

EL PROBLEMA DE LA DONACIÓN EN LA REFLEXIÓN DE PATOČKA

THE PROBLEM OF GIVENNESS IN PATOČKA'S THOUGHT

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Resumen: Esta contribución presenta como el concepto filosófico de "donación" es reinterpretado en la reflexión de Patočka. Partiendo de la lección husserliana, gracias a la cual las cosas son dadas en la pura inmanencia de la conciencia, él critica esta orientación "subjetivista" porque no desarrolla adecuadamente el tema del aparecer en el campo fenomenal. La segunda sección analiza tres desplazamientos metodológicos que abarcan: el rol del sujeto, su relación con la trascendencia, el darse a sí mismo del mundo en su totalidad. La tercera sección compara la reflexión de Patočka con dos referencias cruzadas a algunos intentos similares en la historia de la fenomenología. El tema de "la donación", por tanto, nos traslada al mayor problema con el que ha trabajado siempre la filosofía: la manifestación del mundo. Patočka intentó esclarecer este problema mediante dos metáforas (el espejo y la pintura), pero también subrayó cómo concierne el modo en el que el hombre interpreta la propia existencia.

Palabras clave: aparecer, donación, percepción, campo fenomenal.

Abstract: This paper presents how the philosophical key concept of givenness is reinterpreted in Patočka's reflection. Starting from the Husserlian idea, according to which things are given in the pure immanence of consciousness, Patočka criticized this "subjectivist" orientation because it doesn't adequately develop the appearing in the phenomenal field. The second section analyzes three main methodical shifts concerning: the nature and the role of the subject, its relationship with the transcendence, the self-giving of the world as a whole. The third section compares Patočka's reflection and two cross-references to similar undertakings in the history of phenomenology. The theme of givenness brings us back in the end to the biggest problem within which philosophy has always worked: world manifestation. Patočka tried to clarify this issue through two metaphors (the mirror and the painting), but he also highlighted as it concerns the way in which man interprets his existence.

Keywords: appearing, givenness, perception, phenomenal field.

1. INTRODUCTION

To recognize the key points of Patočka's position on the notion of givenness, it is first necessary to understand the core of his criticism of Husserl. Since Husserl remains at the level of transcendental subjectivity, he does not move beyond being, but for Patočka the concept of consciousness, defined by intentionality, is unable to account for the appearance of what appears. For Patočka consciousness is always positive and cannot be the source from which appearance originates. This is why Husserl's position falls short of giving a full account of givenness: he continues to consider the reflective return of the subject to itself as givenness's foundational basis¹. But, the subjective aspect of thetic characteristics and of characteristics of givenness is as external to the subject as the things that appear. We are not able to understand how lived-experience could be the origin for appearing. In this issue, Husserl's phenomenology risks renouncing its discoveries in the sphere of appearing and its modes of givenness—and deviating into subjective construction. Yet for Patočka the aim is quite the opposite: an a-subjective phenomenological account makes possible an opening beyond the *ego* that moves it towards the more fundamental structures underpinning human experience.

The core of Patočka's discussion is therefore of Husserl's account of intentionality and its basis in a transcendental *ego*. For Patočka, our access to reality is not a purely reflective operation, "as Husserl seems to believe when considering the original 'givenness' of the present thing as guaranteed in the intentionality of consciousness. The accessibility of the original *datum* in the 'immanent perception' is a prejudice that must be rejected"². Rather, according to Patočka we target different phenomena depending on whether we find intentionality to be the ultimate foundation of experience and appearing or we uphold the idea that every experience is bonded to an objective correlate and the concept of

¹ Instead, according to Patočka, "there is a difference here between those characteristics that I ascribe to the 'thing itself' and other characteristics, which are certainly also present but not belonging to it, but with whose aid, so to speak, or on the basis of which, it appears" J. Patočka, "Der Subjektivismus der Husserlschen und die Forderung einer asubjektiven Phänomenologie", in Id., *Die Bewegung der menschlichen Existenz*, Klett-Cotta, Stuttgart, 1991. English Translation: Id, "Husserl's Subjectivism and the Call for an Asubjective Phenomenology", in L. Učník - I. Chvatík - A. Williams (eds.), *Asubjective Phenomenology: Jan Patočka's Project in the Broader Context of his Work*, Nordhausen, Traugott Bautz, 2015, p. 30. The characteristics of givenness appearing in the world before me are not present as lived-experiences, or something subjective. "That on the basis of which an object is itself objectively [...] present. [...] What we argue against, however, is the claim that one can make this basis of appearing into yet another object for a possible 'inner perception' that grasps it 'originally' [...]" *Ibidem*, pp. 30-31.

² J. Patočka, *Die Bewegung der menschlichen Existenz*, p. 426.

consciousness. "What belongs to the essence of my critique is the fact that I cannot embrace the Husserlian interpretation of lived-experience and acts, and hence also *his* concept of the intentionality of consciousness"³. Patočka thus criticizes the self-certainty of the *ego* as it is interpreted by Husserl: a presence that appears as an original self-giveness, which in turn requires a corresponding object. Instead, for Patočka the *ego* cannot be grasped in a reflexive act or an internal perception: "I'm not given like an object"⁴. He believes that only through 'cathartic release' of the phenomenal element can phenomenology regain its sense of investigation of appearing as such. This interrogation of the very definition of phenomenology is similar to Heidegger's criticism of Husserl regarding the problem of the "return to the things themselves". In fact, Patočka states: "our reflection would first of all contribute to a recovery and a renewal of the identification motto of phenomenology 'towards things themselves'. Indeed, our intention is to start from things just as they appear and they show themselves, to stick to showing of things and refraining from all speculation"⁵.

2. HUSSERL'S POSITION

The concepts of givenness is as central to phenomenology, and as sensitive a topic, as it is far from being unequivocally clarified—even by Husserl himself⁶. According to Michel Henry, the core concepts of phenomenology and their founding principles "remain *de facto fundamentally indeterminate*"⁷; they open into contradictions and reinforce latent tensions. On the other hand, always referring to the issue of givenness, Jean Greisch has argued that: "the concept of givenness, which is already semantically close to the concept of phenomenon and appearance, from the beginning of Husserl's phenomenology represents [...] an essentially operative concept"⁸. It remains certain, however, that Husserl refused

³ J. Patočka, *Asubjective Phenomenology*, p. 32.

⁴ J. Patočka, *Asubjective Phenomenology*, pp. 37-38.

⁵ J. Patočka, *Die Bewegung der menschlichen Existenz*, p. 425.

