

## THE RELEVANCE OF JAN PATOČKA'S PHENOMENOLOGY IN QUESTIONS OF SCIENCE AND RELIGION

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*To Krzysztof Sitarz*

**ABSTRACT:** Jan Patočka's attempt of an «a-subjective» phenomenology represents a complex thesis which has in itself many potentialities of which Patočka himself was not probably aware. In this article we enumerate some problems to which Patočka's thought can give us a new insight. Firstly we make a brief description of the fundamental of his «a-subjective» phenomenology. Secondly and finally, we indicate four problems concerning science and religion to which Patočka's theses are relevant. These problems are the epistemic value of scientific research, the mind-body problem, the possibility of a religious revelation and the reasonability of theism and atheism. In some of these problems we indicate references to authors who have already dealt with the topic for further information. Our aim is to invite scholars to take into account the thought of Jan Patočka, so that they will deepen in the questions we present here.

**KEY WORDS:** Jan Patočka, phenomenology, science, religion, mind-body problem, revelation, theism and atheism.

### *La relevancia de la fenomenología de Jan Patočka en cuestiones de ciencia y religión*

**RESUMEN:** El intento de Jan Patočka de una fenomenología «a-subjetiva» constituye una propuesta compleja que tiene muchas potencialidades de las que el mismo Patočka probablemente no era consciente. En este artículo enumeramos algunos problemas para los cuales Jan Patočka puede darnos una nueva perspectiva. En primer lugar, hacemos una sucinta descripción de los aspectos fundamentales de su fenomenología «a-subjetiva». En segundo y último lugar, indicamos cuatro problemas para los que el pensamiento de Jan Patočka es relevante. Estos problemas son los del valor epistémico de la investigación científica, el problema mente-cuerpo, la posibilidad de una revelación religiosa y la racionalidad del teísmo y el ateísmo. En algunos de estos problemas indicamos referencias a autores que han trabajado ya estos temas para obtener mayor información. Nuestro objetivo es invitar a los estudiosos a tener en cuenta el pensamiento de Jan Patočka y profundicen en las cuestiones que aquí presentamos.

**PALABRAS CLAVE:** Jan Patočka, fenomenología, ciencia, religión, problema mente-cuerpo, revelación, teísmo y ateísmo.

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## INTRODUCTION

In the last years, Patočka's thought has been given its due place in philosophical and political discussions, and he has been acknowledged as one of the great thinkers of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Within phenomenological circles, his idea of an «asubjective» phenomenology and his theory of the movements of existence are closely and thoroughly studied. Likewise, his ethical and political thought has been attentively studied, in so far as it can give ideas about how to propose ideals for public life in increasingly pluralistic societies. Patočka's relevance lies also in that his thought is a philosophy of resistance to the oppressor, where intellectual and vital quest for the truth defies the established powers. Patočka's thought is also a praxis of resistance to oppression. Patočka in fact was an intellectual and a moral example for Czech dissidents, especially for Václav Havel, whose ideas are to a good extent inspired in Patočka's thought.

Our aim in this article is to show how Patočka's thought is also relevant in the fields of science and religion, even if Patočka himself did not deal with these topics. However, the complexity of his thought allows us to find in him some clues for contemporary debates on issues of science and religion. With this, we also show one of the best characteristics of philosophical theories, namely that they open new possibilities which could even be unknown to the one who first thought them.

This article consists of two parts. The first one consists of a basic presentation of Patočka's philosophy in the points which are essential to the aims of this article. We will not deal then with his philosophy of history and the ethical consequences of his thought. Instead, we will speak of Patočka's asubjective phenomenology and his conception of the world and human existence in it. In the second part we will show how Patočka's thought can be used in some scientific and religious issues such as the mind-body problem, the value of scientific research or the problems of a theistic (or atheistic) worldview.

## 1. PATOČKA'S CRITIQUE OF TRANSCENDENTAL PHENOMENOLOGY AND «ASUBJECTIVE» PHENOMENOLOGY

### 1.1. *The critique of transcendental phenomenology*

As we have indicated, Patočka accepts that the phenomenological method is the best indicated to carry out a radical philosophical research. However, Patočka does not fully accept Husserl's understanding of phenomenology as a sort of idealism. This idealism claimed to take exact account of knowledge and rationality, and with it the very disclosure of being, by describing the process of «Constitution» of the world to consciousness.

This idealism is distinct from other versions in that the world is not simply taken as a creation of the mind. The world and its objects do appear as having their own entity, and neatly distinct from consciousness, to which notwithstanding they appear. This consciousness is also transcendental intersubjectivity, as Husserl says in the fifth of his *Cartesian Meditations*. Intersubjectivity is a phenomenological datum, the world can only appear within horizons shared by the different conscious subjects, in such a way that the world is a common world.

Patočka knows well that transcendental phenomenology is not equivalent to classic idealism, and even less to solipsism. Nevertheless Patočka, along with many of Husserl's disciples, thinks that this idealism does not correspond to the original impulse of

phenomenology. Patočka considers that if we hold to the original intention, that is to say, to the fundamental principle of taking what is given in exactly the measure that it is given<sup>2</sup>, then we cannot defend an idealistic philosophy, however different from other idealisms it may be. Patočka states that Husserl's phenomenology ends being idealistic because of theoretical presuppositions which cause the introduction of non-phenomenological constructions in the analysis.

According to Patočka, Husserl misses his own discovery of appearing as such. The study of phenomenon discloses the primordial fact of appearing. Before any thought, action or evaluation, something appears to me. However, Husserl assumes that analyzing the phenomenon as such is the analysis of appearing *to me*, to a subject full of contents whose existence and certitude is guaranteed by the self-evidence of the *cogito*. In Husserl, then, the study of the phenomenon is not that of appearing in its originality, but an ontology of subjectivity. With this, we abandon the field of appearing and we confound it with the realm of what appears, repeating the same mistake as Plato and Descartes<sup>3</sup>.

