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Homelessness. Home and Modernity in Jan Patočka's Thought[1]

Bezdomność. Dom i nowoczesność w myśli Jana Patočki

Summary

The article elaborates the interpretation of *homelessness*, which appears in Patočka's *Heretical Essays*, from wider perspective of his philosophy. In the first part the author outlines the problem of homelessness on the background of tension between the natural world and modern scientistic account of reality. Patočka presents modern homelessness as multilayered phenomenon, which affects not only our private and intimate spaces, but also our relation to the world, Earth and even Being itself, what leads to question whether such multilayered understanding can be grounded in his philosophy. For this reason, the second part of the article is dedicated to elaboration of Patočka's concept of home with its ties to the world in the context of his theory of three movements of existence. Such approach reveals that home and the world permeate each other. The concluding part points to specific thematic contexts of homelessness in its various layers and highlights how they attest to crisis of modern humanity and problematicity of its situation.

Keywords: Jan Patočka, home, homelessness, movement of acceptance, movement of self-extension, problematicity

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Streszczenie

Artykuł rozwija interpretację bezdomności, pojawiającą się w *Esejach heretyckich* Jana Patočki, z szerszej perspektywy jego filozofii. W pierwszej części autor zarysowuje problem bezdomności na tle napięcia między światem przyrody a współczesnym scjentystycznym ujęciem rzeczywistości. Patočka przedstawia współczesną bezdomność jako zjawisko wielowarstwowe, które wpływa nie tylko na naszą przestrzeń prywatną i intymną, ale także na naszą relację ze światem, Ziemią, a nawet samym Byciem, co prowadzi do pytania, czy takie wielowarstwowe rozumienie może być ugruntowane w jego filozofii. Z tego powodu druga część artykułu poświęcona jest omówieniu koncepcji domu Patočki i jego powiązań ze światem w kontekście jego teorii trzech ruchów egzystencji. Takie ujęcie ujawnia wzajemne przenikanie się domu i świata. W części końcowej wskazano na specyficzne konteksty tematyczne bezdomności w jej różnych warstwach i podkreślono, jak świadczą one o kryzysie współczesnej ludzkości i problematyczności jej sytuacji.

Słowa kluczowe: Jan Patočka, dom, bezdomność, ruch akceptacji, ruch samoodtwarzania, problematyczność

Homelessness as Manifestation of Split between Natural World and Modernity

The phenomenon of homelessness in Patočka's thought appears at the intersections of themes of home within the natural world and modernity. As we will see, the homelessness is one of the phenomena which reveal the crisis of modernity, which to certain extent is characterised by shift and transformation of the natural world. Despite his criticism Patočka is in no way an anti-modernist, nor did he ever deny modern contributions and advancements: the development of science and technology, which enabled humanity to overcome some of its boundaries, lessen poverty and create "far-reaching equality of opportunity."[2] While not rejecting modernity as such, Patočka by following

[2] J. Patočka, *Heretical Essays in the Philosophy of History*, Open Court, Chicago–La Salle, Ill. 1996, p. 118.

E. Husserl and his *Krisis* was troubled by the dangers which the scientific forgetfulness of the natural world brings. From the scientistic point of view natural sciences through applying their mathematizing methods describe the world as it *really* is and through their explanations they cover and interpret our primordial living within the natural world. The forgetfulness rests in the fact that such view overlooks, how it is grounded in the natural world, which it takes for granted and yet reinterprets as a totality of merely subjective epiphenomena. The science turns from insight into the things to a mere *technē* of calculation. Through its successes the scientific approach is elevated as *the* insight into the matter of things and this prejudice further affects how we approach ourselves. The techno-scientific conceptualizations become part of our everyday jargon, by which we not only talk about things, but pertains also to how we understand and interpret ourselves.[3]

But next to Husserl Patočka also draws on Heideggerian insights. For Patočka the modern science grows out of unrecognized metaphysics of Force, which forms a latently pre-given framework of "totality of what-is,"[4] and thus in advance determines the way how is the world and its objects mathematized and then used. The cosmos is primarily understood as an accumulation of energy and forces which are in ongoing cosmic processes stored and set in motion. On the one hand, from this background the modern philosophy can present a human being as standing above nature, as a being, who as the Cartesian master and possessor uses theoretical knowledge for inciting and interrupting cosmic processes at their own will. But, on the other hand, in such a view human being is also reduced to a force at disposal. We are, as Patočka notes, "integrated into the same process, accumulated, calculated, utilized, and

[3] Ľ. Učník, *Science and Lebenswelt*, "Phainomena" 2013, no. 22 (84–85), pp. 26–27.

[4] J. Patočka, *Heretical Essays*…, p. 117.

manipulated like any other state of energy."[5] The danger of this pre-given framework does not consist merely in the fact that our mastery over nature, which makes our everydayness tick, is illusory, nor in simplifying opinion that technology controls us, but rather in the fact that this metaphysics of Force lies at the heart of our forgetfulness of Being and with it reinterprets, overshadows and downplays the meaning of our existential possibilities: "Humans have ceased to be a relation to Being and have become a force, a mighty one, one of the mightiest."[6]

Shift in human self-understanding, which is brought by development of modern science, is not without consequences, since it tends to become manifest in experiences which testify for the deep crisis of humanity and its meaning. Patočka takes on this issue already in his first major work, *The Natural World as a Philosophical Problem*, where he argues, again following Husserl, that the one world of human being is torn between the natural world and the world of modern science and that modern science forms a worldview, in which the human being – objectified as a "thing among things" – is stripped of awareness of own freedom. For this reason, this scientific worldview as a sort of self-fulfilling prophecy leads to self-alienation and self--abdication. "Self-abdication," as Patočka states, "is a reliance on 'nature' where man directs neither himself nor others from a *personal* standpoint but rather gives himself up to the impulses that carry him."[7]

This disparity remains present also in his late *Heretical Essays*. One of the manifestations of this modern crisis lies in homelessness. Patočka introduces the homelessness in a single concise passage as follows:

[5] Ibidem, p. 116.

[6] Ibidem.

[7] J. Patočka, *The Natural World as a Philosophical Problem*, Northwestern University Press, Evanston, Ill. 2016, p. 10.