⁶ Givenness is always present whenever the matter is intentionality, reduction, evidence, self-giveness of consciousness, etc. This because givenness is the necessary background to all the phenomenological reflection. This theme is a Brentanian school heritage and, even before *Logical Investigations*, Husserl confronts himself also with Twardowski. However, we suggest these references: *The idea of phenomenology* (lessons III, IV, V), *Ideas I* (explicitly § 143), *Cartesian Meditations* (§§ 24 ss.).

⁷ Michel Henry, *Phénoménologie de la vie, vol. I: De la Phénoménologie*, Paris, PUF, 2003, p. 78. Translations from the French and German texts are mine own.

⁸ Jean Greisch, *Gegebenheit, Husserl-Lexikon*, Darmstadt, WBG, 2010, p. 111.

the empirical tradition (that accepts data, whereas Husserl does not) precisely because he refused the empirical account of perception. Husserl rejects all 'sensualist' accounts as a stream of contents 'without sense in themselves'⁹. Rather, consciousness always involves the intending of objects, sense, and the constitution method: taking things in their givenness does not mean merely perceiving or ordering them clearly in the perceptive process. "Rather, it is necessary to 'follow up' the perceptually meant in a perceiving and experiencing, be it actually experiencing or just phantasizing"¹⁰. This not mean that Husserl has renounced the world of perception for the abstraction of the 'eidetic content'¹¹. From this perspective, givenness in Husserl is not guided by perception but intuition. Intuition becomes the "principle of all principles"¹² to which we must remain faithful. It is the measure of all truth and the source of all knowledge.

Speaking more broadly, givenness for Husserl results from the reduction to immanence of consciousness. It's fundamental to remember Husserl's distinction between transcendental reduction¹³ and eidetic consideration¹⁴. Only transcendental reduction clarifies the notion of givenness, as it entails the reduction of transcendental experience to the sphere of ownness, to the immanence of consciousness. Through transcendental reduction, Husserl interprets the world on the basis of the givenness of meaning (*Sinngebung*) of the transcendental *ego*. This *ego* constitutes the objective world¹⁵. Husserl arrives at this conclusion

⁹ See M. Heidegger, *Prolegomena zur Geschichte des Zeitbegriffs*, P. Jaeger (ed.), GA vol. 20, Frankfurt am Main, Klostermann, 1979, p. 147; Id., "Über das Prinzip "Zu den Sachen selbst", *Heidegger Studies*, 11 (1995), pp. 2-7.

¹⁰ Edmund Husserl, *Ideen zu einer reinen Phänomenologie und phänomenologischen Philosophie. Zweites Buch: Phänomenologische Untersuchungen zur Konstitution*, Den Haag, M. Nijhoff, 1952. English translation: Id., *Ideas pertaining to a Pure Phenomenology and to a Phenomenological Philosophy, second book: Studies in Phenomenology of Constitution*, Dordrecht, Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1989, p. 37.

¹¹ Within the pure *ego* Husserl distinguishes immanent perception (in which the subject grasps himself absolutely, in its own subjective irreducible core, in its own uneliminable *residuum*) from transcendent perception (an object caught by a subject and never independent of it). Our evidence of transcendent perception is always inadequate, never absolute. Matter (*yle*) constitutes the material moment of the perception of the transcendent object. Husserl emphasises that it belongs to the essence of such objects to always reveal themselves in profiles, adumbrations (*Abschattungen*, see *Ideas I* § 3), or perspectival aspects. The object as a whole is never given; it always presents from one side or perspective. On the Husserlian view of perception, see also *Thing and Space* lectures (§ 40) and the *Cartesian Meditations* (§ 9).

¹² See E. Husserl, *Ideen zu einer reinen Phänomenologie und phänomenologischen Philosophie. Erstes Buch*, Den Haag, M. Nijhoff, 1950. English translation: Id., *Ideas pertaining to a Pure Phenomenology and to a Phenomenological Philosophy, first book: General Introduction to a Pure Phenomenology*, Dordrecht, Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1983, p. 44.

¹³ See especially *Cartesian Meditations* § 44.

¹⁴ See especially *Ideas I* § 3.

¹⁵ Eidetic intuition (*Wesensschau*), instead, grasps the invariant structures of any given content. Any empirical content includes a non-empirical *datum*. Eidetic seeing (*Wesenserschauung*) doesn't give us individual objects, but a new sort of object: the pure essences.

through Descartes, to whom he owes the intellectual insight that comprehension of the *cogitatio* is itself knowledge. In this sense *cogitationes* are the first absolute givennesses: “Every intellectual experience, indeed every experience whatsoever, can be made into an object of pure seeing and apprehension while it is occurring. And in this act of seeing it is an absolute givenness”¹⁶. Husserl’s assertion that “Absolute givenness is an ultimate”¹⁷, however, can easily be misunderstood, because it seems to imply that absolute, direct givennesses are offered up on a platter, just waiting for the gaze of the phenomenologist. In fact, Husserl’s intention is to determine the essence of the “material thing” through a phenomenological analysis of givenness. To achieve this, “thus we have to go back to, as exemplary, to the consciousness in which things are given to us originally and so perfectly that we can be lacking nothing for grasping the universal essential form which prescribes the a priori rule for such objects”¹⁸. Husserl, in this way, founds the possibility for understanding givenness in our selves; only after a certain point does he distinguish between the noetic-subjective and the noematic-objective aspects of *cogitationes*.

On this topic Patočka, however, agrees instead with the analysis of Husserl made by Ernst Tugendhat¹⁹, who argues that this method is not feasible. From this perspective, Husserl’s “Cartesian” reason is located in precisely this point: “[in the] dogmatic prejudice of [the] absolute givenness of *cogitationes* [...]”²⁰. This stance presumes givenness is immanent to consciousness, and therefore evident, giving rise to itself²¹. Patočka instead frames givenness as related to the self-giving of Being, to the field of appearing and our modes of understanding the relation between the world and our subjectivity²². Indeed, the Czech philosopher aims to extend and elaborate the Husserl’s analysis in the *Ideas*, particularly the work he did before his transcendental phase. Patočka notes that, before becoming an object of logical-linguistic research, the field of appearing and the

¹⁶ E. Husserl, *Die Idee der Phänomenologie. Fünf Vorlesungen*, Den Haag, M. Nijhoff, 1950. English translation: Id., *The Idea of Phenomenology*, Dordrecht, Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1999, p. 24.

¹⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 45.

¹⁸ E. Husserl, *Ideas, second book*, p. 37.

¹⁹ Patočka refers to Ernst Tugendhat, *Der Wahrheitsbegriff bei Husserl und Heidegger*, Berlin, De Gruyter, 1967.

