

Alberto Parisi¹

Negating Platonism: Reversing Platonism in Patočka and Deleuze

ABSTRACT: This article analyzes one of the central themes of 20th century European philosophy after Nietzsche, namely the ‘reversal of Platonism’. To this end, it examines how two very different philosophers, Gilles Deleuze and Jan Patočka, spoke more or less simultaneously of the need for a ‘reversal of Platonism’ or a ‘negative Platonism’. The comparison helps us to clarify the positions of the two philosophers and their inherent limitations, as well as more recent attempts to reverse Platonism today, such as in the works of Adriana Cavarero and Giorgio Agamben.

Keywords: Platonism, Jan Patočka, Gilles Deleuze, metaphysics.

Negacija platonizma: preobrnjenje platonizma pri Patočki in Deleuzu

POVZETEK: Prispevek analizira eno osrednjih tem evropske filozofije 20. stoletja po Nietzscheju, namreč »obrat platonizma«. V ta namen preučuje, kako sta dva zelo različna filozofa, Gilles Deleuze in Jan Patočka, bolj ali manj istočasno govorila o nujnosti »obrata platonizma« ali »negativnega platonizma«. Primerjava nam bo pomagala razjasniti stališča vsakega filozofa in njihove intrinzične meje, pa tudi novejšje poskuse obračanja platonizma danes, na primer v delih Adriane Cavarero in Giorgia Agambena.

Ključne besede: platonizem, Jan Patočka, Gilles Deleuze, metafizika.

¹ Alberto Parisi, PhD is Specially Appointed Assistant Professor at the Kobe Institute for Atmospheric Studies (KOIAS) of the Graduate School of Humanities of Kobe University, Japan, and Assistant with PhD at the Institute for Philosophical and Religious Studies of the ZRS Koper, Slovenia. E-mail: parisi.alberto@yahoo.com. The article was written in the framework of the research program Liminal spaces: areas of cultural and societal cohabitation in the age of risk and vulnerability (P6-0279), funded by the Slovenian Research and Innovation Agency (ARIS).

In the European philosophical landscape of the 20th century, it is difficult to find two figures as far apart as Jan Patočka and Gilles Deleuze. Reading each of these thinkers is a completely different experience: on the one hand, there is the Czech phenomenologist Patočka, who tried to think transcendence – even if, unlike his teacher Husserl, an *asubjective* transcendence – until the bitter end; on the other, there is the French heterodox, transcendental empiricist Deleuze, *the immanence thinker par excellence of the 20th century*, also until a bitter albeit different end. The two could be considered the 20th century champions of two opposing poles: transcendence and immanence.

And yet, comparing the two, as I wish to do in this article, does not seem as misguided when approached from the perspective of something like a ‘phenomenology of difference,’ as recently initiated by a thinker like Miguel de Beistegui (2000, 54–70):² a phenomenology capable of learning even from its apparent ‘enemies’ – and Beistegui spoke explicitly of the potential of Deleuze’s philosophy of difference for a phenomenology – a phenomenology capable of rethinking itself in ever new, heretical ways, and returning to things themselves, as Patočka aspired to.³

Indeed, once we open ourselves to the possibility of heresy – phenomenological or otherwise – there are also other philological and philosophical reasons why such a comparative prospect might be more interesting than expected. While other critics have already pointed out the interesting similarities (in difference) between Patočka’s conception of *asubjective* phenomenology and Deleuze’s philosophy of difference (Kouba 2020, 54–67; Shores 2022, 52–85), no one has yet commented on the striking similarity between two of their most important projects or philosophical slo-

2 He then presented his own Deleuzian-Heideggerian ‘differential ontology’ (Beistegui 2004).

3 ‘And is this not the historical lesson of phenomenology: that it is itself a flow, with unpredictable bends and meanderings, which, whatever their intensity, in the end always reinvent phenomenology, remaining faithful to this potential or this virtual reserve that phenomenology has at the moment when they express the impossibility for them to remain faithful to the letter of phenomenology. But there is no “letter” of phenomenology: no primordial word, no consecrated text, no original truth that one could betray: only an endless series of heresies, which is, at least in philosophy, the only possible form of fidelity, that is, fidelity in and through genuine questioning’ (Beistegui 2000, 68). To note that here Beistegui refers explicitly to Patočka’s *Heretical Essays*: ‘See, for example, the beautifully named *Heretical Essays* (Prague: Petlice, 1975) by Patočka, perhaps the most unfaithfully faithful of all phenomenologists’ (Beistegui 2000, 70).

