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## Patočka and English sensualism and its place in modern philosophy

**Abstract:** The reception of the British empirical-sensualist tradition as a unique form of philosophising has its special place in the history of philosophy. Jan Patočka takes this fact into consideration, but his reception and interpretation of British empiricism is not purely historical. Patočka was trained by Husserl's phenomenology and formed by Heidegger's intellectual heritage, and this is reflected in his original philosophical thinking. Furthermore, his philosophical thought is highly influenced by a motif initially formed on the grounds of Husserl's phenomenology as the problem of *Lebenswelt*, in Patočka's work present as the problem of *natural world*. Patočka perceives the entire philosophical tradition in the context of this leitmotif. His critical reception of British empiricism was an inseparable component in the rethinking of the problem of natural world. Patočka did not attempt to summarise his attitude towards British sensualism in the form of a stand-alone paper or study. Nevertheless, his reception of the British philosophical heritage of the 17th century is definitely of primary importance — firstly, in the context of the phenomenological tradition (especially its founder E. Husserl), which Patočka joins, and secondly, for the articulation of his own philosophical position. Comments on the British sensualist tradition can be found in various writings from his early as well as late period. His notion of empiricism is always fundamentally interrelated with his other philosophical works — with his interpretation of Husserl and Heidegger and later still more intensely with his own notion of the natural world and his project of *asubjective phenomenology*.

**Keywords:** Patočka, English sensualism, English empiricism, phenomenology, natural world, asubjective phenomenology

## 1. Introduction

Reflections on the English empirical tradition as a particular way of philosophising have their unique place in the history of philosophy. J. Patočka is aware of it, but his perception and interpretation of English sensualism is not motivated purely by the history. Patočka is a disciple of Husserl's phenomenology and is significantly formed by Heidegger's thought heritage, which influenced not only the way of his philosophical thinking, but also his thinking in general, including the theme originally formulated in Husserl's phenomenology as the problem of *Lebenswelt*, in Patočka present as the problem of the *natural world*. Patočka perceives all previous philosophical traditions in the context of the leitmotifs of his own philosophical thinking.

Patočka's (critical) reception of English sensualism was an integral (historical and philosophical) part of thinking about the problem of the natural world. His reception of the sensualism of the 17th century was only the starting point, and continued through the thoughts of Th. Reid, R. Avenarius, E. Mach, B. Russell, to end with *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* by L. Wittgenstein.

Patočka's perception of English sensualism was never processed into any article or independent study. However, from the perspective of his creative work, the perception of English philosophical heritage of the 17th century is very important. It is important for the understanding of the phenomenological tradition (especially its founder E. Husserl) to which Patočka saw himself as belonging, as well as for the construction and articulation of his independent position as a thinker.

We can find a number of comments on English sensualist tradition in several works both in early and late periods of Patočka's work. His perception of empiricism is always bounded by the context of his philosophical work — and the interpretation of Husserl's and Heidegger's philosophy — and, later, by his solution of the problem of the natural world.

## 2. Patočka and his relation to English sensualism

I will first introduce the topic of the English tradition of sensualism in relation to Patočka's thoughts and next analyse Patočka's perception of this problem.

The initial meeting with empiricism is already indicated in Patočka's dissertation "Pojem evidence a jeho význam pro noetiku" (The concept of evidence and its importance for the epistemology) from 1931.<sup>1</sup> A more detailed analysis of the empirical tradition can be found in Patočka's habilitation thesis *Přirozený svět jako filosofický problém* [The natural world as a philosophical problem] from 1936.<sup>2</sup> An important note on this subject can also be found in his review of Husserl's *Crisis* of 1937.<sup>3</sup> In his collected works, sensualist philosophy is mentioned in "Úvod do Husserlovi fenomenologie" [An introduction to Husserl's phenomenology] from 1965.<sup>4</sup>

The most important source in which Patočka subjects the empirical tradition to the most consistent criticism (which ultimately arises from the very nature of the file — it is a record of lectures he delivered at the Philosophical Faculty of Charles University in Prague in the academic year 1968/69) is the work *Body, Community, Language, World* from 1968.<sup>5</sup>

Other important studies related to this theme are: "Přirozený svět a fenomenologie" (The natural world and phenomenology) from 1967,<sup>6</sup> "Husserlova fenomenologie, fenomenologická filosofie a 'Karteziánské meditace'" (Husserl's phenomenology, phenomenological philosophy

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<sup>1</sup> J. PATOČKA: "Pojem evidence a jeho význam pro noetiku." In: J. PATOČKA: *Fenomenologické spisy I*. Sebrané spisy. Sv. 6. Praha 2008, pp. 13—125. All Patočka's papers will be quoted from the critical issues, as released in his collected papers.

<sup>2</sup> J. PATOČKA: "Přirozený svět jako filosofický problém." In: J. PATOČKA: *Fenomenologické spisy I*. Sebrané spisy. Sv. 6. Praha 2008, pp. 127—261 (*The Natural World as a Philosophical Problem*. Trans. E. ABRAMS. Evanston, IL, 2016).