> This bewildered wandering is manifest, among other things, in modern homelessness. For all the vast production of the wherewithal of living, human life remains homeless. Home is understood ever more as a shelter, a place to sleep over so we can return to work the next day, the place where we store the fruits of our labor and lead our 'family life' of which there is ever less. That humans, unlike all other animals, build dwellings, because they are not at home in the world, because they lean out of the world and for that reason are charged with a calling within and towards it, anchored in deep layers of the past which have not passed as long as they live on in them – all that vanishes in the face of modern voluntary and enforced mobility, the gigantic migrations which by now affect nearly all the continents. The greatest homelessness, however, is in our relation to nature and to ourselves: Hannah Arendt used to point out that humans no longer understand what it is they do and calculate. In their relation to nature, they are content with mere practical mastery and predictability without intelligibility. In a sense, in their natural sciences they left the earth long before cosmic flights and so have in reality lost contact with that ground beneath their feet to which they had been called. Thereby, though, they also gave up their own selves, their distinctive place among all that is, which consists in being the living beings we know who relate to their Being, who really are this relation. Being ceased to be a problem once all that is was laid out before us as obvious in its quantifiable meaninglessness.[8]

The word "homelessness" in given context might sound to contemporary ear rather strange. However, in Patočka's times in Czech language there was no word denoting people, who were forced to live without roof over their head. Homelessness for Patočka, as the quoted passage indicates, has a specific meaning, which relates to the meaning of various levels

[8] Idem, *Heretical Essays*…, pp. 115–116.

or layers of "home" within the world. Only with the first layer, where the original meaning of home shifts into a mere space where "private life" takes place and where we sleep in order to work and vice versa, we might say that Patočka uses the concept of home literally. This poses a question. Is the concept of homelessness in regard to other layers appropriate? Is it not a mere metaphor, which rather complicates the matter instead of making it clearer? In what follows I will argue that Patočka's use of homelessness in all mentioned layers is justified. It requires, however, not to see the phenomenon of home in isolation, but from the perspective of the world and in this perspective not as delimited with clear-cut boundaries, but as co-constitutively permeating. There is no home without the world and human being also tends to be in the wholeness of the world at home.

Thus, as we see from the quotation, the modern worldview affects how we find ourselves within and "beyond" the natural world. Yet, this self-understanding is not turned into question how modern technology is co-constitutive of this natural world. Modernity, the nature of which is determined by technological rationality prescribing what appears as relevant, is from the beginning seen as a detachment from natural world. In such technological framework human being is alienated and appears reduced, nivelized, interchangeable. Yet, it would be premature to close the question of relation between natural world and modernity with a mere statement of their disparity. For Patočka the solution to the crisis, which is brought by metaphysics of Force, does not consists in returning to some pristine, natural way of living. Both the life within the taken-for-grantedness of natural world and attitude formed by metaphysics of Force attest to our forgetfulness of being. Both of them rule out the experience of problematicity shaking the ground of meaning, which reveals and enables us to reflect on our human condition and opens us for the questioning of (our) being.

The Meaning of Home

But what is a home? My point of departure for grasping the meaning of home is Patočka's famous concept of three movements of existence,[9] in which he discerns the movement of acceptance/anchoring, the movement of self-prolonging/defense and, finally, the movement of truth. For Patočka we discover ourselves in the natural world through openness and realizing the movement of existence. We can speak here of subjective genesis or genesis of subjectivity as it finds itself and attains orientation in and from within the world. We could also – even though not literally – characterize particular movements of existence as stages of development of subjectivity beginning with non-differentiation between subjectivity and the world in the case of new-born to attaining independence, pragmatic attitude and orientation withing the world of things until one comes to reflect on one own situation from the experience of the world as a whole.These movements present three basic ways of how something appears to human being and entail specific kind of self-appearance. Even though they are in their own nature distinct, "each of those three

[9] It should be noted that the concept of movements of existence is a notion, which Patočka develops and reconsiders in various versions, which, especially with regard to the meaning of the third movement, are not compatible with each other (on this issue see, e.g. P. Rezek's studies *Lidský život a lidská existence jako pohyb u Jana Patočky* [*Human Life and Human Existence as a Movement in Jan Patočka*] and Třetí životní pohyb u Jana Patočky jako problém intersubjektivity [*Third Life Movement in Jan Patočka as a Problem of Intersubjectivity*], [in:] P. Rezek, *Jan Patočka a věc fenomenologie*, Jan Placák – Ztichlá klika, Praha 2010, pp. 93–107, 108–125). From the vast number of accounts of Patočka's theory might be highlighted: J. Dodd, *The Heresies of Jan Patočka. Phenomenology, History, and Politics*, Northwestern University Press, Evanston, Ill. 2023, pp. 83–126; J. Čapek, *Existence and Perspectivity. Jan Patočka's Three Movements of Existence Reconsidered*, "Human Studies" 2025, https://doi.org/10.1007/s10746-024-09778-7 and critical study *Performing the Soul Through Movement*, [in:] M. Ritter, *Into the World. The Movement of Patočka's Phenomenology*, Springer, Cham 2019, pp. 115–127.

movements is always *co*-movement,"[10] they co-determine and refer to each other, we find them in tensions and intertwinements. When one of them dominates, the remaining two are present at least latently. In order to understand the meaning of home, I will specifically pay attention to intersubjective and affective dimensions between these movements.

In concise form Patočka expresses the meaning of home in his text *On the Prehistory of the Science of Movement*:

> The others are our original home which is thus not a mere external prerequisite but rather the very anchor of existence, the relation to what is *already* prepared for us in the world, what accepts us and must already be there prior to us if we are to be able to live and carry out all the rest of our life-movement.[11]

As we can see, Patočka stresses three crucial aspects of home: 1. it is grounded in specific kind of intersubjective relations, 2. home is something already prepared in advance for our coming and being, and 3. it is a condition for two other movements. In the following part we will look at these aspects in more detail.

