Community and Time: Being with Those No Longer There from Eduardo Nicol's Metaphysics

Comunidad y tiempo: estar con aquellos que ya no están desde la metafísica de Eduardo Nicol

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Abstract

This paper launches a groundbreaking exploration of how Eduardo Nicol's metaphysics paves the way for addressing the philosophical concern regarding the mode of being of those who are no longer alive. By engaging into a discussion of this topic which include contributions from Jan Patočka, Martin Heidegger, Emmanuel Lévinas or Jacques Derrida, Nicol's ideas are contextualized and integrated within this theoretical framework. Moreover, Nicol's insights into community and temporality are introduced as key elements for addressing the philosophical problem by highlighting his recovery of different trends underlying phenomenology and existentialism. As outlined, his ontology of intersubjectivity opens new avenues for overcoming Heidegger's

Resumen

Este artículo realiza una interpretación innovadora respecto a las formas en que la metafísica de Eduardo Nicol ofrece herramientas para abordar la problemática filosófica relativa al estatuto ontológico de aquellos que ya no están. A través de la reconstrucción de una discusión sobre este tema que incluye las aportaciones de Jan Patočka, Martin Heidegger, Emmanuel Lévinas o Jacques Derrida, revelaremos de qué manera las tesis de Nicol se pueden integrar en este marco teórico. Así, su lectura en torno a la comunidad y la temporalidad resultarán fundamentales para afrontar este problema filosófico, destacando su recuperación de diferentes tendencias subyacentes a la fenomenología y al existencialismo. Tal y como desarrollaremos, su ontología de la intersubjetividad abre nuevas vías

individuation of *Dasein* as derived from his understanding of *Sein-zum-Tode*. In the same way, Nicol's metaphysics of expression blurs the borders between past and present, illuminating the ontological grounds underlying the presence of those who are no longer alive.

Keywords:

Being-with-the-dead, Community, Eduardo Nicol, Phenomenology, Temporality.

para superar la individuación del *Dasein* de Heidegger, derivada de su concepción del *Sein-zum-Tode*. Del mismo modo, la metafísica de la expresión de Nicol difumina las fronteras entre pasado y presente, ofreciendo luz en torno a los fundamentos ontológicos que subyacen a la presencia de los que ya no están.

Palabras clave:

Ser-con-los-muertos, Comunidad, Eduardo Nicol, Fenomenología, temporalidad.

Introduction

This article is framed as a contemporary philosophical inquiry into phenomenological-ontological grounds of relations with dead others. This paper's discussion departs from Hans Ruin's insight (2018: 4) into what he coined as "being with the dead" (*Mitsein mit den Toten*), or as Ewa Domanska defined as "being-toward-the-dead-body" (2005: 398). Although his question seems unfamiliar with continental philosophical tradition, from Ruin's perspective, pretheoretical relations with those who are no longer alive could be considered a subtle concern underlying phenomenology and existentialism. Hence, this philosophical question can be summarized as follows: "How can we as phenomenologists, with our strict demands for staying with the things themselves in their immediateness, speak of something nonexistent and nonevidential without giving way to «metaphysical fiction»?" (Ruin, 2018: 15). After all, despite not being there, those who were loved ones and passed away have left deep traces, thereby remaining among the living. The dead are no longer, but as far as the living incorporate them, they are not nothing. For this reason, it is worth further delving into "in what form of being does the other continue to be" (Ruin, 2018: 16) beyond the ontological threshold identified with death. As Hans Ruin outlined, among the classic topics of contemporary phenomenology, this inquiry pervades an underlying concern introduced during the second half of the 20th century by Jan Patočka's essay "*Phénoménologie de la vie après la mort*" ("*Phenomenology of Life After Death*") (1995). In this text, the Czech philosopher systematically established the grounds of a phenomenological approach to dead others:

> The dead don't go away completely; the other lives on in us. It is, of course, only a precarious life, dependent on us —but a mere survival that lasts only as long as we ourselves live— a

trite, self-evident idea. It's worth noting, however, that no one has ever philosophically explored the question of how the other lives within us. Who is this other who survives? What mode of being does it have? (1995: 145)[1]

To Patočka, such problem is related to the experiences of mourning and grief (Schuback, 2011: 66). This concern paves the way for a philosophical analysis of the modes of being of those who are no longer alive, pervading the works of contemporary continental philosophers, including Martin Heidegger, Emmanuel Lévinas, and Jacques Derrida. This philosophical problem deeply questioned a basic assumption regarding the understanding of intersubjectivity: reciprocity, which is absent when dealing with dead others. As Colin Davis brings to the fore "the point is to explore the presence of what no longer exist" (2007: 19).

