Ivan Chvatík
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Editors

Contributions to Phenomenology 61

Jan Patočka and the Heritage of Phenomenology

Centenary Papers

Springer

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CONTRIBUTIONS TO PHENOMENOLOGY

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JAN PATOČKA AND THE HERITAGE OF PHENOMENOLOGY

Centenary Papers

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Editors' Introduction

Jan Patočka, a respected name in Continental philosophy, though less well-known in the English-speaking world, was, with Eugen Fink and Ludwig Landgrebe, one of the key figures in the small, yet – for the phenomenological movement – extremely important group of Edmund Husserl's last direct pupils. He met Husserl for the first time in Paris, where he spent the entire schoolyear 1928–1929 on a graduate scholarship and had the fortunate opportunity to attend, at the Sorbonne, the *Pariser Vorträge* (better known under the title of *Cartesian Meditations*), fascinated, in his own words, "to see this meditation unfold, impervious to the public eye, as if the philosopher were himself at Descartes' hearth, further developing his themes." When he subsequently won a Humboldt-Foundation stipend, it was clear that, far from staying in Berlin where he had been assigned, he would let nothing keep him from rejoining Husserl in Freiburg. The old master greeted him warmly as a fellow countryman – Husserl's native Prostějov (Prossnitz) was and still is part of the same country as Turnov, where Patočka was born in 1907, or Prague, where he was to live out his life. As a matter of fact, he was at the time the one and only countryman of Husserl's to show a serious interest in phenomenology.

The impressions and experiences from the months the young Patočka spent in Germany, in 1932–1933, were without a doubt decisive for the future path of his thought. In Berlin, he not only witnessed Hitler's *coup d'état* (a shock he was later to speak of as the beginning of his political awakening), but engaged in a fruitful friendship with Jacob Klein (the reader will find in the following pages a detailed account of the importance of this relation for Patočka's understanding of Plato, and one could say the same for Aristotle). Klein was also instrumental in recommending insistently that Patočka not concentrate solely on the study of Husserl's phenomenology, but apply equal attention to the thinking of his one-time assistant Martin Heidegger – despite Heidegger's later severe criticism of Husserl and his eminently criticizable political stance. Patočka was given the same advice by Husserl's then assistant, Eugen Fink. In Freiburg, where he was an eye-witness to Heidegger's infamous Nazi rectorship of the university, Patočka was also initiated, with the help of Fink, his elder by a mere two years, into the deepest of philosophical issues which – as he was already then beginning to understand – lay hidden in the gaping abyss between Husserl's phenomenology and what Heidegger had made out of it. To delve into these obscure depths or, eventually, to bridge the gap – such

was the task Patočka appears to have taken up even then. And, as the reader will see while following the many different paths along which the contributors to this volume explore and probe into his thought, he will perhaps have succeeded at least in indicating that this in-between is indeed the space worth diving into, if one is to come closer "to things themselves" than Husserl himself ever managed and let phenomena shine forth at once in their apparentness and their historicity, consistently grasped and interpreted as a matter, not only of the "history of Being," but, to no less an extent, of that of mankind.

Patočka's experience with the dramatic and tragic times in which his destiny placed him was quite clearly of primary importance for his succeeding in linking phenomenological questions and questioning with the field of the philosophy of history, as well as in his later becoming himself a pivotal figure in contemporary Czech history. To get back to the 1930s, at the time when he was writing the habilitation thesis he was to publish in 1936 on the Husserlian theme of the life-world (*The Natural World as a Philosophical Problem*), Patočka was instrumental in organizing the visit to Prague during which Husserl presented, in November 1935, one of the first drafts of his posthumously published work *The Crisis of the European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology.* Shortly thereafter, when it became clear that Nazi authorities were not willing to allow Husserl and his assistants to work undisturbed on the transcribing and editing of his manuscripts in Germany, Patočka endeavored to secure their transfer to Czechoslovakia. Ludwig Landgrebe was thus able to prepare the first volume of the proposed Collected Works of Edmund Husserl (*Erfahrung und Urteil*), but when the book came off the press in Prague, in March 1939, Hitler's troops were already marching into town. Nearly the whole edition was destroyed by the Nazi occupiers who, eight months later, also closed all Czech universities for the duration of the war. During the Occupation years, Patočka lived as a secondary school teacher and was later mobilized as a laborer, while never ceasing to work simultaneously on several ambitious philosophical projects (among them, already, a philosophy of history). All remained unfinished at the end of the war, when their author chose rather to invest his energy into his teaching at Charles University. During the short interlude of freedom before the February 1948 "Prague coup" ushered in yet another – this time Stalinistic Communist – totalitarian regime and Patočka was forced out of academe, he lectured mainly on the history of philosophy, with courses on the Pre-Socratics, Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle. He was to wait twenty years – sidelined into editing the work of the great late Renaissance philosopher Comenius, and becoming by the way a leading figure of world Comeniology – before being called back to Charles University thanks to the political liberalization of the so-called Prague Spring. In the meantime, he had published in 1964 his second and last book to appear in a normal way: the collection of essays on *Aristotle, his Forerunners and Successors*, for which he was awarded the highest postdoctoral degree of the Academy of Sciences. (A third slender volume – the collection of more politically-minded essays *For the Meaning of Today* – was to be printed in 1969, then censored and pulped before it ever got to the bookshops.) With widening publishing possibilities at home and abroad in the second half of the 1960s, Patočka also continued working on the original revision of phenomenology

dealt with in Part II of this volume. These reflections nourished his teaching when, at age 61, he was finally awarded tenure as professor at Charles University. His appointment was, however, officialized only in the autumn of 1968, i.e., over two months *after* Czechoslovakia had once again been occupied – by the armed forces of its Warsaw Pact allies. After a mere four years of teaching, Jan Patočka was forcefully pensioned on reaching age 65, left with only a, so to speak, private engagement with the participants of the half-illegal seminars held in his own apartment or at the homes of students, friends and well-wishers. In the darkest days of the 1970s "normalization" period he nonetheless kept working, as he wrote to a French friend in 1975, "harder than ever" on his main subjects. His last and most translated major work, the *Heretical Essays in the Philosophy of History*, was published in a totally illegal samizdat edition less than two years before his life reached its climax and end, when – following through with the ideas of freedom and responsibility which draw an unbroken line of force through forty years' thinking, teaching, and writing – he became, alongside future Czech President Václav Havel, one of the three initial spokespersons for the dissident civic initiative movement Charter 77.

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This volume is a collection of papers presented in Prague at a conference held in April 2007, conjointly by Charles University and the Czech Academy of Sciences, to commemorate the centenary of Patočka's birth and the thirtieth anniversary of his death. Scholars from around the world assembled then in the Czech capital to explore the significance of Patočka's writings for contemporary philosophy. The conference showed that Jan Patočka's many-faceted thoughtful legacy has truly something to say to the world at large, and that the way in which it addresses basic questions of human existence in general, and the condition of modern man in particular, remains acutely actual.

From the thirty contributions presented at the conference (the complete proceedings of which are scheduled to appear simultaneously in Czech translation)[1] we have attempted to select a smaller number covering, in as broad a spectrum as possible, the whole of Patočka's work. The authors represented here include both scholars and politicians, philosophers and sociologists, Patočka's direct disciples and fellow dissidents as well as younger people with backgrounds stemming from or bridging fifteen different countries and five continents (the Old World coming together with the New and the still newer "post-European world" dealt with in some of Patočka's last important texts). Although no predefined guidelines were given to the participants, their contributions divide up naturally into three large transthematic fields defining the articulation of the final selection which is reflected in vignette form in Václav Havel's opening speech, chosen to serve as preface.

[1] Ivan Chvatík (ed.), *Myšlení Jana Patočky očima dnešní filosofie* [The Thought of Jan Patočka in the Eyes of Philosophy Today] (Praha: Oikoymenh/Filosofia, 2010).

In Part I, the reader will thus find papers mapping out Patočka's rootedness in philosophy's near and distant past: above all his dialogue with the thought and methods developed by his immediate predecessors, Husserl and Heidegger, but also the constant reflection on Plato (and, between the lines, Aristotle and Kant) which is never solely exegetical, drawing rather on the history of philosophy in order to revisit and go beyond classical phenomenology while grappling already in the 1950s with some of the same extremely contemporary problems with which French phenomenologists in particular (Levinas, Ricœur, Derrida, Marion) have been and remain concerned up through the present day. The four texts assembled here draw the major lines of force which point to Part II, defined by the two poles of negative Platonism and asubjective phenomenology (in what one could call, with Ricœur in 1997, an elliptical movement, overlapping with that he himself discerned in Patočka's life work between the phenomenology of the natural world and the question of the meaning of history). We have placed here the contributions dealing more specifically with Patočka's revisited concept of phenomenology and the ways in which it inspires today's philosophers, in such varied domains as cognitive science, the theory of translation, or phenomenological sociology. The third and final section (sharing – next to politics, history, ethics, and religion – part of its title with the 2007 special issue of the Romanian journal *Studia phaenomenologica*, entirely devoted to Patočka, which set the stage for the Prague conference) proves that Patočka never lost sight of what he formulated as early as the first half of the 1930s, namely, that philosophy is not merely one more specialized discipline among others, but something entirely different: "Among human possibilities is the capacity to know *the world* (not individual things, but 'the whole'),"[2] in which we human beings exist as "thrown freedom": "all the possibilities of freedom spring out of that in which we are placed by mankind's past, all are codetermined by what has been."[3] That is to say that philosophy cannot afford to concentrate exclusively on highly abstract "ontological" research; its task is, on the contrary, to attempt to understand what human freedom and history are all about. "Understanding our freedom means" – of course – "grasping it in a historical situation."[4] In short,

> … what, in the last instance, philosophy calls for is a heroic man. That is philosophy's human message. Heroism is not a blind passion, love or revenge, ambition or will to power. Rather, it implies a calm clarity concerning the whole of life, an awareness that this way of acting is *for me* a necessity, the sole possible way for me to exist in the world. The hero's being in the world, here and now, does not await its confirmation and continuation in a world beyond. Heroism accepts its own finitude. It is nothing other than the conclusive

[2] Jan Patočka, "Some Comments concerning the Extramundane and Mundane Position of Philosophy" [1934], in *Living in Problematicity*, ed. E. Manton, transl. E. Kohák and E. Manton (Prague: Oikoymenh, 2007), p. 19.

[3] Jan Patočka, "Několik poznámek k pojmům dějin a dějepisu" [1934], in *Sebrané spisy*, sv. 1, *Péče o duši I*, ed. I. Chvatík and P. Kouba (Praha: Oikoymenh, 1996), pp. 43–44; see French translation: "Quelques remarques sur les concepts d'histoire et d'historiographie," in *L'Europe après l'Europe*, ed. and transl. E. Abrams (Lagrasse: Verdier, 2007), p. 151.

[4] Ibid., p. 44/152 (Czech/French).

> certifying of its own substance, irreducible to the mere circumstances of the world's crossroads. Philosophy can then cleanse the heroic man's self-understanding, make him comprehend his faith, not as the revelation of something transcendent, but as a free human act. What appears in this faith is no transcendent divine commandment, but the principle of man standing in a historical situation. The understanding of Being which philosophy arrives at when intellectually exceeding the world is thus linked with man's authentic existence as represented by the free act; so we might, perhaps, express the ideal of a consummate philosophy as that of a philosophy of heroism and a heroism of philosophy.[5]

So the lines of force drawn through the first two sections lead logically into the third and find there their climax, be it in scholars' and politicians' reflections on Patočka's personal engagement in politics and his death, be it in his project of philosophy of history, his concept of religion, or the (at first glance) more marginal excursions evoking the significance of his thought for comparative analysis of civilizations or intercultural dialogue. Their thematic criss-crossing is summed up in the final contribution (fruit of a talk given two years after the Prague conference, by its organizer, at an international seminar on "Europe after Europe" at the University of Bergamo, Italy) which draws a parallel between the Socratic questioning at the heart of the "care for the soul" and the generalization of the epoché advocated by Patočka's asubjectivism in the perspective of a "third (ethical) conversion" continuing the universal history of the European world in the philosophical sense which was the direct or indirect ambition of such an important part of his work from the 1930s onward and leaving the last word to a new profound reading of the "solidarity of the shaken" – an albeit negative point of reference in the current spiritual disarray of world-forsaken "globalized" humanity.

The volume as a whole, meant to be a both overall and in-depth introduction for English-speakers, remains of interest to all Patočka scholars, whatever their linguistic allegiance, enabling laymen and specialists alike to better appreciate Patočka's own irreplaceable part in the heritage of phenomenology and his positive message for us today.

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A few technical remarks:

The editorial work on this volume, with its contributions from scholars of eleven different mother tongues quoting Patočka from available English, French, or German translations, when not translating themselves from the original Czech, German, or French documents, has involved checking all cited passages against sources available in the Prague Jan Patočka Archive. The aim was initially simply to ensure coherence, but the enterprise has enabled us to correct several mistaken readings and, by the way, to suggest perhaps a few modest solutions in terminological questions that have so far divided Patočka's various English translators. The quotations in the following pages do not, therefore, always follow word for word the indicated sources. The reader tempted by the idea (or, shall we say, the by no

[5] Jan Patočka, "Some Comments concerning the Extramundane…," op. cit., pp. 27–28.

means superfluous precaution) of comparing translations will find at the end of the volume a bibliography of the works by Patočka quoted in the following pages with references to the Czech (German or French) original documents, as well as to translations available in five major world languages. The complete bibliography, including an up-to-date list of secondary literature, can be consulted at the Internet address of the Archive in Prague: http://www.ajp.cuni.cz/biblio.html.

Finally, the editors wish to express heartfelt thanks to RPG Advisors (Czech Republic), the Simons Foundation (Vancouver), the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation (Paris), the Ministry of Culture of the Czech Republic, the Jan Hus Association (Paris), and the Deutsch-Tschechischer Zukunftsfond for their generous support, without which the centenary conference in Prague would not have been possible.

Remembering Jan Patočka

Opening Speech at the Conference in Prague, April 23, 2007

Václav Havel

Ladies and Gentlemen,

You are surely not expecting an expert lecture from me. By way of introduction to this significant and important conference, which I welcome in Prague, I would like to make just three or four personal remarks.

My first contact with the work of Professor Patočka was in the depths of the darkest 1950s when, as a boy of about fifteen, thanks to a bit of detective work, I found out the existence of a book entitled *The Natural World as a Philosophical Problem*. The book was in the University library but it was banned and, therefore, not lent out. At the time banned books could be borrowed on an individual basis with the agreement of a man named Jirkovský. I got up the courage to go and plead with him, and fortunately succeeded in being convincing. I read *The Natural World as a Philosophical Problem* which – along with one or two other books – proved to be instrumental in shaping my life. This book is what made me realize that my own life should be seen in the framework of the natural world, and that this world, with its dimensions of near and far, up and down, its horizon and its mystery, is something entirely apart from what science has to offer. A small example: the natural world is what makes the cosmos appear as incomprehensibly immense. It does not necessarily seem so to astronomers. They measure it in parsecs and observe merely objective nearness and farness. Astronomy's calling is not, however, to marvel at mystery, but rather to keep on researching so as to accumulate more and more knowledge.

My second remark concerns the 1960s. By that time I already knew Professor Patočka personally and I invited him to the theater I was working at. He held philosophical lectures, debates, and discussions for us in the evening after the performances. He was an enthralling debater, an oral, Socratic type of philosopher, and his lectures were so gripping that even the actors never walked out on him.

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The third remark takes us to the 1970s. I was then delegated to ask Professor Patočka to become a spokesperson of Charter 77. I witnessed his decision. He hesitated quite a while, well knowing that this was something that could be terribly risky, something that could completely change both the content and the style of his life, something that could end up taking him to prison. Moreover, he felt there were key figures of his generation in Czechoslovakia who should have priority over him, having manifested their civic engagement more clearly throughout their lives. Only when I got explicit support from these people did Professor Patočka finally decide to accept the office. But once he made this decision, he took the job deadly seriously. He devoted every free minute of his life to Charter 77. He even personally distributed various samizdat pamphlets around Prague. He wrote several short essays that have become famous and remain very important for the history of Charter 77. He truly personally vouched for his acts, and these acts were paradoxically strengthened by the very circumstances of his death.

In my last remark, I would like to touch on the legacy Professor Patočka has bequeathed to us. Thanks mainly to him, Charter 77 was endowed with an articulate moral dimension. He is the one who spoke of the solidarity of the shaken. The one who told us there are things that must be done because they are good *per se*, regardless of when or whether they will be appreciated and converted into some kind of success; things for which we must accept even to make sacrifices, insofar as they concern values we consider fundamental and important, values worthy of our sacrifice. Travelling around the world, I meet with a great many dissidents, opposition people, and human rights defenders, in all sorts of places, in particular in countries governed by dictatorships or authoritarian regimes, flying either right- or left-wing banners. I find it interesting to observe the ways – sometimes surprising for me – in which all of them subscribe to the legacy of Charter 77, especially to its moral dimension. The idea of non-violent resistance, vouched for with one's very existence, has gained ground, and Professor Patočka should – among others, but to a significant extent – be given credit for this too. Our own story has had a happy ending, but I believe this very fact compels us to show solidarity with all people who have not yet been so fortunate and may not live to see the happy ending of theirs. That seems to me a relevant call or challenge for today.

Part I
Patočka's Appropriation of Classical Phenomenology

Jan Patočka: Phenomenological Philosophy Today

Miroslav Petříček

In this short paper, I would like to take up the difficult task of recalling Jan Patočka's work and intellectual activity as a whole, while – at the same time – not only commemorating, but proposing an interpretation that will link his work with present-day phenomenological philosophy. In other words, I shall attempt to resume his thoughts in order to renew his questions and problems in his own footsteps. The task is by no means easy, but Patočka himself has provided an important hint as concerns the practice of carrying on, inasmuch as one of his last works (developing impulses initially received from Husserl's philosophy) bears the title *Heretical Essays*.

Hence my first and main question: what does "heresy" mean for Patočka, and what is "heretical" in his relation to phenomenology? What led him to this "heresy," be it what it may?

Jan Patočka lived and worked in strange times and circumstances. Twice a university teacher, twice forced out of academe. To be sure, historical conditions cannot entirely explain his way of thinking, but they can – perhaps – help us to understand it. It is beyond me to provide a detailed description of the communist era in Czechoslovakia. Any account could be but partial and overly emotional. So I'll jump over this impassable obstacle with a short-cutting illustration.

When you watched television in those days and years, you ended up with tears in your eyes. Were those tears of laughter or deep despair? The answer is both. Such an odd experience is not something that can be passed on or shared. But that is the way things went, the way they were. It was a time that defies explaining – not because it was too complicated but, rather, because it was totally stupid. On the other hand, it was the kind of situation where the saying "philosophy as a way of life" acquires its full meaning.

Jan Patočka called this particular coming together of life and philosophy "care for the soul." But we shall perhaps better understand his way of thinking if we go back over the whole development that led him, in the end, to this concept of "caring

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for the soul." It all began with his book dealing with the *Lebenswelt*, the "life-world." But he was not long in expressing certain reservations with regard to Husserl's conception of phenomenology and phenomenological method. According to Patočka, phenomenology cannot be identified with Husserl's teachings. Moreover, what Husserl conceives of as phenomenology, i.e., the procedure of working back from ossified theses to the living wellsprings of experience, has always been part and parcel of philosophy – that is why the course Patočka taught in his last year at Charles University was not called "Introduction to Phenomenology," but rather – the difference is revealing – "Introduction to Phenomenological Philosophy."

Of course, this was in no way an exceptional position, nothing that could justify describing Patočka's version of phenomenological philosophy as a "heresy." It is well know that many, perhaps nearly all of Husserl's followers went on (later) to open up their own paths, which quite frequently led in very different directions. Such was, for example, the case of Martin Heidegger. I nonetheless believe Patočka's path to be, to a certain extent, peculiar in its characteristic effort to remain as faithful as possible to Husserl. This is what makes Patočka open only to those Heideggerian suggestions which he can still construe as compatible with an enlarged version of Husserl's phenomenology or "phenomenological philosophy." In short, Patočka drifts away from Husserl in a process of broadening which has nothing to do with relinquishing or simply overcoming; rather, he attempts to enlarge both the scope and content of phenomenology. In this sense, his undertaking is much closer to Eugen Fink's attempt at elaborating the inmost core of Husserl's thought. I have here in mind – first and foremost – Fink's lectures from the 1950s, "*Die intentionale Analyse und das Problem des spekulativen Denkens*" (1951) and "*Operative Begriffe in Husserls Phänomenologie*" (1957).

Phenomenology, says Fink, should be fundamentally anti-speculative, that is, free from prejudice; it should get at "*die Sachen selbst*," reach all the way to the "*Lebenswelt*," the life-world, and uncover the ultimate ground, where the thing itself appears as what it is in its "*Sich-Zeigen*," its self-showing. This is both a requirement and an obligation, and to fulfill this requirement would mean the ultimate legitimation for phenomenology. Fink makes, however, a serious objection: there is no such thing as an "*an sich sprachfreie Sache*," a thing entirely disengaged from language, and this realization brings with it a "*nachdenkliche Frage*," making us doubt whether it is actually possible to get at the real origin without precedents, to start radically from the very beginning, "*radikal von vorn*."

To anticipate a bit: we find a certain answer to these doubts in Patočka's own philosophy – in his concept of the first movement of existence, the movement of "sinking roots," the "instinctive-affective" anchoring of our existence in the always already given world (this movement points to our "embodiment"), as well as in his reading of history as – always already – rooted in the pre-historical world.

Coming back briefly to Fink: if the "pre-conceptual thing," the "*vor-begriffliche Sache*," is a pre-judice, a pre-judgment in the sense of "*Vor-urteil*," and if phenomenology always already includes an irreducible moment of speculation, how are we to understand the "*Sache selbst*"?

Fink clarifies this "speculative moment" by distinguishing between "thematic" and "operative" concepts. The "*Sache selbst*" is what the thinker tries to grasp or, better, what is at issue for him in his thinking. To this purpose, in order to grasp the thing itself, he uses various "thematic" concepts which he creates in order to keep the thing in sight; at the same time, however, having in mind his "theme," what really concerns him as his "topic," he uses – without being entirely aware of it – all sorts of intellectual notions and schemata which never become explicit or "thematic." These *operative* concepts are nonetheless what make it possible to bring the thing itself into sight in the first place. It is an act of a paradoxical sort: operative concepts are shadows, but precisely these shadows are the necessary medium of the phenomenological way of seeing. I quote:

> *Die klärende Kraft eines Denkens nährt sich aus dem, was im Denk-Schatten verbleibt. In der höchstgesteigerten Reflexivität wirkt immer noch eine Unmittelbarkeit sich aus. Das Denken selbst gründet im Unbedenklichen. Es hat seinen produktiven Schwung im unbedenklichen Gebrauch von verschatteten Begriffen.*[1]

Fink summarized here – in his inimitable style, yet extremely aptly – not only his own philosophical position regarding the phenomenological method, but the whole situation of phenomenology in those days. It was a very problematical position indeed: there is no further reference to philosophy without prejudgment, and even the fundamental concept of intentionality seems uncertain. This background helps us also to understand Patočka, who at roughly the same time was grappling with the complicated notion of "negative Platonism" and trying to delve deeper into his earlier project of elaborating in greater detail the concept of the "*Lebenswelt*," or "life-world." This seems to have been when something important happened. While analyzing the structures of the life-world, Patočka realized that he was not describing a structure but rather a complex dynamics. This was due to the fact that his effort to understand the "*Lebenswelt*" kept bringing to the fore, more and more, the phenomenon of the lived body or, in other words, the dynamic presence of the existing human being in his or her world.

Now, the bodily foundations of our consciousness make it impossible to grasp its entire content solely by means of reflection; not everything in our life can be made fully explicit, or "objectified." Life includes, if I may use Fink's term, irreducible "shadows." The transparency inherent in the fact that to live is to *vitam ducere* is not of the same order as the clarity of reflection: we are not given to ourselves, we are in search of ourselves.

This does not mean that we have no choice but to relinquish such fundamental concepts of Husserlian phenomenology as intentionality and reflection. On the contrary: all the phenomena of the life-world, or "*Lebenswelt*," in particular the interdependence of *aisthēsis* and *kinēsis*, point to a deeper unity which is the true basis of all our *intentional* acts. And this unity is the unity of the three fundamental movements of our existence.

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[1] Eugen Fink, "Operative Begriffe in Husserls Phänomenologie," in *Nähe und Distanz*, ed. F.-A. Schwarz (Freiburg and München: Alber, 1976), p. 186.

It is clear, in the light of another related context (the context of Patočka's later writings on Europe), that existence means, above all, openness: we are beings fundamentally open for the world and for ourselves. Or, to say the same thing in other words: intentionality in Patočka's phenomenological philosophy means just this openness as manifested through the unity of the three movements of human existence and, explicitly, by the third movement.

To understand this claim, it is necessary to introduce another important concept which plays a decisive role especially in the later philosophy of Jan Patočka: the concept of the soul and care for the soul.

The soul means for Patočka – roughly speaking – the movement from *doxa* to *epistēmē*, but also a capacity for critical distance from this movement, for the soul is potentially aware of the impossibility of grasping or embracing the whole.

The soul thus stands for a critical attitude toward our finite knowledge which is another meaning of our "openness." When we "care for our soul," we remind ourselves of our twofold task, i.e., to transcend all finite knowledge and to answer for every individual act of knowing, since all knowledge must be carefully checked for "shadows."

This requires "*Einsicht*," i.e., intellectual insight, and responsibility for this instance of critique. Caring for the soul means cultivating this critical attitude.

This again is an obvious echo of Edmund Husserl and his book on the *Crisis of European Sciences* – now without transcendental phenomenology. Patočka's concept of the soul implies – in concentrated form – his understanding of this key work of Husserl's.

To be sure, these are well-known, established, and familiar things. What I wish to stress is simply this impressive act of interpretation of Husserlian phenomenology, an act which, on the one hand, goes beyond almost all limits of Husserlian phenomenology and, on the other, extends these limits and the scope of phenomenology as such. It is an act of fidelity and adherence to phenomenology.

This finally brings me to the question of Patočka's heresy and phenomenological philosophy today.

I hope, however, that almost everything important has already been said, so there is not really any more to add. Heresy is the same "act" as the original creative interpretation which carries on, taking a thought further. It is – perhaps – a sort of "over-interpretation," but never a mis-interpretation, since this mode of heretical thinking implies a reflection on the very limits of the thought to be understood, and it implies such an extension of these limits which can transform even the basic definitions and fundamental concepts while preserving the core of the thought in question.

I believe this to be a totally actual lesson, a message which undoubtedly has some bearing on philosophy today.

“Idealities of Nature”: Jan Patočka on Reflection and the Three Movements of Human Life

Steven Crowell

When, in the tumultuous year of 1968, Jan Patočka was once again able to deliver a series of lectures at Charles University after a hiatus of almost twenty years, he produced, in the words of his English translator, a gemlike summary of “the achievements and problems of Continental philosophy at mid-century.”[1] More than this, however, Patočka sought to present, in systematic outline, his own effort to develop the tradition of phenomenology in an original direction. He sought not only to overcome what he held to be the “subjectivism” of Husserl’s philosophical conception, but also that which still infected, in his view, Heidegger’s ontological transformation of phenomenology in *Sein und Zeit*. Drawing upon Merleau-Ponty’s phenomenology of the lived body, and in reflections on the history of philosophy, Patočka hoped to liberate the phenomenological approach from constraints and presuppositions tacitly guiding its founders. In this, his work is strikingly contemporary. For Patočka struggles with the same problems more recently brought to our attention by Emmanuel Levinas, Jean-Luc Marion, and Eugen Fink – problems of nature, embodiment, cosmology, and theology that, in the hands of these other thinkers, can appear to leave phenomenology behind for metaphysics, speculation, and ungrounded construction.

What is unique about Patočka’s approach to these issues, however, is his adherence to the program of *transcendental* phenomenology. In a crucial text from his *Nachlaß*, he characterizes his position as the “transformation of Husserl’s teaching into a formal transcendentalism of appearing as such.”[2] Patočka here sees himself as completing Husserl’s own incomplete transformation of transcendental philosophy,

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[1] Erazim Kohák, “Translator’s Postscript,” in Jan Patočka, *Body, Community, Language, World*, ed. J. Dodd, transl. E. Kohák (Chicago and La Salle: Open Court, 1998), p. 179. Future references to this volume will be given in the text, abbreviated BCLW.

[2] Jan Patočka, “Phänomenologie als Lehre vom Erscheinen als Solchem,” in *Vom Erscheinen als Solchem. Texte aus dem Nachlaß,* ed. H. Blaschek-Hahn and K. Novotný (Freiburg and München: Alber, 2000), pp. 162–163. Future references to this essay will be given in the text, abbreviated PLES. All translations from Patočka’s German texts are my own.

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which went beyond the Kantian concern with subjective conditions of possible knowledge to a concern with the conditions of *intentionality* as such. Patočka's completion of this trajectory attempts to grasp that "transcendence," prior to intentionality, thanks to which entities are given *as* the things they are. This gives rise, however, to a delicate question of method: if phenomenology is to move beyond the subjectivism of its founders, must it not also move beyond *reflection* as its primary – or perhaps sole – source of philosophical insight? And if that is so, how can it remain transcendental, that is, critical, concerned not merely with what shows itself, but with our *access* to what shows itself? How can it keep from falling into the "speculation" and merely constructive "metaphysics" against which phenomenology had set its sights from the beginning?

One good place to get a feel for the issues here is at that point in the Fifteenth Lecture where Patočka highlights a limitation of Heidegger's conception of the human being. Against Husserl, Heidegger had argued that the world of meaning and value, the practical world of Dasein's "understanding of Being," does not rest upon a more foundational stratum of mere things taken as objects of perception (BCLW 123). Agreeing with this assessment, Patočka nevertheless argues that "this understanding, structured as care," does in fact "presuppose something else, prior to itself" (BCLW 129). Consideration of the experience of children and animals – neither of which possesses the understanding of Being that distinguishes Dasein – suggests the importance of something that Heidegger only alludes to, namely, "the elementary protofact of *harmony with the world*." Prior to Dasein there is "life," and the achievements of understanding depend on an "even more elementary ground," namely, "the world as an empathy of a kind, as a sympathy" (BCLW 133). Revealed to us in our moods and in the structure of our sensible and affective engagement with things, this sympathy is no mere reliable differential responsiveness to the environment, but includes a moment of "ideality"; it is already meaningful and so belongs within the scope of phenomenology.[3] Just as Hegel had pointed to the organism as evidence that "nature bears ideality within itself," Patočka insists that, because life is a *meaningful* whole, it must include ideality at its source. Sensing is no mere effect of the world upon our organs; it is "evidence of this ideality with which our soul can resonate." Indeed, "we as soul, as *ideality of nature*, are in harmony with this aspect of nature as a whole" (BCLW 134). Thus if transcendental phenomenology is to move beyond the "finitude" of our understanding of Being toward the "infinite" in which such understanding is situated – the "whole," the "cosmos," the "world" – it must recognize the ideality that resides already in our bodily harmony with nature.

[3] On the idea of a "reliable differential responsive disposition" in contrast to "sentience" as "the capacity to be *aware* in the sense of being *awake*," see Robert Brandom, *Making it Explicit* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1994), p. 5. Both are to be contrasted with "sapience," which is our "capacity for reason and understanding" and is invoked when we explain something's behavior "by attributing to it intentional states such as belief and desire as constituting reasons for that behavior." The issue that will concern us in the present essay might be formulated as the question of whether Patočka's claim that *sentience* already has the normative character of *sapience* ("ideality") can stand up to phenomenological scrutiny.

Just here the fundamental question of method arises: if phenomenology is restricted to what is given in reflection, how are we to get this whole, nature, into our sights as a space of ideality and meaning, as a world of "light" rather than "a mathematical world" (BCLW 134)? Patočka himself notes that "were phenomenology a study of consciousness in reflective access, in self-givenness, as Husserl thought, then the whole of today's lecture could not be considered phenomenological." For though reflection can grasp an act such as perception, "I cannot in this way grasp the meaning of this act within the process of life as a whole" (BCLW 83–84). In what way, then, is "life as a whole" to be grasped? From a phenomenological point of view, isn't the very concept of an "ideality of nature" an unholy mixture of the transcendental and the dogmatically naturalistic?[4] In order to see how Patočka answers this fundamental question of contemporary phenomenology,[5] I shall first examine his critique of Husserl's theory of phenomenological reflection and Heidegger's incomplete transformation of it. This, in turn, will lead to Patočka's critique of Husserl's transcendental idealism and to his own "asubjective" phenomenology of "appearing as such." This, finally, will provide the context for a critical assessment of Patočka's appeal to the "three movements" that constitute life as an "ideality of nature" and its compatibility with his "formal transcendentalism of appearing as such."

1 Reflection as an Act of Objectification and as a Process of Life

"The phenomenological method," writes Husserl, "operates exclusively in acts of reflection."[6] By "reflection" Husserl means a specific mental process, an "objectifying act," whereby other mental processes – *Erlebnisse* – are made into intentional objects. Husserl is careful to distinguish his concept of reflection from that of the neo-Kantians (for whom it is a purely formal concept indicating the logical principles by means of which experience is to be transcendentally *constructed*) and from that of the psychologists (for whom it is an act of introspection that grasps

[4] Patočka's own version of reflective method is meant to ward off such mixtures, since inscribed in the concept of reflection is a commitment, endorsed by Patočka himself, to "demonstration," that is, to philosophical self-responsibility (BCLW 85).

[5] Contemporary phenomenology is far from doing justice to this question, but see, for instance, the essays *Naturalizing Phenomenology. Issues in Contemporary Phenomenology and Cognitive Science*, ed. J. Petitot et al. (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999). Many of the essays in this volume bear the traces of an attempt, drawing largely on Merleau-Ponty, to resurrect a phenomenological "philosophy of nature" by sacrificing phenomenology's transcendental character. Patočka's work is interesting in this regard because he sees no tension between the transcendental and something like the "natural."

[6] Edmund Husserl, *Ideas Pertaining to a Pure Phenomenology and to a Phenomenological Philosophy. First Book*, transl. F. Kersten (Den Haag: Martinus Nijhoff, 1983), p. 174.

concrete, datable instances of mental processes). Against the Kantians, Husserl argues that reflection must limit itself to what is given in experience; the intentional object must be constituted from structures that are reflectively evident within that experience. Against the psychologists, Husserl holds that reflection does not grasp mental processes as occurrent entities standing in causal relations, but as intentional structures governed by relations of meaning.[7] But how successful is Husserl in distinguishing the phenomenological concept of reflection from these two precursors? Patočka argues that in neither case has Husserl truly freed himself from their dangers.

The case against phenomenology had already been made by Paul Natorp. *Erlebnisse* are not originarily given as objects; they are the "subjective" moment through which objects come to be known. Thus reflection, as an objectifying act, can only distort the features of what is originarily non-objective, "stilling the flow" of subjective life.[8] As Patočka puts it, when we reflect "do we not already thereby transform [experience] into something other than what it originally is, … depriving it of its own mode of Being" (BCLW 94)? Patočka recognizes that human experience has a certain "clarity" about itself, a kind of pre-reflective self-awareness "by which our own original Being is accessible to us" (BCLW 96, 95), but the difficulty is to see how such pre-reflective self-awareness can be mobilized into a philosophical method. Natorp had argued that because reflection fails, we can only "reconstruct" subjective life by working back from logical structures of the object.[9] Patočka, however, does not wish to abandon phenomenology in this way, so he revises it by arguing that even if Husserl's concept of reflection remains infected with both psychologism and constructivism, another take on reflection remains possible.

An example should help clarify Patočka's position. Perception of a burning candle delivers an object with a certain constellation of properties unified into a meaningful whole, but the *act* of perceiving, the mental process, remains occluded. Husserl's phenomenology thematizes the way the burning candle appears, not treating the object from the third-person perspective, as a causally unified entity, but from the first-person perspective, as a "unity of meaning."[10] In addition to this *noematic* thematizing, however, Husserl also seeks to grasp the mental process itself – perceiving – by objectifying it in reflection. It is this step that Patočka challenges. For him, phenomenological reflection properly grasps only the

[7] For an early statement of this point see Edmund Husserl, "Philosophy as Rigorous Science," transl. M. Brainard, in *The New Yearbook for Phenomenology and Phenomenological Philosophy*, Vol. II (2002), p. 270: "Everything psychical that is experienced *in this way* [*sc*. in reflection] is thus, as we can likewise say with evidence, embedded in a comprehensive nexus, in a 'monadic' unity of consciousness, a unity that in itself has nothing at all to do with nature, with space and time, substantiality and causality, but rather has its completely unique 'forms.'"

[8] Paul Natorp, *Allgemeine Psychologie nach kritischer Methode* (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1912), pp. 190–191.

[9] Ibid., p. 32.

[10] Edmund Husserl, *Ideas I*, op. cit., p. 128.

"appearing as such"; it does not grasp perceiving, or remembering, but rather "the perceived, the remembered" as a noematic unity (PLES 118). Indeed, he denies that transcendental subjectivity is at all a locus of acts in the Husserlian sense: "There are no 'noeses' that could in themselves be ferreted out and reflexively grasped" (PLES 126). More specifically, Patočka rejects Husserl's early view that the intentional object – the perceived candle as perceived – takes on its meaningful character because a certain act, perceiving, interprets neutrally given "hyletic data" in a particular way.

For Patočka, such a view combines the worst features of both the psychological approach and that of the neo-Kantians, for concepts like "act" and "*hylē*" are not phenomenological givens, but merely "constructed concepts" that arise from the "idea of psychophysical interaction" (PLES 122). Thus they are psychological, not transcendental, concepts.[11] Patočka argues that psychology studies the "adjustment" (*Anpassung*) which the organism makes to the structure of appearing as such, but psychological concepts cannot be used to explain appearances (intentional objects) since they are empirical and causal. In appealing to the notion of an "act" of consciousness, Husserlian phenomenology thus remains infected both with the problems of empiricism (the attempt to explain appearing as such in terms of *entities that appear*) and with the problems of "bald" naturalism (the commitment to the exclusivity of *causal* explanation) (PLES 132).[12] Though the worth of such "constructed" concepts may prove itself in the course of empirical psychological investigation, they can only distort the "completely unique 'forms'" that govern the phenomenological field of meaning. But if noeses are not given in phenomenological reflection, there is no "constitution" of things in immanence (PLES 137); and, more radically, there is "no intentionality of consciousness" (PLES 123).

In what sense, then, is phenomenology reflective at all? According to Patočka, Husserl *employs* phenomenological reflection, but he lacks "a *theory of reflection* itself" as a vital process belonging to existence or life (BCLW 165). Heidegger recognized this problem, and by reconfiguring "consciousness" and "reflection" as capacities grounded in existence (*Dasein*) as a being that is essentially *concerned* with its Being, he offered a superior account of our original access to our own Being, our pre-reflective self-awareness. Such accessibility arises from the fundamentally practical character of our Being: we are not in the world as stones are; rather, our Being is something we "*must* do, create, accomplish…. Humans are in such a way that they simultaneously *are* and *ought to be*" (BCLW 95). For instance, as I write, I am engaged in what Husserl would call a series of acts – perceiving the computer screen, understanding the sentences I write, imagining possible arguments, and so

[11] For a different elaboration of this argument see Steven Crowell, "Does the Husserl/Heidegger Feud Rest on a Mistake? An Essay on Psychological and Transcendental Phenomenology," in *Husserl Studies*, Vol. 18, no. 2 (2002), pp. 123–140.

[12] The concept of "bald naturalism" was introduced by John McDowell, *Mind and World* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1996), p. 73.

on. An analysis of acts thus shows what I *am* as I engage in this specific task. But the task itself – *trying* to write a paper that will appeal to a sophisticated audience of Patočka scholars – cannot be clarified by reference to such occurrent acts alone. "Trying" is not itself any kind of act or mental process. Rather, in Heidegger's terms, it is a mode of Being in which I am concerned with who I *ought* to be: I try "for the sake of" being a phenomenologist. This sort of self-understanding – a "projection" of my "*possibilities* for Being" – transcends what is by establishing *norms* for it, conditions of success or failure. Thus it cannot be captured in terms of discrete acts of planning, willing, desiring, and so on. It belongs instead to the process of life which, in just this way, carries a certain ideality (normativity) within itself.

How does this conception allow for a redefinition of reflection? To begin with, reflection is no longer seen merely as a distinct objectifying act. The pre-reflective self-awareness that characterizes human life – our implicit grasp of what we are about – is a reflection of a new sort. As Heidegger puts it: "Dasein does not need a special kind of observation, nor does it need to conduct a kind of espionage on the ego in order to have the self; rather, as Dasein gives itself over immediately and passionately to the world, its own self is reflected to it from things."[13] For instance, I grasp myself as a carpenter not because I reflect on what I am doing, but because in the course of my engaged activity things show up as nails to be driven, as hammers to be wielded, as lumber to be cut, joined and sanded. I know what I am about, who I am, not because such knowledge is pre-reflectively given in a series of *Erlebnisse* that can be objectified in reflection, but because the world shows *this* face to me rather than some other. It does so, according to Heidegger, because I am *trying* to build something and am thus responding to the normative conditions of success and failure inherent in my commitment to that task, what I *ought* to be (do).

But phenomenology is a method, and it remains difficult to see how the inherent clarity or self-awareness of practical life can help us toward a methodological concept of reflection. Patočka identifies the problem: while it is true that existence – which is not originally given as an object – "cannot in principle be grasped in its distinctiveness by *observation*," nevertheless "original non-objectivity does not mean non-objectifiability" (BCLW 97). Were that the case, there could be no reflective method at all.[14] The "great problem" for phenomenology, then, is "how such Being might be grasped philosophically" (BCLW 101). Patočka imagines Husserl objecting to Heidegger that if the latter can say anything about pre-reflective existence at all, then it must in some sense "appear," be "a phenomenon," something "that presents itself to the philosopher's view." But if "existence is something that we do rather than see, then nothing can be seen of it, then it is not a phenomenon." Husserl objects that Heidegger tries to avoid mere construction without acknowledging the phenomenological means for doing so, namely, the

[13] Martin Heidegger, *Basic Problems of Phenomenology*, transl. A. Hofstadter (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1982), p. 159.

[14] Even Heidegger embraced this conclusion. See ibid., p. 322: "Our question aims at the objectification of Being as such, that second essential possibility of objectification, in which philosophy is supposed to constitute itself as science."

intuitive givenness of existence in reflection. Isn't Heidegger's position a "transcendental philosophy trying to step over its own shadow"? "To this," Patočka insists, "Heidegger has no answer" (BCLW 101). Patočka will seek a middle way: "objectification in reflection" is *necessary*, but it "does not *suffice* to grasp this life in its own essence" (BCLW 110).

In one respect, Patočka's middle way is a continuation of Heidegger's phenomenology. Recognizing that what appears in any objectifying act as "originally" given (i.e., given in person) is not necessarily "originarily" given in its Being (since the originally given can be simultaneously "concealed" in its Being), Patočka embraces Heidegger's hermeneutic modification of Husserl's reflection on the "intentional implications" contained in our direct grasp of an intentional object. For instance, phenomenological reflection on how a blackboard eraser presents itself does not exhaust itself in grasping what is given originally; instead, methodological reflection must include "also that philosophical procedure which grasps, not only what is given, but also the inner implication of the meaning of the given, pointing beyond" (BCLW 102). While I can see an eraser, what makes it what it is, its "Being," cannot be seen: "that it is intended for erasing is something that I do not see" (BCLW 104). It is not enough, then, to reflect on the *perceptual* horizon in which the eraser shows itself, for its being as a perceived *eraser* is not found there. Rather, the "inner implications" that inform the intentional object "must be uncovered differently – patiently, not at one stroke," by means of "interpretation" (BCLW 106). In contrast to Heidegger, however, Patočka emphasizes that "there does remain a reflective core on which this method relies." For "reflection" designates phenomenology's search for "a more original access" to what shows itself; it is the process of moving from the entity to that which makes the entity what it is, its "meaning" (BCLW 106).

In this, Husserl and Heidegger are one: though Heidegger rejects the reduction, his phenomenology, "no less than Husserl's," moves "entirely in the dimension of understanding meaning" – not "logical constructs, but living meanings," an "intelligible context" whose distinctive lawfulness becomes evident only through a reflection on life (BCLW 112). To grasp the meaning-structure of things – in Patočka's language, to move from what appears to the structure of appearing as such – it is not enough to objectify *Erlebnisse*. But the procedure through which meaning becomes accessible *does* make explicit what does not explicitly show itself – what "I do not see" – and so retains the essential function of reflection in Husserl's sense: to attain more original *evidential* access to that which constitutes the entity as it is given or appears. For Patočka, as for Husserl, this is a desideratum of phenomenology's commitment to ultimate philosophical self-responsibility.

If we can now see the outline of Patočka's attempt to retain a role for transcendental reflection within phenomenology after Heidegger's hermeneutic turn, a significant question still remains: Won't any reflective method – whether it be a reflection on consciousness in Husserl's sense or a reflection on life in Patočka's – condemn phenomenology to a kind of subjectivism, to a concern not with what is, but merely with the way things appear to the subject? Patočka accuses Heidegger of overcoming subjectivism only incompletely, since traces of the noetic still cling

to the idea of understanding as "projection of possibilities." But how does his own approach fare any better? To answer this question we must turn to Patočka's arguments for an asubjective phenomenology of appearing as such.