1. Intersubjectivity of home. According to Patočka, human life is from its very outset intersubjectively determined and weaved into the subjectivity of the other. Therefore, the project (*rozvrh*) of human existence entails the structure of intersubjective mirroring: not only the other appears to me, but I also

[10] J. Patočka, *Body, Community, Language, World*, Open Court, Chicago–La Salle, Ill. 1998, p. 149. Translation altered according to J. Patočka, *Tělo, společenství, jazyk, svět*, OIKOYMENH, Praha 1995, p. 105.

[11] J. Patočka, *On the Prehistory of the Science of Movement. World, Earth, Heaven and the Movement of Human Life*, [in:] *Dis-orientations. Philosophy, Literature and the Lost Grounds of Modernity*, eds. M. Sá Cavalcante Schuback, T. Lane, Rowman & Littlefield, London 2015, p. 74. Translation altered according to J. Patočka, *K prehistorii vědy o pohybu: svět, země, nebe a pohyb lidského života*, [in:] J. Patočka, *Fenomenologické spisy II. Co je existence*, OIKOYMENH, Praha 2009, p. 198.

realize that I appear to the other, and just as I am more or less thematically aware of my appearance to the other, the other is aware of own appearing to me.[12] Thus, realizing of my existence never takes place in isolation, but within a certain intersubjective *milieu*.[13] Not only is destiny of a subjectivity inseparably connected to subjectivities of the others, but the others play a crucial role in me becoming myself. Or as Patočka stresses: "The other is the most powerful component of our experience, revealing to us what we ourselves are and can do."[14] However, I do not have full control over my appearance within the other, nor is the other given in their appearance exhaustingly to me. For this reason, according to Patočka, "human life, in its central dimension, is a seeking and discovering of the other within oneself and of oneself within the other. The whole drama of human life is a question of whether what is implicitly contained in that primordial, purely situational contact will or will not be discovered: the interior concealed behind all that manifests itself."[15]

The distinctive nature of intersubjective relations we find within home comes from dimension of affectivity. Home is a place where love[16] in its instinctive-affective form[17] is realized among

[12] *The Phenomenology of Afterlife*, [in:] *Jan Patočka and the Phenomenology of Life After Death*, eds. G. Strandberg, H. Strandberg, Springer, Cham 2023, p. 15; J. Patočka, *"The Natural World" Remeditated Thirty-Three Years Later*, [in:] J. Patočka, *The Natural World as a Philosophical Problem*, Northwestern University Press, Evanston, Ill. 2016, p. 168.

[13] From this perspective also such intersubjectively isolated situations as loneliness or solitude must be grasped as a presence of non-presence of the other and therefore are not understandable without reference to intersubjectivity.

[14] J. Patočka, *Body, Community, Language, World*, p. 66.

[15] Idem, *The Natural World and Phenomenology*, [in:] *The Selected Writings of Jan Patočka. Care for the Soul*, eds. I. Chvatík, E. Plunkett, Bloomsbury, London 2023, p. 125.

[16] J. Patočka, *On the Prehistory of the Science of Movement*, p. 200.

[17] In his conception of three movements of existence Patočka distinguishes two forms of love: "the biological" or "physical" which is grounded

the closest relatives. Patočka often demonstrates this intersubjective aspect on the relation between the parent and child, that is, on acceptance of a child as well as on child's anchoring (or sinking roots) into the world which can be realized only with and by the presence of others. At the first glance the asymmetry in the possibilities, the activity and passivity, can be seen here. The child is accepted, what entails that the parent takes care of its needs. The child appears not as a thing, but a living subjectivity whose activity consists in emanating its passivity, helplessness and dependence. The parent accepts the child by caring and satisfying its needs, through which the child attains a specific place in the world.

In the movement of acceptance there is much more going on than just providing care for basic physiological needs. After all, in fulfilling these tasks parents could be substituted by various institutions. To be a parent is more than to perform a certain role or fulfil the function. Patočka is rather aiming for description of primordial affectivity, to which we are passively exposed, and which opens us for (self)experience of unique other, with the other and by the other. In other words, the question is, how subjectivity as the openness for the subjectivity of the other is realized and how it affects one's self. For this reason, Patočka highlights the differences between the subjectivities of a child and adult. Mature subjectivity relates to the world in various layers and structures of discernment. As adults, we discern things and objects, more or less thematically grasp their contexts as well as our relation and difference to them. We see ourselves as part of

in the movement of acceptance and authentic love, which a person develops in the third movement of truth. For the critical discussion of Patočka's concept of love see M. Ritter's chapter *Omnia Vincit Amor* ([in:] M. Ritter, *Into the World*, pp. 171–183) and especially his recent article *Love as Ontological Solution: Patočka on Love* ([in:] *Phenomenologies of Love*, eds. V. Cibotaru, I. Apostolescu, Brill, Leiden 2025, pp. 165–180), where he also addresses love as belonging to the domain of "pre-everydayness" in Patočka's manuscripts from the World War II.

a shared external world, and yet through experience of its alienness and hostility we take for granted that we do not belong to it thoroughly. For this reason, we build our homes as an "outer inwardness" or "external interiority" (*vnější nitro*),[18] which serve as a shelter from surrounding inhospitability. Subjectivity of a newborn (and also preborn), in contrast, lives in the absence of any of these discernments and especially in the lack of difference between myself and the world. Devoid of ability to phenomenalize particular things and oneself, the experience of a child is that of being merged with the world in emphatic harmony, where the infant's affective experience is the world and the world is the infant.

As we saw, according to Patočka, we aim to discover others within ourselves and ourselves within the subjectivity of others. Let us, therefore, examine the experience of a child and a parent from the perspective of intersubjective intertwinement. For the infant the world is here first and foremost formed by the presence of the other, with whom the child identifies or rather feels merged. In nourishment, calming embrace, caress of the other human being, the child experiences warm, welcoming and friendly face of the world, which culminates in the bliss of a sleep. And, on the other hand, in suffering the non-presence of the other, who neglects the child's calling or is unable to provide care, the world speaks as cold, inhuman inhospitability. "Thus," Patočka claims, "every human, from the onset of life, is immersed, rooted, mainly in the other."[19] From the perspective of the parent, however, the child does not appear as being merged with the world but in addressing us it steps to the foreground from the given surrounding context as a particular embodied subjective being endowed with interiority. As Patočka notes, "we are at the same

[18] J. Patočka, *"The Natural World" Remeditated Thirty-Three Years Later*, p. 165; idem, *"Přirozený svět" v meditaci svého autora po třiatřiceti letech*, [in:] J. Patočka, *Fenomenologické spisy II*, p. 319.