Undoubtedly, any approach on ontological grounds relating to and anticipating the dead could not take Heidegger's *Being and Time* as a touchstone. Nonetheless, his existential analysis of *Sein-zum-Tode* (being-toward-dead) has raised deep reluctance regarding its weaknesses when framing the mode of being of a dead other. Per different readings (Harrison, 2003; Hudson, 2017; Ruin 2018), according to Heidegger, an authentic (*eigentlich*) understanding of death requires reframing it as a personal possibility. This assumption bolsters the comprehension of how the passing of others intertwines with one's mortality. As Robert Pogue Harrison outlined, "To Heidegger, it is because no one else can die for me that my resolute being-toward-dead individuates me" (2003: 81). This process of individuation precludes any phenomenological analysis of the dead other since this experience does not interfere with authentic and personal relations

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1 The original versions of non-English references appear in the footnotes. "Le mort ne s'en va pas tout entière, l'autre continue à vivre en nous. Ce n'est, bien sûr, qu'une vie précaire, dépendante de nous – notre pan de l'immortalité, mais une simple survie qui ne dure qu'aussi longtemps que nous-mêmes vivons. Idée banale, d'une évidence qui va de soi. Il est cependant à noter que personne n'a approfondi de manière philosophique la question de savoir comment l'autre vit en nous. Qui est cet autre qui survit? Quel mode d'être a-t-il?". All translations of texts into English are the responsibility of the author.

with the death, as Heidegger posits. The personal relation to one's own death, as articulated through Heidegger's notion of *Sein-zum-Tode*, must be complemented by an emphasis on his insights regarding otherness and Being with the other. Indeed, the act of existing as a Being with others serves to foreground the ontological basis of the intertwinement between selfhood, alterity, and the communal structures to which *Dasein* belongs. As Heidegger states in *Being and Time*:

> If fateful *Dasein*, as Being-in-the-world, exist essentially in Being-with Others, its historizing is co-historizing and is determinative for it as *destiny*. This is how we designate the historizing of the community, of a people. Destiny is not something that puts itself together out of individual fates, any more than Being-with-one-another can be conceived as the occurring together of several subjects (1996: 436).

Despite the assumption that an authentic relation to death individualizes *Dasein*, Heidegger's reflections on the relation between *Dasein* and others suggest a profound entanglement between *Dasein's* possibilities and futurities and those of others. This gives rise to imbrications which evidence the presence of community participation with others. Such a community is not merely the aggregate of discrete individuals, but rather constitutes, in Heidegger's terms, a communal destiny. As Gregory Schufreider asserts: "The movement of a «sequence in time of events» occurs as «history» only then a people are drawn toward their allotted mission in an ecstatic transport, whisked away, as it were, and swung into joint, inserted into their endowment. Such an endowment is communal" (1981: 30). Consequently, the tensions underlying *Dasein's individualization* —arising from *Sein zum Tode*— in conjunction with Heidegger's insights on Being with others and community, illuminate the possibility of grounding one's relation to death in the very imbrications that bind *Dasein* to others.

Intending to overcome such weakness, Emmanuel Lévinas' works *Time and the Other* (1987) and *God, Dead, and Time* (2000) strove

to reframe an approach to the dead by illuminating how the other dead deeply affect the self. Hence, Lévinas sought an ontologically grounded insight into intersubjectivity, which went further than *Dasein's* solitude when dealing with one's mortality. According to Lévinas —as Cynthia Coe reframed it— "Heidegger's conception of dead leaves no room for alterity, in which projection and thrownness are still focused on the individual ego in the present" (Coe, 2018: 7). Thus, Heidegger's approach failed to grasp the radical intersection between *Dasein* and the other, which, to Lévinas, was even more radical than that derived from Heidegger's *Mitsein*. As Lévinas asserted, "The preposition *mit* is not which describes original relations with the other" (2000: 35). According to him, *Dasein's* anticipation of the dead is embedded within the emotional and theoretical aftermaths of experiencing deceased loved ones.

