

PATOČKA'S TRANSFORMATION OF PHENOMENOLOGY

JAMES MENSCH

Abstract

At first glance the conjunction of phenomenology and practice seems to be a contradiction in terms. Husserl's phenomenology is informed by the exercise of the epoché, where we suspend every thesis that we have regarding the natural world. The result, Husserl declares, is that the epoché “*utterly closes off for me every judgment about spatiotemporal existence.*” Its focus is not on such existence, but on the evidence we have for it. Does this mean that phenomenology is forever shut off from the realm of praxis – that it cannot concern itself with the ethical and political issues that confront us? For Patočka, this conclusion fails to take account of the freedom presupposed by the epoché. Such freedom, he writes, is “grounded in our inherent freedom to step back, to dissociate ourselves from entities.” It is not the result of some act of consciousness. It is, rather, our ontological condition, it is “what characterizes humans as such.” If this is true, then the practice of the epoché actually opens up phenomenology to practical questions. If the epoché presupposes our freedom – the freedom that is at issue in such questions – then the epoché also presupposes the engagement – the being-in-the-world – of our praxis. It does not suspend this engagement, but rather discloses it – this, by showing that freedom is the ultimate residuum left by the epoché. The thesis of my paper is that this insight allows Patočka to transform Husserlian phenomenology. In his hands, phenomenology conjoins the epistemological with the practical by seeing them both in terms of the freedom definitive of us. By examining what Patočka calls “the motion of human existence,” I delineate the nature of this transformation.

Philosophically and personally, Jan Patočka left a double legacy. Philosophically, he is known for his advocating a new version of phenomenology. In traditional Husserlian phenomenology, Patočka writes, “[t]he appearing of a being is traced back to the subjective (to the ego, experience, representation, thought) as the ulti-

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mate basis of its elucidation.”¹ In Patočka’s view, however, appearing as such is the ultimate basis. It “is, in itself, something completely original.” By this, he means that “manifesting in itself, in that which makes it manifesting, is not reducible, cannot be converted into anything that manifests itself in manifesting.”² It is not some objective material structure. It is also not the structure of subjectivity. Both exist and both can show themselves. But “showing itself is not any of these things that show themselves, whether it is a psychic or physical object.”³ In fact, if such showing is “the ultimate basis,” then we must, Patočka writes, “take the subject, like everything else, to be a ‘result’ of appearing. Its presence results from the same ‘apriori rules of appearing’ as govern other things.”⁴ In Patočka’s view, then, phenomenology’s focus is not on subjectivity but on appearing as such.

Personally, Patočka’s legacy is political. He is known for his actions as a spokesman for the Charter 77 movement, which affirmed the priority of human rights. It was in defense of such rights that he died after an eleven-hour police interrogation on March 13, 1977.⁵ Such an end was not unexpected. The Charter 77 document issued on January 13th spoke of a need to accept “a certain risk” out of “respect for what is higher in humans.”⁶ By March 8th, this risk was clear. In a document issued on this date, Patočka asserted “that there are things for which it is worthwhile to suffer,” namely, “those which make life worthwhile.” Without them, “all our arts, literature, and culture become mere trades leading only from the desk to the pay office and back.”⁷ His reference is to our human rights. It is because they are essential to our humanity that it is worthwhile suffering for them. Confronting them, we encounter a moral imperative.⁸ Here, the legacy is one of praxis, of political engagement.

The question is: How do we conjoin these different legacies? Does Patočka’s personal engagement follow from his philosophical position or are they simply two disparate elements? In my book and two previous articles, I made the argument that the connection involved Patočka’s conception of “care for the soul.” “Soul,” for Patočka, does not refer to the Husserlian (or Cartesian) subject, but rather to the “motion of

¹ Patočka Jan, “Corps, possibilités, monde, champ d’apparation”, in Patočka J., *Papiers Phénoménologiques*, Grenoble, Jérôme Millon, 1995, p. 127. All translations from French in this article are my own.

² Patočka Jan, *Plato and Europe*, Stanford, Stanford University Press, 2002, p. 24.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 22.

⁴ Patočka Jan, “Corps, possibilités, monde, champ d’apparation”, *op. cit.*, p. 127.

⁵ See Kohák Erazim, *Jan Patočka. Philosophy and Selective Writings*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1989, p. 3.

⁶ Patočka Jan, “The Obligation to Resist Injustice”, in Kohák Erazim, *Jan Patočka, Philosophy and Selective Writings, op. cit.*, p. 343.

⁷ Patočka Jan, “What We Can and Cannot Expect from Charta 77”, in Kohák Erazim, *Jan Patočka. Philosophy and Selective Writings, op. cit.*, p. 346.

