



AN ABSTAINING STANCE TOWARDS OTHERNESS?
AN OIKOLOGICAL APPROACH TO THE PRACTICAL
APPLICABILITY OF THE EPOCHÉ

¿ABSTENERSE FRENTE A LA OTREDAD?
APROXIMACIÓN OIKOLÓGICA A LA APLICABILIDAD
PRÁCTICA DE LA EPOJÉ

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RESUMEN

ABSTRACT

El artículo investiga cómo es posible reaccionar al encuentro con la alteridad del otro sin asimilarlo o asimilarla, adaptándose y perdiéndose a sí mismo en el Otro, o simplemente encerrándose en uno mismo. Esta reacción es la práctica de la epojé examinada en su dimensión existencial como una realización o un acto, lo que lleva a preguntarnos de dónde proviene la libertad que tal realización requiere. Para responder, se investiga la relación entre la alteridad y la epojé a través de la oikología de Hans Rainer Sepp. Respecto de los conceptos de Sepp sobre el cuerpo-vivido, el proceso corpóreo-corporalidad de posicionamiento de sí misma de la existencia humana es analizada y relativa a una experiencia primaria de la alteridad del otro. Esto revela una forma primaria de epojé hacia el otro que arroja luz sobre la posibilidad de usar la pura Resistencia que el encuentro con él o ella proporciona para realizar la epojé de nuevo con cada encuentro. El artículo concluye con un breve análisis de la posibilidad de habituarse a esta práctica de la epojé, tomar una postura de abstención hacia el otro.

The article investigates how it is possible to react to the encounter with the otherness of the Other without assimilating him or her, adapting to and losing itself in the Other, or simply with-drawing into oneself. This reaction is the practice of Epoché which is examined in its existential dimension as a performance or an act, leading to the question of where the freedom required by this performance comes from. To provide an answer, the relation between otherness and the Epoché is then investigated following the approach of Hans Rainer Sepp's Oikology. Regarding Sepp's concepts of the living-body, the bodily-corporeal process of positioning itself of the human existence is analyzed and related to a primal experience of the otherness of the Other. This reveals a form of primal Epoché towards the Other which sheds light on the possibility of using the pure resistance the encounter with him or her provides to perform the Epoché anew with each encounter. The article concludes with a brief analysis of the possibility to habituate this practical Epoché to take an abstaining stance towards the Other.

Keywords: Hans Rainer Sepp | Oikología | Epojé | Alteridad
Keywords: Hans Rainer Sepp | Oikology | Epoché | Alterity

1. LOCALIZATION OF THE INVESTIGATION

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This investigation is based on the question: *how is it possible to react to the otherness of the Other?* For the subject, the encounter with the otherness of the Other is always the encounter with an absolute border, that cannot be fully grasped in one's own sense context, and therefore marks a sort of incursion into the subject's world. It is thus to be questioned how the subject can deal with this without assimilating the Other, adapting to and losing itself in the Other, or simply withdrawing into oneself. The text is the attempt to elucidate another possible reaction that still regards the Other as an absolute boarder: the practical *Epoché*. Firstly, the different concepts will be clarified and simultaneously the investigation itself will be localized. This localization leads to the oikological character of the investigation¹. Secondly, the act and performance of *Epoché* will be investigated, leading to the question of where the freedom required by this performance comes from. Thirdly, this freedom will be linked to the resistance of the otherness of the Other in order to show relation between the Other and *Epoché*. Fourthly, the resulting possibility of an abstaining stance will be shortly characterized.

In order to clarify what is meant by the central question, a brief localization of the present investigation is given. First, in relation to the Other and his givenness: As the title suggests, the investigation is not about the Other as a friend, enemy, lover or postman. All these are already roles or existing relationships or, to put it briefly, the encounter already happens within a sense context, that gives the Other a certain meaning and thus structures the encounter even beforehand. Nor is his givenness addressed in the sense of

¹ Oikology (as described in more detail below) is a philosophical approach invented by Hans Rainer Sepp and is based on the German language. So far there are only few translations of the terms into English, so that the present investigation faces the problem of providing part of the vocabulary itself. These translations are simply an offer, not a final statement. Furthermore, the present text is also an attempt to actively use the possibilities given by Oikology. Although its questions and research purposes, i.e. its project, are original, it is nonetheless complementary to the recently published interviews with Hans Rainer Sepp and the first chapter of his latest work on Oikology, insofar as it tries to apply Oikology to a certain problem. In summery the aim of text is to investigate the practical *Epoché* and in doing so, to see what the Oikology can offer for this aim. For some recent translations to English and Spanish that provided some of the necessary vocabulary see: Marcela Venebra, *Oikology: Phenomenology of Place. Dialogue with Hans Rainer Sepp*, in *Acta Mexicana de Fenomenología. Revista de Investigación filosófica y científica*. No. 4, México, Centro Mexicano de Investigaciones Fnomenológicas, 2019, pp. 183-195; and Andrés M. Osswald, *A puertas abiertas. Elementos para pensar la fenomenología oikológica de Hans Rainer Sepp*. Open Doors. Elements to think the oikological Philosophy by Hans Rainer Sepp, (*Ibíd.*, pp. 199–218.)

the phenomenological givenness within an act of empathy, described for example by Edmund Husserl or Edith Stein². Rather, it is postulated that the act of empathy is already inherent in a more fundamental moment, which is embodied, for example, by the fact that the Other is always indirectly given. Access to the Other is necessarily mediated, for the subject and the Other must remain separated entities. Stein is aware of this, but it rather marks a formal point within her investigation. She begins her research with the fact that there are other consciousnesses given to us and does not focus on the genetical aspect of this givenness, which on the other hand allows her to examine how understanding is possible and later even to investigate how individuals form a society³. Husserl remarks both the indirect givenness as well as the genetical investigation of the givenness, yet the focus of his research lies on the epistemological aspects and he aims to show how the Other can be revealed within the sphere of the transcendental subjectivity as the fundament of knowledge⁴. It is due to this focus that Husserl does not deliver a description of the encounter with the Other in a more fundamental way, i.e. at the level of an encounter with a limit of the subject's sense context. This more fundamental moment could be described as the givenness of the pure otherness of the Other, with which the subject cannot empathize, nor understand or even grasp it within a sense context, and that marks in this sense an absolute boarder. Stein and Husserl seem aware of that, but do not focus on this moment. It is not the aim of the investigation to criticise Stein or Husserl, nor defend them against criticism, but rather to ask for this moment and how the subject can react to it. Examples for this are the approaches of Jean-Paul Sartre's concept of *the look* (*le regard*) and Emmanuel Lévinas' concept of the face (*le visage*)⁵. Here a more radical

² Husserl's work the *Cartesianische Meditationen* provides an insight into his concept of empathy. See Edmund Husserl, *Cartesianische Meditationen*. Eine Einleitung in die Phänomenologie. 2., Durchges. Aufl., Hamburg, Felix Meiner, 1987, Hua I. For a vaster insight in the Husserlian thoughts about intersubjectivity the texts from the *Husserliana* 13, 14 and 15 ought to be taken into account. For the genesis of the problem of intersubjectivity within Husserl's Philosophy see especially the prefaces of Iso Kern. For an overview of Stein's concept of empathy, see Edith Stein, *Zum Problem der Einfühlung*. Unter Mitarbeit von Maria Antonia Sondermann. 3., durchgesehene Auflage, Freiburg, Basel, Wien, Herder, 2008. Edith-Stein-Gesamtausgabe /Philosophische Schriften, Frühe Phänomenologie, 1.

³ Edith Stein, *Beiträge zur philosophischen Begründung der Psychologie und der Geisteswissenschaften*, Freiburg, Herder, 2010, p. 110. Edith Stein Gesamtausgabe, 6.

⁴ The possibly arising critic that the subject is primal to the Other could be countered with the argument that the transcendental subjectivity is in the last instance intersubjective. See for instance the interpretations of Kern and Ströker, Iso Kern in Edmund Husserl, *Zur Phänomenologie der Intersubjektivität*. Texte aus dem Nachlass; dritter Teil. 19, p. XLVIII. Hua XV, and Elisabeth Ströker, *Das Problem der Epoché in der Philosophie Edmund Husserls*. In *Analecta Husserliana*. The Yearbook of Phenomenological Research. Anna-Teresa Tymieniecka, Dordrecht, Springer, 1971, p. 181.