[19] Idem, *The Natural World and Phenomenology*, p. 125.

time accepted only if we are ourselves an uncovered object, if we are discovered as something that is for itself."[20] Thus, acceptance on the part of the parent is made possible by mature subjectivity with abilities to phenomenalize and recognize the newborn in uniqueness and distinctiveness of its embodied life. My care aimed at the body of an infant is a care which at the same time aims at its subjective life and through acceptance or rejection of this care I come to experience myself. From this perspective the care of a parent is a manifestation of one's affective bond with the other, with the child, which is entangled into engagement on my own being.[21] To be a parent in this regard does not mean just fulfilling a certain function or a role. It expresses an intersubjectively intertwined experience, in which I find myself addressed in passive affectivity by the infant-other. Through this close connection mature subjectivity finds own passivity, dependence and incompleteness, a desire to be present within the infant's interiority and to be accepted on an instinctive-affective level.

For Patočka is the thematization of the relation between the child and parent crucial, for it enables us to understand, as we will see, how human subjectivity anchors into the world, where it finds its bearings. But not only that. Parent-child relation must be understood as paradigmatic, as it serves as leading clue for understanding the first movement of existence in other intersubjective encounters, such as erotic dimension, "biological love" between

[20] Idem, *"The Natural World" Remeditated Thirty-Three Years Later*, p. 165.

[21] This intersubjectively determined experience of me coming to myself through the other takes place in woman already in various stages of pregnancy. As N. Depraz wrote: "The lived experience of pregnancy makes me turn my attention from the world to myself, to my flesh, which bears in itself another flesh. It therefore creates a new bodily intimacy with myself, which is an intimacy through and with another human being that I don't yet know and that is so naturally near to me: the other *in statu nascendi* in me brings me back to the depth of my own being" (N. Depraz, *The Intimate Other. Phenomenology of Lucid Embodiment in the Light of the Lived Experience of Pregnancy*, "Theoria et Historia Scientiarum" 2003, ed. T. Komendzinski, no. 7 (1), p. 170).

grown-ups, but also relations to our closest in the "autumn of life", in condition of their withering away or even when they are deceased.[22] The subjectivity of a child manifests the dimension of experience, which precedes the domains of pragmatic everydayness with its own modifications of intersubjective relations and which does not come to a halt when the subject loses former ties of helplessness and dependence.[23] Patočka not only reveals the subjectivity of a child in its emanation of dependence, but with it also constant presence of primordial affective passivity within the mature subject. Even as mature individualities "we feel an emptiness, a want – a need to be accepted and supported in the whole of our being, and not merely in our functions."[24] The first movement lives in adults as desire for acceptance by the desired other, as desire to be accepted in anchoring within other's subjectivity.

Nowhere is this underlying affectivity aiming for anchoring in the other and acceptance by the other more visible than in the domain of erotic experience. In *Natural World and Phenomenology* we read:

> In an erotic relation, I am given to myself not in what I make myself, what I strive for, what I do, but in what I am, that is, what I *already* am – therein lies the passivity, inseparable from the charm, the magic, of this entire realm.[25]

[22] See Patočka's *Phenomenology of Afterlife*, p. 22. This issue had been taken on by N. de Warren in *Souls of the Departed. Towards a Phenomenology of the After-Life* ("Metodo" 2017, no. 5 (1), pp. 205–237) and more recently in *The Disappearance of Intimacy* ([in:] *Jan Patočka and the Phenomenology of Life After Death*, pp. 53–68).

[23] As Patočka stresses in Hegelian manner, "in human sensibility, life as an emphatic harmony with the world is transcended, that is, it is preserved yet modified" (J. Patočka, *Body, Community, Language, World*, p. 139).

[24] Idem, *"The Natural World" Remeditated Thirty-Three Years Later*, p. 169.

[25] Idem, *The Natural World and Phenomenology*, p. 129.

In erotic relation I find myself passively determined by desire which is intentionally aimed at particular and unique person of the other. But this desire is not a mere ephemerous need, which can be instantly satisfied. It is a desire, which should be deemed, as Patočka notes elsewhere, as a need to be needed,[26] a desire of the other which can come to completion only if the other is passively determined by the desire oriented at me as well. Erotic relation is a relation of *resonance* in mirroring intersubjective reciprocity, where not only I desire the other, but through grasping their desire I am also grasping myself, or find myself returned to me, as desired: "Life is *returned* to me, given back," because "something that was never really actual is directly present as a gift, something given to us, aimed at us, which we could never give to ourselves, arrange, procure *ourselves.*"[27] Patočka by stressing the erotic relation as a gift highlights the transcendence of primordial affective passivity over the sphere of pragmatic, everyday preoccupations. The fulfilment of our desire aiming at the other, which entails the desire of the other aiming at us, is grounded on precondition of passive spontaneity. It cannot be attained by pragmatic concern in which the other would serve as a mere means for my need, for "any manipulation, any effort to gain control of it inevitably violates it, pollutes it, makes it ordinary, objectified, 'dirty.'"[28]

2. Home as the world prepared in advance. As we saw, after Patočka highlights that home is grounded on specific intersubjective relations, he immediately adds, that home has a character of readiness for the new human being, that for such coming the others are prepared in advance. What is the nature of this being prepared? Patočka notes: "Naturally, we are accepted in more

[26] "We need to be the fulfilment of another's emptiness, and if this happens, our own emptiness – need – is fulfilled" (idem, *The Phenomenology of Afterlife*, p. 19).

[27] Idem, *The Natural World and Phenomenology*, p. 129.