The central point in Patočka's critique is, in our view, the consideration of the subject which is necessarily given in phenomenological analysis. To Husserl, this subject includes all his «acts». Everything that can be related to consciousness, to what is lived, is absolutely given in the analysis of the Cartesian *cogito* in its certitude. On this basis, it can be stated that the phenomenon is ultimately founded on such subjectivity. To Patočka, it is not this «full» subjectivity that is given in phenomenological analysis, but only a «subjective pole» to which appearing is referred but upon which it is not founded<sup>4</sup>. Appearing has its own «entity»<sup>5</sup> and a thorough phenomenological analysis must study it in itself. Patočka criticizes that Husserl keeps the prejudice of the evidence of conscience as a unitarian entity. In his consideration of the first data, Husserl went beyond what was actually given by these data. The problem is not the undoubtfulness of the very act of living, but that along with it, the conscience as a sort of unity encompassing all its «nomenents» is taken for self-evident. This unity is not individual conscience, but transcendental conscience, namely the ultimate horizon to which all that appears is referred. Thus, conscience is taken as a sort of absolute entity to be analysed in reflection, in the realm of the immanent<sup>6</sup>.

<sup>2</sup> This is the «principle of all principles». See *Ideen zu einer reinen Phänomenologie und phänomenologischen philosophie*, Erstes Buch, Husserliana III/1, Den Haag, Martinus Nijhoff, 1976, p. 43.

<sup>3</sup> See JUAN MANUEL GARRIDO, ««Appearing as Such» in Patočka's A-Subjective Phenomenology», in *Philosophy Today*, De Paul University, 51:2 (2007) 121-136. Patočka's critique of husserlian subjectivism can be found in the following essays: JAN PATOČKA, «Der Subjektivismus des Husserlschen und die Möglichkeit einer «asubjektiven» Phänomenologie», and «Der Subjektivismus des Husserlschen und die Forderung einer «asubjektiven» Phänomenologie», in KLAUS NELLEN, JIŘÍ NĚMEC and ILJA SRUBAR (eds.), *Die Bewegung der menschlichen Existenz*, Klett-Cotta, Stuttgart, 1991, pp. 267-285 and 286-309. [Spanish translation: «El subjetivismo de la fenomenología husserliana y la posibilidad de una fenomenología asubjetiva» and «El subjetivismo de la fenomenología husserliana y la exigencia de una fenomenología asubjetiva», in AGUSTÍN SERRANO DE HARO (ed.), *El movimiento de la existencia humana*, translated by Agustín Serrano de Haro and Teresa Padilla, Encuentro, Madrid, 2004, pp. 93-112 and 113-136.]

<sup>4</sup> See for example «[époque et réduction]» in *Papiers Phénoménologiques*, translated by Erika Abrams, Grenoble, Jérôme Millon, 1995, pp. 163-210, especially p. 169. This text must not be confounded with the essay «Epoche und Reduktion» (quoted below, note 8) of which this one is a draft version considerably longer than the final essay.

<sup>5</sup> We write this term between quotation marks to indicate that appearing must not be taken as an entity in the ontological sense, as if it were a real object. As we will see, appearing has to be considered as distinct from what appears, as a non-real sphere though, as we shall see, it discloses the world.

<sup>6</sup> Understood as «what is given by itself», as opposed to simple «the structural elements». This distinction is described in EDMUND HUSSERL, *Die Idee der Phänomenologie. Fünf Vorlesungen*, Meiner, Hamburg, 1986.

In other words, when in Husserl life is affirmed<sup>7</sup> as self-evident, it is not only about the *current act of living*, the present evidence of being alive and conscious, but also all the determinations which we find in our living. They are all taken as equally self-evident, and with this it is also assumed the evidence of the «terrain»: conscience as a Unitarian entity or pre-entity. This is for Patočka a result of the introduction of theoretical theses foreign to the strictly phenomenological research starting from the first data, which proceeds only assuming what can be inferred from those first data.

The subjectivist presupposition prevents Husserl from carrying out the phenomenological *epochè* in a fully radical way<sup>8</sup>. *Épochè* consists of «interrupting» the belief in the real existence of the world and its objects, not eliminating the contents as such, but leaving them in their pure appearing. *Epoche* is not doubting the existence of the world; this belief, which certainly supports everyday life as a basic thesis, simply ceases to be posed, and this in order that all that is present to us can show itself under a different light. With this, a whole new field of research is opened, which is claimed to give account of the most fundamental principles that sustain every science and every knowledge, as well as every act in our life in the world.

Husserl's use of *epochè* is however not radical enough, says Patočka. The «interruption» is not applied to consciousness, understood as a whole unity, a unitarian entity. To Husserl, explains Patočka, if we interrupted the thesis of the existence of consciousness, then there would no longer be an «absolute terrain» from which and on the grounds of which the constitution of the world could be studied with guaranties<sup>9</sup>.

This limitation of *epochè* is due to Husserl's subjectivistic prejudice, which takes subjectivity as absolutely given with all its contents. Thus, phenomenon, referred as it is to subjectivity, is necessarily founded on and «constituted» by it. To be firmly grounded, all the phenomena need to be referred to absolute subjectivity. The phenomenological analysis must, then, clarify how phenomena are founded on subjectivity; it must «redirect», «reduce» them to their subjective foundation. The main aim of phenomenology is, consequently, reduction. Therefore, *epochè* is only a «secondary tool» subordinated to reduction. Otherwise the phenomena (and with them the world) would not be reduced and phenomenology would have no sense at all.