⁵ For Sartre's social ontology and theory of *the look* (*Le regard*), reference is made to the corresponding chapters in his work *L'être et le néant*. See Jean-Paul Sartre, *L'être et*

confrontation takes place with the otherness of the Other than, for example, with Husserl and Stein. Nonetheless, for Sartre the direct givenness of otherness via *the look* cannot be reciprocal within the same instant and therefore there can be no encounter between two subjects, which recognise one another as subjects at the same time⁶. Lévinas' concept of the face, however, is close to the project at hand, in so far as it could possibly be described as a radicalized form of the *Epoché*⁷. At the same time certain of Lévinas' concepts for example the *separation* are close to the *Oikology*⁸. Yet Lévinas focuses on the fundamentality of ethics and hence does not pay too much respect to the violence that the encounter with the Other always bears. The present study is therefore devoted to find a vocabulary for the encounter with the otherness of the Other beyond these approaches.

Secondly, due to that reason, the approach presented here aims to be an oikological one. The term firstly refers to the ancient Greek term *Oikos* (House) and therefore it could be stated that Oikology investigates *housing*, understood as both, dwelling (in houses), but at the same time its condition, the bodily-corporeal positioning of the human existence. In other words, Oikology aims to reveal the condition under which human existence is located (and locates itself) in the world due to its bodily-corporeal consti-

le néant. Essai d'ontologie phénoménologique, Paris, Gallimard, 1943, pp. 292, 404. In relation to Lévinas, reference is made to the corresponding chapter in his work *Totalité et infini*. See Emmanuel Lévinas, *Totalité et infini*. Essai sur l'extériorité, Dordrecht, Paris, Kluwer Academic, Librairie Général Française, 1971, p. 203.

⁶ Due to the limitation of pages it is neither possible to further develop the three attempts of Stein, Husserl and Sartre nor investigate their relations and benefits for a fuller description of the phenomenological givenness of the Other. However, such an approach marks the basis of the following work: Marius Sitsch, *Liebe und Ein-samkeit*. Komplementäre Gegebenheitsweisen des Anderen nach Edith Stein und Jean-Paul Sartre. 1. Aufl, Nordhausen, Traugott Bautz GmbH (Ad Fontes, 11).

⁷ Such an interpretation can be found within the philosophical-historical overview of *Epoché* in the general work *Epoché und Reduktion* by Kühn and Staudigl, where it is stated that Lévinas develops a form of counter-reduction, Cf. Rolf Kühn-Michael Staudigl, *Epoché und Reduktion. Formen und Praxis der Reduktion in der Phänomenologie*, Würzburg, Königshausen & Neumann, 2003, p. 11. *Orbis phaenomenologicus* Perspektiven, 3, and Natalie Depraz-Francisco J. Varela, y Pierre Vermersch, *On Becoming Aware: A pragmatics of experiencing*, Amsterdam/Philadelphia, John Benjamins Publishing Company, 2003, p. 23; with which he radicalizes *Epoché*. Cf. *Ibid.*, p. 45.

⁸ In an interview from 2018 Sepp for example describes his concept of the radical separated human existence that precedes the relation between the individual and the society is similar to Lévinas' concept of *separation* (cf. Erik Dzwiza; Gerlek, Selin, Interview mit Hans Rainer Sepp im Rahmen der Husserl Lecture 2018 und der HAT 2018. In: Et. al. Online verfügbar unter et-al.ophen.org.; and Marcela Venebra, *Oikology: Phenomenology of Place*. Dialogue with Hans Rainer Sepp, p. 185). Furthermore, it is interesting that Lévinas uses the term of dwelling (French: *demeur*) that could be understood as an oikological term. With regard to this possible relation with the Oikology and the, at least structural, closeness to the *Epoché* it could be interesting for the present investigation to further examine Lévinas' thoughts. Due to the limitation of space this project has to be postponed to a later moment.

tution and its structure. The term bodily-corporeal refers to the abilities of the living human body (*Leib*), but also includes the physical corporeality of the body (*Körper*) with which the subject offers resistance to the surrounding real around it; corporeality is not meant in an objectifying sense, but as a fact of real subjective existence. On the one hand the subject is centered in itself and in this sense, it is an absolutely separated in-dividuality, so to speak it is an *in-dividual*. The *in* indicates the (self-)localization of the human existence *in* something that surrounds it, which is simultaneously realized as a separation. On the other hand, the subject is not an absolute individual, because it is included in a social world and in this sense, it is an *individual* only in this context. It follows from this that there are two fundamentally different ways of *being-in* for the subject: the first is the *being-in* of the bodily-corporeal localization of the human existence and the second its *being-in-the-world* that is formed in the context of the social world. Oikology examines the tension between these two ways of *being-in* and asks how the transformation process from the first to the second appears; it aims to show that the *Oikos* (as house, dwelling, settlement) is the factor that makes the transitional movement between the two plausible. The investigation of the occurrence of dwelling, first physical in one's own corporeality, and then also in a community, culture and so on, forms a fundamental point of view which, for example, precedes the philosophical judgement of an action within the framework of ethics or cultural-scientific questions about factual transformation processes in the history of humankind⁹.

The present attempt thus profits from Oikology because it allows to illuminate the *in-dividual* in its bodily-corporeal existence that precedes at the same time the social context and the sense context as well; that is thus also beyond the (reduced) sense context of an act of empathy. Hence, it is possible to examine the encounter with the otherness of the Other *within* the bodily-corporeal localization of the subject. The givenness of the pure otherness of the Other as a boarder or limit has to be thought of as resistance and thus as a bodily-corporeal encounter. In addition, Oikology offers the possibility of an investigation of the *Epochè* itself, as a bodily-corporeal execution that precedes its potential to form a theory. As Sepp puts it: "With regard to phenomenology, the question is (...) what the practical

⁹ The book *In. Grundrisse der Oikologie* by Hans Rainer Sepp is recommended for a broader and more specific presentation of what Oikology is and what philosophical possibilities it offers. Hans Rainer Sepp, *Grundrisse der Oikologie*, Freiburg, München, Karl Alber, 2018. (im Erscheinen) Sextus Empiricus: Grundriß der pyrrhonischen Skepsis. Unter Mitarbeit von Malte Hossfelder. 1. Aufl., Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1985. Suhrkamp-Taschenbuch Wissenschaft, 499. It is the first work to contain a general description of Oikology. For the definition of the term Oikology itself see especially the preface *Was ist Oikologie? A description of the fundamental structure of Oikology* can also be found in two interviews with Sepp. See Erik Dzwiza; Gerlek, Selin, Interview mit Hans Rainer Sepp im Rahmen der Husserl Lecture 2018 und der HAT 2018, and Cf. Marcela Venebra, *Oikology: Phenomenology of Place. Dialogue with Hans Rainer Sepp*.

realization of the epochē means for the transformation of life"¹⁰. Nonetheless, the present project does not exist in this form in the oikological research, and the text is an attempt to examine how fruitful the oikological philosophy could be for it, while this of course also implies to consider the practical usability of Oikology as a whole. In general, Oikology is an open project, it is the concertation of a core, which is open to all areas. Oikological speaking the present attempt is not copying the ground plan and just adding another room, but trying to develop the whole with different philosophical projects. That said, the otherness of the Other is not (yet) an oikological project, but the present text aims to show to what extent it could be. In this sense, its approach is a philosophical testing of Oikology. Put briefly, aims to shed light on the extent to which Oikology can think of the otherness of the Other and, beyond that, whether it can provide a response to the encounter with otherness that is not assimilating in the aforementioned sense. Moreover, the approach sees itself as question-oriented or problem-oriented; different authors are consulted for different aspects of the investigation and the text may seem eclectic, but it is not its intention to postulate or justify comparability. In this sense, the concept human existence provided by Oikology is used synonymously with subject, which is used because of the terminology Other and subject.

A third localization towards the approach of the present study and with reference to it being an oikological project can be made concerning its claim to a moral or ethical potential. This concerns the concept of abstaining stance (*enthaltende Haltung*). Taking an abstaining stance towards the Other, as in reacting to his otherness on a fundamental level, is not to be understood as an answer to the ethically connoted question, *What should I do or how I should behave towards the Other?* Likewise, no individual attitudes or convictions such as love or friendship, i.e. concrete relationships, are thematised, nor are any considerations that determine an ethics or morality or a theory of a functioning society. Rather, just as the otherness of the Other is to be thought of in a fundamental way, attempts are also made to sketch out a primal and elementary and thus all these assumptions pre-rising stance, which could then appear as a condition of possibility of

¹⁰ *Ibid.* pp. 183-195. Regarding cultural transformation processes in the history of humankind, such as changes of paradigms or the transformation from a magical to a mythical and then to a rational relation with the world, Oikology aims to investigate the condition of the possibilities of these transformation processes on a fundamental level. The link to the *Epoché* is here the relation between *Epoché* and *Epoché*, which means that the first is a reaction of life itself to modify its directedness towards the world and to some degree also its positioning, whereas the latter marks the point in time of the change of the transformational process. The relation would be that *Epoché* might be a condition of *Epoché*. Oikology therefore allows to analyze moments of cultural change by reference to *Epoché*. Within his attempt of a Phenomenology of the *Epoché* Sepp marks this project and it can be speculated that this project is embedded in Oikology. Hans Rainer Sepp, *Bild. Phänomenologie der Epoché* I. Teilw. zugl., Dresden, Univ., Habil.-Schr. 2005, Würzburg, Königshausen & Neumann, 2012, p. 273.

all these concepts. The investigation aims to reveal a sort of proto-ethical potential that lies in the encounter with the otherness of the Other, and can be realized within the practical *Epoché*, for the latter is understood as a bodily-corporeal reaction (taking a stance) that counters an assimilating tendency and, hence, takes an abstaining stance. Of course, with the possibility of habitualization the abstaining stance (as the pure reaction) could become a general abstaining attitude; the German word *Haltung* contains both, (bodily-corporeal) stance and (mental) attitude.

