

Oneself through Another: Ricœur and Patočka on Husserl's Fifth Cartesian Meditation

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Abstract

The paper offers a parallel exposition of Ricœur and Patočka in the narrow context of their respective reading of Husserl's Fifth Cartesian Meditation. At the same time, it follows a broader goal, namely to confront a hermeneutics of the self with a phenomenology freed of subjectivism. Ricœur claims that phenomenology (and its method of intuition) presupposes interpretation. Under this assumption, even the paradox of intersubjectivity in the 5th CM can be restated as an interpretation of the self/other difference. Patočka in his interpretations of the 5th CM drew on his own observations regarding embodiment and a possible self-awareness of the bodily subject. He claims that the first form of explicit self-reflection is made possible through the other. It is against the background of this claim that he gives his original reading of the "appresentation" of the other as leading to the appresentation of myself in the other. At the end, the paper localizes the point in which Ricœur's hermeneutics of the self and Patočka's non-subjectivist phenomenology part ways: it is the possibility of the self to be oneself. While the emphasis in Ricœur and his hermeneutics of the multiplied forms of alterity is put on being oneself as another, in Patočka it is through another that being oneself (or coming to oneself) is possible.

Keywords: Phenomenology, Hermeneutics, Self, Intersubjectivity, Edmund Husserl, Jan Patočka, Paul Ricœur

It would be impossible to imagine the work of Jan Patočka and Paul Ricœur without their initial inspiration by Edmund Husserl's phenomenology. In the present paper, I trace

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this inspiration in one particular area: the problem of intersubjectivity. As the most influential phenomenological text on this topic is Husserl's Fifth Cartesian Meditation, I will pay special attention to the fate of this text in the works of Patočka and Ricœur. This means that their reflections on intersubjectivity which are less connected with Husserl will mostly be omitted, even though they may constitute an original and important part of their thought. Husserl's other analyses of intersubjectivity will also be mostly ignored here.

Ricœur incorporates his reading of Husserl into a non-Husserlian framework, which is his own hermeneutics of the self. He suggests replacing the key concept of phenomenology – intuition – by the concept of interpretation. The self/other distinction is thus something to be understood and interpreted, not something simply given and grasped intuitively. Though this might seem to be the complete abandonment of Husserl's idea of phenomenology, Ricœur claims that this primacy of interpretation [*Auslegung*] over intuition is at work in some of the basic moves of the Fifth Meditation (5th CM).

Patočka fostered the original intention of Husserl to establish phenomenology as inquiry into the appearing of that which appears. In his own attempt to free phenomenology from subjectivism and the "metaphysics of consciousness," he abandons Husserl in many respects. Nevertheless, he retains and develops at least two aspects of Husserl's treatise: the understanding of the lived body as the crucial aspect of intersubjectivity and the idea of analogical transfer. Patočka, nevertheless, develops this idea as explaining not only the possibility of my experience of the other, but also of my knowledge of myself. The encounter of the other occasions the first form of an explicit self-reflection.

My parallel exposition of Ricœur and Patočka in this narrow context of their respective reading of the 5th CM has a broader goal, that is, a confrontation of the hermeneutics of the self with a phenomenology freed of subjectivism. As I will suggest at the end, if there is a remaining and unresolved problem with the very approach to the subject (or the self), it is in the hermeneutics of the self.

1. The Task of the Fifth Meditation

At the end of his Fifth Meditation, Husserl articulates a view that repeatedly aroused disagreement and was – together with certain assertions in *Ideas I* (Husserl 1976, for example, §§ 44 and 46) – generally taken to be the example of an extreme form of Husserlian subjectivism. Not only does Husserl say that every entity and every sense has to be analyzed in relation to the “ego”, but he also claims that “all that exists” is constituted in this ego itself (Husserl 1960, 83) and that it is only “understandable as a ‘product’ of transcendental subjectivity” (ibid. 85; see also 84 and 91). Whereas the first claim affirms that there is a strict *correlation* between the ego and “all that exists”, the second, stronger claim seems to affirm the *dependency* of “all that exists” on transcendental subjectivity. In connection with these claims, Husserl arrives at an understanding of phenomenology as a “self-explication of the ego” (Husserl 1960, § 41, 85; *Selbstausslegung des Ego*, Husserl 1950, § 41, 118).

Both Ricœur and Patočka believe that these claims forsake the original spirit of phenomenology by embracing an unacceptable idealism (Ricœur 1986), an “idealist metaphysics of consciousness” (Patočka 1970, 331). Nevertheless, both Ricœur and Patočka pay special attention to the analysis of intersubjectivity in the 5th CM as a way of showing the limits of the Husserlian position.

Husserl himself was well aware that his idea of an “egological science” may encounter objections precisely because of its radically subjective character. In his own articulation of the objection, phenomenology entails solipsism. It is precisely this objection which opens the last Cartesian meditation. Husserl’s own phrasing of the objection (Husserl 1960, § 42, 89; see also Husserl 1959, 173–74) names with astounding clarity what is at stake – namely, the capacity of phenomenological *epoché* to institute a universal, philosophical reflection, and not only a mode of reflection that encapsulates the meditating “I” within himself or herself. A different, yet related way to put the objection is to doubt the capacity of phenomenology to account for the fact that we encounter and experience other people: “But what about other egos, who surely are not a mere intending and

intended *in me...* but, according to their sense, precisely *others?*" (ibid.)

Husserl emphasizes right from the start that the experience of others is a complex one: I experience the other (1) as an organism which really exists in the world; (2) as somebody who perceives the world, and myself, from his own perspective, that is, as a "subject for this world"; in addition (3), I perceive the world as accessible for anyone, as being "actually there for everyone" (ibid., 91). This "thereness-for-everyone" (92; "das Für-jedermann-da," Husserl 1950, 124) is implied in the very concept of objectivity. This is a deep conviction of Husserl: objectivity presupposes intersubjectivity. The same holds true for the concept of "cultural entity": cultural objects, such as books, tools, and traffic signs, are cultural objects only if other people exist who perceive and use them as such. It follows that the fate of phenomenology understood as a universal philosophy (which addresses the topics such as conditions of objective knowledge or the being of the world) depends on a well-grounded account of intersubjectivity. Nevertheless, in this idea of intersubjectivity, the other is not just another person I encounter in the world. It is another subject for whom the world exists, for whom objects have their meaning as natural objects, cultural objects, and so forth. The other is the other transcendental ego. Consequently, the intersubjectivity Husserl needs to account for is a "transcendental intersubjectivity" (Husserl 1960, 130).

