarity is not given in the pairing of subjects, but only that it is not the motivating factor which drives the association of pairing. Similarity as such cannot be the basis for this synthesis, because it itself presupposes at least two contents which are already given together as a unity. In other words, since similarity itself already presupposes unity, viewing it as a source of unity begs the question. While discussing the unity of species in the *LI*, Husserl says that

> […] we find in fact that wherever things are "alike," an identity in the strict and true sense is also present. We cannot predicate exact likeness of two things, without stating the respect in which they are thus alike. Each exact likeness relates to a Species, under which the objects compared, are subsumed: this Species is not, and cannot be, merely "alike" in the two cases, if the worst of infinite regresses is not to become inevitable. (*LI* II §3, 242.)

The act of predicating similarity to two things depends on a prior existing aspect, with regard to which we can say they are alike. According to Husserl, the aspect, in virtue of which things are similar to each other, is their species. If we attempt to derive the species from similarity, we necessarily enter an infinite regress, since each determination of similarity requires a prior common ground. This means that the similarity, which Husserl cites as the basis for attributing subjectivity to a material body like me, is merely an indication of an already present unity, waiting to be concretized and thematized. It is not a motivating psychological factor for regarding other bodies similar to mine as human beings, but rather it is a characteristic of experience stemming from an *eidetic necessity*. Such eidetic necessity owes its intelligibility to the principles of founding and foundedness that dictate the essential relations between individuals and pluralities, between one and many.

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V.

How do the principles of foundation, then, govern the relations between "I" and "other"? When I utter the words *alter ego*, an inseparable part of their meaning

is the sense of *ego*, whose sense itself is originally constituted for me within my own primordial sphere. Thus, the ego, or more precisely, the basic immediate sense of being an ego, is a part of the sense of being an *alter* ego. The ego as I is a *foundation* of the ego as other. The sense of I is a *moment* of the sense of other, since the other cannot be given without the presence of the I; initially, because an other is always given in cognition to an I, but more essentially because ego as I is a moment of the ideal sense of alter ego. The experience of someone else, then, is mediated by an immediate first-person experience, such that the latter is a moment of the constituted otherness.

At the same time, however, since the unity of I and other does not conflate them into one, there must be an aspect of difference which makes plurality possible. That is to say, although I grasp myself and the other as *one* unity in virtue of sameness, at the same time there is an unbridgeable *difference* which constitutes the two of us as a *plurality*. I can never experience the immediate stream of consciousness of the other. Since it is essentially absent and beyond my grasp, we are different from each other. "If it were, if what belongs to the other's own essence were directly accessible, it would be merely a moment of my own essence, and ultimately he himself and I myself would be the same." (*CM*, 109). Recognizing the essentiality of this gap reveals that not only is the *alter* ego founded on the ego, but that also the ego as I is founded on the other. The sense of my own ego, i.e., an ego with a sphere of ownness, "gets this character of being 'my' self by virtue of the contrastive pairing that necessarily takes place" (*CM*, 115). In other words, I can understand the meaning of "my own" only in contrast to something which is not mine; something which is essentially beyond my immediate experiential grasp. Through the realization that I cannot experience the immanent stream of experience of an alien ego, I become aware of the individuality, in the form of direct immanent experience, of my own ego. In this respect, the experience of my own private self has sense only through the mediation of the other. The I cannot be given as such without a founding moment of otherness. Therefore, the alter ego is a moment of the ego in relations of reciprocal founding. The I is merely a moment of a whole, and ultimately not a *concretum*, i.e., not an independent whole, but rather an *abstractum*, because her being in the world cannot be fully conceived without other moments, i.e., other egos.

In virtue of this dependence between egos as abstract parts, our experience of the world has an objective sense. The recognition of another body as an alter ego also makes possible the sense of things in the world as *one and the same from different perspectives*. "We," the alter ego and I, experience one and the same world, from different viewpoints, which converge into one unity. In addition to being dependent on each other, ego and alter ego permeate each other as moments of the objective world as a whole. But this "we" is not restricted only to me and one other ego. It is not only I and thou, but an open we. Not only is it impossible to understand an ego without the (at least) implicit presence of another ego and vice versa, but we also cannot conceive of a world without a plurality of egos perceiving and living in it. Therefore, the world as such is necessarily and *a priori* an intersubjective world, which is to say, a world given to a communion of egos. It is this community that constitutes world space, world time, and reality in general. An objective world correlates to a transcendental intersubjectivity, i.e., a community of egos that always transcends any particular point of view.

Every ego necessarily takes part in this "we," "the community of monads,"
(*Monadengemeinschaft*), a collective conscious act, either potential or actual, constituted by the unity of diverse simultaneous perceptions of the same objects. The "we" is in this way the index around which the objective world is oriented. In effect, it is a plurality of different points of view, which undergo constant mediation in relation to each other. It is important to emphasize that it is precisely not a "view from nowhere," but rather an endless community of views, of monads, each relating to a common world in virtue of the existence of other views. It is a community of egos mutually existing for each other, harmoniously constituting one identical world, the "harmony of the monads" (*Harmonie der Monaden*). By virtue of this harmonious communalization of intentionalities, the community of monads,

> [...] the transcendental intersubjectivity has an *intersubjective* sphere of ownness, in which it constitutes the Objective world; and thus, as the transcendental "We," it is a subjectivity for this world and also for the world of human beings, which is the form in which it has made itself Objectively actual. (*CM*, 107.)

VI.

Now, it is crucial to understand in what sense there are *many* egos, in order to clarify the sense, in which the transcendental ego, as a moment of a communal whole, is absolute and singular. In the passages above, I have demonstrated that the ego necessarily presupposes alter egos, as a moment of a community of monads. This claim, however, seems to contradict Husserl's view that the transcendental ego is "the one and only absolute ego" (*CM*, 69), and that therefore the phenomenology of "*self-constitution* coincides with *phenomenology as a whole*" (*CM*, 68). To answer this challenge, it is telling to discuss an objection made by Alfred Schütz to Husserl's theory of intersubjectivity. In fact, Schütz raised two major objections to the theory, which have to do with the problematic relations between plurality and singularity in the transcendental sphere. First, he asks:

> But is it conceivable and meaningful to speak of a plurality of transcendental egos? Is not the concept of the transcendental ego conceivable only in the singular? Can it also be "declined" in the plural, or is it, as the Latin grammarians call it, a *singulare tantum*? (Schütz 1970, 77.)

Again, if the I is indeed the pole of all world validities, then a plurality of such egos seems like an obvious contradiction. In this regard, Zahavi has made a helpful distinction between *indexical* uniqueness and *substantial* uniqueness (Zahavi 2001, 82). The indeclinability of the I does not indicate that there is only one I, but rather that it is only I who experience myself as such. There is only one I for me, and this I is absolutely unique and individual, but only in this indexical sense. Exactly as there is only one "here" with respect to my immanent consciousness, but many points which are "here" for others, there is only one I for me, but many egos which are an I for others. Many commentators have made the mistake of identifying this indexical uniqueness with a substantial one. But not only does this uniqueness not imply a solipsistic viewpoint, its indexical nature necessarily implies others, because "I" and "here" have sense only with respect to "other" and "there."

Even if we consider this to settle the problem, however, Schütz's second objection introduces another, more difficult, obstacle:

> And what sense would it make to speak of intersubjectivity with reference to the one and unitary Eidos "transcendental ego at large," that is, to speak of transcendental, not mundane, intersubjectivity? (Schütz 1970, 79.)

Given that after eidetic variation the factual transcendental ego is disclosed to be only a possibility, an example of one eidos ego, it seems that intersubjectivity merely has a derivative sense, as many factual transcendental egos. In this sense, it is not transcendental. If there is only one general eidos of the transcendental ego, then transcendental intersubjectivity seems to be merely a co-presence of many *factual* transcendental egos. Though Schütz does not develop this point any further, but merely raises it as an open question, he seems to imply that the plurality of transcendental egos must be factual, taking for granted the model of one eidos and many instantiations as definitive in this case. That is, he understands the multiplicity of transcendental egos as many instantiations of one and the same eidos ego. Under this conception, the plurality of egos is made up of numerically singular egos, a fact that undermines the possible transcendental character of intersubjectivity.

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In response to this objection, on the basis of my mereological analysis, I claim that transcendental intersubjectivity does not follow the traditional pattern of a species and its different instantiations. It is not as though there is a species of one unique individual "ego" which all numerically distinct factual egos manifest. Rather, the plurality of transcendental intersubjectivity instead appears as a unified whole of *moments*, each inseparable from the complex unity of which it is a part. Thus, a transcendental ego is a moment of a complex plurality, which is not simply a collection of numerically distinct manifestations of one and the same ideal sense. Schütz's problem derives from a misconception of the singularity of the transcendental ego as well as of the plurality which characterizes transcendental intersubjectivity.

We have already seen numerous times that the difference between "I" and "other," the basic source of alterity within the ego's experience, has constitutive

significance. In other words, there is no conceivable ego outside of a relation with others. Accordingly, understanding an ego merely as an instantiation of an idea glosses over this integral element of constitution, since it views plurality merely as a product of a prior undifferentiated sense. But again, differentiation is precisely what makes subjectivity as an individual intentional structure possible. Thus, it is mistaken to conceive of the plurality of transcendental intersubjectivity simply in terms of sharing a property in common, which each ego holds individually regardless of the others. The others are precisely an inseparable part of the communality, in virtue of which the transcendental ego is as it is. The ideal sense of ego consists in constitutive relations of sameness and otherness which depend on and presuppose a plurality. The *a priori* structure of this ideal sense consists in mutual relations of foundedness between different and distinct egos. There is no sense to an I with a sphere of ownness without a contrary other which is not its own, and there is no *alter* ego without the denial of access to its own primordial sphere. One cannot conceive of one moment without the other, and vice versa; their senses truly permeate each other to form one whole. *This whole, which is the true eidos of subjectivity, can accordingly never be an eidos of one individual ego, but rather an eidos of a plurality of egos, an eidetic structure of community.*

To sum up this analysis, we can determine that the unity of the community of monads is an eidetic structure of plurality, composed of interdependent and interpenetrating moments, each in itself unique, holding within itself an interplay of sameness and otherness, identity and alterity, presence and absence. *A transcendental ego is uniquely singular, but only in virtue of an alter ego, thus unique only as a moment of a whole.* Rather than being a *singulare tantum*, it is more fitting to say that transcendental subjectivity in its fullest sense is actually a *plurale tantum*, since all transcendental activity presupposes a multitude of transcendental egos. The relations between egos, then, are constitutive of all being: "The intrinsically first being, the being that precedes and bears every worldly Objectivity, is transcendental intersubjectivity: the universe of monads, which effects its communion in various forms." (*CM*, 156.) Any concrete experience, either of another ego or of something else in the world, always presupposes an *a priori* open intersubjectivity, the community of monads, which is structured as an infinite whole of interpenetrating moments.

As I have demonstrated, these moments by necessity follow a logic of moments and wholes in mutual relations of foundedness.

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Anthony Longo

Intersubjectivity, Mirror Neurons, and the Limits of Naturalism

Abstract: The paper explores the possibilities and limits of naturalizing the experience of intersubjectivity. The existence of mirror neurons illustrates that an experience of intersubjectivity is already present on a more primitive, precognitive, and embodied level. A similar argument had been made in the first half of the twentieth century by phenomenologists, such as Edmund Husserl. This motivated Vittorio Gallese, one of the discoverers of mirror neurons, and other philosophers to connect the functioning of mirror neurons with Husserl's phenomenology of intersubjectivity as presented in his *Cartesianische Meditationen*. I argue that such attempts are grounded in an inadequate interpretation of Husserl's analysis and turn into a circular argument. As such, they bypass a more primordial experience of intersubjectivity, which Husserl thematizes in *Ideen II* as the experience of an "expressive unity," and which resists any project of naturalization from within.

Keywords: intersubjectivity, mirror neurons, naturalism, Edmund Husserl, Vittorio Gallese.

1. Introduction

One of the recurring debates in recent philosophy of mind concerns two widespread approaches within contemporary philosophy and cognitive science to phenomenal consciousness, namely the naturalistic and the phenomenological one. The question arises to what extent can phenomenal consciousness be naturalized: is the scientific understanding of mentality as we find it in neuroscience reconcilable with mental life we experience in everyday life in a pre-theoretical attitude? Is it possible to explain acts of consciousness, such as perception, imagination, and memory, in physicalist terminology?

The paper explores the limits of naturalizing intersubjectivity as the experience of the other as another conscious person. Traditional theories of

intersubjectivity call upon mental capabilities to posit the consciousness of the other. This paradigm became doubtful with the discovery of mirror neurons, as they indeed show that there is already an interaction with the other on a more primitive, pre-theoretical level that precedes our mental capacities of positing the existence of other consciousnesses. Such an argument had already been made in the first half of the 20th century by phenomenologists like Edmund Husserl and Maurice Merleau-Ponty. This appears to be the cause for Vittorio Gallese, one of the discoverers of mirror neurons, and for other philosophers to seek for a matching between the mechanics of mirror neurons and Husserl's phenomenology of intersubjectivity. These publications are simultaneously, although often implicitly, an attempt to approach the phenomenon of intersubjectivity as part of the physical and causal reality, i.e., an attempt to naturalize our experience of the other. However, it seems that such endeavors overlook a more original experience of the other, which Husserl describes and which essentially resists the reconciliation with a naturalistic approach, such as the one present in neuroscience.

104   In what follows, I will, first of all, provide a sketch of the debate regarding the so-called "other minds," and the impact of the discovery of mirror neurons on this debate. Next, in section 2, I will summarize concisely recent publications that connect Gallese's research on mirror neuron mechanisms and Husserl's phenomenological analysis of intersubjectivity. Both indeed point out that the interaction with the other originates in a precognitive, bodily "pairing" between self and other. The blind spot in this debate, however, seems to be the question whether Husserl's phenomenology is at all compatible with a naturalistic approach to consciousness. Therefore, I will, in the 3rd section, present an analysis of the way Husserl's theory is presupposed in the academic literature on the subject of mirror neurons and phenomenology. The analysis will show that this theory, as employed in recent publications, is faced with a logical problem, and that, consequently, the theory cannot contribute to an elucidation of intersubjectivity. Against this current approach to the question of mirror neurons and Husserl's theory of intersubjectivity, I pose a different description of the experience of the other by Husserl, which points towards the limits of a naturalization of intersubjectivity.

2. Other minds and mirror neurons

One of the central questions in contemporary philosophy of mind considers how is it possible that we have an (implicit) understanding of others as conscious beings, i.e., as the so-called "other minds." Man is often characterized through a specific cognizance of one's own consciousness. René Descartes wrote already in 1637 that the only initial certainty we have is the existence of the "I think," i.e., of ourselves as "cogito." Such a reasoning might lead to different forms of solipsism. Nevertheless, we are easily able to interact with others in daily life without a highly engaged philosophical attitude that ensures the existence of the other. This is apparent in the other's behavior, facial expressions, and actions that we immediately perceive as meaningful and not as arbitrary or coincidental. Such phenomena related to our immediate and spontaneous interaction with the other play a crucial role in society and are indeed also ethically and politically relevant. The question however arises how is it possible that we understand each other as conscious beings, while our consciousness only allows us to experience our own consciousness. In other words: which capabilities allow us to understand and to know the other? The problem of other minds, thus, seems at first an epistemological problem.

One of the classic attempts to explain the possibility of understanding the other resides in "folk psychology." One of the defenders of this theory, Dan Sperber, claims that the knowledge of the other amounts to the attribution of mental states to others. These attributions rely on a "theory" of mental life that posits a relationship between mental states and "outcomes," such as actions, emotions, and expressions. For this reason, the traditional approach is indeed often called the "theory theory." When I see another person drink (under normal circumstances), I can conclude that this person has the desire to quench their thirst. This is possible because of my theoretical and general assumption that the one who is thirsty drinks.

The first possible solution to the problem of other minds is challenged by simulation theory. Defenders of this theory, such as Alvin Goldman, claim that social cognition does not rely on the attribution of mental states to others, but on the ability to imagine the mental state of the other as one's own. A certain action, movement, or decision leans on this or that belief, or desire.

The simulation of another's mental state then happens on the basis of the so-called pretend beliefs and desires that ought to provide an explanation for the actions performed by the other. In other words, I can gain a grip on the other's consciousness by imagining, which mental state precedes the kind of action that the other performed. The similar cognitive systems of people make this inference of other minds possible on the basis of analogy.

Although these two theories defend a different outcome, both assume that the possibility of understanding the other is based on certain mental or cognitive abilities. The *theory theory* refers to the ability to attribute mental states to others, whereas *simulation theory* assumes that an act of imagination is required to understand the other. This paradigm was recently refuted by, among others, Vittorio Gallese through the discovery of mirror neurons: "[A]t the basis of our capacity to understand others' intentional behavior […] there is a more basic functional mechanism which exploits the intrinsic functional organization of parieto-premotor circuits like those containing mirror neurons." (2009, 521–522.) As an argument against mentalist explanations of intersubjectivity, Gallese points to a more fundamental, primitive, and precognitive level, at which the other is already understood. Because of the relational nature of actions, there is always already a common understanding between subjects without the need for a mental act. According to Gallese, it is the mirror neurons, which cause the possibility of interaction with the other.

Gallese and his fellow researchers at the University of Parma discovered mirror neurons in the premotor cortex of the brain. These neurons are activated, when a subject perceives a goal-directed action itself (Gallese 2001, 35). In macaques, it has been shown that the same neurons are fired, when they see someone grasp an object. Examples that are more similar to our everyday reality might be the contagiousness of emotions, such as laughter and sadness. Although the intensity of the neurons firing differs between the perception of an action and the performance of an action, an *as if* motor system always appears to be activated in the individual brain, so that it can be said that the visually registered movement of the other person is "represented" in the individual brain via mirror neurons.

With this discovery, Gallese and others are able to characterize the understanding of the other as automatic and unconscious. This, again, refutes

the core aspect of mentalist theories of intersubjectivity. No "analogical inferences" make the interaction between self and other possible, but rather embodied processes that already precede the mental construction of the other. This makes an immediate understanding of the other possible. The imitation processes that mirror neurons create already constitute, in a certain sense, a grasp of the other person's actions from a first-person perspective. Because of this "match" between the body of myself and the other, I already understand the other in a fundamental way, even before I can approach the other cognitively or reflexively.

3. Mirror neurons and Husserl's phenomenology of intersubjectivity

In Gallese's numerous publications, in which he elaborates his findings on mirror neurons, we regularly find references to the phenomenology of Husserl and Merleau-Ponty, or, more specifically, to their analyses of empathy and intersubjectivity. By doing so, he tries to conceptualize the results of his research by, for instance, linking the working of mirror neurons to Husserl's descriptions of the lived body (*Leib*) and his concept of *Paarung*, but also to Merleau-Ponty's concept of *intercorporeality* as evidence of a pre-reflexive level of a mutually embodied understanding between self and other. Let us dwell for a moment on a number of references in Gallese's articles to Husserl.

In "The Roots of Empathy: The Shared Manifold Hypothesis and the Neural Basis of Intersubjectivity," Gallese (2003) refers to Husserl in a review of earlier theories of empathy and intersubjectivity, and to the specific relationship between self and other that is central to them. In doing so, he lays the conceptual ground for his own hypothesis that the experience of the other is a correlate of neurological structures. Referring to Husserl's *Cartesianische Meditationen* and *Ideen II*, he points to the anti-solipsistic character of Husserl's description of the other, which also forms the core of Gallese's own work: "The other is apprehended by means of a primitive holistic process of 'pairing' ('Paarung'): the self-other identity at the level of the body enables an intersubjective transfer of meaning to occur." (2003, 175.) The bodily aspect of intersubjectivity that Husserl point to is further clarified by Gallese in his article:

> [T]he body is the primary instrument of our capacity to share experiences with others [Sheets-Johnson, 1999]. What makes the behavior of other agents implicitly intelligible is the fact that their body is experienced not as material object ("Körper"), but as something alive ("Leib"), something analogous to our own experienced acting body. (2003, 176.)

The embodied relationship to the other makes that we can understand the other from a certain immediacy without transcending the singularity of consciousness. According to Gallese, this explains how we can perceive the other *as a person* and not as a mere physical body or object in the world.

In a slightly more recent article, "Embodied Simulation: From Neurons to Phenomenal Experience," Gallese (2005) uses Husserl to demonstrate a similarity between, on the one hand, what experimental research shows about intersubjectivity and the role of mirror neurons therein and, on the other hand, what Husserl writes about the role of the body in interacting with the other:

> These results suggest that the full appreciation of others as persons like us depends upon the involvement of body-related first-person tactile experiential knowledge. Again, this perspective is closely related to Husserl's notion of intersubjectivity. As repeatedly stated in *Ideas II* (1989), the dual nature of our own body as the sensing subject and the sensed object of our perceptions, enables the constitution of other living humans as understandable persons. […] We retrieve the inner sense of the experiences and motivations of others from their overt behavior because it induces the activation of the same functional mechanisms enabling our own sense of personhood. (2005, 40–41.)

From a reading of these and other texts by Gallese (including: 2001, 43–44; 2004, 397; 2008, 774), it indeed appears at first sight that the discovery of mirror neurons is highly relevant for a phenomenological analysis of intersubjectivity. In the scientific debate on intersubjectivity this appeared to be the reason for some publications on the possibility of a reconciliation between phenomenological descriptions of phenomena and neurological

findings. A brief review of the literature demonstrates this from different perspectives.

A first way, in which such a connection is made, is by arguing that the empirical findings of Gallese and his colleagues can serve as *an empirical justification* for Husserl's theory of intersubjectivity. In Jean-Luc Petit's contribution "Constitution by Movement: Husserl in Light of Recent Neurobiological Findings," this is made very explicit:

> [W]e must at least be prepared to admit that the recent findings of neurophysiology amply justify Husserl's upholding […], the assertion that our empathic experience of the other is an internal imitation of the movement accomplished by the other, and which implies an actualization of the kinesthetic sensations—including its neural correlates—corresponding to the movement in question and not its effective execution nor even any affective fusion with the other. (1990, 241.)

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Evan Thompson also cites the relevance of mirror neurons as support for Husserl's analysis of the experience of the other as evidence of a pairing between myself and the other (2001, 9).

Others, on the other hand, explicitly cite the similarity or the complementary nature between Gallese's claims and those of Husserl. After a discussion of the findings published by Gallese and Goldman, Thompson argues that precisely the "non-inferential bodily pairing of self and other" is at the heart of both the structure of mirror neurons and Husserl's phenomenological description of empathy (2001, 9). Matthew Ratcliffe, in "Phenomenology, Neuroscience, and Intersubjectivity," points to both Gallese's and Husserl's shared assumption of a fundamental "togetherness" as opposed to a necessary gap between self and other, as taken for granted in the cartesian approaches to consciousness. This, he argues, creates a trade-off between the two theories (2006, 336). On the one hand, the operation of mirror neurons can complement where Husserl remains unclear about what exactly the pre-objective bodily analogy consists in and how it is possible. On the other hand, Husserl provides the necessary conceptual framework to interpret and clarify the findings of mirror neurons.

Finally, Helena De Preester joins in by pointing out that the same "logic" is assumed by both Husserl and Gallese. While, according to her, Merleau-Ponty is rather cited by Gallese to clarify the properties of mirror neurons, Husserl's theory turns out to be extremely suitable to reinforce the neurological explanation of intersubjectivity, specifically his concepts, such as *Körper*, *Leib*, and *Paarung* (De Preester 2008, 139).

Dan Zahavi offers a nuanced perspective on the debate by pointing out the similarities and differences between Husserl's phenomenology and Gallese's findings of mirror neurons (2011, 246–149). Zahavi acknowledges that in a sense there is a great similarity between the two theories, since they both draw attention to a certain coupling ("pairing") between bodies, and to the fact that this coupling happens passively on a precognitive level. Zahavi's analysis, however, reveals a number of critical reservations about the comparison assumed by the abovementioned literature and Gallese himself. First, the literature seems to ignore the different layers of intersubjectivity. For example, mirror neurons may indeed contribute to a passive relationship between self and other, but this does not yet imply a full interpersonal understanding that concerns our everyday dealings with other people. Second, Zahavi points out a possible tension between the interpretation of mirror neurons as evidence of "immediate" experiences of others, on the one hand, and the conceptualization of this interpretation as a simulation theory with internal imitations as its essence, on the other hand. Furthermore, he poses the question whether mirror neuron activity is not too static to do justice to the dynamic interconnectedness between self and other. In other words: can the concept of "mirroring" describe how the other is experienced? According to Zahavi, a fourth difference lies in the distinction between mirror neurons that should be situated on a subpersonal level, while Husserl's phenomenology concerns the personal level as a whole. With this, he suggests the connection between both theories as complementary rather than as a justification of each other.

A final question thar Zahavi raises is whether a phenomenological approach to intersubjectivity is *at all* reconcilable with a neurological theory (2011, 250). Such a question appears to be the blind spot in many of the publications that address the equation. Each of the articles discussed is implicitly an investigation into the possibility of naturalizing intersubjectivity, i.e., of giving

it a place in physical reality. Although naturalism as a philosophical movement does not have an unambiguous and delineated definition, we can state that a naturalistic approach generally assumes that reality and its properties are fundamentally physical in nature (Papineau 2015). When properties are psychological in nature, they simply must be understood as epiphenomena of the physical. Naturalizing a phenomenon then means trying to give it a place in the physical, spatio-temporal reality that is subject to causal laws. The articles discussed seem to presuppose a naturalism in a certain sense, without confronting it with Husserl's phenomenological project as such. Petit, for example, explicitly states that the complementarity between mirror neurons and phenomenological considerations of intersubjectivity give rise to a legitimate naturalism (1990, 243). Other authors debated above also implicitly seek a way to give intersubjectivity a place in physical reality by reducing the *Paarung* between lived bodies that Husserl speaks of to the mechanisms that constitute mirror neurons. This assumption gives rise to a re-reading of Husserl's phenomenological analysis.

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4. Intersubjectivity and naturalism

In order to get a better understanding of the role Husserl plays and can play in the debate on mirror neurons and intersubjectivity, we first need to understand how Husserl's analysis of intersubjectivity itself is presented in the debate. The references to Husserl in the discussed literature start from a specific analysis of intersubjectivity that is mainly elaborated in his *Cartesianische Meditationen*. Intersubjectivity is described there and in the literature on mirror neurons and phenomenology as *Paarung* that is possible because of the similarity of bodies and that forms the foundation for the experience of the other as a conscious, embodied person. Although the references to Husserl's theory in literature seem correct in themselves, they ignore what Husserl's analysis in that text ultimately aims to demonstrate, namely that such an approach to intersubjectivity runs into a logical problem. Before this can be clarified, I will briefly outline Husserl's reasoning step by step in his fifth meditation.

While most theories of social cognition, empathy, "other minds," or intersubjectivity mainly focus on the conditions of possibility for understanding

the other or positing its existence as an "other mind," Husserl points to a more fundamental question that precedes such questions. The question that must first be answered is how a conception of the "other" is possible at all, even before one tries to understand the others in their motives and emotions. The problem of the other becomes with Husserl, in other words, not an epistemological, but a phenomenological problem: how can someone phenomenally appear as another person, as another transcendental ego (*Hua I*, 122)?

In order to analyze this issue phenomenologically, Husserl introduces a specific form of *epoché* to describe how the nature of the ego depends on the experience of the other as a transcendental ego (*Hua I*, 136). Thus, for Husserl, this analysis does not involve a genetic analysis of how the other— and thus intersubjectivity—comes about. Rather, an abstraction of the initial intentional orientation towards the other is necessary, in order to arrive at a "sphere of ownness," from which one can constructively describe the appearance of the other. Such a sphere concerns the experience of all objects in the world, including the self, which do not refer to others. The experience that results from this is thus not of a cultural nature, but leads to the appearance of the world as mere nature, as a physical world (*Hua I*, 128–129). This also implies that the bodies of myself and others are regarded purely as *Koṙper*, i.e., as physical bodies that are part of the spatio-temporal, causal reality. The sphere of ownness, to which this *epoché* leads is expressed in an experience of the world in the naturalistic attitude, in which the consciousness of the other is ignored.

According to Husserl, this movement opens the way to the experience of the other in two ways. First, in the naturalistic attitude, the possibility of a similarity between my body and that of the other arises. As *a body*, my body is spatially interchangeable with that of the other, and vice versa. While I normally experience my body as an "absolute here" wherever I go, my "here" and the other's "there" are arbitrarily considered as *physical bodies* (*Hua I*, 140). Second, I continue to experience my own body insurmountably as a freely movable organ of perception, as the subjective center of my orientation in the world (*Hua I*, 128). Together, these bring about the possibility of a *Paarung*, a transfer of the unity immediately given to me between my physical body and my psychic consciousness as embodied to the other. Husserl describes this

coupling between my body and that of the other as a form of "appresentation" that also occurs in the experience of physical objects: an object, such as a stone or a house, is always given to me from a certain perspective, yet in the perception of the object as an object I am also directed to its not immediately given sides, such as the back of the house. Similarly, in the experience of the other, the consciousness of the other is also given to me in a non-immediate way (*Hua I*, 139–142).

In short, according to Husserl's analysis in the *Cartesian Meditations*, I can experience the other as another person, because I first objectify my own body and then, through the resemblance between my body and that of the other, constitute the other as an embodied *ego*. Such an analysis, however, runs into a logical problem. The resemblance between my body and that of the other can only take place, because I objectify my own body and reduce it to a purely physical body as part of the spatio-temporal reality. This movement takes place in the naturalistic attitude, in which reality is posited in its physical materiality. But the naturalistic attitude or the approach to the world as physical nature already presupposes an intersubjective constitution of the world (*Hua XIII*, 261–262). My body can only be constituted as *Körper* on the basis of intersubjectivity. Husserl's analysis thus seems to lose its relevance. Peter Reynaert, however, argues that this reasoning retains its relevance, as long as it is understood as a *reductio ad absurdum* (2001, 214). In other words, we should consider Husserl's analysis in the *Cartesian Meditations* as a way of demonstrating that, from a naturalistic attitude, the resemblance of bodies cannot be used to clarify the experience of the other phenomenologically.

Thus, an alternative approach seems necessary to give a phenomenologically adequate description of the experience of the other. In Husserl's *Ideen II* we find an analysis of intersubjectivity, which seems to be ignored in the literature that connects Husserl with Gallese. According to Reynaert, this analysis in the *Ideen II* describes a more original experience of the other than that in *Cartesianische Meditationen* (2001, 214). For this, Husserl again introduces a different approach by explicitly abandoning the naturalistic attitude, in order to describe the experience of the other. After all, the phenomenological reduction, he observes, creates an openness to other attitudes alongside the naturalistic one:

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> Auf eine solche *neue Einstellung*, die in gewissem Sinn sehr natürlich, aber *nicht natural* ist, haben wir es jetzt abgesehen. "Nicht natural", das sagt, daß das in ihr Erfahrene *nicht Natur ist im Sinne aller Naturwissenschaften*, sondern sozusagen ein *Widerspiel der Natur*. (*Hua IV*, 180.)

Husserl calls this anti-naturalistic attitude, which he also identifies as an anti-artificial attitude, the "personalistic attitude." Because of the social nature of our world, this attitude is always already present in our interaction with others.

The other is then no longer a constituted entity by analogy in the naturalistic attitude, but an expressive unit (*Ausdruckseinheit*). This means that the other as a person is meaningfully structured, expressed in his physical body and is given in a single perceptual act. The other as a conscious person thus does not supervene on his physical body as an epiphenomenon, but is a property of it (*Hua XIII*, 472). Husserl thus describes the other as a "cultural object" that cannot simply be abstracted into a physical entity. The experience of the other is an "interpretation" (*Hua XIII*, 250–251). This gives rise to the possibility of "understanding" the other, since his psychic life is expressed in his physical behavior. Such an interpretation necessarily escapes the possibilities of the naturalistic attitude.

The description of intersubjectivity expresses the way, in which the other originally appears to us, even before any objectification of the body is possible. This originality lies in the fact that it is not derived from the experience of the self or the "sphere of ownness," as is the case in *Cartesian Meditations*. The self does not need to be objectified or naturalized, in order to experience the other as a unit of expression (*Hua XIII*, 76). Although Husserl acknowledges that psychic and cultural consciousness are always dependent on the natural world, he argues that this does not need to imply that the cultural self is subject to the causal laws of physical reality. In other words, Husserl is saying here that the experience of the other cannot simply be naturalized. The other is made expressively present. In *Ideen II*, Husserl argues that the personalistic attitude ontologically precedes the naturalistic attitude. From this point of view, the naturalistic attitude is merely a reinterpretation of the personalistic attitude (*Hua IV*, 281–282).

5. Conclusion

In the present paper, I tried to show that attempts to naturalize intersubjectivity using Husserl's phenomenology run up against a fundamental limit. The discovery of mirror neurons has overturned the traditional paradigm, in which the experience of the other was understood in terms of mental capacities to attribute mental states to others or to simulate them in one's own consciousness. A similar argument was made already among early phenomenological thinkers. A *Paarung* or linkage between bodies counts as a possibility condition for interacting with others in a direct way. This shared argument proved to be a trigger for attempts at reconciliation between Husserl's phenomenology of intersubjectivity and naturalistic approaches to it as found in neuroscience. Several authors underpin this attempt on the basis of Husserl's theory as set out in his *Cartesianische Meditationen*. A re-reading of the fifth meditation reveals that Husserl's analysis runs into a logical problem. In the analysis, the experience of the other as a person depends on a similarity between bodies that can only occur in the naturalistic attitude through an objectification of one's own body. But this objectification itself presupposes intersubjectivity. The relevance of Husserl's reasoning lies in its approach as a *reductio ad absurdum*, which shows that a naturalistic approach to the other cannot adequately contribute to a clarification of intersubjectivity. The existing literature ignores a more original experience of the other that Husserl thematizes as a unit of expression and that comes about in the personalistic attitude. Husserl explicitly characterizes this attitude as being anti-naturalistic and preceding the naturalistic attitude ontologically, so that a naturalization of consciousness is necessarily situated within an artificial involvement with the world. Every attempt to naturalize intersubjectivity or the experience of the other thus encounters a distinct limit.

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Ka-yu Hui

THE EXPRESSIVE STRUCTURE OF THE PERSON IN HUSSERL'S SOCIAL PHENOMENOLOGY
FROM SUBJECTIVE SPIRIT TO CULTURAL SPIRITUAL SHAPE

Abstract: The paper argues that the structure of expression prevails in Husserl's social phenomenology. We begin by considering Husserl's concepts of *Individuum* and *Urgegenstand*, and his project of grounding the human sciences (§1). We then explore the expressive structure of the person in three interrelated aspects. First, expression indicates the peculiar manner of the constitution of the person as a spiritual subject (§2). Second, there is an essential relationship between the person and her surrounding world, and hence not only is the person always given as a system of expressions, but also is a cultural object given as such (§3). Third, the system "person–surrounding world" can also be an expression of communal spiritual life and culture—what Husserl calls "higher order personal unities"—once they are constituted through appropriate communal acts (Conclusion).

Keywords: Edmund Husserl, expression, person, spirit, community.

Introduction

The present paper explores the systematic importance of the concept of expression in Husserl's social phenomenology. We argue that the structure of expression prevails in Husserl's analyses of interpersonal relationships, cultural objects in the surrounding world, and the different levels of community and culture. We will begin by considering Husserl's concepts of *Individuum* and *Urgegenstand*, and his project of grounding the human sciences (§1). After that, we will explore the expressive structure of a person in three interrelated aspects. First, expression indicates the peculiar manner of the constitution of the person as a spiritual subject, in contrast with the constitution of the person as a unity of body and soul (§2). Second, there is an essential relationship

between a person and her surrounding world, and hence not only is a person always given as a system of expressions, but also is a cultural object given as such. In other words, spirit is expressed in the system "person–surrounding world" (§3). Third, the system "person–surrounding world" can also be an expression of communal spiritual life and culture—what Husserl calls "higher order personal unities"—once they are constituted through appropriate communal acts (Conclusion).

I.

Let us motivate the inquiry with a brief consideration of the Husserlian phenomenological project of grounding the human sciences. For Husserl, we can secure the foundation of the human sciences and avoid any natural(istic) reduction, only if we can clarify the material ontological difference between the subject matters of the natural sciences and the human sciences. In other words, only if we can show that the region *Natur* (the material ontological region for the natural[istic] sciences) and the region *Geist* (the material ontological region for the human sciences) are two separate and irreducible regions, can the foundation of the human sciences be secured. Hence, the particular task of grounding the human sciences turns out to be a global task of building up ontologies for both nature and spirit.

In *Ideas I*, Husserl spells out some of the most important steps in this task. Roughly put, it consists of two main steps (after, of course, the performance of the *epoché* and the phenomenological reduction). First, the phenomenologist needs to pick an *Individuum*—i.e., a "'this-here' whose substantive essence is a concretum" (*Hua III*, 29/2014, 30; see also *Hua IV*, 17/1989, 19). Second, she needs to show that this *Individuum* can be a "primal object" (*Urgegenstand*) that unifies different abstract and concrete essences into a region, such that everything within the region obtains its sense through referring back to this primal object. Husserl helpfully gives us an example of what these formal ontological concepts mean. He writes:

> If we transport ourselves into any eidetic science at all, for example, into the ontology of nature, then we find ourselves […] [oriented]

toward objects of the essences that in our example are classified under the region of nature. We observe thereby […] that "object" is a title for many different yet interrelated formations, for example, "thing," "property," "relation," "state of affairs," "set," "order," and so forth. These are obviously not equivalent to one another but instead refer back respectively to one kind of object that has, so to speak, the prerogative of being the primordial kind of object, with respect to which all other [objects] present themselves to a certain extent merely as variants. In our example, the thing itself (over against the thingly property, relation, and so forth) naturally has this prerogative. (*Hua III*, 21/2014, 22.)

Put differently, in order to build up an ontology of nature, we need to pick an essence—in our case, thing—and show that: 1.) it is an *Individuum*, and 2.) it is an *Urgegenstand*, from which other essences typically included within the region of nature receive their senses, only if they are related to physical things. As Claudio Majolino helpfully suggests, the members of this region "are either *things*, or *properties* of things, or they are *somehow related to* things—i.e. they refer back (*zuruckweisen*) to 'things' as *Urgegenstände*" (Majolino 2015, 48). Husserl unambiguously points out that the essence "thing" satisfies the requirements, when he writes:

> The material thing fits under the *logical* category, *pure and simple individuum* ("absolute" object). To it are referred the logical (formal-ontological) modifications: individual property (here, the quality of being a thing), state, process, relation, complexion, etc. In every domain of being, we find analogous variations, and so the goal of phenomenological clarity requires us to go back to the individuum as the primordial objectivity (*Urgegenständlichkeit*). It is from it that all logical modifications acquire their sense-determination. (*Hua IV*, 34/ 1989, 37.)

However, in the case of the region of spirit, it is not clear what counts as the *Urgegenstand*. This paper argues that the person serves this role. The concept of person designates the eidetic singularity of the substance of the region of spirit. The stock of essences, abstract or concrete, typically included in the

world of spirit, acquires sense-determination by referring back to "persons." The denizens of the world of spirit, from personal individuals as members of a community to cultural objects like books and buildings, to different levels of collectivity like family, nature, and culture, acquire their senses by referring back to the *eidos* "person." Furthermore, all of these "objects" stand in an expressive unity with the persons.[1]

II.

In *Ideas II*, Husserl embarks on an analysis of the experience of another person through empathy (*Einfühlung*). He qualifies the givenness of the lived body (*Leib*) of the other as an "expression" of her psychic life (*Hua IV*, 166/1989, 175). A few sections later, he more explicitly states that "[t]he thoroughly intuitive unity presenting itself when we grasp a person *as such*… is the unity of the '*expression*' and the '*expressed*' that belongs to the essence of all comprehensive unities." (*Hua IV*, 236/1989, 248.) According to Husserl, a person presents herself to our consciousness as a "double and unitary" (*doppeleinheitliche*) unity, consisting of the sensuous body and the spirit. The two aspects are, however, essentially united. In order to fully understand expressive unity, we have to first contrast it with the conception of the person as a body–soul unity.

Let us start with the similarity between the manner of givenness of spirit and that of the soul. In his now-famous analysis of corporeality, Husserl argues that through double sensation, one can constitute her own lived body (*Leib*) as both a physical thing in the real world and a lived and sensing body (*Hua IV*, 145/1989, 152–153). The "soul," as a unitary psychic stream that continues

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1 To complete the argument, we should devote a separate discussion showing why a person is an *Individuum*. For reasons of space, let us just quote from Husserl the following passage to support the claim: "Terminologically, we distinguish psychological apprehension and experience from human-scientific (personal) apprehension and experience. The Ego that is apprehended 'psychologically' is the psychic Ego; the one apprehended in the way of the human sciences, the spiritual sciences, is the personal Ego or the spiritual individuum. [*Das Ich als 'psychisch' aufgefaßtes ist das seelische, das geisteswissenschaftlich aufgefaßte das personale Ich oder das geistige* Individuum.]" (*Hua IV*, 143/1989, 150; emphasis mine). The rest of the paper argues that "person" is the Urgegenstand for the region Geist.

to develop in one's life, is constituted as something "introjected" in the lived body (*Hua IV*, 176/1989, 186). What is crucial for our analysis here is that the physical body and the soul are separately substantial and bound together as two systems of predicables united in a founding–founded relationship (*Hua IV*, 32/1989, 35). The soul is a unity of sense (*Sinn*) encompassing a stock of psychic predicables and, for this reason, cannot be reduced to the physical body. But, on the other hand, the soul cannot be given other than as a meaning stratum founded on the physical body.[2] As a psychological concept, the soul designates a "substantial-real unity" that manifests through different states and modes and has its own "lawfully regulated functionality." For example, one can study how different psychic states and properties (perceptions, sensations, feelings, etc.) connect and what lawful regularities are in this unitary flow. The name of the science, which studies these relations, is psychology.

Like the soul, spirit can neither be given without the body nor be reduced to the body. Husserl points out that spirit is always *apperceived* in a specific manner (*Hua IV*, 142/1989, 149). On the one hand, not only is spirit not sensuously perceived directly at this or that moment, but also is it non-sensible and invisible by essence. On the other hand, spirit cannot be meaningfully intended without some sort of "incarnation," i.e., without incorporating a sensuous body. This double relation between spirit and the body—that spirit is essentially non-sensuous yet necessarily anchored in the body—distinguishes the structure of expression from other kinds of apperception (*Hua IV*, 238/1989, 250). In this regard, Husserl calls a person a "double and unitary" (*doppeleinheitliche*) unity (*Hua IV*, 166/1989, 175).

However, the apparent similarity in the manner of givenness of the soul and spirit should not be overstated. Husserl maintains that spirit is essentially "expressed" by the body, and they should not be conceived as forming a founding–founded unity (*Hua IV*, 325/1989, 337; *Hua IV*, 204/1989, 215; *Hua I*, 150/1960, 121). The distinction between the two kinds of unity can be explained only if we have clarified the distinction between soul and spirit. There is an inclination to identify the two, while spirit in the robust sense is not a soul. Mastering this

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2 Husserl convincingly points out that even a ghost needs a "phantom body" to be given (*Hua IV*, 94/1989, 100).

"difficult distinction" is central to the understanding of the distinction

> […] between nature and the world of the spirit, between the natural sciences and the human sciences, the sciences of the spirit, between a natural-scientific theory of the soul on the one hand and theory of the person (theory of the Ego, Egology) as well as the theory of society (theory of community) on the other hand. (*Hua IV*, 172/1989, 181.)

We must emphasize that in our experience of a person, the sense of spirit is essential to the whole object, without which the sensuous substrate—the body—will be apprehended differently. Husserl notes: "[…] in the attitude of the human sciences […] the other spirit is thematically posited as spirit and *not as founded* in the physical Body" (*Hua IV*, 204/1989, 214; emphasis mine). Similar to the soul, a material stratum is necessary for the givenness of a person. Nevertheless, we cannot, in the genuine sense, "take away" the empathizing consciousness intending another person while keeping the sensuous perception of the material substrate—the other's body—intact. As Sara Heinämaa insightfully points out, Husserl maintains that there are "two separate constitutive paths starting from what is pregiven to the senses" (Heinämaa 2010, 13). Sensuous givenness is involved in the constitution of physical things. However, it can also be taken up in another constitutive path, orchestrated in the constitution of sensuous objects with spiritual meaning (Husserl 1973, 138). Husserl's point is not that the physical is only a moment *included* in the personal expressive unity; his point is that the category of "the physical" is *excluded* from the apprehension of a person.

The above analysis shows that spirit is not equivalent to a person's psychic life. According to Husserl, the concept of spirit involves different strata.[3] The *elementary* sense of spirit is a "human being as a member of the personal human world" (*Hua IV*, 201/1989, 212). To perceive a person is to apprehend a human being as a member of the personal human world. In the personalistic attitude, the body is not experienced as an indication of inner psychic life; instead, it is the person expressing herself as a person. A gesture is not

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3 See also Melle 1996, 29–30.

perceived as a natural event causally connected with and conditioned by the natural world, but as an expression of what the person "thinks." This expressive gesture is also not perceived as a mere indication of a psychological event, but as a movement bearing social meanings. For instance, in order to understand the meaning of a nod, it is insufficient to only look at the inner psychic life of a person. We must also consider the immediate surrounding world and even the more general social world, in which the person is embedded, such that the meaning of the nod can be fully displayed. There is no inner psychic, no "soul" as a "substantial reality" (*substantielle Realität*) hiding behind the body in our primordial experience of another person in the personalistic attitude. The person cannot be given, first of all, as a physical body, on which is founded the soul. This picture of the person as a unity of body and soul is utterly foreign to our experience of a person in the personalistic attitude.[4]

The body is part of the person and expresses her spiritual life. Therefore, if the surrounding world must be considered in our experience of the person, our account of the structure of expression should include this dimension and the objects therein.

III.

Husserl argues that the analysis of the expressive structure of the person is a "fundamental analysis *embracing all spiritual Objects, all unities of Body and sense*, hence not only individual humans but also human communities, all cultural formations, all individual and social works, institutions, etc." (*Hua IV*, 243/1989, 255; cf. 1973, 138). Indeed, Husserl characterizes our experiences of objects like books, theatrical plays, and tools as experiences of "spiritual Objects" or "Objective spirit," assigning them a status akin to persons (*Hua IV*, 239/1989, 251).

Husserl aptly points out that a person, as a member of the personal human world, "belongs to the surrounding world of things" (*Hua IV*, 204/1989, 214). The surrounding world of a person is a world that consists of things and other persons, and "a man is what he is as a being who maintains himself in his

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4 Heinämaa also argues for a similar point. See Heinämaa 2017, 339.

commerce with the things of his thingly, and with the persons of his personal, surrounding world" (*Hua IV*, 141/1989, 148). There is a "relation of reciprocal determination between the personal subject and its surrounding world" (*Hua IV*, 321/1989, 333). The meanings of things in one's surrounding world determine the comportments of the person by motivating her to (re)act in a certain way; the person is, on the other hand, free to manipulate the things in the surrounding world, to bestow on them new meanings. This reciprocal determination defines the person as a member of the personal human world and not as an individual abstracted from worldly relationships with things and people (*Hua IV*, 326/1989, 338). In short, when we experience the person as a person, we always, at the same time, apprehend her relations with the surrounding world.

This last point brings us to the realization that if spirit is expressed through/as the body, and if a person is always connected with the surrounding world, the expressive structure encompasses not only the body but also objects in the surrounding world. Differently put, spirit is always expressed in the system "person–surrounding world." Hence, we can apprehend the spiritual life of another not only through bodily expressions but also through the objects in her surrounding world.

Husserl insightfully points out that the surrounding world is a network of motivations, consisting of different things with different meanings to the person. The person is motivated to act in specific ways, and motivations exist as relations between the personal subject and the object as presented in the person's consciousness (*Hua IV*, 219–220/1989, 231). In this regard, the person's spirit can also be expressed in her motivational relationship with objects in the surrounding world. For instance, a friendly personality is immediately discerned in a stranger's act of holding the door for you. Moreover, objects not in immediate contact with a person can also express her spiritual life. When we enter a person's house, the decoration on the wall, the books on her bookshelves, the tidiness of the kitchen, etc., can tell us something about this person. Ancient cookware displayed in a museum expresses the spiritual life of the tribe long buried in history.

Crucial here is the double relation of spirit and its sensuous substrate. As we established, a person is not given first as a physical body, to which we subsequently add a distinct spiritual sense. Instead, the sensuous givenness

of the body is immediately apperceived as an expression of a spirit. Likewise, when we perceive an object having "spiritual meaning," we do not first perceive the physical thing deprived of human meaning. Instead, the spiritual meaning animates the whole of the sensuous given. Husserl emphasizes that unity of expression is neither external nor causal, even though a sensuous (not "physical") ground must be there as the substratum. With a shift of attitude, one can always turn towards the physical appearance. However, this does not mean that the physical is first perceived, on which we add spiritual meaning. A book is perceived as a book, not because we first perceive a mere physical thing and then add to it the meaning of being a book. We perceive a book immediately as a book, because the sensuous givenness is apprehended directly as a book. In other words, the spiritual and the sensuous "pregiven," the spirit and the body, are not "bounded" but "fused" together (*Hua IV*, 238/1989, 250). In these cases, the sensuous is essentially included in the spiritual being, not one layer added on top of another. In this regard, the structure of expression that we explained above is also found in spiritual objects.

In some cases, the "substratum is physically unreal and has no existence," e.g., the harmony of the rhythms of a closet drama (*Hua IV*, 239/1989, 251). A closet drama can have specific spiritual and cultural properties, e.g., being harmonious. However, it does not make sense for someone to ask *where* this property of "being harmonious" is. Husserl's point is that the category of natural space is inadequate in grasping the spiritual object and its spiritual properties, precisely because the object is not constituted based on any physically real existence; strictly speaking, a closet drama has no physical existence at all. However, there is certainly a layer of sensuous substratum—the book, the words, the actors' speeches, if we are reading the drama out loud in the rehearsal together—in our intention of the closet drama. Nevertheless, the drama itself is not a physical thing. This once again confirms that spiritual objects are not physical objects, and their sensuous substratum is apprehended as immediately expressive of spiritual meaning.

Once we get rid of the conception that a person is a soul introjected into a physical body, we can see more easily that understanding another person is not so much a matter of "mind-reading," i.e., accessing her hidden mental states, but a matter of reading the expressions of her spiritual life in her gesticulations,

linguistic expressions, comportments, habits, surrounding objects, etc. Regaining the primordial experience of a person as spiritual expression, the rightful place of "objective spirits" in expressing one's spiritual life can be restored.

Conclusion

As mentioned above, spirit is a stratified concept. The elementary sense of spirit is the person as a member of the personal human world. Spirit at this level is expressed through the body or objects in the surrounding world. However, Husserl also extends the concept of spirit to encompass what he calls "higher order personal unities," including family, nation, supranational community, etc. As John Drummond aptly notes, these social collectives consist of individual personal spirits, but the former cannot be reduced to mere aggregations of the latter. Instead, these spiritual unities are unified by specific principles (Drummond 1996, 237–238).

The expressivity of an individual personal spirit is thereby complicated. A person can be treated as expressive of her own spiritual life, but she can also be considered a member of a collective. In the latter case, the person is an expression not only of her own spiritual life but also of the "communal spirit" (*Hua IV*, 243/1989, 255). Once the dimension of sociality is introduced in full scale, the expressivity of the system "person–surrounding world" is tremendously multiplied. It will take us too far afield to explicate the constitution of different levels of communalization.[5] Suffice to say that, with specific "mutual communicative comprehension" and "communicative acts," different levels of spiritual meaning are constituted and supplied to the communal spiritual world. Hence, gesticulations and comportments of a person (including those towards things in her surrounding world) are not only expressive of her personality; they all now have extra layers of spiritual meaning, expressing also the habitual life form of a community (or even communities of different levels).[6] As Husserl writes in the Vienna lecture:

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5 For helpful analyses, see Szanto 2016, 148–152, and Gotô 2004, 103–104.
6 See also Miettinen 2014, 161.

Personal life means living communalized as I and "we" within a community-horizon, and this in communities of various simple or stratified forms such as family, nation, supranational community. The word life here does not have a physiological sense; it signifies purposeful life accomplishing spiritual products: in the broadest sense, creating culture in the unity of a historical development. (*Hua VI*, 314–315/1970, 270.)

At the highest level, the individual personal spirits can be unified into a "cultural spiritual shape," of which the "spiritual Europe" is always Husserl's favorite example (*Hua VI*, 318–319/1970, 273–374).

In this regard, expression transcends the restriction in the individual surrounding world and becomes the global structure of the world of spirit. Not only can an individual spiritual life, but also can the communal spirit be expressed by persons and cultural objects.

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Liana Kryshevska

The Notion of the Social World in Gustav Shpet's Conceptualization and the Ways of Phenomenology

Abstract: The topic of the article is one of the key notions of Gustav Shpet's conceptualizations, the notion of the social world. The meaning of this notion is defined in two theses. One of them defines the social world as a teleological world, whose things are accessible to consciousness in their entelechy. The other asserts that the social world is a world of phenomena, in which transcendence receives its expression. The two theses are based on the specificity of Shpet's phenomenology as a phenomenological ontology as well as on his approach to resolving the problem of the emergence of sense. The understanding of the social world is based on the analysis of intentionality and the structure of the word, which Shpet considers as a prototype of all social phenomena. In his considerations, attention is dedicated to the distinction between sense and signification, which represents a special feature of Shpet's phenomenology and directly influences the notion of the social world.

Keywords: social world, inner form of the word, sense, signification, phenomenological ontology.

The notion of the social world and the context of Shpet's phenomenology

The main works of Gustav Shpet regarding the notion of the social world were written about 100 years ago. However, Shpet's notion of the social world still stays relevant for the contemporary debate about the social phenomena. Moreover, it is important in the context of the changes that have characterized phenomenology since Husserl and up to the present. Shpet is one of those representatives of early phenomenology who expanded the scope of phenomenology and its methodological as well as conceptual foundations. In Shpet's notion of the social world this feature of early phenomenology is reflected directly, since it is grounded in those tendencies. Above all, this

concerns the rejection of the idealistic position, the analysis of the problems with ontological character, and the question of the formation of sense.

Perhaps this direct connection between the notion of the social world and the basic tenets of Shpet's phenomenology is due to the fact that Shpet does not consider the notion of the social world as a separate and independent one. He does not create a distinct and developed phenomenological concept of the social world, which could be regarded as a kind of "proto-sociology." Shpet's understanding of the social world is fundamentally different. This notion is one of the key elements of his phenomenological conceptualization, from its beginnings onward. Therefore, in order to understand the notion of the social world, it is necessary, on the one hand, to determine the specificity of Shpet's phenomenology and, on the other hand, to clarify the relation of the notion of the social world to other key notions of Shpet's philosophy, most importantly to the notion of the word, which is a key concept in Shpet's philosophy.

However, in the currently established analytical position with respect to Shpet's phenomenology this connection is not obvious. Such an approach to Shpet's phenomenology not only obscures the connection between the notion of the social world and the notion of the word, but also impedes an adequate understanding of the specificity of Shpet's philosophy as a whole. I have in mind the analyses of Shpet's phenomenology within the framework of the hermeneutic turn (Kalinich 1992) and its interpretation as hermeneutic phenomenology (Artemenko 2020).

Above all, such an approach is reflected in the understanding of the key notion of Shpet's philosophy, the notion of the word. The definition of Shpet's conceptualization as hermeneutic phenomenology entails treating the notion of the word mainly "in einer kommunikativen Perspektive" (Plotnikov 2006, 118); it considers it only as a "prima facie communication […], consequently, a means of communication; […] a condition of communication" (Shpet 1989, 380). One must admit that Shpet's thought gives grounds for such an interpretation. However, the communicative perspective of the analysis of the notion of the word veils the holistic meaning that Shpet bestows upon this concept. Shpet does not limit the word to its ability to act as a message. He treats the word broadly, and regards it as "the archetype of culture" (Shpet 1989, 380), not limiting it to verbal language alone, because, for Shpet,

language itself is "a prototype of any cultural and social phenomenon" (Shpet 2006, 143).

It is important to emphasize this, because Shpet's notion of the social world is closely linked to the notion of the word and cannot be examined adequately without this connection—the word for Shpet is a social (or sociocultural) thing, and the social world itself in the broadest sense can be understood as the word.

Another difficulty arising from treating Shpet's phenomenology as hermeneutic phenomenology is related to the veiling of the essence of Shpet's philosophy. To understand this, it is necessary to focus not on the individual theses of his works, but on the main topic of his project that as a leitmotif unites his early and late phenomenological studies, which are actually very different as far as the subject of analysis and analytical approaches to it are concerned.

The main problem of Shpet's phenomenology is the problem of the realization of sense. He develops this topic in his key works and considers it in different aspects. In his first phenomenological study, *Appearance and Sense* (1914), Shpet considers the question of the emergence of sense in the context of intentionality. The thematic core of *Aesthetic Fragments* (1922–1923) is the concept of the structure of the word, which is nothing other than a statement of the genesis of sense as a constitution of the phenomenon. In *The Inner Form of the Word. Studies and Variations on a Humboldian Theme* (1927), this topic is developed further—the genesis of sense in the structure of the word, which Shpet understands as a prototype of all phenomena, is researched in Shpet's last phenomenological work in detail.

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The claims that Shpet develops original phenomenological concepts of language and aesthetics[1] are not erroneous, because the problems of word and language, art and aesthetics are heavily researched in Shpet's phenomenology. However, Shpet does not develop one or even more regional phenomenologies. His project is an integral phenomenological project, the main question of which is the question of the possibility and conditions of cognition. Shpet addresses this question by establishing the genesis of sense, its "availability" for the cognizing consciousness and its realization in the

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1 Such a position in the studies concerning Shpet's phenomenology is held, for example, by N. Plotnikov (2006, 119) or A. Haardt (1993).

structure of the phenomenon. The main notions of the solution to such a questioning are word, idea, actuality, art, and social world. Here, the word is a condition of the emergence of sense and a key to understanding the connection between the perceptible reality and the sphere of the ideal; the social world is such a world in whose phenomena the sense manifests itself in its being a function.

Social world, social intuition, and social being

It has already been mentioned above that the reconstruction of Shpet's notion of the social world requires pointing out the specificity of Shpet's phenomenological project. In order to do this, the focus must be placed on the main problem of Shpet's phenomenology and on its solution.

Shpet's phenomenological project can be characterized as a project of phenomenological ontology (cf. Kebuladze 2013, 114). He postulates such an understanding of the essence of phenomenology already in his first phenomenological work, *Appearance and Sense*, created immediately after attending Husserl's lectures in Göttingen.

Shpet sees the main task of phenomenology not only in studying cognition itself, not only in cognizing consciousness itself as a means of cognition. Phenomenology should aim at this cognition in its being:

> Our concern is with a study of the being of cognition in its essence, that is, a distinctive kind of being.
> Therefore, if what results is a "theory" […], it is a theory not of knowledge or cognition, but of being. (Shpet 1991, 98.)

According to Shpet, phenomenology is in this form capable of claiming the role of "a universal theory of science and of knowledge in general" (Shpet 1991, 126). In other words, the function of phenomenology as the universal theory of science and cognition for Shpet is a matter of content, but not substantiation, as was the case with Husserl. Therefore, it is understandable why the main phenomenological question according to Shpet is the question: "What is?" (Shpet 1914, 99.) And why that what for Shpet "is" is the subject

of phenomenology, which is not limited to the ontology of cognition, but necessarily includes the ontology of the cognizable world.

This understanding of phenomenology defines the area that should be in the scope of the research. The solutions phenomenological ontology is looking for should be applicable to the cognition as such. Considering the task of phenomenological ontology in this respect, Shpet points to the existence of a certain empirical being, which Husserl "missed" and in connection to which the analysis of "cognition in its being" is only possible. This type of empirical being is the social being that has a special mode of givenness and a special mode of cognition (Shpet 1991, 100).

In his argumentation regarding social being, Shpet relies on Husserl's "principle of all principles." However, his arguments relate only to the first part of the "principle," namely on the assertion that "every originally presentive intuition is a legitimizing source of cognition" (Husserl 1983, 44). Shpet critically assesses the very distinction between the two types of intuition—sensual and ideal. For Husserl, this is the distinction between natural attitude (*natürliche Einstellung*) and eidetic seeing (*Wesensanschauung*). Shpet does not consider the distinction as being sufficient for the possibility of cognition. He does not deny the cognitive function of sensual and ideal intuitions, but insists on their limitations: both are associated with the cognition of only one type of reality, either empirical or logical.

Shpet insists on the existence of something, as he says, "third something" (Shpet 1991, 101), which is not a synthesis of sensual and ideal intuitions, but is their basis, has a primary meaning, and is an originary givenness (Shpet 1991, 101). By this third something, he understands a special kind of intuition, which he designates as social intuition.[2]

This interpretation of "the principle of all principles" makes it possible to outline the context, in which the concept of the social world gets its first concretization. For Shpet, the social world is an appearance of social being; it is an originary givenness, it means, it is an actuality; its essence is grasped in social intuition. This context indicates that the subsequent concretization of

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2 The term "social intuition" is used by Shpet only in *Appearance and Sense*. Later on, Shpet abandons the term, replacing it, in *The Inner Form of the Word*, with the notion of intellectual intuition.

the notion of the social world is associated with the structure of intentionality. In this respect, special attention should be paid to the question, which concerns Shpet all the time—how is originary givenness present in the structure of consciousness?

Sense and signification. An ontological distinction

The question how originary givenness is present in the structure of consciousness means a shift of emphasis in the main phenomenological problem—the problem of the correlation between consciousness and actuality. For Husserl, this is a problem of pure intentionality. For Shpet, the main issue is the question about the source of originary givenness in the structure of intentionality as well as of the phenomenon. The question was formulated by Shpet in two ways. On the one hand, it concerns the givenness of sense in the noema. On the other hand, Shpet raises the question of the ability of positional acts of categorical positing, which leads to sense and objectivity (Shpet 1991, 136). The meaning of such questions can be fully clarified, if we bear in mind the distinction Shpet draws between signification and sense.

As is well known, Husserl does not distinguish between sense and signification, while Shpet draws the distinction between them, based on their formal difference. In other words, for Shpet the distinction is a systematic distinction stipulated by the structure of intention. Shpet defines signification as an indication of the content of an expression. Signification does not go beyond the defined content and is established by a logical connection. Sense is the designation of an object in its "defining qualification" (Shpet 1991, 154). It is associated with the definition of the ontological status, since it is the sense of a concrete thing (Shpet 1991, 154).

It may seem that this definition violates the logic of argumentation. The logical connection between an object and signification and the ontological status of a concrete thing are not categories of the same order. The feeling of violation of the logic of argumentation is intensified, when Shpet characterizes the definition of sense as hidden (*verborgen*), intimate to the thing itself or its

origin.[3] Obviously, this is a very symptomatic choice of words, which brings to mind Heidegger's philosophy. Yet, despite the sense of broken logic, Shpet's thought is actually very consistent.

Shpet's distinction between signification and sense gets fully clarified by his definition of the internal sense of the object itself as entelechy, which is directly reflected in Shpet's understanding of intentionality. Methodologically, the difference in Shpet's point of view is due to the function of entelechy as a motivation that directs the flow of the acts of consciousness. According to Husserl, the concatenation of experience (*Erfahrungszusammenhang*) is postulated by the correlation of motivation and the horizon of experiential actuality (Husserl 1983, 107). For Shpet, motivation correlates with a concrete thing given originally.

The result of Husserl's description of intentionality is the constitution of the phenomenon, which is implemented as a discovery of signification. For Shpet, the analysis of intentionality alone is insufficient, since it does not provide the possibility to answer the main question of phenomenology, how the world and consciousness correlate, and, hence, how the things of the world, the concrete things are given in consciousness. Shpet insists that the problem of intentionality should be viewed as a problem of the actual being, meaning, the problem of intentionality is a problem of reason and actuality. He sees the purpose of his searches as the discovery of the "source of originary givenness" (Shpet 1991, 150) in the structure of the phenomenon. He does not find it in Husserl's presentation of intentionality, and therefore develops his own and original concept of intentionality, the core of which is the correlation of consciousness and actual reality.

For Shpet, an indication of the "source of originary givenness" is the entelechy of a concrete object. As a motivation, it is a certain quality of the object, which does not coincide with the content of the noema. Entelechy deviates from the noematic core. It leads to the essence of the object and at the same time reveals the object being described in its essential relations or concatenations. Establishing, grasping entelechy is described as a conversion

3 In the Russian version of his text, Shpet used the German word "Ursprung" (Shpet 1914, 203).

of the intentional consciousness into the new stratum of experience. Here, the intention is directed to a deeper core of noema, in accordance with which noeses also take a new direction. The entelechy of an object is revealed in this stratum, the object gets fixed in its concreteness, that is, in its teleology (Shpet 1991, 150).

The establishing entelechy requires special acts in the structure of intentionality. For Shpet, the special acts are the ones, which "animate the doxa itself" (Shpet 1991, 153). They are not positional acts, but are found in these positional acts. Shpet refers to these acts as hermeneutic acts, since they are directed to the content of the noema as to the sign of entelechy. Shpet also calls these acts sense-bestowing, since they fill the notions with sense, namely, with the sense of actual being, without which the notion stays, as Shpet puts it, "mechanical" (Shpet 1991, 153).

This represents a very important provision of Shpet's conceptualization that is of fundamental importance for understanding the essence of being, which Shpet calls social, as well as for understanding the ontological status of the social world and its objects. Introduction of hermeneutic or sense-bestowing acts provides Shpet with the possibility of the theoretical substantiation of "ontological constructions of teleological systems" (Shpet 1991, 155). In other words, Shpet phenomenologically substantiates a certain order of essences as well as actions themself. Shpet accentuates a direct connection between his conclusions and the issue of the means and the ends (Shpet 1991, 155), but his conclusions also open the possibility for systematic research regarding the issues of human existence.

Social world and/as word

However, in the analysis of Shpet's concept of the social world such a conclusion is still preliminary. A more or less complete understanding of Shpet's notion of the social world requires not only an understanding of the structure of intentionality, but also the structure of the phenomenon as such.

Such an endeavor implies the need to consider Shpet's concept of the inner form of the word, a concept that is an important part of his integral phenomenological project, which would stay incomplete without it. Shpet

addresses the issue of the inner form of the word in two of his works: in *Aesthetic Fragments*, created during 1922–1923, and in the work written four years later—*The Inner Form of the Word*. Both works have a common topic of analysis. However, the conceptual focus of these works is different. The work *Aesthetic Fragments* gives a general idea of the function and position of the word as a social phenomenon, while research presented in *The Inner Form of the Word* is a systematic study.

Here, a clarification should be made right away. Shpet does not mean the verbal word. Therefore, an analysis of the concept of the word only within the framework of the philosophy of language does not quite fit Shpet's idea. He understands the word broadly, like any phenomenon that expresses sense: "Any sensory perception of any extent and temporal form, of any volume and of any duration can be considered […] as a sense-bestowing sign, as a word." (Shpet 2006, 194; my translation.) This means that any phenomenon of culture is a word, that is to say, a word is a phenomenon and an archetype of culture. But what determines the understanding of the word in Shpet's conceptualization, and how can the term "social world" be understood through the word? Two factors need to be taken into account here.

The first factor is the ontological status of the word, which is determined by its relation with transcendence. According to Shpet, the word is the only possible way "to translate" transcendence into an image, in which transcendence, being expressed, becomes accessible to understanding (cf. Shpet 1989, 365). Put differently, the word is an image of transcendence, which through the structure of the word finds its givenness in actuality and becomes accessible to reason.

The second factor is that the word is an ontological prototype of any social thing (Shpet 2006, 140). In other words, the formal features of the word, which Shpet understands as the law of the functioning of sense, are formal features of all sociocultural things. This very possibility is due to the universality of logical forms that correspond to all ideal forms. As a law of cognizing consciousness, this point makes the foundation of the phenomenological method in general. In the conceptualization of the inner form of the word, Shpet generalizes this principle, and on its basis methodologically substantiates the emergence of sense in phenomena.

Such a structure or, rather, an element of the structure of a word, which is the formation of sense that is universal for all social phenomena, is the inner form of the word. According to Shpet, the inner form of the word is the result of the relation between a thing existing in real actuality and an object, that is, an ideal possibility of that thing. The thing is in the realm of sensory perception and is connected to the external forms of the word. The object is what is thought, it is free from content, from verbal form, and is attained in intellectual intuition (Shpet 1989, 393). It is related to those forms of the word, which Shpet denotes as pure or ideal forms.

According to Shpet, an object without verbal expression is only an abstraction: "Wordless thinking is a meaningless word," he asserts (Shpet 1989, 398; my translation). Yet, being the sphere of the formally conceivable, the object contains everything that can be realized, filled with content, and embodied in a real thing. It is this feature of the object that gives Shpet grounds for defining the object as the formal generative core (формальное образующее начало) (Shpet 1989, 394–395) of sense.

140   The presence of a middle element in the structure of the word, which emerges as a correlation between external and ideal forms, is obvious. Using Humboldt's term, Shpet defines it as the inner form of the word. In the inner form, Shpet distinguishes between two levels. The first is the logical form. Specifically, it represents the relation between external and ideal forms. These forms are dynamic, not set once and for all. The second level of the inner form is the inner poetic form. It is based on logical form and arises from the relation between logical form and syntagmas, which Shpet considers a part of the external form of the word.

In the holistic structure of the word, as Shpet establishes it, the relationship between the external and ideal forms of the word are determined by the movement from the sensually perceived or given in contemplation to the formal-ideal or eidetic object. The inner form of the word is realized on a different plane. It is not related to linear motion, but develops, as Shpet points out, "in the depth" (Shpet 1989, 382). The mechanism of its emergence is different from the static, given, requiring only reflection of the external and ideal forms (Shpet 1989, 400). It is constructive, dynamic, and giving (cf. Shpet 1989, 400). Its emergence is connected with a special situation, which

is essentially a hermeneutic situation. And its realization requires from consciousness a special effort, an effort of sense-bestowing.

Conclusion

A reference to the specificity of Speth's phenomenological conceptualizations is necessary for a primary understanding of the meanings that Speth puts into the notion of the social world. It is Shpet's understanding of intentionality and the structure of the word, which for him is the prototype of any social phenomenon, that creates the context, in which the notion of the social world receives its first definition. This can be expressed with two theses. The first one points to the connection between the social world and transcendence. The social world is an actuality, in whose phenomena transcendence receives its expression and becomes accessible to reason and understanding. The second thesis asserts the social world as a teleological world, whose things are grasped by consciousness in their entelechy. These are two differently directed theses. However, in Shpet's conception they have a common origin, namely the structure of the formation and realization of sense that constitutes the phenomenon of the social world and is grasped by the effort of intellectual intuition.

This is the first, brief, but very intense definition of the notion of social world by Shpet. It provides a range of possible strategies for further analysis of the notion of the social world, but also of Shpet's holistic phenomenological conception. One of the strategies can be directed towards Shpet's understanding of the phenomenon, which states it as being irretrievable and irreducible. In other words, the phenomenon as described by Shpet can be considered as a phenomenon that J.-L. Marion calls saturated and relates to a form of experience, in which not the grasped phenomenon is constituted, but the cognizing Ego.

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Daniele Nuccilli

Wilhelm Schapp on the Narratological Structure of Intersubjectivity

Abstract: The epistemological structure of the "philosophy of stories" of Wilhelm Schapp can variously be applied to the analysis of intersubjectivity and the experience of alterity. I focus on the hermeneutic/ontological perspective of the human being that Schapp offers through his concepts of "being-entangled-in-stories" and "co-entanglement-in-stories." I would like to show how this concept, which reflects the influence of the psychological notion of "empathy," is employed by the philosopher as an epistemic tool to explain the comprehension of alterity. Schapp's work is effective on a double level: firstly, it brings out the importance of our past stories for the comprehension of others and of our own being in the world; secondly, it offers a solid basis to reverse the relation between stories and narratives, showing how a certain historical or even traumatic event may give rise to multiple narratives that represent different ways, in which the same story emerges from contrasting perspectives.

Keywords: entanglement, intersubjectivity, stories, narrativity, reconciliation.

Wilhelm Schapp's philosophy of stories is often used in sociological and philosophical studies on narrative and storytelling (Gasché 2018; Mathies 2020). However, beside rare exceptions (Carr 1986; Hilt 2014), there are no reflections on how the problem of intersubjectivity is addressed therein.[1] Yet, the problem of how single stories of different individuals relate and the issue of the formation of a collective identity through shared stories are two major cornerstones of Schapp's thought. The purpose here is to highlight how the epistemological framework of the "philosophy of stories" is capable of being used for the analysis of intersubjectivity and the experience of alterity. The

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1 On the other hand, some prominence is given to Schapp's phenomenology of law in the studies on social ontology (De Vecchi 2015; Lasagni 2022, XV).

fundamental concept, upon which knowledge of both the external world and the other worlds is based, is the co-entanglement (*Mitverstrickung*) (Nuccilli 2020). In order to better understand this concept, however, we need to take an in-depth look at two other fundamental mainstays of Schapp's thought, namely the concept of entanglement (*Verstrickung*) and the concept of stories (*Geschichten*). Before delving deeper into these two concepts dependent on one another, I believe it is essential to provide a terminological-conceptual clarification of the term *Geschichten* and explain whether the term is to be understood as what is called histories in English or rather what is meant by stories.

1. *Geschichten*. Stories or histories?

Since *Geschichten* is the plural of *Geschichte*, which is translated into English as "history," the natural way to translate and understand the term should be "histories." Unlike English, however, the German language does not draw the terminological distinction between history and story. In fact, the same word could be indifferently referred to objective facts or to the narration of facts, be they real or invented. In the technical terminology of contemporary historical narrativism, the concept of story has assumed its own shape and a precise connotation in relation to the problem of historical narrative. Without following either the different perspectives represented therein or the various definitions regarding each concept, it can be said that the conceptual toolkit of narrativism makes a specific distinction between the objective level of facts (history), their re-elaboration on a linguistic level (narrative), and their formation into configurational nuclei of meaning (story) following a specific category of narrative model (plot). Starting with Hayden White's *Metahistory* and his formulation of the concept of emplotment, however, the narratological aspect of story and the fictional dimension of the historical narrative have prevailed over the previous historiographical conception. According to White, stories are no longer understood as something that can be found by historians or that neutrally reflects past events; rather, they become narrative constructs that depend on the plot, by means of which the historian narrates past events (see White 1973, 7).

As I have shown elsewhere, the common root shared by the terms *history* and *story* can be found in the classical conception of "*historía*," which already incorporates the experience of reality and its transposition into oral form, and which Schapp's perspective tries to intercept and unfold using a hermeneutic approach (Nuccilli 2018). In his "philosophy of stories," he aspires precisely to deconstruct and rearticulate the relationship between the objective historical level and the narrative level through the concept of co-entanglement. If the purpose is to pursue a widely accepted and paradigmatic narratological position, Forster's *Aspects of the Novel* (1927) undoubtedly stands out as an essential contribution to better understand, from the theoretical and literary point of view, the difference between what can be defined as history and what can be defined as story. Here, the author draws a distinction between what is historical, i.e., what "deals with actions, and with the characters of men only so far as he can deduce them from their actions" (Forster 1927, 35) and the story understood as "narrative of events arranged in time sequence" (ibid., 25), in which the plot differs from the story, inasmuch as it is "also a narrative of events" and "the emphasis falling on causality" (ibid., 62). In light of these examples, it can be said that Schapp's concept of *Geschichte* covers the whole semantic field of history understood as a historical fact (history) and history understood as the content of a narrative (story). Speaking of these two aspects, we can refer to two examples, in order to understand the continuity of these two moments within Schapp's concept of *Geschichte*. The first example shows the way, in which *Geschichte* can be understood as history. It is reported by Schapp in paragraph 6 of *In Geschichten verstrickt* and describes the episode of Alexander's helmet narrated by Plutarch in *Life of Alexander*. As a matter of fact, Plutarch relates to Alexander's refusal to take advantage of his status to the detriment of his soldiers by emptying a helmet filled with water previously brought by a slave. According to Schapp, this episode unveils more about the figure of the king, in command of a thirsty army in the middle of the Balochistan desert, than any military victory or conquest mentioned in history books. This episode reveals an aspect of Alexander's personality that explains his political and military success in a far more effective way than in-depth analyses of his political choices and military decisions (Schapp 2012, 104). The second example helps us to understand the reason why Schapp's

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concept of *Geschichte* can be understood as story, starting from its connection to the linguistic and propositional dimension. This example goes through the analysis of the proposition "the queen is sick," which is a statement contained in paragraph 17 of *In Geschichten verstrickt* that somehow reminds us of Forster's "The king died" (Forster 1927, 61). Even though this proposition refers to something that can be semantically understood, Schapp argues that it will never return an objective givenness, on which we make the intended state of affairs converge. The only way to make the state of affairs clear is to place it in a broader context, that is, in one or more stories. Queen Elizabeth, the "snow queen," the queen of bees, or the queen of a kingdom who appears to us in a dream may be sick. Only a narrative articulation, a *story*, is eligible to identify the object-related referent, on which a proposition can make the intended state of affairs converge, thus creating the conditions for a judgment on truth and falsity. Schapp's concept of stories also covers Forster's concept of plot, and associates fictional stories with those narratives that refer to real facts. Hence, the choice of translating *Geschichten* as stories not only in my previous articles, but also in this contribution. Concurrently, this same translation aims to keep purely historiographic connotations away from this concept. However, the brief remarks offered here also ensure that we do not fall into the trap of opposite misunderstanding and that the concept of stories is not understood solely in terms of fiction.

2. Entanglement and stories

Let us now focus on the explanation of the two elements that make up the concept of entanglement-in-stories: the "entanglement" and the "stories." We will then require them to introduce the concept of "co-entanglement," which is essential to understand Schapp's narratological structure of intersubjectivity. Under the clear influence of Heidegger's view, Schapp in *In Geschichten verstrickt* defines the fundamental existential condition of man as "being-entangled-in-stories." The way the concept of *Entanglement* takes shape in Schapp's prominent work suggests that it has the same magnitude as Heidegger's being-in-the-world, especially if we meditate on the moment of "thrownness" (Heidegger 1962, 174). Even before their birth, human beings find themselves

entangled in present, past, and future stories. Compared to the Heideggerian reflections, however, Schapp's philosophy wants to free itself from any form of historicism (Nuccilli 2018). According to Greisch, the tripartition of the concept of entanglement provided in *In Geschichten verstrickt*, namely "self-entanglement" (*Selbstverstrickung*), "other-entanglement" (*Fremdverstrickung*), and "shared-entanglement" (*Allverstrickung*), offers a way out of Heidegger's fundamental existential concept of care (*Sorge*) and allows us to understand the historicity of man anew through the *pluralia tantum* of stories (see Greisch 2010, 194).

The entanglement is therefore the precondition for the appearance of stories, and this has epistemological consequences. As Schapp states in *In Geschichten verstrickt*:

> The being-entangled refuses to be separated from the story, so that story remains on one side and my being-entangled on the other, or alternatively, so that story in general is still something without the entangled and the entangled is still something without the story. (Schapp 2012, 85–86.)

Accordingly, the story cannot be traced back to a mere object of knowledge, since it always requires the involvement of the being-in-the-world of the human being as a whole. For this reason, in his work *Philosophie der Geschichten* Schapp defines entanglement as the equivalent concept of Husserl's self-givenness (Schapp 2015, 293). It is only through the appearance (*auftauchen*) of story that the outside world and the other worlds can head our way. However, no story is suspended in the air in this framework. Behind each story, there is always a man being entangled in it. The author points out that each story has a "self" entangled in the story. This self is in turn the meeting point of a myriad of stories, involving other close and distant selves, the surrounding world, and the things and people closest to it (Schapp 2012, 1). Therefore, the stories are the contextual weave, in which the world takes shape, a weave that always wraps itself around a singular or collective subject (Schapp 2012, 196 ff.). Just as every single individual is entangled in stories, so stories, in which other selves are entangled, have to do with us, too. It is in such a mutual connection that we understand our being and

relationship with others and things. In doing so, we shed light on the essential framework of co-entanglement. Humans and things are part of this weave. On the one hand, the former are entangled in "other people's" stories (*Fremdgeschichten*, as Schapp defines them; see ibid., 120) or co-entangled in our own stories; on the other hand, things are tools or artefacts ("things-for" [*Wozudinge*]; see ibid., 13) with their own stories, which in turn are part of the narrative layer of the stories of human beings who use and produce them.

As in Lipps's theory of empathy (see Lipps 2018), Schapp raises an immediate problem about the encounter with the other. This problem is linked to the fact that everyone is immersed in their own experience; thus, we know directly our own feelings only. Furthermore, an attempt to compare the level of knowledge of the other's experience with one's own experience would be a quite challenging task. In Schapp's language, everyone is entangled both in their own stories and collective stories related to their culture and religion. The understanding from others does not take place in a neutral and distant way; on the contrary, it always materializes from the stories that entangle us at that moment. It could be said that we all empathize with the stories, in the sense that we feel part of them and project our stories into them. The encounter with the other therefore seems to be constantly mediated by our individual story and its influence on the interpretation of other people's stories, together with the culture, upon which these stories rest.

In order to overcome this theoretical problem, Schapp resorts to two crucial cornerstones of his concept of co-entanglement. The first one is the concept of horizon inherited from Husserl's phenomenology (Wälde 1985); the second is linked to the deeper dimension of entanglement and revolves around Schapp's interpretation of "parables." Let us now deepen the concept of horizon. According to Schapp, it is completely impossible to isolate a story from its context and identify its beginning and end. Each story always has a pre-story and a post-story (Schapp 2012, 88). This means that each story is linked to a previous story, which in turn is linked to other previous stories that make its horizon, which is the dynamic context of sense where each story acquires its meaning. Each story is therefore like a "drop in a sea of stories" (ibid., 84). In the way they are told or depending on how they arise, the stories refer to events, of which only some aspects are highlighted, while some others

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are left in the background. However, if we proceed from the foreground to the background, that is to say, if we move from the first emerging story to the stories that stand behind, we can reach an ever-wider perspective in the horizon of stories, until we meet the great narratives of the past, myths, or narratives, upon which the great religions are based (see Schapp 2015, 193 ff.). In any case, the relationship between the stories of every single individual and these great narratives, in which entire civilizations are entangled, should not be understood in terms of a chronological/linear reconstruction of past events. Quite the opposite, the entangled one remains the starting point for every experience of the past. In *Philosophie der Geschichten*, Schapp points out:

> The single entangled is always at the center of our research. Starting from their stories, we advance in all directions as far as we can. That being so, no obstacles stand in the way. We are not only entangled in our stories, but also in all the stories up to the creation of the world, and, consequently, up to the furthest man back in time. (Ibid., 46–47.)

