CC BY NC SA

ARGUMENT
BIANNUAL PHILOSOPHICAL JOURNAL

e-ISSN 2084–1043 p-ISSN 2083–6635
Published online: 15.10.2026

Vol. 16 (1/2026) pp. 157–172
https://argument.uken.krakow.pl/

Anthropotechnics and transcendental phenomenology. Towards the transformative dimension of subjectivity

Damian KAŁUŻNY*

ABSTRACT

This paper discusses the possibility of interpreting Husserl's transcendental phenomenology through the lens of Sloterdijk's concept of anthropotechnics. The analysis accentuates the parallels between Husserl's phenomenology and Sloterdijk's anthropotechnical approach, particularly the significance of the ethical and transformational nature of philosophy in both conceptions. In the first section, emphasis is placed on Sloterdijk's anthropotechnical interpretation of transcendental phenomenology, according to which phenomenology is an ambiguous stance. For Sloterdijk, the early period of Husserl's thought can be seen as a re-establishment of the significance of the unworldly, contemplative mode of living. Conversely, the late period of phenomenology represents an attempt to ground the transcendental subject in the world. The paper argues that, in contrast to Sloterdijk's perspective, the original transformational dimension of the transcendental reduction cannot be restricted to the isolating subject in an inner enclave, but rather has to encompass the entire domain of human reason and culture. The second section discusses Husserl's conception of philosophical reduction in the anthropotechnical perspective. It is argued that according to Husserl — both in his early and late works — the phenomenological transformation is characterised by the philosopher's radical responsibility for humanity. The aforementioned ambiguity of Husserl's phenomenology is thus not the sign of a shift between early and late periods of his thought. It is rather the structural characteristic inherent in both the phenomenological investigation and the philosophising subject itself. The article highlights the possibility, one not without challenges, of an anthropotechnical interpretation of phenomenology.

KEYWORDS

phenomenology, anthropotechnics, Husserl, Sloterdijk, ethics

* Ph.D., independent researcher. E-mail: kaluuzny.damian@gmail.com.

DOI: 10.24917/20841043.16.1.9

INTRODUCTION

Peter Sloterdijk's concept of anthropotechnics offers a fundamental interpretation of the conditions of human culture, religion and philosophy. His thought can be considered part of a broader philosophical paradigm that accentuates the pivotal significance of self-care. According to thinkers such as Pierre Hadot (Hadot, 1995), Michel Foucault (Foucault, 2005), and Sloterdijk the asceticism — understood in its original, pre-Christian sense as the sphere of the 'practice of the self' — is a fundamental yet forgotten aspect of European subjectivity. Nonetheless, and in contrast to the approaches of Foucault and Hadot which are concerned mostly with ancient 'techniques of the self', Sloterdijk proposes an original and thought-provoking anthropotechnical interpretation of modern philosophies. From this perspective, all human culture — including religion, disciplinary regimes, sports and, last but not least, philosophy — can be considered an exercise of self-transcendence of human existence. The concept of anthropotechnics enables Sloterdijk to not only revitalize the premodern understanding of philosophy as the practice of the self but also to propose an interpretation of philosophical thought that challenges both modern and postmodern understandings of philosophy.

In this paper, I will discuss Sloterdijk's anthropotechnical interpretation of Husserlian phenomenology. The conception of anthropotechnics allows us to situate Husserl's phenomenology within a more extensive framework encompassing the historical evolution of the understanding of subjectivity and philosophy itself. Like Edmund Husserl's phenomenology, Sloterdijk's philosophy is not confined to the domains of classical epistemology or ontology. Rather, it offers a fundamental interpretation of the conditions and possibilities of becoming a subject (Sloterdijk, 2013b: 161). Sloterdijk's perspective may constitute a substantial contribution to contemporary research exploring the performative, ethical and existential implications inherent in Husserl's philosophical tenets (see: Cimino, 2020; Jacobs, 2017; Heffernan, 2022; Loidolt, 2022).

The purpose of the article is twofold. The initial objective is to demonstrate the possibility of an anthropotechnical interpretation of phenomenology. I examine Sloterdijk's theories of subjectivity in order to illuminate the equivocal nature of the transcendental ego. This concept is posited by Sloterdijk as a paradigm of the subject in a 'state of suspended animation' while concurrently being an entity embedded within the modern process of engagement. Nonetheless, the analysis is not confined to Sloterdijk's texts. It is important to note that, from Husserl's own perspective, the transcendental reduction should produce the self-conscious, self-responsible and autonomous subject.