The introduction concludes with a literary example to illuminate what is meant by abstaining stance regarding everyday social interaction. The example used to illustrate this is the speech *This is water* given by David Foster Wallace on the occasion of the 2005 graduation ceremony from Kenyon College. The content of Wallace's statements only reveals itself in its entirety when one considers that he had the opportunity to tell the graduates of this liberal arts education study programme everything, to give them everything for their paths, to prepare them for real everyday life and that he said the things which are of paramount importance to him. The importance of freedom of thought in everyday adult life. The freedom to decide about the *what* and *how* of one's own thinking, to consciously focus one's attention on certain circumstances and to decide how meaning is constructed from experience. There are some paths that one's own train of thoughts follow more easily, they appear more comfortable, however, some of these paths lead into downward spirals of thoughts, they create patterns that repeat themselves; man becomes a slave to his thoughts¹¹. The patterns become bars of a spiritual prison. His words are directed against "arrogance, blind certainty, a closed-mindedness that's like an imprisonment so complete that the prisoner doesn't even know he's locked up"¹². As an example, he uses the unconsciously but frequently made assumption of almost every human being to be the absolute centre of the universe; after all, every person is the centre of their own universe, a protagonist in their own history. Nevertheless, Wallace concern is not making a plea for compassion or outward orientation¹³, but to show that a person has the possibility "to do the work and somehow altering or getting free of (...) [her, M.S.] natural, hardwired default setting, which is to be deeply and literally self-centred, and to see and interpret everything through this lens of self"¹⁴. According to him, this is where the true value and purpose of education lies, and furthermore this is what it essentially means to learn how to think: It is a struggle to overcome "getting hypnotized by the constant monologue inside your head"¹⁵.

¹¹ Cf. David Foster Wallace, *Das hier ist Wasser/This is water*, Köln, Kiepenheuer & Witsch, 2012, p. 43. 5. Aufl., KiWi Paperback, 1272.

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 44.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 45.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 46.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 47.

This struggle lasts a lifetime, it becomes more and more difficult with the entrance into adult life and everyday life; from getting up, working, shopping, getting stuck in traffic, to falling into bed in the evening and this again and again, day after week after month after year. And during this very routine it is easiest to become a slave to one's own thoughts and attitudes; feel anger towards the pensioners in their heavy SUV's who sluggishly drive mousey down the roads, to be disgusted by the fat woman in the queue who yells at her little daughter. However, these thoughts do not need a decision-making, they simply correspond to the inherent standard default setting one has, that the pensioners are in *my way* and the woman annoys and repels *me*¹⁶.

On the other hand, it is also quite possible to see the exact same examples from a different angle; some of the pensioners may have lost their wives in a traffic accident and dare only to drive slowly and in big cars down the street, the woman in the queue may normally be a paragon of motherly love, but right now be completely exhausted because she has lost her job and has four more children waiting at home. It's not about probability or morality, it's about that the sense of experience one has learnt and the meaning that it conveys, are being contingent. They are constrained by what Wallace calls the standard default setting of attitudes of a human being. This can be aptly described by the word egocentrism. Egocentrism must be opposed by an action of the subject, with which the question of how this action can be formulated terminologically can be posed. At first it appears as a process of becoming conscious, which goes hand in hand with a liberation from the absolute claim of egocentrism. This moment of liberation would be a modification of the normal worldview (in terms of Wallace), which describes what is meant here by abstaining stance; it is not something done for the Other, but rather a questioning of the subject itself which makes it possible to take into account the position of the Other. It is a bodily-corporeal stance that the subject takes, and the example of Wallace shows that to counter one's tendency to egocentrism is a nearly infinite work, and thus the primal abstaining stance has to become an abstaining attitude (as mentioned in German both meanings, the reaction itself as well as the habitualization as an attitude, are included in the sense of the word *Haltung*)¹⁷.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 49.

¹⁷ Sepp also states that the inhibition of the egocentric tendencies is the only possibility to empathize with Others, i.e. to see things from their perspective. He refers to this inhibition of the egocentrism in the chapter *Das Politische* in his work, in Hans Rainer Sepp, *Grundrisse der Oikologie*. See especially the second part *Egozentrismus und politische Haltung*. Another reference to the terms stance and attitude can be found within Lipps' distinction between the behavior (German: *verhalten*) of animals and the stance or attitude (German: *Haltung*) of humans. See Hans Lipps, *Die menschliche Natur*, Frankfurt am Main, Vittorio Klostermann, 1941, p. 18.

2. EPOCHÉ AS A PRAXIS

The proposed concept, which seems conceptually adequate for this action is Epoché, since it possesses the described potential to refer to one's own structure of experience and to modify it. The term is introduced into philosophy by the Ancient Pyrrhonian Scepticism and during his long-lasting philosophical history it varies dramatically in its function and purpose due to the multitude of philosophical systems that use it: Originating from Ancient Scepticism the term found its way into the Stoic tradition, while possibly already changing its meaning from a more passive-active acceptance of the incompleteness of the search for truth to reach the calmness of the soul to the voluntarily act of suspending ones judgment as an ethical obligation. Nonetheless, both approaches focused on a modification of the conduct of life by Epoché for the beneficitation of the practitioner (and Others), *i.e.* to reach blissful happiness. The concept then reappeared for example in the hyperbolical doubt of René Descartes, although for the epistemological purpose of finding a fundamentum inconcussum. The continuation of the Cartesian project, albeit with a different connotation, and probably the most prominent use of the concept of the Epoché in recent times can be found in Husserl's phenomenology. Emanating from Husserl's methods of Epoché and reduction, many phenomenologists used his methods, often even with the ambition to radicalise them into a form of counter-reduction, which explores the fact of an absolute auto-donation¹⁸. Due to the limitation of space

¹⁸ Cf. Rolf Kühn-Michael Staudigl, *Epoché und Reduktion. Formen und Praxis der Reduktion in der Phänomenologie*, p. 11., and Natalie Depraz- Varela, Francisco J.-Vermersch, Pierre, *On Becoming Aware: A pragmatics of experiencing*, Amsterdam/Philadelphia, John Benjamins Publishing Company, 2003, p. 25. *Advances in Consciousness Research* 43. These mentions are far from complete and they do not take into account various notions of Epoché by different traditions and thinkers. Among them are for example Cicero, Michel de Montaigne, the Desert Fathers, Augustin of Hippo, David Hume and of course the large number of phenomenologists around and after Husserl. For a fuller genealogy of the thought figure, it is even useful to investigate concepts like the Socratic method, the allegory of the cave by Plato or the conversation technique of Jesus Christ. See, for example, Natalie Depraz, *Phänomenologie in der Praxis. Eine Einführung*, Freiburg, Alber, 2012, p. 189, 213. Unter Mitarbeit von Sebastian Knöpker. Orig.-Ausg. Surly, notions of the concept of Epoché are not bound to the Western or Eurocentric tradition. The original concept might be even traced back to the early Buddhist tradition, if it is considered that there was a cultural exchange between the ancient Greek culture and the central Asian culture during the military campaign of Alexander the great. See for example the recant works *Pyrrhonism. How the Ancient Greeks Reinvented Buddhism* by Adrian Kuzminski, in Adrian Kuzminski, *Pyrrhonism. How the Ancient Greeks Reinvented Buddhism*, Lanham, Rowman & Littlefield Publishing Group Inc., 2018; and *Greek Buddha. Pyrrho's Encounter with Early Buddhism in Central Asia* by Christopher Beckwith, in Christopher Beckwith I., *Greek Buddha. Pyrrho's Encounter with Early Buddhism in Central Asia*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 2015. For a comparison between the phenomenological Epoché and the experience of enlightenment (Satori) in Zen-Buddhism see Hans Rainer Sepp, Zen und Epoché, in Hisaki Hashi, Werner Gabriel und Arne Ha-selbach (Hg.), *Zen und Tao. Beiträge*

the present investigation cannot illuminate this vast area of meanings¹⁹. The word Epoché as a noun for the activity epechein means, depending on the contextual nuance, stopping, pausing, abstaining or restraining, suspension, interruption. The present investigation is closely localized to the Pyrrhonian Scepticism, insofar as it focuses on Epoché as a (bodily-corporeal) stance and a reaction to the shocking moment of encountering the otherness of the Other, and thus, prior to an ethical obligation and the voluntarily act of suspension (See for comparison the description of Sextus Empiricus: Sextus Empiricus 1985). Husserl, on the other hand, seems closer to the Stoic approach of suspending one's judgment, yet not primarily for an ethical, but an epistemological purpose. He first mentions the term Epoché in his work *Ideen I*, where he describes the thesis of the natural attitude. Epoché appears then (in comparison and distinction to the Cartesian hyperbolic doubt) as a counterturn against thethetic potential of the general-thesis. The act is a bracketing, not a universal negation and therefore inhibits the mentioned thetic potential instead of doubting or negating it. Husserl also stretches that this possibility of bracketing is voluntarily act and describes it with a clear epistemological purpose²⁰.