<sup>3</sup> J. PATOČKA: "Edmund Husserl: *Die Krisis der europäischen Wissenschaften und die transzendente Phänomenologie*." In: J. PATOČKA: *Fenomenologické spisy I*. Sebrané spisy. Sv. 6. Praha 2008, pp. 366—378.

<sup>4</sup> J. PATOČKA: "Úvod do Husserlovi fenomenologie." In: J. Patočka: *Fenomenologické spisy II*. Sebrané spisy. Sv. 7. Praha 2009, pp. 7—139 (*An Introduction to Husserl's Phenomenology*. Trans. E. KOHÁK. Chicago, IL, 1996).

<sup>5</sup> J. PATOČKA: *Tělo, společenství, jazyk, svět*. Praha 1995 (*Body, Community, Language, World*. Trans. E. KOHÁK. Chicago, IL, 1998).

<sup>6</sup> J. PATOČKA: "Přirozený svět a fenomenologie." In: J. PATOČKA: *Fenomenologické spisy II*. Sebrané spisy. Sv. 7. Praha 2009, pp. 202—237.

and Cartesian meditation) from 1968,<sup>7</sup> “Přirozený svět v meditaci svého autora po třiatřiceti letech” (The natural world in meditations of its author after thirty years) from 1969,<sup>8</sup> “Epoché a redukce. Několik poznámek” (Epoché and reduction. A few notes) from 1975,<sup>9</sup> and “Karteziánství a fenomenologie” (Cartesianism and phenomenology) from 1976.<sup>10</sup>

In his dissertation on the concept of evidence and its importance for epistemology, in the first part (the systematic one), Chapter 6 (A detailed analysis of some evidence and an attempt to rebut certain objections), under letter E (Subjects of internal and external perception), Patočka deals with the difference between internal and external perception. External perception shows the reality in the active process of verification. In this process, we are aware of the reality as dependent on the subject within the scope of the outside world. The category of thing is implemented in an ongoing process of knowledge formation. No object is a figment of pure randomness — it is our firm belief that everything has a certain essence that is the reason for its unity. Things and patterns which can be observed are objective. These laws are the subject of science. Science consists in interpretation, which is based only on ordinary experience. *Sensus communis* satisfies itself with the statement that things are not (always and necessarily) as they seem.

On the other hand, science will seek to determine more precisely the individual components of the researched process of knowledge and to determine the mode of causal order, which takes place in the cognitive process. In this context, Patočka refers to the difference between the world of *sensus communis* and *the world of science*.<sup>11</sup> This is how the category of *causality* rises, to which Patočka devotes his critique.

It is a very old critique; Patočka points out that it can already be found in the Greek skeptics, in the Middle Ages in al-Ghazzali, and in the 17th century in Descartes. As the best known and most

<sup>7</sup> J. Patočka: “Husserlova fenomenologie, fenomenologická filosofie a ‘Karteziánské meditace.’” In: J. Patočka: *Fenomenologické spisy II*. Sebrané spisy. Sv. 7. Praha 2009, pp. 238–264.

<sup>8</sup> J. Patočka: “Přirozený svět v meditaci svého autora po třiatřiceti letech.” In: J. Patočka: *Fenomenologické spisy II*. Sebrané spisy. Sv. 7. Praha 2009, pp. 265–334.

<sup>9</sup> J. Patočka: “Epoché a redukce. Několik poznámek.” In: J. Patočka: *Fenomenologické spisy II*. Sebrané spisy. Sv. 7. Praha 2009, pp. 442–454.

<sup>10</sup> J. Patočka: “Karteziánství a fenomenologie.” In: J. Patočka: *Fenomenologické spisy II*. Sebrané spisy. Sv. 7. Praha 2009, pp. 453–496.

<sup>11</sup> See *ibid.*, p. 69.

influential, Patočka quotes the critique by D. Hume, that is his attempt to explain the causality psychologically and devalue it epistemologically.<sup>12</sup> According to Hume's criticism, we cannot analytically understand the way in which the cause produces its effect. This incomprehensibility is closely similar to incomprehensibility of existence as it is: "How could anything ever be?" — asks Patočka.<sup>13</sup>

When asked how something happened, we do not have an answer other than: A caused B. This response is inevitable, because this relation is easily noticeable. Finding the causes is simply where the process of establishing the external perception starts, and to which it zigzags back again. This process, however, deepens not only our understanding of the real causes but also our understanding of causality as an idea.

Patočka observes that the causal world differs from the world of sense as do the worlds of action and states, the worlds of substances and forces, among which a metaphysical drama takes place, whose brief fragment is our concrete world of seeing and living.<sup>14</sup> The task is to: "determine the mode of evidence and, where appropriate, its importance in the global whole."<sup>15</sup>

### 3. Patočka and *Cartesian rationalism*

Empiricists come into play once again in the second (historical) part, Chapter 2 (Empirical genesis), where Patočka tries to solve the problem of evidence. In his analysis, Patočka bears in mind that the base for a particular philosopher is life itself.<sup>16</sup> Examples include the Descartes *Cogito*, which Patočka considers a last resort, since its intellectualism did not allow the philosopher to move forward. In the previous chapter (Genesis of rationalism),<sup>17</sup> Patočka looks at Descartes' reasoning in more detail. Descartes used the evidence as a weapon against (noetic) scepticism, and he did it setting all previous

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<sup>12</sup> See *ibid.*

<sup>13</sup> See *ibid.*, p. 70.