On the contrary, Patočka thinks that *epoche* can be universally and radically applied, and that this does not paralyse philosophical research. Radical *epochè* discloses the pure structure of «appearing as such» and reveal that the true discovery of phenomenology is appearing and not its purported foundation. *epochè*, and not reduction, is the main concept in phenomenology. Furthermore, a radical use of *epoche* leads to a new, and for Patočka more accurate, understanding of existence in the world, of knowledge, and especially, as we will see below, of the configuration of rationality in an always unachieved teleology towards truth, which always remains as a goal.

<sup>7</sup> «Life» is always understood as «conscious life», in the broad sense of being affected and/or referred to an object. This refers to a broad extent of experiences, the ones classically described as those of «the senses» and of «the intellect».

<sup>8</sup> This is the main idea of the text «Epoche und Reduktion» in *Die Bewegung der menschlichen Existenz*, pp. 415-423. (Spanish translation: «Epojé y reducción», in *El movimiento de la existencia humana*, pp. 241-250.)

<sup>9</sup> See *Ibidem*, p. 249.

## 1.2. *The «asubjective» phenomenology of Jan Patočka*

### a) Radical *epochè*, appearing as such and the world

According to Patočka, then, if we use *epochè* without any subordination to other theoretical aims, we find that the analysis of phenomena is no access to any absolute entity or pre-entity, but to the pure appearing of what appears, that is, to appearing as such. *Épochè*, radically considered, leaves us before (or, rather, within) the disclosure of the «space of appearing» in which subjectivity is no longer the absolute terrain to which what appears necessarily refers. Subjectivity is one of the essential moments of the structure of appearing (to whom it appears), the other two being the world and its contents (what appears) and the laws of appearing (how it appears)<sup>10</sup>. In this sphere of appearance, subjectivity is an essential pole, but referred to a world that subjectivity has not at all «founded» or «constituted». The appearing of the world and its objects, as such appearing, is certainly referred to subjectivity, but this subjectivity shows itself as existing in a world to which it belongs<sup>11</sup>:

*«Perhaps the immediacy of the auto-donation of the self is a prejudice and the experience of the self has, like the experience of things, its a priori, an a priori that allows the appearing of the self. Understood this way, epochè is not the access to any entity or pre-entity, whether worldly or not, but precisely for this reason it is perhaps the access to appearing instead of [the access] to what appears, that is to say, to appearing itself. Thanks to the universality of epochè it is also clear that, as well as the self is the condition of possibility of the appearing of the worldly, the world as a proto-horizon (and not as a totality of realities) represents the condition of possibility for the appearing of the self»<sup>12</sup>.*

Liberated, then, from subjectivist prejudice, Patočka thinks that *epochè* can and must be universally used, and this makes us study the subject as constituted within a world in which the subject appears as rooted. At the same time, this subjectivity rooted in the world lives in a natural world, the world of everyday life, shared with others. Therefore, it can be said that radical *epochè* leads us to affirm a quite particular way of being in the world. This particular way consists of being rooted in the world as an apriori to subjectivity, and, at the same time, existing in a natural world that appears to a subjective horizon.

Once we have indicated the general pattern of how Patočka, to our understanding, presents human existence in the world, we will see in more detail how his theses are developed. We are first going to deal with the appearance of the world as a previous totality, and then we will explain the configuration of the natural world according to Patočka<sup>13</sup>. In the description of Patočka's theory of the configuration of the natural world,

<sup>10</sup> See ANA CECILIA SANTOS, «Die Lehre des Erscheinens bei Jan Patočka: drei Probleme», in *Studia Phaenomenologica. Romanian Journal for Phenomenology* VII (2007) pp. 303-329, especially the pp. 304 and 310-14.

<sup>11</sup> A problem in Patočka's conceptualization is the «double status» of subjectivity as a pole of appearing as such, to which the world is referred, and at the same time a part of what appears and a part of the world. We cannot deal with this problem in this paper. See ANA SANTOS, «Vers une phénoménologie asubjective», in RENAUD BARBARAS (ed.), *Jan Patočka: phénoménologie asubjective et existence*, Paris, Mimesis, 2007, pp. 49-71, especially pp. 67-69.

<sup>12</sup> «Epoché und Reduktion», p. 420; «Epojé y reducción», pp. 247-248. My italics.

<sup>13</sup> The theme and scope of this paper does not allow us to enter into the complexities of Patočka's conceptualization of human existence and that to which it is opened. Karel Novotný shows that there can be traced up to three conceptualizations. The first one points to Heidegger and takes the opening as the understanding of Being and the opened as the entity in that it is the Being «understood as» in a certain way. The second one refers to philosophy of corporality and considers the disclosure of the world as the

there will be also a description of the existential dynamism within the natural world. Once we have explained the basic patočkian notions of human existence within the world, we will be able to indicate the ethical root in Patočka's phenomenology.

b) The world as an all-encompassing totality

As we have said above, radical *epoche* discloses the world as the a priori of subjectivity. Appearing things are shown within horizons, internal and external<sup>14</sup>. These horizons are included the one in the other in such a way that they all can be finally included in an all-encompassing horizon. This horizon is the world as an all-encompassing totality. In order to explain how the world is disclosed as the totality of things included in an all-encompassing horizon, Patočka makes use of the concept of *Weltfüge*, taken from Eugen Fink<sup>15</sup>.