⁸ See Patočka Jan, “The Obligation to Resist Injustice”, *op. cit.*, p. 341.

existence” through which we actualize our being-in-the-world. To defend our human and political rights is to preserve the motions – those involving childhood, the world of work, and our social and political engagements – that are essential to human flourishing.⁹ In this article, I am going to focus on a different path. I will argue that the fundamental character of human rights is inherently linked to the ultimate character of appearing as such. Both are to be understood in terms of Patočka’s transformation of phenomenology. This is a transformation that conjoins the theoretical with the practical by seeing them in terms of the freedom definitive of humanity.

Practical Philosophy and the Freedom of the Epoché

Aristotle, in his description of practical wisdom or *phronesis* (φρόνησις) gives us the clearest definition of practical philosophy. The praxis aimed at in such wisdom is not a *technē*. It is not a system of crafts and rules directed at making a product. Its focus is on action itself, i.e., on how we should act. In ethics, its inquiries concern the actions that are most suited to realizing our individual and collective potentialities. In politics, they concern how we should govern ourselves. In economics they raise the question of how best to organize the system of exchange of goods and services that our interdependent nature requires. The aim of all these inquiries is practical rather than theoretical, since at issue is: what should we do? The focus of this question is on the future. As Aristotle notes, we do not deliberate about what is past or what is always the case. We only do so with respect “to the future and to what is possible.”¹⁰ This means that practical wisdom is distinct from *epistemē* (ἐπιστήμη) or knowledge in the strong sense. Such knowledge concerns what “cannot be otherwise than it is.”¹¹ As such, it is teachable. We can pass it on without fear of its having changed since we learnt it. Thus, we can teach what is always the case – for example, a law of nature – or what is past, for example, the winner of a battle. These are items that can be known. But the future, given that it

⁹ See Mensch James, “Patočka’s Conception of the Subject of Human Rights”, in *Idealistic Studies*, 41, 1–2, Spring & Summer, 2011, pp. 1–10; Mensch James, “Caring for the Asubjective Soul”, in Tava Francesco, Meacham Darian (eds.), *Thinking After Europe. Jan Patočka and Politics*, London/New York, Roman and Littlefield International, 2016, pp. 117–131; and Mensch James, *Patočka’s Asubjective Phenomenology: Toward a New Concept of Human Rights*, Würzburg, Königshausen & Neumann, Orbis Phaenomenologicus: Studien 38, 2016, pp. 130–157. Edward Findlay also draws the connection between care of the soul and the motion of our existence. See Findlay Edward, *Caring for the Soul in a Postmodern Age. Politics and Phenomenology in the Thought of Jan Patočka*, Albany, SUNY Press, 2002, p. 159. His approach, however, is different than my own.

¹⁰ Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1139b 8, New York, Macmillan, 1962, p. 149.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 1139b 20, p. 150.

does not yet exist, exists only as a subject for deliberation. At issue in such practical deliberation is our conduct. We deliberate concerning our conduct and, hence, the future that we choose through acting to actualize.

Can phenomenology engage in such deliberation? Can it focus on the practical aspects of our lives? For Husserlian phenomenology, the practice of the epoché seems to prevent this. When we perform the epoché, we suspend every thesis we have regarding the natural world. This means that we “‘put it out of action,’ we ‘exclude it,’ we ‘bracket it.’”¹² The result, Husserl declares, is that the epoché “*completely closes off for me every judgment about spatiotemporal existence.*”¹³ Its focus is not on such existence, but on the *evidence* we have for it. Its endeavor is epistemological rather than practical. Does this mean that phenomenology is forever shut off from the realm of praxis – that it cannot concern itself with the ethical and political issues that confront us? For Patočka, this conclusion holds only if we accept Husserl’s limitation of the epoché. Husserl writes that were the epoché to have a universal application, “there would not remain any area for unmodified [non-bracketed] judgments.” Given this, “the method of bracketing” must be “definitely restricted.”¹⁴ It cannot apply to the consciousness engaging in the epoché. If it did, then all judgments concerning its contents would also be suspended.¹⁵ At this point, even the epistemological task of examining the evidence for our judgments would have to be abandoned.

What this argument fails to grasp, according to Patočka, is the freedom presupposed by the epoché. In attempting to answer how the epoché is possible, Husserl writes that “the attempt to doubt everything pertains to the realm of our *perfect freedom.*”¹⁶ This means that “we can with complete freedom employ the epoché on every thesis,” setting it “out of action” – i.e., suspending our belief in it.¹⁷ Such statements point to the fact that freedom is not a thesis of consciousness; it is not something that the epoché can bracket. It is rather something inherent in the epoché. As Patočka expresses this, Husserl, in proposing the epoché, “is far from suspecting that the step of the epoché is not a negation, but rather more negative than any negation, that it contains the negative, the not in the *non*-use, in the

¹² Husserl Edmund, *Ideen zu einer reinen Phänomenologie und phänomenologischen Philosophie. Erstes Buch*, The Hague, Martinus Nijhoff, Husserliana: Gesammelte Werke 3/2, 1976, p. 63. All translations from German in this article are my own.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 65.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵ For Husserl, the restriction of the epoché, thus, leaves us with “‘pure experiences,’ ‘pure consciousness’ with its pure ‘correlates of consciousness’ and, on the other hand, its ‘pure ego’” (*ibid.*, p. 67).