2 Appearing as Such and Subjectivism

Important features of Patočka's theory of appearing as such have already been introduced in our discussion of reflection. According to Patočka, "the primary source of the misunderstanding of the appearance-problem" is "that one confuses or mixes the structure of appearing with the structure of what appears" (PLES 119). One example of such mixing is precisely Husserl's concept of *noesis* which, though it is supposed to account for the constitution of appearing as such, is actually modeled on the causal sphere of psychological adjustment and psychophysical interaction. For this reason, Husserl mistakenly identifies appearing as such with a "subjective realm of *Erlebnisse*" (PLES 118). Patočka, in contrast – who in this respect, like Marion, believes he is only being true to Husserl's "principle of all principles" (PLES 136) – argues that the structure of appearing is "autonomous." The phenomenological sphere of "absolute givenness" is not to be identified with "consciousness" in any sense; rather, it is the sphere of "giving, of self-showing, of manifestation" (PLES 119).

But, as we also saw in the example of the eraser, this kind of manifestation involves a structure that does not appear in the same way: the eraser can be seen, but that it is intended for erasing cannot be seen. Patočka's term for the total system of such "structures of appearing as such" is "world," and, as it does not appear, world "is not itself a phenomenon"; it is "neither my reality nor an objective one, but rather an *interval*" (BCLW 166; my emphasis), something "*sui generis*," an "inexplicable, yet all-explaining event of Being" which is "contemporaneous with the birth of humans" (BCLW 167). Before exploring this interval and its structure, we need to see how the autonomy of appearing as such can be established phenomenologically. Patočka's argument for this turns on his radicalization of the epoché and rejection of the reduction to the sphere of "pure immanence."

The importance of the epoché for Patočka consists in the fact that it is already "the gateway to the 'transcendental sphere'" even if it is not an "introduction to the reduction" (PLES 166). The epoché is the essentially negative move which insures that phenomenological insights will be "independent of every construction and therewith of every inductively understood empiricism" (PLES 166). It is an act of "freedom" that produces a fundamental "change of standpoint" (*Einstellungsänderung*) with regard to the general thesis of the natural attitude (PLES 141–142). In bracketing the general thesis, what comes into view, according to Patočka, is the "non-modalizability" of the world as such. The epoché allows us to see that the world is not of the same ontological sort as things in the world, not the sort of thing about which doubts could be raised, or which could be seen as relative to something else. In bracketing "Being," the epoché does not reveal another realm of Being – not

even a "pre-being" in Fink's sense, since pre-being "is still a kind of Being" (PLES 144). Hence, what shows itself under the epoché cannot be treated as something subjective, since subjectivity too is a character of Being. The yield of the epoché is not something that appears, but the field of "appearing as such," and this field has a *normative* structure: "world cannot show itself now this way and then in some other way, for in such a case there would be no clue [*Leitfaden*] and no measure [*Maßstab*] for self-showing [of entities] itself" (PLES 146). It is thus a realm of *transcendental* conditions as Patočka understands this term: the field of appearing as such has a purely "formal character" in the sense that "appearing is not responsible for the content of what appears, but only for its *lawfulness*, its *structure*" (PLES 136).

Husserl's transcendental reduction, in contrast, produces a "curious hobbling" of the real meaning of the epoché, according to Patočka (PLES 142–143). Rather than recognize the autonomous lawfulness of the field of appearing as such, Husserl betrays a "subjective prejudice" by tracing the source of meaning to the constitutive acts of transcendental subjectivity, to what is purely "self-given in immanence" (PLES 143). Biographically, Patočka attributes this subjective prejudice to the fact that Husserl discovered the epoché only after he had developed the theory of the reduction (PLES 144), but we have already seen a deeper reason for this subjectivism: Husserl's entanglement in the conceptions of psychology, his failure to distinguish radically between transcendental and ontical conditions. In contrast to the resulting theory of intentionality as a noetic-noematic structure, Patočka argues that "there is only the 'noematic' side, the world or world-phenomenon" (PLES 165).

As we have seen, the concept of a noetic act derives from the psychological adjustment made by the subject to its causal involvement with what appears. But "the fact that the world appears and appears to *someone* … is a peculiarity that cannot be clarified causally or through constructions; it is a world-lawfulness that cannot be reduced to anything else" (PLES 133). Patočka's asubjectivism is radical here: the "supposed intentions are nothing but lines of force [*Kraftlinien*] of the appearing on what appears" (PLES 124); they "constitute" nothing, but merely "show and refer to other than what has already appeared." It follows that "perceiving, remembering," and so on are not genuinely phenomenological concepts at all; rather, phenomenological concepts should pick out "qualities and determinations of appearing" as such (PLES 128). Such qualities and determinations are not derived from the empirical and ontic by any kind of abstraction; rather, they are a completely different *sort* of property, discoverable only through the epoché, and they "make up no kind of objective, substantive unity with what is given in them" (PLES 152). That is to say, they are qualities and determinations of meaning, not entities; and meaning is no "real predicate" of the entities given through it.

Two questions arise in connection with Patočka's radicalization of the epoché and rejection of the reduction to pure immanence. First, how is it possible to talk of *appearing* in an "asubjective" way at all, of an appearing that would not, by its very nature, make reference to a subject to whom it appears? And second, what is the nature of the "world-lawfulness," the structure of appearing as such, that "cannot be reduced to anything else"? If it has a normative character, can this really be understood without any reference to subjectivity?

On the first question Patočka is clear. Appearing as such is not absolutely asubjective. Rather, the term "subject" must be understood in a dual sense. There is, first, the concrete subject, an entity in the world. All talk of "acts," of "contents of consciousness," and so on, refers to the subject in this sense. And, second, there is the transcendental subject, which is not *in* the world but part of the structure of appearing as such (PLES 120). However, this "subject *to whom* the All appears" – the "dative of manifestation"[15] that belongs to appearing as such – is but an "empty position" (PLES 122–123).[16] Subjectivism – including Husserl's doctrine of constitution in pure immanence – consists in the false belief that the concrete subject has some kind of transcendental priority over other entities that show up in the world. In contrast, Patočka's "empty" transcendental subject has no priority over what is manifest to it. Since both subject and world belong to the structure of appearing as such, there is no asymmetry between them as conditions for the appearance of entities. Taken together with his idea that the structure of appearing has a merely formal, law-like character, Patočka's "empty" transcendental subject completes his concept of phenomenology as a "formal transcendentalism of appearing as such."

But this leads to problems in Patočka's answer to our second question: Husserl's turn to the noetic was in part motivated by a concern to say something about the origin of the *kind* of lawfulness and structure characteristic of the phenomena – laws and structures of meaning. If the subject is nothing but an empty position, it obviously cannot be the origin of such lawfulness. But then, what is? Patočka asserts that appearing as such is *sui generis*. The epoché reveals "the complete independence of the lawfulness-structure of appearing from that of what appears" (PLES 154). Were such laws similar to causal laws – discoverable from a third-person perspective as simply obtaining – their *sui generis* character might seem plausible. But when we consider that they are laws of meaning, it seems less plausible.[17] For consciousness of meaning (of something *as* something) entails a subject that does more than merely register the presence of some entity, "process" it as "information," as though meaning, like the entity itself, were governed by causal laws that simply obtain. Rather, because meaning includes a *normative* moment, a reference to conditions of satisfaction that govern what the entity is *supposed* to be,[18] the laws of appearing cannot be laws that simply obtain in a third-person way. They must include within themselves a certain ideality, a relation between what *is* (what appears) and what *ought* to be (what it appears *as*). Patočka's example of such a law can help make this problem more intuitive.

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[15] The term "dative of manifestation" is not Patočka's, but was coined by Thomas Prufer.

[16] On this point it is hard to see any difference between Patočka's position on subjectivity and that of the neo-Kantians, for whom *transcendental* subjectivity (as distinct from the concrete psychological subject) was a purely "formal" principle of "consciousness in general."

[17] It is worth mentioning that, for Patočka, laws of appearing cannot be *logical* laws either. He criticizes Hegel explicitly for reducing the transcendental to the logical (PLES 159).

[18] On conditions of satisfaction, see John Searle, *Intentionality. An Essay in the Philosophy of Mind* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983).

In perceiving a table, the back side is given "emptily," as Husserl puts it, while the front side is given intuitively. Husserl traces this necessary connection between a certain presence and a certain absence to the perceptual intention itself, in which the "absent" back side is "meant" as a horizon for possible future intuitive fulfillment. Patočka, in contrast, holds that the necessity of the connection between presence and absence in perceptual appearing does not derive from the perceptual intention, but belongs to the structure of appearing as such. "Appearing is a play that is only possible under retention of a field of rules" (PLES 138), and if one studies "precisely *these* relations" – for instance, those of presence and absence – one can "convince oneself that a subjectivization here makes no sense" (PLES 129).

But how are we to understand this sort of rule? In the case of perceiving a table, we may agree that the back side is not "self-given," but this does not mean that "the circumstance, that the table as a physical object *must* have a back side, is not self-given" (PLES 131). The "must" here, which indicates the rule in question, cannot refer to the laws of physics, which have been bracketed under the epoché. Nor can it designate a purely logical necessity, since from the point of view of logic – that is, in the absence of all consideration of how the table is apprehended – there *is* no distinction between the front and back of a physical thing. Rejecting Husserl's idea that the necessary connection may be traced to the perceptual intention, Patočka argues that an entity "*must* show itself in this one-sided way" because "self-showing is only possible under the conditions of a *contrast*, only if *a* self-showing is there under *different* aspects" (PLES 138).

Even if one accepts the rest of Patočka's argument for an asubjective phenomenology, however, it is not altogether easy to understand this position. For if one cannot distinguish between the front and the back of a table from a purely logical standpoint, it seems equally impossible to speak of "one-sided" self-showing, or a rule-governed "play" of "different aspects," without reference to the *subjective apprehension* of the world. As we have seen, Patočka does hold that the transcendental subject belongs necessarily to appearing as such as the "taking up of appearing" (*Erscheinungsaufnahme*) (PLES 148), but this cannot do the work required to clarify the special character of these rules. For we need to explain why appearing is "taken up" in just the way it is, why it is *necessary* that the table appear as this *sort* of play of presence and absence. For this, we must, it seems, refer to a specific placement of the transcendental subject and to the act in which that placement is engaged.

A perceived table, for instance, must show up as a specific play of presence and absence, but the same table as imagined or remembered will exhibit a very different play. In general, an individual thing can show up in many different ways – that is, exhibit a meaning governed by various laws and structures of appearing – and phenomenology must be able to clarify why *this* set of rules now governs its appearing and not some other. Such clarification cannot be provided by Patočka's theory of subjective adjustment to the world, since this adjustment is psychological and *presupposes* the operation of one or another rule of appearing. The transcendental question, however, is why just this rule and not some other governs the object so as to demand our adjustment in the way specific to perception. No such

question arises about causal laws, which cannot fail to function; but it does arise for normative laws of meaning, which govern how things are *supposed* to show up: a perceived table *must* have a back side "if it really is a table." For this reason, both Husserl and Heidegger develop phenomenologies of correlation. The table must show up as a certain play of presence and absence because it is *perceived* (Husserl); a certain entity must exhibit a lawful "in-order-to" connection with other entities because it is being *used* as a hammer in my practical understanding of myself as a carpenter (Heidegger). In each case, a particular law of appearing holds because the subject is *normatively* related to things (beholden to them) in a certain way,[19] and in the absence of that relation one cannot even identify the law as a law.

Patočka seems to sense this problem. Arguing that the field of appearing cannot be constituted in terms of acts, he nevertheless admits that one can call it "subjective" if by that one means that "the world appears, and appearance-characteristics [*sc.* its lawfulness] express substantively the intelligibility [*Verständnis*] of things, of their Being, of their essence" (PLES 145). In Heideggerian terms, such intelligibility derives from Dasein's understanding of Being, its "projection of itself on possibilities" for being in this way or that (carpenter, teacher, father). For Patočka, however, this view is still too noetic. Intelligibility is not correlated to understanding, but is "intelligibility in the form of the understood" (PLES 146). Thus one cannot appeal to different modes of practical self-understanding to say why the same thing can show up in different ways. Such things "are manifest, intelligible [*verständlich*] *to me*; in themselves they are without intelligibility; and yet they are *themselves*, no image, no symbol, no interpretation; the understanding of them [*deren Verständnis*] adds nothing to them and does not create them" (PLES 147).

There is, then, a significant tension in Patočka's thought between the idea of a rule-governed self-showing and the kind of rules that appearing exhibits. Rules of meaning must be correlated with particular *types* of acts, projects, and practices – not because the latter "create" their correlates, but because they let their correlates show themselves in *certain determinate* ways. It may be that the noetic "adds nothing" to the things that appear, but the rule of their appearing, their transcendental condition, cannot be understood without reference to *differentiated* noetic contexts.

The distinction between causal and normative rules allows us to see more clearly what it means to speak of "idealities of nature." Human beings are such idealities because in their Being they are oriented toward the normative. Such orientation is what allows the meaning-structure of entities – the laws of appearing as such – to come into play. As we have seen, Patočka characterized the region of appearing as such as an "interval," an "all-explaining event of Being" that is "contemporaneous with the birth of humans" (BCLW 167). This interval can now be seen as a normative space;

[19] On the normative status of being "beholden" to entities as a condition for their appearing as the things they are, see John Haugeland, "Truth and Finitude: Heidegger's Transcendental Existentialism," in Mark Wrathall and Jeff Malpas (eds.), *Heidegger, Authenticity, and Modernity. Essays in Honor of Hubert L. Dreyfus*, Vol. 1. (Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press, 2000), pp. 54–57, 75.

indeed, its character as an *interval* simply expresses the transcendental character of meaning as a play of the "is" and the "ought." But, given Patočka's insistence on the autonomy of the interval, it is puzzling why it should be "contemporaneous with the birth of humans." This cannot merely mean that it depends on the emergence of a transcendental subject in the sense of an "empty position," for children and animals are also such datives of manifestation, yet they do not belong to this "birth." When and how is a human being born? One plausible suggestion is that humans are "born" when they become attuned to the normative as such; that is, when they are able, not merely to act in accord with norms, but also in light of them, able to govern *themselves*. This would account for the kind of ideality in question: responsiveness to norms is a natural capacity that allows for the emergence of meaning, and so of what John McDowell calls "second nature."[20] But if such birth must have *transcendental* significance – that is, if it cannot be seen as a matter of psychological adjustment to some pre-given laws of appearing – it follows that the transcendental subject cannot be a mere empty position. I believe that Patočka came to understand this and tried to flesh out his conception of the subject by way of his theory of the three movements of life. In conclusion, then, let us see whether this theory adequately addresses the problem of the lawfulness of the world.

3 Ideality and the Three Movements of Life

Here we must restrict ourselves to a brief sketch of Patočka's conception of "life" as the "middle term" in which nature is transformed "into something that is already more than nature" (BCLW 134). Our question is whether this transformation can be seen to have transcendental significance, or whether it falls victim to a subtle form of non-phenomenological naturalism, thereby leaving the normative lawfulness of the world unclarified. We may begin by recalling Patočka's critique of Heidegger. For Heidegger, "life is a life of understanding," i.e., meaning is correlated to practical activity. But this ignores the fact that "in human living not everything is given solely by understanding" (BCLW 133). At a deeper level, there is "sensory, perceptual harmony with the world," without which "existence [in Heidegger's sense] would not be possible" (BCLW 135). Sensation is no mere hyletic datum, but an effect, a feeling that involves meaning; sensation "addresses us" (BCLW 137). Here then, apparently, is a modality of meaning that is genuinely *sui generis,* a meaningful solicitation or address from appearing as such. If sensible life does indeed involve such a moment of meaning, it might be possible to defend the asubjective transcendentality of appearing as such by showing that the normativity necessary for "comprehension, understanding, cognition, truth" (BCLW 153) originates in sensible life and so founds those levels of meaning that seem to require correlation with differentiated noetic states.

[20] John McDowell, op. cit., pp. 84–86.

Doubts about whether Patočka's concept of sensible life can really serve this transcendental role arise, however, if we ask about what "human" means in his claim that "in human living not everything is given solely by understanding." The problem is this: for Patočka, the harmony with the world that sensible life exhibits is common to animals, children, and adult human beings. If this harmony is a genuine level of meaningful appearing, and not merely a naturalistic fact, then there is some basis for asserting that meaning does not depend on noetic functions, but only on the "uptake" of appearing as such by the empty transcendental subject. Here Patočka's position is equivocal, however, for animals and children are said to be "wholly submerged in a relation of empathy, of fellow-feeling with the world" (BCLW 138), while "in *human sensibility*, life as an empathic harmony with the world is transcended, that is, it is preserved yet modified" (BCLW 139; my emphasis). The "childish" and the "animal-like within us" does not "persist unchanged as some specific layer or as an autonomous element in our mode of Being" because humans live in a "distinctive interval with respect to worldly reality" (BCLW 138). Is not this "distinctive interval" precisely the interval of appearing as such? If so, then the question remains open whether meaning really originates in that sensibility we share with animals and children, or whether it arises only with the "birth of the human," i.e., with whatever it is that accounts for the *difference* between childish and animal sensibility, on the one hand, and "human sensibility" on the other. In the latter case, life would be the "middle term" that transforms nature into "something more than nature" only because it can move from simply responding to the world's solicitations to acting in light of the *specific* norms belonging to differentiated noetic states. Patočka, however, does not seem to hold this view.

His view depends on a subtle and portentous identification of "appearing as such" with the *cosmos*.[21] If the animal and the child respond to the solicitations of the world in sensibility, genuinely "human" sensibility is already "richer" than this, since it is "humans who bring out the endless, the cosmic, in sensibility precisely because sensibility is for them a world, an *infinity*" (BCLW 140). Here we see the basis for

[21] A full treatment of this theme would require – and will not receive here – an inquiry into Patočka's relation to Eugen Fink's cosmological turn. But as Karel Novotný writes in "Einführung. Struktur des Erscheinens und endliche Freiheit" (in Jan Patočka, *Vom Erscheinen*…, op. cit., p. 22): "Without doubt, Patočka's own critique of the subjectivism of Heidegger's conception of the world takes its point of departure from Fink. However, Patočka seems in a way intent on replacing Fink's Cosmological Difference with the phenomenological difference between the field of appearing and what appears, so that the opposition 'world-totality and human world' is, through the appearing, once more phenomenologically mediated." This raises the question of how far Patočka's appeal to the infinite, to the world-totality, to *cosmos* and the like, can be considered *phenomenological*. Are these notions, as Patočka understands them, consistent with the demand – inherent in the concept of phenomenological reflection and accepted by Patočka – that phenomenology strive for "demonstration," i.e., original access? Are these notions really hermeneutically uncovered "intentional implications" of the finite intentional objects with which we deal meaningfully, or are they crypto-naturalistic constructions deriving from an unholy mixture of the ontic and the transcendental? The tension in Patočka's concept of the "human" suggests the latter answer.

Patočka's view that humans are idealities of nature: normative world-lawfulness, and so meaning, shows itself because humans are oriented toward what transcends the finite (the ontic) and makes it possible, namely, the infinite. Leaving aside the question of whether just any "infinite" is sufficient to yield the interval between *is* and *ought* that characterizes existence,[22] we must ask where, exactly, this orientation toward the infinite originates. We cannot assume that it is already there in sensibility as such, in the harmony with the world we share with animals and children, since it is supposed to be that by which "human" sensibility transcends the animal and the childish. But if it originates in some other movement of life, then appeal to sensibility cannot provide us with the basis for an asubjective account of the normativity of meaning.

And in fact Patočka locates its origin at the "apex" of the three movements of life. The first movement, which he calls "sinking roots," is precisely our "instinctive-affective harmony with the world" (BCLW 148). Though Patočka holds that, in existence, all three movements "presuppose and interpenetrate each other" (BCLW 147), he grants to the first movement a certain "foundational" significance in the sense that "an instinctually affective life is possible … without the two further movements which build on it" (BCLW 148). Such building begins with the second movement, that of "self-sustenance, of self-projection," thematized by Heidegger as Dasein's practical engagement or "understanding" (BCLW 148). Significantly, Patočka argues that the transformation of sensibility into "human" sensibility begins only here. "In humans, all animal functions pass through a refraction due to the instinctually affective life very early taking place in a human-produced context, … in the context of a tradition constituted by the second and third movements" (BCLW 148).

It would thus appear that the meaningful character of world also emerges only with this second movement. Only because our instincts and inclinations are "refracted" in this way do they take on normative significance – e.g., as *reasons* for me to do something as opposed to causes that make me do it. But neither is this second movement sufficient, in Patočka's view, for world. Only a third movement – "the movement of existence in the narrow [Heideggerian] sense of the word, which typically seeks to bestow a global closure and meaning on the regions and rhythms of the first and second movements" (BCLW 148) – is the "authentically human movement" (BCLW 160). In the second movement, life is driven by utility and is enslaved to its finite goals, a condition that, like sensibility, we share with some animals. Tied to the Earth in the first movement, I remain so also in the second as I labor on it to bring forth a built environment. But in the third movement "humans attempt to break the rule of the Earth" – not in the sense of trying to leave it behind or attempting to gain "mastery" (both of which belong to the second movement), but in

[22] Only an infinite that already has normative significance will suffice – for instance, Plato's Idea of the Good, or some notion of God. A "mathematical" infinite in Kant's sense can provide no basis for normative laws.

the sense of an "attempt to gain *clarity* about our situation" (BCLW 160).[23] Meaning and "world" – *cosmos* in a phenomenological, non-naturalistic sense – arise only with this third movement, in which finitude is transcended by the orientation toward the infinite that characterizes "existence in the narrow sense," the birth of the human.

The theory of the three movements of life, then, supplies no independent reason, beyond the formal phenomenology of appearing as such, to think that the lawfulness of appearing as such can be understood apart from the differentiated noetic contexts to which its normativity is traced in the putatively subjectivistic phenomenologies of Husserl and Heidegger. Put otherwise, the concept of life, as Patočka understands it, does not contain the resources necessary to overcome the shortcomings of the empty transcendental subject we encountered in the previous section. Patočka's concept of sensibility equivocates between a naturalistic conception (something common to children, animals and adult human beings) and a transcendental one, a genuinely phenomenological conception of human – that is, meaningful – sensibility. Thus he has not shown that meaning is indigenous to sensibility; rather, sensibility is meaningful only when "refracted" by the subsequent norm-governed movements of life. We must conclude, then, that there is a tension between Patočka's call for an asubjective transcendental phenomenology of appearing as such and the *kind* of law – normative, meaningful – he attributes to the world.

[23] Each of the three movements of life has an "authentic" and an "inauthentic" mode. The inauthentic mode of the third is "being blinded by finitude." It is here that Patočka locates the ultimate significance of the epoché, for he understands the general thesis of the natural attitude as the inauthentic mode of the third movement. In the natural attitude, with its "*Ansichseinsthesis*" (i.e., its characteristic naive realism), we are "lost" among things that appear, captivated by the world of finite things, oblivious to the transcendence or infinity that sustains it. The epoché, which Husserl describes as a negative gesture of bracketing, has in fact a positive motivation in certain "moods" in which the "repressed" infinity makes itself felt and a movement from inauthentic to authentic human being is inaugurated, a move toward what Patočka calls "freedom." See Jan Patočka, *Vom Erscheinen*…, op. cit. Text VI: "Transzendentale Epoché und theoretische Haltung," pp. 179–182.

Sacrifice and Salvation: Jan Patočka's Reading of Heidegger on the Question of Technology

Marcia Sá Cavalcante Schuback

Jan Patočka's reading of Heidegger's concern with the "question of technology" can be framed within the relation between sacrifice and salvation. Indeed, the experience of what has been called, since Ancient Greece, *technē* is anchored in the abyssal experience of sacrificing in order to save: sacrificing life in order to save life. Patočka's reading of Heidegger on this issue is of great inspiration, not only by helping us to understand Heidegger's views, but above all because Patočka challenges us here to deepen from within the historical tension between nihilism and totality, this abyssal thought on the paradoxical relation between sacrifice and salvation. Following mainly Patočka's 1973 lecture "*Die Gefahren der Technisierung in der Wissenschaft bei Edmund Husserl und das Wesen der Technik als Gefahr bei Martin Heidegger*"[1] and the Prague follow-up seminar,[2] it is possible to argue that the question of technology is central to his understanding of freedom and, hence, to

[1] Lecture originally written in German for the World Congress of Philosophy held in Varna in September 1973. The text published under this title by K. Nellen, J. Němec and I. Srubar (eds.) in Jan Patočka, *Die Bewegung der menschlichen Existenz. Phänomenologische Schriften II* (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1991), pp. 330–353, is a second, enlarged and revised version, completed by an Appendix reproducing the second part of the first version, pp. 354–359. The complete first version has been published only in translation. For English, see "The Dangers of Technicization in Science according to E. Husserl and the Essence of Technology as Danger according to M. Heidegger," in Jan Patočka, *Philosophy and Selected Writings*, ed. and transl. E. Kohák (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1989), pp. 327–339. For French, see "Les périls de l'orientation de la science vers la technique selon Husserl et l'essence de la technique en tant que péril selon Heidegger," in Jan Patočka, *Liberté et Sacrifice. Écrits politiques*, ed. and transl. E. Abrams (Grenoble: Millon, 1990), pp. 259–275.

[2] I shall follow here the French translation by Erika Abrams and her own title of this seminar held by Patočka in Prague in October 1973: "Séminaire sur l'ère technique," in *Liberté et Sacrifice*…, op. cit., pp. 277–324. [See also Jan Patočka, "Čtyři semináře k problému Evropy" (Four Seminars on the Problem of Europe), in *Sebrané spisy*, sv. 3, *Péče o duši III*, ed. I. Chvatík and P. Kouba (Praha: Oikoymenh, 2002), pp. 387–423].

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his political philosophy as well. But not only that: reading these texts, we can discover a fruitful way to address the core of Patočka's phenomenology of appearing as such. Precisely in regard to the philosophical question of technology we can see that, for both Patočka and Heidegger, the phenomenological question of freedom is not merely an issue for phenomenology, in the sense of an object of research, but the central question of phenomenology's own condition of possibility. In other words, the question of technology concerns, not only ethical and political issues, but the very definition of phenomenology itself. Insofar as technology, or *technē*, presupposes in its own definition the meaning of something like "appearing," a phenomenology of technology should be developed from within a phenomenology of appearing. My claim is that reading Patočka's texts on technology brings us, not only inspiring thoughts on the problem of technics and technology, but also important indications on how to deepen our understanding of the relation between Patočka's and Heidegger's thinking. Above all, we gain an insight into Patočka's own redefining of phenomenology as a philosophy of appearing as such. This becomes manifest when we realize that the question of "sacrifice" has a fundamental phenomenological significance in that it points to what could be called a *phenomenological sacrifice*. In other words, sacrifice shows how appearing appears as such. It appears in sacrificing itself. I cannot here give a full account of these issues. My aim is, rather, to suggest a few paths for future thought. The present article is divided into three parts: (1) a summary of how Patočka understands the difference between Husserl and Heidegger regarding the phenomenological question of technology; (2) a general discussion on the question of technology as a question in quest of Being *as* appearing; (3) an outline of what I call "phenomenological sacrifice" as the sacrifice of appearing.

1 Patočka's View on the Difference Between Husserl and Heidegger Regarding the Phenomenological Question of Technology

According to Patočka, this distinction is to be understood mainly in relation to two central aspects: firstly, regarding technology as a *structure of meaning*; secondly, regarding technology as a *source of knowledge*. Patočka argues that, whereas Husserl defines technology as an "emptying and displacement of meaning" (*Sinnentleerung und Sinnverschiebung*), technology is, for Heidegger, an "accomplishment of meaning" (*Sinnvollzug*), an excess of meaning.[3] For Husserl, technology is to be understood from out of the crisis of modern science. Modern science is in crisis insofar as the meaning of science understood as the endless task of reason's immanent teleology, i.e., the meaning of science as philosophy, becomes empty.

[3] Jan Patočka, "The Dangers of Technicization in Science…," op. cit., pp. 328–330; "Die Gefahren der Technisierung in der Wissenschaft…," op. cit., pp. 331–334.

This emptying of meaning occurs when reason deviates from itself, when its meaning is displaced. Aiming at universality, rationality deviates and displaces its meaning through a kind of *hubris* of quantification, formalization, formalism, automatism, habitualism, in short, through what Husserl called technicization (*Technisierung*).[4] Technology estranges human life from truth because, in it, through it, and with it, the meaning of truth and the truth of meaning become empty and displaced. For Husserl, technology is a certain *sterēsis*, a lack of meaning, a lack of truth, a paroxysmal formalism. Husserl's solution, or rather his hope for "salvation" from this crisis, is framed in terms of the possibility of a new foundation of transcendental subjectivity through which theory and life could belong together anew as at the Greek origins of science.

Patočka sees Heidegger's view as much more radical. Heidegger's basic claim is that, as the meaning of Being, the essence of technology, grasped in the German word *Ge-stell* ("enframing" in English, *arraisonnement* or *dis-positif* in French), understands all beings as *Bestand*, as reserves, dis-posals and resources, as being at dis-posal, and is no longer graspable as an "object" (*Gegenstand*) for subjective representations.[5] For Heidegger, technology means, not only a *uni*-dimensionalization of all meanings and beings, but an *omni*-dimensionalization of one sole meaning of Being, namely, Being as *Bestand*, as what can be positioned anywhere and at any time, to whatever use and function, independently of all spatial and temporal determinations. As *Bestand*, Being *is* nothing. As Patočka puts it, "both things and people … function rather than dwell, have an effect rather than repose."[6] In the world of planetary technology, everything – things, world, man, nature, animals, universe, beings – can only receive the meaning of technology, that is, of an understanding of Being as *Bestand*, as reserve, disposal, function, resource. Technology is, therefore, an "accomplishment" and an "excess" of meaning. In this world, Being has solely this excessive meaning of *being nothing but Bestand*. "*Ge-stell* is universal," as Patočka insists, it is universal as an *omni-dimensionalization of meaning*.

As an accomplishment of the meaning of *Bestand*, *Gestell* shows a radical *transformation of the meaning of Being* and, of course, of the Being of meaning. What Heidegger describes as a transformation of the meaning of Being is interpreted by Patočka as *metamorphosis*, a term related to Ovid's classical title, but which has, I believe, a strong Kafkian resonance. Patočka interprets this "metamorphosis" of meaning, exhibited in planetary technology, as a metamorphosis of life. In this metamorphosis, life negates itself. It owns living; life metamorphoses into a *vivere*

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[4] Edmund Husserl, *Die Krisis der europäischen Wissenschaften und die transzendentale Phänomenologie*, ed. W. Biemel (Den Haag: Martinus Nijhoff, 1954), Husserliana VI, above all § 9, f–g.

[5] Martin Heidegger, "Die Frage nach der Technik," in *Vorträge und Aufsätze* (Pfullingen: Neske, 1997).

[6] Jan Patočka, "The Dangers of Technicization in Science…," op. cit., p. 330; "Die Gefahren der Technisierung in der Wissenschaft…," op. cit., p. 334: "sowohl Dinge wie Menschen … eher fungieren als weilen, eher wirken als bestehen."

nolle, mori non posse, "unwilling to live [yet] unable to die,"[7] to borrow a phrase from Seneca's dialogue "On Consolation." Metamorphosis of life implies a metamorphosis of all experiences of transformation and transcendence, and, therefore, of the experience of meaning and truth. In this, it shows the question of technology to be a matter, not only of the structure of meaning, but also of the source of knowledge. In this respect, Husserl asserted technology and, thereby, the question of modern science to be a moment in which intuition, defined as the original wellspring of knowledge, is substituted by intellectual formalism, a moment in which theory emerges as opposed to life. From Heidegger's viewpoint, however, and this means, in Patočka's own terms, from the point of view of the experience of a "metamorphosis" of meaning, the essence of technology is a "specific mode of understanding of what is."[8] In this passage from the "*Séminaire sur l'ère technique*," Patočka evokes the title of the lectures held by Heidegger in 1949 in Bremen, "*Einblick in das, was ist*," where Heidegger explains in very challenging thoughts that the essence of technology, *Ge-stell*, *is* Being itself.[9] In its essence, technology is nothing technological, it is not the realm of "technologies," but rather an *understanding of Being*. In its essence, technology is an *Einblick in das, was ist*, an insight into that which is, a mode of understanding of the way things and world appear to us.[10]

Patočka saw here a central point in Heidegger's thoughts on the question of technology, namely, the *ambiguity* brought out by the double genitive of the expression "understanding *of* Being." This ambiguity is not a rhetorical idiosyncrasy of "Heidegger's language" but a linguistic expression of what Patočka calls the "paradox of understanding."[11] The essence of technology is a mode of understanding of Being, excessive and "paroxysmal" to such an extent that it conceals for us, more than ever, more than any reification and subjectivation, that understanding is already here. Quoting Patočka: "this mode of understanding prevents us from having another relation to understanding than the one in which we are at its disposal, viewing and experiencing everything from the point of view of the *Gestell*."[12] Our perspectives are entangled in the circuit of the point of view of the *Gestell*, in "*le circuit de ce regard*."[13] Patočka considers this excess of understanding to

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[7] Lucius Annaeus Seneca, "On Consolation," in *Moral Essays,* Vol. I, transl. J. W. Basore (Loeb Classical Library No. 214), p. 15.

[8] Jan Patočka, "Séminaire…," op. cit., p. 278.

[9] Martin Heidegger, *Bremer und Freiburger Vorträge*, Gesamtausgabe 79 (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1994), p. 69: "Wenn das Wesen der Technik, das Ge-stell als die Gefahr im Seyn, das Seyn selbst ist, dann läßt sich die Technik niemals durch ein bloß auf sich gestellten menschliches Tun meistern, weder positiv noch negativ."

[10] Jan Patočka, "Séminaire…," op. cit., p. 279.

[11] Ibid., p. 280.

[12] Ibid., p. 279: "il nous empêche d'avoir d'autre rapport à la compréhension que celui donné par le fait que nous nous sommes mis à son service et que nous voyons tout dans la perspective du *Gestell*."

[13] Ibid.

express an absolute lack of understanding. However, this paradox of excess qua lack belongs to the nature of understanding as such, to its universalizing nature. As he says, "the *Gestell* is universal, and because it is universal, understanding cannot be comprised within it."[14] "As disclosure, and because it discloses, understanding dissimulates itself in most extreme concealment,"[15] quoting Patočka further. That is why the understanding of Being *is* in its essence paradoxical, and not a resolution of paradoxical views, states, or statements. The paradox of understanding is not something contingent in the fate of human reason, it does not result from a historical "crisis," as Husserl supposed; rather, it is *the paradox of Being as appearing*. Here lies the profundity of Heidegger's view, which Patočka grasped in his reading of Heidegger. Because Patočka understands the essence of technology from out of the paradox of Being as appearing, we shall read his reflections on the essence of technology together with his writings on phenomenology as philosophy of appearing.

2 The Phenomenological Question of Technology as the Question of Being as Appearing

The question of technology is, for Heidegger, the question of Being. But this does not mean that, in the world of planetary technology, "Being" appears as the technological. It means rather that *Being appears as appearing*. For Heidegger, Being does not precede appearing, Being *is* appearing:[16] Being as appearing constitutes a phenomenological tautology. This tautology itself appears in the *Ge-stell*. According to Heidegger, appearing can never appear as such, but solely as dis-appearing in appearances. In this dis-appearing in appearances, appearing as such reveals itself. For Heidegger, phenomenology should therefore be redefined as a phenomenology of the unapparent, *Phänomenologie des Unscheinbaren*.[17] This is the truth of Being, which Heidegger describes using the literal meaning of the Greek word *alētheia*. Patočka understands it as the "paradox of understanding," the paradox of Being as appearing, of truth itself. *Gestell*, the essence of technology, is the "paroxysmal" experience of the paradox of understanding as the paradox of Being and of truth. It is the "paroxysmal" experience of this phenomenological "tautology." In the world

[14] Ibid.: "Le *Gestell* est universel, mais parce qu'il est universel, la compréhension ne peut y être comprise."

[15] Ibid., p. 280: "La compréhension, en tant que ce qui dévoile et, par le fait même qu'elle dévoile, se dissimule dans le retrait le plus extrême. C'est le paradoxe de la compréhension en général qui présuppose toujours quelque chose qui dévoile et quelque chose qui, en dévoilant, demeure voilé dans le retrait."

[16] Although Patočka considers that, in Heidegger, Being precedes appearing, it is important to indicate that Heidegger understood his own philosophy as an experience of thought in which Being and the aletheological structure of appearing are the same.

[17] Martin Heidegger, "Seminar in Zähringen 1973," in *Vier Seminare*, Gesamtausgabe 15 (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1977), p. 137.

of planetary technology, the essence of understanding, of Being, and of truth as disclosure makes itself evident, but in the most paroxysmal and dangerous mode of appearing as such in its own disappearing. That is why, for Heidegger, the question of technology is not essentially a *question of crisis*, as Husserl assumed, but a *question of danger*. Patočka brings this distinction between *crisis* and *danger* very clearly to light in his account of Husserl's and Heidegger's positions. And he also very clearly understands Heidegger's view on the relation between the essence of appearing and the essence of technology, saying, for instance, that in the world of planetary technology "the world still reveals itself, but in such a way that it is no longer world," being exclusively the gathering of reserves and resources at disposal for uses and abuses.[18] What appears is not only the omni-dimensionalization of one meaning of Being, but also the tremendous danger of totally losing an originary access to the truth of Being and to the essentialization of man. The essence of technology reveals that Being itself is dangerous, that "danger is in Being," as Heidegger expresses it in one of his Bremen lectures entitled "On Danger" – "*Die Gefahr*."[19] Because the paradox of understanding is the paradox of Being itself (of truth), danger is the danger of Being and not something circumstantial, contingent, such as the "unfathomable fate" of history. Patočka interprets this Heideggerian motif of "danger in Being" as "metamorphosis" of life, as life's necessary tendency to destruction, as the presence of non-life, of destruction, of death within life itself. This is why "where danger is, grows also that which saves." The paradox of the understanding of Being as the paradox of Being itself is the perspective in which Patočka understands Heidegger's interpretative appropriation of Hölderlin's verses – "*Wo aber Gefahr ist, wächst das Rettende auch*." According to Patočka, Heidegger introduces a new idea concerning the question of technology in connection with his interpretation of these two lines of poetry: the idea that, in the utmost danger of hindrance to any originary access to the truth of Being and the essence of man, the truth of Being and the essence of man still does appear and disclose itself. Because the essence of technology, as *Gestell*, reveals itself as a *Geschick der Entbergung*, a destiny of disclosure, it may be possible, in the utmost danger of totally losing any originary access to the essence of truth and the essence of man, in the utmost danger of total destruction through planetary and productive strategies of world-wide control over life and death, to realize a deeper understanding of Being. This disclosure is, however, in danger of never becoming unconcealed, in danger, therefore, of "total mobilization" (recalling Ernst Jünger's words) and destruction. Heidegger's idea, seen by Patočka, is that "*das Rettende*," salvation, or rather transformation takes place, not in a beyond, but from within danger, from within the danger of Being. It is, however, on the point of "that which saves" that Patočka claims to differ from Heidegger.

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[18] Cf. Jan Patočka, "Séminaire…," op. cit., p. 279: "Le monde se manifeste toujours, mais de telle façon qu'il n'est plus jamais monde, qu'il n'est rien au-delà de ces mises en demeure et commissions."

[19] Martin Heidegger, *Bremer und Freiburger Vorträge*, op. cit., pp. 46–67.

I believe his position should be understood in relation to the understanding of truth as *alētheia* which guides Heidegger's notion of the phenomenological tautology of Being and appearing. For Heidegger, Being is appearing insofar as this *is* means the *belonging together,* the "con-stellation" (*die Konstellation*) of appearing and disappearing – appearing appears as dis-appearing in what appears, but it is in this "negative" and absent way that appearing appears as such. As concerns this point, Patočka makes a different claim. For him, the difference between Being and beings, appearing and appearances, should rather be understood as "*conflict*," in the Heraclitean sense of a "tensional relationship" between opposites. In order to appear itself, this conflict demands, however, a sacrifice. It is through sacrifice that a front line of difference can appear within Being as such. Because, for Heidegger, the phenomenal givenness of the technological is what appears revealing its own previous inexistence, transition from non-Being to Being, that is, *poiēsis*, he sees "that which saves" as *poiēsis* itself, that which appears while disappearing in appearances. Technology understood as *poiēsis* is what saves from the danger of *Gestell*. This is why Heidegger believes that art, well distinguished from aesthetics, can be viewed as "saving." Patočka criticizes this position of Heidegger's, terming it an "aesthetical conversion."[20] He argues instead for an ethical-political metamorphosis, formulated both in the Heraclitean terms of *polemos* and through a reformulation of Saint Paul's words, τὸν καλὸν ἀγῶνα ἠγώνισμαι, where "the good fight"[21] is interpreted by Patočka as "solving conflict by conflict."[22] Patočka's position is not non-aesthetical, he does acknowledge that a story such as Kafka's "The Burrow" (*Der Bau*) can be understood as something "saving."[23] There is no doubt but that he admits the aesthetical does indeed have an ethical dimension. One could object that Heidegger's "solution" is not a passive aesthetical one, that one must, in order to understand his claim, first determine what "art" means for Heidegger, but the decisive point here is rather what Patočka calls "metamorphosis," *metanoia* as a "solving of conflict by conflict." The question Patočka is asking from out of Heidegger is how "*das Rettende*" can become effectively saving, how it can break through as a historical force.[24] For Patočka, Heidegger's "aesthetical conversion" cannot suffice to describe the way Being as appearing appears in its own withdrawal. In his view, this remains a "formal" and, therefore, aesthetical description. The "ethical" metamorphosis (*metanoia*) proposed by Patočka provides a description, not only of the general formal meaning of the paradox of Being, but also of the way in which this paradox appears in concrete human life in the era of planetary technology, era characterized both by planetary conflicts (the world wars) and by unceasing minor

[20] Jan Patočka, "Séminaire…," op. cit., p. 282. For the whole argument, see pp. 280–285.

[21] 2 Timothy 4:7.

[22] Jan Patočka, "Séminaire…," op. cit., p. 284.

[23] Ibid., p. 297.

[24] Jan Patočka, "The Dangers of Technicization…," op. cit., p. 335; "Die Gefahren der Technisierung in der Wissenschaft…," op. cit., p. 354: "Wie kann das Rettende wirklich zum Rettenden werden, d.h. aus der Vergessenheit heraustreten und eine geschichtliche Macht entfalten?"

conflicts all over the globe. For Patočka, it is in the concrete experience of sacrifice that the paradox of Being as appearing appears in its ethical, that is, singular-concrete dimension. In the concrete experience of sacrifice, Being appears as the paradox of appearing and, thereby, as other than the omni-dimensionalized meaning of *Bestand*. In the concrete experience of sacrifice, a more originary form of truth breaks through, in which Being as appearing is not only understood, but concretely experienced as a historical force. In order to develop this difference between Heidegger and Patočka in regard to "*das Rettende*" and the possibility of historical metamorphosis (*metanoia*), it is relevant to discuss how Patočka's views on sacrifice relate to Heidegger's remarks on the essence of sacrifice.

3 Phenomenological Sacrifice or the Sacrifice of Appearing

How are we to understand the moment when danger is paramount but "that which saves" grows? Patočka follows Heidegger in the insight that Being appears as appearing, in the era of planetary technology, when the meaning of Being withdraws, in its omni-dimensionalization as resource for any use and abuse. The gift of Being as appearing such as planetarily experienced in the era of global technology is given, however, in the utmost danger of its own withdrawal. The concrete experience of this historical endowment of the meaning of Being as appearing is the sacrifice of the human. The human is sacrificed in the sense that, in the planetary power of man over beings and life, man appears no longer to have power over his own power. Defined as a world governed and planned by human will to power and control, the world of planetary technology is at the same time a world in which neither singular nor plural experiences are capable of breaking this planetary "hegemony."[25] This paradoxical situation, in which human control is controlled and dominated by its own will to power and control, reveals a world of planetary conflict in which power enhances power to such an extent that it becomes a planetary experience that "the human being does not control the process controlling him."[26] Here appears a radical conflict within Being itself. The era of planetary technology is, as Heidegger highlighted, a world of "unconditional anthropomorphism"[27] yet, paradoxically, a world where the human is sacrificed. Heidegger hints here at a thought which

[25] For a very inspiring discussion of broken hegemonies at the basis of the unbroken hegemony of the planetary, see Reiner Schürmann, *Des hégémonies brisées* (Mauvezin: Trans-Europ-Repress, 1996).

[26] Cf. Jan Patočka, "The Dangers of Technicization…," op. cit., p. 336; "Die Gefahren der Technisierung in der Wissenschaft…," op. cit., p. 354: "Als das mächtigste Mittel der Machtsteigerung haben sich darin Konfrontation, Spaltung und der Konflikt erwiesen. Besonders im Konflikt wird klar, daß der Mensch als solcher nicht als das Beherrschende, sondern als ein Bestelltes einbezogen wird."

[27] Martin Heidegger, *Nietzsche II* (Pfullingen: Günther Neske, 1961), p. 20.

Patočka develops in greater depth, namely, that when the human is sacrificed on a planetary scale, another meaning of the human appears, not as a mere idea, but as a historical force, making possible real historical metamorphosis.