The following discussion will accentuate this ethical and ascetic meaning of transcendental reflection referring to Husserl's texts such as the *Crisis* and *Kaizo* articles. The second aim is to delineate the limitations of Sloterdijk's reading of phenomenology. I will show that, in contrast to Sloterdijk's perspective, the late period of Husserl's phenomenology cannot be regarded as a turn consisting in the negation of the transcendental, non-worldly subject. An alternative interpretation of phenomenology is offered. This interpretation highlights the ambiguous nature of the phenomenological subject. It posits that the necessity of enrooting transcendental truths in the sphere of the life-world, accentuated by Sloterdijk as a feature of late Husserl's phenomenology, is not the result of abolishing the previously established non-worldly subject. Rather, it is a continuation of the responsible attitude that is fundamental to both phenomenological investigations and philosophizing subject itself. The following argument will thus demonstrate that the previously mentioned ambiguity can be regarded as an indispensable condition of philosophical subjectivity. It will be shown that Sloterdijk's individualistic perspective does not fully account for the communal dimension in the phenomenological context.

The paper proceeds in three steps. First, I will reconstruct Sloterdijk's concept of anthropotechnics and his interpretation of modernity. In the first section, I will outline a framework for further considerations by describing concepts such as 'secession' and 'de-automatization'. In the second part, I will examine the application of Sloterdijk's anthropotechnics to Husserl's project. I will discuss Husserl's phenomenology as a position that renews the ascetic--performative character of philosophical reflection while remaining integrated into a modern, post-Enlightenment paradigm. In the final part of this section I will examine the interpretation according to which the equivocal structure of transcendental phenomenology is an intrinsic characteristic of the transcendental ego itself.

ANTHROPOTECHNICS — THE CREATION OF THE SELF IN THE ENCLAVE

In his analyses, Sloterdijk explores the possibility of forms of subjectivity by examining a wide range of human practices, starting with the ancient techniques of the self. In his well-known book *You Must Change Your Life*, Sloterdijk presents an exhaustive interpretation of human culture as the result of exercises. As a post-Nietzschean thinker, Sloterdijk conceptualizes human development as an artistic-acrobatic performance resulting in the creation of

a subject that shapes himself (Sloterdijk, 2013b: 34–35). He argues that the subject is an entity capable of actualizing the most improbable possibilities. Its existence is stretched between existent, ordinary practices and higher possibilities of self-creation that transcend them. Sloterdijk accentuates the vertical aspect of the human nature.

One of the key concepts that Sloterdijk uses to describe this ascetic performance is the concept of secession. He traces the methods of subject formation that arose in the Hellenistic schools and notes that the common strategy of these schools was withdrawal into the inner, independent sphere of the self. It is important to acknowledge that by 'inner sphere of the Self' Sloterdijk means not solely the introspectively accessible space of psychological experiences. Returning to the self in its original, premodern sense entails the practice of establishing the comprehensive realm of habits, experiences and ways of conducting one's life. The self-shaping individual is always entangled in a network of social, cultural or linguistic dependencies that he attempts to transcend. So, from an anthropotechnical perspective introspective self-knowledge is always preceded by a more fundamental auto-referential performance. While the first method is retrospective, the second has a primarily prospective sense. Subjectivity, interpreted through the lens of self-techniques, is the outcome of self--referential practice directed towards the future (Sloterdijk, 2013b: 243, 252).

Secession, as Sloterdijk puts it, is a form of returning to the self that results in the establishment of the self within the 'enclave'. It is a radical transformative act that must result in the separation of old habits and values from the newly established sphere of the subject. Sloterdijk claims that the secessionist subject is at perpetual war with the ordinary mode of existence. This 'crusade against the ordinary' (*ibidem*: 219–221) results in a radical and asymmetrical split between a small group of ascetic subjects and the rest of humanity that stays within the sphere of naïve, quotidian life. The first group is for Sloterdijk a laboratory that invents new forms of human self-interpretation that are then appropriated by a larger population. Thus, the very concept of humanity is, in his view, the product of small groups of individuals who have escaped their socio-psychological environment (*ibidem*: 224).

From a phenomenological perspective, it is crucial to note that in order to engage in a retreat to the self, the subject should first de-automatize his pre-existing habits. De-automatization, as described by Sloterdijk, is an act of setting up a radical distance between the old world and the new sphere of the subject's transformed life (*ibidem*: 404–405). However, for the ascetic subject, this is not an end in itself. The objective of de-automatization is to open up the possibility of new, desirable repetitions, and to form a wholly

new subject. The products of this secessionist difference can be real spaces such as monasteries and academies (*ibidem*: 221–222, 409), as well as the inner and individual sphere of the self-forming subject. However, for Sloterdijk, the latter sphere is a deeper stratum of the techniques of the self.