There seems to be a contradiction between the universal (and intersubjective) pretention of phenomenology and the radically egologic character of phenomenological inquiry. Husserl believes he has done away with this semblance of contradiction precisely through his analysis of intersubjectivity in the 5th CM (Husserl 1960, 150). Before I deal with Ricœur's and Patočka's readings of the 5th CM, it is necessary to briefly recall the way Husserl proceeds. I will limit my exposition to four steps:

1. the reduction to the "sphere of ownness";
2. the *Leib/Körper* distinction;
3. the "analogizing apprehension" ("appresentation") of the other;

4. the particular mode of givenness of the other.

We can say, by way of anticipation, that while both Ricœur and Patočka highly appreciate steps 2 to 4, they have serious doubts concerning the possibility of step 1, the reduction to the sphere of my own.

(1) In the reduction to the “sphere of ownness” [*Eigenheitssphäre*], the meditating ego excludes all its intentional relations to others (to their bodily presence, to their behavior, and to the ways they aim at the ego itself), and it abstracts from all predicates that the world receives from others (from the world as existing objectively, that is, “for everyone,” as comprising “cultural entities” and so forth). This reduction to the sphere of my own (of my own perceptions and movements) lays bare what Husserl calls the “mere nature” (Husserl 1960, 96; *bloße Natur*, Husserl 1950, 128) or “nature” included in my ownness” (96; *eigenheitliche “Natur,”* 127; the quotation marks are Husserl’s). This “mere nature” comprises only what is experienced by myself without any meaning that would depend on others.

(2) When describing what one finds in his or her experience reduced to one’s own sphere, Husserl articulates an extremely influential observation concerning one’s bodily experience. What one encounters in the reduced sphere is bodies. Yet one of them is special:

Among the bodies [*Körper*] belonging to this “Nature” and included in my peculiar ownness, I then find my lived body [*Leib*] as uniquely singled out – namely as the only one of them that is not just a body but precisely a lived body [*nicht bloßer Körper.... sondern eben Leib*]: the sole Object ... to which, in accordance with experience, I ascribe fields of sensation... the only Object “in” which I “rule and govern” immediately, governing particularly in each of its “organs” (ibid., 97, trans. modified; orig. 128).

The distinction between the (physical) body and the lived body does not mean that these characteristics (*Leib, Körper*) are mutually exclusive. My lived body is also a body. Yet other bodies are *not* lived bodies, at least not within the strict limits of the reduction to the sphere of my ownness. This is precisely one of the main results of this reduction: “If I reduce *other* men to what is included in my ownness, I get *bodies* included therein; if I reduce *myself* as a man, I get ‘my animate

body’ and ‘my soul’, or myself as a psychophysical unity” (ibid., 97, trans. modified).

(3) Nevertheless, in my everyday non-reduced experience, I always grasp other people not as mere physical bodies, but as others. How does this come about? It is at this point that the famous notion of appresentation intervenes. Husserl calls appresentation an operation by which the consciousness makes co-present something that is not immediately present. When perceiving an object, we understand the unseen rear side of it as being co-present with its front side. When encountering a body, we grasp it as another person precisely because we not only see a body, but we also make an ego co-present to it:

Let us assume that another man enters our perceptual sphere. Primordially reduced, that signifies: In the perceptual sphere pertaining to my primordial Nature, a body is presented... Since in this Nature and this world, my lived body is the only body that is or can be constituted originally as a lived body..., the body over there, which is nevertheless apprehended as a lived body, must have derived this sense by an *apperceptive transfer from my lived body* (ibid., 112; orig. 140).

This transfer of the meaning “lived body” from my own body to another one is based on the similarity between the two bodies [*Körper*], of “that body over there with my body” (ibid., 111/140). The other body is grasped as a lived body precisely because I make another ego co-present to that body. There is a similarity at the basis of the transfer (two bodies) and its outcome (my ego/the other ego). This is why Husserl speaks, regarding the outcome of the transfer, about assimilative apprehension [*verähnlichende Apperzeption*] (Husserl 1950, 141).

(4) The other is thus *given*: he or she is present in front of me, yet not fully or immediately perceived or grasped by me. When I see somebody smile, I perceive this behavior of another person “as having a physical side that indicates something psychic appresentatively.” (Husserl 1960, 114) Yet I cannot grasp directly the enjoyment lived by the other: it is and always will be his or her own joy. This is the somewhat paradoxical and still understandable way that the other is given for Husserl: “The character of the existent other’ [*der Charakter des seienden “Fremden”*] has its basis in this kind of verifiable

accessibility of what is not originally accessible.” The experience of the other is thus an experience that can never be “fulfilled”; it is a “transcending experience” (ibid., 114), an experience that “never demands and never is open to fulfillment by presentation” (ibid., 119; *nie Erfüllung durch Präsentation fordert und zulässt*, Husserl 1950, 148). It follows, for Husserl, that the experience of the other has its own kind of verification or falsification. The analysis of this particular mode of givenness of the other still falls within the domain of self-explication. Husserl concludes: “I... acquire by ‘self-explication’ (explication of what I find in myself) every transcendency.” (ibid., 149)

2. Bibliographical Remarks on Relevant Texts by Ricœur and Patočka

From the early stages of their own philosophical work onward, both Ricœur and Patočka read and commented on Husserl’s writings. Their first philosophical writings adopt Husserlian phenomenology as their own methodological basis. During the Second World War, while a prisoner of war, Ricœur worked on his commented translation of Husserl’s *Ideas I* (published in 1950), and simultaneously on a phenomenological – Husserlian – description of the fundamental structures of the will (*Philosophie de la volonté I: Le volontaire et l’involontaire*, also published in 1950). In its closing chapters, Patočka’s doctoral thesis (1931) on the concept of evidence culminates in a treatise on Husserl (now in Patočka 2008, 13–125), and his habilitation *The Natural World as a Philosophical Problem* (1936; 2008, 127–261; English trans. Patočka 2016b) is deeply Husserlian.