Now, how are we to understand the proposal of an "ethical metamorphosis" as "solving of conflict by conflict" or "sacrifice"? How are we to define sacrifice as a solving of conflict by conflict? The general meaning of sacrifice is, in Patočka's own words, the paradoxical idea of a "gain through a voluntary loss."[28] Far from a concept of sacrifice as an act of substitution or transference, where potential conflicts can be controlled by means of the sacrifice of a surrogate victim,[29] Patočka defines sacrifice as pushing negativity to its extreme limits.[30] Sacrifice means here holding out, bearing the pain and suffering of this negativity until it breaks through into a positive dimension. Sacrifice is not understood in its mythical and religious meaning, as a sacred-violent practice where the hierarchical difference between divinity and humanity is experienced and ritualized. Taken as pushing negativity to the emergence of a positive new order at its extreme limits, sacrifice refers to a metamorphosis within Being, whereby the difference between Being and beings appears as a real transformative force. Patočka's views on the essence of sacrifice are much closer to Bataille's than to Girard's, insofar as he assumes the fundamental force of sacrifice to be the real differentiation of the being of man from the being of things. As Bataille asserted, the principle of sacrifice is destruction, but not extermination. At stake in sacrifice is the destruction of thinghood in the victim,[31] the return to "immanent intimacy" with the groundless ground of life.[32] Whereas extermination in the sense of in-human catastrophes aims to transform the human into a thing, to displace the human into a realm of total utility (extermination camps, different forms of slavery and human devastation), sacrifice destroys the identification of humanity and thinghood. The concrete experience of being able to sacrifice oneself, of letting oneself be sacrificed, the active passivity implicated in sacrifice points, according to Patočka, to the *concrete* experience of difference between Being and beings. For Patočka, sacrifice is only possible where an ontological difference is *concretely* experienced, where the difference between Being and beings becomes real. This is why he determines the essence of sacrifice from

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[28] Jan Patočka, "The Dangers of Technicization…," op. cit., p. 336; "Die Gefahren der Technisierung in der Wissenschaft…," op. cit., p. 355: "Die paradoxe Vorstellung ist, daß man durch freiwilligen Verlust gewinnt."

[29] For an account of the sacred violence of sacrifice from a mythical-religious perspective, see René Girard, *Violence and the Sacred*, transl. P. Gregory (Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1977).

[30] Jan Patočka, "Séminaire…," op. cit., p. 299. For a discussion of this notion in Patočka's understanding of religion and Christianity, see Ludger Hagedorn, "Auto-Immunity or Transcendence. A Phenomenological Re-consideration of Religion with Jacques Derrida and Jan Patočka," in J. Bornemark and H. Ruin (eds.), *Phenomenology and Religion*, Södertörn Philosophical Studies, Vol. 6, 2009.

[31] Georges Bataille, *Théorie de la religion* (Paris: Gallimard, 1973), pp. 58–59.

[32] Ibid., p. 60.

out of the experience of self-sacrifice. Self-sacrifice is not simply a means for something else. Self-sacrifice is in itself a profound force of differentiation. This is why Patočka affirms that "the simple fact of speaking of sacrifice points to an understanding of Being totally different from that implemented in the era of technology,"[33] that which understands Being as beings, and beings as resource and disposals (*Bestand*). He insists that self-sacrifice is one of the dominant experiences of the present day, while at the same time technical understanding tends to eliminate the possibilities for understanding the ontological meaning of sacrifice. In a world where the difference between Being and beings is being eradicated, insofar as it acknowledges nothing but beings understood as resources, functions, and disposals, the ontic difference between the being of man and the being of things tends to disappear. In self-sacrifice, however, both the ontic difference between the being of man and the being of things (a substantial meaning of beings) and the ontological difference between Being and beings breaks through as a *concrete difference*.

Although Patočka claims to differ from Heidegger, there are important common points between the two thinkers regarding the essence of sacrifice. In "*Der Ursprung des Kunstwerkes*," Heidegger affirms that "an essential way in which truth grounds itself is the essential sacrifice."[34] The notion of "essential sacrifice" as a mode in which truth grounds itself is developed by Heidegger in the Postscript added in 1943 to his 1929 lecture "*Was ist Metaphysik?*" In this Postscript, Heidegger defines sacrifice as *Abschied*, "taking-leave" of beings on the way toward preserving (*Wahrung*) the favor of Being, "*die Gunst des Seins*."[35] Essential sacrifice is here understood as the proper mode of "essential thinking" in its abyssal difference from all calculative reasoning and thoughts: "essential thinking" "instead of calculatively counting on beings by means of beings, expends itself in being for the truth of Being."[36] Such thinking responds to the claim of Being through which the human being becomes responsible for the "simplicity of a singular necessity," that which "creates the need that fulfills itself in the freedom of sacrifice."[37] Essential sacrifice means human essence expending itself, not by compulsion, but in a manner that "arises from the abyss of freedom."[38] And, further, "sacrifice is at home in the essence of the event [*Ereignis*] whereby Being lays claim upon the

[33] Jan Patočka, "The Dangers of Technicization…," op. cit., p. 337; "Die Gefahren der Technisierung in der Wissenschaft…," op. cit., p. 356.

[34] Martin Heidegger, "Der Ursprung des Kunstwerkes," in *Holzwege,* Gesamtausgabe 5 (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1977), p. 49: "Wieder eine andere Weise, wie Wahrheit sich gründet, ist das wesentliche Opfer." See English translation: "The Origin of the Work of Art," in *Poetry, Language, Thought*, ed. and transl. A. Hofstadter (New York: Harper Perenniel, 2001).

[35] Martin Heidegger, "Nachwort zu 'Was ist Metaphysik?'" in *Wegmarken*, Gesamtausgabe 9, 2nd ed. (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1978), p. 308: "Das Opfer ist der Abschied vom Seienden auf dem Gang zur Wahrung der Gunst des Seins." English translation in *Pathmarks*, transl. W. McNeill (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), p. 236.

[36] Ibid.

[37] Ibid.

[38] Ibid.

human being for the truth of Being."[39] Sacrifice can therefore never tolerate calculation. No one can sacrifice him- or herself calculating gains and, therefore, "miscalculating" in terms of utility.

Patočka follows Heidegger in his most central thought, namely, that sacrifice is the extreme experience of the extreme of Being, that sacrifice is only possible when the difference between Being and beings becomes a concrete experience. He also introduces an elucidative distinction between authentic and inauthentic sacrifice, which can be read as an interpretation of what Heidegger means by "essential sacrifice." In inauthentic sacrifice, one life is sacrificed for the sake of another. In this sense, it is a sacrifice that does not take leave of beings. Authentic sacrifice, on the contrary, is sacrifice for the sake of the totality of life itself, a sacrifice on the way toward Being, which can, therefore, happen only, necessarily, through departing and distancing oneself from beings. Patočka even uses the expression "repeated" sacrifice, which calls to mind the Heideggerian motif of "repetition" (*Wiederholung*).[40] He criticizes, however, Heidegger's notions and talk of "expectation" (*die Wartung*) and of the *"*favor" (*Gunst*) of Being, which he considers omissive, non-active, too harmonious. His claim is, instead, for a "solving of conflict by conflict" understood as forwarding and pushing negativity to the extreme, e.g., to a tension enabling the breakthrough of a transformation from within the breakdown of all trust in objectivity. Sacrifice is thus defined as "*jusqu'au-boutisme*," in Erika Abrams' translation of Patočka.[41] But, on this very point, Patočka meets up again with Heidegger regarding a more central aspect, namely, Heidegger's understanding of sacrifice as freedom, the "freedom of sacrifice." For Patočka, this pushing on to the bitter end, this "*jusqu'au-boutisme*" of sacrifice is what makes it possible to realize *in concreto*, and not simply abstractly, that "freedom is something negative, [that] the task of freedom is to show the positive in this negativity."[42] Only in pushing the negative to the bitter end does it become possible for something to appear as an *absolute difference*.[43] Only then, the absolute difference between beings and what is *not* a being becomes manifest, making it clear thereby that a non-being constitutes beings. It is this "non," this negative, more potent than any direct "yes," or affirmative, that those who

[39] Ibid. A full account of Heidegger's understanding of the essence of sacrifice should also refer to unpublished writings such as *Besinnung* (Gesamtausgabe 66) und *Beiträge zur Philosophie (Vom Ereignis)* (Gesamtausgabe 65), and to his thinking on the "History of Being." In the volume *Besinnung*, pp. 37–38, Heidegger writes: "Das Wesen des 'Opfers', welcher Name aus dem Bisherigen allzuleicht mißdeutbar bleibt, besteht in der schweigenden Inständigkeit des Hinterlassens einer Erharrung der Wahrheit des Seyns, als welches den Kampf zwischen Entgegnung und Streit zum eigensten Wesen hat."

[40] Cf. Jan Patočka, "The Dangers of Technicization…," op. cit., p. 337; "Die Gefahren der Technisierung in der Wissenschaft…," op. cit., p. 357. I thank Filip Karfík for showing me this connection.

[41] Jan Patočka, "Séminaire…," op. cit., p. 314.

[42] Ibid.: "montrer *in concreto* que la liberté est quelque chose de négatif, montrer la positivité de cette quantité négative."

[43] Ibid., p. 315.

sacrifice themselves realize *in concreto*. The appearing of this *non*-objectivity of Being is, for Patočka, what breaks through as the freedom of sacrifice. This concrete sacrificial realization of the non-objectivity of Being is the way in which appearing appears as such, a way which Patočka at one point calls a mystery.[44] It reveals a sense of difference beyond the difference between metaphysical (ontic) and ontological difference. When *Gestell* appears as putting, not only existence and life, but "the very existence of existence"[45] in radical danger, difference appears above all as man's way of relating to his own essence, either renouncing it or caring for it, either abdicating his/her soul or being born anew with a soul, discovering him/herself as the "soulful human being" Josef Čapek wrote of in words which remain in the heart of Patočka's thought.[46]

Observing the temporal dimension of Heidegger's *Wartung* and Patočka's call for pushing negativity to the extreme may bring our differentiation between their respective positions regarding the question of sacrifice to a more principial level. Here, a more fruitful perspective appears than contrastive distinctions and oppositions, namely, the *in-betweenness* and *meanwhileness* at stake in authentic sacrifice, in the freedom of sacrifice. In both positions, what becomes decisive is the sense of difference that breaks through in the freedom of sacrifice. Heidegger and Patočka share an understanding of the sacrificial dimension as the appearing of radical difference. They agree that difference is tension between appearing and appearances, and, therefore, that another sense of difference must be conceived in order to grasp the phenomenological feature of this tension. Heidegger thematizes this fundamental issue – as a question of tensional difference – from out of its temporal constitution as meanwhileness and inbetweenness, as event, *Ereignis*, as Being's open infiniteness. Though Patočka insists that, for Heidegger, Being precedes appearing, a careful reading of Heidegger shows, as we have already seen, that Being is nothing but appearing. Heidegger does not claim Being's precedence in regard to appearing, or vice versa, but rather their tautology. Though Patočka argues for a reverted position, namely, for the precedence of appearing in regard to Being, I believe his thoughts about the freedom of sacrifice and the sacrifice required by freedom point to a similar phenomenological tautology. The question arising here is in what sense we should understand the "difference" between Heidegger's and Patočka's views on "difference." If we admit that Patočka proposes a phenomenological difference (appearing precedes Being) in contrast to Heidegger's ontological difference (Being precedes appearing), how should we characterize this difference between phenomenological and ontological difference? Is it phenomenological *or* ontological? As far as I can see, this question presupposes a logical difference, since it is contrastive, dual, and dialectical. My claim here will be that if we acknowledge rather a tautology of Being and appearing, and, thereby, the sacrificial constitution of appearing as such – insofar as appearing as such can only appear dis-appearing in appearances – a

[44] Ibid., p. 291.

[45] Ibid., p. 319.

[46] Cf. Jan Patočka, "Josef Čapek, pèlerin boiteux," in *L'écrivain, son "objet,"* ed. and transl. E. Abrams (Paris: P.O.L, 1990), p. 176.

non-dualistic sense of difference may break through. That being the case, it becomes urgent to develop a tensional sense of difference, where Being and non-Being meet in their conflictive belonging together as non-otherness. This would constitute the phenomenological sacrifice, the sacrifice of appearing. The amplitude of these questions would of course exceed our present proposal. In order to find a way in which to further elucidate the phenomenological sacrifice, let us try now to pinpoint in what sense Patočka defines the freedom of sacrifice.

The freedom of sacrifice means, as we have already seen, taking the negative to the limit where positivity breaks through. Reflection on the essence of sacrifice brings into play the tensional distinction between resignation and self-destruction. Here Patočka introduces a very inspiring thought. For him, the essence of technology grasped as *Gestell*, as the world of planetary technology, is also the world of the sacrifice of the singular. It is a world where self-alienation becomes more natural than being oneself. It is a world where nature is completely confused and entangled with singularity's immersion in everydayness, in impersonality; the world of the "worker," which knows and wants only "day" and "light." It is a world where paroxysmal individualism renders the individual indifferent to his singularity. In this sacrifice of the singular, the essence of technology as *Ge-stell* means destruction of the dividing line between singularity and totality, particularity and universality, interiority and exteriority. The world of planetary technology has no place for anything other than itself. In it, man becomes a slave to his own freedom, controlled by his will to control, submitted and subjected to his role as subject of history; in the world of planetary technology insensitivity becomes contemporary human sensitivity. In this technical world, which has come out of *Gestell*, power is typically anonymous and arbitrary; it is, as Patočka remarks, functional, but with no aim and to no end. The world of the virtual is a world of indifference to both causality and determinations, since all is realized as networks and fields of forces. Ambiguity increases. Conflicts, however, do not disappear; they grow exponentially. Conflicts grow, as a matter of fact, atomically, that is, on minimal levels. Danger of total destruction is confined in virtual and regional conflicts with Iran, with the Arab world. The total appears on the level of individual-atoms – unceasing small and private conflicts between people, groups, gangs, small and invisible relations between functioning and non-functioning forces. Here, there are no longer either fronts or frontiers, and otherness is nothing but multiple likenesses and a variety of "as if." The essence of technology builds a world with no without, with no outside, a "*huis clos*," a closed circuit. In its long history, the word *technology* has signified human dreams of salvation – salvation from the negative, from human finitude, from human limits, from what Aristotle already termed nature's "impotence." Technology names and evokes human attempts to save man from negativity. However, the essence of technology carries the necessity of salvation represented by technology to such an extreme that life reaches a stage where there seems to be no salvation from technical salvations. In all these ambiguities or paradoxes of the technical "world," we witness what Patočka calls the sacrifice of the singular. "But where danger is, grows also that which saves." For Patočka, these lines denote the possibility of a trans-individual struggle against the danger of Being appearing within the danger of Being, since the danger of technology necessarily implies a singular metamorphosis (*metanoia*).

The sacrifice of singularity does not mean extermination of singularity, but rather confusion, entanglement, non-difference of singularity and plurality. This is why, as Patočka says, the fight against outer misery must be at the same time a fight against inner misery, a struggle and conflict in singular existence. It is no longer possible to proceed in alternative terms, fighting either against outer or against inner misery. Both are "now" totally intertwined. There is only one fight – because the essence of technology, *Ge-stell*, is the sacrifice of the singular.

Technology as sacrifice of singularity shows that the frontier or dividing line between totality and singularity is obliterated, that there are no longer any differences between interiority and exteriority, between individuality and universality. The sacrifice of singularity is the sacrifice of borders and frontiers. It is the universal reality of ambiguity, where differences are indistinguishable, evil can be good, good can be evil, all concepts and instances seem everydayly entangled, overlapping. It is the rise of ambiguity as a realm of indifference and indifferentiation. This is why a transformation in the "no way out" of the *Gestell* is a transformation within it, and therefore within singular life. In this sense, the sacrifice of pushing and forwarding negativity – no-more-limits, no-more-frontiers, no-more-differences – could be understood as an insight into the non-difference of singularity and universality. Forwarding this insight into the strange ambiguity present on all levels of our lives, enframed by an omni-dimensionalized understanding of Being as resource and disposal, may, however, lead to the breakthrough of another sense of difference, more radical than any metaphysical, ethical, ontological differences. Another sense of difference means transformation, but transformation as understood by Patočka in the sense of a metamorphosis of Being bringing about a concrete metamorphosis of meaning.

Transformation is usually understood as overcoming a limit, a frontier. But how can we understand transformation in a world without limits, borders, frontiers? Patočka also asks this question, drawing on the experience of the most extreme of all conflicts – namely, the experience of war – and taking strong inspiration from both Teilhard de Chardin and Ernst Jünger. War means destruction of differences, and is as such to be grasped from the "front-line experience."[47] War exhibits a "phenomenology" of the front, and this experience of the front is what can be described *in concreto* as the emergence of absolute difference, the realization *in concreto* of transformation, of "that which saves" in the utmost danger. For Patočka, war is confrontation with the front line of differences. The "solidarity of the shaken" means a shaking, an undermining of the realm of indifferentiation and indifference from within. Reading the twentieth century as war, Patočka shows that the First World War was a war of and for limits and frontiers, a war of day and light.[48] It could promote only explicit, organized nationalisms. The Second World War eliminated this material sense of the front or limit. The sky became part of the battlefield,

[47] Jan Patočka, *Heretical Essays in the Philosophy of History*, ed. J. Dodd, transl. E. Kohák (Chicago and La Salle: Open Court, 1996), pp. 125–126.

[48] Ibid.

indicating that topographical borders had disappeared in a world of "cosmic war" (in Teilhard's words), of "total mobilization" (according to Ernst Jünger), of total destruction, final solutions, war from the atom to the All. The *Gegenüber* disappeared, became virtual, attacks came from everywhere, from above, from all sides. It was a war against frontiers, aiming at the omni-dimensionalization of only one side. After the two world wars, there emerged a strange situation of neither peace nor war – the cold war, Star Wars, marketing wars, religious wars, where it is no longer possible to draw a line between war and peace, where clear contraries disappear, and all that is left us is a realm of ambiguity, moments of indifferentiation, where politics of indifference grow and flourish. At the same time, however, the individual body – the individual skin in suicide-bombing – becomes the front line. In a world which has sacrificed the singular, the individual becomes the concrete front of differentiation.

The growth of indifferentiation and indifference, e.g., of ambiguity, exhibited in the world of planetary technology is, as Patočka says, the way the world still appears to us. It appears as an un-world, "but where danger is, grows also that which saves." It is here that we can experience historically, that is, *in concreto*, the sacrificial meaning of the phenomenological difference. In the sacrifice of all differences – called for by the world of planetary technology – a more radical sense of difference may break through and be realized. I would like to suggest an understanding of this radical or absolute meaning of difference as *non-otherness*. Here we could connect Patočka's reflections on sacrifice and the front line of difference with his readings of Nicolaus Cusanus and, in particular, of the treatise *De Non-Aliud* (*On the Non-Other*), which he even translated into Czech.[49] As Filip Karfík points out in his article on Patočka and Cusanus' concept of *non aliud* (non-otherness), appearing as such is an unindividualized "open field of possibilities." We encounter here one of the most challenging of Patočka's and Heidegger's thoughts, namely, the phenomenological meaning of possibility, a meaning that has yet to be thought through. From out of an understanding of difference as non-otherness possibility can no longer be framed in terms of a transition from non-Being to Being, from a no-longer to a not-yet, and even less so as the integration of potency and impotency. It should rather be realized as non-otherness in the sacrifice of appearing, in phenomenological sacrifice. The possibility of freedom shows itself here as freedom of and for the experience of the possible. As Patočka once said, "This experience is not a passive experience forcing itself upon us … because the *experience we have* is at the same time *one that has us*."[50]

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[49] On this issue, see the inspiring article by Filip Karfík, "Die Welt als 'non aliud' bei Jan Patočka," in *Internationale Zeitschrift für Philosophie*, 1998, no. 1, pp. 94–109. Patočka's translation is to be found in Jan Patočka and Pavel Floss, *Mikuláš Kusánský* (Praha: Vyšehrad, 2001), pp.190–194.

[50] Jan Patočka, "Negative Platonism: Reflections concerning the Rise, the Scope, and the Demise of Metaphysics – and Whether Philosophy Can Survive It," in *Philosophy and Selected Writings*, op. cit., p. 193.

Patočka's Phenomenological Appropriation of Plato

Burt C. Hopkins

For both Husserl and Heidegger, the metaphysical character of Plato's thought precludes, in principle, its appropriation by phenomenology. In Husserl's case, this is because Plato's best insights, for example, the one-over-many nature of eidetic unity, the "in itself" status of logical meaning, are obscured by the hypostization of ideal meaning.[1] For Heidegger, the problem is more complex: Plato's ontology, guided by the privilege of presence intrinsic to the *logos*, is a formal one, in the sense that the meaning of Being that guides its investigations is uncritically posited as that which belongs to the *Etwas überhaupt*, to any object whatever.[2] For Jan Patočka, on the contrary, the metaphysical character of Plato's thought does not rule out, in principle, its phenomenological appropriation, and indeed, this appropriation in a fundamental, albeit partial manner. In *Plato and Europe*,[3] Patočka traces the origination of what *was* Europe back to the Platonic account of the care of the soul, which contrasts significantly with Husserl's location of the *idea* of Europe in the ancient philosophical Greek impulse toward the universal science (*epistēmē*) of what is. And, contrary to Derrida and others,[4] who see in the notion

[1] Characteristic of Husserl's attitude toward Plato is his view that phenomenology's "general essence is the *eidos*, the ἰδέα in the Platonic sense, but apprehended in its purity and free from all metaphysical interpretations" (Edmund Husserl, *Erfahrung und Urteil* [Hamburg: Felix Meiner Verlag, 1985], p. 411; *Experience and Judgment*, transl. J. S. Churchill and K. Ameriks [Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 1973], p. 341).

[2] Heidegger characterizes Plato's approach to the meaning of Being as "formal-ontological" (Martin Heidegger, *Platon: Sophistes* [Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1992], p. 432; *Plato's Sophist*, transl. R. Rojcewicz and A. Schuwer [Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1997], p. 299), in the precise sense that the explication of any pre-given theme, including that of the "mere something in general [*Etwas überhaupt*]" (ibid., p. 225/155), is guided by the *logos*.

[3] Jan Patočka, *Plato and Europe*, transl. P. Lom (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2002). Herein referred to as "PE."

[4] Jacques Derrida, *The Gift of Death*, transl. D. Wills (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1995), p. 13. See also Edward F. Findlay, *Caring for the Soul in a Postmodern Age* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2002), p. 62.

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of "care" invoked here the influence or anticipation of the *Sorge* articulated by Heidegger in *Being and Time*, the care elaborated by Patočka concerns neither an existential-ontological understanding of Being nor the disclosure of the authentic, ecstatically original temporality proper to the entity possessing the ontological privilege that follows from this understanding.

The "care" at issue for Patočka is, rather, most fundamentally a matter of the struggle for unity of a soul whose self-manifestation occurs *in* the mathematical formations that are "*the model for Being in general*" (PE 185). The contiguity of the mathematical with the Ideas in Plato leads Patočka to say, "this *mathematical* is at the same time the *soul*" (PE 102), and to then go on to say, "what shows us the activity of the soul in the proper sense is our relation with the mathematical world. There, on mathematics, on *thoughts*, *thinking* shows itself to us, in thoughts *thinking* is present" (PE 103).

In what follows, I will trace this strand of Patočka's appropriation of Plato as it relates to the phenomenological priority of self-showing in his own phenomenology, of appearing or manifesting as the fundamental trait of the phenomenon proper to phenomenology. While the character of this priority as it develops in his critiques of Husserl's and Heidegger's subjectivism is well known, its Platonic background does not seem to have received the attention it deserves. This may be, in part, a result of what Patočka's *Plato and Europe* makes clear, namely, that his Plato is radically different from Husserl's or Heidegger's, as the Plato in question is the Plato, above all, of the "so-called unwritten doctrine" (λεγομένοις ἀγράφοις δόγμασιν, *Physics*, 209b14–15) reported by Aristotle and others.

To be sure, Patočka identifies three currents belonging to the care of the soul in Plato, (1) the "ontocosmological" (PE 97), (2) the communal care in the conflict of two ways of life, and (3) the care regarding its relation toward the body and incorporeality. However, Patočka makes it clear that the first current or domain is "the most important" (PE 182; cf. 188). And it is precisely this domain that is for him the subject of what, in his own words, he characterizes as "Plato's own scholastic teaching, the doctrine which Plato, consistent with himself as a philosopher, never put down in writing, since he considered such recording as inappropriate for philosophy, equivocal, not grasping philosophy as such, throwing philosophy into the situation in which it is today, i.e., a situation of *quot capita, tot sensus* [as many heads, so many opinions] – a situation where the heart of the matter is not pursued, but rather where tangential questions are debated upon and where irrelevant considerations make us lose the proper thread, which consists, not merely in discussing, but in seeing" (PE 182). Neither the unwritten nature of this teaching nor the fact that Patočka does not identify (in PE) the "attempts to reconstruct" (ibid.) it that he alludes to, hinder him, however, from employing it as the basis of his account of the most important dimension belonging to care of the soul in Plato and, therefore, of his account of the Platonic "thought of the *appearing of being*" (PE 103). Patočka's view that "[n]o doubt these Platonic reflections encompass something that philosophy has forever intended, that it has pursued through the ages, up to the present day" (ibid.), is therefore all the more remarkable when we consider that not only are these "reflections" something that the Platonic dialogue, in Patočka's

words, reflect "only to a certain degree" (PE 182), but also something that the attempts to reconstruct them are in disagreement about, and often radically so.

Patočka's method of establishing Plato's fundamental thought of the appearing of being by apparently treating as self-evident the content of Plato's reported teaching in the unwritten doctrine, a teaching that does not appear directly in Plato's dialogues, and of basing its self-evidence in this doctrine's scholarly reconstruction, which likewise does not appear in Patočka's own text, seems to manifest the following irony: his discourse about Plato's fundamental thought, whose context is a non-metaphysical championing of the phenomenological autonomy of the phenomenon from being, of the fundamental distinction between something's appearance and its status as an existent thing, is not guided by the manner in which Plato's thought appears, by the way it gives itself, but by the appeal to it as something that exists independent of its manifestation. That is, the irony that appears from this line of consideration is that Patočka's purported phenomenological account of the metaphysical limitation of Plato's thought appears itself to be, according to his own understanding of the term, metaphysical.

It is my contention, however, that this appearance is deceptive because it is based on a supposition that is fundamentally at odds with Patočka's accounts of both care of the soul in Plato and the *sui generis* field of manifesting that guides his *phenomenological* critique of Husserl's and Heidegger's phenomenologies. The supposition is that thought, thinking itself, is capable of appearing, of directly showing itself to us, and that, therefore, its being *is* a phenomenon. Thought in Plato cannot appear for Patočka because, like the interiority of the soul, it is both invisible and indeterminate. Indeed, these characteristics figure not only in Patočka's account of Plato's thought but also in his own, because, as is well known, he takes both Husserl and Heidegger to task on precisely this issue, insofar as they include appeals to the existence of something determinate in their phenomenological accounts of the manifesting as such that – on Patočka's understanding – is coextensive with the phenomenon of phenomenology. Appearing, in Patočka's words, "is something other than that which appears" (PE 98), and, as such, "it is an entirely different structure" (ibid.). Thus, while the soul, or thinking, necessarily appear in something that is manifest, the *appearing* that is necessarily inseparable from either one of them becoming manifest to us always has to be "something *more* … than what appears – if it is to appear" (PE 99). To this Patočka adds: "And we know that *appearing* is appearing of *the one in many* and in many manners of givenness and so on" (ibid.).

Not only do we know this, but Patočka is confident that Plato "no doubt" (ibid.) knew it too, and that he thematized this fundamental thought, "that things can appear to us only on the basis *of something other* than what they themselves are" (ibid.), by using mathematics, mathematical structure, as its "guiding thread" (ibid.). To be sure, the mathematics and mathematical structure at issue for Plato are not – it goes without saying (and thus Patočka does not say this) – the mathematics and mathematical structure of modern, symbolic mathematics, wherein quantity is general, in the precise sense of a conceptual objectivity that is indeterminate with respect to discrete or continuous magnitude. Rather, the mathematics

and mathematical structure in question concern heterogeneous magnitudes, the discrete magnitudes dealt with by arithmetic and the continuous magnitude that is the object of geometry. And it is precisely this mathematics that Patočka maintains functions as the paradigm for Being in Plato, including the Being of the soul. As the paradigm of Being, mathematics models the invisible Ideas, the generation of visible solids, and the soul, which "stands *at the boundary* of the visible and the invisible" (PE 187). The soul, moreover, introduces itself into this hierarchy of Being by thinking. By "thinking" Patočka does not mean "any kind of external demonstration" (PE 188), but the "praxis of the soul itself setting itself in motion," a praxis from which "springs … the distinctive experience leading to the *seeing* of what is beyond, on the other side [in the invisible], and what is not here [in the visible]" (PE 188–189). Care of the soul in Plato, then, for Patočka "means to want to be in unity with oneself" (PE 189), and this ambition is rooted in the fact that "[m]an is not originally, and always, in unity with himself" (ibid.) because his soul, as that which moves itself, "harbors a continually living impulse either, through thinking, to reach what is, to attain unity with itself, or, through irrationality, to decline into non-being" (PE 188).

According to Patočka, the mathematical models Being in Plato by pointing to the difference in the intelligibility, in the revealedness, of the different dimensions of mathematical beings, a difference that is tied to their generation in a manner that yields their hierarchy. It is this difference and hierarchy, then, that point to the gradation and manifoldness of Being in "what we might call Plato's ontology" (PE 185). Patočka explains this dimensional generation as one that begins with dimensionless numbers and terminates in the surface of bodies. Numbers for Plato, as in the "Greek conception" (PE 184), are "*paradigms of composition* made up of units" (PE 100) and, in Patočka's words, "[t]he fundamental thought is that the progression [goes] from μονάς, from units in the sense of numbers, to lines, from that to surface and from that to bodies" (PE 184). In this progression of dimensions, the beginning signifies the highest, in the sense that, as the source of the dimensions of mathematical beings generated from it, these beings rely upon it for their Being. And, as the highest, it is also more comprehensible than the lines it generates, just as the lines are more comprehensible than surfaces, and so on. According to Patočka, the great problem for the ancient geometry of Plato's age is that of "*relations* within the mathematical realm" (PE 101) which – for numbers and geometrical dimensions alike – are "*graduated* in a particular way" (ibid.). This gradation is shown in the passage from one dimension to another that occurs when the incommensurability of relations in one dimension are demonstrated to be commensurable in another, which not only means that the discovery of incommensurability does not bring to an end relations between mathematical beings, but also that dimensionality "has at the same time the meaning of a mixing of the *comprehensible with the incomprehensible*" (PE 102).

As the guiding thread for Plato's fundamental thought of "the appearing of being," mathematics and mathematical structure model Being in general by serving as its analogue. Patočka unpacks the analogy between the two as follows. To numbers, units in the mathematical world, there correspond (analogically) two first

principles, "and the first, most fundamental principle is the One" (PE 185). Patočka expresses the reason for this in phenomenological terms: "In order for something to *show* itself, there has to be something that can be grasped, identified (in our modern terms), in and of itself" (ibid.). The other "first" principle is the *indeterminate dyad*, which doubles what is one, either by repeating (multiplying) it or dividing it. The responsibility of this indeterminate dyad for multiplicity renders it indeterminate and, therefore, the opposite of the One, which is responsible for determinacy. These two principles, however, despite their fundamental opposition, are capable of "mixing," of mutual penetration, and in this they are analogous to the mixing of the comprehensible and the incomprehensible that occurs in mathematical structures with the passage from one dimension to another (PE 102). The One, as the principle of determinacy, is therefore the principle of unity, limit, whereas the indeterminate dyad is the principle of unlimitedness, of continual growth. In Patočka's words, "[t]hese *two principles* are *the beginning of everything* – so holds Plato" (ibid.). Both principles "*produce effects*" (PE 192), and the One, "form, limitedness, is good" (ibid.), while the opposite, "indeterminacy, woolliness, the bad infinite," is the evil principle in which "we should project everything that causes chaos in our life: passion, license, and all that wants to grow or repeat itself endlessly, with no reason and no precise limit" (ibid.).

The mixing of these highest principles, of the One and the indeterminate, generate *numbers*, "the primeval forms of everything" (PE 186), by imposing limit and therefore unity upon multiplicity. However, the numbers they generate are "numbers other than those we work with in mathematics" (ibid.). These other, non-mathematical numbers are Ideas; they are not the "numbers one counts with" (ibid.), but rather "the *models* of all numbers," and "they are always unique" (ibid.). Numbers as Ideas, however, do not mean that something like the idea of number exists. Patočka writes, "[t]here is no idea of number. That has nothing to do with Ideas being numbers" (PE 210). An idea of number – number, that is, in the mathematical sense – as something common "above" (ibid.) them, does not exist because the non-temporal relation of "prior" and "posterior" characteristic of numbers precludes it. The dyad is prior to the triad, the triad prior to the tetrad, and so on, and "[t]his means that here the common is not above numbers, but rather is within them" (ibid.). That is, the prior-posterior relation between any two numbers precludes their commonality in this regard, which means that what is universal in them is "[w]hat mathematical numbers are made of, i.e., units" (ibid.). To the question of why Ideas are numbers, Patočka answers: "[b]ecause in these first models of unified multiplicity we have before us the *archetypes of all dimensionality*" (PE 186), which, when "taken mathematically" (ibid.), are responsible for "something like surface and body" (ibid.) arising. And in "the first unifying of the One with multiplicity," (ibid.) Ideas-numbers are the "[a]rchetypes of this forming of the extant" (ibid.). As "the most fundamental, the most elemental numbers" (PE 100), "these elemental numbers cannot enter into composition with one another, arithmetical operations cannot be carried out with them" (ibid.). This is the case because they are "ἀσύμβλητοι (incomparable, not of the same kind)" (PE 186); they are "not made up of any kind of homogeneous identical units" (PE 100). This means

that "[n]umbers as we know them … do not belong to the realm of Ideas" (ibid.), but "in a certain lower domain, which is no longer a domain with no presuppositions, but precisely one that presupposes the Ideas" (ibid.). The Ideas-numbers, of which there are "nine or ten – opinions on this are somewhat divided" (PE 100), are therefore presupposed by the "infinite, endless examples of every kind of number" (ibid.), in the sense that, as the models of all numbers, they are the "first prototypes of all diversity, all that has form" (PE 186). And it is precisely in this sense, "when variety is unified" (ibid.), that "we have something like a number before us" (ibid.).

Analogous in existence to the geometrical lines are "Ideas[-numbers] that already encompass within themselves something analogical to irrational relations" (PE 187), and "Plato tries to show that mathematical analogy can make us understand the mutual relations of Ideas[-numbers] with one another, what he calls the participation of Ideas[-numbers] in one another" (ibid.). And analogous to surface, as we have already mentioned, is the soul, which "stands in the midst of all that is" (ibid.) and which, while belonging to the invisible, also "stands *at the boundary* of the visible and the invisible" (ibid.). The first principles, Ideas-numbers, Ideas-numbers as linear relations, and mathematical numbers proper to the domain of the invisible, exist "only because the soul thinks, only on that basis" (ibid.). The understanding that follows from the soul's thinking "sets itself in motion" (ibid.) and, with this movement, "everything that it grasps – that is, insofar as it grasps it – are comprehensible relations" (ibid.). Included in these relations, of course, is "concrete mathematics" (ibid.), and it is precisely the soul's use of "the measures we have gotten used to in the intelligible world" (PE 188) that is responsible for the visible world *showing itself* as having less Being than the intelligible one. More precisely, the visible, in the guise of the "bodily world characterized by movement, constant change, and insufficient identity" (PE 187–188), "suddenly shows itself when we measure it … as something immensely vague, elusive" (PE 188), and notwithstanding the bodily world's thorough-going appeal to us, when measured thus, it shows itself as something less than the "*higher existent*" (PE 103) that "makes possible the appearing of being" (ibid.).

Plato's thought of Being in terms of gradation is taken by Patočka as a sign that "Plato undoubtedly yields to the Greek philosophical tradition, or more precisely to the philosophy of his time, which holds to be existent that which is superlatively present and lasting" (ibid.). And with this, he holds that Plato's thought "becomes a doctrine of *absolute Being*, it becomes the doctrine we call *metaphysics*" (PE 104). Metaphysics for Patočka "means at the same time a doctrine of *appearing* and of *being*. That which makes beings appear to us is in turn another, higher being, and so on" (ibid.).

To summarize: Care of the soul in Plato is, above all, a matter of the ontocosmological movement of thought, of a being's thinking that is fundamentally invisible and therefore incapable of directly appearing, of *being* something that appears. Not being what appears, the soul is rather responsible for all appearing, for the phenomenon, in the precise sense that that towards which its thinking self-movement aims, the mathematical, is what supplies the analogical measure for the showing, the appearance, of what shows itself. Being responsible for the phenomenon – in the

sense of the *appearing* of what appears – the soul is beyond that which it is responsible for making appear, that is, beyond that which appears. Because of this very responsibility, the soul therefore appears, "shows itself" (albeit indirectly) in precisely the mathematical and, analogous to these, ontological relations that its thinking comprehension brings about. These mathematical relations are, therefore, at the same time, the soul.

The mathematical structures in question are paradigms of composition made up of units, that is, dimensionless arithmetical numbers, together with the dimensionless points, one-dimensional lines, two-dimensional surfaces, and three-dimensional solids of geometry (and stereometry). The mathematical relations in question concern (1) the graded hierarchy of mathematical beings and (2) the mixing of mathematical dimensions. The concern of the former are the mathematical beings involved in the generation of solids, wherein the simpler structures are more comprehensive, comprehensible, and, therefore, higher on the scale of mathematical Being than the more complex. The concern of the latter is the crossover to higher mathematical dimensions, wherein relations between magnitudes that are incommensurable in one dimension become commensurable in another. The arithmetical structures are analogous to the first principles of ontocosmic generation, the One and the indeterminate dyad, which generate proto-dimensional Ideas-numbers responsible for the dimensional generation of bodies. Ideas-numbers are distinguished from mathematical numbers by the non-homogeneity of their Ideas-units, which render them incomparable (ἀσύμβλητοι) and incapable of being combined like mathematical numbers. The mathematical relations are analogous to mixing of the two opposite first principles, which generates the Ideas-numbers in a manner that permits their unity to encompass the irrational relations of their Ideas-units and the unique unities of each number to mutually interact.

Ontocosmic care of the soul therefore represents the discovery of the appearing of being – the phenomenon – as the standard of the truth, insofar as it, and it alone, functions as the measure for distinguishing that which appears of itself from that which merely seems to do so, but, in subsequent appearances, turns out not to. In Plato, however, this discovery is not "purely" realized because appearing in Platonic thought does not function as the sole criterion of truth. Rather, the thought of the appearing of being in Plato becomes metaphysical, in the precise sense that his philosophy calibrates the appearing, that is, the truth of being, in accordance with a scale of existent beings whose degrees of Being are determined by their participation in the traditional thought of that which is most present and lasting. And, therefore, the truth of Being is ultimately not sought in the *appearing* of what shows itself, but by what, independent of this, putatively remains present in a manner not verified by this criterion.

From the discussion so far, it can be seen that injustice is done to Patočka's originality as a thinker when his account of what, for him, is the most important dimension of care of the soul in Plato is associated with Heidegger's notion of *Sorge*. As we have seen, the care in question for Patočka is inseparable from the self-movement of the soul's thought taking aim at mathematical structure in a manner that leads to the appearing of being; thus, not the "phenomenon" of a being's understanding of

Being, but the structure of *appearing itself*, which has *phenomenological* priority over all understanding and all beings, is what, for Patočka, is at stake in Plato's monumental thought of the appearing of being. Moreover, an even greater injustice is done to Patočka when his critique of Plato's metaphysics is lumped together with Heidegger's. We have seen that Patočka's critique of Plato is *not* focused, as is Heidegger's, on the existentially derivative meaning of Being proper to any object whatever that putatively limits Plato's ontology to formal ontology. Rather, Patočka's critique takes aim at the fact that the *genuine* appearing of being made possible by Plato's "ontology," the appearing that provides "the deepest and ultimate ground of philosophical explanation, the final answer to the philosophical question" (PE 41) – answer which, Patočka maintains, "cannot be a being" – is misinterpreted by Plato who finally answered the question by appealing to just such a being; or, rather, to a hierarchy of beings.

Patočka's phenomenological appropriation of Plato is therefore guided by the idea that "*the structure of appearing must stand upon itself* " (ibid.), which means, "[a]ppearing must become clear to us in its pure structure *without regard to any reality whatever*, to any however refined real thing that might serve as its substratum" (ibid.). Husserl's phenomenology as well as Heidegger's fail to measure up to this idea, and for the same basic reason: subjectivism. In Husserl's case, not only does he presuppose an "act of 'turning inward'" (PE 143) which "does not exist" (ibid.), but the "entire constitutive systematic does not exist" (ibid.). This does not mean for Patočka that "there is no mediating of appearing by the subject" (ibid.), but rather that the whole system of the subject showing itself along with its indications and references to things is a "mediation necessary for the world to show itself to us" (ibid.). This essential mediation is a "kind of formal subjectivity" (ibid.), which as such is never the material from which one could "constitute" the world in its "presence." In Heidegger's case, the thematization of Being as "an achievement of the finite subject" (PE 170), of Dasein's *Seinsverständnis*, betrays what Heidegger himself eventually realized, that this mode of access to the phenomenon of Being "is still too close to Husserl's subjectivism" (ibid.). Moreover, both Husserl and Heidegger conflate the appearing itself, which for Patočka is the proper sense of phenomenon, with Being, and therefore fall short of Patočka's idea that the problem of appearing, "the problem of *self-showing* is in reality *more fundamental* and deeper than the problem of Being" (PE 133). Husserl's taking the immanent Being of transcendental subjectivity as the most basic phenomenon of phenomenology betrays this, while, in Heidegger, it is betrayed by his equation of the proper sense of phenomenon with the meaning of Being.

From the standpoints of the classical phenomenologies of Husserl and Heidegger, Patočka's idea of the radical autonomy of the structure of appearing, its originality notwithstanding, presents apparently insuperable difficulties. From the Husserlian perspective, phenomenon and subject must necessarily be recognized as inseparable, for the simple reason of the eidetic impossibility of there being something like appearing that does not appear to someone. From the Heideggerian perspective, there can be no more fundamental phenomenon than the meaning of Being because it is precisely the ontico-ontological a priori status of this meaning that structures

the self-showing of anything at all that exists. Patočka, of course, is not unaware of these difficulties. To the Husserlian, his reply is that from the necessity that appearing appear to someone, it does not follow that "this someone … would be its creator and bearer. On the contrary, the *bearer* is *the structure*. He or it, to whom appears that which appears (existents), is a moment and component part of this most fundamental structure" (PE 41). To the Heideggerian, his reply is that "to ask about the relation between the phenomenon and existent things" (PE 33) is to engage in phenomenological *philosophy*, which "differs from phenomenology in that it wants not only to analyze phenomena as such, but also to draw *conclusions*" (ibid.) – and these are "so to say, *metaphysical*" (ibid.). Thus, for Patočka, in order for the phenomenon to remain phenomenon, "it must remain an autonomous *unreal* region of the universe, which, though it is unreal, in a certain manner determines reality," (ibid.), albeit the way in which it does so "is a question no science can solve, … not even phenomenology that considers solely the phenomenon as such" (ibid.). At best, then, "phenomenological philosophy can put forward certain constructive hypotheses about this" (ibid.).

Our discussion of Patočka's account of Platonic care of the soul (in its privileged ontocosmic dimension) makes clear the source of the original idea that guides his critiques of Husserl and Heidegger and informs his own articulation of an a-subjective – and, for that matter, a-ontological – phenomenology: the Platonic *chōrismos* thesis; that is, the hypothesis that the manifold of things that appear can only do so on the basis of something other than themselves, something which, as the structure of appearing as such, not only is not an existent, but also is something that cannot ever show itself in terms of that which is apparent. This something other is the domain of the Ideas-numbers, which are the presuppositions of mathematical numbers, the dimensionality of visible bodies, and the care of the soul as the locus of manifesting itself. To the question of how for Plato – and thus, for himself – it is possible to establish a *phenomenological* relation to the *structure* of appearing when this structure itself is held to be something other than that which is apparent, Patočka would no doubt answer: through care of the soul. To the question of how Patočka was able to think that he *knew* the content of Plato's "unwritten doctrine," which, after all, being unwritten, is only available indirectly (through Aristotle's second-hand polemic against it, and the doxographic tradition that often mentions Plato and the Pythagoreans indiscriminately), two answers, a short one and a long one, are possible. Because of the paucity of references to primary or secondary sources dealing with this topic in Patočka's published writings (apart from Aristotle, Patočka only briefly mentions L. Robin, Ph. Merlan, P. Wilpert,[5] and K. Gaiser[6]), both answers must take the form of "constructive hypotheses."

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[5]The references can be found in Jan Patočka, *Aristoteles, jeho předchůdci a dědicové [Aristotle, his Forerunners and Successors]* (Praha: Academia, 1964), pp. 413, 411, 415.

[6]Konrad Gaiser's *Platons Ungeschriebene Lehre* (Stuttgart: Ernst Klett Verlag, 1963) is mentioned in Jan Patočka, "Europa und Nach-Europa," in *Ketzerische Essais zur Philosophie der Geschichte und ergänzende Schriften*, ed. K. Nellen and J. Němec (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1988), pp. 245, 256–257, 266–267.