Of course, Husserl's thoughts on that matter do not end with the *Ideen I*, and he followed various ways to reach the transcendental sphere with Epoché and reduction; for example, his lectures for the years 1923/1924 can already be read as a critic of his proceed in the *Ideen I*, insofar as he asks for a new way²¹ and attempts now, for example, to expand the Epoché from singular acts to an universal concept or from the psychological reduction to the transcendental reduction²². This might be, as Rudolf Boehm carefully states, already a foreshadowing of his proceed in the *Krisis* that begins in the life world²³. Nevertheless, Husserl never provided a phenomenal analysis of the act itself, instead he showed the performance of *zum asiatischen Denken*, Wien, Passagen Verlag, 2007, pp. 51-66.

¹⁹ For the use of the concepts in the phenomenological tradition and the notion of counter-reduction see the collected work *Epoché und Reduktion* by Kühn und Staudigl. Cf. Rolf Kühn-Michael Staudigl, *Epoché und Reduktion. Formen und Praxis der Reduktion in der Phänomenologie*, ed. cit. For an overview of the ancient Greek tradition see *L'origine et l'évolution de l'epoché* by Pierre Couissin, in Pierre Couissin, *L'origine et révolution de l'epoché*, in *Revue des Études Grecques*, Bd. 42, S. 373–397. For an overview of the original use of the term and the differences to the Husserlian use, see Joachim Ritter-Gründer, Karlfried-Gabriel, Gottfried, *Historisches Wörterbuch der Philosophie*. Band 2. D-F., Basel: Schwabe, 1976, p. 594.

²⁰ Cf. Edmund Husserl, *Ideen zu einer reinen Phänomenologie und phänomenologischen Philosophie*. Erstes Buch: Allgemeine Einführung in die reine Phänomenologie, 1913, The Hage, Karl Schuhmann, 1988, 48ff. Hua III. Jahrbuch für Philosophie und phänomenologische Forschung 1.

²¹ Cf. Edmund Husserl, *Erste Philosophie*. Zweiter Teil. Theorie der phänomenologischen Reduktion 1923-1924, The Hage: Rudolf Boehm, 1959, p. 162. Hua VIII.

²² *Ibid.*, pp. 128, 164.

²³ *Ibid.*, in Boehm's preface, p. XXXV.

Epoché and reduction multiple times²⁴. In general, for Husserl the Epoché seems to be a means to a definite end, i.e. a mean to find the transcendental Phenomenology as a theoretical science²⁵. This could indeed be one of the reasons why Husserl never finished his project of a Phenomenology of Epoché. Other reasons could be the problem of circularity, i.e. that an investigation of Epoché requires the performance of the very same (this problem will be addressed again below)²⁶. As for Husserl's own reflections on this subject, it seems appropriate to agree with the statement that he was first and foremost interested in the applicability of Epoché as a methodological tool for his epistemological purposes. Nonetheless, it seems possible to study the performance of Epoché with the texts of Husserl and even learn it while doing so²⁷. This corresponds with the general attempt of Ströker²⁸. There is a distinction possible between what Husserl writes and what he performs, between his attempt to find the theory of Phenomenology and his phenomenological conduct of life. His project remains attached to the search for apodictic knowledge, yet his stress of the attitude of suspension could be interpreted as a general ethos of life and knowledge²⁹. Nevertheless, this possibility is not to be investigated here and furthermore, to genuinely perform Epoché in order to describe it one must avoid getting entangled in the discussion of the phenomenological tradition and maybe even avert the eyes from Husserl intention (not his performance) as a primary focus³⁰. Therefore, the present text aims to elucidate the meaning of practical Epoché and to show the connection to the Other within it.

This meaning of Epoché and the role of the Other in its performance can initially be approached with Hans Lipps. For Lipps, Epoché is a radical acquisition of the conduct of life and marks the beginning of philosophy. This is not to be understood as a singular point, but rather Lipps states that

²⁴ Cf. Elisabeth Ströker, *Das Problem der Epoché in der Philosophie Edmund Husserls*, pp. 170–185. For a general overview of the movements of Husserl thoughts regarding this subject the preface of Boehm can be considered. Elisabeth Ströker provides an overview of the different forms and connotations of Epoché and reduction within Husserl's Phenomenology and thus delivers a Phenomenology of Epoché at least to a certain amount.

²⁵ Hans Rainer Sepp, *Bild. Phänomenologie der Epoché I. Teilw. zugl.*, Dresden (Univ., Habil.-Schr. 2005), Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 2012, p. 266. *Orbis Phaenomenologicus Studien*, 30.

²⁶ See Elisabeth Ströker, *Das Problem der Epoché in der Philosophie Edmund Husserls*, p. 172.

²⁷ Natalie Depraz, *Phänomenologie in der Praxis. Eine Einführung*, Freiburg: Alber, 2012, p. 11. Unter Mitarbeit von Sebastian Knöpker. Orig.-Ausg.

²⁸ Cf. Elisabeth Ströker, *op. cit.*

²⁹ Cf. Natalie Depraz- Varela, Francisco J.-Vermersch, Pierre, *On Becoming Aware: A pragmatics of experiencing*, p. 25.

³⁰ Cf. Natalie Depraz, *Phänomenologie in der Praxis. Eine Einführung*, p. 13.; *Ibid.*, p. 25.; Hans Rainer Sepp, *Epoché vor Theorie*. In Rolf Kühn und Michael Staudigl (Hg.), *Epoché und Reduktion. Formen und Praxis der Reduktion in der Phänomenologie*, Würzburg, Königshausen & Neumann, 2003, p. 266. *Orbis phaenomenologicus Perspektiven*, 3, pp. 199–211.

philosophy always stands at its own beginning. According to Lipps, the subject is always already entangled in its own existence, i.e. the execution of its conduct of life happens through a self-evolving self-conception and it is deprived of its own foundation (*Grund/Grundlegung*). The subject is related to its foundation, but in such a way that it cannot grasp it. The subject is not the master of its comprehension of things, for it does not have itself and it is not the foundation of its existence. It is therefore revolving around its own supporting centre as a foundation³¹. In other words, the subject in its natural attitude can be characterized by an unconsciousness towards itself and to a certain egocentric for it only revolves around its own foundation. This circularity marks at the same time the place where all encounters with things and Others happen. The subject deals with everything under the guidance of his foundation.

To become aware of its own foundation and at the same time take responsibility for it would be a philosophical attitude. Yet, philosophy cannot begin with itself, it can only evolve from non-philosophy. The reason for this is that even philosophy is already affected by a previous foundation³². In order to adopt a philosophical attitude, the relationship of the subject with things and thus also with itself must be interrupted and Lipps calls this interruption *Epoché*. It is the inhibition of the natural and momentary conduct of existence, which conceals one's own foundation³³. At the same time, it is the discovering of one's own foundation. *Epoché* signifies to linger with something, to pause the revolving or to take time. In this existential *Epoché* the subject finds itself confronted with the origin of its transcendent, extensive reference and its connection with its surroundings. The occurrence of this confrontation is titled by Lipps as *being-affected* (*Betroffen-werden*). This elucidates passivity: the subject cannot want to be affected; it is affected. This *being-affected* leads to the *Epoché*, which makes the subject conscious of its previous foundation and hence renders the possibility of the acquisition, gives way to the philosophical attitude. And since this event takes place within the process of life, the beginning of philosophy takes place in life itself as well³⁴.