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From an epistemological point of view, the entanglement, of which Schapp speaks, finds nourishment in what the author calls "positive world." By the expression "positive world," he refers to the world, to which the entangled-in-stories belongs, built on a universal history that involves an indefinite number of human beings along a timeline that projects itself up to the ancient times (see ibid., 41 ff.). The western positive world is based, for instance, on the universal history of the world's creation, from Hesiod to Dante (see ibid., 42 ff.). The only access to this world is our entanglement that leads us, then, into the horizon of the positive world, to which we belong, to other stories belonging to individuals entangled-in-stories, with which we come into contact and within which we can, in turn, be co-entangled. The entangled one finds themselves co-entangled within a universal history, which serves as a horizon for the single individual stories. It is precisely that horizon, then, that is located at the center of an endless number of horizons, likewise determined by other universal histories that build the horizon of further positive worlds, within which other individual stories take place (see ibid., 44). We can access those individual stories through the identification of an anchor, set between the

horizon of stories that constitutes their world and the horizon that configures our stories (Schapp 2012, 7). Therefore, every individual is somehow able to find the gateway to understand someone else's story. This leads us now to the second main cornerstone of the concept of co-entanglement. According to Schapp, there are stories, like the parables, that represent the common meeting point between all human beings, as they can co-entangle the most distant earthling in terms of geographical and cultural perspectives into a common story. The parable of the prodigal son is the example that Schapp cites in *In Geschichten verstrickt*. The story of the son who decides to return to his old father's house can entangle any father from anywhere in time and space waiting for their son who emigrated abroad for work reasons. Since this story may refer to the father–son relationship, it does nothing but outline a common story inherent in the entire human race (see ibid., 186). According to Schapp, these stories of the "we," namely *Wir-Geschichten* or "we-stories," are the pivotal moment for every chance of co-entanglement between an individual's own story and the story of another human. The story of death is by all means yet another crucial story of the "we," inasmuch as it goes beyond culture and religion, and easily leads to a certain level of involvement between completely different individuals. If we explore the condition of our own entanglement, we shall then reach those stories that most characterize us as human beings. It is from this perspective that others' stories come together on every level of experience, from our closest stories to those we hear about from newspapers, news broadcasts, and social media. Therefore, the most straightforward way to get to know the other is to dive even deeper into the horizon of stories, in which we are entangled, to discover the section of the horizon that we have in common with their stories, and let the story or stories display the essential elements of the human nature entangled in them. According to Schapp, this can be done, even if we do not share any experience with that human being. From this perspective and following his most well-known sentence, we can therefore say: "The story stands for the man." (Ibid., 103.) This means that we can literally know individuals and the essential core of their nature starting from their story. Schapp provides the example of a lawyer who dines with the defendant of a case that he is evaluating. In his view, the documents relating to the case will likely let the lawyer gain a better knowledge of the nature of the

man than simply spending time eating meals together (ibid., 105–106). This example of co-entanglement has to do with human beings who do not share any past experiences, and therefore refers to a current horizon whose roots are not to be sought in events shared by their stories. However, there are further structural models of co-entanglement, where individuals share past traumatic events. Schapp provides the example of an encounter between two comrades in arms from the same regiment who fought in the First World War. As soon as they meet, even after several years, many memories come back from the past: their comrades, the enemies they killed, the battles they fought, and, finally, the background of the Great War. Starting out from this universal event, their single stories are illustrated along with the causes and effects of such a disaster. This conflict represents the common story shared and experienced by these two men, that is, a catastrophic piece of history that constantly keeps them entangled (ibid., 112–113). Nonetheless, it is a common historical background, where past and future stories take life, regardless of whether they belong to an entire generation of human lives or future generations. There is no discontinuity between the background of the Great War and the dimension, in which the stories of each individual are located that instead interact with one another and, consequently, give life to a permanent feature of human history through their stories, i.e., the condition of entanglement. It is at this point that Schapp's thought deviates from Dilthey's. According to Marquard's concept of the "pluralization of history," human beings are not only "historical" but also "storical" (Marquard 2004, 47). Actually, they embody a tangle of stories, in which the inner remembering experience of mankind emerges.

3. Entanglement and reconciliation

Now that we have clarified what Schapp means by entanglement and co-entanglement, I would like to mention a possible application of this perspective to an essential concept of reconciliation studies: the concept of "divided memory" (Barkan, Cole, and Struve 2007). For example, let us think about the opposite perspective that the children of the victims and the children of the oppressors may have on a dramatic event, such as a war or a terrorist attack. According to Schapp's framework, we live and grow up in the stories of our ancestors as

we passively go through them (see Fellmann 1973, 136). Actually, the divided memory consists of often-conflicting (see Cobb 2016) "divided narratives" (Ehrmann and Millar 2021). Many recent studies have focused on how, in a conflict or in a post-traumatic situation, the future generations are more likely to grow up listening to narratives that are tied to their faction (see Bennett 2019; French 2018; Müller and Ruthner 2017). Compared to the way the concept of narratives is normally understood in these studies, Schapp's concept of story offers a different perspective, since he speaks of a story that cannot be reduced to the linguistic level or to the moment, when the story is being told; quite the opposite, it always arises from a horizon, in which individuals are involved in all their spiritual and cognitive dimensions (Schapp 2012, 9). As we have already seen, Schapp points out that this horizon is the hermeneutical plane, within which the stories of individuals bound to a common event intertwine, and from which they unravel in many different directions. All the connections, by means of which the story of each individual binds to the traumatic event, constantly dwell on the horizon and unravel backward to the past and forward to the future through what Schapp calls "previous story" (pre-story) and "subsequent story" (post-story). According to him, such connections are revived through the becoming-known of story (*Bekanntsein der Geschichte*), that is, a story or even an encounter with a commemorative object. The narrative event or the reference to history through the commemorative object are the moments, in which the story emerges, but, despite that, they do not exhaust its factuality. Each story embodies a semantic universe, a narrative heap; therefore, this acts as a source, from which the narrative draws facts and aspects to bring into the foreground. In this way, it is possible to make a "second reduction," which consists in highlighting the single moment as opposed to the whole; in other words, it emphasizes what is in the foreground of story (Nuccilli 2017, 18). Consequently, each co-entanglement goes through a partial but many-sided access to history and depends on the points of contact, which the stories of each individual find in the stories of others.

In view of what happened at the African Truth and Reconciliation Commission, the abovementioned points can be transposed onto a practical level. The purpose of the court was to gather testimonies from victims and perpetrators of crimes committed by both sides during the regime, and, where possible, ask and grant forgiveness for acts carried out during Apartheid. The

aim of these measures was not only to overcome the system of segregation by law, but also to truly achieve a victim–perpetrator reconciliation (see Young 2004). This process was tied closely to the narration of events from different perspectives. As Ceretti points out, the purpose was to "create a story, namely a multicentric narrative that is broad enough to contain the plurality of memories and take them where they can reach a virtuous compromise" (Ceretti 2004, 48). With an encounter of the stories of victims and of perpetrators, along with the rediscovery of our ancestors' stories, we can rebuild a common horizon linking us to someone else's stories. As could be seen in the documentary film "Black Christmas," the perpetrator and the victims can compare each other and build a common story of forgiveness, thus laying the groundwork for their future lives upon this co-entanglement.

In this regard, Schapp's theoretical framework can be integrated with the recent narratological methods applied in studies on reconciliation, since it does not consider narrative as a mere linguistic tool to reshape memory or construct a collective memory centered around political and social groups on the other side of the fence. Rather, the narrative serves the purpose of rediscovering and reaching the common horizon by means of the shared pool of lived experiences. This common horizon collects in an inextricable but dynamic weave the same lived experiences and stories of each person affected by a traumatic event. In this way, following the Schappian proposal, we can not only reconstruct memory or rebuild a narrative from scratch, but we can also create a form of co-entanglement in a common story projected into the future of a common horizon. The subject should be further explored; nonetheless, it can be said that the concept of co-entanglement, as yet almost unknown in reconciliation studies, can be a valuable contribution to this field and, in wider terms, to the problems concerning intersubjectivity.

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Daniel Neumann

Sharing a Realistic Future
Gerda Walther on Sociality

Abstract: Gerda Walther's approach to sociality is unique in that it equally employs psychological and phenomenological concepts to conceive of collective experiences, thereby addressing manifold forms of togetherness. My intention is twofold. Firstly, I want to discuss how Walther embeds Husserl's "pure I" of intentional analysis into an "empirical I" with habitual dispositions and memories, so that social experiences are not merely the correlates of consciousness, but arise out of a concrete psychological history, in which our past emotional engagements with others are already implicated. Secondly, I will reinterpret Husserl's concept of protention in the context of Walther's approach to the communal. This allows for an idea of futurity, which is not based on the immanence of conscious experience, but on our explicit or habitual relationships with others, meaning that we cannot but include them in our approach to the future.

Keywords: Gerda Walther, phenomenology of community, intentional analysis, Husserl.

In the writings of early phenomenologists, one often finds the idea that phenomenology is an inquiry after essences. An essence is what constitutes and comprises all the essential characteristics of a thing or the features, without which the thing would not be what it is. To go "back to the things themselves," thus, does not mean to advocate for a strict empiricism, in which the world emerges as my sensation of it. Rather, it means to be able to detach oneself from this very immediate, sensual experience in order to find essential structures. This detachment can take on the form of eidetic reduction, as described by Husserl in his *Ideen zu einer reinen Phänomenologie*, but many early phenomenologists criticized Husserl for taking "the transcendental turn" in this very same work. According to writers like Hedwig Conrad-Martius, eidetic

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reduction goes towards elucidating the structures of conscious experience, but not the essential structures of the things themselves (Conrad-Martius 1965, 394). Rather, the concentration on *how* we experience seems to dissemble *what* is experienced, the real object existing throughout our experience and announcing itself in it. The interest of many early phenomenologists was to strip away the transcendental and psychological layers, which have been imposed on our grasp of reality. In this sense, one could say that phenomenology inquires after a reality that appears to us *in spite* of ourselves, offering a methodology, which enables us to directly and maybe somewhat recklessly approach the world in terms of essences.

In the paper, I want to focus on *Zur Ontologie der sozialen Gemeinschaften* by Gerda Walther. My guiding question, here, will be, if and how Walther's work on community can be considered as a *realist phenomenological* approach? Ultimately, my interest is in thinking about how this realist sense of the communal can furnish us with a temporality that goes beyond the subjective inner time consciousness of Husserl. Does my being part of a community confront me with a temporal experience that is not based on my immediate, subjective experience? Can there be a "realistic" future that is not simply the continuation of my own singular existence, but one that can be shared between the members of the community? And how much is a realistic phenomenology, or even an ontology, needed to establish this philosophically? In approaching these questions, I will establish the key motives that enable Walther to psychologically address the social as a shared experience. In the first part of the paper, I will, thus, consider the question of how the communal is constituted in individual experience, before discussing, in the second part, how this shared sociality can be addressed in terms of collective temporality.

1. The constitution of the social in individual experience

In her treatise, Gerda Walther sets out to analyze the ontological, not the phenomenological nature of community. In other words, her method does not begin from the question of how a community appears in consciousness, but what constitutes the real being of communities. Thus, the ontological inquiry always has to be grounded in existing reality, but not as it correlates to consciousness.

Yet, to approach reality means to reintroduce a phenomenological viewpoint, to intentionally address it. This inseparability of phenomenological and ontological inquiry comes out most clearly in Walther's description of essences as the transcendental guideline (*transzendentaler Leitfaden*) for the experience of real objects (Walther 1923, 9 f.). The essence dictates how a thing is experienced, how it is constituted in consciousness. From this intentional constitution, the ontological constitution is sharply distinguished (ibid., 10). Thus, one and the same essence produces different results depending on how it informs the method used. A phenomenological investigation reveals how an essence informs consciousness, thereby allowing to inquire after the essential structures of consciousness itself. By contrast, an ontological investigation will reveal the essence of the thing itself.

How do these two forms of investigation come together in Gerda Walther's treatment of communities? On my reading, she modifies the phenomenological method of Husserl's *Ideen* by reinterpreting it in psychological terms. Concretely, this means that her starting point is not the "pure I" of transcendental phenomenology, but the "empirical I," which is the center of ordinary experience. By starting with this empirical I, or the I-center (*Ichzentrum*), Walther is able to incorporate those features of sociality, which may seem incompatible with a strictly Husserlian account, most importantly the idea that the experience of community goes beyond the active and passive synthesis of the I, originating from a "self" that is prior to conscious experience (Walther 1923, 13).

In her introductory remarks, Walther explains why a purely phenomenological account of the I is insufficient, namely because of how it concerns the relationship between foreground and background. The background, into which this "psychological I" is embedded, is not the *Strukturzusammenhang* of experience, but its "self," its personal history of memories, decisions, friendships, hopes, disappointments, and so on (ibid., 14). While one could say that the pure I *actualizes* what is in its background, for instance, by turning towards the door after hearing a loud bang and wanting to find out what caused it, the "psychological I" *is actualized by* its background, by its psychological dispositions and habits, which influence its comportment in the world at any given time. This is, in my estimation, the

fundamental premise of Walther's inquiry. By reintroducing a psychological viewpoint into the transcendental "I," she makes room for thinking about how we are influenced by collective ideas and intentions, as well as by our own sense of being part of a community, how community is embedded in us and how it actualizes itself in our thoughts and actions.

Does this mean that her analysis completely shies away from the classical intentional analysis? Not at all, as the distinction between *Noesis* and *Noema* is fundamental to her study of community. But the meaning of this terminology is modified to fit the psychological profile of the I. The noetic side, which comprises the different modalities of living-through, or *Erleben*, receives a new role when applied to the psychological relationship between foreground and background. When a habitual feeling emerges from the background and takes place in actual experience, this very emergence itself carries with it a noetic quality. Thus, the noetic aspect of experience does not just reveal my attitude towards a noematic content in a specific situation; it reveals to me *what kind of person I am to have this attitude* as it comprises my whole person or "self" (ibid., 16). This noetic aspect allows to conceive the self and its importance for what I am consciously aware of, implying myself as a historical being with acquired dispositions, such that the past is constantly shaping the present and the future.

How is this relevant for the analysis of community? In order to actually grasp what communal experiences or *Gemeinschaftserlebnisse* are, we have to take into account how community is already at work in our everyday comportment. This can take the very general form of a cultural *a priori*, if the community is that of a nation or a region. Thus, I may often find myself to be the typical "German" when in the company of others. But a *Gemeinschaftserlebnis* can also take on the form of a very concrete experience that I share with others or with only another person. And, here, this feeling of togetherness or the we-experience also emerges not in my "I-center," as Walther says, or in the *cogito*, but behind my back, as it were, in the self. In other words, I consciously find myself sharing an experience or having a communal experience. The communal experience engulfs me, the other is already there in my experience, in *our* experience (ibid., 71). The argument for the centrality of this strong division between "self" and "I" is that it enables thinking the *priority of the communal*

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from its most general to its most specific, situational forms. Wherever we are dealing with thinking the community, according to Walther, we are dealing with the question of how it already originates with us.

The basic psychological term that captures how the communal is inscribed in the self is unification (*Einigung*). Walther describes unification as a feeling that, occasioned by an external object, arises in the subject, which now strives to unite itself with this object. "A warm, affirmative wave of greater or lesser impact flows, with more or less vehemence, through the whole subject or barely reaches a particular sphere of the subject." (Ibid., 34.)[1] This feeling of unification arises out of the background of consciousness and may become the center of attention, thereby carrying the subject almost automatically towards the object. But we should not view Walther's idea that the feeling of unification is occasioned by an external object as the causal proposition of "A causes B." It does not really make sense to say that the object is the cause of the feeling, if its effect, namely the striving to unify oneself with it, emerges with more or less intensity *from one's own background*. In other words, the object does not simply prompt me to unify myself with it. Rather, it is my own background, the context of my lived experience, which predisposes me to feel a sense of relatedness to the object, thereby wanting to enter into some form of community with it.

As soon as the acute feeling of unification subsides, it returns to the self, behind the "I-center." The feeling returns from whence it came, having now been intentionally fulfilled by the object (ibid., 39 f.). But this does not mean that it simply sinks into oblivion. On the contrary, it remains active, whether we are aware of it or not. One could say that we remain pre-reflectively aware of this feeling of togetherness with the object (Schmid and Wu 2018, 114 f.). Thus, when I see the person I once felt unified with again, or maybe even only think of them, the feeling might arise anew in all its initial intensity. But it might also inconspicuously inform the actions and thoughts I have towards the community. To describe this, Walther uses the modified concept of *Noesis* to note that this habitual feeling plays a role in our subsequent experiences— without the need to be correlated to the *Noema* of the concrete memory of the unified object (Walther 1923, 40).

1 All translations are my own.

While this psychological background presents a constant influence on occurrent experience and shapes our noetic attitudes, it is not some obscure ground beyond our reach. In fact, feelings as that of unification arise not simply out of this background as such, but arise from a "source point," or *Quellpunkt*. By introducing the concept of *Quellpunkt*, Walther enables us to differentiate between the layers of the self and to, thus, elucidate the source for the differences in unification, resulting in different forms of community. To further clarify this, we might consider the differences in the emotional afterlife of certain events in us. When we remember a mundane event, such as visiting the grocery store, we are actualizing past noetic and noematic contents, reliving them as past memories from our present position. The remembered event as such is over and done with. We are merely repeating a dead past, as Walther says. The reason for this is that nothing has touched us or invoked a sympathetic feeling in us. This is very different from remembering an encounter with a close friend. Here, we are not merely reliving a past experience, because the feeling towards the friend is still active when we remember it. In other words, we cannot remember the friendship without living and feeling it as well (ibid., 43). This is where the notion of *Quellpunkt* or source point comes in, because both acts of remembrance originate from different source points in our self. Determining what creates a sense of community means grasping the modalities of how and where this sense arises in us. This difference in source points enables Walther to distinguish between different modalities of unification and their reciprocation. For example, wanting to form a mostly purpose-driven friendship would not be adequately reciprocated by the desire to deeply get to know the other person. Here, one could, of course, also think of the classical examples of unrequited love, etc.

The gist of Walther's argument is that to conceive of the different kinds of communities and their different modes of unification, we have to look at how communal feelings towards the other members or towards the community as such arise out of the self and how they are experienced as accepted and returned. After this rough outline of how the social is constituted in individual experience, I am now able to address how a common sense of futurity might be conceived in Walther's ontology of communities.

2. Sharing a realistic future

As Walther replaces Husserl's "pure I" with a psychological or empirical I, her realistic phenomenological approach affords a different view towards the future as one that arises out of my own consciousness alone in the form of protention. How does the feeling and sense of community, in the form of habitual and reciprocal unification, influence my sense of futurity? How to anticipate or expect a future, in which the other members of the community are constitutively co-implied? To better unfold this question, I want to consider a longer passage, in which Walther describes how we-experiences are always already those of myself and others simultaneously:

> […] *my* experiences unfold in *my* current I-center, they arrive from my background consciousness, *my* self, in which it is embedded. But I am not alone as "myself" in this embedding, in this background, from which these experiences originate, since in communal experiences, I have integrated the others, I have intentionally included them behind my I-center in *my self* (or they grew into it on their own), and I feel with them (unconsciously, automatically, or based on an explicit unification). "My" experiences, insofar and *only* insofar as they are communal experiences, spring not just from myself, from my isolated self, my "only-my-self" behind the I-center, but they simultaneously arise from the others *within me*, from the we, the "people, who also," in whom I remain und with whom I am one. I live and experience from out of myself and out of *them* at the same time, from out of "us." (Walther 1923, 71.)

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Lived experience arises not as my own, but as that of others as well. This allows for a distinguishing between the weak and the strong version of we-experiences. In the weak version, the fact that these experiences are not just my own, but are also those of others, could be conceived as a mere *aspect of my own experience*, such that I am aware of what I experience right now is also experienced by others. I implicitly know that I am not alone in intending a certain object, for instance, when watching a movie with friends. The strong

version, on the other hand, would mean that I am not merely sharing, as it were, an object with the others, but that what I have intentionally present would not be there, or would afford a very different experience, were it not for the others. Here, we are much more immersed in the communal experience, to the point where we possibly cannot recognize ourselves as individuals in them, which also makes it difficult to tie this sort of experience to an intentional object.

This strong claim might appear to conflict with Walther's statement that every experience is ultimately that of an I-center, not of some metaphysical communal essence. However, I have shown that this I-center is not the pure-I of consciousness but the psychological I, which is embedded in its dispositions, habits, and experiences. Walther can make the strong claim about we-experiences, because her approach leaves behind the abstract idea of experience of intentional analysis. As a consequence, we cannot separate ourselves from the others as two *cogitos* encountering each other, nor is Husserl's distinction between the presentation of my own experiences in consciousness and the experiences of the other as appresentation applicable (Husserl 1960, 108 f.). To clearly distinguish between my experience and the experience of the other becomes difficult, if we have, as members of a community, included each other in our selves, that is, if we have formed habitual and emotional bonds.

This strong notion of we-experiences would have to be explained differently in regards to past, present, and future experiences. Antonio Calcagno has suggested that in Walther, there is a communal time consciousness, which derives from the individual one. According to his reading, this makes it possible to understand collective acts of remembrance as drawing from past experiences that have become habitual. Habit is "the structural retainer of the passive oneness of community, and it can be drawn upon to anticipate future possibilities for the community" (Calcagno 2012, 102). As a consequence, an act of remembrance can be that of a community, not just its single members. What I find intriguing about this suggestion is that it does not need specific intentional objects to construe a communal memory, since what is remembered arises from the habitual self.[2] In other words, we do not act and remember as a community, because we share a

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2 Regarding the aspect of non-intentional communal experience in Walther, cf. Calcagno 2018.

similar object, but because we are "noetically in tune," as it were, as each of us feels that this memory comes from a shared place, from a "we."

Yet, I would like to modify the kind of futurity that Calcagno's interpretation envisages by more clearly distinguishing between retention and remembrance, viz. protention and projection. While the communal oneness of past memories may be convincingly said to manifest itself in public commemorations or festivities, it is an altogether different matter to collectively project or anticipate a common future. By contrast to past events that may have become part of history books, protending or projecting a future is at first glance a highly individual act, being based not just on a common history, but on one's own highly singular experiences. A vision of the future, even if made more tangible through common political interests or concerns, cannot offer the same substrate for shared noetic acts as a common past. When we draw upon common remembrances to anticipate future possibilities, chances are we will end up with very different, singular projections of the future. Thus, it seems questionable how much a common future based on projections is possible.

The alternative is to conceive of a shared future based on protentions. The difference to projections is that we do not need to employ individual or collective imagination to give us an *image* of the future. Protention, as the form that experience takes in the anticipation of the near future, is itself without any original contents (Alweiss 1999, 182). Based on the preceding discussion, one can see how protentions do not just fit with the pure I of the Husserlian inner time consciousness, but also with the empirical I of Walther's social ontology. Here, the existence of protentions means that we are already linked up with, and embedded in the selves of others, in their worries, hopes, and anticipations. To have a we-experience of the future in this sense means that the future necessarily arises out of a common interest, or out of an emotional constellation that we share with others. In other words, we cannot *but* include the others in our approach to the future. This dynamic is already at work in a simple deliberation. Following Walther, the unification, as co-dependency or co-implication, shapes my expectations and anticipations even before I form what would ordinarily be a protention. In this sense, one could say that the ontology of the communal suggests the idea of a "realistic future," as it does not solely depend on my individual ambitions or projections. Rather, it depends

on me, letting myself be preceded by the communal, which is embedded in my self and in which I consequently experience myself *as* embedded.

It then becomes clearer how the affectivity construed by Walther, namely the manifold forms of reciprocal unification, is amended by the concept of protention: it is not just that a feeling of oneness arises out of different source points of the self and returns to it. One can now add that theses centrifugal and centripetal affective movements have a temporal index. In feeling united or unified with someone, the person (or persons, or the community as such) becomes part of my immediate protention, and the anticipation of my own future has just become broader and brighter to include those I feel unified with. Likewise, in habitual communities, where the feeling of oneness remains unconscious or is seldomly felt as such, the unquestioned belonging to a community is the reason why I anticipate that the community will persist. Here again, the feeling of being unified itself is concomitant with the expectation of permanence, such that one may never need to question why one should "stay together," as the habitual emotional bond carries with it its own sense of continuity.

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In her treatise, Walther insists that the ontology of community does not entail the eradication of the particular or losing one's individuality as a member of the community. The case of protention and the realistic future perspective it affords may be seen as a clear example of the kind of union she had in mind: while the I remains the last or basic instance in the constitution of the communal, the experience this I makes would be quite abstract and solipsistic, if it did not include the affectivity of the self. While one can imagine how protentions are solely based on one's immanent experiences (and many of Husserl's classic examples of inner time consciousness never leave this realm), it seems clear that their social aspect should not be neglected. To anticipate a future, whether indirectly or in explicit meditation, does not merely include the others, but is guided and motivated by the different forms of our mutual unifications.

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Jan Strassheim

"Passive" and "Active" Modes of Openness to the Other
Alfred Schutz's Phenomenology of Intersubjectivity

Abstract: In order to clarify the structure of intersubjectivity that underlies any social world, Alfred Schutz developed a "mundane" phenomenology based on a constructive criticism of Husserl's transcendental approach, and with reference to Max Weber and Henri Bergson. The paper addresses Schutz's understanding of the relation between ego and alter ego as the focal point of intersubjectivity. His analysis hinges on "types," which mediate between "lived experience" in its fullness (*Erleben*) and selectively articulated experience (*Erfahrung*). I argue that Schutz's analysis, unfinished during his lifetime, can help us identify a problem which also applies to more recent work, such as Dieter Lohmar's. By itself, a tendency of experience to follow types only allows for "passive" ways of being open to another person. In order to grasp the relation between ego and alter ego that makes our everyday intersubjectivity possible, we need to assume an additional tendency, an "active" openness, which inherently motivates our experience to transcend types.

Keywords: Alfred Schutz, types, intersubjectivity, otherness, relevance.

A founding figure of what is variously called "social phenomenology" or "phenomenological sociology," as well as the godfather of the original "social constructivism" (Endreß 2016), Alfred Schutz is a household name. But he is also a frequently misunderstood philosopher. Jürgen Habermas (1987), for instance, seminally portrayed Schutz's work as a direct application of Husserl's

thoughts to the social world. The reality was more complicated.[1] Schutz drew on phenomenology and other sources (such as Henri Bergson) to develop his own independent account of sociality. His work shows, on the one hand, how phenomenology can help elucidate otherwise unclarified fundamental structures of the social world. On the other hand, it helps us identify problems that future phenomenological research into sociality will need to solve. In the following, I will focus on Schutz's contribution to our understanding of the relation between *ego* and *alter ego* as the pivotal moment of intersubjectivity. Schutz's approach, I will suggest (in section 1), hinges on the concept of "types," which he deploys in constructive criticism of Husserl. I will then argue (in section 2) that Schutz's analysis, unfinished during his lifetime, raises a problem, which also applies to more recent approaches (such as that of Dieter Lohmar) and which remains in need of further investigation: how should we understand the way, in which an ego's experience is truly *open* to the otherness of an alter ego?

1. Schutz's mundane phenomenology and the role of "types"

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Since his university studies in Vienna, Schutz pursued the goal of building a philosophical foundation for the social sciences, especially for the budding discipline of sociology as Max Weber had conceived it. During the 1920s, although he knew some of Husserl's works, he could not see their relevance to his research and instead relied on Henri Bergson's philosophy of life. Only in 1929, when reading Husserl's *Formal and Transcendental Logic* (Husserl 1969), did Schutz discover that Husserl, too, wanted to clarify intersubjectivity as the foundation of the social world. He immediately turned towards phenomenology, and published his findings in 1932 in a book entitled *Der sinnhafte Aufbau der sozialen Welt* (Schutz 1967). He sent a copy to Husserl, who replied with a letter calling him "one of the very few who have penetrated into the deepest, and unfortunately so difficult to penetrate-into, sense of my life-work and whom I regard as its promising successor" (Husserl 1994, 483). He invited Schutz to Freiburg and offered him to become his research assistant.[2] What may have impressed Husserl was that Schutz's reading of

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1 On Schutz's relation to Husserl, see also Schutz 2011.
2 Schutz declined, as he had a position in Vienna and a family to support.

phenomenology was informed by a constructive criticism already apparent in his 1932 book. This needs some explanation.

Schutz agreed with Husserl that an ego's experience of an alter ego plays a crucial role for intersubjectivity and with it for the constitution of our entire objective "world" valid "for everyone." The other person is "the *first affair that is other than my Ego's own*," and all "transcendencies […] originate first of all as 'others,'" "in the form, someone 'else'" (Husserl 1969, § 96). Nevertheless, Schutz doubted that a *transcendental* ego would be able to experience another person as another person. After all, the transcendental ego's "sphere of ownness" had been construed by bracketing the "world of the 'non-Ego,'" including all egos other than itself. How can such an ego contain within it, as Husserl claimed, the "motivational foundation" for experiencing something that has been methodically excluded from its experience? Husserl himself called this an "enigma" (ibid.) and deferred its solution to later investigations. But the argument presented in more detail in *Cartesian Meditations* (Husserl 1960) did not convince Schutz. Much later, "to get twenty years of reflection off my chest" (Schutz and Gurwitsch 1989, 262), he published an article (Schutz 1966b), in which he rejected Husserl's attempts at a transcendental approach to intersubjectivity published up to that point.[3] All of these attempts, according to Schutz, begged the question by tacitly presupposing an experience of alterity already present within the ego. When I experience *another* ego as such, I am already intending something that "transcends" my transcendental "sphere of ownness." And on pains of circularity, this experience cannot be explained by something that is built on this "first affair that is other than my Ego's own," i.e., by the intersubjectively shared world of physical objects, language, and culture.

Nonetheless, his doubts about the transcendental approach never led Schutz to abandon phenomenology. Instead, he chose to start out from one of the alternative "ways" that Husserl described in the 1930 "epilogue" to his *Ideas* (Husserl 1989, 405–430; Schutz 1967, 43 f.). What Husserl called a

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3 This is an important qualification, as Schutz (1966b, 78) himself stresses. Schutz died in 1959 and never read Husserl's extensive manuscripts on intersubjectivity that Iso Kern edited in three *Husserliana* volumes in 1973. A "posthumous" dialogue between Schutz and Husserl on intersubjectivity might produce quite different results, but has to my knowledge not been systematically undertaken so far.

"constitutive phenomenology of the natural attitude" allowed Schutz to analyze the underpinnings of our everyday experience characterized by an attitude, in which we take for granted the existence of the world and the others around us. The focus of this alternative "way" is on the "mundane," or worldly, "empirical" ego rather than its logical matrix, the "transcendental" ego.[4] This ego does not constitute other egos and the world around it by analogy to its experience of itself, or as "a 'modification' of myself" (Husserl 1960, 115), but is born into a world of others that preexist it. And, Schutz (2003, 115) stresses, "as long as human beings are born by mothers and not produced in retorts, experience of the *alter ego* will genetically-constitutionally precede experience of one's own self."[5]

A central element of Schutz's mundane phenomenology of intersubjectivity is the concept of "types." Already in his Bergson years, he had analyzed experience (*Erfahrung*) in terms of "forms of life" that highlight only certain aspects within the streaming fullness of "lived experience" (*Erleben*) while neglecting all other aspects of it (Schutz 2006). In his 1932 book, he combined this interpretation of the Bergsonian *durée* with Husserl's analysis of streaming consciousness. The selective articulation of experience is now described in terms of "types." Within the analysis of intersubjectivity, the internal articulation of experience through "types" plays the same role as the earlier "forms of life."[6] I can never access another person's stream of lived experience in its fullness. To do this, I would impossibly need to *become* the other by forgetting myself, changing into their body, and living through their entire life

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4 As Schutz (1967, 44) himself stresses, his approach does not invalidate the insights of transcendental phenomenology. Transcendental phenomenology deals with the formal structure of *any* conscious subject (including hypothetical aliens or gods), while Schutz's mundane phenomenology deals with the special case of the empirical ego as a *human* subject. Unlike the "anthropologism" that Husserl perceived in Heidegger at the time and rejected as a non-phenomenological project, Schutz's work was in the spirit of an anthropology that Husserl himself claimed was contained within phenomenology (see Strassheim 2021).

5 Cf. similar formulations in: Schutz 1962, 57, and Schutz 1966b, 82.

6 The concept that links both conceptions is "meaning" (*Sinn*), which Schutz understands as a "tension" between the fullness of lived experience and its selective articulation. Schutz's aim since the 1920s had been to clarify the notion of "meaning" central to Max Weber's interpretive (*verstehende*) sociology.

as it has accrued up to the present moment. What I *can* do is to "understand" the other through the medium of "typifying" constructs. Types never offer more than an "approximation" to the other's lived experience in its fullness. But, to the extent that both my own experience and the other's experience are *themselves* internally articulated by selective typification, types constitute a formal bridge between us.

Schutz's notion of "types" (or "typification") was initially inspired in part by Max Weber's concept of an "ideal type." According to Weber, the analysis of social phenomena, such as institutions, interactions, or history, cannot be based on strict and universal "laws." But neither can it be based on uniquely individual actions or biographies. An ideal-typical analysis happens in-between: it assumes a certain degree of generality both within each individual and across individuals, but it does not claim universal validity, and sometimes it even serves to highlight exceptions and counterexamples. What makes this more than a methodological device (which might be of interest to social scientists only) is the underlying idea that ideal types reflect "typical" views, motives, or expectations in the actual social world that allow individuals to coordinate with each other.

In order to clarify the philosophical grounds for this idea, Schutz used Husserl's own concept of "types." From 1932 onwards, he read the manuscripts for what would become *Experience and Judgment* and discussed them with Husserl. Types, unlike strict rules, laws, or ideal essences, produce continuity in experience without shutting out discontinuity. That is, on the one hand, by highlighting recurrent or constant aspects within our experience, types help us recognize familiar objects or events and make us expect the same patterns to reappear in future experience as well. In this sense, they are crucial for our "faith in the continuity of our real experiences," as Schutz (1966c, 100) puts it. But, on the other hand, this faith reaches at best what Husserl (1973, § 77) calls "presumptive certainty": a certainty that is always "on notice" or, as Schutz likes to say, knowledge "taken for granted until further notice." Types are enriched and modified over the course of our experience. There may be exceptions and disappointments. And sometimes, the type itself is proven wrong and must be replaced (Husserl's example of this is the recognition that whales are fish but belong among the mammals). In other words, types are in principle open to discontinuity.

Due to this combination of continuity and discontinuity, of closed patterns in experience and their open development and application, types (far more than Husserl's invariable "eidetic" structures; see Schutz 1966c) became central to Schutz's analysis of intersubjectivity.

(a) On the side of continuity, intersubjectively shared types enable us to engage in smooth or institutionalized interactions. We can have social relationships that rely on interlocking routines and standard expectations, and we can typify each other as carriers of typical roles and attitudes. This side of types also explains small and large tragedies that arise in everyday life. The "elusive other" (Barber 1988) escapes the net of our typifications, and especially in modern, "rationalized" societies unique individuality is often simply disregarded in favor of "anonymous," typified functions (Natanson 1986). Moreover, persistent difficulties and misunderstandings may occur between people who rely on different systems of types, for instance, between members of different cultures.

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(b) But, on the other hand, types remain open to discontinuity and thereby to ever new situations and individuals. We can get to know the other person better, who, as we are aware, is always more than their typical role. We can learn to understand other cultures, as we know that not everybody relies on the same types. This side of types is often overlooked, but it is at work everywhere. Our everyday language, for instance, does not—not even ideally— follow strict "rules," as Habermas claims, but it involves linguistic types which leave indefinite leeway for local variations and creative uses. Indeed, if this were not so, language could not support human communication (Strassheim 2017). Schutz (1964) compares this dynamic aspect to the interaction between musicians who must adapt their performance to each other and to the occasion even when they are playing the same score.

In other words, the concept of "types" as flexible patterns within experience is highly useful for phenomenological analyses of both the individual and the social dimension. Within the Husserlian tradition, the type has more recently been rediscovered as a basic category that can be productively applied to daily practical routines as well as to more creative dimensions, such as dreams or phantasy (Lohmar 2008 and 2014). Nevertheless, the *openness* of types contains within it a problem that can only be solved at a deeper level of analysis.

2. The problem of "active openness" to the other beyond types

What is it that allows me to gain access to the individual or cultural other, even when this other transcends the types that are at my disposal? A preliminary answer might be that, in order to do this, I must return to the "fullness" of my lived experience. Schutz had, in his Bergsonian period, argued that this fullness is not only infinitely richer that the small selections which make up my articulated, intentional experience, but that it transcends even basic differentiations between emotion and intellect, between my mind and my body, or between my "inner" life and the "outer" world.[7] It is tempting to think that lived experience also transcends any fixed differentiations between myself and the other. At any rate, it is related to an infinite potential of mutual perception and interaction among people who are in each other's presence. Interactants, especially in mutual bodily presence, expose to one another a constantly growing "fullness of symptoms" (*Symptomfülle*) far beyond ready-made typifications, a fullness, in which their individual streams of experience can mirror each other and approximate a lived "we" (Schutz 1967, § 33 f.).

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However, this answer has only shifted the problem. If we can gain access to the individual other at the level of our lived experience (*Erleben*) in its fullness, then how and in what sense do we access this level? After all, as Schutz argues, all our experience (*Erfahrung*)[8] is constituted by way of a selective articulation that neglects most of this fullness. Undivided fullness cannot be experienced as such, because, phenomenologically, experience is intentional, directed and therefore selective. Furthermore, even if undivided fullness could be experienced, a series of implausible implications would arise. If my experience reached a level beyond all distinctions between me and you, in what sense would it still be *my* experience? Furthermore, if this shared level as such granted us access to each other, why would we still need to communicate

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7 It is not clear to what extent Schutz influenced the younger Maurice Merleau-Ponty who knew Schutz and his work and was for some time a student of Schutz's best friend Aron Gurwitsch.

8 Using "experience" for both *Erleben* (lived experience, fullness, *durée*) and *Erfahren* (articulated, intentional experience) is misleading, but the German distinction has no precise English equivalent.

at all—let alone miscommunicate at times—, rather than simply read each other's minds? If we want to avoid such implications, the real problem is to explain how I gain access to the potential fullness of lived experience *within the boundaries of* articulated, selective experience.[9] And to the extent that experience is articulated by *types*, the concept of typification needs revisiting.

How precisely does typification work? On Schutz's reading of Husserl's genetic phenomenology, past experiences "motivate" (Husserl 1982, § 47) later experiences within the history of an empirical ego. Past experiences "pre-delineate" (Husserl 1973, § 8) narrow paths of anticipation and help determine which aspects of the world will come to the fore in later experiences while many other aspects will simply be ignored. Within such a motivational history, types embody a general tendency of experience to converge upon continuous patterns and to follow such patterns once they have been established. This tendency is quite pervasive, especially if we assume that our complex life in any human society is based on typical patterns and that, as Schutz argues, most of our typical patterns are acquired from the society, into which we are born. Types structure our sensual perception and our emotions, our goals, and our actions, our use of language and nonverbal signs; they shape our views of ourselves and of others, and they carve out what we expect and what we remember. And where social and cultural institutions stabilize and reinforce shared types, the individual motivation to follow them will only deepen.

But, then, what could possibly motivate my experience to *deviate* from a typical pattern? On the face of it, we might answer that I am ready to stray from a type, whenever I experience something atypical. But, if types shape our experience at all levels by picking out typical aspects of the world and ignoring atypical aspects, the very occurrence of an *atypical* experience becomes a mystery. Without an intrinsic motivation of experience to go beyond the typical, the in-principle openness that makes types so attractive for phenomenological analysis boils down to only two specific kinds of openness,

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9 Gerda Walther (1923) engaged the task of explaining the ego's intentional access to a level that connects ego and alter ego. However, it seems she failed to reach a satisfactory conclusion before—perhaps not surprisingly, given the implications mentioned earlier—turning instead to the study of mysticism and parapsychology. I am grateful to Daniel Neumann for pointing me to Walther's work.

both of which may be called "passive." The first kind of passive openness might be termed *impressionistic*: we receive impressions from something beyond our typified intentionality, from something that can somehow impact and shape our experience, even when it does not conform to our types at hand. The second kind is *forced* openness: a typical pattern is disturbed, once again from outside (e.g., an obstacle before our feet or a person who stops us) or due to some internal conflict (e.g., between different types), and this in turn forces us to question our types and to search for atypical aspects that might explain the disturbance. These are in effect two kinds of openness that can be found already in Husserl's concept of types (Lohmar 2011).

Nevertheless, I am less optimistic than Dieter Lohmar (2011) that what I would call "passive" openness sufficiently captures our actual experience of novel or unique situations, or even, for that matter, our experience of a completely *typical* situation, since any typical situation, even though it conforms to a type on a general level, is "*atypical* in its uniqueness and particularity," as Schutz (1970, 56; original emphasis) puts it. I will conclude this chapter by first noting the reasons for my skepticism and then sketching a possible solution.

Impressionistic openness, whether based on sensual perception or on automatic mechanisms of "association," may help explain how newborn children are motivated to form their first interests and percepts, and to gradually build up typical expectations (Lohmar 2008, ch. 7). But it does not explain why typical expectations, once established, can be modified or given up later on. To be sure, typical expectations are relatively indeterminate, vague, or "empty," as Husserl puts it. But, if types were *wide open*, so to speak, that is, if the concrete determination of experience were left in large part to a passive impression that bypasses the intentionality of my experience, we would to that extent be advocating *tabula rasa* empiricism rather than phenomenological analysis. More importantly, we would be inviting back in problems similar to the ones mentioned above, namely problems of a supposedly immediate access to the fullness of lived experience.

As for *forced* openness, it explains part of our actual experience and action in everyday life—but only part of it. Schutz, too, was interested in the notion of a "problem" (Schutz 1966a) in the literal sense of the Greek *problêma* as "something thrown before" us. When the typical course of experience is

interrupted, the breakdown forces us to question our types and to search for a solution. However, while this analysis fits a range of cases, it fails to account for cases, where we adapt to each other in the smooth and spontaneous way that Schutz himself compares to "making music together." Seeing the otherness of the other person purely in terms of a "problem" to be solved would fail to grasp this essential characteristic of our social world. It is true that we often forget the actual others behind our stereotypical views of them and stubbornly ignore their frustration at being thus reduced, unless and until we meet with resistance—but this does not happen always or inevitably.

Even more fundamentally, the difficulty Schutz had seen as afflicting Husserl's *transcendental* approach to intersubjectivity now seems to return in a different guise in Schutz's own, "mundane" phenomenology (cf. also Strassheim 2021). As noted earlier, types shape a person's entire experience of the world and their actions within it, delimiting what is familiar or normal for this person and what they accept as certain and trustworthy. Moreover, my experience of myself is based on types, through which I identify my own attitudes and goals and my roles in society (Schutz speaks of "self-typification"). In sum, types very much make me the person I am. In this sense, my system of types constitutes what we might call an *empirical* "sphere of ownness." While different from Husserl's transcendental sphere of ownness, it raises a similar problem: what is the "motivational foundation" for me as an empirical ego to actively look beyond the types that make up my familiar world, and to open my experience to an alter ego, a different person within their own "sphere"? If intentionality followed a tendency towards typical continuity *only*, the nominal openness of types—which made them interesting as a category for the analysis of a social world in the first place—would be rendered ineffective by a motivational lock-in.

While the late Schutz was aware of such problems in his own theory, his premature death in 1959 kept him from finding a systematic solution. As far as I can see, the only remedy to the shortcomings connected with the two kinds of *passive* openness is to assume an additional, *active* openness within experience. Indeed, Schutz's texts contain ideas towards such an openness, for instance in his concepts of "anxiety" (inspired by Kierkegaard and Heidegger, see Strassheim 2016a) or "spontaneity" (inspired by Leibniz, see Strassheim

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2016b). This *active* openness towards what transcends typical continuity is a motivational tendency within experience that forms a tension with the other tendency, mentioned above, to *maintain* typical continuity. Clearly, neither tendency can be reduced to the other, as they pull in opposite directions. But, given the problems raised here, this tension cannot be avoided, as we need to assume both tendencies at work in our experience.

Another central notion of Schutz's might provide an umbrella for the two tendencies. "Relevance" is his general term for the "selectivity" of experience or, more precisely, for the dynamic, through which the selective articulation of experience develops in time.[10] The argument given here would suggest that this dynamic of experience is constituted by an inherent motivational tension which, intuitively, fits well with everyday notions of "relevance." Those aspects of ourselves and the world around us, including other people, which become "relevant" to us, may do so, because they fit with typical patterns, such as routine expectations or topical knowledge—but also precisely, because they are unusual, strange, or new, in a word, atypical. If this argument is valid, then an important task for a phenomenology of sociality, whether it follows Schutz's particular stance or not, is to clarify further, how these two tendencies logically relate to each other and how their interplay shapes experience in a way that allows us to engage with the otherness of the other person and thus to live in the intersubjective dimension that forms the basis of the human world.

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10 Lohmar (2008) uses a narrower concept of "relevance" that refers to emotional or volitional interests or values invested in types. He seems to link this concept to Schutz, who, nevertheless, explicitly used the term "relevance" in a far more general sense (see, e.g., Schutz 1966a).

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Andrzej Gniazdowski

Phenomenology of the Total State by Aurel Kolnai

Abstract: The aim of the paper is to reconstruct the relationship between Kolnai's criticism of the total state, the embodiments of which were, according to him, both the national-socialist as well as the communist state, and his philosophical apology of the corporate state. The goal of such an endeavor is to contribute to both history of the phenomenological movement as well as to theory of the state by a systematic reconstruction of Kolnai's phenomenology of the state as an unjustly unacknowledged position within the 20th-century political theory.

Keywords: Aurel Kolnai, phenomenology, political theory, totalitarianism, total state.

The interpretation of Aurel Kolnai's political philosophy as a kind of political phenomenology may raise justified objections. It is out of the question that Kolnai could be considered one of the greatest conservative-liberal political thinkers of the twentieth century.[1] His thorough as well as critical assessment

1 Cf. Manent 2004, 207–218.

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of both communism and national socialism, as carried out in the books *Psychoanalysis and Sociology* from 1920[2] and *The War Against the West* from 1938,[3] allows one to place his political analyses among the most significant positions regarding the totalitarian debate. Kolnai's theoretical contributions to the phenomenology of values and emotions, delivered, e.g., in his dissertation *The Ethical Value and Reality* from 1927 or in the article "On Disgust" from 1929,[4] make his membership within the phenomenological movement also by no means debatable. By contrast with these studies, however, in his political writings—conservative-catholic in their outlook—Kolnai did not apply the phenomenological method explicitly. The question, which arises, is, therefore, whether his critique of totalitarianism may be interpreted as a political application of phenomenology or rather as a separate, both practical and theoretical activity.

In order to answer this question, the present paper attempts to undertake a reconstruction of the theoretical background of Kolnai's critique of the total state as a modern political phenomenon. Beside the aforementioned, pioneering study in the area of political psychoanalysis, where he criticized "the centralized, despotic, and mechanical kneading of society" (Kolnai 1922, 168) as an inevitable outcome of anarchist communism, as well as his anti-Nazi compendium, where he dedicated an entire chapter to the national-socialist concept of the state, he also analyzed the problem of the total state in a series of articles.[5] Already in 1933, Kolnai published the paper "The Total State and Civilization," in which he defined both the communist as well as the nationalist totalitarianism as being "basically primitivism" (Kolnai 1933b, 113–116).[6] In the same year, he argued against Carl Schmitt's "concept of the political" in the paper "What is Politics

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2 Cf. Kolnai 1920. The first English translation of this text was published in 1922 (cf. Kolnai 1922).
3 Cf. Kolnai 1938.
4 Cf. also Kolnai 2004.
5 Between 1926 and 1934, Kolnai published in the journal *Österreichischer Volkswirt* the articles, such as: "Faschismus und Bolschewismus" (1926), "Rechts und Links in der Politik" (1927), or "Persönlichkeit und Massenherrschaft" (1933/1934).
6 For the English translation, cf. Kolnai 2017, 45–52.

About?",[7] and he continued his polemics in the articles published between 1934 and 1936 in the Viennese journal *The Christian Corporate State* edited by Dietrich von Hildebrand.[8]

The goal of the paper is to reconstruct the historical context and the possible phenomenological meaning of Kolnai's critique of the total state delivered in the cited works. What is aimed at here is to answer the question, whether it is possible to interpret his anti-totalitarian approach as a practical implication of the theoretically legitimate phenomenology of the total state, if not of the state as such. Making this question clear seems to be by no means insignificant, *mutatis mutandis*, also with regard to other, politically diversified, supposedly phenomenological "approaches" to the total state, like those of Hannah Arendt in *The Origins of Totalitarianism* or Martin Heidegger in his *Rektoratsrede*. The contemporary significance of answering this question consists in a contribution to understanding why Kolnai did not limit his critique of totalitarianism to the communist and national socialist concept of the state. Were there strictly theoretical, phenomenological or rather just political, if not religious reasons that pushed him to extend this critique after the World War II to what he considered the totalitarian qualities of the liberal democracy itself?

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Political positivism and phenomenology

The philosophy of Aurel Kolnai has become, at least since the beginning of the century, a topic of intense studies.[9] In 2007, Axel Honneth recalled his "forgotten work" in the "Afterword" to the volume of Kolnai's selected essays considering the emotions, such as disgust, pride, and hatred.[10] The reason why

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7 Cf. Kolnai 1933a. For the English translation, cf. Kolnai 2017, 53–84.
8 In the journal *Der Christliche Ständestaat*, Kolnai published nine articles under the pseudonym Dr. A. van Helsing: "Heidegger und der Nationalsozialismus" (June 17, 1934), "Marxistisches und Liberalistisches im Nationalsozialismus" (June 24, 1934), "Staatsidee und Staatsform" (August 19, 1934), "Der Mißbrauch des Vitalen" (August 26, 1934), "Othmar Spanns Ganzheitslehre" (November 11, 1934), "Othmar Spanns 'organische' Staatslehre" (November 18, 1934), "Einfallspforten des Nationalismus" (January 27, 1935), "Langbehn und der deutsche Katholizismus" (February 17, 1935), and "Chesterton" (June 28, 1936).
9 Cf. Dunlop 2002 as well as Balázs and Dunlop 2004.
10 Cf. Kolnai 2007.

this work needed to be remembered at all, was, on the one hand, the multiplicity and heterogeneity of Kolnai's research areas[11] and, on the other hand, the fact that it, as a work of "a philosopher of Hungarian-Jewish origin and a Catholic convert" (Backes 2019, 18) did not fit any ready interpretative schemas. Apart from Kolnai's achievements in the domain of the phenomenology of negative emotions,[12] it is also his original, liberal-catholic political philosophy that has been, nevertheless, drawing a growing attention in the recent years.[13] After the publication of the German translation of *The War Against the West* in 2015, there is an increasing interest in the reconstruction of his standpoint in the totalitarian debate, too.[14] The recognition of the contemporary significance of Kolnai's critique of totalitarianism, however, does not spell the recognition of its phenomenological meaning. The isolated attempts at interpreting Kolnai's political philosophy as a "political implication of phenomenology" focus on finding a link between phenomenology and his "anti-totalitarian activism," rather than ask about the possible phenomenological background of his anti-totalitarian theory of the state.[15]

186   In order to answer the question, to which extent Kolnai's critique of the total state presupposes a kind of phenomenology of the state as its theoretical point of reference, there is no other way as to place this critique in a broader, historical context. What shaped this context in the time of the Weimar Republic and the Third Reich was a fundamental theoretical controversy over the normative status of the state within the German political science. The object of this controversy was the possibility to overcome what had been considered to be the crisis of this science, determined by the search for a normative foundation of the state by legal positivism.[16] What this crisis consisted in was a radical theoretical discontinuity between "being" and "should be," reality and ideality, facticity and validity, legality and legitimacy, inherent in the legal

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11 Cf. Honneth 2014, 77.
12 Cf. Korsemayer and Smith 2004 as well as Ernst-Wilken 2019.
13 The textual basis for these studies was widened in the last decades by the publication of three volumes containing Kolnai's selected political essays: apart from *Politics, Values, and National Socialism* cited above (2017), cf. also: Kolnai 1995 and 1999a.
14 Cf. Bialas 2019.
15 Cf., for example, Gubser 2019.
16 Cf. Ernst Vollrath's discussion of the concept "Staat" in: Ritter 1998, v. 10, 46.

positivist theory of the state. In order to face this discontinuity, which made any normative legitimization of the state impossible, the main representative of legal positivism at the time of the publication of Edmund Husserl's *Logical Investigations*, Georg Jellinek, distinguished between the state as an empirical, i.e., the sociological and historical phenomenon of facticity, and the state as an ideally valid normative legal order.[17] He considered that it is possible to close the gap between these "two sides of the state" by his doctrine of the normativity of the factual, that is, by the skeptical, if not nihilist thesis that the state is normatively legitimized by nothing but the factual being of the state itself.[18]

If we take into consideration Husserl's remark about phenomenologists as "genuine positivists" (Husserl 1983, 39), the theoretical framework of not only Kolnai's, but also of any other political implications of phenomenology seems to be to some extent historically predetermined. The most general criterion of their phenomenological essence turns out to be in this context the criticism against the skeptical relativism of legal positivist theory of the state. What is to be expected would also be a kind of reference to the arguments put by Husserl against the "positivist reduction of the idea of science to mere factual science" and "loss of its meaning for life" (Husserl 1970, 5). According to the current interpretations of Kolnai's political philosophy, his anti-totalitarian activity fulfills these criteria already because of his project to "complete the phenomenology of moral values," to wit, by not only the affirmation of objective ends and moral rules, but also by binding them with practical reality (cf. Kolnai 1927, 4, 12). Apart from the openness for a "world of objective moral values, putatively revealed by phenomenological insight," as an antipositivist premise of Kolnai's anti-totalitarianism thus used to be interpreted also his "insistence on embedding political claims in the bedrock of human experience—the real life of the person" (Gubser 2019, 128).

It is worth mentioning that phenomenology, both transcendental, represented by Edmund Husserl, as well as realistic, developed, e.g., by Max Scheler and Alexander Pfänder, by whom Kolnai was influenced the most,[19] is only one of the approaches theoretically disposed to overcome the crisis

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17 Cf. Jellinek 1900.
18 Cf. Lepsius 2019.
19 Cf. Vendrell-Ferran 2018.

of legal positivism in the theory of state. The same can be said about other theoretical standpoints, which formed the so-called anti-positivist turn in social sciences and the humanities of that time. Apart from neo-Kantianism, neo-Hegelianism, and critical theory, influenced by both Marxism and psychoanalysis, are worth a mention in this context also neo-Thomism, hermeneutics, and philosophy of life.[20] In opposition to all these theoretical standpoints among them, which identified the crisis of legal positivism with the irreversible decline of scientific reason as such, Husserl insisted on the "genuineness" of the phenomenological positivism, in order to claim the pure, radical scientificity of his phenomenology. What would be needed in search for the more specific criteria detecting the phenomenological meaning of Kolnai's criticism against the total state is, therefore, to confront his arguments with other antipositivist approaches to the problem of the state's normative foundations defining themselves as being scientific.

In this context, as the theoretically most relevant points of reference for an interpretation of Kolnai's approach to the total state can be considered the "pure theory of law" by Hans Kelsen and the "substantial" theory of law developed by Carl Schmitt.[21] What differentiated the two explicitly scientific critiques of legal positivism, taken as ideal types, was the diametrically opposed standpoint with regard to the relationship of law and state. Both Kelsen and Schmitt, in a sense, equated the state and law, but while Kelsen tended to reduce the state to the logically formal legal order,[22] it was law, which for Schmitt could be actually reduced to the state.[23] Insofar as Kelsen's pure theory of "stateless law" had for its consequence, from the point of view of the legal anti-positivists, the state's theory without state,[24] Schmitt's criticism against the legal positivism thus paved the way to the National Socialist doctrine of the total "state of exception."[25] Apart from Othmar Spann with his study *The True State* from 1921[26] who gave fascism its "first comprehensive philosophical system"

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20 Cf. Schürgers 1989, 12.
21 Cf. Vinx 2015.
22 Cf. Kelsen 1911 and 1934.
23 Cf. Schmitt 1922.
24 Cf. Somek 2006.
25 Cf. Schmitt 1921 and 1922.
26 Cf. Spann 1921.

(Polanyi 1935, 362) and Hans Freyer with his book *The State* from 1926 who articulated the concept of the total state in his polemic against the concept of the legal state,[27] it was precisely Carl Schmitt who introduced this fascist term into the political culture of the German right with his articles published during the 1920s and 30s.[28]

Despite Kolnai's only isolated critical remarks about Kelsen's "pure legalism,"[29] the theory of the state and law developed by this "jurist of the century" is an important point of reference for the reconstruction of the theoretical background of Kolnai's supposed phenomenology of the state. The critical legal positivism of Kelsen, starting from the dichotomy of Is and Ought and stating that "the reason for validity of a norm can only be the validity of another norm" (Kelsen 1970, 193), had an essential impact on all political implications of phenomenology, in the first instance on the phenomenology of law.[30] Kelsen attempted to overcome the crisis of legal positivism, endangered by legal nihilism, with a further radicalization of the formal normativism inherent in the aforementioned Jellinek's theory of the "two sides of the state." With reference to Neo-Kantian objectivism in the theory of science, he assumed that the state existed by virtue of its legal order and that it was nothing but the system of norms expressed linguistically in ought-sentences and logically in hypothetical propositions.[31] The phenomenological significance of Kelsen's thesis that the only normative foundation of the state is the constitution, taken as a "basic norm," consisted in provoking critical attempts to overcome its pure formalism. While Kelsen entirely disregarded the question of the content of this norm, the phenomenological "genuine positivists," like Adolf Reinach, Edith Stein, Wilhelm Schapp, Felix Kaufmann, or Fritz Schreier, searched for a kind of "material a priori" of law and legal order.[32]

If such a constructive criticism of Kelsen's legalism can be considered inherent in the political implications of phenomenology, Kolnai's both legal

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27 Cf. Freyer 1925.
28 Cf. Schmitt 1999.
29 "Othmar Spann's Theory of Totality" in: Kolnai 2017, 138.
30 Cf. Loidolt 2010, 10 and 129 ff.
31 Cf. Vollrath, "Staat," in: Ritter 1998, 47.
32 Cf. Loidolt 2010, 43 ff.

and political anti-positivism seems to fulfil this criterion in an ambivalent way. While searching for the *a priori* foundation of law in the "humble realism and material richness of the Christian ideas of God, man, morality, knowledge, society etc." (Kolnai 2017, 138), Kolnai, like Scheler, Hildebrand, and many other realistic phenomenologists who converted to Catholicism, surpassed the formalism of legal positivism enhanced by neo-Kantian purity at the cost of the unambiguous scientificity of his approach. Insofar as his critique of both positivist and neo-Kantian ideas of political science did not imply, however, the thesis about the decline of science as such, the theoretical standpoint of Kolnai corresponded with those theories of the state, which searched for its normative foundations in a kind of theology of natural law. In this context, an important light on the difference between theological-political and phenomenological meaning of Kolnai's critique of the total state may be shed especially the analysis of differences between his work and the "political theologian" Carl Schmitt who aimed at overcoming legal positivism by the substantial normativism of his "concept of the political."

The concept of the total state

What makes the historical context of Kolnai's supposed political phenomenology all the more complex is that the question of the normative foundations of the state, apparently purely theoretical before the war, transformed at the time of the Weimar Republic into a radically practical one. The historical trigger of this transformation was that, which was perceived as a "Versailles humiliation" ending the World War I, and the radical break with the well-established tradition of German authoritarianism in favor of the democratic state.[33] The knowledge-constitutive interest of also "purely scientific" attempts to overcome the alleged nihilist implications of legal positivism was, at its core, the search for a theoretical justification of the opposing political standpoints regarding the most schismatic political issue of that time, that is, the legitimacy of the Weimar Republic itself. While the theoretical arguments in favor of legal positivism coincided to a large extent with the political recognition of the

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33 Cf. Preuß 1918.

liberal-democratic principles of the Weimar Constitution, legal anti-positivism within the theory of the state was closely interconnected with the conservative or national-socialist revolutionary political standpoints.[34]

Carl Schmitt's critique of both Hans Kelsen's pure legalism and liberal democracy of the Weimar Germany perfectly exemplifies this coincidence and this interconnection. His core argument against them was, paradoxically, that it is nothing but the liberal democratic state, including the Weimar Republic, that is *de facto* total, and that it is nothing but Kelsen's pure formalism that legitimizes theoretically the factual totality of this state. In the article "The Way to the Total State" from 1931 Schmitt pointed to the unavoidable, both sociological and political consequences of the transformation of the authoritarian state into the democratic one. The most fundamental of them consisted in the inevitable, total identification of the state with society. According to him, it was in the first instance the liberal democratic principles of the American–French revolutions and English Radicalism that initiated the simultaneous process of the socialization of the state and, as its reverse, of the politicizing of society. "As it has organized itself into state," Schmitt assumed, "society is in the process of changing from a neutral state of the liberal nineteenth century into a potentially total state." (Schmitt 1999, 10.) In his interpretation of this process, he speaks about "a dialectical evolution which passes through three stages: from the absolute State of the 17th and 18th centuries, over the neutral state of the liberal 19th century, to the total state of the identity between state and society" (ibid.).

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Schmitt interpreted the fascist and national-socialist totalitarianism of the 20th century as a socio-political phenomenon, the essence of which was an attempt to take appropriate measures against the change in conceptions about the state, prevalent in the 19th century. While stressing: "There is a total state," he considered this change to be an empirical fact that one does not get rid of with any kind of "shouts of outrage" or "watchwords, such as liberalism, legal state, or whatever names one wishes to give them" (Schmitt 1999, "Further Development of the Total State in Germany," 20 and 22). In his works, since *Dictatorship* from 1921, through *The Political Theology* from 1922, to *The Concept of the Political*

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34 Cf. Vollrath, "Staat," in: Ritter 1998, 47.

from 1927, Schmitt pointed at the radical incommensurability between Jellinek's two sides of the 20th-century state, that is, the state taken as a socio-historical phenomenon and the state taken as an ideally valid normative legal order. Insofar as he interpreted the liberal-democratic state from the empirical point of view as a total state and from the normative point of view as a pseudo-legal state, he assumed, that "the most difficult question of today's constitutional law cannot be answered by talking about the 'sovereignty of the parliament'" (Schmitt 1999, "The Way to the Total State," 18).

According to Schmitt, when taking a look at the "true situation" of the Weimar Republic in February 1933, it becomes evident that "against the total state there is only one antidote, a revolution just as total" (Schmitt 1999, 20). The meaning of this revolution had to be, in his interpretation, the transformation of the 20th-century pseudo-state into a genuine state or, so to speak, the conversion of the factual total state "in itself" to the authentic total state "for itself." Schmitt considered the normative foundation of this state and the criterion of its authenticity to be both formal and substantial "concept of the political," which it presupposed.[35] This constitutive condition for the authentic state, the normative concept, the function of which was to mediatize between its two sides and to overcome the dichotomy of Is and Ought, consisted, according to him, in the "specific distinction between friend and enemy" (Schmitt 2007, 26). In Schmitt's theory, "every authentic state was a total state," insofar as the state presupposed this distinction in the sense that it allowed no forces to arise within it, which might be inimical to it.[36] It was total, as he wrote, "in the sense of its quality and of its energy, of what the fascist calls the *stato totalitario*, by which it means primarily that the new means of power belong exclusively to the state and serve the purpose of augmenting its power" (Schmitt 1999, 21).

Despite the circumstance that they both formed the left wing of the Catholic Center in the twentieth century,[37] Kolnai, unlike Schmitt, belonged to those anti-positivist theorists of the state who did not share the hostility towards the liberal-democratic principles of the Weimar Constitution. From the outset, he

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35 Cf. Schmitt 2007, 26.
36 Cf. Schmitt 1999, 22.
37 Cf. Backes 2019, 29.

considered the anti-liberal and anti-democratic, populist movements after the World War I in Germany and Austria to be more or less inadequate answers or even rather radical failures in facing the political challenges of the time. Kolnai saw the essence of conservative-revolutionary and national-socialist, violent opposition against the Weimar Republic in "the revolt against the liberty" and "the emancipation of tyranny" (Kolnai 1938, 106 ff.). While criticizing "the paradoxical attitude of shaking off liberty as though it were shaking off oppressive fetters" (ibid., 107), he pointed to the Christian origins of the Western, liberal-democratic institutions. "Whatever shortcomings and blunders of the liberal civilian world may be," he wrote, "it is still incomparably closer to the Christian axioms of spiritual personality […], than is the world of a new Paganism, Daemonism and pan-social Militarism." (Ibid., 109.)

The first circumstance that compelled Kolnai to express his anti-totalitarian political views was his witnessing, as a young student, of the bolshevist revolution and the communist dictatorship in Hungary in 1919.[38] Long before being converted into liberal Catholicism under the influence of Gilbert K. Chesterton,[39] the twenty-year-old Kolnai analyzed, in the book *Psychoanalysis and Sociology*, the mass political movements from the standpoint of Durkheim's positivist sociologism and Freud's psychoanalytical theory of culture. There, he interpreted the anarchist-communist ideology on the basis of both his personal experience and his student readings regarding the psychoanalytical term of "regression." What he understood by that was the "reversion of mental life, in some respects, to a former, or less developed, psychological state," characteristic of not only individual mental disorders, but also social psychosis (Kolnai 1922, 157 ff.). Kolnai justified the explicit liberal political standpoint taken in this book theoretically with reference to, one the one hand, Freud's idea of the emancipatory power of psychoanalysis with regard to human self-awareness and, on the other hand, Durkheim's theory of the evolution of the social solidarity from mechanical to organic one.[40]

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38 Cf. Honneth 2014, 77.
39 Cf. Dunlop 2002, 56.
40 Cf. Kolnai 1922, 23.

Kolnai explicitly criticized Schmitt's concept of the total state as well as his concept of the political for the first time in the article "The Total State and Civilisation" from 1927. For the purpose of this critique, he adopted the arguments directed earlier against the anarchist communist concept of classless society and the abolition of the state. Kolnai interpreted both totalitarianisms as an answer to the serious internal defects and crises on the part of the liberal civilization. The essence of National Socialism with this regard was, according to him, aiming at a civilizational renewal by the "return to the Primitive," that is, in his interpretation, by the regression from civilized society to the primitive horde.[41] Kolnai thus saw in the idea of the renewal of the Western civilization by such a return, even if justified to some extent by "the imperfections, mishaps, vices and lethargies of the civil society" (2017, 79), a deceptive and perilous illusion. He pointed out that national-socialist totalitarianism confused the true universalism, towards which all civilization really tends, with a "raw, misunderstood, false universalism […], which is really a contracted nationalistic cult of exclusiveness and mulish Prussian planned organisation" (ibid., 80). The civilization, built on the complex division of labor in society, demanded, in Kolnai's interpretation, an organic solidarity in the sense of tolerance, readiness to come to terms with what is alien, as well as acceptance of the multiplicity of values and needs. What the "heroes of totality" offered as a remedy was instead nothing but, as he wrote, "mechanical resonating to a narrow-minded tribal thinking" and "pseudo-community of a common uniform, for which the foreigner and dissident is simply the 'enemy'" (ibid.).

Among the heroes of the idea of the total state, unable to understand that "there will never be a 'totalitarian' civilisation" (ibid., 81), Kolnai counted first of all Carl Schmitt. To the extent as the national-socialist ideology signified, according to Kolnai, the return to the primitive self-idolization of the tribe, it was from his perspective not by accident that this "National Socialist theorist of the state" and "Göring's Crown Lawyer" (Kolnai 1938, 111), as he wrote, "exalts hostility to the true formative determining factor of the state as such, and the readiness to die for the group to the true political attitude" (Kolnai 2017, 78). In his direct answer to Schmitt's *The Concept of the Political*, i.e., in the article

41 Cf. Kolnai 2017, 78.

"What is Politics About?", Kolnai considered the substantial normativism of this concept to be derived in the first instance from the philosophy of life. He interpreted Schmitt's antipositivist theory of the state as a kind of sociology of politics that defined the state not in terms of constitutional law, but in terms of political existence. The concept of the political, formulated by Schmitt with reference to "irrationalists of life and power," such as not only Nietzsche, Klages, Sorel, Pareto, Spengler, and Heidegger, but also Bergson and Scheler,[42] had for its substantial foundation, in Kolnai's interpretation, the principle of "existential antagonism" and for this only reason it also had nothing to do with science. He regarded the tribal nationalism of this totalitarian theory as "self-contradictory," insofar as, from his post-Durkheimian perspective, "no modern nation can be a total tribe" (Kolnai 2017, 81).

Kolnai discussed the theoretical function of Schmitt's concept of the political as a normative foundation of the total state at length in 1938 in *The War Against the West*. In the chapter about the "creative enmity," he criticized this concept firstly for recognizing the struggle of rival centers of power not as an occasional necessity, but as an essential one.[43] Kolnai contested Schmitt's thesis that the political sphere is an original province of life, different from religion, ethics, or utility, governed by its own fundamental and specific laws, by pointing to "a marginal element of sound truth and a central element of obvious perversity in this" (Kolnai 1938, 147). He described the "great discovery of Schmitt," summarized by him in the statement that "the first and original factor of public life is to be found, not in the need for an authoritative regulation of the questions and conflicts arising from the contact and interpenetration of human lives in society, but simply in the phenomenon of collective systems of power hostile to one another," ironically as a "Copernican turn" in the theory of state (ibid., 143). Even if Kolnai was ready to admit that war is the "last argument" of foreign politics, he considered it to be "absurd to suggest that it is the essential—if mostly 'latent'—meaning of the latter" (ibid., 81).

If Kolnai in the articles from 1933 emphasized that "whoever says totality— says war" (Kolnai 2017, 81), in *The War Against the West* he regarded the

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42 Cf. Kolnai 2017, 82.
43 Cf. Kolnai 1938, 146.

overrating of war as not "the most monstrous of Schmitt's fancies" (Kolnai 1938, 146). As he wrote, "the establishment of the 'irreducible category' of Friend and Foe is less overtly offensive, and yet contains a stronger trace of barbarism" (ibid.). Considering the contrast between friend and foe to be an "ultimate fact"—specific to the sphere of politics in the same way as the polarities of good and evil, beautiful and ugly, useful and detrimental present themselves as constitutive for the spheres of morality, aesthetics, or economics—, resulted, according to him, in an absurd understanding of not only foreign, but also internal affairs. Kolnai pointed out that there also is only one aspect of home policy, to which Schmitt is ready to grant the real character of politics: the attitude of the state towards the political rebel, the public enemy. According to Schmitt, as he noticed, "the State shows credentials of its character as such, not only by being prepared to fight a foreign state, but also inasmuch as it is willing to exterminate its seditious citizens" (ibid.). Insofar as Schmitt's concept of the political established "'Us' as an ultimate standard of Pro and Contra, an unchecked sovereignty of group egoism and self-worship," this for Kolnai meant neither more nor less than "the grammar of tribal subjectivism couched in the scientific phraseology" (ibid.).

In *The War Against the West*, Kolnai criticized Schmitt's "militant irrationalism" against the background of numerous other totalitarian political theories in Germany. He noticed that among the national-socialist theorists of the total state not only Hegel "with his somewhat circumstantial deification of the state," but also Schmitt with his apparently scientific approach was considered "a long-winded scholastic" (ibid., 125). He commented with schadenfreude upon the criticism against Schmitt's concept of the political from the part of other national-socialist state theorists, such as Ernst Forsthoff or Otto Koellreutter. Kolnai pointed out that especially after his "Jewish connections" were revealed Schmitt ceased to function as a "true interpreter of Hitlerian *völkisch* Germany" (ibid., 143). Despite Schmitt's, as Forsthoff put it, "turning away from the formalistic ideology of the constitutional state which is bound to ignore what is really essential," what Koellreutter reproached him with was his "*un-völkisch* legal formalism—his worship of the State as an abstract unit of power" (ibid., 146). Although Kolnai recognized the theoretical relevance of Schmitt's concept of the total state and admitted that "a trace

of Roman juridical thought and Roman Catholicism still clings to him," he regarded, taking a stand with respect to this criticism, the dissent between the "two luminaries" of National Socialism as "not much more than an academic controversy" (ibid.).

The total state as a phenomenon

To ask about the possible, phenomenological meaning of Kolnai's criticism against the concept of the total state is to ask about the normative foundations of his own political theory. Apart from the early impact of Freud's psychoanalysis and Durkheim's sociologism on his liberal approach to the total state mentioned above, there also exists no controversy over the role played with this regard by his Hungarian-Jewish origin and his Catholic conversion.[44] What these both factors are considered to influence the most is, on the one hand, Kolnai's "egalitarian and emancipatory plea" and, on the other hand, his focus on the "moral-philosophical categorization of a phenomenon" (Backes 2019, 27). Despite the direct influence of Scheler's material ethics of values and Pfänder's theory of emotions on his moral philosophy, the phenomenological dimension of Kolnai's political writings used to be contested due to his clear statement that politics interested him only in its ideological aspect.[45] Backes maintains that "[w]hile familiar with the theories of Marxism and Leninism, he knew much less about the 'phenomenological' practice he vehemently called for as a student of Edmund Husserl" (Backes 2019, 28).

From this perspective, Kolnai's categorization of the total state shows limited affinity to the much more discussed and to the same extent phenomenologically dubious Hannah Arendt's approach to this phenomenon. Kolnai can be described as a "theorist of totalitarianism in the broadest sense *avant la lettre*" (Backes 2019, 26) not only because of his use of this term already in the articles from 1933, but also given his early comparison of Bolshevism and Fascism. Like Arendt and many other contemporary analysts who adopted this term from the translations of the book *Italy and Fascism* by Luigi Sturzo published in 1926,[46] by totalitarianism he

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44 Cf. Honneth 2014, Backes 2019, and Gubser 2019, 122.
45 Cf. Kolnai 1999b, 138.
46 Cf. Backes 2019, 26.

meant in the first instance the "critical answer to an existing civilisation" (Kolnai 2017, 45) and, as such, a modern political phenomenon. Although neither Kolnai nor Arendt overlooked the structural similarities of fascist and communist quest for omnipotence and total power,[47] they both also focused on Nazism as the principal "enemy of the West" (Backes 2019, 17).

Unlike Arendt who analyzed the origins of totalitarianism after the Holocaust and stressed the "experience of uprootedness and superfluousness" (Arendt 1976, 475) as a condition of possibility of racial and class exterminations, Kolnai pointed to the "tribal egoism" as the main element of this phenomenon. He wrote that totalitarianism is "basically Primitivism," because:

> […] here a person appears as most subject to the forces of nature and only resistant to them (including alien "humanity") through the most rigid uniformity of his fellow members, a dull, unawoken and prejudiced being, lacking the civilised traits of human autonomy, rationality, versatility and world-openness. (Kolnai 2017, 45.)

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While Arendt was inclined to reify totalitarianism to a general phenomenon and treat it as a historical subject with intentions of its own,[48] Kolnai mostly limited himself to the adjectival use of the term "total" or "totalitarian" as an attribute of a state, dictatorship, politics, conception, or (mainly the Schmittian) doctrine of law.[49] In *The War Against the West*, the totalitarian state in this sense meant for him "the renewal of the Tribal State at the stage of industrial civilization, organized by means of the social technique previously developed by the Democratic State with its plurality of parties" (Kolnai 1938, 161).

If Kolnai, like Arendt, discerned the origins of totalitarianism as a new, unprecedented form of government in the modern phenomena of capitalism, liberalism, imperialism, nationalism, and democracy, he applied the term "totalitarian" as a designation exclusive to the various forms of Fascism and Nazism. In his book from 1938, Kolnai explicitly distinguished the totalitarian state from the communist or collectivist state, in which "the governmental

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47 Cf. Canovan 2000, 35.
48 Cf. Canovan 2000, 37.
49 Cf. Kolnai 1938, 300.

apparatus of the State affects to regulate all social, or even private, life of the citizens" (ibid.). Neither did he mean by the totalitarian state "that the various groups and trends in national society should acknowledge an impartial 'Whole' of State interests beyond and above them," what he considered to correspond rather to the "ideal" of "patriotic" or "conservative democracy" (ibid.). Kolnai identified the totalitarian state with "One Party State," and defined it as a state, which, firstly, "claims to enforce a Unitarian and obligatory scale of values upon the whole of society" and, secondly, "is politically uniform in colour, i.e., identified with one definite trend or party, and a set of rulers appearing as a closed body outside competition" (ibid.).

What is considered remarkable about Kolnai's approach to the total state is the fact that, in *The War Against the West*, he interpreted Bolshevism as "infinitely more akin to the civilian (*bürgerlich*) idea than is Nazi Anti-Liberalism" (ibid., 20). Despite his extensive criticism also against the "heroes" of the communist totality in *Psychoanalysis and Sociology*, in a comparison between Bolshevism and Italian Fascism in the article from 1926 Kolnai already maintained that the first was "undeniably ideologically linked to the greatest ideals of humanity" (Kolnai 1926, 213). A normative foundation of higher esteem, in which Bolshevism was held in the book from 1938, was the same assumption about the greater proximity of communist state to ethical universalism. Far from the naïve, pro-Soviet romanticism and philo-Bolshevism of his contemporaries,[50] Kolnai justified the "special moral status" granted by him to National Socialism by the statement that in the form of a racial doctrine it broke with the ethical universalism of the West.[51] He interpreted the racial anti-Semitism and national tribalism, specific to this modern form of primitivism, as an expression of the "negation of mankind" and the "intrinsic enmity to Western democratic society" (Kolnai 1938, 495).

In his late memoirs, Kolnai considered the fact that in *The War Against the West* National Socialism and Bolshevism were not treated as doctrines, which are equally (or similarly) anti-Western, to be one of his greatest political errors. Even if the current interpretations are ready to explain this "error" by

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50 Cf. Congdon 2001, 54.
51 Cf. Kolnai 1938, 495.

pointing to the complex political circumstances of this time and the fact that the choice between the two doctrines was then for him like "being caught between a rock and a hard place" (Backes 2019, 29), the difference between his criticism against the totalitarian state and collective state seems to require a more insightful examination. What is at stake here is the question about the normative foundations of Kolnai's own pro-Western argumentation. If to the totalitarian concept of the political Kolnai opposed the concept of ethical universalism and the rights of man, the question especially concerns the ultimate foundations of his concept of "humanity." Was it just biographical and ideological—in short, theological-political—or, rather, theoretical-phenomenological arguments, which were fundamental for Kolnai's critique of the total state and totalitarianism?

It is out of the question that both reception of Kolnai's work and his personal explicit statements point in the direction of the first interpretation. The most significant difference between Kolnai's and Arendt's approaches to the phenomenon of the total state consists in his accentuation, as a Roman

200   Catholic, of the Roman, rather that the Greek origins of what he called the West or Western Civilization. In the "charter of the West" drawn up by Kolnai in the introduction to *The War Against the West*, which summarized what he meant by the West as a "spiritual and historical reality," he mentioned as one of the essential traits of the Western civilization the "synthesis between Roman Imperial universalism and Christianity" (Kolnai 1938, 25). What was specific to the perspective, from which in the interwar period Kolnai criticized the concept of the total state, was the assumption about the commensurability between Roman Christianity and the "democratic principle of a constitutional 'opposition,'" which he considered "most peculiarly Western of all social phenomena" (ibid.). He interpreted individual liberty and freedom of organization, on the one hand, as inseparable from analytic thought and from the "iron distinction between 'objective truth' and 'preconceived opinion' imposed by ruling bodies of any kind" (ibid.). On the other hand, insofar as the stress laid on experimental research and the development of the sciences was for Kolnai inseparable from the condemnation of magic, he regarded them too as a consequence of the "rational and modifying influences of Christian theology itself" (ibid.).

The interpretation of Kolnai's approach to the total state as "genuine positivist" and in this sense normatively founded in a realistic phenomenology, nevertheless, seems also not to be without chance to be justified. While defining his method of dealing with the phenomenon of National Socialism, Kolnai stated that it "can be summarized briefly thus: 'Let them explain themselves'" (ibid., 18). The echo of the phenomenological call "back to the things themselves" in this statement, even if distorted, is hard to miss. On the one hand, Kolnai frankly declared the explicit practical motive of his political analyses, which consisted in fighting the fascist concept of the total state. On the other hand, it was precisely because of this practical motive that he, to put it in his own words, has "taken great pains to do the justice to the object" of his enquiry (ibid., 19). As Kolnai wrote, especially when the thing that has to be explained is, as in the case of National Socialism, "more than a 'little' thing, when it is a grand and powerful thing, it is foolish to treat it as 'nothing but' something else, to reduce it to its component parts, and, as it were, explain it away" (ibid., 15). According to him, even if only for the purpose of fighting the totalitarian ideology more effectively, "we had better begin by accepting it as a real, massive, well-founded fact" (ibid.).

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However, it is not only this practically motivated attempt at analyzing the phenomenal content of totalitarianism in its entire complexity that allows one to interpret Kolnai's critique of the total state as a kind of phenomenology. It is quite evident that by the non-reductionist approach to this phenomenon he meant dealing with it in accordance with the phenomenological principle of all principles inherent in the scientific investigation of essences.[52] Kolnai admitted that, indeed, "if objectivity means being impartial, neutral or inactive in one's outlook, then I disclaim objectivity" (Kolnai 1938, 19). The standpoint taken by him, nevertheless, can be considered as being genuinely positivist to the extent as it excluded any value relativism, that is, the assumption that "all things are equally good or bad" and that, consequently, also "National Socialism is half-way good and half-way bad" (ibid.). At the same time, he declared: "if objectivity means the faithful presentation of a thing according to its own essence and undistorted by one's own feelings, then I may claim that I have at least made a sincere attempt to be objective" (ibid.).

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52 Cf. Husserl 1983, 45.

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Max Schaefer

Renewing the Erotic Relation
Michel Henry and the Lover's Night

Abstract: The paper engages in a critical examination of Michel Henry's phenomenological study of the erotic relation. While Henry's analysis sheds light on the nature of eros and how it might be renewed from obscene objectivism, it undermines his account of the phenomenological life of the subject as a radically immanent mode of appearing and calls for a revision. By acknowledging life as a movement of transcendence towards the world, we can resolve this issue and further refine Henry's insights into the nature of eros. I begin by laying out Henry's account of how the forgetting of life results in a reduction of the erotic (i.e., inter-subjective) relation to a merely sexual (i.e., inter-objective) one. Following this, I outline Henry's account of the nature and limits of the erotic relation, and I demonstrate how Henry's work harbors the latent suggestion that the failure of eros can serve as a step towards a higher union with others in a love of God. In the closing section, I show how Henry's analysis of the erotic relation calls for a re-conception of life as a movement of transcendence.

Keywords: eros, sexuality, life, anxiety, intentionality, body, voyeurism, *agape* love.

I. Introduction

If well-founded, then Michel Henry's (1922–2002) phenomenology of life would call for a radical rethinking of human life as we know it. The radical implications of his thought were not lost on Henry. As early as 1965, in his *Philosophy and Phenomenology of the Body*, Henry asserts that his phenomenology, insofar as it "reveals on the ontological level the subjective essence of all the original determinations of bodily life," will eventually lead "to a new philosophy of all the 'material' acts of man, to a new philosophy of rites, of work, of cult, etc." (Henry 1975, 218).

Among those acts that are given more extensive treatment in Henry's phenomenological studies are those of a sexual or erotic nature. Sexual acts

receive consideration from the very onset of Henry's work in *The Essence of Manifestation* (Henry 1973). However, it is in his later work, in a volume entitled *Incarnation*, that Henry provides his most extensive treatment of such acts. It is in this work that Henry takes significant strides towards laying out the new "philosophy of sexual love" that he anticipated in his earlier works, a philosophy based on "the data of the philosophy of the subjective body" (Henry 1975, 218).

As we will see, the data yielded by this philosophical study of bodily life is interpreted by Henry as suggesting that the proper nature and limits of the erotic relation can only be understood on the basis of life. For, according to Henry, it is only in the unconscious, non-intentional, non-objectifying self-affection (i.e., auto-affection) of our immanent bodily life, and not in the transcendence of the world opened by the intentional regard of consciousness, that we can truly account for how other living beings are actually given to us, and thus for how different people, with different experiential situations, can nevertheless understand and communicate with one another.

206   According to Henry, it is only by appreciating this newfound life of the erotic relation that *eros* can be rescued from an inevitable slide into a pornographic objectivism proper to the world and instead undergo a renewed vitality outside of it. However, in subjecting Henry's analyses to critical inquiry, I will argue that the data yielded by Henry's undoubtedly powerful phenomenological examination of our lived experience of the erotic relation suggests something other than what Henry himself concludes. I find that Henry's analyses compromise his account of the life of the subject as a radically immanent mode of appearing. As I will show in this work, it is by acknowledging life as a movement of transcendence towards the world that we can remedy this issue and, in so doing, further develop Henry's insights into the nature of *eros* and how it might again be renewed in contemporary Western civilization.