The short answer is that Patočka was able "*see*" the content of Plato's unwritten doctrine, that he was therefore, somehow, an initiate of the teaching Plato did not write down, but only talked about with those closest to him – most of whom nevertheless rejected it.

The long answer, not necessarily unrelated to the first, is that Patočka's early association with Jacob Klein, with whom he studied Greek thought in Berlin in 1933,[7] "initiated" him into certain of the mysteries connected with Aristotle's report that Plato or the Platonists held Ideas to be, in some sense, numbers. In 1947, Patočka wrote about Klein: "This man has played an absolutely eminent role in my life. It was he who sent me to Freiburg. Thanks to him I got to know everything that was going on at that time in the world of ideas. He is the one who made me doubt about my initial orientation."[8] Klein at that time was completing what remains to this day the only work that attempts to reconstruct Plato's unwritten doctrine of eidetic numbers from the conceptual level proper to Ancient Greek arithmetic and logistic which informs his thesis that veiled references to this doctrine can be found in certain Platonic dialogues, above all the *Hippias Major* and the *Sophist*. The first volume of Klein's work, entitled *Greek Logistic and the Origination of Algebra*,[9] was published in 1934, and the first person to review it was Patočka,[10] in that same year.

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[7] Edward F. Findlay, op cit., p. 16.

[8] "Brief J. Patočkas an Robert Campbell vom 30. 9. 1947," in Eugen Fink and Jan Patočka , *Briefe und Dokumente 1933–1977*, ed. M. Heitz and B. Nessler (Freiburg/München: Alber; Praha: Oikoymenh, 1999), p. 57. Filip Karfík, in a personal electronic communication with the author, reports the following about Patočka's relationship to Klein and Plato's "unwritten doctrine":

"Yes, Patočka was very much interested in this topic, probably since his early studies in Berlin. Jacob Klein was then his closest friend, and he remained in contact with him also after the war (they met again in 1947 in Freiburg). Patočka himself lectured on the Pre-Socratics and on Plato between 1945–1949 and knew almost everything written by that time, including research about early Greek mathematics (Becker et al.) and Plato's unwritten doctrines according to Aristotle's and other testimonies (following Robin, Wilpert, Gomperz). He addressed this topic late in his career, in his book on Aristotle, published in 1964, where he devoted a whole chapter to the interpretation of Platonic unwritten philosophy. All of these earlier studies by him preceded the publications by Krämer and Gaiser and relied on the older attempts of reconstructions (from Robin onwards). When he became acquainted with Gaiser's book, *Platons Ungeschriebene Lehre*, he saw it as a sort of confirmation and a better elaboration of this reconstruction and kept referring to it up until his late writings. In the beginning of the 1970s he once again lectured on Plato (the course is still unpublished, but the typescript exists) and made use of Gaiser's reconstruction."

[9] Jacob Klein, "Die griechische Logistik und die Entstehung der Algebra," *Quellen und Studien zur Geschichte der Mathematik, Astronomie und Physik*, Abteilung B: *Studien*, Vol. 3, no. 1 (Berlin: Julius Springer, 1934), pp. 18–105 (Part I). English translation (of both parts): *Greek Mathematical Thought and the Origin of Algebra*, transl. E. Brann (Cambridge, Massachusetts: M.I.T. Press, 1968; 2nd ed. New York: Dover Publications, 1992).

[10] Jan Patočka, "Jacob Klein, *Die griechische Logistik und die Entstehung der Algebra I.* In *Quellen und Studien zur Geschichte der Mathematik, Astronomie u. Physik*, (hsgg. v. Neugebauer, Stenzel u. Töplitz. Berlin, Springer 1934. S. 97)," in *Česká mysl*, Vol. 30, no. 4, 1934, pp. 232–233. See English transl. by Eric Manton in *The New Yearbook for Phenomenology*, Vol. 6, 2006, p. 307.

Given the relevance of Patočka's review to both of the constructive hypotheses under consideration, it bears quoting at length:

> The author shows how the concept of ἀριθμός differs from our concept of number and how the problematic of this concept (the unity of many) is connected to the basic questions of Greek philosophy, especially in its Platonic form. Elucidating the concept of ἀριθμός from this point of view then leads to the solution of the most important and darkest questions of Platonism, in particular the question of the Ideas-numbers. Klein agrees with O. Becker (*Die diairetische Erzeugung der platonischen Idealzahlen*, Quellen u. Studien I, 483 ff.) in that ἀριθμὸς εἰδητικός is simply a "collection of Ideas," i.e., an "arithmetic unity," whose units (μονάδες) are εἴδη. However, on the basis of this knowledge, Klein is the first to dare to offer a solution to the question of *methexis*: the arithmetic nature of Ideas (εἴδη = ἀριθμοί) makes it possible to understand how εἶδος is both χωρίς and ἕν, although it relates to πολλά. He finds reference to this solution in the dialogue *Hippias Major* 300a–302b, especially in the formula ἓν ἓν ἕκαστον, ἀμφότερα δὲ δύο.
>
> Klein's work is an attempt to clearly interpret the Platonic doctrine of ideal numbers. While the interpretation is not complete, nevertheless in the main points it does so well in clarifying the issues that it is possible to say that any further research must seriously take this interpretation into account. If we compare the many obscurities in a book like Brunschvicg's *Les étapes de la philosophie mathématique* about the character of Ideas-numbers, we see how poorly justified are such statements as the claim that the Platonic dialogues provide literally no information concerning this doctrine. (In this respect, Klein's thorough and deep interpretation of *The Sophist* is completely new and provides startling evidence of the philosophical wealth of this dialogue.) The theory of Ideas-numbers is precisely not a mathematical theory, but rather an ontological, philosophical interpretation of the possibility of something such as διάνοια.[11]

When the content of Patočka's review of Klein's article is compared to our discussion of his account of Plato's unwritten doctrine in *Plato and Europe*, four things stand out: (1) the accounts of Ideas-numbers are identical; (2) also identical are the accounts of the arithmetic nature of the εἶδος as what permits it to be related to πολλά (multiplicity) while being both χωρίς (separate) and ἕν (one); (3) the non-mathematical character of the theory of Ideas-numbers reported in the review, which marks it as a philosophical interpretation of the possibility of something like διάνοια (thought, thinking), is similar to *Plato and Europe*'s account of thought/thinking becoming manifest in its movement toward the mathematical structures that model Being; and (4) neither the foundational role of Ideas-numbers for the dimensional generation of bodies nor the mathematical generation of solids that models this in *Plato and Europe* are mentioned in the review.

The identities noted in the first two points are significant for our constructive hypotheses because, above all, Patočka himself attests to Klein's priority in being the first to "dare" to provide a solution to the *methexis* problem in Plato. The abbreviated structure of Patočka's review obviously prevented him from elaborating how Klein's solution is rooted in two fundamental insights: (1) the insight into the

[11] Ibid.

difference between the concept of ἀριθμός and our concept of number,[12] and (2) the insight into the guiding clue this difference provides for grasping the non-mathematical *chōrismos* that is characteristic of the *eidetic number's* relation to multiplicity.[13] Klein's account of the difference between the Greek ἀριθμός and our concept of number may be succinctly stated: the Greek ἀριθμός is not a concept at all, if by concept is understood an idea that encompasses common qualities belonging to individual objects,[14] while our concept, by which Klein refers to the symbolic concept of number (*Zahl*) of modern, post-Vieta, mathematics, is just such a concept. The non-conceptual character of Greek ἀριθμός is articulated by Klein as the well-ordered collection of a multiplicity of identical units, wherein the unity of the collection in question, in modern terms, the positive integer, is not predicable of the units. This is Klein's solution in the *Hippias Major* alluded to by Patočka in his review: for instance, in the ἀριθμός two, the units are ἓν ἕκαστον (each one), while their unity is ἀμφότερα δὲ δύο (both together two); "two," therefore, cannot be predicated of either of the units (each being one and, therefore, precisely *not* two) because it only refers to both together. The symbolic nature of the modern concept of number, in contrast, is identical with the representation of the general concept of being an amount, without any determinate reference to that of which it is the amount. In a word, for Klein, Greek numbers are determinate, while our modern numbers are indeterminate.

In Klein's view, it is precisely the irreducibly one-over-many unity of the "*arithmos*-structure" of the mathematical ἀριθμός, together with Aristotle's report that Plato or the Platonists held *eidetic numbers* to be incomparable (ἀσύμβλητοι), that provides the guiding clue for grasping the *chōrismos* structure of the ἀριθμὸς εἰδητικός. To wit: the *arithmos*-structure exhibits a unity that encompasses a multiplicity without distributing itself *in* its parts, which are homogeneous mathematical units, while Aristotle's report provides the context for unveiling references in Plato's dialogues to collections of Ideas (= ἀριθμός) composed of heterogeneous *monads*, this is, composed of "units" that are different *genē*.[15] Therefore, unlike the identical *monads* of mathematical numbers, which are comparable, and hence, combinable "indifferently" into different numbers, the *monads* of Ideas-numbers are reported by Aristotle to be incomparable, and therefore incapable of being combined to form different numbers, as are mathematical numbers.[16] And it is precisely Ideas-numbers in this sense that Klein maintains, in the dialogue *The Sophist*, are shown by the philosopher and mathematician (the Eleatic Stranger and

[12] Jacob Klein, op. cit., chapter 6.

[13] Ibid., chapter 7.

[14] See above, where Patočka's account of why Ideas-numbers are not ideas *of* numbers is discussed.

[15] Jacob Klein, op. cit., p. 86/89 (German/English).

[16] Aristotle, *Metaphysics M 6*, 1080a15–b4; see W. D. Ross' note on the term ἀσύμβλητος, *Aristotle's Metaphysics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1924), p. 427.

Theaetetus) – both together – to be responsible for our διάνοια being able to think anything at all, both what is and what is not.[17]

In connection with our constructive hypotheses, even more significant than Patočka's recognition of Klein's priority in proposing this solution to the Platonic *chōrismos* thesis is the fact that none of the studies of Plato's unwritten doctrine that have appeared subsequently to his article follow his proposal.[18] This includes the book Patočka refers to most frequently in his work, Gaiser's 1963 study *Platons Ungeschriebene Lehre*. Gaiser, in fact, explicitly states, without mentioning Klein's proposed solution, that "[i]t remains unresolved how the *logos*-<relational>character of Platonic numbers can be harmonized with their inability to be combined (ἀσύμβλητοι)."[19] And, after quoting Klein on the *arithmos*-structure of the Ideas-numbers (but not on their incomparability), Gaiser shows again that he does not follow Klein's account when he writes: "The Platonic explanation of this state of affairs [Klein's account of the *arithmos*-structure of Ideas-numbers] in relation to the mathematical theory of *logos* <relation>, however, remains unresolved in its essentials."[20] The fact that Klein's account has not been accepted by the literature is even more significant than its priority because it supports our hypothesis that Patočka *must* have learned from Klein to *see* what his account of the care of the soul in *Plato and Europe* shows that he clearly saw, namely, the *arithmos*-structure of numbers whose units are not identical mathematical monads, but incomparable Ideas. No technique of thinking can lead to what is seen here, because requisite for such seeing is the recognition of the fundamental lack of analogy between the "units" of mathematical numbers and those of Ideas-numbers, notwithstanding the analogy of the one-over-many *arithmos*-structure that unites the units for each kind

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[17] Jacob Klein, op. cit., pp. 88–94/91–98 (German/English).

[18] Discussion in detail of possible reasons for this cannot be pursued here, although the two most obvious ones can be briefly indicated. The first is that Klein's attempt to approach Ancient Greek mathematics from its own conceptual level is ultimately inseparable from his critical-historical account of the difference in the "conceptuality" (*Begrifflichkeit*) of pre-modern Greek and modern European numbers concepts. (Most discussions of the "unwritten doctrine," whether they mention Klein or not, lack critical acuity on this point, symptomatic of which is their talk in vague metaphorical terms about the Greek number concept being more "concrete," "intuitive," etc., than the modern concept.) In addition to the non-conceptual mode of Being of the Greek ἀριθμός noted above that emerges in Klein's account, its aporetic mode of Being, as at once many and one, is especially significant, because it is Klein's thesis that this mode of Being means that the Greek ἀριθμός is both καθ' αὑτό (by itself) and πρός τι (in relation to something). Because of this, Klein maintains (1) that Greek arithmetic *as well as* logistic treat of both non-relational and relational mathematical beings and (2) that from the standpoint of Being, arithmetic and therefore ἀριθμός is more fundamental than logistic and therefore ἀναλογία. For Gaiser and Patočka following him, it is the reverse: Plato's so-called "theory of *logos*" (in the sense of mathematical relation, ἀναλογία) assumes priority as the "παράδειγμα and bridge to beings" (Jan Patočka, "Europa und Nach-Europa," op. cit., p. 245). From the standpoint of Klein's analysis, this reversal of priority has the insuperable disadvantage of eliding the status of the mathematical as the image of the beings (εἴδη) that are paradigmatic for that which is mathematical and all else, which is clearly manifest in Plato's dialogues. See also below for a discussion of this last point.

[19] Konrad Gaiser, op. cit., p. 365.

[20] Ibid., p. 367.

of number. Likewise, no technique can yield the Platonic *chōrismos* thesis, the supposition that the non-mathematical one-over-many *arithmos*-structure of the Ideas-numbers is for all time *beyond* the manifold beings that can only *appear* in accord with the heterogeneous unities that compose Ideas-numbers. This is no doubt why Patočka writes in *Plato and Europe* "[t]he most important Platonic teaching is that the technique of thinking is insufficient…. According to Plato, philosophy begins where something begins to be seen, where meaningful discourse leads us to the thing itself" (PE 182). Patočka goes on to say that, despite their importance for philosophy, what guides sight for Plato are not the eyes, but the thoughtful interrogation of "the meaning of the verb *to be*" (ibid.) which, in *The Sophist*, leads Plato to see "the problem of *Being* as the problem of truth, the problem of what *in truth*, genuinely, is" (PE 183).

However, instead of pursuing this line of thought, Patočka's discussion in *Plato and Europe* recurs to Plato's unwritten teaching that the mathematical dimensional generation of solids is the model for Plato's ultimately metaphysical teaching about the gradations of Being. As we have noted, Klein's account of eidetic numbers makes no mention of their connection to dimensional generation. A detailed examination of why this is the case is not possible at this point, but a very abbreviated – and concluding – consideration is possible within the context of our discussion. In his "*Europa und Nach-Europa*," Patočka writes that Gaiser's book on the unwritten doctrine "establishes with great plausibility that mathematics is significant for Plato, above all, as the paradigm of Being."[21] And the mathematics that provides that paradigm in Gaiser's account is the mathematics of dimensional generation that Patočka presents in *Plato and Europe* replete with its status as the thought-goal of the soul's thinking self-movement and the third-dimensional analogue of the soul's being as the boundary between the invisible and visible.[22] Patočka's reliance on Gaiser's reconstruction here brings with it the following problem, which is not unrelated to Patočka's critique of the metaphysical turn of Plato's "fundamental thought of the appearing of being" in *Plato and Europe*: what is manifest in the dialogues, not only does not support Gaiser's thesis that the mathematical functions in Platonic thought as the model of Being, but it actually contradicts it.

The *locus classicus* for the status of mathematical Being in Plato's dialogues is the divided line, where the hypotheses employed by the geometers' and arithmeticians' διάνοια are not only situated below the εἴδη investigated by the dialecticians' νόησις, but are said to *image* the greater degree of Being proper to the εἴδη in accord with the same unspecified proportion (ἀναλογία) in which the images in the visible realm image the greater degree of Being in their visible originals. Book 7 buttresses this status of the mathematical, by saying that the mathematicians, in contrast to the dialecticians, *dream* about Being (533b). The status of the mathematical in this text is clearly *not* that of a model (*paradigma*) of Being, but that of

[21] Jan Patočka, "Europa und Nach-Europa," op. cit, p. 266.

[22] See ibid., pp. 266 f., where Patočka provides a concise synopsis of Gaiser's account of dimensional generation, the context of which is Patočka's endorsement of it.

its image. But, perhaps more to the point, had Patočka completed in *Plato and Europe* the interrupted discussion of Being and truth in *The Sophist*, he would have had to come to terms with that dialogue's formulation of the truth of Being in terms of the problem presented to the *logos* and διάνοια by the mode of Being of the image: distinguishing its mode of Being (which alone, among all the beings in the world, forces the soul that encounters it to reproduce its mode of Being, which is to "be" precisely what it is *not*) from the mode of Being of the original that it *appears* to be, but is – "in truth" – not. That is, Patočka would have had to come to terms with the precise juncture in a Platonic dialogue where the problem of the appearance of Being, its phenomenon in both Plato's and, I would suggest, Patočka's sense, confronts a problem that only philosophy in Plato's sense – and not the phenomenological philosophy in Husserl's, Heidegger's, and, perhaps, even Patočka's sense – is able to address: the problem of whether or not the *logos*, guided by διάνοια, can provide the criterion for distinguishing the image, together with its embodiment, the Sophist, from the original, together with its embodiment, the Philosopher. In my judgment, it is the unsurpassable achievement of Patočka's phenomenological appropriation of Platonism to bring into proximity these matters themselves, and to have done so in a manner that neither Husserl nor Heidegger ever dreamt of.

Part II
From Negative Platonism to Asubjective Phenomenology

The Relevance of Patočka's "Negative Platonism"

Eddo Evink

> *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 awareness 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.*[1]

These words, with which Jan Patočka opens his "Negative Platonism," are still valid today. Patočka notes that there have been several reactions to the so-called end of metaphysics, several views that accuse each other of being metaphysical, "as if that were a deadly weapon."[2] I would like to demonstrate in this article that, after more than half a century, this situation has not really changed, and that Patočka's contribution to the discussion on the end of metaphysics has lost nothing of its relevance. Still today, no one seems to know exactly what the metaphysics that has died is or was, "because the question has yet to be posed adequately."[3]

Among the various currents of thought that can be discerned in late twentieth-century continental philosophy in regard to their relation to the metaphysical tradition, I shall concentrate on the two which have been, in my opinion, the most influential in the past decades: on the one side, Nietzsche, Heidegger, Levinas and Derrida; on the other, Gadamer and Habermas.[4] Each of these groups criticizes the

I wish to thank Thomas Swann and especially Erika Abrams for their corrections of the successive drafts of this text.

[1] Jan Patočka, "Negative Platonism: Reflections concerning the Rise, the Scope, and the Demise of Metaphysics – and Whether Philosophy Can Survive It," in *Philosophy and Selected Writings*, ed. and transl. E. Kohák (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1989), p. 175.

[2] Jan Patočka, op. cit., p. 175.

[3] Ibid.

[4] Many other names could, of course, be added here, e.g., Adorno, Merleau-Ponty, Deleuze, but all cannot be discussed here.

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other for being metaphysical, but each can, at the same time, be said to be metaphysical itself. Patočka's negative Platonism will be discussed here as a fruitful position in this debate. Special attention will be paid to the relation of this notion to the work of Derrida, which is very close to the thought of Patočka, though also showing some important differences.

1 The Many Deaths of Metaphysics

To begin with, there is a tradition of outbidding in criticizing metaphysics: Nietzsche, Heidegger, Levinas and Derrida all try to take a step further in their denouncement of metaphysical thought, claiming that all the preceding criticisms of metaphysics are in themselves still too metaphysical. The unification of reality in one principle or center is taken here as the heart of the metaphysical way of thinking. Each in its own way, these critiques are all looking for a difference not to be mastered or reconciled by any unifying thought.

1.1 Nietzsche

An important pinnacle of metaphysical criticism is reached in the work of Friedrich Nietzsche. Nietzsche discerns several forces behind the metaphysical project of understanding the whole of reality. One of them is the force of language, which creates unity and order out of a chaos of perceptions and impressions. Language suggests a world of general truths or ideas behind everyday perceptions.[5] In the same way, it suggests that behind everything that happens, there must be a cause, that behind every action there must be a coherent subject with his own identity and free will, and that behind the whole world there must be a single cause: God. All these illusions can be explained as a result of the fixating characteristics of language.[6]

Against this metaphysical tendency to tie endless change and becoming, the chaos of competing drives and powers, to one sole essence, Nietzsche proposes a historical approach: a genealogy aiming at a historical explanation and refutation

[5] Friedrich Nietzsche, *Über Wahrheit und Lüge im außermoralischen Sinne*, in *Kritische Studienausgabe* (herein KSA), ed. G. Colli and M. Montinari (Berlin and New York: W. de Gruyter, 1999 [1980]), Vol. 1, pp. 878–880; see also *Menschliches, Allzumenschliches*, KSA, Vol. 2, pp. 30–31.

[6] Friedrich Nietzsche, *Menschliches, Allzumenschliches*, op. cit., pp. 30–31, 36–40, 103, 545–548; *Die fröhliche Wissenschaft ("la gaya scienza")*, in KSA, Vol. 3, pp. 482–483; *Zur Genealogie der Moral. Eine Streitschrift*, in KSA, Vol. 5, pp. 279–281; *Jenseits von Gut und Böse. Vorspiel einer Philosophie der Zukunft*, in KSA, Vol. 5, pp. 29–37; *Götzen-Dämmerung oder Wie man mit dem Hammer philosophirt*, in KSA, Vol. 6, pp. 88–97; cf. *Nachlaß*, KSA, Vol. 7–13, in particular Vol. 12, pp. 18–20, 315, 383–387, 465.

of metaphysics, ethics, and religion.[7] This genealogy also explains how metaphysics digs its own grave. The will to truth, another power that is inextricably bound up with metaphysics, will inevitably counter the truth claims of religion and of metaphysics itself.[8] The result of this development is what Nietzsche calls the death of God: the loss of all stable and founded orientation and meaning.[9]

The metaphysics denounced here by Nietzsche is the search for a determined rational structure, within or behind reality, on the basis of which the totality of reality could be understood.

1.2 Heidegger

Despite his hostile attitude towards metaphysics, Nietzsche is viewed by Martin Heidegger as the last and highest fulfilment of the metaphysical tradition. For the later Heidegger, "metaphysics" means the vision of reality as a collection of present beings, an idea of reality that has forgotten Being and, as such, is in search of the essentials of beings. As a result, philosophy has taken the shape of "onto-theology": the study of the main qualities of beings (ontology) and of their ultimate cause or source, that might only be thought of as a supreme being (theology).[10]

The entire history of philosophy, according to Heidegger, is dominated by this way of thinking. From Plato on, metaphysics rules supreme, in search of the principles that present reality: principles such as the Ideas, the unmoved Mover, God, Cogito, Subject, Spirit, History, and so on. This history of metaphysics reaches its final stages at once in technology, which makes everything calculable and controllable, and in Nietzsche. In his much-discussed interpretation of Nietzsche as the last metaphysician, Heidegger views the will to power and the eternal return of the same as metaphysical principles. Nietzsche's critique of metaphysics is thus interpreted as the highest point of metaphysics and its end, as a reversal of Platonism – a *negative* Platonism, if you like.[11]

In Heidegger's project of "overcoming" metaphysics, the history of metaphysics is to be recaptured and resumed, in order to think what has as yet remained

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[7] Friedrich Nietzsche, *Menschliches, Allzumenschliches*, op. cit., pp. 23–25; *Zur Genealogie der Moral*…, op. cit., pp. 257–412; *Jenseits von Gut und Böse*…, op. cit., pp. 105–128; *Götzen-Dämmerung*…, op. cit., pp. 82–87; *Der Antichrist. Fluch auf das Christentum*, in KSA, Vol. 6, pp. 181–198, 209–247.

[8] Friedrich Nietzsche, *Götzen-Dämmerung*…, op. cit., pp. 80–81.

[9] Friedrich Nietzsche, *Die fröhliche Wissenschaft*…, op. cit., pp. 467, 480–482; cf. *Menschliches, Allzumenschliches*, op. cit., pp. 590–591.

[10] Martin Heidegger, "Die onto-theologische Verfassung der Metaphysik," in *Identität und Differenz* (Pfullingen: Günther Neske, 1990 [1957]), pp. 39–42.

[11] Martin Heidegger, *Nietzsche* (Pfullingen: Günther Neske, 1961); Gesamtausgabe 6 (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1996).

unthought-of, to step back to the ground upon which metaphysics became possible. This long detour through the history of philosophy is the only way towards a new beginning of philosophy that will necessarily be a new "thinking of Being."[12]

1.3 Levinas

Emmanuel Levinas went a step further in this history of the critique of metaphysics. He opposes, like Heidegger, the mainstream history of Western philosophy – now including Heidegger. According to Levinas, philosophical thought has almost always reduced alterity and singularity to "the Same," gathering all that is singular under a general concept, lumping together all differences under one denominator (e.g., Ideas, God, History, Reason, or – in the case of Heidegger – Being). Instead, Levinas proposes to develop a philosophy that relates to otherness, or, better said, to the other who withdraws from any thought or grasp, but nevertheless must be taken into account.[13]

1.4 Derrida

Jacques Derrida, in a further development, has tried to uncover elements of metaphysical thought in Heidegger and Levinas. In doing so, he gives a new and aporetic twist to this history of the various ends of metaphysics, bringing it to a close by showing that there can be no end to it.

Following Heidegger, Derrida speaks of a "metaphysics of presence," a mode of thought searching for an ultimate foundation, source, or center of reality, that presents itself as self-evident and makes possible the presence of all other beings. On the basis of this foundation, reality is presented as rationally ordered by means of clear distinctions and hierarchical oppositions (transcendent-immanent,

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[12] Martin Heidegger, "Überwindung der Metaphysik," in *Vorträge und Aufsätze* (Pfullingen: Günther Neske, 1985 [1954]), pp. 67–95; "Nachwort zu 'Was ist Metaphysik?'" in *Wegmarken*, Gesamtausgabe 9, 2nd ed. (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1978), pp. 303–304; "Einleitung zu 'Was ist Metaphysik?'" in ibid., pp. 365–368.

[13] Emmanuel Levinas, "La philosophie et l'idée de l'Infini," in *En découvrant l'existence avec Husserl et Heidegger,* 4th ed. (Paris: Vrin, 1988), pp. 165–178; see also *Totalité et Infini. Essai sur l'extériorité* (Den Haag: Martinus Nijhoff, 1961), p. 13. Paradoxically, Levinas turns the usual terminology of the history of philosophy the other way round. Apparently because of his opposition to Heidegger, he puts the entire metaphysical tradition, including Heidegger, under the heading of *ontology*, while calling his own alternative way of thinking *metaphysics*. *Ontology* here stands for the autonomy of rational thought that reduces alterity to the Self or the Same; *metaphysics* is the heteronomy that relates to the singular other. In Levinas, the metaphysical desire is no longer a desire to know, as it was in Aristotle; it is the desire that leads beyond knowledge to the other, a desire that will never be fulfilled and can but increase as a desire.

inside-outside, etc.). The many figures and shapes that metaphysicians have built through the ages are all, according to Derrida, linguistic and historical constructions. They must be dismantled in order to lay bare their preconditions and shortcomings, as well as the epistemological, ethical, political, and other implications inherent in them.[14] Such a dismantling or deconstruction of these edifices is undertaken by use or, if you like, abuse of their inscription in social and linguistic networks of references that are, by their very nature, unstable.

On the one hand, Derrida problematizes the metaphysical way of thinking as a violent interpretation of reality that always reduces singularities and differences to unity and, thereby, excludes other possible interpretations. On the other hand, since this is the case with every interpretation, Derrida emphasizes that there is no alternative; we cannot but understand the world we live in through a metaphysical manner of thinking.[15]

Our interpretation of the world always implies concepts that are part of a metaphysical construction that must be deconstructed. Metaphysics can never be ended. However, we should be aware of its violent character. Moreover, every effort to leave metaphysics behind is, according to Derrida, in itself a metaphysical movement because it attempts to make a clear distinction between the metaphysical tradition, on the one hand, and a new mode of thought beyond metaphysics, on the other.[16] In fact, Derrida proclaims the end of the tradition of outbidding in proclaiming the end of metaphysics.

The history of philosophy consists of a large number of metaphysical constructions that must be criticized and replaced again and again. Metaphysics, therefore, is an infinite and immortal striving for absolute knowledge that can only result in finite constructions.[17] In one of his earliest publications, Derrida describes philosophy as a "community of the question," which he later redefines as a "community of the call": a community of thinkers who must respond to the questions they find themselves confronted with. Derrida's deconstructions aim to preserve these questions *as*

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[14] Jacques Derrida, *De la grammatologie* (Paris: Minuit, 1967), pp. 11–12, 23–25, 27, 41, 64, 71, 104; *La voix et le phénomène* (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1967), pp. 70, 111, 114–115; *L'écriture et la différence* (Paris: Seuil, 1967), pp. 244, 409–411, 425.

[15] Jacques Derrida, *L'écriture et*…, op. cit., p. 412: "Or tous ces discours destructeurs et toutes leurs analogues sont pris dans une sorte de cercle. Ce cercle est unique et il décrit la forme du rapport entre l'histoire de la métaphysique et la destruction de l'histoire de la métaphysique: *il n'y a aucun sens* à se passer des concepts de la métaphysique pour ébranler la métaphysique; nous ne disposons d'aucun langage – d'aucune syntaxe et d'aucun lexique – qui soit étranger à cette histoire; nous ne pouvons énoncer aucune proposition destructrice qui n'ait déjà dû se glisser dans la forme, dans la logique et les postulations implicites de cela même qu'elle voudrait contester."

[16] Jacques Derrida, *Éperons. Les styles de Nietzsche* (Paris: Flammarion, 1978), p. 96: "C'est ici que l'opposition entre métaphysique et non-métaphysique rencontre à son tour sa limite, qui est la limite même *de* cette opposition, de la forme de l'opposition. Si la forme de l'opposition, la structure oppositionnelle, est métaphysique, le rapport de la métaphysique à son autre ne peut plus être d'opposition."

[17] Jacques Derrida, *Limited Inc.* (Paris: Galilée, 1990), p. 210.

questions.[18] They attempt to break through the finite constructions and closures of philosophical texts in order to expose them to the possibility of alternative views, to prepare a place for innovative approaches, as an "invention of the other."[19]

In his interpretations of philosophical texts, therefore, Derrida always emphasizes the metaphysical presuppositions that are at work in the text, stressing them in order to criticize the main lines of thought within the text and to open them for the alterity that they had excluded or suppressed. In his opinion, Heidegger's thought is still metaphysical by focusing entirely on ontological difference as the one difference that philosophy is concerned with.[20] Comparably, Derrida finds in Levinas' work a reduction of all philosophical questions to the sole source of meaning, i.e., ethical difference.[21] Even these philosophies of difference, despite their critique of the metaphysical tradition, still contain metaphysical elements of thought.

2 From Metaphysics to Language

An alternative approach to the metaphysical tradition can be found in the work of Hans-Georg Gadamer and Jürgen Habermas. They do not regard metaphysics as a manner of thinking that is inherent in philosophy, but as a historical period that has been left behind quite a while ago. For them, metaphysics means the search for an ultimate grounding and understanding of reality as a whole – an approach that is outdated by the investigation of historical and linguistic structures in which philosophical thought is always already embedded.

2.1 Gadamer

Thinking along the lines of Heidegger's ontological turn in the hermeneutic tradition, Gadamer views all interpretation as a work of dialogue – e.g., a dialogue between text and reader – in which their horizons conflate. In his relation to the metaphysical tradition, Gadamer takes a different stand from his master, Heidegger. Heidegger wanted to overcome metaphysics through the elaboration of a new thinking – an effort which he

[18] Jacques Derrida, *L'écriture et*…, op. cit., pp. 117–120; *Du droit à la philosophie* (Paris: Galilée, 1990), pp. 27–29, 515–522; cf. Derrida's remarks in a discussion in Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe and Jean-Luc Nancy (eds.), *Les fins de l'homme. A partir du travail de Jacques Derrida* (Paris: Galilée, 1981), p. 184.

[19] Jacques Derrida, *Psyché. Inventions de l'autre* (Paris: Galilée, 1987), pp. 11–61; *Points de suspension. Entretiens* (Paris: Galilée, 1992), pp. 224–225.

[20] Jacques Derrida, *De la grammatologie*, op. cit., pp. 11–12, 31–39; *Marges de la philosophie* (Paris: Minuit, 1972), pp. 22–29, 147–164; *Positions* (Paris: Minuit, 1972), pp. 18–19; *Psyché*…, op. cit., pp. 395–451.

[21] Jacques Derrida, *L'écriture et*…, op. cit., pp. 117–228; *Psyché*…, op. cit., pp. 183–201.

knew to be an endless task, since philosophy inevitably falls back again and again on the "language of metaphysics." According to Gadamer, however, this idea of a "language of metaphysics" is a poor and inexact expression; "there is no language of metaphysics."[22] During the history of philosophy, a philosophical terminology has been developed that can be traced through a conceptual history that tries to rediscover the "living language": the full and original meaning of words before they became fixed metaphysical concepts. This is, according to Gadamer, the only possible meaning of a "language of metaphysics": the edification of a philosophical conceptuality with all its implications, which can be criticized with the help of a conceptual history.[23]

For Gadamer, metaphysics has already been surpassed by this view of language as dialogue: the endless effort to reach understanding and agreement that in no way aims at an absolute and definitive comprehension of the whole of reality.[24] This idea of dialogue emphasizes the linguistic and historical limits of all understanding and claims, thereby, to have bypassed the metaphysical tradition.

Obviously, another concept of metaphysics is at stake here. It is not the necessarily violent objectification that makes thought metaphysical, but the effort to reach absolute knowledge of an all-encompassing principle – an effort that, according to Gadamer, has been left behind since the beginning of the twentieth century.

2.2 Habermas

Jürgen Habermas goes even further, maintaining that contemporary philosophy finds itself in the same position as the generation after Hegel: "since then, we have no alternative to post-metaphysical thought."[25] With "great simplification," Habermas defines metaphysics as idealism from Plato up through Hegel.[26] He discerns within this line of thought three main aspects: the "motif of unity" in search of the one origin, the identity of Being and thought, and a "strong concept of theory" that

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[22] Hans-Georg Gadamer, "Hermeneutics and Logocentrism," in Diane P. Michelfelder and Richard E. Palmer (eds.), *Dialogue and Deconstruction. The Gadamer-Derrida Encounter* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1989), p. 121.

[23] Hans-Georg Gadamer, "Text und Interpretation," in *Gesammelte Werke 2* (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1986/1993), pp. 332–335; "Destruktion und Dekonstruktion," in ibid., pp. 365–366; "Letter to Dallmayr," in *Dialogue and Deconstruction*…, op. cit., pp. 98–99.

[24] Hans-Georg Gadamer, "Destruktion und…," op. cit., pp. 363, 367–368; "Text und…," op. cit., pp. 335–336.

[25] Jürgen Habermas, *Nachmetaphysisches Denken* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1992), p. 36: "daß sich unsere Ausgangssituation von jener der ersten Generation der Hegelschüler nicht wesentlich unterscheidet. Damals hatte sich der Aggregatzustand des Philosophierens verändert: seitdem haben wir zum nachmetaphysischen Denken keine Alternative."

[26] Ibid.: "Unter Vernachlässigung der aristotelischen Linie nenne ich in großer Vereinfachung 'metaphysisch' das auf Plato zurückgehende Denken eines philosophischen Idealismus, der über Plotin und den Neoplatonismus … bis zu Kant, Fichte, Schelling und Hegel reicht."

places itself above common sense and praxis. In modern philosophy, the turn to subjectivity has changed these aspects of objective idealism into a "philosophy of consciousness."[27]

Several developments in nineteenth-century thought have deprived philosophy of its abilities to create foundations, and have also made it possible to combine unity or community and individuality without metaphysical paradoxes and aporias. The task of philosophy has changed from founding scientific knowledge to that of mediating between the sciences and the life-world. Absolute reason has been traded here for communicative reason, the rationality of language and dialogue, the presuppositions of which Habermas has reconstructed in his theory of communicative action.[28]

Consequently, according to Habermas, metaphysics already came to a close halfway through the nineteenth century. Since then, many critiques of metaphysics, such as those of Nietzsche, Heidegger and Adorno, have gotten bogged down in this same tradition, showing what metaphysics had always tried, and failed, to achieve.[29]

3 Reciprocal Accusations

Both of the currents of thought sketched above can cast accusations, criticize one another for being "metaphysical," "as if that were a deadly weapon."[30] On the one hand, Derrida's deconstructive strategies can lay bare the metaphysical assumptions that are inherent in the projects of Habermas and Gadamer. Even if they are accepted as assumptions and not as "strong concepts," they have a metaphysical function with all the accompanying features such as hierarchical oppositions, fixed definitions and distinctions, as well as suppression and exclusion of alterity. Although Habermas and Gadamer claim that their historical, hermeneutical thought has done away with absolute metaphysical pretensions, the contextually situated and historical suppositions they adhere to can always be stretched to their absolute limits.

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[27] Ibid.: "Eingehen werde ich auf das Einheitsmotiv der Ursprungsphilosophie, auf die Gleichsetzung von Sein und Denken und auf die Heilsbedeutung der theoretischen Lebensführung, kurz: auf Identitätsdenken, Ideenlehre und starken Theoriebegriff." See also pp. 36–40.

[28] Habermas mentions four developments that have problematized the metaphysical mode of thought: the increase in formal and methodical rationality (*Verfahrensrationalität*) that questions the intrinsic rationality of an objective ordering; the rise of historical consciousness and of the historical-hermeneutical sciences that stress the finitude and contextuality of all thought and, thereby, detranscendentalize the main metaphysical concepts; several critiques of the objectifying and functionalization of life forms that have provoked the linguistic turn in early twentieth-century philosophy with its denouncing of the modern subject-object scheme; and finally the inversion of the primacy of theory over praxis. Cf. ibid., pp. 41–60.

[29] Habermas (ibid., p. 35) calls this "negative metaphysics"; see also Jürgen Habermas, *Der philosophische Diskurs der Moderne* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1985).

[30] Jan Patočka, op. cit., p. 175.

This is the point where I think Derrida is right: a revisiting of the old metaphysical tradition is inevitable and entails a prospect of critical evaluation.

But here we reach, on the other hand, a point of critique that is put forward by Gadamer and Habermas against Derrida. By changing every issue into a metaphysical problem, Derrida, according to his opponents, loses the ability to positively acknowledge the possibility of understanding, agreement, and practical employability of thought. His "negative metaphysics" can only have negative and critical effects; he dismantles, but does not construct.

It must be admitted here that Derrida does not deny the possibility of new ethical, political, and scientific initiatives. On the contrary, he encourages them. But his own work is more focused on the transcendental conditions of possibility and impossibility that also undermine and problematize any new initiative. Therefore, his philosophy remains at least suspect of being an unusable and negative metaphysics. A more practical use of deconstructive interventions is very well possible, but also demands a free and distant attitude towards Derrida's own work. This is the point where I think Gadamer and Habermas are right.[31]

In general, we can say, on the one hand, against Habermas and Gadamer, that metaphysical questions can never be left behind. They are still relevant with regard to the basic ontological assumptions that are inherent in contextually situated and historical suppositions, even if they have abandoned their absolute pretensions. On the other hand, against Heidegger, Levinas and Derrida, one can have reservations with regard to the metaphysical desire that still haunts their work in, respectively, the question of Being, the subjection to the other and the invention of the other. In short, all critiques of metaphysics emphasize one feature of the metaphysical tradition which they abandon while at the same time engaging in another.

The "postmodernism debate" seems to have been caught in this dilemma: either one denies the undeniable metaphysical side of all thinking, or one takes this metaphysical aspect as the core of all philosophy, thereby falling back into a negative metaphysics.

4 Patočka's Negative Platonism

It is time now to take a look at Patočka's "negative Platonism," to see if it is able to overcome this dilemma. In answering the question, "what [metaphysics] has died?" (175),[32] Patočka goes back further than the birth of metaphysics. He goes all the way to the birth of philosophy itself. The moment of this original birth he finds in Socrates, the "great questioner" and "emblem of philosophy as such" (180).

[31] One can also add here that Derrida seemed unaware or, at most, rarely aware of the fact that his receptivity for an absolute alterity is in itself a metaphysical construction; cf. my article "Jacques Derrida and the Faith in Philosophy," in *The Southern Journal of Philosophy*, Vol. XLII, no. 3, 2004, pp. 313–331.

[32] The page numbers in brackets refer to Jan Patočka, "Negative Platonism…", op. cit.

In his "absolute freedom," in the movement of "constantly freeing himself," "Socrates uncovers one of the fundamental contradictions of being human, the contradiction between man's intrinsic and inalienable relation to the whole, and his inability, the impossibility of expressing this relation in the form of ordinary finite knowledge" (180). Socrates thus formulates "a new truth," the truth of philosophy as such, that can be articulated solely "in the form of a question, in the form of a skeptical analysis, of a negation of all finite assertions" (181).

The essence of metaphysics, as Patočka finds it in the thought of Plato, Aristotle, and Democritus, consists in offering an answer to the Socratic questions (181). Plato's answer takes the form of the doctrine of Ideas: a static system of rigid and lifeless principles substituted for the "living force of transcendence" and "the historicity of Socrates' struggle against the decline of life" (182). But there is also another side to the Platonic Idea: it is "also a goal and a model and a *vis a fronte* – that is a Socratic element" (181). Patočka keeps these two moments in mind whenever he speaks of Ideas in this text. The main aspect of the Ideas does not reside, for Patočka, in the concepts and their systematic order, but rather in their separation from our everyday experience and actual reality, that is, in the *chōrismos* (198).

Chōrismos is not the separation of two realms of objects. Rather, it separates objectivity from that which can no longer be articulated in terms of objects. The *chōrismos* shows that there is more than just the empirically given. Human existence also relates to the world as a whole. Patočka reinterprets the Platonic notion of Idea by emphasizing this element of *chōrismos*. He thus gives a "non-metaphysical" (197) reading of Plato's Ideas, changing them into what happens to be the core of his Socratic view of philosophy. The Idea – Patočka prefers to speak of it in the singular form – cannot be defined in a positive and objective manner; it cannot be seen. "Rather, the Idea enables us to see in a 'spiritual' sense in which we can say that we see, in that which is given and presented to us, something more than is directly contained in the givenness" (199). Patočka strips the Idea of its presentational objective character in order to show its transcendental quality: the Idea is "the origin and wellspring of all *human* objectification" (199).

In other words: we have the freedom to choose new perspectives on the phenomena that are given to us. Freedom is described here by Patočka as the ability to look beyond the empirically given, to have an understanding of "the whole." The experience of freedom is an experience of transcendence (193). The Idea, in Patočka's sense, is "pure superobjectivity, the pure call of transcendence" (204). This reinterpretation of the Platonic Idea is presented by Patočka as an effort to "overcome and preserve (*aufheben*) metaphysics in a deeper sense" (197), as a step from metaphysics to philosophy, and as a step back from Plato to Socrates.

But since what is beyond the *chōrismos* cannot be positively articulated, negative Platonism can never completely step back from metaphysics to philosophy. It is essentially marked by a tension between freedom and openness towards the world as a whole, on the one hand, and the necessity, on the other hand, to give a positive expression of the beyond.

This tension has left its traces on Patočka's style in this essay. In several passages, Patočka clearly states that metaphysics has come to an end (175), and negative

Platonism is described as a "philosophy purified of metaphysical claims" (205). But he also states, "the human spirit returns to metaphysics ever again, in spite of its putative emptiness and invalidity" (197). And he remarks that negative Platonism "shows how much truth there is in man's perennial *metaphysical* struggle for something elevated above the natural and the traditional, … in the struggle, taken up ever again, against relativism of values and norms" (205–206, my emphasis). It seems that metaphysics as a set of positively formulated claims has died, but that it lives on in a negative way, as a truth without objectivity, yet which has nonetheless positive traits, as a struggle against relativism. This can also be found in the balanced end of Patočka's text, where he describes negative Platonism as both poor and rich: poor because it "can make no assertions of positive content about the Idea or about man" (205); rich because it guards philosophy's "own-most domain" and "preserves for humans the possibility of relying on a truth that is not relative and 'mundane,' even though it cannot be formulated positively, in terms of content" (205). This last quotation clearly shows the tension of negative Platonism at work: what is a truth that is not relative, yet at the same time cannot be formulated positively?

In this text, written in 1953, Patočka leaves this question unanswered. In another essay, on modern "supercivilization," written at about the same period, he speaks of a "regulative transcendence" that combines the receptivity for the call of transcendence with the impossibility of a positive answer.[33] In his later work, Patočka develops out of this tension the idea of the care for the soul. The same struggle against both absolutism and relativism then calls for an existential stability that is able to question itself as well.[34]

The tension between the positive and the negative, which Patočka refers to again and again, emphasizing slightly the negative side, can be found in the terminology and title of the essay. Instead of "negative Platonism," why not something like "positive Socratism"? And why does Patočka hold on to the notion of "Idea," when he in fact means *chōrismos*? These seem to be signs of a work in progress that is still looking for a more positive way to articulate itself.

5 The Relevance of "Negative Platonism"

In this tension, Patočka also brings together the two concepts of metaphysics that I distinguished in the first part of this article. On the one hand, he seems to agree with Gadamer and Habermas that metaphysics has come to an end long ago. The opening sentences of "Negative Platonism" mention the awareness of the end of metaphysics as something the nineteenth century has in common with the twentieth (175, cf. 188). Yet, at the same time, he claims, with Heidegger, that no one really

[33] See French translation: Jan Patočka, "La surcivilisation et son conflit interne," in *Liberté et sacrifice. Écrits politiques*, ed. and transl. E. Abrams (Grenoble: Millon, 1990), pp. 99–180.