There is, though, one point of divergence. Both Ricœur and Patočka accentuate the practical and affective dimension of the life of the subject. Yet, whereas Patočka believes this to be compatible with the idea of transcendental subjectivity, Ricœur does not. Though Patočka suggests that the “analogical appresentation” presupposes a more fundamental layer of “primordial, practical and affective tendencies” (Karfík 2008, 71–72; Patočka 2016b, III/6, esp. 80-81), he still assumes the role of an advocate when dealing with Husserl’s account of intersubjectivity who is, for example, obliged to deal with the

objection of solipsism (Patočka 2016b, II/7; Patočka 2008, 308–21; see also Patočka 2014, 99–106). In contrast, Ricœur states his reservations. His analysis of voluntary acts (deciding, acting, executing a voluntary movement) focuses on the subject as an incarnate existence, not as a transcendental subjectivity. The latter idea makes it impossible, claims Ricœur, to address the problems of the embodiment and the experience of others. In his introduction to his *Philosophie de la volonté I*, Ricœur delivers a trenchant verdict on the 5th CM and Husserlian phenomenology as such: “it [Husserlian phenomenology] never takes my *existence* as a body really seriously, not even in the fifth *Cartesian Meditation*. My body is neither constituted in an objective sense, nor constitutive as a transcendental subject—it eludes this pair of opposites. It is the existing I.” (Ricœur 1966, 16; orig. Ricœur 1950, 19)

Though in their later philosophy Patočka and Ricœur parted ways with Husserlian phenomenology because of its “subjectivism” and “idealism,” they continued to write extensively about Husserl and about the 5th CM. In the remainder of this article, I will focus only on their later writings. In a different philosophical context – that of hermeneutical philosophy (Ricœur) or a-subjective phenomenology (Patočka) – the Husserlian analysis of alterity and its key paradox can be considered from a new perspective.

We have several Patočka texts on the 5th CM from the period 1965 to 1968 (Patočka 2009, 7–171; in English, Patočka 1996; Patočka 2009, 255–64; and Patočka 1992, in English, 1998, Lecture VIII). At this time, he became critical of Husserl in many respects: he no longer shared the idea of transcendental subjectivity, yet he still considered the project of phenomenology understood as unprejudiced analysis of the phenomenal field to be a philosophical endeavor of the utmost importance. In his own interpretations of the 5th CM, Patočka drew on his own observations regarding embodiment and a possible self-awareness of the bodily subject.

It is may be surprising to see Ricœur intensively and repeatedly addressing Husserl’s account of alterity after his turn to hermeneutics, which is documented especially well in the 1969 volume *Le conflit des interprétations* (Ricœur 1969). In

1975, Ricœur published an article *Phenomenology and Hermeneutics* (1986; English tr. in Ricœur 2007, 25–52) in which he claims that phenomenology (and its method of intuition) presupposes interpretation. Under this assumption, even the paradox of intersubjectivity in the 5th CM can be restated as an interpretation of the self/other difference. In the subsequent years, Ricœur addressed intersubjectivity in the 5th CM in the decisive, concluding passages of two of his later works (Ricœur 1990 and 2004b).

The following exposition of Patočka's and Ricœur's writings on the 5th CM in their later philosophy will first address Ricœur's and Patočka's criticism of Husserl's idealism so that their diverging views on the way phenomenology can then be restated. Subsequently, I will focus on their resulting reading of the 5th CM.

3. Ricœur: Toward a Hermeneutical Reading of the Fifth Cartesian Meditation

In his article “Phenomenology and Hermeneutics,” Ricœur criticizes what he calls the “Husserlian idealism,” which he summarizes as follows “The place of plenary intuition is subjectivity. All transcendence is doubtful; immanence alone is indubitable.” (Ricœur 2007, 27) Ricœur describes the concept of intentionality, which he holds to be the key phenomenological discovery, in a way that explicitly draws on Sartre's 1939 article on intentionality (Sartre 1998). The same emphasis in Ricœur's own phrasing runs as follows: “That consciousness is outside of itself, that it is *toward meaning* before meaning is for it, and above all, before consciousness is *for itself*. Is this not what the central discovery of phenomenology implies?” (Ricœur 2007, 39) Consequently, it is necessary “to shift the axis of interpretation from the problem of subjectivity to that of the world” (ibid., 36), in order to preclude the subjectivist, the wrong, understanding of intentionality.

Moreover, when analyzing intentionality, “idealist” phenomenology committed another error: it made abundant use of the subject–object terminology. Without trying to denounce a certain legitimacy of this terminology, Ricœur claims that such a relation presupposes a larger context that it makes itself part

of: “the problematic of objectivity presupposes a prior relation of inclusion that encompasses the allegedly autonomous subject and the allegedly adverse object. This inclusive or encompassing relation is what I call belonging.” (ibid., 30) To put it differently, the category of belonging – the Heideggerian “being-in-the-world” – is more fundamental than the subject–object relation. The “ontological priority of belonging” (ibid., 30) has, according to Ricœur, an important consequence: the primary epistemic act is not the intuition of that which is presently given, but an interpretation that situates it in a larger context, and explicates its implicit meaning, which “stands on the horizon,” or – to use Heideggerian terms – understands something *as* something. Ricœur summarizes the opposition of intuition and interpretation by saying: “the key hypothesis of hermeneutic philosophy is that interpretation is an open process that no single vision can conclude.” (ibid., 33)

The move from intuition to interpretation as the fundamental category of a philosophical reflection does not lead to the abandonment of phenomenology. Phenomenology, nevertheless, has to “conceive of its method as an *Auslegung*, an exegesis, an explication, an interpretation” (ibid., 43). According to Ricœur, certain of Husserl’s descriptions of experience *de facto* proceed as its *Auslegung*. Ricœur himself endeavors to demonstrate the presence of the method of interpretation in *Logical Investigations* and *Cartesian Meditations*. If experience is always related to a horizon, it contains a “surplus of meaning” to be explicated. This holds true both for my perceptual experience of things and for my experience of others: analysis of experience proceeds as an unfolding (that is, explication, *Auslegung*) of the “surplus of meaning” which is present in my experience.