II. Worldly *eros* and the fall into obscenity

Let us begin by investigating Henry's account of how the forgetting of life leads to the reduction of the erotic relation to an obscene objectivism. From beginning to end, Henry's work is directed by the claim that the history of

Western philosophy has been guided by an ontological monism. In his view, this monism consists in the assumption that there is only one mode of appearing, that of the ecstatic, transcendent appearing of the world, which is opened by the intentionality of consciousness, and which allows objects to appear before our perceptual gaze. By conceiving of appearing in this way, Henry maintains that nearly all Western philosophy has unduly limited the field of appearing to object-manifestation, to the appearance of objects within the horizons of perceptual consciousness, such that something is, if, and only if it can be seen by a subject (Henry 1975, 14–15). In so doing, Western philosophy has laid the groundwork for a civilization, which unduly privileges forms of theory and knowledge that are guided by intentionality and that emphasize seeing, objectivity, and universality.

In fact, the ramifications of this seemingly innocuous assumption stretch into all domains of human life, including that of the erotic. For, as Henry makes clear, this assumption is nothing less than a metaphysical decision, which ushers in a radical upheaval of the life of the subject as a whole. This upheaval originates with a forgetting of life. At its most basic level, this forgetting is ontological.[1] That is to say, it is made possible by life's very own ontological structure (Henry 1973, 382). In the eyes of Henry, life is a radically immanent and affective mode of appearing, which, as such, can never appear within the ecstatic appearing of the world, despite the fact that it is the condition that makes the latter possible. Henry thus leaves us with a radical bifurcation of these two modes of appearing, of life and the world, where the former is absolute and self-sufficient, and the latter is relative to and dependent upon the former. Because of this, life is essentially hidden from thought, which, as inherently directed towards something outside itself, is prone to existential and historical acts of forgetting.[2] Thus, the forgetting of life is not arbitrary, or even the result of a mistake, but belongs to the very constitution of the finite living subject.

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1 For an extended analysis of the nature and role of forgetting in Henry's material phenomenology, see Steinbock 1999.
2 That being said, since life always remains that, which founds and sustains each living creature and its thought, Henry acknowledges that the living subject can never entirely forget life. Thus, rather than being altogether forgotten, it would be more proper to say that life is overlooked (Henry 1973, 274).

Concretely, this means that life's reality and all its hidden depths are covered over and usurped by the shallow display of an unreal objective world. For Henry insists that, since life, as the fount of all reality and appearing, can never appear in the light of the world, the latter is altogether unreal.[3] In forgetting life for the world, then, the living subject forgets her reality. She forgets the truly transcendent depth of her life; she forgets that her life, as the immanent movement of self-affection that each individual undergoes in her flesh, cannot be reduced to the biology of its natural body as determined by the mechanistic laws of nature.[4] According to the late Henry, this means nothing less than the forgetting of the free play of life's passion, its innate need to ascend towards the absolute ground of its being, towards the living God (i.e., Christ), whose endless self-affection each finite individual undergoes within the depths of her flesh.

This fall from life plays out on the level of our erotic relations. In forgetting the essential condition of the erotic relation (i.e., life), Henry notes that

> [t]his life's sensuality, its capacity to feel and enjoy, are crushed onto the [natural] body, incorporated in it, identified with it, and one with it; they become what one touches, what one caresses, and what one gives joy to by touching; what is there, really in the world, the object before one's gaze, and near at hand. The erotic relation is reduced to an objective sexual relation; and that is how it now comes about, as a performance and a set of objective phenomena. (Henry 2015, 218.)

In reducing the erotic relation to a strictly sexual one, what is effectively brought about is a shift from an "'inter-subjective'" relation to an "'inter-objective'" one (Henry 2015, 220). For Henry observes that eros, at its heart,

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3 Joseph Rivera points out that, although Henry regards the intentional order of appearing, which determines the natural, embodied subject (i.e., the objective body) as it is experienced in the world as unreal, to be sure, he does not reject the existence of the objective body (Rivera 2015, 20).

4 In other words, for Henry, the forgetting of life involves forgetting that life is causally and ontologically irreducible to natural life. Henry's work thus tries to liberate us from a merely biological conception of life. In fact, especially in his late work, Henry makes it clear that, in his eyes, the forgetting of life is tantamount to forgetting that one is a son of God and not merely a natural being (Henry 2003, 134).

consists in an inter-subjective relation, which is to say, it consists in "each living being's desire to enter into symbiosis with the life of another living being and finally to be united with it in a loving vital fusion" (Henry 2015, 218). However, in identifying reality with objectivity, and all knowledge with objective knowledge of the world, the erotic relation is "reduced to an objective sexual behavior" (Henry 2015, 220).

For Henry, this is tantamount to a profanation of life. He writes:

> To that which is cloaked in the secret of an original modesty because it carries within it the spirit that is heterogeneous to every thing and every objectivity, it really claims: This absurd thing and indecent sex is what you are and is all you are—indecent because it has nothing in common with you, or with spirit [i.e., life]. Only this claim is not simply an allegation, it is an act—the act that brings about a subjectivity's extraordinary metamorphosis into an inert object: the sexuality whereby life exposes itself, and thus affirms that it is nothing other, and nothing more, than that. (Henry 2015, 219.)

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In this case, it is no longer life but "this body in its objective condition (seen, touched, felt, heard, and smelled) that becomes the agent of communication" and understanding between living beings (Henry 2015, 220).

In the eyes of Henry, this reduction of eroticism to sexuality does not stand as a new phase in the erotic relation, but as a radical transformation of it (Henry 2015, 220). In short, it marks the time of a sadomasochistic voyeurism and pornography. And, indeed, Henry's study here may be seen as providing a phenomenological account of the nature and limits of voyeurism and pornography, not to mention their prevalence within society. For voyeurism is "a logical consequence of the act of undressing *which makes the flesh identified with a visible body* and then forces it to behave as an objective reality in the inter-subjective communication of living beings" (Henry 2015, 220). Ontological monism makes all of the world a stage. Thus, as Henry writes,

> [v]oyeurism is not at all limited to the traditional actors of the erotic relation; it carries in principle the possibility of extending to everyone

who will have decided to hand the erotic relation over to the world. Either to undress together and give themselves over to various sexual practices reduced to their objectivity, establishing between them no longer an "intersubjective" relation but an "inter-objective" one, and expecting from it all the tonalities of anxiety, disgust, degradation, masochism, sadism, and enjoyment (the kind of degradation it provides) that these practices can bring. Or, without themselves resorting to this, then at least watching it, the possibilities of which are multiplied by the new technologies of communication, which are themselves forms of voyeurism. (Henry 2015, 220.)

Carried to its limit, this voyeurism writ large is pornography. That is to say, it is a world "where everything is given to be seen—which then requires the vantage points on the behaviors and sexual attributes to be multiplied, as if something within sexuality were endlessly refusing this total objectification" (Henry 2015, 220). According to this world-view, what matters is not the content, or whether these actions serve the growth of life—i.e., its ability to feel and act—, but whether they are communicated and multiplied.[5] What matters is the orgy of communication, in which the "who" of it all is of no significance and everything is indistinguishable.

In Henry's view, the inevitable result of this process is nihilism, understood as the destruction of all values. In his eyes, it is only in life, and not in nature, that values can arise. Henry writes:

Only in life and for it, by virtue of the needs and values that belong specifically to life, are the values that correlate with these needs assigned to things. Life is a universal principle of evaluation, and this principle is singular. At the same time, life proves to be the origin of culture, in as much as this is nothing other than the set of norms and ideals that life imposes on itself in order to realize its needs and desires, which in the end are summed up or concentrated in one alone: the need for life to

5 Jean Baudrillard makes a similar point with regard to communication in contemporary Western society in general (see Baudrillard 1988).

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increase itself constantly, to increase its capacity to feel, the level of its action, and the intensity of its love. (Henry 2015, 218.)

The forgetting of life thus effectively means the diminishment and obscuring of its values (Henry 2015, 219). In fact, this is what the transformation of the erotic into the pornographic truly is: an obscuring of life's values in masochism and sadism. As Henry has it,

> it is masochism for the spirit [i.e., life] to declare that it is nothing other than a contingent objective determination (foreign precisely to spirit) and for it to lower itself to the rank of a thing, of a masculine or feminine sex. The other's sadism corresponds to this masochism, as its correlate, and enjoys the suffering of the one that is diminished like this, affirming in and by its display that its truth is in this poor thing, which is indeed foreign to spirit, indecent, and absurd. (Henry 2015, 219.)

In the erotic realm, the nihilistic attitude that pervades the world's penchant for a pornographic objectivism is played out in sadomasochistic practices. It is played out in actions that profane life, that provide some semblance of pleasure in degradation, in convincing living subjects that there is no real value in life, that all there is is the mechanical causality of nature, and our own fleeting constructions. The seeming liberation from life thus comes at a high cost: it results in the impoverishment of the erotic relation, so important to our sense of self-respect and self-confidence, and, more generally, in the growing feeling that life has no real value, and that it would be better to die than to slog away at this unrelenting degradation.

III. Awakening the life of *eros*

In response to this mounting nihilism, Henry stresses the need, in our erotic relations, for a reawakening of life and its absolute priority over intentionality. The living subject needs to rediscover that the erotic relation essentially consists in a desire to unite with the life of the other. And, for Henry, this means nothing less than a desire for union with God. At its core, the desire

to unite with the life of the other is a desire to unite with the eternal life that dwells in the depths of her life. Accordingly, what needs to be rediscovered is that, at heart, the erotic relation is bent on a union with the absolute, with the fount of all being. It is this union with the absolute that is the true meaning and purpose of the erotic relation and that is lost in the blinding light of the world's obscenity.

In Henry's view, a rediscovery of this meaning necessarily involves a reassertion and an acknowledgement of life's absolute priority over intentionality in the constitution of the erotic relation, a task which Henry himself takes up in his phenomenological study of the matter. In turning to this analysis now, our aim is to determine what it reveals about the nature and limits of the erotic relation.

To begin, Henry stresses that desire is made possible by the duplication of anxiety (Henry 2015, 202). Drawing on the Danish religious philosopher Søren Kierkegaard's study of anxiety, Henry first notes that what causes anxiety is the subject's pre-reflective, non-objectifying bodily awareness of the possibility of its own power.[6] At heart, prior to any objectifying (i.e., intentional) act of consciousness, the subject feels the possibility of its freedom; she feels the possibility of her power, and this fills her flesh with a "mix of attraction and repulsion before the unknown" (Henry 2015, 192).

Furthering this analysis of anxiety, Henry makes the following observation:

> The inability to get rid of itself exacerbates it [i.e., anxiety] at the moment the possibility of power comes up against the non-power in itself [i.e., the absolute life of God] that is older than it and that gives it to itself—against the powerlessness that we have shown to be the source of this power. This is when anxiety is brought to its paroxysm and increases vertiginously: Wanting to flee itself and coming up against its inability to do it, cornered by itself, the possibility of power is thrown back on itself, *which means that at the same time it is thrown back on the power that makes it possible*. So it throws itself into it, as if it were the

6 As Kierkegaard puts this, "anxiety is the dizziness of freedom." For more on Kierkegaard's own view of anxiety, see Kierkegaard 1980, 61.

only way out, the only possibility that remains, and takes action. (Henry 2015, 193.)

Anxiety increases when the finite subject comes to feel that the affective movement of its flesh is based upon that of an absolute, eternal life, over which it has no power. The subject thus becomes anxious about the limits of its power, about what this absolute life, whose limits are unclear and indeterminate, might have the power to do. As Henry details here, it is ultimately the subject's inability to escape itself that brings this anxiety to its highest point. Since the subject is given over to itself in its bodily life in a radically immanent manner, without any distance or outside, the subject can never throw itself outside itself; it can never escape the unrelenting movement of its bodily life and its awareness of itself and the possibility of its power. Unable to bear this affective state any longer, the self finally takes action in an attempt to escape or distract itself from its anxiety. Ultimately, this reveals the tragic nature of the human condition: that "'anxiety about sin produces sin'" (Henry 2015, 207).

In Henry's view, this anxiety is redoubled "the moment desire is born" (Henry 2015, 202). That is to say, anxiety is redoubled the moment the subject becomes aware of the objective body of the other as inhabited by a living soul (i.e., a finite life) and spirit (i.e., absolute life). In other words, desire arises the moment one is awoken to the sensual body of the other, to the fact that the objective body of the other is imbued with the ability to sense and be sensed. Such a subject becomes aware of what Henry, following Kierkegaard, regards as "the monstrous contradiction that the immortal spirit is determined as a genus [i.e., as male, female, etc.]" (Kierkegaard 1980, 69). It is in and as anxiety that the subject becomes aware of the paradoxical relation between the two modes of appearing, between life and the world (Henry 2015, 197).

More concretely still, what redoubles the subject's anxiety is its newfound awareness of the possibility that is made possible by this monstrous contradiction: the possibility of its power to touch the life of the other, to unite with the other in a moment of loving fusion by touching her where she touches herself. The flip side of this coin is that the subject is alerted to the fact that, in its own case, as a spirit that is somehow connected to this sexed body, it too can touch and be touched, that it too may be the cause of anxiety in others, a

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fact, which contributes to the redoubling of anxiety amongst the living (Henry 2015, 214–215).

According to Henry, what this reveals is that it is life's drive to increase its capacity to feel that makes possible sexual desire and the erotic relation, which springs from it. It is life, in its absolute priority over the intentional acts of consciousness, that is wholly responsible for spurring on the subject to touch the life of the other in its own-most depths, to communicate with and understand the other on a primal level, via the affective movements of their bodily lives and their pre-reflective, non-objectifying awareness of those movements.

However, what Henry discovers is a metaphysical limitation to the erotic relation between finite living subjects. With respect to the question as to whether "eroticism gives us access to the life of the other," Henry begins by noting that "having accounted for the implication of sexual difference for the understanding of eroticism—of its anxiety, and of the desire that takes shape there—the question refers to sexuality. Is sexuality so extraordinary that it allows us to attain the other in himself or herself, in what he or she is for themself in some way?" (Henry 2015, 208.) Examining the matter, Henry observes that in trying to touch the life of the other, the agent, in brushing up against the skin of the other, encounters a practical limit in its own ability to feel. In brushing up against the sexed body of the other, the erotic agent finds that she cannot feel the other where she feels herself, and this contributes to her anguish. Henry is careful to stress that it is a limit internal to the immanent life of the finite subject (i.e., of its organic body, to use Henry's term), against which the erotic agent runs up in the erotic act.[7] In Henry's words:

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7 According to Henry, when the energy or force of life drives the living subject to engage in action, "the body runs up against a first resistance. Its internal phenomenological systems give way to its effort and constitute our 'organic body.' These are not our group of 'organs' as they appear to an objective knowledge of some kind but precisely as we live them within our subjective body as the terms of our effort. These are the primal 'configurations' whose entire being consists in their being-given-to-effort and exhausted in it. Second, at the very heart of this zone of relative resistance offered by the organic body, the pressure that weighs on it and gradually makes it give way, that is,

What the other drive feels remains beyond what the first feels. The impotence of each to attain the other in itself exasperates the tension of desire up to its resolution in the paroxysmal feeling of orgasm, in such a way that each has its own without being able to feel that of the other as the other feels it. If this is the erotic desire in the sexual act, here again it is a failure. (Henry 2015, 211.)

This failure determines the metaphysical limit of the erotic relation. While the erotic relation can stimulate the life of the subject, it can heighten and allow one's pleasure in and feeling for life to grow, it cannot allow the finite subject to feel the other finite subject where she is in herself, in her life. Even at the height of their erotic engagement, each living self remains in "the lover's night," which is to say, in the immanence of its own flesh and life. In Henry's words, "[*i*]*t is in the immanence of the drive that desire fails to attain the pleasure of the other where it attains itself*; it is in the lovers' night that, for each of them, the other remains on the other side of a wall that forever separates them" (Henry 2015, 211). As Henry continues,

a proof of this is given by the signals lovers offer each other while carrying out the act, whether it is a question of spoken words, sighs, or varying manifestations. Such that the coincidence sought is not the real identification a transcendental Self with an other, the recovery of two impressional flows melting into one, but at best only the chronological coincidence of two spasms powerless to overcome their division. (Henry 2015, 211.)

Indeed, it is this very play of signs that prevents eroticism from collapsing into an auto-affective solipsism. As Henry writes, it is because

these signs and signals are themselves phenomena, that the auto-eroticism at work here differs from auto-eroticism properly speaking,

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the use of the powers of the subjective body, runs up against an obstacle that no longer gives way. The Earth [i.e., nature] is a line of absolute resistance that lets itself be felt continually within the organic body and is the unsurpassable limit of its deployment." (Henry 2012, 44–45).

> where everyone is truly alone with himself […] In the impassioned coupling, on the contrary, a recognition for him or her who has produced or allowed this sort of satisfaction, however provisional, is added to the immanent phenomenon felt by each drive at the moving limit of its organic body, and to the enjoyment in which its desire results, and is indissociable from it and from the well-being it procures. The erotic relation then doubles the pure affective relation, which is foreign to the carnal coupling, and is a reaction of reciprocal recognition, of love perhaps, even when this might well precede and indeed provoke the entire erotic process that results from it. (Henry 2015, 211.)

Although Henry regards the ecstatic appearing of the world, in which these signs arise as a realm of extreme unreality, he suggests here that this realm, and the signs and signals that people it, do make some effective difference, inasmuch as they spare eroticism a solitary fate, and seem to contribute to life's enjoyment.

216   Apart from this, Henry's work, although he does not state this explicitly himself, bears the suggestion that the failure proper to the erotic relation may serve as a stepping stone towards a higher union with others in a love of God. Similar to Kant's account of the mathematical and the dynamical sublime, the initial moment of failure or counter-purposiveness in the erotic relation may ultimately be put to purposive use by leading the living subject to discover the transcendence of the absolute life that, according to Henry, dwells within its flesh, and in which all finite souls are one in His mystical flesh.[8] In developing an awareness of the limitation of the erotic relation, the subject, in its frustrated yet rising passion, may turn to other cultural acts—i.e., ethical, religious, or aesthetic—, in which its relation with all of the living in the mystical body of Christ may be revealed. In this sense, the true promise of the erotic relation may be seen as consisting in leading the finite subject towards a higher sense of relation in *agape* love, understood as a form of love distinct from *eros*, as a distinctly religious relation, in which all are unified in the body of Christ as

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8 For Kant's account of the mathematical and dynamical sublime, see Kant 2007, § 25 and § 28.

the foundation of all relationality and meaning. In the eyes of Henry, it is only the awakening of erotic life to this *agape* love beyond the obscenity that walks hand-in-hand with the world that we can liberate the erotic relation from the nihilistic attitude, into which it has fallen.

IV. Renewing erotic life in the world

The question is whether Henry's own analyses support the conclusion that it is the a-cosmic nature of life that is responsible for motivating the renewal of the erotic relation. As we have seen, the redoubling of anxiety that marks the birth of sexual desire requires both modes of appearing—that of life and the world. Sexual desire arises from the contradiction between life and the body. Even if life is always responsible for driving the actions of the subject, this indicates that life does in some sense need the objective body. There can be no growth in life's capacity for feeling in the erotic relation unless there is a physical body.[9] Similarly, there could be no genuine diminishment and degradation of life's feeling in the absence of such a body. Yet, if the objective body, as determined by the intentional order of appearing, is the extreme unreality that Henry holds it to be, then it would not be able to have a hand in contributing to these very real changes in the life of the subject.[10] Therefore, Henry's analysis of the erotic relation betrays his conclusion that life is entirely self-sufficient.

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Now, if the objective body plays an essential role in the erotic relation or, indeed, in any action whatsoever, then, as Frédéric Seyler notes, there arises the very real question as to the status that should be assigned to this body, and to the intentional order of appearing in general (Seyler 2012, 107). As Seyler writes, if the intentional order of appearing is necessary for any and all action,

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9 One can make the same point with regard to any living activity. As Frédéric Seyler notes, "it remains unclear on what grounds we could designate a purely immanent praxis as an action: does action not also and obviously imply intentional components, e.g., in the case of the runner (seeing the track unfolding in front of him, feeling his movements, evaluating the situation from a tactical point of view, etc.), and necessarily imply those components?" (Seyler 2012, 106–107).

10 Christina Gschwandtner makes a similar point when she observes that "[i]f the world were purely an illusion in the extreme sense Henry occasionally suggests, it could not have the power of barbarity and evil he also claims for it. There would be no need to fight it as intensely as he does." (Gschwandtner 2016, 72.)

then it "cannot be discarded as unessential in defining the *reality* of action itself" (ibid.). However, if the intentional components function as essential and therefore real components of life's activity, then Henry's radical bifurcation of life and intentionality is altogether problematic. For, if intentionality is a real component of life's action, then one must explain how the latter gives onto the former. Yet, as Renaud Barbaras observes,

> Henry cannot provide answers to these questions precisely because he argues that they concern two completely impenetrable regimes of appearance. In other words, it is not possible to pass from immanence to transcendence. On the contrary, within the auto-impressional embrace, everything is in place to prevent a window from opening onto exteriority or to prevent an outside from forming. In order to articulate the impression, along with the ek-static givenness, the border must become porous, and "immanence" must be thought in such a manner that transcendence may come about in and through it. (Barbaras 2012, 57.)

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Indeed, at certain points in his analysis of the erotic relation, however unwittingly, Henry seems to stray from his assertions regarding the strict bifurcation between the two modes of appearing. He observes:

> To reach out her hand, to squeeze, to caress, to feel or to breathe in a scent, a breath, is to open oneself to the world. It is in the world, in its appearing, that the other is really there, and that his body (to which the other is united) is there and is real. If it is a question of attaining the other beyond the limit that crushes the impassioned movement, beyond the resisting continuum in which the organic body becomes a thing body, and beyond the invisible side that this body opposes to desire—is it not in the appearing of the world that this body now lies before the gaze, the touch, or the caress? What shows me this ungraspable "within" of the other's thingly body is its "outside," and that is what occupies me, whether it be a question of ordinary experience or of the radical medication it undergoes when the sensible body becomes an erotic and sensual body. (Henry 2015, 214.)

Yet, how could the exterior body in any way reveal the interior life of the subject, if the two modes of appearance were as radically bifurcated as Henry claims? Indeed, how could one ever recognize that the objective body that moves now before me is inhabited by a life at all, if life is utterly unable to appear within the light of the world?[11] The truth is that Henry's conception of the radical immanence of life is unable to accommodate the results of his own analysis of the erotic relation.[12] Henry's analyses indicate that both life and the body play an essential role in the renewal and diminishment of the erotic lives of living subjects.

To support Henry's findings regarding the erotic relation, it is necessary to acknowledge that while Henry deserves credit for highlighting that only the auto-impressionality of life, as a power that takes hold of itself, can function as the ultimate foundation of any real movement and appearing, this life must be understood as a primordial movement of transcendence. Only by acknowledging that the primal impulsion of life functions as an ecstatic movement can we explain how the non-objectifying drives of life and the objectifying acts of consciousness relate to one another, and thus how, as Henry's analyses reveal, both flesh and body function as necessary conditions for the possibility of *eros*.

Indeed, contrary to what Henry suggests, by acknowledging the primordial transcendence of life, we neither reduce all appearing to object-manifestation nor do we necessarily condemn society to unduly privilege forms of theory and action that favor objectivity, seeing, and universality. First, the fact that life, in its movement, necessarily throws itself outside itself does not mean that it does not possess itself, that it is thereby rendered foreign to itself, such that

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11 As Barbaras puts this, "[i]f I attribute a carnal meaning to others or to my face, it is because *something within exteriority urges me to do that*, without which I would aim at any material reality as if it were flesh. But this amounts to saying *that there is a mode of presence of living interiority within exteriority*, which directly conflicts with the division of appearing that Henry establishes." (Barbaras 2008, 7.)
12 As Emmanuel Falque similarly notes, in Henry's study of the erotic relation, "[e]verything happens as if, according to us, the Henryan determination of immanence or of the pathos-filled flesh now buckled under the weight of transcendence or corporeality, no longer being able to express the truth of the erotic relation without definitively renouncing its own solipsism" (Falque 2016, 156).

it only ever appears to itself as an object to the reflective gaze of a subject. In its ecstatic movement, life still appears in itself in a pre-reflective and non-objectifying manner. In its movement outward, life still affects itself in the flesh of the subject in a pre-reflective and non-objectifying way. However, in acknowledging life's outward movement, we lay the groundwork that better allows us to account for how this non-objectifying mode of appearing gives onto and communicates with the objectifying mode of appearing. In a word, we lay the groundwork that allows us to make sense of the essential role that, as Henry's analyses themselves reveal, both life and the objective body play in the formation of anxiety, desire, and the erotic relation between finite living subjects. Thus, it is only by virtue of an acknowledgment of the ecstatic movement of life's impulsion that Henry's insights into anxiety, desire, and the erotic relation can be consistently maintained and, as we shall see, even allowed to mature.

For one, this modification allows us to refine Henry's account of the depths of meaning at play in the erotic relation. On our account, the non-objectifying self-affection of bodily life may be understood as an unconscious, indeterminate, pathic order of meaning, which underlies the determinate, objective meaning proper to objectifying acts of consciousness. The former is an order of meaning that cannot ever be fully thematized or controlled by the objectifying acts of consciousness. Thus, as Henry himself knew, the meaningfulness of the erotic relation cannot ever be reduced to an obscene objectivism. Insofar as life functions as a primordial transcendence that founds and exceeds the immanence of consciousness, there always remains a depth of sensation that is refractory to reflection and language. Here, we begin to see the true, lasting contribution of Henry's phenomenological study of the erotic relation: a rich account of a depth of feeling that functions as a real type of meaning in itself and which remains irreducible to objectifying acts of consciousness and its control.

More than that, although transcendental life is no longer a-cosmic, but fundamentally ex-posed to the natural world, this does not mean that the life of the subject can be entirely explained in terms of the laws of nature. For the living subject is not simply an object in the world, but a world-directed agent for whom there is a meaningful world replete with values and norms.

Returning life to the natural world simply means that neither subjectivity nor worldly entities can function as an absolute ground, to which the other is merely relative; it means that a thorough understanding of the reality of the subject requires both the first-person perspective of phenomenology and the third-person perspective of the natural sciences.

Indeed, though we cannot comment on this matter at length here, insofar as the bodily life of the subject here remains, like Christ in the Judeo-Christian tradition, a unique singularity, which is irreducible to conceptual understanding, this bodily life can come to be seen as harboring at least a hint of a divine life within its carnal flesh (Mensch 2020, 189–191). In fact, inasmuch as one's awareness of the singularity of life can be felt in a pronounced way in the erotic relation, the erotic relation remains a way, in which this kinship can come to be known in a most striking manner.

Consequently, life's depth of feeling can motivate a higher relation to God, even if, contra Henry, it cannot provide certain knowledge of Him. So long as life remains a radically immanent self-affection, without distance or outside, there is no room for error, and so, the self-affection, in which one comes to feel oneself as being lived by an absolute life, provides the finite subject with indubitable knowledge of itself as a son (or daughter) of life. However, once the night of life has been cracked open, and a sliver of light allowed to enter, there is always room for error and uncertainty. At most, the erotic arousal of life's non-objectifying self-affection can motivate and merge into a spiritual feeling for the absolute, which can spur on reason, in its ascending function, to believe in a divine fount of all that is. To the extent this is the case, the erotic relation, in merging into this spiritual feeling for the absolute, can similarly give rise to a rational belief in a spiritual relation, in a relation of all the living to one another in the mystical body of Christ. In this case, *eros* and *agape* love are not wholly distinct, as they are in Henry, but are in fact inseparably intertwined.

In line with this, it needs to be acknowledged that the renewal of the depth of feeling in erotic life, up to, and including, its merging into a spiritual relation, is something that is accomplished by both the non-objectifying drives of life and the objectifying acts of consciousness. Both the non-objectifying drives of life and the objectifying acts of consciousness are required for the erotic relation to find as complete a fulfilment as possible.

Indeed, given the reality of both life's drives and its objectifying acts of consciousness, it is important to bear in mind that a full renewal of the erotic relation must not only take place in its ascension towards the spiritual, but also in the objectifying acts of the natural body. Owing to the ecstatic movement of life, and the interplay between the objectifying and non-objectifying modes of appearing that this enables, it follows that, however imperfectly, life necessarily finds some manner of expression in the objective body and in the signs and signals (e.g., gestures, spoken words, etc.) that arise within the objective realm, a fact, which perhaps helps explain the very real allure of the obscene, even pornographic expressions of the world. A renewal of the erotic relation in contemporary Western society would thus require us to put these signs to as best a use as possible.

Accordingly, even if erotic desire in the sexual act is unable to perfectly feel the other where she feels herself, she does attain something of the other through such erotic relations. The boundaries of the lover's night thus need to be redrawn. The lover's night is always broken by shafts of daylight, although never enough to allow the other to be seen in a perfectly clear and distinct manner. An acknowledgement of this point aids us in understanding why it often takes time for lovers to feel comfortable with one another, since, especially in the early stages of such relationships, there is always something to the other that remains hidden.

Because of this, eroticism is always vulnerable to both a nihilistic attitude that demeans life in sadomasochistic practices and an affirmative attitude that renews the depths of life's forces. For, in this case, not only is the allure of objectivism as real and as enticing as that of spirituality, but both are invariably at play in every subject to varying degrees. Hence, the very real practical significance of addressing the matter. In Henry, it is never clear why one needs to struggle against the debasement of *eros* in the world's objectivism, given that the latter is utterly unreal and foreign to life's sublime solitude. As such, while the erotic relation may forget its basis in life, there is never any real threat that the forces of the world might infiltrate and destroy erotic life altogether. However, as our analyses have shown, the erotic relation is under threat, not only from the outside, but also from within itself, and is always at risk of being genuinely lost.

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collectivity

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community

Marco di Feo

The Ontological Root of Collective Intentionality

Abstract: The Husserlian notion of intentionality expresses *the transcendental correlation* between the conscious subject and the experienced object. Consciousness is always *consciousness of something.* In every intentional act, we find a fundamental structure, which is composed of three intrinsically connected parts: *the noetic pole* (the subject), *the intentional modality* (the act), and *the noematic pole* (the object). The notion of *collective intentionality* imposes the following question: what kind of consciousness occupies the place of subject? By comparing different types of intentionality (individual, intersubjective, and collective), I intend to demonstrate that collective intentionality can belong to a network of people who are bound to each other within an ontologically structured order of social unity. This membership *status* is rooted in the normative constraints that give existence and identity to the collective.

Keywords: collective intentionality, social ontology, social belonging, social normativity, collective consciousness.

I. Introduction

In the paper, I attempt to accentuate the ontological foundations of collective intentionality, in order to free it from the suspicion of subjective arbitrariness. The ontological foundation that I intend to show also distances the notion of collective intentionality from individualistic reductionism (methodological individualism),[1] which reduces it to the mere sum of individual acts. In order to achieve my purpose, I will proceed through two interconnected steps:

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1 On *methodological reductionism*, see: Epstein 2009 and 2014.

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- First, I will free the notion of intentionality from its psychological reductionism ("psychologism").[2]

- Second: I will show how it is possible to accept a non-reductionist notion of collective intentionality, without hypostatizing supra-individual entities of a substantial type.

II. Intentionality as essential dynamism of experience

When we try to analyze phenomena, such as social acts, collective subjects, relationships between individuals and communities, interactions between groups, etc., we must first of all address one of the most debated issues in social ontology: *collective intentionality*.[3] In general, the concept of *collective intentionality* refers to intentions that allow us to act together, to feel the same emotions together, or to think in a common and shared way. In the current debate, these intentions are mostly understood as psychological and mental experiences. Collective intentionality would, therefore, correspond to the *will* to act, feel, or believe in certain contents (values, beliefs, etc.) together with other people.[4]

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From the phenomenological point of view, however, the concept of intentionality exceeds and precedes that of intention. It expresses the *essential* way, in which a consciousness can be *the consciousness of something*. Being conscious means being the pole of *a transcendental correlation* that inseparably binds consciousness and reality. Thanks to this correlation, reality is a *world* of perceptible, knowable, thinkable, intuitable, appreciable, and affirmable phenomena. In other words, intentionality is the transcendental condition, by which there is a world of facts, objects, and subjects, to which a consciousness can refer in terms of reality. This does not mean, however, that reality is a mere

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2 On the concept of *psychologism*, see the critical analysis of Husserl in: 1984 and 1988.
3 For a general introduction to social ontology, see: Gilbert 1989; Bratman 1999; Searle 2001; De Vecchi 2012; Epstein 2018; Baker 2019. On *collective intentionality*, see: Schweikard and Schmid 2021; Tuomela and Miller 1988; Tuomela 1989, 1991, 1995, 2005, 2007, and 2013; Gilbert 1990, 2009, and 2013; Searle 1990, 1995, and 2010; Pettit 2003, 2007, and 2009; Schmid 2003, 2012, and 2018; Petersson 2007; Tomasello 2014; De Vecchi 2011, 2012, and 2014.
4 According to Searle, for example, the notion of intentionality simply indicates *having an intention of*, that is, having certain types of beliefs and cultural references.

construct of mental categories. In a realistic framework, intentionality expresses the correlation that a conscious subjectivity can have with *the thing itself*. An intentional act is a *stance* that allows the subject to be in the presence of something or somebody. It is the mode, through which conscious subject (*the noetic pole*) takes a stand in the face of the thing (*the noematic pole*), being in the presence of it.[5] There are several kinds of acts: perceptual, cognitive, linguistic, intuitive, etc.[6] In each intentional act, we find a fundamental structure, which is composed of three intrinsically connected parts: *the noetic pole* (the subject), *the intentional mode* (the act), and *the noematic pole* (the object). This correlation is a sort of *transcendental in rebus*, because any kind of conscious experience is always realized in this way. Intentionality does not therefore mean having a psycho-physical desire or a volitional intention. It means *to be in the presence of*. It means to be the conscious correlate of a phenomenal givenness. Collective intentionality is not reducible to the sum of individual intentionalities, because they are *two essentially different ways of the consciousness–world correlation*. My consciousness of a givenness x and your consciousness of the same x do not in any way generate a collective pseudo-consciousness of x.

III. The difficult case of collective intentionality

As long as we talk about individual intentionality, there is no doubt about the elements that constitute it: an individual consciousness (*noetic pole*), a certain type of individual intentional act (*intentional mode*), and a given object (*noematic pole*).[7]

For example: "I admire this sunset." (i) "*I*" is the individual noetic pole; (ii) "I *admire*" is the intentional act, through which "I" place myself in the presence of something (this sunset); (iii) "*this sunset*" is the noematic pole, which gives itself to my consciousness through my intentional act.

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5 On the Husserlian notion of *noesis* and *noema*, see Husserl 1988.
6 On the phenomenological notion of *act*, see: Scheler 2000; Mulligan 1987; De Vecchi 2017.
7 There is a heated debate around the question if a pure individual consciousness really exists. Indeed, every personal consciousness fully emerges as such only thanks to its original belonging to a certain community. On this topic, see: Scheler 2000 and Zahavi 2021.

The problem arises by means of the following question: is there a real collective intentionality, in which *the noetic pole* is not an individual, but a group?

If we analyze a collective experience, for example: "*We* admire this sunset," then several ontological problems seem to arise. (i) About "*we*": does it indicate a supra-individual subjectivity? (ii) About "we *admire*": is there really a plural subject who performs this act? (iii) About "*this sunset*": can we consider it a real collective givenness, that is, the intentional correlate of a real "we"?

The three mentioned problems are rooted in the central ontological problem: *the nature of the bearer*. On the one hand, there are those who believe that collective intentionality is not merely individual. Its bearer would then be the collective (i.e., "*the Irreducibility Claim*").[8] On the other hand, there are those who argue that only individual subjects can be the bearers of intentionality. Consequently, collective intentionality would be nothing more than the aggregation of independent individual acts (i.e., "*the Individual Ownership Claim*").[9] Reductionism postulates necessary coincidence between consciousness and psycho-physical corporeity of its bearer. If the bearer is a flesh-and-blood subject, then his consciousness can be only individual. Consequently, those who maintain the existence of a collective intentionality must also support the existence of a supra-individual subjectivity. Therefore, they must demonstrate how it is embodied in a psycho-physical corporeity, which is different from that of the individual. In my opinion, this incarnation, which is ontologically impossible, is not necessary. From my ontological point of view, the intrinsic correlation is not between subjective corporeity and consciousness, but between consciousness and the subject's status of

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8 According to Schmid (2018, 234), there are four essential dynamics of self-consciousness: "(a) self-identification, (b) self-validation, (c) self-commitment, and (d) self-authorization." He argues that they can also belong to a collective experience. "What's collective about collective intentionality is that it is plurally self-known. This form of the intentionality in question is the subject, and it is plural. Subjectivity does not only come in the singular, but in the plural, too. The differences between the ways in which subjectivity is realized in the singular and the plural and that are obvious in the different ways in which the functions of self-identification, self-validation, self-commitment, and self-authorization are realized can only surprise on the base of the mistaken assumption that subjectivity is always singular." (Ibid., 241.)
9 On this topic, see Epstein 2018.

independence. To be the bearer of an individual consciousness, the subject would have to be totally independent. That is, he would be able to take a position on something in a completely independent way with respect to any type of external constraint. If we take into account the normal course of our days and all the occasions when we have to make choices, then we see how this condition is quite rare. In most cases, we intentionally relate to the world as *parts of wholes* that include us, motivate us, empower us, etc. In these instances, common beliefs, mutual duties and rights, shared values, sentimental ties, role responsibilities, etc., come into play. In most cases, then, the social whole, of which we are a part, takes a stand in the face of reality through our intentional acts. Although this happens differently from person to person, because each of us is unique and unrepeatable, the noetic correlate of our intentional act is nevertheless often a collective consciousness. This consciousness is structured by our social bonds and acts through them, in compliance with the obligations and responsibilities that they impose on us.[10]

The ontologically central point is as follows: when subjects authentically assume the *status* of members, then they undergo *an ontological change*. They become *constituent parts of social wholes* that *bind* them.[11] *The root of their collective intentionality is the normative structure that gives existence and identity to their group membership*. When normative constraints organize an authentic *us*, then they are capable of producing a real *we*, that is, a collective consciousness.

Norms are then the ontological foundation of every possible collective subject, in which an authentic collective intentionality can take shape. There are informal (such as those that depend on a sentimental bond) and formal norms (such as those incorporated in a law). They allow members to know what others are doing (Tuomela and Miller 1998; Bratman 1999), to converge in reciprocity (Gilbert 1990), and to be confident that everyone will do their part (Schmid 2013).

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10 The bond also works in case of transgression. In fact, even when we break a bond with a certain act, the noetic pole of our choice is the collective consciousness, to which the bond refers.

11 For an introduction to Husserl's social ontology, see Caminada 2015 and 2019. For a possible deepening of the phenomenological approach, see: Schütz 1962, 1970, and 1976; Salice and Schmid 2016.

IV. Collective subjects vs. social aggregates

When I talk about collective subjects in my ontological framework, I am not referring to any kind of social aggregate, in which two or more people share a certain type of experience. Rather, I always refer to *wholes* of a social nature, that is, to forms of a social unit, in which the cooperation between people depends on a plot of structural and normative constraints. Only in this case people become *non-independent parts* of their group. This new condition concerns both *the horizontal relationships* of dependence, or co-dependence, with other members, as well as *the vertical relationship* of dependence with the whole collective. *The assumption of this twofold dimension of constraints is precisely the root of collective intentionality*. A real social whole has its own normative structure, which assigns roles, establishes rules, and organizes joint actions. It also has its own specific identity, that is, a set of emerging characteristics, which are irreducible to those of individual parts (e.g., the democratic being of a state, the oppressive being of a sect, the winning being of a team, etc.). Thanks to this emerging level of features, it also holds a specific causal power (e.g., a state can declare war, a sect can expel its members, a team can create new products, etc.). If there is *a real we*, ontologically founded, then the subject "we" manifests the existence of constraints that impose, or motivate, many individual subjects to think, feel, and act in a non-independent way. The possessive adjective "our" (*our* thoughts, *our* feelings, *our* actions, etc.) precisely expresses *the belonging of us* to an ontologically-founded *we*, without which *our* thoughts, feelings, actions, etc., would not exist.

All the other forms of collaboration, or sharing, do not establish real social wholes, but only social aggregates. Therefore, they are not able to found a real collective intentionality.

In a very general sense, a social aggregation is a simple sum or sharing of individual acts, which do not require a vertical constraint of belonging. For example, we have an aggregation of individual acts, when two subjects listen to music, at the same concert, or walk together for a stretch of the road. They are actually doing something together and they have to coordinate in some way (e.g., one walks at the same speed as the other, one keeps to the right and the other to the left, etc.). However, this intersubjective coordination

does not require a collective consciousness, according to which one *must* act in a non-independent way with respect to others. This type of sharing does not generate a normative structure, which is capable of giving life to an ontologically emerging *we*. So, we can understand these cases as examples of social interactions that do not change the *status* of ontological independence. They simply involve an intersubjective intentionality, which is the interaction between individual acts, that is, acts detached from a higher order of unity.[12]

V. The noetic pole of collective intentionality

Ontological conditions of the subject (dependence, co-dependence, or independence) establish the modes of her/his intentional positioning. The latter is configured as a certain *x-intention* and is declined in the following essential forms:

(i) *I-intention (individual intentionality)*: subject takes a stand towards the surrounding world *in an individual way*, *starting from her/his ontological condition of independence*;

(ii) *us-intention (or intention-of-us, intersubjective intentionality)*: several individual subjects take a *stand* towards the surrounding world *in a shared way*, *saving their ontological condition of independence*;

(iii) *we-intention (collective intentionality)*: *a group* of individuals takes a stand towards the surrounding world *in a collective way*, according to the normative and structural system that gives shape and identity to it.[13]

Therefore, a real collective intentionality is not a mere psycho-physical or mental faculty, which can be arbitrarily activated. Its intentional acts have a specific and original way, which is essentially different from that of an *I-intention*. The *we-intention* is the intentional dynamism that allows thoughts, values, ideas, etc., of a group to take a stand in the world through the coordinated and joint intentional acts of its members. It is the *transcendental*

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12 For the essential differences between several types of intentionality, see De Vecchi 2011 and 2014. On the phenomenological notion of *grounding*, see Husserl's notion of *Fundierung* (1984). On this topic, see also: De Monticelli and Conni 2008; De Monticelli 2018 and 2020; di Feo 2022a and 2023.

13 On the notion of *we-intention*, see: Tuomela and Miller 1988; Tuomela 2003 and 2005; Roth 2017; Epstein 2018; Schmid 2018; Schweikard and Schmid 2021.

world–consciousness correlation that characterizes the acts of those who belong to a collective. The bearers of a real *we-intention* (members) are always interconnected subjects who find themselves in the ontological condition of thinking, feeling, and acting as *relatively non-independent parts of a social whole*.[14] Going back to the previous example, when *we admire this sunset* collectively, *we* know and feel *we* share this experience together. Each of us then perceives qualities of the landscape as something that strikes all group. While this vision strikes me, it also affects the other members of my group. In addition, I am also struck by what others are experiencing, so much so that their joy becomes mine. This is not a sub-personal emotional contagion, as in mass phenomena, but is a deep sharing, which has its roots in our bonds of co-belonging.[15] This experience is, indeed, impossible for those who do not belong to the group. They can share this experience with us, but never in the form of *intentional interdependence*. In other types of collective experience, moreover, this interdependence can take more structured and complex forms, such as those that characterize the agency of a team or the institutional organization of an institutional collective subject.

In summary: *collective intentionality is a specific and distinct form of intentional correlation, in which the noetic pole is an ontological concatenation of people who collectively take a stand in the world.*

VI. The noematic pole of collective intentionality

Jointly, *the noematic pole* of this particular intentional modality is *a collective givenness*, which is originally given to the whole collective. This characterization does not depend on the accidental projection of individual subjects that feel it,

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14 Subjects fully integrated into a group are authentically and spontaneously bearers of *we-thoughts*, *we-desires*, *we-intentions*, *we-actions*, etc. At the same time, since no social constraint should compromise a space of autonomy and personal self-determination, a good integration does not inhibit the dimension of *I-intention*, through which individuals take their own standpoints towards the surrounding world. On the topic of *identification*, see Salice and Miyazono 2019. On the topic of *social integration*, from a phenomenological and ontological point of view, see: di Feo 2019 and 2022b.

15 This sunset, which we are watching, could still be a moment that we were waiting to live together. Therefore, it would be originally and intentionally given as an event for *us*.

think it, experience it, *as if* it *were* so. It is collective from the beginning onward. For example, insults against the community strike it in its entirety. Once again, this is possible, because there is a pre-existing *we*. Within it, every member grasps this givenness as something that concerns, affects, threatens, etc., the entire community. Therefore, the collective givenness is not the object of individual experiences. It is not the correlate of individual consciousnesses, but is a collective event, which is addressed to the entire collective. What we think, desire, feel, etc., in the *we-intentional modality* is properly and originally *given to us*, in *our* experience, because *we are an ontological unit with its own collective consciousness.*

Some eminent philosophers argue that the collective configuration of certain experiences depends on their content. For example, according to Bratman (1999), a common purpose is a necessary and sufficient condition for uniting subjects and making them act jointly. The weak point of this thesis is the failure to identify the ontological conditions, for which a purpose can be properly collective. The difference between common and collective purposes is precisely the following: while the former can motivate relationships and interactions between independent subjects, the latter can exist only as the noematic correlate of an ontologically existing *we*. That is, the ontological distinction between social aggregates and social wholes is missing. According to other philosophers, collective intentionality is configured as such by the *mode* of the act. For example, Tuomela (2003 and 2007) highlights the difference between the individual act ("*I-mode*") and the plural act ("*we-mode*"), and also identifies the relationship between this second type of intentionality and group membership. However, dismissing a deep ontological investigation, he focuses on modal variations of the act, concluding that intentionality depends on the type of act. On the contrary, I argue that intentional dynamism configures both the modality of the act and the collective nature of the givenness.

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VII. Conclusion

Collective intentionality is *an essential dynamism of human consciousness*, which is different from the individual as well as the intersubjective one. Its ontological foundation is the existence of an emerging social unit, in which the interconnection between horizontal constraints (part–part) and vertical

constraints (part–whole) gives people a real *status* of belonging. This status becomes the source of a real collective intentionality to the extent that it motivates a coordinated and joint participation. If such conditions are realized, then members become bearers of a collective mental dimension.

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Lucia Angelino

Sartre and Freud as Resources for Thinking the Genesis of a We-Perspective

Abstract: The philosophical problem I address in the paper is centered around the following questions. What kind of relation to others is relevant for the emergence of a we-perspective? Should one prioritize the concrete face-to-face encounter between *self* and *other* or, rather, focus on the much more complex social configurations involving the figure and the function of a third party (*le tiers*)? Drawing inspiration from Sartre's *Critique of Dialectical Reason* and Freud's *Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego*, I argue that, in order to account for the genesis of a "we-perspective" in large-scale, polycentric, and constantly shifting social configurations, one needs to shift the theoretical focus from the *You* to the *Third*, that is, from the dyadic face-to-face (*immediate*) relations of reciprocity between *I* and *You*, *self* and *other* to ternary relations of "*mediated* reciprocity," involving the figure and the function of a third party who is at the same time an *Other* for the *I* and a representative of the *symbolic order*.

Keywords: we-perspective, third party, I–you relationship, group identification, phenomenology of sociality.

Introduction

The present paper is centered around the following questions. What kind of relation to others is relevant for the emergence of a we-perspective? Should one prioritize the concrete face-to-face encounter between *self* and *other* or, rather, focus on the much more complex social configurations involving the figure and the function of a third party (*le tiers*)?[1]

Up to the present, most—if not all—philosophical answers given to these questions highlight the importance of the relation between *I* and *you*—as *a key* to a proper understanding of the foundations of a "we-perspective."

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1 This alternative is brilliantly formulated by Descombes (2001, 117–155).

The central argument in this position is that the capacity to adopt a *second-person* perspective—a perspective, in which one relates to the other as a *you*—is crucial for the constitution of a "we is greater than me," a "we>me" psychological orientation. But, to what extent is such an argument plausible? Does a story built around *I* and *you*, *ego* and *alter ego* suffice to explain the emergence of a we-perspective in complex, polycentric, and constantly shifting social configurations, which go beyond the here and the now, and involve the plural positions of *you* and *they*?

In this contribution, I suggest that it does not. Drawing upon some conceptual resources offered by Jean-Paul Sartre and Sigmund Freud, I argue that, in order to trace a way out of this impasse, one needs to shift the theoretical focus from the "You" to the "Third" (*tiers*). More precisely, I claim that, in order to account for the genesis of a "we-perspective" in complex, plural, and constantly changing social configurations, one needs to shift the focus from dyadic face-to-face (*immediate*) relations of reciprocity between *I* and *You* to ternary relations of "*mediated* reciprocity," involving a third party who is at the same time an *Other* for the *I* and a representative of the *symbolic order*: not just a third person, but *a figure of transition* between the first-person *singular* and the first-person *plural* perspective.

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The decisive point to be retained in this context is that "the third party" is to be understood as a person (for example, an external observer, a witness, or a third in-group *agent*)—rather than as a realm of being (e.g., a shared object or a common project).[2] The Third is "another" whose functions differ from "the first other," or the *alter ego*, and who is conceived in such a way that this mediation gives rise to plural social configurations, which cannot be fully explained with reference to the dyadic model of *ego* and *alter ego*.

This argument—which I call "the turn to the Third" in social theory, initiated by Georg Simmel (1964) and Sigmund Freud (1959)—is somehow familiar in the social sciences. In contemporary German social philosophy[3]

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2 This conceptual distinction first made by Simmel (1964, part II, chap iii, iv, and v) is currently adopted in social theory, for instance, by Fischer (2013), among others.
3 If one looks at the social sciences, one finds rich and extensive considerations about the figures and functions of the Third. Moreover, there is an ongoing debate in German social philosophy and social theory, which centers on whether social theory

and sociological theory, one finds critical reflections on the Third as a key to understanding the emergence of complex social configurations—such as political and media institutions—, which cannot be explained with reference to dyadic interactions.

Rarely, however, one finds reflections on the function of the third within philosophical debates on the "we"—with the consequence that the qualitative change effected by the *intervention* of a *third* party in the relationships between the *I*, the *you*, and the *we*, is still underexplored. That the intervention of a third redefines dyadic relationships between *ego* and *alter ego* and at the same time also plays an important role in the transition from small groups to larger social units (group formations) and "institutions" is an unquestioned point in the social theory debate. That it has an important role to play in the process of group identification and therefore in the transition from a first-person *singular* ("I-perspective") to a first-person *plural* perspective (a "we-perspective") is what I argue for here. My paper is, therefore, organized as follows. In the first section, I provide an overview of the dyadic model, which is typically applied to account for the emergence of a "we-perspective," and highlight the limitations of such a model. In the second section, I outline an alternative framework by drawing inspiration from Sartre's account of the genesis of groups in the *Critique of Dialectical Reason* as well as by focusing on Freud's *Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego*. In a final move, I explore the epistemological and heuristic potential of this alternative framework centered on the Third (*le tiers*) in contemporary research on the "we," particularly as applied to account for the emergence of a "we-perspective" in groups made up of *many*.

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should turn to the analysis of the role of the third party, in order to conceptualize social phenomena classically viewed from the standpoint of the "Other." See: Bedorf 2003 and 2006; Fischer 2013; Bedorf, Fischer, and Lindeman 2010; Esslinger *et al.* 2010; Cooper and Malkmus 2013; Berger and Döring 1998. See also: Waldenfels 1997. Despite all this work, however, we do not find any reflections centered on the function of the third in the emergence of a "we-perspective," neither in social theory nor in the philosophical (and social ontology) debate on the "we." My main concern in this paper is precisely to move beyond this impasse. Specifically, I intend to explore the role of the third in the genesis of a we-perspective in a "group made up of *many*."

The I, the you, and the we. The importance of reciprocity

Let me start by considering the dyadic model, which is typically applied to account for the emergence of a "we-perspective." According to a prominent and recent view, supported by both philosophical arguments and empirical evidence, a "we-perspective" typically arises out of a dyadic *I–you* relation involving a "special kind of reciprocity" (Zahavi 2019, 254), one that requires the ability to adopt what has in psychology been termed a "second-person perspective,"[4] in which I relate to another as a *you*—as somebody who is also attending to and addressing me. This strategy is clearly illustrated by Zahavi's proposal, which today has come to be seen as a classical treatment of this topic in the current debate. According to his proposal, which mainly draws on the writings of German classical phenomenologists, such as Edith Stein (1989 [1917], 1922), Edmund Husserl (1952, 1973), Max Scheler (2008 [1913]), and Alfred Schütz (1967 [1932]), the capacity to adopt a second-person perspective and to establish a *I–you* relation of *reciprocity* is crucial for the emergence of a first-person *plural* perspective. To adopt a second-person perspective means more concretely to be engaged in "a subject–subject (you–me) relation where I am aware of and directed at the other and, at the same time, implicitly aware of myself, as attended to or addressed by the other" (Zahavi 2019, 255). In other words, the emergence of a "we-perspective" requires that "I experience and internalize the other's perspective on myself, that I take over the apprehension that others have of me" (ibid.). As important as this argument might be, one limitation is that it typically applies to forms of "we" that are bound to the here and the now of a face-to-face interaction between "ad hoc pairs of individuals in the moment" (Tomasello 2014, 5). But there exist other forms of "we" that are not tied to the here and the now of a physical interaction in the same way, and rather imply both temporal as well as spatial distance. Arguably, people can experience themselves as members of a we-community (e.g., a moral, religious, or cultural community), even if they are not *de facto* together with the relevant others. And, indeed, the experience we have been living through

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4 See, for instance: Schilbach *et al.* 2013; Eilan 2014; Carpenter and Liebal 2011; Darwall 2006.

during the COVID-19 pandemic attests to the *ethical* possibility of sustaining *meaningful relationships* with others, even in the absence of direct, immediate face-to-face relationships.

What, then, if the "we" connects simultaneously multiple individuals far from each other and unknown to each other? What if the "we" arises out of polycentric and at the same time constantly shifting and conflicting social configurations? How are we to explain the transition from a second-person perspective, in which individuals internalize the perspective of a specific or significant other, to a kind of fully agent-independent, objective point of view?

There is, in short, no question that an account of the "we," which focuses on the *I–you* relation, is fairly restrictive. It is this lacuna that this paper seeks to overcome by drawing inspiration from Sartre whose analyses of the genesis of the "group in fusion" in the "Theory of Practical Ensembles" are focused on the key role of "the third party."

In this fascinating and somehow forgotten book of *The Critique of Dialectical Reason*,[5] where Sartre seeks to account for the social integration of human multiplicities beyond the holism–individualism dichotomy, he faults sociologists for failing to offer a proper account of the relationship between the individual and the community.

In his own words, it is "a common error of many sociologists to treat the group as a binary relation (individual–community)"—in which the individual is either absorbed (and therefore dissolved) in the group or stands in front of it, as a separate entity—, "whereas, in reality, it is a ternary relation" (Sartre 1976 [1960], 421), so that each individual, *as a third party*, is connected, in the unity of a single *praxis* and, therefore, of a single perception, with all the group

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5 It is worth recalling that Sartre's *Critique* has largely been ignored both in social ontology and in the burgeoning field of the phenomenology of sociality. Almost everyone who has written about Sartre's ideas about the "we" mistakenly considers the presentation in *Being and Nothingness* to be definitive. That work, which appeared in 1943, does contain an analysis of "Being-With (*Mitsein*) and the 'We'" in the chapter entitled "Concrete Relations with Others." But shortly after the publication of *Being and Nothingness* Sartre began to modify many of its fundamental points. In this respect, it is important to bear in mind what he himself said near the end of his life: "What is particularly bad in *L'Être et le Néant* [*Being and Nothingness*] is the specifically social chapter, on the 'we,' compared to the chapters on the 'you' and 'others' […] that part of *L'Être et le Néant* failed […]." (Sartre 1981, 13.)

members, and with each of them individually. The crucial point to be retained is that each member in the group is a third in relation to every other member: each individual might become a "regulatory" third *within* the group and might act as a mediator through whom all the others are unified. Moreover, Sartre's major claim is that, "whatever relations of simple reciprocity" there are within the group, "these relations, though transfigured by their being-in-a-group, are not constitutive" of "a group behavior and of group thoughts" (Sartre 1976 [1960], 374). What is needed is a relation of "mediated reciprocity," involving the figure and the function of a third party.

In order to grasp this claim, I suggest looking closer at Sartre's treatment of the Third in the apocalyptic genesis of the "group in fusion." I shall do this in a necessarily schematic way by reading Sartre's work through the following question: How does individual thinking (and acting) become collective?

Beyond pure reciprocity: the Third

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Sartre provides an answer to the question thanks to what he terms the third party in the *Critique of Dialectical Reason*. As I read Sartre, there are two ways of understanding the third party within the context of the ephemeral group in fusion. There is what I call a *weak* way: the one that consists of conceiving "the third party" as a third in-group agent whose function is to foster mutual understanding and relation among group members. But, beyond this, there is a *strong* way: the one that consists of conceiving "the third party" as a representative of the group or as a temporary leader whose function is to convey the perspective of the group, as a whole, to all the others, as well as to direct and unite them for a while. By "the third party" (*le tiers*), Sartre means,[6] more precisely, a third *in*-group agent who acts, as if he/she were the whole group

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6 As I will argue here, the Third in Sartre's *Critique* ultimately appears not only as a third in-group agent—as has been abundantly proposed in secondary literature on Sartre's *Critique*, which includes important contributions by Catalano (1986, 2010), Santoni (2003), Rizk (2014, 2011), and Flynn (1997)—, but also as a temporary leader or as a provisional representative of the group's aims and values. The essential point to be retained is that the third party, as a temporary leader, is neither an outside leader nor a particular chosen leader. On the contrary, everyone in the group can become a third in relation to the others and therefore unite and direct the group for a while.

acting within her/him.[7] They find themselves in the situation where, by acting on behalf of the group, to which they belong (e.g., as a temporary leader),[8] they induce all the other members to act immediately in the name of the same group[9] and, thereby, engender the social convergence of human multiplicities. That is why, "from a structural point of view, the third party" can be defined as "the human mediation through which the multiplicity of epicenters and ends (identical and separate) organizes itself *directly*, as determined by a synthetic objective" (Sartre 1976 [1960], 367).

As "creator of objectives and organizer of means" (ibid., 381), the third party "stands in a tense and contradictory relation of transcendence–immanence" (ibid., 381), since they are *inside* the group, yet also *outside* of it as its "unifier." In this respect, they might be considered as a director or as a leader whose function is to unify a gathered multiplicity of individuals by posing in their reciprocal actions a relationship to a synthetic objective, which goes beyond each individual. As long as the fusion of the group continues, however, this power passes immediately to another individual in the group who, acting freely on behalf of the same group, assumes in turn this function in an endless process of grouping. In other words, each member in the group might become a third and might act as a regulatory third through whom all are unified in an endless process of grouping. In this respect, as Catalano clearly pointed out in his *Commentary*, "the law of the group-in-fusion is what Sartre terms an 'alternation of statutes': each [individual], as potential regulatory third, can

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7 Sartre clearly expresses this concept: "His praxis is his own in himself, as the free development […] of the action of the entire group which is in the process of formation." (Sartre 1976 [1960], 371.)
8 In the group-in-fusion, this is obvious, because every person is a potential sovereign who can lead the group for a while. However, identifying the third party with a leader is both an error and an exaggeration, since it represents a function, and not a concrete figure, but, most importantly, it represents a function that can be played by various actors in the group. However, this analogy contains a grain of truth in the sense that the third party embodies the leading idea, in which the group's members can have a share and which welds them together.
9 Since the example that Sartre has in mind is the French Revolution, we might think of the case of revolutionary groups. Typically, in a revolutionary group, an agitator/organizer will emerge. They are neither a leader *stricto sensu* nor the one who commands or is in charge. But they do act as a director, a medium, and a channel for popular opinion.

become equally an actual regulatory third, *without becoming a transcendent other to the group*" (Catalano 1986, 175).

In this alternation of statutes, "which appear as the very law of the fused group" (Sartre 1976 [1960], 381), there emerges a movement of "mediated reciprocity" between two "third parties" who come together in the generating movement of the group. Each one does not act in the name of the other in front of them; they act in the name of the group. At this juncture, there emerges the first "we-subject" (*nous*), which is "practical but not substantial" (ibid., 394), and plural rather than singular, because it emerges in the ubiquity of this movement of mediated reciprocity between several selves. The result is that something like a "we-perspective" emerges in a movement of mediated reciprocity, where each individual is simultaneously an *I* and a *third* in relation to every other. According to Sartre, there is "nothing magical" in this result. It merely requires the interiorization of a third-party perspective, which entails a *radical alteration* of the first-person *singular* perspective, so that everyone in the group comes to think, act, and feel "in a completely new way: not as an individual, nor as an Other, but as an individual incarnation of the common person" (ibid., 357). The crucial point in this argument is that the shift to the third-person position is decisive, in order to give rise to a group-minded perspective—not "me," but "we" as a group—and, at the same time, to scale up to group's identity.

Moreover, each individual who plays the role of "the third party" brings about a relation of a new, distinctive kind amongst the group members. This new relation, which is born out of fundamental reciprocity, is no longer the simple, immediate, direct, and lived relation between *I* and *you*, but a "relation of each to each, with and through all" (ibid., 467). The most important feature of this relationship lies in the fundamental characteristic of mediation, which is neither an object nor an objective, but the group's common *praxis* "laying down its own laws" (ibid., 467) in each "third party."

Without going into the finer details of Sartre's very deep analyses, it is important for us to focus on the following three points.

First, it is important to notice that "the third party" has a crucial role to play in the process of group identification, insofar as the internalization of a third-party perspective—its synthetic point of view—is the basis, upon which the

first "we" emerges that cannot be attributed neither to a single individual nor to a collective consciousness, since, as we have seen, it emerges in the ubiquity of a relation or a movement of mediated reciprocity between several selves.

Second, it is important to notice that the Third functions "as a *via media*"—the middle way—(Flynn 1981, 358) between the individual and the group, and, as such, enables the move from a subjective self-regarding perspective (first-person *singular*) to a more objective and socially inclusive view (a "we-perspective"), in which each individual thinks from the particular standpoint of all those involved, or affected, together with him/her. In the same vein, it is important to notice that the figure of the Third enables the shift from a simply experienced we-perspective to a we-perspective reflexively assumed.

Third, it is important to acknowledge that the third party embodies not just a third person, but all those (group members) who are not immediately present and, at the same time, also the norms, values, and aims, in which they have a share and which bind them together, therefore communicating an identity of interest and purpose to all the others. That is why the Third enables each self to come into contact with the group's norms,[10] and to act as well as to think in accordance with the normative standards of the group. In this respect, the third party can be seen as a figure of transition, a sort of link, holding together the individual and the collective levels of human thinking.

The function of the third party in the process of group identification

In this last section, I focus my attention on the role played by the third party in the process of group identification and, therefore, in the transition (shift) from a first-person *singular* ("I-perspective") to a first-person *plural* perspective ("we-perspective"). As we have seen, the Third appears to play an important role in this process. But the crucial question that still requires an explanation is how this process can be described psychologically. In order to answer this question, I suggest using the schema of identification developed by Freud in his work *Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego*. I will do this in a necessarily schematic way by focusing on the few pages, where Freud

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10 A similar argument borrowed from developmental psychology is made by Bedorf (2006, 262).

sketches out a graphic representation of identification.[11] In this fascinating book, in which Freud seeks to overcome the limitations of both Le Bon's and Tarde's crowd psychology,[12] he interprets the process of group identification as meaning that the "individual gives up his ego ideal" and narcissistic self-love, "and substitutes for it the group ideal" (Freud 1959, 78–79). In other words, the process of group identification, as described by Freud, implies that "a number of individuals have put one and the same object in the place of their ego ideal and have consequently identified themselves with one another in their ego" (ibid., 61).

That is why, in the words of Étienne Balibar, the relations among group members must be described by following:

> […] the schema of a *double mimesis*, functioning at once *horizontally* (as identifications between subjects with one another, identifications with one's fellow men […]) and *vertically* (although, paradoxically, the graph designed by Freud inscribes this verticality on a horizontal axis), as identification with a "model" (*Vorbild*) that is also imaginary, whose power of attraction and suggestion induces, through a return effect, the *Spaltung* of the subject into an *Ich* and an *Idealich*, which are both *him* and *different from him*, or better still, as Lacan will say in his commentary (in *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis*) it is "in you more than you," and thus is at once the same as you and different from you. (Balibar 2016, 50.)

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11 At the end of the chapter entitled "Being in Love and Hypnosis," Freud designs the graphic representation of the process of group identification that he previously defined as follows: "A primary group […] is a number of individuals who have substituted one and the same object for their ego ideal and have consequently identified themselves with one another in their ego." (Freud 1959, chap. VIII.)

12 Le Bon (1895), Tarde (1890), and Freud (1959) can be considered as the founding fathers of crowd psychology, which they jointly established, while attempting to solve the mystery or the riddle of group formation/constitution. Another important figure in this debate is McDougall (1920). A historical and systematic reconstruction of their contributions can be found in Moscovici (1985). Many other books contain accounts of the relationships between Freud, Le Bon, and Tarde. See, in particular: Giner (1976) and Adorno (1972, VIII, 35).

I shall argue that the graph of identification, as sketched out by Freud, presents a particular interest from the point of view of our philosophical inquiry for at least two reasons.

First, it shows that a "we-perspective" in a "group made up of *many*" arises from relations of "mediated reciprocity," "functioning at once *horizontally* (as identifications between subjects with one another) and *vertically*," as identification with a third party or a model, who is, however, immanent, and not transcendent to the group.

Second, it proves that the shift from a first-person *singular* ("I-perspective") to a first-person *plural* perspective ("we-perspective") requires a far more radical alteration of one's sense of the self than the one achieved/effected by adopting a "second-person perspective," an *alteration* of one's sense of the self that implies the capacity to adopt a "third party-perspective," by which each individual gives up his/her own "ego ideal" and puts in its place the "group ideal."

Conclusion

To summarize and conclude, the thrust of this contribution was to demonstrate that the *I–you* relation, involving a special kind of *reciprocity* between *self* and *other*, accounts well enough for the emergence of a "we-perspective" in dyadic forms of "we" that are bound to the here and the now of face-to-face interactions. But it cannot explain how a "we-perspective" (first-person *plural* perspective) emerges in far more complex, polyadic, and constantly shifting social configurations, which go beyond the here and the now, and involve the plural positions of *you* and *they*. Arguably, if a "we-perspective" is to develop amongst a plurality of group members, it is *not sufficient* that each individual takes and internalizes the perspective of a specific or significant other towards themselves; they must also, at the same time, internalize the collective perspective of the group as a whole. As should hopefully by now be quite clear, the third party plays a key role in this process, since they are at the same time an *Other* for the *I* and a representative of the *whole system of perspectives* shared by the group members. In conclusion, my argument can be formulated as follows: in addition to the capacity to adopt a second-

person perspective—which entails identifications between subjects with one another—, the emergence of a "*we-perspective*" in polycentric and constantly shifting social configurations requires the shift to the third-person position, through which a kind of "group's agent-neutral point of view" emerges and is communicated to all the others.

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Marco Russo

The Theater of Appearances
Social Phenomenology of Excentricity

Abstract: Helmuth Plessner, one of the fathers of the 20th-century philosophical anthropology (with Max Scheler and Arnold Gehlen), proposed an anthropological model based on the notion of excentricity, and developed an aesthesiology, i.e., a philosophy of embodied symbolic forms. I outline the social phenomenology of the excentric model from such an aesthesiological perspective. First, I highlight the structural relationship between excentricity, sociality, and theater, then I focus on the specifically aesthesiological aspects of this relationship, which also have ethical implications.

Keywords: excentricity, aesthesiology, symbolic forms, theater, dialectics.

I. Phenomenology, hermeneutics, morphology

Plessner attended Husserl's lectures in Göttingen for a while and also planned to write a doctoral thesis under his supervision (Plessner 1959a, 348–349; Vydrová 2020). The project did not materialize, but the phenomenological imprint remained. For Plessner, phenomenology is an instrument for reading the manifold manifestations of experience, without relegating them to a theoretical box and without immediately reducing them to data for scientific explanations. No science grasps "das Phänomenhafte am Phänomen" (Plessner 1928, 30). With phenomenology, philosophy—instead of being the writing of books about books—finally becomes a reading of reality: "Arbeit unter offenem Horizont"; "im Freien philosophieren" (Plessner 1959b, 359).

marco russo

Following the tradition, which Plessner traces back to Goethe and Herder (Plessner 1923, 32–33; Plessner 1928, 24 and 32), the phenomenal appearance does not conceal, but reveals the nature of something. Between essence and appearance, the nature and the form of something, there is an intimate relationship; in the case of living beings, this relationship is dialectical (Plessner 1928, 115; Holz 2003, 117–139) in the sense that essence (what one is) develops through contrast with appearance (how one is), i.e., through a series of positionings, adaptations, and balancing acts between the individual and its body. The phenomenological description of forms also requires a hermeneutic support, in order to outline the meaning of what we describe; meaning has to do with temporally conditioned values, directions, and reasons (Plessner 1970, 371; Lessing 1998). Thus, phenomenology grasps "das Vokabular der Erscheinungsweise und Modi des Empfindens" (Plessner 1970, 373); hermeneutics deciphers that dictionary by placing it in the cultural-historical context. Both are based on the dialectics between essence and appearance, individual and form, which characterizes life.

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II. Dialectics of limits

The most important element of the Plessnerian phenomenological morphology is the limit. Things have spatial limits. The limit is the criterion of identification that allows us to distinguish one thing from another. Boundaries are arbitrarily modifiable as long as they are inert. In living things, on the other hand, the limit is a proper irreducible part, not a mere contour; it assumes the function of a border that introduces the directional opposition between an inside and an outside (Plessner 1928, 103–104). A living body does not end upon its own boundary, but establishes a relationship with it, as if there were someone "behind" it who assumes a position with respect to its body. The relationship of a living body to its boundaries is, therefore, called "positionality" (ibid., 130–132). Positionality takes on an increasingly pronounced character as one moves from the open plant form to the closed animal form, where centralization is also physically localized in a brain. The processual characteristics of biology (nourishment, transformation, development, mobility, struggle, death) are positionally featured, they derive from and express the original inside–outside bipolarity.

The human excentric form is an extreme complication of the centralized closed form. The psychophysical center, upon which the animal lives, is again placed in front of the individual: as body image, as external self-representation, as the reflexive power to become an object and to look at itself from outside. One's physical center is both the pole of convergence and of external projection of one's identity. I am my body, which, however, is also experienced as the "sheath" that covers me (Plessner 1967, 319). The same duplicity appears between my body and the social body, into which my body places me. I am the center of my body, but I am also the periphery of countless other external centers. Thus, the formula for excentricity is: "Ich bin, aber ich habe mich nicht" (Plessner 1961, 190).

Man finds himself halfway between the egocentric environment of the animal (inner and outer world) and the allocentric world (*Mitwelt*, the common world). The positional distance of the self from the self forms an inner field, which is generated in opposition to an outer field. These two fields still have a circumscribed and environmental character, whereas the common field is open and indeterminate, neither internal nor external. The *Mitwelt* is a third sphere, the sphere of the spirit, which, however, is not the dialectical synthesis of inner and outer worlds, but rather their overlapping point: the common place, where everyone perceives themselves from the outside, from the position of others: "Mitwelt ist die vom Menschen als Sphäre anderer Menschen erfaßte Form der eigenen Position" (Plessner 1928, 302). Here, each person addresses themselves and others by saying: you, he/she, we (ibid., 300).

In the *Mitwelt*, I am a face, a name, a body that works, loves, and suffers … But everyone is a face, a name, a body that works, loves, and suffers. Thus, the origin of sociality lies neither in the I nor in the We, because both are traversed by distance, by an impersonal factor. The excentric "I" has a permanent distance from itself; the "We" is the collective reflection of this distance: a group of people who have their extraneousness as beings "outside the center" in common. The social bond derives from this mutual exposure, from the need to be recognized, although just at the moment, when others recognize me, I realize that I am not exactly what they see. The bond between inner, outer, and common worlds has a "dialectical structure" (ibid., 299) with no final synthesis; the only synthesis is "das leere Hindurch der Vermittlung"

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(ibid., 292), i.e., the *oscillation* between one pole and the other. Unity is thus a momentary balance, a provisional artifice; and it is this that distinguishes the Plessnerian social dialectics from the Hegelian-Marxist dialectics. Sociality as unity of the manifold is an infinite task, it has only a regulative value.

From this framework, a liberal conception emerges, where, however, institutions and rules are not external limits to individual freedom, but instruments for its realization. The impersonality of the common sphere, the abstraction of public rules, must in turn materialize in forms of everyday life. Since they are a part of personal identity, each person is invited to execute the public rules by overseeing their effectiveness, applying them with creative wisdom. As in the theater, a role is fixed and already defined, but each actor gives it his or her specific imprint, to the point of completely renewing that role. This comparison is not accidental. For Plessner, the image of society as theater is not a mere metaphor, but the exact description of social life, which takes place within the *in-between*: in the oscillation between individual difference and public indifference. As in the theater, a successful society is one, where everyone manages to be a protagonist even in the simple role of an extra.

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III. Social theater

Theatricality is the proper form of being excentric. Plessner gave anthropological value to the theatrical dimension (Plessner 1948; 1960a and b; 1961, 195–205). We could say that, on the biological side, theatricality coincides with morphology, with the revelatory and communicative character of the body, which in turn depends on the dialectics between essence and form, body and limit. On the cultural side, theatricality signals the complication of this dialectics; it becomes an ambiguous interweaving of revelation and concealment, identity and otherness. Ambiguity is not an obstacle to be overcome, but is structural, because it derives from excentricity. Theater here properly becomes a drama, a story, linking present, past, and future, a story of men, representing themselves, in order to grasp the sense and non-sense of what they do. "Nichts ist der Mensch von sich aus […]. Er st nur, wozu er sich macht und versteht. Als seine Möglichkeit gibt er sich erst sein Wesen kraft der Verdoppelung in einer Rollenfigur, mit der er sich zu identifizieren versucht." (Plessner 1961, 204.)

On stage, man is a mask, an actor; behind the mask, is not the authentic, but an undefined self. On the other hand, the mask is a fiction, an anonymous and interchangeable role. The natural morphology gets complicated, because forms take on a symbolic value and enter the realm of fiction. Form is no longer merely a revelation, but a representation, sometimes conscious, sometimes unconscious; thus, it becomes a sophisticated language that overlaps facts and interpretations, reality and appearance.

The theatrical concept of *Verkörperung* (embodiment, incarnation, personification) sums up this overlapping. The actor embodies a character; they are and are not what they appear to be. Their body embodies a fiction, which is not simply a lie, but an artifice, a symbolic medium, which materializes the incorporeal: thought, imagination, spirit, culture (Plessner 1948). Thus, from a theatrical term, *Verkörperung* becomes the key term for the analysis of the relationship between truth and fiction, the immaterial and the material. *Verkörperung* describes how the individual enters the scene of the world, and how this scene is configured through individuals and their actions. The scene is configured through the system of signs and symbols that men construct over time; men configure themselves, in turn, through the system of signs and symbols that belong to their epoch.

There are therefore two levels of *Verkörperung*. The first concerns the study of the mind–body, spirit–matter relationship; the second concerns the social play. They are both the field of enquiry of aesthesiology, which is a philosophy of culture (Plessner 1923, 279; 1970, 370–384) or, as I prefer to say, a philosophy of embodied symbolic forms, because these forms have a corporeal frame. Indeed, aesthesiology studies "das innere Konditionssystem, welches zwischen den symbolischen Formen und der physischen Organisation herrscht" (Plessner 1928, 33). Aesthesiology examines culture on the basis of the relationship between symbolic meanings, types of action, and perception. The body, and its sensory differentiation linked to various cognitive and productive performances, is the guide for this research. Thus, the dimension of fiction or of cultural artifice turns out to have an objective grounding; the spirit is free, creative, but not arbitrary. Culture has a body, and works within the limits and functional distinctions that a body has.

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> Aufgabe einer Ästhesiologie des Leibes ist es, die spezifischen Konkretisierungsmodi der Verleiblichung unseres eigenen Körpers zu erkennen […]. Sie muß am Leitfaden geformten Verhaltens vorgehen, die unverwechselbare Rolle einer Sinnesmodalität für seine Verkörperung dabei im Auge haben und so versuchen, dem Aufbaugesetz der Erscheinungsweisen unserer Umwelt von den Verkörperungsweisen aus auf die Spur zu kommen. (Plessner 1970, 383–384.)

IV. The social body

Identity develops through figurations that represent ourselves to ourselves and others (Plessner 1961, 195 ff.; Stahlhut 2005). The first figuration is one's own body. I *am* my body, but at the same time I *have* a body like an external thing that I must learn to inhabit. In fact, it takes a long learning process, before one learns to walk and govern one's movements. The balance remains precarious in any case, as we see in situations of clumsiness, in uncontrolled expressions of laughing and crying, in illness. In these cases, the duplicity of the body is clearly revealed; the body is the personal, sentimental, and communicative medium, and is at the same time an external thing that hinders oneself and one's bonds with others (Wehrle 2013).

From the individual *Verkörperung* of the self with respect to one's own body, one moves onward to social *Verkörperung*; having a body now means becoming a public figure. I dress, talk, express myself, think, and act according to certain patterns. I am a person-mask that assumes a number of roles; I am both the center and the periphery of a *Mitwelt*, a scene that extends further and further from my environment. This scene is an anonymous social body that is constantly intertwined with my individual body. This moment of decentralization is necessary; a certain amount of alienation is necessary to be oneself. Social alienation stabilizes my identity and allows me to get in touch with myself. "Daß ein jeder ist, aber sich nicht hat; genauer gesagt, sich nur im Umweg über andere und anders als ein Jemand hat, gibt der menschlichen Existenz in Gruppen ihren institutionellen Charakter." (Plessner 1961, 195.)

Culture is a set of patterns of action and thought. Like science, art, and language, also macro-institutions, such as the state, the administrative

apparatus, the school, or the church, are the result of *Verkörperungen*. Plessner does not say this explicitly, but the aesthesiological approach leads to the view that ethics and politics, norms and institutions must also be a part of a philosophy of symbolic forms. The social body is a system of symbolic forms; but it is still a body, it has all its potentialities and limitations: "die Welt des täglichen Lebens [ist] nach ihren sinnlichen Evidenztypen ein Organismus" (Plessner 1923, 19). The ambivalences of the body, as a medium and a limiting boundary, as a unitary pole and a point of collision, also apply to the social body. Ambivalence can be defined as the contrast between community and society, familiarity and strangeness (Plessner 1923). No social body is devoid of these elements, and this implies a constant dose of conflict, whether internal or external, to the social groups. Another consequence is that, just as politics and ethics must be a part of the symbolic system of culture, this system likewise always has an ethical-political aspect: it generates and controls conflicts of value, taste, and knowledge, even to the point of physical conflict (Plessner 1931). The assumption of the excentric model leads to the consideration of the social body, not as an old-fashioned organicistic metaphor, but, on the contrary, as a description of advanced and functionally highly differentiated societies.

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V. Aesthesiology of the public sphere

The first fundamental characteristic of a body is that it perceives and is perceived, moves and is moved, thus creating a network of reciprocal influences, openings, and delimitations. Being a person means being a character in front of a real or virtual audience. Society is the place, where this theatrical dimension is explicit. It provides a series of roles and rules of behavior, i.e., a cultural code. As aesthesiology teaches, this code is sensitive, it is articulated through the different senses. There are visual, olfactory, auditory, gustatory, and tactile patterns that guide behavior and the production of objects (cultural style). Norms and institutions also have a style, they determine forms of judgement and value. Although formulated in the abstract, judgements and evaluations are activated in the presence of precise sensory signals, to which one is more or less reactive according to cultural style. The senses have a cognitive and

at the same time an emotional relevance. Through the cooperation between perception and movement, they, on the one hand, show us the world, which is categorized according to a conceptual grammar, ranging from a maximum of abstraction (visual field) to a maximum of concreteness (tactile field, smell, taste), with the acoustic and linguistic fields (the typically communicative and participatory fields) at the center (Plessner 1923, 189 and 220). On the other hand, they generate a permanent emotional field due to the feedback of perception on psychosomatic states (ibid., 293). We are immersed in a network of signs that convey messages; since these signs are perceived through one or more senses, the exchange of messages is never completely neutral, but produces atmospheres, moods, attitudes, and reactions (Griffero 2020). Usually, the sensory component remains in the background, because it is embedded in perceptual and behavioral patterns that have been introjected and act out of habit. But we must not forget that habit is precisely a *habitus*, a complex of morphological or behavioral traits that belong to a group; it is an attitude, a tendency, or a custom. The *habitus* regulates the interpersonal threshold of contact, gaze, sound, smell, and taste. Therefore, it has the function of social regulation and moral evaluation; precisely for this reason, the *habitus* emphasizes the most concrete side of morality, the moment, in which the norm embodies itself in perceptual signals and behaviors (Hettlage and Bellebaum 2016; Schloßberger 2019). It is no coincidence that the social rule comes into crisis when it runs into very different habits.

To be is to be perceived: the public image is aesthetic in nature, that is, first of all perceptive and then linked to taste, judgement, symbols and values (Carnevali 2020). In public space, each person is their own image, which is not really their own, because it stands between me and what others see of me. And it is precisely this intermediary function that makes it indispensable.

Being perceptually constructed, the public image leaves impressions, leaves a trace that then follows an autonomous communicative path. Our public image is a *Doppelgänger* (Plessner 1960b, 224) that circulates through words, memories, evaluations; it is strengthened and dispersed in a network of associations and references, which follow its own communicative criteria. What we say and think becomes a formula, the "part" played by the character. Our public alter ego reveals and hides us from ourselves. The public image is

in fact not neutral, but always accompanied by judgement: it has a reputation, an esteem, a certain value (Origgi 2015). It is in public that one makes good and bad impressions, that one gains or loses respect, fame, or prestige. The public theater has a climate, a context that influences actors and spectators, perception and judgement. The context is formed by the audience, but also by the scene made up of places and things, artificial environments and products.

Social aesthesiology thus confirms the formative power of appearances: they do not add to substance and content, but shape them, give them a recognizable and assessable form. Without form, substance is not even perceived.

VI. Ludus and drama

Plessner did not systematically develop the implications of human theatricality, nor did he develop the specifically social and ethical-political implications of aesthesiology. However, through the anthropological model of excentricity, he provided the theoretical basis for considering theater as a tool to describe the various aspects of excentricity. We have seen that there is a biological theater and a cultural theater of forms, which make possible a hermeneutic phenomenology of the human condition that develops in the interweaving of the laws of life and constructions of the spirit. The concept of *Verkörperung* summarizes this interweaving and allows it to be studied in its many variants, guided by the dual material and symbolic aspect of the body. The body as an organism that positions itself in relation to its limits and environment; the body as a sensory palette that marks the forms of culture; then the body as a social organism made up of characters, masks, roles, and institutions. This corporeal center always lives according to the dialectics with itself and with the other from itself; such a dialectics is what phenomenology and hermeneutics must analyze and understand through the theatrical model. Indeed, the model contains a theoretical framework concerning the reflexive relationship between observer and observed, fact and interpretation; and it contains the conceptual key to expounding human ambiguity in its multiple manifestations. The oppositional pairs of rational thought (being–appearance, truth–fiction, natural–artificial, internal–external, freedom–necessity, etc.) must become sufficiently fluid, in order to adapt to the nature of anthropological phenomena.