<sup>14</sup> See *ibid.*

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 71.

<sup>16</sup> See *ibid.*, p. 88.

<sup>17</sup> See *ibid.*, pp. 76—86.

ideas of describing the world aside in order to rebuild lost confidence in the light of evidence. Patočka totally agrees with this approach: “This idea is absolutely primordial in the whole philosophy and should not be abandoned.”<sup>18</sup> The Cartesian evidence is twofold — evidence of the facts *cogito sum*, which cannot be cancelled by anything and which is a measure of lucidity and clarity and is applicable to all other truths; and evidence of mathematical ideas, which again is twofold, comprising the initial view of relations and concepts, an intuition, and the ongoing view, that is, deduction. According to Patočka, the problem of Cartesian method lies in the fact that “Descartes overemphasised rationality due to his biased deductive ideal and failed to appreciate all other types of data evidence in their proper diversity that defies its pangeometrism.”<sup>19</sup> Descartes no longer needs to look for a mathematical certainty; he needs to understand that all cognitions are based on a single, endless source, and that he himself is a part of this infinity.

The answer to the limits of Cartesian rationalism should be empiricism. Patočka draws attention to the fact that it was for a long time intellectual.<sup>20</sup> Basic to classical empiricism is the effort to understand all existence, including the mental and the spatial. In this context, J. Locke is close to Descartes despite the fact that he polemically opposes rationalism. He separates the concept *I* from the concept of *substance*, introducing the confidence that rationalists left behind. In spite of this, Patočka, in accordance with his phenomenologically motivated position, points out that to understand consciousness, he embraces the principle of composition of simple particles and (rationalistically) constructs its content, instead of trying to understand it in accordance with the principles of empiricism.<sup>21</sup>

#### 4. Patočka and empiricism

Noetic consequences of this compromised empiricism are demonstrated by G. Berkeley and D. Hume, for whom there cannot be

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., p. 78.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., p. 80.

<sup>20</sup> See *ibid.*, p. 88.

<sup>21</sup> See *ibid.*

anything in the consciousness that is not a real part of it. Patočka in his dissertation critically records empirical tradition only in terms and in the context of the problem of evidence seen and solved from the phenomenological point of view.

Patočka talks in more detail about the empirical tradition in his habilitation thesis, but again in the context of the problem which he wants to solve, that is, in the context of the question of the natural world.

A modern man does not have a consistent view of the world, thinks Patočka. He lives in a dual world — firstly, in his natural surroundings, and secondly, in a world defined by a modern natural science, which is based and built on the principles of mathematically definable patterns of nature. Consequently, uncertainty enters our lives, which is actually an inherent source of spiritual crisis in which we find ourselves.<sup>22</sup>

According to Patočka, attempts to overcome this uncertainty have been made by thinkers and philosophers who have tried to eliminate one element of this dual understanding of the world, to logically convert one type to the other, or to demonstrate that one follows from the other. But the result is, as Patočka points out, that the subjective plane has never been rigorously analysed — there is no distinction between the result of subjective activity and the (subjectively understood) activity itself.<sup>23</sup> In this context, Patočka asks: Is there a positive analytical method, a subjective one, which has philosophical significance and not just psychological?<sup>24</sup> And he answers: “This is a method of phenomenological analysis.”<sup>25</sup> His reflection on the position of humans in relation to the natural world will be built on this methodological assumption.

Perception<sup>26</sup> is the activity enabling and accompanying all human life, writes Patočka, but also the very perception assumes a massive structure, assumes the original time-consciousness in which it is perceived.

Having defined the basis of our world, we can proceed to the examination of activities which are in a sense personal, activities through which a free will soars beyond what is immediately present, or what immediately determines it. And these are thinking and language.

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<sup>22</sup> See J. Patočka: *Přirozený svět jako filosofický problém*, p. 129.

<sup>23</sup> See *ibid.*, p. 130.

<sup>24</sup> See *ibid.*

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*

Thinking and language are, according to Patočka, expressions of human freedom, the possibility to control the world of human beings. People are not entirely, passively determined by their environment and processes that are not their own; on the contrary, they actively shape the environment and steer it.<sup>27</sup>

Any philosophical or scientific theory is made possible by thoughts afforded by a language. Theoretical work has therefore its objective results in theoretical concepts and structures. They are artefacts of cultural creations and their relation to the activities of thought is similar to the relation between the reality of the natural world and the activities of the receptive nature.

Our theories do not arise without a context; quite the reverse, the prerequisite for their existence is the natural world (actual world), and the human life is the foundation on which they are formed. The results of a theoretical system cannot be considered as independent beings; therefore, they cannot be detached from their vital functions — on the contrary, we must understand them right out of them.

The unity of the world is not the unity of substance (matter) of which it is composed; the unity of the world is a spiritual unity that creates and maintains it.