The paradoxical attempt to constitute the other “in me,” while constituting it “as other” or, to put it differently, the paradox in which “another existence breaks away from my existence at the very moment when I posit the latter as unique,” is present already on the level of the perceptual experience of things. Once I recognized that the thing is an entity that transcends my conscious life, the thing “tore itself away from my life as something other than me.” (ibid., 49; see

also 1967, 116–17) The paradox becomes more acute once the problem of the other ego enters the scene.

According to Ricœur, the very first step of the 5th CM, the reduction to the sphere of ownness, is an example of *Auslegung* (Ricœur 2007, 51). The sphere of ownness is, on this reading, not simply “given” in “some sort of brute experience”; it is not a given “from which I could progress toward another given, which would be the other.” It is a result of my interpretation of the experience (ibid., see also Ricœur 1967, 122),¹ arrived at by way of abstracting from all that is “foreign.” The explication of that which is “my own” is thus inseparable from the explication of that which is “foreign.” Or, as Ricœur put it, “[t]here is no better way to say that what is one’s own and what is foreign are polarly constituted in the *same interpretation*.” (Ricœur 2007, 51; trans. modified according to Ricœur 1986, 80) Nevertheless, these two observations (namely, that the “sphere of ownness” is not a simple given and that its analysis is dependent on abstraction) do not constitute an objection against such an analysis. The reduction to the sphere of ownness uncovers, indeed, what it means to be an individual, embodied, and living being. In non-reduced experience, the body was tacitly presupposed. The reduction to the “sphere of ownness” is but a “coming to awareness” of the profound “wealth” (*richesse*) of this bodily life. It is important, however, that this coming to awareness is – according to this hermeneutical reading – an “endless” one (Ricœur 1967, 122; *interminable*, 2004a, 243).

How does the recourse to the *Auslegung* shed a new light on the key paradox of the 5th CM, that is, on the conflict between the description of the other as being “other than me” and the constitution of the other “in me”? The hermeneutical reading is capable of grasping the sense in which the other is “in me” without running into paradoxes. Ricœur resolutely refuses to read this “in me” as referring to my “sphere of consciousness.” Instead, for him it refers to my existence. He makes his point clearly in the following passage, which is a commentary on the 5th CM (Husserl 1960, § 46, 102).

The other is included not in my existence as given, but ... as it [my existence] is characterized by an “open and infinite horizon”, a

potentiality of meaning which I cannot master in a glance. I can indeed say therefore, that the experience of others merely “develops” my own identical being, but what it develops was already more than myself since what I call here my own identical being is a potentiality of meaning which exceeds the gaze of reflection (Ricœur 2007, 52).

Concerning methodology, it is obvious that this hermeneutical reading of the 5th CM prioritizes certain Husserlian ideas, such as the claim that each experience has its horizon (see also Husserl 1985, § 8), while intentionally downplaying others, such as the Husserlian claim that there is a sphere of immanence which is – epistemologically – prior to transcendence. As we have seen, Ricœur believes that it is precisely by taking recourse to *Auslegung* (interpretation) that Husserl succeeded in settling the “latent conflict between two projects – a project of describing transcendence and a project of constituting in immanence.” (Ricœur, 2007, 50) The other is neither “constructed” on the basis of some inner experiences nor simply “described” as being other than me. The first option would entail an idealism, according to which the other is dependent, in his or her being and meaning, on myself. The second option would run into some kind of empiricism, which is not true to experience, since it is unable to account for the combination of presentation and a-presentation that is implied in my experience of the other. The hermeneutic reading of the 5th CM avoids both the idealistic and empiricist analysis of the experience of the other. The “explication,” as Ricœur states, is “held midway between a philosophy of construction and a philosophy of description” (1967, 140).²

Ricœur returns to his hermeneutical reading of the 5th CM at the end of his 1990 work *Soi-même comme un autre* (English trans. *Oneself as Another*, 1992). Let us briefly recall the “hermeneutics of the self” developed in this work. It constitutes the large framework of Ricœur’s reading of the 5th CM. The hermeneutics of the self takes alterity or otherness to be constitutive of the self. Moreover, Ricœur explicitly emphasizes that there are different forms of alterity. “Polysemy of the Other” (1992, 21 and 318) explicitly precludes the reduction of otherness “to the otherness of another Person” (ibid., 317). Ricœur distinguishes three forms of alterity: the otherness of one’s own body, the otherness of the foreign (of

another self), and the otherness of the conscience (*Gewissen*). He analyzes the first two types of otherness in his reading of the 5th CM.

The otherness of one's own body is, according to Ricœur, implied by the Husserlian *Leib/Körper* distinction, more precisely by the very concept of *Leib*, which he prefers to translate as flesh (*la chair*). I have already quoted the key passage according to which the lived body is "the sole Object... to which, in accordance with experience, I ascribe fields of sensation... the only Object 'in' which I 'rule and govern' immediately, governing particularly in each of its 'organs'." Ricœur suggests reading this passage as showing the lived body "as a paradigm of otherness" (ibid., 324). The primordial features which make this body mine – the sense of touch, for instance, – and which make it possible it to be the "organ of the will" (as Husserl says in 1989, § 38, 159) and the basis of my free movement, all these features are not objects of choice or desire: "I, as this man: this is the foremost otherness of the flesh with respect to all initiative. Otherness here signifies primordially with respect to any *design*. Starting from here, I can *reign over*. ... the 'I can' however, does not derive from the 'I want' but provides a ground for it" (Ricœur 1992, 324). Consequently, "selfhood" implies for Ricœur its own, proper otherness, which stands close to the Heideggerian concept of thrownness (ibid., 327). The passivity of my lived body with respect to all intentions and actions I can undertake represents the otherness in myself. My own body is the paradigm of this "primary otherness."³ It is because there is an "irreducible distance of alterity at the very heart of our flesh" that the task of a hermeneutic mediation arises, as Richard Kearney suggests in his project of "carnal hermeneutics" (Kearney 2016, 38).