What first of all appears to us in our perceptions, are limitations, that show the forms in which things are placed. Limitations are, each one separately, contingent; however, we can't eliminate a limitation without «replacing» it with another. Individual limitations, then, are contingent, but limitation as such is not. If there are always necessarily limitations when we perceive, then the idea of a totality which encompasses all limitations appears as necessary. This is in fact for Patočka the kantian idea of «absolute space» or the finkean concept of *Weltfüge*<sup>16</sup>.

This totality is necessarily one and all-encompassing, since if not we would have again another limitation which could be integrated in a totality of a superior order and so on. Nevertheless, the fact that an all-encompassing totality is an unavoidable horizon when considering perception, does not involve that this totality *actually exists*. At most we could say that it is impossible to *think* this totality as non-existent, but it does not mean that this totality in fact exists. Patočka tries to solve this problem with the help of the mutual foundation of the part and the whole. If we get to demonstrate the real existence of a part of the totality, then we will have demonstrated the existence of the all-encompassing totality. In other words, if a limitation of something is found as evidently existing, then the totality that encompasses this limitation is also necessarily existing<sup>17</sup>.

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«presentation» of possibilities to an incorporated subject. These three conceptualizations are not mutually exclusive; to the contrary, they all deal with human existence and its place in the world disclosed by appearing. We will centre our attention in the conceptualization referred to Eugen Fink which, to our understanding, gives the clearest exposition of the basic lines of the problem of appearing and world in Jan Patočka. See KAREL NOVOTNÝ, «L'ouverture du monde phénoménologique: donation ou compréhension? Sur le problème de l'apparaître comme tel chez Jan Patočka», in RENAUD BARBARAS (ed.), *Jan Patočka. Phénoménologie asubjective et existence*, pp. 9-25.

<sup>14</sup> See for example: «[Leçons sur la corporéité]» in *Papiers Phénoménologiques*, pp. 53-116, especially pp. 63-70.

<sup>15</sup> «Universo y mundo del hombre. Observaciones a un planteamiento cosmológico contemporáneo», in *El movimiento de la existencia humana*, pp. 85-92. For the original text in German, see «Weltganzes und Menschenwelt», in BEIERWALTES and SCHRADER (hrsg.), *Weltaspekte der Philosophie. Festschrift für R. Berlinger*, Rodopi, Amsterdam, 1972. Also in *Die Bewegung der menschlichen Existenz*, pp. 257-264.

<sup>16</sup> See *Ibidem*, pp. 85-86.

<sup>17</sup> It should be noted that here Patočka passes from «phenomenology» to «philosophical phenomenology». The former deals with appearing as such, in its pure appearing, the latter tries to draw «metaphysical conclusions» from phenomenology. The problem of appearing and the world is, then, a problem in which phenomenology and philosophical phenomenology are implicated. It can be asked whether phenomenology and philosophical phenomenology can be really separated. Patočka himself, at the end of his life, thought that asubjective phenomenology needed an ontology. In our opinion, considering «appearing as such» leads to consider the world, and this last consideration cannot be coherently made without questioning «what is» disclosed as the world and whether it really «exists».

In order to demonstrate the existence of such a «part», Patočka seeks to show the «asubjective» self-disclosure and self-attestation of a part of the world in its appearing in our perception. In our perception there must be the presentation of something identifiable as a form, as something within limits, and this without our subjectivity playing any «active» role (which would once again raise the problem of idealism and actual existence of the world «out of us»). This is possible, according to Patočka, by virtue of an «asubjective» phenomenology in which what appears gives account of itself exclusively from itself:

«For any totality, whether it be an ulterior collection of parts, or a previous totality, the mutual foundation of the part and the whole is, however, valid; *they are mutually presupposed*. Therefore, if there is no direct access in experience to the whole, it is enough to know of it as such whole in order to have a right to affirm the meaning of “part” as independent from the subject. Such a right seems to be able to be shown in an “asubjective” phenomenology of perception that does not need to acknowledge the limit of perceptive auto-donation in immanence which takes place in apodictic self-perception, and that considers the meaning of perception, through twisted paths, as founded in the strictly worldly phenomena, and not in the subjective ones»<sup>18</sup>.

c) The world as the natural world of ordinary life

Thus, the world appears to us as separate and independent from subjectivity. However, we also know that the world appears as the natural world within which we carry out our everyday life. Patočka makes a careful analysis of the structure of the natural world, as well as of the existential dynamism deployed within it. It is in the careful consideration of these analyses where we can see the ethical impulse within Patočka's first philosophy.

Patočka studies the natural world from the points of view of its structure and of existential dynamism. The study of the structure of the natural world leads to the analysis of the referents, the study of existential dynamism leads to Patočka's theory of the three movements of human existence.

i) *The referents of the natural world*

The fundamental referents of the natural world are the earth and the heavens<sup>19</sup>. The earth is the immobile substrate upon which our activity is being carried out. Upon the earth we move among things, and relate to them as well as to the others. The earth is thus «the bearer and the referent of all relations»<sup>20</sup>. The earth also appears as «force and power», everything is in a certain way subordinated to the earth:

«The earth rules the heights and the depth. It rules even over the components which are forces beside it, even against it, though it is the earth that ultimately has power over them. For even a stream of water, even the ocean, are forced to cleave to it»<sup>21</sup>.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 87. These «twisted paths» are not specified here. These are ways in which appearing as such reveals itself as constituting a web of references where subjectivity is one of the poles of this autonomous realm, but not its «founder» or «constituter». The phenomenon shows to us and in this showing it is disclosed as a structure referred to us, but to which we are also «caught» and by which we are in a certain way «co-constituted». Patočka tries repeatedly to explore this «self-attestation» of appearing as a non-subjective realm. See for example Epoché et réduction. Manuscript de travail, in *Papiers Phénoménologiques*, Grenoble, Jérôme Millon, 1995, pp. 163-210.