Lipps further describes this process in his reflection about understanding: An understanding for something can only be awakened, for example through a demonstration. Understanding is ignited by the demonstration. With an example, a demonstration, something is made clear that cannot be grasped conceptually. The example is concerned with something that is mere fact and pre-conscious, but which has overtaken its questioning

³¹ Cf. Hans Lipps, *Die menschliche Natur*, p. 57.; Hans Lipps, *Untersuchungen zu einer hermeneutischen Logik*, Frankfurt am Main, Vittorio Klostermann, 1976, p. 21.

³² Cf. Hans Lipps, *Die menschliche Natur*, p. 56.; Hans Lipps, *Untersuchungen zu einer hermeneutischen Logik*, p. 62.

³³ *Ibid.*, p. 20.

³⁴ Cf. Hans Lipps, *Die menschliche Natur*, p. 56.

as fact³⁵. Here, something previously unconscious becomes conscious. This situation confronts the subject with an aporia, because it shows that with every philosophical problem the subject itself is in question. The condition of its existence, from which it lives, has manifested itself in its interpretation of the problem³⁶. From this it can be deduced that the origin of sense and meaning cannot be understood, for understanding requires meaning, nor be reconstructed, because the foundation is a singularity that has already happened. It therefore makes sense that Lipps states that the foundation can only be acquired and not that the circling of the subject can be disrupted entirely, because the foundation is different from sense, or more precisely it is its limit and beyond this limit lies the previous fact of the constitution of sense and meaning itself³⁷.

The link to terms such as example or demonstration already gives hint to the context where the *Epoché* for Lipps is situated: the speech (*Rede*). Stated differently, the possible radicalisation of the self-reference of the subject, described by Epoché, is linked to the Others and the dialog with them. The subject encounters the Other, who, simultaneously as the latter refers to his or her foundation. The subject can only appeal to the Other and confront him or her with their own foundation by means of examples. By use of speech, the Other is brought back to himself or herself, for their answer presupposes a perspective and thus also serves as a provider of sense and meaning. In the speech, the Others can be liberated from their entanglement in themselves through this confrontation with their foundation. This is to make the Other affected, or to put it differently, to lead them into Epoché. For one subject can only be led to an interruption of its revolving around itself by another subject. Lipps thus marks, that philosophy happens within the relationship from one to another³⁸.

In other words, and following Wallace's thoughts, it offers the subject and the Other the possibility of being liberated from the dominance of their own point of view³⁹. Nevertheless, insofar as Lipps' thoughts point to some-

³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 55.

³⁶ Cf. Hans Lipps, *Untersuchungen zu einer hermeneutischen Logik*, p. 21.

³⁷ For a comparison with Sepps view of the *Epoché* within Lips' philosophy see Hans Reiner Sepp, *Epoché als Auf-Bruch des Zirkels. Zu einer Grundfrage der Hermeneutik von Hans Lipps*, in Hans Rainer Sepp (Hg.), *Metamorphose der Phänomenologie. Liber amicorum für Meinolf Wewel*, Freiburg, München, Karl Alber, 1999, pp. 111-135.

³⁸ Cf. Hans Lipps, *Untersuchungen zu einer hermeneutischen Logik*, p. 21.

³⁹ Surly, this does not necessarily mean that every dialog or encounter with the Other realizes this potential. Especially, a confrontation with something beyond the sense context or its limit can likely appear as a threat and hence be answered with either (counter-) violence towards the Other or a withdrawal into oneself. As far as Sartre aims to describe an encounter with the Other outside every context of understanding and meaning, the experience of *being-looked-at* and the following reactions of the subject can function as an example. In the same instant there are also forms of group egoism possible, where the multitude of perspectives only lead to one assimilative dominating perspective, that is

thing beyond sense and meaning, it follows that the dialog with the Other has to contain something more than a different perspective, then the confrontation with a different point of view, which also only is sense, would not be sufficient⁴⁰. Thus, the question arises from where does the Epoché derive its liberating potential from, to be able to make oneself aware in this way and to become conscious one's own foundation. In connection with this, how can the Other or the dialog with him or her realize this potential. Lipps does not answer these questions⁴¹ and does not deliver a performative description of the Epoché. Yet, he gives an indication, when he states that the resistance of the Other perspective and the unforeseen of the objection of the Other are what constitute this liberation⁴².

In order to further investigate this matter a general description of the process of Epoché is necessary. For this description of the structure of the Epoché, the phenomenology of the Epoché by Hans Rainer Sepp and the description of the act of the Epoché as a praxis by Natalie Depraz, Pierre Vermersch and Francisco Varela are used. With Sepp⁴³, the inversion of the normal directedness of the intentionality of the subject during the Epoché can be described as follows: By inhibiting the thetic potential of all acts of consciousness, the relation of the relationship between consciousness and the world is modified. All interests, desires and all directing and targeting at something are bracketed. This can be seen as an extreme stance of life, through which it radically positions itself to itself. In this respect, Epoché can be understood as life's response to its basic orientation which is formed and maintained by itself: Everything which life does in order to... ultimately happens for its own sake. This basic orientation marks life's egocentric tendency, which already contains the seed of absolutisation. The caring structure and the spatial centrality are broken up. Without this, experience is no longer related to this or that something but to nothing. In this way, the pure fact of its being-related becomes experienceable itself. The centrifugal moment of life becomes, conversely, a centripetal moment: instead of being directed from a centre to this or that in the environment, life is now directed from an outside perspective on itself⁴⁴. Bearing in mind this concept of inversion, it becomes clearer why Lipps connects the moment of Epoché with the notion of becoming aware of oneself. Finally, the inversion forms the root of the possibility of the acquisition of the subject's foundation. Depraz

shared between the group members. Nonetheless, this does not exclude that there is an encounter with the Other possible, which avoids these traps.

⁴⁰ Cf. Hans Lipps, *Untersuchungen zu einer hermeneutischen Logik*, p. 126.

⁴¹ Sepp for example states that Lipps does not completely conceptualize the basic patterns of the situation he describes. *Ibid.*, p. 132.

⁴² Cf. Hans Lipps, *Untersuchungen zu einer hermeneutischen Logik*, p. 35.

⁴³ Cf. Hans Rainer Sepp, *Epoché vor Theorie*.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 206.

et al. also describe *Epoché* as the center of the act of *becoming-aware*⁴⁵; they state that the *Epoché* followed by intuitive evidence forms the cycle of the reflective act⁴⁶ that makes the subject aware of something. The intuitive evidence and the act of *Epoché* are interlocked with one another: “*epoche* is naturally completed by an intuition that crystallizes for the subject and which serves as strong internal evidence”⁴⁷.

According to Depraz et al. *Epoché* is accomplished in three phases: suspension, redirection and letting-go. These three phases, considered as an organic whole, form the *Epoché*, because for the second and third phase the first must be reactivated again or, stated differently, the subject must hold on to its suspensive disposition during the other two phases. In the first phase the subject suspends its prejudice that what appears to it is really the state of the world and hence, changes the way how it pays attention to its own lived experience. In the second phase it redirects his attention from the exterior to the interior which ends in the third phase of letting-go or accepting its experience⁴⁸. The redirection of the attention and the acceptance of whatever appears are the heart of the process of becoming aware, even if they are only possible due to the former (and reiterated) suspension. The second and third phase are complementary; they are a two folded moment combined of a reflective conversion, so to say an inversion of the usual intentional structure of awareness, that is a return to oneself, and a letting-go as an opening of oneself. Thus, they combine an active moment with a passive one or more precise they mark the active-passive structure of the *Epoché*⁴⁹. In the first moment the subject turns from the exterior of the world to the interior of itself and within the second instant it changes its voluntarily turning to a listing: the searching for something becomes a letting-something-come or letting-the-object-reveal-itself. Reaching the third phase changes the quality of the awareness and moves from an active looking-for to an accepting letting-arrive⁵⁰. The initial phase of the *Epoché*

⁴⁵ See Natalie Depraz – Francisco J. Varela, Pierre Vermersch, *On Becoming Aware: A pragmatics of experiencing*.

⁴⁶ Depraz et al. investigate the procedure of becoming aware from different theoretical perspectives and hence also from the point of view of different traditions. Therefore, they use the terms reflection (Psychological context), reductive act (Phenomenological context) and mindfulness (Buddhistic context) interchangeable, as well as becoming aware is used synonymous with all three terms. Cf. *Ibid.*, p. 15.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 24.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 25.