It is part of our modern way of life that we do not have any consistent view of the world; our society (as opposed to ancient or medieval society) does not recognise any single and comprehensive arrangement of facts. In *The Natural World as a Philosophical Problem*, Patočka calls this situation the de-anthropomorphisation of the world.<sup>28</sup> Instead of understanding the life and the human being, there is an understanding of abiotic factors, of God as an explicative notion that has been abandoned. When ancient or medieval people thought about the world and the human being, they did not doubt that they thought in principle about the same objects and beings that surrounded them at the sensorial, naive, theoretically non-mediated level of perception. Are we still able to philosophise in this way? And what significance does philosophy have for us? — asks Patočka.<sup>29</sup>

The need for philosophy is related to the human life experience — the need for unity is therefore a practical requirement; today's human being turns to philosophy solely out of a sense of wonder. A person is driven to it by his or her personal problems with his or her spiritual life, by his or her entire life setting.

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<sup>27</sup> See *ibid.*, p. 131.

<sup>28</sup> See *ibid.*, p. 132.

<sup>29</sup> See *ibid.*, p. 133.

Prior to any theoretical interest, today's human being has an idea of the world which is available to him or her without any active effort. This idea is marked by a passive constitutive process, which, according to Patočka, involves two moments: *fatality* and *interpretation*. Fatality is everything perceived by our senses, the experience that can be our own, but also foreign, present or past. The moment of interpretation represents a spontaneous and naive action intended to spread the experience. This is a naive extrapolation, which, as Patočka notes, cannot be called theorising, because the tendency to theorise in this case is not yet distinguished from other tendencies, and critical requirement is not yet on the agenda.<sup>30</sup>

## 5. Patočka and the natural world

This is the way how Patočka arrives at the fundamental assumption of his consideration of the natural world: “before all theorising, in the sense of all theoretical problems, the objectivity is given to us through the most diverse kinds of experiences ... we are trying to have immediate access to and a certain freedom in this objectivity, all this based on our personal goals and decisions; ... And since this entire complex of facts (reality) is given without our theoretical effort and without art, so naturally, we call it the natural, or naive, world; for its most characteristic feature is that we consider it [present; D. H.] here without our free intervention, based on the simple fact of our experience and free from any theoretical aspect.”<sup>31</sup>

The most characteristic feature of a human being who has grown in an environment defined by modern science is that they simply do not live in the natural, naive world, and thus their overall relation to reality is not a natural view of the world. The reason why the modern human — the human who owes main ideas to modern science — no longer has access to the natural view of the world is that our natural science simply does not develop the world's *sensus*

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<sup>30</sup> See *ibid.*, pp. 133—134.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 134.

*communis*, the naive and natural world, but is its *radical reconstruction*, thinks Patočka.<sup>32</sup>

Patočka does not understand Descartes' fights against confused ideas in terms of a fight against Aristotelianism; there is a more important opposition here — it is a matter of fight of the *scientific world* against the *naive world*. What was true so far is not anymore; the fundamentals of reality have become mathematical laws — the fact is understandable and repairable when based on formal mathematical model.

The consequence is that our naive world is suffering from the lack of constructiveness. Patočka's intention is not to explain the origin and essence of new age natural science interpretation; he is concerned with its effect on our sense of life.

The direction of Patočka's interpretation of the natural world focuses on "redirecting the results of science back to the 'subjective givenness.'"<sup>33</sup> From this point of view (understanding the human being as an object, as a complex of objective forces), he calls this process *self-disaffection*, which points to another phenomenon — *self-abdication*. Self-abdication is relying on nature: one does not control oneself or others from some personal vantage points, but lets oneself be led by impulses that are not one's own, because they are of nature. Thus, one no longer lives for oneself but accepts life as it goes by. The question of the (global) meaning of life loses significance.

What is important is the observation and interpretation (automatically taking place) of impulses. Reflection has no essential vital importance; it is completely subordinated to action, as any personal decision is the result of natural necessity that is (and this is important for Patočka) located below the surface of experience, so it precedes lived experience.

With such a limited definition of the problem, Patočka analyses the assets and mistakes of English sensualism in the third chapter of *The Natural World ...* (An attempt of historical typology of possible solutions to the problem. Berkeley, Reid, Jacobi, Goethe. Modern positivism: Avenarius, Mach, B. Russell, Carnap, Wittgenstein, physicalism), in Part One (Outlining the problem).

Patočka begins with a paradoxical situation: the faculty of revolution as the doctrine of clear and distinct ideas (that is, rationalist revolution delimited and defined by Descartes' philosophical resignation) leads to the new age thinkers beginning to realise the dif-

<sup>32</sup> See *ibid.*, pp. 134–135.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 135.

ference between the naive world and the world of science. What is, according to Patočka, essential to start discussions on the natural view of the world is a documented, systematic analysis and, finally, the restitution of the things that are a given. It is necessary that the natural world should be accurately described in its basic structure, and that it should be investigated in terms of its component parts and interrelated moments.