On the level of individual psychic life the act of secession is a form of self-acquisition that results in a distinction between two ontological spheres. The first sphere depends only on the subject's own powers and abilities, while the second encompasses everything that is external to the subject (*ibidem*: 224). Ascetic subjectivity is thus dedicated to becoming an autonomous, self-governing entity. Consequently, the secessionist gesture creates a surplus of self-reference within the practicing subject (*ibidem*: 227). Sloterdijk underscores the topological dimension of established individuality. Although particular variations may differ, every secessionist enters a space of higher, supra-ordinary existence unattainable for the general populace. Setting aside the scope and reliability of the philosopher's diagnosis, it is important to note that Sloterdijk describes this secessionist gesture as the matrix of every intellectual *epoché* (*ibidem*: 215, 439).

Although the comprehensive analysis presented by Sloterdijk is not solely limited to the philosophical transformation, the latter can be considered a significant episode in the history of Western conceptions of self-transforming subjectivity. In his book *The Art of Philosophy* Sloterdijk provides a more detailed account of the anthropotechnical significance of the philosophising subject. He interprets the history of Western philosophy as a process of developing a subject in a state of suspended animation. The philosophical method is therefore not, in essence, exclusively a tool for obtaining universal, irrefutable truth, but rather an exercise that produces subjectivity in a near-death state (Sloterdijk, 2012: 3, 6). The surplus of self-referential attitude provides philosophers with an honoured position that justifies their withdrawal from ordinary life (*ibidem*: 58). Philosophers create a higher, second-order community of contemplative subjects who are not attached to their ordinary environment (*ibidem*: 29). Sloterdijk describes the last few centuries of the history of philosophy as a gradual removal of the privileged position of the philosophical subject (*ibidem*: 85–95).

This last process is a part of the modern engagement of the population in all-encompassing mobilization. According to Sloterdijk, modernity can be seen as a process of the de-verticalization and collectivization of ascetic life (Sloterdijk, 2013b: 331, 371, 402–403). Through the creation of modern institutions such as factories, schools and prisons, Western societies have disseminated a model of the ascetic life. As a result, the ascetic routines have lost their elite

status and have become a means of governing populations. Modernity is therefore a movement that abolishes isolated, exceptional enclaves. Sloterdijk thus remains consistent with his individualistic interpretation of philosophy. In his view, modern transcendental philosophies, despite emphasising the importance of the first-person perspective, subordinate the individual to a rationally organised collective. Yet this movement was neither fully effective nor total. Sloterdijk explores Western cultural history to highlight the remnants of an independent, secessionist attitude. He cites thinkers such as Nietzsche (*ibidem*: 29–39), Wittgenstein (*ibidem*: 132–148), Rousseau (Sloterdijk, 2016) and others to underscore the secessionist nature of their thought. So, modern Western culture remains torn between refugial experiences of withdrawal and the intellectual and social process of abolishing the enclaves of the self.

The aforementioned tension between retreating into the self and modern engagement is a basic framework of Sloterdijk's interpretation of the modern history of philosophy. Transcendental phenomenology plays a significant role here. In *The Art of Philosophy* Sloterdijk offers an ambiguous interpretation of Husserl's thought. Two key points are worth underscoring. Firstly, Sloterdijk argues that transcendental phenomenology is a method that produces an observer who is uninvolved in worldly connections and interests. The *epoché*, as an act of 'stepping back' from the naïve natural attitude, creates a position that restores the contemplative *modus vivendi* (Sloterdijk, 2012: 16–17; 2013a: 83–84). It is thus interpreted as an act of secession from the external world. Secondly, Sloterdijk interprets the late period of Husserl's phenomenology as the abolition of the previously established non-worldly, contemplative perspective. According to Sloterdijk, beginning with the *Crisis*, Husserl's philosophy is an attempt to reintroduce the transcendental subject into the context of worldly interests and habits (Sloterdijk, 2012: 26–27). Ultimately, for Sloterdijk Husserl's phenomenology remains consistent with his interpretation of post-Kantian German idealism understood as an endeavour to involve a free and independent entity in the all-encompassing movement of modern mobilization (Sloterdijk, 2016: 39).