<sup>19</sup> JAN PATOČKA, «The “natural” World and Phenomenology», in ERAZIM KOHÁK, *Jan Patočka. Philosophy and selected writings*, The University of Chicago Press, 1989, pp. 239-273, especially pp. 255-257.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 255.

<sup>21</sup> *Loc. cit.*

The earth is not the only referent. Together with the essentially near referent of the earth, we find another referent correlative to this, which is essentially distant, the heavens:

«There is, however, yet another referent, one that is essentially distant, intangible, unmanageable by bodily touch, no matter how present it appears—a referent to which all that is essentially beyond reach belongs—the heavens, the light, the heavenly lights and bodies, all that encloses our horizon without closing it in, all that constitutes the outside as something that constantly encloses us in an interior»<sup>22</sup>.

This so structured natural world is also radically shared with others. In our ordinary life we are referred to the Others in a space inhabited by me *and* others. In fact, Patočka states that we are in rapport with the world through the rapport with the others. The other, in fact, is made apparent and patent before myself, since the individual always perceives himself as within a «meaningful situation» in which the self is already referred to, and appealed by, the other. This essential contact with others in the natural world is what gives reality and density to life in the world:

«Contact with the others is the very center of our world, endowing it with its most intrinsic content, but also its most important meaning, perhaps even *all* its meaning. It is only contact with others that constitutes the proper context in which man lives; our sense contact with present reality, or *in*-tuition, gains its central significance by bestowing a mark of its immediate persuasiveness on the reality of the others»<sup>23</sup>.

ii) *The movements of human existence*

Human existence in the natural world is dynamic. Human existence is then in movement<sup>24</sup>. Man is confronted to tasks and possibilities, which are presented to an embodied existence<sup>25</sup>. The movement of existence is lived in the inner experience<sup>26</sup>, and is described also as a relationship with the other. This movement can take place in three different forms, which are typical of different existential positions. There are then three existential movements: the movements of rootedness, of defence, and the movement of truth.

The existential movement is first of all a movement of rootedness, through which an individual is received and accepted into life. Rootedness is the acceptance of one by the others in the community. By virtue of this acceptance, the individual has «a place» in the group, and therefore a place in the world. Thus, the individual's existence has a primary meaning. Rootedness discloses the world for the first time, in the sense that one is «accepted into it»: «Thus man is from the start of life immersed, rooted primarily in the other»<sup>27</sup>.

<sup>22</sup> «The natural world and phenomenology», p. 256. The italics are Patočka's.

<sup>23</sup> «The natural world and phenomenology», p. 258. The italics are Patočka's.

<sup>24</sup> Patočka understands movement as the realization of human existence through the appropriation of possibilities. Patočka recuperates Aristotle's notion of movement as the actualization of an essence and modifies it in an existential sense, in such a way that the actualization of human essence is not that of a preexisting one which discloses itself, but of an essence which is being «built» in each appropriation of possibilities. Patočka's main work on this subject has not yet been translated to any commonly accessible language: *Aristotelés, jeho předchůdci a dědicové* [Aristotle, his predecessors and his successors], Praha, Nakladatelství Československé Akademie Věd, 1964. This book has a french abstract which, to our knowledge, has not been either translated or republished: pp. 389-403.

<sup>25</sup> For the study of corporality in Patočka, see «Leçons sur la corporéité», in *Papiers Phénoménologiques*, translated by Erika Abrams, Grenoble, Jérôme Millon, 1995, pp. 53-116; *Body, Community, Language, World*, translated by Erazim Kohák, Peru (Illinois-USA), 1998.

<sup>26</sup> «The natural world and phenomenology», p. 255.

<sup>27</sup> «The natural world and phenomenology», p. 260.

The movement of rootedness has a strong connection with the movement of defence. This second movement consists of working to obtain what is necessary for subsistence, and to maintain the order which allows the acceptance of life and the movement of rootedness. The individual, who has been accepted into life, has to join the others in the task of working so that the conditions of the acceptance can be maintained. In this movement the world as exteriority is disclosed:

«The other —as well as, in the natural, inevitable mutual bonding, the others— is what covers us, thanks to whose help the earth can first become the earth for me, the sky the sky —the others are our original home. A home, that sinking of roots, is not, however, possible of itself and for itself. A home is a place where the sinking of roots among things takes place, that is, where needs are met, through the mediation of others. What is needed, though, must be procured, secured and that takes place only partially in the home —the activity of procuring what is needed, work, entails an outside, the work place, the domain of objectivity»<sup>28</sup>.

Finally, the movement of truth is the confrontation with finitude and the question for the meaning of such a finite existence. When someone assumes his finitude, he confronts his existence and he is situated explicitly in front of the world as a totality. In this situation, the individual is in a position from which the question for himself and his life can be posed. This assumption of finitude and this questioning for the meaning of existence has for Patočka clear moral connotations. In the movement of truth, the human being accepts his finitude as well as the responsibility for his existence. Each one is then responsible for the choices he makes and for the subsequent «shape» he gives to his life and being. This moral dimension of the movement of truth is essential to the ethical and political dimensions of Patočka's thought, and is especially essential to the understanding of the ethical root and impulse already present in Patočka's first philosophy.

d) Conclusive remarks of this section

Thus, «asubjective» phenomenology leads to a consideration of man that is situated in a previously existing and independent world<sup>29</sup>. The human being lives in a natural world, as well, structured with referents. In this natural world, human existence develops in a dynamic way according to the three fundamental movements described above. Mortality and finitude are made explicit in the movement of truth and it is here where responsibility for one's life and the shape one gives to one's being takes place. This means that responsibility is rooted in the human dynamism of the existential movements. The teleology of truth is then present in Patočka within the frame of philosophy of existence, which starts from the standpoint of finite existence. The finite individual, existing in a pre-given world, is then oriented, by virtue of its third movement, to responsibility. Morality is then «incorporated» in the dynamism of finite human existence. In the following section I will try to show how these positions can play an important role in current debates about questions of science and religion. We will deal with the value of scientific research, the mind-body problem, the problem of revelation and the possibilities of theism and atheism. We will not enter in detail and the list of problems is not complete. Our aim is to show how Patočka's philosophy is complex enough to provide us with insights in different debates.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 260.