Patočka's problem of the natural world has originated in the early modern philosophy. The first figure that Patočka mentions in regard to his habilitation work is G. Berkeley. Berkeley is the first one who vehemently attacks the Cartesian split of the world to *mundus sensibilis*, the world of our immediate perception and opinion, and *mundus intelligibilis*, the world of scientific perception.<sup>34</sup> Berkeley wants to dismantle this dualism at any cost, even at the price of the reality of things.

## 6. Patočka, Berkeley, Locke, and Hume

Patočka identifies the reason for this position as follows: Berkeley overlooked the fact that Cartesian dualism has its roots not in the idea of an independent object, in the idea of material substance, but in the idea of mathematical understanding of the material substrate (this is perceived from Patočka's point of view, that is, from the perspective of the natural world problem).<sup>35</sup> The basis of Berkeley's efforts is to deny the autonomy, the (material) independence of the object, which is reflected in his understanding of mental life that continues through collecting ideas. This is a conceptual heritage of Locke's sensualist philosophy. Berkeley succumbed to the pitfalls of objectivism (much as he tried to avoid them), whose historical origin lies in the metaphysical dualism that he strove to deny. Locke's concept is based on a historical assumption of metaphysical dualism, which is founded on the opposition of subject — object, soul — material substance. It comprises the idea of atomic prerequisites for collection of ideas. This concept does not include, Patočka writes, "any-

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<sup>34</sup> See *ibid.*, p. 139.

<sup>35</sup> See *ibid.*

thing specifically subjective, but it is a simple qualitative complex.”<sup>36</sup> Berkeley takes over this concept, creating a peculiar theory of ideas, which is substantially a theory of the object, in contrast to subjective opinion. Patočka evaluates Berkeley’s position as “extremely impoverished and interpretatively falsified spirituality”;<sup>37</sup> from this position, Berkeley then reduces all beings. What Berkeley intends, according to Patočka, is the abolition of Cartesian dualism, not the impairment of science.

Berkeley’s order looks as follows: 1. Based on the assumption that everything that we know about things, we gained through impressions; 2. The coherence of what we call things is not a real coherence, but a semantic one. An analysis of the things and the relation between them is part of the semantic context of the world. We know about things through impressions, which means that the only reality of things is their meaning. A thing is then actually a sign that identifies through impressions. The actual signs (impressions of things) are not available separately but in semantic units: “Impressions of ‘things’ are nothing else than a sign of other impressions, related to the first ones.”<sup>38</sup>

Berkeley also criticises and rejects Locke’s notion of substance. It originally grew on the basis of Cartesian rationalism, but Locke, Berkeley, and ultimately also Hume remain in the genetic line that begins with Descartes and ends with Hume’s critique of rationalism. Berkeley’s criticism of Locke is still too simple — Berkeley’s world is ruled by geometrical simplicity. Patočka adds that asking about the origin of ordering the world into classes and laws is to ask for divine wisdom, which eventually controls the world.<sup>39</sup> Matter and the laws will eventually become words and sentences of the divine language, which God uses to communicate with the creation. In the context of *The Natural World...*, Patočka’s critique of Berkeley is (for now) completed, and in some respects also his critique of the traditions of English sensualism.

In 1969 Patočka speaks about the problem of the natural world again;<sup>40</sup> in this case, however, he is more specific about the tradition of English sensualism — it is primarily limited to coping critically with Berkeley’s philosophical heritage, which Patočka considers in the context of Locke’s and Hume’s philosophy in particular.

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<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid., pp. 139–140.

<sup>39</sup> See *ibid.*, p. 140.

<sup>40</sup> See Patočka’s fourth lecture in “Problém prirodzeného sveta,” published in his work *Telo, spoločenstvo, jazyk, svet*.

Patočka's analysis begins with Locke's *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, where he notes two spheres that Locke presents as contrapositions: on the one hand, there is an (objective) science sphere of mathematically interpreted science, and on the other hand, the (subjective) sphere of feelings, impressions and ideas. Elementary data are collected into more complicated complexes of ideas in accordance to the rules of a non-reliable nature of objective relations. This presupposes the existence of forces that have the ability to associate ideas. Observation shows that the associative rules do not work for all entities uniformly. In this context, Patočka recalls the ancient idea that there is a mutual attraction between ideas. In sensualist terms, it is a necessarily subjective attraction — it happens on the basis of our experience. Hence, everything that occurs in our mind is necessarily subjective; it has a random character.

The question, Patočka believes, then is: How can we reach the objective sphere from the original, given sphere? How is it possible to arrive at something objective, internally inevitable, as envisaged in the concept of objective science? The answer is — we cannot.<sup>41</sup>

Metaphysics of nature has reached a serious obstacle: objectively existing standards cannot be derived from associative rules, which are subjective in nature. These consequences are implicitly present in Locke's conception from the beginning.