[34] See Jan Patočka, *Plato and Europe*, transl. P. Lom (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2002), pp. 74–75, 86–87, 92–93, 106, 118, 136.

knows what this means because "the question has yet to be posed adequately" (175). And, with Derrida and others, he speaks of the "perennial metaphysical struggle" (197, 205) as an answer to "the call of transcendence" (204).

From the perspective of Patočka's negative Platonism, Gadamer and Habermas seem to have missed the urge of the call of transcendence. Dialogical philosophy can find its foundations neither in the rules or practices of language nor in what Gadamer calls the "*verbum interius*," the inner speech that can never be entirely expressed in language.[35] Both philosophers ignore the *chōrismos* that remains at work after the end of metaphysics.

Although Patočka places his own negative Platonism in the lineage of Heidegger's overcoming of metaphysics (188), his position with regard to the metaphysical tradition is different from Heidegger's. Both Heidegger and Levinas give too much of an answer to metaphysical questions, whether in the thinking of Being or in the recognition of the retreating and commanding face of the other. From the perspective of negative Platonism, all these philosophers, each in his own way, change the tension of post-metaphysical thought into a dilemma, and would have it positing itself one-sidedly on one of the poles. Either metaphysics is viewed as an outdated search for absolutes, while philosophy is supposed to positively formulate finite answers to finite questions. Or metaphysics is seen as an inescapable unifying way of thinking that can only be engaged in a negative form.

Patočka, however, seems here to be very close to Derrida. The relation of negative Platonism to Derrida's "community of the question" requires a more detailed discussion. Let us start with what they have in common. Despite differing terminology, both agree that metaphysical questions, with regard to the totality of reality and to absolute values and presuppositions, keep on haunting us and will never be satisfactorily answered. This is what Derrida means by his "community of the question," which is supposed to maintain the question as a question.[36] The fact that questions cannot be answered is demonstrated by the plurality of answers.[37] Derrida prefers to speak here of "openness for the other" and for the unpredictable "event." Patočka talks rather of freedom and transcendence. Both approaches underline the necessary possibility (in terms of both description and prescription) of new and unexpected views and ideas.

Moreover, this does not mean that any answer would be right, that receptivity for the event would mean receptivity for everything. In other words, it does not lead to relativism. On the contrary, the call of the other (Derrida), or of transcendence

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[35] See Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Wahrheit und Methode* (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1990 [1960]), pp. 422–431; Jean Grondin, *The Philosophy of Gadamer*, transl. K. Plant (Chesham: Acumen, 2003), pp. 123–137; and Jean Grondin, *Introduction to Philosophical Hermeneutics*, transl. J. Weinsheimer (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994), pp. xiii–xv.

[36] Derrida and Patočka both use expressions like "preserving as a problem" and "keeping the question"; cf. Jan Patočka, *Heretical Essays in the Philosophy of History*, ed. J. Dodd, transl. E. Kohák (Chicago and La Salle: Open Court, 1996), p. 118; Jacques Derrida, *L'écriture et*…, op. cit., p. 119.

[37] Jacques Derrida, *Psyché*…, op. cit., p. 61; Jan Patočka, *Plato and Europe*, op. cit., p. 75.

(Patočka), is a call for truth.[38] Openness does not mean relativity but perfectibility of metaphysical answers to the questions we are faced with.

Nevertheless, Patočka's attitude towards the actually given metaphysical answers is not quite the same as Derrida's. Derrida admits that we cannot do without answers, but he emphasizes the need for a critical approach to all answers given by the metaphysical tradition and, in particular, the totalizing tendency inherent in all hierarchical oppositions, i.e., in all language. In his later work, the openness for the other is slightly changed, becoming openness for the absolute other. His formula "*tout autre est tout autre*" ("every other is wholly other") calls for abstracting from every concretely given phenomenon to the abstract other and singular as such. This strategy can be recognized, for example, in his work on justice, the messianic, and negative theology.[39] This course set on the absolute other goes hand in hand with the excavation of every positive articulation of a fundamental idea. The emphasis on absolute alterity and the excavation of metaphysical positions reveals an urge for purity that can be interpreted as a trace of the metaphysical desire for the absolute. Absolute purity still functions here as a norm that can never be fulfilled. Therefore, Derrida's oscillation between the metaphysical intention of absolute knowledge and the finite constructions of the metaphysical tradition can in itself be taken as a metaphysical construction; his plea for the messianic without messianism is in itself a messianism. The metaphysical desire is still at work in Derrida's texts, albeit in a negative way. Without himself further pursuing definitive metaphysical answers, Derrida seems nonetheless to believe that philosophy as such is characterized by this metaphysical urge. In other words, we cannot but think something absolute, which Derrida will then be more than willing to deconstruct. In Patočka, we do not find this metaphysical desire. He is not in search of an excavation of all metaphysical projects. Nor is there, in his texts, an orientation towards the absolute other or the singular as such.

Whereas, in Derrida, one can make out a tendency towards a negative metaphysics akin to Levinas, the movement discernible in Patočka's work is in the direction of a more positive articulation of the metaphysical quest for meaning. Although Patočka's style and terminology seem to stress the negative side of his relation to the metaphysical tradition, there is a positive side as well, expressed in terms of freedom and the struggle against relativism. Like Derrida, Patočka underlines the endless recurrence of metaphysical questions and the plurality of answers, but he does not, contrary to Derrida, take the metaphysical desire of purity for granted. This leaves room for a more positive approach of a Socratic questioning philosophy which, in his later work, develops into the notion of the "care for the soul." The care for the soul does not mean only that the soul must constantly question itself or

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[38] Jacques Derrida, *Positions*, op. cit., p. 80 n.; Jan Patočka, *Plato and Europe*, op. cit., pp. 36, 68.

[39] Jacques Derrida, *Force de loi* (Paris: Galilée, 1994); "Comment ne pas parler. *Dénégations*," in *Psyché…*, op. cit., pp. 535–595; *Sauf le nom* (Paris: Galilée, 1993); *Spectres de Marx. L'État de la dette, le travail du deuil et la nouvelle Internationale* (Paris: Galilée, 1993).

accept to be brought into question. It also means the concern, having been thus shaken, to find a new equilibrium, a new harmony, in human life as well as in the *polis*: "To get our feet back on solid ground!"[40]

In his later work, *Plato and Europe*, Patočka is looking for a more positive account of the search for meaning: "We can never know once and for all whether we are living in good or evil, in truth or untruth. The question is whether our existence in this alternative, in this indecisiveness … does not have an essential *significance* that is not negative, but rather *positive*."[41] It is precisely this search for a stable and positive meaning beyond metaphysics that reveals the relevance of negative Platonism. Without either neglecting the call of transcendence or falling back into a negative metaphysics, Patočka shows us the meaning of metaphysical questions for our human existence, the importance of our being metaphysically questioned. This affirmative existentialist meaning of the care for the soul gives Patočka's relation to the metaphysical tradition at once its specificity and its contemporary relevance.

The notions of negative Platonism and the care for the soul have moreover a potential for being further elaborated affirmatively, e.g., in the articulation of tolerance and pluralism as alternatives to the current rise of religious fundamentalism. They can also be helpful in delivering strong arguments for the conceptualization and development of modern democracy. In short, the negatively formulated message that basic questions can never receive a definitive answer, always has another, positive, side that can be articulated in presuppositions and convictions, and developed in the direction of ethical and political stances and positions. These positive capacities, inherent in negative Platonism, show that it has lost nothing of its relevance today.

[40] Jan Patočka, *Plato and Europe*, op. cit., p. 77, cf. pp. 86, 93, 106, 124, 136, 196.

[41] Ibid., p. 136.

Negative Platonism and the Appearance-Problem

Tamás Ullmann

The expression "negative Platonism" is not only the title of a well-known essay by Patočka, it points as well to a whole philosophical program. Patočka's thought was guided and directed by this program from 1953 – the year the essay began circulating in manuscript form – through his late writings of the 1970s. It may sound strange to say that Patočka's rich and complex philosophical *œuvre*, extending from historical research and aesthetics to concrete political questions, and covering almost all relevant philosophical domains, has but one central problem. I would nonetheless like to argue that, insofar as we consider Patočka as a phenomenologist, his phenomenologically oriented work is a constant rethinking of one and the same predominant problem: that of negative Platonism. I shall begin my essay with a brief outline of its main phenomenological ideas, then go on to try to show the relation between negative Platonism and the appearance-problem on the basis of the texts published in the volume *Vom Erscheinen als solchem*.[1] Concerning the problem of appearing, we must consider first Patočka's critique of Husserl, Heidegger and others, then the radicalized phenomenological approach that he himself terms asubjective phenomenology. At this point, a deep, indeed aporetical question arises in the conceptual framework of Patočka's philosophy: how can we speak in one breath of asubjective phenomenology and personal responsibility? It would seem difficult to reconcile the goal of asubjective phenomenology and the supposition of free responsibility in one coherent theory. Viewing this as the central problem of Patočka's later philosophy, I shall conclude by attempting to reconstruct a possible answer to this aporetic question.

[1] Jan Patočka, *Vom Erscheinen als solchem. Texte aus dem Nachlaß*, ed. H. Blaschek-Hahn and K. Novotný (Freiburg and München: Alber, 2000).

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1 Negative Platonism

The questions raised in Patočka's essay "Negative Platonism" are the following: what does metaphysics mean, how can we understand something like a Platonic Idea, and what is the task of philosophy in our pragmatic technical age? The author sees a crucial change at the Greek beginnings of philosophy: the transformation of the Socratic attitude into Platonic idealism. According to Patočka, this seemingly minor shift has had a tremendous impact, not only on philosophy, but on the whole of European history. If we live today in a cultural crisis, it is because metaphysics – the metaphysics born in Plato's theory of Ideas – continues to determine our present worldviews. The philosophical program outlined in Patočka's "Negative Platonism" takes shape around three central concepts: metaphysics, freedom, and Idea.

1. Negative Platonism tries to find the real sense of metaphysics cleansed of all higher objective entities or absolute rules. Turning away from the dream of a perfect higher ideal reality implies that there are no metaphysical facts. As Patočka writes: "Metaphysics has no independent subject-matter."[2] In other words, a logical-epistemological analysis easily reveals that the supposedly metaphysical objects are sheer fictions, due mainly to language schemes. He makes a list of metaphysical fictions: ideas both as realities and as logical entities, universals, values, categories such as substance and causality (when understood as the ultimate building blocks of reality), and finally Being itself, it too without objective content. It is interesting to note that his argumentation is not only similar to the Nietzschean critique of metaphysics, but relies on the same central argument: the seduction of language. Metaphysical fictions emerge because we submit to our language schemes.

The negativity of metaphysics has two sides: the "logical-epistemological" side consists in positing a higher, but fictitious reality, whereas the "existential" side assures comfort against fear, anxiety, suffering, loss of meaning, doubt, and despair. Nonetheless, metaphysics has a positive side as well, and that profoundly intrigues Patočka. How can we find our way back to metaphysics in a positive sense? At this point, Patočka relies on phenomenological insights. First of all, on the fact that we can withdraw from our everyday occupation, from particular things. Phenomenology and philosophy are nothing else but this act of distancing from particular entities and interests. Metaphysics in this sense is not the unfolding of a new universe beyond the sensible world, it does not reveal "the experience *we have*," but rather "the experience *we are*."[3] Metaphysics in its positive sense is thus turned towards our world, towards reality here and now, and it tends to open up the hidden structure of this world and of "the experience we are." *Instead of an ideal universe and eternal rules, inner drama and the particular structure of this concrete world* – this is how Patočka's conception of metaphysics could be summarized.

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[2] Jan Patočka, "Negative Platonism: Reflections concerning the Rise, the Scope, and the Demise of Metaphysics – and Whether Philosophy Can Survive It," in *Philosophy and Selected Writings*, ed. and transl. E. Kohák (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1989), p. 188.

[3] Ibid., p. 192.

2. His second intention is to interpret freedom in a new way. The negative interpretation of freedom has two main branches in tradition: either we suppose freedom to be nothing more than arbitrariness, or we determine it as the mere lack of natural determinism. Neither one of these interpretations can elucidate the real phenomenon of freedom. According to Patočka, we should adopt a radically new attitude: freedom should no longer be treated from the standpoint of causality (the above-mentioned two versions of freedom are both dependent on the concept of causality). Both because freedom in a positive sense has nothing to do with the conceptual framework of causality and because causality has turned out to be one of the major metaphysical fictions.

On the other hand, Patočka refuses to divide human beings into a sensible and a suprasensible component, as if the former, the body, were subordinated to the rules of natural causality, and the latter, the soul or the mind, were beyond any physical determinism. Both conceptions are linked to a false metaphysics. We are free *as* sensuous beings, and we are free *in* the sensible, natural world. But how is this possible? Patočka attributes three characteristics to freedom: (1) *Freedom is an experience*. But, unlike sense experience, it is not related to any fact, or object, or state of things: it is not the experience of something objective to which one can return whenever one wishes to do so. The experience of freedom, linked to a concrete situation, happens once and only once. It never repeats itself in the same form. The experience of freedom is an experience of risk and struggle, and of losing stability and comfort in habitual life. (2) *Freedom is negative* in the sense that we are not satisfied with sense experience and pre-given ready-made things. And what's more: the whole content of passive sense experience can become void and insignificant. The negativity of the experience of freedom consists in the troubling insight that irreality and fantasy can, under certain circumstances, be more important than so-called reality, the supposed object of our perceptual experience. The human being seems to be flexible and pliant to such an extent that his hopes, fantasies, desires overcome the harshness of reality. (3) *The experience of freedom is always* "*full experience*." As Patočka writes: "The experience of freedom is always an experience of the whole, one pertaining to a global 'meaning.' "[4] That is why he concludes: "For all these reasons we can designate the experience of freedom as one of transcendence."[5] However, transcendence is not something "suprasensible" in traditional terms, it belongs to all human life as its natural movement and tendency. On the other hand, freedom as transcendence is not limited to the "moral or existential" sphere of human life, since other sorts of human activity as well (distancing from things, language, science, thinking, etc.) are rooted in the experience of freedom.

3. Finally – and this seems to be the most programmatic part of Patočka's reasoning – he attempts to reconsider the concept of idea. This is certainly the climax of his essay on negative Platonism. He tries to find a middle way between the two extremities that have determined philosophy since Plato: the first declares that all that appears is somehow determined by an ultimate ideal structure of essential rules.

[4] Ibid., p. 193.

[5] Ibid.

This attitude can be represented by the Platonic Idea, the Cartesian rational God, Kant's transcendental ideal and the eidetic structure of consciousness in the early Husserl. The second extremity supposes that there is nothing stable in Being: things as well as experiences of things are constantly changing (radical empiricism, Schelling, etc.). According to Patočka, we should give up the ancient dream of metaphysics of an ultimate, stable, eternal structure of Being as such. The first and fascinatingly perfect expression of this dream took shape undoubtedly in Platonic idealism. Unfortunately – as we shall see – Husserl and even Heidegger continued to pay tribute to this tendency, mainly because of their hidden subjectivism. But the other extremity cannot be accepted either: philosophy based on raw empiricism or on the productive imagination gives up not only rules and ideal-logical form, but the very sense of experience. Experience risks losing all concrete determination, content, and form, if it is based on sheer sensuality or on the arbitrariness of imagination. Patočka is convinced that there is a sense of existence, of time, of life, but this sense is far from being ideally pre-given. At first sight, his solution seems to be a strange reversal of the Platonic conception of Idea. As if by this reversal we could eliminate the false metaphysical aspects of the Idea and retain only its "phenomenological" characteristics.

Patočka's negative Platonism considers the Idea in a metaphysical, but not in a supra-sensible or supra-natural way. It means that the Idea, though neither a higher, supratemporal entity, nor a general objectivity, nonetheless transcends the particular. How are we, however, to grasp something that would thus function between ideal entity and particular thing? Traditional philosophy has no word for such a thing or structure. It is clear from the text that the Idea in the sense of negative Platonism is not what we see, but that which makes it possible to see things in general. Idea expresses our ability to step back from the present and the given, it frees us from the bondage of reality, it makes possible to see what is more and what is new as compared with the perceptually given. That is why the Idea in negative Platonism falls within the province of temporality and history, rather than eternity.

There is a concept appearing in the last part of the essay, the importance of which has not – in my opinion – been duly stressed: the concept of *chōrismos* (separation). In Plato, it refers primarily to the separation between the sensible, natural world and the suprasensible sphere of Ideas, but, in a more general approach, it has to do also with the separation between sensuous givenness and ideal meaning, and with the separation between causal-temporal determination and supratemporal freedom. It is not difficult to see that the concept of *chōrismos* latently determines the whole metaphysical tradition from Plato to Husserl: sensuous experience and ideal meaning are always separated, that is why they have to be synthetized.

According to Patočka, it is precisely the Platonic form of *chōrismos* that must be relinquished if we wish to give sense to metaphysics. Giving up this central metaphysical conviction of a clear-cut separation of the spheres is the clue to negative Platonism. For example, one of Patočka's most significant insights, guiding his later phenomenological research on the nature of appearance, is that there is no separation between the sensuous and the logical-ideal part of experience.

To put it more concisely: *ideal meaning is not apart from, but rather part of the phenomenological field*.

These three transformations – that of the metaphysical attitude, that of the function of freedom and that of the concept of Idea – outline the overall framework of the new program called "negative Platonism." I believe the whole of Patočka's later thinking can be connected directly or indirectly to these basic insights. Let us see now how he returns to these themes in the late 1960s, when – thanks to his renewed teaching activity – he can once more concentrate on the fundamental problems of phenomenology.

2 From the Critique of Phenomenology to Asubjective Phenomenology

During his first period as a university teacher, after the Second World War, Patočka dealt with the beginnings of philosophy in Ancient Greece, focusing on Socrates, Plato and Aristotle. His second period – in the late 1960s – can be characterized by a strong renewal of his interest in basic phenomenological questions. *Introduction to the Study of Husserl's Phenomenology*, as well as *Body, Community, Language, World*, and *The Problem of the Natural World* are the classical results of this period. I prefer, however, to consider here his manuscripts from the 1970s, published in the volume *Vom Erscheinen als solchem*, which seem to represent an even deeper immersion in phenomenological problems.

The program called "negative Platonism" offers several possible paths for thinking. What is historicity? How can human life be conceived as life in the natural world? How is freedom to be defined in an ethical and in an existential context? What is the historical destiny of metaphysics? The meaning of technology? The essence of politics? The role of art in life? Etc. Be all that as it may, it is interesting to note the resoluteness of Patočka's return to the very foundations of phenomenology, as soon as political change allows him to devote himself to deeper studies and research. His interest focuses on a predominant question: what is appearing? All the others seem to be reducible to this fundamental problem. And, as we shall see later, the phenomenological philosophy of appearing outlined in his later manuscripts is one of his major attempts to elaborate the program put forward in the essay on negative Platonism.

His critique of Husserl's phenomenology is based on a clear distinction between epoché and reduction. The patient elaboration of this distinction becomes the methodological background of Patočka's later phenomenology. Though epoché and reduction do not coincide in Husserl's approach either, the radicalization of their difference makes it possible for Patočka to open up a new path for phenomenological research. Greatly simplifying, we can say that the epoché is the fundamental act of phenomenology and of philosophy in general. It is a free act, a kind of stepping back from concrete things and from the ontic belief, which is meant to open the phenomenological field. Contrary to the epoché, the reduction is a dubious step.

For Patočka, it means reduction to something that is posited, supposed as a constant background. Though Husserl was the first to uncover the phenomenological field, thanks to the methodological means provided by the epoché, his transcendental turn falsified this essential discovery. Though Husserl rejects Descartes' objectifying of the *sum*, he also fixes consciousness, not ontologically, as Descartes and Kant did, but transcendentally: positing an essential structure as the ultimate framework of all conscious activities.

The appearance and importance of the reduction after the transcendental turn is a clear symptom of Husserl's Cartesianism and of its metaphysical residues. For Patočka, this Cartesianism originates in Husserl's confusion of subjectivity and phenomenality. At first, phenomenality was subjective solely in the narrow sense that all phenomena appear to me, in this given perspective, in this given aspect. It shifted, however, from this neutral position to a central one, and subjectivity became the source of all that appears. This shift is inadmissible in Patočka's eyes. To speak of constitution instead of phenomenal appearance is, for Patočka, the same mistake as to speak of subjectivity instead of the phenomenological field, or of reduction rather than epoché. An appearing being is reduced to another being and we miss the appearing itself, since reduction to transcendental subjectivity is not reduction to the real source of appearance, but to a special component of appearing itself. Appearing as such is more original than subjectivity, which – even in its non-psychological, transcendental form – is part of the phenomenal field. As Patočka puts it, in very simple words: "Historically, one has always attempted to reduce the appearance-problem to some appearing being."[6] And this is true of Husserl himself, who discovered the epoché, the gateway to the age-old problem ("*das uralte Problem*")[7]: what is appearing?

Patočka considers Heidegger's philosophy as overcoming the difficulties of the Husserlian transcendental approach. His critique on Heidegger is nonetheless sharp and appropriate. Although Heidegger underlines the existential-ontological character of Dasein, the problem of appearing takes shape for him in the framework of "opening possibilities." The fundamental event or function of Dasein is the opening of the world, which, according to Heidegger, is nothing but the projection of possibilities ("*Entwurf der Möglichkeiten*").[8] Patočka's counter-argument against this conception is that no one could open his or her possibilities if these possibilities were not already opened to him.[9]

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[6] Jan Patočka, *Vom Erscheinen*…, op. cit., Text V: "Phänomenologie als Lehre vom Erscheinen als solchem," p. 154: "Man hat in der Geschichte dieses Problems immer Erscheinung auf irgendein Erscheinendes zurückzuführen versucht."

[7] See ibid., p. 149.

[8] See ibid., Text III: "Leib, Möglichkeiten, Welt, Erscheinungsfeld," pp. 87, 92, 94.

[9] Ibid., p. 94: "Kein endliches Wesen ist imstande, Möglichkeiten zu schaffen – genausowenig wie Wirklichkeiten.… Der Entwurf eigener Möglichkeiten ist kein ursprüngliches Schaffen von Möglichkeiten, kein *Welt*entwurf, sondern es ist bloß ein Entwurf *meiner Existenz* auf der Hintergrund der Welt."

Heidegger's hermeneutical phenomenology seems to be subjectivistic to the extent that the projection of possibilities, on which all appearance is based, can only be understood as *my* project of possibilities. The project of possibilities, which makes it possible to open the world and all that appears in the world, originates from my own Dasein. "I do not open my possibilities, but *my situation* in the light of the possibilities that open *themselves*."[10] In spite of his struggle against Cartesianism and transcendentalism, Heidegger's approach remained subjectivistic, since the structure of the projection of possibilities is fundamentally a transcendental structure. And there is another crucial problem: "Heidegger does not deny corporeity, he does not deny that we exist also as things among other things, but he does not analyze it further, does not recognize it as a fundamental of our life."[11]

The method that Patočka calls "a-subjective phenomenology" is probably his most enigmatic yet, at the same time, most promising attempt to renew phenomenological research. The starting-point of his reasoning could be summarized as follows: with the transcendental turn, Husserl fell back into a certain Cartesianism. Albeit his concept of subjectivity implies temporality and corporeity, and is thus more than the point-like, abstract Kantian ego, it is still, for Patočka, a metaphysical conception. The Husserlian transcendental consciousness carries a transcendental structure of eternal, ideal, pre-given forms that Husserl calls *eidē*. In the connection *ego-cogito-cogitatum*, Husserl focused on the ego, on the sense-bestowing activity, neglecting the *sum*, the mode of existence of this ego.

This is the point where Patočka's own investigation begins. When we examine the *sum*, existence, we find that it cannot be traced back to a constitutive ego which would be responsible for all manners of appearance. On the contrary, it becomes clear that even the ego itself, consciousness, which Husserl supposes to be adequately given in reflection, is a conceptual construction, a projection, an illusion: the illusion of an ultimate origin. To be sure, the phenomenal field has a central perspective, a certain pole of appearing, which is what we normally call ego or consciousness. But consciousness appears to itself in the same temporal stream as the other phenomena, so it is part of appearing and by no means its source or foundation. The phenomenal field determines this pole of appearing, just as consciousness determines what appears and how it appears.

The *sum* thus proves to be more fundamental than the ego. In itself, this idea is not particularly original. Heidegger, Merleau-Ponty, Ricœur have all tried to follow the same argumentation, reversing the order of the subject and its mode of existence. Yet these thinkers all believed that existence, even preceding consciousness, must have an invariant structure. And it is precisely on this point that we see the originality of Patočka's idea: asubjective phenomenology does not suppose any hidden structure, any invariant foundation within human existence, on the level of the *sum*, beneath the ego. According to Patočka, the subjective being has no determinable or

[10] Ibid., p. 93: "Ich erschließe nicht meine Möglichkeiten, sondern *meine Lage* im Lichte der Möglichkeiten, die *sich* erschliessen."

[11] Jan Patočka, *Body, Community, Language, World*, ed. J. Dodd, transl. E. Kohák (Chicago and La Salle: Open Court, 1998), p. 176.

conceivable characteristic whatsoever, but that in no way means that consciousness is nothing or that it is sheer indetermination; its determination comes from its situation and its acts: its being is a system of possibilities. The basic aspects of this a-subjective phenomenal pole are: temporality, movement, historicity. And the way Patočka more concretely describes his a-subjective phenomenal sphere brings us back to the form of human being in the natural world.

Nevertheless, two questions arise: (1) We have seen that Patočka tries to go beyond all metaphysical construction so as to free our vision. The result is, apparently, that there remains in his description nothing to hold on to. We no longer find any constant structure in the appearing world, nor – parallelly – any invariant moment in human consciousness or being. Everything seems to be moving, changing – everything seems to be part of a Heraclitean stream. Does this conception not lead to extreme skepticism? (2) We know how important freedom is in Patočka's description of the movements in the natural world. Freedom is the third movement, the breakthrough to one's own possibilities, the highest possible level of self-realization. Freedom has nothing to do with arbitrariness, it coincides essentially with responsibility. And if we speak of responsibility (in whatever sense we take it: responsibility for others, for myself or for the world), it is very difficult not to conceive it in terms of an I, as *my own, personal* responsibility. My responsibility is my most essential possibility, it is what constitutes me as a person, and the meaning of my existence is inevitably linked to this personal responsibility. We have here, apparently, an aporetic problem, ensuing from a hidden contradiction, inasmuch as asubjective phenomenology seems to go beyond all subjective, ego-like, personal characteristics, even beyond the authentic conception of Being-in-the-world. How can this conception be reconciled with Patočka's very strong accentuation of freedom as responsibility? How can we practice asubjective phenomenology and still speak of personal responsibility?

I believe these two fundamental questions motivated Patočka's thinking in his later period, and it seems to me that the two can only be answered at the same time, or at least in a parallel manner.

3 Appearing as Such

Patočka expresses on many occasions his conviction that the ultimate problem of philosophy as interpretation of our experience is nothing other than appearing. However, it is not the appearing of this or that object, or of any particular kind of objectivity, but appearing as such, *Erscheinen als solches*. What does this mean, and how can we approach appearing as such? Let's begin with some remarks in "Negative Platonism." Patočka speaks here of the experience of freedom as an experience with no substrate, "if by substrate we understand some finite positive content, some subject, some predicate, or some complex of predicates."[12] The experience of

[12] Jan Patočka, "Negative Platonism…," op. cit., p. 196.

freedom can be grasped in both a negative and a positive manner. "It has the negative character of a distance, of a remove, of an overcoming of every objectivity, every content, every re-presentation and every substrate."[13] That is why Patočka terms this experience poor. Nevertheless, it has a positive aspect as well: from this point of view, the experience of freedom means an experience of totality, of the whole. Precisely in this sense we can say that, for Patočka, the experience of freedom in all its guises implies a holistic character, a kind of totality, not in the sense of a sum total of particular beings, but as the ultimate and original condition of all that appears. That kind of totality is what Patočka calls "appearing as such." In a first step, we can approach appearing as such through the concepts of the whole, of world and of horizon.

Appearing as such relates to the whole. This proposition, enigmatic at first sight, is the key formula of Patočka's later phenomenology. The task of asubjective phenomenology is simply to uncover appearing as a whole. Of course, this whole does not coincide with the whole of our sense experience, nor does it refer to a sphere beyond sensuous experience, a sphere of imagination, of speculative thinking. The whole is reality itself, but – so to say – after the act of epoché. The suspension of the validity of particular beings and ontic convictions does not reduce everything to nothing, but rather turns our attention to the whole. However, the whole is not a higher level of Being or a more intense, fuller manner of Being (in a theological or mystical sense). For Patočka, the whole is not an ontological, but rather a profoundly phenomenological term: it is the essence of appearance, appearing as such.

If we consider appearing as the central problem of phenomenology, phenomenology becomes a *phenomenology of the world*. To understand the significance of this phenomenological approach to the world, we must turn our attention to Eugen Fink's philosophy. As we know, Patočka and Fink kept up an intense, lifelong correspondence.[14] The Czech philosopher considered Fink's phenomenology as one of the most important philosophical achievements after the Second World War, and he was deeply inspired by Fink's world philosophy (*Weltphilosophie*). Alongside the forgetting of Being, Fink speaks of the forgetting of the World. Metaphysics, which confined itself to particular beings (as a latent *Dingontologie*), is nothing but the history of this fundamental oblivion of the World. Fink criticizes Heidegger, who succeeded in overcoming objective ontology, but failed to overcome the metaphysics of light. The *logos* of the World (*Weltlogos*), at work in all beings according to Fink, cannot be grasped from the viewpoint of a "*Lichtmetaphysik*." Fink's cosmological approach is an exemplary model for Patočka's later phenomenology. And the fact that Fink's philosophy is at least as deeply influenced by Nietzsche as by Heidegger also points to a possible manner of thinking that became exemplary for Patočka.

Why does Patočka's concept of "world" not coincide with that of Husserl's "life-world," despite Husserl's apparent overcoming of Cartesianism in his later

[13] Ibid.

[14] See Eugen Fink and Jan Patočka, *Briefe und Dokumente 1933–1977*, ed. M. Heitz and B. Nessler (Freiburg and München: Alber, 1999).

philosophy? We can better answer this question on the basis of Fink's philosophy. However positive his turn towards the life-world, Husserl still fails to take into account the *historicity* of the world, which is neither the external temporal framework of an atemporal, unchanging basic structure, nor a transcendental historicity, but rather the *constant changing of the very basic structure of the world itself*. In Patočka's terms: the historicity of appearing as such.

Patočka's new approach – what we might call a phenomenology of world – cannot be easily defined. We can first reach a few negative determinations: (1) It is not subjectivistic in the sense that appearing as such cannot be traced back to a transcendental source of constitution and sense-bestowing activity. (2) It is not objectivistic either, since Patočka rejects all traditional approaches that consistently reduced appearing to an appearing entity[15] and failed to take into account the phenomenological difference between phenomenal being and phenomenality itself. The concept of horizon does not help either, since horizon is always the horizon of a certain object. Even conceived as an infinite background, horizon remains relative to a finite object. Object presupposes horizon, and vice versa, hence the concept of horizon remains in the framework of an objectivistic conception. (3) The phenomenology of world cannot be metaphysical, if metaphysics means an ahistoric approach.

This last insight – namely, that *everything is temporal and historical* – can be found in various forms and on various levels in Patočka's manuscripts. (1) On the level of appearing as such, sense data and intentional sense-bestowing activity can no longer be clearly separated. Animation of hyletic data by objectifying intentions is no adequate way of describing appearance.[16] Everything that can be considered as a "datum" is not an external, indifferent, neutral moment of appearing, but essentially part of appearing, and appearing itself as well: "everything that is in the appearance-field is already appearing being."[17] In other terms: the components presumed to make appearing possible (intentionality, consciousness, sense data, horizon, etc.) are not exterior to appearing as such; on the contrary, all are part and parcel of it. This means that we can grasp them only retroactively, by making a detour through separation and abstraction. (2) Analogously, Patočka states that temporality does not mean inserting atemporal objects, data, forms, aspects, etc., into the stream of time. The concept of temporality implies that all parts and components of temporality are temporal as well. There are no unchanging, supratemporal spheres of reality. Husserl recognizes something similar when he speaks of a manner of temporality even in the case of ideal objects, but he fails to reach a deeper level of temporalization. Though he gives up, in his analysis of time, the structure "form of apprehension – content of apprehension," he still presupposes, with the concept of "*Urimpression*," atemporal sense data. According to Patočka, there can be no atemporal components of the time-stream, just as there can be no dead "*hylē*" in intentional experience. (3) Temporality is the ultimate background.

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[15] See note 6 above.

[16] Cf. Jan Patočka, *Vom Erscheinen*…, op. cit., Text V, pp. 126, 135.

[17] Cf. ibid., Text III, p. 94.

In other words: the asubjective fundament for phenomenology is nothing other than temporality. This thesis is not often formulated in Patočka's writings, but when it does appear, we find it always on loci of primary importance, and it can, therefore, be considered as a fundamental principle of his phenomenology.[18] As he writes in the first of his two articles on asubjective phenomenology: "The result of radical analysis of the phenomenal sphere points in the direction of an original time, not towards a mere time-experience, but towards time as such."[19] Time plays an important role, not only in the order of foundation, but also functionally. When Patočka meditates on the unity of the world as an appearance-structure and on the question of how the amazing multiplicity of things, aspects, appearances, can belong to one unitary whole, his answer is as follows: what assures the synthetic unity of experience is not transcendental categories or other general idealities, it is the unity of time which prevents multiplicity from falling apart.[20]

Everything is thus part of appearing, and everything is part of time. In other words: every part of appearing appears in its entirety, just as every part of time is temporal in every respect. A strange vision. Husserl's absolute consciousness and transcendental ego seem to be devoid of temporal change or genesis (even in genetic phenomenology, one finds residues of atemporal structures: forms of intention, hyletic data, absolute horizon, a priori structures of the life-world), and Heidegger's Being, somehow, beyond temporality (despite its being what gives temporality). Patočka's vision is more radical. For him, there can be no exception to appearing or, consequently, to temporality – neither consciousness, nor Being, nor world. He seriously endeavors to think through the consequences of such a radical phenomenological attitude. That is how his philosophy becomes thoroughly and completely historical.

4 Asubjective Appearing and Personal Responsibility

The enigma posed by Patočka's late phenomenology resides not only in giving a coherent interpretation of appearing as such, but also in finding a way to mediate between or reconcile asubjective phenomenology of appearing and subjective

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[18] Ibid., Text II: "Die Transzendentalphilosophie Husserls nach der Revision," p. 52: "Ist es umgekehrt nicht notwendig, auf einer neuen, *asubjektiven* Grundlage, d.h. auf der *Grundlage von Zeit* [my emphasis] und deren Erhellung etc., eine Theorie der *menschlichen* Erfahrung als derjenigen Erfahrung darzustellen, die in den Zusammenhang dieser ursprünglichen Erhellung gehört?"

[19] Jan Patočka, "Der Subjektivismus der Husserlschen und die Möglichkeit einer 'asubjektiven' Phänomenologie," in *Die Bewegung der menschlichen Existenz. Phänomenologische Schriften II,* ed. K. Nellen, J. Němec and I. Srubar (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1991), p. 284: "Das in einer radikalen Analyse der phänomenalen Sphäre gewonnene Resultat zeigt in die Richtung einer ursprünglichen Zeit, keines bloßen Zeiterlebens, sondern der Zeit als solcher."

[20] Jan Patočka, *Vom Erscheinen*…, op. cit., Text IV: "Weltform der Erfahrung und Welterfahrung," p. 105: "Es muß eine ganz andere vorgängige Einheit da sein … welche nie isoliert ist, sondern immer sich weitet, ohne sich zu zersplittern. Es ist *die Einheit der Zeit*."

freedom as responsibility. I believe there are at least three possible mediations, all of which can be found, in a more or less elaborated form, in Patočka's later writings.

1. The first would be a kind of aesthetic-artistic approach to reality. The aesthetic observation of appearing things and the beauty of the world reveals not only appearing as such, but also a kind of responsibility, what Patočka calls *responsibility for Being*. We can find traces of such a conception in several essays.[21] An artist observes things and at the same time lets them appear as they are: this twofold movement is, according to Patočka, the essence of art. Letting things appear as they are is an aesthetic aspect of responsibility for Being.[22]

2. Another possible mediation can be erected on the concept of the Other. My being in the world, my life as movement in the world, cannot attain its supreme possibility, the breakthrough to freedom, without Others. All forms of heroic, solitary, self-sufficient attempts to live an authentic life (either in the Nietzschean form of Titanism, in Heidegger's heroic attitude, or in the Sartrean form of a hopeless struggle against reification) imply a manner of nihilism, which boils down to clinging to the ego. Being in truth cannot be realized without responsibility for others. Asubjective phenomenology of appearing necessitates the investigation of the *sum* in the world, and this *sum*, this movement in the world, inevitably implies a relation to the others, which is responsibility.[23]

3. It seems to me that, in his manuscripts on appearing as such, Patočka outlines a third possibility of mediation between asubjective phenomenology and personal responsibility. This mediation makes both implicit and explicit references to Nietzsche's and Fink's conception of world. As we have already mentioned, Patočka was, mainly through Fink, very deeply influenced by Nietzschean philosophy and critique of metaphysics. Nietzsche's conception of being, based on movement, change, and conflict of forces, had a strong impact on Patočka's phenomenology of appearing as such. On the other hand, it is a Nietzscheanism without determinant factors of Nietzschean thinking: Patočka does not accept the will to power, the idea of eternal return and the tendency towards heroic Titanism.

One should be very careful in approaching the connection between the two thinkers. I by no means want to suggest that Patočka was a follower of the Nietzschean way of philosophizing. I wish merely to show that the radicalization of phenomenology made it well nigh impossible for him to express his new vision

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[21] Cf. Jan Patočka, "Die Sinnfrage in der Epoche des Nihilismus: Masaryk – Dostojewski – Kant – Nietzsche – Heidegger," in *Tschechische Philosophen im 20. Jahrhundert*, ed. and transl. L. Hagedorn (Stuttgart and München: Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, 2002), p. 250: "so etwas wie ein von der Liebe geleitetes Verstehen, dessen nächtsliegendes Beispiel in unserer Welt die künstlerische Liebe ist, die die Dinge sich aus sich selbst entfalten läßt."

[22] Jan Patočka, *Body, Community*…, op. cit., p. 170: "In a manner of speaking, humans are *pragmata*, something that serves; human life serves in a sense different from that in which things are equipmental. Objectivity [*věcnost*] means *letting* things *be*, letting them come to themselves, to their being which is external to them and yet is theirs."

[23] See Patočka's analysis of Dostoevsky's "The Dream of a Ridiculous Man" in "Die Sinnfrage…," op. cit., pp. 239–253.

in a conceptual way. Appearing as such, the appearance-field as the ultimate background of all phenomenalities, seems to defy not only conceptual interpretation, but also phenomenological description. Patočka is not Nietzschean, but he tends to apply Nietzschean concepts and metaphors to express his own philosophical vision. I shall try to describe, from this point of view, the mediation between asubjective phenomenology and subjective responsibility. It will be an attempt to reconstruct Patočka's phenomenology of appearing in a series of successive steps, though it is, of course, not an argumentation in the classical sense.

First step: *Weltapriori*. Investigating the structure of appearing, Patočka relies on the concept of the apriori of the world. The world is not the universe of things: world-structures are not the structures of finite things, just as the lawfulness of appearing has nothing to do with the causal laws of physics or psychology. World in this sense means a comprehensive unity of organic structural moments.[24] This apriori as an organic unity of structural laws of appearing is not behind, but in the very heart of all that appears. It is very difficult to grasp, because the ontic structure of appearing things covers over this layer. The apriori of the world is within things and objective relations, but is not itself a thing or an objective relation.

Second step: *Other kinds of realities*. Epoché means taking a step back from finite things and turning our attention to the whole as such, but it is not merely a heuristic or methodological claim, after which the phenomenologist could safely turn back to things. The change in attitude means changing the orientation of our attention as well. The modal transformation of our attitude towards reality involves a more radical transformation: that of the subject of our phenomenological intuition. Instead of objective things and real connections, we must be able to bring into sight other kinds of realities. What are these realities? Patočka, on several occasions, makes an attempt to list them, but the result seems always rather limited: the near and the far, perspectives, characters of appearance, levels of fullness and emptiness, the zero-point of orientation, totality of space, duration, deficiency, actuality and inactuality, etc.[25] What does this list suggest? Neither ontological

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[24] Jan Patočka, *Vom Erscheinen*…, op. cit., Text IV, p. 104: "Die Zugänglichkeit des Einzelnen … bedeutet nur, daß *kein einziges* Seiendes erfahren werden kann außerhalb dieses Zusammenhangs, welcher das ständig-grundlegende *Apriori* jeder Erfahrung bedeutet. Dies Apriori ist kein Verhältnis von Kategorie zur Anschauung, es ist kein Begrifflich-Allgemeines, sondern man könnte es eher mit dem Verhältnis von *einer* durchgehenden Einheit zur von ihr umfaßten Mannigfaltigkeit vergleichen."

[25] Ibid., Text V, p. 121: "Selbstgegeben und ursprünglich gegeben sind da Dinge in Perspektiven und Erscheinungscharakteren, in Nähe und Ferne, im Optimum der Fülle oder schwindender Fülle bis zum Verdecktsein und Verschwinden im Leerhorizont, der gar nicht so leer ist"; p. 146: "Aus den Erscheinungscharakteren wie Raumtotalität, Dauer, perspektivische Gegebenheit des Seienden, Originalgegebenheit und Defizienz, Gegenwart in Aktualität und Inaktualitäten, kann sich wegen der Formalität dieser Züge kein 'Welt*bild*' ergeben"; p. 151: "Kein Ding und Sachverhalt kann erscheinen, ohne in die Felder von Anschaulich-Unanschaulich, Leere-Fülle, Nähe-Akme-Ferne usw. einbezogen zu sein. Diese Zusammenhänge und ihr 'Funktionieren', ihren Sinn zu durchforschen scheint uns, anstatt der 'noetisch-noematischen Strukturen', die Aufgabe einer Phänomenologie als Erscheinungslehre zu sein."

description in terms of subject and predicate, nor transcendental-phenomenological approach in terms of noetic-noematic constitution. Patočka attempts to grasp the structural lines of a new sphere, which has never been approached by traditional thinking.

Third step: *Perspectivism, forces, struggle*. This kind of phenomenological approach is completed by a strong emphasis on – I would say – Nietzschean motifs. I present three of them: perspectivism, forces, and struggle. (A) Patočka underlines in many contexts the importance of a perspectivistic view: the lack of perspectivism can be considered as the main flaw of every metaphysics. Perspectivism determines not only temporal and historical description, but also movements in the natural-social world.[26] Perspectivism is the clearest expression of the both thoroughly social and thoroughly historical character of appearing as such. (B) Patočka discovers a certain cooperation or tension of forces on the level of appearing as such; in other words: *he substitutes description of forces for analysis of objects*. This is perhaps the point where he most clearly goes beyond subjectivism. To speak of forces in appearing implies that these forces belong neither to intentional sense-bestowing activity, nor to particular objects. Phenomenology of appearing as such abandons once and for all subjectivism and objectivism from the moment Patočka takes into account the functioning of "forces" of appearing.[27] The task of phenomenology is thus to uncover the "*Kraftlinien des Erscheinens*," which in no way coincide with particular things or objective relations. (C) From the concept of forces, it is but a short step to the likewise Nietzschean, and indeed Heraclitean, concept of struggle between forces. We know the importance of *polemos* in Patočka's philosophy, but the function of *polemos* on the level of appearing as such is not obvious. We might be tempted to think of the phenomenology of appearing as a sphere of peaceful Being and quiet contemplation. However, the novelty of Patočka's thinking consists precisely in showing that appearing as such, the essence of phenomenality, is not only temporal, historical, and thoroughly dynamic, but also "polemic." Polemic in the sense that things do not belong to a calm, neutral, and inoffensive sphere of aesthetic appearances; on the contrary: what presents itself as stable and lasting Being in the classical ontic or ontological sense (with a substantial core and variable predicates) is a dynamic and organic complex of struggling forces. Temporality and historicity characterize, not only the social-natural world, but also the seemingly more individual level of phenomenological contemplation. Parallel to this: *polemos* functions, not only in the social-natural world, but also on the phenomenological level of appearing as such.

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[26] Ibid., p. 126: "Was erscheint, ist nämlich nie eine Welt *ohne* die konkreten Subjekte, sondern die Welt samt ihnen und ihrem Zusammenhang, der Sozialität.… er [der Zusammenhang zwischen konkreten Subjekte und Weltdingen] läßt … die Möglichkeit verwirklichen, eine *perspektivische Welt* erscheinen zu lassen, die Welt, die *jemandem* erscheint."

[27] Ibid., p. 124: "Die angeblichen Intentionen sind nichts anderes als Kraftlinien des Erscheinens am Erscheinenden. Sie formieren und 'konstituieren' auch nichts, sondern zeigen bloß und weisen auf anderes[,] als [es] das schon Erscheinende ist."