<sup>29</sup> To be more precise, it is asubjective phenomenology and its phenomenological philosophy that make us draw these conclusions about human existence and the world.

## 2. SOME CONSEQUENCES OF JAN PATOČKA'S THOUGHT IN THE FIELDS OF SCIENCE AND RELIGION

At first sight, it is not evident that Patočka's considerations may have relevant consequences as far as scientific or religious issues are concerned. However, Jan Patočka's philosophy is richer than it seems, and his views can provide us with intellectual tools to approach some contemporary problems of science and religion. Jan Patočka himself never dealt with these topics but, as it usually happens with great thinkers, his thought enshrines potentialities unaware to the author but which we can infer.

We will limit ourselves here to indicate certain problems to which Patočka's thought gives the possibility of a new insight. We will deal at the first place with the consequences in scientific issues like the mind-body problem (based on prof. James Mensch's considerations). Secondly, we will speak of the religious question of how to think revelation and the world.

### 2.1. *Jan Patočka and Science (I): the unity of the world and its exploration. The value of scientific research*

As we have seen, Jan Patočka rejects husserlian transcendentalism and states the co-originality of subjectivity and the world as they are given in the phenomenon, understood as appearing as such. This co-originality is given in the phenomenon itself but on the metaphysical level Patočka goes one step further and states the primacy of the world as the a priori of subjectivity. The world is present to subjectivity as the all-encompassing totality which is never given as an actual whole. The world is always richer than the present phenomenon (even if implicitly the whole is hinted in the form of an all-encompassing horizon) and so we are permanently open to new aspects of the world.

Two characteristics stand out: the unity of the world (including the subject in itself) and its openness. These two traits are of fundamental importance as far as the value of scientific research is concerned. Scientific exploration can be thought to have an important role in the discovery of the one world by the subject, especially if we compare with the consequences of all idealism, which have the tendency, in my opinion, to devaluate science in the name of the inclusion in the all-encompassing and absolute subjectivity.

Thus, by virtue of the phenomenon we are left before a world which is continually opening itself in new possibilities. The world is then, according to this conception, a totality which is never exhausted by our actual knowledge. It is certainly known as a totality because of the givenness of the all-encompassing horizon, but not because of our actual knowledge of every entity in the world. This means that the world is always open to exploration. To our knowledge, Patočka does not specify much about the sort of exploration can be carried out. Presumably, this is because he had other aims and felt no need to explore this subject.

Although Patočka did not seem to indicate the different sorts of exploration of the world, this classification is one that we can do without contradiction with the basic lines of his thought. Thus, we can distinguish at least two types of exploration. On one hand there is, obviously, the «naïve» exploration that we can make in our ordinary lives with the tools provided by our senses. On the other hand, we've got the scientific exploration, carried out with the methodological and technical tools of modern science and technology. Even if the question of the relationship between these two sorts of exploration remains

open, we can see that nothing speaks a priori against the specific value of scientific exploration. It may be objected that classical subjectivist phenomenology also gives value to modern science. Nevertheless, in transcendental phenomenology the epistemic value of science is clearly subordinated to subjectivity, whereas in Patočka's asubjective phenomenology there is no transcendental subject posed as the absolute terrain of appearing. Patočka's phenomenology leaves us before a phenomenon where the world is co-original with the subject as a never-exhausted totality which is always to be explored. Patočka's phenomenology, then, provides us with a general metaphysical view that accepts and includes the exploration and results of modern science. This very acceptance and assumption is also the key to avoiding scientism, since the never-ending richness of the world in its appearing prevents us from accepting dogmatically any particular view as the definitive one, even if it is one issued from modern sciences or even if it is the affirmation of the exclusivity of the scientific approach.

## 2.2. *Jan Patočka and Science (II): the mind-body problem*

Another crucial issue for which Patočka's thought can provide us with intellectual tools is the mind-body problem<sup>30</sup>. Once again, Patočka did not explicitly mention the topic, which was not so relevant in intellectual debates at that time. However, his phenomenological and metaphysical views allows us to consider the problem of the relationship in such a way that we can conceptualize the «mental» or «spiritual» as having its own «entity» and autonomy with regard to material «causal» reality, at the same time that we avoid ontological dualism. Let us have a closer look.