[28] Ibidem.

than one sense, acceptance itself is ambiguous."[29] In certain sense we are already accepted by the world itself, by the "blind" nature and its processes, through which we come to be. The very world, which on the one hand affects us with its cold hostility, also provides us with possibilities to make our place in it and dwell on the face of the earth. Furthermore, this being prepared also consists in afore-mentioned passivity pre-determining us for being engaged in the being of the other, in finding ourselves in our effect on their subjectivity and experience. As Patočka says: "life is possible only as a state of *already* entering into the warmth that has been prepared, in the passivity of being penetrated by *acceptance*, and therefore only on the basis of a past that enables us to drop anchor and put down roots."[30] In such a case, it is as if something has already prepared us for such a coming, since it is not a condition which we could manipulatively procure. But to decisive extent, home is prepared actively, it is a result of conscious and intentional concern, in which we change the character of the environment around us to suit our needs. Home is built as shelter which provides for us a protection from inhospitality of the world and in this regard is a physical materialization of its original meaning in the sense of "fence of the others who mediate the contact with the outward."[31] But being also more than just a shelter, it is a private space, which we deem as our own, as a place to which we belong.[32] Building and preserving home as a physical dwelling is included in the third meaning of acceptance, which entails that we accept the others by satiating and satisfying their needs by work: "We can only accept the other by risking ourselves, by attending to the other's needs no less than

[29] J. Patočka, *"The Natural World" Remeditated Thirty-Three Years Later*, p. 165.

[30] Idem, *The Natural World and Phenomenology*, p. 129.

[31] Idem, *Prostor a jeho problematika*, [in:] idem, *Fenomenologické spisy III/2. O zjevovaní*, OIKOYMENH, Praha 2016, p. 68.

[32] Ibidem, p. 67.

our own, by *working*."[33] The first movement of acceptance – by virtue of being a co-movement – thus inevitably refers to second movement,[34] which Patočka calls the movement of defense or of self-extension.

The character of the movement of defense is opposite to that of acceptance/anchoring. In the second movement our finitude comes to the fore and throws us into the necessity of work and labor. The finitude, which announces itself in our needs, constitutes the framework in which the things appear in their usability and utility, as tools and means of satisfying our needs. Thus, the self-extension in the second movement must be seen in two--fold sense: on the one hand it is extension of ourselves into the realm of things, which become an inorganic part of our body.[35] And second, through satiating our needs it is an extension and reproduction of our vitality as well as of our closest relatives, whom we accept.

The first stark contrast between the first and second movement might be seen in the domain of affectivity. While in the first movement a human being finds its "completeness" in satisfied desires and needs which climax in forgetfulness of an infant's sleep or self-dissolution in erotic pleasure, in the movement of defense the coercion of vital reproduction throws us into forced asceticism. This, of course, cannot leave the affective atmosphere of the movement untouched. The pleasure must be delayed for the sake of providing its means. Work, which in the end requires the use of strength against the natural resources and things, is felt as burden and toil. In use of tools our manipulating body is at first transparent and so are the tools which become apparent only if there is attention needed to meet a certain end we wish to achieve. But as my body becomes wearier and strength seems to diminish, I start to feel my body as something I must struggle

[33] J. Patočka, *Heretical Essays*, pp. 30–31.
[34] Idem, *Tělo, společenství, jazyk, svět*, p. 106.
[35] Idem, *"The Natural World" Remeditated Thirty-Three Years Later*, p. 172.

with. Through pain and toil felt in the work we are brought back to ourselves, we feel ourselves in our limits, with which we must calculate in order to achieve given tasks and goals. This sorry aspect of our human condition for this reason entails a call for alleviation from its burdening nature.

Second stark contrast, which is connected to the first one, consists in the way how the other appears in the intersubjective encounters as well as in my self-appearance. The others are revealed in alienating functionality and servitude. The other does not stand in front of me as a subjectivity, on which I rely and relate in my passivity and vulnerability as accepting protective fence, but as a function, force, object of calculation, as somebody I can use or can get used by. In such relation I take into account what I get from the relation with other and what I lose. *Mutatis mutandis* in this reduced form I grasp myself in reified way as somebody, whom I offer to the others at their disposal. For this reason, relations stemming from this movement might attain a form of pragmatic partnership and cooperation or – because of seeking alleviation the burden of work – also of domination and exploitation, which is often masked by ideological fallacies.[36]

Because movements of existence are also co-movements, the alienation of forced asceticism of the second movement cannot leave the environment of home unaffected. After encountering Patočka's reflections on the nature of original home as micro-community tied by the relations of acceptance and instinctual love, we might be surprised when we also read, that "the golden age", that is, the age of dominance of anchoring and acceptance, is also age of "vague antagonisms, jealousies, and hatreds."[37] The reason for this alleged paradox of affectivity might reside in the fact that the intertwinement between the movement of acceptance and defense makes home a porous environment. And because of this porousness the other might be given to me not only

[36] Ibidem, p. 174.
[37] Ibidem, p. 167.

as accepting subjectivity but also becomes a source of alienating distance. In other words, because we accept by providing satisfaction of other's needs, the other's subjectivity also places on us the burden of labor. Thus, the finitude of the other – just as my own finitude – coerces me to forced asceticism and lures me into calculating attitude, in which I weigh what the relation gives and takes. The intimate relation – whether between parent and child or between adult subjectivities – inevitably entails a dimension of calculating attitude and distance.[38]

For this reason, the anchoring intersubjectivity of home is marked by the pragmatic concern of the second movement. On the one hand this potentially threatening attitude is inhibited by acceptance, the need to find myself in the life of the other and that of the other within myself. On the other hand, the care for the other presents a claim and a task, which potentially dissolves every accepting desire.