The *Leib/Körper* distinction brings Ricœur to another observation concerning otherness, that is, the otherness of other selves. The concept of the "body" (*Körper*), or, more precisely, the possibility to turn the lived body into *a* body, presupposes the otherness of the other person: "the otherness of others as foreign, other than me... seems to be... prior to the reduction to ownness. For my flesh appears as a body among bodies only to the extent that I am myself an other among all others." (Ricœur

1992, 326) Starting from here, Ricoeur again – in a different way than in *Phenomenology and Hermeneutics* – shows the reduction to the sphere of ownness to presuppose the other. In *Oneself as Another*, Ricoeur states this as follows: “all the arguments that are intended to ‘constitute’ the other in and on the basis of the sphere of ownness are circular... the other is presupposed.” (ibid., 332) The body (*Körper*) which is the basis for the analogical transfer (as being a body among bodies) presupposes the other: “To say that my flesh is also a body, does this not imply that it appears in just this way to the eyes of others?” (ibid., 333)

For Ricoeur, this “failure of the constitution of others” by no way disqualifies the Husserlian account of intersubjectivity. On the contrary, it provides an opportunity for what Ricoeur holds to be the “authentic discovery” of the 5th CM, “namely the discovery of the paradoxical character of the other’s mode of *givenness*.” (ibid., 333) This mode of givenness is called “appresentation.” In my experience, the other is not represented (on the basis of some sign or picture), but precisely given. And yet, he or she is not given immediately; the other’s experiences can never be mine; “the gap can never be bridged between the presentation of my experience and the appresentation of your experience.” (ibid., 333) The analogizing appresentation combines similarity (the other is also an ego, a subject of experiences) and dissymmetry (these experiences will never become mine). Now, for Ricoeur, the final and most important result of the paradoxical operation called “analogical transfer” or “appresentation” is definitely *not* the constitution of otherness, but something else: “If it [the analogical transfer] does not create otherness, which is always presupposed, it confers upon it a specific meaning, namely the admission that the other is not condemned to remain a stranger but can become *my counterpart*, that is, someone who, *like* me, says ‘I.’” (ibid., 335)

Husserl claims in the 4th CM that transcendental subjectivity is a “subjectivity that constitutes the sense and being” of all imaginable entities (Husserl 1960, 84). Now, for Ricoeur again, the real achievement of the “analogical transfer” has nothing to do with the *being* of the other; it is limited to the “sense of ego,” which is being transferred from myself to the

other. This is a *transfer of similarity* (the uncovering of similarity in somebody who nevertheless stays other than me). It combines the (transferred) similarity and the (presupposed) alterity. It is strictly limited to the *sense* of his or her being other (and of my being myself): "Resemblance and dissymmetry have a bearing on the sense of ego and on that of alter ego. Kept within these limits, Husserl's discovery is ineffaceable." (Ricœur 1992, 334)

The last quotation also illustrates the philosophical position Ricœur adopts concerning the otherness of another person. He embraces neither the suggestion made by Lévinas, that the other precedes the self, nor the suggestion attributed to Husserl, that the self precedes the other. More precisely, he embraces both suggestions *simultaneously* by taking dissymmetry, be it in one direction or the other, to be an indispensable ingredient of our experience of the other. This can best be seen on the final pages of his 2004 book on recognition, *Parcours de la reconnaissance* [*The Course of Recognition*]. Ricœur suggests that the idea of mutual recognition (of myself by the other and vice versa) has its limitations. Both Lévinas and Husserl recall that there is, at the bottom of each mutuality, an original asymmetry:

Admitting the threat that lies in forgetting this dissymmetry first calls attention to the irreplaceable character of each of the partners in the exchange. The one is not the other. We exchange gifts, but not places. The second benefit of this admission is that it protects mutuality against the pitfalls of a fusional union, whether in love, friendship, or fraternity on a communal or a cosmopolitan scale. A just distance is maintained at the heart of mutuality, a just distance that integrates respect into intimacy. (Ricœur 2005, 263)

Ricœur does indeed tend to see the movement of the self toward the other and the movement in the opposite direction as being "dialectically complementary." He understands the phenomenon of promise to corroborate this "intersecting dialectic of oneself and the other." Keeping a promise can be seen both as my own activity, and as a capacity accorded to me by the other: "If another were not counting on me, would I be capable of keeping my word, of maintaining myself?" (Ricœur 1992, 340)

One of the main assumptions of *Oneself as Another* consists in holding the self to have been constituted by different

forms of alterity: alterity of one's own body, of the other person, and of the conscience. The "as" in the title *Oneself as Another* is meant in a strong sense of implication: "oneself inasmuch as being other." (ibid., 3) Yet, if the self is always mediated and interwoven with different sorts of otherness, how can he or she be himself or herself? And what does it mean to be oneself? In his hermeneutics of the self, Ricœur gives no simple answer. Being oneself is related to a particular type of conviction or trust. Ricœur turns these categories into the concept of "attestation": it is an "attestation of self," an "attestation of being oneself acting and suffering." (ibid., 22-23) In *Oneself as Another*, the concept of self-attestation is related, for instance, to action (which may be attributed to myself or not) or to the life-unity grasped in the form of a story. With respect to action done by myself, I can *attest* that this is what I did. With respect to my own life-story, I can *attest* that this is who I am. But what is the relationship between self-attestation and the different forms of alterity (of my body, of the other person, of my conscience)? Even at the end of his work, Ricœur refrains from answering this question. He emphasizes, instead, "the need to maintain a certain equivocalness of the status of the Other on the strictly philosophical plane." (1992, 355)

4. Patočka: "Life's drive ... to other beings makes us who we are"

In his writings on Husserl from the 1960s and 1970s, Patočka criticizes Husserl's phenomenology along similar lines as Ricœur does. For instance, in a 1970 article, Patočka praises Husserl for having established phenomenology as an investigation of the way things appear, as an inquiry into the sphere of phenomena. Nevertheless, the project of inquiry into the appearing as such [*das Erscheinen als solches*], which was Patočka's favorite expression at this time, was unfortunately conceived in a subjective manner. There is a "crude metaphysical theory" or an "idealist metaphysics of consciousness" in Husserl's heavy use of the transcendent/immanent distinction (Patočka 1970, 331; see also Patočka 1975, 81). In his criticism, Patočka finds Husserl's subjectivist stance wanting in at least in three respects:

Husserl (1) gives a false idea of the subject by overstating the capacities of explicit self-reflection of the consciousness, (2) offers an inconceivable account of the world by making it dependent on the consciousness of the subject(s), and (3) abandons the original ambition of phenomenology to analyze “appearing as such.”