Fourth step: *Embodiment and action*. Hence, the importance of bodily being for Patočka. Corporeity cannot be interpreted as a transparent medium of perceptual experience or practical-pragmatic Being-in-the-world. For Patočka, corporeity is more: it is what makes us part of a whole to which we belong by the whole of our activity, passivity, and affectivity, yet from which we can still distance ourselves. Corporeity symbolizes Patočka's profound insight that, as bodily beings, we are neither the mere passive, observing, contemplative part of appearing, nor its active, constitutive source, but rather a field of forces within the whole, within the ultimate field of forces. That is why Patočka rejects a phenomenology of kinesthesis.[28] The body is not something that precedes actions, a permanent substratum for momentary actions. The body is nothing other than the complex system of actions.

Fifth step: *Actions and responsibility*. Perspectivism, struggle of forces, and embodiment imply that, even from the viewpoint of asubjective phenomenology, we would seem to arrive at a kind of interrelated complex of (non-Cartesian) ego and (non-subjectivistic) activity. Activity directly implies responsibility, since freedom is not projection of possibilities, but responsibility for actions.[29] Though the adjective that best characterizes Patočka's phenomenology of appearing is doubtless "antihumanistic," it still implies the idea of responsibility. Like all other phenomena in the world, we are not substantial beings, but the result of struggling forces, physical and biological forces, bodily and psychic instincts. The task of thinking consists first of all in uncovering the illusions of anthropomorphism.[30] This very Nietzschean insight is an exemplary idea for Patočka, and he tries to show from many points of view that freedom is not *my particular* freedom, since there is no human substrate with the special attributes of freedom.[31] Nonetheless, freedom, distancing from things, is what constitutes my own personal perspective of experiencing appearance and performing acts in the world. Strange as it may sound, it seems that bodily being and *polemos* of forces constitute my personality and personal, free responsibility. In other words: the origin of responsibility is not a spiritual component of my existence, because

[28] Ibid. p. 132: "so gibt es auch keine einzelnen 'Kinästhesen', sondern es gibt eben nur den agierenden und reagierenden Leib."

[29] Ibid., Text III, p. 87: "Die Freiheit liegt nicht im *Entwurf der Möglichkeiten*, sondern in der *Verantwortung für die Aktion*, darin, daß es nicht ein Prozeß, ein passiv rezipiertes Geschehen, sondern eine Leistung ist, die ich dadurch erbringe, daß ich die Möglichkeit, die mich aus der Welt anspricht, als meine aufnehme oder abweise."

[30] Jan Patočka, *Body, Community*…, op. cit., p. 168: "Is there not, in Heidegger's conception, still too much that is anthropological? … Is there not, in the conception of the world as an aggregate of potentialities which we can interpret, read, still too great a tendency to ignore the original closure within itself of what is, the primordial dark night of existence which precedes all individuation?"

[31] Jan Patočka, *Vom Erscheinen*…, op. cit., Text I: "Kritik der Husserlschen phänomenologischen Philosophie," p. 49: "Wenn es aber kein Seiendes oder 'Vorseiendes' gibt, zu dessen Attributen die Freiheit gehörte…"

there is no such spiritual component. *The very nature of appearing, the corporeal relation to appearing and forces within appearing turn out to be the origin of freedom and of responsibility*.

These briefly sketched structural moments seem to compose the middle sphere between two extremities, between metaphysical idealism and a chaotic vision of Being: Patočka calls this middle sphere "Idea" in the sense of "negative Platonism." An "idea" referring, not to the general characteristics of an objective mode of Being, but precisely to the complex of asubjective and non-objective features, aspects, patterns, structures, perspectives and forces that compose appearing as such.

Negative Platonism and Maximal Existence in the Thought of Jan Patočka

Pierre Rodrigo

I would like to begin by stating the thesis which will guide this paper. My thesis is that the philosophical thought of Jan Patočka represents a twofold radicalization: the joint radicalization of Platonism as "negative Platonism" *and* of Husserlian phenomenology as an "asubjective" phenomenology. In fact, Patočka builds his own thought on one and the same critique aimed against both Plato *and* Husserl. In substance, his critique can be expressed as follows: neither of these two thinkers succeeded in developing the ultimate potential of his own "discoveries," though both brought to light something absolutely exemplary, opening up the possibility of a decisive refoundation of the constitutive project of metaphysical thinking. Patočka's aim is thus, through the doubly critical heritage of Plato and Husserl, to resume this twice opened and twice closed possibility.

More precisely, Patočka criticizes Plato for not having upheld to the last the daring paradox which is at the core of his thought: the paradox of the *non-objective determination of objectivity*. Such is, for Patočka, the meaning of the Platonic *eidos*, i.e., the Idea, which he understands as an authentic "force of derealization," since Plato conceives of it as "separate," existing apart from the sensible realities of which it is the intelligible essence. This separation, the Platonic *chōrismos*, institutes ideality in its specifically metaphysical status, while at the same time revealing human transcendence – revealing, in other terms, according to Patočka's interpretation, the metaphysical *freedom* which we (strictly speaking) *are* – and such was precisely the substance of Plato's teaching. In the following, I shall attempt to show why, and exactly in what way Plato failed to uphold this point, and in what sense one can, then, be justified in resorting to a "negative Platonism." We must, however, first take a closer look at the critique addressed to Husserl.

As stated above, Patočka's critique of Husserl is basically the same as his critique of Plato. He believes that the radicality of Husserl's major discoveries (the institution of a new meaning of phenomenality and the method of the epoché) has been lost in the course of his development of the theory of "reduction," which

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ultimately led him to misinterpret, in terms of transcendental subjectivity, the phenomenal non-objectivity revealed by the epoché. Husserl should instead have upheld to the utmost, so as to make good the promise of refoundation provided by his breakthrough as such, the thesis that "the phenomenon is no product of subjective constitution"; rather, "'subjective' possibilities themselves become clear only upon the phenomenon."[1] In order to understand both the non-objectivity and the asubjectivity of the phenomenon, he would, of course, have had to elaborate an entirely new way of thinking *appearing*. We shall see that this is precisely what Patočka is led to do through his parallel radicalization of Plato and Husserl.

I

Dealing with the question of the origins and true meaning of metaphysics – for example, in his 1953 text on "Negative Platonism," or later, in 1973, in his unofficial Prague seminar on *Plato and Europe* – Jan Patočka claims to find its essence and ironic origin in the famous Socratic "ignorance," that "infinitely daring" philosophy (as he terms it), which asserted itself as of a completely different order from inner-worldly knowledge. This Socratism is what eventually gave birth to Platonism, if Plato is indeed, as specified in a lecture connected with the 1973 seminar, "the creator of the 'non-objective' as a separate, suprasensible realm, the world of true being, of truth, of which sensible reality is a mere image and degraded form."[2] Metaphysics thus owes its birth to a fundamental human experience, uncovered by Socrates and Plato, and defined by Patočka as "the experience of dissatisfaction with the given and the sensory," i.e., the ontological experience of freedom, inasmuch as freedom takes on "the negative character of a distance, of a remove, of an overcoming of every objectivity, every content, every re-presentation and every substrate."[3] Strictly speaking, the Platonic foundation of metaphysics is to be truly understood solely as the *non-objective* institution of Ideas; such is precisely the meaning of the *chōrismos*, the separation from the sensible. Hence, Patočka can write that "*chōrismos* meant originally a separateness *without* a second object realm …, a separatedness, a distinctness

[1] Jan Patočka, "Der Subjektivismus der Husserlschen und die Forderung einer asubjektiven Phänomenologie," in *Die Bewegung der menschlichen Existenz. Phänomenologische Schriften II*, ed. K. Nellen, J. Němec and I. Srubar (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1991), p. 308; quoted from the French translation: "Le subjectivisme de la phénoménologie husserlienne et l'exigence d'une phénoménologie asubjective," in *Qu'est-ce que la phénoménologie?*, ed. and transl. E. Abrams (Grenoble: Millon, 1988), p. 247.

[2] Jan Patočka, "La fin de la philosophie est-elle possible?" in *Platon et l'Europe. Séminaire privé du semestre d'été 1973*, transl. E. Abrams (Lagrasse: Verdier, 1983), p. 251.

[3] Jan Patočka, "Le platonisme négatif. Réflexion sur les origines, la problématique et la fin de la métaphysique, ainsi que la question de savoir si la philosophie peut y survivre," in *Liberté et sacrifice. Écrits politiques*, ed. and transl. E. Abrams (Grenoble: Millon, 1990), pp. 79, 83–84; ["Negative Platonism: Reflections concerning the Rise, the Scope, and the Demise of Metaphysics – and Whether Philosophy Can Survive It," in *Philosophy and Selected Writings*, ed. and transl. E. Kohák (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1989), pp. 193, 196].

an sich, an absolute separation for itself …, the mystery of the *chōrismos* is the same as the experience of freedom: the experience of a distance with respect to real things, of a meaning independent from the objective and the sensory."[4]

However, as he adds, the fact is that the rigor of this metaphysical foundation, which was supposed to be – and remain – a rigorously non-objective foundation of the meaning of objectivity, was immediately jeopardized by the conceptualization Plato adopted in order to account for the link between the sensible and the intelligible. If sensible reality is indeed, according to Plato, as noted above, "a mere image and degraded form" of the Ideas, it is because the Ideas function as "paradigms" of sensible objects, because they are the models of such objects. This, however, implies *de facto* that the Idea was conceived of as an *ideal super-object*, giving itself to be imitated through "participation," i.e., that it was conceived of in precisely the same mode as objectivity, precisely as what it should not be if one respects the eidetic constraint imposed by the *chōrismos*! Considering the about-turn thus accomplished by Plato's thought, it appears clearly that the metaphysical tradition issuing from it rests on a similar reversal of the founding paradox of Platonism – the non-objective determination of objectivity, i.e., the fruitful paradox of the Ideas as separate entities, at once transcendent to sensible realities *and* source of the intelligibility of these same realities – and on its conversion into a new paradox with a directly reversed status: the paradox of the superobjectivity of the Ideas, or (as Patočka notes elsewhere) "an idealism of pseudo-things and pseudo-objects."[5] It is as if the affirmation of the "deobjectifying force" of the Platonic Idea,[6] which initially made metaphysics possible, had been unable to avoid a compromise with the force and appeal of the explanatory model of objectivity, thus coining an ideal superobjectivity as a model to be imitated. This compromise is what Patočka describes as "the fundamental tension of metaphysics," explaining it as follows: metaphysics, intrinsically "impossible without the non-objective," nonetheless "thinks [the non-objective] in an objective manner."[7]

This critique of Platonism already includes the fundamental goals and guidelines of "negative Platonism." Negative Platonism will be conceived of with the strictest fidelity to the initial thought which established the transcendence of the Ideas; through loyalty to Plato, though at the same time going against him, it will deny the Ideas the status of super-objects. "The Idea as we understand it," Patočka writes to this point in the decisive text defining his negative Platonism, "is the only non-reality that cannot be explained away as a construct of mere realities. It is not an object of contemplation, inasmuch as it is not an object at all. … It shows and proves itself to us as a constant call to go beyond merely given objectivity and thinghood …"[8] Patočka thus preserves the purity of the metaphysical intention of Platonism from

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[4] Ibid., p. 87/198 (French/English).

[5] Jan Patočka, "La fin de la philosophie…," op. cit., p. 253.

[6] Jan Patočka, "Le platonisme négatif…," op. cit., p. 94; ["Negative Platonism…," op. cit., p. 203].

[7] Jan Patočka, "La fin de la philosophie…," op. cit., p. 252.

[8] Jan Patočka, "Le platonisme négatif…," op. cit., p. 96; ["Negative Platonism…," op. cit., p. 204].

contamination by the objectivist model of knowledge, while furthermore – and this point is, without doubt, essential – relating the conception of human life back to the purest Socratic ideal of "caring for the soul," *epimeleia tēs psychēs*. As Patočka insists, in particular in his 1973 lectures on *Plato and Europe*, "the *care of the soul* [is] that through which alone the soul becomes what it can be – harmonious, non-contradictory, ruling out, exorcizing the possibility of shattering into contradictory fragments…. The care of the soul is something completely internal … the internal forming of the soul itself into something unified and constant … precisely because it is occupied with thinking."[9] Freed from the pursuit of mundane knowledge, the self-examination – the *exetasis* of the soul by itself, advocated by Socrates and, subsequently, by Plato,[10] – is thus restored to its negative purity. This, however, does not mean that the soul loses its inner activity or mobility. To think so would be thinking still in an *objectivist* manner: thinking, in other words, that consciousness abstaining from inner-worldly activities is necessarily empty, since it has *no object*. Patočka's critique of Plato's reversal of the initial non-objective determination of objectivity, converted into the superobjectivity of the Ideas as paradigms, has, however, taught us to distrust the evidences of the ontological model of the object. After this preparatory criticism, it is, therefore, urgent to follow up with a positive consideration of the care of the self as *unifying* force of the human soul; this is precisely what Patočka undertakes, remarking in a lecture entitled "The Soul in Plato," given at a meeting of the Czech Union of Classical Philologists in 1972:

> In the *Gorgias*, Socrates speaks of all that he would be willing to suffer rather than, *being one*, to be in disagreement with himself and to contradict himself. The unification of the self, the harmonizing of one's own views, is the self-formation of the *psychē* through philosophy which is the aim of the Socratic elenchus. Where no such unification takes place, the *psychē* declines and sinks into the opposite state and sphere.[11]

We see, here, that the soul's need for unity, or, as Patočka says, its "need for pure Being,"[12] is by no means a sign of ontological vacuity, nor does it indicate an objective lack. On the contrary, the need of unity is evidence of an ontological demand which Patočka calls, quite appropriately, *amplitude*: only that consciousness which amplifies itself by unifying itself can, indeed, feel the call to go beyond merely given objectivity and thinghood. It can do so because it *is* and *exists* in a non-objective manner, i.e., because it puts itself to the test as non-objectivity in its self-accomplishment. This amplitude and self-unification do not by any means imply a withdrawal, a removal of the self from the world – no text shows this better than the 1939 essay entitled "Balance and Amplitude in Life," in which Patočka states

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[9] Jan Patočka, *Platon et l'Europe*, op. cit., p. 96; [*Plato and Europe*, transl. P. Lom (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2002), p. 86].

[10] Jan Patočka, "Vom Ursprung und Sinn des Unsterblichkeitsgedanken bei Plato," in *Ketzerische Essais zur Philosophie der Geschichte und ergänzende Schriften*, ed. Klaus Nellen and Jiří Němec (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1988), pp. 306–307; quoted from the French translation: "L'origine et le sens de l'idée d'immortalité chez Platon," in *Platon et l'Europe*, op. cit., p. 303.

[11] Jan Patočka, "L'âme chez Platon," in *Platon et l'Europe*, op. cit., p. 284.

[12] Ibid., p. 290.

that "[t]he philosophy of amplitude is a philosophy aware of the necessity of life's constantly bearing the weight of the world, and which acknowledges this duty as its own," then adding:

> Life in amplitude means both *self-testing* and *protesting*. In amplitude, man exposes himself to extreme possibilities that, in ordinary life, remain abstract and remote, and protests against those which, from the viewpoint of the everyday, seem self-evident.[13]

It should, therefore, now be clear to us that consciousness, amplifying its being through its reflective movement of self-examination, becomes capable of infinite tasks, opens itself to "extreme possibilities" in connection with a metaphysical potentiality that neither objectivism nor subjectivism can account for, since this amplitude is not the subjective correlate of fulfillment by an object, but rather something of an entirely different order. At this point, one comes up against the extreme difficulty of elaborating a theory to suit this potentiality, i.e., the extreme difficulty of constructing an asubjective phenomenology.

II

Before going on to examine this point, we should stress once again the importance of Husserl's discovery of intentionality as an exemplary possibility of refounding philosophy. This discovery meant, first of all for Husserl himself, the hope of overcoming both objectivism and subjectivism inherited from tradition, thanks in particular to the acknowledgement of the decisive role of what Husserl eventually termed "the universal correlation apriori." Patočka, however, considers that this hope remained unfulfilled. He affirms, consequently, without the slightest ambiguity, in his 1971 study on "The Subjectivism of Husserlian Phenomenology and the Demand for an Asubjective Phenomenology," that:

> Classical phenomenology fell victim to its own discoveries and their imprecise formulation. The great discovery of the modes of givenness, above all of the originary mode, led to the revealing of the perhaps truly universal structural relation "empty intention-fulfillment." Husserl failed to distinguish between this opposition and that of deficient givenness and intuition. However, intuition refers to the mode of givenness of an object, whereas fulfillment can also take place where no object, no given thing or objective process can be shown to exist.[14]

In order to measure the true importance of "the great discovery of the modes of givenness," we have but to reread the initial words of *Ideas I*, the author's introduction to that "General Introduction to Pure Phenomenology." In the very first sentence, Husserl presents his phenomenology as "the fundamental science of philosophy."

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[13] Jan Patočka, "Life in Balance, Life in Amplitude," in *Living in Problematicity*, ed. and transl. E. Manton (Praha: Oikoymenh, 2007), p. 39; quoted from the French translation: "Équilibre et amplitude dans la vie," in *Liberté et sacrifice*, op. cit., pp. 35–36.

[14] Jan Patočka, "Der Subjektivismus der Husserlschen und die Forderung…," op. cit., p. 305; "Le subjectivisme de la phénoménologie husserlienne et l'exigence…," op. cit., p. 243.

This science, which he views as "essentially new," is called "a science of 'phenomena'" (*eine Wissenschaft von "Phänomenen"*). Phenomena, however, may seem to be nothing new or original, since we commonly speak of historical, physical, cultural phenomena, etc. Obviously, this is not the sense in which Husserl intends to speak of *Phänomenen*; he therefore immediately stresses the cardinal modification brought about by the "phenomenological attitude," consisting in *suspending* belief in naturalist evidences and considering solely pure "phenomena" in a new sense. He thus makes absolutely clear – though the paradox remains unabated for the supporters of naturalism – that "the phenomena of transcendental phenomenology will become characterized as irreal [*irreal*]…. Our phenomenology is to be an eidetic doctrine, not of phenomena that are real, but of phenomena that are transcendentally reduced."[15]

This means that, whatever may be said of Husserl's transcendental turn in *Ideas I*, which Patočka will be led to criticize, his "great discovery" was and is that the "phenomenon," of which phenomenology is the pure science, is neither an object nor a representation. The phenomenon is, rather, *phenomenality* itself, i.e., a *mode of Being* in its own right; the phenomenon is, more precisely – looking at both sides of intentional correlation – phenomenality considered according to its various modes of phenomenalization for consciousness. Yet another way of saying it: Husserl's discovery consists in taking the phenomenon as the mode of givenness, the appearance-structure of what appears to consciousness in any given type of experience (perceptual, imaginative, oniric, aesthetic, moral, etc.). That being the case, one understands why – even before Husserl emphasized the "transcendental reduction" and the transcendental ego's sense-accomplishments – the phenomenon is in fact to be understood as "irreal," and why Patočka can thence, with good reason, hold this determination of the phenomenon to be a derealizing and deobjectifying force, no less so than the Platonic determination of the separately existing Idea.

The irreality of the phenomenon and the epoché, as suspension of the natural attitude, make up, in fact, the derealizing force of classical phenomenology or, what comes down to the same thing, the non-objective character of intentionality. Patočka remarks, in one of his two major essays on asubjectivity, that what Husserl is aiming at, as early on as his *Logical Investigations*, is neither objects of knowledge, nor even a priori objects, but "what makes it possible for an object in general to appear in various manners, above all and centrally *as itself*, what makes it possible for it to show itself as it is, in its core and meaning."[16] Of course, we know, thanks to Husserl, that what makes possible the different modes of appearing of objects – and, therefore, is *nothing objective* – is the structure of a priori intentional correlation, inasmuch as this structure provides a field for the interplay or amplitude necessary for consciousness' significative meaning and the eventual fulfillment of its significational intention.

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[15] Edmund Husserl, *Ideas pertaining to a Pure Phenomenology and to a Phenomenological Philosophy*. *First Book*, transl. F. Kersten (Den Haag: Martinus Nijhoff, 1983), p. xx.

[16] Jan Patočka, "Der Subjektivismus der Husserlschen und die Möglichkeit einer 'asubjektiven' Phänomenologie," in *Die Bewegung der menschlichen Existenz*…, op. cit., p. 274; quoted from the French translation: "Le subjectivisme de la phénoménologie husserlienne et la possibilité d'une phénoménologie 'asubjective,'" in *Qu'est-ce que*…, op. cit., p. 200.

We must, however, carefully consider Patočka's reservations regarding the transcendental turn, posterior to the breakthrough of the *Logical Investigations*.

To claim that the field of phenomenal appearing or, as Patočka writes, "the field of self-showing," implies the possibility of interplay between an intending of sense and its satisfaction – which we may call, in Husserl's technical terms, an "empty intention" and its "fulfillment" – is not at all the same thing as to claim (incorrectly, according to Patočka) that *intuition, Anschauung* alone can bring about this fulfillment… The error made in identifying these two theses actually proves fatal to what Patočka calls "the great discovery of the modes of givenness" – for a quite simple reason, to be found in a decisive passage of the later of the two essays on asubjectivity, in which Patočka affirms that "classical phenomenology fell victim to its own discoveries and their imprecise formulation." Again, I quote the text:

> intuition refers to the mode of givenness of an object, whereas fulfillment can also take place where no object, no given thing or objective process can be shown to exist.[17]

Clearly, the brunt of the critique concerns the model used by Husserl for conceptualizing the fulfillment of the intending of sense, rather than the idea itself of such a fulfillment. It is, in substance, a critique against the *objectivist model* which allows Husserl to conceive this fulfillment in the form of an "intuition" of essence, opposed to mere significative meaning just as *full* is opposed to *empty*. In actual fact, as Patočka states in a preparatory manuscript relating to the article "Epoché and Reduction," it is essential to understand two points which greatly modify the fabric of Husserl's conceptuality:

- It must be understood, first of all, that "emptiness is a *mode of givenness*, and by no means a non-given";[18] this in turn induces to conceive of the originarity of givenness under *various* aspects, besides the one aspect of perfect fullness. It follows that "qualitative fullness is no guarantee that *the thing itself* is present."[19]
- Secondly, it must be correlatively admitted that, since the opposition emptiness-fulfillment remains, in Husserl, closely dependent on an object ontology, i.e., on a conception of being as fullness by right, this opposition cannot give us the key to understanding either phenomenality or appearing as such, which are, as we now know, necessarily *non-objective*.

Consequently, if Husserl's phenomenology falls victim to an imprecise formulation of its own discoveries, it is because it regards – under the influence of a false evidence inherited from tradition – emptiness-fulfillment solely from the viewpoint of

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[17] See note 14 above.

[18] Jan Patočka, "Epoché und Reduktion in den 'Fünf Vorlesungen,'" in *Vom Erscheinen als solchem. Texte aus dem Nachlaß*, ed. H. Blaschek-Hahn and K. Novotný (Freiburg and München: Alber, 2000), Text V, p. 129; quoted from the French translation: "*Épochè* et réduction dans les *Cinq Leçons*," in *Papiers phénoménologiques*, ed. and transl. E. Abrams (Grenoble: Millon, 1995), MS 3G/17, p. 176.

[19] Ibid., p. 130/177 (German/French).

subject-object, the latter being phenomenologically reinterpreted, in the exemplary experience of perception, in terms of objective adumbrations, on the one hand, and subjective lived intuition, on the other. Hence – as Patočka wrote in 1970, in his first study on asubjective phenomenology, dealing with the system Husserl elaborated beginning with his *Logical Investigations* – "what is meant to be brought to light with the 'subjective side' of 'acts' are structures which cannot rest on an 'intuitive' pre-given, yet nonetheless need a 'support,' lacking 'objective' reference in the true (real) sense of the word."[20] Everything, then, is ready for Husserl, in the *Ideas*, to "ascribe to the apprehension of subjective being, to reflection on subjectivity," "the evidence proper to the appearance-sphere in its showing and self-showing."[21]

In short, the surprising paradox which is the outcome of this turning away from the phenomenal sphere as such, i.e., as it shows itself, towards the sphere of the transcendental ego and its acts of fulfillment – the paradox referring the phenomenon's non-objectivity to constituent transcendental subjectivity – is that, through the empty intention-intuitive fulfillment relation, subjectivity is, after all, conceived along the lines of a model dependent on … objectivity! "The phenomenal sphere is first divided into two moments – on the one hand, what appears in its modes of givenness, on the other, the presumed 'subjective' foundations of appearing; the latter are described as lived-experience, given to the reflective glance, and finally the evidence which is a feature of the showing and self-showing of the phenomenal field, of appearance itself in its appearing, is ascribed to this reflective glance."[22] Moreover – what is worse – the evidence of the reflective glance thus brought into play is entirely dependent on the ontological model of object contemplation!

And so the turn-about Patočka criticizes in Husserl is indeed the same as in Plato: what could and should have been a breakthrough towards a new foundation of metaphysics twice closed up on itself.

III

In order to dispel this error once and for all, we need an ontology other than that of full objective Being. Jan Patočka has left us at least an outline of such a theory, if not the theory itself in so many words. One part of this outline is to be found in his remarks on the amplitude of the life of self-examining consciousness striving towards maximum unification, another in the working manuscripts and published texts in which he considers the path leading from the philosophy of the transcendental ego to a philosophy of the existential *sum*. These are the texts I wish to examine

[20] Jan Patočka, "Der Subjektivismus der Husserlschen und die Möglichkeit…," op. cit., p. 276; "Le subjectivisme de la phénoménologie husserlienne et la possibilité…," op. cit., p. 203.

[21] Ibid., p. 277/204–205 (German/French).

[22] Ibid., p. 278/205 (German/French).

by way of conclusion, so as, hopefully, to put together what we have seen in the study of his parallel critique on Plato and Husserl.

The 1975 study "Epoché and Reduction" is of primary importance in this context. Patočka demands here a fundamental distinction between these two concepts, only the first of which, epoché, seems to him to be consistent with the authentically phenomenological attitude of suspending natural theses, whereas reduction entails the risk of a throw-back to subjectivity at the expense of phenomenality. It follows that, though phenomenology without epoché is absolutely inconceivable, a phenomenology without reduction would be quite possible, and is indeed *required* in order to preserve the sharp edge of the discovery of phenomenality. On this doctrinal basis, Patočka then takes a decisive step in the theoretical constitution of his asubjective phenomenology, asking:

> What would happen if the epoché did not stop at the thesis of one's own self, if it were conceived in a totally universal manner? … Perhaps the immediate givenness of the ego is a "prejudice," and self-experience has, as does thing-experience, a specific apriori that makes the appearing of the ego possible.[23]

Understood in this way, radical, unlimited epoché strips principially the subjective pole of all absolute constituting power, since the ego is now put in brackets, in the same way as all appearances whatsoever. "Asubjective" phenomenology is, in fact, nothing other than this dismissal of the transcendental instance. What, then, do we have left after the operation of radical suspension of all prejudgments in relation with the natural attitude? On what shores does asubjective phenomenology drop anchor? The only possible answer is: on the shores of *appearing as such* – which Patočka, moreover, thinks of rigorously as a "horizon," and by no means as land, or ground (in accordance with an ontological model doubtless suitable for what appears, but by no means for appearing itself). The only acceptable name for this horizon, for this encompassing non-appearance of all possible appearances, is *the world*. This is why Patočka writes:

> The world is not only the condition of possibility of the appearing of things real, but also the condition of possibility of a being that lives in relation with itself and thus makes appearing as such possible. Epoché leads straight away to the universal apriori which opens the scene of appearing, both for things real and for the subject of lived-experience. It does not, however, give access to an absolute ontological ground.… Epoché carried through consistently to completion does not lead to an infinite being, but to an apriori which can in no way be looked upon as being, [and] which unfolds its function in making possible a relationship with one's self, an ontological structure without which no appearing would be possible.[24]

In these conditions – which are, it should be noted, the phenomenologically rigorous conditions of conceptualization of the non-objectivity of phenomena – consciousness

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[23] Jan Patočka, "Epoché und Reduktion," in *Die Bewegung der menschlichen Existenz*…, op. cit., p. 420; quoted from the French translation: "*Épochè* et réduction," in *Qu'est-ce que*…, op. cit., p. 257.

[24] Ibid., p. 421–422/259 (German/French). See also Jan Patočka, "Epochè und Reduktion in den 'Fünf Vorlesungen,'" op. cit., pp. 164–165, 121–122; "*Épochè* et réduction dans les *Cinq Leçons*," op. cit., pp. 169–171.

is not so much denied, or quashed, as restored to its proper level. In other words, though the transcendental ego is rejected, the egological subject of reflection is nonetheless conserved, as must be the case in order to conceive of something like an 'appearing to.' Someone is needed, some reflective consciousness, to which appearances can appear in the global ontological structure of appearing restored to its largest horizonal generality; this, however, does not at all mean that this consciousness would be the absolute ground of the *transcendental constitution* of appearances. Rather, it is merely one of the two necessary moments of the appearance-structure. Patočka calls its mode of Being, which he has thus shown to be relative to appearing, the *sum*:

> In a certain sense, the phenomenal sphere should indeed be founded on the ego, or rather on the *sum*, which includes the ego…. Though founded on the *sum*, the analysis of the phenomenal sphere, of appearance in its appearing, can nonetheless be legitimately termed "asubjective."… The ego is nothing more than the ontological character of a being interested in its own Being, a being which exists temporally and in movement. This then points even further beyond the egological sphere.… The *ego sum* must insert itself, take root among men and things in order, subsequently, to participate in the substance-consuming defense against the onslaught of the world…[25]

The agency of the "*sum*" denotes, as we see here, nothing other than the mode of Being of a being which appears and appears reflectively to itself in the world by seizing its possibilities in contact with the Being-in-itself that it is not. The Heideggerian inspiration behind this sort of existential determination of the *sum* through its possibilities is clear; it is, moreover, attested by an explicit reference to Heidegger in the closing paragraph of the 1970 essay establishing the possibility of asubjective phenomenology, where Patočka insists on the kinship between what the author of *Sein und Zeit* is aiming at and Husserl's initial intention. The thinker to whom Patočka pays tribute in the concluding page of this article is, however, the "late Heidegger" – the thinker of the *Kehre*, rather than of Dasein – he who "showed, in this phenomenalizing accomplishment, the being which, in the *sum*, comes into motion and into clearing effectiveness [*lichtende Wirksamkeit*]."[26] The allusion is not easy to decipher, but it seems certain in any case that, as we are speaking here of "late Heidegger," the "being which, in the *sum*, comes into motion and into clearing effectiveness" is not Dasein, as we might at first have been tempted to presume. We are thus left with the most difficult – yet at the same time, without a doubt, the most promising – interpretation, i.e., that Patočka advances, beneath the façade of tribute paid to Heidegger, a general ontological thesis that is purely his own, concerning the *movement of phenomenalization of Being itself*, or *Being as the movement of phenomenalization*. This thesis, which is but an outline, considers that Being, understood in its most general sense, is what is phenomenalized through the medium of an existent (a *sum*) which brings it to its accomplishment,

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[25] Jan Patočka, "Der Subjektivismus der Husserlschen und die Möglichkeit…," op. cit., p. 283–284; "Le subjectivisme de la phénoménologie husserlienne et la possibilité…," op. cit., p. 212–214.

[26] Ibid., p. 285/214 (German/French). E. Abrams translates the last two words as "the light of *energeia*."

its effectiveness, its *energeia* – and does so, not because this existent functions as a foundational instance, but more conclusively because the mobility proper to Being is attested particularly strongly in it.

Our aim here was to try to find, with Patočka, an ontological model that would no longer put us in danger of being forced back into the ontology of full objective Being which – let us not forget – is also that of Husserl's intuitive "fulfillment" of acts of consciousness. This new ontology is what is now beginning to take shape. Its first determination will be as follows: *true fulfillment, conceived of outside of all objectifying models of Being, is movement*. This formula is the first determination of an ontology of movement in which movement – as Patočka noted in 1964, in a passage of his major work on Aristotle, dealing in particular with the Aristotelian theories of *kinēsis* and *physis* – "is the manner in which a finite being that cannot *fully* exist, can nonetheless attain *maximal* existence."[27] Raised to the rank of a major ontological factor, movement is thus, following Patočka's generalization of the analysis of the Being of *physis* in Book III of Aristotle's *Physics*, "the entelechy of the mobile as it is mobile," i.e., the actualization of the mobility intrinsic in the Being of all forms of beings. That is why movement continually *maximizes* finite Being as it is finite. As Patočka remarks in the working manuscript entitled "Phenomenology and Ontology of Movement," nothing is less subjectivistic than such a determination of ontological movement; quite the reverse, it can bring us to encompass the whole of human phenomena in an entirely asubjective structure, providing we accept to radicalize the Aristotelian definition of *kinēsis* by ruling out all reference to a "substrate" for movement, be it what it may.

The care for the soul, considered as life in amplitude, in the world, and as a self-unifying process, as it was conceived of by Patočka in the course of his reflections on "negative Platonism," thus links up with his ontological characterization of movement as maximization of finite Being and, in particular, as "fulfillment" of embodied consciousness as it can appear to itself, existing and acting within the world-horizon. A philosophical reflection on the appearing of appearances, and, consequently, on phenomenality as the mobility of Being in general, thus finally becomes possible.

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[27] Jan Patočka, *Aristoteles, jeho předchůdci a dědicové* (Praha: Academia, 1964), p. 199, quoted by E. Abrams in a footnote to her translation of the working manuscript "Phénoménologie et ontologie du mouvement" in Jan Patočka, *Papiers*…, op. cit., MS 10A/6, p. 30.

Phenomenology and Henology

Renaud Barbaras

In *Broken Hegemonies*,[1] an imposing work in every regard, Reiner Schürmann devotes a very stimulating chapter to Neoplatonism, which he rereads from a perspective one could summarily describe as phenomenological. The heart of henology is the fundamental distinction between the One and beings, a distinction summed up in the opening line of the Sixth Ennead: "It is due to the one that all beings are beings."[2] In Plotinus, being is no longer referred to substantial form, but to the One itself as the ultimate condition of its beingness. In other words, it is due to their unity, which Schürmann calls the union or "entering into constellation" of a multitude of factors, that beings are beings: "Separated from the one, beings do not exist. The army, the chorus, the flock will not exist if they are not one army, one chorus, and one flock. The house and the ship themselves are not if they do not possess unity; for the house is *one* house and the ship is *one* ship. If they were to lose that unity, there would no longer be either house or ship."[3] Whereas, for Plato and Aristotle, substance (sensible or divine) is located in beings and functions as ground, the One is not foundation, but condition. Hence, the movement of transcendence that leads from the intelligible (beings) to the One is necessarily heteronomous in relation to the movement leading from the sensible to the intelligible. Insofar as the One is a non-being, one must add that henology can only be negative, but in a sense that has nothing to do with negative theology. Nothing positive can be said of it, since the *logos* is inferior to the One. Schürmann insists on the active or event-like character of the One. In fact, it should be fundamentally understood as the singular event of union, more precisely as an entering into constellation, a

[1] Reiner Schürmann, *Des hégémonies brisées* (Mauvezin: Trans-Europ-Repress, 1996); *Broken Hegemonies*, transl. R. Lilly (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2003).

[2] Plotin, *Ennéades*, VI, 9 [9], 1, 1, ed. and transl. E. Bréhier (Paris: Les Belles-Lettres, 1924–1938) modified. Quoted in ibid., p. 186/143 (French/English).

[3] Ibid., VI, 9 [9], 1, 3–9. Quoted in ibid., p. 193/148 (French/English).

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"contextualization," a "worldification" [*faire-monde*]: the *hen* is *henosis*, the one is "uni-fication."[4] The One differs from intelligence as a process or an event differs from a thing, or, grammatically, as the verb differs from the noun. According to Schürmann, this difference refers to the difference between Being and beings, so that the One should be assimilable to Being itself, *to hen* to *to einai*. It is true that Plotinus himself never made this assimilation; nonetheless, it is to be found in the *Anonymous Turin Commentary*, first attributed to Porphyry, which Schürmann cites: "The one that is beyond substance (*ousia*) and beyond beings (*ontos*) is neither being, nor substance, nor act, but rather it acts and is itself pure acting, so that it is itself Being (*to einai*) that which is prior to beings (*ontos*)."[5] The One, understood as "pure acting," is, at one stroke, totally desubstantialized and posited as equivalent to Being.

Thanks to this assimilation, which is decisive, Schürmann proposes to distinguish between two versions of the ontological difference. The first version is the one that is at issue in returning to the foundations. It is the difference between *ousia* and *on*, between *entitas* and *ens*, i.e., the *metaphysical* difference. This difference has its origin in the necessity of accounting for production and, more generally speaking, for physical change. The metaphysical difference makes it possible to answer the question of how to produce a universal *eidos* in individual material. Thus, "the physico-metaphysical difference rules over this onto-theological territory since the actual substantiality of things, *ousia* (*energeia*), is treated there as a being, as the hypostatic Intelligence, as the subsistent act, as a God."[6] One must distinguish from this metaphysical difference, which is the first version of the ontological difference, the Plotinian *henological difference* between the event-like One and substantial being. Schürmann states more precisely: "Plotinus takes a step backwards from this metaphysical difference between substantiality and things, a step which leads to the One or – following the Anonymous of Torino cited earlier – to Being. What appears with this step can be called the *phenomenological* difference. The phenomenological difference secures no supreme ground, nothing that transcends a deficient reality toward a complete reality. It is only the transcendental condition of appearing."[7] In other words, the henological difference, as a second, non-metaphysical, version of the ontological difference, should be characterized as a phenomenological difference. This text is decisive inasmuch as it suggests that the phenomenological difference can only be thought as a henological difference, and hence that phenomenology qua ontology – ontology which definitely distances itself from metaphysics – is to be understood as henology. Our hypothesis is that the work of Jan Patočka answers exactly to this characterization of the ontological difference. Patočka's phenomenological philosophy is a henology insofar as it brings to the fore unity as the very condition of appearing, so that Being means

[4] Reiner Schürmann, op. cit., pp. 189–193/145–148 (French/English).

[5] Ibid., p. 189/145 (French/English).

[6] Ibid., p. 190/146 (French/English).

[7] Ibid.

nothing other than this unity which Patočka also characterizes as world. The phenomenological difference, between appearing and the appearing beings, is strictly assimilable to the henological difference between the One and what it unifies. This conclusion proceeds from a movement which structures the whole of Patočka's phenomenological thought. We can reconstitute this movement in three stages: (1) the question of Being is to be approached on the basis of the question of appearing: ontology makes sense only as phenomenology; (2) appearing as such cannot be understood if it is referred to something appearing, whatever that may be: the phenomenological difference cannot be a metaphysical difference; and (3) there is a surpassing of beings (of appearance) toward their appearing only as the making evident of their submission to a condition of unity: the phenomenological difference makes sense only as henological difference.

I

Patočka characterizes phenomenology as an inquiry into appearing as such, as an attempt to make appearing evident. His primordial intention is "to bring to sight [*au paraître*] not the *thing that is appearing* [*l'apparaissant*], but the *appearing* [*l'apparaître*], the appearing of what appears, which does not itself appear in the appearance [*l'apparition*] of what is appearing."[8] Precisely insofar as it does not appear in the appearance of what is appearing, appearing as such must be explicitly inquired into, and this calls for a specific method. The possibility of this inquiry proceeds from the singularity of the Husserlian undertaking. The problem of knowledge, as problem of transcendence, is resolved in Husserl by distinguishing between two types of immanence (and, consequently, two types of transcendence): the internal immanence (of lived-experiences) and the intentional immanence (of the noema). There is thus a belonging of the object to consciousness which does not jeopardize its transcendence, and a relation of consciousness to the object which does not entail its interiorizing in the form of representations. That means that the problem of transcendence, i.e., the elucidation of the subject-object relation, is resolved without resorting to the metaphysical devices Descartes calls on in his *Meditations on First Philosophy*: one no longer needs to make a detour through the veracity of God in order to secure the relation of consciousness to the transcendent object, since, thanks to intentionality, it has become possible to *reduce* objectivity as such to the immanence of consciousness. However, as Patočka stresses, the

[8] Jan Patočka, "Les 'Considérations phénoménologiques fondamentales' et l'*époché*," in *Papiers phénoménologiques*, ed. and transl. E. Abrams (Grenoble: Millon, 1995), MS 3G/17, p. 196; ["Die phänomenologische Fundamentalbetrachtung und die Epoché," in *Vom Erscheinen als solchem. Texte aus dem Nachlaß*, ed. H. Blaschek-Hahn and K. Novotný (Freiburg and München: Alber, 2000), Text V, p. 149: "nicht *das Erscheinende*, sondern *das Erscheinen*, das Erscheinen des Erscheinenden, welches bei dessen Erscheinen selbst nicht erscheint, zum Vorschein zu bringen"].

reduction also provides an answer to the inquiry into the nature of being (*ti to on*), though this question is not posed in so many words. In fact, being is grasped in its own nature when we describe it as constituted in the lawful structures of its presentation to consciousness, i.e., in subjective processes subject to eidetic laws: beings, in their essence, are the correlates of these subjective processes. For Husserl's phenomenology, objects are, accordingly, nothing more than guiding threads for unveiling the correlative structures of consciousness, and the proper "substance" of all mundane reality is the constitutive activity of transcendental subjectivity. With Husserl, phenomenology appears indeed to be the true foundation of ontology; "philosophy's own-most problem is no longer: 'What is being?' This problem is implied in another question: 'How does being manifest itself?' and the answer to the second question also answers the first."[9] In Patočka's eyes, this is an established fact: the foundation of *all* ontology is phenomenology; there is no other ontology but phenomenology.[10] This explains the peculiarity of his reading of Heidegger, with its marked insistence on the necessity not to separate the problem of Being from the problem of manifestation. In Heidegger, the passage from the phenomenon in the common sense of the word to the deep phenomenon, the phenomenon of phenomenology – namely, what remains withdrawn while yet bringing about meaning and grounding for what is immediately and commonly given – is no longer what it was with Husserl, namely, the passage from the finite to the infinite, from the actual aspects of the object to the infinity of other aspects (and, consequently, of other experiences) in which the object remains the same, in short, the passage from appearances to the transcendental subjectivity which is the bearer of this infinity. According to Heidegger, as Patočka interprets him, the continued experience of the object is an interpretation and explication of what gives itself. This explication itself refers to an understanding; the explication of being insofar as it gives itself is based on the understanding of its Being. As Patočka says, I have to understand the Being of the thing in order to hold it to be a thing, in order for it to show itself to me as a thing. In other words, being is approached from its manifestation. It is fundamentally understood as that which manifests itself, and Being then appears as that which is required in order for this manifestation to be possible, that which must be understood in order for something to manifest itself, i.e., to give itself as a being. One does not pass from a being to its Being – such a procedure would nearly inevitably entail reducing Being to a structure or an essence of beings, i.e., not passing beyond beings – but rather from the manifestation of beings to Being as that of which there must be understanding in order for this manifestation to take place. It is therefore not surprising that Heidegger characterizes Being precisely as emergence out of withdrawal, entrance into appearing. Being is, in a way, nothing other than the work of manifestation, this coming to appearance, or to presence, which makes it possible for me to encounter beings, to say that there is something there.

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[9] Jan Patočka, "La fin de la philosophie est-elle possible?" in *Platon et l'Europe. Séminaire privé du semestre d'été 1973*, transl. E. Abrams (Lagrasse: Verdier, 1983), p. 257.

[10] Ibid.

Patočka asks, "How does Heidegger come to see Being as self-showing?" and answers his own question: "Because manifestation serves him as a guideline for the understanding of what Being is. Heidegger breaks through the age-old tradition for which Being is something like an objective character of beings because the guiding theme of his philosophizing is the theme of self-showing.… Always, from the very beginning, philosophy is in reality a philosophy of self-showing, of the phenomenon, and the problem of Being thus belongs to the context of the problem of manifestation. Heidegger's ontology is an ontology in this sense; as such, it is fundamentally different from ontology in the scholastic sense of the term, from the tradition which views ontology as the study of being in its internal structures in general, and not above all in the structures related to the fact that beings manifest themselves."[11] One could not better say that there is no ontology but as phenomenology, that Being is nothing other than what is at work in manifestation. As we shall soon see, it is on this explicit condition that the equivalence between Being and the One, asserted by the anonymous Neoplatonist of Torino, will become truly comprehensible. Only insomuch as Being is first referred back to the primitive dimension of appearing shall we be able to assimilate it to the One as event of union. Phenomenology is the one and only locus where unity between ontology and henology can be accomplished. Be that as it may, Patočka's reading of the meaning of Heidegger's approach contains the seeds of a critique on Heidegger. Indeed, if the problem of manifestation is deeper and more original than the problem of Being, it is hazardous to begin with the question of Being, rather than subordinating it from the outset to the question of manifestation. It means risking abstraction, but also subjectivation of manifestation (in "early" Heidegger), since, once Being is separated from manifestation, manifestation can be accounted for only by referring Being to a subjective structure.[12]

II

Appearing as such, the proper object of phenomenology, can be approached only by means of a special method which Husserl calls reduction, and which Patočka, for reasons we shall soon see, specifies as epoché. Husserl defines this method as the suspension or neutralization of the natural attitude, characterized by the thesis of existence, i.e., by the positing of the appearing world as reality in itself. Patočka, however, does not retain this characterization, tainted, in his opinion, with a lack of radicality, i.e., with a kind of naiveté, pertaining to the definition of the natural attitude. Husserl fails to see that the thesis of existence of the world itself refers to a deeper

[11] Jan Patočka, *Platon et l'Europe*…, op. cit., p. 171; [*Plato and Europe*, transl. P. Lom (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2002), p. 159].