On the other hand, thanks to this (skeptical) opinion on the possibility of objective concepts, the natural world obtains the attention, even if it is in a specific mode. A sensualist approach focuses in principle on the objective world of science, the practical application of mathematical structures, writes Patočka. Mathematical concepts and constructions are pure facts, idealisations that do not have the fundamentals in re (a line segment — length without width — has nothing to do with everyday experience); their application is purely practical.<sup>42</sup>

Berkeley's solutions were proved limited; in Hume's continuation of English sensualism, there was no place for them. For Patočka, Hume is a strange personality. Patočka is well aware of his crucial role in Husserl's phenomenology. In his review of Husserl's *The Crisis*, he writes:<sup>43</sup> "Berkeley decomposes the concept of rational science by his sensualistic criticism, and finally Hume, Husserl's

<sup>41</sup> See *ibid.*

<sup>42</sup> See *ibid.*, p. 149.

<sup>43</sup> J. Patočka: "Edmund Husserl: *Die Krisis der europäischen Wissenschaften und die transzendente Phänomenologie.*" In: J. Patočka: *Fenomenologické spisy I.* Sebrané spisy. Sv. 6. Praha 2008, pp. 366—378.

most modern [philosopher; D.H.] (greater than Kant...), states the bankruptcy of objective knowledge. Objectivism is shaken — that is precisely Hume's philosophical motive."<sup>44</sup> Patočka refers to Hume also in terms of the requirements for a return to the original way of experience. As Patočka explains, Hume does not disturb Locke's basic scheme, but on the other hand, his final conclusions consistently point to the inconsistency of the situation — if our experience is a bounded context, limited to ourselves, then to ask about our experience, we need to refer to its internal structure.<sup>45</sup> What Patočka really appreciates (not without following the phenomenology of Husserl) is the fact that Hume formulates the principle: "for our each experience it is necessary to go back to the original method which is given to us."<sup>46</sup> This is the way how we should investigate our experience, our mind.

This is where Patočka's critique starts: Hume did not explore the idea of the relation between the original and imagination. Is it really a visual indication, or is it something more complex and substantial? This, among other things, is related to the fact that Hume looks at ideas as the content, as the real part of experience of our consciousness. Patočka believes that Hume has "far more philosophical abilities as a philosophical ethos but is attached to the comfortable role of the academic skeptic, who avoids the 'abysmal' problem."<sup>47</sup>

Patočka's proposal is to return to the original method of looking at reality, devoid of Hume's naturalism, which offers a fundamentally different outlook on reality and inner life. This means separating experience from an objective framework, looking at their relation as the original relation, as a clue for meaning, which is autonomous, having its own internal laws.

English sensualism has the English propensity for disrupting the spirit of naturalism, thinks Patočka. However, English empiricism cannot do it, because the enemy is in the fort — in the understanding of spirit itself, which is meant and modelled as *res extensa*. Its context, meaning, and relations are construed in an objective sense, in terms of the processes in the third person.<sup>48</sup>

<sup>44</sup> Ibid, p. 375.

<sup>45</sup> See J. Patočka: *Tělo, společenství, jazyk, svět*, p. 150.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid.

<sup>47</sup> J. Patočka: "Edmund Husserl: *Die Krisis der europäischen Wissenschaften und die transzendente Phänomenologie*," pp. 375—376.

<sup>48</sup> See *ibid*.

## 7. Patočka's asubjective phenomenology: Patočka and Husserl

The end of the sixties marks Patočka's own project: *asubjective phenomenology*. His arguments in the empirical critical reflection on sensualist traditions are the same. Patočka links them to the problem of the natural world. One finds here precise critical reflections on English sensualism, enhanced with new contexts.

In his introduction to Husserl's phenomenology<sup>49</sup> from 1965, in the third section of "Phenomenological writings II," Patočka points to the existence of various theories of meaning, but is mainly interested in *theory of meanings as characters* (which he considers to be synthetic), which he will later assume as the contraposition to the operational theory of meaning advanced by English empiricists.

For clarification, the theory of meanings-characters, subjective ideas associated with linguistic expressions that produce them, is an extremely subjectivist theory. This is mainly because of the fact that meaning overlaps with mental realities. Patočka draws attention to the fact that this theory is also a psychological theory, because it cannot cope with the phenomenological fact that we actually *numerically* process the same, regardless of our or others' ideas. And this shows once again Patočka's inclination to mathematical perception and its influence on the issues he examined.

By contrast, the operational theory of meaning,<sup>50</sup> as we have indicated above, exemplifies extreme objectivism in the theory of meaning. According to this theory, meaning is associated with a certain generality; however, this generality is not in the object to which our thinking is directed but lies mainly in the *use* of rules which we learn to apply. It is in this context that Patočka mentions Wittgenstein, since he emphasises that language is like a game, an action governed by rules we follow in certain situations. We understand the language (in terms of understanding the meaning) only when we learn to apply these rules, when we have learnt to play this language game. Thus: "The language is life-form (life is basically a controlled negotiation, a practical behaviour)."<sup>51</sup>

<sup>49</sup> J. Patočka: "Úvod do Husserlovy fenomenologie." In: J. Patočka: *Fenomenologické spisy II.*, pp. 7–139.

<sup>50</sup> Theory developed mainly by L. Wittgenstein in his *Philosophical Investigations*.

<sup>51</sup> J. Patočka: "Úvod do Husserlovy fenomenologie." In: J. Patočka: *Fenomenologické spisy II.*, p. 54.