In order to explain the relevance of Patočka's thought in the mind-body problem, we need to focus our attention on the problem of experience as such and in the way Jan Patočka dealt with it. As Mensch states, experience has been one of the central philosophical problems in the history of Philosophy, especially in modern times. This problem consists specifically of how to take account of experience as such, that is to say, how do we have to explain to ourselves the very fact of having an experience, with its inevitable element of interiority and «immateriality» (at least in the phenomenological description). The explanation of experience as such becomes a problem because experience occurs in an finite existent individual who is integrated in a world dominated by causal relations which can be fully explained from an impersonal perspective, centred on the third person. This perspective necessarily does not consider experience in its «inner» character and takes everything under its sight as caught in a net of cause-effect relations fully explainable within deterministic laws. The problem of experience is, then, the problem of explaining the very fact of «grasping» something in its very «inner» aspect of «assuming in one's interiority and knowing it», an explanation which, however, must take into account the fact that this experience is of someone integrated in a causal world. The problem of experience show in all its complexity the mind-body problem, that is to say, the problem

<sup>30</sup> In this point I follow Professor James Mensch, from the San Francis Xavier University in Antigonish (Nova Scotia, Canada). He took part in the *International Conference Jan Patočka (1907-1977)* with the paper «Patočka's Asubjective Phenomenology, Artificial Intelligence and the Mind-Body Problem». This paper will soon be published in the periodical *Focus Pragensis* (presumably during the year 2008). It can be found on-line in this address: <http://people.stfx.ca/jmensch/Patocka%20and%20Artificial%20Intelligence.doc> (the menu of texts can be found on this page: [http://people.stfx.ca/jmensch/Papers\\_You\\_Can\\_Download.html](http://people.stfx.ca/jmensch/Papers_You_Can_Download.html)). Our brief rapport is based on the text distributed to the attendants to the Conferences. All the possible interpretation mistakes are however my own responsibility.

of the relationship between «mental» phenomena and «bodily» or «cerebral» ones. It is also the specification of the mind-body problem as the problem of experience which helps us understand in what sense Patočka's phenomenology is relevant when considering this problem. This relevance of Patočka's thought lies concretely in his theses about «appearing as Such», posed within his project of an «a-subjective phenomenology».

According to Mensch, the problem of experience has been approached in such a way that we have tried to find a «bridge» between experience as such and the causal order of the world. This search for a bridge has resulted in three different solutions. Two of them have affirmed the total subordination and assumption of one into the another (which involves its elimination) and the third one strives to find a positive relationship between both aspects, without eliminating the actual reality of any of them. The first solution is monistic materialism, which eliminates experience as such, reducing it to causal processes (the latest version of this solution reduces experience to neuronal processes). The second solution is monistic idealism, which takes the causal order as a creation of subjectivity. The third solution includes «interactive» dualism or emergentism. We are not going to explain these positions, already well known in contemporary debates on the subject. Instead, we focus our attention on a presupposition common to them all and we see how Patočka give us a hint about thinking the whole subject without affirming this presupposition.

This presupposition is precisely that there must be a «bridge» between appearing and the causal order, that we need to «translate» somehow the characteristics of the one into the other. What Patočka's asubjective phenomenology helps us question is exactly the necessity of such a presupposition to approach the mind-body problem. As we have seen, Patočka explains that asubjective phenomenology leaves us before «appearing as such», which has its own legality, different from the (causal) legality of what appears. The phenomenal order and the causal order are on different levels, each one has their own rules and are not reducible to the other. To Patočka, both the causal and the phenomenal are part of the one world, but both spheres keep their autonomy. It is true that Patočka himself speaks of a possible relationship between these spheres (Patočka speaks of a relationship of co-originality, which would suggest a certain interactive dualism). However, this statement does not say anything against the «legal autonomy» of each sphere and thus does not force us to look for any «bridge» between them<sup>31</sup>.

Thus, following Patočka's thesis of the autonomy of «appearing as such», we can say that his philosophy provides us with arguments to be posed in the debate. Patočka's philosophy, in its affirmation of appearing as such, could give reasons for a certain «dualism» which would not seek for any «bridge» at the same time that the unity of the world is kept.

### 2.3. *Jan Patočka and Religion (I): the manifestation of the world and Revelation*

Another aspect in which Patočka's phenomenology is relevant is the consideration of the possibility of a religious revelation in the world. Once again, it is appearing as such (and its structure) which give us hints for this issue<sup>32</sup>. Asubjective phenomenology states that the analysis of phenomena affirms the primacy of appearing over being (which is

<sup>31</sup> In any case, we can take the theme of appearing as such and explore its potentialities for thinking the mind-body problem.

<sup>32</sup> Here I follow the above quoted article of JUAN MANUEL GARRIDO, «Appearing as such in Patočka's A-Subjective Phenomenology», especially the p. 136.

disclosed by appearing, whatever the relationship in the ontological order) and this appearing leads us to affirm the world as an a priori of subjectivity. The affirmation of the primacy of appearing has a serious metaphysical consequence which can be better exposed if we compare Patočka's thesis about the primacy of appearing with Heidegger's one about the primacy of being in its self-hiding disclosure. To Heidegger, as it is well known, the appearing of any entity necessarily presupposes the previous disclosure of being, a disclosure that is inevitably accompanied by a self-hiding of being. Any appearing is then, according to Heidegger, a necessarily incomplete one since the foundation is never fully revealed. We are not going to analyse in detail this thesis but this succinct description enables us to see the fundamental difference with Patočka's view. In Patočka there is a primacy of appearing, it is appearing what first discloses itself and opens the way to the world. This does not mean of course that everything is revealed by appearing. As we have already seen, the disclosure of the world is never complete. Nevertheless, there is an essential difference between these two views. To Heidegger, there is a hiding in manifestation itself, and thus, we may say, a certain source of mistrust concerning the revelation of being. In the core of reality there is a self-hiding. To Patočka, to the contrary, manifestation is, in its inner structure, essentially transparent. The never-exhausting richness of the world is in no way in Patočka the result of the self-hiding of being but of the richness of manifestation itself<sup>33</sup>. Another important point is that manifestation, although autonomous, can only happen to human beings. Human beings are not the «source» of appearing (at most a necessary presupposition) but they are the «place» of appearing<sup>34</sup>.