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 62.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 64.

dis-connection” of a thesis.¹⁸ This means that its use implies the “unique freedom of humans with regard to entities.”¹⁹ Such freedom manifests “the negative character of a distance, of a remove” from entities.²⁰ The epoché, Patočka claims, does not create such a remove. Rather “the act of the epoché, taken as ‘a step back from the totality of entities,’ is “grounded in our inherent freedom to step back, to dissociate ourselves from entities.”²¹ Patočka’s point is that such freedom is not some act of consciousness.²² It is, rather, our ontological condition. Freedom is “what characterizes humans as such.”²³ Granting this, the practice of the epoché actually opens up phenomenology to praxis. If the epoché presupposes our freedom – the freedom that is at issue in praxis – then the epoché cannot suspend the engagement – the being-in-the-world – of such praxis. This engagement must, in other words, remain as a residuum of the epoché.²⁴

Pragmatic Disclosure

Given the above, we have to say that Husserl’s question – the question of the evidence for our judgments – cannot be abstracted from the question of our engagement with the world.²⁵ Concretely, this means that such engagement is disclo-

¹⁸ Patočka Jan, “Die Gefahren der Technisierung in der Wissenschaft bei Edmund Husserl und das Wesen der Technik als Gefahr bei Martin Heidegger”, in Patočka J., *Die Bewegung der menschlichen Existenz*, Stuttgart, Klett-Cotta, *Ausgewählte Schriften IV: Phänomenologische Schriften II*, 1991, p. 346.

¹⁹ Patočka Jan, “Die Gefahren der Technisierung...”, *op. cit.*, p. 347.

²⁰ Patočka Jan, “Negative Platonism”, in Kohák Erazim, *Jan Patočka. Philosophy and Selective Writings*, *op. cit.*, p. 203.

²¹ Patočka Jan, “Die Gefahren der Technisierung...”, *op. cit.*, p. 347.

²² *Ibid.*

²³ Patočka Jan, “Die Gefahren der Technisierung...”, *op. cit.*, p. 346.

²⁴ Here, I disagree with Bruce Bégout. For him, when we fail to follow Husserl in restricting the epoché, we wind up with a “decapitated phenomenology.” He writes, “C’est en ce sens-là que la ‘phénoménologie asubjective’ est d’une certaine manière une phénoménologie décapitée. Coupant la tête du sujet percevant et philosopant, qu’elle associe toujours sans nuance à l’épouvantail cartésien ou husserlien, elle ne prend jamais en considération les moyens philosophiques de son propre discours, ni de ses propres conditions d’effectuation, mais nous projette d’emblée dans l’origine sans nous expliquer comme elle fait, et sans pouvoir, chose plus grave, justifier à quel type de connaissance (perceptive, logique, conceptuelle) ses affirmations se réfèrent” (Bégout Bruce, “La phénoménologie décapitée? Perspectives et difficultés de la phénoménologie asubjective de Jan Patočka”, in *Chiasmi International*, 4, 2002, p. 404). For Patočka, however, the result is actually the self as practically engaged.

²⁵ This includes an engagement with our historical being and responsibilities. Ivan Blecha traces Patočka’s political engagement to this. He writes: “Es handelt sich schon nicht mehr um das Ethos der exakten Forschung, sondern um das Ethos der Mitverantwortung für die historische Gestalt der Welt (...) Patočkas persönliche zivile Engagiertheit ist dann der faktische Inhalt dieser ethischen Maxime (...)” (Blecha Ivan, “Intentionalität in der asubjektiven Phänomenologie”, in Bloss Jochen,

sive, is a source of evidence. Heidegger's adoption of this position is well known. Because of its freedom, human existence – Dasein – “is care.”²⁶ This means that “Dasein exists as an entity for whom, in its very being, such being is an issue.”²⁷ It has to freely choose what it will do and, as a consequence, the being that it will be as the author of its actions. As Heidegger expresses this: “[The statement] ‘The Dasein is occupied with its own being’ means more precisely: it is occupied with its *ability* to be. As existent, the Dasein is free for specific possibilities of its own self. It is its own most peculiar able-to-be.”²⁸ Now, in realizing its choices, it does not just exhibit its own possibilities, it also exhibits the world in which it acts. Concretely, this means that its projects disclose the things it employs in their “what is it for” and “in-order-to.”²⁹ Thus, Heidegger writes, “The wood is a forest of timber, the mountain a quarry of rock; the river is water-power, the wind is wind ‘in the sails.’”³⁰ Our “circumspective concern” focuses on the uses which we can put the forest, mountain, river, and wind to. For example, it is because we want to sail across a lake that the wind exhibits itself as “wind in the sails.” As we gain more skill in making our way in the world, the world itself becomes more practically meaningful. We “understand” it in the sense of knowing the purposes of its elements. According to Heidegger, “interpretation,” defined as the “considering (...) of something as something” articulates this understanding. It makes explicit the purposes of the objects I encounter. In Heidegger's words, interpretation “appresents the what-it-is-for of a thing and so brings out the reference of the ‘in-order-to,’” i.e., its use in a particular project.³¹ As a result, the world becomes articulated in the evidence it provides us.