²⁰ J. Patočka, “Der Subjektivismus der Husserlschen und die Möglichkeit einer asubjektiven Phänomenologie”, in Id., *Die Bewegung der menschlichen Existenz*, Stuttgart, Klett-Cotta, 1991, p. 269.

²¹ See E. Husserl, *Ideas, first book*, pp. 343-344.

²² Generally, Patočka uses the term *danost* to indicate givenness—a semantically broad and relatively indeterminate term. It indicates the given in a broad sense, not in the sense of scientific data. Patočka also uses *datum*, but to refer to scientific data.

different ways in which givenness is given within it had already been discovered by Husserl in the *Logical Investigations*:

The real discovery of the *Logical Investigations* is the field of appearing, which, in order that the thing can present itself and appear, must overcome the thing and its material structure; it is a field that hides within itself a legality *sui generis* not convertible into that of the object in its own being or [even] into that of the mental being with its specifically egological character.²³

This reference to the *Logical Investigations* is important for Patočka. He thinks it is here that “we find ourselves facing the nascent subjectivism of Husserl’s phenomenology”²⁴. Indeed, Patočka uses this passage to disagree with Husserl’s subjectivist orientation²⁵. The debate on analysis of perception’s acts between Husserl and Natorp in *Fifth Logical Research* (cf. § 14) is interesting to consider in relation to Patočka’s reading of this as the anchor point for Husserl’s subjectivism. Patočka characterizes this point as a “metaphysical neutrality”. From this debate it emerges that, for Husserl, interpretive intention is always already a hermeneutics, a surplus animating sensation and allowing us to perceive a precise object. Through this act of apperception (which is always an objectifying act), it is possible to separate sensations (*hyletic data*), which are *experienced* but do not appear, from *objects*, which appear but are not *experienced*. Thanks to this split, intention turned toward an intended immanent object can be characterized as apprehension, interpretation, or apperception. This is a synthesizing operation. Thus, on one hand, there are acts of apprehension that animate sensations (*subjective processes* that do not appear); on the other, there are objects that appear, or “the world”²⁶ in general. According to Patočka, Husserl also identified the fact that the object appears in different modes—and, first and foremost, appears as itself—with positional characters and with its own

²³ J. Patočka, *Die Bewegung der menschlichen Existenz*, p. 274. The discovery of the phenomenal sphere by Husserl has great importance because previously the philosophical tradition had always converted it into the structure of what appears in one’s own being.

²⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 276. I also refer to the study by Marc Richir, “Possibilité et nécessité de la phénoménologie a-subjective”, in E. Tassin - M. Richir, *Jan Patočka: philosophie, phénoménologie, politique*, Grenoble, Million, 1992, pp. 101-120.

²⁵ According to Patočka it is possible to trace a more “subjectivist” orientation in *Fifth Logic Research*, chapter II: *Consciousness as intentional experience*.

²⁶ E. Husserl, *Logische Untersuchungen. Zweiter Band: Untersuchungen zur Phänomenologie und Theorie der Erkenntnis. Erster Teil*, Den Haag, M. Nijhoff, 1984. English translation: Id., *Logical Investigations. Volume II*. London and New York, Routledge, 2001, p. 106.

modalizations and manner of givenness. Yet despite having tried to locate a way in which the phenomenal field could be independent of the sphere of the appearance of being, Husserl never gave up his "idealistic metaphysics of consciousness"²⁷. Such a sacrifice, however, would be required to return to phenomenology the sense of appearing as such. Husserl was attentive to the phenomenal sphere, but his "intention is circumscribed by terms that come from the subjective sphere: this not a highlighting of the phenomenal field as such, but its *reduction to pure immanence*"²⁸. In this way, the problem of providing evidence for the phenomenal field as such reemerges in the form of the problem of the non-inclusion of things in the sphere of lived-experiences. In the next section, we will explore in more detail how Patočka analyzes the problem of givenness and the methodical displacements he creates on this issue.

3. METHODOICAL DISPLACEMENTS

3.1 The role of the *ego*

For Patočka the problem of givenness also concerns the *ego*, because to grasp what is given, we must increasingly anchor ourselves in our own subjectivity, distinguishing between reflection and phenomena. Reflection, for instance, always requires an "object" on which to exercise, whereas the phenomena that appear in the phenomenal field are not objective beings. In addition, we have to consider that even the *I* is not objectively given to us. Indeed, "the *I* is a structured activity, some moments of which appear as given, which would make no sense and could not exist without a non-given nexus"²⁹. In fact, the alleged certainty of the subject (necessary to any theory of knowledge) is destabilized by the lack of clarity of sensory data, which calls into questions the certainty of the

²⁷ J. Patočka, *Die Bewegung der menschlichen Existenz*, p. 282.

²⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 279. Patočka says that, when drafting the *Logical Investigations*, Husserl did "not recognize the existence of an 'pure' ego" (*Die Bewegung der menschlichen Existenz*, p. 275), which meant he could only operate according to a reduction to immanence.

²⁹ J. Patočka, "Der Subjektivismus der Husserlschen und die Forderung einer asubjektiven Phänomenologie", in Id., *Die Bewegung der menschlichen Existenz*, Stuttgart, Klett-Cotta, 1991. English Translation: Id., "Husserl's Subjectivism and the Call for an Asubjective Phenomenology", in L. Učník - I. Chvatík - A. Williams (eds.), *Asubjective Phenomenology: Jan Patočka's Project in the Broader Context of his Work*, Nordhausen, Traugott Bautz, 2015, p. 38. Patočka means that the world can be explained as a chain of reciprocal references that give meaning to human life too.

subjectivity experiencing them³⁰. Moreover, the structure of *appearing as such* shows that the subject is limited in relation to structure.

The subject therefore has to be thought otherwise. What then is the role of the subject? For Patočka the subjectivity appearing in the field of appearance is a character, or component, of the phenomenal field, one of its moments. This subjectivity must be understood as *that to whom* the appearing appears and not that on which appearance depends. I am the one to whom phenomenal characters point. This means that the self understanding of the subject and its understanding of things form a unit—but the self-understanding of the subject cannot be the base of its understanding of things, nor can its understanding of things be the base of its self-understanding, because both are rooted in the phenomenal field. The *ego* is certain not of its essence but only of its own existence. For this reason, in its role as recipient of appearing, the *ego* must be considered a formal structure without any content. According to Patočka, the *ego* is a “empty pronominal structure”³¹; characters of appearance “stand before an empty I”³² who is the “one who realises [*als Realisator*] them”³³.