This critique of Heidegger's lacuna was also echoed by Jacques Derrida, who outlined in *Aporias* how "Heidegger suggests an ontological delimitation among the fields of inquiry concerning dead" (2000: 132; Sternad, 2015) that cannot stand due to the implications of experiencing the other's deadness. In his famous work *Specters of Marx* (2006)*,* Derrida's notions of "spectrality" planted a kernel to grasp the everlasting aftermath of the absence of those who were part of oneself. Such category provides a foundation for reframing ontology so as to address the following challenge: "what is the effectivity or the presence of a spectral, of what seems to remain as ineffective, virtual, insubstantial as a simulacrum?" (Derrida, 2006: 10). Moreover, opposing Heidegger's understanding of *Dasein's* inescapable individual mortality, Jacques Derrida outlined that the intersection between the living and the dead grounds the constitution of political and historical communities. As Jessica Auchter outlines, within Jacques Derrida's philosophy "ontology cannot be fully cleansed of spectrality" (2014: 18).

As outlined, this philosophical discussion —sketched in more detail by Ruin (2018), Harrison (2003), and Hudson (2017)— foregrounds the inquiry regarding the implications of the bonds that connect us to our loved ones when they are no longer there. This analysis establishes the basis for questioning, "What more can we

say about the mode of being-the-form of the presence of those no longer?" (Ruin, 2016: 63) in a discussion of intersubjective ties with those having-been, pervading Patočka's, Heidegger's, Lévinas', and Derrida's oeuvre. In this regard, two metaphysical problems intertwined with this philosophical inquiry cannot be glossed over: the question of intersubjectivity (how others pervade the identity of the self) and the problem of time (how present concerns are embedded in the past).

This paper echoes this contemporary philosophical discussion by exploring how these readings approach the mode of being of those who are no longer alive there, which may be enriched by incorporating the perspectives of an author not mentioned in these debates: Spanish Mexican philosopher Eduardo Nicol. Recent approaches to Nicol's philosophy have illuminated the potentiality of his metaphysics of expression when addressing the ontological roots of political communities. Nicol's philosophy is founded on the premise of obedience to a philosophical vocation that is conceptualized as a rigorous and universal science (Savignano, 2008: 303). The objective of this philosophy is to develop a comprehension of reality that resonates with the structural historicity of human beings. This approach is undertaken to address the crisis and challenges of contemporary times (Aguirre Moreno, 2003; Monfort Padres, 2025; Sánchez Cuervo & Iglesias Granda, 2023). From the perspective this paper endorses, Nicol's work on metaphysics of time and community as developed in his works *Historicismo y existencialismo* (*Historicism and Existentialism*, 1960), *Metafísica de la expresión* (*The Metaphysics of Expression*, 2003), *La idea de hombre* (*The Idea of Men*, 2013), and *Crítica de la razón simbólica* (*Critique of Symbolic Reason*, 1982) provide us with theoretical resources to engage this problem that has drawn the attention of philosophers mentioned above. By echoing this question, this paper aims to enrich the features of this philosophical inquiry by recuperating and contextualizing Nicol's insights into the problem to endorse it from new perspectives and angles. Hence, the forthcoming discussion follows this structure.

First, Nicol's conceptualization of intersubjectivity and community is overviewed to frame how the bond with others is prefigured.

Second, Nicol's understanding of temporality is addressed to ground the implications of past experiences and relations into personal and collective biographies, allowing for reframing the understanding of the modes of being of those who are no longer alive there stemming from Nicol's metaphysics. This interpretation provides new avenues for rethinking this philosophical problem via the perspective of an author's contribution not fully recognized in European philosophy.

Being and Otherness: On Community

Few would dispute that Eduardo Nicol's works are one of the priceless critical philosophical contributions from his Spanish exile in Mexico after the Spanish Civil War. Influenced by German intellectuals such as Wilhelm Dilthey, Edmund Husserl, and Martin Heidegger, Eduardo Nicol's philosophy provides a multifarious approach to classical questions of Western metaphysics to further explore contemporary challenges related to the role of technique in society, temporality, the dialogical constitution of communities, and the mode of being of those having-been. As a result, his "dialectic phenomenology" (González Valenzuela, 1981) underpins groundbreaking approaches to this philosophical problem. The basis of his philosophy can be addressed by endorsing different angles and perspectives. In this case, this paper's interpretation departs from his analysis of the ontological dependence between the self and the other to make the first step in grounding the bonds by which dead others remain after they depart.