The Ontological Difference and the Question of Appearing as Such

Heidegger thus brings us to a position where we can say that phenomenology is the study of the evidence provided by our freely chosen practical engagements.

Strózewski Władysław, Zumr Josef (eds.), *Intentionalität – Werte – Kunst, Husserl – Ingarden – Patočka*, *Beiträge zur gleichnamigen Prager Konferenz vom Mai 1992*, Prague, Filosofia, 1995, pp. 82–83).

²⁶ Heidegger Martin, *Sein und Zeit*, Tübingen, Max Niemeyer, 1968, p. 284.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 406.

²⁸ Heidegger Martin, *The Basic Problems of Phenomenology*, Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 1988, p. 276.

²⁹ See *ibid.*, pp. 164–165.

³⁰ Heidegger Martin, *Sein und Zeit*, *op. cit.*, p. 70.

³¹ Heidegger Martin, *History of the Concept of Time*, Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 1985, p. 261.

The difficulty, for Patočka, is that he does not remain with this position. His conception of the ontological difference between entities and Being positions the latter as ultimately controlling our disclosures. Being does so by successively determining our understanding of entities. Our conception of the “real” – of the Being of entities – guides our disclosures. It privileges some projects over others. It also determines the area of relations that we take as suitable for exhibiting the reality of entities. If, for example, we understand Being as mathematically quantifiable nature, the area of relations will be given by the modern scientific laboratory with its various instruments and procedures. If it is power, then the relations given by the various technologies of power, from the technologies of the financial markets to those of political manipulation, will serve as the frameworks for our disclosures. For Heidegger, each epoch is characterized by a dominant conception of being. Taken as a standard, it informs the epoch’s understanding of the purposes of things.³² Such conceptions, however, conceal the ontological difference. Following them, we understand Being in terms of the entities that we disclose through our standards. The result, Patočka writes, is that “the historically determined person (...) can only view Being as the Being of entities, can only thematize it [in relation to entities]; Being as such, as the origin of light (of the truth, of appearing as such) hides itself from him.”³³

The point of this critique is that, in taking Being as the “origin (...) of appearing as such,” we are no longer engaged in phenomenology. Since Being conceals itself in entities, it cannot itself be an object of phenomenological description. Only entities – the ontic – can be so described. In Patočka’s words: “We must, methodologically, hold fast to the fact that only the ontic can be an object of phenomenological description, for only the ontic can be present, and only what is present can be intuitively grasped. By contrast, the ontological can never be seen. It can only, interpretively, be explicated indirectly; it can never, itself, become present.”³⁴ Given this, the ontological difference, which is *not* a difference between entities, is not a phenomenological concept. It is not intuitively based. The result, then, is that the account of appearing that appeals to the ontological

³² For a list of the philosophical expressions of such standards, see Heidegger Martin “The Onto-theo-logical Constitution of Metaphysics”, in Heidegger Martin, *Identity and Difference*, New York, Harper and Row, 1969, p. 66. Heidegger’s “Vom Wesen der Wahrheit” (in Heidegger Martin, *Wegmarken*, Frankfurt am Main, Vittorio Klostermann, 1967, pp. 79–80) describes the notion of an area of relations or *Bezugsbereich*.

³³ Patočka Jan, “Die Gefahren der Technisierung...”, *op. cit.*, p. 350.

³⁴ Patočka Jan, “Von der Epoché als Ausschaltung”, in Patočka J., *Vom Erscheinen als solchem. Texte aus dem Nachlaß*, Freiburg/München, Verlag Karl Alber, Orbis Phaenomenologicus 2: Quellen 3, 2000, p. 190.

difference appeals to what cannot appear. Instead of being phenomenological, the account must be hermeneutical – i.e., a matter of interpretively explicating our relation to Being.³⁵