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The macroscopic manifestation of theatricality is the social organization. I have tried to show the perspectives that open up if one applies aesthesiology to social phenomenology. These perspectives suggest fruitful encounters between the lines of research that often remain separate. Aesthesiology is a philosophy of symbolic forms on a corporeal basis, and it requires ethics and politics to be integrated into symbolic forms. The aesthesiology of the public sphere is precisely the attempt to give structural relevance to social appearances, to the ways, in which ethics and politics are embodied in a *habitus*, in perceptual and evaluative patterns. Although not systematically, Plessner gives us many important indications regarding the relationship between theater and ethics. It is no coincidence that soon after the publication of his aesthesiology (1923) he published an essay on social philosophy (Plessner 1924), in which an explicit theatrical paradigm of ethics is sketched out: morality lives on forms and rituals, on recognizable attitudes and virtues. Moral choice is linked to freedom, and freedom is rooted in an "ontologische Zweideutigkeit," which would later be called excentricity. "Wir wollen uns sehen und gesehen werden, wie wir sind, und wir wollen ebenso uns verhüllen und ungekannt bleiben, denn hinter jeder Bestimmtheit unseres Seins schlummern die unsagbaren Möglichkeiten des Andersseins." (Plessner 1924, 63.) The balance of ambiguity lies in the dramaturgy, the cultivated theater of appearances, based on the continuous readjustment between being and seeming, duty and power. Therefore, Plessner recovers the modern tradition of prudence as the art of governing oneself in the unpredictable play of circumstances (Accarino 2002; Kimmich 2002). Prudence is made up of a set of social virtues that turns conflicts into a ritual game, made up of indirect forms and modes of expression: diplomacy, ceremonial, aura, tact, manners, and *jeu d'esprit*. Given that "Öffentlichkeit [ist] das offene System des Verkehrs zwischen unverbundenen Menschen" (Plessner 1923, 95), the importance of the ceremonial brings out the *Spieltrieb* that already dominates the organic world, and gives it symbolic richness. Thus, "die Gesellschaft lebt allein vom Geist des Spiels" (ibid., 93–94). A complex interplay arises between the scene and the invisible background:

> Takt ist […] die Fähigkeit, jene unübersetzbare *Sprache der Erscheinungen* zu begreifen, welche die Situationen, die Personen

ohne Worte in ihrer Konstellation, in ihrem Benehmen, in ihrer Physiognomie nach unergründlichen Symbolen des Lebens reden. Takt ist die Bereitschaft, auf diese feinsten Vibrationen der Umwelt anzusprechen, die willige Geöffnetheit, andere zu sehen und sich selber dabei aus dem Blickfeld auszuschalten, andere nach ihrem Maßstab und nicht dem eigenen zu messen. (Plessner 1924, 107; my emphasis.)

The theatrical vision of sociality thus emphasizes the relationship between ethics and aesthetics. This aesthetic component is often seen as the opposite of ethics, because it makes judgements superficial and transient, too closely linked to the moment and the passions. The weakness of the criticism is that it overlooks the very aesthesiological matrix of the spirit: ethics is a part of culture, and culture is experienced in the social body. The moment of abstraction is intertwined with empathy, contexts, and circumstances. Moral principles are embodied in people and things, and thus convey expressive, communicative, and performative properties. On the one hand, this approach highlights the importance of personal virtues, which are intrinsically social; on the other hand, it highlights the importance of the environmental context. The scene is in fact an essential component of the theatrical action. Social aesthesiology thus provides the elements for an ethics of virtues with a strong focus on the cultural component, where culture means not only knowledge, but the configuration of the environment, care for the scene, where everyday life takes place. The ethics of principles falls short without an appropriate *habitus*.

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The current society of the spectacle, where empty appearance and ephemeral fiction triumph, however, seems to be a denial of the ethical role of aesthetics. But this is precisely because there has been a separation between ethics and aesthetics; the public sphere has lost its theatrical value by mixing—without any solid cultural mediation—the impersonality of the *Mitwelt* with extreme personal narcissism. The substitutability of roles in the public sphere, which implies assuming a constraint and maintaining a distance from the role, becomes pure play, an opportunity for constant change, without constraint and commitment. All that is left of theater is *ludus* without dramaturgy; drama is transformed into a play without symbolic and formative power. Favored by technology, *Verkörperung* is transformed

into weightless *Entkörperung* (deprivation of the body). Anthropologically speaking, *Entkörperung* indicates death, afterlife, absence; it is the existential experience of nothingness and unphantomability, to which the metaphysical sphere of myth and religion is linked (Plessner 1961, 209–214). Instead, we observe that the pleasure-loving playful society of the spectacle removes this unsettling background. Without an evocative background, which links the visible and invisible, the bodies themselves, their symbolic significance, become empty. Only the mask remains, without the person; the scene without the power of representation. All this happens not through an excess of theater, but through its disappearance: what remains are only images (reality as show). The seriousness of the spectacle, the mediating role of virtue, the commitment to give substance to forms, which begins with the recognition of the limits that forms impose, has disappeared. Thus, it is precisely in the liquid society of the spectacle that we need to rediscover the weight of representation, restoring to it all its dramatic meaning: in order to be able to have a worthy life in the flux of appearances.

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Nerijus Stasiulis

The Ontology of Sociality

Abstract: The question of social relations presupposes ontological questions. The possibility and cause of a social relation is assumed by, and is thus prior to, the individuals of the relation. In Heidegger's philosophy, this presupposition is termed *Mitsein* (Being-with). *Mitsein* is rich in its characteristics, because it further assumes the spatiality of Dasein. Social relations are relations of mutual influence and exchange thereof, of a mutual-coming-to-be-together as well as of separation. In fact, they are *etiological* relations. Heidegger offers an analysis of the ontological origin of *etiology* and the historical change of the notions of *aition* and *cause* alongside the history of Being (*Seinsgeschichte*). The world structured according to the techno-scientific principle, in which we find ourselves today, is the outcome of the Cartesian understanding of space. This is also the space of social relations. Heideggerian concepts can serve as a critique of the mediatization of the world in the time of technology, and point to our bodily existence necessarily attached to our senses and direct, immediate experience.

Keywords: body, cause, Heidegger, *Mitdasein*, space.

Introduction

One of Heidegger's key existentials, equiprimordial (*gleichursprünglich*) with the other existentials, is *Mitdasein*, Being-there-with: a human being, characterized as Dasein, is always already in the world with other human beings; i.e., Dasein is in a sense not a single or particular human being, but a common or shared world of many human beings. All of these human beings are also characterized as Dasein and, thus, as *Mitdasein*. In Heidegger, there is no being in a vacuum or a being, which would be single *a priori* and would only later on come into contact with other beings and human beings. *Mitsein* and *Mitdasein* are *a priori*; whether a human being's existence is *authentic* (*eigentlich*) or inauthentic (*uneigeintlich*), it is always such a *Mitdasein*.

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Importantly, Heidegger's existentialism is ontology. The structure of human existence, as it is described in *Being and Time*, is at the same time the ontological structure of Being and the way it manifests itself. This is so, because the "Da-" in *Dasein* stands for Being's manifestation. Dasein is first and foremost a *place* for the manifestation of Being, a *guardian* of Being, which stands in a mutual relationship of necessity with Being. Dasein is *Mitsein* as Being-in-the-world; it has a world and is, as it were, had by the world. The structure of Dasein, its world, and its *Mitsein* are equiprimordial with, or even dependent on, the most primary manifestation of Being and structure thereof. Hence, in order to analyze *Mitsein* and its possibilities, one must analyze Being's possible different manifestations.

Heidegger's thought unfolds along the line of two possible manifestations of Being: the modern, or Cartesian, one and the Greek one as it is retrieved/reinterpreted in Heidegger's own thought. Also, these two possibilities are related in terms of the *history of Being*, i.e., the Greek manifestation of Being is that of Being as constant Presence and the modern manifestation is also the same: the latter is a (historically/chronologically) later shape of the former. Accordingly, the Cartesian space, in which modern Dasein exists, can also be said to be a derivative of Dasein's original space as it is described in *Being and Time*, because the original structure of Dasein is in essence nothing else but the phenomenological description/retrieval of the Greek Dasein mentioned above. Around the period of writing *Being and Time*, the phenomenological reading of Aristotle's philosophy was a key for the formation of Heidegger's own description as well as a key to "unlock" the Greek manifestation of Being, in general. Namely, Heidegger sees all Greek thought as an expression of the manifestation of Being as constant Presence.

In this text, we shall assert that the structure of sociality as *Mitdasein* is equiprimordial with Dasein's world and space, i.e., with the different possibilities thereof—the *authentic* and *inauthentic*, or the Cartesian and the "Heideggerian"—, and shall attempt to describe these two ontological structures and their meanings for the social aspect of existence.

Mitsein as simple, and not one

It is essential that, for Heidegger, the Greek thinking of Being as Unit(y) and thus constant—immovable/unchanging—Presence is not a thinking of a monotonous unity, but of that which is crucially related to temporality and plurality. The philosopher employs a distinction, which he finds in Aristotle, between *one* (*einhaft*) and *simple* (*einfach*): for the Greeks, Being is one, not as "one/single," but as "simple." Simple is at the same time one and manifold (*mannigfaltig*) (Heidegger 2005a, 153; Arist. Phys. 187a 1–10). Analyzing the Aristotelian/Greek notion of Being during the course of his discussion of the way Being unfolds, the philosopher describes this thus:

> Is this one being [*Sein*] something before all unfolding, that is, something that exists for itself, whose independence is the true essence of Being? Or is being in its essence never not unfolded so that the manifold and its foldings constitute precisely the peculiar oneness of that which is intrinsically gathered up? Is being imparted to the individual modes in such a way that by this imparting it in fact parts itself out, although in this parting out it is not partitioned in such a way that, as divided, it falls apart and loses its authentic essence, its unity? Might the unity of being lie precisely in this imparting parting out? And if so, how would and could something like that happen [*geschehen*]? What holds sway in this event [*Geschehen*]? (These are questions concerning *Being and Time*!) (Heidegger 1995, 25; Heidegger 1990, 31.)

This is a description of the world of existence as *Mitsein* and *Mitdasein*. Being manifests itself in such a way that there is plurality of beings and human beings, who exist as Dasein: that is, a) they are always already in the world and space, which is structured according to Dasein's relation to Being; and b) they are always with one another, that is, they are always already in a relation to one another, which is determined by the very structure of both their existence as well as their space.

Hence, one sort of the social relation is among people as *subjects*, which essentially treat others as *objects*, where "object" is defined techno-scientifically

along the lines of the Cartesian space; the other sort of relation is among people as *Dasein*, which essentially treat others as Dasein, where Dasein is defined by its ek-sistential relation to Being as other than beings (the ontological difference).

The Cartesian space and *Ge-stell*

In *Being and Time*, Heidegger describes two ways of relation among people (Heidegger 2006, 122–123). This relation is always one of *regard* (*Rücksicht*). In the inauthentic mode of the regard, one cares about, or for, the other in a way, which usurps the other and takes away their own authentic existence. In the authentic mode, one's care manifests itself in liberating and respecting the other's authentic existence, i.e., one regards the other as Dasein, and not as an object. This seems to be similar to what Kant says about treating the other as an *end* in itself or what, anticipating the Kantian ethics, Descartes says about the equal moral status of, and respect for, all human beings in virtue of their free will (see Rutherford 2021). But there is an important difference. For Heidegger, the Cartesian metaphysics of the subject is equiprimordial with the metaphysics of the object or the revealing of the world as the Cartesian space. In the Cartesian space/world, all beings manifest themselves as objects, are set as certain constant presences, and, thus, eventually such a world turns out to be one governed by the principle of *Ge-stell*. Descartes "forgot" to pose the question of the Being of Subject and Object (Heidegger 2006, 113), and his metaphysics resulted in the forgetfulness of Being, or *Gestell*. In turn, asking the question of Being collapses the metaphysics of subject and objects back to its ontological origin, and reveals the possibility of Dasein's space and the authentic social relationship.

The Cartesian space is that of extension; it is essentially mathematical. Heidegger emphasizes that this Cartesian extension expresses the ontology of *ständiger Verbleib* (Heidegger 2006, 95, 96) or constant presence and enduring; the same is true for all later science despite its transformations (such as moving from the three-dimensional space to the multidimensional space or to the purely mathematical quantum and relativistic physics) (Heidegger 2005b, 3). The ontology of science remains the same. In fact, Descartes "merely" took over the traditional ontology of substance, and worked it into the transcendental

basis for modern science (and eventually technology) (Heidegger 2006, 93, 96). One needs to emphasize that modern metaphysics was not determined by the mathematical science, which somehow happened to gain importance at a certain historical period, but, on the contrary, because of the metaphysics/ontology of constant presence or Being as constant and unchanging presence, mathematics was suitable to grasp and describe it. Both the identical and unchanging "laws of Nature" and the "particles" characterized merely by the properties of size, shape, position, and movement in the mathematical space express a possibility of the ontology of presence (see more, for example: Heidegger 1979, 276 and earlier).

The modern Subject and Object are revealed equiprimordially. It is usual to speak of the Cartesian dualism or the split into *res cogitans* and *res extensa*, spirit and matter/body, subject and object. In fact, this is not so much a "split," but an equiprimordial manifestation of the two where they reveal each other and depend on each other. The Subject, too, is the expression of the ontology of presence (Heidegger 1984, 76–82). The Subject is the *ground* and the container of axioms (the principle of the *constant-mathematical* "laws of Nature"), and sets the world as (post-)Cartesian space, where beings are (must be) revealed as objects, i.e., techno-scientifically. It is the action of the Subject's will. But here one must not confuse will and ontological freedom. Heidegger is emphatic that manifestation of Being in terms of *Gestell* is not a matter of our free choice, but, on the contrary, we are governed by the very manifestation of Being as constant presence, and thus we (in our time) must see the world in terms of *Gestell*. Also, one must not confuse techno-scientific activity and *Gestell*: Heidegger leaves the "practical" side of techno-science as it stands, and devotes his thought merely to its ontology. This is not a matter of science or technology as such, but "merely" that of ontology. Due to this ontology, we are Subjects, i.e., we live in the digital-informational space. In our social relation, we reveal one another as digital-informational objects, which stand in a mutual informational relation. Heidegger's work, however, revolves around revealing Dasein, the *Mitdasein* and its/their world as rooted in Being, by collapsing the ontology of constant presence back into its ontological origin in self-concealing Being.

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Next, we shall discuss two more aspects of the social relation in this dual possibility of being either subject/object or Dasein: the bodily Being and Being-with as well as the causality implicit in this relation.

The other and I as bodily

The Cartesian thought is based on the Greek distinction between the essential, or true, being and the inessential being or non-being(s). And there is a corresponding distinction between the mind and the senses. In Descartes's philosophy, mind takes on the meaning of mathematical-physical knowledge (Heidegger 2006, 95), and the sensual and the bodily is reduced to the sphere of non-essence. Phenomenally, we are revealed to each other and one another as bodies, but in the Cartesian space body is an "organism," and "organism" is a mechanical-technical concept of the body (Heidegger 1979a, 255).

The bodies are revealed to us phenomenally and via senses, which first and foremost reveal the world as Dasein. But the phenomenally given is scattered into a multiplicity of single sense-data, if we construe it in terms of the Cartesian space. The Cartesian twist of the Greek (Platonic) *chorismos* between the intellectual and the sensual arose equiprimordially with the "dualism" of mind and body, and it also gave rise to the empiricist philosophy. The more we tend to see things in terms of their pure shape, position, and extension, the more—as opposed to these relations of positions—noticeable becomes what fills the gaps and places, i.e., the sensually given; thus, the sensually given— color, pressure, tone, etc.—becomes the building block of a thing (Heidegger 1984, 211). Heidegger notes that the treatment of sense-data by modern physics depends upon this ontology. Modern physics (and biology) treats the data as effects of a mathematically grasped/graspable cause. For example, color is (objectively) a wave of a certain length and a certain number of vibrations per second. Its (subjective) "impression" can be explained by the effect of this vibrating wave on the nervous system. Just like in the case of Subject and Object, the question of Being is forgotten here. Such an explanation bypasses the question of the Being of color, the sensually/phenomenally given, body, etc. Therefore, Heidegger is strict: such an explanation cannot be considered scientific, because it completely bypasses or ignores what is purports to explain. The true or authentic explanation should not bypass or abandon color, body, and the sensually given as phenomena, that is, as manifestations of Being. But as manifestations of Being, they appear in the Daseinian space, and not the Cartesian one.

Causality and *Mitdasein*

The social relation in the Cartesian space is a relation among organisms. Thus, it is a causal relation in the modern sense of causality. This causality presupposes the chronological and linear notion of time: the cause temporally precedes the effect. It also presupposes the ontology of constant presence: the causal relation is stable, reproducible. While sensual things change, the "law of Nature" remains unchanging. Such is the "mechanistic" or technological, or informational, notion of causality.

The Daseinian space has its own temporality, which precedes the chronological one. It is the temporality of the so-called ecstasies of time: future, past, present. This kind of temporality is the Heideggerian retrieval of the Aristotelian notion of *dynamis*, *entelecheia*, and *energeia*, which imply the so-called four causes. Heidegger retrieves these Aristotelian four causes in his analysis of the ready-to-hand, and the structure of the ready-to-hand is the structure of both the Daseinian space and the Daseinian time (see Stasiulis 2019). Also, Heidegger reinterprets constant presence as *entelecheia* and *energeia*, that is, as one that is not "outside time," but one that has to do with time—namely, as the unity of the three ecstasies of time.

Now, the structure of the three ecstasies of time as the unity of the three ecstasies of time is the structure of *the thrown project* (*geworfener Entwurf*) or, in Aristotelian terms, of *pathesis* (passion, receptivity) and *poiesis* (production). Here lies the key difference between the Subject's space and the Dasein's space. The Subject should be seen as the ground of beings, which as such actively sets beings as constant presences—or, as discussed above, the sensually given and bodies as organisms. It renders them into variants of informational space. Crucially, it has forgotten Being, does not hearken to Being, forecloses the possibility of revealing things non-informationally and as phenomena of Being; in this sense, it is absolutely active. When several such subjects come into a relation, they are both mutually absolutely active and (seek to) turn each other into objects. Hence, they are in the condition of war, and here Being is, to use Heidegger's description from his later interpretation of early Greek thought, "out of joint" (*aus der Fuge*) (Heidegger 1977, 354). The relation of Dasein, on the other hand, is rooted in the hearkening to Being, whereby Dasein is not

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merely active as a subject, but also (and first of all) passive in this hearkening to Being. This passivity–activity is also characteristic of the social relation. In *Mitdasein*, human beings are revealed to each other and one another in such a way that, instead of actively objectifying, they are receptive to the other as a phenomenon of Being, and only thus they are active/productive. They do not usurp the other and are not usurped by them, but both "sides" of the relation are at once active and passive. The passive has its own activity, and the active has its own passivity. This kind of relation is not brought about as a causal project, but arises equiprimordially with the right relation to Being, which Heidegger calls the remembering of Being or of the ontological difference between Being and beings, which are manifested as phenomena of Being.

Conclusion

Sociality should be seen in the broader or even broadest context in which it comes to pass. This context may be called cultural, but we treat culture as an expression of ontology or history of ontology, and thus the context of sociality is ontological. Our current informational-cybernetic society and informational-cybernetic space do not give rise to each other, but they arise "equiprimordially" as expressions of our relation to Being. The characteristics of our current relation to Being are by Heidegger called the forgetfulness of Being, the implicit metaphysics of the Subject as the ground of all revelation of beings or phenomena, the setting of beings as constant presences in the sense of informational entities. This is seen as a way of transitioning into Dasein and sociality as *Mitdasein*, which is characterized, correspondingly, by the remembering of, and hearkening to, Being, turning from the "absolutely active" Subject to the receptive-productive Dasein and to the relation among human beings as among Dasein. This change presupposes a change in the notion or perception of space, causality, and time.

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Dario Vuger

On Circumlocution as Method
From Heidegger and Debord Towards a Philosophical Praxis

Abstract: The paper explores the possibility of reading Heidegger's work as a methodological tool for a certain philosophical praxis. The main concepts, through which a new interpretative value of his main works can be presented, are the notions of circumlocution and circumstance as well as circumventing and circumfusing, and their respective utilization in philosophy. Through such a re-reading of Heidegger's oeuvre, the possibility of a new understanding of his philosophical aims emerges, accentuating the idea that a thoughtful engagement with the world in fact provokes new forms of behavior and relation to being. Once more can one stress the overwhelming importance of the notions of care and being-there in Heidegger's philosophy. Circumlocution points to the central importance of going-about or being-present through one's language, finding confinement within it, and bringing from within it the possibility of understanding phenomena. As such, circumlocution has a lot to do with vernacularism in Heidegger's philosophy.

Keywords: circumlocution, vernacularism, Martin Heidegger, Kitarō Nishida, Guy Debord.

There has been little or no debate regarding the meaning of literary style in Martin Heidegger's work, although we can clearly observe that there certainly exists the phenomenon, which could be thematized as "Heideggerian-style" philosophy and thus also legitimizes the discussion of literary style in terms of a certain method. Already by formulating the problem in such a way, we are on the path of specific Heideggerian interests, the crux of which is the overcoming of philosophy as metaphysics. Such overcoming seems to suggest that Heideggerian philosophy could be presented as a conceptual tool for a certain (post-)philosophical praxis, which is in turn already at work in Heidegger's final assessment of the modern era in his text "The End of Philosophy and the Task of Thinking."

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The main concept, through which a new interpretative value for the deliberation upon Heidegger's work becomes present, is the notion of circumlocution employed as a method for a mindful practice of engagement with the world and mediated only by the language of the everyday life. This, however, does not only concern the possible instruction regarding the issue "how to read Heidegger," but is, rather, a suggestion on reconsidering the role and reception of philosophy as a whole in the age of fundamentally novel phenomena, which can be summed up under the umbrella terms of *the society of the spectacle*—as indicated by the French theorist Guy Debord—or the culture of visualizations.

Heidegger's questioning language can be re-considered in terms of simulating the wanderings and wonderings of inner contemplation, which thus dwells in the immediacy of thought and language (expression). This provokes new forms of behavior and relation to being, a new *aisthesis* that goes beyond philosophical investigation and finds its limit in discussing the whole of Heidegger's work in terms of a project in radical will. We want to stress the importance of circumlocution in Heidegger as being representative of the whole of his philosophical project, and as a radical aesthetic essence of the work by his contemporaries who engaged in a similar conceptual practice within their respective philosophies, in order to provoke new understandings, augment and reframe our experience of the world in a certain philosophical mannerism through works of expressive and reflective writing opposed to the overwhelming dominance of the techno-scientific and spectacular modes of work in the 20th century.

Circumlocution as a method for a certain mindful praxis points to the central importance of going-about or being-present through one's own language, finding confines within it and bringing from within it the possibility of understanding phenomena. Vernacularism in Heidegger is intrinsically connected to this circumlocutory style. His use of everyday, common terms, in order to circumscribe vast conceptual frameworks outside the "learned" vocabulary of traditionally understood philosophical investigation or speculation, is integral to his radical overcoming of the speculative universe of philosophy towards a conceptually, methodically, and actually more engaged type of philosophy. The intensity of this philosophical praxis dwells in the

extensive use of language as the means for a "clearing of grounds" or "paving of paths." It deals with resonances, relations, and experiences in life-world, and is not dependent on any kind of visual thinking, but rather on impressions that arise from the daily use of language, its ex-perimental mapping and implicit directions, which the words suggest us to follow. It should come as no surprise that this kind of "navigation" through language has the qualities of a certain "psycho-geographical" (Debord 1989, 5) practice in the proper sense of the word, as suggested by Guy Debord. It is also deeply anti-spectacular in the sense that it suggests a certain methodological iconoclasm to be taken up as a measure, in order not to succumb to the perils of contemporary imperatives of visualization.

The premises for such a conceptualization are evidenced in the general disposition of Heidegger's philosophy understood, first, as a radical overcoming of the western philosophical tradition in light of the new phenomena, which have come to dominate all experience in the 20th century. And, second, as a disclosing of the most radical inadequacy of philosophy to critically address the issues of the techno-scientific domination over all aspects of contemporary culture, but also to fully explain and give meaning to fundamental problems of human experience of the world, which is in turn easily exploitable by these modern phenomena. Finally, circumlocution evident in Heidegger provides us with novel views and considerations of phenomenology as fundamental ontology or existential phenomenology, and as such denotes a certain *end* of philosophy. Heidegger's overwhelming concern with the transformations of life-world and immediate experience is in terms of fundamental problems of experience that arose at the beginning of the 20th century with the development of contemporary physics demonstrated in his groundbreaking essays "The Age of the World Picture" and "The Question Concerning Technology," as well as in his major work *Being and Time*.

In opposition to the visualizations and spectacles of contemporary science, which pushed the world into a technologically dominated framework of an endless show, Heidegger's phenomenological method proves itself not as a science, but a practice of *making-sense* of the phenomena. The sense-making is done by the means of literary expression, through philosophy taken not as a form of cynicism, skepticism, or criticism, but as an act of existential

hesitation, which expresses itself through circumlocution. Heidegger radically turns phenomenology into a project: not only as a methodological tool, but as an environment for thought at the end of philosophy, which can no longer rely on its history and its concepts to satisfy the authentic will for knowledge of the emerging world.

Heidegger builds these attitudes as reactions to themes in contemporary science and culture between, and following, the two World Wars. The age of modern science and the techno-scientific augmentation of the daily life on an unprecedented scale have reshaped the infrastructures of society—its culture, art, and language—, alas, have fundamentally changed the patterns of thought. What began as a scientific theory of special relativity also marked the highpoint of debate over the structure, meaning, and goals of physical theory.[1] The socio-cultural infrastructure for the popularization of science as a part of cultural policy of the modern era is already well established.[2] The now historic debate between the philosopher Henri Bergson and the physicist Albert Einstein about the "correct" understanding of the notion of time marked the

final decline of philosophy as well as the advent of the growing interest for new philosophers: philosophers-scientists in whose works philosophy takes on the form of a personally apologetic account of their own theories, while science they advocate dwells essentially in visualizations and discrete propositions opposed to oftentimes iconoclastic and "organic" or "flowing" way of *thinking as becoming*.

It should also not be forgotten that Guy Debord marks the advent of the *Spectacle* in the same historic time (Debord 1999, 175), tracing it through the same historic events and explaining it through the same sets of consequences; the attentiveness and the appeal of modern technologies, which deal exclusively with spectacles and visualizations (photography, cinema, television, digital media), become also one of the main tools for scientific research, on the one

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1 The major philosophical debate preceding Einstein's discoveries is well recounted in Pierre Duhem's 1905 book *La Théorie physique, son objet, sa structure* (cf. Duhem 2003).
2 An instructive overview of the popularization of science, especially through digest and abridged formats, is given in the groundbreaking survey of contemporary culture in the 1961 book *The Image: A Guide to Pseudo-Events in America* by the American historian Daniel Boorstin (cf. Boorstin 1987, 118 ff.).

side, and of the popular commodification (and/by visualization) of time, on the other. When science reached into the non-graspable, it began dealing with images. Thus, the Einstein/Bergson debate marked the rise of post-modernism in the application of techno-science to the everyday life, not only on the infrastructural, but also on cultural and linguistic levels; for it was a debate about what is available to visualization and what is unimaginable, what is scientifically sound and philosophically absurd, what makes sense for the living, and what (re)makes (re-imagines, visualizes) life. Central to all such notions is the problem of visualizing time as a way of its understanding by making it discrete.

Heidegger's relation to these developments must be of crucial importance for understanding his philosophy, which clearly searches for new modes of engagement with the world that goes beyond the consequences of contemporary reconfigurations of knowledge, thought, action, etc.; in this respect, his project has a clear and implicit intellectual lineage, coming from Bergson and culminating in the post-philosophical figure of Debord, it also significantly resonates within the non-western traditions of though. During the nascence of Heidegger's lifework, philosophy itself became the subject taken on by the most prominent physical scientists of his time, from Albert Einstein to Werner Heisenberg. Through popularization of science, philosophy itself became an alienating project, as summed up by Debord in 1967:

> The Spectacle is the inheritor of the weakness of the western philosophical project, which attempted to understand activity by means of the categories of vision, and it is based on the relentless development of the particular technical rationality that grew out of that form of thought. The Spectacle does not realize philosophy, it philosophizes reality, reducing everyone's concrete life to a speculative universe. (Debord 1999, 39.)

Complementarily, one reads:

> The concept of "*the spectacle*" interrelates and explains a wide range of seemingly unconnected phenomena. The apparent diversities and

contrasts of these phenomena stem from the social organization of appearances whose essential nature must itself be recognized. Considered in its own terms, the spectacle is an affirmation of appearances and an identification of all human social life with appearances. But a critique that grasps the spectacle's essential character reveals it to be a visible negation of life—a negation that has taken on a visible form. (Ibid., 46.)

That is to say, the spectacle is a negation that has taken on the form of a *world-picture* (Heidegger 1968); it is an objectified *Weltanschauung* (Debord 1999, 36).

Since we are concerned here with the motivations for reading Heidegger's work in the contemporary age that he himself described as the age of the world picture—as an age of superficiality and technical frameworks, within which the possibility of thought lies in overstepping the philosophy's end inside the social application of cybernetic science as the new metaphysical horizon of mankind—, we suggest that the deliverable result of *Being and Time* is its ability to provoke an authentic practical response or a more meaningful interaction with the world, which would not be available to us, if he would have adopted a *philosophic* or *scientific* style of writing. Yet, the style itself is something not intentionally achieved or developed for a certain purpose, but rather an essential, inherent, and self-imposed structure, which dwells in subtlety, hesitation, and gesture. Here, we are on the fringes of aesthetic methodology—the aesthetics of reception and literary criticism—, but also of the study of socio-cultural history and philosophical context in light of Heidegger's re-conceptualization of phenomenology as the study of the daily life in its essential expressions in language, i.e., its vernacularism, and as the effort of establishing a way of/for thought to preserve itself at the time of unprecedented intellectual crisis. In that respect, we can also, considering Heidegger's style of writing as providing us with the method for thought, read it as a *situationist* project. Bringing forth the Heideggerian way of thought, leads out of philosophy and into observing world, not by means of spreading out of philosophy over the immediate experience, but by making experience of the world immediately present in the wandering language of thought. For this purpose, Heidegger does away with thinking in the same way Debord does

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away with walking through a genuine psycho-geographical situationist effort, which is why phenomenology and vernacularism remain central.

By the usage of vernacular terms of the German language—*Dasein* and *Gestell* are the perfect examples—, Heidegger does not want to augment the language of philosophy, but seeks rather to augment the expressive potential of the living language with potentialities for the thought-provoking wandering concerned with phenomena, which stresses the importance of phenomenology and the "thinking about" in all its aspects (of something, but also as "going about") and effectuations with regard to pure "thinking." This is done by means of a re-thinking of the relationship towards language and of the possibilities of its use as not limited solely to the means of expression. In Heidegger, vernacularism and circumlocution are meta-lingual tools, which go beyond expression and towards the phenomenological realm of *clearing*-the-path, reaching openness, etc. Such an endeavor is not only the case and point within Heidegger's "creative" and "experimental" use of etymological research, but it is, rather, a declaration of fundamental interest in the everyday life and its radical connection to the patterns established in a certain usage of the language possibilities, which are not properly utilized or are obscured by the images and/as new modes of "communication."

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In *Being and Time*, and especially in the earlier lectures entitled on the *History of the Concept of Time: Prolegomena*, Heidegger discusses at length not only his understanding of phenomenology, but also his style. The analyses he provides us with in the *Prolegomena* and *Being and Time* are his most extensive studies into the differences and the nuances of immediate perception, *presencing*, its expression in language of the daily life. This is not a theory or a science pursuing to explain the concrete works of the mind or the physics of time. What he proposes is a structure that has the quality to bring about the wandering relation with our daily experience and to understand fully what and how we speak, why and to what *end* do we express our experiences in language, and why such experiences are not something that contemporary science can account for, although it can *discretely* explain them—like, e.g., our experience of time.

Therefore, Heidegger is ready to bring forth methodic contemplations for certain essential aspects of his work, such as "intentionality," which is "not

good to be speculated about, but should rather be followed in its concreteness" (Heidegger 2000, 51). Thus, he continues with the idea that "phenomenology is as research exactly the work of unveiling and disclosing in the sense of methodically guided disintegration of concealedness" (ibid., 96). He stresses that his thinking "does not want philosophy, it wants things" (ibid., 98). Likewise, it does not want the *show*, nor a *visualization*, but the incessant activity of thoughtful understanding. The disintegration of concealedness cannot be achieved by "painting a picture," but by "clearing the field," by circumscribing an area or, better yet, by *circumambulation*, as it is an adoption of a certain special form of a radically mindful attitude.

Heidegger's view of phenomenology is radical and disruptive with regard to all notions of philosophical and scientific investigation; it has to be such, in order to bring forth the methods of literary expression as a method for experience and of mindful relation with the world. He does not build or imply structures, but constructs affective environments or situations. This is the reason why Heidegger's work is by himself always presented as being merely "preparatory," as a kind of permanent prolegomena in terms of not being a textbook on how to write and do philosophy, but the prolegomena for a practice of a certain thoughtful engagement with the world after philosophy, a practice of thought. Heidegger's circumlocution is in that respect instructive and practical.

This is present already in the contents of Heidegger's *Prolegomena* and *Being and Time*. Due to the fact that the project remained unfinished, but was complemented by an extensive body of work, going outside and beyond the themes presented in the mentioned discussions—all the while remaining conceptually inseparable from them—, we are inclined to posit that one must take them as such, as rounded and self-reliant didactic and methodological tools, which bring into practical focus much of his shorter essays and lectures, acting as studies, singular psycho-geographies, or situational reports on a certain combination of words, expressions, and phenomena; such is, e.g., the play of words concerning *in-formation*, *ge-stellen*, or the *end* of philosophy (in terms of its *finitude* as a project and *habitual end* as finding the confines or an environment for realization).

Prolegomena and *Being and Time* deal with *being-there* and time in light of contemporary debates and implied prescribing of techno-scientific notion

of time to immediate human experience. However, Heidegger wants to do much more by developing the idea of the history of the concept of time as "history of discovering time as the history of the essence of being" (Heidegger 2000, 158). Such a history should build upon the question of being as a certain phenomenology of presencing or being-there as a philosophy of time, which radically overcomes any further philosophical engagement. By rediscovering time as nothing discrete, one adopts an attitude towards time, and not just an image of it. Moreover, in the central part of the *Prolegomena*, Heidegger himself warns us that "in this explication of being-there we will stumble upon a vast number of formulations that have at first a peculiar character and above all have—in formulation—*the character of hesitation*" (ibid., 171; my italics).[3]

This stems, he says, from the nature of language, the inadequacy of words, and from the grammar itself. Being-there must be discovered in its immediate daily presencing, in the "daily presencing of any individual to be as being-there" (ibid., 175). Now, in order to fully stand behind this often-stressed inadequacy of language, its inability to address the essential properties of the experience of being-in-the-world as presencing or of even intending an action, he must take his own philosophy to the level that radically dispenses with any form of definitive or scientific statements. There are three methods to uphold this ideal: 1) the extensive preparatory work, which is essential, 2) circumlocution or periphrasis in style, 3) digressions and transgressions in the use of vernacular concepts. These methods are equivalent to *dérive* (flowing, drifting) and *détournement* (diversion) of the psycho-geographical project developed by the actors of the Situationist International some years later; they advance the application of such concepts to the phenomena not only of made environments, but also of conceptual environments.

Accordingly, Heidegger's comment regarding practice as being de-realized in the age of modern science bears importance in more than a few aspects:

> Machine technology is itself an autonomous transformation of praxis,
> a type of transformation wherein praxis first demands the employment

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3 The German original employs the words "Charakter des Fremdartigen" and "Charakter des Umständlichen."

of mathematical physical science. Machine technology remains up to now the most visible outgrowth of the essence of modern technology, which is identical with the essence of modern metaphysics. (Heidegger 1996, 116.)

Here, Heidegger seems to suggest that machine technology does not only transform praxis; it transforms it in such a way that it no longer seems to indicate a human activity, but rather the subjection of all human activity to automatized practice, which puts forward the demand for calculation, prediction, and optimization of all action, where *cybernetics* takes precedence over *poiesis*. The transformation taking place is described with reference to two major themes of Heidegger's work: *en-framing* as the essence of technology and *cybernetics* as the essence of modern metaphysics. Moreover, Heidegger here puts forward the idea of cultural politics as one of the decisive outcomes of this transformation, since "all human activity is understood in terms of its culture" (ibid., 8), and all culture becomes highly technical and subjected to optimization as a policy. Cultural policy, the same as the essence of modern science, relies on research, procedures, projects, and information, in order to live up to its image. In life, technology and science come together in such a way that they become virtually inseparable, like a picture-in-a-frame. They are such upon the basis of the necessity of their nature. Since human action is, in the broadest sense, the act of being (Heidegger 2000, 134), we can see how techno-sciences reduce being to a system or a picture to be manipulated and prescribed with meaning, making the picture itself the only thing to be seen, turning it as such into the complete and only available reality.

When discussing the essence of technology in terms of *Gestell*, or en-framing, we can see more clearly the vernacular/circumlocutory method at play. The title of the essay on technology poses the question, for which Heidegger sets himself to pave a path as a preparation for the posing of the question. This is done through a discussion, which does not provide us with a clear structure, but a series of connections circling around the term he decided to be central to the question—*Gestell* or en-framing—; it gives way to various etymological connections that sketch out the vast area covering the question. The author's circumlocution here is highly constructive, bringing about the

term *Ge-stell* from various accounts and conceptual similarities of *Gebirg* and *Gemüt*, as well as *stellen* and *nachstellen*, i.e., bringing-forth, standing, framing, forming, ordering, etc., which shape the discussion into a kind of a demystifying text that seems to aim at provoking a certain response, which is only achievable in practice or engagement with *technology* itself. The next step is the implicit link of the conceptual decomposition of the notion to that of *information*, which at the time dominates all scientific as well as the popular discourse. It is an in-formation, a thing that pushes forward with certain order, an ordering of phenomena to be taken as such or to be in-formative.

The same goes for the notion of *world-picture* in the text that tries to establish the grounding for bringing into view the essence of modern science, which is equal to the essence of modern era, because the latter is dominated by the application of modern science to the life-world of modern man. Through techno-sciences and their en-framing, the modern human being has its world served to it as a standing-in-front, a picture, at the essence of which lies a system. World-as-picture—provoked by science—means exactly the drawing-out of the world from the confines of immediate experience to a standing-reserve, which is the background or the forefront of action that is no longer integral to it, but only a supplemental show of technology. And, as the idiom "world-view" suggests, in discussing the notion of the world-picture, we are dealing with the dominant attitude towards the world. Heidegger's use of circling-around, unfolding, and stretching-out a certain theme in its possible literary outlooks aims to provoke a certain understanding or a proper motivation for observing the concrete workings of modern science applied to the daily life through categories, which do not seem to be immediately connected to it. The world-view, which we are talking about here, is the same one that is at the center of Guy Debord's exposition of the *Spectacle*; it is, namely, the objectified *Weltanschauung* (Debord 1999, 8) or, simply, visualization.

It is well-known that Heidegger often stresses the importance of grasping *Dasein* in its daily presencing as well as in its surrounding world. The theme stretches throughout the whole discussion in *Being and Time*, but the terms employed within it become increasingly enriched by the developing *ecology* or conceptual landscape, which provokes us to act mindfully towards the understanding of conceptual and practical implications of certain connotations

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of specific words and phrases, such as the (mundane) concepts of *world* (*Welt*) or *time* (*Zeit*). Such a movement represents the essence of circumlocution as it acts upon the philosophical and conceptual landscape in the same manner as practices of psycho-geography act upon the actual urban landscape of man-made environments. In this respect, language and culture must also be taken as man-made environments. In the following statement by Heidegger, one finds an appropriate quote for this comparison:

> These measures express not only that they do not want "to measure," but that the estimated distance belongs to a being, towards which one thoughtfully moves in a caring way. But even if we use the more solid measure and say "we are hour an hour away from home," this measure must also be taken as estimated. Half-an-hour is not thirty minutes, but it is a duration that has no "length" in the sense of some quantitative stretch. This duration is always subjected to common, daily "doings." (Heidegger 1985, 148.)

The discussion is connected to the notion of distancing, making distance obvious or concealed, making us attentive to distance and mindful of our common expression of it, but also to the term *distraction*, which represents the same phenomena and by etymological approximation gives way to rising attentiveness of distraction as the drawing-away, guiding, and suppressing attention, of attending as doing with care, and not only with measure. By combining meanings, by circling around concepts, and sketching out a certain *aesthesis* or an affective network of careful considerations of phenomena, Heidegger employs circumstance and circumventing as elements appropriate to his phenomenology in such a way that he tries to provoke a sensation or an impression of the phenomena, which goes beyond what is plainly expressed in words. In this regard, the movement seems like *circumfusion*, or spreading-out, the levelling of the field of word-play to a certain immanent range of discussion that should be proper at all times to all the phenomena.

Thus, we can understand Heidegger's project with regard to language and to the end of philosophy as being extensive in nature, especially if we compare it to the intensive critique provided by Debord who wishes to over-utilize certain

terms—like "spectacle"—, in order to deconstruct their mystifying grasp over our daily lives. Both "strategies" are the elements proper to circumlocution as method of thoughtful investigation. Circumlocution is taken here in its literary explanation as a periphrasis, but also in a more literal sense of going-about, *Umschreibung*, or, in the Croatian language *okoliš-anje* (*environment-ing*). The Croatian word bears the primary meaning of *hesitation*, of a reluctance at arriving to a certain fixed point, of a consideration of the point itself as something to be circled around and not immediately engaged, of a certain gravitating.

For Heidegger, it was necessary to find the concepts that would bring a rather complicated mind-scape of his task of thinking into the immediate complexity of the daily experience. He found this possibility in the vernacular term of *Dasein*. The meaning and concrete connection of the term to the daily life and its everyday use make it significant in light of Heidegger's phenomenology as well as in the attempt at overcoming philosophy. Its significance is that of a converging point between the theoretical mind-scape and the life-world, within which language takes form: *Dasein* does not take up space; rather, it is infinitesimally small and presents only the center, around which Heidegger circles: it is a mundane (*mundus*) term in the *world*-making sense of the word.

Now, although there are more than a few indications that Guy Debord was aware of Heidegger and his work, we are far from stating that his thought was directly influenced by Heidegger's.[4] Rather, we wish to accentuate the conceptual closeness between both thinkers with regard to what we are trying to thematize as a specific line of contemporary thought concerning the provocation of certain mindful attitudes towards the everyday life. There certainly exists a similarity in Debord's use, and many an interpreter's misuse, of the term *spectacle*. A lot of the blame for such misuse can be attributed to Debord himself for not persisting firmly enough in explaining the importance of the correct translation of the term, which is only achievable through circumlocution, because his work on the theory of the spectacle is by itself an effort at utilizing circumlocution as a method of exploring the nuances of

4 Cf. especially the letters found in his posthumously published correspondence: Debord 2003.

a concept that had been very carefully selected for its vernacular use in the French language.[5] In this sense, his task is not dissimilar to that of Heidegger who effectively used up a large portion of *Being and Time* just to circumfuse the term *Dasein* and bring it into focus, not as a reinvented term, but as a circumstance that reinvents the everyday, within which it appears. We should not overlook that *Dasein* is a commonly used term in the daily speech, in much the same manner as the *spectacle* is used in the daily French language; thus, the effect on the reader of *Being and Time* or *The Society of the Spectacle* in their respective languages can have a genuine influence on their mindful action within the world reshaped towards accommodating the circumlocution involved in levelling the field of meaning.

The mindful and levelled experience of the world, through wandering confined in language, is something that brings forth one more connection: the Japanese tradition of thought and its linguistic heritage; the deep concern of the Japanese with the subtleties of language and expression is well documented and has become commonplace among scholars. An introduction to Japanese literature states the following about one of the central works of early Japanese literature entitled *Essays in Idleness* (*Tsurezuregusa*; 1329–1333) by Yoshida Kenkō: "what is not stated, cannot be seen by the eyes, and is incomplete in expression is more moving, alluring, and memorable than what is directly presented. Since ancient times, Japanese aristocrats prized the social capacity for indirection and suggestion." (Shirane 2006, 7.) The concern for aesthetics of the Japanese (aristocrats) forms a part of sociality as the fine appreciation of the nuances of social response and interaction.

The idea of linguistic nuances shaping sociality is very much alive in Japan of the 20th century, where we find a few notable examples of

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5 Opting to not translate the term of the spectacle (English: "show"; Croatian: "prikaz") or of *Dasein* is, therefore, nonsensical. In this way, the concepts do not only lose their radical potential, but they also become novelty concepts within a certain national philosophy, which—as such—has no authentic connection to the actual philosophical efforts that produced it in the first place. Thus, by not translating, for instance, *Dasein* as "prisutnost" in Croatian—which is a genuinely vernacular term, a word frequently used in the daily language—, one obstructs the aesthetics of the Heideggerian thought, its capability to affect us immediately; rather, keeping the original form of *Dasein*, limits its use and any kind of engagement to the purely intellectual realm.

philosophers engaging in circumlocution that comes naturally from language itself, just as it does in Heidegger, in place of gestures. In this respect, one can consider one term, which is a daily occurrence in the Japanese language, but is at the same time a decisive term for a certain philosophy of a mindful practice proper to "the Japanese mind." This may provide us with the case for vernacularism and the wandering language that suits Heidegger's project especially well, as it also corresponds to other projects engaged with overcoming the speculative universe of the western philosophical thought by radically adapting it to a completely different socio-cultural, epistemic, and spiritual framework.

The word and concept of *basho* (場所; ba-sho)—in a quite literal translation it could be rendered as "situation," "situatedness," or "standing-about"—comprises two kanji characters, the first one for location as a concrete space and the second as a more abstract term usually used in addresses, as a place. *Basho* is central to Kitarō Nishida's philosophy (Nishida 2012), which, interestingly enough, tries to overcome classical philosophical dualisms in the radical attempt at a philosophy of *nothingness* or *situating nothingness* within the perspectives opened up by the reception of western thought in the emerging intellectual centers of modern Japan. More importantly, Nishida's philosophy precedes Heidegger's, although their respective approaches are fairly similar because of the central importance of (Husserl's) phenomenology in both of them. What Heidegger "invented" as a disruptive project of radical will through the methods discussed represented already the common ground for Nishida's creative re-combination of western thought and eastern culture. His philosophy established the prominent *Kyoto School*, within which we can see an instantiation of the realization of just such a practice that has its focus in mindful engagement with phenomena beyond philosophy proper, finding in it only a new environment for the literary expression, which is by itself at home in the Japanese language. The latter carries a myriad of meanings on the same level of expression, embodying the making of gestures and the implied context as an essential part of speech, making it thus circumstantial or, better yet, situational. Equally, the withholding of gestures and situations only gives language a poetic expression, as it becomes more intensive—as it does in the case of Debord's work on the notion of the *spectacle*.

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It would seem that—from the vast oral traditions of Shinto to the literary tradition of Buddhist monks—thought and action have a deeper connection in Japan; thus, reading is—the same as writing—considered to be a part of acting, a praxis, which only makes it natural to be considerate of one's language or even the way one thinks of things; thought itself seems to be applied and reflected upon the wholeness of nature. Being-there, or *presencing*, seems to be for the traditional Japanese mind almost a natural state of observing the fleetingness of things as well as of appreciating life in every form and in all phenomena, which also makes the life-world *spectacular* in a profoundly *iconoclastic* way. Such is the appreciating and the observing (*theorein*) of visual world considered as the nexus of gestures (*poiesis*), because the life-world is filled with divine life, as it is implied within the vernacular belief system in Japan. For the Japanese mind—considered in traditional terms—, every action is a manifestation of one's will and the *eventfulness* of being. Because of that, its relation to other beings is highly considerate, mindful, and involved (*careful* in the sense of *teinei*);[6] likewise, it seeks to avoid disturbing the life-world of any other being. Concentrating on the term *basho*, Nishida anchors his abstract philosophy in the everydayness of language and expression, provoking a new affective attitude towards the life-world.

Yet: by talking about situating nothingness, we are already within a certain Heideggerian framework masterfully resolved in the essay "The End of Philosophy and the Task of Thinking," which lays out and gives conclusion to the overwhelming preparatory work Heidegger undertook in his philosophy, in order to establish phenomenology as the only authentic response to the problem of thinking in the later 20th century. Within it, Heidegger explicitly talks about *situating nothingness* in terms of *das Ende*, which etymologically stands at the beginning and the end, since it, as a concept, denotes the concrete place of settlement and growth—the habitual end, *environ*—,[7] as well as the

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6 The word *teinei* comprises two kanji characters: the first one means a concrete place—it is commonly used for denoting a street, a city, or a ward, as well as for the counting of various tools—, the second means preference, peacefulness, quietness, and tranquility (it is used in the words for peace, stability, and politeness).

7 In the Croatian language, we use the word "kraj" to denote a place in the sense of a habitat. We also use it in the compound expression "kraj-obraz," meaning land-scape, in which the word "kraj" means "next to," but also implies the notion of habituation:

end in terms of temporal or spatial finitude. Both meanings, however—and this is here the gravitational center of Heidegger's phenomenological pull—, have the notion of *realization* in their vernacular use.[8] By speaking of the end of philosophy, Heidegger gives finishing touches to its realization, habituating it on the limits of thought now dominated by techno-sciences. The radical step here is the dissociation of philosophy and thought that is quite similar to Debord's disruptive critique of the western philosophical project, which plunged the concrete life-world into a speculative universe of visualizations. Since both thinkers actually advocate a certain phenomenological path for thought and praxis, the development of the connections to the philosophers of the Kyoto School may prove to be fruitful in further disclosing the interconnectedness and highly performative or gestural closeness of the observing and the acting attitude as a basis for a certain mindful practice. Such a mindful attitude can be described as care and hesitation at once, as being, at once, nuanced and involved.[9]

We can, therefore, conclude that phenomenology in light of Heidegger's project of a mindfully disruptive reaction to the advances of modern techno-sciences re-presents a post-philosophy, for which circumlocution, as method, is—it being a careful hesitation—a grounding attitude. Heidegger IS a

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the literal translation could, therefore be, "next-to-one's-face" ("obraz" namely means "face"). Likewise, "kraj" is denotes the end of any duration in terms of finitude as well as the end of a certain concrete or the abstract space. The term "krajobraz" can, thus, in fact hold in itself all the meanings of the word "kraj," which means that a landscape can be defined as the space beyond one's own face, denoting the excentric positionality of the human being, for which language acts as a situating agent and a gesture of habituation that is always "ending" as the habituation of nothingness.

8 The double nuancing of meaning would not be possible, if Bergson's groundbreaking work *Creative Evolution*, which—in light of new scientific theories (evolution) and technological inventions (cinema)—discusses the traditional problems of the emerging and enduring (becoming) consciousness, would not popularize the debate about nothingness and the limits of expression.

9 For example: the everyday term *seikatsu* (生活), which also utilizes two characters, the first one meaning "life" and "birth," and the second "lively" and "living," is commonly understood as livelihood or *the life of one's daily existence*; in this sense, it is the closest thing to the vernacular term of *Dasein*, although *Dasein* is usually translated into Japanese as *gensonzai* (現存在), comprising three kanji characters meaning "being-presently-aware-of-one's-existence." The latter term has no presence in everyday language and is certainly in opposition with Heidegger's project as discussed here.

situationist in the precise manner and gesture demanded by the critical project of Guy Debord, for he is interested not only in overcoming the faults of the western intellectual tradition, but at the same time tries to make the life-world expressible in language, rather than in images.

Through Heidegger's task of thinking, we can see that there is much more to technology than what it shows of itself; that the world is not reducible to the picture we have of it; and that circumlocution is not only a literary style, but a proper practice: we can literally observe Heidegger walking-about and writing-about: not simply writing-about-something, but wondering, navigating by following the confines, the—implicit and explicit—boundaries of language. As the formalization of thought, circumlocution is the psycho-geography of the mind-scape. This is the essence of the radical move: to think-about, and not to think about this or that.

Thus, let us keep in mind—taking in the consequences of the discussed essays—that, for Heidegger, philosophy is—within the contemporary era without the world—a practice of thought. For the situation of the total visualization of all events, philosophy must re-invent itself (as phenomenology) by radically "ending" in the circumlocutive practice of thoughtful engagement with the phenomena of the techno-scientifically re-imagined life-world. This is the only really existing meta-verse, and it is the only truly Heideggerian type of the world. Namely, the world AS the meta-verse (*stíkhos*).

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Silvia Pierosara

Managing the Absent
On the Role of Nostalgia in Individual and Social Relations

Abstract: The study explores the phenomenology of nostalgia as well as the latter's relationship with individual and collective memory. Its starting point is related to a particular definition of nostalgia as a pathology of memory and of imagination. The research hypothesis is that, far from only being a limit, the experiences of absence, loss, and oblivion are not contrary to memory, but are rather an integral part of its dynamics. This relationship with absence is constitutive for a phenomenology of nostalgia, which can work towards the construction of an ethically good memory or, on the contrary, act as an obstacle to the positive role of memory in building and enforcing personal and social relational environments.

Keywords: nostalgia, totality, absence, memory, imagination.

1. The feeling of nostalgia: A phenomenological path

The present study explores the phenomenology of nostalgia as well as the latter's relationship with individual and collective memory. Its starting point is related to a particular definition of nostalgia as a pathology of memory and of imagination. The research hypothesis is that, far from only being a limit, the experiences of absence, loss, and oblivion are not contrary to memory, but are rather an integral part of its dynamics. This relationship with absence is constitutive for a phenomenology of nostalgia, which can work towards the construction of an ethically good memory or, on the contrary, act as an obstacle to the positive role of memory in building and enforcing personal and social relational environments. This study is divided into three sections. First, the

silvia pierosara

meaning that nostalgia has acquired throughout the modern and contemporary age is explored, showing that it deals with absence and lost time. Second, the feeling of nostalgia as longing for an imagined totality, an integral reality that neither ever existed as such nor is desirable, is investigated; both on a personal as well as a social level, the wish to regain totality is pathological. Third, this study maintains that there can be other forms of nostalgia, which are not regressive, but equate the feeling of an unavoidable loss, without aspiring to reconciliation, but evaluating the fragment, the hidden possibilities of the past.

2. Longing for the past: A brief history of nostalgia

Nostalgia is commonly defined as a feeling, also often as a social passion; it corresponds to the German *Sehnsucht*.[1] It is almost associated with a "regressive" feeling, a backwards-oriented glance, which paradoxically does not have a defined "noema," since it is capable of inventing it through the work of a pathological imagination. What we remember and long for never happened as such. We aim to go back to something unavoidably lost. Therein lie the dangers of nostalgia, both on a personal as well as on a social level. Drawing on Jean Starobinski's history of the idea of nostalgia, it is worth briefly reconstructing the origins of this concept, with a particular focus on Kant who transforms nostalgia from the suffering from a lost place to the suffering from a definitively passed time. The feeling of nostalgia was codified, and the word invented, at the end of the seventeenth century by the Swiss physician Johannes Hofer, according to whom nostalgia was a pathology of imagination that affected Swiss soldiers far from home. A century later, Kant recognized that nostalgia deals with time, rather than with spaces and places.

> In his *Anthropologie*, Kant has given a subtle interpretation to his irrational desire; what a person wishes to recover is not so much the actual place where he passed his childhood but his youth itself. He is not straining towards something he can repossess, but towards an age which is forever beyond his reach. (Starobinski 1966, 94.)

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1 For an accurate reconstruction of the philosophical history of the German word *Sehnsucht*, see Corbineau-Hoffman 1995.

Even if very superficially sketched, this history of nostalgia depicts it as a feeling of something absent that the subject represents with the help of imagination, often a pathological one. Before suggesting this feeling is addressed not only to the past, but also, and maybe even to a greater extent, to the future, as an attempt to build something that is not completely achievable, it is worth drawing on some phenomenological categories, in order to highlight some features of this particular feeling. When nostalgia is directed towards the past, it works with the remembrances that are unavoidably imagined and, to an extent, distorted. It can be equated to the wish to gain a lost unity, a lost "golden age." To the extent that it distorts the mere events, it can be oppressive or liberating. This section focuses on the fusional, dangerous, backwards-oriented traits of nostalgia, and the emancipatory openings of nostalgia are discussed in the last section.

Nostalgia is usually conceived of as a passion, in the etymological sense of the word; it is not something we choose, it happens in a non-voluntary way and concerns human ways of remembering the past. Even if it is to a certain extent unintentional, it has an intentional content, a noema, which could be defined as "the world-under-nostalgement […] a past world, a world that no longer exists" (Casey 1987, 364). Moreover, the experience of nostalgia goes beyond the act of remembrance, since it can be experienced as an "affective tonality" that guides and accompanies human experience. In other words, nostalgia is not only directed towards something, but can be a characteristic of the experience. Nostalgia is not simply directed towards an object, but is a way of experiencing something, which shapes the experience. According to Hart, the author of a famous article on "The Phenomenology of Nostalgia," nostalgia is an "affective synthesis of the heart's desire" (1973, 410).

In the brief phenomenological history of nostalgia, it is impossible not to mention Vladimir Jankélévitch, whose masterpiece *L'irréversible et la nostalgie* is one of the most complete and exhaustive philosophical inquiries on this topic. In short, he highlights the essential connection between the irreversible passing of time and the feeling of nostalgia, which accompanies the experience of transience. This confirms that nostalgia is often perceived as a feeling of incompleteness, finitude, an unhappy finitude that strives for an impossible unification and accomplishment.

This short discussion helps us to thematize the features of nostalgia. It is a passion, a passive experience, a "pathological" one, in the sense of something not chosen but lived. We are lived and oriented by nostalgia, and we cannot decide to experience it; quite the contrary, it "experiences" and lives us, and conditions our way of looking at time, our temporality. In this sense, it is not voluntary, but at the same time it is intentional, it is directed towards something; a content, although with blurred contours, can be recognized in it. This content can be identified both with the punctual remembrance, which provokes suffering, since it is unavoidably past, and with a particular way of living temporal experience, a kind of bitter awareness that what we are living is structurally incomplete. If this awareness turns into a kind of resistance to the past, then it is not only illusory from an existential viewpoint, but also unrealistic from a theoretical viewpoint, and hubristic from an ethical viewpoint.

It becomes clear that nostalgia deals with how humans live and experience absence in the forms of time passed, loss, and incompleteness. If directed to rescuing something unavoidably gone, nostalgia seems doomed to pursue unity at all costs. From the standpoint of personal relations, this striving towards unity can lead to the acceptance of fusional relations, which aim to overcome the distinction between "I" and "thou." If translated in relational terms, the need to recompose a lost unity becomes the need to come back to a state of indistinction, a dangerous condition, a death drive. Lacan's category of the imaginary and his reading of familial complexes testify to the threatening side of the nostalgia for fusion. Nostalgia does not limit itself to a "vertical" feeling, directed to the "deep-seatedness" of the past. It also acquires a horizontal dimension, and in its attempt to become horizontal, it turns into the wish for fusion, the need to overcome distance, the will to fill in absence. All these are impossible attempts that lead to death. This threatening side of nostalgia becomes all the more evident in the context of social relations, where fusional attitudes applied to the idea of community can easily become a cage, a deadly and exclusionary *dispositif*. This can be sadly true not only for the nation-state, but also in all the contexts, where social action calls for processes of self-identification and self-recognition.[2] A common trait between

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2 In an insightful essay significantly entitled "El camino nostálgico hacia el

the experiences of nostalgia on a personal as well as a social level is rooted in the incapacity of accepting finitude, difference, and absence, which leads us to strive for surrogates, false identities and identifications, objects that are thought to be sufficient.

3. Nostalgia, memory, and the impossible totality

According to Hart, "nostalgia is not a remembering of better past times but a reverie of the past. The reverie is not an actual recollection of the past as it was experienced. Rather, it is an idealized constitution of the past." (Hart 1973, 402.) This idea of a reverie is related to the interpretation of nostalgia as a pathology of imagination. If we move from the perspective of a physician,[3] who medicalizes this relation with the passing of time, to a metaphysical perspective, we can recognize the same illusionary reverie of completeness and identity, an attitude doomed to try to block the transitoriness of time, to grasp its image once and for all.

In order to focus on the metaphysical import of a phenomenology of nostalgia, this section, by deepening some suggestions that have previously emerged, explores the relationship between nostalgia and memory from a phenomenological viewpoint taking a cue from Levinas. The images, the traces, and the narratives that nostalgia and memory construct are structurally interwoven with absence, precarity, imperfection. Nostalgia can, thus, be considered as the particular feeling that humans perceive in the face of this absence, as an attitude towards the acknowledgment of the impossible totality. Nostalgia, like memory, can be open to indeterminacy or folded back on itself, it can foster life or lead to death. Such a feeling is not unidirectional, and potentially has the resources to work for the change and the flourishing of human beings and inclusive societies. However, to free nostalgia from its abuses in the social and public domain, it is worth exploring the origins of

reconocimiento de sí," Jorge Montesó-Ventura (2021) explores the positive role of nostalgia in the dynamics of self-recognition.
3 As already mentioned, this perspective belongs to the first scholars who invented the word nostalgia, but if we think back to Karl Jaspers's "Heimweh und Verbrechen," it is a die-hard tradition.

such distortion in more depth. This study hypothesizes that it can be traced back to the human relationship with totality.

For the abovementioned, this study focuses on the privileged interlocutor Emmanuel Levinas. In *Totality and Infinity*, Levinas mentions nostalgia with reference to desire and metaphysics. The first appearance of the term is emblematic:

> Desire would characterize a being indigent and incomplete or fallen from its past grandeur. It would coincide with the consciousness of what has been lost; it would be essentially a nostalgia, a longing for return. But thus it would not even suspect what the veritably other is. The metaphysical desire does not long to return, for it is desire for a land not of our birth, for a land foreign to every nature, which has not been our fatherland and to which we shall never betake ourselves. The metaphysical desire does not rest upon any prior kinship. (Levinas 1969, 33.)

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This dense and thought-provoking passage contains both the reasons to suspect nostalgia as well as the reasons to rescue it from this suspicion. When Levinas describes metaphysical desire, he invites us to beware its interpretation as of something that lost its unity and strives to recompose it. Metaphysics cannot be a nostalgia for the origin, for fusion, for totality. Quite the contrary, it is directed towards the genuinely unknown, aware that this desire cannot be structurally satisfied, since it cannot by definition transform into knowledge. Here, the otherness of the other is at stake. It deals directly with the issue of nostalgia. If interpreted as a feeling folded back onto the past, striving for regaining something lost, nostalgia reproduces the metaphysics of identity, but does not leave open the possibility of a desire towards infinity.

On the other hand, going beyond Levinas, we could hypothesize that there is a feeling of nostalgia that is forwards-oriented, open to possibilities that cannot be determined prior, and has always already accepted incompleteness and absence. The capacity of living with the awareness of absence, without filling it in with images, concepts, and fictitious identities, can transform the affective tonality of nostalgia into an awareness open to the future, and not desperately closed on the past. From this standpoint, nostalgia can be correctly

interpreted as a symptom of a pathology of the imagination, since it imagines a fusional state, a metaphysical truth whose content has to be rescued from oblivion and made present. The imagination of a fusional state does not correspond to anything real, its "noema" is an impossible ground, a supposed identity whose experience is not given to us. If it intends to avoid the risks of a closure, nostalgia can only be directed to the future, one that is undetermined and open to infinity.

One of the main gains of the Levinasian reading of nostalgia deals with his intuition of linking it to the problem of identity. Paraphrasing Adorno, we could say that nostalgia should become aware of the non-identical, without aspiring to it. Levinas writes that the nostalgia for identity is not equitable to the metaphysics of desire, since it does not recognize the other, it is persuaded to know it, but every knowledge is impossible, every attempt to depict defined contours of knowledge is doomed to become a dangerous exercise of fictitious identification. Nostalgia can be rescued from the idea of fusional identification only by coming to terms with absence, by interpreting loss and absence as a dimension of alterity that inhabits us, without being defined once and for all, and without being reproducible as it happened in the past. The past is unavoidably gone, it does not necessarily contain the truth of the origins, the truth as identity or totality. The dignity of finitude is crossed by absence; it is its thread, with which it is intermingled. Only by liberating finitude from the obsession of infinity as something to regain, as an achievable possession— thereby denying infinity itself—, can nostalgia be seen as potentially open to the future.

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> In understanding being as exteriority, in breaking with the panoramic existing of being and the totality in which it is produced, we can understand the meaning of the *finite* without its limitation, occurring within the infinite, requiring an incomprehensible fall of the infinite, without finitude consisting in nostalgia for infinity, a longing for return. (Ibid., 292.)

The past is unavoidably gone, no memory can rescue it from its transitoriness, there is no way of coming back to an original status of unity

and perfection. What is lost is simply the imperfect experience as we humans can do it, without any hubristic conception of perfection. Following this path, it could be argued that the experience of nostalgia should pass through the filter of fragmentation. Nostalgia is not a longing for the perfect past, but for fragments of experience we know to be unrecoverable. Hence, nostalgia can be equated to this awareness, directed not to an entirety and a totality, but rather to moments, fragments, and its ethical import compels us to resist the temptation to revive them. Even when nostalgia is directed to joyful moments of the past, it should always be accompanied by the will to live something different in the future, and not to re-experience the same moments already lived. Only this openness to the future can make it possible to live a life worthy of infinity.

Before moving to the next section, where these phenomenological considerations are applied to the social world, it should be highlighted that, in order to take nostalgia seriously, one should not forget that it is linked to the transitoriness of time. Both when nostalgia distorts our remembrances, making them better than they were, as well as when it is directed to real joyful experiences lived in the past, it needs to come to terms with absence so as not to become pathological.

4. Nostalgia "for the particular": Coming to terms with totality and keeping fusion at a distance

This section argues that nostalgia, to the extent that it is a feeling, which we experience without willing it, is neither good nor bad in itself, but it can become useful or dangerous depending upon its transformation into action. In other words, its ethical quality depends on the direction that it outlines and, consequently, on the uses and abuses of memory. If we consider Bergson's still-valid proposal of thinking memory as an action, we could say that, when nostalgia affects the act of remembrance with the aim of reproducing totality, it can be easily distorted and used ideologically. If nostalgia is directed only to an impossible return to an imaginary and regressive state of fusion that mystifies memory, and uses it as a justification for restoring or maintaining the status quo, both personally and socially, then it can be recognized as a "restorative" feeling. In her famous book *The Future of Nostalgia*, Svetlana Boym lists two opposed kinds of nostalgia, a restorative and a reflective nostalgia: "nostalgia

of the first type gravitates towards collective pictorial symbols and oral culture. Nostalgia of the second type is more oriented towards an individual narrative that savors details and memorial signs, perpetually deferring homecoming itself." (Boym 2001, 49.) Even if partial and not strictly philosophical, the experience of nostalgia, as described by Boym, is relevant for at least two reasons. First, it highlights that it can become a resource directed at the construction of a life in common. Second, it stresses the dangers of the attempt to recompose an "original image," an identity given once and for all, and at the same time invites to use reflective nostalgia to correct some too teleological pictures of history. Indeed, reflective nostalgia has to do with fragments, with the possibility to narrate the past anew and to detach from the traditional ways of giving accounts of history. Restorative nostalgia points to imaginary identities; reflective nostalgia is a "wise" feeling, and it can be useful to discuss the supposed unavoidability of progress. Taking a break and listening to divergent accounts of the past, far from the triumphal images of modernity, the first step could be to discuss the idea of a "universal history."

If we venture beyond Boym, it is not by chance that nostalgia was codified as a pathology at the end of the seventeenth century, when the idea of progress was starting to emerge as a philosophy of history. Nostalgia was, thus, seen as a feeling that compelled people to live with eyes directed backwards, a sort of brake to the triumphant march of progress. Reflective nostalgia is not a feeling of a striving for totality, impossible to regain and hubristic to desire, but rather a sort of a symptom that there could be many other ways of narrating history by pluralizing them. Transitoriness of time does not mean the unavoidability of progress. The traces left along the way cannot be revived, of course, but can serve as signs of a different future yet to come, free from the compulsion to repeat, and open to the possibility of actualizing something new, not before having tried to know more from that past, from the experiences of suffering people.

In other words, if nostalgia recalls the act of memory that is able to accept the transitoriness of time and recalls the past to act in the future, questions the inherited tradition, and addresses it in a critical and reflective way, then it can become a means to compare, determine unheard voices from the past, and give them the possibility to be heard. Defined as such, nostalgia is pacified with its impossibility to grasp totality

and in its dwelling in the fragment. In a very different context and for totally different aims, Iris Murdoch used the expression "nostalgia for the particular." Here, the hypothesis is that nostalgia is directed to the particular that is not repeatable as such but can be used as something to compare with the present. A renewed phenomenology could be one that is attentive to histories of nostalgia and capable of making a genealogy as well as a critique of it, without censoring or removing it from the public sphere. According to Atia and Davis (2010), nostalgia can be read as a kind of subaltern memory that works through the past, has a potential instrument of critique, and calls for the attention of social scientists.

The famous exchange between Horkheimer and Benjamin paves the way to an interpretation of nostalgia as longing for the particular. At the same time, the need to distance from a reading of nostalgia as a feeling devoted to the conquest of an impossible totality, clearly emerges from their exchange. This reading of nostalgia calls for a refiguration of history and progress. Is nostalgia unavoidably linked to the idea of progress and linearity of time? Is it possible to use it leaving aside this pathological reference to a distorted idea of redemption meant as a perfect totality that overlooks suffering in history? With the words of Max Horkheimer:

> The determination of incompleteness is idealistic if completeness is not comprised within it. Past injustice has occurred and is completed. The slain are really slain . . . If one takes the lack of closure entirely seriously, one must believe in the Last Judgment . . . Perhaps, with regard to incompleteness, there is a difference between the positive and the negative, so that only the injustice, the horror, the sufferings of the past are irreparable. The justice practiced, the joys, the works, have a different relation to time, for their positive character is largely negated by the transience of things. (Max Horkheimer; in Benjamin 2002, 471.)

From a phenomenology of nostalgia aimed at exploring the issues, the pitfalls, the mistakes of a memory that cultivates dreams of totality, this study considers the phenomenology of nostalgia as an urgent task in our societies,

one that should take divergent narratives into account, always starting from the awareness of an impossible totality to reach or recover from the past. Nostalgia, reflective nostalgia, can collect together the openness to the future, the need to remember, the awareness of the transitoriness of time, and the critical attitude towards triumphant stories of progress, by keeping fusion and a "monolithic" idea of identity at a distance.

5. Concluding remarks

In these concluding, but open-ended remarks, the study highlights that suffering from something absent is one of the engines of memory, but the kind of reaction to such suffering makes the difference between a pathological and a safe nostalgia, an overloaded and a pluralized memory, which usually correspond to a kind of society that is open and inclusive, or in turn a kind of society that is excluding. Even if always already gone, the awful past can always come back, though in other forms. Contrarily, even if disappeared once and for all, joyful moments can become something different, if used to imagine and project future possibilities yet to come. In the first section, this work demonstrated that nostalgia is not only an attitude towards the past, but can be also a way of experiencing the world. The risks of a nostalgia that is meant to recover unity and totality, by erasing loss or by filling it in with surrogates, were highlighted. Deepening this line of inquiry, the research highlighted that a precise concept of desire and of the metaphysics of desire is at stake in distorted interpretations of nostalgia. Further, how and why nostalgia can be dangerous, with its passion for the identical, leaving no room to the different and to the divergent, was also explained. In the third section, the argument becomes explicitly a social-ethical one, since we explored the possibility of grasping a kind of nostalgia that is open to the future and does strive neither for the past nor for the idea of reconciliation. Rather, it deals with a pluralization of histories, with their actualization that is able to keep the transitoriness of the past together with the critique of an automatically teleological version of progress and history.

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particularities

&

totalitarities

Michal Zvarík

Socrates and *Polis* in the Thought of Jan Patočka and Hannah Arendt

Abstract: The article addresses differences between Jan Patočka's and Hannah Arendt's interpretation of Socrates and of his relation to politics. For Patočka, Socrates discovered human transcendence over the givenness of relative goods and their dependence on "comprehensive meaning," which is "given" negatively. From this, it follows that the only meaningful life-project is living in problematicity, and freedom in its true sense consists in a non-determination from the positively given meaning. While also in Arendt's view Socrates adopts a distance from things and given meaning through thinking, where she stresses its negativity as well as its ability to dissolve general moral prescripts and paralyze action, she, however, limits the political significance of thinking to the situation of emergency in abnormal political circumstances. Freedom for her is always the freedom to act, which is based on opinions representing a distinct place of the actor in the world. For Patočka, on the other hand, Socrates represents true politics calling for an awakening to problematicity.

Keywords: Jan Patočka, Hannah Arendt, Socrates, problematicity, philosophy, politics.

As is generally known, Jan Patočka's late considerations on the concept of history are to a large extent indebted to Hannah Arendt's work, especially her elucidation of the human condition through human activities of labor, work, and action. Appropriating her views allowed Patočka to originally distinguish differences between the pre-historical and the historical era of humanity. The former is formed through self-understanding in light of the

"modest" meaning of the world and the place of man within it. Pre-historical mankind sees its role primarily in the preservation of life and the world through labor and work; it is dominated by the bondage of life to itself, to self-preservation and self-sustenance. All of this takes place under the shelter of myth, providing human life with meaningfulness. The latter era is marked by revealing the problematicity of the whole, which affectively disrupts and shakes the modesty of pre-historical, accepted meaning, which in its approach of non-questioning appropriation is disclosed as incomplete, insufficient, and unsatisfactory. The crucial threshold between pre-history and history comes with the birth of the city (*polis*) and philosophy. Thus, for Patočka, history is in the first place to be understood as *a spiritual history*, as coping with the revealing of problematicity through care for the soul. Despite Patočka's indebtedness to Arendt, I aim to show that their views on the nature of action and freedom are in fact quite diverse. I intend to demonstrate this through stressing differences in their interpretations of Socrates and his political entanglements.

Patočka on Socrates's discovery of problematicity

For late Patočka, history in the true sense consists in *the care for the soul*, which can be characterized as a specific struggle for meaning in facing and appropriating problematicity. Let me adumbrate the specificity of this attitude by briefly comparing it to the pre-historical attitude. In the pre-historical age, devoid of problematicity *per se*, the human being could rely on a certainty of meaning, which permeates the wholeness of the world. This does not mean, however, that human life is deprived of problematic moments as such. Pre-historic life is aware of specifically human toils and turmoil, it still suffers from pain, poverty, sickness, and death. Yet, such experiences do not present a challenge to the meaningfulness of the world, since their meaning is merely relative and integrated into the absolute meaning of the whole. Problematicity, on the other hand, is introduced into human life, when this overall, absolute meaning is found insufficient, illusory, when the former, uncritically accepted meaning becomes shaken. Thus, it cannot provide a securing shelter anymore, and with it the relative meanings of our particular activities, which depend

on their nexus to an absolute counterpart, suddenly lose their appeal. In other words, the manifestation of problematicity, to which we find ourselves passively exposed, threatens us with nihilism. According to Patočka, there are several attitudes one might adopt, when facing the problematicity of absolute meaning. In the first case, one might escape or avoid the appeal of problematicity and re-anchor oneself in the former meaning, that is, in self-deception and in pretending that, in fact, nothing significant had happened. The other option is resignation to any meaning, the attitude of the "terrible stagnation of suicide" (Patočka 2002, 67). While at first glance such a view might be seen, especially in comparison to the former, as an authentic response to problematicity, as a kind of "dogmatic skepticism," it is actually an illusion of its own kind. Thus, there seems to be only one option as an appropriate response to the revelation of problematicity, which is neither escape nor resignation, but the appropriating of problematicity as a new life-project. Such an appropriation entails the constant search for meaning and finds meaning in this constant search. It is a permanent readiness and openness towards the shaking and examination of everything that appears to stand firmly on the grounds of absolute meaning. As is generally known, Patočka attributes the discovery of this attitude to Socrates:

> […] this discovery of the meaning in searching, which follows from its absence, as a new life-project is the meaning of Socrates's existence. The permanent shaking of the naïve awareness of meaningfulness is the new way of meaning, the discovery of its nexus with mystery and being and the whole. (Patočka 2002, 69.)

What will interest us, here, is the question of how this radical change of perspective instigated by the appropriating of problematicity affects the meaning of crucial political concepts of action and freedom.

The connection between Socrates and care for the soul as his life-project can already be seen in Plato's *Apology*. Here, Socrates states:

> For I go around doing nothing but persuading both young and old among you not to care for your body or your wealth in preference to

or as strongly as for the best possible state of your soul as I say to you: Wealth does not bring about excellence, but excellence makes wealth and everything else good (τὰ ἄλλα ἀγαθά) for men, both individually and collectively." (30a7-b2.)[1]

In this passage, we can see the close interconnection between the care for the soul and the good things, which Patočka addresses in his work *Eternity and Historicity*. While at first glance Socrates's appeal might strike us as being merely moralistic, it actually reveals the inherent problematicity of what we deem to be good. Socrates points to the fact that between various things, which are good, there is always a certain organization or hierarchy at play, which allows us to give preference to some of them over others. Thus, things do not appear to be good in the same way. Furthermore, such a hierarchy might actually be false.

According to Patočka, Socrates's central discovery is the question of the Good as *the question* (Patočka 2006b, 143). This discovery entails the fact that the nature of the good has a specific kind of givenness, which usually does not come to the center of our attention. In fact, as a question, it first and foremost remains concealed. Usually, good appears as something at hand, already known in advance, because we almost always encounter good things. Their goodness is inherently presupposed, inasmuch as it does not have to be explicitly mentioned.[2] Our every action is motivated by reaching some good as an end (τέλος) or "for the sake of which" (οὗ ἕνεκα). Yet, we might ask, what gives all these "goods" we are striving for their goodness? Truly, the good appears to be something common to them. If that is so, though, how are we supposed to understand this "common feature"? Is it something "essential"? Already here, it appears that between the Good itself and particular "goods," there is some kind of difference at play.

Patočka clarifies the concealment of the question of the good in a similar way—and with similar diction—to Heidegger's posing of the question of

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1 The English translation of Plato's dialogues is taken from Plato 1997.
2 In Plato's *Republic*, we read: "Therefore, let no one catch us unprepared or disturb us by claiming that no one has an appetite for drink but rather good drink, nor food but good food, on the grounds that everyone after all has appetite for good things, so that if thirst is an appetite, it will be an appetite for good drink." (438a1-5.)

being. For Heidegger, too, the question of being has to be discovered first and properly, since it is dissembled through the allegedly self-evident meaning of being. The very fact that we permanently encounter beings—and for this reason we simply take the meaning of being for granted—is evidence of its primal obscurity (Heidegger 1967, 4). The same goes for the relation between a good thing and the Good itself; we might be even tempted to say that we first and foremost live in forgetfulness of the Good (Patočka 2006b, 144). Just as the mystery of being leads Heidegger to ask after that distinctive being, to which being means something, i.e., *Dasein*, so, according to Patočka, is Socrates led by the problematicity of the good to the soul as the ground of its manifestation.

From a phenomenological perspective, Socrates makes it explicit that every action is based on presupposed layers of meaning, which, in the end, point to some latent, uncritically accepted general horizon. Let us briefly consider, for example, the movement of Plato's dialogue *Laches*. It begins with the question whether fathers who wish to educate their sons should let them be taught in the art of fighting in heavy armor, and for this reason they ask the publicly prominent figures Nicias and Laches for counsel. Socrates, however, stresses that the answer to such a question presupposes knowledge of the meaning of education, which consists in the improvement of the soul; and since it is excellence (ἀρετή), which makes the soul better, the educator should know what excellence means. And, with it, he should know the meaning of particular excellences, such as courage. Mere relatively good things are in their meaning dependent on some general, "absolute" account of the good in itself. From this move from particular action towards general understanding arises the search for *eidos* as something identical in all particular cases as the search for an answer to the question "what is" (τί ἔστιν) some *x*, where *x* stands for, e.g., virtue, piety, courage, temperance, etc. At first glance, the problem of the Good appears as a problem of *unity*, which is expressed in *eidos* through its *definition* (λόγος), i.e., abstract meaning. From this point of view, one could be tempted to understand the difference between particular goods and the Good itself as the problem of *unity of speech* (*logos*), to which one can adopt an *objective*, personally non-engaged, "neutral" attitude (Patočka 1990, 113–114). Yet, what Socrates is rather pointing to is the relation between speech and the soul in the sense of human existence (Patočka 1990, 112). It is the character of our soul,

which constitutes the latent background and the field for the appearance of something as good, and which escapes our attention due to our direct focus on the particular, relative end. For Socrates, speech is merely a bridge, through which the condition of the soul as a field of appearance becomes explicit. The dialogue functions as a *means* to become aware of one's own existence.

Thus, the Socratic refutation (ἔλεγχος) as a negative result of search for *eidos*, is not merely a revealing of paradox in speech. *Elenchus* causes *aporia*, an internal state of helplessness and paralysis, which should not be mistaken for a mere synonym of paradox. It rather fulfils three internally intertwined functions.[3] The first is its *diagnostic* function, which consists in its manifestation of our internal *disunity*, an unhealthy rupture in our very soul. The second function is *destructive*, for it reveals that our actions are led by a merely contingent life-project, which is unable to legitimate its claim for "absoluteness." By destruction of this allegedly true general horizon, the refutation makes manifest the problematicity of one's existence. And, finally, if one is able to withstand the destructive appeal of refutation, then its third, *maieutic* function might be applied. "Maieutic," here, is not to be understood as the delivering of a certain idea from the hidden depths of the soul to clear expression in speech, as Plato's *Theaetetus* might suggest (150d). Rather, it is "a sort of 'existential maieutics,' the revealing of a *new, essential possibility of own being*" (Cajthaml 2010, 53).

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According to Patočka, for Socrates Good itself is revealed *negatively*; we become aware of it as a non-given, as a *transcendence* beyond our reach. From this follows the possibility of a new life-project, in which a human being grasps itself as "unaccomplished, given at hand to itself, in order to understand its own essential will, to give meaning to its life" (Patočka 2006b, 146). The fact that a human being has a task to become accomplished does not mean to live in accordance with claims of "absolute" meaning prescribed by cosmic order, nature, authority, or tradition. Rather, it means free self-projecting in and through the meaning of wholeness, which lets itself be negatively experienced as the denial of being given.

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3 Here, I follow Cajthaml 2010, 52–53.

The two trials

At first glance, it might seem that with paralysis delivered by refutation and caused by manifestation of the Good in its non-givenness as a result comes the loss of freedom. For Patočka, on the other hand, "[t]he experience of freedom is always a comprehensive experience, the experience of comprehensive 'meaning.'" The experience of freedom rises from awareness of one's own transcendence and distance from what is "given and sensual" (Patočka 2006a, 322). Socrates reveals this nature of freedom *vis-à-vis* our relation to problematicity. With a change of perspective, one might come to understand that instead of being free he was silently determined through alleged meaning of some relative good without the explicit relation to the non-given Good itself. Here is the root of the Socratic statement that "no one does wrong willingly," meaning that we usually act in the shadow of forgetfulness of the Good, in ignorance of this existential relation, which silently determines the nature of the soul. In such determination, we act on the grounds of accidental, contingent reasons, which lack justification and are contradictory. Therefore, the unity of life is fractured into contingent fragmentary actions, stemming from accidental impressions, and it dissolves into the privation of a firm form. For this reason, Socratic paralysis is the inevitable first step we must undertake, if we want to regain freedom in its true sense. The negativity, with which the Good itself shines, places us in the position of a choice between true freedom from inner self-determination and a self-alienating return to the alleged evidence of externally given relative goods.

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These insights are crucial in explicating Patočka's understanding of the conflict between Socrates and the City of Athens escalating in the public trial. Only on the surface is it just *one* trial, where Socrates stands as a culprit. Yet, as Patočka stresses, there are *two trials* happening at once (Patočka 1991, 33–34). The first, the explicit one is aimed at Socrates whose questioning is seen as a danger, and for this reason his threatening, "sophistic" behavior must be silenced. The second one, on the other hand, is not obvious and directly visible. It is a trial where the culprit is the City of Athens, the meaning of life of its citizens being based on the unjustified grounds of non-critically accepted meaning.