gans: namely, in Patočka's case, that of re-interpreting Platonism in a negative way and, in Deleuze's, that of reversing Platonism *tout court*.

In this article, I will begin to approach such a demanding comparison by limiting myself to two points of difference – although we must also judge the ineradicable similarities from the original differences. Firstly, I will discuss the Nietzschean origins of Deleuze's reversal of Platonism in contrast with the more mysterious roots of Patočka's Negative Platonism, arguing that they have a common denominator in Heidegger's interpretation of Nietzsche. Secondly, I will explore how each thinker develops their respective negative version of Platonism, either by reversing or reimagining Plato's theory of Ideas. It is in this latter aspect that their approaches most sharply diverge, though not without some fascinating points of contact.

1.

Perhaps even more striking than their shared rejection of transcendental subjectivity is Patočka's and Deleuze's description of their own philosophical project – at least for a period of their lives – as a 'reversal of' or as a 'negative' Platonism. It was in the early 1950s that Patočka started developing what, according to extant manuscript notes, was supposed to become a broad, all-encompassing philosophical project entitled *Negative Platonism* (Tava 2015, 9–12; Arnason 2007, 8). Of this larger project, which he never completed, only a long essay was published in 1953 with the same title (Patočka 1989, 175–206). It is one of the most read and most discussed of Patočka's texts, and even although any references to 'negative Platonism' are almost completely absent from his later works, most critics agree on its significance for Patočka's philosophical trajectory (Tava 2015, 56–72; Arnason 2007, 19–25; Ullmann 2011, 75–81; Rodrigo, 2011, 87–97).

Deleuze did not afford his reversal of Platonism such editorial importance, but inscribed it most vigorously in two of his most important texts, *Difference and Repetition* and *The Logic of Sense*, from 1968 and 1969 respectively, as the aim and motto of his (and not only his) philosophy: 'The task of modern philosophy has been defined: to overturn Platonism,' he writes in chapter 1 of *Difference and Repetition* (Deleuze 1994, 58). For both philosophers, 15 years apart, what contemporary philosophy must do, in order to go forward, is to re-read Platonism negatively, to turn it upside down.

However, the difference is immediately perceptible in the choice of words. Even though both titles or slogans testify to the necessity of a return to Platonism in a negative manner, Deleuze's rhetoric and choice of words sound more extreme, while avoiding any reference to negativity. The difference appears to be Nietzschean, as Deleuze's reference in *The Logic of Sense* suggests: 'What does it mean "to reverse Platonism"? This is how Nietzsche defined the task of his philosophy or, more generally, the task of the philosophy of the future' (Deleuze 1990, 253). As many scholars have noted, Deleuze is likely alluding here to a fragment Nietzsche wrote while drafting *The Birth of Tragedy*: 'My philosophy an inverted Platonism: the farther removed from true being, the purer, the finer, the better it is. Living in semblance as the goal' (Nietzsche 1969, 207; Beistegui 2012, 56; Smith 2005, 90). Deleuze had probably encountered this passage very recently, perhaps during preparations for the new edition of Nietzsche's *Complete Works*, which he was editing with Michel Foucault for Gallimard. Notably, no reference to this fragment appears in his 1962 work, *Nietzsche and Philosophy*. Alternatively and more scandalously, he may have encountered it through Heidegger's *Nietzsche*, which his friend Klossowski was translating into French at the time (Heidegger 1984, 154).