These two theses, the primacy of appearing as transparent manifesting and humanity as the place of appearing, are of fundamental importance when considering the possibility of a religious revelation in the world. It is also relevant when thinking the eventual place of the human being in such a revelation. The relevance of Patočka's thought in this subject touches the fields of both philosophy and theology. From a strictly philosophical point of view, Patočka's theses state a world which, in its very manifestation, is open to be considered as a revelation. From a theological (and especially «apologetically») standpoint, Patočka's views provide us with a metaphysical basis to defend the reasonability of a religious faith based upon a Revelation from the divine.

#### 2.4. *Jan Patočka and Religion (II): the possibilities of theism and atheism*

Finally, Jan Patočka's philosophy gives us hints for considering the possibility of a theistic or atheistic worldview. In our opinion, Patočka's phenomenology provides us with a philosophical bases for both positions. His philosophy is, in our view, «agnostic», in that it does not say anything about the problem of God. It is true that we can detect «christian elements» in his positions, like the consideration of the world as «revealing itself»<sup>35</sup> and the thesis that human existence is constituted to transcend its own

<sup>33</sup> It is true that in some occasions Patočka seems to accept Patočka's view (like, for instance in his seminars about the problem of Europe). However, these statements are in a context in which Patočka is explaining other heideggerian concepts which he accepts. This is the case, for example, of the concept of Gestell, which Patočka takes to explain contemporary crisis. In his explanation, Patočka explains the self-disclosure and hiding of being. However, Patočka's own views about appearing in many other writings make us sustain the interpretative thesis that Patočka does not accept Heidegger's position on manifestation.

<sup>34</sup> This point is also briefly but extraordinarily exposed by Juan Manuel Garrido in his already quoted article.

<sup>35</sup> See once again JUAN MANUEL GARRIDO, «Appearing as such in Patočka's A-Subjective Phenomenology».

finitude<sup>36</sup>. However, these statements do not necessarily involve the affirmation of a theistic thesis, which is never explicitly posed. It is also true that in his philosophy of history Christianity is seriously considered as a socio-political formation which gave shape in a certain historical phase to the ideal of life within the truth. Nevertheless, the consideration of a socio-political phenomenon is not the same as considering it from a strictly religious perspective which, to our knowledge, is not present in Patočka.

In our view, Patočka's phenomenology enables us to hold both a theistic and an atheistic worldview. This means also that Patočka's philosophy leaves space for human freedom on this topic. We are not forced to hold a theistic or atheistic position if we accept Patočka's metaphysical considerations about appearing and the world. Patočka's considerations speak about a phenomenon whose analysis leaves us before appearing as such. The analysis of appearing as such in its structure discloses the world as an original proto-structure necessarily presupposed by the structure of the phenomenon itself. This movement by virtue of which we analyse the phenomenon and stand before the world as a totality is the movement of transcending the given. The discovery of the world is the result, then, of an essential capability of transcendence present within the very dynamism of human existence. Jan Patočka's thought clearly and unambiguously affirms the reality of transcendence in human life. To Patočka, the human being is not enclosed within his instincts or interests (which in his view correspond to the first and second movement) but he keeps within himself the capability of transcending them. However, from this transcendence does not necessarily follow a transcendent. Patočka's phenomenology leaves us before the world as a totality. We can endlessly explore this totality, but nothing forces us *a priori* to pose the existence of God. The unending richness of the world can be that of an «autonomous self-sustained world» and human transcendence can be opened to the spectacle of a self-disclosing world<sup>37</sup>. On the other hand, this atheistic worldview is not an inevitable consequence. Human existence could discover in the world an absolute foundation or a personal interpellation from transcendence. In any case, what is most important on our opinion is that neither possibility is excluded. This means that the human being is intellectually free to explore the world, hold a theistic or atheistic (or agnostic) worldview, of keeping or changing it and of discussing it. This consequence on the metaphysical level of the worldview is of fundamental importance on the political level. If the disclosure of the world does not force us to hold a particular position concerning the problem of God, then there is no reason to impose any particular view<sup>38</sup>. This political consequence goes beyond the field of religious tolerance. If the world is a totality which is never fully comprehended, then no particular worldview can be imposed<sup>39</sup>.

<sup>36</sup> A good exposition of this topic (though unfortunately not easy to find) can be found in Filip Karfik, «Das Unendlichwerden durch die Endlichkeit». Die Transzendenz und die Bewegung der Hingabe den Anderen bei Jan Patočka», Documents of the CTS (CTS 98/04), Center for Theoretical Studies and Center for Phenomenological Research, April 1998.

<sup>37</sup> It should be noted that this atheistic worldview would not be a scientist or deterministic one (at least, it would not be necessarily so). The autonomous world to which we would be open would always be richer than what could be comprehended by our knowledge and would always be open to further research. It goes without saying that a theistic world view would similarly be open to research.

<sup>38</sup> We leave aside the fact that, in our view, the necessity of respect would also be obvious even if this «metaphysical openness» were not present. This would make us enter in the fields of political theory and we would go beyond the limits of this paper. The political consequence that we want to express here is to be seen as an *a fortiori* argument in favour of religious tolerance.

<sup>39</sup> Once again, this is a metaphysical *a fortiori* argument.

### 3. FINAL REMARKS

The aim of this article has been to show the potentialities present in Patočka's thought in fields relevant to science and religion. Our intention has been to invite scholars to take Patočka's phenomenology into account when discussing religious or scientific issues. It has not been our aim to analyse these topics in detail, but to present the basic lines in which Patočka's positions can be relevant. As we have said, Patočka never dealt with this topic and thus it does not immediately draw the attention of those who do research in fields related to science and religion. However, we hope that this paper has shown that his thought deserves attention.

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