The question Patočka faces in his rejection of Heidegger is *how to understand pragmatic disclosure in terms of appearing as such*. Patočka's response to this question is essentially threefold. The first involves his questioning Heidegger's assertion that "Dasein is free for specific possibilities *of its own self*" (italics added). Exercising this freedom, Dasein exhibits itself by projecting as practical goals the possibilities that it finds in itself. In the projects that realize these goals, it actualizes these possibilities thereby disclosing both the world and itself. Is Dasein the origin of such possibilities? Patočka remarks: "Against Heidegger, there is no primary *projection* of possibilities. The world is not the project of [our] liberty, but simply that which makes possible finite freedom."³⁶ The focus, here, is *on the world*, not on the self. Thus, Patočka asserts, "I do not create these possibilities, but the possibilities create me. They come to me from outside, from the world that is a framework where the things show themselves as means and I show myself as the one who realizes the ends served by such means."³⁷ His point is that our freedom to disclose the world is tied to the world's ability to offer us the means for our projects. In his words, "I would not have the possibilities [for disclosing things] if the means for such possibilities, for my goals, did not exist, which means that I could not appear to myself, 'open myself,' understand myself [without such means], just as things could not show themselves, if my action [of disclosing them] did not exist."³⁸ Disclosure here is limited by the world. Such limitation is what makes it a *genuine disclosure* of the world in which Dasein acts. Since the possibilities that it actualizes come from the world, their actualization exhibits this world.

To see this limitation as springing from appearing as such, we must turn to Patočka's second response to our question about the tie between pragmatic disclosure and such appearing. According to Patočka, "[t]he original possibilities (the world) are simply the *field* where the living being exists, the field that is co-original with [this world]."³⁹ As for "my totality of possibilities," this is just "a selection" made from this.⁴⁰ While the former possibilities signify appearing as such, understood as a set of "legalities," the selection designates appearing to

³⁵ See Patočka Jan, "Phänomenologie als Lehre vom Erscheinen als solchem", in Patočka J., *Vom Erscheinen als solchem*, *op. cit.*, pp. 159, 161.

³⁶ Patočka Jan, "Corps, possibilités, monde, champ d'apparation", *op. cit.* p. 122.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 120.

³⁸ *Ibid.*

³⁹ *Ibid.*, p 124.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 123.

me. On the level of appearing as such, we thus have, “the impersonal order of the totality of possibilities, possibilities not pertaining to any being in particular.” On the level of appearing to me, we have “my totality of possibilities as a selection made from the sphere of the first.”⁴¹ Thus, the “impersonal order” of appearing as such involves pure possibility. It forms “a simple field of specific legalities.”⁴² The human totality of possibilities understands these legalities in relation to us, i.e., in terms of our possible experience.⁴³

Patočka’s account of pragmatic disclosure thus differs substantially from Heidegger’s. Both agree that things appear as means – in Patočka’s words, as “the needle for sewing, the thread for threading through the needle, etc.”⁴⁴ But, for Patočka, the possibilities expressed by such means are not, as in Heidegger, traced to Being’s determining a standard of disclosure. Their origin is the world, understood as “the impersonal order of the totality of possibilities.” This is the order of appearing as such. As for appearing to me, this involves my bodily action – my action, example, of using the needle for sewing. Here, as Patočka writes, “[t]here is always, on the one side, the thing as a means.” On the other, there is always “the bodily mediated activity that endows the means with a sense.” As a result, “I understand the things from myself, from my activity, but I understand myself, my activity from the things. There is a mutual mediation.”⁴⁵ It is, in other words, my embodiment – both the senses and the behavior embodiment affords me – that makes a selection from the possibilities of appearing as such so as to bring about appearing for me.⁴⁶ Pragmatic disclosure is related to appearing as such through a selection of the possibilities of the latter.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 123.

⁴² *Ibid.*, p. 126.

⁴³ Guy Deniau ignores this distinction when he writes: “La formalité du discours de la phénoménologie asubjective est celle de la *sécheresse* d’un discours qui porte sur le *rien* du tout de ce qui paraît, c’est-à-dire justement sur l’apparaître *comme tel*, irréductible à ce *qui paraît* ‘objectivement’ ou ‘subjectivement’” (Deniau Guy, “La ‘formalité’ de la phénoménologie asubjective et la ‘mission’ de l’homme”, in Barbaras Renaud (ed.), *Jan Patočka – Phénoménologie asubjective et existence*, Paris/Milano, Mimesis, 2007, p. 79). In fact, the horizontal structure of appearing implies both subjects occupying viewpoints and objects exhibiting themselves to them.

⁴⁴ Patočka Jan, “Leib, Möglichkeiten, Welt, Erscheinungsfeld”, in Patočka J., *Vom Erscheinen als solchem*, *op. cit.*, p. 89.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

⁴⁶ This inclusion of the body in Heidegger’s existential analytic is, according to Renaud Barbaras, Patočka’s original contribution. In Barbaras’ words, “l’originalité de Patočka va consister à rendre compte de la corporéité à partir d’une analyse de l’existence et donc à saisir la corporéité au plan existentiel” (Barbaras Renaud, *Vie et intentionalité*, Paris, Vrin, 2003, p. 96). The contribution, as he also writes, is the insight that Dasein’s realization of its possibilities through pragmatic disclosure involves motion and, hence, embodiment: “si le Dasein est vraiment ses possibilités, il n’a d’effectivité que comme réalisation motrice, ce qui signifie qu’il est essentiellement incarné” (*ibid.*, p. 98).