Undoubtedly, Eduardo Nicol's philosophy on intersubjectivity evidenced Martin Heidegger's influence. As he acknowledged in *La vocación humana* (*Human Vocation*, 1953), "The concept of being-with [*Mitsein*] can be connected to our ideas on individuality and community" (1953: 307).[2] Nevertheless, the connections between Heidegger's concept of "Being with Others" and the notion of

2 "El concepto de ser-con [*Mitsein*] que utiliza Heidegger […] puede ponerse en conexión con nuestras ideas sobre la individualidad y la comunidad".

community, as asserted by Nicol, require careful nuance. While *Being and Time* emphasizes the interconnection with otherness as the ontological basis of intersubjectivity, the underpinning of a community involves an extensive preontic structure that points to a more profound dimension of *Dasein*. As Gregory Schufreid defends: "Community is not a mere conglomeration of a variety of individuals, any more than "a people" can be thought simply as the sum total of particular people" (1981: 32). There is, after all, a stronger and more complex relation between *Dasein*, community, and historicity — one that acquires new implications in Heidegger's later thought. For instance, his advocacy of the notion of Heimat in his essays on Hölderlin foregrounds the interconnections between *Dasein's* historical being and its relation to others in the following terms: "We are a conversation, that always means at the same time: we are a conversation… Both ——being a conversation and being historical—— are equally ancient, belong together and are the same" (Heidegger 1949: 302). As a result, Heidegger draws distinctions between intersubjectivity and community, which contrasts with Nicol's thesis that "co-presence is already a form of community" (2003: 144).

Nonetheless, at the core of Nicol's approach was his reluctance with Heidegger's *Mitsein* since the former strove to capture a stronger connection between selfhood and otherness beyond Heideggerian analysis. Such differences are located within Nicol's interpretation of the philosophical problems addressed in the first lines of *Being and Time*, which concerns about the emergence of the question of being. As Martin Heidegger defended,

> if the interpretation of being is to become a task, *Dasein* is not only the primary being to be interrogated; in addition to this it is the being that always already in its being is related to what is sought in this question. But then the question of being is nothing else than the radicalization of an essential tendency of being (1996: 15).

Contrary to this assumption, in *Historicismo y existencialismo* (*Historicism and Existentialism*), Nicol argued that the basis for questioning

being is not derived from an essential tendency of being, but in human necessities. As a result, a "pre-ontological understanding of being" is downgraded on behalf of the anthropological necessities of human beings. As Nicol argued, "Man cares about being so as to speak with and understand others" (1960: 121).[3] This appellation of relations with others by communicating at the basic level of ontology paved the way for capturing the underlying intertwinement between ontological considerations and otherness. Thus, according to Nicol's perspective, all modes of being highly depends on belonging to an ontological community built on dialogical relations.

This dependency was evidenced by Nicol's interpretation of human ontological precarity. From his perspective, the ontological grounds of human beings are defined by flaws and absences, by their own incompleteness. As asserted in *La vocación humana* (*Human Vocation*): "Man is the being who is never complete. Man's being precisely consists of always being incomplete" (1953: 36).[4] As a result, human relations with others through dialogue may be motivated by fulfilling this ontological gap. These insights underscore Nicol's thesis on expression derived from humans' ontological constitution. As asserted at the beginning of his *Metafísica de la expresión* (*Metaphysics of Expression*): "We express because of nostalgia and hope; nostalgia for our own being, for that part of our being that we don't have and hope of recovering it through dialogue" (2003: 18).[5]

This ontological grounding of dialogue foregrounded how Nicol's metaphysics reframed Heideggerian *Mitsein* so that the borders between selfhood and community blurred. Therefore, the other —with whom one participates in a dialogical community— becomes critical for fulfilling one's own being and biographical endeavor. As a result, by highlighting that otherness complements one's own being, fraternity, common understanding, and solidarity

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3 "Al hombre le importa el ser para hablar con los demás y entenderse con ellos".

4 "El hombre es el ser que no se completa nunca. Su ser consiste justamente en ser incompleto siempre".

5 "Expresamos por nostalgia y Esperanza. Nostalgia de nuestro propio ser, de esa parte de nuestro ser que no tenemos y esperanza de recuperarlo con el diálogo".

became touchstones of the intersubjective community for Nicol based on the dialogue he strove to sketch (Saavedra Martínez, 1999: 34). Hence, Nicol's rejection of *Dasein's* solitude derived from Heidegger's analysis of *Sein-zum-Tode* can be understood. In this regard, Nicol's critical view of Heidegger's reframing of death as the defining pole of human life highlighted the specificities of Nicol's approach to the question at stake. Assuming that a vital human project is endowed with sense inasmuch it anticipates its ending account for relinquishing any horizon of expectations, as expressed by Nicol in *La vocación humana* (*Human Vocation*):