[12] Cf. ibid., pp. 177/165, 184/173, 187/176 (French/English).

and more secret tendency, a tendency "towards reality, thingness, objectivity,"[13] conducive of accounting for appearance on the basis of appearing beings. Such is the true sense of the natural attitude: not the positing of the world as a reality resting in itself, which would be the source of its own appearance, but the subordination of appearance to something of the order of reality, be it a reality that does not have the face of a natural or mundane reality, in short, the circular reference of appearing to the appearing thing of which it is the condition. This addition is crucial, since Husserl, grasping the natural attitude as the thesis of existence within certain limits, leaves, as we shall see, the way open for a subordination of appearing to a dimension which, though not strictly speaking part of the world, is nonetheless an appearing reality. Hence, the radicalized definition of the epoché which Patočka proposes. The crucial step accomplished by the epoché "is to reveal the total independence of the lawful structure of appearing from the structures of that which appears," and Patočka adds, giving the epoché its true historical depth: "there would thus be given, in the epoché, an entirely new possibility of solving the age-old problem: what is appearance? In the history of this problem, one has always attempted to reduce appearance to something appearing."[14] We recognize here – in what is pointed out as the main obstacle to carrying out the epoché and, consequently, to uncovering the proper lawfulness of appearing – the movement of regress from (appearing) being to its substantial foundation: in short, the ontological difference as metaphysical difference. From a phenomenological perspective, which views the question of manifestation as the essential problem of philosophy, metaphysics necessarily means the passage from appearing beings to another being of a 'higher' order, a moving upward within the element of beings, where nothing of their appearing as such is ever accessible to us – in short, the subordination of appearing to that which appears. Metaphysics thus merges with the natural attitude understood in this broader sense, so that the epoché means nothing other than a critique of the metaphysical difference. This is as much as to say that the phenomenological difference, as truth of the ontological difference, can only be brought to light by radically calling in question the metaphysical difference. Insofar as it aims at accessing appearance as such, the epoché is a distancing from appearing being, in which the proper appearing of which is always concealed: in this sense, it is indeed a suspension of the natural thesis. This distancing from the posited existence of the world is, however, not based on another positing, on the positing of another reality; for this reason, it can never proceed to the antithesis,[15] i.e., it can never deny the existence of the world. In Husserl, as in Descartes, the existence of the world is denied always in favor of another reality, the positing of which inflects the epoché

[13] Ibid., p. 135/125 (French/English): "there is a depth of Being which we unveil only when we swim against the natural current and the general inclination of our mind and our whole instinctive constitution which tends towards reality, thingness, objectivity."

[14] Jan Patočka, "Les 'Considérations phénoménologiques fondamentales…,'" op. cit., pp. 200, 201; ["Die phänomenologische Fundamentalbetrachtung…," op. cit., p. 154].

[15] Cf. Jan Patočka, "La fin de la philosophie est-elle possible?" op. cit., p. 258.

or doubt from the start, being of metaphysical essence. The epoché is indeed a distancing from the world, but a distancing made necessary by the refusal to subordinate appearing to something appearing, a distancing which never goes so far as to abandon the world in favor of another reality. On the contrary, it remains as if retained by and entirely turned toward the world it suspends. This distancing does not proceed from appearing beings to another being (which would be the locus, the source, or the cause of their appearance), but rather from appearing beings to their appearing. It ensues that the phenomenological difference will necessarily have an entirely new meaning, since it cannot be a difference between beings, a real difference, i.e., a duality. The phenomenological difference differs, as such, from the metaphysical difference.

It follows from these remarks that the epoché, continually jeopardized by our "inclination" for objectifying or realization, necessarily assumes a critical or negative form. In order to access appearing, one must first curb the movement leading us to abandon what appears in favor of another reality. We shall see, however, that there is perhaps also a truth of metaphysics, or at least some kind of positive contribution: its movement toward a higher reality supposes a movement of detachment which, grasped in itself, before it transforms into positivity, may well, by the distance it establishes, put us on the path of appearing itself. The henological difference would thus be obtained on the basis of an interruption of the movement toward the foundation, an inflection of the metaphysical difference. The critique of the metaphysical difference is developed simultaneously on both phenomenological and metaphysical ground, but it is especially on the latter, through an unceasing meditation on the meaning of Platonism, that Patočka opens the way to henology. On the phenomenological level, the critique of metaphysics, as we have described it, merges with the critical discussion of Husserl's phenomenology. Though Husserl's approach makes it possible, as we have seen, to bring to the fore the question of the manifestation of being, it nonetheless takes a turn which precludes it from answering this question. What is here at issue is quite clearly the status of the epoché. The epoché makes it possible to step back from the world to the phenomenon of the world, i.e., to uncover phenomenality as such, up to then concealed in the phenomena that realize it. However, Husserl fails to respect the autonomy of the phenomenal field which, though indeed subject-related, remains on the other hand transcendent inasmuch as it is, through and through, the showing of beings. He would have the phenomenal field itself relate to a singular being, consciousness, which has the peculiarity of being given to itself in immanence: the appearing of being is thus wholly subordinated to a being whose Being consists in appearing to itself, phenomenality rests entirely on a singular phenomenon which bears the entire burden of appearing. In other words, we witness here, within phenomenology, a kind of overcoming or displacing, which corresponds to the shift from epoché to reduction. Underlying the suspension of the existence of the world is a possibility of negation, itself the reverse of a position: the positing of a transcendental consciousness in which the world is constituted. The epoché is but a step toward the reduction to consciousness, a reduction

which makes it possible to bring to light the constitutive function of this region, i.e., the assimilation of the phenomenal to the subjective, in the sense of that which lies in the immanence of consciousness. As Patočka writes, Husserl solves the problem of manifestation "by asserting that appearance, manifestation, is possible only on the basis of a subjective being, that the essence of appearance is uncovered only by the de-limitation, the in-finitization of the subjective being. Essentially, Husserl thus refers the problem of appearing back to the problem of that which appears, back to the problem of being."[16] Understood as reduction, the epoché immediately takes the form of a referring back of appearing beings to another – privileged – appearing being: consciousness; it repeats the metaphysical regress of mundane being to an ontic foundation of a higher order. The fact that this foundation is subjective makes no difference, since this subjectivity is also a being, not, as Patočka would have had it, a feature of phenomenality itself.[17] In short, the reduction to consciousness is a move which brings phenomenology close to a metaphysics of subjectivity.[18] As Patočka strongly emphasizes, "[t]here is a phenomenal field, a Being of the phenomenon as such, which can neither be reduced to a being appearing within it, nor, therefore, explained on the basis of a being of whatever sort it may be, whether naturally objective or egologically subjective."[19] The epoché, which aims at accessing appearing as such, must therefore interrupt this movement leading from appearance to appearing subjective being. The epoché is a suspension of the reduction, and thus of consciousness, as well as of the thesis of existence; it is carried out as the reduction of the reduction. This bracketing of any form of ontic ground is what makes it possible to bring to light the henological condition of being. Though Patočka does at times thematize the constitutively unitary dimension of appearing on the basis of his critique of Husserl, it is first and foremost on the ground of metaphysics itself that he succeeds in overcoming the metaphysical difference in favor of the henological, which delivers the truth of the phenomenological difference.

[16] Ibid., pp. 259–260.

[17] Namely, its relativity to our situation and our movements in the world.

[18] This regress to the subject "possesses the principial meaning that leads to the metaphysical subjectivation of being" (Jan Patočka, "La fin de la philosophie est-elle possible?" op. cit., p. 260).

[19] Jan Patočka, "Der Subjektivismus der Husserlschen und die Forderung einer asubjektiven Phänomenologie," in *Die Bewegung der menschlichen Existenz. Phänomenologische Schriften II*, ed. K. Nellen, J. Němec and I. Srubar (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1991), p. 302; quoted from the French translation: "Le subjectivisme de la phénoménologie husserlienne et l'exigence d'une phénoménologie asubjective," in *Qu'est-ce que la phénoménologie?*, ed. and transl. E. Abrams (Grenoble: Millon, 1988), p. 239.

III

It is doubtless in this perspective that we should understand the importance Patočka grants to Plato throughout his work.[20] We might say that he discovers Neoplatonism and its phenomenological scope at the heart of Platonism. This discovery rests at once on a reading of the Platonic texts and on an interpretation of the *chōrismos* as the core of truth in Platonism and, consequently, a lever for challenging the metaphysical difference from within Platonism. Patočka, of course, condemns at first the eminently metaphysical character of the attempt to refer the sensible back to the Ideas, where what is at stake is the grounding of mundane being, in its appearance, on the Idea conceived of as a higher, truly existing being. From this point of view, the critique of Platonism is the counterpart, on the object side, of the critique of Husserl's phenomenology on the subject side. In both cases, Patočka proposes to show that transcending mundane being towards a fuller being, be it a pure Intelligible or pure subjectivity, brings us no closer to appearing as such. Thus, "inasmuch as he considers that which is the principle, indivisible and permanent, as a *higher being*, and not only as that which makes it possible for being to appear, Plato yields to the Greek philosophical tradition, or more precisely to the philosophy of his time, which holds to be existent that which is superlatively present and lasting."[21] The wording is significant. If Platonism yields to the Greek philosophical tradition, it can only be because Platonism contains, at least virtually, the means for calling this tradition into question. This virtuality, in which the metaphysical difference is shaken, is resumed in Patočka, first of all, through a theme he comes back to more than once in *Plato and Europe*: the importance of the mathematical model for the theory of Ideas. The hierarchy of Being is, in fact, understood through analogy with the hierarchy of mathematical realities. Patočka emphasizes the One, which is at the top of the hierarchy of Being, just as points and numbers (i.e., units) occupy the top of the mathematical scale.[22] And "[e]verything that is, must be *one*. In order for something to *show itself*, there must be something that can be grasped, identified (in our modern terms), in and of itself. Everything that is, must be one; that is the first condition of possibility for speaking of something as *being*. It could then also be said that the doctrine of the One is above the doctrine of being, and some commentators indeed claim that Plato's ontology is subordinated to henology."[23] Patočka thus takes from the Platonic doctrine the primacy of the One as condition

[20] The series of lectures given in Prague in 1973 in the framework of a private seminar and collectively published under the title of *Plato and Europe* offers an eminent example of this importance.

[21] Jan Patočka, *Platon et l'Europe*…, op. cit., p. 114; [*Plato and Europe*, op. cit., p. 103].

[22] What is above that is the principle, and the principle is what, when eliminated, abolishes everything that depends upon it. For example, the abolition of the point leads to the abolition of the line, and consequently of the plane surface and the solid.

[23] Jan Patočka, *Platon et l'Europe*…, op. cit., p. 198; [*Plato and Europe*, op. cit., pp. 185–186]. See also p. 109/99 (French/English).

of the beingness of being. However, though one can claim ontology to be subordinated to henology, the status of the One remains problematic, and nothing allows claiming that it lies beyond being, that it thus makes us escape from metaphysics.

On the other hand, the transition to henology is much more explicit in the long 1953 essay entitled "Negative Platonism." Patočka's purpose here is precisely to bring to light the possibility of a surpassing of metaphysics which would not consist merely in pushing it out of the way, after the manner of positivism in all its forms; to inquire into the conditions of a "sublation" (*Aufhebung* ["*relève*"]) of metaphysics. This sublation rests on bringing into sight the fundamental experience on which metaphysics is based – the experience we *are*, as opposed to those we *have*. This experience is the experience of *freedom*, which is a dissatisfaction with the given, and therefore a separation, an overcoming of the given, in short, an active transcendence. This originary movement of disengagement from the given is the prerequisite for accessing the question of appearing, or rather, it *is* this question itself. The dissatisfaction with the given, which is at the heart of our separateness, implies that the given is not all there is, that the given is not what decides about being. Underlying the movement of distancing *per se* is the discovery that there is more to the given than what is immediately contained within it, that being thus includes a hidden dimension, which is not delivered in its very beingness. Such is the true meaning of the Platonic theory of Ideas, as Patočka sees it, and that is what makes him look upon Platonic metaphysics as opening the way to an overcoming of metaphysics. The truth of the Idea is the *chōrismos* as separateness, distantiation from immediate being. Far from being the finishing point and the condition of possibility of this separation, as a classical reading would have it, the Idea is in fact, according to Patočka, a mere symbol or abbreviation of this possibility of distantiation from beings. *Chōrismos* indeed "means originally a separateness *without* a second object realm. It is an interval that does not separate two realms, coordinated or unified in something third that would embrace them both and so would serve as the foundation of both their coordination and their mutual separation. *Chōrismos* is a separateness, a distinctness *an sich*, an absolute separation for itself."[24] If *chōrismos* is pure separation, a negation which is not the reverse of a position, an active difference which is not a duality, it becomes impossible to ascribe the slightest positivity to the Idea. It is not a reality we could eventually catch up with or contemplate. The Idea can denote only the non-positive reverse of the *chōrismos*. It is a force of distantiation, the pure call of transcendence; as such, it can have no positivity and, therefore, necessarily exceeds the order of being. The Idea, Patočka writes, is "pure superobjectivity," "it appears to us at first as non-being." In short, "it is a determination that, stripped of metaphysical encrustations, stands above both subjective and

[24] Jan Patočka, "Le platonisme négatif. Réflexion sur les origines, la problématique et la fin de la métaphysique, ainsi que la question de savoir si la philosophie peut y survivre," in *Liberté et sacrifice. Écrits politiques*, ed. and transl. E. Abrams (Grenoble: Millon, 1990), p. 87; ["Negative Platonism: Reflections concerning the Rise, the Scope, and the Demise of Metaphysics – and Whether Philosophy Can Survive It," in *Philosophy and Selected Writings*, ed. and transl. E. Kohák, (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1989), p. 198].

objective existents."[25] Such, however, is not the most common version of the Idea, and, following Patočka, one cannot but acknowledge that there is a tension between the *chōrismos* and the positive doctrine of Ideas. In truth, this tension is simply an expression of the discrepancy between what Patočka sometimes calls historical Platonism, which is metaphysical, and its true meaning, which opens the way to an overcoming of metaphysics. The truth of Platonism lies in the *chōrismos*, which must ultimately be understood as delivering the true meaning of the epoché. However, the "historical" Plato does not stick to this wrenching apart, to this separation which does not delimit distinct domains; instead, he rests the *chōrismos* upon the positive realm of Ideas, just as Husserl ultimately views phenomenality as supported by consciousness. The regress to determinate and intelligible Ideas thus attests subordination to the realm of beings in the very movement that transcends it, just as there is, in Husserl's reduction, evidence of subordination of appearing to an appearing being. In this sense, one might say that *chōrismos* is to the positing of the Ideas as epoché is to the reduction to the region of consciousness. Just as Patočka's reading of Husserl leads him to elaborate an epoché without reduction, neutralizing consciousness itself, his reading of Plato opens onto a "negative theory of the Idea,"[26] refusing to subordinate the Idea to the rule of being under the pretext of preserving the purity of the *chōrismos*.

We witness here, so to speak, an intrinsic surpassing of metaphysics, which retains only the metaphysical movement of distantiation from being, while suspending or restraining the form of excess or overflowing within distantiation which leads to its subordination to a positive transcendence. This suspension, in which epoché and *chōrismos* meet, is the step thanks to which the metaphysical difference makes way for the henological difference. Indeed, how are we to think this non-being – which the Idea *names*, but which cannot be an Idea – this non-being which lies beyond beings, but which is nonetheless not nothing? That which exceeds *all* beings, though not itself a being, can only be the very unity of being. This is where we must come back to the meaning of the *chōrismos*. Patočka defines it as a pure or absolute separation. This means that the distance the *chōrismos* widens vis-à-vis all beings is a null distance, for it does not create a gap between positive beings. It is a distance which is simultaneously proximity, i.e., affirmation of being, stripped however of its own determination, and thus understood according to what commands its beingness: the *chōrismos* is the discovery of the unity of being as the condition of its beingness. It is what tears us away from being in its substantiality and makes us discover its unity. In this sense, what Patočka calls negative Platonism is, in fact, a negative henology: the opening, through the *chōrismos*, of the dimension of the One as non-being, as not-a-being. It is, therefore, not surprising that Patočka views the Idea, comprehended as a symbol or another name for the *chōrismos*, as the very mark of unity. The Idea is the not-a-being which, "through its opposition, unifies for us the whole of finite being," and "the unity to which the

[25] Ibid., pp. 95/204, 92/202, 90/200 (French/English).

[26] Ibid., pp. 92/202, 89/200 (French/English).

spiritual experience of freedom [synonym of the *chōrismos*] points, is more absolute than the unity of any genus whatever. Species and genera, just as the entire world of language, are undoubtedly creations of the Idea, but the Idea is not a species or a genus, as the metaphysical version would have it." Just as there are two versions of the ontological difference, there are two versions of the Idea. One is metaphysical, the Idea as a being of a higher order, at the foundation of the beingness of other beings; the other henological, acknowledging, in the Idea, the One, beyond all genera, as the condition of the beingness of beings. By isolating the moment of separation at the root of the Ideas, Patočka succeeds in calling up, within Platonism, the difference between the metaphysical and the phenomenological differences. The henological difference proceeds, so to speak, from a reduction of the metaphysical difference, and this reduction consists in separating from its positive end-point and thus isolating the epoché-al moment of distantiation.

At the same time, and in conclusion, this critique of metaphysics helps us to better understand how the henological difference can also be called a phenomenological difference – as Schürmann's text, which gave us our starting-point, bears witness. The question of phenomenology is that of appearing as such. It is, as we have seen, a question that cannot be solved by resorting to any appearing thing, be it intelligible ideality or immanent lived-experience. The appearing of being is not something other than the being of which it is the appearing, it belongs to that being, though not coinciding with it as such, since it (appearing) is precisely what lets the being be, what makes it possible for us to call it being. In short, appearing is something about being which is no being. The appearing of being can, therefore, mean only its articulation with other beings in a unitary whole, i.e., its inscription in a world, or, to use Schürmann's term, its "entering into constellation." Unity, as event of union, unifying unity or advent of a world, defines the appearing of being – appearing which, as we have seen, delivers the true meaning of its Being – and Patočka's phenomenology is nothing else than a description of phenomenality on the basis of these laws dominated by unity. Henology, brought to light in the heart of Platonism by means of a critique of its metaphysical dimension, thus opens the way to phenomenology: making it possible to go beyond being toward the One, the doctrine of the *chōrismos*, truth of the doctrine of Ideas, leads us back to phenomenality by exposing its ultimate apriori. The One delivers the true meaning of appearing, just as the *chōrismos* delivers the true meaning of the epoché. As Patočka writes in a striking text, summarizing the movement that we have here attempted to make clear: "the world of the Ideas must be understood as *world* in the sense of the adjoining (*Gefüge*) of possibilities. In addition, the dialectic of the Ideas … is to be comprehended as dealing, not with 'intelligible beings,' but with the conditions of possibility of appearing in general, of all and everything.… Plato's doctrine is thus by no means a theory of being, but rather a theory of the *appearance* of being; it should be interpreted, not *theologically*, as the doctrine of a super-existent God, superior to Being and non-Being, but rather as a theory *of the world*."[27]

[27] Jan Patočka, "Corps, possibilités, monde, champ d'apparition," in *Papiers*…, op. cit., MS 5E/15, p. 126; ["Leib, Möglichkeiten, Welt, Erscheinungsfeld," in *Vom Erscheinen*…, op. cit., Text III, p. 96].

Patočka and Artificial Intelligence

James Mensch

It may seem strange to associate the name of Jan Patočka with artificial intelligence. Neither a mathematician nor a logician, the phenomenology he espoused, with its emphasis on lived experience, seems worlds apart from the formalism associated with the discipline. Yet, as I hope to show, the radicality and depth of Patočka's thought is such that it casts a wide net. The reform of metaphysics that Patočka proposed in his asubjective phenomenology also affects artificial intelligence. It shows that what philosophers take as its most difficult, yet primary problem may well be the result of a category mistake.

1 Reductionism and the Hard Problem of Consciousness

David Chalmers expresses a general consensus of cognitive scientists when he writes that "the really hard problem of consciousness is the problem of 'experience.'" It is the problem of the "subjective aspect" of our perceptions. Beyond the visual processing, there are also appearances – e.g., "the felt quality of redness, the experience of dark and light, the quality of depth in a visual field." How do we relate such experiences to the brain's processing? As Chalmers puts this: "It is widely agreed that experience arises from a physical basis, but we have no good explanation of why and how it so arises."[1] We can see how physical processes can give rise to further physical processes. In John Locke's words, we can grasp how a change in "the size, figure, and motion of one body should cause a change in the size, figure and motion of another body."[2] A physical change, however, is not itself

[1] David Chalmers, "Facing up to the Problem of Consciousness," in *Journal of Consciousness Studies*, Vol. 2, no. 3, 1995, p. 201.

[2] John Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (Amherst, New York: Prometheus Books, 1995), p. 444.

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a perceptual appearance with its "qualia" or qualitative contents. The difficulty, then, is that "the structure and dynamics of physical processes yield only more structure and dynamics." But the perceptual appearances we seek are distinct from structure and dynamics.[3]

The formulation of this problem is quite old – dating from at least the time of Locke and Leibniz.[4] It is marked by the attempt to treat appearance as a derivative category – that is, as something whose reality could be reduced to a physical basis. Much as the temperature of the air can be reduced to the motion and, hence, the kinetic energy of the molecules composing it, so should the felt warmth of the air be reducible to the physical structure and processing of the brain as it receives information from the surrounding world. In Chalmers' words, the goal here is "an explanatory bridge" that would link perceptual experiences to this structure and processing.[5] Those, like Daniel Dennett, who deny such a bridge, either deny the very existence of appearances with their qualia, asserting that "we are all zombies. Nobody is conscious,"[6] or else they make them epiphenomenal. Here, we affirm with Frank Jackson that appearances exist, but "[t]hey do nothing, they explain nothing." They are "a useless by-product" of our evolutionary development.[7] Again the reductionist paradigm is evident. Appearances, if they cannot be explained by physical processes, must be denied or, if this seems too counter-intuitive, taken to be as illusory as the rainbow – neither doing nor explaining anything. Both positions assume that the only reality that does produce effects is physical reality. Everything else, if it is to be taken seriously, must be reduced to this.

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[3] David Chalmers, op. cit., p. 208.

[4] Locke's formulation is: "We are so far from knowing what figure, size, or motion of parts produce a yellow color, a sweet taste, or a sharp sound, that we can by no means conceive how any size, figure, or motion of any particles can possibly produce in us the idea of any color, taste, or sound whatsoever: there is no conceivable connection between the one and other" (John Locke, op. cit., p. 445). Leibniz makes the same point in his analogy of the mill. "Perceptions," he writes, "... are inexplicable by mechanical causes, that is to say, by figures and motions. Supposing that there were a machine whose structure produced thought, sensation, and perception, we could conceive of it as increased in size with the same proportions until one was able to enter into its interior, as he would into a mill. Now, on going into it he would find only pieces working upon one another, but never would he find anything to explain perception" (Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz, "Monadology," in *Basic Writings*, transl. G. Montgomery [La Salle, Illinois: Open Court, 1962], p. 254).

[5] David Chalmers, op. cit., p. 203.

[6] Donald Dennett, *Consciousness Explained* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1991), p. 406. Part of the difficulty in reading Dennett's *Consciousness Explained* is that while denying qualia, he often seems to imply them. Thus, on the one hand, he feels compelled to offer an explanation "why secondary qualities, for example, colors, turn out to be so 'ineffable,' so resistant to definition" (p. 382). The reason is that "[c]olors … are the product of biological evolution, which has a tolerance for sloppy boundaries" (p. 381, n. 2). On the other hand, the conclusion of this and other similar arguments is the dismissal of qualia as "mere complexes of mechanically accomplished dispositions to react" (p. 386).

[7] Frank Jackson, "Epiphenomenal Qualia," in *Philosophical Quarterly*, Vol. 32, no. 127, April 1982, pp. 135, 134.

There is another possible reaction to the failure to find an "explanatory bridge" between appearances and physical processes. This is to explain appearances, not through recourse to matter, but rather by turning to "consciousness." This transcendental tradition begins with Descartes' assertion that while bodies are extended, mind is not.[8] Given this, how can mind come in contact with the material world? Lacking any extension, it cannot be touched, pushed or pulled. In fact, since it has no size, there is no physical point of contact between it and matter. George Berkeley, reflecting on this fact, questioned the very existence of matter. If, as Locke argued, "we can by no means conceive how any size, figure, or motion of any particles, can possibly produce in us the idea of any color, taste, or sound whatsoever," then we have to admit with Locke that "there is no conceivable connection between the one and other."[9] But, as Berkeley observes, we posit the material world as the cause of our conscious experiences. It is supposed to explain them. Can we persist in this belief when even its proponents "own themselves unable to comprehend in what manner body can act upon spirit"?[10] Berkeley's fundamental question is, then: why should we posit matter? What explanatory work does the concept do? Hume, who called Berkeley "a great philosopher,"[11] simply abandons the notion. He starts off with the contents of consciousness, the most basic being "impressions," and argues that we construct our world from the associations that arise through the resemblance, contiguity and constant conjunction of our mental contents. Thus, having constantly seen a chair from various perspectives, whenever I view it from one of these, I take it as a three-dimensional object. This is because all its views are so associated that when I see one of them, the others come to mind.

Hume, as is well known, takes causality as a form of association. The constant conjunction of two contents, where one always precedes the other, results in our taking the first as the cause of the second. As a relation between the contents of consciousness, causality, however, can in no way explain the existence of such contents. What can? Berkeley took such contents as dependent on mind or consciousness. Kant agrees, adding that what things are "in themselves," apart from the contents of our consciousness, is entirely unknown to us. By the time this line of thought reaches Husserl, consciousness has come to be seen as an independent region of Being. According to Husserl, "reality, both the reality of the individual thing and that of the entire world, essentially (in the strong sense) lacks independence," since it is dependent on consciousness.[12] As for consciousness, it "must

[8] René Descartes, *Meditations on First Philosophy*, transl. L. LaFleur (New York: Macmillan, 1990), p. 74.

[9] See note 4 above.

[10] George Berkeley, *A Treatise Concerning the Principles of Human Knowledge*, § 19 (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 1982), p. 30.

[11] David Hume, *Treatise of Human Nature,* Book I, Part I, sec. 7 (Minneola, New York: Dover Publications, 2003), p. 12.

[12] Edmund Husserl, *Ideen zu einer reinen Phänomenologie und phänomenologischen Philosophie, Erstes Buch*, ed. K. Schuhmann (Den Haag: Martinus Nijhoff, 1976), Husserliana III, 1, p. 106.

count as a self-contained connection of being, as a connection of absolute being into which nothing can enter and from which nothing can slip away, a connection which has no spatial-temporal outside…"[13]

Once again, we confront a form of reductionism – this time to the absolute Being of consciousness. The experiences of consciousness presuppose it. Our "ideas" – Berkeley's term for such experiences – "cannot exist otherwise than in a mind perceiving them."[14] Taken as appearances they are unthinkable apart from it. According to Patočka, the basic assumption of this line of thinking is that "in order for something to appear, it has to appear to someone." This means that "appearing is always *mediated* by some kind of *subjectivity*." It cannot exist without it and, hence, can be reduced to it. This implies that appearing can be explained by "the act of turning inward" and reflecting on the subjective acts and contents that constitute an appearance.[15]

2 Appearing as Such

Two opposing lines of thought, thus, follow from our failure to provide an explanatory bridge between appearances and physical processes. The first line denies appearances either entirely (Dennett) or in terms of their having any efficacy (Jackson). It asserts that the primary reality of the world is physical reality. Such reality is objective. Our experience of it is characterized as "third person" insofar as the physical world is one that, not just "I," but also "they" (the grammatical third person) can experience. Its objects are available to all of us. The second, opposing line of thought denies that these physical processes are the primary reality. It asserts that what is real in the primary sense are "first person," subjective experiences. It is out of these that we constitute what we take to be the physical world. The two positions are opposites, the first reducing consciousness to the physical world, the second reducing this world to consciousness.

The question is whether we have to choose between them. Is it the case that one must be false and the other true? Kant observed that "[i]f two opposed judgments presuppose an inadmissible condition, then in spite of their contradiction

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[13] Ibid., p. 105. See also ibid., p. 120 and the comments of the "Nachwort" in *Ideen zu einer reinen Phänomenologie und phänomenologischen Philosophie, Drittes Buch*, ed. M. Biemel (Den Haag: Martinus Nijhoff, 1971), Husserliana IV, p. 146. A later expression of the same position occurs in the assertion: "The absolute has its ground in itself; and, in its non-grounded being [*grundlosen Sein*], it has its absolute necessity as the single, 'absolute substance' ['*absolute Substanz*']…. All essential necessities are moments of its fact [*Factum*], are modes of its functioning in relation to itself – its modes of understanding itself or being able to understand itself" (MS E III 9, Nov. 5, 1931, in *Zur Phänomenologie der Intersubjektivität, Dritter Teil: 1929–1935*, ed. I. Kern [Den Haag: Martinus Nijhoff, 1973], Husserliana XV, p. 386).

[14] George Berkeley, op. cit., Part I, sec. 3, p. 24.

[15] Jan Patočka, *Plato and Europe*, transl. P. Lom (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2002), pp. 142–143.

(which is not actually a genuine one), both fall to the ground, inasmuch as the condition, under which alone each of these propositions is supposed to hold, itself falls."[16] Kant used this point to show that the classic questions of philosophy, such as whether the world had a beginning in time, were falsely posed. Neither a "yes" nor a "no" answer to them was correct, since the condition or assumption for posing them was not valid.[17] Patočka's insight is that the same point holds in the present case. Here, the inadmissible assumption is that appearances require an explanatory bridge. Appearing, in other words, has to be explained in terms of something else – be this the processes of material nature or those of the subjectivity that is apprehended through reflection. Ontologically speaking, the assumption is that appearing as such is not an independent category, but must be explained in terms of what appears.

Against such a view, Patočka asserts that "appearing is, in itself, something completely original." This means that "appearing in itself, in that which makes it appearing, is not reducible, cannot be converted into anything *that* appears in appearing."[18] It is not some objective material structure. It is also not the structure of mind or consciousness. Both exist and both can manifest themselves. But "showing itself is not any of the things *that* show themselves, be it a psychic or physical object."[19] Not only is it not these, it cannot be deduced from them.[20] It cannot because such a deduction would already assume, in the content of its terms, the very showing that it was trying to deduce. As Patočka puts this, "I cannot go back to what appears to explain the appearing of appearing, since the understanding of appearing is presupposed in every thesis I might make about the appearing entity."[21]

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[16] Immanuel Kant, "Kritik der reinen Vernunft," B531, in *Kants gesammelte Schriften*, ed. Königliche Preussische Akademie der Wissenschaften, 23 vols. (Berlin: George Reiner, 1955), III, p. 345–346.

[17] For Kant this condition was the assumption that the appearing world was the world "in itself." See ibid.

[18] Jan Patočka, *Plato and Europe*, op. cit., p. 24.

[19] "Showing is not then, as it appears, a merely objective structure, because the objective, material structure is that *which shows itself*. Showing is also not mind and it is not structures of mind, because that is also just a thing, something that is and that eventually can also manifest itself.… showing itself is not any of the things *that* show themselves, be it a psychic or physical object … and yet it is the showing of *these* things" (ibid., p. 22).

[20] As Patočka writes: "the world of phenomena, the world of phenomenal lawfulness, is independent of the world of realities, of the world of actualities.… It is never possible to deduce appearing as such, as we have said, from any, either objective or psychical, structures. It cannot be done" (ibid., p. 31).

[21] The fallacy here is that of the *petitio principii*. In Patočka's words: "Es ist ja von vornherein klar, daß die Gesetzmäßigkeit des Erscheinens in seinem Erscheinen keineswegs die des Erscheinenden in seinen Eigenstrukturen, besonders in seinen Kausalbeziehungen sein kann. Ich kann nicht auf das Erscheinende rekurrieren, um die Erscheinung in ihrem Erscheinen zu klären, denn das Verständnis des Erscheinens ist bei jeder These über das erscheinende Seiende schon vorausgesetzt" ("Der Subjektivismus der Husserlschen und die Möglichkeit einer 'asubjektiven' Phänomenologie" in Jan Patočka, *Die Bewegung der menschlichen Existenz*. *Phänomenologische Schriften II*, ed. K. Nellen, J. Němec, and I. Srubar [Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1991], p. 278). All translations from the original German of this text are my own.

According to Patočka, this point is continually ignored in the history of philosophy.[22] Again and again, we find "the peculiar shift from the problem of *appearing* to the problem of *beings*." Two examples provided by Patočka make his point clear. The first concerns Plato's account of the divided line. Each section of the line marks a distinct mode of appearing. Reflected images and shadows appear differently than the objects that generate them. A third form of appearing characterizes the way mathematical objects show themselves; a fourth, the Ideas. Plato makes this evident. But, as Patočka remarks, "instead of a completely autonomous problematic of appearing, the problematic of a certain scale of beings is introduced." Thus, "Plato," in Patočka's reading, "saw the fundamental difference [in appearing], except he constantly interprets it as if it were a difference between various degrees of beings and not a difference between stages and aspects of appearing as such."[23] The same transformation appears in Husserl. Here, the tendency to ontologize the process of appearing occurs when he interprets his description of this process as a description of transcendental subjectivity. By equating the phenomena with the experiences of a subject, they are subjectivized. Because of this, the phenomena are also ontologized: they are understood as beings – as particular existing experiences. The result, according to Patočka, is that the description of the phenomena becomes a description of "a subject whose accomplishment are phenomena." Modes of givenness become ontologized as modes of transcendental subjectivity, the latter being understood as a being.[24]

For Patočka, by contrast, the fact that appearing is something "completely original" means that it forms its own category, one that is distinct from Being. In his words, to assert that "'[t]here is a structure of appearance' does not signify 'there is a being, a this-here, which one can call appearance.' Appearing as such is not a being and cannot be referred to as a being."[25] In other words, what we have to do with here is not "given as a being, rather it is the givenness and modes of givenness of a being, which modes themselves cannot be designated as beings."[26]

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[22] See ibid., pp. 287–296.

[23] Jan Patočka, *Plato and Europe*, op. cit., pp. 146–147.

[24] Ibid., p. 164. As Patočka elsewhere writes: "Vielleicht ist die Hauptquelle des Mißverständnisses des Erscheinungsproblems als solchen gerade dies, daß man Erscheinungsstruktur mit der Struktur eines Erscheinenden verwechselte oder vermengte. 'Es gibt eine Erscheinungsstruktur' bedeutet nicht 'es gibt ein Seiendes, ein Dies-da, das man Erscheinung nennen kann.' Erscheinen als solches ist kein Seiendes und es kann nicht wie auf Seiendes darauf hingewiesen werden. Weil er diese Unterscheidung (zwar irgendwie im Sinne hat, aber) nicht ausdrücklich vollzieht, sucht Husserl nach einem absolut gegebenen Seienden, statt nach der Gegebenheit des Seienden, meinetwegen einer absoluten, zu fahnden" ("Epoché und Reduktion in den 'Fünf Vorlesungen,'" in Jan Patočka, *Vom Erscheinen als solchem. Texte aus dem Nachlaß*, ed. H. Blaschek-Hahn and K. Novotný [Freiburg and München: Alber, 2000], p. 119). All translations from the original German of this text are my own. The reference to an "absolut gegebenen Seienden" is to transcendental subjectivity in the immanent givenness of its experiences (*Erlebnisse*).

[25] Jan Patočka, "Epoché und Reduktion in…," op. cit., p. 119.

[26] Ibid.

These "modes of givenness" form a separate non-ontological category. If we accept this, then we have to reformulate the history of metaphysics. Such a reformulation goes far beyond Heidegger's attempt in *Being and Time* to determine the "kind of Being" that Dasein possesses by breaking the tie between Being and presence.[27] This Heideggerian "destruction" of the "traditional content of ancient ontology" is insufficiently radical. A truly radical reform would break the tie between Being and appearing. It would entail our abandoning the attempt to speak of appearing in terms of Being, i.e., to link it to some ontological commitment. It does not matter whether this be a commitment to the Being of Husserl's absolute subjectivity or to the Being-in-the-world that is Heidegger's *Dasein* or to the various physical structures and processes that make up a natural scientific account of subjectivity. All such attempts simply bear witness to the category mistake of conflating the question of appearing with that of Being. They all go astray in their not taking appearing as its own category.

3 The Empty and the Full Subject

What happens when we do not commit this category mistake? How do we deal with the fact that appearing is appearing to someone without reducing appearing to a function of subjectivity, interpreted either materially or transcendentally? Patočka's answer involves our distinguishing the "empty" from the "full" subject. If we take appearing as such as a "world-structure," it embraces both subjects and things. As such, it has three moments: "what shows itself (the world), that to which it shows itself (subjectivity), and *how,* the manner and way, it shows itself."[28] Now, subjectivity regarded as that to which things show themselves (Husserl's transcendental subjectivity) does not show itself. The active turning inward to reflect on it comes up empty-handed. All its content, by definition, comes from its objects – that is, from things appearing to it. Devoid of any internal content, this subject, according to Patočka, is simply a feature of manifestation itself. It is required by the fact that appearing is always appearing to someone. This means, Patočka writes, "mediating by the subject shows itself … directly on [the] things showing themselves to us.… for example, that we have an originally given cup and then the surroundings and so on, which are always in spheres of givenness, finally merging into deficient modes of givenness…" These are what show themselves. In other words, any supposed turn to the subjectivity *to whom the world appears* (the transcendental subject) is actually a turn to such elements. In itself, this subject is actually only a position that these elements determine. This means, Patočka adds, "only these indications, references, and this whole system of indicators is subjectivity, is us."[29] Empty of any

[27] Martin Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit* (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer, 1967), p. 22.

[28] Jan Patočka, "Epoché und Reduktion in…," op. cit., p. 123.

[29] Jan Patočka, *Plato and Europe*, op. cit., pp. 142–143.

inherent content, the transcendental subject consists simply of the "references and indicators" of this content. It is, for example, the spatially located point of view set by a pattern of perspectival appearing. It is, further, the zero-point in time between the remembered and anticipated perspectives of this pattern. To ontologize this zero-point in space and time is simply to return to the dilemmas posed by Descartes' non-extended subject. It is to revisit the question of how such a subject could ever come into contact with the material world.

To give this empty subject its own content is to make it "one of the appearing things." It becomes one of the worldly realities that appear to the empty "transcendental subject." As Patočka puts this: "The subject to whom everything shows itself is empty, while the subject that has content (*das erfüllte Subjekt*) exhibits neither advantage nor precedence over other worldly realties…"[30] In fact, "it appears as a living body (*Leib*) that belongs to the subject to whom everything shows itself." This is a body that has kinaesthesia – i.e., sensations of its own movements.[31] Like other worldly realities, this "full" or "concrete" subject stands in causal relations to the rest of the world. As Patočka puts this: "Concrete subjects are things among things, which certainly stand in causal connections with other worldly things, and this connection is a specific one: it concentrates the effects [of the other things] in specific, highly differentiated, acting organs [those of the senses and the brain], and thereby actualizes the possibility of letting a perspectival world appear, a world that appears to someone."[32]

This full subject is, as obvious, the biological agent: the person composed of flesh and blood. Does this mean that there are actually two subjects – i.e., two distinct entities that somehow have to be brought into relation to each other? To assert this is to forget that the empty subject is actually not a being at all. It is a structure of appearing. It is something embedded in the "how" of appearing as it unfolds itself perspectivally through time. Embedded in this "how" is a spatial-temporal zero-point. The relation of the concrete subject to this structure is that of providing the conditions for its applicability. In their making possible the appearing of the world, the actions of our brains and senses simply make the structures of appearing applicable to us. As Patočka expresses this: "Causality in no way signifies the creation of the appearing as such, but rather the adaptation of the organic unity to the structure of appearing, which co-determines the world and in a certain partial sense grounds it."[33] The point Patočka is making can be put in terms of the familiar distinction between the validity and applicability of a formal law. Different machines made of different materials can be constructed to do sums. The laws these machines obey are causal laws – be they the laws of electronics for an electronic calculator

[30] Jan Patočka, "Epoché und Reduktion in…," op. cit., p. 123: "Das Subjekt, dem das All sich zeigt, ist leer, während das erfüllte Subjekt weder Vorzug noch Vorrang vor anderen Weltrealitäten aufweist…"

[31] Ibid.

[32] Ibid., p. 126.

[33] Ibid., p. 132.

or those of the gear and lever for a mechanical adding machine. The arithmetical laws that such machines instantiate are, however, not causal, but formal. Patočka's insight is that appearing itself has this formal character. It is "a specific (world) structure … without itself being actual" – i.e., without its being a being.[34] On the one hand, it represents "a lawfulness that … cannot be grounded or drawn from the object." This follows because the lawfulness that is drawn from objects is causal, and the laws of this structure are formal. On the other hand, its lawfulness "determines experiential, natural and scientific knowing."[35] This is not because it gives the subjective conditions for knowing, but rather because, as the lawfulness of appearing, it determines the knowing that is based upon appearing.

One way of putting the above is to note that if appearing is a world-structure, then the evolution of organic beings would take account of it. Their evolution would involve their adapting to this structure if such adaptation offered a survival advantage. The evolution of sensory organs and central nervous systems would, thus, provide them with the causally determined apparatus that would make the structure of appearing applicable to their organic functioning. Now, to derive the structure of appearing from this apparatus is, in Patočka's view, rather like deriving the formal laws of mathematics from the causal mechanisms of a particular type of calculator. It is, in fact, to reverse the actual relation. The calculator was constructed to follow the laws of mathematics in giving correct calculations. Similarly, our brains and sensory organs were adapted to take advantage of the structures of appearing. This does not mean that their laws are the formal ones of this structure. There is no "explanatory" bridge that links the two. Thus, the laws of perspectival appearing that set up particular points of view – points in relation to which objects show first one side and then another – are not causal laws. The laws governing our brain's putting together perspectives to grasp spatial-temporal objects are, however, causal. Given this, we can say that the "hard problem" of providing such an explanatory bridge is "hard" precisely because it is insoluble. It has no solution since it presupposes incompatible concepts.[36]

The cognitive science that follows Patočka's insight will avoid this problem. It will concentrate on the study of appearing qua appearing and then look to see how its structures might be made applicable to material objects through causal laws.

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[34] Ibid., p. 125, n. 174.

[35] Ibid., p. 125. Phenomenology's task, Patočka writes, is to investigate this determining lawfulness: "die Phänomenologie untersucht schauend die Grundstrukturen, aufgrund deren überhaupt Welt erscheinen kann und aufgrund deren etwas wie natürliche, d.h. nicht schauende, sondern hypothetisch erwägende, formal-leere und erst Voraussicht aufgrund der Erfahrung verbürgende Erkenntnis möglich ist. Das von der Phänomenologie Geleistete wäre zugleich eine neue Wissenschaft vom anschauungszugänglichen Apriori, ein Beitrag zur Metaphysik als Wissenschaft vom Aufbau der Weltstrukturen und eine Grundlage für die objektiven Wissenschaften" (p. 126).

[36] The incompatibility is not just between causal and noncausal (or formal) lawfulness, but also, more basically, between appearing as such, with its lawfulness, and all causal processes. There are forms of formal lawfulness – such as those of Dedikind's number theory – that have no connection to appearing as such.

The study of appearing makes a whole wealth of phenomenological insights available, insights that can be used as "clues" to investigate the kinds of problems that natural (or artificial) sentient beings face in constructing their worlds. The point, however, is not to confuse the laws that structure appearing with the causal laws through which such beings (or their human makers) solve these problems. Artificial intelligence research can succeed on its own without any metaphysical commitments regarding the nature of appearing as such. Availing itself of Patočka's insight, it need not fall prey to the antinomy that has bedeviled philosophy since Descartes' time.

Reading Patočka, in Search for a Philosophy of Translation

Domenico Jervolino

Twentieth-century philosophy, in different ways, following different methods, and through a plurality of styles, placed language at the center of its reflection. Merleau-Ponty said this of Husserl,[1] but the statement can be extended to the century as a whole.

Within the realm of phenomena, language is now treated as something original and fundamental. Language is an *Urphänomen*, as Patočka says: an original phenomenon in which what appears is both "the capacity to be said" of things and the "capacity to say" of humans – in other words – an original phenomenon in which the capacity of things to be said manifests itself to the human capacity of saying what exists.[2]

On the other hand, Patočka, who devoted a dense chapter of his habilitation thesis to language, also deplores, in his "Fragment on Language," a certain

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[1] In a communication at the first International Phenomenology Colloquium, organized by Father Van Breda in 1951, Merleau-Ponty wrote: "In the philosophical tradition, the problem of language does not pertain to 'first philosophy,' and that is just why Husserl approaches it more freely than the problems of perception or knowledge. He moves it into a central position, and what he says about it is both original and enigmatic. Consequently, this problem provides us with our best basis for questioning phenomenology and recommencing Husserl's efforts instead of simply repeating what he said. It allows us to resume, instead of his theses, the very movement of his thought." (*Signs,* transl. R. C. McCleary [Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 1964], p. 84). Citing this passage, Ricœur adds: "our relation to the greatest of French phenomenologists has perhaps already become what is was to Husserl: not a repetition but a renewal of the very movement of his reflection." (Paul Ricœur, *The Conflict of Interpretations*, ed. D. Ihde [Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 1974], p. 247; various transl., for this part K. McLaughlin).