Patočka’s re-examination of the notion of subject eliminates the need to make it the ultimate foundation for appearance. But he argues that the subject still cannot be abandoned, since it is the basis for the concept of human responsibility. This is a point still discussed in the philosophical debate: what do we make of the human subject? It is no longer considered a robust subject but one that discovers itself to be capable of corresponding to life, discovers itself as finite—open and in dialogue with the world. Patočka’s move, then, reinstates the subject as the recipient of appearing: appearing “is always for a subject”³⁴. Yet, “reflection on the I must have an entirely different, essentially practical character and an origin in the originally practical essence of our life’s context [*Lebenszusammenhangs*]”³⁵. Thematising the action does not mean turning inward but rather turning outward, towards extreme externality. Thus the world as the *a priori* structure of appearing makes no sense without a recipient of what

³⁰ “But what belongs to the I cannot be grasped in itself and in an ‘absolute way’.” *Ibidem*, p. 32.

³¹ J. Patočka, *Vom Erscheinen als solchem. Texte aus dem Nachlaß*, Freiburg/München, K. Alber Verlag, 2000, p. 129.

³² *Ibidem*, p. 121.

³³ J. Patočka, *Husserl’s Subjectivism and the Call for an Asubjective Phenomenology*, p. 32.

³⁴ J. Patočka, *Papiers phénoménologiques*, Grenoble, Millon, 1995, p. 261.

³⁵ J. Patočka, *Husserl’s Subjectivism and the Call for an Asubjective Phenomenology*, p. 38.

appears, namely without human beings, but the circumstance that appearing appears *to someone*, assigns "a role"³⁶ to the subject in the act of manifestation. The subject, thus, does not determine the objective nature of what appears: it does not found the nature but it realizes it in practical life.

Thus to clarify the nature of being in Patočka we need to start with appearing and with the phenomena in the field of appearance. The appearance of the subject manifests a general structure of appearing upon which the subject also depends. According to Patočka, the necessity of the reduction to immanence and of the constitution of the object clarifies what is given but it calls for a metaphysical theory, one that has already decided what the sense of Being of being is, while in fact our intuition is incapable of explaining how lived experience can make transcendence appear objectively. In reference to the relationship between reduction and givenness, Bertrand Bouckaert thinks that "the problem of motivation for the reduction [to immanence] has had a decisive role in the genesis of asubjective phenomenology"³⁷. In other words, Patočka realizes during his discussion of the *ego* that subjectivity cannot be considered the grounds for appearing. All of our experiencing occurs in relation to a subject, but the subject cannot be the origin of the sense, because the subject itself is also dependent on appearing. Husserl, conversely, arrived at givenness through eidetic categorical intuition: the phenomenal material, which is already structured, shows us a categorization, but this intuition necessitates a shift in the *cogito* so that "the self-certainty of the existence of the *ego*, of the *sum*, was interpreted as a presence; and this presence was understood as original self-givenness. But original self-givenness needs a corresponding object"³⁸. On the other hand, according to Patočka, the conscience has to be redefined: "I is only experienced as the organisational centre of a universal structure of appearance that cannot be reduced to a being as such, appearing in its particularity [*Einzelsein*]. We call this structure 'world' [...]"³⁹.

3.2 Transcendence and the phenomenal field

³⁶ J. Patočka, *Vom Erscheinen als solchem*, p. 120.

³⁷ Bertrand Bouckaert, "De l'autre côté du miroir: les motifs phénoménologiques de la réduction chez Husserl, Fink et Patočka", *Recherches Husserliennes* 17 (2002), p. 106.

³⁸ J. Patočka, *Husserl's Subjectivism and the Call for an Asubjective Phenomenology*, pp. 35-36.

³⁹ J. Patočka, "Epochē and Reduction: Some Observations", in *Asubjective Phenomenology*, p. 49.

According to Patočka givenness remains external to us: it appears to us with objective characters of appearance and withthetic characters of appearance, but these “are in no way present as a lived-experience or something subjective”⁴⁰. For this reason Patočka says:

That on the basis of which an object appears is itself objectively [*sachlich*] and not subjectively present. What Husserl brought into play, to oppose Natorp, i.e., the ‘lived-experience’ [*das ‘Erlebte’*], is not at all given. And it violates the ‘principle of principles’ (namely, that the ultimate court of appeals to which one can take recourse in matters of knowledge is the given, but only insofar as it is actually given) if Husserl in the analysis of appearing appeals to an alleged basis of lived-experience that is simply not given.⁴¹

As Ivan Chvatík has written, Patočka’s “refusal of the absolute ground of consciousness entails the abolition of the difference between the transcendence of mundane things and the immanence of the lived experiences of consciousness. It becomes apparent that the world [...] is rather a special *a priori* horizon-structure *by means of which* anything can appear to us, precisely in our lived experiences”⁴². For Patočka, therefore, “what appears originally are things and thingly characteristics, which appear [...] ‘over against me [*mir gegenüber*]’”⁴³, such that “the ‘subjective’ quality ofthetic characteristics and characteristics of givenness is precisely ‘out there’ (before me) like appearing things themselves”⁴⁴. Referring to Iso Kern’s essay, *Husserl und Kant* (in which he designates noetic intentionality as constructive), Patočka maintains that the act of understanding as such does not give us the thing because the givenness of the thing is the construction of a way of being. The thing is understood by means of different perspectives of it, which originate in the phenomeal field. Therefore, there can ultimately be no intuition of data. Only by dividing the phenomenal sphere into two moments—which means “[...] on the one hand what appears in his manner of givenness, on the other hand the so-called subjective grounds of this

⁴⁰ J. Patočka, *Husserl’s Subjectivism and the Call for an Asubjective Phenomenology*, p. 30.

⁴¹ *Idem*.

⁴² Ivan Chvatík, “Patočka’s Project of an Asubjective Phenomenology”, in *Asubjective Phenomenology*, p. ⁶².

⁴³ J. Patočka, *Husserl’s Subjectivism and the Call for an Asubjective Phenomenology*, p. 30.