3. Home as a precondition of other movements. The movement of acceptance and anchoring aiming for two-fold protection of a new and helpless being – that is, in providing intersubjective affective shelter of a micro-community and a readiness of the world – must be seen as precondition for the movements of defense and truth. Of course, such precondition is most obvious in providing care, in nourishing, protection and reproduction

[38] This attitude, again, can be experienced already during the pregnancy. J. Vydrová, following N. Depraz, notes that woman initially experiences pregnancy as a certain encounter with the other announcing in her body, which then transforms to such an extent, that the other "occupies the place of mother, rules over her body and determines her" (J. Vydrová, *Medzi subjektivitou a intersubjektivitou*, "Filozofia" 2007, no. 62 (8), p. 672). The preborn other already takes its toll in the form of tiredness, backpain, weariness, which come to conflict with pregnant mother's daily tasks by which the appeals of a child are set aside: "One day I feel dizzy and finally faint: 'I am here!' you are obviously telling me. My only pre-conscious weary answer at this very early stage is the following: 'I know you are here, but let me carry on doing what I have to do.'" (N. Depraz, *The Intimate Other*, p. 171).

of vitality of a helpless infant. But Patočka points to home as a precondition of the other movements in more specific sense. Home is environment, through which one continuously attains the sense of belonging to the wider world and awareness of their own place in it. In other words, home is a precondition of subjective genesis from non-discerning unity of consciousness to individual mature subjectivity. This continuous process is essentially intersubjectively conditioned, as it presupposes and realizes the structure of intersubjective mirroring.

First of all, the others play a crucial role in child's awareness of its own distinction from the world and from the others. An important insight into how this process initially takes place is offered by Martin Buber:

> Through the *Thou* a human becomes *I*. That, which confronts him comes and disappears, relational events condense, then are scattered, and in the change consciousness of the unchanging partner, of the *I*, grows clear, and each time stronger.[39]

In infant's unity with the world is the intersubjective intertwinement present only in convolute form as a possibility which is yet to be actively developed and realized. The surrounding world, with which it originally is the one, does not consist of totality of environing inanimate objects, but it is a world which is vividly addressing it. Buber stresses that this addressing has different levels of density or intensity: sometimes it is direct, sometimes it is indistinctive humming in the background, once it is a constant presence of the other who turns their face to the infant, which later turns into being "addressed" by silence. Regardless of these differences there stands the self which remains as a constant pole of these changing experiences and becomes more aware of its constancy.

Patočka next to Buber, and partly following J.-P. Sartre, underlines that through the other I come to awareness of myself

[39] M. Buber, *I and Thou*, Charles Scribner's Sons, New York 1958, p. 28.

as an object within the world. In recognizing the other as attentive subjectivity, which at the same time is a distinctive object of my attention I come to realize that I am such object of attention as well. Such experience is far from conscious mental operation. Originally it rather makes itself apparent as captivation, in which I find myself: "I see this *captivation* on the other – that means to *see the sight*, observe hearing, etc. – captivation which I in quite the same way see on me as 'it', as the subject of reacting, of addressing."[40] Such experience of reification, however, does not inevitably entail an awareness of alienation. Quite contrary, very often it has form of accepting and welcoming gestures and bodily movements like smile, caress, hugging and embrace.

The ability to recognize myself as a part of the world is also precondition for attaining various bodily habitualities, sediments and possibilities, on which the future mature individual will have to rely. We saw that home, even though it serves as a shelter from the outside world, is in fact porous. This porosity can go also in another direction, in which home functions as a place in which an infant becomes prepared for what lies beyond the protective walls. As Patočka writes:

> The safety of this mediating and protecting world is then the milieu in which we acquire the possibilities with which life in the big world, the world of work and struggle, later operates as something taken for granted.[41]

The intimate others in the environment of home are not only seen in their accepting approach. Their alienating self-realization in their roles also comes to the fore. The working body becomes a source, which to infant opens own possibilities. The other is also a source of revealing the possibilities of my own body, of

[40] J. Patočka, *Prostor a jeho problematika*, p. 64.

[41] Idem, *"The Natural World" Remeditated Thirty-Three Years Later*, pp. 166–167.

my future habits and sediments, which enable me to grow out of home and stand on my own in the movement of defense. At home, children in careless atmosphere of play imitate the others and take on themselves various roles and functions. Through entertainment – stories and fairy tales – they come to awareness of the wider world as alien and potentially dangerous.[42] In bodily appropriating of the using of tool, but later also in various chores and duties of the child age, the infant is introduced into the wider shared world with its pressures and tasks and continuously has to endeavor the asceticism of alienating everydayness until the whole process reaches its completion in attaining individual independence and ability to found and maintain own "always threatened, provisional, but so desired and loved home."[43]

As we saw, Patočka attempts to understand home from the movement of human becoming within the world, who is destined to find their bearings in it. Home is thus revealed in its porous structure. Truly, home appears to be Janus-faced. At first glance, it is a place of acceptance, a space where our vulnerabilities and conditioning passivity do not need to be hidden from the alienating sight of the other and where we are primarily determined by intersubjective intertwinement of our desires. But as we saw, such acceptance is provisional. The other as an object of care is also the one who addresses us with claims and burden of work and concomitantly with it becomes reified. And home is, on the other hand, a precondition of one's future independence and in both of these cases the movement of acceptance is intertwined with its co-movement of self-extension and defense. But *mutatis mutandis* Janus-faced is also the world itself. The acceptance, as we saw, is ambiguous. The world primarily manifests itself in its hostile face by which we are threatened, but

[42] J. Majerník, *Home and Homelessness*, [in:] *Stories and Memories, Memories and Histories. A Cross-disciplinary Volume on Time, Narrativity, and Identity*, ed. J. Griffith, Brill, Leiden–Boston 2025, pp. 205–206.

[43] J. Patočka, *Prostor a jeho problematika*, p. 57.

this very hostility might be understood as form of acceptance through which it calls us to build home, a task for which we are naturally and at least partly passively endowed with creative abilities. It is also the frozen hostility of the world, through which we feel addressed to take care of the other, to serve as their intersubjective protective fence. In this regard our tendency to be anchored within home poses an alienating danger as well. Since this exposure to the outer world is inextricable aspect of human condition, it is a task of the human being to confront and deal with it, to step outside of the protective walls. Home might allure us as a safe haven, in which we are liberated from the claims of external world, a place of forgetfulness that home exists from the world and in certain sense also for the world.