Let me briefly describe this conflict between the "natural" and the Socratic attitudes towards the problem of human finitude, one of the central issues in Plato's *Apology*. The problem of finitude is crucial, because it reveals whether we can live a life of unity and can justify our free non-determination. Socrates takes the example of our possible relation to death, in order to demonstrate our ignorance dissembled as knowledge: "To fear death, gentlemen, is no other than to think oneself wise when one is not, to think one knows what one does not know" (29a4–6), because, in this attitude, it is assumed that death is inevitably something wrong. In *Apology*, there are several examples of how such a presupposition affects human actions: defendants representing their families at court, in order to instigate compassion in judges regardless of whether it is just (34c–35b); men acting according to the order of thirty tyrants who do not hesitate to bring the democrat Leon of Salamis for execution (32c4–e1), and, of course, Socrates's prosecutors who presuppose that the threat of death will silence his philosophizing. Socrates's position, on the other hand, is one of knowledge of one's own ignorance. We do not know whether death

is something bad, merely some deep, dreamless sleep, or the gate to a blissful afterlife. For this reason, it is foolish to act as if we knew that death is the worst of all things (29a7–b1).

In the first cases, the actions are affected by the directly given meaning of death, which is uncritically accepted and thus determines the scope of the given "meaningful" possibilities prescribing its avoidance. Such an action is unaware of its own distance and the transcendence of this givenness. Because of our distance from things, we are allowed to examine them, place them in different contexts and see possible contradictions. In dissembled ignorance, this existential position, however, remains concealed. A human being, projecting itself in accordance with unexamined meaning, in the end renounces its own freedom, which is dissolved into disunity and is unaware of its internal contradictions.

The trial of Socrates does not merely show two different attitudes, but primarily their conflicting relationship. Socrates, officially the defendant, but in fact a judge, represents a kind of politics, which consists in the awakening of Athens, its upliftment towards freedom and excellence through critical self-examination in the care for the soul. Since politics strives for the good, Socrates was throughout his life a true politician whose "politics" was realized

through private dialogues, consisting in the examination of individuals instead of holding offices and rhetorical persuasion of the masses. As Patočka stresses, Socrates's "privateness [*soukromost*] is the *true* relation towards the public, it is inner restitution aimed at restitution of the public" (Patočka 1991, 60). Such politics causes awakening, *shaking* of allegedly self-evident meaning, and calls for negative manifestation of the Good as a root of real excellence (*aretē*). But, from this stance, it is implicitly evident why Socrates's philosophizing *must be* private. Since critical examination is destructive, since it reveals the soul in contradictory disunity, and sets a task to confront problematicity through its appropriation as a life-project, one is tempted to avoid its claims and see the awakener as the true culprit:

> […] an unfree and inauthentic life is characterized by deep forgetting of itself, forgetting, which does not want to be reminded of it and resists it with all its powers, so the awakener will be hated, slandered, and chased to death. (Patočka 1991, 68.)

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Hannah Arendt on Socrates

Hannah Arendt's work is to a decisive extent dedicated to the meaning and significance of political action, especially the rehabilitation of its bad reputation caused by the mistrust of philosophers since the trial of Socrates (Arendt 1998, 12). For this reason, it might be surprising that late Arendt turns attention to Socrates as a paradigmatic figure of thinking, on the basis of which she praises political non-participation. Socrates not only allows her to conceptualize the relation between thinking and action, but also to address contemporary issues of responsibility *vis-à-vis* the moral disasters of totalitarian regimes, mostly the question, on the one hand, why people of morals are too easily willing to change their system of morals for another one, where what before had been prohibited becomes now allowed, and, on the other hand, why non-conformists who distrusted one system of morals did not accept the new one, what kept them from participating in political crimes. While the former "suffered" from *thoughtlessness*, i.e., the inability to critically examine given moral concepts, the latter indulged in the processes of thinking, which led them to the realization

of what they would be actually doing, if they participated in crimes. These people, according to Arendt, shared the view that if they had anything to do with such crimes, they would be unable to live with themselves.

As with Patočka's, Arendt's portrayal of Socrates emphasizes that the experience of thinking has a natural tendency towards *negativity*, which results in a paralyzing effect on our opinions and actions. First of all, the activity of thinking requires a detachment from the world and its immediately pressing matters. It takes place in the distancing from what is immediately given. While indulging in thinking, it is as if all surrounding things and people were not present for the time being and other activities were brought to a halt (Arendt 1978, 175). In thinking, we find ourselves in solitude, and cease to be present for the world, and vice versa. However, the paralysis brought forth by thinking is not an immediate result of detachment, because our stream of thoughts might be interrupted at any time, either because of our spontaneous decision or due to circumstances around us, which might coerce us to turn our attention to them.

Detachment, however, is a necessary condition, because thinking is a process of examining concepts whose meaning is usually uncritically presupposed and accepted. In our everyday orientation in the world, we rely on concepts as "frozen thoughts" (Arendt 1978, 171) with their alleged self-evident meaning. They usually function as "prejudices," through the lens of which an orientation in the world, every action, and opinion are possible. Assuming distance allows us to ask what they actually mean and see their place in the chain of meanings. Socrates distorts their non-critical acceptance by searching for explicit justification. For this reason, through thinking he attempts to "defrost" their alleged firmness and subjects them to *movement* (Arendt 1978, 170). Since this movement is potentially infinite—because every concept also requires justification by concepts, which have yet to be justified—, the final justification seems impossible. For this reason, "thinking inevitably has a destructive, undermining effect on all established criteria, values, measurements of good and evil, in short, on those customs and rules of conduct we treat of in morals and ethics" (Arendt 1978, 174–175).

At this point, it is fully legitimate to ask whether Socratic thinking does not bring nihilistic tendencies. If every concept, on which we ground our moral attitudes, can become a theme of thinking, and if in the end none of

these concepts can be justified, are we not in a situation where everything is possible, because "without God, all things are permitted"? In fact, however, and this point interests Arendt most, thinking is the safeguarding of human beings in times, when conventional values are shaken or even turned upside down. Thinking forms a barrier, which protects individuality from falling into nihilism as a mere negation—and yet, in its essence, a *Doppelgänger*—of conventionalism. Thus, our search for the root of Socratic paralysis must go beyond nihilism (Arendt 1978, 176).

The answer to the question why thinking is dangerous because of its distance from conventional norms and yet does not fall into nihilism is found in the very structure of the thinking person, in the simple fact that, when I think, I am in silent dialogue with myself. But as a dialogue presupposes two selves at least, it is in this detachment from the world that I find my own inner plurality, a certain duality, which at the same time calls for a unity of myself. In the moment of solitude, I cease to be there for others, and others for me, in order to find my "other I," the unity as a relation to myself. From this perspective, Arendt interprets the crucial Socratic passage from Plato's *Gorgias*: "I think it's better to […] have the vast majority of men disagree with me and contradict me, than to be out of harmony with myself, to contradict myself, though I'm only one person." (482b6-c3.)

For Arendt, the main problem of Socrates is the problem of "unity of myself, that in whatever I do I should not contradict myself." My every act, every misdeed I have ever done or might do, even in greatest secrecy, always has a witness in my person. If Socrates says that it is better for him to be in contradiction with anybody else than with himself, he means this: I should not do anything that I may not be able to justify in the court of my inner dialogue, for I will become unreliable to myself, unable to actualize the inner friendship. Or, as Arendt put it:

> […] the reason why you should not kill, even under conditions where nobody will see you, is that you cannot possibly want to be together with a murderer. By committing murder you would deliver yourself to the company of a murderer as long as you live. (Arendt 2005, 22.)

We could say that in thinking I gain inner plurality, which is a source of—to use the language of A. J. Steinbock—inner diremptive experience, where I grasp myself potentially split between my optimal and real I.[4]

It is here, where we find a root of the paralysis, which the activity of thinking brings. Potentially, any action can become an object of scrutiny. In such examination, we can see a certain concept at play in the network or horizon of allegedly self-evident meanings that are co-present. Yet, our thinking is also the ability to rip these firm concepts from the co-present context of meaning and bring them into potentially infinite movement, in which former certainty is revealed as indeterminate, non-justified vagueness. Arendt was very well aware that in political action we rely not on absolute insights into the eternal essence of thing, but solely on limited perspectives expressed as mere opinions. But as we see, the power of thinking might dissolve any apparently solid opinion. Thinking in this regard does not call for action, but rather warns us against doing anything that might lead to an inability to live with oneself. Instead of telling us what to do, it discourages us as a warning (Arendt 1978, 190).

324   We can conclude that from the Arendtian point of view the activity of thinking has rather a bittersweet taste. As already mentioned, most of Arendt's theoretical interest was invested in the defense of political action, which in the course of history became deprived of its significance and meaning. Yet, action has dangers of its own, and Arendt underlines that in times of political emergency, it is the reclusive distance of thinking from any political participation, which can at least save the human soul, when the world appears beyond remedy: "The manifestation of the wind of thought […] at the rare moments when the stakes are on the table, may indeed prevent catastrophes, at least for the self." (Arendt 1978, 193.) Such is the case of Socrates who preferred harmony with himself before participating in the misconduct of the Council—massively driven to commit injustice by their frustration at the results of the battle—or the thirty tyrants who under the threat of death sought to engage Socrates in their crimes (*Apology* 32a-e). And, for Arendt, it was thinking, which brings concepts into a whirlwind, that stopped those few from letting themselves be

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4 For the concept of diremptive experience in the scope of moral emotions see Steinbock 2014, 72. By applying the concept of diremptive experience here I do not imply that Steinbock would consider it in Arendt's sense as a "by-product of thinking".

carried like leaves in the "objective" wind by a totalitarian tendency to bind the plurality of people, in order to make them act as one through the movement of terror (Arendt 1979, 465–466).

Conclusion

Despite the great similarities we find in Patočka's and Arendt's interpretations of Socrates, we should not ignore important differences. Their return to Socrates is motivated by the search for an antidote to those powers, which in the era of modernity tend to rule over human individuality and devalue its significance and dignity (Učník 2013). For Patočka, Socrates is a philosopher of freedom, which can be attained only in appropriating the attitude towards the non-givenness of the Good itself, i.e., from the *problematicity* of own existence. On the other hand, Arendt rather limits the Socratic remedies to the times of political emergency (Arendt 1972, 65), when they may serve as a protecting guard against actions, which might lead to living in contradiction. If we can speak of some notion of care for the self or care for the soul in Arendt, it is a concept whose significance is too limited to become a grounding horizon of political life *per se*. Socrates's "politics" is true, but only when the political sphere is in crisis, in abnormal condition. Unlike Socrates, she remains a philosopher of action, which is not aimed at changing human beings through education. Action is oriented on changing the world, an open space of action, which people in plurality co-constitute as common fabric by their words and deeds. Only such an interpersonally constituted world can be home to freedom, which is always freedom to act. Acting entails being visible to others, and only in this way can a human being attain worldly reality. From the Arendtian perspective, Patočka's political philosophy is restricted to the Socratic voice, which warns against misdeeds inadequately "justified" by non-reflected, uncritically accepted contexts of meanings. Such is a political participation that does not aim to act itself, but to declare the "No!" to politics of personal irresponsibility, which hides behind alleged "objective powers."

From Patočka's point of view, unlike Arendt's, the trial of Socrates reveals that the public sphere is rather a place of dissembling than of appearance and manifestation of actors as who they are. There are two intertwined reasons

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for that. First, public space is dominated by the tendency to take givenness for granted and remain unaware of human distance and transcendence of it. And, second, when facing the claims of the problematicity of human existence, its calls to attain a unity in remaining open to negativity, public actors tend to avoid and escape these claims. Patočka's final warning could consist in the claim that every one of our actions seems to be "fragmentary," for they are grounded in non-reflected, accidental reasons, in which the final context of meaning is overlooked. By acting, we must pay the price that in the end we do not know what are we actually doing.

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Zachary Daus

On the Significance of Mutual Vulnerability in Hannah Arendt's Conception of Freedom

Abstract: The paper offers an interpretation of Hannah Arendt's conception of freedom. After defining her conception of freedom as the experience of spontaneous self-disclosure, I offer an account of the conditions that enable this experience. I describe these conditions as being particular structures of human relations, specifically mutual intelligibility and mutual vulnerability. I focus in particular on mutual vulnerability, arguing that when we are mutually vulnerable to the same risk, we grant each other greater freedom to act in ways that are spontaneous, confident that the other(s) will do nothing to put ourselves at risk. After arguing that the phenomenon of mutual vulnerability is present in Arendt's conception of promising, I broaden my analysis to show how it is present in other forms of social relations, including, but not limited to, the relations that characterize participatory democracy.

Keywords: freedom, vulnerability, interdependence, trust, Arendt.

1. Introduction

Many have acknowledged that Hannah Arendt develops a conception of freedom that is unconventional by the Western philosophical standards. Arendt herself acknowledges this, writing in "Tradition and the Modern Age" (1954) that the "unprecedentedness" of "totalitarian domination" cannot be "comprehended through the usual categories of political thought" and that the "continuity of Occidental history" has been broken (1954, 26). Following Arendt's reasoning, if we are to fully comprehend the unprecedented ways, in which freedom can be denied under totalitarianism, we must first revise our understanding of what freedom is.

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The conception of freedom that Arendt develops is, broadly speaking, an existential conception. By existential, I mean that Arendt conceives of freedom as a distinctive "human experience" with lived characteristics (Arendt 1959, 144). I refer to this experience of freedom as *spontaneous self-disclosure*. Self-disclosure refers to the aspect of freedom that reveals "who" we are (Arendt 1958, 179), such as the aims towards which we strive or the principles by which we live. Spontaneity refers to the aspect of freedom that is self-generated and consequently, as Arendt repeatedly emphasizes, unpredictable or unexpected (ibid., 178). Arendt's existential conception of freedom can thus be said to combine both positive and negative conceptions of freedom. Freedom as spontaneity points to negative freedom, insofar as spontaneous action requires some degree of freedom from external interference, while freedom as self-disclosure points to positive freedom, insofar as self-disclosive action reveals the aims and principles by which we desire to live.

Arendt's conception of freedom can also be characterized as relational. Freedom for Arendt is not, as the Western philosophical tradition often emphasizes, dependent upon the exercise of an Augustinian free will or Kantian rational autonomy, but upon certain structures of human relations that enable spontaneous self-disclosure. I focus on two such relational conditions: mutual intelligibility and mutual vulnerability. Because Arendt claims that self-disclosure never occurs alone, but always before an audience that tells the "story" of the actor's action, self-disclosive action must be intelligible to others. While scholars have already stressed the significance of mutual intelligibility in her thought, fewer have addressed the significance of mutual vulnerability. I claim that mutual vulnerability, that is to say, the condition of multiple individuals being vulnerable to the same risk, enables spontaneity by creating an atmosphere of trusting non-control. This is because, when individuals are mutually vulnerable, they trust each other to do nothing that (knowingly) endangers themselves, and consequently grant each other the freedom to act in ways that might otherwise be perceived as unduly risky.

While my intuition is that the phenomenon of mutual vulnerability is implicitly present throughout her political thought, I focus in particular on how mutual vulnerability manifests itself in what Arendt refers to as mutual promising. Ultimately, I suggest that a phenomenology of mutual vulnerability

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lies not only at the heart of Arendt's conception of promising and her political thought more generally, but is itself a helpful concept for making sense of our increasingly interdependent world.

2. The experience of freedom

In order to better understand Arendt's conception of freedom as action that is spontaneous and self-disclosive, it is helpful to turn to two modes of human activity that Arendt places in contradistinction to freedom: labor and work.

Labor, on the one hand, denotes the kind of activity that must be performed, in order to sustain biological "life" (Arendt 1958, 87). The results of our labor, such as the creation of nourishment or energy, are fleeting and characterized by cycles of production and consumption. The activity of labor is thus repetitive and predictable. Work, on the other hand, denotes the kind of activity that is performed, in order to produce the "durable" artifacts that constitute our material culture (ibid., 137). The results of our work are more permanent than those of our labor. While the activity of our work is consequently less repetitive than that of our labor—and even allows for a degree of creativity—, it is nonetheless predictable. This predictability is described by Arendt, when she characterizes the mentality of the worker as being that of the Platonic ideal of the "craftsman," who must produce the products of their craft "in accordance with the idea" that serves as their initial model for their finished product (ibid., 142).

Action, unlike labor and work, is the human activity, in which freedom as spontaneous self-disclosure is experienced. While Arendt suggests that action and, by extension, experiences of freedom primarily occur in the activity of participatory democracy, she also suggests that action can also occur in apolitical activities, such as those that the ancient Greeks categorized as "*techne*" (1958, 207). The spontaneous aspect of action, on the one hand, refers to that which is fundamentally "unexpected" and thus corresponds to the "fact of birth" or "the human condition of natality" (ibid., 178). Arendt cites the ancient Greek conception of the literary "hero" as an example of such a spontaneity, who possesses the "willingness to […] insert one's self into the world and begin a story of one's own" (ibid., 186). The self-disclosive aspect of

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action, on the other hand, refers to that which reveals to others the uniqueness of the actor and thus corresponds to "the human condition of plurality" (ibid., 178), since it combines the uniqueness of individuality and the equality of intelligibility. As an example of such self-disclosure Arendt describes the "art works that glorify a deed or an accomplishment" and, in so doing, disclose the uniqueness of the "hero" who performed it (ibid., 187).

Before continuing to a closer analysis of the relational conditions that enable spontaneous self-disclosure, a brief explanation of Arendt's motivations is in order. As already mentioned, Arendt develops her conception of freedom as an intentional response to the 20th-century totalitarianism. I interpret Arendt's intention as pragmatic, guided by the reasoning that, if we are to avoid future totalitarian domination, we must develop forms of political thought and action that are responsive to its threat. One of the principle causes of the rise of totalitarianism, according to Arendt, is social "alienation" (1951, 427–445). If individuals are alienated from the principles that guide themselves and their communities, they will be more likely to support totalitarian movements.

This points to the significance of freedom as self-disclosure. Spontaneity is significant, not insofar as its absence is a cause for totalitarianism, but insofar as its absence is an effect—or symptom—of totalitarianism. As Arendt writes in *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, the destruction of "man's power to begin something new out of his own resources" is a hallmark of totalitarian systems, such as National Socialism (ibid., 596).

To borrow a metaphor from medicine, we can characterize Arendt's pragmatic characterization of freedom as spontaneous self-disclosure as both detective and preventative. It is detective in the sense that, when human spontaneity is absent, totalitarian domination is possibly the cause. It is preventative in the sense that, when human alienation is ameliorated through acts of self-disclosure, the possibility of totalitarian domination emerging is reduced.

3. The relations of freedom

In addition to being existential and pragmatic, Arendt's conception of freedom is relational. It does not conceive of freedom in terms of free will,

rational autonomy, or non-interference, as the likes of Augustine, Immanuel Kant, and Isaiah Berlin respectively do. Instead, the experience of freedom as spontaneous self-disclosure depends on particular structures of relations with other humans. This section now turns to the relational conditions that are necessary for this experience of freedom, with special focus given to the condition of mutual vulnerability.

The first condition that enables freedom as spontaneous self-disclosure is mutual intelligibility. As Jeremy Arnold observes, for spontaneous action to differ from mere acts of randomness, it must in some sense be "minimally intelligible" to others (Arnold 2020, 96). In the case of spontaneous self-disclosure, this intelligibility is the ability for spontaneous action to convey some aspect of the identity of its actor. Arendt claims that this disclosure occurs, when humans are "with" each other, writing: "the revelatory quality of speech and action comes to the fore where people are with others and neither for nor against them—that is, in sheer human togetherness" (1958, 180). She clarifies this "sheer human togetherness" as being similar to the relation between actor and audience, writing that the "who" that is disclosed is like the "*daimon*" of ancient Greek religion, which "accompanies man throughout his life" and is "visible to those he encounters," but "hidden from the person himself" (ibid., 179–180). If the self can only be fully disclosed to others, then acts of self-disclosure must be intelligible to others.

The second condition that enables freedom as spontaneous self-disclosure is mutual vulnerability. The role of vulnerability in the thought of Arendt has admittedly received little attention from scholars. A notable exception is Judith Butler, who in "Precarious Life, Vulnerability, and the Ethics of Cohabitation" (2012) suggests that Arendt invokes the notion of mutual vulnerability to justify a form of ethical responsibility. According to Butler, Arendt's concept of plurality refers to groups of distinct individuals who are interdependent, insofar as they are mutually vulnerable to the threat of unfreedom. Because freedom depends on human distinctness, distinct individuals are interdependent upon each other for their freedom. Or, as Butler writes: "Without the plurality against which we cannot choose, we have no freedom." (2012, 143.) And freedom depends on human distinctness, because, according to Arendt, genuine self-disclosure can only occur with the assistance of an audience of distinct individuals. As Butler herself observes,

this justification of ethical responsibility is nonetheless problematic, as it implies that our responsibility to those who are distinct from us exists, only insofar as they constitute a pluralistic audience before whom we can perform self-disclosure. This can by no means be the only justification for pluralistic tolerance.

While Butler interprets mutual vulnerability as an intriguing yet problematic explanation for our responsibility towards those who are distinct from us, it can also—and perhaps less problematically—be understood as an explanation for human spontaneity. We can better understand how mutual vulnerability enables human spontaneity by turning to Arendt's interpretation of human promising. In *The Human Condition* (1958), Arendt interprets promises as a means for reducing unpredictability while enabling spontaneity, likening them to temporary "islands" in "oceans of uncertainty" (1958, 237). Key to understanding how promising preserves spontaneity while reducing unpredictability is the phenomenon of mutual vulnerability. While it might be intuitive that *promisees* are vulnerable to the fulfillment (or nonfulfillment) of the promise, Arendt implies that *promisors* are similarly vulnerable, claiming that "without being bound to the fulfillment of promises, we [promisors] would never be able to keep our identities" (ibid.). In other words, the promisee is vulnerable to the promise, insofar as he or she desires the benefits of its fulfillment, and the promisor, insofar as he or she desires to maintain his or her sense of identity.

Inspired by Arendt, Paul Ricoeur in *The Course of Recognition* (2005) similarly emphasizes the significance of promising to the promisor, writing that the promisor both "plac[es] himself under a certain obligation to do what he says" as well as makes a "commitment" to "the other to whom the promise is made" (2005, 129). Ricoeur describes this "obligation" as a "more fundamental promise" that "precedes any promise making" (ibid.), in which both commitment to oneself as promisor and commitment to the other as promisee is subsumed. This more fundamental promise can be understood as what Ricoeur refers to as the promisor's "will to self-constancy, to remaining true to form, which seals the story of a life confronted with changes in circumstances and changes of heart" (2005, 129–130). By emphasizing the significance of our will to self-constancy, Ricoeur, like Arendt, consequently suggests that promises are a relation of mutual vulnerability: the promisor with

respect to his or her desire for self-constancy, the promisee with respect to his or her desire for whatever benefits come with its fulfillment.

How, then, does the mutual vulnerability of promising enable spontaneity? As has already been briefly described, when two or more individuals are mutually vulnerable and recognize their vulnerability, they trust each other to do nothing that will put themselves at risk, because to put another at risk is—when mutually vulnerable—to put oneself at risk. In the case of promising, when a promisor is vulnerable to the fulfillment of a promise *vis-à-vis* his or her desire for self-constancy and the promisee recognizes this vulnerability, the promisee will trust that the promisor will do nothing to knowingly hinder the fulfillment of the promise. This creates an atmosphere of trusting non-control, in which the promisee affords the promisor a greater degree of spontaneity in how they carry out the promise, knowing that the promise, even if carried out unconventionally, will still likely be fulfilled. And should the promisor fail to fulfill the promise, recognition of their vulnerability encourages forgiveness, or, as Arendt writes, "redemption from the predicament of irreversibility" (1958, 237).

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4. The phenomenon of mutual vulnerability

The phenomenon of mutual vulnerability, and the experience of spontaneity it encourages, is not restricted to the practice of promising. In this final section, I will expand my analysis of mutual vulnerability to other contexts, specifically empathetic as well as professional relations. Finally, I will return to political relations, describing how participatory democracy encourages mutual vulnerability between its citizens and, in so doing, experiences of freedom as spontaneous self-disclosure.

What distinguishes empathy from similar attitudes, such as sympathy, is that empathy entails sharing the affective state of the person with whom one is empathizing. This means that, when we are empathetic, we not only are aware of another's affective state, but to some extent experience it ourselves.[1] Some philosophers have built on this basic insight, claiming that

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1 Shaun Gallagher in *Action and Interaction* (2020) offers a philosophical account of the neuroscience behind this interpretation of empathy: "Empathy involves being in

empathy so construed plays a role in moral judgment, insofar as sharing a negative affective state with another includes sharing a negative valuation of the intentional object, towards which that state is directed.[2] If we share the affective state of a person who suffers a violent attack, for example, it is likely that we, too, will question the value of violent attacks. With the concept of mutual vulnerability in mind, we can build on these claims in a different way. When we are in a relation with an individual whom we know is empathetic, we will likely experience greater spontaneity, trusting that their empathetic vulnerability to our potential suffering will encourage them to do nothing that knowingly causes our suffering.

We can also encounter the phenomenon of mutual vulnerability in professional relations. A significant amount of literature, particularly in the field of management studies, already exists on the relationship between vulnerability and trust in professional relations. Some scholars emphasize that an acceptance of vulnerability is necessary for trust (Rousseau *et al.* 1998), others emphasize that an expression of vulnerability is necessary, particularly for those in leadership roles (Nienaber *et al.* 2015). Few—if any—emphasize the significance of mutual vulnerability. We can come to an understanding of the significance of mutual vulnerability for fostering trust and, by extension, spontaneity in professional relationships by turning to the example of a joint work project. When two or more colleagues are mutually vulnerable to the completion of a project and are aware of each other's vulnerability, they will likely grant each other greater freedom to act in ways that might otherwise be considered risky, trusting each other to be equally committed to the successful completion. This atmosphere of trusting non-control can be compared to a jazz ensemble, whose members allow each other the freedom to improvise, trusting that they are committed to the quality of the performance itself.

Finally, we can also encounter the phenomenon of mutual vulnerability in the activity that Arendt identifies as the paradigmatic context for the experience of freedom: participatory democracy. Participatory democracy encourages experiences of spontaneous self-disclosure by giving its citizens

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the same or similar affective state as the other." (2020, 177.)

2 For a clear presentation of the relationship between empathy and moral judgment, see Catrin Misselhorn's account in *Künstliche Intelligenz und Empathie* (2021, 61–66).

a context for addressing issues, to which they are mutually vulnerable. When citizens trust each other to have their mutual interests at heart, they grant each other the freedom to creatively ameliorate the threats that endanger their interests. It is in such contexts of trusting non-control that not only a nation's "heroes" are disclosed, but the "principles" that guide its collective action, such as "love of equality" or "honor" (Arendt 1959, 151). For a less abstract example we can turn to the ongoing Russian war against Ukraine, where spontaneous acts of Ukrainian heroism helped to disclose national sovereignty as a guiding principle of the Ukrainian nation.[3]

5. Conclusion

Freedom for Arendt is the lived experience of spontaneous self-disclosure. Such experiences occur, when we unexpectedly reveal to others some aspect of who we are. Freedom is for Arendt also relational, insofar as the relations of mutual intelligibility and mutual vulnerability are necessary for our realization of freedom as spontaneous self-disclosure. In this essay, I focused particularly on mutual vulnerability, arguing that it promotes spontaneity by encouraging relations of trusting non-control. Beginning with mutual promising, I broadened my analysis of mutual vulnerability to other relational structures, such as empathetic and professional relations, before concluding with a brief analysis of participatory democracy.

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While by now it is hopefully clear that Arendt indicates a starting point, from which we can think about freedom in ways that stress the significance of mutual vulnerability, we must also be aware of the limitations of her approach. Arendt's conception of mutual promising conceives of mutual vulnerability in terms of a desire for existential self-constancy and not, for example, bodily well-being. This reflects Arendt's reticence in discussing the human body and its biological needs, as well as her controversial view that politics ought not to concern itself with matters related to biological necessity, which she relegates

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3 Accounts of contemporary perceptions of Ukrainian national sovereignty can be found in *Ukraine in Histories and Stories: Essays by Ukrainian Intellectuals* (2019). As Hanna Shelest, for example, writes, following the Russian invasion of Donbas, "nobody is questioning […] [Ukrainian] sovereignty" (2019, 300).

to the activity of "labor." If we are to build upon the conception of mutual vulnerability found in the thought of Arendt, it would be prudent to extend her analysis to vulnerabilities of a bodily nature. The mutual vulnerability of empathy is perhaps a starting point for this project, but more can be done.

As increasing globalization and accelerating climate change continue to converge and bring humanity closer together, I believe that the significance of mutual vulnerability will only become more pronounced. The Western tradition, long favoring individualistic conceptions of ideas like freedom, has hindered our ability to discuss phenomena like mutual vulnerability in an explicit and constructive way. While it is possible to turn to the non-Western traditions for meaning in this new era, we can also turn to lesser-known currents in the Western philosophy that center relational phenomena like mutual vulnerability. I propose that the thought of Arendt can assist us in this endeavor.

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Fabián Portillo Palma

Isolation and Loneliness as Categories of Social Being
Arendt and the Origin of Totalitarian Movements

Abstract: The paper reflects, with a declared practical interest, upon the conditions, which, according to Hannah Arendt's description of totalitarianism, may be playing a fundamental role in the rise of new movements of totalitarian resonances within the liberal democracies across Europe (and the entire world). The analysis of *world alienation*, *loneliness*, *isolation*, and the so-called victory of *animal laborans* will contribute positively to that. Our leading intuition is, in fact, that a perverse similarity exists between the conditions, under which historical totalitarianism appeared, and the conditions, under which human life exists in our current world.

Keywords: Arendt, totalitarianism, loneliness, isolation, world alienation, *animal laborans*, Marx.

The impulse of this paper is to be found in the basic intuition: we are going to stand for the idea that the rise of discriminatory nationalist and racist movements, not only in Europe, but worldwide, is fundamentally linked to the generalization of certain experiences that are no different at their core from the ones that may be recognized as those of the past century. My scope is directed specifically to the experiences that lead to the totalitarian domination suffered by the entire world in the time period, which began after the collapse of the era of imperialism and ended with the nuclear era.

A deeper approach to the phenomenon of totalitarianism in its current resonances will bring us necessarily to the theoretical insights provided by Hannah Arendt's work *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, published first in 1951. Arendt bases

her well-documented and philosophically relevant understanding of the entire phenomenon of totalitarianism on the essential experience, which prepares masses for a totalitarian domination of their own lives. This experience has two faces: the phenomenon of *isolation*, related intimately with the impossibility or incapacity for *praxis*; and the phenomenon of *loneliness*, which is linked to the phenomena of *superfluousness* and *uprootedness*. Her thesis can be summarized thus: only a community, where loneliness and isolation turn out to be the main and general experiences, can be subjected to totalitarian domination. As a result of this, Arendt claims that totalitarianism was not an arbitrary historical event, but rather a phenomenon, which grows from a specific human attitude towards its surrounding world. A pre-theoretical sphere of experiences[1] set the conditions for totalitarian domination of a whole community.

In this paper, we refrain from elaborating a genealogical approach to those ideas or thesis, but we prefer, rather, to set the conditions to discuss with Arendt—and disagree with her about—the origins of totalitarian tendencies.

For that purpose, our exposition may be broken down into three sections: 1) we will first introduce the notion of *world alienation*, in order to point out the pre-theoretical realm, in which *isolation* and *loneliness* can be grasped as categories of social being; 2) a description of Arendt's explanation of the origins of totalitarianism will follow, based mainly—but not exclusively—on a reading of the chapter "Ideology and Terror. A Novel Form of Government"; and 3) we will conclude by reflecting with Arendt on the notion she extracted from the victory of *animal laborans* as a fundamental event of our times.

1. A genuine "*being-together*": Totalitarian tendencies and world alienation

Our approach to the current totalitarian tendencies within liberal societies is based upon the principle that a philosophically relevant explanation of it requires a prior clarification of a certain type of attitude towards the world. In other words, a certain clarification of the so-called *being-in-the-world*.[2] This

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1 In Arendt's oeuvre, one can recognize important phenomenological traces (cf. Arendt 2018 and Villa 1996.)

2 For Arendt, the Heideggerian concept of *being-in-the-world* (*GA 2*, 71–173) is of

is what in Arendt's work will appear as the *world* understood as the common space, within which human life can humanly take place.

In the same way that can be ascertained for the roots of the historical German and Soviet totalitarianisms, these new tendencies[3] also arise upon a specific breeding ground, which makes them possible. The resemblances between the historical and the current totalitarian tendencies are based on the fundamental orientation of the modern human existence. Arendt explains in *The Human Condition* how modernity has shaped the human life by referring to the phenomenon of *world alienation*. She introduces this term while discussing how the three types of human activity—i.e., *labor*, *fabrication*, and *praxis*—have evolved with the beginning of the modern times. For her, three events defined the fate of the modern *being-in-the-world*: America's discovery by the European monarchies, the reformation initiated by Luther, and Galileo's invention of the telescope (Arendt 1958, 248).

The first of the aforementioned events is to be considered as the initial stage of a longer process that could not come to an end until the 1960s, when the first human achieved to leave our planetary homeland. Nevertheless, such an ephemeris turned ironically into its opposite, since humankind remains the more distant from its homeland the more distance its artefacts can cover. With the second of the events, it could be that the conditions were set for the era of *animal laborans*, where human nature is explicitly denied by the rhythm imposed upon it by the capitalist system of production. Luther's struggle to reform the Catholic Church and the later segmentation of the Western Christianity had a deeper meaning than a mere theological conflict. It allowed the dissolution of properties and its conversion into capital, forcing a huge mass of worldwide population to become a working mass. A new type of human specimen arose, since a vast majority of the global population was forced out from their shared world and coerced to convert themselves into a wandering manpower, which in Arendt's work will appear as the expression of a process of animalization. A common world of useful things is displaced by one of

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outstanding political value, for it allows a philosophical thematization of the realm of commonness (cf. Arendt 2018, 122).
3 Such as the reactionary movements like the Fidesz party, AfD, Prawo i Sprawiedliwość, or Vox.

consumption and exchangeable goods:[4] the world of *animal laborans* is also *the consumer's world*. Galileo's invention constitutes a symbol for what Arendt calls *the Archimedean point*, through which the Western civilization started to doubt information coming from the senses and thus based knowledge on the logical and experimental procedure of modern science.

The world as the object of human knowledge displaces the world as the space where human life takes place, as the artificial sphere of a community where free acts in the forms of a collective discussion of the common and shared world are still possible. The experience where the world is the result of a scientific vision and where no immediate experience of communal ties to it can be found is what describes mainly the modern *being-together*. Just as can be said for the historical totalitarianism, this was the self-reaction to the superficiality of modern individuals. The new version we are witnessing is based on the new radicalization of the conditions, under which modern humankind dwells in the world. Following Arendt's words, the totalitarian regimes

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> […] can be sure that their factories of annihilation which demonstrate the swiftest solution to the problem of overpopulation, of economically superfluous and socially rootless human masses, are as much of an attraction as a warning. Totalitarian solutions may well survive the fall of totalitarian regimes in the form of strong temptations which will come up whenever it seems impossible to alleviate political, social or economic misery in a manner worthy of man. (1951, 602–603.)

2. The origins of totalitarianism: Isolation and loneliness as socio-ontological categories

For Arendt, totalitarianism is a new phenomenon in human history, although its newness does not make it an external event to humankind itself. From that idea, she deduces the following:

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4 At this point, it is worth mentioning that Arendt distances herself from Marx's *theory of alienation*. The latter is based on the disregard for the specific phenomenon of *world alienation*: labor and *human alienation* are problematic effects of the capitalization process, because they deny explicitly the possibility to disclose a world in Arendt's sense (cf. Arendt 1958, 254).

The crisis of our time and its central experience have brought forth an entirely new form of government which as a potentiality and an ever-present danger is only too likely to stay with us from now on, just as other forms of governments which came about at different historical moments and rested on different fundamental experiences have stayed with mankind regardless of temporary defeats—monarchies, and republics, tyrannies, dictatorships and despotism. (1951, 628–629.)

Beyond the conclusion warning us that such a historical event has not yet been removed from humankind, although it has historically been defeated, the current essay finds the other element of her conclusion much more interesting. Totalitarianism is based on the fundamental experience of humankind within a certain historical period. That experience is what Arendt calls *terror*, which goes alongside with *ideology*, understood in a particular way. *Terror* is the human experience defined by the phenomena of *isolation* and *loneliness*.

The experience of *terror*, as already mentioned, is composed of two different phenomena: isolation and loneliness. *Isolation* is to be understood as a kind of human experience defined by the impossibility to act along with others in a social sphere. This happens when we cannot find a supportive institution that enables us to raise our voices or to make a claim against an injustice. An isolated human is the one who lacks the power to act, who lacks the capacity to have an impact on their surrounding world. Isolation and powerlessness, or incapacity, go hand in hand. Arendt continues by explaining that the experience of isolation is the defining element of tyrannical domination: a tyrant seeks to place himself in a position of power through the elimination of all types of dissidences within his kingdom or republic, but he keeps the private sphere of those who are under his rule intact. When a type of human life frees a certain space to act, even if that action is not of the sort of social or public activity, this maintains the realization of the human condition possible; even when it is limited. That is the case with tyranny: a life under it lacks public action, which is what Arendt calls *praxis*, but not *labor* and, even more importantly, *fabrication*.[5] For the purposes of the production of goods and human articles,

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5 For a more schematic explanation of this tripartition within the *vita activa*, cf.

which constitute our artificial but essentially human surrounding world, isolation can be recognized as a need. It is required to withdraw to one's own private sphere to be able to invent or produce something that will be included as part of the above-mentioned world. The human condition is then limited by the tyrannical domination, but not expressly denied. This is the fundamental difference, according to Arendt, between tyranny and totalitarianism. While the first attacks the public and collective activity of men and women, the second consists of denying reaction to that human condition, since it makes both fabrication and praxis impossible.

As well as isolation, *loneliness* is a fundamental human experience that in the years following World War I became extensive, as it started to affect more sectors of the global population. It is not a new experience that totalitarian domination has brought up, but rather a very limited one: prior to this, it had affected those elements of society that were marginalized, for instance, the elderly. However, currently it has started to define a general way to dwell in the world; it is a form that, as Arendt points out, has the particularity of being a human experience that denies the basic elements of the human condition. In fact, totalitarianism's aim "is not the transformation of the outside world or the revolutionizing transmutation of society, but the transformation of human nature itself" (1951, 601). To be lonely is not the same as being isolated: while isolation is to be understood as a lack of the institutions or the tools to act in the public sphere, loneliness is the experience of not belonging to the world where we live (1951, 624). It points to a collapse of all sorts of connections to the world, and is therefore intimately linked to the more concrete phenomena of *uprootedness* and *superfluousness*. Arendt will describe them as follows: "to be uprooted means to have no place in the world, recognized and guaranteed by others; to be superfluous means not to belong to the world at all" (1951, 624–625). Totalitarian movements define a singular form of sociability, a form that is characterized as a constant conflict of everyone against everyone; as well as a particular form of subjectivity that can be described as an experience of being part of a huge movement, which goes beyond oneself and the individuals with whom one is in contact, and from the perspective of which every individual

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Arendt 1958, 7–21.

is a dispensable part of a bigger and more important event. The epitome of totalitarian domination is the concentration camp.[6] Here, both elements found out in the experience of loneliness can be clearly noted. On the one hand, one's own existence is to be recognized as being in a constant conflict within the context of deep instability, while, on the other hand, this particular existence is irrelevant to the broader point of view of the movement, to which one belongs.

Hannah Arendt makes a huge effort to keep the difference between *loneliness* and *solitude* clear. Solitude is a better-known experience within the human history, for it has been felt by many individuals since the beginning of time. It is defined as a type of human experience that is based on the withdrawal into one's self, with whom we start a sort of an inner dialogue. Both are experiences whose basis is that of the disconnection from the social or collective world, but in their inner constitution lays a fundamental difference. While we are in solitude dialoguing with someone else (in this sense with our own self, which supposes that we are discussing with our own culture, our own history, or, to sum up, with our own world), in the phenomenon of loneliness we lack such a connection, since we have been separated even from our own self (cf. 1951, 625). Under such conditions, only one human capacity is left, the one, through which modern philosophy tried to renew itself: logical and deductive thinking, whose criteria to discern between true and false, right and wrong are a self-evident experience. This ability, referred to by Arendt somewhere else as the discovery of the Archimedean point (1958, 257–268), is the condition of ideology, since it does not need any external input, it needs only its own thinking path and logic. Deductive and logical thinking is a type of thinking that fails to reach a certain type of truth, because it does not disclose anything, any type of world shared with others. The *truth* "is of communicative nature and disappears beyond the sphere of communication" (2018, 119).

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Ideology is therefore not to be seen as a malfunction of human understanding or a combination of lies that, because of one reason or another, has a great effect on human communities, but rather as "the result of their atomization, of their loss of social status along with which they lost the whole sector of communal relationship in whose framework common sense makes sense" (1951, 461).

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6 Cf. Arendt 1951, 573–603.

Ideological constructions, such as the global Jewish conspiracy of the 1930s or the pandemic conspiracy of nowadays, find a fertile ground in societies, where human activity has been reduced to its minimum level or, in other words, where human action has been denied as a fundamentally common experience. As Arendt points out:

> What prepares men for totalitarian domination in the non-totalitarian world is the fact that loneliness, once a borderline experience usually suffered in a certain marginal social conditions like old age, has become an everyday experience of the evergrowing masses of our century. The merciless process into which totalitarianism drives and organizes the masses looks like a suicidal escape from this reality. The "ice-cold reasoning" and the "mighty tentacle" of dialectics which "seizes you as in a vise" appears like a last support in a world where nobody is reliable and nothing can be relied upon. It is the inner coercion whose only content is the strict avoidance of contradictions that seems to confirm a man's identity outside all relationship with others. […] [B]y teaching and glorifying the logical reasoning of loneliness where man knows that he will be utterly lost if ever he lets go of the first premise from which the whole process is being started, even the slim chances that loneliness may be transformed into solitude and logic into thought are obliterated. (1951, 627–628.)

3. Barbarians at the empire's borders: Totalitarian tendencies and the victory of *animal laborans*

The conditions behind such experiences have not changed, and that is one of the more important impulses that holds the directive intuition of this paper. Totalitarianism and terror are based, as we have already exposed, upon more basic phenomena, such as isolation and loneliness. Such phenomena originated within a particular group of shared conditions, which, despite the historical defeat of totalitarian regimes, can still be found today. What is then the fundamental condition that is still present in the 21st century? Something

that Arendt calls the victory of *animal laborans*,[7] which is, as we have already seen, one of the fundamental elements that constituted the modern *being-in-the-world*. As we can read on the last pages of *The Origins of Totalitarianism*:

> In isolation, man remains in contact with the world as the human artifice; only when the most elementary form of human creativity, which is the capacity to add something of one's own to the common world, is destroyed, isolation becomes altogether unbearable. This can happen in a world whose chief values are dictated by labor, that is where all human activities have been transformed into laboring. Under such conditions, only the sheer effort of labor which is the effort to keep alive is left and the relationship with the world as a human artifice is broken. Isolated man who lost his place in the political realm of action is deserted by the world of things as well, if he is no longer recognized as *homo faber* but treated as an *animal laborans* whose necessary "metabolism with nature" is of concern to no one. Isolation then becomes loneliness. (1951, 624.)

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The era of *animal laborans* is defined by a striking loss of world experience, since all sort of human activity is reduced to an expression of labor, which Arendt equates with a pure natural, or rather animal, process. As we can read at the end of *The Human Condition*:

> The last stage of the labouring society, the society of jobholders, demands of its members a sheer automatic functioning, as though individual life had actually been submerged in the over-all life process of species and the only active decision still required of the individual were to let go, so to speak, to abandon his individuality […] (1958, 322.)

This automatic process looks similar to the life most of us are familiar with: a life oriented towards labor, to a non-stopping activity that leads merely to the production and reproduction of our own humankind. This reduction of human life could be perfectly seen in the working conditions imposed by the Fordist

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7 Cf. Arendt 1958, 320–326.

model, but also, we would add, in the conditions, under which we are developing our labor nowadays. Under the slogans of flexibility, entrepreneurship, and "be your own boss," we are facing with a similar reality: a world, in which the production of new elements to be incorporated into the world of the things as well as the praxis of free and plural participation in the public and political spheres are gone. A world, in which the human condition has been demoted to a mere activity oriented towards the satisfaction of natural needs.

Since activity aiming towards satisfaction of natural or basic needs is a relatively individual activity—concludes Arendt—, society inhabited by *animal laborans* is such, where no one is of concern to anybody. Our threat, today, remains the same as in 20th century: a certain type of shared existence, where the only bond with others is a sort of organized loneliness. Following Arendt's appreciations, the latter:

> […] is considerably more dangerous than the unorganized impotence of all those who are ruled by the tyrannical and arbitrary will of a single man. Its danger is that it threatens to ravage the world as we know it—a world which everywhere seems to have to come to an end—before a new beginning rising from this end has had time to assert itself. (1951, 628.)

To conclude, we would like to seek a distance from Arendt's last diagnosis or, rather, from her conclusions concerning the "victory of *animal laborans*." Against Arendt, we must state with Marx (and many others)[8] that the recreation of the political character of Athens (1958, 133), which in her—as well as in Marx's—eyes seems to be the only efficient remedy against totalitarianism, must be achieved by a concrete human emancipation from labor.[9] This cannot be equated to a mere transformation of the conditions, in which the working masses perform their duties, but rather to a transformation of the whole phenomenon of labor in such a way that what Arendt considers

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8 Good examples among them are Lafargue's iconic appeal to laziness (1883) as well as Marcuse's critique of the Soviet (1958) and the Western societies (1964).
9 For an overview of Arendt's reading of Marx, cf. Arendt 2002 and Fonti 2001, 226–240.

unbearable—i.e., the primordial position of labor in our current times—can, in fact, be overcome. An emancipation of labor will lead to an overwhelming consumption—as she states—, only if the over-all framework that makes it possible does not change as well.

If we agree on the fact that the current stage of capitalist development deepens the conditions that generated historical totalitarianism in the sense explained in this paper, then we might also agree that everyday explanations of this new totalitarian tendencies—which are based upon a malfunction of human understanding due to fake news or directly to the effects of ideology— are vague or imprecise. The resurgence of that type of human existence can be due to a revival of the same scenarios that brought up organized lonely masses as leading powers in the interwar period: a new mass of dispossessed, lonely, and isolated people is at our doors, and endangers not only the already obsolete liberal institutions, but every type of collective existence. It consists not of barbarians who stand at the empire's external borders, but of citizens who, due to the conditions, have been forced to desert their prerogatives and duties as active parts of a cultural and political community.

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Gintautas Mažeikis

Faustian Hope and Power
Bataille, Bloch, Habermas

Abstract: The article discusses the ideas of Bataille and Bloch about the transgressiveness of hope and the role of hope's energy in the cases of individual and collective actions. A hope is the "not-yet-conscious," but it is not neutral; it is socially and culturally oriented. There are many forms of expectation, but the article focuses on the Faustian visions that, according to O. Spengler, characterize Western thinking. The principle of hope explored by Bataille, Bloch, and Habermas presupposes that individuals or cultural communities create different fantasies of the future, and turn them into utopias and rational projects of modernization. Faustian hope exists either as a disruptive, cynical desire for the vertical power, or as a narcissistic, even ecstatic practice. The article discusses Faustian hope in the case of the vertical of power and the state of exception.

Keywords: Faustian hope, utopia, transgression, the accursed share, the vertical of power.

Introduction

Contemporary phenomenology and Critical Theory presuppose that the social and cultural role of emotions depends on the imaginary and communicative praxis of human beings. Unlike faith, which is primarily a passive emotion, hope is an active action. It does not resign but engages people in the struggle to overcome the current situation and open up a new or the lost old state. Thomas Meisenhelder ponders upon active interactions between phenomenology and

Critical Theory (Meisenhelder 1982), analyzes Jean-Paul Sartre's dialectics of emotions as a way of apprehending the world, discusses Maurice Merleau-Ponty's concept of hope that displaces the instinctive, the carnal fear of death, and shows Jürgen Habermas's theory of hopeful speech acts as the driver of constructive social communication. My approach is similar, because the analysis is based on the intersections between phenomenology and Critical Theory, as well as also different, because the attention is paid to Georges Bataille's and Ernst Bloch's considerations. Bataille presented hope as an ecstatic praxis of self-creation; Bloch analyzed the principle of hope and its ability to support class liberation from the Marxist perspective. Habermas is critical of the Marxist interpretations of dreams of class struggle, and develops the theory of communicative action. Faustian symbolism that is wide-spread in literature could be interpreted as negative and critical public communicative praxis that intends to limit individual, aristocratic, or capitalistic cynicism. Assuming that our desires are less realistic and even illusory as well as that dreams are fantastic and sometimes dangerous, any society seeks to control or exploit them through education, public relations, and propaganda. The development of human beings could be either horizontal, quantitative, or vertical, qualitative. For example, a career in the institutions of the apparatus of power and religious hierarchies presupposes a thinking of the vertical. They even use the concept of the vertical of power and interpret it through ecstatic imagination. For a long time, the concept of vertical transgression was perceived as a sacral act performed by angelic or demonic forces. The exegetical biblical literature interpreted the sinful fall or becoming a saint by the metaphor of Jacob's ladder that was substituted by the form of the imaginary of career and, later, of any institutional lift of possibilities.

The climbing of people up the vertical ladder is stimulated by the desire for power to realize personal or world changes, and to justify cultural, scientific, and technical progress. Hegelian and Marxist philosophy argues for the dialectical negation as a leap from one level of socio-economic formation to a higher socio-political state and, to this end, develops the idea of individual and collective becoming or *Bildung*, which can be presented as the fulfillment of immanent sources and as a liberation from previous structural forms. Hegel and the Marxists associated *Bildung* with the concept

of *Aufhebung*, which means stepping up by exploiting the results of previous stages and negating its power that nowadays corresponds to advancing a career by the bureaucracy ladder: the previous stages have to serve the new status of the subject.

Many poets and philosophers (Goethe's Faust, Lord Byron's Manfred, Oscar Wilde's Dorian Gray, and Friedrich Nietzsche's Zarathustra) exploited the topic of Faustian hope. The condition for the fulfillment of the forbidden desire was a free self-relation with the radical Negation that could be signified by the figure of Satan or by rebellion against God. Today, human beings guided by Faustian hope seek supernatural elevation and use related technologies of power; they expect a trans-human development, the limitless expansion and rejuvenation of human forces, cynically ignoring the interests of other people and generations. To achieve the Faustian ideal of wisdom, omnipotence, and youth, they are ready to reject other communities' interests even by committing crimes. The character of "vertical" growth, especially if it is exceptional or criminal, is supplemented by ecstatic praxis and is presented as some sort of demonic or divine collaboration and corresponding sacrifice.

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Bataille explored the parallel between the danger of excess energy and the desire for the individual to become a sovereign, and linked the idea of individual and social development to the breaking of moral boundaries, to the phenomenon of the damned part. To get exclusive power over other people the subject is ready to break social and moral norms as well as law. "The accursed share" (Bataille 1991–1993) is at the same time a transcendent, sacred part, and a crime, and the actual becoming depends on the character of political class, individual imagination, and existing practices of breaking social norms. Bataille was less interested in the interpretation of archetypal images and figures like Faust, although the figure of Marshal Gilles de Rais, which Bataille interpreted, has many similarities to the Faustian tradition. Bloch ignored Bataille's idea that "the accursed share" could be used for illegal or revolutionary uprising, and supported György Lukács's theory of class-consciousness and historical development. Bloch considered the phenomenon of becoming in the context of the concepts of hope and utopia, and explained the role of archetypal imagination as the form of substituted interpretation of social and class development. He was critical of the Frankfurt School of Social Research but was involved in discussions with them, especially

before World War II. There are parallels between Bloch's approach to Marxist interpretations of Faustian hope and Horkheimer's and Adorno's reasoning about archetypical figures of Odysseus, Marquis de Sade, and Faust. Habermas tried to reconsider the ideas of Bataille and Bloch in several books, and critically drew attention to the power of symbols and the energy of utopias to understand the potential progress of social heterogeneity and the public communicative role of archetypical symbolism.

Bataille's excess of the accursed share

Bataille associates affective power with the accumulated excess energy that should be wasted in nonproductive actions, in order to escape the social explosion and liberate human beings from surplus reification. However, the same energy can be used for military purposes or persuasion of the masses, or the accumulation of the symbolic power necessary for the ascension through the social and religious hierarchies. According to Bataille, "the accursed share" is the surplus-value of the successful economy that cannot be invested into economic growth, not only in the case of the absence of technologies and skills necessary for it, but, moreover, should be wasted for the satisfaction of nonproductive wishes to normalize social relationships. Accursed sharing means spending surplus-value on the rituals, arts, luxury, fiestas, or wars.

Bataille found that heterogeneous groups (individuals, aristocrats of spirit, religious believers, merchants, and militaries) of interests could waste or utilize surplus energy in a subjective and non-instrumental way, which has non-commercial symbolical value. He explains the wasting of nonproductive energy as different modes of transgression that do not correspond to rational utilitarian, normative behavior, but satisfy expectations of rituals, holidays, and carnivals, and argues for charismatic power. The concept of transgression replaces the ideas of dialectical negation, rejects the compulsory synthesis, and, in many cases, presupposes liberation from previous moral and status conditions: the slave can become a king for some time. Bataille considers the radical transgression as a result of "the accursed share," which Giorgio Agamben related with the phenomenon of *homo sacer* and the state of exception. On the other side,

the effect of the accursed share promises that any person can become a king or a saint and climb up the heaven's hierarchies.

The excess energy of the accursed share encourages the mystical search for demons and angels, supports religious and sexual journeys, helps to create a sacred vertical of power, and wastes resources for the symbolical, unproductive purposes. Potlach and religious sacrifice, ecstatic religious and ideological rituals are forms of transgressive becoming affected by the accursed share. Bataille's reflections on the trial of the French Marshal Gilles de Rais in 1440 give an example similar to the searches of Faust and de Sade. De Rais was the military commander of the French army and fought hand in hand with Joan of Arc at the end of the Hundred Years' War. After military action, de Rais was greatly disappointed by the brutal burning of Joan, frustrated and devoted to the search for demonic forces. To that end, he performed demonic rituals and, according to evidence gathered by the Inquisition, brutally killed many children. The Inquisition "proved" that he was seeking a sacral relationship with the devil. Bataille interprets the case of de Rais as an example of the traumatic mental syndrome of feudal egocentric consciousness in searching for the sense of life stepping down by the vertical of power. Military feudal lords imagined themselves as centers of any sacred transgression, as a turning point of the mystical vertical: "Day in and day out, he waits for the Devil, his supreme hope […]." (Bataille 1991, 283.)

Bataille interpreted Marquis de Sade's practices and writings and explained the radical violations in Sade's book *The 120 Days of Sodom, or the School of Libertinage*. De Sade's writings and life present analogous intentions to de Rais, but more philosophical and reflective, without demonic mystification. De Sade demonstrated the hope that sexual violence will become a restoration of the original forces of nature. In order to liberate sexuality and violence, he broke many moral norms to create a new relationship based on the excess of "natural" desires and cruelty (Bataille 2001, 119). Bataille explains the excess of being and the accursed share that sadistic ecstasy can reach. De Sade corresponded to and illustrated the time and spirit of the Great French Jacobin Revolution, the cult of violence, and its sexual significance. He did not need the vision of the devil, and hoped to restore the laws of nature, and in his book *Philosophy in the Bedroom* he created a philosophical-sexual utopia. Bataille analyzes and

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discusses similar examples to explain the ecstatic character of the verticals of being in many cases presented in the form of the vertical of power. According to Habermas, Bataille's proposal is "impossible" (Habermas 2008, 211) for a morally and rationally homogeneous society.

The European hope of becoming a young-old state, the wish to be energetic, impulsive, and educated at the same time is a Faustian idea transposed onto the national level. At first glance it seems that the Faustian state remains old, experienced, and young, energetic, and full of love at once, after it had been revived after selling its soul to Mephistopheles. On the contrary, the failure of Renaissance and the end of Reformation demonstrate a downfall, like a sunset. The fear of decline drives the Western people to seek for the inner spirit of Mephistopheles, in order to obtain another youth. Nazi Germany was an example of the national Faustian idea and its implementation. The Third Reich promised to build a new, youthful Germany with thousands of years of experience and scientific knowledge. The desire to be a leader in Europe, hubris, and the wish to become young again, but also the fear of novelty, leads to resentment, to moral transgression.

As a new example of a hedonistic cynicism without hope for the future, we could cite the cynicism in the novels of the French writer Michel Houellebecq. Interesting is his novel *La Possibilité d'une île*—a post-Faustian dystopia of eternal youth concerning the continuation of an endless man, the absurdity of eternal life. The Russian writer Dmitry Glukhovsky published the book *Futu.re* on the same subject of the halting of aging and the eternal continuation of life. His post-Faustian conclusions are even more destructive than the ones presented by Houellebecq. Eternal youth is achieved by destroying childhood and old age, and thereupon such a continuation becomes the emptiness and meaninglessness of hedonism. The lack of an opportunity to sacrifice one's family, friends, and neighbors for a better life destroys a person's personality.

Bloch on the Faustian principle of hope

Bloch developed ideas related to Faustian hope in his books *Das Prinzip Hoffnung* and *Tübinger Einleitung in die Philosophie* that Habermas interpreted as "a mirror of a philosopher's wanderings and of his inner development—a

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mind's Odyssey in the spirit of Exodus" (Habermas 1970). Bloch interpreted the phenomenon of hope in the context of the Hegelian phenomenology of spirit: hope foresees, thematizes, and perceives the future. Bloch interprets Faust's idea as a terrible hope, as an alienated and altered case of social consciousness. Parallelly to Horkheimer's and Adorno's discussion of Odysseus's metaphor in the book *The Dialectic of Enlightenment*, Bloch considers the Faustian principle to be a phenomenon of the European enlightenment. They all borrowed such interpretations from Hegel while interpreting the phenomenology of spirit either as a journey of Odysseus or as the desires of Faust in the history of the Western thought. They rethink the concept of *List der Vernunft*, which describes both Homer's Odysseus and Goethe's Faust. The rational ruse of Odysseus was revealed on the journey, and this was the beginning of the enlightened consciousness (*aufgeklärtes Bewusstsein*), which was presented in Hegel's *Phänomenologie des Geistes*. Bloch interprets the cunning reason differently than Horkheimer and Adorno, and presents it in the context of a people struggling against exploitation as "the human part of the weak" (Bloch 1995a, 354). He explains that many of the heroes of myths, fairy tales, and history, such as, for example, Odysseus and Faust, do not express the ideas of open class struggle, do not present productive social emancipation, but are the form of "anticipatory consciousness" (Kellner 1976, 16). Bloch interprets anticipatory consciousness as a figurative prolongation, as a feudal self-liberation, as a capitalist cynicism, or as a dream of the emancipation of exploited people. The future can be imagined as fantastic and alien, but if we develop our political consciousness and our critical competencies, hope will turn into individual or communal becoming. There is no immanent dialectics of subjects (individual, community, society) without a painful transformation or metamorphosis up or down the ladder of the power of social hierarchies. Bloch considers the stages of development of human consciousness in the context of Hegel's *The Phenomenology of Spirit* and Nicholas of Cusa's dialectics of self-explication (Bloch 1970, 53) that correlates to Goethe's idea of *Bildung* as a vertical becoming. There are many archetypal characters for the hope of becoming:

> The fictional figures of *human venturing beyond the limits* then appear: Don Giovanni, Odysseus, Faust, the last precisely on the way to

the perfect moment, in utopia which thoroughly experiences the world; Don Quixote warns and demands, in dream-monomania, dream-depth. (Bloch 1995a, 16).

Mythological figures and archetypes are not neutral to each other and can negate, support each other, or create new symbolic organizations and developmental trajectories, delivering either friendship or "forms of hatred." The most popular are mythical archetypes, but they can also be of literary origin: Don Quixote and King Lear, Don Juan, Faust.

Bloch divides affects into two major groups. The first is prepared and full of emotions (jealousy, greed, respect). The second consists of open, yet undeveloped emotions of waiting (fear, hope, faith). Bloch considers the role of expectations in the context of class *Bildung*—class becoming. The European culture has developed a special poetic and symbolic practice of cultivating individual, communal, and societal emotions. Poets, writers, and philosophers cultivate hope, turn it into works of ethics and aesthetics, reflect upon it, and

358   associate it with religion, ideology, with the basic norms of society harmonizing with cultural and civilizational requirements of their *Zeitgeist*. Literally and philosophically developed hopes turn into utopias and gain political significance in the shaping of plans for the "utopian frontier-content" (Bloch 1995a, 16). The Faustian idea of immanent rebirth is limited depending on the approach to novelty. On the one hand, Goethe's Faust seeks to open up new horizons of knowledge, and Mephistopheles helps him. On the other hand, the role of knowledge is limited by serving the cynical needs of the subject. The French Jacobins and the Soviet Communists were more radical in terms of innovation and the future, they tried to break all old life forms, and had other hopes and utopias. Marxists maintained the image of Prometheus and historical symbols of the uprising, such as Spartacus, or created new images of Marx, Rosa Luxemburg, and Lenin.

Bloch believes that the myth of Prometheus presents an energetic past, which could blow up the present (Bloch 1995a, 9). According to him, Marxist philosophy seeks to open up the future by exploring the energy stored in the past and thus resurrecting the most radical dreams. The image of Prometheus competes with the picture of Lucifer. Lord Byron portrayed Lucifer's

revolutionary role in the poetic work *Cain*, where Lucifer acts like a Prometheus: they both carry light, give it to the people, and oppose the will of a higher god. However, Lucifer, like Faust, remained an individual cynic, and, despite Byron's attempts, did not become a symbol of the socialist revolution. Communists rejected the cultural proposals of the feudal lords and the aristocracy, and choose the tragic figure of Spartacus, the leader of the ancient Roman slave uprising (Bloch 1995b, 1171). At the end of World War I, the German socialist revolutionaries called themselves "The Spartacus League" (*Spartakusbund*) and edited the newspaper entitled *Spartakusbriefe*. Prometheus, Spartacus, and Faust represented different symbolical constellations in the same historical time and proposed different matrixes to interpret reality: Spengler supported the aristocratic Faustian imaginary, and Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht were active in the *Spartakusbund*.

Communicative energy of hope and utopia

Habermas criticizes and continues some of Bataille's and Bloch's ideas, and explores their conceptions of the excess power and the crisis of utopian thinking. Bataille and Bloch emphasize different energies: Bataille discusses the excess of the accursed share as part of the energy that is libido and eroticism, and, conversely, Bloch emphasizes the stimulating power of hunger in the direct physical and metaphorical sense: "Bloch follows the same motif when he stresses hunger over Freudian libido as the fundamental drive […] Hunger appears as the elemental energy of hope." (Habermas 1969/1970, 311.)

However, there is the third source of wild energy: anxiety or even fear, which was discussed by Martin Heidegger and the follower of Habermas Axel Honneth. The fear of death and Nothingness, and the radical negation coerce people to fight for their survival in the tragic periods of history and, according to Bataille, open the gate for the vertical transgression.

Habermas realizes that Bataille and Bloch have very different views, although they are both looking for visions of future and hope for them. According to Bataille, the accursed share and its energy are unproductive, undefeated, and can free people from alienated self-reproduction and commodification. Bloch also seeks to free people from stagnation and confusion by encouraging

dreaming and creating utopias, yet relies not on considerations of libidinal energy, but on political classes driven by hunger and scarcity. Habermas synthesizes both of them: Bataille's creative and subjective approach, which is in line with Nietzsche's and Adorno's visions of subjective power, and Bloch's concepts, which are partly similar to Lukács's, Horkheimer's, and Herbert Marcuse's ideas of social liberation.

Habermas supports and criticizes Bloch who tried to galvanize socialist utopian energies, and thinks that the trauma of the Western expectations and the crisis of the utopian future after the collapse of the Soviet Union characterize contemporary consumer liberal society. He does not consider that soviet imperial hopes can start to be a new totalitarian utopia, as the case of the Russian aggression against Ukraine in 2022 demonstrates. The social and political utopias are exchanged by rational instrumental projects, calculation of benefit, or by the desire for power. And Faustian hope for the greatest power characterizes Stalin's, Hitler's, and Putin's ecstatic dreams. Faustian irrationality characterizes state and individual hopes for reaching cynical imperial happiness and for the construction of a new utopia for this purpose. However, does this mean that we need to reject all the utopias? Habermas asks, what does it mean to think about the political future, if we have no public hopes? His conception of publicity (*Öffentlichkeit*) is communicative, it negates Faustian subjectivity, and presents new perspectives on the heterogeneous and public communicative mind with its archetypal symbolism. The entropy of utopian energy in cynical and individualistic consumer society and the ideology of the selfish welfare state demonstrate the limits of neoliberal society and illusions of public communication. The crisis of utopian thinking in liberal societies gives opportunities for the building of new totalitarian states with strong verticals of power and promises for mass society. Democratic societies have to revive political hopes through public discussions of utopian images, in order to stop future wars, to help refugees, or to control global warming. Habermas considered utopia as an important condition of the *Zeitgeist* or the feeling of future:

> Infected by the Zeitgeist's focus on the significance of the current moment and attempting to hold firm under the pressure of current problems, political thought becomes charged with utopian energies—

but at the same time, this excess of expectations is to be controlled by the conservative counterweight of historical experience. (Habermas 1991, 49.)

Utopian hope breaks at the frontier and transcends existing norms and rules of the socio-political regime. The most energetic symbols and discourses are related to wars, revolutions, crises, and religious movements; they have great mobilizing or disorganizing power and are deeply embroiled in myths, into the "Not-Yet-Conscious" (Bloch 1995a, 118) of people. This "Not-Yet-Conscious" (*das "Noch-Nicht-Bewußte"*) signifies that hope is not fully rational in the sense of logical or databased scientific thinking, and acts between a dream and the rational choice. Esteban Marín-Ávila maintains that hope is similar to trust and is the condition for rational actions in society. On the contrary, in the analysis of propaganda implementation in the case of vertical power and desires of crowds, we meet the situation of manipulative, irrational "Not-Yet-Conscious" (Marín-Ávila 2021). Habermas found that contemporary welfare state and the Western consumerism lost the capacity to open transcendent expectations for public discussions and exhausted utopian energy because of the growth of alienated individualism. He supports the idea of heterogeneity, not only because of the wasting of excess energy on the ecstatic, for example, artistic rituals, but regarding the rational policy of diversity, communicative symbolical interactions, and the funding of the growth of social diversity. The idea of ecstatic energy is, thus, transformed into the idea of social and cultural, artistic energy, and into the orientation towards diversity.

Conclusions

Many people hope for a career in the vertical of power and interpret it mystically as dependent on the irrational power of authoritarian solutions. Aristocratic, individualistic, cynical transgression of the communicative rules and common praxis demands specific archetypes and images that help to ignore the values of communities. Christian mysticism, which originated in the Middle Ages, meditates on the ascent upon Jacob's ladder as an alienated form of climbing the steps of hierarchy, discusses Providence, manipulates by using Theurgy, or

builds exclusive supremacy. However, the problem lies in the social recognition of vertical becoming and the legitimation of the vertical of power, which demands special narratives. Diversity of power narratives creates heterogeneity and inequality. Bataille interprets heterogeneity as some sort of irrational social diversity, as an opportunity for exceptions that can be achieved through luxury, potlach, organizing of parties, gifts, modern arts, or as an ecstasy, whether in psychedelic or cruel rituals. The accursed share lies neither in the productive activity nor in the instrumental mind, nor in the realm of reification and market exchange, but is an irrational waste, a subjective but disinterested vision of art, and it helps to construct the irrationality of the vertical of power. Habermas believes that social gifting is a form of communal solidarity and communicative action, and can thus enable participation without selfish benefits. The diversity we create depends on the images we nurture and the hopes we turn into practical action. Bloch acknowledged that many of our expectations and desires correspond to mythological or fictional archetypes: Faust, Don Juan, Lucifer, Prometheus, Spartacus, Medea, Salome, etc., and related symbolic organizations.

362 Any artistic action requires a certain topic and narrative to reflect and change the expectations of the ruling class. The role of philosophy is to translate the artists' and writers' imagination and alienated class expectations into critical language. Habermas is cautious in interpreting Bloch's Marxist concept of the social and cultural imagination, but supports that our public communication is themed around significant and powerful symbols. Bloch is full of hope for socialism, which is compatible with the history of the European culture, and reveals the essential development of man. Habermas avoids such a harsh Marxist, classical approach in this regard, but tends to support Bataille's and Adorno's ideas about the artist's ability to subjectively express universal ideas. He believes that this creative initiative refreshes and energizes the diversity of our communication activities and destroys the hard verticals of power. Without this energy, heterogeneous becoming would be impossible, and social and cultural diversity would not be revealed.

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Guelfo Carbone

A Way Out of Nazism?
Heidegger and the "Shepherd of Being"

Abstract: Heidegger's involvement with the Nazi movement in the early 1930s is both a renowned and an extensively debated topic, which has recently been brought into the spotlight once again with the publications of the so-called *Schwarze Hefte*, raising new questions regarding well-established issues. The paper addresses the topic of the "shepherd of being" as it recurs in the *Black Notebooks* from the second half of the 1940s, by testing the hypothesis that the shepherd represents a key figure of Heidegger's philosophical way out of Nazism. This topic not only relates to Heidegger's own involvement, but also to those peculiar transformations of political power brought about by the spread of totalitarianism, which Heidegger was able to perceive and partly also analyze, and which are still recognizable in our present time, as both Foucault and Agamben have pointed out.

Keywords: Martin Heidegger, *Black Notebooks*, totalitarianism, political leadership.

1. Introduction: New terms for a *vexata quaestio*

In light of the publication of the first volumes of *Schwarze Hefte* (*Black Notebooks*), Heidegger's involvement in the Nazi movement has been recently addressed once more, raising new questions about longtime established issues. In particular, this discussion concerns two main points: on the one hand, Heidegger's account of his own active commitment to the political plans of the National Socialist Workers' Party during the period of his rectorship of the University of Freiburg in 1933–1934,[1] and, on the other hand, the controversial

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1 See, among others: Zaborowski 2010; Farin and Malpas 2016; Espinet *et al*. 2018.

charge of anti-Semitism.[2]

The *Schwarze Hefte* that date back to the 1930s and 1940s are the *Überlegungen* (translated into English as *Ponderings*) and the *Anmerkungen* (*Notes*). The first, basic finding provided by these *Notebooks* is that Heidegger's intense and radical *Auseinandersetzung* (confrontation) with Nazism extends way beyond his "short-lived, though concerted, partisanship for Hitler's regime,"[3] and continues, intermittently and with varying intensity, for approximately eighteen years, from the end of 1932 to 1950. By taking a philosophical, non-ideologically oriented interpretation of the whole Heidegger affair, we are able to pinpoint the two key experiences involved in this crucial *Auseinandersetzung* that outlives the actual duration of the Nazi regime, and that appears often in the *Notebooks* from the 1930s and 40s. First, the "great error" of the rectorship, as Heidegger himself calls it in *Ponderings and Intimations III* (Heidegger 2016, 145).[4] Second, the denazification process that Heidegger had to face immediately after the war. These two experiences in combination give rise to a unique meditation marked by "despair" (*Verzweiflung*), which affects Heidegger's "thinking of ~~beyng~~ [*kd*]" throughout the second half of the 1940s, as we read in the 1947–1948 *Anmerkungen IV* (Heidegger 2015, 387).[5]

In this desperate and hopeless confrontation, National Socialism is interpreted by Heidegger, together with other representatives of nihilism, such as Bolshevism and Americanism, as a prominent historical expression of the late outburst of modernity, namely, as a substantial phenomenon included in

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2 See, among others: Homolka and Heidegger 2016; Mitchell and Trawny 2017; Lapidot and Brumlik 2017.

3 See Löwith 1995, 7, as cited in: Thomson 2005, 32.

4 On the "error" of the rectorship in 1933, see the important, albeit later reflections in the *Anmerkungen*, in: Heidegger 2015, 98 f., 127, 143, and 147 f. See also Crowell 2016.

5 On the role of despair, see: Carbone 2021c and Cera 2020. In this paper, we use *kd*, in brackets, an abbreviation for *kreuzweise durchgestrichen*, in reference to Heidegger's habit of crossing out the word *Seyn* or *Sein* in his later writings using an X-shaped cross similar to the *crux decussata* (on this, see Ardovino 2005, 86). We have rendered it graphically simply by adding a strikethrough on the term. Furthermore, the word *beyng* is conventionally used in the *Ponderings* translations to render the German word *Seyn*. In cases where there is no English version available of the cited texts, all translations are this author's own.

those "machinational signs" (Heidegger 2017, 5) that go back to the dominant, epoch-making *Machenschaft* ("machination"),[6] which is not to be overlooked and underestimated, as he writes in the 1939 *Ponderings XII*.[7]

Moreover, as is already well known, these *Ponderings* and *Anmerkungen* show that the confrontation with Nazism, and particularly with the regime of power established by the Nazis, revolves around the question of technology, not least thanks to the groundbreaking take on technology elaborated in these *Schwarze Hefte* (Mazzarella 2021). Therefore, Heidegger's confrontation with Nazism entails a profound meditation on the very notion of power (*Macht*) and its transformations related to fundamental aspects of everyday life under the Nazi regime, such as communication strategies, propaganda, social control techniques, the display of hegemony, or the nature of authoritarian violence.[8] All these topics can be found in the *Black Notebooks*, and they will be deepened by later philosophical investigations devoted to the European totalitarian regimes of the past century, particularly by Foucault (2003; 2007) on biopolitics, and by Agamben (2017) on sovereignty.

In this context, one of the most relevant topics that comes to the foreground in the *Schwarze Hefte* from the late 1940s is the shepherd of being (*der Hirt des Seins*). Indeed, before the *Notebooks* were released, we knew the figure of the shepherd of being only through some important, albeit rather sporadic and scattered mentions in Heidegger's published work. To name but a few, these include: the *Letter on "Humanism"*, the *Anaximander's Saying*, both dating back to 1946, the 1949 conference entitled "The Turn" (*Die Kehre*), the 1963 letter to Takehiko Kojima, and the 1969 seminar in Le Thor.[9] In the 1947–1948 *Anmerkungen III*, *IV*, and *V*, the figure of the "shepherd of being" gains a key role.[10]

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6 See, e.g., Heidegger 2016, 217.
7 See Heidegger 2017, 5 f. For an insightful as well as useful assessment of this crucial period, based on a close reading of the *Black Notebooks*, see the "critical reconstruction" by Esposito (2021).
8 See Trawny's "Afterword" to *Ponderings II–VI*, in: Heidegger 2016, 386.
9 See, respectively: Heidegger 1998, 252 and 260; 2002, 262; 2003, 63; 2006, 160; 2012, 67.
10 See, especially: Heidegger 2015, 51, 118, 312, 371 f., 376, 378, 383 f., 402, and 458. An extensive analysis of the figure of the shepherd of being in the *Schwarze Hefte* can be found in: Carbone 2021b, 94–116.

The hypothesis that shall be put to the test in what follows is that the shepherd of being represents a pivotal figure for Heidegger's *Auseinandersetzung* with Nazism, and, in particular, that this *Denkfigur* (figure of thinking), as we would like to provisionally call it, indirectly represents a tentative philosophical way out of Nazism. Indeed, the figure of the shepherd hints back not only to Heidegger's own involvement in the political plans of the National Socialist Party, but also to the peculiar transformations of political power and political leadership brought about by the European totalitarian regimes during the same years as the *Black Notebooks*. Transformations that are still recognizable in our present time, as both Foucault and Agamben have pointed out.

Methodologically, this hypothesis is based on a combined reading of Heidegger's 1946 *Letter on "Humanism"*, published in 1947, where the figure of the shepherd of being famously appears, and the *Black Notebooks* dating from approximately the same period (1946–1949). The proposed hypothesis also implies that, in those years of despair, the figure of the shepherd is intended by Heidegger as guiding *Ereignis-Denken*, the thinking of the event of appropriation of humans and being. The *Denkfigur* of the shepherd of being recapitulates the overcoming of metaphysics, directing *Ereignis-Denken* towards the present historical destiny, which stems from the harrowing and catastrophic conclusion of the Second World War, as well as from the tragic consequences of the criminal totalitarian leaderships in Europe.

During a very intense period of about four years (from *Anmerkungen I* to *Anmerkungen IX*, collected in volumes 97 and 98 of the *Gesamtausgabe*), the figure of the shepherd of being attracts, with varying intensity and in a non-systematic manner, all the key themes of *Ereignis-Denken*, which can be found in the aforementioned *Notebooks*, such as (i) the need to come to terms with the irretrievable forgottenness or oblivion of being, (ii) the way towards the completion of the overcoming of metaphysics, and (iii) the corresponding overcoming of the human being as *animal rationale*. As regards the period indicated for the purposes of the present argument, it should be noted that in the *Anmerkungen IV* (1947–1948) the "shepherd of ~~beyng~~ [*kd*]," who is charged with the duty to protect the complete forgottenness of being, is depicted as the coming human being, or the "future man" (Heidegger 2015, 383) who

becomes the mortal man, and that, after 1949, the shepherd simply gives way to the "mortals," in the plural.[11]

2. Neither a metaphor nor a leader of people

In what follows, we shall focus on two different interpretations of this *Denkfigur*, arguing that both are proved wrong by what can be read today in the *Black Notebooks*. The first thesis holds that the shepherd of being is a metaphor, and nothing more. The second thesis compares the shepherd to a *dux gregis*, a Latin expression that literally means leader of the flock. This latter case implies the consequence of taking the shepherd of being as evidence that Heidegger's fascination for Hitler, the *dux*, the *Führer* of his country, continues after his involvement in the Nazi politics, and even after the war had ended. The first position tends to neutralize the figure of the shepherd, reducing it to a mere metaphor to be explained through something else. The second one tends to emphasize it beyond its actual significance, in order to use it to explain something else. In both cases, the meaning of the *Denkfigur* of the shepherd, as well as its role in *Ereignis-Denken*, are overlooked. Since both the meaning and the role can be reassessed thanks to the new source material provided in the *Schwarze Hefte*, it should be noted that the two theses considered in what follows were formulated before the publication of the *Black Notebooks*, and also before the publication of volume 82 of the *Gesamtausgabe*, which provides some very important, albeit only a few, notes to contextualize the figure of the shepherd of being (Heidegger 2018a, 563–576).

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In his famous work on Heidegger's way through phenomenology to thought, Richardson (1963, 439, 525, and 524 f.) refers to the *Hirt des Seins* as a

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11 On mortals in later *Black Notebooks*, see, especially, Heidegger 2020a, 134–137, 141 f., 181, and 191. On the use of the plural "mortals" by Heidegger, borrowed "from the Greeks," see Arendt (1994, 443) who explains that "[w]hat is important here is not the emphasis on mortality, but the use of the plural." Since Heidegger "has never articulated the implications of his position on this point," Arendt is careful to add that "it may be presumptuous to read too much significance into his use of the plural" (ibid.). However, the *Anmerkungen III–IX* recently issued in the series of the *Black Notebooks* are extremely helpful in clarifying the importance of the shift from *man* to the plurality of *mortals*.

metaphor. In turn, in the essay that presents the French version of Heidegger's 1945 conference entitled *Die Armut* ("Poverty"), Lacoue-Labarthe (2004, 50 and 65) simply dismisses the topic, claiming that it is worse than a case of an unlucky metaphor; rather, the shepherd of being is "pastoral rubbish" and "Neolithic reverie."

Such alleged residual "rubbish" has been deemed to have implications for Heidegger's path of thinking. It has been claimed, for instance, that the figure of the shepherd represents an "idyllic, rustic metaphor" (Pastore 2001, 199) that appears in the *Letter on "Humanism"* with the specific task of mitigating and diminishing Heidegger's involvement in the Nazi movement. According to this viewpoint, his involvement with the Nazi regime is purposely not mentioned in the 1946 letter, since the *Humanismusbrief* is a self-absolving statement and is part of Heidegger's indirect strategy of denying responsibility for his political error of taking on the rectorship. Yet, to take the shepherd of being as a rustic metaphor is not only misleading, but it is contrary to what Heidegger explicitly argues. Furthermore, and beyond Heidegger's arguments, this position does not allow us to fully grasp the philosophical role of such an important *Denkfigur*.

As we read in the 1947–1948 *Anmerkungen IV* (Heidegger 2015, 371 f.), if the human being is thought of as the "shepherd of being," the existence of the shepherd, in this case, has nothing in common with the idyllic life of a herdsman (or sheepherder), not even in name. This point had been already clarified in the 1946 *Anaximander's Saying*, published in the 1950 volume of the *Holzwege*:

> Preservation as the protection of being belongs to the shepherd; a shepherd who has so little to do with bucolic idylls and nature mysticism that he can become the shepherd of being only if he remains the place-holder for the Nothing. Both are the same. (Heidegger 2002, 262.)[12]

The reference to the "place-holder for the Nothing" is crucial, since, according to Heidegger, the shepherd of being, namely, the future human being, is basically a mortal who does not possess anything, not even his or

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12 On this, see also David 1993.

her own death, because death means radical dispossession. As we are told in *Anmerkungen IV*: the shepherd is above all a mortal, and a mortal is one who essentially exists in the complete and irretrievable abandonment by beyng. Therefore, a mortal is able to dwell in the proximity of the heart of "departure," of *Abschied* (Heidegger 2015, 384). Heidegger flags such complete abandonment by crossing out the word "*Seyn*" ("beyng") with an X-shaped cross (here rendered as a strikethrough line), so that in these *Black Notebooks* the shepherd is mostly called: *Hirt des ~~Seyns~~* [*kd*], shepherd of ~~beyng~~ [*kd*].[13]

In the *Anmerkungen III* (which date back to 1946–1947), we read that if humans truly become mortals, namely, if humans enter the relationship with death in the sense of the event of appropriation (*Ereignis*), then humans become the "shepherd of ~~being~~ [*kd*]" who can protect the forgottenness of being in its simplicity. In this context, also the task of the thinkers is set. The thinker is the "shepherd of letting go" (*Hirt des Lassens*), and to let go means "to guard the dwelling in the neighborhood with death" (Heidegger 2015, 285). And vice versa, to conceive humans as the shepherd that guards or protects the oblivion of the truth of beyng means, as we read in 1949–1950 *Anmerkungen VIII*, that "the shepherd can ex-ist as thinker. The shepherd is then one who gathers the flock, and the flock are the thoughts of the world that is to be thought." (Heidegger 2018b, 239 f.)[14]

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The "essential poverty" mentioned in the *Humanismusbrief* as the key feature of the "shepherd of being" (Heidegger 1998, 260), together with the essential mortality conferred in the *Black Notebooks*, makes the shepherd

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13 On the crossing-out of Seyn, some important clarifications are to be found in the 1947 *Notebooks* called *Vier Hefte I* (Heidegger 2019, 56, 69, and 83 f., in particular).