Sloterdijk's interpretation of phenomenology may appear oversimplified. He does not provide a detailed characterization of phenomenology as a kind of anthropotechnical exercise. At least three objections can be raised here. Firstly, Sloterdijk's interpretation of *epoché* and transcendental reduction does not satisfactorily explain the transformational potential of phenomenology. It is questionable whether transcendental reduction can be interpreted as a strategy of withdrawal into an 'inner citadel' (Sloterdijk, 2012: 22). From the very outset of his transcendental philosophy, Husserl's primary objective was not to

propose a set of completely private exercises of retreat to an inner citadel, but rather to establish a universal and rigorous science that would provide a foundation for all possible knowledge. Sloterdijk offers no detailed analysis of the relation between the secessionist aspect of the *epoché* and the universal objective of phenomenology. While for Sloterdijk the autonomy of the subject is the goal an end in itself, for Husserl it is a transcendental and ontological ground for universal and rigorous knowledge. The second objection is that Sloterdijk overlooks the radical novelty of Husserl's project. For Husserl, phenomenology was intended to be a groundbreaking theory that would explicate the proper meaning and significance of human reason. If phenomenological research results in a transformation of the subject at the psychosocial level, it is always a consequence of a more profound transcendental-eidetic inquiry. To present transcendental phenomenology as a mere reiteration of the naïve, natural technique of the self — without detailed discussion of the unique character of Husserl's phenomenology — is to risk dismissing its philosophical significance. The third objection is that Sloterdijk does not explain the significance of the change in Husserl's position between his early and late transcendental investigations. Husserl did not abandon his transcendental approach but rather radicalized it in the form of genetic investigations, revealing a deeper stratum of the constitutive function of transcendental subjectivity.

In the next section, I will address the aforementioned objections by underscoring three aspects of Husserl's late phenomenology. Firstly, drawing on the *Crisis* and the *Kaizo* articles, I will bring out the ethical dimension of transcendental phenomenology. Secondly, I will discuss a problem concerning the transformational potential of transcendental phenomenology. Thirdly, I will briefly present the problematic nature of the possibility of grounding the transcendental attitude in an everyday habitus. This argumentation will show the potential and the limitations of the interpretation of phenomenology as an anthropotechnical stance.

TRANSCENDENTAL PHENOMENOLOGY — TOWARDS A TRANSFORMATIVE DIMENSION OF THE TRANSCENDENTAL REDUCTION

Starting from his early text on the significance, method, and telos of transcendental phenomenology, Husserl insisted that truly philosophical investigations must effect a rigorous renewal of human autonomy. In *Philosophy as Rigorous Science* published in 1911, he claimed that philosophy enables a "life

regulated by pure rational norms" (Husserl, 1965: 71). His later writings stress even more strongly the irreducible vocation of the philosopher: to ground the very possibility of a self-governing human reason. In the *Crisis* Husserl states that the transcendental reduction is akin to a "religious conversion" (Husserl, 1970: 137). The transcendental reduction requires a transformation of the subject's life (Husserl, 2002: 394, 461). These claims may bring Husserl's thought close to Sloterdijk's anthropotechnical approach. Yet to assess the possible ethical and transformative meaning of phenomenology two aspects must be examined more closely. The first is the notion of the autonomy of philosophical reason. As philosophical research is undoubtedly motivated by the task of restoring universal and autonomous reason, to appreciate the ethical dimension of Husserl's philosophy, it is necessary to examine the phenomenological relation between autonomy and universality more closely. Given its rigorous epistemological aim, is it possible to equate the transcendental reduction, without misunderstanding, with a retreat into an 'inner citadel'? The second aspect concerns the scope of the transformation initiated by the transcendental reduction. How can the phenomenological reduction serve not only to grasp and explicate the conditions of knowledge, but also to effect a deep personal transformation of the subject?

According to Husserl, universal, all-encompassing reason does not have the static character of eternal truths given once and for all. Rather, it is a dimension of the infinite *telos* of humanity that permeates all intellectual human activity (Husserl, 1970: 275, 395). Autonomous reason has a primarily prospective sense. However, this prospective dimension of human life is not a normative rule imposed from outside, but a prescription that arises from conscious life itself. It is an intrinsic feature of the noetic structures of consciousness. The aim of transcendental philosophy is to explicate these hidden fundamental structures of conscious life. To restore a proper sense of the universal dimension of human life is to uncover and ground the rigorous meaning of the teleological character of humanity. This can only be done by means of the radical self-reflection of both the philosopher and humanity. Understood in this way, reason must have a guiding role in all human culture. To uncover the hidden and forgotten dimension of human rationality is to bear responsibility "for the true being of mankind" (*ibidem*: 17). As Joaquim Siles i Borràs (2010: 4–5, 172) argues, this responsibility for the teleological nature of reason motivated Husserl to radicalize his standpoint. The ethical dimension is an indispensable part of phenomenological investigations.