⁴⁹ According to Depraz et al. this active-passive moment complicates the performance of the *Epoché*, since the danger is to either stay within the emptiness between phase two and three or to fail to suspend what firstly appears after the inversion of the attention, but is not yet really a passive receiving, but still the active search. Finally, this whole moment can seem paradox in the sense that the subject must actively stay passive, comparable to the command *be spontaneous*. *Ibid.*, p. 32.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 31, 41.

deserves special attention since it allows for the possibility of the second and third, thus acting as a kind of trigger. Depraz et al. indicate three possibilities for initiation of suspension here: an external existential event, that functions as a shock, such as an astonishment caused by aesthetic surprise or a death, or the impact of another person, who tells the subject to suspend its prejudices or models the gesture, or a self-directed command of suspension. The third possibility, however, requires a lot of practice, or at least some kind of training. These three possibilities are called worldly, intersubjective or individual motivations by the authors⁵¹. Nonetheless, Depraz et al. note that speaking about the initial phase causes a problem: the beginning of the *Epoché* has already taken place, yet at the same instant, it is produced anew each time. Stated differently, it is not possible to describe this becoming aware and hence the *Epoché* without having put it into praxis and thus having experienced it⁵². Consequently, the aim to investigate the conduct of *Epoché* may seem circular. Alas Depraz et. al. state that there are certain techniques that induce the act itself and that the initiation can be demonstrated by giving examples⁵³.

Depraz et al. describe the process of *Epoché* in voluntarily terms, even though of course the stretch the passive moment in the transition from the second to the third phase as well as the possibility of an external trigger that causes the first phase of suspension. Nonetheless, they describe the act of *Epoché* as rather active than passive, as something the subject does, following a motivation. In order to avoid circular tendencies in the argumentation the initial moment, in this sense the motivation, has to be further investigated. According to Sepp, Husserl already hinted that *Epoché* cannot grow out of the freedom of the individual alone, because a special motivation is needed to first detach the subject from its natural inherent worldview. Nevertheless, such a motivation cannot exist insofar motivation is situated in the context of the mundane sphere whereas the *Epoché* leads to the transcendental sphere and the transition between both cannot be rooted in the mundane sphere. Nonetheless, the fact that the transition is not motivated is not to be understood as a resignation but as simply illuminating that the transition is very singular⁵⁴. Indeed, Husserl claims, for ex-

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p. 26.

⁵² Ströker describes a similar problem when investigating the *Epoché* in Husserl's Phenomenology: firstly, an analysis of the acts of reduction and *Epoché* faces the problem that the necessary phenomenological vocabulary to describe them (for example as acts) is only gained after the investigating person has performed these acts himself or herself. Secondly, it is only possible to describe the performance of the *Epoché* within this performance because outside of this it is nothing. Cf. Elisabeth Ströker, *Das Problem der Epoché in der Philosophie Edmund Husserls*, p. 176.

⁵³ Cf. Natalie Depraz- Varela, Francisco J.-Vermersch, Pierre, *On Becoming Aware: A pragmatics of experiencing*, p. 30.

⁵⁴ Cf. Hans Rainer Sepp, *Bild. Phänomenologie der Epoché I*, p. 265; Hans Rainer Sepp, *Epoché vor Theorie*, p. 210.

ample, that the motivation cannot be part of the method, since the method must be rooted in itself⁵⁵. Husserl is aware that motivation is a complicated subject: He also states that the genuine incuriosity of the transcendental spectator does not follow from mere privation, because in a normal reflection the subject sympathizes with itself and thus adopts its own interests and cannot become uninterested or incurious. Hence, it needs a special motivation to reach this incuriosity⁵⁶. Husserl then poses the question of what can motivate the free deed of the suspension of *Epoché* but does not answer the question further (other than his statement that the method is not motivated). The closest to a motive can be found in the first lecture from 1923/1924 in which Husserl reflects about the apodictic begin of philosophy. He defines philosophy as a search for a foundation of knowledge, as an epistemological project to reach the universal science in absolute epistemological justification. This project can only begin with the philosophizing subject itself, since nothing else is apodictically given. Thus, the subject must reflect on itself and stop its naivety: it has to render a decision concerning all of its future epistemological life. Philosophy starts with this free deed and this voluntarily decision brings about the lifeform of the philosophizing subject. Even though Husserl also considers a form of obligation to take this decision (concerning the state of the sciences and their lack of radicality) and even describes it as a calling, he insists that philosophy starts with a decision and no one can simply blunder into it⁵⁷.

In the last instance Husserl only describes a motivation out of oneself or out of an epistemological urge. Furthermore, he also focuses on *Epoché* as a voluntary act. The question of how this urge then is motivated, however, is not answered, hence it might be useful to reshape the whole question. For motivation in the actual sense cannot be spoken of, because a motive is only given in a sense context, and *Epoché*, as far as it leads to the limit of the context of meaning, cannot be traced back to a motive. As Lipps has also indicated, *Epoché* can only be understood as a confrontation with non-sense, since it is the resistance of the Other and the unforeseen in the dialog with him or her, not just another argument, i.e. context of meaning. Regarding the praxis of phenomenology, the question can be transformed as such: which original experience precedes the possibility of *Epoché* as a free deed? Or more precisely, how is *Epoché* possible and where does the freedom that it requires come from. According to Sepp, this freedom must first be liberated itself. This is possible because *Epoché* it is an overcoming, a break-through of resistance. Resistance is a concussion of the context of sense in total, a rift in the cosmos of meaning, inhibition of the previous cir-

⁵⁵ Cf. Edmund Husserl, *Erste Philosophie*. Zweiter Teil. Theorie der phänomenologischen Reduktion. 1923-1924, p. 139.

⁵⁶ Cf. *Ibid.*, p. 99.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 3.

cle of human existence⁵⁸. The freedom that is relevant for the entry into the *Epoché* only arises from a collision with the impenetrable. *Epoché* is then the breaking through the resistance, it is acceptance of the break⁵⁹.

In conclusion, it can be interpreted that there are two meanings of *Epoché*: one in which the suspension or interruption is caused by a confrontation with non-sense or with pure resistance, which is then accepted during an *Epoché*, and one in which the suspension is caused due to a voluntarily act or technique. In terms of becoming-aware as in becoming conscious and a primal sense of re-reflecting as being-thrown-back-to-oneself the first meaning seems to precede the second. The general possibility of modifying the relation with something requires the freedom to do so and as it has been stated this freedom has itself to be liberated. Therefore, the *Epoché* can only be understood in its full sense if it is investigated on a level that precedes all forms of voluntarily acts or techniques, of habitualizations and in total precedes the sense context: the level where the *Epoché* is first and foremost a bodily-corporeal stance that is a response to an encounter with pure resistance. This investigation falls into the oikological sphere, since it is an investigation of the the bodily-corporeal localization of the subject but must be reformulated in terms of Lipps's description of *Epoché*, it has to be reformulated as how the Other can provide this liberating potential.

3. THE TRIGGERING MOMENT OF THE *EPOCHÉ*: RESISTANCE AND OTHERNESS

Max Scheler's critique of idealism and realism, which is also a basic concept in oikological philosophy, provides a good explanation for the further analysis of the triggering moment of the *Epoché* and the experience of resistance. As Scheler writes, the problem of idealism and realism is based on a false premise. The essence (German: *Sosein*) of an object and its factual existence (as being-there or German: *Dasein*) are equated in relation to the knowledge that the consciousness has of them. However, only the essence is immanent in the consciousness (albeit in varying degrees of adequation). The pure fact of *existence*, on the contrary, remains foreign and independent of knowledge and consciousness. The givenness of it is completely different from the givenness of essence⁶⁰. Following this critique, Scheler therefore asks about the givenness of reality. Like Lipps, Scheler traces the re-flexion, as actual bending-backwards-to-oneself, back to the more original having and suffering of a moment of resistance-experience given as a moment of reality. The consciousness or subjectivation of the subject occurs as a result of this moment. Here resistance is to be seen as a bodi-

⁵⁸ Cf. Hans Rainer Sepp, *Bild. Phänomenologie der Epoché I*, p. 265.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 274.

⁶⁰ Cf. Max Scheler, *Späte Schriften. Gesammelte Werke*, / Max Scheler, Bd. 9, Bern, Francke, 1976, p. 185.

ly-corporeal phenomenon, for a purely intellectual being there would be no difference between real and unreal or more precise, the difference would be within the pure intellectual context and thus from a different nature. The experience of resistance is the experience of the living force in resistance. If the subject presses his hand against the table it experiences resistance, which cannot be reduced to the accompanying sensations of touch and pressure. When it presses with a pen, the resistance is experienced at the end of the pen, not at the point where his hand and the pen touch. There are also mental resistances, for example when trying to remember something, and at this very moment the desired memory cannot be grasped. The past is also a resistance for one's own future⁶¹.