I will focus especially on the first point of the critique. In this regard, Patočka's own exposition of the “life” of the subject, of its capacity to know itself and to enter into an exchange with others, is more important than his critique of Husserl. Before discussing the Husserlian concept of intersubjectivity (and the 5th CM), Patočka deliberately analyzes the “self” as bodily dynamism (Patočka 1998, lectures I-VII; 1996, 137-51). His detailed reflections can be read as an alternative, non-Husserlian development of the idea of intentionality: every consciousness is directed to something. Patočka does not, however, refer to consciousness. Moreover, he reads “directedness” as referring not to an epistemological relation (as a form of knowledge of something), but to a movement of the living body, to “*our being toward things*” (1998, 42). The “centrifugal stream that governs our life” (ibid., 36) is oriented towards particular, practically relevant things that I can use, articles that can fulfill my bodily needs, and it plays out within horizons of the world I live in. Patočka uses the concept of horizon in the Husserlian sense (the “inner and outer horizon”), that is, as something that makes our experience not point-by-point orientation towards one object, but a continuous passage from one horizon of possibility to another one.

As we have seen, Patočka characterizes the directedness of the bodily self toward things and worldly possibilities as a movement. He takes this dynamic directedness to be the primordial structure of ourselves. He explicitly terms it “primordial dynamism,” and describes it with regard to intention and its fulfillment (ibid., 40-41) or potentiality and actuality (ibid., 45), yet the vocabulary he uses is neither strictly Aristotelian (*dynamis-energeia*), nor strictly Husserlian, but more, so to speak, energetic or vitalistic: the self is repeatedly defined as a bodily thrust (in the Czech original, *elán*), energy, force (*síla*), or “the drive of primordial longing”

(*ibid.*, 41; *původní prahnoucí elán*, 1992, 34). Patočka is willing to understand needs and instincts not as physiological mechanisms, but as components of this primordial dynamism (Patočka 1996, 145; see the remarkable note 22 on a possible phenomenology of instinct).

When developing his phenomenology of the bodily “primordial dynamism,” Patočka distinguishes pre-reflective self-awareness from explicit reflective self-awareness. In our thrust, we are aimed at things and “turned away” from ourselves. This is what Patočka expresses by saying that the “I, too, is a horizon of a kind” (Patočka 1998, 39, 47, and 58) and he repeatedly quotes what Merleau-Ponty says about the “bodily space”: “it is the darkness of the theater required for the clarity of the performance.” (Merleau-Ponty 2012, 103) Patočka shows that bodily dynamism (the self) can gradually become aware of itself in different ways: in pain and pleasure or in emotions I “find myself,” but I am also given to myself in the sense of an objective body. In addition to this, Patočka makes an important claim that the first form of explicit self-reflection comes about through the other: the “I” defined as the incessant “projection into the world... returns to itself because it encounters a mirror.... a place from which further continuation is a return to itself. This place is other being – Thou” (Patočka 1998, 36). And, “This return to the self through the other is the *first type of explicit reflection.*” (*ibid.*, 51) This might seem to be Sartrean (I see myself as seen by the other), yet Patočka’s idea is actually different, as I will now try to demonstrate.

If I come to myself explicitly for the first time thanks to the other, it presupposes that I am able to refer to the other as another self. It is precisely here that the idea of the analogical transfer intervenes. Patočka obviously comes to the topic of analogical transfer with different presuppositions. That which is transferred from myself to the other is not the fact that he or she is also another ego (the “sense ego”), but that he or she is a “dynamism” similar to myself: “Other beings are the cores of analogous dynamism.” (*ibid.* 55, 58) Consequently, the encounter between myself and the other is not a Sartrean objectification of the other by my gaze, but an analogizing transfer of the dynamic character of my own being. If I make

one step more, I can for the first time explicitly return to myself as to dynamism: "I see myself through the other not as an object only but also as a dynamism contained in the bodily presence." (ibid., 52) The idea of analogical transfer helps Patočka to reject the Sartrean concept of the intersubjective encounter understood by Sartre as an objectification of myself through the other or vice versa.

The commentary on the 5th CM (Patočka 1998, lecture VII, and 1996, chap. 8; see further Patočka's postface to CM 2009, 238-64) gives several interesting suggestions about how to make use of Husserl's analysis, and even how to defend it, without embracing the subjectivist idea of consciousness. Let us deal first with the presuppositions of the analogical transfer, and then with what Patočka takes to be its outcome.

Patočka clearly states that the analogical transfer presupposes the objective body: the "experience of the object-body, the experience of *oneself in the third person*"... "plays a primary role in the experience of the other." (1996, 152) This is indeed a restatement of the Husserlian passage in which Husserl says that the analogical transfer takes as its starting point the similarity of two objective bodies (*Körper*), of "that body over there with my body." (Husserl 1960, 111) In Patočka's rendering: "the objective appearance of my subjective body... associates itself with an analogous appearance of the second person" (Patočka 1996, 153). Now, this seems but a variant of the circularity objection we encountered in Ricœur: the other is not "constituted" but presupposed, since the very fact that I perceive my body as an object presupposes the other who sees me. Patočka occasionally admits that the other accomplishes the objectification of myself, but he still points out that the experience of my body as an object does not necessarily require the other. There is an experience of my body as an object which is still my own experience. In this experience, I am myself "*given to myself as an object, as a body that exists in alienation.*" (ibid., 153-54) We experience "objective corporeity" (Patočka's term here) when our body is not an "organ" of our free movement or center of our activity, but something we have to care for (a hungry or thirsty body), or something we just sense without moving it. "A body which does not respond, which does not yield,

which is not skillful, ceases to be my body in one sense and becomes an object for me.” (Patočka 1998, 44). Patočka separates the “body-as-mine: the body-subject, sensing, actively capable and realizing its possibilities,” and the “body-object, body sensed and given in distantiating sensibility... body of the same order as all other objectivities.” (Patočka 1996, 147) Patočka’s term “body in the third person” refers precisely to this original experience, which is still *my* experience of *my body as an object*.