Husserl elaborates this ethical dimension of philosophy in the *Kaizo* articles, particularly in the article "Erneuerung als individualethisches Problem"

("Renewal as an individual ethical problem"). He states here that a human being, as a rational entity, has the ability to reflectively grasp the eidetic possibilities and norms of his life (Husserl, 1989: 23–24). Moreover, human beings are capable of consciously regulating their actions in accordance with rationally grounded norms. The eidetic laws of the subject's ethical life are not involuntarily imposed but rather may be voluntarily implemented. To clarify his conception of this voluntary nature, Husserl develops the concept of categorical imperative (*ibidem*: 36, 40–41). In contrast to his early investigations, the categorical imperative in Husserl's later writings is not solely a formal-normative law of human action (see Brudzińska, 2022: 39–40; Heffernan, 2022: 101; Donohoe, 2016: 127–135). Rather, living in accordance with the categorical imperative consists in radical devotion to realizing a higher form of existence. For Husserl ethics is a way of life. He states that man is both the object and the subject of his actions (Husserl, 1989: 37): ethical life has the character of a self-forming enterprise directed toward its own future realizations.

As an *animal rationale*, a human being should be entirely subject to the realization of an authentic form of existence grounded in the rational norms of conscious life. Due to the inherent imperfection of human capabilities, the complete actualization of the ideal of ethical perfection is an endless task. Husserl states that man is never fully rational, but can only strive to become rational (*ibidem*: 119). Consequently, the authentic form of existence requires constant self-education. Husserl describes this kind of life as "panmethodism" (*ibidem*: 39).

This brief overview of Husserl's conception of ethical life reveals several similarities with Sloterdijk's anthropotechnical approach discussed above. Three points of contact are particularly noteworthy. The first is the emphasis placed by Husserl on the self-formative aspect of human life. To become an authentic ethical entity, one must undertake an infinite process of continual self-shaping. This process is not limited to a single aspect of human existence but encompasses the entire sphere of practical, scientific and social attitudes. This last point leads to the second parallel between Husserl's phenomenology and anthropotechnics: the prospective and self-referential nature of the subject. Both Husserl and Sloterdijk interpret the subject's life as a project directed toward the realization of a new mode of existence in the future. Third, this ideal of self-shaping is guided by a heroic decision to embody a higher dimension of rational being (see: Cavallaro, 2022: 53–54). So for both Husserl and Sloterdijk, the cultural life of the subject is rooted in the possibility of the subject being oriented toward the vertical space of its own potential.

However, these three points of similarity are not yet sufficient to equate Sloterdijk's anthropotechnics with Husserl's phenomenology. To assess the possibility of an anthropotechnical interpretation of phenomenological thought, it is necessary to consider how the transcendental reduction might function as a method for achieving an ethical form of life. In other words, can the act of transcendental reduction be described as analogous to the secessionist strategy of the subject in the enclave? Can it be regarded as a form of de-automatization? Is the reflective stance in which the transcendental ego lives after performing the reduction a form of 'inner citadel'?

The *Kaizo* articles and Husserl's writings on the transcendental reduction provide preliminary answers to these questions. In the *Kaizo* articles, Husserl clarifies his notion of freedom (Husserl, 1989: 23–24). He states that human freedom consists in an original openness towards possibilities for one's own life. However, living in the anonymity of the natural attitude the subject is unaware of the constitutive role of his consciousness and thus unable to grasp the proper meaning of their own reason (Husserl, 1970: 111–114). Because philosophical thinking has a privileged insight into the sphere of eidetic possibilities, it is the highest form of human activity (Husserl, 1989: 73). So, the philosopher is able to recognize the authentic motives of his action at their deepest level. For Husserl, the theoretical approach toward reality is not limited exclusively to a particular realm of the world or the technical ability to transform nature. Human freedom consists in a critical, self-conscious openness to the possible rational realizations of one's own existence. Freedom in its highest form is therefore indispensable to the philosopher's attitude of self-responsibility.

This self-responsibility attains its deepest and fullest realization in the transcendental reduction (Husserl, 1969: 279). The *epoché* — as an act that is both introductory and indispensable to the transcendental reduction — is especially important here. It is through the *epoché* that the subject gains access to a fundamental dimension of self-understanding as a rational entity (Husserl, 1960: 21). It consists in bracketing the entire sphere of the natural attitude by suspending the thesis of the world's existence. By performing the *epoché*, the subject questions every thesis or claim to knowledge acquired within the natural attitude. However, this transcendental form of questioning does not entail a sceptical denial of the possibility of valid knowledge. It suspends the naïve acceptance of unexamined beliefs. In the transcendental attitude the phenomenologist cannot rely on any worldly knowledge or methods (Husserl, 2002: 90–91; 1983: 59–61). In *Cartesian Meditations* Husserl describes radical philosophy as a "withdrawal" and "overthrow" of all constituted sciences (Husserl, 1960: 2). On the same page, he declares that radical-reflective philosophy

is the most personal occupation of the philosopher, one initially resulting in a state of "absolute poverty" (*ibidem*: 2). Elsewhere, to describe the *epoché* Husserl employs terms such as: 'abstention', 'dislocation', 'unplugging' or 'exclusion' (Cohen & Moran, 2012: 110). Given this terminology, it is possible to draw parallels with Sloterdijk's vocabulary and so to interpret the *epoché* as a form of de-automatization. In order to enter the transcendental attitude, the transcendental ego — like the secessionist subject — must first break with old habits and presuppositions. Husserl explicitly extends the epistemological procedure of transcendental investigation to the entire sphere of human existence.