The difference is therefore Nietzschean, in the sense that Deleuze's reversal of Platonism has Nietzschean roots, supposedly unlike Patočka's. But it would be a mistake to read Patočka's turn to Platonism as completely detached from Nietzsche. Indeed, tellingly, Nietzsche is the first thinker Patočka cites in his essay, right on the first page.⁴ He doesn't even name him, but it is clear how central he is to his argument:

For all the profound differences between nineteenth-century philosophy and philosophical thought today, there are some common themes that link them. One of those is the sense that the metaphysical phase of philosophy has come to an end and that we are living at the end of a grand era, or perhaps even after its end. The air, as the great seismographer of the catastrophes to come said, is full of putrescence. Yet what is it that died? What is it that has been dismissed so thoroughly, once and

4 As also Martin Koci (2017, 7) notes.

for all, that only a monument erected by historians remains? (Patočka 1989, 175)

In Patočka's case, the Nietzschean reference is more hidden and refers to a certain conception of the history of philosophy, rather than to Nietzsche's views on Platonism. Indeed, I do not actually know whether Patočka had access to Nietzsche's fragment, but what he had access to was a text by Heidegger from 1943, republished as part of his *Holzwege* in 1950, while Patočka was writing his essay, and translated into French in 1962, Heidegger's essay 'Nietzsche's Word: "God is Dead."' As we will see, more than to Nietzsche, the reference here seems to be to Heidegger's interpretation of Nietzsche and the role Heidegger afforded to him in his conception of the end of metaphysics.

Now, what is surprising is that through this comparison between Patočka and Deleuze, we discover that, rather than being Nietzschean, both reversals of Platonism – Deleuze's as well – could be said to be Heideggerian and that their roots lie in the very first page of Heidegger's essay, which reads as follow:

The commentary derives from a thinking that is beginning to win an initial clarity about Nietzsche's fundamental place within the history of Western metaphysics. To point in this direction clarifies a stage of Western metaphysics that is in all likelihood its final stage, since metaphysics, through Nietzsche, has deprived itself of its own essential possibility in certain respects, and therefore to that extent other possibilities of metaphysics can no longer become apparent. After the metaphysical reversal carried out by Nietzsche, all that is left to metaphysics is to be inverted into the dire state of its non-essence. The supersensory has become an unenduring product of the sensory. But by so disparaging [*Herabsetzung*] its antithesis, the sensory denies its own essence. The dismissal [*Absetzung*] of the supersensory also eliminates the purely sensory and with it the difference between the two. (Heidegger 2002, 157)⁵

⁵ Heidegger would further expand on this topic in the first volume of his study on Nietzsche (Heidegger 1984, 151–161).

As we have seen, this is the exact context in which Patočka inscribes his thought by mentioning Nietzsche's words regarding the end of metaphysics – a Heideggerian conception of the history of philosophy to which – it is worth remembering – Deleuze never subscribed (Smith et al. 2023). But, as we will see, this is also the best summary of what a 'reversal' of Platonism would consist of or of how to imagine something like a negative Platonism, because what Heidegger is doing in these last three lines is describing the Nietzschean critique of Plato's Theory of Ideas.

For Heidegger, Nietzsche's reversal of metaphysics or of Platonism consists in reversing Plato's Theory of Ideas, denying the super-sensuous in favour of the sensuous. This is true for both Patočka and Deleuze, but from this point, the two thinkers diverge markedly. Deleuze fully embraces Heidegger's depiction of Nietzsche's reversal of Platonism and pushes it to its most extreme limits by considering very rigorously how to deny the super-sensuous through the sensuous. Patočka instead takes a more Heideggerian/Phenomenological approach. Unlike Deleuze, he opposes the idea that a mere reversal of Platonism would be able to free us from metaphysics, claiming, in Heideggerian terms, that reversing metaphysics ultimately keeps us within its bounds (Nietzsche's main fault). Yet Patočka also envisions a 'negative' Platonism as a path forward, a philosophy capable of rescuing metaphysics from itself. And such, Negative Platonism would consist of a new interpretation of the Theory of Ideas that stresses the *chorismos*, the difference between Ideas and objects, above everything else. In doing so, it repositions Ideas beyond objectivity and subjectivity, as mere 'calls' to transcendence.