> If all existence depends on the nothingness that is death, there is no existence, no form of life or form of being, that can boast a positive character. Nothing is worth anything. Nor is it worth anything, even that last presumably heroic gesture of sustaining ourselves in life in the knowledge that it is meaningless. Perhaps the Heideggerian anguish comes, as much as from death, from having to affirm and deny life at the same time. The solution is to find a constitutively affirmative element in being in that of man and his historical action. In other words, we will have to see if, alongside the vocation of death, there is not a vocation of life: if life itself is not essentially a vocation (1953: 39).[6]

This vocation of life entails a dialogical bond with others that does not fade because of anticipating death since "no one can die for me". Therefore, by reading Nicol's reluctance concerning *Dasein's* solitude stemming from Heidegger's *Sein-zum-Tode*, one can perceive how Nicol's ontological role of community paved the way

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6 "Si toda la existencia depende de la nada que es la muerte, no hay existencia alguna, forma de vida o forma de ser, que pueda presumir de un carácter positivo. Nada vale nada. Ni vale nada siquiera ese último gesto presumiblemente heroico de sostenernos en la vida a sabiendas de que carece en absoluto de sentido. Tal vez la angustia heideggeriana provenga, tanto como de la muerte, de tener que afirmar y negar la vida al mismo tiempo. La solución es encontrar en el ser —en el del hombre y en su acción histórica— un elemento constitutivamente afirmativo. En otras palabras: habrá que ver si, junto a la vocación de la muerte no hay una vocación de la vida: si la vida misma no es esencialmente vocación".

toward conceptualizing intersubjectivity to transcend temporal limits imposed by death. Hence, remarks on Nicol's insight into temporality are outlined to explore this question.

"Being is past": On temporality

Admittedly, previous considerations highlighted Nicol's ontology and anthropology by outlining how human life requires assuming that every single behavior, no matter how personal, is traversed by dialogical interchanges with others. Thus, human reason is embedded in dialogue, so everyone is, thinks and speaks as a community member. Nonetheless, from Nicol's perspective, such a relation of belonging is not restricted to the community with whom dialogues presently occur but extends to those preceding us. As Nicol asserted in *La idea de hombre* (*The Idea of Man*), "Community with the past is dialogical as well" (2013: 31).[7] As a result, the intersubjective constitution of every subject is not restricted to face-to-face interaction through dialogue, but "consciousness between the other and the self is accentuated when the ancestors are included".[8] Undoubtedly, underlying these assumptions regarding a dialogical interchange with those preceding us is a conceptualization of history and temporality where the borders between the past and present blur. In this regard, at the core of Nicol's *Metafísica de la expresión* (*Metaphysics of Expression*) lies a groundbreaking theory on history and temporality, summarized as follows: "The utterance that the man is historical in his very being means that man not only has past but that he is this past. He belongs to the past" (2003: 141).[9]

By echoing Heidegger's analysis of *Dasein* through its *Geschichtlichkeit* and *Zeitlichkeit*, Nicol emphasized that humans lack an

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7 "La comunidad con el pasado también es dialógica".

8 "La conciencia entre el tú y el yo se acentúa cuando se incluyen en ella los antepasados".

9 "La afirmación de que el hombre es histórico en su ser mismo significa que el hombre no sólo tiene pasado, sino que es su pasado. El pasado lo tiene a él".

essence scholastically. Their ontological substratum is nothing else than what they display through different temporal instances. Thus, a human is "a temporal being which changes in its own being with the changing of its creations" (2003: 141).[10] Nonetheless, the everlasting removal and actualization of historical conditions underlying the ontological background of humans does not account for personal identities defined by gaps and discontinuities (González, 1988). On the contrary, a common thread underpins personal and collective biographies from Nicol's perspective, thereby tying together different stages of human life. Nicol identified this thread with temporality: "the core of being itself" (Nicol, 2003: 128).[11] As a result, past circumstances that became part of the self did not fade as time passed but remained integral to the present identity. Furthermore, the philosophy of Nicol posits a reciprocal relationship between the past and the present. As previously stated, the contemporary moment can be designated as a period of inheritance from the events that have transpired. However, it is important to acknowledge that the configuration of historical past is inherently dependent on the selective gaze projected from every present. This insight provides a valuable perspective on the extent to which Nicol's metaphysics reframed the conceptualization of history and historiography. The act of reading, comprehending and interpreting the past is invariably accompanied by a specific form of retrospection, from which the concept of a historical past being deemed to be fully living emanates.