⁴⁴ *Ibidem*, 31.

appearing [...]”⁴⁵—would allow us the data intuition. Patočka overcame this split of the phenomenal sphere (but the appearing remains anyway *unified*) by renouncing the subjective construction of the *cogitationes*. This is why the theme of asubjectivity arises. Even when, by acts of thought, we aim at an object (thinking its characters of givenness or its positional characters), we do not aim at something subjective (a real experience) that belongs to us, but rather at the phenomenal sphere in which we live and inside of which we orient ourselves⁴⁶. At the same time, the phenomenal sphere does not have the same problematic character as the object that shows itself; the phenomenal sphere to many different experiences which would become an endless process of confirmation. Though we need more ‘clarity’ on what the object means and how its prerequisite and foundation are to be sought in the subject. Patočka makes evident that the phenomenal sphere cannot be interpreted as a mere subjective reflection, otherwise that reflection “will have the character of an original apprehension of the subjective being, does not *in this regard* in the same way the real objective being: [the subjective being] ‘does not adumbrate self’, but simply shows itself for what it is”⁴⁷. On this point Bruce Bégout remarks that, “with rare insight, Patočka glimpses very well where, in Husserl, the phenomenological primacy of internal perception, of evidence, is connected to the epistemological primacy of the transcendental subject, in order to arrange phenomenological philosophy as the foundation of all sciences”⁴⁸. Considering Husserl's reading made by Patočka, what status does givenness have? Ultimately we do not know, because we are not able to determine it. Patočka finds the act of consciousness unable to directly disclose the given, either through internal perception or acts of reflection.

Husserl's texts, however, are more ambiguous on this point: they offer other possible interpretations and openings. For example, § 50 of the *Crisis* testifies that “Husserl has managed to fully understand the situation of subjective phenomenology”⁴⁹. Iso Kern⁵⁰ has likewise shown that in this paragraph of the *Crisis*,

⁴⁵ J. Patočka, *Die Bewegung der menschlichen Existenz*, p. 278.

⁴⁶ Patočka shows that he wants to continue the search in Fifth research and Sixth research of *Logical Investigations*.

⁴⁷ J. Patočka, *Die Bewegung der menschlichen Existenz*, p. 278.

⁴⁸ B. Bégout, “La phénoménologie décapitée? Perspectives et difficultés de la phénoménologie asubjective de Jan Patočka”, *Chiasmi International* 4 (2002), p. 381.

⁴⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 382.

⁵⁰ Iso Kern, *Husserl und Kant. Eine Untersuchung über Husserls Verhältnis zu Kant und zum Neukantianismus*, La Haye, M. Nijhoff, 1964, p. 361.

Husserl grasps the subjective (element) in the moment of its original openness and mobility—and thus not in its subsequent objective form as a *noesis* graspable via the reflective gaze. These readings suggest that the relation between subject and phenomenal plan should be thought in a new way. Thus, according to Patočka, “no ‘data-animating intention’ can be grasped, exhibited, or given”⁵¹, and the appearing of the thing is still given to me in the phenomenal field. Starting from the phenomenal field—which means, starting from phenomena themselves—we have to interpret the subjective and the things these make appear. Even the “egological” must be grasped in the phenomenal field, because it is a constitutive part of that field: it arises there along with the things it makes appear. To understand this point, it is important to differentiate between “subjective” (*subjektivní*) and “subjectual” (*subjektivní*). The “subjective” indicates that to which the subject relates as the horizon of its understanding, while “subjectual” indicates the “egological”. In this second sense the world is subjective and is the *epoché* that gives access to the subjectual dimension. To understand what is given, we therefore must take into account the relationship between the subject, the phenomenal field, and the structure of the field of appearance. In reference to the relationship between subject and phenomenal field, Patočka writes:

The fundamental law of appearing is that there is always the duality between *that which appears* and *that to which* this appearing being appears; appearing is such only in this duality, but in no way *that to which* the appearing being appears *creates* the appearance, *effectuates* it, “constitute” it, produces it in some way. On the contrary, appearing is not appearing other than in this duality.⁵²

Thus, for Patočka the field of appearing has both an empirical and a transcendental side. For this reason we must always distinguish the legality that governs the structure of things from that which regulates the structure of appearing, but these two aspects are linked together because the phenomenic laws of appearing are also given in beings⁵³. The plane of appearing has a preliminary, transcendental meaning (indicating the world of appearing, the whole) and an empirical meaning that presupposes this universal structure. Every singularity

⁵¹ J. Patočka, *Husserl's Subjectivism and the Call for an Asubjective Phenomenology*, p. 32.

⁵² J. Patočka, *Papiers phénoménologiques*, p. 127.

⁵³ This intertwining of the laws of appearing seems to recall the chiasm of Merleau-Ponty.

comes from this structural whole. It is not possible to understand the whole starting only with sensory impressions and representations, because every being is a possibility emerging within the whole. The sphere of appearing, from this perspective, must have an autonomous structure. According to the Czech philosopher not having thought it in this way led Husserl to posit a split between the subjective sphere and the objective sphere of givenness.

What would this autonomy that Patočka locates mean? It does not mean that the phenomenal field has an autonomous Being (*Eigenes Sein*) in the sense of "an absolutely self-contained being [*Seiendes*]"⁵⁴. Appearance as such, indeed, has no independent reality; it is simply the world of the possible⁵⁵. In order not to be based on the subject, the phenomenal field has an autonomy (*Eingenständigkeit*) from the subject that must be maintained. The function of this autonomy field is "to make appear *another thing*"⁵⁶ and it means independence from any reference to consciousness: the phenomenal field is the place "where the being of egological and noegological nature shows itself for what it is, where both kinds of beings can meet"⁵⁷. The plane of appearance, therefore, is independent of the subject but not in an absolute sense. The being appearing in the plane of appearance *is* related to the subject to which it appears, but this correlation is *sui generis*: it is 'between' the two, a means, something mediating. "For this the 'given' - upon which the appearance always depends - must always remain in it [in the being] as its non-thematic foundation; the given is what interrogates me"⁵⁸.

What then indicates the existence of an 'object'? First of all my fulfillment of it, but also its probable being. There is present in the phenomenal field not only an object but also an area, a horizon, an originality and its relapse back into non-originality⁵⁹. Therefore, on one hand, the subject is not independent from the Being of the field of appearance, because it is located in it; on the other hand, the phenomenal sphere cannot be interpreted as a mere subjective reflection. Patočka establishes the independence of the phenomenal field of appearing of consciousness on a different ground from that of consciousness, since the subjectivity of the phenomenal field means only that the world appears, that the

⁵⁴ J. Patočka, *Husserl's Subjectivism and the Call for an Asubjective Phenomenology*, p. 33.

⁵⁵ See J. Patočka, *Papiers phénoménologiques*, p. 126.

⁵⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 128.

⁵⁷ J. Patočka, *Die Bewegung der menschlichen Existenz*, p. 280.

⁵⁸ J. Patočka, *Papiers phénoménologiques*, p. 128.

⁵⁹ See *Idem*.

characters of appearance materially express the understanding of things, their Being and their essence. "We can designate the field of appearance also as 'subjectivity', but we have to recognize that this 'subjectivity' is an *understanding in the form of understood* [...]"⁶⁰. This means subjectivity that understands is included in the field of appearance and can be clarified only within the world.