2.

In order to reverse Platonism one first needs to understand it correctly. Deleuze's path to enact Nietzsche's reversal of Plato's theory of Ideas begins with a new interpretation of the theory. His first move is to show that, contrary to the standard interpretation of Platonism, the theory of Ideas is not dualism but triadism. A third element is more important than either Ideas or copies: the simulacrum.⁶ The famous dualism between Idea and

⁶ For pivotal readings of Deleuze's concept of the simulacrum and his overturning of Platonism, also in the following pages, I refer to Smith (2005, 97–108) and Beistegui (2012, 55–62).

copy (or essence and appearance) is only apparent because what really matters is the difference between copy and simulacrum. As he summarizes in the conclusion of *Difference and Repetition*, with a fascinating wink to the critique of metaphysics:

It is correct to define metaphysics by reference to Platonism, but insufficient to define Platonism by reference to the distinction between essence and appearance. The primary distinction which Plato rigorously establishes is the one between the model and the copy. The copy, however, is far from a simple appearance, since it stands in an internal, spiritual, noological and ontological relation with the Idea or model. The second and more profound distinction is the one between the copy itself and the phantasm. (Deleuze 1994, 264–265)⁷

Platonism is ‘metaphysical’, according to Deleuze, not because it bases itself on the dualism of idea and copy, as it is usually thought, but because it relies on the difference between copies and simulacra. It is then this difference that one must consider in order to understand his theory of Ideas.

Indeed, copies and simulacra are both just images, argues; but in positing their difference, something has occurred:

The distinction wavers between two sorts of images. *Copies* are secondary possessors. They are well-founded pretenders, guaranteed by resemblance; *simulacra* are like false pretenders, built upon a dissimilarity, implying an essential perversion or a deviation. It is in this sense that Plato divides in two the domain of images-idols: on one hand there are *copies-icons*, on the other there are *simulacra-phantasms*. (Deleuze 1990, 256)⁸

Copies and simulacra are simply images, but what differentiates them is ‘resemblance’. While the copy has some resemblance to the model or idea, simulacra are instead built on dissimilarity.

What this central difference to Platonism reveals to us, according to Deleuze, is that Platonism is animated by an original moral goal, which is not the separation of the world of Ideas from the material world of copies,

⁷ See also Deleuze (1990, 253–257).

⁸ See also Deleuze (1994, 127).

but rather the ability to select and choose which is morally best among the images. But this means that ideas became necessary only because Plato had to distinguish morally between copies and simulacra:

The great manifest duality of Idea and image is present only in this goal: to assure the latent distinction between the two sorts of images and to give a concrete criterion. For if copies or icons are good images and are well-founded, it is because they are endowed with resemblance. [...] Consider now the other species of images, namely, the simulacra. That to which they pretend (the object, the quality, etc.), they pretend to underhandedly, under cover of an aggression, an insinuation, a subversion, ‘against the father’, and without passing through the Idea. (Deleuze 1990, 257)⁹

The real dualism that Platonism introduces, according to Deleuze, is that between copy and simulacrum, where copies are images that resemble Ideas and are therefore good and well-founded, while simulacra are images that do not resemble Ideas at all, namely that they insinuate a similarity with Ideas that is, however, impossible to prove.

To summarize, for Deleuze, Platonism is not dualism but triadism; three elements are at play: Ideas, copies, and simulacra. While Platonism is usually understood to be founded on the difference between Ideas and copies, Deleuze claims that it is actually founded on the difference between copies and simulacra; and Ideas are introduced as mere standard-setters, namely as pure identities whose end is to guarantee the resemblance of copies and the dissimilarity of simulacra, and thus allowing us to tell them apart. But this means that Platonism is nothing more than a moral project aimed at using the Idea to guarantee the triumph of copies over simulacra, the triumph of true and authentic pretenders over false ones.¹⁰

⁹ See also Deleuze (1994, 126–128).