According to Husserl, the transcendental approach is a personal decision that transforms the whole sphere of life (Husserl, 2002: 100–101) by splitting it (*ibidem*: 11–12). The phenomenologising ego is divided into the natural self and the disinterested observer. The latter is a subject disengaged from worldly interests and tasks. This position of non-participation enables him to conduct a phenomenological and transcendental explication. As a result of the transcendental reduction, the world loses its absolute character and is considered a product of the constitutive activity of the transcendental ego. Yet the knowledge attained through phenomenological investigation remains valid for the philosopher even after the return to the natural attitude. It must therefore be appropriated and incorporated into the habitus of a subject's life. Husserl insists that the philosopher cannot forget the sense acquired in the transcendental attitude (*ibidem*: 101). The transcendental attitude therefore opens up the possibility of sedimentation at the personal, worldly level of the subject (see: Jacobs, 2017). The transcendental reduction reveals a surplus of self-referentiality that carries not only theoretical but also ethical significance. As Siles i Borràs states, "to practise phenomenology is to live an ethical life" (Siles i Borràs, 2010: 7). Taking into account these ethical implications, Husserl's phenomenology can be seen as resembling, at least to some extent, the act of establishing an enclave described by Sloterdijk.

However, the comparison should not be overdone. Firstly, it should be noted that, according to Husserl, the domain of phenomenological investigation is not restricted to the subject's individual sphere. Transcendental reflection is not a form of exercise that separates the realm of immanence from the external world. It would be a misunderstanding to regard it as an act of drawing strict borders between the self in the enclave and the outside world. The sphere of the transcendental ego embraces all conceivable reality, including the objects of perception, values, mathematical entities and the entire cultural domain. Accordingly, the *epoché* serves as a way of grasping the universal conditions of the possibility of human rationality. Secondly, it should

be noted that transcendental reduction is understandable in its proper sense only from within the transcendental domain. The phenomenologist, after attaining the transcendental level of inquiry, can retrospectively explain their decision to perform the reduction on proper transcendental grounds. To be considered rational in the transcendental sense, every technique, especially the technique of the self, has to be critically examined and grounded in transcendental structures. Insofar as phenomenology can be a transformative technique of the subject, its distinctive character lies in the self-examination of its epistemological, ontological and ethical dimensions. The vertical aspect of the phenomenological transformation of the subject can be understood properly only on the basis of the teleological structures of human reason disclosed by the phenomenologist. So, the ethical and transformational character of transcendental phenomenology is inseparable from its epistemological goal. Whereas the former has a prospective character, the latter is fundamentally retrospective. To separate the epistemological aspects of Husserl's phenomenology from its transformational potential is to dismiss its rigorous sense and radical philosophical novelty. Consequently, the transcendental reduction is never the private act of a philosopher escaping ordinary, naïve communities.

The difference between the transformational aspect of the *epoché* and Sloterdijk's notion of secessionist subjectivity reveals a deeper divergence between the standpoints we have been considering. According to Husserl, every valid instance of knowledge evokes the pure joy of cognition, which implies the possibility of sharing it with everyone who adopts a purely theoretical attitude (Husserl, 1989: 85). In this sense, phenomenology is a standpoint that is diametrically opposed to the attitude of self-satisfied asceticism, one that leaves the community far behind (see: Brudzińska, 2022: 40; Loidolt, 2022: 158–159). The main goal of transcendental reduction — however secessionist its form may appear — is the renewal of all human culture, not only of the subject trained in phenomenology. Husserl places strong emphasis on the unity of the personal and communal aspects of the phenomenological transformation (Husserl, 1989: 21–22). The teleological nature of human culture, disclosed through transcendental investigations, is meant to encompass all of humanity. Husserl's later work, in which he emphasizes the significance of the lifeworld, is not, as Sloterdijk claims, a reversal of his position, but rather an attempt to uncover the deeper structure of the transformation of both the subject and the European sciences. In other words, the same motives that enable the phenomenologist to perform the transcendental reduction and 'step back' from the natural attitude also lead him to universalize the achievements of transcendental investigations.