The following idea outlined in *El porvenir de la filosofía* (*The Future of Philosophy*) grasps how temporality underlies ontology as reframed by Nicol's philosophy. Accordingly, the ontological condition of the human lies in the fact that "its being is empowered to actualize anew that being of its own that has ceased to be, and thus retain it while maintaining cohesion through the memory of the past" (1972: 104).[12] Therefore, by pervasively leaving their traces, past experiences tend

10 "Ser temporal que cambia en su ser mismo con el cambio de sus creaciones".

11 "La entraña del ser mismo".

12 "Su ser está facultado para actualizar de nuevo ese ser propio que ya dejó de ser, y así lo retiene manteniendo la cohesión por el recuerdo de ese pasado".

to refigure the constitution of subjective temporality, which always depends on the recovery and actualization of what has happened and is no longer there. Thus, pastne*s*s is the touchstone of the organization's underlying relationships between different temporal layers. Every course of action that displays human freedom and the ability to perform something new requires assuming a legacy inherited from those who preceded us. As outlined in Nicol's *Psicología de las situaciones vitales* (*Psychology of Life Situations*), "Each presence of the self contains its past and, therefore, its possibility of a future" (2000: 42).[13] Hence, every "today" evidences the everlasting presence of "yesterday" so that the borders between past and present tend to collapse. As a result, temporality is reframed by its ambiguity related to the past: the latter is gone yet pervades the present.

This dynamic accounts for a particular understanding of the grounds of metaphysics, asserting that "being has ontological memory" (Nicol, 2003: 15).[14] To Nicol, what happened will never come back, although it remains as a trace, memory, or mark, a hallmark for new actions toward the future. Therefore, Nicol's ontology of temporality emphasizes how different time layers revolve around an everlasting past. As outlined in *La reforma de la filosofía* (*The Reform of Philosophy*): "The future comes forward in the present because the present has not broken its connection with the past: it retains it" (1980: 41).[15] This thesis does not posit the notion that every occurrence is perpetually preserved and stored within the realm of ontological memory. Conversely, the act of recollection, akin to the study of history, is inherently selective in nature. Therefore, depending on the retrospective perspective adopted, the interpretation of what became part of the everlasting past may vary.

This background reframes the implications endowed to the fading of the past as the years pass. Similarly, if contemporaneity cannot cancel or neutralize the past from which it came, the historical

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13 "Cada presencia del yo contiene su pasado y, por tanto, su posibilidad de porvenir".

14 "El ser tiene memoria ontológica".

15   "El futuro se adelanta en el presente, porque este no ha roto su conexión con el pasado: lo retiene".

experience of death cannot be conceptualized as a definitive end or a mere annihilation of what is no longer. On the contrary, per Nicol's ontological framework, death can neither be reframed as an individual experience nor defined as accounting for removing what is gone. The intersubjective and diachronic bonds that tie together a community along time and space ensure that death remains transfigured into a legacy that continues pervading historical lives. As outlined in *El porvenir de la filosofía* (*The Future of Philosophy*), "There is no death but transfiguration of what the past bequeaths us" (1972: 158).[16] The transformation of the past is influenced not only by the historical legacy and consequences of recent events, but also by the way memory is recovered and represented by history. As a result, human historicity and temporality reframe understanding death prefigured as the source of a new inheritance that forthcoming generations will keep alive. Such an event cannot be reduced to an experience that individuates *Dasein* since it is part of the historical roots of a communitarian process that grounds how the deceased remain. Indeed, dialogical relations with our contemporaries constitute individual and collective identities, including our ancestors, giving rise to "shared commitment across time" (Ruin, 2018: 35). As derived from this reading, Nicol's metaphysics paved the way toward conceptualizing modes of being of those who participated in dialogical relations but are no longer there.

Being with those who are no longer

This reading on Nicol's insights regarding community and temporality emphasizes how the ontological grounds of humans rely on multifarious intersubjective relations encompassing different topographies and periods. This net of interactions becomes a cluster for the subject's identity so that individual consciousness is embedded within it. Hence, nothing can be conceived apart from otherness, regardless of whether such alterity is contemporaneous. Consequently,

16 "No hay muerte, sino transfiguración de lo que nos lega el pasado".

Nicol's reading of intersubjectivity endorses a perspective on personal biographies unconstrained by the horizon of one's inevitable passing away. Therefore, Nicol's narrow view of Heidegger's approach is transcended by utilizing previous theses on community and temporality. As derived from Nicol's philosophy, dialogical relations with others offer a ground to rethink human lives and time beyond mortality. As Nicol outlined in *Psicología de las situaciones vitales* (*Psychology of Life Situations*), "I know that my future has a limit". However, "life requests more life" (2000: 67),[17] provided by the bonds shared with others.