¹⁰ ‘Platonism as a whole is built on the basis of this wish to hunt down the phantasms or simulacra, which are identified with the Sophist himself, this devil, that insinuator or simulator, this always disguised and displaced false pretender. [...] In his [Plato’s] case, however, a moral motivation in all its purity is avowed: the will to eliminate simulacra or phantasms has no motivation apart from morality. What is condemned in the figure of the simulacra is the state of free, oceanic differences, of nomadic distributions and crowned, anarchy, along with all that malice which challenges both the notion of the model and that of the copy.’ (Deleuze 1994, 127, 265)

If this is the case, then we can finally understand what reversing Platonism might mean: for Deleuze, reversing Platonism means freeing the simulacra, which are nothing more than systems of pure difference, and letting them spread:

So ‘to reverse Platonism’ means to make the simulacra rise and to affirm their rights among icons and copies. The problem no longer has to do with the distinction Essence-Appearance or Model-Copy. This distinction operates completely within the world of representation. Rather, it has to do with undertaking the subversion of this world – the ‘twilight of the idols.’ The simulacrum is not a degraded copy. It harbors a positive power which denies the original and the copy, the model and the reproduction. At least two divergent series are internalized in the simulacrum – neither can be assigned as the original, neither as the copy. (Deleuze 1990, 262)

What counts above everything else for Deleuze is that while copies are founded on resemblance, namely on identity, the peculiarity of Plato’s simulacra is that they escape identity and resemblance altogether. In fact, they are not simply a ‘copy of a copy,’ two or three times or infinitely removed from the idea, truth, and identity (257). Rather, they are pure differences that ‘do not pass through the Idea’ in their insinuation (257). They are free from any reference to a model or a copy and, for this reason, they call into question the very difference between model and copy.¹¹

Reversing Platonism for Deleuze means to free, against Ideas (and copies), the positive power of difference internal to simulacra. Making true both Nietzsche’s and Heidegger’s *word*, in this new conception, our world is not a sensuous appearance – a semblance – of the super-sensuous world, but rather a pure semblance, an immanent game of differences, without any reference to another world. That very difference has been eradicated. However, as Daniel W. Smith notes, ‘Deleuze’s project of overturning Platonism must not be taken as a rejection of Platonism; on the contrary. “That

¹¹ ‘The simulacrum is built upon a disparity or upon a difference. It internalizes a dissimilarity. This is why we can no longer define it in relation to a model imposed on the copies, a model of the Same from which the copies’ resemblance derives. If the simulacrum still has a model, it is another model, a model of the Other (*l’Autre*) from which there flows an internalized dissemblance’ (Deleuze 1990, 258).

the overturning [of Platonism] should conserve many Platonic characteristics,” writes Deleuze, “is not only inevitable but desirable” (Smith 2005, 105).¹² By freeing the power of the simulacrum, the dualism between Ideas and copies is erased but Ideas do not disappear, according to Deleuze. Rather, simulacra ‘require a new conception of Ideas: Ideas that are immanent to simulacra (rather than transcendent) and based on a concept of pure difference (rather than identity)’ (106). In this inverted Platonism, Ideas are not somewhere else, but are internal, immanent, to this simulacra. They are a pure system of differences preceding and enabling any representation (Deleuze 1994, 26–27). In a beautiful phrase, which will have some odd parallels in Patočka, they are ‘a brute presence which can be invoked in the world only in function of that which is not “representable” in things’ (59); Ideas as the reminder of the immanent play of difference.

3.

As we will see, Patočka’s negative interpretation of Plato’s theory of Ideas is very different from Deleuze’s, and yet some features are similar. Indeed, Patočka’s project begins from the opposite pole, namely from what he calls the ‘experience of freedom’ and associates it with transcendence. For him, Plato is the first person to have proposed a ‘conceptual systematics’ for achieving freedom or transcendence (Patočka 1989, 195). Thus, before proposing his negative version of Platonism, he begins by offering a short version of that systematics and what he takes Platonism to be – and with it, the rest of two millennia of European philosophy:¹³

Plato explained freedom as transcending the sensible and reaching the transcendent Being, a transcendence from the ‘apparent’ to the ‘real.’ The intermediary between the two realms was dialectics, a spiritual process stretching between two poles, one sensible, the other suprasensible, and permitting an ascent from the sensible to the suprasensible as well as a descent in the opposite direction. (195)

¹² For Deleuze’s passage see Deleuze (1994, 59).