With this we come to Patočka's third response to our question. It is that there is a "field of self-showing, a field that must have its own definite structure if the thing itself is to present itself and appear."⁴⁷ Pragmatic disclosure, here, is linked to appearing as such insofar as it must embody this structure. Thus, no matter what means we choose for our end – e.g., the hammer for driving in the nail or the needle for sewing – this means, if it is a spatial-temporal object, it must appear perspectively. A similar necessity holds for the horizontal character of experience with its structures of near and far, presence and absence. The objects that we encounter have their internal horizons – the sets of appearances that are required to determine their features ever more closely. They also have their external horizons of appearances that link them together as we move between them. Such horizons are a structural feature required if they are to appear as part of a field of things – and, ultimately, as things that are part of the appearing world.⁴⁸ A crucial element in the structure of appearing is, of course, the subject – understood as that to whom things appear. Thus, things cannot appear perspectively except as related to a definite viewpoint. The same holds for the horizontal structures of appearing. Given that these structures consist of connected sets of perspectively ordered appearances, they also require a subject occupying a viewpoint. Patočka asserts that this requirement for a subject is "a fundamental law of appearing," according to which "there is always the duality between what appears and the one to whom this appearing appears." This means that "appearing is appearing only in this duality."⁴⁹ As Patočka also writes, "appearing requires man, he is appearing's *destination*."⁵⁰

⁴⁷ Patočka takes this field as "the authentic discovery of the *Logical Investigations*". See Patočka Jan, "Der Subjektivismus der Husserlschen und die Möglichkeit einer 'asubjektiven' Phänomenologie", in Patočka J., *Die Bewegung der menschlichen Existenz*, *op. cit.*, p. 274.

⁴⁸ As Husserl writes in this regard, "The individual – relative to consciousness – is nothing for itself; perception of a thing is its perception in a *perceptual field*. And just as the individual thing has a sense in perception only through an open horizon of 'possible perceptions,' (...) so once again the thing has a horizon: an 'external horizon' in relation to the 'internal'; it has this precisely as a thing of a *field of things*; and this finally points to the totality, 'the world as a perceptual world'" (Husserl Edmund, *Die Krisis der Europäischen Wissenschaften und die transzendente Phänomenologie*, The Hague, Martinus Nijhoff, Husserliana: Gesammelte Werke 6, 1962, p. 165).

⁴⁹ Patočka Jan, "Corps, possibilités, monde, champ d'apparition", *op. cit.* p. 127. What we confront here is, in fact, a "world-structure," one embracing both things and subjects. In Patočka's words, "Und da dies Erscheinen von der Präsenz der Dinge und der Welt im Original nicht abzutrennen ist, ziehen wir es vor, das Erscheinen als eine Dinge und Subjekt umspannende und umfassende Struktur aufzufassen. Die einzige Dinge und Subjekte umfassende Struktur ist aber die Welt selbst, und deshalb möchten wir sie als Weltstruktur aufgefaßt wissen" (Patočka Jan, "Epoché und Reduktion", *op. cit.*, p. 123).

⁵⁰ "L'homme est requis dans l'apparition: il est le destinataire de l'apparition" (Patočka Jan, "Corps, possibilités, monde, champ d'apparition", *op. cit.*, p. 122). Garido, here, opposes Patočka. In his view, appearing "as such" does not require a subject occupying a viewpoint. He writes, "Only from

Care For Appearing

When we recall Patočka's assertion that freedom is "what characterizes humans as such," this requirement becomes more than a demand for a passive point of view. Appearing, in requiring man, requires his freedom. Freedom, in other words, is a structural component of appearing as such. What differentiates the human totality of possibilities of appearing from "the impersonal order of the totality of possibilities" is what we *choose* to disclose through our actions. The "selection" that is necessary for a coherent, appearing world is, in other words, not simply dependent on our embodiment – i.e., on the senses and abilities that embodiment affords. It also requires our choices in employing these. Such choices, thus, signify our responsibility as "appearing's destination." In our freedom, we bear a responsibility for the appearing of a definite world.

This point can be put in terms of Patočka's transformation of Heidegger's conception of care – the care, which Heidegger claims, is *Dasein*. In Heidegger's account, *Dasein*'s actions are its own responsibility. It has to choose what it will do and, as a consequence, what it will be as it realizes the possibilities that it finds in itself. Care, here, is care for its own being. *Dasein* is responsible for this. For Patočka, by contrast, the possibilities at issue are not *Dasein*'s, but those of the world. In realizing them, *Dasein* exhibits the world; it makes it appear. In this case, responsibility is responsibility for such appearing. This is the object of our care. In Patočka's words, it becomes the "care that follows from the proximity of man to manifesting, to the phenomenon as such, the manifesting of the world in its whole, that occurs within man, with man" as he confronts his own freedom.⁵¹