The ambivalence of acceptance thus enables us to see the relation between home as "outer inwardness" and the world as a surrounding and home-delimiting inhospitable exteriority through their permeability. Not only the inhospitability of the world enters into the private and intimate domains of our home with the threatening possibility of their dissolution. We also leave home and in our various forms of encountering the outward we transform and make it home-like and familiar. As J. Majerník notes, next to "fundamental home" understood as a shelter for a new-born and place where erotic relation might come to fulfilment, there are other meanings:

> The other senses of "home," such as being at home in a given place, country and city, get even more tangential and metaphorical. But their shared core or point of refence – what enables us to call them "home" at all – is what they have in common with the two fundamental kinds of home. With these kinds of "home," the domain of home in the strict sense (…) seamlessly expands to encompass a wider part of the world, namely that part, which we consider "our own," which is "*essentially close*" to us. They are more 'extensive' and less 'intensive' kinds of home.[44]

[44] J. Majerník, *Home and Homelessness*, p. 207.

In dealing with the outer world, we rely on familiar skills and habits, in which are prescribed "normal," usual ways of procuring the materials and products we need. The intersubjective encounters – whether with partners, rivals, anonymous persons, or even enemies – are mediated through various written and non-written rules, customs, laws etc., which reduce the strangeness of the other and build the bridges of possible communication. The world behind the walls and fences of our homes is not incomprehensible and sheerly alien *terra incognita*, but addresses us with various layers, levels and intensity of familiarity. Thus, when Patočka writes about the modern homelessness in its various layers – which stretch from home in the sense of microcommunity occupying a delimited private space to a cosmic dimension and relation to being – it is very likely that he has this complexity of relation between home and the world as a whole in mind and which speaks here between the lines.

In *Heretical Essays*, however, Patočka also stresses homelessness in relation to our very being and this claim might be surprising. To be a human existence ontologically entails this self-relation in the sense of being engaged in one's own being. Self-relation is implicitly present already in the movements of acceptance and self-extension, but it is in the third movement where it becomes thematically explicated. In the third movement, however, a human existence undergoes an experience of problematicity, which shakes the ground of naïve meaning within the natural world. In facing problematicity is revealed that what we consider to be firm and reliable is a mere prejudice. With this experience is transformed the meaning of our self-realization within the movements of acceptance and self-extension, which become explicitly thematized as sources of self-forgetfulness. For this reason, the problematicity shakes our very being at home within the world as it is realized under co-constitutive dominance of first two movements of existence. Discovery of problematicity opens a possibility of new relations to myself and to the world, which consists in the attitude of constant questioning:

> This new manner of life consists, then, in our being able to live in such a way that we do not accept life simply, but rather we accept its *problematicity*. From this moment on, this is our base; it is that in which we live and breathe. This also means that, from this moment on, we cannot accept anything as a finished and given thing, we cannot rely on anything; everything we accepted as self-evident is not self-evident; everything we know is prejudice.[45]

This poses a question: can we be at home in the world after the shaking? Does it not come to us only at the price of self--forgetfulness? Is there a possibility for the world to appropriate problematicity, to be its "home"? In line with this possibility is Patočka's claim that "the human world and environment (*osvětí*) show, that the big world is able to provide the ground for realization of human meaning in such a way, that for the human being it might become home."[46]

To be fully at home in the world presupposes self-realization in the ontologically explicit sense of the word and therefore must also entail problematicity. As we saw, according to Patočka, the phenomenon of homelessness attests to modern wandering, to our blind and purposeless life of a being who is unaware of own existential situation. Patočka addressed the theme of wandering also in his interpretation of Sophocles' Theban tragedies, which is elucidating also for the context of *Heretical Essays*. Our contemporary condition might be likened to that of mythical Oedipus.[47] Oedipus' character is a living embodiment of human problematicity which speaks through his paradoxes and strife between what he deems to be true and what truly is. Oedipus

[45] J. Patočka, *The Spiritual Person and the Intellectual*, [in:] *The Selected Writings of Jan Patočka*, p. 298.

[46] J. Patočka, *Celek světa a svět člověka. Poznámky k jednomu současnému náběhu ke kosmologii*, [in:] idem, *Fenomenologické spisy II*, p. 441.

[47] Idem, *Truth of Myth in Sophocles' Theban Plays*, [in:] *The Selected Writings of Jan Patočka*, p. 245.

is a wanderer, who because of prophecy leaves home and willingly accepts exile. In Thebes he finds second home, becomes their savior, an honorable king, who marries a widow queen. At this peak of his achievements, he is unaware that at "home" in Corith he was an outcast, that his voluntary exile is return to his original city, from which he was expulsed and left to die as an infant. Thus, Oedipus is a wanderer in two-fold sense: not only as a person who must leave his homeland but more specifically in the blindness to his own predicament. This problematicity of human condition is in telling way portrayed in Oedipus blinding himself when he realized who he really is: an involuntary murderer of own father and incestuous husband to his mother. What was obvious in the plain sight was blinding; thus, without his eyes, he is truly seeing that the truth is domain of gods, not of human. Patočka stresses that in character of Oedipus Sophocles reveals the dangers of Heraclitean *idia phronēsis*, "own understanding", which is blind to the divine and what is truly common (*koinon*) for all.[48] From Patočka's perspective the character of Oedipus testifies to the fact that to be at home in the world is to appropriate the paradox of problematicity, to accept that to see means to be blind and awareness of blindness is true way of seeing.

The Homeless Homes

So far we can state that Patočka is justified to speak about various layers of homelessness due to ambivalence of acceptance and permeability of the domains of home and the world. In the concluding part I will address the question of how this permeability enables homelessness in these layers. This brings us to the question of alienation and authenticity which is *the* issue of fifth of *Heretical Essays*.

[48] *Ibidem*, p. 243. See also Ľ. Učník, *Patočka on Techno-Science and Responsibility*, "Studia Phænomenologica" 2007, VII, pp. 410–411.