14 A similar take on what thinking can be is to be found in the incipit of the 1951–1952 lectures devoted to the topic *Was heißt Denken?*: "Man can think in the sense that he possesses the possibility to do so. This possibility alone, however, is no guarantee to us that we are capable of thinking. For we are capable of doing only what we are inclined to do. And again, we truly incline toward something only when it in turn inclines toward us, toward our essential being, by appealing to our essential being as what holds us there. To hold genuinely means to heed protectively, to let a herd graze at pasture. What keeps us in our essential being holds us only so long, however, as we for our part keep holding on to what holds us. And we keep holding on to it by not letting it out of our memory. Memory is the gathering of thought." (Heidegger 2008, 369; trans. mod.)

the temporary, but pivotal figure of *Ereignis-Denken* in the second half of the 1940s. In *Anmerkungen III*, we are told that "[t]he event of appropriation is the appropriation of man in the neighborhood with death" (Heidegger 2015, 291). To be a neighbor of death is a trait that defines human existence, that distinguishes human beings from any other being, and such a distinctive feature—Heidegger remarks in these *Anmerkungen*—consists in assigning humans to poverty and dwelling (Heidegger 2015, 289 and 291 f.).[15] In his private notes on the *Humanismusbrief*, included in the aforementioned volume 82 of the *Gesamtausgabe*, the ancient Greek term "θνητός" is used by Heidegger, in order to define the mortal being that is sustained by language, "Λόγος," precisely to designate the mortal being that inhabits the Λόγος, in symmetrical opposition to (or as a reversal of) the metaphysical definition of the ζῷον λόγον ἔχον, the living being that is supposed to possess language as an instrument (Heidegger 2018a, 574, 580, and 583).

Mortality and poverty are the two basic features of the shepherd of being, namely, of the future man, which emerge throughout the *Black Notebooks* from the second half of the 1940s. As such, they are to be understood in the broader critique of the metaphysical determination of the human being. In the *Notebooks* from this period, an attempt is also made to dislocate meditation, in order to reach a different place, from which to think about the essence of humanity, as we read, for instance, in a passage from the 1948–1949 *Anmerkungen VI*, which mentions the "*Reich (das regere) des Ereignens*," namely, the "reign (*regere*) of appropriating" (Heidegger 2018b, 36). Here, the term "*Reich*" (reign), is specified by Heidegger by placing the Latin expression "*regere*" (to direct, to guide, to control) in brackets immediately after it. Human beings guide, direct, or control nothing, not even their essential poverty. Indeed, to be poor, as Heidegger argues in these pages, is possible solely within the "reign of appropriating," a reign that is reached only through the historical destiny assumed in its entirety, and not if humans decide to be less rich and wealthy.

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15 On animality and death, see: Crowell 2017, Ardovino 2021, and Polidori 2021.

3. Poverty and mortality: The "future man"

The second thesis on the shepherd of being that has now been proved wrong by the recent availability of the *Black Notebooks* concerns its political meaning, which implies the question: to whom do we entrust our essential finitude marked by radical, irreparable mortality? In a relatively recent assessment, we read that: "Heidegger's shepherd is part of an idealised agrarian past and alludes to Plato's shepherd in *The Statesman* in which leaders of the *polis* herd both animals and men." (Broglio 2008, 127.) Despite the fact that this position on the "idealised agrarian past" had been proved wrong, even before the publication of the *Black Notebooks*, as we have already read in the *Anaximander's Saying*, this essay by Broglio provides some interesting insights. For instance, he focuses on Nietzsche's satyr and Heidegger's shepherd of being as representative figures for each philosopher, as well as the differences between them. In fact, Nietzsche and Hölderlin are the two possible direct sources for Heidegger's *Denkfigur* of the shepherd of being (Carbone 2021a). In both cases, for Nietzsche and Hölderlin, as is the case also for the Italian poet Leopardi, the shepherd is an anxious and errant *peregrinus* (foreigner, stranger, alien), essentially separated by the flock, with no homeland and no community.

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Secondly, even though the conclusions on Heidegger's "nostalgia" or "mistake" are misconceived (Broglio 2008, 135 f.), the final reference to Plato's *Statesman* made by Broglio is quite interesting, since the model for the political ruler that Plato addresses critically in the dialogue called Πολιτικός (*Statesman*) is precisely the figure of the shepherd king, which was largely widespread in ancient Euro-Mediterranean cultures and can be found in the Hebrew *Bible* (e.g., King David) or in Homer's epics, as Benveniste (2016, 377–382) has argued regarding the "shepherd" of the people (ποιμήν λαῶν).

It is worth briefly recapitulating Plato's argument here, in order to cast a light on Heidegger's shepherd. In the dialogue Πολιτικός, Plato carefully separates the role of the best statesman from the activity of any ordinary herdsman, since the best statesman should not gather the people and feed them, which is exactly what the herdsman does with the flock.[16]

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16 See, for instance: Πολιτικός 267c–268d, 274e–280b, 301a–301e, and 310e–311c

On this point, there is no possible ambiguity in Heidegger's position: to be a shepherd does not mean to guide a flock. The shepherd of being is no herdsman. In the aforementioned private notes on the *Humanismusbrief*, Heidegger warns that the shepherd is not the shepherd of a flock, namely, is not the "slave" of the flock, and is not a "*Kuhhirt*," a German word that indicates a cowherd (Heidegger 2018a, 572). Thus, the fact that the shepherd has nothing to do with these more or less bucolic idylls is quite clear in what Heidegger explicitly says about this important *Denkfigur*, and it is also reaffirmed in the 1957 *Black Notebook* entitled *Winke I*: the true shepherd does not make something or someone else move (Heidegger 2020b, 66 f.) and, consequently, does not seek followers or aims to guide anyone.

It should be noted in passing that the reflection on "environmental ethics" can be cast anew, by relying on the Heideggerian perspective, in which the figure of the shepherd is not deemed to be the "guardian" of animality or even of "non-human animals," who would be compelled by the reckless progress of the train of civilization to create and maintain "refuge areas for wildlife and other animals to live out a more appropriate, natural existence—letting these animals be more authentically" (Turner 2009, 161, 164, and 162). By contrast, the relationship with animals goes back to the relationship with animality. This latter is grounded in essential mortality, which, in turn, is understood within the call for the fundamental protection of the forgottenness of being.

Again, the *Black Notebooks* published so far also prove to be pivotal in this respect. In fact, not only do these *Notebooks* warn against what the shepherd is not, but they also provide a positive meaning, which can be summarized with the Heideggerian expression to be found in the important private notes on *Humanismusbrief*: the shepherd is the "*Hirt des Brauchs*," the "shepherd of use" (Heidegger 2018a, 572).[17]

The topic of use also recurs in the same *Notebooks* where we find many of the notes on the shepherd, namely, in the *Anmerkungen IV*, with

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and, respectively, Plato 2006, 42–49, 66–87, 156–161, and 192–195.

17 One can also translate this as the shepherd of "usage," according to the English translation of the expression "*der Brauch*" in the *Holzwege* (Heidegger 2002, 276), or even as the shepherd of "need," since, in *Ponderings XIII*, "*das Brauchen des Seyns*" is rendered as "the need for beyng" (Heidegger 2017, 96).

different formulations: "*Sage des Brauchs*," the "saying of use," or "the event of the appropriation of use" (*Ereignis des Brauchs*).[18] It is worth taking into consideration that what Heidegger calls "use" ("*Brauch*") is essential to mortality with regard to *Geviert*, the Fourfold that gathers earth and sky, mortals and divinities, since "use is the event of appropriation of mortals as such," which we can read, for instance, in the 1952–1953 *Vigiliae I* (Heidegger 2020a, 90).

In the notes devoted to the *Humanismusbrief* (Heidegger 2018a, 571), Heidegger explicitly refers back to a number of pages from the 1947–1948 *Anmerkungen IV*, where we are told that to think of humans as the "shepherd of being" "has nothing in common with the shepherd of a pastoral idyll," not even in relation to the designation of the word "shepherd." He goes on to explain that we know nothing about the shepherd, if we think of the shepherd as starting with the flock, "particularly if we intend the human flock," and that we should not assume this for moral purposes, since the shepherd is not a moral model (Heidegger 2015, 371 f.). On the contrary, as we read some pages further on, the shepherd is "the friend of the riddle of use," and "this shepherd has nothing to do with a flock" (Heidegger 2015, 376). In the same *Anmerkungen*, we read that "use" is "the danger," insofar as use is also the "preservation of ~~beyng~~ [*kd*]." Accordingly, then, "the shepherd of ~~beyng~~ [*kd*] has nothing to do with flocks," but relates to the "protective heed" that comes with radical mortality. The shepherd—we read further on—"compels us" to exist in the mode of such protective heed in the face of danger. The human being, as shepherd, should not "avoid" danger, but should "protect" it. The human being is the "shepherd of ~~beyng~~ [*kd*]," "the future man," but not just any man, "rather, the essential man," namely, above all, "the one who thinks" (Heidegger 2015, 382 f.). Heidegger goes on to explain that the shepherd gives shape to the "future man" only on the basis of "~~beyng~~ [*kd*]," that is, only on the basis of the irretrievable oblivion of the truth of our historical destiny, which is summarized in the idea that humans belong to "use" (Heidegger 2015, 383). As he states in the 1945 conference entitled *Die Armut*, such

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18 See Heidegger 2015, 326 f.

historical destiny is essentially marked by poverty.[19]

These few remarks on the shepherd of being presented here with reference to the recently issued *Black Notebooks* are sufficient to understand that Heidegger did not intend the shepherd as a leader of the masses, which are gathered as a flock, or as a leader of people. Briefly stated, Heidegger's shepherd of being has nothing to do with a *dux gregis*.[20] On the contrary, if we place this *Denkfigur* between Heidegger's radical critique of *Macht*, of power, which also stems from his confrontation with the Nazi regime, on the one hand, and the desperate and hopeless rush forward of *Ereignis-Denken* in the late 1940s, on the other, we can observe that the shepherd carries out the deposition of any possible leadership, of any *Führerschaft*, and takes up the guardianship (*Wächterschaft*) of the historical destiny of mortals. However, such guardianship, as we read in some of the notes to the 1944 lecture-course on Heraclitus, does not mean surveillance, since the "shepherd is no policeman" (Heidegger 2018c, 294).

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19 Poverty is, indeed, "the overtone of the still hidden-sheltered ownmost of the Western people and their destiny" (Heidegger, Kalary, and Schalow 2011, 8).
20 See Mincă (2014, 85), who suggests a possible comparison in this vein.

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Dean Komel

On Totalitarium

Abstract: Philosophical, historiographical, sociological, political, cultural, and other studies of totalitarianism in the 20th century focus on its "social appearance," but predominantly without the insight that this "social appearance" can by itself be totalizing with regard to the horizon of the world as a whole of beings, although they presuppose it as their "objective assumption." Totalitarity as *totalitarium* is empowered by the functional machination of the worldhood of the world dictated by the totalization of social subjectivity. Likewise, the system of production, defined by techno-scientific progress and capitalized globally, needs to be understood in the context of the empowerment of social subjectivity, which is functionally "objectified" into totalitarium. The totalitarium is established by various blocks and zones of functioning, however not in historical consecutiveness, but rather as a conjuncture of regulations, disposals, subordinations, and re-orderings, which take power over everywhere.

Keywords: totalitarium, totalitarity, society, subjectivity, world.

In contemporary philosophy, as well as in the wider field of social and cultural studies, and also in media communications in general, concepts, such as "global society," "knowledge society," "post-industrial society," "information society,"

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"risk society," and "the society of the spectacle"[1] have, in addition to the old ones, such as "capitalist society," "socialist society," "mass society," "consumer society," etc., become well-established in recent decades. In these designations, "society" is, in different respects but nonetheless uniformly, addressed as the subject of an all-encompassing world process, *without explicit definition of the subjectivity of society as a processor.*

Peter L. Berger's study *The Social Construction of Reality. A Treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge*, published in 1966 with Thomas Luckmann, is considered one of the central works of phenomenologically oriented sociology, an orientation founded by Alfred Schütz (cf. Schütz 1932). In the book, Berger defined society as "[…] a human product, and nothing but a human product, that yet continuously acts upon its producers" (Berger 1967, 3). Berger's characterization of society as a product and a producer of man at one and the same time could also be somewhat refined. Are we not today made to bear witness to society acting *as a total production with and beyond man*, placing the latter, as "human resource" or "human capital"—together with all the "natural resources"—in the function of its own empowerment? The total (re)production of society as the unconditional subjectivity establishes power over the world, which is being, whilst the horizons of worldhood are erased, systematically transformed into *totalitarium.*

The world does not subsist as a universum, *but functions as the* totalitarium.

If we take into account that *the worldhood of the world* forms a distinguished theme of phenomenology, this premise dictates a consideration of the totalitarian structure, which is not only marked by the peculiarities of the so-called "social world," but which concerns *the world as a whole*. The term "totalitarium" connotes a direct connection with what we are used to labelling the social phenomenon of "totalitarianisms," which historically defined the 20th century. However, between totalitarianism as a social phenomenon and the totalization of social subjectivity over the world, a difference emerges that requires its own description and interpretation. Referring to the current theories of totalitarianisms, and the social ideologies behind them, can thus

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1 Within the scope of this article, we cannot specifically cite all of the many relevant reference works and authors. The present text was written in connection with my book *Totalitarium* (Komel 2019).

prove very useful, but at the same time it can also prove insufficient for defining the totalization of the subjectivity of society itself, which does not have to rely specifically on ideological or any other terror, insofar as technology and capital are sufficient to maintain its power, under which everything functions. Despite that, we do not come to anything.[2]

Of course, I do not in any way intend to deny the various social forms of violence today or the various psychopathologies of desubjectification and deobjectification that accompany them. I also do not want to diminish the relevance of civil society efforts for social changes. However, it is necessary to consider what dictates the conditions of the possibilities, within which such efforts are actualized. What characterizes *the unconditional activation and actuality* of totalitarium itself?

Totalitarium is essentially *mundus totalitarius*. Totalitarity, which establishes *totalitarium*, does not arise from the world as a *totality of existing*, but from the power of a self-willed ruling over the world.

Previous definitions of totalitarianisms as social and historical phenomena have repeatedly directed attention to the difficulty of structurally defining the terms "totalitarity," "totalitarianism," and "totalitarian society" (cf. Bracher 1981 and Žižek 2002). In "The Logic of Totalitarianism," Claude Lefort, certainly one of the most prominent researchers of totalitarianism in the last century, described the *totalitarian social structure* as follows:

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> Totalitarianism presupposes the conception of a society which is
> sufficient unto itself and, since the society is signified in power, the

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2 In this context, Sheldon S. Wolin introduces the distinction between "classical totalitarianism" and the new "inverted totalitarianism": "[…] totalitarianism is capable of local variations; plausibly, far from being exhausted by its twentieth-century versions would-be totalitarians now have available technologies of control, intimidation and mass manipulation far surpassing those of that earlier time. // The Nazi and Fascist regimes were powered by revolutionary movements whose aim was not only to capture, reconstitute, and monopolize state power but also to gain control over the economy. By controlling the state and the economy, the revolutionaries gained the leverage necessary to reconstruct, then mobilize society. In contrast, inverted totalitarianism is only in part a state-centered phenomenon. Primarily it represents the *political* coming-of-age of corporate power and the *political* demobilization of the citizenry." (Wolin 2010, xvii–xviii.)

conception of a power which is sufficient unto itself. In short, it is when the action and knowledge of the leader are measured only by the criterion of organization, when the cohesion or integrity of the social body turns out to depend exclusively on the action and knowledge of the leader, that we leave the traditional frameworks of absolutism, despotism and tyranny. The process of identification between power and society, the process of homogenizing the social space, the process of enclosing both society and power are linked together to constitute the totalitarian system. With the constitution of this system the representation of a "natural" order is reestablished, but this order is supposed to be social-rational and does not tolerate apparent divisions or hierarchies. (Lefort 1999, 77.)

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By "the logic of totalitarianism," Lefort means the systemically directed *manipulation* of social reality, not the *machination* that characterizes the process of totalizing society as totalitarium. Totalitarian social machination, unlike totalitarian social manipulation, *erases the very worldly-historical horizon and its ground*, which is why it cannot be historically located in the way that, for example, Nazism and Communism as totalitarian social phenomena are explained within the historical situation of the 20th century. That totalitarium as a machinating takeover of power over everything can no longer be placed in history does not follow only from some postmodernist declaration of the end of history and the corresponding end of man, art, philosophy, capitalism, revolution, etc. On the contrary, all these ends are ultimately possible only within the framework of *the totalization of social subjectivity*, which can itself calmly, blithely, and with universal approval also declare the end of society in its global or planetary dimensions. One can draw a comparison with the collapse of past civilizations, as well as with the apocalyptic end of the world, which was successfully replaced by the "scientifically" supported theory of the Anthropocene. The very label "Anthropocene" reveals the machination with *the worldhood of the world*, if we consider that the English word "world,"[3] like

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3 "Old English *woruld*, *worold* 'human existence, the affairs of life,' also 'a long period of time,' also 'the human race, mankind, humanity,' a word peculiar to Germanic languages (cognates: Old Saxon *werold*, Old Frisian *warld*, Dutch *wereld*, Old Norse *verold*, Old High German *weralt*, German *Welt*), with a literal sense of 'age of

the German word "Welt," originally meant "age of man." One might say: the empire strikes back.[4]

In any case, referring to the end of history, even if we reduce it to its geological level, does not absolve us from *the question of the truth of this history*, which is not merely some socially confirmed historical reality, but concerns the question of *the essential eventuating* of the historicity of this history or the worldhood of the world. Martin Heidegger tackled this question when he conceived of the history of being as the nihilism of the will to power, which does not simply define some socio-historical course and the systemic manipulation of it, but the transformative processing and procedure of historicity itself in the manner of *Machenschaft* (Heidegger 2012, 99–132). *Machenschaft*, *machination*,[5] as such, drives the machinery of totalitarium, in which everything and everyone merely functions, and nothing more.[6]

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man,' from Proto-Germanic *weraldi-, a compound of *wer 'man' (Old English *wer*, still in *werewolf*; see *virile*) + *ald 'age' (from PIE root *al- (2) 'to grow, nourish')." (*Online Etymology Dictionary*, s.v. "world," accessed November 23, 2022, https://www.etymonline.com/word/world.)

4 For more on this, cf. Moore 2016 and Stiegler 2018.

5 "Late 15c., *machinacion*, 'a plotting, an intrigue,' from Old French machinacion 'plot, conspiracy, scheming, intrigue' and directly from Latin *machinationem* (nominative *machinatio*) 'device, contrivance, machination,' noun of action from past-participle stem of *machinari* 'to contrive skillfully, to design; to scheme, to plot,' from *machina* 'machine, engine; device trick' […]." (*Online Etymology Dictionary*, s.v. "machination," accessed November 23, 2022, https://www.etymonline.com/word/machination.)

6 In his *Black Notebooks*, Heidegger plays broadly also with the label *Welt-Imperialismus*, *world-imperialism*: "Yet world-imperialism itself is only something pursued and driven by a process having its determinative and decisive ground in the essence of truth in the modern sense. The basic form of this truth unfolds as 'technology,' whose essential delimitation cannot be captured by the usual notions. 'Technology' is the name for the truth of beings insofar as they are the 'will to power' unconditionally inverted into its distorted essence, i.e., insofar as they constitute the *machination* which is to be thought metaphysically and in terms of the history of beyng. Therefore, *all* imperialism is *conjointly*, i.e., in reciprocal increase and subsidence, pursued to a highest consummation of technology." (Heidegger 2017, 187.) "In this process, which we grasp only extrinsically as long as we think of it as 'world-imperialism,' absolute subjectivity attains its consummation even according to the circumstance that for humans now there remains altogether no means of escape

The complex of functioning is the driving force of society as a subjectivity that propels into function simply so that everything functions.

Heidegger, in laying out the machination that turns everything into function, partly relied on Ernst Jünger's formulation of "total mobilization" (Jünger 1993), which, compared to what Lefort considers "the logic of totalitarianism," plunges deeper into the very *metaphysics* of the totalization of society itself. Nevertheless, Heidegger accepted Jünger's formulation with a certain reserve, namely, because he followed the insight that *Machenschaft* as such conceals its metaphysical essence, which decisively contributes to the fact that the phenomenality of the subjectivity of society in the process of its totalization appears as a *gigaphantom*: in an enormous production of its appearance, it simultaneously obscures and denies its own essential character in such a way that everything becomes equally essential or equally unessential. We cannot say that the totalization of social subjectivity assumes the fundamental function of being, insofar as what is represented by being remains just a function that guarantees the power of the functioning of the world as totalitarium. The more social "occurring" and "processes" become functionally phantomic, the less clear and transparent what we still call "society" is. This, of course, is not an obstacle, but a condition for society to be unconditionally totalized.

This *gigaphantom* is, therefore, not something phantasmatic and unreal, but at most something virtual and hyperreal (to use Baudrillard's label), which renders questionable even the possibility of *a phenomenological description* of society's present condition. At the same time, the concept of "social construction of reality," as proposed by Berger and Luckmann in the aforementioned work, appears to be a good deal problematic. As their subtitle indicates, they themselves understood it as a contribution to the "sociology of knowledge."

The phenomenological research method, which Berger and Luckmann relied on, claims that each position of knowledge is guaranteed on the basis of a phenomenological description, which should bring the horizon of understanding to a certain level of *evidence* and *contextual analysis*. Compared

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on earth; that is, the selfcertainty of the subjectum has now been caught and enclosed unconditionally in its most proper distorted essence, and self-relatedness, the sense of absolute reflexion, has become definitive." (Ibid., 187–188.)

to analyses in the social sciences, phenomenological description is not limited to providing a more or less credible picture of social realities or of the entire social situation on the basis of the available data. When describing social phenomena, in order to broaden the horizon of understanding at all, phenomenological description must be assumed from the outset; *we ourselves* must be essentially included in any structural analysis of society. However, the fact that the "we" does not evince merely some social preobjective givenness, but a socially active coexistence, does not of itself ensure the evidence of experience, which we have with ourselves. This requires an explicit phenomenology of *the lifeworld*, which reveals that the experience with ourselves is correlated with *the horizon of the world*, since otherwise *it would not be an experience at all*. This fact, however, can only have a *constitutive*, not a *constructional* validity, which, for example, is also revealed through all literature and art.

This evidence, which directly concerns *us in the world*, does not of itself appear only at the level of theoretical dealing with social phenomena; rather, it is present already within the most common human action (*praxis*), which is referred to others according to its end-in-itself. The production of goods, as well as their sale and consumption, is, in comparison with action, purely purposeful and not *properly* directed at others. That I act of my own accord and "for my own good," therefore, does not negate, but rather essentially affirms the actions of another just as it does to me—although not always for me—of equal value. From this follows further *evidence of the world* we *share with others*. That we can share a world, or that it, on the other hand, divides us, should not be taken as a mere social fact, since social facticity itself can only be formed on the basis of the assumption of human action and cooperation in the world that we share—most directly in that we can communicate in it. "We," "you," they," "those over there," etc., do not only express the subject of some interconnected multitude, but first and foremost express the world between us.

Precisely the tendency of interpersonal communication shows that the "world common to all" exceeds, as a whole, human action, but at the same time it cannot manifest itself experientially, if human action does not enter it; here, we can recognize the elementary *emergence* of *freedom*, which cannot be invented and constructed, unless it has found us in advance. As something already found, freedom is constitutive of *being-in-the-world*. We associate

freedom most of all with the experience of ourselves, but it is precisely in this connection that the irreparable connection of freedom with necessity is revealed, which has been the central topic of philosophy from its beginnings to the present day; as such, it triggers a *polemos* regarding the *just* constituting of the social world and of the world in general (cf. Komel 2019).

Although today the demands for justice around the world ring louder than ever and although the tremendous levels of social injustice in the world have been statistically proven, it is necessary to ask whether, in principle, the subjectivity of a society that transforms the universe into totalitarium even needs justice and anything fundamental. Or is it enough to spread the propaganda of total freedom, which also sells the fiction of a just society, in which everything and everyone functions? Everything is perfect, except that we remain without the world.

The difference between *subjugating* and *delivering* the world is relevant precisely in relation to the phenomenological consideration of the worldhood of the world as a horizontal unveiling of what prevails over us, even before we *subjugate* it, and at the same time it demands of us a free attitude. In this regard, let us quote Heidegger's very succinct phenomenological formulation of the delivering of the worldhood of the world in "On the Essence of Ground," which he dedicated to Husserl in 1929 on the occasion of his seventieth birthday:

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> *Freiheit allein kann dem Dasein eine Welt walten und welten lassen. Welt ist nie, sondern weltet.* (Heidegger 1978, 162.)

Or, in English translation:

> *Freedom alone can let a world prevail and let it world for Dasein. World never is, but worlds.* (Heidegger 1998, 126.)

We quote Heidegger's formulation, because it succinctly presents a phenomenological point of view towards the *a priori* aspect of the worldhood of the world, which prevails in advance, to the extent and only to the extent that freedom releases it (to us). This is an essentially releasing freedom, in which we can recognize an intimation of Heidegger's later introduction of *Gelassenheit*,

releasement (Heidegger 2010). Essential in this respect is the emphasis that the prevailing of the world does not follow from the existence of, but from *the worlding* of the world. Although it seems that this is just a play on words, a so-called *figura etymologica*, it is a genuine phenomenological indication of *the worldhood of the world* in the sense of what is giving itself in advance, although it is never given in the manner of some fact or thing. The ascertainment that *the world worlds*, but does not "exist," in this connection, therefore, does not mean any denial of the existence of the world, but a recognition of the horizons of its advance giving, in short, the recognition of the worldhood of the world. The freedom that lets the world prevail is not a subjective self-certainty as a guarantee of the objective reality of the world. The latter never lets the world prevail as *arche*, but, rather, according to its own self-will, which it perceives as a certain freedom in itself, transforming the world into its totalitarian archive; this should not be understood only to mean that an egoistic individual, as a human or even a superhuman, takes possession of the world and corrals it within the zone of his interests. This concerns the authority of society as a world overruling subjectivity, which is not willing to let the world prevail. As a result, it cannot be "generalized" to any set of individual human specimens. In order for society to function as an unconditional subjectivity, each individual will must be put into function (cf. Stiegler 2013). The empowerment of society's subjectivity, therefore, corresponds to the enormous striving of individual wills for will; these can express themselves personally, culturally, through media, academically, politically, economically, etc., without being able to achieve anything other than the self-promotion of this power of expression, but never the power in itself. The will never triumphs, which is perhaps decisive for the machinating empowerment of the society's subjectivity.

This undoubtedly further problematizes the "social construction of reality." What conceptual validity do we attribute to this "construction"? The construction, which we distinguished earlier from constitution, can only have the validity of systemic, technologically transmitted functioning, which Heidegger called *Gestell* (Heidegger 1977). This raises the question of how to understand *social construction—Gestell*—in terms of subjectivity, if it is structurally connected in advance to the plant of technological production? Thus, it cannot be claimed that society dominates the world with the help of technological progress. However,

the frontal expansion of technology can be *conceived* as *technosphere* (Paić 2022) or *medium* (Trawny 2017), in which *the society that is being technologized* and *the technology that is being socialized at once* dominate the world and functionally mediate it as *totalitarium*. The subjectivity of society, which totalizes itself in the *sphere*, *medium*, and *zone* of technological recycling machinery, is therefore not composed of and represented only by "human resources" or "human capital"; rather, everything "technologically produced," as well as "naturally born," and, of course, first and foremost "the public space," is functionally harnessed into its machinating economy.

It is certainly worth considering how we can justify the label "subjectivity," if we are not satisfied with justifying it on the basis of its modern origin. In this respect, the concept of society as subjectivity was already thoroughly dealt with by Niklas Luhmann. Within the framework of his systems theory, society is conceived as an autopoietic, self-organizing, and self-managing system that leaves behind the perception of society as subjectivity. In his *Social Systems*, Luhmann emphasizes:

> Kant started with the assumption that plurality (in the form of sense data) is given and that unity must be constituted (synthesized). Only separating these aspects, thus posing complexity as a problem, makes the subject into a subject—indeed, into a subject of the connection between plurality and unity, not only into a producer of synthesis. Systems theory breaks with Kant's point of departure and therefore has no need for a concept of the subject. It replaces it with the concept of self-referential systems. Then it can say that every unity used in this system (whether as the unity of an element, the unity of a process, or the unity of a system) must be constituted by the system itself and cannot be obtained from its environment. (Luhmann 1995, 28.)

When Luhmann outlines the difference between systemic and subjectivist conceptions of society, he is not only distancing himself from Kant, but he is distancing himself from the entire transcendentalist tradition, including Husserl's phenomenology. It could be said that he marks off systems theory from all of philosophy, which is based on the assumption of self-knowledge, and proves the

rational will to know and act. In establishing this demarcation, Luhmann partly relies on the "deconstruction of the subject," such as that undertaken by Derrida and other authors. However: does conceiving of society as a self-referential or autopoietic system really overpass and dismiss understanding *society as subjectivity*, or does this transition to the systemic level empower society as a subjectivity that totalizes itself?[7] By replacing the correlation of subject and object, which characterizes the cognitive and ontological ground of philosophy in the modern era, with the interaction of system and environment ("Umwelt" in German), Luhmann bypasses the worldhood of the world, or reduces it to the environment. The very order of the world is thereby made disposable as an object of systemic regulation that is dictated by the totalization of society's subjectivity. This subjectivity, which regulates and subordinates the world, is not a subjectivity based on a human or social subject; rather, it posits itself in terms of systemic supremacy. Luhmann himself emphasizes that "every unity used in this system (whether as the unity of an element, the unity of a process, or the unity of a system) must be constituted by the system itself and cannot be obtained from its environment." However, the functioning of the system, precisely at the point of its own self-referentiality, demonstrates the systemic empowerment of the subjectivity of the society, in which everything must function. To the extent that in this all-functioning the difference between social achievements and the technological efficiency disappears, the system is no longer the determinative form for the society; rather, it functions as an information management *apparatus* that empowers power itself and, in this respect, essentially manifests itself as *an apparatus of power*.[8]

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7 Indicative in this regard is not only the title of Luhmann's *Die Gesellschaft der Gesellschaft* (1997), but also many other titles of his books that were published by Suhrkamp: *Die Wirtschaft der Gesellschaft* (1989), *Die Wissenschaft der Gesellschaft* (1990), *Das Recht der Gesellschaft* (1993), *Die Kunst der Gesellschaft* (1995), *Die Religion der Gesellschaft* (1998), *Die Politik der Gesellschaft* (2000), *Das Erziehungssystem der Gesellschaft* (2002), and *Die Moral der Gesellschaft* (2008). The English editions avoid literal translations of the titles: *Die Gesellschaft der Gesellschaft* is thus translated as *Theory of Society* (2012–2013).

8 Cf.: "'a collection of tools, utensils, etc. adapted as a means to some end,' 1620s, from Latin *apparatus* 'tools, implements, equipment; preparation, a preparing,' noun of state from past-participle stem of *apparare* 'prepare,' from *ad* 'to' (see ad-) + *parare* 'make ready' (from PIE root *pere- (1) 'to produce, procure')." (*Online Etymology*

subjectivity, which he provided, alongside an intimation of totalitarity, in his lectures *The Principle of Reason*:

> Subjectivity is not something subjective in the sense of being confined to a single person, to the fortuitousness of their particularity and discretion. Subjectivity is the essential lawfulness of reasons which *pro*-vide [*zu*-reicht] the possibility of an object. Subjectivity does not mean a subjectivism, rather it refers to that lodging of the claim of the principle of reason which today has as its consequence the atomic age in which the particularity, separation, and validity of the individual disappears at breakneck speed in favor of total uniformity. Whether or not we may want to look into and attest to it today, all this is based in the *Geschick* of being as objectness for the subjectivity of Reason, for *ratio* as determined by the *principium rationis*. Its injunction unleashes the universal and total reckoning up of everything as something calculable. (Heidegger 1991, 80.)

Totalitarium is characterized by total uniformity of subjection. Heidegger outlines the subjectivity of Reason, not of society, but at the same time emphasizes that subjectivity is not merely something humanly-subjective. Heidegger and Luhmann seem to agree on the definition of subjectivity up to a certain point; however, while Luhmann conceptually renounces the use of the label "subjectivity" in the context of treating society as an autopoietic system, in Heidegger's exposition of the machination of *Gestell* as the essence of technology ("Technik"), as evidenced by the previously given references, we even encounter its emphasized use. How is it that subjectivity is not (any longer) a determination of the human subject—on the contrary, it even eliminates it—, yet it can still be an increasingly powerful determination of the rationally calculated machination? This cannot be equated with Hegel's "cunning of the reason" or "instrumental reason," which is the subject of Horkheimer's, Adorno's, and Marcuse's critiques. Even if we declare that today the instrumental function of this intelligence is done by the smartphone and artificial intelligence, we should consider the function of digitalization within the context of the totalization of social subjectivity (cf. Stiegler 2016). Perhaps,

following what we previously highlighted as medium and technosphere of the totalization of society's subjectivity, we should add here also the *noosphere*,[10] which defines subjectivity as "essential lawfulness of reasons which *pro*-vide [*zu*-reicht] the possibility of an object." This should not be taken as something delivered from outside. *Gestell*, in its functional *Herstellen* and *Bestellen* (*installation*) (cf. Heidegger 1997, 3–35), is not something that waits behind the doors and enters when we open it; it imbues the very threshold of the "subject" in advance, so that it willingly or unwillingly disposes and is itself predisposed for what the subjectivity of society as total subjection installs into it. This installed subjection is entirely at work when it meets our expectations, ambitions, emotions, feelings, thoughts and imaginations, creativity, political aspirations, social activism, as well as our scientific achievements and religious beliefs, strategies of war, futuristic architecture, stock markets, prices of raw materials, necessities of life, and so on, *ad infinitum*.

Michel Foucault who devoted a number of his works to the genesis of subjectivity in the social, political, historical, as well as in the individual and biopolitical contexts based his analyses of social installation and the related subjectivations, subjectifications, and subjections on *the theory of dispositive*. Gilles Deleuze and Giorgio Agamben (2009), among others, particularly drew attention to its validity for today's "social theory." It is important to emphasize that Agamben himself supports the English translation of the French term *dispositif* as *apparatus*, which also appears in the English translations of Deleuze's writings. This also allows Agamben to make a direct reference to Heidegger's definition of *Gestell*,[11] namely, when he accentuates the following:

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10 The term "noosphere," which was introduced by the biogeochemist Vladimir Vernadsky and by the Jesuit, paleontologist, and philosopher Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, serves as a predecessor to the term "Anthropocene." Regarding the connection between the concepts of the *Anthropocene*, *technosphere*, and *noosphere*, cf. Lemmens 2022.

11 "When Heidegger, in *Die Technik und die Kehre* (The Question Concerning Technology), writes that *Ge-stell* means in ordinary usage an apparatus (*Gerät*), but that he intends by this term 'the gathering together of the (in)stallation [*Stellen*] that (in)stalls man, this is to say, challenges him to expose the real in the mode of ordering [*Bestellen*],' the proximity of this term to the theological *dispositio*, as well

The term "apparatus" designates that in which, and through which, one realizes a pure activity of governance devoid of any foundation in being. This is the reason why apparatuses must always imply a process of subjectification, that is to say, they must produce their subject. (Agamben 2009, 11.)

Agamben further ascertains that the manner of how the formation of apparatuses formulates the process of subjectification is key to dealing with what Foucault called "disciplinary society." In this regard, processing subjectification is obviously embedded in the procedure of desubjectificating subjections:

Indeed, every apparatus implies a process of subjectification, without which it cannot function as an apparatus of governance, but is rather reduced to a mere exercise of violence. On this basis, Foucault has demonstrated how, in a disciplinary society, apparatuses aim to create—through a series of practices, discourses, and bodies of knowledge—docile, yet free, bodies that assume their identity and their "freedom" as subjects in the very process of their desubjectification. Apparatus, then, is first of all a machine that produces subjectifications, and only as such is it also a machine of governance. (Ibid., 19–20.)

Deleuze, in this regard, emphasizes that Foucault's theory of the dispositive or apparatus is linked to the transition from *disciplinary society* to *control society*:

Some have thought that Foucault was painting the portrait of modern societies as disciplinary apparatuses in opposition to the old apparatuses of sovereignty. This is not the case: the disciplines Foucault described

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as to Foucault's apparatuses, is evident. What is common to all these terms is that they refer back to this *oikonomia*, that is, to a set of practices, bodies of knowledge, measures, and institutions that aim to manage, govern, control, and orient—in a way that purports to be useful—the behaviors, gestures, and thoughts of human beings." (Agamben 2009, 12.)

are the history of what we are slowly ceasing to be and our current apparatus is taking shape in attitudes of open and constant *control* that are very different from the recent closed disciplines. Foucault agrees with Burroughs who announced that our future would be more controlled than disciplined. The question is not which is worse. Because we also call on productions of subjectivity capable of resisting this new domination and that are very different from the ones used in the past against the disciplines. A new light, new utterances, new power, new forms of subjectivation? (Deleuze 2007, 345–436.)

If we once again take up Wolin's distinction between "classical totalitarianism" and "inverted totalitarianism," we can easily determine that "control society" is already a very recognizable brand of "classical totalitarianism." In the conditions of "inverted totalitarianism," however, it is not about society or about some part of it being under the control of a particular apparatus, but rather about *society as an apparatus that itself exercises control in the function of the totalization of its own subjectivity*. That the rebellion against such a "controlled society" and the revolutionary change of the world can be left to the agency of new "forms of subjectivation," as Deleuze suggests, is indeed beyond questionable. Is not the worldhood of the world turning into *totalitarium* precisely, because of new and new "forms of subjectivation" installed by the machinating totalization of social subjectivity? According to the conditions of this installing, the "world" also functions only within the apparatus and as a slide on the screen of social subjectivity.

Translated by Jason Blake

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individuality

&

expressivity

Evgeniya Shestova

Communication in the Text Space
Phenomenology of the "Logic of Question and Answer"

Abstract: In the article, I propose a phenomenological investigation of reading conceived of as communication within the text space. I consider reading as a *quasi-dialogue*. Such a concept allows us to avoid the problem of reality of the dialogue partner. I investigate what produces the effect of request to the reader and of communication in the text space. I start with the examination of Gadamer's logic of question and answer, and interepret questions and answers as two interwoven aspects of sense: the negative and the positive. In Merleau-Ponty's interpretation of language as gesticulation, question, or the negative aspect of sense, points to a possible sense. In his late works, Merleau-Ponty re-interprets Husserl: the text conveys neither sense nor signification, but a significative intention. It is a request addressed to the reader from the other who produces the intention. I propose to consider this other as a *quasi-author* who is a part of the act of reading.

Keywords: question, phenomenology of reading, H.-G. Gadamer, M. Merleau-Ponty, quasi-author.

Introduction

Since Husserl's *Logical Investigations*, phenomenology looks closely at the function of language. Starting from the examination of soliloquy, it comes to the description of language in the dimension of intersubjectivity. Therefore, it may have problems with the description of language functioning in a non-communicative situation, for instance, in reading. The latter is essentially ambiguous: I read the text all by myself, but this is not a "solitary life"; reading implies some sort of intersubjective action. Many descriptions of reading point out that the reader is affected by the text, he/she is requested by the text. What does this mean?

I will try to explicate why does reading as an interaction with a text—even if we do not read the text as an expression of the author's personality—involve

the reader into *indirect communication* within the text space? What is the communicative potential of language? The concept of indirect communication allows us to suspend the reality of the dialogue counterpart by reading and to focus on the experience of reading.

The first author we think of with regard to this subject is Hans-Georg Gadamer. I will start with his descriptions of reading in the paragraphs about the logic of question and answer in *Truth and Method*, and investigate what Gadamer calls "question" as well as what is the role of question in reading?

For the phenomenological explication, I will turn to Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology of expression, speech, and language. I will consider how Merleau-Ponty describes the function of the question in communication in *Phenomenology of Perception*. I will demonstrate how the sense of the concept *question* can be extended in the terms of his theory of expression as gesticulation.

Finally, I will refer to the revision of the concepts of lingual gesticulation and question in the later works of Merleau-Ponty, where he specifies their relation to the Husserlian concepts of intentionality and tradition. This will make a return to indirect communication and its revision in the Husserlian terms possible.

One can suppose that there are reasonable grounds to traverse from Gadamer to Merleau-Ponty: their ideas about the function of language as well as their shared phenomenological background offer the opportunity for the accentuation of common problems, which they, however, elaborate in different ways.

1) Both philosophers consider language as a medium. Language is not a set of tools, but a way of the appearing of world (and of others) for me as well as of the appearing of me (and of others) in the world. "The meaning of words must be finally induced by the words themselves," writes Merleau-Ponty (2005, 208).

2) Both authors want to maintain an ambiguity: they do neither suppose an autonomy of sense-giving consciousness nor do they hypostatize language, which determines thinking. Consequently, *tradition* becomes an important concept for both—tradition conceived as interaction within a language medium.

But the totality of language posited by Gadamer does not allow him to explicitly raise the question of the emergence of new sense. Merleau-Ponty

starts from this point and phenomenologically describes the nascency of sense (*sensus in statu nascendi*): production of sense, a shift of the language medium, the interplay between language and sense. I recognize this as a way from the history of effects to the phenomenological analysis of effect.

The sense of the question

At the very beginning of the paragraph "The Logic of Question and Answer" in *Truth and Method*, Gadamer argues: "a historical text […] puts a question to the interpreter" (Gadamer 2004, 363). What does this mean?

Contemplating on the essence of the hermeneutic experience in the preceding paragraphs, Gadamer is guided by the model of a dialogue. But reading is not completely analogous to dialogue: "It is true that a text does not speak to us in the same way as does a Thou." (Ibid., 370.) Nevertheless, I am convinced that this is an important character of reading: there is something in the experience that induces Gadamer to describe a text like a seemingly autonomous actor.

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The notion of *the question put by text* is a very obscure concept, especially taking into account that Gadamer somewhat later adds: we must interpret the text as an answer to author's guiding question. So, what is the text: a question or the answer? Gadamer's assertion is: "Both!" He writes: "Perhaps there is a logic of question. In such a logic we could note that the answer to a question necessarily arouses new questions." (Gadamer 2006, 23.) The answer is in equal measure a question, and it is not a counter-question; a question is not necessarily marked by the intonation contour or by the question mark. The logic of question and answer has much wider terms and describes reading in general. Moreover: Gadamer explains his conception by discussing the logic of question and answer as proposed by R. G. Collingwood. Collingwood extrapolates his theory upon the analysis of historic events: the question is here a historic situation; the answer are the actions of a person in this situation. Gadamer does not discuss such an extrapolation, he contests Collingwood's idea that the reconstructed question is the same question, which had induced the author.

Thus, the *question* and the *answer* go beyond the framework of dialogue; the question is rather a *request*, and such a request is included in the

structure of every expression. Logic of question and answer is the structure of understanding in terms of the history of effects. How does a request function?

In order to clarify the effect of *the question put by text*, Gadamer introduces the concept of *Betroffenheit/Betroffensein* (to be perplexed or touched).[1] The text puts a question by perplexing us; the experience of being requested is an experience of being perplexed. "The real and fundamental nature of a question," writes Gadamer, "is to make things indeterminate" (Gadamer 2004, 367–368) or "suspended." In German language this is what is denoted by *in-die-Schwebe-bringen* (Gadamer 1990, 369). We can find the verb *schweben* and its derivatives also in Husserl and Heidegger. In *Being and Time*, Heidegger criticizes *freischwebende* (soaring or free-floating) theses, which are not confirmed by the analytic of *Dasein*. Heidegger describes with this verb (*schweben*) the effect of dread (Heidegger 1976) or fear (*Angst*) (Heidegger 2001). "We are suspended in dread," writes Heidegger in the lecture "What is Metaphysics?" (Heidegger 1976, 44); the dread, thus, leaves us hanging and all the things slip away. This is the suspension of all theses, they become meaningless in the face of Nothing. In Husserl, *schweben* is one of the verbs that describes the suspension of the thesis by reduction.

The suspending question is a special sort of suspension. *Freischwebende Thesen* are not factually suspended, they appear to be evident. Gadamer's suspending question provokes an openness—the openness, which "is not boundless" (Gadamer 2004, 357); it is not full indeterminacy and it defines the horizon of the answer. This orientation may be called the sense of the question.

The logic of question and answer presupposes that we cannot separate the question from the statement. An expression includes a request that may touch the reader; the question has a sense that defines the horizon of a possible answer. The experience of reading includes a question as its structural part. I would like to propose to call what Gadamer calls *answer* and *question* the

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1 "However, we cannot take the reconstruction of the question to which a given text is an answer simply as an achievement of historical method. The most important thing is the question that the text puts to us, our being perplexed by the traditionary word, so that understanding it must already include the task of the historical self-mediation between the present and tradition." (Gadamer 2004, 366.)

positive aspect and the *negative* aspect of sense, which are inseparable (a separation is perhaps possible only for a methodological clarification).

In the next part, I wish to analyze the function of the *negative* aspect of sense within communication. For this purpose, I refer to Merleau-Ponty and his analysis of language and speech in *Phenomenology of Perception*.

The sense of the expressive gesture

In *Phenomenology of Perception*, Merleau-Ponty begins his investigation of language and speech with the description of the aphasic disorder, which afflicts the "unmotivated" language, while the "automatic" language remains undisturbed. The patient Schneider can use a word in the answer to the doctor's question, but he cannot use the same word in arbitrary expression or just pronounce it. This example affirms: to know language, does not mean to know its vocabulary or rules, it means the ability to speak as the ability to co-exist in the world together with other speaking persons. The aphasic disorder afflicts this ability.

The doctor who puts the question seems to supply the speech disability of the patient: the ability to speak implies an antecedent questioning, which is required for expression. The act of speech includes a question (in the broad sense) as *the negative aspect of sense*. Merleau-Ponty characterizes Schneider's speech as "ossified" (Merleau-Ponty 2005, 228); Schneider seems to have a total coincidence of world and language: a proposition, which describes a fictional or possible situation, is for him meaningless. Schneider cannot lie. This state seems to be ideal for expression and description, but it results in Schneider being nearly unable to speak. He does not have any need to speak—the expression, which just duplicates the experience, becomes pleonastic. When the space of the possible does not exist, the expression becomes useless. The question put by the doctor creates a gap between the lived (non-expressed) experience and "the spoken word" (ibid., 229).

Merleau-Ponty likens expression to gesticulation, and this likening clarifies how the gap arises as well as how it becomes a question posed to the reader.

Merleau-Ponty elaborates the Husserlian concept of the "linguistic living body" (*Sprachleib*) (Husserl 1989, 161) by incorporating

language as the outer layer of the human living body. This layer is not individual, it is a kind of an intersubjective body layer. This idea prevents the conception of language as a sign system or a tool for the ciphering and deciphering of meanings. The lingual gesticulation rather outlines and points out sense within the sense medium than expresses it.

What is a bodily gesture, which is the benchmark for Merleau-Ponty's analogy? In *Phenomenology of Perception* and in later articles, Merleau-Ponty defines it in different manners.

In *Phenomenology of Perception*, the language gesture is characterized as a sort of nuanced emotional gesture like a smile or a grimace of anger. The smile does not express happiness, it *is* happiness. By the same token, the word materializes, or incorporates, sense.

But I assert that mimicking has a social dimension, it is addressed. Often it is said that we understand emotions by analogy: I juxtapose the facial display of the other and my own facial display in a certain situation, and this is a way to understand what the other feels. But this conception implies the possibility to see my own face and presupposes a knowledge about my own mimicking.

I propose to turn our attention from the conception of mimicking as an expression of emotions to the theory called *behavioral ecology view of facial displays*. In the article "Facial Displays Are Tools for Social Influence," Alan J. Fridlund and Carlos Crivelli (2018) describe some tests in the recognition of emotions on photos conducted among indigenous people in Melanesia, Africa, and Papua New Guinea. Indigenous people in general had difficulties with the recognition of emotions on the photos. The first conclusion of researchers was expectable: facial displays are determined culturally; people of another culture can interpret the facial display usual for us quite differently. Mimicking is not a natural physiological reaction to stimulus (as Merleau-Ponty also emphasizes; 2005, 246). But the researchers perceived an interesting thing: tribal people recognized the "fear" face (marked so by the researchers) as a "threat" display. They associated the emotional facial display with the face of the communicative counterpart. The idol that protected the house had such a "fear" (for us) face— it should trigger fear in the intruder, make his/her face the "fear" face.

The most important conclusion of the scientists is the following: facial displays are tools for social influence: they provoke an action or request an

interaction. Smile is an invitation to play or affiliate, pouting is a request for protection or help, anger is a demand to submit. Facial displays get their sense within the definite social circumstances, they do not express any sort of inner life, they are the mode of interaction and provocation of the possible (or wishful) action of others.

In his descriptions of lingual gesticulation, Merleau-Ponty also tends to such a conception—he writes that the expression of emotions is socially determined and presupposes a "setting common to the speakers," our common world, which we influence by expression (verbal or not). The common world is a medium between me and my counterpart. The communicative request of a facial display is the negative aspect of sense in the dimension of mimicking. When an expression becomes more detailed and comes to language, speech outlines sense and at the same time opens the space of possible answer and reaction. The gap mentioned above is a gap between the present intersubjective configuration of the world and the wishful one, a gap between the spoken wor(l)d and the new sense.

But there is a problem: this approach to the essence of language through expressive gesticulation and speech means also primarily direct communication. Can we use this conception in the analysis of the experience of reading—an experience without a direct communication?

Merleau-Ponty's answer can be summarized as a sort of *mutatis mutandis*. In the article "On the Phenomenology of Language" and in the book *The Prose of the World*, he proposes a modified conception of lingual gesticulation, which is more appropriate for a description of reading.

The sense of the intention

The article "On the Phenomenology of Language" aims to integrate the whole of Husserl's conception of language, from the *Logical investigation*s to the *Origin of Geometry*, and clarifies the coherence between particular significative intentions and tradition. Merleau-Ponty demonstrates in what way the reader joins in the tradition.

In the article, Merleau-Ponty develops a new conception of the lingual gesture. The idea was already delineated in *Phenomenology of Perception*:

"the spoken word is a gesture, and its meaning, a world" (Merleau-Ponty 2005, 214). There exists not only the *expressive* gesture, but also a sort of *practical* gesture: we can tie a shoelace or take a spoon. This gesture does not mean any communication, it does not include any immediate requests. I propose to analyze this art of gesticulation for a more productive and precise characterization of the question contained in the text.

If we interpret the language gesture as a practical gesture, the word will relate to its meaning as a gesture to its object, so the meaning is something that "awakens my intentions" (Merleau-Ponty 1964, 89). The word does not express any ready-made meaning, it has meaning as its goal, just as—in *Phenomenology of Perception*—a hand moves voluntarily to the point where a mosquito stung me. To have meaning as an aim is the "animation" of the word by meaning.[2] The word expresses a significative intention.

The significative intention is a goal orientation, so it signifies a lack of meaning; it is a gap (ibid.), the expression of something not yet signified that I try to signify, to fixate through my speech. The gap becomes a gap against the background of *spoken words*, of a language medium made of sedimented speech. Thus, the gap is "no more than a determinate gap to be filled by words" (ibid.). It is a productive, fruitful gap, requesting of the reader to produce sense.

Such an elaboration of the notion of *the lingual gesture* gives more clarification to the idea of *the negative aspect of sense* or of the question inherent in the text.

The meaning of the word, as well as the objective aspect of the act, is given through nuances. It is the pole of the significative intention that orients the intention. This sense core "determines" the gap in the medium, consisting of

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2 This interpretation has its origin in § 9 of the first *Logical Investigation*: "We shall […] have acts essential to the expression if it is to be an expression at all, i.e. a verbal sound infused with sense. These acts we shall call the meaning-conferring acts or the meaning-intentions." (Husserl 2008, 192.) Merleau-Ponty does not have regard to the Husserlian explication: "One should not, therefore, properly say (as one often does) that an expression expresses its meaning (its intention). One might more properly adopt the alternative way of speaking according to which the fulfilling act appears as the act expressed by the complete expression" (Husserl 2008, 192), because he proposes another conception of language, which is involved in the constitutive process (and does not express a ready meaning) and in the communication.

many similar, yet not-fully-determined core meanings. Language is full of voids, but it functions as a strong tissue, which allows us to understand each other.

The written word transmits not a fixed meaning, but the "determinate gap," which the reader has to fulfill by changing his way of articulating the correlation with the world. The significative intention marks something lacking, something not yet expressed in language; it produces a gap, a lack in the language system. This shift involves the whole language system, which reshapes, in order to embrace the new meaning. Concurrently, it is only partly new, while codetermined with sedimented meanings. Thus, communication transcends the bounds of the momentary and direct communication of two people, it involves a changeable language world: the word in speech reveals its intention and meaning as the goal of intention, as the matter under question. In such a way, it puts forth a question and provokes the reader to answer it. The tradition is communication within the text space.

The thesis can be an unauthorized assertion, the question provokes much more, in order to implicate the questioner who does not understand something. The negative aspect of sense and the request addressed to the reader provoke us to see in the text some sort of the Other.[3] Such an analysis exposes what the agency of the text consist of—agency, which Merleau-Ponty describes as a sort of fusion with the author inspired by the book,[4] and which Gadamer denotes as a *Thou* of the text or the "text that puts the question." Of course, the reader is not really possessed with Stendhal or Flaubert, the author's name marks a transformation of the language system. The reader experiences a rupture between his/her language correlation with the world and the correlation expressed by the text. The author is philosophically dead and gone, but not forgotten: *the quasi-author* as the structural aspect of the

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3 By re-reading my own text, I can observe new senses or unexpected ideas. This is illustrative of the thesis that the Otherness of the text does not presuppose the Other as a real person, it is an aspect of the reading act. "In the heart of the alternation of question and response an ethical impulse arises," writes Waldenfels (1993, 11).
4 "I create Stendhal; I am Stendhal while reading him. But that is because first he knew how to bring me to dwell within him. The reader's sovereignty is only imaginary, since he draws all his force from that infernal machine called the book, the apparatus for making significations." (Merleau-Ponty 1973, 12.)

reading act is unavoidable. The notion of a quasi-author is meant as a pole of the significative intention transmitted by the text; it is responsible for the non-coincidence of the reader's mode of correlation with the world and the other one, the expressed one; the quasi-author is inaugurated as the Other who delimitates the reader and communicates with him/her.

Conclusion

The conception of the sense-giving and function of language proposed in this article delineates the possibility to complement the phenomenology of expression (from the author's position) with the phenomenology of reading, which means that the word has its definite sense in communication and within a specific context.

The investigation of Gadamer's logic of question and answer makes clear that an expression always implicates a question, also without it formally being a question. The question means here that the expression brings the reader into suspension, while the positive aspect of sense outlines the horizon of the answer. Therefore, I have proposed to designate the *question* and the *answer* as *the negative and the positive aspects of sense.*

Within a dialogue, the question marks a gap between the spoken (as sedimented in language) and what is to be spoken, but does not yet have a proper expression. The negative aspect of sense opens for the counterpart in the conversation the definite space of a possible sense. I would like to propose to complement Merleau-Ponty's conception of the language expression as a nuanced gesture with the behavioral ecology theory of facial displays, which demonstrates that mimicking is communicative and evocative.

The description of the function of question in a dialogue can clarify the function of the implicit question in the text in reading, which becomes a question of the reader. The negative aspect of sense functions as a request that provokes the reader to the act of sense-giving. There is a specific communication within the text space: it is not a real dialogue between two persons, but it implies an activity on the part of the text. In his later articles, Merleau-Ponty describes this circumstance with Husserl's terminology: an expression does not transmit sense, it transmits the significative intention. The significative

intention at work directs the reader's sense-giving and discloses the absence of proper sense. A text touches the reader, and the tradition becomes a history of effects (Gadamer's *Wirkungsgeschichte*).

Gadamer's and Merleau-Ponty's repetitive description of reading in terms of a dialogue with the text or an effect from the text denotes that the quasi-author is a structural part of the reading act. It designates that the significative intention in the text, which affects the reader, is initially owned by the Other. The reader is demanded to transform his/her language medium according to the text.

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Manca Erzetič

The Hermeneutics of Testimony in the Context of Social Mediation

Abstract: The problems of conceptualizing testimoniality are intertwined, which is why we cannot examine them in isolation within an individual disciplinary field, but have to take into account the inter-relations of philosophy, literary science, and historiography, as well as the fields of law, theology, sociology, and political sciences. In view of methodology, we primarily rely on hermeneutics, while taking into account certain elements of phenomenological, structuralist, psychoanalytical, and socio-critical orientations in contemporary philosophy. Although at first sight the theme of testimoniality occupies only a marginal place in philosophical discussions, examining testimony explicitly shows that it opens up many new, as yet little-explored problem areas of philosophy itself. We can even conclude that the phenomenon of testimony as such is both an encouragement for and a challenge to philosophy in an era that has become problematic both as a historical time and as a social space.

Keywords: testimoniality, hermeneutics of testimony, socio-historical context, concentration camps, witnesser.

Examining the testimonial topics in a systematic sense takes us to various fields of philosophy, such as ethics, aesthetics, philosophy of history, philosophy of literature and art, philosophy of language, philosophy of politics, philosophy of law, and philosophy of religion. This contribution is based on the

hermeneutical-phenomenological approach; however, due to the breadth of the field under consideration, the topic is of necessity also interdisciplinary and can serve as a basis for more broadly defining the relevance of human studies in the academic, disciplinary, and social contexts.

The development of an elementary conception of the hermeneutics of testimony allows for a suitable analysis of testimonial sources, in the light of which we can, in the broader field of the humanities, discern a general lack of a theoretical approach.[1] This lack also has a negative effect on the evaluation of testimony documents themselves. The treatment of testimonial experience occupies an important place in philosophical hermeneutics, and in this regard Paul Ricoeur's contribution must be mentioned first and foremost. His reflections on testimony allow us to delineate some fundamental conceptual differentiations.[2] A critical analysis of these differences reveals that the philosophical aspect of studying testimony must be demarcated from the outset from the religious, legal, or literary aspects, because otherwise it is not possible to satisfactorily conceptualize testimoniality. Of course, this does not mean that we should ignore the aspects of testimony just mentioned. Quite the contrary. Giorgio Agamben offers us key support in this regard, since his thinking connects the appropriation of the phenomenon of testimony to the broader reception of Martin Heidegger, Hannah Arendt, Michel Foucault, Jacques Derrida, and other authors, as well as to the testimony literature of Primo Levi (Agamben 1999). Agamben's focus on the possibility and impossibility of the existential structure of being-witness allows us to more precisely unravel the experience of testimony as it is intertwined with remembering, to which Paul Ricoeur attributes central validity (Ricoeur 2004). Furthermore, it makes it possible to unfold the ontological or existential level of testimony, which was initially outlined in Heidegger's *Being and Time* as part of the development of the existential analytic of *Dasein* that, as "this entity, which each of us is himself," (Heidegger 2001, 27) has a tendency to existentially testify, i.e., to bear witness to the human condition as such. On this basis, it is also possible to establish a conceptualization of the hermeneutics of testimony, which encompasses

1 Cf. Heiden 2020 as well as Marinescu and Ciocan 2021.
2 Cf. Ricoeur 1980, Lythgoe 2011 and 2012, as well as Perez 2011.

also a critical discussion of the fundamental philosophical concepts of "self," "experience," "personality," "time," "space," "existential situation," "historical experience," "memory," "being," "meaning," "linguistic expression," etc.

The key research assumption that we will develop in the present contribution is the *special connectedness* the phenomenon of testimony has with the individual-existential experience and the socio-historical situation, in which a particular testimony was formed or to which it refers from a (spatio-temporal) distance. To the extent that this connectedness has a special hermeneutic value, since it refers to the communicative or social context of the testimony's effect, it is necessary to specifically thematize it and allow it a constitutive role in the conceptualization of testimony.[3] This makes it possible for us, in contrast to previous considerations of the phenomenon of testimony, not to attribute to it a mere memoir value; such an attribution prevents the very act of testifying in different and difficult-to-define areas of life experience, burdening it with misunderstanding and non-communication—two aspects that can turn into complete social rejection.

The hermeneutic approach makes it possible to crystallize the phenomenon of testimony in terms of its various aspects (biographical, historical, literary, artistic, religious, legal, cultural, social, media …). However, it is always necessary to take into account the entire life-world situation, into which the testimony enters (as a direct existential experience) and from which (at the level of expression) it departs. The expressiveness of testimony in the social context cannot be considered exclusively as a manner of interpersonal communication, and this is directly demonstrated by the range of how testimony occurs in both the sphere of law and in the sphere of religion. Equally, in the historiographical and biographical contexts, testimony should not be equated (subjectively viewed) with remembering and (objectively viewed) with documentation. Similarly, in the linguistic-theoretical framework, testimony cannot be defined simply as a form of communicating or stating, and, in the literary-theoretical framework, only as a mode of narration.

Testimony is a concept that we use constantly in everyday life. Yet, testimony does not speak to us and address us in an arbitrary way, and it therefore

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3 Cf. also Matthäus 2009.

cannot be grasped from the general concept of speech and utterance. Rather, it is defined by *the existential modus of witness*. At stake is not the matter of understanding testimony as something that we remember and want to verbally express, insofar as it concerns *the claim of understanding the meaning of being*. Remembering does not directly, but only indirectly, fulfill the understanding of the meaning of being. Remembering something witnessed by the one who bears witness (i.e., the witnesser) already presupposes the vital mode of the witness who *was right there*. This brings us meaningfully into the realm of Heidegger's ontological determination of Being, which is ourselves, and has its own vital possibility of understanding being. Heidegger chooses the term *Dasein—being-there—*, which is extremely important for our definition of the essence of testimony, insofar as this situation of *being-there* is a precondition for the definition of testimony. The existence of *Da-sein* does not only include the witnesser, but it holds, through the "Da" (in the sense of "there" and "here"), the openness of the entirety of testimony as such. At the same time, this requires a conceptual demarcation of the terms "witness," "witnesser," and "testimony,"

which are of wide general use and which are of terminological relevance also in the humanities. In a phenomenological description, we are directed to a prior understanding of these terms, although they are conceptually and semantically opaque. In order to understand what constitutes the essence of testimony, it is necessary to explain what *we as witnessers have been witness to*. Here, it must be taken into account that the understanding of what we are testifying is already put into existence and thus determines our human condition, that is, it bears witness to the very existential *meaning of being human*. At the same time, man, as a being who is capable of being, is, for the sake of being "positioned," "destined," "thrown" into the world, always already exposed to his own misunderstanding, from which the demand for understanding emerges. This requires special caution regarding the validity of the testimony, which must be approached structurally within the framework of what testimony means.

Testimoniality includes questions pertaining to three entities: the witness, the witnesser, and the testifying in connection with factual testimony. This field, which we establish in terms of the triad witness—witnesser—testifying, can be considered in the context of existential analysis of *Dasein* (being-there). The individual links in the witness—witnesser—testifying chain are interconnected

and form a whole. The interdependence of each individual member of the whole and at the same time their own entities form a hermeneutic circle. In this way, the links within the testimony structure are connected to each other as a whole, but simultaneously they maintain and demonstrate their own character, which allows for the possibility of their detailed interpretation of the testimony set. When we inquire about testimoniality, we presuppose the following questions: what constitutes meaning, how does the "witnesser" participate in this meaning, and what does it mean in this context to exhibit this relationship as "testifying" or as "bearing witness"? With regard to testimony as a particular way of showing something or someone, the consideration of the meaning of being-witness is best linked to the phenomenological philosophical method, which is specifically aimed at demonstrating something as something. The hermeneutic aspect of such a demonstration, however, demands that bearing witness as demonstration should be captured in its meaningful specificity. This meaningful peculiarity is special in that it is directly personified in the self of man. Thus, meaning appears as a problem of bearing witness to the meaning of humanity, which calls for a clarification of how exactly the ability to testify and bear witness to what is witnessed in the world belongs to the selfhood of the human personality. The question of *how-it-is-for-me-to-be-in-the-world* implies by itself that I cannot be *indifferently* present among the other beings, but in the way that I am testifying to something in the world. This being-present-in-the-world is never simply being-present-at-something (in the manner of bare existence at something). A witness is always a witness to something or someone, not just a witness-by-something/someone. The witness also does not have something merely in sight, but is directly confronted with what is in sight. Where what being-witness is like for a witnesser is not specified, where the vital manner of a witness is lacking, the meaning of this being-witness-to-something-for-someone is also lacking.

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In *Oneself as Another*, Ricoeur relies on Levinas's determination of the credibility of the witness to use the accusative form **"Me voici!"** that translates not as "Here I am!", but as "It's me here!"[4] This turns out to be problematic precisely in the case of the social context to the testimony that comes into play, and it cannot be simply assumed, insofar as it is dictated by the sense of how-it-is-*for*-me-to-be**.**

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4 For a more extensive account, cf. Ricoeur 1992, 22.

Being-witness shows not only "me," but at the same time also others, the whole world, and the situation of being-in-the-world. However, it does so not in the way that one steps into the place of the subject, but rather in the way that one *represents the irreplaceability of being* and with it also oneself as a being who is in an essential relation to being. It is here that we distinguish the existential definition of being-witness from the subjectivist position that, from the outset onwards, equates *the witness* with *the witnesser*. *In this way, in principle, access to the consideration of the phenomenon of testimony, which is carried out in the witness–witnesser–testifying frame, is prevented*. It would be a mistake to understand the triad in such a manner that we place the "witnesser" into the position of the subject and the "witness" on the level of being! The witnesser is always more or less than the subject, insofar as the witness is vitally determined by *being-witness*. If we declare someone to be a witnesser and testifier, we do not mean by him only the subject, but also his relation to what he witnesses and testifies to as meaning. Without this connection, there is no witnesser and testifier, only *an author*. The witnesser does not have any "copyright" to what and what about he testifies. Because of this, he is free to express meaning, even if it turns out to be nonsense. In fact, the witnesser himself brings to light an understanding, rather than conforms to general understanding and understandability.[5] Testimony, as a testimony, always deviates from the general and generalized understanding, which shows the marginal position of the witnesser, insofar as he follows the dictates of being a witness.

Agamben notes that Foucault in his theory of the author in his essay "What is an Author?" (1998) overlooked the question of the ethical implications of the theory of enunciation or of the semantics of enunciation. This is especially true of an act of enunciation that has the status of a testimony, where:

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5 Here, one can discern a parallel with Waldenfels's understanding of responsivity: "The voice of the respondent is pro-voked [pro-voziert]; it is called out from elsewhere; one responds to something or to someone. What the response is made to is not to be confused with the about-which [Worüber] of a statement that I make or with the what-for [Wozu] of a decision I make. The response does not depart from me myself. The person who appears in the response stands across the usual definitions. He is neither a mere 'deficient being' who has to compensate for what is lacking, nor does he stand out as a 'crown of creation,' nor does he live 'at the center of the World.'" (Waldenfels 2015, 6.)

> […] what momentarily shines through these laconic statements are not the biographical events of personal histories, as suggested by the pathos-laden emphasis of a certain oral history, but rather the luminous trail of a different history. What suddenly comes to light is not the memory of an oppressed existence, but the silent flame of an immemorable ethos—not the subject's face, but rather the disjunction between the living being and the speaking being that marks its empty place. Here life subsists only in the infamy in which it existed; here a name lives solely in the disgrace that covered it. And something in this disgrace bears witness to life beyond all biography. (Agamben 1999, 143.)

The hermeneutics of testimony can be based on the theory of enunciation, but at the same time it also exceeds it, specifically, where the authority of the author-witnesser comes to the fore or is challenged, either because of the trauma of the witnesser or because of intimidation by some other authority that has appropriated social power. The Slovenian writer Boris Pahor (b. 1913) who died in 2022 at the age of 109 confronts both aspects in his extensive literary work, and he has rightly been called the witnesser of the 20th century.[6] Pahor's literary oeuvre not only draws attention to the totalitarian conditions of the past century and the living conditions within it, but he primarily confronts the reader with questions of *affection and (mis)understanding or (mis)meaning*. Affection is not tied to an emotional experience or an event as a real historical fact, but is *primarily and fundamentally characterized by misunderstanding*. "Experiencing" an event in a socio-historical situation is therefore only possible, if *someone witnesses it*, i.e., the witnesser is the one who assumes the role of a witness to the extent that it is assigned to him in his own existence.

When the Slovenian National Hall on Oberdan Square in Trieste was burned down on July 13, 1920, Pahor was there as a witness to the totalitarianism that marked the 20th century. For Pahor, the experience of seeing this act of arson was not only the one that would mark his feelings, but rather the one that had

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6 Cf. Rojc 2013. See also: *Wikipedia*, s.v. "Boris Pahor," accessed November 23, 2022, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Boris_Pahor.

been stamped upon his actual existence of being-in-the-world, which, "from then on" and "from there," is distinguished by the aspiration of the testimony. Being-witness involves being touched by something that is to be testified to. Of course, the question is whether what concerns the witness as a witness to the event can be treated as "the subject's experience" and whether we do not thereby contextually falsify the frame of testimoniality itself. When Boris Pahor describes his experience in the Nazi concentration camps and the war, as well as the post-war situation, he repeatedly emphasizes the importance of the burning of the National Hall in Trieste (this is also a key point for understanding his testifying), since he wants to highlight, from the viewpoint of a historical situation, what actually established it. Usually, concentration camp victims are asked about their factual experience. Their testimony thus boils down to describing the facts, leaving out the question of what they actually witnessed. To the extent that bearing witness is reduced to such a description, we forestall the possibility of understanding testimoniality. If we ask what feelings someone had, when they saw the burning National Hall, we forestall the possibility of understanding what the person present witnessed. What Pahor witnessed marked the entire 20th century. In *Grmada v pristanu* (*The Pyre in the Port*)*,* where Pahor for the first time describes the burning of the National Hall, he emphasizes the glowing, red sky and the smell of smoke in the air. He also describes the event in his most famous literary work, *Necropolis* (2011), by indicating the origin of what he later witnessed in the concentration camps.

In her article "Trauma, memory, testimony," Claudia Welz systematically addresses the relationship between the three denoted concepts. She turns to the experience of the concentration camps, interrogating statements made by the Holocaust survivors, expressed by sentences, such as: "No one can describe it" and "No one can understand it." Welz also deliberates upon the problem of integrating and communicating the traumatic experience in the sense of testifying. Her paper encompasses the process of testimony, the (in)ability to transform traumatic memory, and the fundamental role of speech as a traumatic experience. Welz considers the etymology of the Greek word τραῦμα in the sense of "being wounded." The English translation "wound" does not fully satisfy the meaning of the word τραῦμα, as it implies physical injury. "Trauma" refers also to a psychological condition that has marked an individual due to

an event. Welz argues that trauma, which results from having experienced some kind of horror, impairs our memory and renders us unable to testify.

Welz states that a non-traumatized witness is capable of the normal communication process *from seeing to saying*. He testifies to what he saw. In the case of a traumatized witness, however, this natural process is prevented. Her research uses phenomenological, psychological, and ethical questioning of the relationship between trauma, memory, and testimony, highlighting the "inner witness" and the importance of "the social context." According to Welz, socialization plays an important role in de-traumatizing the witness (e.g., helping the witness by talking, encouraging testimony and restitution of memory and identity). She takes Claude Lanzmann's film *Shoah* as an example, which very directly tries to present the problem of testimony as such.

Shoah follows a witness to a concentration camp in such a manner that the viewer is given no reflections except their own. The purpose of the film was to let the testimony as such be imprinted upon human consciousness and conscience. Welz, in the case of *Shoah*, states: "those who were closest to the 'facts' died first, and those who have survived can witness only vicariously with the help of 'fiction'" (Welz 2016, 106). In a similar vein, Agamben, quoting Primo Levi, reiterates: "'I must repeat: we, the survivors, are not the true witnesses. […] The destruction brought to an end, the job completed, was not told by anyone, just as no one ever returned to describe his own death. […] We speak in their stead, by proxy.'" (Agamben 1999, 33–34.)

In Welz's view, *Shoah* represents an insoluble problem of testimony, precisely because it cannot testify to the past of those whose past it was: "The narrative of the past cannot be told by those whose past it was." (Welz 2016, 106.) She refers to Agamben who says that, in testimony, there is something akin to the inability to bear witness. Here, the relation is to "the living dead" (to the *Muselmann*, which is a Yiddish expression for "a Muslim").[7] If the Shoah is something like

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7 "The so-called Muselmann, as the camp language termed the prisoner who was giving up and was given up by his comrades, no longer had room in his consciousness for the contrasts good or bad, noble or base, intellectual or unintellectual. He was a staggering corpse, a bundle of physical functions in its best convulsions. As hard as it may be for us to do so, we must exclude him from our considerations." (Jean Améry; quoted in: Agamben 1999, 41.)

an event without witnesses, as defined by Shoshana Felman and Dori Laub, then, accordingly, it is impossible for it to be witnessed, neither from the inside (i.e., inside death) nor from the outside (i.e., outside death no one can be a witnesser and testifier; according to Levi, they can act *only as a proxy*, or, in Agamben's view, as an *outsider*). Lanzmann's film aims to "capture" precisely this *in-betweenness*, and, as such, show it directly to the viewer who assumes the role of an inexperienced witness to what the camp survivors testify. Welz's "wounded identity" of the victim (the label is Lawrence Langer's) is a witness who tries to remember, but their memories are always anew irretrievable (they cannot be testified), which as a result continues to haunt the witness as a survivor. In her opinion, something like the guilt of the survivor remains in the memory. They survived, because they adapted to the camp conditions, which puts the camp inmate in a traumatic situation.[8] The desire to survive (for example, through taking the position within the *Sonderkommando*, suffering humiliation in the banal matters, such as the fortune of stealing a piece of bread from another inmate, etc.) included debasing situations that did not leave elevating feelings after surviving the camp.[9] None of the inmates had a real choice, no one was capable of deliberation; the inmates had to act only as they were told (that is, they functioned, but did not live).[10] The punishment of the inmates depended on disobeying the orders of the superiors, but all opposition would have been ineffective, since *extermination* and dying were the order of the day in the camp. On the basis of the testimony of Luna K., Welz states that choosing whether to obey or to disobey an order was not a choice at all, because anyone who resisted, in order to possibly prevent/resist the killing, did so at the cost his own life and consequently endangered the lives of other; if he did not oppose it, the act itself meant indirect "participation" through the means of silent observation of the killing and extermination. According to Welz, this destroyed any mutual relations and consequently compromised personalization with the victim. Trauma was inflicted upon the inhabitants of

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8 Cf. also Santos, Spahr, and Morey Crowe 2019.

9 "This created humiliating, un-heroic memories." (Welz 2016, 107.)

10 "As the witness Chaim E. explains, no one had a choice in the death camps, and no one could think over what to do. The prisoners were just driven to do whatever they did. They were like robots rather than human beings." (Welz 2016, 107.)

the concentration camps as a wound, through which the inmates either lost human contact with themselves and their inner world, the soul, or became dehumanized, alienated in the manner of a *Muselmann* (i.e., he was no longer capable of perceiving himself as being human). They lacked a *Thou* as an *I*.[11] A *Thou*, with whom *I*, as a being-there [*Dasein*], can establish a dialogue[12] or, rather, "talk to" within myself (*I talk to myself*), which actually means bearing witness to myself in the way of being-witness. By eliminating *the witness* as presence, the possibility of establishing the individual as an individual is also destroyed (cf. Welz 2016, 109). In the continuation, Welz also deals with the inner consciousness of the witness, insofar as self-awareness and conscience are concerned. According to her, *testifying* and *conscience* have the same characteristics: *watchfulness*, *wakefulness*, and *alertness* (ibid., 110). For the witness to even recognize something like conscience, conscience must already appear to them as a remembering. If this remembering is traumatized or if PTSD (*post-traumatic stress disorder*) occurs,[13] the process of testifying or bearing witness becomes impossible.[14]

In section 60 of *Being and Time* entitled "The Existential Structure of the Authentic Potentiality-of-Being Attested to in Conscience," Heidegger provides an analysis of the attesting relevance of the call of conscience in co-affiliation with duty, determination, silence and immediacy, and non-locality. On the

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11 In *Testimony* (1992), Dori Laub bears witness to the childhood experience of a concentration camp, where he describes the loss of the essentiality of the *self*, according to which a person has a self: "There was no longer an other to which one could say 'Thou' in the hope of being heard, of being recognized as a subject, of being answered. […] The Holocaust created in this way a world in which one *could not bear witness to oneself.* […] This loss of the capacity to be witness to oneself and thus to witness from the inside is perhaps the true meaning of annihilation, for when one's history is abolished, one's identity ceases to exist as well." (Quotation taken from: Welz 2016, 108.)

12 "The internal 'Thou' is here presented as the addressee with whom an inner dialogue takes place. Furthermore, the 'inner Thou' is characterized as a prerequisite to symbolization and internal world representation." (Welz 2016, 109.)

13 Cf. the chapter "Traumatized memory" and its subheading "PTSD and witnessing: '*from seeing to saying*' or '*reinventing*' in recounting'?" (Welz 2016, 114–121).

14 Irrespective of the psychological designation of the condition (PTSD), when a person is able to testify despite the trauma, the more essential process can be named as from seeing to saying or from perceiving to recounting the perceived.

one hand, this confirms the connection between testimony and conscience, as represented by Welz, but, on the other hand, she also does not place the call of conscience, which can be understood as an existential dictate to being-witness, in the function of remembering. Rather, it is the other way round. Thus, no culture of remembering—which is a very popular concern in the humanities today—is possible without the ethics or, even better, *the ethos of testimony*. Adjusting the possibility of testimony to the capacity of memory deprives testimony of its socio-historical context.

In Ricoeur's book *Memory, History, Forgetting*, we come across the definition that "testimony constitutes the fundamental transitional structure between memory and history" (2004, 21). The problem, of course, is what we understand by the transitivity of the transition in the way of testimony. Based on our findings, this transition is connected with the structure of being-witness or with the assumption of this structure by the witnesser.

Bearing witness means that the transition comes to mean by becoming historical. Becoming historical also means passing into memory and remembering, which can be fulfilled in testimony. However, testimony in its existence is not just a memory. According to St. Augustine, who, especially with regard to *Confessions*, could be characterized as a philosopher-testifier, a testimony is, besides memory, fulfilled by insight and anticipation: "For the mind expects and attends and remembers, so that what it expects passes through what has its attention to what it remembers." (Augustinus 2008, 243.)

Translated by Jason Blake

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Andrej Božič

"Mitsammen."
Paul Celan's Poetry in the "In-Between" of (Cultural) World(s)

Abstract: The enigmatic poetic work of Paul Celan, which has attracted the attention of numerous philosophers, is fundamentally denoted by dialogicality: whilst the (German) language "incorporates" into Celan's poems words, phrases, or idioms from different cultural realms, dis-owning thus poetry for the acceptance of the other, it nonetheless opens the "in-between" of mutual understanding and cohabitation. The inter-weaving of (cultural) world(s) in the language of poetic creativity gives rise to the dis-heartened search for sense in the embodied permeation of (remaining) cultural— not only linguistic and literary, but also historical as well as political and social— fragments. The confounding complexity of Celan's lyric oeuvre, therefore, re-presents a specific, unique hermeneutic challenge: a challenging of hermeneutics as such in the encounter with the alterity of poetry. The paper addresses certain questions related to—the inter-culturality of—sociality through the interpretation of Celan's poem "Anabasis" from the collection *Die Niemandsrose* (1963).

Keywords: Paul Celan, poetry, the other, language, sociality.

At first sight, it might seem somewhat peculiar, perhaps surprising and strange to attempt to acknowledge, during a debate about the problem(s) of (the relation between) phenomenology and sociality, the—diversly, divertingly— heterogenous creativity of literary arts, in general, and of poetry, in particular, as one of the—if not quite "equ(iv)al(ent)," with regard to its specific significance

and referential relevance nonetheless "not(ice)able"—interlocutors of the conversation. Can it be that phenomenology, with the vast wealth of its meticulously elaborated methodological and epistemological approaches, of its immensely intricate historic development, as, indeed, an original orientation, a movement of contemporary philosophical thought, is not self-sufficient enough to convincingly and conclusively grasp not only the disparate details, but also the constitutive conditions of the social dimension of humanity? Must it be, in order to accurately comprehend the overwhelming wholeness of the human as a being capable of establishing senseful and sensitive inter-personal, sociable and societal associations, supplemented by instructive insights stemming from other (if not stringently scientific) realms of knowledge? Does it, due to the helplessness of an essential lack(ing), necessitate assistance?

And: is it actually at all compulsory to complicate additionally the convoluted matter of the relationship of phenomenology towards the social by entangling and entailing the endeavored discussion with the ancient, albeit (still) not obsolete, (for)ever (and as yet) un-resolved concern(s) of kindred dis-similarity between *Dichten* and *Denken*, between poetizing and thinking, between the poetic uttering, the poem, and the philosophical concept, the idea, between poetry and philosophy? And: if the latter issue has, to a certain degree, co-determined the specificity of phenomenological research—and, thus, likewise, although as such not especially thematized, co-delineates the background horizon of the present contemplation—, wherefrom comes, if at all, such a compulsion of the counter-parts that con-figure within the cor-relating inter-connection to continually re-turn, from without, to each other, to the other?

But: has the other, on the contrary—in truth?—, (not), however it re-occurs and however it re-emerges, always already, from beginning onwards, addressed itself, been by itself addressed both to philosophy as well as to poetry or, better, both to the philosopher as well as to the poet: do they (not), confronted with what co-constitutes them, whilst they cor-respond to its adjuration, already always find themselves—their (authentic?) selves?—, as social beings—despite often (as predominantly the popular opinion stereo-typically claims) merely *per negationem*, by withdrawing from the social to the refuge of solitude—, before, and for, the other? With-standing (with-in) the encounter? The secret of the encounter?

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The following deliberation would like to, on the circumscribed pathways and crossroads of questioning, seeking, if not a categorically de-finite answer, at least its infinitesimally ameliorated re-assumption, dedicate attention to the work(s), to the poetry and to the poetics of one of the greatest poets—maybe *the* poet—of the—cataclysmic conflicts and catastrophic contradictions of the—20th century, the German-speaking author of Jewish descent: Paul Celan (1920–1970). Through the (sketch of a) commentary upon the poem "Anabasis" from the collection *Die Niemandsrose* (1963), I shall strive to show—"exemplify"—how Celan's poetic oeuvre—(by) traversing the "in-between" of (cultural) world(s)—maintains—and remains ardently devoted to—the tie(s) to the—im-possible, im-probable—potentiality of mutuality, of the common—the communal and the communitarian—, despite the total(itarian) disintegration of sociality, despite "that which happened" (Celan 2001, 395),[1] that which lets, and does not let, itself be mis-spelled with the epitome of the ominously in-famous name (")Auschwitz(")): the (historic) "event" of the Holocaust.

Fatefully denoted by the experience of the Shoah, by the survival of the genocidal deluge, the experience, which, as an impasse of a caesura in the passage of time, resists all and any—im-mediate(d)—re-presentation, which con-tests, perchance, (with) the essentially unfathomable abyssality of experience as such, Celan's poetry, from within the de-portative dis-placement of its selfmost exile(dness), remits, and ceaselessly, without pause keeps remitting, (itself) to(wards)—both the anti-polar (other) as well as the self-same (other) *as*—the other, to(wards) a conversation: the poet, with-in his wor(l)d(s), not only frequently re-evokes—literally quotes or alchemistically translates—poignantly meaningful notions—terms and phrases, expressions and neologisms—from other languages, from variegated linguistic usages, from miscellaneous idioms, and from omnifarious jargons—the scientific as well as the philosophic, the religious as well as the secular, the journalistic as well as the banal—, in order to impart onto them distinct signification, but also partakes, on the one hand, in the (outward) dialogue with the celebrated

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1 Cf. the German original of the cited phrase—from Celan's "Speech on the Occasion of Receiving the Literature Prize of the Free Hanseatic City of Bremen" ("Ansprache anläßlich der Entgegennahme des Literaturpreises der Freien Hansestadt Bremen"; 1958)—reads: "das, was geschah" (Celan 2000, III, 186).

tradition of (precursory and contemporary) literature and, on the other hand, in the (inward) dialogue with the (former and foreshadowing) unfolding of his poetry. Trans-pierced, trans-mu(ta)ted by silence(s), dis-possessing (of) the poems themselves, the polyphonically dialogical dis-position(ality) of Celan's secretive language can be—approximately, approximatively—de-marked as a twofold, but by itself unified, plurally unique and uniquely plural, as a singular movement of inter-linking counter-currents of the appropriation of the foreign—i.e., of estrangement through the re-accommodation of the alien—and of the alienation of the proper—i.e., the estrangement through the re-acceptance of the own—: a movement that, with-holding (to) the openness of the wound, the woundedness of the open, requires a hermeneutically in-act(ivat)ed dis-tension—of the sort threatening to radically suspend the hermeneutic (effort) itself—: it raises to all readers, the admirer as well as the interpreter, the question of the de-limit(ation)s of the ability to understand, demands consideration, readiness for a concentrated listening, an auscultation of its multilayered nuances of suggestive con-notation, shades of non-sense, a hearkening. It necessitates a response to the address of its inter-(ap)pellation: a cor-respondence of responsibility. A heart.