Becoming aware as becoming conscious only occurs after suffering the resistance of an X which could be defined as reality. Reality is not to be thought of as something concrete or objective (not as something in general), because it itself is not part of this determining process but precedes and conditions it. Similarly, the foundation with Lipps cannot be overtaken by sense itself. In the output of Scheler, Lipps and the analysis of the *Epoché* presented here, the process of locating human existence in an oikological sense can now be carried out by returning to the primal suffering of the resistance experience, which in turn evokes a resistance performance as a reaction. This process can be understood as an oikological description of the constitution of the body-corporeality of human existence.

The subject as an *in-dividual* is through the act of birth an incision into the world itself and functions as a limitation, i.e. as an absolute inside and an absolute border. The bodily-corporeal status of the localization of the subject (the aforementioned first sense of *being-in*) realises itself through three functions of positioning, which can be understood as place-references (*Ortsbezüge*). The place is the reference that a body forms through its location *in* what it is surrounded by. It is, to use an oikological metaphor, the *housing in* of the bodily-corporeal existence in the surrounding matter (that is not yet regarded as matter) throughout a function of its corporeity. This first reference or function is thus the *borderline body* (*Grenzleib*). The border here is the living *being-in*, and this *being-in* as a border is not determined by anything outside of it. Life unfolds itself and then experiences itself as a result of confrontation with the senseless hardness of reality. This marks a primal experience. The force field of resistances only opens up possibilities by creating resistances. Life achieves its self-sufficiency only by enduring its own paradoxical fact; it opposes the resistance of the real with its own resistance. Here the primal and precedingly senseful separation from inside and outside takes place. In this sense, the real is the bearer of human existence. As a reaction to this original *borderline-bodily* experience, life, now also in its function as the *orienting body* (*Richtungleib*), eccentrically emerges from itself. It reigns with an *orienting-bodily* reaching-out to the former being-

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, p. 209.

thrown-back on itself. Now that this alignment of the real also comes back to itself, it becomes a settling-in, comparable to the circling of one's own foundation with Lipps. The imaginary can be understood as a further reaction to this; the third function of the bodily-corporeal subject is to constitute strata of meaning (*Sinnleib*) and this function rises above the *borderline* and *orienting body*, both of which have been reshaped, but it is bound to them in its reality. Oikology is characterized by the fact that it offers the possibility to think about the tension between these three aspects. Human existence is, on the one hand, completely bodily-corporeal anchored in itself and on the other hand constantly transcends itself in its expression. Man is being gifted with imagination, but at the same time real⁶².

Human existence thus can be described as an eccentric centrality, which is reflected in the way it is limited. In the two folded moment suffering from resistance and then becoming resistant itself, a double boundary is created; in the primal distinction, the boundary is formed inwardly to the self and outwardly to everything else. The inward border is only given meontic, meaning it can only be experienced negatively: one's own foundation, one's own centre, always remains a moment that cannot be fully appropriated. It is given only as not-given. Nevertheless, human existence lives out of and within its own absolute subjectivity and peculiarity, even if it can never completely catch up with this. The border to the outside is that of resistance in the experience of the real as impenetrable, which requires an absolute separation of the subject and the real. The real itself is also only given in a meontic way. The real is outside of the sense context, insofar as it precedes this context and cannot be integrated into it, whereas the inability of fully grasping the outer or the inner are given meontic⁶³. These two moments of limitation refer to two ways of experiencing general otherness, which, however, is not yet the otherness of the Other. Oikology creates the possibility to accept the real and one's own resistance and thus react in a not assimilative way, or to develop another attitude, towards the breaking into the real, which subject's life always represents. The violence of this act of incision into the world, inherent in the *borderline* and *orienting body* movement, cannot therefore be met by an ethical approach because it occurs before the context of sense and meaning in which ethics generally falls. Therefore, human existence must react to this act of violence in a *borderline-body-way*. Sepp describes this as path of the practical *Epoché* (or the way of Buddha)⁶⁴. This reaction can be understood as the creation of a stable imbalance, which insists on a consideration of the references of the first two functions of the bodily-corporeal, which preceding the third

⁶² The terms used in this paragraph are translations by Sepp himself. See Marcela Venebra, *Oikology: Phenomenology of Place. Dialogue with Hans Rainer Sepp*; Cf. Hans Rainer Sepp, *Philosophie der imaginären Dinge*, p. 23.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, p. 14.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 36.

sense-making function, and thus of the primal experience. In Oikology, the double and constantly newly drawn boundaries, internally and externally, become conscious for the subject, so that it can react to them and endure them, it can so to say, take a stance.

The encounter with the pure otherness of for example the real bears the structure of violence and donation at the same time. Violence because of the concussion or even destruction of the sense context, because of the confrontation with the inconceivable and donation because of the liberation to modify the reference to the otherness, to take a different stance. The donation liberates the potential to for example of become aware (Depraz et al.), of become conscious (Scheler) or the possibility of acquisition (Lipps). This double structure of violence and donation at the same time is reflected in the two folded structure of *Epoché*: the violence leads to the suspension and gives way to the inversion of the attention, which of course already marks the transition from passive to active for the subject has to go along with this inversion, and the acceptance of the experience, the letting-go uses the free potential given by the violence as a donation. *Epoché* in this sense is the overcoming of the violence through acceptance of the donation. This is the primal experience that precedes *Epoché* as a voluntarily act, and therefore the bodily-corporeal stance.

With the analyses just presented, it is now possible to return to the problem discussed at the beginning, how the otherness of the Other can be thought of within this primal experience. The primal experience of the outside and the border, the confrontation with the pure resistive X or the real must be supplemented, on this level, by a primal confrontation or primal givenness of the Other. Here the problem of the differentiation of the givenness of resistances arises; the resistance of the Other must be given differently, thus be experienced differently than the mere resistance of the real. This does not mean that a further kind of resistance occurs here, but that the Other as resistive real must be given differently than a thing or the subject itself as real. References to such thoughts about the givenness of the resistance of the Other can be found, as already implied, for example, in Lévinas as the resistance of the face of the Other. Or in the concussion that the subject experiences, when another person objectifies it with his look, as Sartre explains⁶⁵. Or in the sense of Lipps, who speaks of naked resistance of the unforeseen objection of the Other, which reveals the limitations of one's own view. These approaches can be reformulated in an oikological sense.

The borders drawn with the function of the *borderline body* emerge from human existence and in its encounter with the senseless hardness of the

⁶⁵ Interestingly, Sartre seems to focus on the violence embedded in the encounter with the Other whereas Lévinas seems to focus on the donation. Following this train of thought, it would be benefiting to read their concepts in a parallel way, and thus describe both moments.

real. Just like one's own human existence, the other human existence unfolds its limits out of itself in interaction with the real. The otherness of the Other, which is simultaneously drawing borders itself, must therefore contain both kinds of the above-described kinds of otherness. The Other is in a bodily-resistive way part of the real and thus different, but also different as an absolute subjectivity which cannot be grasped. Its resistance is therefore, like that of the subject, both: resisting, as is every other given object as real, but also providing resistance. The centre of the Other, his absolute subjectivity and uniqueness, the borderline within him or her, which cannot be obtained, determines his specific otherness. The otherness of the Other is an abyss within him or her, which in confrontation refers initially to the abyss in the subject itself. This primal confrontation causes the discovery of otherness in one's own human existence. By placing oneself in an *orienting-bodily* manner at the place of the Other, the subject discovers itself in the Other or discovers the other(-ness) within itself. On another level, already with some meaning afflicted this could be described as an act of projection into the Other, which initially captures him or her. But since the subject (like the Other) is in a *borderline-bodily* way absolute separation, this results in a doubling: the Other is like the subject and at the same time not like the subject. The resistances of one's own and the Other's *borderline-corporeality* ultimately prevent the imminent assimilation, whereupon the Other is released, since he or she cannot be grasped or captured, just as the subject cannot be grasped or captured.

In this sense, the primal confrontation with the Other is also an act of simultaneous violence and donation: Violence, since there is a confrontation with a second kind of otherness than that of the external resistance of the real and this can initially only be dealt with by assimilation tendencies in the sense of taking up space in or of the Other. Donation, because the other gives the subject its own otherness, the Other shows the borders to the subject's inner self. The moment of releasing as letting-go, which is determined by the borderline-body, carries the structure of *Epoché* characterised above. In this sense, it is a primal *Epoché* in relation to the Other. The original reaching out of the subject, which bounced off the *borderline-body's* resistance of the Other (and one's own), threw it back on itself. The subject, thrown back on itself, first discovers itself as a *meontically* experienceable foundation, as a border within itself. Here the otherness of the Other is released; he or she and the subject are donated to each other as separate existences that are, nevertheless, connected in their otherness. In order to fully unfold the structure outlined here, this process would have to be a reciprocal event, since the Other also discovers his otherness only in this way⁶⁶. The encounter with the Other proves to be a necessary step in

⁶⁶ The original oikological confrontation sketched here shows some parallels to the movement of recognition (*Anerkennung*) of Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, which he explains in the *Phenomenology of Spirit*. (See Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Phänomeno-*

the corporeal localization or dwelling of human existence according to the ideas that have been expressed here. According to Lipps, it is a necessary step to become aware of oneself. In this consideration, Oikology is able to show a kind of proto-sociality which is already present in human existence as an in-dividual. For without the Other, it would remain fragmentary. The striving for the Other and thus ultimately sociality, one can assume, are already present before the actual socialization happens⁶⁷.