This is why Patočka does not see the reduction to immanence as a solution to the problem of appearing and to the problem of givenness. Instead, he maintains that:

A study of the phenomenal field—a study of appearance in its appearing—would have to be established. This would be a study of the nature of phenomenal being [*des phänomenalen Seins*], which consists in revealing beings [*Seiendes*], enabling them to appear; and which, in this appearing of beings [*des Seienden*] does not itself become a theme, hiding itself, so to speak, in the appearing of things.⁶¹

The field of appearance is thus not constituted by subjectivity, and we cannot explain it starting from subjectivity, because it is not correlated to subjectivity⁶². The field of appearance should not be understood as the noematic sphere: it is not composed by subjective processes, "animating" intentions, apprehensions, or lived experiences. Rather, the ultimate foundation of the field of appearance lies in what goes beyond the subject. For these reasons, Patočka qualifies the phenomenal sphere as *asubjective* and the *ego* as opening itself "towards more fundamental structures which found experience"⁶³. "There is a phenomenal field, a being [*ein Sein*] of the phenomenon as such, which cannot be traced back to anything existent which appears in it"⁶⁴. Therefore, we cannot know whether a being that appears is objective or if it has a subjective-egological nature; we specify it only on the basis of appearing and of the appearance of the phenomenal field. The appearing of the subject thus always refers to a general structure of appearing. Based on the analyzes presented so far, the problem of the

⁶⁰ J. Patočka, *Vom Erscheinen als solchem*, p. 146.

⁶¹ J. Patočka, *Husserl's Subjectivism and the Call for an Asubjective Phenomenology*, pp. 32-33.

⁶² See J. Patočka, *Papiers phénoménologiques*, p. 129.

⁶³ J. Patočka, *Die Bewegung der menschlichen Existenz*, p. 284.

⁶⁴ J. Patočka, *Husserl's Subjectivism and the Call for an Asubjective Phenomenology*, p. 33.

constitution of objectivity “is unsolvable as a whole”⁶⁵, but this does not exclude the possibility of understanding what structure. What is this structure that appears?

We consider belonging to the structure of appearing as such this universal totality of apparent being, the great whole, as well as *that to which* the apparent being appears, subjectivity (which has an empty pronominal structure, a structure that cannot be identified with a single closed subject); and the *how* of appearing, to which the polarity of fulfillment-emptying belongs (never intending this as an absolute void, a nothingness).⁶⁶

The elements composing the field of appearance are therefore three: the universal whole of appearing beings, that to which the appearing being appears, and the mode (the how) of appearing. The structure of the field of appearance cannot be described as an object but must be “investigated in itself without supposing anything else”⁶⁷. The difficulty Patočka runs into is that, as Husserl had already understood, on one hand the subjective pole runs the risk of radically changing the meaning of problems⁶⁸ and of missing the pure phenomenon; on the other hand, the relation between the living and dynamic subject and the world is not erased but must be reconsidered. If appearing “is an original phenomenon, something original”⁶⁹ in itself, we cannot refer to the being to clarify appearing in its appearing, because any thesis concerning being already presupposes an understanding of appearing.

In order to clarify what the givenness is, it is important to stress that the structure of appearing, however, does not depend on the subject, but it does influence the way the world gives itself⁷⁰. The phenomenal plane, therefore, must

⁶⁵ See J. Patočka, *Die Bewegung der menschlichen Existenz*, p. 280.

⁶⁶ J. Patočka, *Vom Erscheinen als solchem*, p. 129.

⁶⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 264.

⁶⁸ See E. Husserl, *Die Krisis der europäischen Wissenschaften und die transzendente Phänomenologie. Eine Einleitung in die phänomenologische Philosophie*, Den Haag, M. Nijhoff, 1954. English Translation: Id., *The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology*, Evanston, Northwestern University Press, 1970, § 48.

⁶⁹ J. Patočka, *Vom Erscheinen als solchem*, p. 113. A phrase quoted in a note of the German edition of the manuscript, and then deleted, is important, “the world is not a whole, but Being itself, and Being is at the same time the whole of being and of appearance” *Idem* (this phrase does not appear in the French translation). This refers to the primacy of phenomenology over ontology.

⁷⁰ This distinction is important because “the whole concept of specific and special world, as for example that of a cosmology in a physical sense, already presupposes the laws and the prior structure of appearing.” J. Patočka, *Vom Erscheinen als solchem*, p. 129.

be understood as grounds for development of an autonomous motivation of sense⁷¹: the plane is wider than being, because it “is a project of any possible meeting with the being”⁷². Appearing primarily means appearing in the world. The laws and internal coherence that govern this plane of appearing are connected to two factors: to the givenness of the whole and to the continuability of experience. These laws are a structure that the I, the ‘subject’ must necessarily understand; without them, “the subject would not be able to exist in clarity about itself and about things”⁷³. The most important phenomenological issues are decided by the appearing field and its conformance with these laws, including the sense of givenness.

3.3 From the given to the world as given

Let us now delve into how the world gives itself as phenomenon. Explaining how we perceive the world remains a problem for Patočka because, on one hand, he takes the world as a whole as a precondition, and on the other hand, we only ever see individual things, not the whole as such. So, there must be something within experience that makes possible its continuability so that “his horizon is given simultaneously to the thing, and step by step, all horizons, that is, the world, which appears here as a concrete figure of the continuability of experience”⁷⁴. In this regard, Patočka writes:

That the rear side of this table is not present in person, does not mean that there is no-present-in-person the fact that the table necessarily has a rear side as a physical object. The same is true for the apprehension of space—the fact that space is always only given from *one* point of view does not mean that it is not given in its own way and does not negate the fact that each of these points of view, with the fraction of space that it captures, is part of a single and unique omni-encapsulating space.⁷⁵

⁷¹ See J. Patočka, *Papiers phénoménologiques*, p. 124.

⁷² J. Patočka, *Die Bewegung der menschlichen Existenz*, p. 282.

⁷³ *Ibidem*, p. 274.

⁷⁴ Renaud Barbaras, *L'ouverture du monde. Lecture de Jan Patočka*, Chatou, Les Éditions de la transparence, 2011, p. 66.

⁷⁵ J. Patočka, *Vom Erscheinen als solchem*, p. 131.

The continuability of experience is given in advance, but it is not a potentiality originating from the consciousness. The subject only discovers one side of beings at a time, but it participates in the manner in which appearing structures every appearance in the world. According to Patočka, the course of sketches presupposes the continuability of experience because the sketches can also not confirm my anticipations. Hence, what allows the development of experience is the framework or background presumed of the world. This framework has to already exist to ensure that the object is formed—which presupposes a plane where exists a deeper level than intuition.