Nonetheless, Nicol's most groundbreaking contribution when rethinking the limits imposed by the anticipation of death does not rely on framing the future but the past; more specifically, exploring how these constitutive relations with others continue beyond the ontological threshold of their passing away. This contribution provides a metaphysical framework for further investigating the mode of being of those who are no longer. By taking Nicol's *Psicología de las situaciones vitales* (*Psychology of Life Situations*) as a reference, an underlying dialectic emerges between presence and absence, which the Spanish philosopher considered to underlie the collective experience of dealing with the passing away of his members. Per Nicol, "Death closes a present reality: it is the definitive absence. However, that absence of the living is an experience of those still present, who keep them alive" (2000: 48).[18] Against the backdrop of prefiguring death as total annihilation of the self, different social practices such as mourning or remembrance strive to keep the deceased among us so that they cannot be considered totally gone. Such insights engage with what Hans Ruin defined as a "phenomenology of the grave" (2016). As the Swedish philosopher outlined, mortuary practices provide an ontological threshold addressing how caring for deceased ones preserves them:

17 "La vida pide más vida".

18 "La muerte clausura una realidad presente: es la ausencia definitiva. Pero esa ausencia del vivo es una experiencia de los que siguen presentes: de los que lo mantienen con vida".

The mourners are still with the other, in the mode of care that is characteristic of being with others and not the kind of care we devote to objects. A corpse is not taken care of in the same way as a lifeless artifact. People continue to be with them in a world that continues to give meaning and significance to our peculiar mode of being with those no longer there (Ruin, 2015: 134).

Indeed, the continuity of "living with them" is when Nicol's philosophy comes to the fore. According to his metaphysics of community, dialogue and symbols are key to this process. The deceased survive through dialogical relations that strive to provide them the space to be present. As Nicol argued, "We said that he or she is dead because we want to hold it back" (2013: 41).[19] Through language and dialogue, "We provide a present state to which has none" (2013: 42).[20] To Nicol's perspective, language and dialogue thus become the basic ways in which dead others live their "precarious live, dependent on us", in Jan Patočka words (1995: 145). In accordance with the assumptions posited by Nicol's *Metaphysics of Expression*, the deceased continue to exist in the present through their symbolic permanence. As Nicol asserts, "expression is communicating being" (2003: 137), there are indications of the embedding of those that came before within human communication and community, underlying their ontological background. It is evident that this insight may potentially serve to diminish the prevalence of the deceased, thereby reducing their memory to a state of preservation by the living. Nevertheless, this simplification does not directly result from Nicol's endeavor to ground those who have been. Nicol's insight, that "presence of the past is one of the main features of the present" (2003: 137), sheds light on the tension between the dead being dependent on how the living maintain their memory and the figure of alterity embodied by the non-living. In this regard, the pull and the push underlying the tension between the presence and absence of those who are no longer alive reach their logical conclusion via Nicol's inquiry

19 "Decimos que está muerto porque queremos retenerlo".

20 "Damos un estado presente a lo que no lo tiene".

into the ontological grounding of corpses. This insight should be contextualized within Nicol's philosophical analysis of expression as a key notion of his metaphysics expressed in *Metafísica de la expresión* (*The Metaphysics of Expression*, 2003) and *Crítica de la razón simbólica* (*Critique of Symbolic Reason*, 1982). In these works, the Spanish philosopher inquired further into the extent to which "being" cannot be reframed as an underlying substance beneath our experience and the symbols we resort to for expressing it. By evidencing certain similarities with Jean-Paul Sartre's metaphysical assumption according to which "being is reduced to the series of its manifestations" (Sartre: 2020: 13), Nicol built his ontology on identifying being and its expression through its manifestations — human language. Therefore, inquiring further into the metaphysical underpinnings beneath the surface experience is pointless. On the contrary, according to Nicol's perspective, being is only what is displayed through experience. Admittedly, this assumption accounts for the emergence of a question concerning the problem at stake: In what sense are those who are no longer present still present? In this regard, from Nicol's assumptions on temporality, being embedded in expression cannot be reduced to contemporaneity but must retain what was displayed before, particularly evidenced by Nicol's insights into corpses. According to Nicol, although the person is gone

> The corpse will be like an echo of presence, and for this reason we call the one who died "the absent one", and we call the corpse "mortal remains". The survival of human beings after death is the object of vital desire and belief, and this is confirmed by the separate persistence of the body, of the mortal remains, which is what evokes absence (2003: 147).[21]

21 "El cadáver será como un eco de la presencia, y por esto al que murió lo llamamos «el ausente», y el cadáver lo llamamos «resto mortal». La pervivencia del ser humano después de la muerte es objeto de deseo vital y de creencia, y ésta que darla confirmada por la persistencia separada del cuerpo, del resto mortal, que es el que evoca la ausencia".