The event of the primal *Epoché* that takes place in the process cause a radical and unique break in the course of life of a subject. This primal *Epoché* is based on the Other, the Other stops the subject, and in its being thrown back on itself it is liberated, but initially only in the sense that it achieves the freedom of a reaction. The reaction, however, could be that of refusal; the subject could respond to the discovery of his own otherness through the otherness of the Other with counter-resistance. Presumably this is even the initially more likely reaction, since it tends to correspond to the subject's normal bodily-corporeal reaching out in opposition. The counter-resistance could take on a variety of forms, such as denying and objectifying one's own otherness or the Other, or something similar. It is the starting point to live out one's egocentric tendencies. This would be, however, a failure to perform the *Epoché* for it would be a failure to accept the experience (or a failure to make it through the emptiness, as Depraz et al. state).

But the subject could also accept its liberation, thus free itself from the tendency to react in counter-action. For the radical break of the primal *Epoché* also offers the basis for making the *Epoché*, as a structural part of the original encounter with the Other, a habituality towards him or her. The otherness of the Other is ever and always a special givenness of resistance that concusses the subject in living out its existence. The adequate reaction to this concussion can only be *Epoché*, as can be postulated from the above. For only in this way is a reconnection of the interrupted references possible, which takes into account the moment of the pause and thus does not assimilate or subjugate the Other. Following Lipps, an enormous potential for the acquisition of one's own constitution of sense can be discovered in the confrontation with the otherness of the Other. The Other throws the subject back to its own foundation, its mere factuality. He or she breaks open the bodily functions of constituting meaning and orienting oneself and leads the subject back to its primal experience revealing to it the otherness that it is itself. The Other confronts the subject with its own senseless foundation.

logie des Geistes, Frankfurt am Main, Suhrkamp, 1970, p. 138. Suhrkamp-Taschenbuch Wissenschaft, 603.) In fact, the concept of recognition seems suitable to describe this primeval confrontation, whereby of course the concept of *Epoché* that Hegel himself did not use would have to be maintained.

⁶⁷ Following this train of thought, it would presumably be fruitful to investigate pregnancy (possibly as the first shared *Oikos*) in the sense of a first *housing in* and thus to enrich the of bodily-corporeal localization. Due to the limitation of pages this project has to be postponed.

At the end of the encounter stands the breakthrough of the resistance of the otherness of the Other through accepting his donation: *Epoché*. After this, the potential of the *Epoché*, as an abstaining stance towards the Other and its habitualization as an abstaining attitude, can be outlined.

4. THE HABITUAL *EPOCHÉ* AS AN ABSTAINING STANCE

The first potential is to be found in the liberation of the subject and the Other; in the mutual concussion caused by the otherness of the respective Other, the freedom required by *Epoché* is released itself⁶⁸.

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The *Epoché* as an abstaining stance is a kind of awareness or remembrance: the subject responds to its own foundation, it has now given it as the origin of every constitution of sense and meaning. The foundation is not a solid one, but a fluid one, that can be shaken. In resistance, human existence experiences its powerlessness and vulnerability, but also its freedom is liberated. As Oikology already suggests, *Epoché* as a bodily-corporeal and existential praxis forms a counter-programme to an extension of egocentrism, in that every relation of the subject has given the non-totality of this relation. It is not a matter of living in a continuous *Epoché* where every reference is merely put in brackets all the time. This seems neither possible nor desirable; an indifferent attitude towards life would also obscure any joy. Rather, the foundation is co-given and acquisitioned, or to put it another way, the *Epoché* can constantly be performed, the abstaining stance becomes the abstaining attitude. The Other functions as a rupture of context of sense and meaning of the subject. Through the presence of his otherness, for example caused by one of his deeds, which do not follow the laws of sense and meaning of its own understanding, but radically break with them, the context goes astray. The subject becomes certain of the continence of its context of sense. By experiencing the Other as a disruption in the world formed by the subject, it also experiences itself as a disruption. The other is the questioning of the subject and the subject the questioning of the Other.

The crucial moment in all constitutions of meaning, be it everyday life or a political or social system or even an ethic, is, precisely, as is postulated

⁶⁸ Here could a potential of philosophy, or at least of *Epoché* as therapeutic practice be located: The Other is led back to its foundation, as Lipps describes it in the speech or more precisely dialog. In order to fulfill this potentiality, however, it would be necessary to examine how exactly an (specific) *Epoché* can be triggered in the Other. Other than the potential of leading the Other to *Epoché* the abstaining stance or attitude seems similar to the attitude of the therapist. See: Claudia Mariéle Wulf, *Schuld, ins Wort gebracht. Das befreiende Gespräch über Schuld in der Pastoral*, Zugl., Fribourg, Univ., Diss., Vallendar: Patris-Verl, 2008. See also Natalie Depraz- Varela, Francisco J.-Vermersch, Pierre, *op. cit.*, p. 155.

here, the fluidity and contingency of this respective constitution. Be it the political or the ethical or, in relation to philosophy, the philosophical or, more precisely, the philosophising of the philosopher. The abstaining attitude is a visualisation, an exposure of the foundation and contingency of a context of sense and meaning. Before ethics, for instance, there must be a stance that considers the reconnection to the primal subjectivation of the subject, its *borderline body*, and so on. In Addition, *Epoché* also offers protection against the senselessness itself, the despair that could be felt in the view of this contingency, and finally offers the possibility to analyse, compare and modify the belief-systems of meaning. It also offers the possibility of resistance, the discovery of one's own resistance and individuality, which by definition already contains a counter tendency against any excessive (over-)shaping by power structures or totalitarian regimes. It also contains the dictum of non-violence: "A life in the acceptance of its limitations no longer needs violence to defend its place. It has given itself back to it by releasing the donation that it is itself and surrendering itself to it. It is"⁶⁹.

For the concrete encounter with the Other within an abstaining attitude this could mean the following. In each encounter with the Other, the subject can see his otherness shimmering through the context of sense and meaning of the encounter. The Other is no longer given in a fixed context of meaning, for example as friend or enemy or postman. First of all, his subjectivity is certain, because it is given with the moment of concussion itself. All its facets continue to be given in meaningful or object-like references, but now their validity is now in question. The Other continues to be given as a concrete person, but at the same time he or she is given as more than that. The given facets of the Other appear as formations or as both contingent and necessary realisations of his or her subjectivity, *i.e.* as his or her personality or character. The perception of the Other changes the direction of the view from the outside to the inside: The subject reaches his inner self and the inner self of the Other in an *meontic* way, it experiences the borders within itself and within the Other. In this sense, the otherness of the Other is also given, but particularly in the mode of the *meontic*, of the non-given. The Other appears as equivalent to the subject, for in the opacity of his or her otherness he or she shows himself or herself to be just as absolute and individual as the subject itself. At the same time, he or she appears as a structural affinity which marks the possibility for a relationship on equal terms.

In the letting-go of the *Epoché*, the subject allows the Other to come as they are. Here the subject primarily gets the opportunity to hear the Other's demands. At this point it can become a dialogue partner, it can listen and

⁶⁹ This translation is offered by the author. See the original: „Ein Leben in der Akzeptanz seiner Begrenztheit bedarf keiner Gewalt mehr, um seinen Ort zu verteidigen. Es hat sich ihm selbst zurückgegeben, indem es die Gabe, die es selbst ist, freigibt und sich ihr überlässt. Es ist.“ *Ibid.*, p. 209.

it can respond to the personal values of the Other. At this stage, there is a kind of proto-ethical moment from which no concrete ethics can or should be develop, but from which an abstaining stance and an abstaining attitude towards the Other can arise, in which intersubjectivity is possible as a fact of equal original interlocutors. The other and the subject could now live together; the subject lives, like the other demands it, while the Other lives, like the subject demands it. Their encounter has developed into a continuous dialogue as equally initial partners.

Ultimately, life seeks a way out of its own egocentrism towards a liberation from itself, and an encounter with the Other offers precisely this long-awaited and desired possibility. The secret lies in the Other, which can end the lonely self-circulation of the subject.