The assumption of this other plane is not given by the intuition but by an independent presence, because it is a law of the phenomenal field that does not depend on contingent. For Patočka, talking about our experiencing of the world implies that the world itself becomes a phenomenon or, rather, that experiencing examines the phenomenon of the world. Experience of the world is different from all other types of experience: it is the original that precedes and makes possible all other experiences. But what conception of experience allows Patočka to say this? He understands experience not in the ordinary sense, but as experience *as such*⁷⁶. For Patočka the world we experience is not the sum of its beings but the totality of its possibilities. It's not me giving myself possibilities but the world giving them to me: "they come to me from the outside, from the world"⁷⁷. The world as a whole, then, is understood as a principle of unity that articulates finite beings. If we adopt this different idea of the world, it is also necessary rethink subjectivity, because the notion of world is crucial to how we understand the structure of human existence. The question then becomes whether the world in Patočka is a simple phenomenon or whether it is phenomenality itself.

A paradoxical thesis in *Plato and Europe* could help us clarify this difficulty. Patočka claims that "the same appears to us in various ways of givenness"⁷⁸. But how can the world be given as a whole *and* by subjective perspectives? Are the two different modes of giving the world compatible? Yes, according to Patočka. In fact he states: "The world is given to us in its entirety, but this does not mean that it is not given to us *perspectivally*, that it is given to us in its full

⁷⁶ That is possible by an *epoché* without reduction.

⁷⁷ J. Patočka, *Vom Erscheinen als solchem*, p. 90.

⁷⁸ J. Patočka, *Platón a Evropa*, 1979, in *SS-2/PD-II*. English Translation: Id., *Plato and Europe*, Stanford, Stanford University Press, 2002, p. 24.

completeness"⁷⁹. There are, therefore, two kinds of givenness: a givenness according to the whole and a givenness in accordance with perspectives. But they are two sides of the same givenness. In the appearing of a thing, always a whole shows itself, but this whole implies an excess of givenness which means a retreat compared to what shows itself to the subject. The given, therefore, can only show itself partially, that is, through perspectives. Everything that shows itself is given, but not all that gives itself also shows itself. For this reason Patočka often says that "[...] the *one* within many ways of showing always has to show itself to us, in various manners of givenness, from many sides"⁸⁰. The question that underlies this statement is: "Where does this unity throughout the different ways of showing, throughout the different ways of how things show themselves to us?"⁸¹ Coming out of the world from the original manifestation means the phenomenon remains identical to itself throughout this process. But how can there be two phases, compatible with each other, of the same givenness: one 'as a whole' and another 'according to perspectives'? According to the Czech philosopher "what reveals itself in its completeness *is not the whole*; these are just individualities, changeable details, varying with our movements, the diversity of perspectives"⁸².

In this way, like the concept of the world, immediate givenness also yet contains a paradoxical element: it is a givenness as a whole but always according to perspectives. Yet a difference between world and givenness nonetheless emerges: givenness occurs *in totality with respect to the world*, but *according to perspectives in reference to the subject*. Therefore a divergence between givenness (from the point of view of the phenomenon that gives itself) and the appearance (from the point of view of the subject that receives the givenness) must exist. The given shows itself according to perspectives, and thus partially, but showing itself according to perspectives does not mean giving itself partially. On the contrary, while something appears to us, it is always given to us as a whole. The givenness of the world is always given in totality, but it is not immediate. Therefore, assuming that givenness according to perspectives implies that the world is given with an excess of givenness compared to the partiality of

⁷⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 72.

⁸⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 133.

⁸¹ *Ibidem*, p. 22.

⁸² *Ibidem*, p. 73.

perspectives: "The world as a whole is then anticipated and involved in every perception"⁸³. For this reason Patočka can claim:

[...] here in front of me there is a lot more than what perception presents us and shows us. The perception of singularity is always already known within an infinite, realizable inactuality. Therefore perception does not occur among the givennesses of always new perceptions, but from the start already takes place within a totality that is here, even if it is not perceived; and it is precisely this totality that, in perception, is articulated in a given part and in a not-given part, in presence and non-presence, actual and non-actual, familiar and foreign.⁸⁴

The phenomenological concept of world, thus, takes on a paradox of saturation: we can speak of the world as a saturated phenomenon⁸⁵. The concept of 'saturated phenomenon' is used to indicate this excess of givenness, which assumes the shape of a lack, of a retreat. In this sense Patočka can say that emptiness "is not a non-givenness but *a way of giving*"⁸⁶, an excess compared to the ability of the concept to understand what is given. Therefore rather than fully grasping the given, the phenomenon always remains irreducible.

Nevertheless this theoretical position poses a question: should we describe the world as phenomenon, or is the world phenomenality itself? While Patočka may not give us a final answer, he does make it clear that the horizon and totality of the world should be thought of as something that "we can never convert to an objective insight"⁸⁷—nor can we doubt them, because any explicit belief in Being presupposes implicit belief in the whole. Let's examine more in detail how the givenness of the world is conceived by Patočka. The world is the unity of what we experience, but it cannot be thought of as an object, because it is not before us in the way an object is: it instead "contains everything and it is in everything

⁸³ J. Patočka, *Qu'est-ce que la phénoménologie?*, Grenoble, Millon, 2002, p. 145.

⁸⁴ J. Patočka, *Le monde naturel et le mouvement de l'existence humaine*, Dordrecht, Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1988, p. 27.

⁸⁵ Jean Luc Marion organizes this phenomenality around the concepts of phenomenon and of saturated givenness (see J.-L. Marion, *Étant donné. Essai d'une phénoménologie de la donation*, Paris, PUF, 1997, p. 429). Everything that is given is not necessarily given in the conceptualizing capacity of the subject. Renaud Barbaras also speaks of a "primitive given" to indicate this diversity of original appearing (see R. Barbaras, *Le mouvement de l'existence: études sur la phénoménologie de Jan Patočka*, Chatou, Les Éditions de la transparence, 2007, p. 19). For Patočka, the fact that there are limits to the world's showing itself to us means that the subject is limited in his capacity to receive givenness in totality.

⁸⁶ J. Patočka, *Vom Erscheinen als solchem*, p. 129.