It is of the utmost importance for Patočka to defend the autonomous status of the subjective experience (my experience) of my own “objective corporeity.” First of all, he thus makes clear his distance from Sartre (and from his “I cannot be an object for myself,” Sartre 1992, 270): there is an experience of my own “objectivity” which is not merely a result of external objectification (Patočka 1998, 50-51). Secondly, it shows that my existence is not reducible to the immanent sphere of consciousness, that it is profoundly bodily and external. Thus, the idea of the “body in the third person,” which Patočka attributes to Husserl, is an argument against a certain understanding of Husserl:

This comment concerning the necessity of the objective body for the experience of the other as such... shows that it is not really possible to present all of the experience of the other on the level of the I as reduced to the subjective immanence. ... Constitution of the other I, however, presupposes that I and the other I are not wholly isolated streams but share a common terrain. This common terrain cannot be the mere phenomenon of my body – that is still strictly private – but only the object-body... Thus the structure of intersubjectivity is another reason for rejecting the reduction towards purely subjective immanence (1996, 154, n. 33).

This quotation is important not only as part of a discussion between Patočka and Husserl, but also because it indicates the role attributed to the “objective body”: it is a “common terrain” or “common ground,” which makes possible the experience of the other. Since I can experience my own body from a distance, I can compare this body and the body of another person and see that they are similar. This secures the basis for analogical transfer (and precludes the objection of circularity).⁴ Nevertheless, “objective corporeality” is not the only common ground for analogical transfer. In his 1968 lecture

course, Patočka also includes here objects of daily use – a chair to sit on, a piece of chalk to write with. They are forms of “objectified subjectivity”: “our subject is thus given in practical objects.” Together they create a shared field, that is, they are a precondition for appresentation: “Appresentation presupposes a field common to more than one life stream.” (Patočka 1998, 67) Things that I can use for something (like a piece of chalk or a chair) are open not only to “my thrust into objectivity,” but also “to every similar [or, in the original, analogous] thrust.” Consequently, I can “read off the meaning of that comportment and so also the meaning of other subjectivities.” (ibid., 56)

To complete the picture, it is important to say that Patočka elaborates the idea of the “shared field” at an even more general level, which is the concept of the world. He comments on Alfred Schütz and his criticism of the 5th CM. He approvingly mentions one point of Schütz’s critique: the common world cannot be based on the communication of many subjects. The opposite is more likely to be true: communication presupposes the commonality of the world (Patočka 2009, 260, see also 1996, 169). To this, Patočka adds: “The impossibility of deriving the common world from communication is linked to the impossibility of the meaningful structure ‘the world’ in the most elementary sense to be constituted at all, that is, to be explained as a complicated structure built upon more elementary operations.” (Patočka 2009, 261) It is not the commonality of the world, but “only” the objectivity that is dependent on intersubjective interaction. In this respect, Patočka is still Husserlian, and also becomes more and more interested in the *historicity* of the intersubjectively established objectivity (which is an important topic of Husserl’s late thought).

We have, I believe, established that analogical transfer *is possible* (thanks to the shared field of “objective corporeity” and “practical objects”) and that *that which gets transferred* is “primordial dynamism”: we understand the other as a being that – in a way similar to our own – ‘throws’ himself or herself toward things and other people. Now, what exactly is the result of this transfer? Husserl clearly states that the apperception of the other *makes the other similar* to myself [*verähnlichende Apperzeption*] (Husserl 1950, 141). Patočka claims, nevertheless,

that it implies a particular kind of dissimilarity: a dissimilarity of myself. In order to show this, he follows Husserl in comparing an appresentation to a memory (Husserl 1950, § 52): both in my remembrance of something past, and in my understanding of the other body as another self, I make present something that is not present. Nevertheless, I remember a past that I myself lived, whereas in the appresentation, I am never the other, appresented self. From this, Patočka concludes that appresentation – unlike memory – can substantially enrich one’s self:

In recollection as a phenomenon, there is nothing that could somehow enrich myself, that is, nothing that has not already been lived by me. Appresentation is in this respect something completely different. It opens the other to us not only in those respects that would correspond to myself, not only in his or her expressions that are, so to speak, a projection of my own experience into the other. I do not experience the other only as a projection of my experiences. Appresentation is capable of bringing me thoroughly new content. Living together is not just reproduction; it is possible enrichment. (Patočka 1992, 49; this passage is missing in the English trans. 1998, 65)

It follows for Patočka that appresentation contains a “component that shows me as incomplete, as needing, as receiving, as lacking.” (1998, 65; see Karfik 2008, 79) The *alterity* of the other consists not only in the fact that his or her experience is not mine, as it is in Husserl, but also in the fact that certain possibilities of my existence can come only from him or her, that without which I would be “incomplete” or “lacking” something. Consequently, the encounter of the other – which is analyzed as the encounter of the “analogous dynamism,” as its appresentation – contributes to my being myself. This is of course a very broad expression, which can and should be spelled out in more detail concerning the type of possibilities I can receive, the way I receive them, and so forth. At the most general level, Patočka is nevertheless clear about one thing: what I receive from the other is the first explicit, reflective knowledge of myself. Patočka summarizes this as follows:

Life’s drive into the world, to things and to other beings, makes us what we are. The most important drive is that toward other beings; reflection is a continuation of the drive toward the world at the point of encountering another being within our presence. The primordial act of reflection is probably something that belongs to the realm of

appresentation. I appresent myself as I am in the other life. (Patočka, 1998, 65)

This brings us back to the initial claim that introduces and crowns Patočka's reading of the 5th CM: the first form of explicit self-reflection is made possible through the other. Consequently, appresentation is not – or not only – the appresentation of the other self (grasped as co-present to the body which is present in front of me), but of myself: I grasp myself as being co-present to the other life. Not only do I appresent the other, but I also appresent myself in the other.