the 'point of view' of the ego is there actually a background for appearing. The world (...) is then being considered as a 'surrounding' world. To describe appearing as world misses the 'as such,' and runs the risk of becoming another form of phenomenological subjectivism" (Garrido Juan Manuel, "Appearing as Such' in Patočka's A-Subjective Phenomenology", in *Philosophy Today*, 51, 2, 2007, p. 127). This means that "[d]isconnected, released from subjectivity, the world loses, indeed, its 'surrounding' and 'horizontal' characters. The world itself becomes considered as such (...) regardless of any particular 'point of reference' (the ego) (...) There is no longer back- or foreground" (*ibid.*). The reference, here, seems to be to the world, understood as "the impersonal order of the totality of possibilities." If, however, such possibilities are possibilities of appearing, they would seem to involve the subject, understood as that to whom things appear. As Merleau-Ponty points out, consciousness *essentially* has a horizontal structure. To be conscious is to grasp the object from a definite point of view, in relation to which there is, by definition, a foreground and a background horizontally linked. See Merleau-Ponty Maurice, *Phenomenology of Perception*, London, Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1962, p. 71.

⁵¹ Patočka Jan, *Plato and Europe*, *op. cit.*, p. 27. For Patočka, such care is his transformation of the ancient "care for the soul!"

To make this concrete, we have to turn to Patočka's conception of the motion of our existence. This motion consists of the layered movements through which we exist and disclose the world. The first of these is the "instinctive-affective movement" that characterizes our childhood.⁵² It reveals the world as a sheltering, affective place. The child's world, Patočka writes, "is its parents, those who take care of it."⁵³ The child discloses the possibilities of this world as it moves to integrate itself into the human community. Doing so, it "assimilates the outside world without which we could not live."⁵⁴ The second movement is the "movement carried out in the region of human work."⁵⁵ It is the motion of the pragmatic disclosure of things. In Patočka's words, it "is concerned only with things, sees only things, albeit purely in their utensility and not in their independence." It knows them only in terms of their use values. For it, "there are always only networks of instrumental references, every 'here' serving merely to refer beyond itself, to the connections – both personal and object-connections – of the undertaking."⁵⁶ The third movement, by contrast, concerns itself with praxis in the Aristotelian sense. Like praxis, its focus is on action itself: at issue is what we should do. We are concerned with the future that will appear if we choose a certain course of action. This future is not, as in Heidegger, considered in terms of the possibilities of our given situation, possibilities that we project forward as goals. Rather, as Patočka writes: "The accent on the future requires, on the contrary, that the *already* existent cease to be regarded as the decisive instance of possibilities."⁵⁷ The point is not to let them "conceal the essential," which is our action of realizing them. In this motion, I confront my responsibility not just for realizing and, hence, manifesting these possibilities. I also confront myself – namely my "possibility either to disperse and lose myself in particulars or to find and realize myself in my properly human nature."⁵⁸ Thus, in the third movement, we break our "bondage to the particular" and face our freedom with regard to appearing.⁵⁹ Our not losing ourselves in particulars – our resistance to such dispersion – is one with our taking responsibility for the appearing of our world. Care for appearing assumes such responsibility.

⁵² Patočka Jan, *Body, Community, Language, World*, Chicago, Open Court Publishing, 1998, p. 148.

⁵³ Patočka Jan, "Nachwort", in Patočka J., *Die natürliche Welt als philosophisches Problem*, Stuttgart, Klett-Cotta, *Ausgewählte Schriften III: Phänomenologische Schriften I*, 1990, pp. 248–249.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 249. Patočka also calls it "the movement of our instinctive life." This is the life we share with animals. See Patočka Jan, "Leçons sur la corporéité", in Patočka J., *Papiers Phénoménologiques*, Grenoble, Jérôme Millon, 1995, p. 108.

⁵⁵ Patočka Jan, *Body, Community, Language, World*, *op. cit.*, p. 148.

⁵⁶ Patočka Jan, "Nachwort", *op. cit.*, p. 256.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 246.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

Such responsibility embraces all the movements by which we actualize our being in the world. Thus, parents and caregivers are responsible for the growth and development of children. Their responsibility for appearing concerns the instinctive, affective world that the child brings to presence. Failure, here, can damage the development of the human potentialities that are built upon this world. The political, practical consequences of such care are reflected in the rights of the child to proper nourishment, medical care (vaccinations, etc.), and education as enacted in social legislation. Similar assertions can be made about the second motion. In the world of work, we realize our social existence. We exist as embodying our social and professional roles. Care for the appearing as care for this motion involves caring for the workplace environment. As such, it involves all the advances in labor legislation that have taken place in the last 150 years. From the shortening of the work week to the introduction of rules regarding workplace safety, such advances aim at humanizing our working environment. This involves not just the stipulation of minimum “living wages,” which Adam Smith, among others, advocated. It also involves our attempts to provide full employment. The political, social expression of care, here, is that of workers’ rights.