The operational theory is of considerable importance to Patočka and to us as well, particularly because it consistently speculates about nominalist motifs with which English empiricists were concerned.

English empiricists, Berkeley and Hume, also tried to reduce universals to rules dealing with certain features, and thus to reduce the general to action and will, and therefore “to reduce the theoretical understanding of the general to an object, to substitute it by practical understanding as behaviour regulators.”<sup>52</sup> The question of the relation between the term and the reality is the dominant problem of the operational theory, because even if the term does not make sense based on what it represents, it must lead to something real. Patočka points out that there must always be some reality that gives some kind of basis to the meaningful significance, that gives it some sense — this differentiates it from a purposeless combination of words. Nominalists carry long discussions about the “objective reference,” about objectivity of meaningful expressions.

According to Patočka, the operational theory of meaning contains many important elements, and in this context again he refers to Wittgenstein and his understanding of the language, which is undoubtedly a certain way of life, mastering the rules of the game. Meanings are not in fact independent of our will and practical life. For Patočka, it is rather doubtful whether our practical life and our ability to play the game by certain rules capture anything in an objective way, or whether we just refer in this way to things as they are (just in our regulated behaviour). Of course, Patočka does not formulate this idea so explicitly, but he refers to the regulated activity, regulated behaviour. This regulation does not take place only when we participate, but rather it occurs (also) directly inside ourselves. This regulated behaviour has its correlate in the meaningful, standardised, universally schematised world.<sup>53</sup>

In such digressions, Patočka analyses his own phenomenological intentions; all the aforementioned problems are indeed important to him, but not in terms of evaluation of a certain period in history, but in terms of building his own position, which in this case is closely linked to the Husserl theory of meaning as regards what is common to the various subjective acts of thinking. Patočka says that it is

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<sup>52</sup> Ibid.

<sup>53</sup> See *ibid.*, p. 55.

“common in the subjective, not in a purely objective fact of regulated conduct.”<sup>54</sup>

Meaning is never described only objectively, as Wittgenstein wished in his own theory, thinks Patočka. Husserl’s theory of meaning is a kind of transition between extreme subjectivism and extreme objectivism. For Patočka, the theory of meaning represents a more complex problem, but following English empiricism, we have identified only its fragmentary (but not insignificant) turn.

Patočka follows Husserl’s line of thinking in the second section of his framework, in his reference to English empiricists, and also in the second section of “Phenomenological examinations,” in the parts “Philosophy of arithmetic” and “Prolegomena to pure logic.” This discussion arises from Husserl’s assumptions of his discipline, shaped by logic and the psychological method. Patočka points out that the psychological method is crucial to explaining basic mathematical concepts (multiplicity, unity, number). It is important to Patočka that Husserl was trying to point out the psychological origin of these terms, which is why he gives some hope to clarify those issues that could not be resolved by mathematicians or philosophers like Bolzano, Frege, and others in the 19th century. Husserl’s method has the same objective; however, it is very different and, therefore, “it does not lean to an ordinary axiomatisation of objective-logical methods” but “it is heading to trap the origin of basic concepts and to preview the subjective actions upon it.”<sup>55</sup>

Psychological method is for Husserl a reflection on the survival of elementary operations of thoughts and the analysis of that survival. It seems that Husserl followed his teacher of psychology, Brentano, and — similar to him — considered such reflections as *empirical method*, which is based on *fact*. But as Patočka suggests, it was extremely important that Husserl applied his method just to the experiences that bring us to the concept of multiplicity and number. Arithmetical concepts of multiplicity, terms and numbers should have general (ideal) character, but with a kind of objectivity in different mental processes. On the other hand, it was clear that arithmetic relations are not possible without specific activity of the mind, and that this activity involves not only schematisation of relations that are forced on us by things, as it may appear to be the case in a passive experience. And so we find in Husserl, “in a new form, the Locke-Leibniz antitheses, *nihil in intellectu, quod non fuerit in*

<sup>54</sup> Ibid.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid., p. 26.

*sensu — nisi intellectus ipse*: in tensions between the experiential basis (of individual predispositions, facts, even facts of inner experience, reflection) and the self-activity of mind, which lead to more or less objective results.”<sup>56</sup>

According to Patočka, such tensions must inevitably lead to adjustment of empirical basis. This subjective operation must be understood as leading to the assumption of objective concepts and truths. It is objectivity in the sense that we can always turn to these understood concepts and truths as identical for different subjects. On the other hand, as Patočka already knows, such objectivity must be based on something that is not necessarily dependent only on the entity. However, for Patočka — unfortunately, in this case — it is the philosophy of arithmetic contraindication in the full sense of the term.