The analysis here enables us to identify the fundamental difference between Husserl's phenomenological and Sloterdijk's anthropotechnical approaches. Whereas Sloterdijk conceives of modernity as a process of abolishing enclaves in order to integrate ascetic subjects into the Enlightenment project, Husserl regards the act of returning to the self as compatible with the modern idea of progress. According to Husserl, modernity, by reducing the scientific activity to a technical appropriation of nature, fails to recognize the true meaning of the progress of the spirit (Husserl, 1970: 23–57). For Husserl, modern science, as initiated by Galileo, simultaneously reveals and conceals meaning (*ibidem*: 52). It is the goal of the philosopher to rediscover the true meaning of the constitutive nature of subjectivity by means of the transcendental reduction. Yet Husserl does not view the all-encompassing, modern mobilization as antithetical to the withdrawal of the transcendental philosopher. Husserl's transcendental phenomenology both reiterates the ancient Greek approach to philosophical transformation, as Cimino (2020) argues, and situates it within the context of modern philosophical thought.

For Sloterdijk, the dissemination of ascetic forms and ideals is a secondary consequence of the process of self-shaping. For Husserl, on the other hand, the universalisation of the achievements of transcendental investigation is intrinsic to their very meaning. Recognising the most fundamental structure of conscious life involves appropriating both an individual and a communal sense of rationality. Rather than insisting on a shift between the early and the late phases of Husserl's thought, as Sloterdijk does in *The Art of Philosophy*, it is more appropriate to interpret the tension between the pregiven natural world and the ascetic, secessionist aspect of transcendental reduction as a structural feature of transcendental investigations and the transcendental subject itself. That does not mean that the anthropotechnical approach proposed by Sloterdijk is fruitless. By emphasising the historical and psychosocial origins of Western techniques of the self, Sloterdijk's conception reveals an often--overlooked aspect of Husserlian thought.

CONCLUSIONS

The analysis in this article has revealed the possibility of interpreting Husserl's transcendental phenomenology through the lens of Sloterdijk's concept of anthropotechnics. It has been argued that phenomenological philosophy, like other techniques of the self, stems from the radical decision to re-evaluate human life. It is not, for Husserl, a mere ontological or epistemological

stance, but an enterprise that demands devotion to the realisation of a higher, more rational form of existence. We have argued that the *epoché* is similar in nature to Sloterdijk's notion of de-automatisation. Husserl's disinterested observer has also been interpreted as a figure to some extent similar to the self in the state of suspended animation as described by Sloterdijk. However, despite these similarities between Sloterdijk's anthropotechnics and Husserl's phenomenology, several differences prevent these two philosophies from being identified with each other. Firstly, Sloterdijk's interpretation of Husserl's phenomenology does not account for the self-grounding and self-reflective character of transcendental philosophy as a technique of the self. Secondly, Sloterdijk marginalises the communal aspect of phenomenology and philosophical self-formation itself. Finally, his interpretation of the shift between the early and the late periods of Husserl's thinking does not explain the role of the self-responsibility of the philosopher performing the *epoché*.

Despite these reservations, reading Husserl's thought through an anthropotechnical lens remains a promising research perspective. We are still far from fully exploring the consequences and anthropotechnical potential of both phenomenological and post-phenomenological thought. In this context, an especially important thinker is Eugen Fink who, in his *Sixth Cartesian Meditation* (Fink, 1995) radicalises Husserl's standpoint by raising questions about the radical novelty and transgressive meaning of phenomenology. More detailed analyses of the *epoché*, transcendental reduction or phenomenological investigations are still needed to bring out the often overlooked ethical and transformational potential of phenomenology. Given that Husserl's concept of philosophy as rigorous science was not implemented in line with the author's intentions, the emphasis on the personal transformation of the phenomenologising subject can serve as a point of departure for considering the possibility of transposing transcendental investigation into a natural, worldly discourse. In his analyses of the ancient techniques of the self, Hadot (2002: 3–4, 175–176) argues that every philosophy not only stems from the decision of devoting one's life to the realisation of the ideal of the philosopher but also retrospectively justifies this decision within rational discourse. In the light of our observations above, the comprehensive interpretation of phenomenology as a technique of the self should consider the philosophical transformation from both the transcendental, theoretical perspective and the socio-psychological point of view. Such a two-sided investigation of the transformational character of phenomenology would need to thematize how phenomenological discourse affects the lifeworld while itself constituting a form of transformational practice. Husserl's phenomenology as well as its post-phenomenological successors

provides invaluable tools for analysing a wide range of habitual, pedagogical, psychagogic, ethical and above all, ontological dimensions of the transformative potential of philosophy.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Brudzińska, J. (2022). Transcendental Anthropology and Existential Phenomenology of Happiness (pp. 31–44). In: M. Cavallaro, G. Heffernan (Eds.). *The Existential Husserl. A Collection of Critical Essays*. Cham: Springer.