As for the third layer of the movement of our existence, this may be called the movement of “problematization.” Its exemplary figure is Socrates, whose motion was that of constantly questioning the assumptions of his time. The problematization that such questioning occasions is, Patočka writes, “something fundamentally different from negation.” Rather than being “a subjective caprice” or “something arbitrary,” the questioning that problematizes “is something founded on the deepest basis of our life, only *here* do we stand our ground,” rather than on the certainties that we previously assumed.⁶⁰ This ground is our own freedom. Problematization demands that we take responsibility for it, that we acknowledge that the certainties that we assume are not something fixed, but are, in part, the result of our choices. This includes our certainties regarding the rearing of children, the workplace environment, and the political process by which we act to shape these levels of the motion of our existence.

The Transformation of Phenomenology

The transformation that Patočka has worked on phenomenology should by now be clear. Theoretically, he has shifted its focus from subjectivity to appearing

⁶⁰ Patočka Jan, “The Spiritual Person and the Intellectual”, in Patočka J., *Living in Problematicity*, Prague, OIKOYMENH, 2007, p. 60.

qua appearing. The study of the latter leads to the human freedom that is a structural component of appearing as such. It thus leads to our responsibility for appearing and to questions of praxis. Such questions do not limit themselves to the means for reaching given ends. They also concern these ends themselves. To raise them is to realize that our goals are not set in stone. They are not “the decisive instance of possibilities.” They exist through our choices. Recognizing this, we also confront what Patočka calls “the plasticity of reality.”⁶¹ Such plasticity signifies that the possibilities of appearing as such – those of the world – are not limited to those we have actualized. Thus, the questioning that praxis engages in makes problematic the certainties that have guided our lives. There is here, in Patočka’s words, “a shaking of what at first and for the most part is taken for being in naïve everydayness, a collapse of its apparent meaning.”⁶² Such questioning is the response that is called for in confronting the excessive quality of appearing as such – its character of exceeding our ability to actualize all the possibilities that it offers. Appearing as such, here, demands freedom since the openness of freedom corresponds to the openness of the possibilities of appearing as such. Both are open, and yet both are constrained by the structural necessities of appearing.

Given this, our responsibility for appearing is also a responsibility for our freedom. Only when the openness of freedom is preserved do we fulfill our duty to appearing as such. Patočka’s political commitments follow from this. He writes, “political life in its original and primordial form is nothing other than active freedom itself.” It is a life “from freedom for freedom.”⁶³ It is a life *from* freedom since it proceeds from the openness of political discourse. Here, the views of one side are called into question by the other. Political life presupposes this questioning. It exists in the clash of opinions, in the differing interpretations of a given situation and in the opposing views on how to handle it. The debates in which these are aired exhibit the openness of the future, since the future deliberated on depends on the choice of action to be engaged in. As such, it exhibits the public presence of the freedom from which political life lives. This is a life *for* freedom insofar as beyond all the special issues it debates, it maintains itself through such openness. It is for freedom insofar as it wills its own continuance.

Patočka’s work for political rights follows from this. Political freedom requires the rights to freely assemble, discuss, publish, petition and so on. Without them, the third motion of our existence has no public presence. Patočka thought that

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, p. 66.

⁶² Patočka Jan, *Heretical Essays in the Philosophy of History*, Chicago, Open Court Publishing, 1996, p. 49.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, p. 142.

such rights were worth dying for since, in the words of a Charter 77 document, they assured “the humanity of humans.”⁶⁴ In the words of an earlier text, what they assure is “the Idea of Man,” which “is the idea of human freedom.”⁶⁵ That such freedom is inherent in appearing as such makes Patočka’s political commitments an implicit part of his commitment to phenomenology.

James Mensch is Professor of Philosophy at Charles University, Faculty of Humanities. He is the author of twelve published books, the latest being *Patočka’s A-subjective Phenomenology: Toward a New Concept of Human Rights*, Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 2016.

E-mail: james.mensch@fhs.cuni.cz

⁶⁴ In the words of Charter 77, “The idea of human rights is nothing other than the conviction that even states, even society as a whole, are subject to the sovereignty of moral sentiment: that they recognize something unconditional that is higher than they are, something that is binding even on them, sacred, inviolable.” (Patočka Jan, “The Obligation to Resist Injustice”, *op. cit.*, p. 341). This unconditionality comes from the absolute priority of the moral standpoint. For the Charter, “the point of morality is to assure, not the functioning of society, but the humanity of humans. Humans do not invent morality arbitrarily to suit their needs, wishes, inclinations, and aspirations. Quite the contrary, it is morality that defines what being human means.” (*ibid.*)

⁶⁵ The extended quote, here, is: “the Idea of Man is essentially continuously the same, only the historical situation in which it is realized changes, only the main front against which the Idea resists is always different. The Idea is human freedom; the Idea of Man is the idea of human freedom” (Patočka Jan, “Ideology and Life in the Idea”, in Patočka J., *Living in Problematicity*, *op. cit.*, p. 47). The text is from 1946, but Patočka never changed this fundamental position.