By resorting to the notion of an "echo", Nicol emphasized the reverberance and pervasiveness of the past's intersubjective relations within forthcoming generations. In this regard, there is a deep connection between corpses and pastness. As Ewa Domanska outlines: "the disappeared body is a paradigm of the past in itself […] both continue with the present and discontinues from it" (2005: 404). From Nicol's perspective, a corpse's expressiveness is derived from previous relations and interpersonal bonds stemming from their traces as artifacts, bodies to mourn, and memories to remember. Nicol evidenced this conceptual challenge: "Explain the constitution of we when there is no community of actuality, when expressive acts are not integrated into a common now" (2013: 141).[22]

Hence, understanding the basis for this ontological community encompassing different times and generations paves the way toward participating in a dialogical relationship with those who came before. As Nicol outlined in *Crítica de la razón simbólica* (*Critique of the Symbolic Reason*), "How is it possible to keep a dialogue with those who are no longer?" (1982: 376)[23] Nicol's reframing of temporality enables these relations due to the everlasting traces of the past traversing the present. Providing that, as highlighted before, "being is past", this ontological assumption provides the grounds to underscore the mode of being of those who belonged to the past and, thereby, the present.

The application of Nicol's metaphysics to philosophical reflection on the problem at hand gives rise to a number of highly relevant questions. Firstly, Nicol's theory of temporality establishes the trace of the other in the present community. Secondly, the theory of expression reflects the extent to which those who have passed away continue to exist within our symbolic relationships. This phenomenon gives rise to a further challenge, namely the ontological dependence of those who are no longer with us on those who remember

22 "Explicar la constitución de un nosotros cuando no existe la comunidad de actualidad, cuando los actos expresivos no se integran en un ahora común".

23 "¿Cómo es posible dialogar con los que dejaron de ser?".

them. This, in turn, reflects the fragility of their own ontological background.

Consequently, the intertwinement between Nicol's ontology of communities and his theory on temporality, blurring the borders between the past and present, provides priceless theoretical resources to address the philosophical problem introduced by Patočka's "*Phénoménologie de la vie après la mort*" ("*Phenomenology of Life After Death*"). Utilizing his reading and critique of existentialist and phenomenologist intellectual trends, Nicol's encroachment on intersubjectivity and time frames those who went before as a subtle and everlasting reality that has always survived through their aftermaths. Regardless of their absence, they are still present insofar as the understanding of "being present" is reshaped by Nicol's metaphysics, as previously outlined.

Final considerations

Despite providing one of the most original reframing of metaphysics at the core of the second half of the 20th century, Eduardo Nicol's contributions have not been integrated and contextualized within European contemporary philosophical tradition. For reasons such as his exile after the Spanish Civil War, the absence of translations of his work into different European languages, and the difficulties in accessing his pieces outside Mexico or Spain, these contributions are still to be recovered and projected into the academic space and into the dialogue with classic or subtle topics stemming from phenomenological traditions. Hence, this paper sought to fill this gap by engaging his phenomenological metaphysics with a subtle concern underlying contemporary phenomenology and existentialism. As outlined, understanding the multifarious ways in which dead others remain can be enriched by Nicol's reframing of the ontological grounds of community and temporality.

Different from Lévinas' and Derrida's cases, Nicol's critical dialogue with Heidegger's inquiring on *Sein-zum-Tode* set the stage for further steps towards communitarian bonds, providing avenues to

avoid framing death as accounting for the fading of the future horizon. In the same way, the reshaping of the relations between past and present gives rise to a metaphysical space underlying the links between the living and dead beyond the threshold of the latter's passing away. Therefore, is possible to include Nicol's metaphysics in within the different approaches that address the recent philosophical challenge outlined by Patočka. In the same way as Lévinas' "otherness" and Derrida's "specters", Nicol's ontological community, encompassing different times and generations, provides a groundbreaking foundation to rethink the modes of being of those who are no longer alive.

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