As such, thus dialogically distinguished, Celan's opus has attracted the worldwide attention not only of literary connoisseurs, of literary critics, and of literary scientists—among the personalities of the 20th-century poetry, the many-sided implications of his work are doubtlessly one of the most thoroughly scholarly researched and interpretively debated—, but also of philosophers appertaining to a multiplicity of proveniences and schools of thought. The latter is particularly true of numerous phenomenologically oriented thinkers or of thinkers more or less tightly, more or less loosely affiliated with the movement, with one of its many embodiments: not only Hans-Georg Gadamer or Jacques Derrida, not only Otto Pöggeler, not only Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe or Jean Greisch dedicated separate, sometimes—for their own philosophical profiling and proficiency—pivotal writings to Celan's creativity, one discovers decisive, albeit transitory, fragmentary references to the poet in the works, for instance, of Emmanuel Levinas or Bernhard Waldenfels.

However: before becoming, before being the "case" of (any kind of) philosophical interrogation, Celan's poetic aspirations, both his poems as

well as his auto-poetological reflections, by themselves, divulge the author's life-long profound interest in and for philosophy and, within it, for and in phenomenology. The extensive library of publications with contents concerning (the problems of) philosophical thought, meticulously catalogued—with exact transcriptions of all the marginalia of markings, underlinings, and annotations—by Alexandra Richter, Patrick Alac, and Bertrand Badiou in the vast volume entitled *La Bibliothèque philosophique. Die philosophische Bibliothek* (2004)—yet, encompassing only one tenth of the ample amount of all the books the poet owned—, bears witness to the circumstance that Celan was an avid, concentrated reader whose remarkably manifold pre-occupation(s) spanned, with special emphasis on Russian and Jewish thinkers, almost the entire history of "western" (and parts of "eastern") philosophy. However, within it, one can perspicuously discern, as one of central focal points, the poet's, almost systematic, commitment to the authors encircling the phenomenological tradition.[2]

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2 Beside the copious amount of consummately studied works of, and about, Martin Heidegger—his thought stands, as the editors of the abovementioned volume state in the afterword, at the beginning and at the end of Celan's philosophical library (cf. Celan 2004, 742); the controversial relation between Celan and Heidegger has been the subject of numerous, almost innumerable studies—, the poet read, sometimes in first or rare, (in Paris) hard-to-find editions (e.g., the *Jahrbücher für Philosophie und phänomenologische Forschung*), both "primary" as well as "secondary" literature of, and on,—to name, for illustration purposes, without taking a detailed account of the encompassing con-text(s) of the oeuvre as a whole, but a few of the carefully scrutinized writings of perhaps pronounced importance—the following phenomenological philosophers. Whereas Celan's reception of Edmund Husserl can be ascertained through the corroboration of some of the thinker's paramount monographs, such as the *Logical Investigations*, *The Idea of Phenomenology*, or *Cartesian Meditations*, the crucial significance of the reading of the *Lectures on the Phenomenology of Internal Time-Consciousness* has already been shown by several researchers. Likewise, Celan devoted diligent consideration to select essays and treatises of O. Becker, H. Conrad-Martius, H. Arendt, E. Stein, and L. Binswanger, whilst also the copy of Max Scheler's famous programmatic discourse on *Man's Place in Nature* (*Die Stellung des Menschen im Kosmos*) demonstrates a conscientiously dedicated reader. The list could, and should, go on to include also the works of Celan's contemporaries, with some of whom he was bound through friendship (Derrida, Pöggeler, and Levinas). The cursory, incomplete overview that only re-counts assorted publications with phenomenological content within the poet's personal philosophical library, first and foremost, of course,

The marginalia, (along) with the assiduously de-nominated (purchase and reading) dates, doubtlessly reveal that Celan's captivation by the philosophical, preponderantly phenomenological thinking, concentrated cardinally during the course of the 1950s, i.e., during the time of creative crisis—from it, the poetic language was to re-ensue (as) trans-figured—, is principally guided by the author's search for a self-comprehension as a poet, for the self-attestation of the (testimony of the) poetic itself, its "legitimization" and its "justification" before, and within a confrontation with, the exigencies of (the historic) time(s), which found its finest and final, publicly enunciated articulation in the auto-poetological speech on the occasion of the award of the Georg Büchner prize, the speech entitled "The Meridian" ("Der Meridian"; 1960),[3] but which can be re-traced to Celan's private notations in preparation both for the speech itself as well as for the unrealized lecture project "On the Darkness of the Poetic" ("Von der Dunkelheit des Dichterischen"; 1959).[4]

Poetry, as Celan conceives (of) it, as he attempts to demarcate it in "The Meridian," is a language of a crossing—of borders—, of a movement—between them—, of trans-position(s) and of trans-version(s), of traversal that is borne and comes to the world—becomes it—, as life itself characterized, outlined with the shadow of death, as the—always plurally, by and through itself differ(entiat)ed—event of singularity, as a barely perceptible, well-nigh imperceptible breath of air. It is a language, the voice of which, through and by its naming—also of the unnamed, also of the unnamable—, dis-closes the mortal human being as a person, as an I. It is a language that—always on its way to the other, but nevertheless enduringly mindful of the dates, the endured experiences—with-in the turn of breath, with-in the breathturn—*Atemwende* (cf. Celan 2000, III, 195)—, with-stands (with-in) the frightful muting. A language, which offers itself from one hand to the other hand, from the hand of the poet to the hand of the reader, in order only, albeit

formulates a task for further, in-depth examination, which would require a cautious consideration of (all?) the presumed resonances within Celan's poetry. For a general assessment of the poet's philosophical interests and especially of the relevance of phenomenology and Heidegger, cf. May, Goßens, and Lehmann 2008, 249–258.

3 Cf. Celan 2000, III, 187–202. Cf. also the English translation by John Felstiner in: Celan 2001, 401–414.

4 Cf. Celan 2005, 130–152.

broken, albeit transformed, (maybe) to come home: to be able to testify to and for humanity, for and to the realm, the reality—the *ethos* (not "ethics")—of the human(e). Language, always underway: a writing, the remaining, disappearing trace of "*the secret of the encounter* [*Geheimnis der Begegnung*]" (Celan 2000, III, 198).[5]

Of such an encounter, of such a secret—through(out) its be-speaking, with(in) its multi-linguality—sings the poem that Celan wrote between July 27 and 28, 1961, during a family vacation in Kermorvan (Trébabu) on the Breton coast,[6] and that he later included, as part of the third cycle, into the collection *The No-One's-Rose* (*Die Niemandsrose*; 1963): "Anabasis"—in the original of the German language and in the English translation of Michael Hamburger—sings:

ANABASIS   ANABASIS

Dieses   This
schmal zwischen Mauern geschriebne   narrow sign between walls   433
unwegsam-wahre   the impassable-true
Hinauf und Zurück   Upward and Back
in die herzhelle Zukunft.   to the heart-bright future.

Dort.   There.

Silben-   Syllable-
mole, meer-   mole, sea-
farben, weit   coloured, far out
ins Unbefahrne hinaus.   into the unnavigated.

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5 Felstiner renders the author's diction as: "*the mystery of an encounter*" (Celan 2001, 409).
6 Cf. the elucidation by Barbara Wiedemann in: Celan 2018, 812.

Dann:	Then:
Bojen-,	buoys,
Kummerbojen-Spalier	espalier of sorrow-buoys
mit den	with those
sekundenschön hüpfenden	breath reflexes leaping and
Atemreflexen –: Leucht-	lovely for seconds only –: light-
glockentöne (dum-,	bellsounds (dum-,
dun-, un-,	dun-, un-,
unde suspirat	*unde suspirat*
cor),	*cor*),
aus-	re-
gelöst, ein-	leased, re-
gelöst, unser.	deemed, ours.
Sichtbares, Hörbares, das	Visible, audible thing, the
frei-	tent-
werdende Zeltwort:	word growing free:
Mitsammen.	Together.
(Celan 2000, I, 256–257.)	(Celan 2007, 223.)

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Before endeavoring, on the course towards the conclusion, to dis-engage (some of) the—pre-supposed—con-textually inter-related con-junctions de-not(at)ed by the—maybe, at first, enigmatic—title of the poem, let us, let me try to accompany the movement of "Anabasis" with a—"simple"?—(re-)reading: the ad-venture of listening.

In concordance with the established con-summation of Celan's—mature(d), later(r)—creativity, the poem's six strophes seek to, through the ("typical") fragmentary manner of para-tactical, paren-thetic re-citing of seemingly scattered—cantillated—"impressions," contorted—beyond decipherment?—by the refracting proliferation of (verse and line) breaks, by the lacunal gaping of a wound(ing) that in-habit(uate)s, dif-fuses (with) the interiority of the utterance itself, offer "expression," sup-press(ur)ed perchance by the abyssal

ambiguity of the in-effa(cea)ble, to the experience, which cogently culminates with—the (counter-?)diction, the dictate (?) of—the final—the last? the first?—word: (to) the world of togetherness. Whereas the singing of the initial stanza re-collects the—singular?—sign(ing)—the cryptic con-scription: the script(ure)—of a gradual progression—a path? a trace?—that leads, although remaining, whilst it winds—being barely legible, barren in its readability: narrow, sparse—(by) itself between the—enclosing and encasing: anguish- and anxiety-precipitating—walls, at once impassable, but true, at once true, but impassable, although denying—or: obstructing?—passage, despite—or: because of?—its truth(fulness), nonetheless, upwards and back, into and towards the heart-bright future, the precarious prospect of futurity, alight with com-passionate heartfulness, towards and into what may—someday— be-come to be encountered as the (f)actual realization of the heartfelt, the condensed, one-word "statement" of the second strophe in-directly indicates the—silent, silenced—"here" (of speaking)—the constraint, the strait of confinement?—by orienting the—poet's? poem's?—gaze to—the freedom, the errancy of the liberating?—: "There." From the—binding: vertical?—closedness of the walled-up—"here"—, the—wandering? wondering?—gaze reveals the— boundless: horizontal?—openness of the oceanic—"there"—, where—within its sur-rounding—the—re-semblance of a—mole—i.e., (mound) breakwater— appears to sur-face (it), however, as built by—re-sounding?—syllables—by the immaterial "materiality" of language—and as colored by—re-surging?— sea—by the material "immateriality" of water—, paradoxically, simultaneously (both) *in*-visible and in-*visible* as well as (both) in-*audible* and *in*-audible: mole, stretching—losing: dis-solving?—itself somewhere "far out," in(to) the remoteness of what the poem (re-?)maps (as) "the unnavigated," in(to) that, which has—beyond the perpetually elusive horizon(s)—hitherto not been circumnavigated by human beings, which—as the substantive derived from seamen's speech ("un/befahren": "un/tried") suggests—neither has been—still not, not yet—explored nor has been—not yet, still not—experienced: the as- yet-to-be-explored and the as-yet-to-be-experienced. But: the inter-cession, the scission of another deixis ruptures the—im-?measurable?—monotony of oceanic dis-continuity: suddenly, (as) signaled by the (ap-pointed) colon, the—poem's? poet's—gaze—even further onwards? even farther away?—

catches a glimpse of buoys, of an espalier—a (s)train—of buoys as sign(post)s of—car(etak)ing?—sorrow(s)—of re-assuring worries cautiously, as guidance, trans-posed onto the (endless?) openness of the sea, in order to promise a safe(r) crossing towards "the unnavigated," (back?) from it?—, emitting the re-chanting of breath reflexes—the "breathing" of the waving waters: the re-percussions of the vertical fluctuation of the sea's horizontality?—, leaping, rising and falling, skipping, each one, after the other(s), lovely, subtle and serene, beautiful solely for few seconds, the re-flections of breath that are, from afar, re-cognizable—as the source of sounds—only by the distant flickering of sunlight:—the reception re-gathers around the axis of the pause(,) of the dash, and, with the ensuing syn-esthetic break, re-gains, as it were, a con-sonant "translation"—: (as) "Light-/bellsounds." Through the (bracketed) interpolated interjection of the onomatopoetic, which struggles, in vain, to re-capture the reverberating echoes, but which, in turn, commences to re-produce the reviving verses in the Latin language, transpires the re-leasing and the re-deeming of the—in-audible—sights and the—in-visible—sounds

436 of the—espalier of—buoys that eventually allows them—allows it?—to become, to be (as) "ours"; however, if the English translator rendered the anaphoric completion of the stanza with the re-iteration of the prefix "re-," the German original accentuates the—(ar-?)rhythmic (a-)symmetry of the—chiasmatic inter-lacing of the (preceding) outward and (subsequent) inward directedness of the re-settlement of re-appropriation: re-alienation of the un/known and un/owned: the—properly? strangely?—"own." The concluding two strophes—or, (perhaps) better: one, in-dividual strophe torn by the chasm of an eloquently mute(d), empty (verse) line, following the cleft of a colon and permeating the poem's ending with emphasis—, as a sort of an envoi, recapitulate the movement of the whole with a succinct re-densification of the encountered, of the experienced—the (in-)visible, the (in-)audible ("thing")—, from which, through its—poetic?—trans-formation, growing freely, becoming free, a-rises—respires—the—emancipated? emancipating?—word that, like a sheltering tent, provides protection of safe solace before, and from, the whirlwinds of the (deserted, devastated) world: the counter-world, the counter-word: the (counter-)wor(l)d: "Together." "Mitsammen."

If one (maybe) may be tempted to (mis-?)"interpret" "Anabasis"—with regard (also) to the biographical, "empirical" circumstance of it nascency—as an opaquely sophisticated, perhaps perplexingly sublim(at)e(d)—"empyreal"—poetic portrayal—a transcriptive re-narration—of a family outing at the beach, wherethrough the dis-united elements of descried—visual and auditory—"reality"—the road between the walls, the sea and the mole, the buoys—become, as momentous events, imbued with the—privat(iv)ely?—personal, confidential intimacy of the familial, the movement of the poem, which the title bestows with a name, which comes to a halt, to a de-termination with the closing utterance of togetherness, receives a contra-distinctive meaning(fulness), another—dia-critically con-sequential—signification in—the enciphered—light of the (c)overt—explicit as well as implicit—(inter-cultural) references that need to be taken into account, that Celan's language by itself necessitates to take into account, although they might safeguard the silence of compelling withdrawal without response. Within the present con-text, I confine myself to a few—helpful, albeit desperately deficient—hints.[7]

Whilst the—Greek word of the—poem's title originates—as a verbal "borrowing," as a literal "allowance"—from the—title of the—celebrated re-telling of Xenophon's voyages with an army of mercenaries, who—in 401 B. C.—traveled, hired by Cyrus the Younger, to Persia to seize the throne from the latter's brother, king Artaxerxes II, but were, after the fateful skirmish at Kunaxa, left forsaken amongst "barbarians" to procure for themselves a route back to Greece, Celan's poetic com-position, of course, by no means, can be straightforwardly reduced to—the purpose of—a lyrical illustration of the ancient author's *Anabasis*. However: the potential parallel between the prominent episode of Xenophon's story, within which the roaming, dismayed soldiers again, after all adversities, catch sight of the Black Sea, encouraging them with the hope for a hurtless homecoming, and the scene(ry) as well as the (e)motion, the singing of Celan's poem might primarily, as (its) "inspiration," reside within the—(multifarious) meaning(s) of the—the name, (within) the re-naming itself: "march up

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7 For comprehensive commentaries upon Celan's "Anabasis," cf.: Speier 1993, Lehmann 2003 (esp. 221–226), and Badiou 2008 (esp. 86–97). On the latter analysis, cf. also Betteridge 2015.

(the country),” “expedition (into interior territories),” “embarkment”: *ascension*.[8]

If the entirety of—the movement of—Celan's “Anabasis” is directly de-sign(at)ed by the—prologue of the—Greek title, the quotation in the Latin language enters its texture indirectly, through the poem's inter-mediary and inter-medial effort to—non-?imitatively?—demonstrate—by the (repetitively modulating) scansion of syllables—the pulsating sonority of sea, (as) mirrored by the stirring of the buoys: it itself, indeed, is music(al): namely, the citation—as the title remaining untranslated, as the title retaining its alienness—is a verse from the solo motet *Exultate, jubilate* (1773) by Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, but, within the poetic text, it re-appears—as (it) regularly recurs in Celan's oeuvre—with a slight alteration, with an enjambement that specifically highlights the sequestered “cor”: *heart*.[9]

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8 Cf. Celan 2018, 812–813. Already in 1955, Celan obtained a copy of the German translation of Xenophon's work in the Reclam edition, published in 1943. The concluding, summarizing sentence of the historical account reads (almost) like a pre-figuration of the poet's posterior (re-?)“interpretation”: “Die Dauer des ganzen Zuges *hin und zurück* betrug ein Jahr und drei Monate. [The entire expedition *up and back* lasted one year and three months.]” (Xenophon 1943, 261; my emphasis.) Speier's study dedicated to Celan's poem additionally draws attention (also) to—the in-direct “influence” of—the French lyrical epos *Anabase* (1924) by Saint-John Perse as well as the foreword Hugo von Hofmannsthal wrote to accompany the publication of its German translation (1929).

9 The strophe from the libretto of Mozart's motet, encompassing the cited verse, re-sounds thus: “Tu virginum corona, / tu nobis pacem dona, / tu consolare affectus, / unde suspirat cor. [Thou, the crown of virgins, / thou give us peace, though soothe (appease) the afflictions, / wherefore the heart sighs.]” (Quoted, e.g., in: Speier 1993, 75–76.) In one of the (earlier) drafts of the poem, Celan mistakenly—maybe from memory?—mis-quotes the Latin original—yet at once promptly mis-associates it to the (poem's) fundamental dimension of breathing—: “dumque respirat cor [while the heart breathes]” (Celan 1996, 84). Likewise, it might perhaps be worth mentioning that “Anabasis” was written around the time, when the poet was reading the—second volume of the—Russian almanac entitled *Aerial Ways* (*Воздушные пути*; 1961), which he had recently purchased (on June 20, 1961) and which contains Ossip Mandelstam's posthumous poem about the re-sounding of Franz Schubert's music on water and of Mozart's echoes in birds’ noise (cf. Ivanović 1996, 122–124, and Celan 2018, 813): Celan dedicated the entire collection *Die Niemandsrose* to the remembrance of the Russian poet of Jewish descent Mandelstam. On the productive reception of Mozart's

With the conclusion of the poem "Anabasis," with its ultimate utterance, emanating from the circumscribed, if fatally fragmented, fragile movement, with the—wishfully?—whispered—non-?adverbial? non-?substantival?—re-assertion—"Mitsammen."—, which, within Celan's original, contrary to the (much more) common usage of the terms "miteinander" or "zusammen"— all three of them are analogously translatable—, re-calls—not a poetic trans-fusion of both (other) options, but—an idiomatic, idiosyncratic lexeme that Martin Buber and Franz Rosenzweig employed for their acclaimed German translation of the *Bible*, that Buber himself adopted also for his own writings (cf. Celan 2018, 813), with a (single, singular) word, with its (plural, plurivocal) world, language, by itself de-parting from itself, by itself de-creasing towards itself, re-turning—re-(e)volving?—from the other towards the other, dis-closes the germ(ination)—the seed([l]ing)—of sociality: *togetherness*.[10]

★

At the threshold of mutually metamorphic con-vers(at)ion(s) of verticality and horizontality, of visibility and audibility, of landscape and language, born(e) by the movement of ascension—through the (response of the) heart (to the other)—towards togetherness, Celan's poem "Anabasis," as a poetic trans-(con)figuration of human(e) dwelling, through its inter-(con)textuality, passes through—the impasse (?) of—the inter-cultural—both temporal as well as spatial—"in-between" of—and, of course, between—wor(l)d(s)—*amidst*

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work in Celan's poetry, cf. Pöggeler 1993. Cf. also Pöggeler 1990, 296.

10 I would like to extend my sincere gratitude to Sonja Rinofner-Kreidl who—during The 6th Conference of the Central and East European Society for Phenomenology (CEESP) on *Phenomenology and Sociality* (December 2–4, 2021; Ljubljana, Slovenia), where the rudimentary version of this contribution was first presented—graciously conveyed that—the notion of—"mitsammen," for the Austrian German, does not altogether possess the aura of rarity and that it is commonly connected with the distinct tint of (snug) nearness and of (cozy) intimacy, of (comfortable) mutuality of endearment. A corroboration of Celan's predilection for the Austrian dialect of the German language can be found within Gisela Dischner's memoirs concerning the poet, which accompany the book of correspondence between them: she states that Celan's "voice would become, whenever he was emotionally agitated—either positively or negatively—, 'more Austrian [österreichischer]'" (Celan and Dischner 2012, 130).

and across others, the German, the Greek, and the Latin, but likewise the Russian and the Jewish, and still countless others—: within it—within them—, a polyphonous dialogue—without (final?) re-solution?—takes place—always anew displaced? always anew misplaced?—, which, whilst co-constituting what the—non-?spoken?—"we" addresses as "ours," (perhaps) warrants—with the im-mediacy of co-existing life, despite death—the futurity of the communal: the community of the future. A home(coming) for the homeless (humanity)?

But: can—*must*?—I (not) be solitary, (solely?) because I already *am*—have been?— solidary: (be)for(e) the other?

And: vice versa?

Poetry, (as)—the guardian of—the secret of the encounter with the other—(as) the Other?—, thus, embodied with a poem—a poem like "Anabasis" by Paul Celan—, is "a message in a bottle"—a (")message(") (also) for a debate about the problem(s) of (the relation between) phenomenology and sociality?—: a—*the*?—*Flaschenpost*:

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> A poem, as a manifestation of language and thus essentially dialogue, can be a message in a bottle [Flaschenpost], sent out in the—not always greatly hopeful—belief that somewhere and sometime it could wash up on land, on heartland [Herzland] perhaps. Poems in this sense too are underway: they are making toward something.
>
> Toward what? Toward something standing open, occupiable, perhaps toward an addressable Thou, toward an addressable reality.
>
> Such realities, I think, are at stake in a poem.
>
> And I also believe that ways of thought like these attend not only my own efforts, but those of other lyric poets in the younger generation. They are the efforts of someone who, overarched by stars that are human handiwork, and who, shelterless [zeltlos] in this till now undreamt-of sense and thus most uncannily in the open [auf das unheimlichste im Freien], goes with his very being to language, stricken by and seeking reality. (Celan 2001, 396.)[11]

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11 For the (author's) interpolations from the—German original of the—conclusion of the poet's speech delivered at the award ceremony in Bremen, cf. Celan 2000, III, 186.

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Antonia Veitschegger

Disagreement about an Art Work's Value
Why It Is Unavoidable, What It Consists In, and How to Deal With It

Abstract: Disagreements about an art work's value are among the most common but least investigated ones. In order to clarify the issue, I present a structural analysis of the object of disagreement. The structure proposed is threefold, consisting of the spatiotemporal *art thing*, the purely intentional *art work*, and the experiential *art object*. I argue that disagreement about an art work's value is unavoidable, because one art work allows for differing art objects. Disagreeing parties reveal differing art objects, which are meant to manifest the same art work. The disagreement has three subkinds: it can stem from one party having a less extensive awareness of the art thing, from one party misunderstanding the art work's determinacies, or from both parties revealing differing but legitimate art objects. The former two subkinds are resolvable; the latter one is blameless. Finally, I sketch a worthwhile strategy to deal with disagreement about an art work's value.

Keywords: aesthetic disagreement, phenomenological aesthetics, ontology of art, Roman Ingarden.

Introduction

Disagreements about an art work's value are among the most common ones within and between societies. Nevertheless, they are also among the least investigated ones.[1] In this paper, I endeavor to resolve the following three

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[1] The contemporary philosophical debate on disagreement mainly focuses on the epistemology of peer disagreement concerning empirical matters (Feldman and Warfield 2010; Frances and Matheson 2019). Investigations of what is called "aesthetic disagreement" or "disagreement about taste," which also concern art, are mostly embedded within semantic and epistemological debates about aesthetic properties (Goldman 1993; Bender 1996, 2001; Lasersohn 2005; MacFarlane 2007; Schafer 2011; Sundell 2011; Huvenes 2012). Andy Egan focuses on disputes about taste—

questions. How come our art evaluations disagree so often? What does disagreement about an art work's value consist in? And is there any worthwhile way of dealing with it? I address these questions from a phenomenological point of view. My approach is especially indebted to Roman Ingarden's insightful analyses of the work of art.

In section 1, I present three ordinary examples for disagreement about an art work's value. In section 2, I clarify the object of disagreement by presenting its threefold structure, consisting of *art thing*, *art work*, and *art object*. Based on this structural analysis, in section 3, I show why disagreeing art evaluations are not only common, but also unavoidable. Furthermore, I clarify in section 4 what disagreement about an art work's value necessarily consists in, and what contingent shape it can take. In section 5, I revisit the exemplary disagreements from the beginning of the paper, now being in a position to clarify them. In section 6, I define three subkinds of disagreement about an art work's value, as illustrated by the exemplary disagreements from section 1. While two of them are resolvable, one of them is blameless. Finally, in section 7, I sketch a worthwhile strategy to deal with disagreement about an art work's value.

1. Exemplary disagreements

In the following, I introduce three ordinary examples of disagreement about an art work's value, which will later help us to illustrate three subkinds of this disagreement.

The first example stems from my personal history. It concerns a famous painting dating from the 16th century known as *Landscape with the Fall of Icarus*, which was long attributed to Pieter Bruegel the Elder. The disagreement in question emerged, when I was introduced to the painting at school during the Latin class. We had just learned about Ovid's take on Icarus's story in his *Metamorphoses*. Since it illustrates the scenery described by Ovid, we were shown a depiction of the painting in our schoolbooks. My teacher was convinced that the painting was "ingenious." Aged thirteen at the time, I

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understood as conversational exchanges—, and questions, under which conditions they are defective (Egan 2010).

evaluated the matter a little differently: I agreed that the painting was beautiful, but I did not see its ingenuity.

The second exemplary disagreement concerns a work by the German-American artist Eva Hesse: *Expanded Expansion*, a sculpture from 1969 consisting of several fiberglass poles and latex panels. Latex is an unstable material, which caused the panels to turn stiff and brittle over the years (Getty Conservation Institute 2012; Chao and Deluco 2021). At the time the sculpture was first exhibited, the following disagreement arose: contemporary critics of Hesse's work, pointing to its ephemeral material, thought it was sloppy. Others, who were contemporary lovers of Hesse's work, thought it was poetic for precisely the same reason.

The third and last exemplary disagreement concerns a poem by Edgar Guest entitled "Keep Going," which was published in Guest's popular newspaper column *Breakfast Table Chat* in 1921. The disagreement arises between an expert literary critic and what I would refer to as public opinion. In his *The Company We Keep*, the literary critic Wayne Booth quotes the first stanza of the poem as follows:

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> When things go wrong, as they often will,
> When the road you're trudging seems all uphill,
> When the funds are low and the debts are high
> And you want to smile, but you have to sigh,
> When care is pressing you down a bit,
> Rest! If you must—but never quit. (Booth 1988, 212.)

Whereas Booth considers the poem to be trite, the public opinion deems it inspirational—or so I assume, given the enthusiastic comments on the poem one can find online.

2. The object of disagreement

We all recognize a disagreement about an art work's value if we come across one. But, in order to better understand it, we need to clarify the object of disagreement first. What we disagree about in cases, such as the exemplary ones

introduced above, is the object that we encounter in art experience (commonly referred to as the "art work"). However, that object is a complex one (and talk of the "art work" thus ambiguous). In the following, I present its threefold structure, consisting of the spatiotemporal *art thing*, the purely intentional *art work*, and the experiential *art object*. My analysis is deeply inspired by Roman Ingarden's ontology of the work of art, and I will thus repeatedly refer to his writings. But, although I incorporate many of his insights, our views differ crucially. I cannot elaborate on the differences here, but I will try to point out the most important ones in the footnotes.

2.1. Art thing

The object we encounter in art experience has a spatiotemporal aspect, which I call the "art thing."[2] Art experience typically initiates and evolves in virtue of our direct perception of the art thing. We might, for example, see a painted canvas, fiberglass poles and latex panels, or printed letters in a newspaper. To be sure, our direct perception of the art thing might to a certain extent be replaced by mediated perception (e.g., via depictions in the visual arts). The art thing is the spatiotemporal manifestation of the art work (see section 2.2.) as the individual object it is. Its purpose is to grant us access to the art work, to make it repeatedly and intersubjectively available (Ingarden 1961, 290; 1997, 200).[3]

Extensive awareness of the art thing is the basis for encountering the art work as fully as possible. If we miss features of the art thing that are relevant in light of its purpose, our access to the art work is to a certain extent limited. If a painted canvas, for example, were displayed in a poorly lit room, we would miss some of its color characteristics, in virtue of which we could grasp the painting's specific brilliancy.

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2 The term "art thing" is reminiscent of Husserl's "Bildding," which he uses in his analysis of image perception (Husserl 2006, 20–22).

3 Ingarden assumes the work of art to be in need of a physical ontic foundation (Ingarden 1969, 146), but he stresses that the object we experience in a genuine encounter with a work of art (that is, aesthetic experience, in his view) is not to be identified with any real object (Ingarden 1969, 3). While I agree that the object we encounter is irreducible to the art thing, I take the art thing to be one of its dependent parts.

2.2. Art work

The art work is the center around which art experience revolves. It is the core aspect of art experience's object. It is the "skeleton," which is fleshed out within art experience (Ingarden 1972, 5, n. 1; 1997, 266). In the following, I will elaborate on three of the art work's characteristics: its ontic dependence, its two-dimensionality, and its being an invitation.

The art work is ontically dependent for its existence upon an intentional act of its creation: it originates from someone intending it (Ingarden 1972, 121–122). Unlike spatiotemporal objects, such as the desk I sit at, and alike imagined objects, such as the pink elephant in my mind's eye, the art work is a purely intentional object. It is ontically dependent also for its subsistence (Ingarden 1972, 127–128): if it were not for the art thing and being intended in virtue of it, the art work would "vanish" just like the elephant in my mind's eye.

Furthermore, the art work—as any purely intentional object—is two-dimensional (Ingarden 1965, 211–219; 1972, 123–25). First, it has a structural dimension as the individual object it is, with its own characteristics and parts. We refer to its structure, when we speak about a work's artistic means or parts, such as a painting having a fore-, middle-, and background or a poem having four stanzas. Second, the art work has a substantial dimension. We refer to its substance, when we speak about what we reveal in our encounter with the work: a specific kind of beauty, the human inattention to Icarus's death, the power to keep going, etc.

Finally, the art work is an invitation to actualize its substantial dimension by intending—and thereby completing—it in virtue of the art thing. The art work's substance, as it is manifested in the art thing, is not fully determined, but only a schema: it has both determinate aspects as well as spots of indeterminacy (Ingarden 1965, 219–224; 1972, § 38). It is "unfinished" and calls for completion. Following the invitation, we fill some spots of indeterminacy in accordance with the work's determinacies. For example, we are aware of the ploughman not noticing Icarus's death in *Landscape with the Fall of Icarus*. As a determinate aspect of the work, it comes along with several spots of indeterminacy—the ploughman's state of mind, for example. In actualizing the art work's substance, we implicitly fill this vacant spot: we might take the ploughman as focusing on his work, or we might take him as being indifferent to another's plight. In each case, we actualize moments that

are not yet determined, but only potentially present in the art work's substantial dimension. Our actualization determines its specific qualitative character.

In order to encounter the art work as fully as possible, we need to be aware of its determinacies as they are manifested in the art thing. Consider a case, in which we are unaware of the ploughman not noticing Icarus's death, because we are ignorant of Icarus's story and the scenery described by Ovid: we might still see a ploughman doing his work, but we would be unaware of other important aspects of the art work's substance. A legitimate understanding of the art work's determinacies is yet another basis for encountering the art work as fully as possible.

2.3. Art object

The art work's call for completion, then, is fulfilled in virtue of our revelation of what I call the "art object." The art object consists of the valent qualities we find based on our actualization of the art work's substance. In other words: it is the art work's specific ingenuity, beauty, poetic power, etc., experienced by us. The art object is the art work's experiential manifestation.

The art object unites two kinds of valent qualities: those we reveal as the art work's substance ("aesthetic qualities") and those we find in the art work's structure based on the former revelation ("artistic qualities"). The artistic qualities determine the art work's characteristic way of granting us access to its substance. Like the art work, the art object is two-dimensional. Its overall character depends on both aesthetic and artistic qualities including their relation to one another.[4]

In our actualization of the art work's substance, the aesthetic qualities together form a new qualitative whole, such as two tones forming a single chord (Ingarden 1961, 305–307; 1969, 6; 1997, 231–234). Furthermore, they can play a predicative role, figuring as properties of another intentional object

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4 According to Ingarden, the genuine encounter with a work of art is directed at a solely aesthetic object, excluding artistic qualities (Ingarden 1969, 153–179), since he does not consider the physical ontic foundation as a dependent part of the object we encounter. Trying to do justice to our lived experience, I assume that a genuine encounter with a work of art transcends aesthetic experience and incorporates the artistic appreciation of the work of art.

(Ingarden 1969, 5; 1997, 229–231). The specific kind of beauty we find in *Landscape with the Fall of Icarus*, for example, does not appear as the painted canvas's, but as the depicted landscape's beauty. We look "through" the art thing at something else.

Due to our actualization of the art work's substance, we find artistic qualities, too. Seeing the depicted landscape's beauty, for example, reveals to us the work's excellence in its use of artistic means. Artistic qualities determine the art work's value as the invitation it is. They concern the art thing and its features in the light of their purpose to grant access to the art work in question. In virtue of our awareness of the art thing and our understanding of the art work's determinacies, some of the art thing's features appear to us as artistic merits, others as flaws.

To each art work, then, there corresponds more than one art object. The art work allows for different legitimate art objects, because the invitation to actualize and thereby "complete" its substance comes along with a certain scope of variability, within which this can be done. The artistic qualities, in turn, are related to our actualization of the art work's substance. However, not just any art object successfully manifests the art work in question. An art object is legitimate only, if it involves the determinate aspects of the art work as manifested in the art thing, and actualizes potential moments in accordance with the former.[5]

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3. Why disagreement is unavoidable

Thanks to the preceding structural analysis of the object of disagreement, we can now see the possible roots of disagreement about an art work's value. We might be aware of different features of the art thing, or we might have different understandings of the art work's determinacies and its corresponding spots of indeterminacy. The object's complexity alone explains why disagreement is so common in the realm of art. But, more importantly, we can see that disagreement is "built into" an art work's nature, insofar as it allows for several art objects that differ in their qualitative character. Disagreements about an art

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5 This is reminiscent of the conditions of legitimacy formulated by Ingarden regarding the aesthetic object (Ingarden 1969, 22–24).

work's value are, thus, an unavoidable part of our living social practice, insofar as that practice includes the encounter with genuine art works at all.

4. What the disagreement consists in

We can now also gain a better understanding of what disagreement about an art work's value consists in: two (or more) parties find different valent qualities and thus a different overall qualitative character in their respective encounters with one and the same object, namely the art work. Interestingly, the two parties' disagreement about one and the same object consists in their being directed at two different objects, namely the respective art objects revealed. This specificity of the disagreement is due to the art work's nature: it can manifest itself in different experiential "bodies."[6] Each of the disagreeing parties holds that "their" art object is a legitimate manifestation of the work in question.

Thus, the disagreement might also take the following contingent shape: the two parties disagree about "whose" art object is legitimate. Each party takes the art object revealed by the other party to be illegitimate.

Since both art objects might in fact be legitimate, disagreement about an art work's value in the former sense (concerning the overall qualitative character found in one and the same art work) need not coincide with disagreement in that latter sense (concerning the legitimacy of the differing art objects). I might find tranquil beauty in my encounter with a painting, while my friend finds harmonious ease in it, without us having reason to deny the legitimacy of the other one's findings.

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6 Ingarden warns not to identify the object of aesthetic appreciation (and thus of aesthetic disagreement) with the work of art (Ingarden 1969, 13, 21–22). And surely, what we aesthetically disagree about (the work's actualized substance, in my view) is irreducible to the work as the "skeleton" it is, apart from being experienced. On the other hand, aesthetic appreciation, as it figures in our encounter with a work of art, is part and parcel of our appreciation of the work as the invitation it is. In our encounter with a work of art, aesthetic and artistic appreciation are entangled.

5. Exemplary disagreements revisited

We can now further clarify the three exemplary disagreements from section 1.

Consider, again, the disagreement between my teacher and my thirteen-year-old self about *Landscape with the Fall of Icarus*: while he thought it was ingenious, I agreed that it was beautiful, but did not see its ingenuity. How come we disagreed? The reason is simple. At the time of disagreement, I did not see Icarus in the picture. At first glance, I only saw the landscape, one of the ships, and the ploughman I knew from Ovid's text. Looking at the small depiction in my schoolbook, I simply overlooked Icarus's legs, struggling in the right corner of the picture a little above the fisherman. I missed that important detail of the painting, in virtue of which I could have grasped its ingenuity. The suffering protagonist being completely out of focus in an otherwise peaceful scenery—what an ingenious way to convey human inattention to Icarus's plight! My teacher, of course, knew and saw that Icarus was there. The disagreement stemmed from my awareness of the art thing being less extensive than his.

The disagreement concerning Eva Hesse's *Expanded Expansion* is one of a different kind. Both the critics, who thought it was sloppy, as well as the lovers, who thought it was poetic, were sufficiently aware of the art thing and its features. Beyond that, both of their evaluations referred to the art thing's ephemeral material. The same feature appeared as an artistic flaw to the critics and as a merit to the lovers. This is due to their different understandings of the sculpture's determinacies. The work's lovers realized that the ephemerality found in the art thing manifested a determinate aspect of the work. Answering the work's invitation and actualizing its substance, we can reveal, in a unique way, the ephemerality of life. We "see" life's ephemerality through the art thing. For the critics, by contrast, a successful sculpture was meant to be durable. Only from that perspective does *Expanded Expansion* appear as sloppy, lacking precaution in its use of artistic means. Taking into account the work's determinacies, though, we can see that it does a successful job in the way it grants access to its substance, having a specific poetic power. In this case, the art object revealed by the lovers successfully manifested the work, whereas the critics revealed an illegitimate art object.

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The disagreement stemmed from the critics misunderstanding (or being ignorant of) the art work's determinacies.[7]

Finally, let us take a closer look at the disagreement between Wayne Booth, who thinks Edgar Guest's "Keep Going" to be trite, and the public opinion, which deems the same poem inspirational. Again, this disagreement differs from the aforementioned, as it neither stems from one party having insufficient awareness of the art thing nor from one party misunderstanding the art work. Both evaluations take into account the poem's determinacies: its message of "Keep going," its obvious diction, its easy rhymes and meter, and its imagery ("trudging uphill," "you want to smile, but you have to sigh," etc.). Nevertheless, Wayne Booth and the public opinion reveal different aesthetic and artistic qualities in their respective encounters with the art work.

Let us first consider the public opinion's evaluation. "Keep going" is widely understood as an everyday motivational motto. In most readers, the poem's imagery evokes a familiar fatigue of everyday working life. Furthermore, the poem's obvious diction, and its easy rhymes and meter, reveal a specific kind of vividness and ease to them. Through what the poem offers, the readers "see" the fatigue of everyday life "through a vivid lens," as something they can overcome with ease. From that perspective, the poem is inspirational.

For Wayne Booth, on the other hand, "Keep going" means something more serious. It refers to the tedious overcoming of major troubles in life, which the poem's imagery seems to contradict, having little to do with serious obstacles. Booth criticizes that "trudging uphill" rather sounds "like a bad day at the writing desk, not like the feeling after a death of a loved one or discovery of a major illness" (Booth 1988, 213). The seriousness of the poem's message seems to clash with the superficiality of the problems its imagery offers, and with the particular vividness and ease found in the poem's rhymes and meter. Furthermore, the poem's obvious and easy diction reveals a specific kind of thoughtlessness (ibid.). From that perspective, then, the poem is trite.

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7 To be sure, the critics might not have genuinely misunderstood the art work's determinacies, but were possibly unwilling to encounter the art work on its own terms. Since I am concerned with kinds of disagreement arising from genuine encounters with an art work, or efforts thereof, I was only interested in the former case, thereby presupposing the critics' willingness for encounter.

Both the art object revealed by the public opinion as well as the one revealed by Booth are legitimate, insofar as they involve the determinate aspects of the art work and actualize potential moments in accordance with the former. The crucial distinction between the two lies in their actualization of the poem's message: "Keep going" can be understood as an everyday motivational motto or as a serious appeal to overcome major troubles in life. If we do the former, the poem appears inspirational. If we do the latter, it appears trite. The disagreement stems from both parties revealing legitimate but differing art objects.

6. Three subkinds of disagreement

We are now in the position to see that each of the three exemplary disagreements illustrates one subkind of disagreement about an art work's value. According to the three possible roots of disagreement, we need to distinguish between three subkinds: disagreement about an art work's value can stem from:

1. one party having less extensive (or insufficient) awareness of the art thing;

2. one party misunderstanding (or being ignorant of) the art work's determinacies; or

3. both parties revealing differing art objects based on extensive awareness of the art thing and legitimate understanding of the art work's determinacies.

The former two subkinds, illustrated by the disagreement between my teacher and myself about *Landscape with the Fall of Icarus* (subkind 1) and the disagreement concerning Eva Hesse's *Expanded Expansion* (subkind 2), involve one legitimate and one illegitimate or severely limited art object. One party misses or misconstrues some of the art work's aesthetic and artistic qualities due to insufficient awareness of the art thing or due to misunderstanding the art work's determinacies. These disagreements are, at least in principle, resolvable. The third subkind, illustrated by the disagreement between literary critic Wayne Booth and the public opinion about Edgar Guest's "Keep Going," is blameless, because it involves two legitimate art objects.

7. How to deal with disagreement

What remains to be answered is the question whether there are worthwhile ways to deal with disagreement about an art work's value, especially concerning

its blameless subkind. It is not a worthwhile endeavor to try and resolve a blameless disagreement, in the sense of aligning both parties' evaluations of an art work. Instead, the preceding analysis allows us to develop other strategies to deal with disagreement. In the remaining part of the paper, I want to briefly sketch one of those strategies.

The strategy I propose is fairly obvious: we should share our disagreeing takes on an art work, in the sense of reciprocally clarifying them. We should point out those features of the art thing, in virtue of which we found certain valent qualities, and we should share our understanding of what the art work invites us to "see." We can thereby help each other to yield a more extensive awareness of the art thing and a better understanding of the art work's determinacies. We can help each other to reveal further qualities of the art work and to grasp its richness. Sharing our respective takes on an art work can benefit our future experiences of the same work, and possibly of other works, too. Furthermore, clarifying our disagreement can benefit our understanding of others and ourselves, because differing aesthetic sensibilities, personal interests, and value hierarchies come to the fore. Dealing with disagreement in this way can help us gain awareness of some of our own peculiarities and priorities as well as those of our fellow human beings.

Conclusion

At the beginning of the paper, I posed the following three questions. How come our art evaluations disagree so often? What does disagreement about an art work's value consist in? And is there any worthwhile way of dealing with it?

Regarding the first question, the structural analysis, presented in section 2, reveals the complexity of the object of disagreement. That complexity alone explains the disagreement's commonness: given its threefold structure consisting of the spatiotemporal *art thing*, the purely intentional *art work*, and the experiential *art object*, there are many possibilities of reaching differing "results." We might pay attention to different features of the art thing or we might have different understandings of the art work's determinacies (and its corresponding spots of indeterminacy). Furthermore, and more importantly, one and the same art work allows for different legitimate art objects. Thus,

disagreeing art evaluations are not only a common, but also an unavoidable part of any society's genuine artistic practice, since they are "built into" an art work's nature.

Regarding the second question, we realized that disagreement about an art work's value necessarily consists in two parties finding different valent qualities (and thereby revealing different art objects) in their encounters with one and the same art work. Furthermore, disagreement about an art work's value might—but need not—take the shape of the two parties disagreeing about "whose" art object is a legitimate manifestation of the art work in question.

We also learned to distinguish three subkinds of disagreement about an art work's value according to its possible roots: it can stem from one party having less extensive (or insufficient) awareness of the art thing, from one party misunderstanding (or being ignorant of) the art work's determinacies, or from both parties revealing differing but legitimate art objects. While the former two subkinds are resolvable, the latter one is blameless.

Finally, regarding the third question, I outlined a worthwhile strategy to deal with disagreement about an art work's value, taking into account that an alignment of the two disagreeing evaluations is not always an appropriate objective. Instead, reciprocally clarifying our disagreeing takes on an art work can benefit both our future art experiences as well as our understanding of ourselves and others.

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technologies

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controversies

Joaquim Braga

On Don Ihde's Concept of Technological Background Relations

Abstract: The paper has two main parts. In the first one, I expose Don Ihde's concept of background relations and show the phenomenological foundations inherent to its application in the technological domain. The second part is devoted to the review and expansion of the concept, having as its major reference the social-based principles involved in technological mediation processes. In order to make it more inclusive and decenter it from the individual sphere of technology users, the introduction of a third-person perspective in the analysis of technological relations, in general, is proposed.

Keywords: artifacts, focal perception, non-focal perception, sociality, technosphere.

1. Introduction

The idea that technological artifacts—especially those on digital inscription surfaces—trigger sensible experiences devoid of the relationships that we normally have with their materiality has been growing as a theoretical tendency. Such a tendency is manifestly evident in new media theory. Many of its assumptions are based on the metaphor of the material disappearance of media and the consequent suggestive fusion with the users' body to the point that mediation processes themselves become processes of "immediacy" (Bolter and Grusin 1999). The articulation of the discourse on immersion technologies with that of traditional picture theory—which almost always disregarded the material aspects of mediation in favor of the relationship between picture and

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the represented object—further reinforces the misleading conception that the core of technologically mediated relationships is restricted to the domain of representation and the effects it causes.

Don Ihde's vast philosophical work on technology is not centered on artifacts themselves or the way many of them represent phenomena, but rather on the typology of human–technology relations that through them occur and make possible the processes of technological mediation. In the spectrum of such relations, Ihde introduces a unique form of mediation, through which the technological devices themselves create the empirical context of human experiences. Namely, in *Technics and Praxis: A Philosophy of Technology* as well as in *Technology and the Lifeworld*, Ihde designates this phenomenon as "background relations," since, unlike other mediated relations, they do not imply a specific and direct involvement with the devices that support them. It is, rather, the very materiality of devices—such as, for instance, that of lighting, heating, and cooling systems—that engage human perception, regardless of the use given to them.

460 So, it can be inferred from this that background relations make a major contribution to evaluating the techno-myth of immediacy. Although current technologies try to be more transparent—that is, materially less visible—, background relations continue to be part of our empirical social contexts and influence the spheres of sociality. It is important, therefore, to think about how these technological dynamics are carried out and how they are inscribed in our social relations. Since what is implicit in the background relations is the possibility of decentralizing technology from the individual sphere and extending it to the social sphere. They are, in this sense, technological relations that go beyond the private use we make of artifacts, and shape the environment and the atmosphere of the environment as well as determine the constitution of public spaces for social interaction. With the enlargement of background relations to the sphere of social interactions it is intended, in turn, to go beyond the causal and essentialist Aristotelian model, by which it is only the technological function of artifacts that defines their use.

2. Focal and non-focal human–technology relations

Starting from the criticism of the *camera obscura* epistemological model, in which the Cartesian cogito of philosophy is still anchored, Don Ihde, with his notion of embodiment, tries to rescue the experience of the world and in the world from the perspective of subjective consciousness. This methodological step transforms, according to Ihde, the phenomenological analysis itself into a *post*phenomenology, since, although the concept of intentionality is not set aside, there it entails a replacement of the primacy of mind subjectivity by the embodiment relations (Ihde 2010, 42–43). Placing intentionality in straight articulation with materiality, embodiment relations are defined by him as "those human actions *through* technologies directed at some effect in our environing world" (ibid., 43). But this process of desubjectivation means, *ab initio*, that a new ontological approach has to be presupposed, namely, it is required, in Ihde's own words, "an 'ontological turn' towards an inter-relational ontology" (ibid., 65). The interactions that occur between humans and the world are, thus, inscribed in the world and embodied by humans, due to the effective role of materiality; and, theoretically, this fact indicates that materiality should be included "into the notion of intentionality itself" (ibid., 66).

Ihde uses the "figure–ground" nexus of Gestalt psychology and phenomenological analysis to formulate two levels of human–technology relations. The first level encompasses three types of focal human–technology relations—*embodiment relations*, *hermeneutic relations*, *and alterity relations*—, which result from the development of the perception of a foreground. To sustain the articulation of technological mediation processes with *embodiment relations*, Ihde presents, in most cases, schematic formulations based on visual perception and optical artifacts, such as the following: "I see—through the optical artifact—the world." (Ihde 1990, 72.) The more transparent the technological medium used, the greater the degree of embodiment. This means that, in the acquisition of transparency, there is an ongoing process of quasi-fusion of the user with the artifact, from which arises the "*doubled desire*" of "total transparency" and "total embodiment," and through which technology can "truly 'become me'" (ibid., 75).

In *hermeneutic relations*, perception is articulated by interpretation in the sense that the user plays the role of interpreter of the "text," through which the artifact becomes operative and the world "readable," as, for instance, in the case of the thermometer and other measuring instruments. Although they are, in many cases, inclusive—since there is no interpretation without a focal perception—, if in embodiment relations the quasi-fusion processes occur in the user's sphere, here, in the realm of hermeneutic relations, they tend to be given by the narrow coupling of world and technology.

The third type of human–technology relations arises with the concept of "technology-as-other" (ibid., 98), which Ihde designates as *alterity relations*. In fact, these relations are only evocative of the presence of the other, as in the case of interactions in video games and digital voice assistants. What they show is, above all, the anthropomorphic nature that tends to acquire the user's connection with the artifact, regardless of its reference to a world. Now, for Ihde, despite techno-fantasies have always fabulated the elimination of the human–machine interface and even though quasi-alterity is increasingly suggestive, there is never a total material and sensible disappearance of the technological medium—this one, on the contrary, remains "as a recognizable medium" (ibid., 106).

The triadic relationship user–artifact–world is, consequently, the theoretical core of the phenomenological analysis of technology proposed by Ihde. However, human–technology relations are not reduced to focal perception. Firstly, because, as Ihde refers to the formation of the visual field, "*there are no things-by-themselves in the realm of visual experience*," and since, also, "*all items that appear do so in relation to a background and in strict relation with that background*" (Ihde 2012, 37). Inversely to focal relations, non-focal relations establish that technological level inherent in the background, and, therefore, are named by Ihde as *background relations*. Despite this, he finds a general tendency to overlook these relations, particularly in the way we analyze linguistic phenomena from an exclusively syntactic and semantic point of view. There, in the domain of spoken language, "the sonorous quality of speech" is undervalued—and this is justified, in large part, by the "tendency to forget backgrounds and to abstractly believe that one can attend to a thing-in-itself" (Ihde 2007, 138).

Bearing in mind the idea of focal attention, we can, therefore, assume as a distinguishing parameter between foreground and background relations the following main categories:

1. focal perception: *foreground relations*—▶ transparency *vs.* opacity;
2. non-focal perception: *background relations*—▶ presence *vs.* absence.

This parameter of distinction proposed by Ihde should not prevent us from seeing, between the two types of relations, inversion and overlapping occurrences. While, in foreground relations, stability in use and function dictates the transparency of the artifact and is only broken when, for dysfunction reasons, its opacity is required, in the case of background relations, the presence of the artifact can be reversed to foreground—even if only momentarily—, if there are also material problems with its functionality. In both cases, there are, as it were, technological effects of *material resonance* that modify the sense of the foreground–background order.

As with many technologies, automatic and semi-automatic devices—although they require a first handling and a certain control in their programming by the user—have a cybernetic operativity that allows the alienation of focal perception. This fact, however, does not mean that the user is indifferent to the environment generated by the artifact. Quite the contrary, the environment becomes an integral part of the user's empirical context. The best example of the relevance of the created environment is, precisely, given by those technologies whose main purpose is to impose a physical separation in space. When we build a house—and however much it can be designed according to ecological architectural criteria—, we are dividing the space into an internal and an external environment.

What is, however, certain is that Ihde reinforces the idea of embodiment relations through the establishment of a discreet empirical space, to which the material elements that allow technological mediation itself are allocated. Such discreet space—the one of background relations—is, therefore, also a consequence of the embodiment possibilities given by the use of artifacts. In other words, embodiment arouses the material invisibility of artifacts; an example of this are those truly comical cases, in which someone thinks he/she has lost

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his/her glasses, when, in fact, he/she already has them on. Ihde describes this kind of invisibility of devices in the same way phenomenological analyses characterize the ambiguous ontological status of pictures—technology is, here, a *present absence* in the sense that it couples with the environment and is no more able to be fully individuated by human attention. Because they have such bipolar nature (presence and absence), background relations transform, with greater subtlety, the ways we perceive and act in the world. In our era, the growing automation of technological devices means that human intervention in their use is not continuous and, consequently, there is also no full conscious attention to the effects they may produce. Sometimes, it is only due to situations, in which technologies or their energy sources collapse, that we have a real perception of their inscription power in our environment.

3. Reduction, amplification, and perception

Using the epithet "phenomenological materialist" in the broad sense, Ihde seeks to conceive the embodiment relations according to "a phenomenological and multidimensioned sense of body" (Ihde 2010, III–IV). Hence, he has, also, always as a basic phenomenological presupposition the idea that, in the activities of perception, there are never isolated sensory modalities. Unlike traditional epistemology, which deals with the apprehension of phenomena according to the one-dimensional sensory order, this assumption shows us, above all, the impossibility of conceiving of an experience, technologically mediated or not, as being purely visual or purely auditory. However, when it comes to creating focal awareness, there is a kind of deceptive absence of sensory modalities that are not in the foreground. This fact is already part of the main perceptual effects of focal attention, that is, "the very ability to focus helps to enhance the quasi-illusion of a pure visual phenomenon by subduing the other sensory dimensions" (Ihde 2002, 38).

Notwithstanding such "quasi-illusion," Ihde claims that the multisensory feature of perceptual experience is never eliminated and remains always linked to the embodied relations with the environment, even in those contexts where there is a strong prevalence of the visual (ibid., 38–39). As in the case of silence and speech, focal perception does not eliminate what remains in

the background. The act of focusing presupposes a selection of what is in the observation field, but this, instead of being suppressed, is placed on a lower perceptual level (Ihde 1998, 73). To put it another way, the unselected possibilities configure a latency *locus* within what is the object of attention.

As in the paradigmatic case of the *camera obscura*, technologically mediated perception obeys the criteria of "reduction" and "amplification." The first that allows the second by selecting and unifying what is dispersed in our observation field. These two criteria can also be applied to certain background technologies, whose main function is, according to Ihde's terms, to "texturize" the cognitive environment in a different way, thus giving it an individualized technological configuration (Ihde 1990, 112). Many of the technological devices that operate simultaneously in the double field of background and foreground mark the rhythm of time experience and of technosphere itself—as if they would form a kind of music. According to Ihde, instead of disappearing completely and despite the distinctive nature of the phenomena, how one observes and experiences a non-technological environment remains untouchable and archetypical, even with the transition to the technological environment. What really changes are the entities that shape the relata. The "whir of the heating and air-conditioning machinery, the hum of the lighting, and the electronic whine of the technosphere" replace the winds and tides of the "wild world" (Ihde 2007, 87).

Furthermore, in *Existential Technics*, Ihde asserts that "for a technology to function well, it must itself become a kind of barely noticed background effect"; this happens, to a large extent, "so that human action which is embodied through technology can stand out" (Ihde 1983, 51). The elimination of noise caused by the presence of the artifact increases, according to him, the "transparency" effect of technology, since, as with communication devices, "the better it functions, the more likely it becomes that we may simply grow used to its functions and 'forget' that it is there and that it is a significant element in our mediated communication situation" (ibid., 52). However, instead of being just mere noises negatively determining focal attention, technosphere sounds generate "an auditory texture and background that provides an auditory stability to the world"; both the absence of this stability and the sudden change in its rhythmic nature can trigger several psychological effects, such as those

related to "human anxiety" (Ihde 2007, 87). When this rhythm is altered or no longer felt, there may even be significant changes in the perception of technological devices' effects, to the point their effectiveness is jeopardized. Ihde illustrates this fact—which constitutes a technological effect of material resonance—with the following expressive example:

> In Cambridge, Massachusetts, a number of years ago, a church installed a very advanced air conditioner. Yet the congregation continued to feel hot even though the temperature and humidity gauges indicated all was well. It was only after the engineer discovered that they couldn't hear the reassuring presence of the machinery that the problem was solved. An artificially produced fan noise soon made all feel comfortable, and the air conditioner was "felt" to be effective. (Ibid., 87.)

Because they have an extremely stable structure and are, therefore, subject to greater recurrence, technosphere sound rhythms provide identification patterns of time and space by standardizing and balancing what can be perceived and experienced (ibid., 87–88).

Taking into account the "dreams of totalization" (Ihde 1990, 119) that technology inscribes in our relations with the world, the background–foreground interchanges are equally applied, by Ihde, to nature and culture: if "nature is at best a background, often spectacular but not itself a force to be reckoned with," in the opposite pole "what is foreground is totalized culture" (Ihde 1983, 21). In an increasingly technologically mediated world, where the technosphere assumes both a macro-dimension and a micro-dimension—as in the case of the environment created by motorhomes—, this shift from large to small scale signals the emergence of "technological cocoons" and, with these, "the trajectory of our civilization to totality" (ibid.). Still, for Ihde, the dreams of totalization would be fully realized if there were an "inversion in which nature is itself taken into culture" (ibid., 22) through means, by which there is, for us, no longer a substantial difference between them. One of the artifacts' most immediate effects that have a great impact on our environment is, precisely, that the world itself becomes *a world of technology*.

In fact, as Ihde rightly asserts, "in an increasingly more complex technological society more and more human–machine relations take on 'atmospheric' characteristics in terms of the machine background" (Ihde 1979, 13). Such background relations, in turn, substantiate our environment as a true technosphere working as a sort of casing "in part the way technological artifacts do literally for astronauts and deep sea investigators" (ibid., 14). The desire for a technological cocoon on a global scale is, therefore, part of the effects of the desire for technological totalization as well as the atmosphere of fear that invades human beings' concerns, such as those related to disasters caused by war or climate changes. As mentioned by Ihde, "fears of breakdown on a large scale become fears of technologically textured societies"; the spread of these primary emotions actually represents "a subtle but clear replacement or at least equivalence of past threats largely from natural disasters" (Ihde 1990, 116).

However, we must see in this desire to artificially recreate the world a consequence of background relations, that is, of making them a process similar to that of embodiment relations, namely: the quasi-fusion of technology users is not just about artifacts but also about the world itself. It is also here, in the technological coupling of the background with the foreground, that human–technology relations—focal and non-focal—acquire new dynamics among themselves and, consequently, encourage the appearance of new technological mediation forms. The idea of a technological cocoon, in its several material shapes, already reveals such coupling and such new dynamics. What begins as a reduction of the macrocosm and transforms into an artificial microcosm, simultaneously enhances the idealization and conception of beings—such as the bionic ones—that easily adapt to the technological cocoons and, in turn, assert an absolute existential connection between life and technology (ibid., 116–117).

5. Expanding the concept of background relations

Later, Ihde will acknowledge that his conception of human–technology–world relations was first fully anchored in a "praxis-oriented analysis, although not sociological. It was instead phenomenological with an emphasis upon how

scientists and others were bodily-perceptually engaging a world through instruments" (Ihde 2015, XII). Although he has the merit of having introduced the concept of background relations to identify some significant parts of the technological universe that, without it, would not be conceptually intelligible, it is imperative, however, to overcome this "laboratory" point of view and broaden its theoretical scope. Despite trying to introduce new dynamic elements among technological relations, the criticisms that have been made to the conception proposed by Ihde are, for the most part, still centered on the use of artifacts (Verbeek 2008; Nørskov 2015).

Starting from the phenomenological analysis of the relationships between human beings and the world, as well as the phenomenological concept of intentionality, Ihde places technology at the center of both, which means, above all, that technological artifacts allow a particular mediation between "subject" and "world" that otherwise would not be possible. Peter-Paul Verbeek, however, draws attention to the important fact that Ihde's formulation "appears to suggest that he takes as a point of departure humans already given as such and a world already given as such, in between which one can find artifacts" (Verbeek 2005, 129). That is, although Ihde does not explain it as such, in an explicit and developed way, the concept of "mediation"; Verbeek states that it should be understood as "the mutual constitution of subject and object" (Verbeek 2005, 130) and not, on the contrary, as a simple connection process between two distinct and previously given entities.

Now, despite these improvements proposed by Verbeek, both the idea of "subject" as well as the idea of "world" is still reductive; essentially, because relations between humans and technology should not be restricted to those that directly occur with the use of technological artifacts. In order to go beyond this sphere of individual use, here we present, in the following steps, five key points that should serve to broaden the theoretical scope of background relations.

Firstly, Ihde positively evaluates background relations, not exposing the potential negative dimensions that they imply in the lives of both technological users and non-users. On the contrary, as can be read in the following passage, Ihde highlights, first and above all, the discreet nature of technological environments:

> As we live and move and engage with an immediate environment, much in the environment is unthematized and taken for granted. And, in any technologically saturated "world" this background includes innumerable technologies to which we most infrequently attend. Once the cold weather begins I turn up my thermostat and once started do not attend to it at all—unless it goes off or breaks down in the Heidegger "breakdown" mode. Once the lights are on, they can be taken for granted until bedtime. Technologies are simply part of our environment. (Ihde 2009, 43–44.)

This positive environmental conception of background relations is already present in the idea that, by being discreet and almost unobservable, they allow us to perceive the world without having to perceive the artifacts. However, if, for the formation of focal attention, background relations seem to be fundamental and place users in contexts of technological mediation, on the other hand, in the case of non-users, they can have the opposite effect and jeopardize the perception of the world. Ihde mentions the quasi-alterity features generated by technological mediation, but, as we have seen, they are only applied to the practical interactions between humans and artifacts. Now, as the theoretical approach to technological relations is, here, still based on *the first-person perspective*—that is, I–Artifact–World—, the enlargement of the concept of background relations implies, from the outset, the addition of *a third-person perspective*. To live up to this claim, a common principle of sociality then needs to be followed: the materiality of artifacts always exceeds the intentionality domain of their users and encompasses the observation domain of non-users.

Secondly, Ihde, by conceiving the idea of the technosphere in close analogy with the "naturesphere" experienced by human beings in some everyday situations, largely confines background relations to articulated and uniformed environmental contexts. In a direct experience of an urban scenario or a country scenario, there are, without a doubt, atmospheric qualities revealed and embodied. These constitute, strictly speaking, the most elementary level of our perception of the world. However, if in lower-mediated environments there persists a certain symbiotic articulation and continuity among atmospheric experiences, in the case of hyper-mediated environments, the same rarely happens. Conversely, what these typically urban scenarios reveal to us is a

broad cognitive contrast among atmospheres, which, although aroused by technological mediation, do not have the same aesthetic features, such as the degree of intensity, noise, and sensory saturation. The sound of a car does not aesthetically articulate with the sound of an airplane in the same way that the song of a bird harmonizes with the sound of trees being blown by the wind. As much as there is nowadays a growing tendency to apply ecological engineering principles in the construction of machines and technologically mediated environments, the technosphere remains full of background relations lacking a common and harmonious sensible order. Accordingly, relations generated among different artifacts, namely the material resonances exposed during their use, simultaneous or interspersed, can affect the formation processes of focal attention itself. Although one can be enclosed in one's own working space, without major external environmental disturbances, the "I-user" will always be subject to the relational occurrences among the artifacts he/she uses to carry out his/her tasks.

Thirdly, Ihde conceives background relations as the immediate and direct effects aroused by technological artifacts. But if this conception can be perfectly applicable to all instruments whose material and operative nature is self-sufficient, the same cannot be said of those devices that, to function, depend on other technological sources and processes. For instance, a machine, supported by an electrical energy source, discloses references to indirect background relations, such as those that can be experienced in the context of the hydroelectric dam where the energy is produced. The acknowledgement of those elements that, although making the machine work, remain spatially and temporally far from it, means, in turn, not to reduce background relations to the visual model of the simultaneity of the foreground with the background. The latter does not always have to be constituted in close direct articulation with the former. Viewed in this way, we must not lose sight of the fact that the technosphere is full of machines whose main function is to be background technologies for other machines.

Fourthly, another relevant aspect we need to take into account concerns the cognitive changes that may arise with the focal inversion of the foreground–background relations. Ihde, in some passages of his books, acknowledges the relativity of such relations and the consequent possibility of their inversion, as

it happens in painting. But, as has been a practice reiterated in technological analysis in general—like, for instance, in Marshall McLuhan's media theory—, the theoretical emphasis is, above all, placed on the functional operativity and pragmatic purpose of artifacts. In order to understand the potential inversions in the foreground–background relations, it is also necessary to conceive the materiality of artifacts beyond the limits of technological intentionality and extend it to the aesthetic possibilities displayed by the artifacts themselves. This phenomenon tends to be fully visible, when the artifact, in addition to fulfilling its technological function, becomes an object of ostentation, enhancing feelings of possession, control, and social distinction. Both for its user and any observer there is a cognitive primacy of what is in the background over what is in the foreground. That such primacy may have as its main cause an assumption of power, it also inevitably means that background relations must be conceived not only as strictly perceptual relations, but also as power relations in the true Foucauldian sense of the term. This case, illustrated by ostentation, also yields a new meaning of articulation for the "presence–absence" polarity, insofar as, instead of becoming discreet or even imperceptible, the presence of the artifact, as a material object, is substantially reinforced.

Fifthly, and finally, when they are thought of from a third-person perspective, in which the use of artifacts is coupled with their social observation, background relations can undertake a generative technological profile. It is very common today, especially in large urban centers, to see people making massive use of certain portable devices just to mitigate and abstract themselves from the entropic effects caused by hyper-mediated environments. The best example of this is, perhaps, the growing use of headphones as a way to avoid the noise of car and airplane engines, ambulance sirens, and pneumatic hammers. One escapes, in a sense, from one technology with the help of another, replacing a harmful background presence with one more pleasant to our perception. Here, we can freely accept Peter-Paul Verbeek's formulation that "humans do not choose technology; rather, technology forms the background for their choices" (Verbeek 2005, 179).

In a third-person perspective, the world is not, consequently, a set of phenomena that, due to the mediation provided by technological artifacts, is reduced in order to be amplified; it is not a mere scientific laboratory where

technology and its effects are fully ordered and harmonized. The concept of "world" comprises more than that, insofar as it includes the observers themselves—as well as their social relations—who, directly or indirectly, are in contact with the effects of technological mediation.

6. Final remarks

Philosophy of technology has almost always conceived theoretical approaches to the intentional use of artifacts, thus omitting the observation level that non-use makes possible. As can be seen in Ihde's philosophy, even with the inclusion of technological mediation processes in human–world relations, the epistemological model of "subject–object" is not completely overcome. Both the human being and the world tend to be conceived from the one-dimensional cognitive point of view, which excludes the effects of technological relations in the lives of others, namely that of non-users. Of course, on the phenomenological level of the "I-user," as we have seen, focal attention tends to suppress the material presence of artifacts and their environmental consequences. The intentionality that typifies the use made of technology introduces, according to Ihde, a double process of amplification and reduction, divided into what one wants to see or do and what one does not want to see or do. In general, it seems to be acceptable evidence that focal attention implies an environmental abstraction. This issue, however, takes on another form with the entry into the scene of non-users—instead of being mere passive spectators, they are potential observers of the events that take place in their *milieu*.

It can be said, without any reservation, that, nowadays, in most cities in the world, where artifacts, in addition to their status as means, are already an integral part of urban scenarios, the most primary and immediate technological experience is given by background relations. They are as embodied by us as the glasses we wear to read a book; they allow us, for instance, to choose the steps we take to get around in a certain place and thus, by an authentic distance–proximity calculation, avoid or approach certain environments. Their importance is quite immeasurable, especially in a hypermediated era, in which, with the advent of portable micro-technologies and telecommunications, many of the new artifacts operate isolated from public spaces or inscribe in

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them relational dynamics that are barely visible according to our traditional theoretical observation criteria. Without eliminating their fundamental role in understanding the technological universe and taking into account this last fact, it will always be a demanding theoretical task to identify the inscription power of background relations both in our environment and at the core of our social relations.

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Žarko Paić

The Body and the Technosphere
Beyond Phenomenology and Its Conceptual Matrix

Abstract: In the history of metaphysics and its transformation by Heidegger, the body could not emerge as an explicit issue, as it today still hides in neuro-cognitivism under the notion of "the embodiment of consciousness." Considering the horizons of the intersubjectivity of consciousness in Husserl's phenomenology, Merleau-Ponty made the first, and last, step in the expansion of metaphysics in terms of its way to the existential turn and openness of the body as an event. Curvature, fractalization, and substitutability are evidence that the body as a living machine appears in a very different way from the constant transformation of Being as described in the traditional metaphysics. The thinking of Being is compromised by the occurrence of the post-biological body and its permanent transformation. As interplanetary nomads, wandering in the universe, we encounter the uncanny "new nature" of *the technosphere* based on the logic of calculating, planning, and constructing. The body becomes a fluid and metamorphic object.

Keywords: body, technology, event, transformation, *the technosphere*.

Introduction

Nobody described the destabilization of metaphysics better than Nietzsche. In *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, he intimates: *I will demand that what is so generously given to the other world be returned to the man*. Yes, returning what was given out of pure generosity is now shown to be the task of establishing "new values." It is not something only symbolically related to man and his habits of thought. It means a change in the very way of living. When the beyond loses its significance, immanence reigns supreme. Furthermore, instead of the subject, the term "object" gains new legitimacy in determining reality. What was despised for centuries as being transitory and solely in the service of the spirit— *the body*—suddenly takes on the functions of a thinking object. The problem

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faced by thinking in the 20th century was caused by the entry of the body into an existential abyss filled with different physiological and psychological theories. Among them, above all, psychoanalysis tried to penetrate the dark zones of the unconscious, starting from the individual subject as the guardian of language. And thus, the question of the objectivity of the object focused on the sublime in the fetishism of things. This path leads from illumination to fascination. The body turned out to be an ontologically "empty center of power." The writing of signs into its signifying void could begin only after liberation from the rule of the *logos*.

How is it possible to think what connects this emptiness with its various manifestations, from desires, through the will to power and cognitive processes of creating a complex reality, all the way to the relationship with the main concept and problem of contemporaneity, such as technology in the form of *the technosphere*? In the following, this path of the body from metaphysical to cybernetic difference or from ontology as a phenomenology of the body, especially in the work of Maurice Merleau-Ponty, to the open space of *the techno-genesis* of objects is considered. The starting point is that the body must be understood historically and epochally as a machine in its two modes: analogue and digital. Transformations of Being (*nature*) belong to the former case, and transformations of events (*technosphere*) belong to the latter case. However, the machine that unrolls the body at an irreducible speed of transformation means that neither the logic of machines nor the structure of the organism anymore meets the definition of the machine and the body in general. We must, therefore, immediately try to create a language for the new phenomena. Before that, it is necessary to free the thinking from the habit of vainly searching for meaning in the idea of cause and purpose, instead of understanding how *the technosphere* peers into the singularity to the last point of the visible and invisible world of objects. For its fundamental principles, only visualization becomes the sufficient reason for knowing what is happening as a movement in space and time of irreversibility. Nothing is repeated without the "new" way, in which the original and the simulation, the stable and the unstable, are creatively mixed. Opening the problem of the techno-aesthetics of autonomous objects means reconsidering the role of the body in the creative process of *techno-genesis*. But also of its possible

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disappearance in the process of cybernetic disembodiment. *The design of the body*, therefore, marks the transition from the aestheticization of the world as a ready-made object to the dizzying techno-aesthetic construction of the "new" life. Marcel Duchamp and all the theories of design as applied art have nothing more to say about this. When life becomes technologized to the point of the existence of an autonomous object, everything becomes possible and everything becomes real.

1. The phantom limb: Maurice Merleau-Ponty and borders of the phenomenology of the body

The keyword for the painter's existence comes from the verb related to the real and phantom limb as the main organ of the artist's physical-cognitive engagement in the situation. *To handle* something does not mean to carry out the hidden will of the transcendental subject in the sense of the initiator of the action. In such a case, the spirit would "manage" the body at its discretion. At the same time, subjectivism would be written into the blind destiny of an organ with a special place in the determination of human "being." We do not mean the symbolic or metaphysical sense of the hand that governs human life in the manner of directing it into the socio-political sphere of command, nor of conducting a symphony orchestra, nor, on the other hand, pointing to the act of faith and grace, which in Michelangelo's allegory of the creation of the world on the walls of the Sistine Chapel in the Vatican City signifies the touch of man and God. To handle refers to dealing with something that is already always in the service of another purpose. In this respect, the hand has a double meaning. It is a means of work or action and an instrument of direction towards the goal of action. As part of the symbolic-volitional activity of man, it can even be said that without a hand man cannot be an "operative" system of functional action. Therefore, it is not surprising that the problem of the so-called phantom limb (organ), i.e., the phantom hand as a prosthesis or technical replacement for what has been mutilated or taken away, shows the key problem of the difference between ontology and cybernetics. The first one focuses on the natural as part of the necessity of the functioning of the body as an "innate" way of connection/relationship between instincts and sensibility and soul-spiritual manifestations of the "Being in the world." The second, on

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the other hand, concerning the construction of the artificial body (robotics and engineering), is oriented towards the freedom of a new way of thinking and acting. Formally speaking, it has this advantage, because it comes from the work of "artificial intelligence" (*AI*).

The paradox is that freedom and contingency are conditions for the possibility of the cybernetic system of managing the world as an open field of possibilities, while the aporia is reflected in the fact that "nature" is determined by the non-freedom of the facticity of living in the body. Man and other beings cannot choose this voluntarily. Acting according to the principles of freedom begins where "Being in the world" is always limited by fate and bounded in space. Hence, "the phantom limb" is neither a rhinoceros horn nor a tortoise shell, but a technically or mechanically created so-called third hand that manages the processes of exchange of matter, energy, and information from two worlds: (1) natural, or analogue, and (2) technical, or digital. For the first world, language becomes a condition for the possibility of knowing the world, and for the latter world, it appears necessary to learn the rules of visual semiotics, because the techno-image lies at the "essence" of non-human communication. Merleau-Ponty says this about it in *Phenomenology of Perception*:

> The phenomenon of the phantom limb is here elucidated by that of anosognosia, which clearly demands a psychological explanation. Subjects who systematically ignore their paralysed right hand, and hold out their left hand when asked for their right, refer to their paralysed arm as "a long, cold snake", which rules out any hypothesis of real anaesthesia and suggests one in terms of the refusal to recognize their deficiency. Must we then conclude that the phantom limb is a memory, a volition or a belief, and, failing any physiological explanation, must we provide a psychological explanation for it? But no psychological explanation can overlook the fact that the severance of the nerves to the brain abolishes the phantom limb.
>
> What has to be understood, then, is how the psychic determining factors and the physiological conditions gear into each other: it is not clear how the imaginary limb, if dependent on physiological conditions and therefore the result of a third person causality, can *in another context*

arise out of the personal history of the patient, his memories, emotions and volition. […] A hybrid theory of the phantom limb which found a place for both sets of conditions may, then, be valid as a statement of the known facts; but it is fundamentally obscure. The phantom limb is not the mere outcome of objective causality; no more is it a *cogitatio*. It could be a mixture of the two only if we could find a means of linking the "psychic" and the "physiological", the "for-itself" and the "in-itself", to each other to form an articulate whole, and to contrive some meeting-point for them: if the third person processes and the personal acts could be integrated into a common middle term. (Merleau-Ponty 1958, 88–89.)

If we look at the reasoning derived from the distinction between reflex actions in animals and humans, we will see that this understanding, along with Lacan's as the main representative of the new psychoanalysis, does not differ significantly from Heidegger's approach to the relationship of stone, animal, and man to Being. While, namely, existential phenomenology attributes to the human body the possibility of spontaneity and reflex action, only if it is engaged in "Being in the world" situations—and this means that practical knowledge takes precedence over the mere theoretical fact—, an animal cannot relate to Being except in an instinctive and reflex action. Admittedly, Merleau-Ponty will not say that because of this the animal has no world or that the world is less valuable to it than the human world. However, this will also not contradict the basic assumptions of philosophical anthropology. According to them, some kind of biological-cognitive evolution contributed to the hand and brain directing all further operations of thought. All this testifies that the body cannot be absolutized by establishing human existence in the spatial sense through the immanent transcendence of the openness of Being in general. The consideration of the so-called phantom limbs has primarily a cognitive-theoretical function of turning to the essence of metaphysics. In the "idealization" of the permanence of Being and the perfect order, in which diverse beings live in harmony and conflict, metaphysics never saw the body as lacking "in-Being" as such, with dissymmetry, disharmony, and deconstruction of the world. Therefore, its language cannot open up to

hybrid systems of difference and in this chaos of contingency admit what is so simple, painful, and imperfect. What? That people are simply mortal and prone to pleasures, sick and perverse, neither angels nor demons, but beings of physical existence with the aspiration to achieve immortality by moving into *the posthuman condition*. With the help of the body, man is aware of the world. This realization is the reason for human irrationality. Thus, existence becomes a condemnation of freedom and meaning.

What does the statement about "the ambivalent presence of the hand" mean? Let us not forget that Merleau-Ponty published the *Phenomenology of Perception* in 1945. In other books, written in the 1950s and 1960s, we rarely come across examples from already developed computer science and cybernetics. The same applies to Jacques Derrida's major work *Of Grammatology* (cf. Derrida 1967). It explicitly uses the concepts of cybernetics and semiology, such as information, code, program, feedback, sign, signifier, and signified. However, the phenomenology of the body has the task, above all, of establishing the existential organization of reality outside of consciousness as intersubjectivity. Although

Merleau-Ponty dares to assign to Husserl the position of the main thinker of the path towards the existential turn in contemporary philosophy, which is in opposition to Sartre's propositions from his phenomenological ontology in the work *Being and Nothingness* (cf. Sartre 1943), about which he declares that Sartre is the first to decisively place the problem of the body and existence on the horizon of his reflection, it seems that it is still much more important to notice his connection/relationship with Heidegger's concept of "Being-in-the-world" (*In-der-Welt-Sein*; cf. Heidegger 1977). The ambivalence of the body cannot be understood without the massive assumption that the body is an existential projection of the meaning of the "Being in the world." By itself, it has no other meaning than the physical, actually physiological and psychological structure of sensibility. What distinguishes a man from an animal cannot be the mere presence of his body. At its center, lies the existential relationship of a man who suffers, feels, wants, loves, creates, and thinks, only because he is an experiential being of physicality. This is not just any physicality. From it, comes the orientation towards the dimensions of the true historicity of Being.

"The phantom limb" in the phenomenology of the body cannot be considered as a supplement/replacement of Being in the form of nature, to

use the term of the early Derrida in *Of Grammatology*. The reason lies in the fact that its provision should be in hybridity. On the one hand, this concerns the hand in analogy with a natural human organ, and, on the other hand, this concerns the foreign body that imitates the action of a real hand. The problem, of course, is that it is not art in the sense of work, like, for instance, an installation displayed in a museum. Mimetic action no longer refers to imitating nature as such, but to the techno-poietic system of "operational thinking." This is an extremely complex relationship between necessity and freedom, reflex actions and volitional-cognitive activity. Since man does not use his hand only for the everyday purposes of the mechanical way of his existence, it is not possible to simply take over the model of nature or the analogue world in a mechanical way of acting. Many examples from the medical practice of amputation and augmentation of "the third hand" show subtle relationships in the sensory spectrum of manifestations of pain and suffering, joy and elation, mourning and sadness, and feelings of pride and self-recognition. A man faced with the necessity of accepting a mechanical prosthesis for reasons of mere survival becomes someone else. However, this does not mean a complete personality change. He only clearly perceives that his body denotes the medial area of the permeation of life as a connection/relationship between nature and artificiality. Of course, he sometimes feels the pain, as if it were the memory of the original, living hand that is no longer there, and instead of it, all the operations are now performed by "the third hand." In the exhaustive analysis of this condition, in which "the phantom hand" operates, Merleau-Ponty provided the basis for an almost identical procedure of a refined analysis of the acceptance of the transplanted heart as "a foreigner" and "a living machine" in the essay "The Intruder" by Jean-Luc Nancy included in his book *Corpus* (cf. Nancy 2008, 161–170).

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Is it possible to generalize the experience of the singular individuality of a person who, thanks to a mechanical prosthesis "on" their body or the installation of an apparatus "in" their body, becomes someone with a different experience of the world? The body becomes the primary experience of *my* body. The criticism of Kant and Husserl was best carried out by Heidegger in *Being and Time*, when he talks about the structure of the Being-there (*Dasein*) as *Being-in-the-world* in the mode of my-ownness, mineness, always

assuming the determination to understand Being in general. *Mine* is not about *anything* vs. the *world*. For something to be appropriated and marked as *mine*, the content of consciousness "about" the world must first be reduced to the openness of perspectives. Only in *my* world, even that monstrous "phantom hand" can be called *mine* on the condition that it belongs to the structure of the autonomous will-feeling of a Self. But now this is no longer the extension in terms of the Cartesian body. Now, "the third hand" with its technically produced "will" belongs to *my* existential space of thought and action. Even more precisely, *mine* as a label of the self must be expanded in such a way that in addition to the existence of the surrounding world (*Umwelt*, *environment*, *milieu*) introduces the technical landscape of Being. If, on the other hand, we ignore, for methodological reasons, that spatiality can no longer be expressed in the technical landscape of corporeality by oppositions of external and internal, we are left to see what this "phantom hand" truly means in the new meaning beyond metaphysics and its derived concepts and categories.

Merleau-Ponty explicitly claims: "The phantom limb is not the mere outcome of objective causality; no more is it a *cogitatio*." (Merleau-Ponty 1958, 89.) The main reason for the introduction of this term, which does not seem phenomenologically correct, because it is more reminiscent of the psychoanalytic language of the difference between the phantasmatic and the real, so it would suit Lacan perhaps even more than it seems at first glance, is to show how the body appears as an object. However, it should be clearly emphasized that this is not a classic contradiction, arising from the metaphysics of subjectivity. Namely, for metaphysics, the object should be always a construction of the subject. On the contrary, the tradition of the French materialism, as found in La Mettrie and d'Holbach, for example, introduced into philosophical thought, in contrast to Kant's thing-in-itself (*Ding-an-sich*), a series of objects as a result of a mechanistic notion of the concept of nature. In this context, the body's thought appears for the first time. However, in contrast to the Cartesian dualism of mind and body, there is now a solution that has a closed circle of matter's action without the first mover and the last purpose. The objectification of the body does not mean its transformation into an inanimate object as a stone-like "thing" or, on the other hand, its transition into the form of mechanical existence of a prosthesis without the participation

of the organic. What is an object for existential phenomenology? Nothing but the product of external and internal relations between subjects in the perception of the world. Husserl would add here the keyword for a solution to the problem of the relationship between the Self and the community: *inter-subjectivity*. However, when the body appears as an object, it is always something other than the subject, that irreducible area, from which stimuli for action come, because the object is not a mechanical toy without a "soul." Its appearance requires reflection on the conditions of possibility, under which the body is de-subjectivized, and becomes *more extended than the psyche*, as Freud said in a posthumously published note. "The phantom hand" is, therefore, not moved by God or another human being. The desire to objectify the subject turns out to be a decisive factor. Thus, the perception of the external world becomes a problem of determining reality. In the classical projection, it was realistically a place of a synthesis of consciousness and Being in two modes of appearance during modern philosophy: idealistic and materialistic. To be an object, however, for Merleau-Ponty means to leave the Scylla of "objectivism" and the Charybdis of "subjectivism" in the footsteps of Husserl. This concretely means opening up the problem of the emergence of that phenomenon that no longer has anything to do with the metaphysics of nature or with the idea of Being as constancy in changes.