In the text about Husserl’s phenomenology, phenomenological philosophy, and Cartesian meditations from 1968, a pure intentional psychology for Patočka, there is a certain assumption, an opportunity to solve not only the problems of the substantial structure of the mind, the concept of consciousness, but also the problem of knowledge. Patočka speaks of the universal duality — a *survival* — which we experience as a major problem for the subject—object relation. The relationship of subject and object as an understandable essential correlation of the structure of experiences on the one hand, and subjects on the other hand, seems to be the same solution. Patočka, however, points out that even before we start to study survival, we must be sure that this study is *pure*, unaffected by anything, so that it is pure experience, not some collection of unexplained assumptions and prejudices. And at this point Patočka again turns to empiricists and states that: “the modern theory and criticism of knowledge, starting with Descartes and continued by Locke and by empiricism, emerged just as the study of consciousness in a reflective attitude, in the original way of capturing its character, and only later did it turn out that it actually leads to metaphysical and scientific motifs and patterns: in Descartes it became the doctrine of mental substance in a fundamental distinction between *res extensa*, among empiricists — internal, random composition of different facts, merging into a purely factual law of associations and reproductions.”<sup>57</sup> Patočka wonders how to avoid such a risk and, of course, he continues with a comprehensive interpretation of the problem.

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<sup>56</sup> Ibid.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid., 246.

In “Epoché a redukce. Několik poznámek” [Epoché and reduction. A few notes] from 1975, Patočka point out that all the *Idea fenomenologie*<sup>58</sup> sounds like an attempt to reveal the proper intentions of Descartes’ meditations on the difference between the soul and the human body. Patočka also notes (on the basis of Husserl’s reflection on Descartes) that it no longer relies on natural knowing and natural science, but the difference between this method and Cartesian methodical skepticism remains unstated — he even thinks that it might not have been intended. This remarkable change probably results from the fact that the whole world is perceived in terms of its disputableness, which we refer to as *phenomenological reduction*, and then we introduce the concept of *epoché*.<sup>59</sup> Patočka asks several questions at this point, for example: “Is this ‘index of disputableness’ intended primarily to hide these differences from the traditional skepticism? Does it raise the claim that the criticism of knowledge must be based on its non-use? Or does it still need to retain it as a necessary misunderstanding? Does it give the impression that it is a re-creation of Descartes’ attempt to restore the universal skepsa using exactly the same methods? And when we hear about Hume later, who explained the transcendence as prejudice, does it raise suspicion that it is only a variation of Descartes’ skepticism?”<sup>60</sup> In relation to the empiricists, Patočka’s statement sounds at this point as an important response to Descartes’ teachings.

Patočka is convinced that Husserl was somewhat hasty and omitted in his investigations a certain critical step, passing from the preliminary determination straight to the results, to the absolute reality of immanent perception and to the establishment of transcendence in immanence to our *cogitationes*, that is, straight to the *constitution*.

Finally, in the work “Karteziánství a fenomenologie” [Cartesianism and phenomenology]<sup>61</sup> from 1976, in connection with Husserl’s attempt to clarify the transcendental problem of objectivity, Patočka points out that it can be related to the question of form and content (matter). Substance and form, sensuality and spatiality, as well as other inter-sensory moments of objectivity, are in fact subjected at some point to the moment of self-neglect, from which the philosophising person derives *epoché*, the reduction and constitution.

<sup>58</sup> E. HUSSERL: *Idea fenomenologie*. Trans. T. DIMTER. Praha 2001.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, 33.

<sup>60</sup> J. PATOČKA: “Epoché a redukce.” In: J. PATOČKA: *Fenomenologické spisy II.*, pp. 444—445.

<sup>61</sup> J. PATOČKA: “Karteziánství a fenomenologie.” In: J. PATOČKA: *Fenomenologické spisy II.*, pp. 453—496.

Only then is it possible to understand how to solve the paradoxical contradiction in which a daily life fluctuates. This contradiction is intensified by mathematical science, adds Patočka. He also stresses the fact that on the one hand, we come into contact with the reality of the so-called original, but on the other hand, the fact is presented as absolutely independent from us. Patočka notes another important thing: "Husserl formulates his transcendental question along the line of Hume rather than Kant as follows: how to make the obvious (that fact that sensory experience mediates original things) understandable (how to escape the contradiction of these two antithesis)?"<sup>62</sup> Patočka points out that the problems outlined above bring a kind of awakening from self-neglect, from which there is only one step to pronounced absolutisation of the object, often taken by philosophical and scientific theory. Things may be given (in the aforementioned original) in our experience because they are nothing more than a result of the common constitution of objects of monadic transcendental universe, which through the objectivity relate themselves to the subject.

As Patočka further rightly notes, Husserl relates sensations to the circuit of body momentum, implicated as possibilities of life, and this moment [life; D.H.] is not purely factual, neutral, or essentially substantial, such as Hume's sensations. As can be seen, even here Patočka turns to empiricists, namely to Hume, who helps him to refer to Husserl's understanding of sensations, which to him, unlike to Hume, have no substantial basis.

As the study shows, Patočka's (critical) reception of English sensualism was an integral (historical and philosophical) part of thinking about the problem of the natural world.

Patočka did not discuss his perception of English sensualism in any article or separate study; nevertheless, in the context of his perception of the English philosophical heritage of the 17th century, it appears to be particularly important for the understanding of the phenomenological tradition (especially its founder E. Husserl) to which he refers, and ultimately offers an effective intellectual transition to the construction and subsequent articulation of his independent position as a thinker .

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<sup>62</sup> Ibid., p. 467.

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