⁸⁷ J. Patočka, *Le monde naturel et le mouvement de l'existence humaine*, p. 46.

and in all things"⁸⁸. The world cannot even be represented by a subject, because "every representing [*Vorstellende*] subject' is not *in front of* the world, but is contained *in it*"⁸⁹. "And the person who mirrors the world cannot be distinct from it as if he were 'on the other side', as something 'transcendent'"⁹⁰. The world reflects itself and at the same time is embracing itself and producing its own mirror, "being this mirror"⁹¹. The world influences our experience, but "it is never objectively experienced; but rather is at work in the experience as a non-thematic horizon"⁹². Since we always experience individual things, the term horizon would seem to indicate an improper mode of givenness; yet for Patočka, the horizon instead indicates "the promise of something intuitive, concrete and, in this sense, always individual"⁹³. The world is therefore not itself a horizon, an improper mode of givenness, but is "the *omnitudo realitatis* in an authoritative sense"⁹⁴.

Patočka wants to give the world an ontological certainty that cannot be questioned and, for this reason, he calls it "unfalsifiable noema"⁹⁵. The world produces a unity not present in the unique being if this is understood as something objective. Therefore, even if we never really experience the world, "we have to think of it as the unity of all",⁹⁶ because the whole is

The preliminary framework, total, un-individuated, for all individuation. Undivided, it separates and unites all; it is a whole that is not composed of parts, that is incommensurable with each part, a whole that is contained entirely in each part. The world is not a being, and it can be thematized only in relationships that the objects within it offer.⁹⁷

The world is not a sum of objects, but a great backdrop influencing the possibility of the constitution of objects, *i.e.*: the non-objective, presupposed ground that serves as the condition for their perceptibility; untotalizable totality. Every appearance presupposes the unity of the world and has as its form (or *a priori*) the open totality of what may appear. Patočka explains in manner the way world

⁸⁸ J. Patočka, *Vom Erscheinen als solchem*, p. 106, n. 165.

⁸⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 106.

⁹⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 107.

⁹¹ *Idem*.

⁹² *Idem*.

⁹³ *Idem*.

⁹⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 106, n. 165.

⁹⁵ J. Patočka, *Papiers phénoménologiques*, p. 267.

⁹⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 216.

⁹⁷ J. Patočka, *Le monde naturel et le mouvement de l'existence humaine*, p. 100.

given, and how we can understand it. On the contrary, for Husserl, desire to clarify the givenness of the world was a obstacle to understanding its structure⁹⁸. The door giving access to the appearing of the world is the *epoché*. Study of appearance as such means studying what appears within the framework of this whole. To clarify the problem of givenness in Patočka it is necessary therefore turn to the problem of appearing.

4. FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

Investigating givenness in Patočka, it becomes clear that the philosopher uses the concept to contemplate both givenness *and* phenomenality. A formal concept of phenomenon remains an open question in his work. His claim that it is possible for one thing to show itself in different perspectives is not a thesis but a problem that remains to be solved—just like the problem of how the identity of a thing can be maintained when it is given in this way. And this applies not only to the world but also to the *I*, because even the *I* is never fully given. How then can we clarify the phenomenality (or the self-giving) of the phenomenon? Patočka argues that only by observing the phenomenon as such can we find the unity underneath its various modes of givenness: “Through determining how various manners of givenness are connected—through precisely this do I get the structure of the phenomenon as such. Of course, at the same time we naturally have to ask further: *What* allows for various manners of givenness at all, and upon what do they depend?”⁹⁹.

The reasoning developed so far has not let us solve the internal difficulties of the issue of givenness; instead it leads us to a new starting question, *i.e.*: can the phenomenal appear in the world? Therefore, even the question about what is given must be reformulated because no data exist, but only a network of cross-references and external references to the subject. The world constitutes the highest number of original possibilities, an *a priori* field which must be assumed, but it remains a “mystery”¹⁰⁰. It is not by chance that Patočka discusses the grounds of manifestation by means of two eloquent metaphors: the mirror and painting.

⁹⁸ See J. Patočka, *Liberté et sacrifice*, Grenoble, Millon, 1990, p. 194.

⁹⁹ J. Patočka, *Plato and Europe*, p. 29.

¹⁰⁰ Patočka says in *Plato and Europe*: “We cannot freely just dispose of what shows itself in the original, nor of what shows itself not-originally, what shows itself only in a derivative form. In a certain

A mirror reflects everything except itself, or it reflects itself only by reflecting its image as reflected in another mirror. The reflected image is for this reason always poorer than the reality that the mirror reflects.¹⁰¹

Appearing—something in something; that which withdraws before what is shown in it—such as painting to the panel [...]

Painting is something that can itself appear, manifest, but what makes the appearing originally possible does not manifest itself; it is always already overtaken in the direction of the apparent being—of what is present in the original (or in a non-original mode)—because we are the presence of other things, as well as of ourselves, within the whole; we are = we realize (in us is realized) the presence of all these things.

We ourselves do not manifest originally. We do not appear, because we are what withdraws to make way for the presence of things—even the soul does not manifest itself, because it itself makes everything appear—the soul, we cannot decipher it, thanks to the interpretation of the being that appears.¹⁰²

Patočka affirms “that the world shows itself is of course the most important, the most profound fact and problem *with which* philosophy operates, and *in which* it operates”¹⁰³. In this sense, I would argue that a question remains unanswered: can the appearance be subject to rigorous analysis and real knowledge? Patočka addresses this topic only marginally.

Secondly we must say that experience is always experience with or of something. As Ivan Chvatík writes: “To ask ‘what is experience?’ is thus to ask how things are given, how they manifest themselves to us”¹⁰⁴. Developing this problem Patočka reminds us that everything is related, everything is intertwined, and that all ‘things’ are opened and relational. To ask ‘what is the sense of Being of the world that manifests itself’ in Patočka therefore relates to our world experience and has important consequences—consequences that are still insufficiently investigated. It also seems to refer to these observations what Guido Davide Neri says, that is every manifestation of deep blindness in modernity with regard to

sense, we know how the reality that is not actually before us would appear to us, and as a result we know that solely experience of a certain kind could be in agreement with what actually is showing itself to us”
Ibidem, p. 20

¹⁰¹ J. Patočka, *Vom Erscheinen als solchem*, p. 109.

¹⁰² *Ibidem*, pp. 266-267.

¹⁰³ J. Patočka, *Plato and Europe*, p. 175.

¹⁰⁴ I. Chvatík, *Patočka's Project of an Asubjective Phenomenology*, p. 59.

the structure of human existence is manifested “as a ‘loss of the world’”¹⁰⁵. If this is true, the task of phenomenology—that is, our study of appearance, manifestation, or phenomenon—acquires a great importance that moves beyond the theoretical, for it addresses the consciousness with which we live in the world.

¹⁰⁵ Guido Davide Neri, “L’Europa dal fondo del suo declino”, in Id., *Il sensibile, la storia e l’arte: scritti 1957-2001*, Verona, Ombre Corte, 2003, p. 282.