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What is for existential phenomenology the fundamental criterion for separating animals and humans? We will by no means say that an animal does not have a body. But we will not equate the cases of replacing limbs in insects or antlers in deer by analogy with "the phantom hand." The phantom in the hand is nothing but the presence of life as a form in the technical event of state transformation. The hand can be formally replaced indefinitely. The infinite sequence resembles a copy of an image in a digital environment. Namely, there is no original here. However, one must not lose sight of the fact that "the third hand" does not take the place of the "first" as a mere thing without a "soul." The copies are, admittedly, the same in their indistinctness. But that is not the singularity of a living organism. Its fateful expulsion into the world is that organism shows up as being irreplaceably sensuous in suffering and pleasures. Each "phantom hand" does not sit on living flesh as a replaceable organ according to the model of the analogical nature. Instead, we are faced

with the uncertainty and contingency of events. What will happen with receiving or accepting a foreign body, that uncanny otherness of a technical organism, cannot be predicted in advance. This is precisely the essence of the body's existential organization. It becomes the indisputably living singularity of the transformation of organs or limbs. The totality is not superior to the parts as in Hegel. In between, exist the logic of singular reproduction as becoming different from the logic of the production of difference. An animal can reproduce only unconsciously by employing the replacement of limbs, and man leads existence to the highest level of what Dante calls "the new life" (*la vita nuova*). The search for the "new" utilizing substitution does not mean that technology might be understood as a mere mechanical means for other purposes. In the phenomenological and psychoanalytical search for a solution to the problem of creative "human nature"—and this is true for Merleau-Ponty as well as for Lacan—, there is no point of transition towards the essence of technology, although places of mediation with the newer results of cybernetics and semiology in the 1960s were frequent in these works (cf. Paić 2019). Why is that so? The answer that seems to be acceptable is that the concept of existence as an essential new "essence" of man and (unconscious) desire as a structure of corporeality in the world do not reach what the most important thinkers of technology in the 20th century—Heidegger and Simondon—credibly opened as the main problem of modernity. How is it, namely, possible to preserve the experience of a different thinking against the logic of technoscience, without at the same time falling into the fold of the overplayed metaphysical scheme of history about humanity as an authentic Being and inhumanity as the vulgar existence of a technical object?

Let us, for a moment, return to that strange and irreducibly ambivalent "phantom hand." Merleau-Ponty describes the experience of the mutilated body of the subject with psychoanalytic language. This is, therefore, a "traumatic experience." "*A certain dread*" arises from the realization of its inexplicability with categories from vitalism and the organic attachment of the body to the Earth (cf. Merleau-Ponty 1958, 96). Handling objects is possible only under the conditions of a primary contact between the living and the non-living. Moreover, the phenomenon of touch, which Nancy insists on discussing philosophically, shows us that, in the case of stroking an obsidian

head or a marble statue, there is still some excess of the desire to objectify. The coldness of the statue and its perfect indifference, because it cannot reciprocate the touch with a sensory reaction, cannot be the model of understanding for the technical apparatus in the living body. Touching objects or living beings is not the same. The reason is that the technical replaceability of organs in "the other way of life" requires the hybrid creation of events. Feelings and experiences of something that cannot be clearly described are such uncanny events. The arrival of a mechanical machine in people's everyday life causes discomfort, disbelief, and astonishment. This lasts for a short time, because the technical existence of machines, robots, and cyborgs, as Gilbert Simondon put it, is domesticated as "a foreign body" in the socio-political environment of man.[1] The process of accepting the inhuman is no longer such a traumatic experience, as long as the core values of the community are not questioned. Let us remember that today the relationship between the achievements of technoscience in medicine, such as reproductive stem-cell cloning, is tolerated by religious communities. But only to the extent of the distance between the so-called untouchability of Natural Law (God) and human intervention in the biological default of the organism. When that limit is crossed, serious disputes arise. In this regard, bioethical norms are always changing. For the most part, they depend on the level of the value scale concerning the problem of the body in modern society. This is additionally ethically challenging. The reason lies in the fact that it shows the impotence of traditional metaphysics and the religious-ethical doctrines built on it before the penetration of transhumanism and posthumanism. It is enough to extract the main argument for prenatal selection and reproductive cloning: the desire for a healthy offspring (cf. Paić 2011, 65–117)!

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1 "The machine is a stranger; and that stranger who precisely creates the human, makes it conscious, materializes, serves it, but always remains outside the horizon of the human. The true cause of alienation in the modern world consists in this ignorance of the machine, which is not an alienation caused by the machine, but by ignorance of its nature and its essence, the absence of the world of meaning and its non-existence in the table of values and in the understandings that have a part in culture." (Simondon 1989, 9–10.)

However, it is not only faith as the foundation of religion that comes to the wall here. Keeping the memory of the primordial nature of Being and the changes that do not call it into question means defending what has long been indefensible. In his phenomenology of the body, Merleau-Ponty started from the assumption that the world is inhabited by imperfect beings. Moreover, these beings, especially men among them, are the least understandable in their mutual relations, starting from what one thinks of the other, and vice versa. The first fact that we encounter is the view of the Other's body. In contemporary French philosophy, apart from Sartre and Merleau-Ponty, this was in the language of phenomenology most strikingly considered by Emmanuel Levinas. His turn from ontology to ethics had the function of re-searching the world according to the measure of human impotence and the freedom of unconditional commitment to the Other (cf. Levinas 2000). In all three cases, the body is shown to be the main ontological problem for the simple reason that it is about the meeting between objects in space, about the contact between beings, the existential restlessness and discomfort that Being "is," and that this happens in unpredictable and

unexpected relationships. If beings are imperfect, then the fundamental impulse of their meeting is an attempt to free the body from the stigma of the ideal world and the form, in which that world mystifies itself to the extreme limits of the sustainability of the order of concepts, upon which its metaphysics rests. Body mutilation in the context of "a healthy society" arises as an excess phenomenon. The loss of bodily integrity through mutilation also causes discomfort in the observer. This kind of shyness often leads to pathetic compassion for the crippled. But the panicked need for healing and normalization, paradoxically, humanizes the technical character of the world. All this takes place only under the condition of transition to *the posthuman condition*. Traces of the latter are visible in the talk about "the phantom limb." For Merleau-Ponty, it was a necessary step towards a different determination of the meaning of existence. Without a body, everything seems just the appearance of a Being, a deceptive sublimity without nature, an insight into the blueness of the sky in the dark night of the end of history. Things are, therefore, upside down. Their perspective is visible only from a different point of view than usual.

The body, thus, becomes a scandalous act of openness without any shred of theodicy, according to which salvation comes after the end of the

body and relates to the soul of man. We can safely claim that the two most significant theoretical "grand narratives" in the humanities about the body are phenomenology and psychoanalysis. And both confront the influence of modern natural-technical sciences on the experience of the body in all its aspects from medicine to engineering. However, both "grand narratives" are based on the concepts that belong to the Western metaphysics, albeit in its descent from the throne of ideas in the form of inverted Platonism and Christianity. Nietzsche expressed this best. In the intercessions of the will to power as an eternal recurrence for the fundamental concept of "life," he opened the space for the act of radical de-construction of Being. And, indeed, the body as an object can never be understood otherwise than being the opposite of "life." This is why the desire for immortality becomes primarily a desire to prolong the physical existence of man. In the analysis of Merleau-Ponty's statements from the *Phenomenology of Perception* and other writings published in the 1960s, it seems evident that the body is restored to its dignity in thought, only when instead of the primacy of temporality there is a turn towards the primacy of spatiality. This is not only an important difference in comparison to Heidegger and his intended thinking of "the second beginning," starting from the mission of Being as an event (*Ereignis*). Hence, spatiality becomes the authoritative way of the techno-genesis of autonomous objects. In other words, Merleau-Ponty represents the beginning of the thought of recognizing the eccentric and extravagant bodies of the human-non-human. By determining Being-in-the-world through the existential organization of the body in practical engagement, it became possible to abandon the Cartesian relics of thinking about the body. The body cannot be just an existential being, as Jean-Luc Nancy says in *Corpus*. From the extensibility of matter, the supply of energy, and the deliverability of information, it cannot be reduced to what already always is, that is, to be in the permanence of changes.

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My position is that, following Merleau-Ponty, the body should be understood as an elementary *existential event*. The meaning of that event cannot be predetermined, nor does it appear at the end as a hidden secret of Being. Instead, it would be necessary to think the body in its ultimate possibilities of transformation. Like Kafka's character, Gregor Samsa, who was transformed into an insect in a dream, the body also opens up as an event

beyond any previous ontology. Jean-Luc Nancy is right, when he asserts in the *Corpus* that the body as yet still requires to be thought of ontologically (cf. Nancy 2008, 15). The only problem is that for such a different thought, ontology can no longer be authoritative. This might also be true for many other cases, such as the ontology of image, for example. The reason lies simply in the fact that the vertical and hierarchical model of understanding the world, with God as the central substance and Being as the leading concept, no longer corresponds to what happens in the procedural process of the creation of many virtual worlds. Instead of phenomenology, which could still place the problem of "the phantom limb" at the center as a continuation of mechanical technique by other means, because only in the 1960s the first transplant of a human organ, such as the heart, took place, the body in the cybernetic way of thinking can no longer be determined, neither positively nor negative. It is neither an extended substance (*res extensa*) nor is it a function of some phantom human intelligence that feels even the finest vibrations of the Earth. If all this is what body is not, then what "is" it? Nothing. Yes, you heard right—nothing. It does not exist as a thing-in-itself. It is also not conceivable as a thing-for-itself (*Ding-für-sich*). No Enlightenment epic about the process of developing a higher level of consciousness in the body as a neuro-cognitive network of plasticity gives the last answer to the question about what, after Wittgenstein, is called "language games" (*Sprachspiele*, *know-how*) in the philosophy of language. With this, we already indirectly indicate a solution to the problem. If the body is to be thought of as the initiator of *the transformation of events*, such a starting point can no longer be understood from any ontology. Its universal application to diverse areas of Being has passed. All the so-called regional ontologies that Edmund Husserl was still talking about are now melting away in the flourishing of a multitude of aesthetics. However, this is not proof of the absolute predominance of philosophical thinking in the age of *the technosphere*, but an indication of the complete fragmentation of knowledge about the worlds of pure construction. Instead, it is necessary to start from the initial assumption that, like an insect that replaces its organs, "the phantom hand" can be replicated by a technical process of event transformation, which is already performed today in medicine with the help of a 3D printer.

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What does this change mean for the understanding of the body? The impossibility has become a pragmatic possibility of transformation for the functioning of the body as a *technosphere* beyond the difference between the living and the inanimate. If, for example, one wants to improve a person's ability to remember in a complex situation that requires a high level of intelligence, as is the case in space flight today, the solution lies in improving the operation of the "artificial intelligence" devices (*AI*), and not in the birth of a potential genius. A technical understanding of the body removes any trace of dealing with pure essences that phenomenology dealt with. Instead, we are dealing with a pure "uploading" of cybernetically created protocols of the body as a machine. The only thing that remains of Merleau-Ponty's existential phenomenology in the age of *the technosphere* is the problem of determining the existence of that uncanny inhuman that hides behind the idea of "the phantom limb." What kind of existence is it, if its essence should be reduced to calculation, planning, and construction, and no longer to incalculability, singularity, and unpredictability? Does it have something more than the horizontal arrangement of events without foundation in the idea of a creative original, which appears under the name of simulation, simulacrum, and reproduction as a condition for the possibility of the emergence of new machines of contingency? We can answer these questions, only when we establish the essential difference between emergence and *techno-genesis*, the transformation of Being as becoming (*Werden*, *devenir*) and the transformation of a condition as an event (*Ereignis*, événement).

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2. Contingency machines

The classical philosophy of technology stems predominantly from the book *Elements of a Philosophy of Technology. On the Evolutionary History of Culture* (*Grundlinien einer Philosophie der Technik. Zur Entstehungsgeschichte der Cultur aus neuen Gesichtspunkten*; 1877) by Ernst Kapp. The motto to the work seems to be decisive; Kapp namely quotes the thought of Edmund Reitlinger who says: "All of human history, upon close scrutiny, ultimately resolves into the history of the invention of better tools." (Kapp 1877, 1.) This reduces the essence of historical development to technical inventions as the improvement

of things that serve human purposes. However, if we clean this "philosophy of technology" of the classical ailments of the modern dogma called the law of causality and of the rests of natural or rational theology in the notion of the purposefulness of history, what do we get? Only the problems of "progress" and "development" of automata, devices, and things that belong to some indifferent world of pure objectivity. After all, even the word "tool," which comes from the Greek word *organon*, covers the meaning of a logical system and a way of using it by managing it as a manipulation of an object beyond human organic purposefulness, which points to such a self-sufficiency. It can even be said that technology is reduced in everyday dealings with life to the existential space. Newton defined the space, in which two-dimensional objects rest, as a "collector" or "container." Things are, therefore, essentially "not," because their Being as technical bodies cannot be derived from the phenomenological concept of existence as proposed by Maurice Merleau-Ponty for the modern concept of freedom. In addition, the problem of technology does not lie only in the vagueness of this self-sufficient indifference that we observe at the graveyard of old machines from the mechanical era. Therein lies the paradox of the technical existence of the object. The faster the obsolescence, the almost schizophrenic the need for new technical objects. Without this paradox, the object has no reason to exist, and the machine remains an empty flywheel of motion. What we call a machine is not a machine in mechanical motion. On the contrary, the machine includes *organon*, *téchne*, and *poiesis*. While the machine is reduced to the inhuman in the sense of an insurmountable opposition to the human Being, here we encounter the trinity of *management, performance*, and *production*. In this way, it can be said that in the cybernetic system of *the technosphere* there is a synthesis of the management mechanism and control over the processes of producing new things (objects and data networks), of the performative concept of knowledge as a pragmatic use of language in the form of a visualized concept, and, last, but not least, of the infinite production of "the forms of life." The latter are supposed to include what belongs to nature in the analogue world and to artificial life in the digital world (cf. Rieger 2003, 315–326).

What does self-sufficiency mean with regard to the ontological status of technical devices and machines? It would be a mistake to think that technology

in the mechanical way of working tools has some special independence of its own. A thing as an object of the subject's reflected experience cannot have the autonomy that the mind has, which, as Kant says, is its own legislator. However, in the theological sense of the word, only God is assigned this lofty idea of freedom. Because it is not limited by anything external. Hence, the origin of modern theories of political sovereignty in the theological science of God's unlimited power. Nevertheless, a kind of limited autonomy, which is a higher form of self-sufficiency than what the Greeks called *autarky*, belongs to the field of technology in the sense of reshaping nature. Matters change significantly, when modern technology based on automatics comes into play. When machines work on their own and perform complex operations that require a higher level of mental-volitional ability than man, and man appears in the service of the supervisor of the work process in the factory, we are already on the way to machine self-sufficiency. Gilbert Simondon calls it "the second order of cybernetics." However, this historical development of technology from the modern age to modern technology determined the period of the industrial society from the 19th century to the end of the 1960s. Sovereignty and self-sufficiency belong only to "the third order of cybernetics." Here, information precedes matter and energy, and the management or control system is based on the idea of a feedback *loop*.

This circular irreversibility characterizes the process of liberating *the technosphere* from all mediations and medial reflections "about" the world and man. Instead, we are faced with a machine that thinks for itself by producing events as state transformations, rather than mere objects through the technique of replication and cloning. In this sense, *the technosphere* is truly self-sufficient. It cannot be compared to the graveyard of industrial technology, simply because it is on the path of absolute dematerialization. Modern quantum computers are the beginning of the second digital revolution, for which Merleau-Ponty's "phantom limb" means nothing. Apart from perhaps reminding us of the era when the body was still understood from the absolute spontaneity of the freedom of human will. However, today the very concept of free will in the traditional metaphysical sense is called into question. Neuro-cognitivists and enactivists no longer speak that discourse. The brain "thinks" pragmatically. In its plasticity, it reacts to events by going beyond the arguments of physiologists

and psychologists, those who put everything on the line of reflex drives as well as those who bet on the magnificent and irreducible space of human action as absolutely voluntary decisions (cf. Sturma 2013). In this almost inexplicably childish "fascination with the brain," as Jan Slaby points out, we are witnessing the natural sciences in the guise of a new objectivism supported by powerful visualization techniques (SCAN) taking over the once-unconquerable territory of philosophy and spiritual sciences (cf. Slaby 2014, 211–221). Self-sufficiency and autonomy, sovereignty and the absolute rule of managing the system and its surroundings become a fascinating way of unfolding "life" in the highly developed contemporary societies. Why is that so? It seems obvious that there is something uncanny and at the same time amazing in the "essence" of *the technosphere*, since it encompasses the concept of new information and communication technology as "a thing that thinks" and as "an apparatus/device that is aesthetically seductive." Ambivalence arises from its indefinite ambiguity. It is both *a thing* and *a creature* in the sense of a cybernetic virtual avatar, and its calculated images are not perceived as images of nature, but as the creation of a new reality with a fundamental turn in "the essence" of the image. It does not depict and does not represent an objective world. *The technosphere* calculates, plans, and constructs new worlds.

If we return to the problem of determining the reason why phenomenology of the body no longer has the possibility of insight into what is happening with the techno-poietic way of transforming the condition, by which bodies *can* be reshaped not only by transplanting organs and replacing them with other, even animal organs, we immediately come across the keyword of this controversy, i.e.: *history*. That is why Hans Blumenberg is right, when, in his analysis of the relationship between phenomenology and technology in Husserl's late writings, he shows that for him history is "nothing but the living movement of the common and of the mutually permeated within the original conception and sedimentation of sense" (Blumenberg 2015, 175).

The disappearance of living history from the scene must be replaced. Therefore, the new cybernetic physicality exists in the constant state of transformation. The stability of the system results from its change. Everything valid for the technologization of language that describes these bodies becoming disembodied in the *robot–cyborg–android trinity* is even more valid

for the technologization of the image. Why do we talk about different relations of the construction of "artificial life" (*A-life*), when it comes to language and image? The reason lies in the fact that language is telling and, therefore, has the communicative potential of symbolic exchange in the common Being of man. Artificial languages can only be algorithmic languages for the visualization of concepts. In other words, their function becomes instrumental, and that is why it is always mediated by the process of technologization. In contrast, a technically produced image is completely aesthetically autonomous. Without reference to anything in the given world, the information refers only to itself and to other images. Hence, the process of technologizing the image focuses on objects in the space of virtual interaction. Language still speaks, in order to describe things and phenomena. The picture only shows what happens in the continuous transformation of the events. Language, therefore, belongs to the realm of ontological difference, while the image is derived from the cybernetic difference. To the first, history appears as the transcendental *a priori*, and to the second as the immanence in movement without beginning and end. From this, it necessarily follows that we no longer live in "worlds of life," but in "forms of life." Original or immediate life is reduced to the structures of "bare life," and moments of unique happiness are almost rare. Around us are endless platforms of the digital world. They multiply like the conditions for the possibility of new physical or visual communication. Gone are the days of unexpected encounters and uncertainty. Now, the only thing is how contingent machines produce desires and resistance in the world, because the structure of life is not created "naturally" and "historically." All this is far behind us like a pale shadow of things in the accelerated "aesthetics of disappearance" (cf. Virilio 1991).

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Having a body today does not mean being condemned to a singular conception of the world. For Merleau-Ponty, phenomenology of the body was an onto-pathology of living corporeality with a transition to "the phantom limb"; one could speak of a historical way of existence, in which the body engages in situations. Namely, this was only possible, because the body had an original "flaw"; it had an ontological defect in that, unlike insects, for example, it could not *auto(re)generate*. The rapidly developing technology based on the reproductive matrix of copying originals was limited to mechanics and semi-

automatics. If we only look at horror films from the experimental avant-garde phase of the 1920s, we will understand that the dismemberment of organs and mutilation of the body tends to be visually supported precisely by the feeling of disgust (abjection) towards the monstrous event of destruction of the integrity of the body. In analogy with "the phantom limb," which pathologically questions "Being-in-the-world," the film staging was based on the excess of "phantom images." The cut to the body, the cutting of the vital organs as a perceptive shock in Salvador Dalí's and Luis Buñuel's film *An Andalusian Dog* and Germaine Dulac's film *The Seashell and the Clergyman*, directed the viewer's attention to what lies beyond the shock as such. The sublimity of the experience of the thing itself, with which the gaze enters the space of chills, connects disgust and monstrosity. There is no better term for it than the German word *Unheimlichkeit*. It expresses the outrageous fear and admiration of what is both foreign and close to man. The body that disappears in the self-sufficient and autonomous process of the unfolding of *the technosphere* ends this effect of *Unheimlichkeit*. Moreover, by its suspension and neutralization as a constructed object of self-staging in virtual space, the body becomes a replaceable singularity of the case. Nothing seems impossible anymore and everything becomes a performative event: from plastic surgery to the birth of a monster as in Dalí's painting *Geopoliticus Child Watching the Birth of the New Man* (1943).

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Today's research with regard to the human body concerning techno-scientific constructions shows how much "operational thinking" is inscribed in the procedures of "embodiment." Going beyond the prevailing attitude about the rule of the mental substance that determines and orders the body what to do marks the end of modern subjectivism. The talk about "the objectification of the will" as an offshoot of metaphysics, present, e.g., in Schopenhauer, testifies that knowledge was understood only in the difference between mind and body. Therefore, the body could only be understood as an object of knowledge or an intention of free will in the sense of the action of *logos*, *spirit*, and *mind*. Incarnation is either the descent of the mind into the body from the heights of transcendence (philosophy) or, on the other hand, the shaping of man in the image and likeness of God (theology). In both cases, it is understood as an object, although the Greeks, unlike the Christian concept of resurrection,

consider the dead body to be a mere corpse. As we have already shown, for phenomenology the body is a subjectivized way of existentially confronting the world (Husserl and Merleau-Ponty). This constitutes a big step away from the Cartesian "functionalism." Today's attempts to think the body in the complexity of its manifestations combine neuroscience and cognitive science. The upheaval occurred precisely because the research of machines and artificial intelligence shows that man cannot be unambiguously classified neither with the transformations of Being nor with the transformations of the events. "The nature" of the body is that which mediates between the two shores of the world-historical existence of the technical world. Being between "nature" and "technology" gives the body the possibility of merging and permeating with something that transcends duality.

Is this age a sign of the absolute rule of the flesh or is this just an illusion? The answer seems to derive from the logic of contemporary action: *either–too.* Yes, the body appears everywhere in Being transformations. Contemporary art, for example, is defined through a performative-conceptual turn. The same applies to efforts in the interdisciplinary field of transhumanism. Here, on the other hand, research is aimed at improving the physical structure of man concerning *the technosphere*. The fascination with physicality stems from the fascination with the image in the form of a digital code. *Instagram*, *Twitter*, *Facebook*, and other social networks, in addition to showing mass idolatry of sexuality and the body, also testify to the narcissism of our sophisticated technical era. However, at the same time, everything is directed towards disembodiment, the movement towards the Omega point of the universe. The ambivalence of the image as a body and the body as an image permeates all human activities, simply because the body in the age of *the technosphere* is not "a thing" of philosophical-theological "embodiment." Instead of the mystery of the entry of spirit and soul into the body as flesh, the fundamental question is how does "what" (*quidditas*) connects nature and technology happen. In other words, the extension of the domain of "the phantom limb" to the worlds of life shows that living in a network of "phantom images" requires the processes of an aesthetic "embedding" of *the implant* "onto" the body. At the same time, their structure is located beyond the border between the living and the non-living. To be aware of one's own body today means to move from the existential

drama of Being to the pure indifference of *body design*. This turn introduces us to a space, within which powerful machines of contingency work noiselessly and glow fluorescently without stopping. Spirit and soul have passed on their own forever. The only thing left for the body is "a bright future." But can "what" we encounter in our daily dealings with information and codes still be called a body?

3. Aesthetics of self-shaping

When we say "body" (*Körper*, *corpus*), we mean something that is framed and closed, which is also limited by its shell as an object. Each body is located in a certain space. It can even be asserted that spatiality is for the body what time is for Being—an inalienable possibility, reality, and necessity of existence. The distinction between figures and bodies in geometry rests precisely on the assumption that the figure is only an image, and the body becomes a real object in space. All this is still not enough without the existence of a dematerialized substance or "essence" of the body's physicality. Neither the figure as an image nor the body as an object are in their mutual relationship at all conceivable without the relationship of thought and Being. In the metaphysical relationship, a figure appears through the idea or perception of an object. Thus, spirit always has precedence over matter, and ideas over reality. For an object to be created in nature, there must be some condition of possibility for it. Aristotle distinguished between two concepts of shape or form (*eidos* and *morphé*). Since the body as an object appears in reality and as an imagined character, this double appearance is determined by the connection/relationship between form and matter. Not a single thing in nature is without the formal-material condition of its existence. Order in nature can be disrupted by a state of chaos. In such a case, we talk about formlessness and meaninglessness, because what is at stake is the disintegration of the system to the level of reaching the zero point of Being. There are three fundamental concepts both of Aristotle's metaphysics of the creation of beings from Being as well as of classical and modern physics. These are: form, matter, and energy. Besides the form in its two already mentioned modes, the aesthetic (*eidos*) and the physiological-psychic one (*morphé*), the Being of beings always appears in

its constancy as whole or disintegrated, beautiful and sublime or ugly, good and noble or evil and broken. The three fundamental concepts simultaneously determine all possible metaphysics/physics of the body as an object, regardless of whether it is a stone, an animal, or a human. What is enigmatic in its factual necessity? Nothing but the fettering of matter by the form in its singularity. In other words, metaphysics as physics always starts from the idea of creation and what is created. One cannot step into the same river twice, said Heraclitus. And this means that repeating Being in some form outside of its singularity of movement seems impossible. Necessity is, therefore, a kind of absurdity and a wall for thinking that tries to cross the boundaries set by Being itself. What is true for the facticity of movement in space must also be true for the way of appearing in form, which, like the idea of nature, is predetermined and unchanging. The paradoxes of classical metaphysics regarding the body stem from the circumstance that it is always determined by something else and signifies something else. Its formal-material structure can change, only when the third member of the conceptual order—energy—reaches the threshold of the equalization of form and matter.

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How can that even be possible? The answer was given by cybernetics in its second and its third order with the setting of storing information as a constant event transformation (cf. Hagner and Hörl 2008). This not only disestablishes the idea of the permanence of Being in its changes, but also leads to the final process of overcoming metaphysics with the emergence of disembodiment and at the same time the *techno-genetic* construction of a new body with the help of "embedding." The answer of cybernetics presupposes prior clarification of the difference between "embodiment" and "embedding." What does it embody, and what does it incorporate? The answer seems to be that consciousness enters the body in the manner explained by cognitive psychology. With the development of the brain and the growth of a child capable of simple and increasingly complex thought operations, it is clear that thinking appears as a constitutive factor of "humanity." At the same time, "thought" cannot be reduced only to logical-calculating features, but to it belongs the whole set of spirituality or emotionality. Embodiment in today's understanding of neuro-cognitivism of interdisciplinary sciences primarily refers to the ability of the body to move and for the "subject" to feel it as its own body. This applies even

under the condition of "implantation" of other people's organs and implants. Mental abilities are not separated from the physical ones. In the contemporary discussion regarding the problem of the embodiment of consciousness, the action of "mental representations and processes" directed at the body is taken into account: sensations and motor senses (somatic and enactive) (cf. Prinz 2013, 466). We should ask whether other forms of criticism and cognition are embodied or not? The reason is that the term "embodiment" carries with it the unfortunate baggage of apriorism and transcendentalism of the mind (*cogito*, *Vernunft*). The term is doubtful for further use, because it causes controversy. Already from the fact that the brain is never fully considered as a bodily "organ," like the hand, doubts arise about the ontological status of the incorporeal and the corporeal.

The artificial body represents the result of *techno-genetic* construction. However, here we encounter the problem of its cybernetic determination. If, namely, the logic of *the technosphere* stems from the fact that artificial intelligence (*AI*) creates artificial life (*A-life*), then the artificial body (*A-body*) appears as a pure mediality of events that can be produced and controlled. Everything that arises from the information or digital code must be able to be disembodied, in order to be "embedded" in another body. What does this significantly change in the determination of the physicality of the body? First of all, in the process of dematerialization and disembodiment, the body is reduced to a series of functional organs. Formally speaking, the system consists of "phantom limbs" that can be replicated ad infinitum, only because their "essence" lies in technical reproduction. For the first time, the concept of singularity no longer refers to the unrepeatability of the case of what is alive and irreplaceable. On the contrary, thanks to artificial intelligence, the emergence of new life requires the fluid and mobile body that can function in non-natural living conditions. It is not only the body that is the object. Such are all imaginable constructions of artificial life, because their space in its *spatializing* extends to the post-industrial environment. However, what is most important in this is the reversal in "the essence" of the concept of object. *The technosphere* comprises a network of autonomous objects that think and move based on the logic of artificial intelligence. There are three modes, in which they appear: *robot*, *cyborg*, and *android*. Moreover, thanks to the change

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in "the ontological status" of the concept of the object, it is possible to conclude that a complete reversal of the entire metaphysical scheme of history takes place here.

"It" as a creature/thing becomes the subject of its own "fate" without transcendental illusions of eternity and immutability. In the process of de-substantialization, the object rises to the level of a self-sufficient and autonomous network of information and at the same time "experiences"/"revives" by creatively imitating the irreducible "human nature" with a tendency to transcend it. Gilles Deleuze was right when he stated, in his writings about Foucault, that the previous forms of existence, such as God and man, are on the way to disappearing in the form of superman (cf. Deleuze 2004, 131). But this superman no longer has the trace of God's face, nor does he feel the sufferings of human historical consciousness in the pursuit of reaching the Omega point of meaning. His "perfection" becomes pure indifference towards the Other. Except, of course, in the execution of program commands as a contingent "essence" of the technical world. This no longer concerns the act of "objectifying" the subject, but the process of "subjectivizing" the object. The dream of machines in the Renaissance era was not just an echo of hermetic and esoteric understanding of the human body as stardust. Leonardo's machines as mechanical prostheses of the human body and Faust Vrančić's parachutes were the beginning of an intense search for the secret of transitioning to the state of a flying object, the connection/relationship of living and non-living through rising above the Earth, and travelling to the dark side of the Moon.

The objects of *the technosphere* are impossible without visualization or the complex image in digital form. This once again shows the close connection/relationship between the body and the image. The only difference, in comparison with the analogue image, shows that now the digital one constructs the conditions of what is not there in reality, even before the virtualization of the world occurs. The aesthetic object does not have the status of *a readymade*. On the contrary, its advantage is that it is infinitely replaceable in its plastic singularity just like the "artificial brain" (*A-brain*). The image is not a simulacrum of some "natural" source of the sanctity of Being. As a technical body, it is pure information that can, or may not, be transformed into the condition of self-creation of a real object. If, on the other hand, in the new

understanding of the concept of object, the classical metaphysical problem of the mind–body relationship is pushed aside, starting from the primacy of consciousness vs. the extension of matter, then it is necessary to establish new relationships between the body and the object. Merleau-Ponty, as we have seen, elaborated his phenomenology of the body upon the assumption that the body is an object in space and that human existence is conducted bodily. Thus, the opposition of mind and body became suspended. However, there is something doubtful in the new monism. For Husserl, the solution was in the intersubjectivity of intentional consciousness. Hence, the *cogito* must necessarily have the property of a noetic act of event creation. Because only man thinks by using language. Merleau-Ponty went a step further in the direction of the spatiality of the body as an existential object. Such an object is not a thing in the sense of objectivity, but it is also is not a pure function of the self-posited subject either. However, the problem remained unsolved. In the neuro-cognitivism of today's philosophy and science, certainty is sought without unnecessary wandering through the labyrinth.

500   When this no longer concerns "the embodiment of consciousness," because "the phantom hand" is already a mere remnant of the onto-pathology of nature as non-perfection, nothing else remains but a reversal in the concepts of *cogito* or subject. In Husserl's *Cartesian Meditations* (*Cartesianische Meditationen*), the role of the concept of *cogito* is set differently than in Descartes, and it is likewise more radical than in Kant (cf. Husserl 2012). The mind and the subject are not, however, the same. What binds them together becomes transcendence. The subject mentally constructs the world with the help of the spatio-temporal perception of the essence of the experience of the subject's reality. Everything that can, therefore, be thought of within the limits of the transcendental subject is determined by the causal categories of some phenomenon and the purpose it has in the sense of Being. Without causality and purposefulness, Being seems to be meaningless. However, it is not quite like that. Husserl's project of the phenomenological reduction of the essence of the world is based, on the other hand, on an attempt to break through the enchanted border between mind and nature. We have seen that he, therefore, had to leave the body in the environment of intentional consciousness as a mediality or mediation between the demands of the mind and the autonomy

of the subject. Phenomenology schedules in its program the ripening of pure "beings" exactly where its highest peaks are—in the act of eidetic reduction. It cannot think of the abyss or the groundlessness of that uncanny process of the emergence of the modern *cogito* as a transcendental subject. And it cannot do so, because it starts from the self-evident "fact" that every consciousness (*noesis*) is always also the consciousness of something (*noema*). But, what if that "something" (Being?) is the same as Nothing, that is, what can no longer be thought of metaphysically, as Heidegger established in his thinking? Should we perhaps abandon this distinction, this firm boundary between "subject" and "object" by simply reversing the state of affairs itself? Therefore, in the concept of embeddedness, *the possibility* arises that the very process of cogitation or thought criticism becomes an act of object and objectification of consciousness. At the end of the book *Cybernetic Anthropology. A History of Virtuality* (*Kibernetische Anthropologie. Eine Geschichte der Virtualität*), Stefan Rieger introduces into the discussion the relationship between virtuality and transcendence. Of course, we can assume that virtuality in the environment of digital ontology cannot be a new apriorism of technically constructed consciousness. Instead, "virtual transcendence" is at work. And it, on the other hand, arises from the singularity and contingency of events (cf. Rieger 2003, 422–434).

Does the problem not lie precisely in the thought's attempt to solve the mystery of "the embodiment of consciousness" using old metaphysical schemes in a new guise? As shown by various studies in the field of neuro-cognitivism, consciousness is not located outside the body as some extracorporeal substance that, by the will of God or by an act of spontaneity of the subject, sets in motion the complex mechanism of physiological-psychic human processes. However, it is also not "in" the body as a mere object that can be disposed of like a pile of flesh and nerves. Thinking as the highest form of conscious activity is a self-reflective act of knowing the world. The world cannot be located somewhere objectively outside of consciousness. For Kant, time and space were the result of the subject's construction, not eternal and objective categories. The mind, then, constructs natural laws that do not exist objectively outside of our consciousness. It would be wrong to say that the world is only what the title of Schopenhauer's book states—*will and representation*. The first energy principle

is Being in the mobilization of the Earth as a planet, while the second appears as a cognitive moment of the subject's rule. To present the world in the medium of thought means to have it as a pure construction of the unconditional. But, the return of realism within ontology at the beginning of the 21st century appears at the same time in opposition to a new type of transcendental or radical constructivism advocated by the supporters of "the second-order cybernetic" theories, such as in the works of Heinz von Foerster and Ernst von Glasersfeld (cf. Foerster 1985 and Glasserfeld 1995). Virtualization means that kind of technical "operational thinking" that overcomes the oppositions of primary and secondary, original and copy, *a priori* and *a posteriori*. What happens to the subject and the object? Nothing but the ontological deployment of their essence. Another important addition: the virtual enables reality to appear at all on the horizon of space and time. Unlike transcendence, which is primarily related to the concept of primaeval time—this is why Husserl can talk about the primaeval phenomenon and the primaeval experience of a primaeval Earth—, in this context there is nothing temporal in the meaning of presence as "now."

502   Everything is "here-now." Everything happens simultaneously. Virtuality precedes the actualization of the state of events that consciousness in the technical medium of "second- and third-order cybernetics" simultaneously produces, visualizes, and "thinks." As we can see, production precedes sight and cognition. The practical character of today's technoscience *still* goes a step further than this scheme of historical development. It concerns only the fact that the production is not an unconscious act of some complex body according to the four causes (*causa formalis*, *causa materialis*, *causa efficiens*, and *causa finalis*).

    Poiesis, *visio*, and *computatio* are found in a new set of categories and concepts. Instead of the transcendental structure of the subject who thinks by imitating God or creatively constructing the nature of things, a virtualization of the event of the object is at work. In the form of "a thinking machine" (computer), it visualizes the very process of the creation of artificial life (*A-life*). Objects that think in a manner different from human thinking, which Heidegger separated into thinking (*Denken*) and telling (*Dichten*), enter "the third order of cybernetics." They calculate, plan, and construct events as states of affairs in terms of their potentiality and usefulness. The pragmatics

of knowledge replaces the meaning of Being (hermeneutics, phenomenology, and psychoanalysis). When we are no longer able to think of Being and time directly and indirectly, authentically and vulgarly, when we can no longer hope for any "second beginning" (*der andere Anfang*) of thought by the reversal within "the essence" of the metaphysical history of the West, what remains? The answer is clear: *the techno-genesis of events*, out of which *the technosphere* is created and transformed as a system of thinking, autonomous, and self-moving objects.

4. Hybridity, fractalization, curvature

There no longer exists a gap of worlds between *ontogenesis* and *techno-genesis*. This was still the case at the dawn of the 20th century, when first research began regarding the possibility of machines becoming human substitutes and man flying from the Earth towards the endless expanses of space. The problem with determining the meaning of an object in the age of *the technosphere*, in principle, stems only from the fact that it designates a radical construction of artificial life. In such a case, the differences between "subject" and "object" are irrelevant for "the operational thinking." Moreover, many terms that we use to describe the contemporary state of affairs are extremely ineffective, if not completely unusable. Since Norbert Wiener established the fundamental principles of cybernetics with the introduction of the concept of information, everything fundamentally changed, including the notion of the objectivity of an object. In "the third order of cybernetics," there exists no possibility that the human consciousness would be the one that disembodies itself and thereby acquires the status of the transcendental subject. There are virtual-real objects within the world of *the technosphere* rule, such as devices and apparatuses, for which the principle of *autopoiesis* applies. They create themselves like nature and living systems (biological evolution). Thus, they enter the post-biological stage of "life," for which it is necessary to ensure optimal functioning conditions through the increasing construction of new digital platforms and the increasing incorporation of artificial organs into the assemblies that now shape what we still call the body. Embedding becomes a way of singular replaceability of the body as an object that extends its shelf life or, in the case

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of a human, its lifespan only thanks to the contribution of technoscientific research into the possibility of changing "nature" as such. Without this, it seems impossible to continue with the utopia about the immortality of the body and the dystopia about the end of the human body. Neither the human body nor the animal body is a biologically extinct form of existence or "Being-in-the-world." On the contrary, we will witness more and more the kingdom of hybrid creations in all the areas of human activity and surrounding worlds. Being in the form and way of appearing in the manner of a hybrid condition does not mean having a permanent "nature." Instead, everything is subject to technical transformations according to the demands of aesthetic self-shaping. Desire, therefore, does not come from some sublime "black box" of a metaphysically constructed machine that everyone follows, because it is universal. Far from it.

The essence of desire lies in its irreducibility to anything common. Hence, contingency or chance prevails over the necessity (actuality) of Being. The object in its autonomous action can shape itself according to the changes of the environment like a chameleon or it can aesthetically construct its temporary environment, as in the experimental process of "the terraforming of Mars" for man's future conquest of the red planet. Hybrid life also requires hybrid materials, which are all synthetic, because they combine the biological conditions of the organism and the cybernetic system of necessary transformations. To be hybrid means to have an ambivalent experience of the two-dimensionality of a being, which truly belongs to the realm of the "Big Third." The order of things in the age of *the technosphere* derives from the main concept of "third-order cybernetics." It is *an emergence*. The entire history of complex systems is covered by the emergence of the "new." Why do we write this word in quotation marks? The reason lies in the fact that there is something ontologically new, if it springs from the persistence of Being in change: a new sunrise, a new age created on the ruins of the previous epoch, a new man who knows that what is at stake is not only the aesthetic appearance, but the spiritual change of existence (*metanoia*). By contrast, in the world of autonomous objects, "the new" comes from dynamic procedures and protocols, through which cognitive machines self-produce their bodies and their environments. This is why it is possible to say that the ontologically new concerns primarily the relationship to the historical mission of Being, while the cybernetically

"new" is distinguish by the relationship to the event as a technical process ("uploading" in transhumanism). In the philosophical sense of the word, these relationships can be "illustrated" with the comparison between Heidegger's and Deleuze's thinking. Being presupposes meaning and order of beings in the causal-purposeful chain of events. The event, on the other hand, signifies the emergence of structures and processes from the logic of *techno-genesis*, which includes the connection/relationship between the living and the non-living. That is why we are talking about the rule of creative chaos or the order of non-linearity. *Emergence* refers to "chance" as existence refers to "necessity" as its natural obstacle in designing the world. *The arrangement of hybrid objects breaks down the boundaries between worlds. Thus, the body in infinite becoming (*Werden*, devenir*) *finds itself in constant transformation of events, and the initiator of this process becomes the cybernetic information system. In the pursuit of reaching "the infinite speed" (*vitesse infinie*) in the universe beyond space and time, a new history of post-biological humanity is unfolding* (cf. Deleuze and Guattari 2005, 118).

Why are autonomous objects in aesthetic self-shaping condemned to hybridity in all their manifestations, and not only in appearance (*eido*s) and form (*morphé*)? The explanation that talks about the mixing of substances for the purpose of the creation of a "new" part of the alchemical process in the search for pure gold does not seem entirely logical. Hybridity is the only possibility of Being, which unites events and becoming with a difference. In other words, what medieval theology calls the *tertium datur* in opposition to the rules of "common sense," such as, for example, the existence of unicorns, albino deer, black sheep, or fractal forms of the cauliflower, refers to something truly ontologically decisive. Instead of the rule that the exception confirms the rule, the leading generative principle is now that the exception determines the rule, that is, that the singularity of what is created from the mixing of two different substances becomes a new way of self-shaping the world. Hybrid objects are medially determined encounters between worlds. The reason lies in the fact that, in the techno-aesthetic mode of Being, they hide the secret of "new" creation. Hybridity is not, therefore, some external feature of the modern world in the planetary-global movement. At stake is the internal structure of the new metastability of the order. The uncanny (*Unheimlichkeit*)

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becomes the rule in the construction of the object, just like the communication between beings and civilizations in *Star Trek: The Next Generation* (1987–1994) was based on the idea of posthumanism, transhumanism, new cosmology, technoscience, robotics, and nanotechnology. The meaning of the word *hybrid* (ὕβρις) from the original Greek to modern times has with the rule of *the technosphere* almost completely changed. While it originally had a negative meaning, now it has a positive meaning.

What seems valid in the biological sense is within the new technologies continued by other means for the construction of objects of wide application in the daily life of contemporary man. In doing so, the entire network of newly created technical products is designed according to the aesthetic criteria of surface polishing and fractalization of shapes. Everything becomes curved. Everything is visualized from a multitude of perspectives. Hybridity reigns inexorably over our lives. Nothing anymore is self-evident from one dimension and one source. Just as energy is drawn from two or more sources, a form cannot be reduced to uniformity. The metaphorical nature of the body in a hybrid state enables its faster and easier replaceability. However, replaceability and substitutability should not be confused. In the first case, it is a question of similarity with the original. In this way, the substitute cannot be a copy, because it takes over some features of the original. However, its role becomes purely operational. If the replacement toner in the printer works just as well as the original, then it is a pragmatic notion of Being. Everything that contributes to the ultimate purpose is good and has its function. By contrast, a substitute is what Derrida calls *a supplement* in *Of Grammatology*. The meaning of the substitute as an addition lies in the circumstance that it, paradoxically, precedes Being as a single and singular event. In the world of technical civilization, life is led as a pragmatic pursuit of purposes and goals. That is why bodies are replaceable like all other objects. Their "addition" to what happens in nature denotes the path towards *the posthuman condition.* After all, artificial intelligence (*AI*) surpasses the human mind, just as artificial life (*A-life*) surpasses what still seems to us only worthy of real life.

Conclusion

Finally, let us sum up everything we have argued thus far about the transition from the ontology of the body to the cybernetic system of information and the corresponding logic of *the technosphere*. First of all, nature and the Earth were the foundations and sources (*arché*) for understanding the body as rooted in a spiritual ground. In the history of metaphysics and its transformation by Heidegger, the body could not emerge as an explicit issue, as it still hides today in neuro-cognitivism under the notion of "the embodiment of consciousness." It could not be thematized separately, in its principled autonomy, because it had the status and character of a mere object with the associated features of matter and form (*eidos* and *morphé*). From the horizon of the intersubjectivity of consciousness in Husserl's phenomenology, Merleau-Ponty's thinking was both the first and the last step in the expansion of metaphysics in terms of its way to the existential turn and openness of the body as an event. Curvature, fractalization, and substitutability are only clear evidence that the body as a living machine appears in a fundamentally different way from the constant transformation of Being as described by traditional metaphysics for centuries. We do not have to begin to think of the body ontologically, as Jean-Luc Nancy asserted in *Corpus*. However, our task is less apocalyptic-messianic than the announcement of the end of history and metaphysics, upon which the Western thinking about Being rested. Instead, it is necessary to start from the event of the creation of a post-biological body and its permanent transformations. Why such a need for the "new" and changing Being? Simply put, because there can no longer be any illusions that nature and the Earth are the last words of human existence. As interplanetary nomads, wandering through space—this, of course, has yet to be fully realized for the human species—, we encounter the monstrous "new nature" of *the technosphere*, which rests on the logic of the trinity of categories: *calculation*, *planning*, and *construction*. Hence, the techno-poietic activity of "artificial intelligence" (*AI*) also requires the aesthetic design of "artificial life" (*A-life*).

The body becomes a fluid and metamorphic object. But it is no longer an object in the function of a transcendental subject that a priori *decides on its movement, form, and material extension in space. Like in digital architecture,*

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in design for the age of the technosphere*, too, one works on designing objects that can independently and arbitrarily—of course, still under the watchful eye of man as the program supervisor without a direct physical presence in real space and time—cross the boundaries set by the actual organization of reality. Getting out of the shelter of nature and the Earth requires the body as a digital object to miraculously "ascend" to heaven.*

Thinking about the body becomes a task, for which we still do not have an appropriate language. The technology, with which we assemble concepts for hybrid circuits, is full of neologisms and "language games" (*know-how*). But who would care about that, if the only truth of language in the age of *the technosphere* is that no one speaks it anymore, except for thinkers and artists lost in the abyssality of a phantom of the primaeval Earth, abandoned a long time ago by both humans and machines.

And maybe forever.

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Paolo Furia

Uncanniness and Spatial Experience
A Phenomenological Reading of the COVID-19 Lockdown

Abstract: The contribution deals, from a phenomenological stance, with three major characteristics of our experience of space and places during the COVID-19 pandemic: 1) the contrast between the unprecedented availability and diffusion of digital representations of elsewhere at the global level and the lockdown, connected with social distancing and confinement; 2) the unique correspondence between the subjective impossibility to visit places and the objective unavailability of places to be visited; and 3) the restructuring of the boundaries between home-world and alien-world. After COVID-19, our familiar world cannot be taken for granted anymore. "Uncanniness" shows the true nature of the world itself, inherently exposed to crisis and open to change.

Keywords: the uncanny, social distancing, confinement, space, place.

1. Introduction

The notion of uncanniness gained scientific dignity thanks to Freud's famous essay "The Uncanny" (1919). In ordinary language, Freud says, the word is "undoubtedly related to what is frightening—to what arouses dread and horror" (Freud 1955, 219). At the same time, it is "not used in a clearly definable sense, so that it tends to coincide with what excites fear in general (ibid.). Hence, he seeks to specify its meaning in the framework of psychoanalysis. Shortly thereafter, the notion of uncanniness was integrated in the phenomenological reflection by Heidegger who broaches the subject in *Being and Time* (1927). Here, Heidegger rephrases the concept of uncanniness in the light of his analytic of being-there, as I will discuss in the following. From Freud, we

additionally learn that the idea of the uncanny is in the first instance a subject of aesthetics, as long as aesthetics is "not merely the theory of beauty but the theory of the qualities of feelings (Freud 1955, 219).[1] Although aesthetic inquiry has not paid much attention to uncanniness, the development of the recent lively debate about everydayness in aesthetics may be an opportunity to rediscover the importance of the notion of uncanniness, especially because of the conceptual interconnections between everydayness and uncanniness from Heidegger onwards.

In the last decades, the concept of everyday aesthetics has developed into a sub-discipline of its own.[2] It is especially in that framework that scholars have felt the need to elaborate an accurate definition of the everyday. Naukkarinen, thus, states:

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> The everyday attitude is colored with routines, familiarity, continuity, normalcy, habits, the slow process of acclimatization, even superficiality and a sort of half-consciousness, and not with creative experiments, exceptions, constant questioning and change, analyses, and deep reflections. In our daily lives we aim at control and balance. The everyday is the area of our life that we want and typically can trust, the sphere of life that we know very well; or at least believe that we do, which is normally enough to keep us contented. Everyday life is not always only made up of the nice and good, but is still something we are familiar with. (Naukkarinen 2013.)

When in our everyday life a change occurs of such magnitude that we no longer know what to do, our everydayness is revealed in all its precarity and fragility. Uncanniness is experientially related to a feeling of "not-knowing-

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1 Freud also asserts that the psychoanalyst "only rarely" feels "impelled to investigate the subject of aesthetics" (Freud 1955, 219).
2 Everyday aesthetics aims to broaden the scope of aesthetic research by highlighting the aesthetic side of "non-art objects and activities" (Saito 2001, 87). However, since it is highly disputable to determine, what art is and what it is not, many authors have felt the urgency of providing a sounder definition of the everyday, in order to overcome ambiguity and arbitrariness in the development of everyday aesthetics (cf. Melchionne 2013 and Naukkarinen 2013).

what-to-do" in unexpected and bewildering situations. If in ordinary conditions one feels at home in her everyday world, when an extraordinary event concerning biographical or historical conditions occurs, she can no longer orient herself, and the world takes on an uncanny character. Therefore, it can be provisionally concluded that uncanniness consists in the condition, in which the everyday world has lost its familiarity and readability.

Uncanniness refers both to a subjective feeling (to feel bewildered or disoriented in an unexpected situation) and to an objective condition. It can be described as an atmosphere, in the sense specified by Gernot Böhme (1995) and Tonino Griffero (2010). As atmosphere, uncanniness concerns the perceiver as much as the space, in which she is located. Artworks can reveal the uncanny in the everyday space very effectively. In 2001, the American photographer James Casebere made architectural models and then published a monograph of photographs of them entitled *The Spatial Uncanny*. In the series of images, interior landscapes are depicted without reference to the human presence. The vast, empty rooms immortalized by Casebere are sometimes flooded. In the everyday, building and dwelling go hand-in-hand, however their relationship may be conceived differently.[3] Buildings without people and their everyday practices may elicit a sense of uncanniness. This example hints at the circumstance that uncanniness is not reducible to just one of the many possible atmospheric nuances of the everyday; rather, uncanniness should be regarded as the condition, in which the precarity, even the ambiguity of the everyday are fully laid bare. When the precarity of the everyday is revealed at the aesthetic, affective level, the everyday as such becomes suspended. The disruption of the everyday indicated by the uncanny is hardly the result of an intellectual act. The everyday presents its inherent precarity in a number of biographical and historical situations. Above all, we are struck by sudden changes of our routines, which retrospectively cast a shadow over the safeness and familiarity we felt before the changes. We ask ourselves, if we at all had the right to feel safe in our everyday practices also, before the sudden changes occurred. We ask ourselves, if we have been deluding ourselves in having

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3 Two different accounts of how dwelling and building interact can be found in Heidegger's "Building Dwelling Thinking" (1971) and Ricoeur's "Architecture and Narrativity" (2016).

placed trust in the stability and genuineness of our way of life. And, nowadays, when in only a couple of years the everydayness of our lifeworld has been turned upside down at least twice (by the global pandemic of COVID-19 and, more recently, by the Russian's invasion of Ukraine), it is hardly deniable that to reflect over everydayness in aesthetics, as in any other discipline, necessarily brings with it a reflection about uncanniness.

In the following, by drawing on the phenomenological understanding of uncanniness, whose main features are pinpointed in the first paragraph, I explore the ways, in which our usual conceptions of dwelling, traveling, and perceiving space and places have been challenged during the lockdowns due to COVID-19. In the bewildering experience of being recluses in our houses for a long time, a full-fledged suspension of our everyday practices has occurred. Social confinement has provided the opportunity to reflect over the non-obviousness of places and of our ways to represent and live in them. An opportunity, which should not be missed.

2. Not-being-at-home

The Heideggerian analysis of *Angst* (par. 40 of *Being and Time*) represents a full-fledged practical reinterpretation of the phenomenological "*epoché*."[4] If we take into account that "[w]hat Angst is about is not an innerworldly being" (Heidegger 1996a, 174), it renders the world we live by and as we know it "completely without importance" (ibid.). The things at hand in our surroundings sink away. Our certainties falter. The "public way of interpreting the self and the world" (ibid., 175) no longer applies. In our everyday life, the repetition of practices and the familiarity with our surroundings give us "tranquillized self-assurance" (ibid., 176) and make us feel at home in the world "in all its obviousness" (ibid.). The condition of uncanniness that goes along with the feeling of angst discloses "the existential mode of *not-being-at-home*" (ibid.). This is the "more primordial phenomenon" (ibid., 177), even if it remains for the most part "existentielly uncomprehended" (ibid., 178). Our ways of living, inhabiting, and taking care of the world represent our responses to that

4 On the connection between the Husserlian *epoché* and the Heideggerian *Angst*, see: Ballard 1999 and Whalen 2015.

condition of not-being-at-home, which, nonetheless, "constantly pursues *Da-sein* and threatens its everyday lostness in the they, although not explicitly" (ibid., 177). At the basis of the relative stability of our everydayness, therefore, there is a longing for orientation, security, and familiarness as answers to the precariousness of our being-in-the-world. By suspending the meaningfulness of everyday life, angst provokes *Dasein* "to reflect upon that which matters most in its existence" (Magrini 2006). Thanks to that, *Dasein* rediscovers the world itself as possibility: it is caught in its inherent historicity, and is, therefore, open to change.

The notion of uncanniness, tied with the emotional motif of angst, is less present in the later production of Heidegger characterized by a stronger emphasis on the topological character of being.[5] At the same time, the development of an ontological perspective based on the centrality of being situated allows for a spatial reinterpretation of uncanniness as well. This was not often the case in much literature devoted to Heidegger and topology. The claim that dwelling has priority over building and that to be is always to be emplaced (cf. Heidegger 1971) has overshadowed the uncanny character of our being in space. In a famous and very learned book Jeff Malpas has devoted to the topology of being in Heidegger (cf. Malpas 2006), the word "uncanniness" occurs only once. The associated term "displacement" is entirely absent. In an equally learned book devoted to the exploration of the concept of place upon the Heideggerian and Merleau-Pontian bases (2009), Edward Casey has chosen the term "displacement" as the title of the second chapter of the first part, which is coupled with the word "implacement" that gives the name to the first chapter. Implacement is endowed with all the positive

5 The *unheimlich* nature of the relationships between the human being and the world returns also after *Being and Time*, for instance, in *Introduction to Metaphysics* (2014) and *Hölderlin's Hymn "The Ister"* (1996b). In both cases, uncanniness is not just the general character of mortals, but also a specific trait of their relationship to space. By taking our surroundings and our living places for granted, we do not dwell authentically. On the contrary, the authentic dwelling is the one, in which inhabiting and journeying dovetail and coexist. Heidegger sees in the river of Hölderlin's hymn "the locality of the dwelling of human beings as historical upon this earth" (Heidegger 1996b, 33), for its essence as a locale is journeying. The tensive coexistence of inhabiting and journeying assumes an uncanny character and at the same time defines the perimeter of something like an authentic dwelling.

meanings of dwelling: to be able to orient oneself, to feel secure and familiar in a cared environment. On the contrary, displacement is labeled as disturbing, discomforting, bad; it makes for the object of a criticism, which is at the same time epistemological and political. The disturbing character of displacement, read through the lens of uncanniness, cannot be denied. But when reading the lines from Casey, one can hardly find reference to the fact that, according to Heidegger, at least in *Being and Time*, to be displaced points to the uncanny character of our existence. The "not-being-at-home" of our condition is not just the occasional, unfortunate fall from the more fundamental position of happy and accomplished dwelling. On the contrary, dwelling is the challenge of our being-in-the-world, rather than a transcendental condition to be fulfilled. Indeed, when *Dasein* is absorbed in *the they* of everydayness and familiarity, when it takes its surroundings for granted, it is fleeing from itself and its primordial condition: not-being-at-home. This does not mean that a full and accomplished dwelling cannot be achieved in this life; it only means that no way of living and inhabiting should be taken for granted. Sooner or later, the alien, which haunts the familiar both from without and from within, will compel us to reconsider our standards and to approach new possibilities.

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Although uncanniness as such can arise in any situation, it is more likely to be elicited in certain historical circumstances. For what concerns our time, the global pandemic is an opportunity to put into question the taken-for-grantedness of the world and our ways to see and dwell. The pandemic is a key event of the kind of the alien in the sense given to this term by Waldenfels (2011): something, which bewilders us, eludes our biases, interrupts both the material and symbolic orders, in which we have lived thus far. It is evident that this is not just a theoretical issue. The pandemic, and the actions taken by individuals, local communities, states, and the international institutions to limit its spreading, have had and continue to have huge impact on how people experience the world. Both the notions of the alien in Waldenfels and the uncanny in Heidegger can be used to understand the suspension of the taken-for-grantedness of the world that occurs during the pandemic. These notions are especially suited to investigate the deep changes of our experience of space and places during the pandemic. Changes in our perception of space affect our ways to dwell, and, therefore, following Heidegger, have impact at the

ontological level. The very idea of feeling/not feeling at home is changing after the experiences of lockdown, the travel restrictions, and the strengthening of national borders. In the following, I will try to pin down some insights about the ways we make experience of space and places during the pandemic time, in order to address their uncanny character.

3. The pervasiveness of the elsewhere and the confinement

The first characteristic of a phenomenology of space and places in the pandemic time lies in the contrast between the unprecedented availability and diffusion of digital representations of places at the global level and the experiences of social distancing and confinement connected to the quarantine. Some literature has already discussed confinement and social distancing from a phenomenological point of view. Rossolatos shows how social distancing, implying "the prohibition of physical proximity between at least two Daseins in public space" (2021, 403), produces also a non-branded "empty space that lies in-between" (ibid.). Such an empty space is a true and proper *deadzone*: crossing it would be a suicidal action. The social spaces, where the being-with unfolds, become "no-go-zones and taboo spaces" (ibid., 404). Solitary confinement is a traumatic and uncanny experience that occasionally everybody can have, it is not new in human history. What makes the difference in the present context is the contrast between the condition of social confinement imposed by national authorities at the global level and the state of total interconnection of things, places, and people made possible by the pervasive spread of digital technologies on a worldwide scale. Of course, there are digital divides between territories and zones of exclusion, in which access to the internet is still not guaranteed; however, digital connection now concerns billions of people and has produced deep transformations in the ways people interact that are fairly uniform at the global level.[6] Digital technologies deeply affect our ways to make experience of space and places. People are by now literally plunged into a representational place-world. We can explore almost every corner of the earth thanks to

6 According to datareportal.com, 4.88 billion people around the world use internet as of October 2021, and internet users are growing at an annual rate of 4,8 %. Cf. https://datareportal.com/global-digital-overview.

satellites and GPS, broadly used both in our everyday life—let us think of our reliance on GPS, when we need to move from one place to another—and in the sciences (cf. Crampton 2010 and Rennell 2012). The images of places shared on social media, such as Instagram, rush from one side of the globe to the other, creating new pervasive geographic imaginaries, which heavily condition people's behaviors and choices.[7] Digital representations anticipate and predetermine any possible bodily experience of places, also producing some degree of standardization of the travelers' gazes and expectations (cf. Hannam and Knox 2010). They have the power to neutralize the alienating character of the alien-worlds by turning them into familiar environments, in which the traveler will eventually be led to find what she has been taught to expect.

In social media, the domestication of the elsewhere coexists with options of customization that foster new geographic imaginaries, paths, and travel styles. The juxtaposition of standardization and personalization intersects with the dialectic between the fictional character of cyberspace (cf. Meyrowitz 1985) and the ontological significance of digital technologies (cf. Carbone 2019). Digital tools modify both our experiences of places and places themselves. New kinds of places, new squares, new homes, new aesthetic environments emerge by means of digital technologies.[8] The relationship between the digital spaces and material spaces can hardly be reduced to a mere opposition, as if the digital were nothing but a simulacrum of reality devoid of any substance. On the contrary, digital tools extend embodiment beyond the boundaries of the *chair*. The smartphone is now considered to be a true and proper prosthesis of the human body. This also affects our sense of belonging and dwelling. To dwell no longer consists solely of belonging to a community rooted in a certain locale, but at the same time means to live with and by digital tools,

7 To get an idea about how social media are changing our ways to see places, let us think of their impact on travel habits and spatial practices in general. According to a 2017 survey of over 1000 UK "Millenials" (aged 18–33), "the instagrammabilty" of a holiday is the number one factor in choosing a travel destination (cf. https://www.schofields.ltd.uk/blog/5123/two-fifths-of-millennials-choose-their-holiday-destination-based-on-how-instagrammable-the-holiday-pics-will-be).
8 The neologism "homepage," with which we indicate the departure point for our itineraries within the internet, is very telling. Cf. Albanese and Graziano 2020, 47.

through which every elsewhere is potentially de-severed and every alien is domesticated. We do not necessarily belong together with our physical and symbolic surroundings anymore. Our personal and collective identities are more and more shaped within digital contexts, such as social media, where people meet, exchange experiences and opinions, fight and fall in love, regardless of where they are from. Moreover, the state of global interconnection enabled by the digital reflects a condition, in which people are *de iure* free to travel everywhere on earth. The epistemological transparency of the globe (cf. Sloterdijk 2013 and Grevsmühl 2015) is one with the complete accessibility of earthly space. Of course, this is not an irenic and painless process. In the last years, we have been witnessing various reactions against the current state of total interconnection of things, places, and people: the rise of new forms of localism has been among the most visible phenomena also before COVID-19.

The experience of social confinement necessitated by COVID-19 at the global level represents an alien event that challenges the order, in which we are framed. We have witnessed an extraordinary discrepancy between the ongoing process of intensification of digital interconnections and the confinement of the embodied human being. Social confinement consists in a dramatic restriction of the range of motion recognized as juridically and socially legitimate. Solitary confinement stands in stark contrast to a condition, in which digital interconnections get even stronger, in order to enable activities that under normal circumstances are performed in presence, such as working and studying. This contrast is even more evident with respect to practices that are inherently spatial, such as traveling. From march 2020 onwards, travel blogs and online travel guides have been sharing articles about how to travel while being stuck at home. Thanks to digital technologies, one can take a virtual museum tour. Google Arts & Culture has partnered with more than 2500 museums and art galleries around the world to offer interactive exhibits and virtual tours.[9] Guided tours are provided on the YouTube pages of many museums. They are cheap—or totally free—ways to get in touch with art objects and places from all around the world, without moving from home. However, by scrolling through the different pictures of the museum sites and

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9 Cf. https://artsandculture.google.com/partner?hl=en.

their online exhibitions, it is hard to escape the feeling of having an object-centered experience, primarily addressed to the sight, which is different from the total experience of real travel. It has been maintained that "the modern era […] has been dominated by the sense of sight in a way that set it apart from its premodern predecessors and possibly its postmodern successor" (Jay 1988, 3). The increase of attention towards notions of engagement, interaction, and immersion in a variety of fields in the last decades testifies to the attempts to overcome the ocularcentric bias of the Western culture. While the "debate over ocularcentrism" (Stonehill 1995, 147) overflows the boundaries of the decades-long continental philosophy field to affect the entire postmodern culture, aesthetics and cultural studies have witnessed a boost of attention towards engagement (cf. Berleant 1991) and performance (cf. Fischer-Lichte 2004 and Bachmann-Medick 2016). Parallelly, in geography, non-representational approaches in qualitative research about space and place have been elaborated, often in dialogue with the creative arts (cf. Thrift 2008 as well as Boyd and Edwardes 2019). Thus, digital studies usually counter the reduction of the cyberspace to a merely "scopic regime"[10] by emphasizing the interactive and immersive potential of digital technologies. The "list effect" of cheaper or free online exhibitions, displaying works of art according to some kind of order, can be reduced thanks to technologies which are more complex—and more expensive as well. Traveling from the armchair can be more engaging thanks to immersive technologies, such as Augmented Reality (AR) and Virtual Reality (VR). Through digital immersivity, an ocularcentric perspective is at least partially overcome, since within it not only sight, but also other senses are involved in the constitution of a complete perceptual world that is connected to the physical one in various ways (cf. Kellerman 2016).

It has been argued that VR has created "immense opportunities for the leisure and tourism industries throughout the pre-visit phase, during the trip and at the post-visit stage" (Hudson *et al.* 2019, 459). However, the alliance between VR and tourism seems to be weakened by the absence of "real" experience of space. In such cases, the simulation of VR may be charged with

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10 The term "scopic regime" derives from the book *Le signifiant imaginaire* (1977) by the French cinematologist Christian Metz.

the task of replacing the spatial movement implied in visiting.[11] But, does that simulation attain the desired effect? Is that only a question of how powerful is VR in simulating reality? Or is it only a matter of equally distributing digital tools so as to impress a consistent and homogeneous transition towards post-humanity, as maintained by the most orthodox representatives of trans-humanism (cf. Levin 2021)? The point is that VR and AR are usually not designed to replace embodied experience, but to prepare, anticipate, accompany, enhance it.[12] This holds true from a phenomenological perspective, which recognizes the ontological power of the digital, but does not accept to cast aside the embodied self and the qualitative nature of places. The very notions of enhancement and extension assume that there is something to be enhanced and extended. This does not necessarily mean that the relationship between the real and the virtual should be thought in mere representationalist or realist terms. According to Bruce Janz, for instance, both "real" places and digital places "are made possible by play" (2019, 61). By drawing on Eugen Fink's phenomenological advances, the author argues that play is a "sense-creating space" (ibid., 64), which ties together people and objects according to certain rules. In both "real" and virtual places, the human subject finds herself embedded and implicated by things. In both cases, there is a constructive side: they are construed through the establishment of rules, embodied in practices and routines. These rules make places possible, but do not exclude exceptions, improvisations, surprise. In short: between the "real" place and the digital one there is continuity, because the "real" place is in itself a virtual field of possibilities that may or may not find actualization. The everyday world of "real" places results from the open and precarious balance between virtualities and actualizations, just as play is virtually constituted by its rules,

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11 See the immersive travel experiences offered by companies, such as First Airlines or Google Earth VR, Oculus, and Immerse.

12 As it is well known, VR and AR differ in that the first is completely based on virtual information and plunges the subject into an entirely virtual world, whereas in AR information, coming from non-digital world, interacts with computer-generated data in a way that enhances the subject's perception and knowledge of reality (cf. Jung and Dieck 2018). There is a huge literature regarding the differences between VR and AR in many applicative fields such as education (cf. Billinghurst 2002 and Anderson 2019) and medicine (cf. Ecker *et al.* 2019).

but exists only when there is at least one actual player. Spatial practices, such as inhabiting, walking, driving, flying, climbing, swimming, cycling, are ways to actualize places, enliven, and realize them. The model of the play can be used not only to grasp the processual and engaging nature of both "real" and digital places, but also their interconnections. But the other side of the coin is what Jeff Malpas has called the principle of the non-autonomy of the virtual, which consists in: "the recognition of the fact that the virtual does not constitute an autonomous, independent, or 'closed' system, but is instead always dependent, in a variety of ways, on the everyday world within which it is embedded" (2009, 135). As a consequence, digital technologies, as immersive as they may be, are supposed to prepare and accompany spatial practices, but are not supposed to replace them. Immersivity is representational in character as well, when it is disconnected by interaction; however, it is a kind of representation, the fictional traits of which are laid bare, precisely because of the loss of the mimetic reference, regardless of how credible the illusion is. Virtually enhanced experiences of places without "real" places boil down to mere representations without reference or simulacra.

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When social distancing and confinement are in place, the continuity between the virtual and the actual—the digital and the real—is interrupted. The model of the play no longer describes the interconnections between "real" and digital places. It can be replaced by the model of the "utopias of escape." The expression is drawn from Lewis Mumford and refers to a kind of "aimless utopias" (1922, 16), which help people to survive in a world so full of frustration as the "real" one. As long as real places become inaccessible in themselves, their digital representations or simulations available from home take a somehow unreal character. They no longer anticipate a possible travel experience, but refer to a different time, in which places were staged, set up, disposed, narrated, in order to lure visitors. The *de iure* accessibility of the world is now suspended. People are confined into their homes and other places take again the character of the elsewhere, exotic, and unreachable. A purely aesthetic apprehension of remote places is impaired: travels return to be complex and even dangerous practices, illegal most of the time. It is no coincidence that those spatial practices, which have always been complex, dangerous, and even illegal, such as migrations, have been affected to a lower extent than tourism

and leisure travels.[13] The confinement renders the aesthetic, domesticated gaze of the tourist untimely and outdated, somehow even scandalous. The domestication of the gaze produced by the enormous exchange of pictures and representations of places on the internet and in social media no longer gives shape to any actualization in real experience. It remains entirely in the sphere of simulation. As a consequence, also domestication fails. We realize that real places can be actually different from what we expect, because we cannot experience them anymore—again, *de iure* rather than *de facto*. The suspension of familiarity and safety is the practical condition for uncanniness to arise. Here, the uncanny lies not in the geographical displacement, which on the contrary may be highly domesticated especially in tourism and leisure travels, but in the lack of substance and in the loss of reference of the representational world we are surrounded by, because of the ubiquity of technological devices.

4. The restructuring of the boundaries between home-world and alien-world

Confinement and lockdown are complementary phenomena. It is not just about preventing people from traveling and forcing them to stay at home. Lockdown is about making places inaccessible in themselves. Full-scale prohibitions to mobility engender a temporary "suspended animation"[14] of places, turning them into something similar to "non-places," at least insofar as social interactions are suspended within them. As it is well known, Marc Augé defined non-place as "a space which cannot be defined as relational, or historical, or concerned with identity" (2000, 78). He was referring to spaces, such as airports, highways, train stations, entertainment parks, but

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13 Movement restrictions exert an impact on migration, but its flows have never really stopped. Cf. https://www.migrationdataportal.org/themes/migration-data-relevant-covid-19-pandemic.

14 The term is taken from the field of medicine and refers to a "temporary state resembling death, with cessation of respiration" (Farlex Partner Medical Dictionary). The use of this term assumes the organic metaphor as an effective one to understand the processes and phenomena concerning spatial entities as constituting a dynamic totality. The organic metaphor is often assumed in geography, architecture, and urbanism (for instance, in Jane Jacob's pivotal book *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*; 1961).

also historical sites consumed in anonymous and stereotypical ways in the framework of mass tourism (cf. Augé 1997). However, to the extent that also within non-places social interactions take place, they might turn into places, at least for some categories of people—for instance, the employees who work permanently at an airport or the couples who have shared their first kiss under the Eiffel Tower. Of course, non-places have been affected by lockdown along with other kinds of relational and historical places, such as squares, churches, arcades, markets. During an extensive period of lockdown, it is precisely the relational and historical character of places that is bracketed. Social interactions take place mostly online, losing thus their inherent spatial dimension. Places are, therefore, deprived of their vital lymph. They continue to exist in a ghostly form, devoid of their social functions and disembedded from the practices that in normal times enliven them. Their historicity is reduced to the certainty of what they have been in the past, for their present time is suspended, and their future time appears precarious and uncertain. What humanistic geography has taught us to call "sense of place" (cf. Relph 1976) is not granted anymore under the condition, in which our dwelling is restricted to the boundaries of our house. The vibrancy of both places and non-places in the classic sense is muted.

This uncanny situation makes it possible to take into deeper consideration the real nature of places from a phenomenological perspective. With distant learning and smart working enhanced as never before, the importance of the places where people study and work is relativized and reaffirmed at once. On the one hand, the very fact that the school- and work-related functions can be performed in cyberspace shows that the built spaces, in which those functions have always been carried out (schools, offices), were dispensable. On the other hand, the experiences of distant learning and smart working have raised issues about what is the contribution of common places to the quality of both learning and working. Of course, much depends on what kind of work we are talking about, for there are jobs that can be carried out online better than others, especially at the current stage of development and distribution of digital technologies. But there is more. The question is whether space is just a mere backdrop we can live without or actively contributes in giving shape to personal and social identities, actions, and meanings. When the function of a

spatial entity, such as a school, a museum, or a square, is transferred online, that silent spatial entity where those functions were performed before the lockdown presents itself in its pure form. The suspension of everyday activities emphasizes their purely material patterns, their mere appearance, their belonging to a greater context, in which we have learned to build our everyday paths. Their very materiality has affective significance for us. Our memories, our imaginative intentions are elicited by them. Places acquire a depth that is usually forgotten in everyday life. They might be accounted for as being objects of nostalgia, because we feel that a part of our identity has been dropped there. We discover that the sense of place is also what governs our sense of ourselves. At the same time, as everyday practices within places are suspended, we address them as alterities endowed with an enigmatic significance. With their taken-for-grantedness being removed, they reveal themselves as the precarious outcomes of morphogenetic processes, which have unfolded in time, and go largely beyond the bounds of our personal existence and everyday practices. Places reveal themselves as spatial crystallizations of a cultural history and a natural history as well, which are often unconsciously removed from everyday understanding. More specifically, in the Heideggerian terms, the suspension of the everyday *world* emphasizes the role of *earth* in shaping our surroundings. This is why, during the lockdown, underwood has thickened, wheatgrass has grown to the detriment of the kinds of plantations requiring specific human care, gardens have set back, while swamp has moved forward. At the same time, the air and the waters have got cleaner thanks to the limitation of human mobility. Spontaneous nature has timidly flourished in the interstices of our crafted surroundings. The situation is ambiguous. The music and the voices from the balconies of the houses show that the city is not dead, that its mute forms are not those of a cold corpse in the hands of necrotic agents, but rather of an ill patient who imposed herself a powerful therapy to heal. Moreover, by being confined at home, we get a clearer idea of how dwelling does not consist just in taking cover behind the reassuring threshold of our houses. When our home is not projected towards the outside, when the transitional character of the threshold is neutralized and is reduced to an insurmountable border, home can hardly achieve the positive values described by Gaston Bachelard in his *The Poetics of Space* (1964). On the contrary, those alienating experiences,

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which characterize some empirical living conditions, such as being completely lonely and abandoned, as it happens to many elderly people, or cohabiting with a violent man, as it happens to many women, may be intensified. Confinement clearly shows how the alien haunts the intimacy of the family fireside. By extension, this also applies for places in general, always at risk of transforming themselves into unlivable non-places. However, that awareness should not lead towards despair. Rather, it simply hints at the fact that "the own is interwoven with the alien" (Waldenfels 2011, 76) and that man is "not a master in his own house" (ibid., 77). It is clear at this point how the recognition of the historical and relational character of places is not really eradicated by uncanniness, but, on the contrary, thanks to uncanniness we acquire a better sense of the historicity, even of the contingency of places. Through the suspension of the established meanings and senses of places, the way is paved towards a renewal of our way to dwell.

5. Concluding remarks

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Our contemporary age, dominated by the technologically charged neo-liberal model, can be summarized in the claim that "there is no alternative" (Andersson 2012). Economic processes operating at the structural level have produced an acceleration of paces that results in an endless and unstoppable flow of people, commodities, images. Excessive consumption, waste of natural resources, creation of a global web of non-places, the rise of gigantic megalopolises at the expense of rural communities, new forms of economic colonization, global competition rather than cooperation limit the transformative potential of both humans and places with tight, albeit often unnoticed constraints. A process complementary to the unstoppable flow of the postmodern is the impairment of the power of politics in affecting concretely the living condition of people. I am not referring here in the first instance to the power of the established institutions, but, rather, to the definition Hannah Arendt has given to power as "the human ability not just to act but to act in concert" (1970, 44). In other words, also the apparently perpetual flow, in which it seems we are aimlessly embedded, is a form of a hypostatization of the lifeworld, which results in a substantial paralysis of both intellectual awareness and practical-political

action. Such reification can be shuttered by unforeseen, alien events, of which the first effects are perceived at the level of lived experience.

Uncanniness arises from that discrepancy between the expectations shaped by the structural flow and the alien event. By drawing on Arendt's thoughts on power and action, I intend to rephrase the effects of uncanniness in ethical-political terms. What uncanniness allows us to rediscover is the derivative nature of both institutions and culture, and their spaces, which depend on the institutive power of action. In much the same manner as they have been instituted, they can also be withdrawn. In order to avoid misunderstandings about how to interpret this institutive power of action, it is important to highlight the fact that it expresses itself by stopping the allegedly unstoppable flow, in which human activity has developed in our hypermodern times (cf. Augé 2000 as well as Charles and Lipovetsky 2006). The quarantine consists in a deceleration of the human activity on environments, but it is itself a human initiative. It is the result of a political choice, and a brave one, as it consists in the interruption of the flow out of control of the capital, of the market, of commodities and people traffic, of the infection. This concerns the true and proper interruption of an otherwise unmanageable hypermodernity, which has been the veritable philosophy of history of our contemporary age, at least until yesterday. Social confinement is not just an experiential situation: it is a condition determined by political choices pursued at the global level to stop the contagion.

Thanks to the quarantine, we have been driven to recognize that the way we look at places is often stereotyped and unresponsive, that our usual way to inhabit and move through the earth surface is too invasive, that the population density of our cities is too high, that a merely profit-driven economy is helpless to cope with the contemporary global challenges, and that social and political interactions based only on competition cannot respond to the needs of people. Uncanniness, therefore, not only represents the condition, under which we can refresh our view of the world, but also paves the way to reorient our action to make the world a better and more human place to live.

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Authors

Lucia Angelino

researcher at the Archives Husserl (UMR 8547 – Pays Germaniques; Centre national de la recherche scientifique and École normale supérieure de Paris; Paris, France).

lucia.angelino@ens.psl.eu | lucia.angelino@wanadoo.fr

Filip Borek

Ph.D. student at the University of Warsaw (Warsaw, Poland) and the Charles University (Prague, Czech Republic)

f.borek@student.uw.edu.pl

Andrej Božič

researcher at the Institute Nova Revija for the Humanities (Ljubljana, Slovenia)

andrej.bozic@institut-nr.si

Joaquim Braga

researcher and professor at the Institute for Philosophical Studies at the Department of Philosophy, Communication, and Information of the Faculty of Arts and Humanities of the University of Coimbra (Coimbra, Portugal)

bragajoaquim77@gmail.com

Guelfo Carbone

associate professor at the Department of Philosophy, Communication, and Performing Arts of the Roma Tre University (Rome, Italy)

guelfo.carbone@uniroma3.it

authors

Noam Cohen

Ph.D. candidate at The Mandel School for Advanced Studies in the Humanities and the Department of Philosophy of The Hebrew University of Jerusalem (Jerusalem, Israel)

cohnnoam@gmail.com

Zachary Daus

M.A. student at the University of Vienna (Vienna, Austria)

zachary.daus@univie.ac.at | zachary.daus@gmail.com

Marco di Feo

researcher at the Research Center in Phenomenology and Human Sciences "Persona" of the Vita-Salute San Raffaele University (Milan, Italy)

mardifco@gmail.com

Manca Erzetič

associate professor at the Faculty of Slovenian and International Studies of the New University (Ljubljana, Slovenia) and researcher at the Institute Nova Revija for the Humanities (Ljubljana, Slovenia)

manca.erzetic@fsms.nova-uni.si | manca.erzetic@institut-nr.si

Paolo Furia

researcher at the Department of Humanities of the University of Turin (Turin, Italy)

paolo.furia@unito.it

Andrzej Gniazdowski

associate professor at the Institute of Philosophy and Sociology of the Polish Academy of Sciences

agniazdo@ifispan.edu.pl

534

Ka-yu Hui
Ph.D. student at the Department of Philosophy of the Boston College (Chestnut Hill, MA; USA)
huikc@bc.edu

Dean Komel
professor at the Department of Philosophy of the Faculty of Arts of the University of Ljubljana (Ljubljana, Slovenia) and head of the research activities at the Institute Nova Revija for the Humanities (Ljubljana, Slovenia)
dean.komel@guest.arnes.si

Liana Kryshevska
Ph.D. candidate in philosophy at the Ludwig Maximilian University of Munich (Munich, Germany)
kryshevska@gmail.com

Zixuan Liu
doctoral student at the Faculty of Arts and Humanities of the University of Cologne (Cologne, Germany)
liuzixuan97@126.com | liuzx29@mail3.sysu.edu.cn

Anthony Longo
doctoral researcher at the Department of Philosophy of the University of Antwerp (Antwerp, Belgium)
anthony.longo@uantwerpen.be

Gintautas Mažeikis
professor at the Department of Philosophy of the Vytautas Magnus University (Kaunas, Lithuania)
gintautas.mazeikis@vdu.lt

535

Daniel Neumann

research associate at the Department of Philosophy of the University of Klagenfurt (Klagenfurt, Austria)

daniel.neumann@aau.at

Daniele Nuccilli

research associate at the University of Rome "Tor Vergata"

daniele.nuccilli86@gmail.com

Žarko Paić

professor at the Faculty of Textile Technology of the University of Zagreb (Zagreb, Croatia)

zarko.paic@ttf.unizg.hr

Silvia Pierosara

associate professor and researcher at the Department of Humanities of the University of Macerata (Macerata, Italy)

silvia.pierosara@libero.it | s.pierosara@unimc.it

Fabián Portillo Palma

Ph.D. student at the Faculty of Philosophy of the University of Seville (Seville, Spain)

fabialmachar@outlook.com

Dragan Prole

professor at the Department of Philosophy of the Faculty of Philosophy at the University of Novi Sad (Novi Sad, Serbia)

proledragan@ff.uns.ac.rs

Iaan Reynolds

assistant professor at the Department of Philosophy and Humanities of the Utah Valley University (Orem, UT; USA)

iaan.reynolds@gmail.com

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Marco Russo

associate professor at the Department of Cultural Heritage Sciences of the University of Salerno (Salerno, Italy)

mrusso@unisa.it

Max Schaefer

lecturer at the Department of Philosophy of the University of Prince Edward Island (Charlottetown, Prince Edward Island; Canada)

mschaefer@upei.ca | maxschaefer.khora@gmail.com

Evgeniya Shestova

research fellow and associate professor at the Russian State University for the Humanities (Moscow, Russia)

eschestowa@gmail.com

Nerijus Stasiulis

associate professor at the Vilnius Gediminas Technical University (Vilnius, Lithuania)

nerijus.stasiulis@vilniustech.lt

Jan Strassheim

postdoctoral researcher at the Institute of Philosophy of the University of Hildesheim (Hildesheim, Germany)

strassheim@uni-hildesheim.de

Antonia Veitschegger

Ph.D. candidate and research assistant at the Department of Philosophy of the University of Graz (Graz, Austria)

antonia.veitschegger@uni-graz.at

Dario Vuger
curator at the Museum of Fine Arts Osijek (Osijek, Croatia)
dvuger@gmail.com

Michal Zvarík
lecturer at the Faculty of Philosophy and Arts of the Trnava University (Trnava, Slovakia)
zvarik.michal@gmail.com

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