¹³ ‘With that, he also determined the destiny of philosophy for two millennia, though it is problematic whether he thereby set philosophy on its true definitive course’ (Patočka 1989, 195).

For Patočka, as for Nietzsche and Heidegger, Platonism – or metaphysics more generally – is the idea that the experience of freedom or transcendence coincides with a movement from the sensuous to the super-sensuous through the spiritual process called dialectics. To attain freedom and transcendence means to reach the suprasensible realm of truth, to reach the realm of Ideas: therein lies ‘the Platonic doctrine of separately subsisting Ideas’ that we need to reach by leaving behind the sensible world (197). For Patočka, negating Platonism seems to be to negate this picture.

Yet even Patočka does not begin by simply erasing the classic dualism of the Platonic tradition between Ideas, understood as perfect entities, and copies of Ideas, the objects. Rather, he also recovers from Plato’s theory a third, more important element in the dyad. What is even more surprising is that, even if this element has nothing to do with the simulacrum, it has explicitly to do with pure difference. Indeed, he claims that what has been forgotten and misinterpreted in Plato’s theory of Ideas is what Plato calls the ‘*chorismos*’, namely ‘the separation between Ideas and our reality, our actual world of things and people, left to themselves and considered simply as actual’ (198).¹⁴ But understanding the *chorismos* as a separation between two worlds is, according to Patočka, a fundamental mistake:

It is, however, important to understand precisely why the *chorismos*, the separation, the isolation, is an important phenomenon that we cannot ignore and silence. We need to set aside one metaphor suggested by the label *chorismos*, that of the separation of something from something, of two regions of objects. *Chorismos* meant originally a separateness without a second object realm. It is a gap that does not separate two realms coordinated or linked by something third that would embrace them both and so would serve as the foundation of both their coordination and their separation. *Chorismos* is a separateness, a distinctness *an sich*, an absolute one, for itself. It does not entail the secret of another continent, somewhere beyond a separating ocean. (198)

The well-known Platonic *chorismos* is not a difference between two regions, two continents, two realms, but a difference as such.

This is a central move in Patočka's re-interpretation of Platonism and one that has a pivotal consequence: understanding the *chorismos* as pure difference means calling into question the very dualism between Ideas and objects. There is only one world, the world of objects, but within that one world we can have the experience of pure difference, the *chorismos*, which for Patočka is nothing more than the asubjective experience of freedom, understood as the experience of an unsurpassable distance and difference from objects and reality: 'In other words, the mystery of the *chorismos* is like the experience of freedom, an experience of a distance with respect to real things, of a meaning independent of the objective and the sensory which we reach by inverting the original, 'natural' orientation of life, an experience of a rebirth, of a second birth, intrinsic to all spiritual life, familiar to the religious, to the initiates of the arts, and, not least, to philosophers' (198–199).

Chorismos should be understood as an experience of pure difference beyond any objective, representational meaning (199). For a moment, we do not seem too far removed from Deleuze's conception of the Idea as the reminder of 'that which is not "representable" in things.'

And indeed, what of Ideas in this new, Negative Platonism? Once we take the *chorismos* seriously as pure difference, as the experience of freedom, the Idea becomes simply a 'shorthand for the *chorismos*' (199). In this way, we 'transcend the Idea itself, to reach beyond it, to strip it of its presentational, objective, iconic character' (199). Ideas are not absolute objects, as the Platonic tradition argued, but literally nothing, in the sense that they are not things, they are beyond any objectivity.¹⁵ Not too far from the