According to Patočka, modern civilization at the first glance appears to be a victory of everydayness, of sober calculating reason, by the virtue of which all problems might be approached as questions of instrumental and quantitative nature, of measuring what beneficial gain is and what is loss. This self-image of modernity was appropriated also by those critics, who saw the sphere of everydayness as a sole dominion of fallenness into inauthentic condition. This attitude is blind to the fact that the same modernity paved way for various outbursts of irrationality, which its sobriety was destined to eradicate. For Patočka losing oneself in everydayness, that is, to approach oneself and the others merely in their "objective" function and role, is only one form of alienating (self)relation. The other possibility is represented by self-forgetfulness in the literal meaning of the word, which one achieves in experiences of ecstatic pleasure and orgiasm, which seize or captivate the subject. While on the surface modern rationality is on the crusade against irrational digressions, it fails to see how they are, on the one hand, manipulatively orchestrated and how, on the other hand, they function as motivating factors behind rational calculations. Irrationality, the significance of which is in modern approach denied, is in fact its co-constitutive feature. With that being sad it should be now clear that the form of alienation in everydayness, which entails self-forgetfulness among tools and instruments as well as among reified human roles and functions, is grounded primarily in the movement of self--extension and defense, while the estrangement in the ecstatic rapture corresponds to the primacy of the movement of acceptance.

Yet, there still remains a question of how the two kinds of self-forgetfulness are related to the meaning structure of homelessness in its various layers. The danger of modern victory of everydayness consists in the fact that the dominating viewpoints "equally overlook all that is neither objective nor a role."[49] What is the nature of such overlooking? Generally speaking, the

[49] J. Patočka, *Heretical Essays*, p. 115.

natural world, within which we are to large extent sunken in non-thematic presence as embodied subjectivities, is far richer than what appears as actual thematic givenness to the eye of the beholder. The blinding insight or seeing blindness of techno--scientific perspective therefore grasps no more than mere fragments of our experiential life and this non-thematic abundance is either unseen or approached as a mere subjective phenomenon, the meaning of which must be reconstructed from the "real" being behind this subjective figment. Furthermore, it overlooks how it is motivated by finitude and desire to be released from it. As we saw, Patočka discerns the layers of our private home, of home in wider sense of familiarity of relatively close environment and localized identity (which might include identification with municipality, region or country etc.), of our relation to Earth, and ontological relation to our being. Homelessness as a result of our forgetfulness must attest to specific manifestation of crisis within each of them. Ontological level, however, does not stand to the other layer in sort of juxtaposition, but is rather their common denominator. They announce the problematicity of our present situation and thus present a condition for being shaken. But such a possibility is at the same time hindered by the powers of forgetfulness.

Taking this background as a point of departure, in what way does homelessness sneak into privacy of our homes? The genesis of home within the world is motivated by the call for acceptance and to be accepted, through which we build a private shelter from the environing world, which with its coldness is in fact home-constitutive as well. Thus, we accept not only by the sheer desire to be desired, but also through free yielding to commitment of care for the other. The desired other also stands in front of me as a claim of taking on myself the burden of their existence and vice versa, what in turn might become a source of mutual estrangement. In that case the other is given in their calculability as an obstacle to my happiness. From this background arises the desire to be released from the shackless of everydayness,

which for me presents the other with their claims. The relationship is dissolved with the misinterpreting promise of personal autonomy, of freedom to seek own concept of happiness. The other context, from which this dissolution of privacy might be approached, consists in examining how modern way of life produces moods of emptiness, loneliness, boredom and how they are addressed and even reproduced through technological development. The interpretation, in which we are merely subjected to the objective powers that be, allows us to strip ourselves from the commitments to the closest ones, who are losing their unique desired individuality, to which we are called to be committed, for the sake of reified and interchangeable caricature. As the claims and conditions of intimacy within home are problematized, there is growing public demand for its release from its protective and now rather limiting and restrictive walls.

Patočka saw manifestation of homelessness also in modern mass migration, which was not only voluntary, but primarily was forced by political decisions or by a need to seek refuge due to political persecution or threat of war. From phenomenological perspective, the meaning of migration does not imply only a change of a place. Human beings are connected to their homeland through invisible ties of sedimented familiarity, which becomes manifest in various ways with the feelings of homesickness as well as in encounters in new, non-familiar environment, in which they must find their bearings. Mass migration as a result of political decision, however, portrays more ghastly picture. In dependence on legitimizing ideological fervor, it might adopt rather "mild" forms of a mere transfer, or radical, violent expulsion. In case of totalitarian regimes, migration even attains a form of concentration for the sake of absolute control or extermination. Thus, the fervor of mass migration is connected to millions of personal tragedies and traumas. Patočka indirectly addresses the ontological aspect of this issue in his foreword to J. Durych's *Gods Rainbow*, a novel which deals with the aftermath of "wild transfer" of Germans from Sudetenland after World War

II and which he also translated to German. The novel portrays how trauma of the expulsion left deep scars and radically transformed the person of a woman, who is unable to establish normal and intimate human relationships.[50]

Contemporary context of mass migration, however, *nolens volens* points to homelessness in our relation to Earth. Patočka, following the insights of H. Arendt, metaphorically stresses that in our minds and attitude we became astronauts long before J. Gagarin reached the limits of space and N. Armstrong walked on the Moon. In other words, cosmic flights are a realization of preceding detachment from the Earth, which took place in modern mathematized science. In natural world the Earth is firm, immobile ground and primordial referent to our orientation. As Patočka stresses:

> Thus the earth, in the framework of primordial nature that we are analyzing, is not originally a body like other bodies; it is not comparable to anything else, because everything else that might occur and that we might encounter relates to it as the ground that is always presupposed.[51]

Furthermore, the Earth functions as a primordial ground for anything living. It gives birth, nourishment and thus constitutes a condition of our life.[52] However, this natural notion of the Earth as a primordial ground fades into background with the development of the modern science, which under the spell of metaphysics of Force nivelizes the Earth to a body among other such bodies moving in vastness of the universe under the command of same universal, mathematically calculable laws. The turning point of our detachment from the Earth is that through knowledge and

[50] Idem, *Předmluva k „Boží duze" Jaroslava Durycha*, [in:] idem, *Umění a čas I*, OIKOYMENH, Praha 2004, pp. 526–533.

[51] Idem, *The Natural World and Phenomenology*, p. 120.

[52] Ibidem, p. 121.

mastery of these laws we can manipulate the cosmic processes. However, as contemporary environmental crisis reveals, our mastery over the nature has its limits and testifies to the fact that our natural identity as earthlings is not a mere subjective prejudice. The transformation of our attitude towards the Earth is hindered not only by the logic of consume, but also through economic and political rivalries stemming from the meaning structure of the second movement of existence.

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