Cavallaro, M. (2022). "I Want, Therefore I Can": Husserl's Phenomenology of Heroic Willing (pp. 45–63). In: M. Cavallaro, G. Heffernan (Eds.). *The Existential Husserl. A Collection of Critical Essays*. Cham: Springer.

Cimino, A. (2020). Phenomenology and Transformation: Platonic Motifs in Husserlian Phenomenology (pp. 49–62). In: L. Guidi, T. Rentsch (Eds.). *Phenomenology as Performative Exercise*. Leiden, Boston: Brill.

Cohen, J. & Moran, D. (2012). *The Husserl Dictionary*. New York: Continuum.

Donohoe, J. (2016). *Husserl on Ethics and Intersubjectivity. From Static to Genetic Phenomenology*. Toronto–Buffalo–London: University of Toronto Press.

Fink, E. (1995). *The Sixth Cartesian Meditation*. (R. Bruzina, Trans.). Bloomington, Indianapolis: Indiana University Press.

Foucault, M. (2005). *The Hermeneutics of the Subject. Lectures at the Collège de France, 1981–82*. (G. Burchell, Trans.). New York: Palgrave.

Hadot, P. (1995). *Philosophy as a Way of Life. Spiritual Exercises from Socrates to Foucault*. (M. Chase, Trans.). Malden, MA: Blackwell.

Hadot, P. (2002). *What is Ancient Philosophy?* (M. Chase, Trans.). Cambridge, London: Harvard University Press.

Heffernan, G. (2022). The Development of Husserl's Categorical Imperative: From Universal Ethical Legislation to Individual Existential Exhortation (pp. 87–114). In: M. Cavallaro, G. Heffernan (Eds.). *The Existential Husserl. A Collection of Critical Essays*. Cham: Springer.

Husserl, E. (1960). *Cartesian Meditations. An Introduction to Phenomenology*. (D. Cairns, Trans.). The Hague–Boston–London: Martinus Nijhoff Publishers.

Husserl, E. (1965). *Phenomenology and the Crisis of Philosophy*. (Q. Lauer, Trans.). New York–Evanston–London: Harper Torchbooks.

Husserl, E. (1969). *Formal and Transcendental Logic*. (D. Cairns, Trans.). The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff Publishers.

Husserl, E. (1970). *The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology. An Introduction to Phenomenological Philosophy*. (D. Carr, Trans.). Evanston: Northwestern University Press.

Husserl, E. (1983). *Ideas Pertaining to a Pure Phenomenology and to a Phenomenological Philosophy. First Book, General Introduction to a Pure Phenomenology*. (F. Kersten, Trans.). The Hague–Boston–London: Martinus Nijhoff Publishers.

Husserl, E. (1989). *Aufsätze und Vorträge (1922–1937), Husserliana XXVII*. Dordrecht–Boston–London: Kluwer Academic Publishers.

Husserl, E. (2002). *Zur phänomenologischen Reduktion. Texte aus dem Nachlass (1926–1935), Husserliana XXXIV*. Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers.

Jacobs, H. (2017). Phänomenologie als Lebensform? Husserl über phänomenologische Reflexion und die Transformation des Selbst (pp. 247–273). In: T. Jürgasch, T. Keiling (Eds.). *Anthropologie der Theorie*. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck.

Loidolt, S. (2022). Is Husserl's Later Ethics Existentialist? On the Primal Facticity of the Person and Husserl's "Existentialist Rationalism" (pp. 145–161). In: M. Cavallaro, G. Heffernan (Eds.). *The Existential Husserl. A Collection of Critical Essays*. Cham: Springer.

Siles i Borràs, J. (2010). *The Ethics of Husserl's Phenomenology. Responsibility and Ethical Life*. London–New York: Continuum Studies in Continental Philosophy.

Sloterdijk, P. (2012). *The Art of Philosophy. Wisdom as Practice*. (K. Margolis, Trans.). New York: Columbia University Press.

Sloterdijk, P. (2013a). *Philosophical Temperaments. From Plato to Foucault*. (T. Dunlap, Trans.). New York: Columbia University Press.

Sloterdijk, P. (2013b). *You Must Change Your Life. On Anthropotechnics*. (W. Hoban, Trans.). Cambridge, Malden: Polity Press.

Sloterdijk, P. (2016). *Stress and Freedom*. (W. Hoban, Trans.). Cambridge, Malden: Polity Press.