¹⁵ 'Do we not, though, encounter here the paradox of this negative doctrine of the Idea, revealing its internal contradiction? Must not the Idea appear as something in principle nonexistent? Precisely in view of the *chorismos* we must place it in complete contradiction to the sum of all that is, objective and subjective – but what remains when we exclude all that is, what other than sheer nothingness? And is not nothingness, as many logicians and metaphysicians have shown, an impossible conception as soon as we take it in the absolute sense of the word and not simply as an expression for the exclusion of realities of a linguistic device, a mere mode of speaking about signs that serve to mark realities? Is not the doctrine forced at this point to admit that it fails, just as positive Platonism before it, because it hypostatizes the unrealizable, the unreal, a mere *flatus vocis*' (Patočka 1989, 201)

Heideggerian conception of Being, Ideas are not entities; rather they are the ‘the origin and wellspring of all *human* objectification – though only because [they are] first and more basically the power of deobjectification and derealization’ (199). In the same way, and in line with Patočka’s future a-subjective phenomenology, Ideas are not only beyond any object but also beyond every subjectivism: ‘By contrast, the Idea, as that determination, has the advantage that, if stripped of metaphysical encrustations, it stands above both subjective and objective existents; precisely the *chorismos* guarantees that we shall encounter in it no existent in the sense of any content whatever or any process of experience’ (200).¹⁶

Once we free ourselves from metaphysics, we understand that Ideas have nothing to do with objects so much as with any subjective experience. As simple ‘shorthands for the *chorismos*’, they are mere reminders of the pure difference, which Patočka calls transcendence.

Patočka thus concludes that the negative conception of the Platonic Idea is that ‘the Idea is the pure supraobjective call of transcendence’ (204). ‘It comes to us and proves itself a constant call to go beyond mere objectivity, mere factuality’ (204). In other words, for Patočka, Ideas are not perfect and absolute entities located somewhere in a different realm, but the ever-present and latent call of the world to transcendence.

Conclusion

I hope to have shown that comparing two distant thinkers like Patočka and Deleuze is not as useless as first imagined, and could prove particularly fruitful for the future of Phenomenology and philosophy more broadly. What we have found is that, despite their opposing watchwords – transcendence and immanence – Patočka’s and Deleuze’s ‘negative’ versions of Platonism share a common Nietzschean-Heideggerian origin. But this shared foundation was just the beginning. Examining how each philosopher sought to reverse or negate Platonism by reinterpreting Plato’s theory of Ideas has allowed us to highlight significant differences in their conclusions, as well as striking parallels.

Deleuze sought to dismantle Plato's Ideas, and the distinction between Ideas and copies, by unleashing the power of the simulacrum – pure difference – and re-imagining Ideas as an immanent play of differences, before any representation. In contrast, Patočka approached the negation of Plato's Ideas and the Ideas-objects distinction by focusing on the *chorismos*, which he reinterpreted as a pure difference – not as a division between realms, Ideas and copies, but as a difference in itself, a concept he linked to transcendence. In this way, he re-imagined Ideas as a 'shorthand for the *chorismos*' or, in other words, as mere 'calls to transcendence.'

What is fascinating about these findings is how the concepts of transcendence and immanence, seemingly so distant, come to resemble one another when Patočka's and Deleuze's negative Platonisms are placed side by side. Both thinkers attempt to strip Platonism of its defining dualism by liberating the form of pure difference; yet one names this liberation immanence and the other calls it transcendence. In the future, it would be worth asking how we could bring such views together. Both thinkers tried to destroy Ideas from within, reducing them to nothing – to a play of immanent differences in one case and to a call or voice of asubjective transcendence in the other.¹⁷ Might we one day, by joining these perspectives, envision Ideas as the always present voice of the world calling it back to itself, as the very place of its de-subjectification and de-objectification?¹⁸

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17 Patočka often used the term *flatus vocis* in his description of negative Ideas: 'Thus the Idea is the pure supraobjective call of transcendence. From the perspective of objectivity, of form, of finite content, it cannot but appear as pure nothingness, as *flatus vocis*' (Patočka 1989, 204).

18 I cannot but wonder whether this is what Giorgio Agamben has begun to do in his re-interpretation of Platonic Ideas as *sayables*, in close vicinity with his discussion of the concept of voice, in *What Is Philosophy?* (Agamben 2018, 35–90). On this question, see my review-essay of the book (Parisi 2018).

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