It is important to note that in many of his late reflections on intersubjectivity, Patočka prefers a non-Husserlian philosophical background, and sometimes explicitly rejects Husserlian ideas about the alter-ego (MS note C23, 2016a, 727). Patočka's emphasis on the existential dimension of intersubjectivity and on the concrete "other" finds its expression in a focus on such phenomena as the loving acceptance of a child by its parents or the devotion to the other (2009, 374; see also 2002, 43).⁵ Among his expositions of the three movements of human existence, the article "The 'Natural' World and Phenomenology" merits special attention, since all three movements are described in their intersubjective meaning (2009, see 223-25). This, however, would be a topic for another paper.

5. Conclusion

Neither Patočka nor Ricœur believe that Husserl achieved what he had set out to do, that is, to show that it is the intersubjective community of transcendental egos that "constitutes the *one identical world*" (Husserl 1960, § 49, 107). Their objections are in some respects parallel, as I have sought to demonstrate in this article: they both reject Husserlian "egology," and offer several reasons why the reduction to the sphere of ownness is impossible. Thus the most important achievement of 5th CM, according to Patočka and Ricœur, consists in something *different* from the refutation of the objection of solipsism. As others are always present in the life of myself (and vice versa), this objection cannot reasonably be raised at all, not even by the philosophizing, meditating self.⁶

The question to be asked is different: what does it mean for our concept of the self (or the “subject”), if we understand it as already “captured” in the world (Patočka 1975) and pervaded with different forms of alterity. It is here that both Patočka and Ricœur locate one of the main achievements of the “analogical transfer”: it moderates the potentially alien character of the world of inter-personal exchanges; even more, it rules out the possibility that human beings are condemned to live in an absolute and unsurmountable otherness (Ricœur 1992, 335; Patočka 1996, 159-160). Both Ricœur and Patočka underscore the *asymmetry* in the self-other relationship as a fundamental observation that cannot be abandoned in favor of a Hegelian approach to intersubjectivity. The result of the 5th CM, on these readings, is in a sense more modest than in Husserl’s understanding. Its basic message is precisely intersubjective (or anthropological): the “plurality of first persons” (Patočka 1996, 155) is to be understood in its “mutual implication” (Patočka 2009, 261) or dialectical complementarity (Ricœur 1992, 340). Intersubjectivity is not supposed to perform the task of constituting “the *one identical world*”, but to structure the concrete ways that human beings live in the pre-given world.

By way of a concluding observation, I would emphasize one essential point of difference between Ricœur and Patočka. I believe that hermeneutics of the self and phenomenology freed from subjectivism part ways in one important respect – namely, the concept of the self.

Hermeneutics of the self multiplies the forms of alterity which are inherent to the self, in order to show that if there is a self, it is *as* an other (in the strong sense of “inasmuch as being other”). But what is the self then? And how can somebody be himself or herself? Ricœur suggests that self-attestation is the only appropriate mode of self-certainty there can be, if we want to escape the choice between the Cartesian ego and the Nietzschean destruction of the self. Yet the self, in Ricœur, remains exposed to many sorts of alterity and left with not much support on the intersubjective plane (the Aristotelian and Hegelian passages in his “small ethics” of *Oneself as Another* notwithstanding). I suggest reading Ricœur’s emphasis on self-attestation as the symptom of the fact that his own analysis

leaves the self suspended in a kind of void. Consequently, the last resort is an individual act (maybe even a voluntarist act) of self-attestation. Intersubjective relations are not conceived as that through which the self could “come to itself,” but as something to which it is exposed in order to respond – in a somewhat lonesome way – by saying “here I stand.”

Patočka, in his phenomenology of the living dynamism, offers a different description of the intersubjective relation. If it is true that the first form of explicit self-reflection (self-awareness) is made possible through the other, it is in the intersubjective encounter that I can come to myself (and so can the other). It may reasonably be objected that there might be forms of encounter that prevent me from coming to myself, and there are certainly different ways of coming to oneself. Consequently, the claim is too unspecific, as are some other concepts of his analysis (especially the concept of movement, the concept of “thrust” etc.). Yet it should not be overlooked that the basic groundwork sketched out by Patočka offers an approach to intersubjectivity and selfhood different from the one developed by Ricœur. Alluding to the title of the book by Ricœur, we can say that the self can be oneself not *as* another (“*comme un autre*”), but *through* another (“*à travers un autre*”).

NOTES

¹ Ricœur quotes a “hermeneutical” passage of the 5th CM (§ 46): “My own too is discovered by explication and gets its original sense by virtue thereof” (Husserl 1960, 102; “Auch mein Eigenes erschließt sich durch Explikation und hat aus ihrer Leistung seinen ursprünglichen Sinn,” Husserl 1950, 132).

² I believe, that it is, consequently, wrong to claim, as Zahavi does, that Ricœur embraces a “creationist” reading of Husserl. See Zahavi 2001, 214, n. 32.

³ Ricœur develops this, for example, by reference to the oriented spatiality of the self in Husserl’s unpublished manuscripts (1992, 325). It may be objected that Ricœur made a categorical mistake by confusing passivity and alterity. If we refer to the distinction between sense of agency and sense of ownership, it is possible to say that with regard to some involuntary, passive experience, we have the second without the first (Zahavi, 2005, 144).

⁴ In his 1967 commentary to the 5th CM, Ricœur also reads Husserl close to this line (Ricœur 1967, 122-123). It is only in his later writings from 1975 (Ricœur 2007) and 1990 (Ricœur 1990) that he raises the circularity charge.

⁵ In his writings on Patočka, Ricœur highly praises Patočka for having surpassed the “idealism of the *Cartesian Meditations*” (1991a, 77) and for

conceiving the relations to the other in terms of the movement of existence. In this context, Ricœur finds Patočka's emphasis on devotion to the other particularly inspiring (1991b, 88).

⁶ For Patočka, this very question creates part of a misleading, Cartesian way to the *epoché*, to which he preferred different ways (for example, the one of "interest").

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