[2] Jan Patočka, "Husserls Anschauungsbegriff und das Urphänomen der Sprache," in *Die Bewegung der menschlichen Existenz. Phänomenologische Schriften II*, ed. K. Nellen, J. Němec and I. Srubar (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1991), pp. 535–544.

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superficiality of contemporary language philosophy. “Up to the eighteenth century – he writes – language was seen in the closest relationship to the very person of God. At the beginning of the last century [i.e., the nineteenth century], it continued to live in the spirit of those secularized angels, the nations. Then there was a sudden reversal: up to then the Word had been God, now God became a word.”[3]

But he congratulates philosophy on the recent rediscovery of the forgotten principle according to which “truth does not reside simply in clarity, but in the clarity that has its source in profundity.” “Clarity in itself ceases to be a virtue. Language, the starting-point of all our certainties, is wrapped in enigmas. For something to be clear and certain, it must first of all be sayable, and yet we possess neither clarity nor certainty as far as language itself is concerned.”[4]

Here is a list of these enigmas: “Let us consider the problem of the advent of language in the individual: we are faced with a slow evolution that, in its early stages, has nothing in common with meaningful discourse, but at the end of which, unexpectedly and mysteriously, speech appears in its entirety, accomplished, inexplicable. Let us consider the question that so preoccupied eighteenth-century theologizing linguists such as Hamann and Herder: does thought come before language or vice versa? Unless we solve the issue through simple verbal formulas, we are faced with an enigma: where does ‘language’ end and ‘thought’ begin? Let us consider the question of whether language is an organic formation or a mere invention of man, imperfect, continually revised and corrected. We shall soon see that, while we do indeed continually create language, while it is, therefore, always in some way in our power, at the same time it escapes us.”[5]

In this list of enigmas, we could include the phenomenon of translation, which Patočka was possibly thinking of when he spoke of nations as secularized angels. By analogy, could we thus think of translation as an angelic conversation among nations and take up anew the medieval question of the language of angels? Yet we know very well that those conversing are not angels, but men, human beings faced with the urgent problem of making themselves understood.

While there is no givenness of phenomena which is not givenness within language, language itself is always given in a specific historical tongue. The opening of language, the opening that language is, seems to be hopelessly contradicted by the dispersion immanent in the diversity of languages. It is true that some languages, such as English, German, and Czech, have only one word for language, for what other languages, such as French, Italian, and Spanish, say with two (e.g., *langue/langage*). But even those who speak a language like English are capable of distinguishing between the language faculty and historical languages.

There is an immanent tension in language and speech between the supposed universality of the *logos* and the historicity of the many *glōttai*.

The ancient practice and problematic of translation lies, of course, within this interval, this difference between language and historical languages. Translation has

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[3] Jan Patočka, “Fragment sur le langage” [1942], in *L'écrivain*, *son “objet,”* ed. and transl. E. Abrams (Paris: P.O.L, 1990), p. 15.

[4] Ibid.

[5] Ibid., p. 16.

always been practiced by man, yet it has often been considered as a problematical, not to say an impossible activity. It has been an object of theoretical reflection in the Western world at least since Cicero and St. Jerome, and in the second half of the twentieth century, the great century of language, it has become a subject of research in many fields: linguistics, semiotics, literary criticism, anthropology, and finally philosophy itself. To such an extent that one can speak, in reference to the last twenty years, using the felicitous formula proposed by Jean-René Ladmiral,[6] of a "*tournant philosophique de la traduction*," a philosophical turn in translation.

Jan Patočka, who – as Roman Jakobson notes – showed an interest in language throughout his philosophical development, did not have time, for chronological reasons, to partake in this turn. Writer, translator, speaker of many languages, and great specialist of German romanticism (one of the most interesting periods from the viewpoint of the modern history of translation),[7] Patočka lived what could be described as a life of languages and translation. (I borrow this expression from Marcel Hénaff who applies it to Ricœur.)[8] Yet, on reading Patočka, I have at the time of writing this essay found no texts explicitly or thematically devoted to this question.

What, then, is the purpose of the present study? It is not to present Patočka's theory of translation. Rather, it is a search, my own search, for a philosophy of translation through a reading of Patočka. I am convinced that the theme of translation belongs to hermeneutical phenomenology and that the grafting of hermeneutics onto phenomenology – following Ricœur – is or will be useful and seminal, all the more so if we start from the theory and practice of translation which is, without doubt, a hermeneutical practice. In the last few years, I have tried to pursue this line of inquiry in different ways and on different occasions, and I have recently published a book on the subject.[9]

I

Since the givenness of phenomena requires the givenness of language, and since language lives in the plurality of historical languages, it follows that languages, the language faculty, and translation also are part of the process of the constitution of meaning.

The diversity of languages is not an insurmountable barrier to communication, nor is it a curse, as the most common interpretation of the myth of Babel would have it. Rather, it shows us, as argued by Father Marty in his excellent book, *La bénédiction de Babel*, "the long journey toward unity," toward the poetic aim of a reconciled and reunified humanity, prefigured by the gift of languages. Babel is thus treated as

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[6] Cf. Jean-René Ladmiral, *Traduire: théorèmes pour la traduction*, 2nd ed. (Paris: Gallimard, 1994).

[7] Cf. Antoine Berman, *L'épreuve de l'étranger. Culture et traduction dans l'Allemagne romantique* (Paris: Gallimard, 1984); *The Experience of the Foreign: Culture and Translation in Romantic Germany*, transl. S. Heyvaert (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1992).

[8] Cf. Marcel Hénaff, "'La condition brisée des langues': diversité humaine, altérité et traduction," in *Esprit*, no. 323, mars–avril 2006, pp. 68–83.

[9] Domenico Jervolino, *Per una filosofia della traduzione* (Brescia: Morcelliana, 2008).

anticipating or prefiguring Pentecost: "The single language of Babel" – writes Marty – "… promised the worst of confusions.… It was therefore necessary to start over, from the dispersion of nations over the earth, with languages becoming confused, in order to make it impossible to believe in an immediately accessible unity. The account of the Pentecost, at the beginning of the Acts of the Apostles, reports the outcome of this long journey toward unity."[10]

I take the gift of languages, poetically prefigured in the story of the Pentecost as related in the Acts of the Apostles – Πράξεις ἀποστόλων – as the generating idea of a history of translation aimed at a humankind which is both one and many. Yet this synthesis appears difficult and ever precarious with respect to the human condition and its inescapable finiteness. What we can glimpse instead is a certain convergence between the poetic horizon and the ethics immanent in the endless work of translation and translations.

In setting off on this "long journey" of a philosophy of translation, I use the word "gift" in its most general meaning, as in everyday language, and in a threefold instance: in the first place, as the givenness of the phenomenon or, if you prefer, of life; in the second place, as the givenness of language in which the phenomenon shows itself as what-is-sayable; and, finally, with regard to the plurality of languages in which the language faculty materializes as the reciprocal givenness of tongues.

In all these cases, the word "gift" implies the notions of gratuitousness, passiveness, receptiveness… There is, in my opinion, no question of the absolute "purity" of a "pure" phenomenology of givenness, since the giving of the phenomenon can never disregard language which is essentially "impure," linked to the flesh, to incarnation, to human embodiment.

These three forms of giving – of life, language, and languages – support and point to each other, the last of the three – the gift of languages – presupposing and clarifying the first two: the gift of life (that is, the opening up which is essential to the world as phenomenon, as appearing) and the gift of language as *logos*, thanks to which we are living beings endowed with the faculty of speech. In the gift of the mother tongue, these two aspects converge: having a world and being able to name it. Thanks to this gift of the mother tongue – which we all receive for free and must pass on likewise – we are not isolated within the particularity of our ethnic context; on the contrary, we open ourselves to a common world. Every language belongs to the universe of the *logos*, and all languages are in principle translatable.

Let me add that I expect a philosophy of translation to bring a clarification and a renewal of the phenomenological method.

I assume – following Ricœur – that phenomenology unites three theses: (1) Meaning is the most comprehensive category of phenomenological description. (2) The subject is the bearer of meaning. (3) Reduction is the philosophical act which permits the birth of a being for meaning.[11]

Ricœur in his hermeneutical phenomenology reinterprets these three theses through a dialogue with Merleau-Ponty and in response to the "challenge of

[10] François Marty, *La bénédiction de Babel: vérité et communication* (Paris: Cerf, 1990), p. 198.

[11] Cf. Paul Ricœur, op. cit., p. 241.

semiology." I have sought to do the same in response to the challenge of translation studies. Following is a summary of my conclusions, presented at the 2005 International Congress of Phenomenology in Lima (Peru). The three theses are listed above in their order of discovery. But they can also be read the other way round, in their order of foundation. So we shall start from the third one, reduction: if we consider that every language is like a world, then to reduce or stand apart from a language, methodologically neutralizing it, is exactly what happens when we have to do with a foreign language, and with any language expression which we consider as different, as a language of otherness. Viewed in this way, reduction no longer appears as a fantastic and impossible operation of exiting the world. On the contrary, it becomes possible and necessary in order to reach the level granting understanding between people, i.e., the level of transcendental humanity which endows us with the faculty of understanding and being understood thanks to the mother tongue which opens us to the world, but also in the reciprocity that translation establishes between those who speak different tongues.

This idea of phenomenological reduction has a clear influence on the conception of the subject that is embodied in the world through the mediation of a language, but all particular worlds belong to a common world, and our subjectivity exists solely in communion with all the real and potential subjects acknowledged in their specific identity.

The subject of a hermeneutical phenomenology is never an isolated ego, but always a self, a contingent, embodied, finite being, coinciding with our real condition of acting and suffering humans.

Finally, meaning is neither the "*vouloir-dire*" belonging to a subject with no relations, nor the entranceway into a world of separate essences. It is rather the space opened by translation in order to allow us to confront our views on the world.

I admit having reached these conclusions by following Ricœur's path. This was done, however, also taking into account Patočka's phenomenology and the kinship between his and Ricœur's phenomenology. I have dealt with this kinship in an essay published in the journal *Studia phaenomenologica*. I would like my readers to consider this essay, the present text, and my article "*Langage et phénoménologie chez Patočka*," published in French in *Études phénoménologiques* in 1999, as the three parts of a triptych.[12]

II

Resuming now my discussion of Patočka's phenomenology of language, the method I shall follow will be that of reading allusions to translation between the lines devoted by Patočka to the question of language. This will be easier as concerns his

[12] See Domenico Jervolino, "Ricœur lecteur de Patočka," in *Studia phaenomenologica*, Vol. VII, 2007, pp. 201–217, and "Langage et phénoménologie chez Patočka," in *Études phénoménologiques*, Vol. XV, no. 29–30, 1999, pp. 59–78.

early work, where the theme of language is dealt with explicitly, in particular in the remarkable fourth chapter of his 1936 thesis entitled "Sketch for a Philosophy of Language and Speech."[13] This chapter represents perhaps the most original part of a work which remains, on the whole, in the framework of Husserlian orthodoxy. The choice of the theme of language bears witness to the wealth and liveliness of the 1930s Prague milieu, where great attention was paid to language problems. In Prague, the Philosophical Circle Patočka was a member of had a counterpart in the Linguistic Circle where the young Jakobson played an instrumental role. In Prague, at the same time as his famous lecture of 1935, which was to become the basis of the *Krisis*, Husserl also gave a talk on the phenomenology of language at the Linguistic Circle; unfortunately, we have no transcript, but we know the date of the event, thanks to Jakobson's testimony: November 11, 1935. Prague was the place where the Swiss-born philosopher Anton Marty, of Brentano's school, had taught for decades, elaborating a monumental philosophy of language which Ludwig Landgrebe later dealt with in his *Habilitationsschrift*.[14] Landgrebe, one of Husserl's last students and collaborators, worked in Prague under the presidency of T.G. Masaryk (he too a student of Brentano's), when the Czech capital was still a refuge against Nazi barbarity. Prague was where Rudolf Carnap taught in the 1930s, at the German university, before he too was forced to emigrate, and Prague intellectuals were also well acquainted with the advent and developments of logical positivism and Wittgenstein's early work. In short: the young Patočka's work took shape in an environment particularly auspicious for philosophical reflection on language.

According to the young author, language is – along with embodiment, the polarization of space between home and abroad, temporality and the relationship with others – one of the fundamental structures of life experience. It is an activity which, going beyond the level of immediate experience, reveals human freedom. As a phenomenon of pre-theoretical life, it is rooted in affectivity and intersubjectivity, but at the same time it is what opens the world to us and makes possible the advent of a theoretical life.

Following a descriptive approach, Patočka distinguishes three strata within language: speaking (in Czech, *mluvení*), speech or "having a language at one's disposal" (in Czech, *mluva*, which corresponds to the French *parole*) and language as a social institution which presupposes a community (in Czech *jazyk*). This degree of complexity of the language phenomenon harbors a first allusion to the problem of translation. Since only real speaking is thematized in the concrete dialogical situation, the other levels are mere potentialities that normally function without being thematized: they become thematical in situations where they misfunction or

[13] Jan Patočka, *Le monde naturel comme problème philosophique,* transl. J. Daněk and H. Declève (Den Haag: Martinus Nijhoff, 1976), pp. 122–162. [The translation of the passages quoted below from this work has been revised by Erika Abrams. See also the German translation: Jan Patočka, *Die natürliche Welt als philosophisches Problem. Phänomenologische Schriften I*, ed. K. Nellen and J. Němec, transl. E. and R. Melville (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1990), pp. 138–175].

[14] Ludwig Landgrebe, *Nennfunktion und Wortbedeutung. Eine Studie über Martys Sprachphilosophie* (Halle: Akademischer Verlag, 1934).

encounter difficulties. When we hear speaking in a foreign language we do not understand, this fact makes us aware of speech as a faculty and of language as an institution.[15] It is thus the collision with a foreign language – initially on a purely sensory, phonetic level – the voice of the stranger (so to say) that thematizes the presence of speech and language in the exchange between speakers.

When we speak and understand, what presents itself through the sensory expression is the expressed objectivity, which is not, therefore, a real presence, but an ideal one, different from the mere presentation of the object. It is the expression of a meaning, of an intention. In his analysis of the phenomenon of understanding in interhuman communication, Patočka stresses the fact that this is not simply a reactualization of a past sense, nor a presentation of things in their objective substantiality, but rather the expression of a meaning in the present, in a constantly renewed discursive situation. Speaking is movement, it is a process, a mixture of activity and passivity. It is "force," "energy." Communication between men is founded in indirect experience, i.e., an "experience of the experience of others," in which "experience is necessarily translated into an expression."[16] "Truly human coexistence, human coexperience, is coexperience in speech and communication."[17] Among animals, communication remains on a concrete level, boiling down to the actualization of a situation where there is "presentation of the presented." Among humans, the process is different: communication is more a matter of actualization than of presentation; what appears in the actuality of an immediate situation is the *world* opening itself with all its dimensions and all its categories round about our life in common with others.[18]

Language is indeed rooted in embodiment, affectivity, praxis (the connection between language and embodiment, in particular, will be a constant theme of all phenomenology of language). It presupposes coexistence, Being-with-others, since it is always linked with a concrete situation and a concrete community. But language, though embodied, is also virtually infinite in its capacity of expression and reaches the highest levels of universality. Notwithstanding the differences in individual experience among speakers and among languages considered as social-historical products, all ideas can, in principle, be expressed in all languages. The diversity of languages is not, therefore, an insurmountable obstacle or a scandal as opposed to the unity of the *logos*. Rather, translation – or shall we say translatability – is a possibility which is affirmed in principle.

"Every language is in final analysis co-extensive with human faculties of expression in general, but factual language always has a center – ordinarily used possibilities of expression, and a periphery – purely virtual possibilities, as yet unused, but attainable on the basis of the immanent laws governing the creation of means of expression within it."[19] "[T]he limits of every language are those of human possibilities of

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[15] Jan Patočka, *Le monde naturel*…, op. cit., p. 125; [*Die natürliche Welt*…, op. cit., pp. 140–141].

[16] Ibid., p. 131/147 (French/German).

[17] Ibid., p. 132/148 (French/German).

[18] Ibid.

[19] Ibid., p. 133/148–149 (French/German).

expression in general…. All ideas can in principle be expressed in all languages. We mean thereby all ideas concerning the universe of beings; this ability to express the universe must be reflected in the very structure of every language."[20] On the same page we read in a footnote: "Otherwise, there would be no sense in wanting to communicate with members of another language community, the phenomenon of translation would be absurd, and comparative linguistics impossible."[21]

If, as we have seen, the plurality and historicity of tongues are not at odds with the universality of language, it is possible to sketch out a sort of ideal genesis applying to the advent of a language in general and the appearance of individual speech in the community using it, since language is a legitimate and necessary sedimentation of the communication process. The constitution of language and speaking requires, first of all, the apperception of others, who, in their embodiment, are always a phenomenon of expression. But it especially presupposes the ability of humans to take a free stance regarding the world. For animals, the meaning of life is prescribed; humans choose it freely.

How then does language (and each historical tongue) relate to the world? Patočka was familiar with Wittgenstein's *Tractatus*, which considers the proposition as a logical image of fact and language as the logical image of the world. The sense of a proposition would, hence, make itself clear to us in the same way as an object represented in a painting. For Patočka, however, Wittgenstein does not do justice to a third element, i.e., thought and judgment on facts. Thought is an active accomplishment, i.e., synthesizing in the grasping of relations between things. It is a creative accomplishment, not in the sense that it produces reality *ex nihilo*, but inasmuch as it produces ideal formations.

Wittgenstein's mistake, for Patočka, was to treat thought and judgment as a proposition. On the contrary, judgment is the result of the synthetic activity of judging, which does not simply ascertain objective relations between two terms, but constitutes the relation between the two which acquire their meaning through this relation. Furthermore, since every judgment can become the object of another judgment, we have to do with a network of ideal relations, articulated on many levels, which is incompatible with a theory of language as an image of the world. For Patočka, propositions are, in fact, merely the final form of the activity of judgment. Judging is a schematic activity, producing thought schemes which organize the relations among signs and transform one relation into another through substitution processes.

Patočka distinguishes two types of schemes responsible for the elaboration of the notion of meaning – attributive judgments and judgments expressing a process – the analysis of which leads him to three essential features of all judgments: substratum, determination, and a synthetic relation between the two. Language (and, hence, all historical tongues) must contain designations of substrata and processes, designations of (substantial or processual) determinations, as well as means to indicate the unity of the synthetic meaning, i.e., syntactic signs.

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[20] Ibid., p. 134/149 (French/German).

[21] Ibid., p. 134, note/304–305 (French/German).

Intentional acts, with their specific characters, give judgments the dynamic unity particular expressions are moments of – unity which, in anticipated thought schemes, precedes all such parts. On the linguistic level, this anticipative function is fulfilled by syntactic forms which thus map out the network of discourse thanks to which man appropriates reality. "Thought in syntactic forms reaches into the universal horizon and seeks to take possession of all beings appearing within it; the ultimate meaning of all active intentional thought syntheses is to be found in this appropriation of the world. The relationship between reality and thought, subsequently reflected in the relationship between reality and language, is an unending task."[22]

In all historical languages, an original articulation thus expresses the relational structure of the universe – the "*universum*" of beings, in the phenomenological sense of the word – and, thereby, its categorial articulation in acts, things, and processes. All languages have the means of speaking of acts, things, and processes. And Patočka goes on to claim that language, rather than a *speculum universi*, as Wittgenstein would have it, is, as Leibniz maintained, a *speculum intellectus*.

This notion of a logical structure common to all languages – which takes up Husserl's idea of a pure logical grammar, as well as Antoine Meillet's theory of a general grammar, and what Karl Bühler called the "dogma of lexicon and syntax" – offers solid grounds for the reciprocal translatability of all languages, on the basis of a highly idealistic vision of phenomenology.

This vision – that of the young Patočka, faithful disciple of Husserl and friend of Fink, whose idealistic interpretation of the reduction in the 1930s is no secret – is confirmed by Karel Novotný's meticulous investigation of the notions of spirit and transcendental subjectivity in Patočka's early writings.[23] Novotný, however, also shows that, even at this early stage, Patočka's idealism never goes as far as Fink's *Entmenschung* of the transcendental subject. Life constituting the world is spirit solely in the gaze of the phenomenologizing observer. What is at stake is neither the return of the Spirit to itself nor any kind of absolute knowledge, but rather the institution of the spirit in all its unsettledness, its critical essence, its dialectic struggle with objectivity, institution accomplished at this point – admittedly – in an idealistic context, but which does not relinquish the finite measure of the human condition, within the horizon of the world.

Patočka wrote in his thesis: "Speaking – be it subjective, i.e., thought in language form, or objective, i.e., intersubjective contact within language – presupposes, of course, the immense, continually creative and infinitely rich world process.… Life, in its ultimate essence, cannot be grasped, it can only be expressively uttered. Thought in syntactic forms reaches into the universal horizon and seeks to take possession of all beings appearing within it; the ultimate meaning of all active intentional thought syntheses is to be found in this appropriation of the world.

[22] Ibid., p. 161/174 (French/German).

[23] Cf. Karel Novotný, "L'esprit et la subjectivité transcendantale. Sur le statut de l'*épochè* dans les premiers écrits de Patočka," in *Études phénoménologiques*, Vol. XV, no. 29–30, 1999, pp. 29–57.

The relationship between reality and thought, subsequently reflected in the relationship between reality and language, is an unending task…"[24] We have already addressed these last words.

If language is the mirror of thought and the task of thought unending, we are once again confronted with the infinite within ourselves while, all the same, remaining finite beings. What emerges – already in these early writings so close to Husserl's and Fink's idealism – is an open tension between the finite and the infinite, a tension which will be resolved at a later stage along the lines of a-subjective phenomenology. We may ask if a reflection on language and speech could do without this finite dimension of subjectivity, and if attention to language does not lead in the direction of a certain idea of the embodiment of meaning.

Patočka himself states in his conclusion to this chapter on language: "language is something continually informed and transformed, a form ever remolded in the process of life.… To live in a truly human manner means for us to live forever in language and, through it, to reach an agreement with the world and our fellow men."[25]

III

Let us turn now to the phenomenology of Patočka's maturity, his asubjective phenomenology. I should mention right away that we find here no text comparable to the chapter of his 1936 thesis on language and speech. When language appears in titles, as for example the 1968–1969 Prague lecture course on "Body, Community, Language, World,"[26] the actual discussion is limited and a bit disappointing. One would, however, expect the question of language to have gained in importance, insofar as the reciprocal opening of man and the world continues to take place within language. Must we make do with allusions and fragments? Or should we try to read between the lines and develop our own hermeneutical "subtleties"?

I propose to choose here the same method as in my essay on Patočka's phenomenology of language: rather than examining the passages where Patočka explicitly deals with language, I shall assume that he is speaking of language whenever he speaks of phenomenon, embodiment, or world. Through the phenomena given in the opening of the world, the world itself speaks, calls out, addresses itself to us. In Patočka's phenomenological studies, this theme is connected with the reflection on space and spatiality as experienced in the lived body, since our being so addressed *by* the world is inseparable from the process of sinking roots and finding our bearings in the world according to reference points which are not purely objective,

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[24] Jan Patočka, *Le monde naturel*..., op. cit., pp. 160–161; [*Die natürliche Welt*…, op. cit., p. 174].

[25] Ibid., pp. 161–162/175 (French/German).

[26] Cf. Jan Patočka, *Body, Community, Language, World*, ed. J. Dodd, transl. E. Kohák (Chicago and La Salle: Open Court, 1998).

but rather formulated according to a triangular structure corresponding to the personal pronouns *I-you-he[she, it]*, which draw a sort of transcendental genealogy of the pronominal system and form the original protostructure of the a-subjective community.[27]

In this phase, Patočka criticizes the subjectivist prejudice which leads Husserlian phenomenology to an idealist self-interpretation, i.e., to the pure and founding immanence which gives ontological privilege to consciousness. He aims at building the phenomenological method on new foundations, based no longer on the givenness of any particular phenomenon – be it pure consciousness itself – but rather on the phenomenality of all phenomena… Epoché, distinct from the reduction to the transcendental subject, becomes the step backwards with regard to Being which makes it possible to grasp Being in its manifestation. It should also be applied to subjectivity itself: instead of the reduction *to* consciousness, we are here face to face with a reduction *of* consciousness which opens us to manifestation as such.

Is it not language, as address, which makes this manifestation possible?

In his article "*La philosophie du langage de Jan Patočka*," Jan Šebestík underlines the importance of the short essay on Husserl's concept of intuition and the *Urphänomen* of language (quoted above in German translation, but which Šebestík read in the original 1968 Czech version.)[28] Language – *speculum intellectus* – is understood here in its transcendental dimension, as thought in empty intentions, unfolding on the plane of pure meanings, but calling on intuition in order to make the move from significance, from mere objectual intention, to different forms of fulfillment according to the different domains of intended objects.

This conception has two consequences: in the first place, it becomes necessary to reformulate the concept of intuition – freeing it from all sensualism and restoring the scope it once had with Descartes – as the realization of an objectual intention. In the second place, "the meaning of the object is now inseparable from the way in which we experience it. The sphere of meaning cannot be constituted as independent of subjectivity and world. The world becomes the universal correlate of intentional acts, and meaning is precisely the possibility of being integrated into a network of intentionalities."[29] And Šebestík quotes Patočka: "Phenomenology became concrete only by taking *linguistic meaning* as its starting-point."[30]

If Patočka's refoundation of phenomenology concerns both the category of meaning and that of the subject bearer of meaning, we should not forget the third and most important category, i.e., the epoché, which Patočka subjects to truly radical reformulation, distinguishing between reduction and epoché.

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[27] See also Marc Richir, "La communauté asubjective," in *Les Cahiers de Philosophie*, no. 11–12, 1990–1991, pp. 163–191.

[28] Jan Šebestík, "La philosophe du langage de Jan Patočka," in *Les Cahiers de Philosophie*, no. 11–12, 1990–1991, pp. 193–207; Jan Patočka, "Husserlův pojem názoru a prafenomén jazyka," in *Slovo a slovesnost*, no. 1, 1968, pp. 17–22.

[29] Jan Šebestík, op. cit., p. 206.

[30] Jan Patočka, "Husserlův pojem…," op. cit., p. 21.

His aim, as we have already stated, is to extend the epoché to the sphere of the ego thesis. Accomplishing this extension entails no doubt about the indubitable (the self-positing *cogito*), it is merely a matter of abstaining from automatic use of this thesis, a matter of "disconnecting" it, putting it "out of action". This "step backwards" suggests that the immediate givenness of the ego is a mere prejudice, and that self-experience, like the experience of things, requires an apriori that makes it possible. Thus conceived, the epoché does not give access to a being, to an appearance, but to appearing as such. Thanks to the universalization of the epoché, it becomes evident that "just as the self is the condition of possibility of the appearing of the mundane, so the world conceived as the original horizon (and not as the sum of all reality) represents the condition of possibility of the appearing of the self. Egoity is no doubt never perceived in and of itself, it is not immediately experienced in any way whatsoever, but solely as the organizational center of a universal structure of appearing which cannot be reduced to appearances in their singularity. This structure is what we call the world."[31]

Conceiving the phenomenological reduction in this way, we will not be very far from Ricœur, who, reflecting in 1967 on Merleau-Ponty, wrote that "the subject founded by reduction is nothing other than the beginning of signifying life, the simultaneous birth of the being-spoken of the world and the speaking being of man."[32]

We can then, perhaps, better understand some of Patočka's statements:

> we are in a position to carry out a revision of the former way of conceiving language which saw it as a no doubt well-founded phenomenon, resting nonetheless on a deeper, perceptive stratum. Husserl's theory of a hyletic matter receiving its form from intention is marred by latent sensualism; it must make way for a conception of language as indissolubly linked to the very roots of man, to his understanding of Being; to understand Being means to understand the "is," the "there is" that applies to all things, prior to any *logos prophorikos*, and constitutes the condition of the behavior we call perception and which is but one human mode of opening up among many others.[33]

This text becomes even more explicit if we compare it with the corresponding passage of Patočka's rough draft (manuscript 3G/11), published in the *Papiers phénoménologiques*: "Being, as it gives itself to be understood, is the non-objective, pre-reflective foundation of the distance with regard to things which founds language. Viewed in this way, language is by no means a higher level of life in the world among things, superior to perception which would be the rudimentary basis. Language, in the depths of its possibility, is the condition of possibility of human perception itself. The primary world-field is the field of language. Open behaviors, which are always a form of unconcealing, unfold on the basis of what we could call the original language. That means that, in man, the origin of language precedes

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[31] Jan Patočka, "*Épochè* et réduction," in *Qu'est-ce que la phénoménologie?*, ed. and transl. E. Abrams (Grenoble: Millon, 1988), p. 258.

[32] Paul Ricœur, op. cit., p. 261.

[33] Jan Patočka, "Postface," in *Le monde naturel…*, op. cit., p. 178–179; ["Nachwort des Autors zur französischen Ausgabe," in *Die natürliche Welt…*, op. cit., p. 280].

speech, that language cannot be understood solely on the level of speaking. This is the only way to avoid the latent sensualism noticeable in certain phenomenologists."[34] And one can also cite the terse assertion of manuscript 3G/16: "Language is not what we communicate, but what alone makes communication possible."[35]

To what extent is this idea of epoché and language of interest to our philosophy of translation? I believe it has the advantage of deeply linking translation to *the situation of man in the world*, i.e., – again in Patočka's words – to the "*order* to be followed by understanding"[36] in order to understand ourselves and our Being-with-others in the world.

In other words, what takes place in translation is not solely a meeting between two languages, two cultures, or two individuals. There is also a third party which is, in final analysis, the relationship with what grounds us and makes possible communication between us. We can call it, with Walter Benjamin, "pure language." It is indeed, basically, this pure language, language of the world or language of Being, which addresses us in the encounter with the other.[37]

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[34] Jan Patočka, "Postface de l'auteur à la traduction française du *Monde naturel comme problème philosophique* – notes et fragments," in *Papiers phénoménologiques,* ed. and transl. E. Abrams (Grenoble: Millon, 1995), pp. 140–141.

[35] Jan Patočka, "Qu'est-ce que l'apparition?" in ibid., p. 257.

[36] Jan Patočka, "Postface," op. cit., p. 180; ["Nachwort…," op. cit., p. 281].

[37] Postscript: I wish to thank Erika Abrams who, after I had written this essay, brought to my attention an important text by Patočka, "On the Problems of Philosophical Translations," written in 1968 for the Czech journal *Dialog* (the bulletin of the translators' section of the Czech Writers' Union), initially circulated as samizdat in 1977, and later published by Daniel Vojtěch and Ivan Chvatík in volume 5 of the Collected Works (*Sebrané spisy. Umění a čas II* [Praha: Oikoymenh, 2004], pp. 35–44). This article shows Patočka's penetrating ability to describe the work accomplished by thought in translating philosophy. The problem of philosophical translations consists first of all in reconstructing the original ideas in the native language of the philosopher, with all its richness and possibilities, before proceeding to the language of the translator: "One does not translate words, but thoughts." This article further convinces me of the possibility of developing, with Patočka, a philosophy of translation.

Destructed Meaning, Withheld World, Shattered "We"

On Violence from the Viewpoint of Jan Patočka's "A-subjective Phenomenology"

Michael Staudigl

The following considerations[1] relate to Jan Patočka's concept of an "a-subjective phenomenology." This concept will be used to explore the "phenomenon of violence" in a phenomenological manner. From a general viewpoint, the different faces of violence are extremely difficult to grasp phenomenologically. They represent a phenomenon with which historical phenomenology has indeed never dealt systematically.[2] Nonetheless, the project of a phenomenology of violence seems to me – bearing in mind the urgency of the matter – by no means inappropriate or excessive. Addressing oneself to this task against the backdrop of Patočka's conception of human existence, one must, of course, acknowledge that Patočka himself does not directly inquire into the "phenomenon of violence." I propose, however, to show that his conception offers the possibility of a genuinely phenomenological perspective from which insights can be gained into the nature and effects of violence. With its intent to shake "the everydayness of the fact-crunchers and routine

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Translated from the German by Alina Vaisfeld.

[1] This text is the revised version of a talk delivered on April 26, 2007 at the conference "Jan Patočka. 1907–1977" at the Charles University in Prague. A previous draft of this article was published in German in *Phänomenologische Forschungen*, 2007. This modified version is part of my research project "The Many Faces of Violence," underwritten by the Austrian Science Fund (FWF), Vienna. I would like to thank Michael D. Barber, James Dodd, Ludger Hagedorn, Sandra Lehmann and James Mensch for fruitful discussions on the topic.

[2] Cf. Michael Staudigl, "Gewalt als Thema und Problembestand in der Phänomenologie," in Harun Maye and Hans Rainer Sepp (eds.), *Phänomenologie und Gewalt* (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 2005), pp. 263–274. On the different forms of violence, cf. also my article "The Many Faces of Violence" in Ion Copoeru and Hans Rainer Sepp (eds.), *Phenomenology 2005*, Vol. IV: *Selected Essays from Northern Europe* (Bucharest: Zeta Books, 2007), pp. 661–692.

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minds,"[3] Patočka's thinking helps us to open just such a perspective. As concerns our particular inquiry, this means: Patočka's conception enables us to call into question the unquestioned presuppositions of those who always already know what is to be considered violence, what violence does and how it should be accounted for.

In this sense, our project is a simple *attempt* to thematize violence in the framework of Patočka's "a-subjective phenomenology," endeavoring to consider "the thing itself" from a perspective adequate to its phenomenological constitution, i.e., to locate it in the horizon that will let this appear as such. While applying Patočka's conception, we shall be seeking at the same time to attest the fecundity of his phenomenological approach. This goes hand in hand with an authentic understanding of phenomenology, eschewing both orthodox methodical directives and definitive stances, an attitude which could perhaps be further defined as an attempt to follow unconditionally, down to the smallest detail, the "*seeking* path"[4] which Patočka proposed, in his reflections on the history of philosophy, as paradigm for a spiritual renewal of modern European "supercivilization" in crisis.

My reflection will proceed in three stages. First of all, I shall attempt to ascertain under what conditions violence can in general become a theme for phenomenology, inquiring into the nature of an eventual revision of phenomenology in this sense and pointing out the change of direction prepared, not only in recent phenomenology, but already in Patočka's work. Secondly, I shall outline the central dimensions of violence, taking as my guideline the thesis that all violence violates. In the third and concluding section, I shall endeavor to connect Patočka's theory of the movement of human existence with this thesis. My aim will be to provide an insight into violence's encompassing power to violate, which will at the same time furnish an explanation of the difficulties we encounter in trying to elude its logic.

1 Violence as a Boundary Phenomenon and the Necessity of a Revision of Phenomenology

Seeking to approach the question of violence from a phenomenological perspective, one must first inquire whether an analytic approach based on reduction and self-reflection can adequately handle the phenomenon. It seems all too clear that violence consists in something that is, on the contrary, in danger of vanishing into thin air through such an approach: its facticity. We speak thus generally of violence in cases where something – most often an act – is defined *as violence* in the framework of a given order. To put it differently, violence is not a *factum brutum*, there are no "basic acts" of violence. On the contrary, it is, or perhaps one should say its

[3] Jan Patočka, *Heretical Essays in the Philosophy of History*, ed. J. Dodd, transl. E. Kohák (Chicago and La Salle: Open Court, 1996), p. 136.

[4] Jan Patočka, "Was ist Phänomenologie?" in *Die Bewegung der menschlichen Existenz. Phänomenologische Schriften II*, ed. K. Nellen, J. Němec and I. Srubar (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1990), p. 452.

many "faces" are, a matter of meaningfully overdetermined and symbolically codified phenomena. More precisely: phenomena which – to use Merleau-Ponty's words – only attain their specific, i.e., violent, meaning within the horizon of their "symbolical institution."[5] Insofar as something is *held to be* violence, the meaningful articulation or linguistic determination of the concerned experience is constitutive of the phenomenon: experience is here made to utter a sense which – to modify Husserl's well-known dictum – can never *be its own*, as it is never fully able to *make it its own*. Hence, violence implicates experience in a conflict with itself, dooming to failure all attempts to totally appropriate it.[6] This being the case, the idea of a reflective appropriation of this experience, of its integration into an unbroken complex of meaning, appears as an activist illusion, calling to mind Hegel's idea that tears could wash sorrow out of the soul with no lasting remainder,[7] and referring to an ultimately impersonal concept of reason, "which shows to the personal consciousness only its ruses."[8] Theses ruses must be eluded. To this end, reason must be taken as a task to be attended to personally, including and in particular in those cases where it ends up on the *edge* of sense in its attempts to utter the sense of an experience at odds or in conflict with itself. Violence presents us with this task, i.e., more precisely, as Hannah Arendt once put it, with the task of "thinking the unthinkable."[9]

Is an experience of this kind, in conflict with itself – conflict that may lead even to the collapse of the founded presumption of an existing world – phenomenologically thinkable? Husserl himself did not shrink back from doing so, though he failed, in my opinion, to draw the necessary consequences: in the concluding observation to his 1907 lecture, *Thing and Space*, he states that the world – in its existence and its thusness – is an irrational fact, so that, supposing all motivational nexuses broke down, one would have to admit the possibility of a "phenomenological maelstrom

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[5] I take this concept from Merleau-Ponty, who uses it to describe and analyze the field of culture as the open horizon of our situated and historic knowledge. In one of his lectures, Merleau-Ponty defines institutions as "those events in experience which endow it with durable dimensions, in relation to which a whole series of other experiences will acquire meaning, will form an intelligible series or a history – or again those events which sediment in me a meaning, not just as survival or residue, but as the invitation to sequel, the necessity of a future." (Maurice Merleau-Ponty, "Institution in Personal and Public History," in *In Praise of Philosophy and Other Essays*, transl. J. Wild, J. Edie and J. O'Neill [Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 1988], pp. 108–109.)

[6] To my mind, this can be demonstrated as concerns both suffered and inflicted violence. Levinas has powerfully described it as applying also to *ethically forbidden violence*.

[7] Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Enzyklopädie der philosophischen Wissenschaften. Dritter Teil: Die Philosophie des Geistes* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1986), p. 115 (§ 401, Supplement).

[8] Emmanuel Levinas, *Totality and Infinity: An Essay on Exteriority*, transl. A. Lingis (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1969), p. 298.

[9] Hannah Arendt, *On Violence* (New York: Harcourt Brace and Company, 1970), p. 8; in this regard, see also Levinas' reflections on the "evil" of the "useless suffering" of the other (Emmanuel Levinas, "Useless Suffering," in *Entre Nous: On Thinking-of-the-Other*, transl. M. B. Smith and B. Harshav [New York: Columbia University Press, 1998], pp. 91–101).

as unique and ultimate Being," even of "a maelstrom so meaningless that there would be no I and no Thou."[10] This insight seems radical and points to the limits of his phenomenology. However, Husserl immediately eludes its radicality, restraining the insight, which emerges in the framework of a phenomenological analysis of the perception of thing-constitution, through recourse to the power of reason immanent to perception. *A priori*, the rational possibility of strict motivational nexuses, which – so to speak – "proclaim" their Being, is not given. *A posteriori*, the course of experience secures experience, as he puts it, its "force that grounds Being," which overcomes all "counterforces,"[11] however strong they may be.

What Husserl does not consider in this context, and what is also more or less absent from his later reflections, leading much further, on "modalization" in the framework of a "genetic phenomenology,"[12] is the *intersubjective* infrastructure and genesis of the motivational nexuses which ground Being. Apart from his difficulties in thinking phenomena of the new and surprising, Husserl's phenomenology also leaves much to be desired as concerns the possibility of bringing into sight the contingent objections against the "power of reason" which seem uncontestedly to gain ground in the realm of experience. Bearing in mind these difficulties, the fundamental problem can be summed up as follows: in speaking of "strict motivational nexuses," Husserl's constitutional analysis has in view the objectivity of the world, yet neglects its bodily and intersubjective foundation as well as its "symbolic institution," always at work behind the back of the ego. Precisely these relations are, however – when one thinks of the traumatic effects of suffered violence – fragile and vulnerable, and by no means rooted in a "harmony"[13] to be presupposed as the universal horizon of all experience. As the late Husserl once put it, our formation of meaning is founded in an "intersubjective life of world-consciousness," which provides the ground for our "accomplishment of world-validity."[14] The *Urdoxa* is, then, to venture a perhaps problematic formulation, the *doxa of the other* – possible only in the thereby resulting fragility. Cut off from what Marc Richir calls "the phenomenological *apeiron*,"[15] the institutions of meaning, in the interval of which our world-experiencing life unfolds, are fragile and abyssal.

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[10] Edmund Husserl, *Thing and Space: Lectures of 1907*, ed. and transl. R. Rojcewicz. (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1997), Collected Works VII, pp. 250 ff.; cf. also *Zur Phänomenologie der Intersubjektivität. Texte aus dem Nachlaß. Dritter Teil: 1929–1935*, ed. I. Kern (Den Haag: Martinus Nijhoff, 1973), Husserliana XV, p. 151.

[11] Edmund Husserl, *Thing and Space*…, op. cit., p. 251.

[12] Cf. Edmund Husserl, *Analyses concerning Passive and Active Synthesis. Lectures on Transcendental Logic*, ed. R. Bernet, transl. A. Steinbock (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 2001), pp. 63–103.

[13] Edmund Husserl, *Zur Phänomenologie der Intersubjektivität. Dritter Teil*, op. cit., p. 156.

[14] Edmund Husserl, *Die Krisis der europäischen Wissenschaften und die transzendentale Phänomenologie. Ergänzungsband. Texte aus dem Nachlaß 1934–1937*, ed. R. N. Smid (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1993), Husserliana XXIX, pp. 192, 247, 76.

[15] Marc Richir, *Méditations phénoménologiques* (Grenoble: Millon, 1992), p. 58: "Le sublime phénoménologique – c'est-à-dire la rencontre phénoménologique … de l'*apeiron* ou de l'illimité phénoménologiques…"

In order to trace the fragility of subjective meaning-formation, László Tengelyi has recently suggested – embracing Hegel's well-known phrase – "to think lived-experiencing [*Erlebnis*] as experience [*Erfahrung*]."[16] Citing contemporary French phenomenology, he shows that the *expression*, which is an irreducible moment of experience [*Erfahrung*], brings into play excesses of meaning that cannot be attributed to the constitutional achievements of the ego. He speaks here of a "noematic excess" that cannot be reduced to meaning-bestowing noeses,[17] and opposes, against this background, a "diacritical method" to a reflective eidetics of the lived-experience which takes place in the framework of a reduction to egology.[18] The former serves to measure the "abyssality of meaning"[19] which makes itself felt in experience, without prematurely bridging it through reference to a conception of teleology borrowed from perception. The fact is that the universal scope of Husserl's rational teleology appears as doubtful, at the very least, in those cases where pathos and affectivity shake the ego's apodictic acceptance of Being. Rather, the "broken certainty," of which Husserl speaks correspondingly in his *Analyses concerning Passive Synthesis*, reveals its full importance when seen from this perspective: face to face with an *affective meaning-bestowal from without*, the ego is no longer in a position to assert itself as the constituting instance capable of achieving the unity of its experiential life. On the contrary, it experiences itself, as Levinas puts it, in the *accusative*, as the one "who is spoken to," as "patient," or even – in Jean-Luc Marion's formulation, reminiscent of Patočka – as addressee (*destinataire*) of appearing, as given over (*adonné*) to it.[20] In its experience, the demands of the other and anonymous processes of meaning-formation make themselves felt; the ego must respond to them, though it disposes of no answers a priori. The analogous mentioning of "counter-experiences" (*Gegen-Erfahrungen*), "meaning-events" (*Sinnereignissen*), or "affections"

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[16] Cf. László Tengelyi, "Vom Erlebnis zur Erfahrung. Phänomenologie im Umbruch," in Wolfgang Hogrebe (ed.), *Grenzen und Grenzüberschreitungen. XIX. Deutscher Kongreß für Philosophie* (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 2004), pp. 788–800.

[17] Cf. Merleau-Ponty's insight into the corporeal in-between realm of a diacritical process of meaning-formation in the linguistic sphere, an intentionality that is "more ancient than the intentionality of human *acts*" (Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Signs*, transl. R. McCleary [Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 1964], p. 165). Levinas' notions of the "demise of vision" and of language as the "incessant surpassing of the *Sinngebung* by signification" (Emmanuel Levinas, *Totality and Infinity*…, op. cit., p. 296) corroborate this insight, as well as Henry's and Marion's investigation of the "autonomy of givenness."

[18] Cf. László Tengelyi, *The Wild Region in Life-History*, transl. G. Kállay (Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 2004), pp. 67–68, 89.

[19] Cf. (already) Bernhard Waldenfels, *In den Netzen der Lebenswelt* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1985), p. 15.

[20] Jean-Luc Marion, *Being Given. Towards a Phenomenology of Givenness*, transl. J. L. Kosky (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2002), Book V, pp. 248 ff. (where he speaks of "the gifted [*l'adonné*]"), and *In Excess. Studies of Saturated Phenomena*, transl. R. Horner and V. Berraud (New York: Fordham University Press, 2004), p. 26: "The *I* is made the clerk, the recipient, or the patient of this process."

in the literal sense (*Widerfahrnissen*), to name but a few examples, necessitates a "revision" (*refonte*) – some even speak of a "reversal" (*renversement*) – of phenomenology. Such a "reversal" should make it possible to do justice to the "field of complete experience," which – in its dynamics, opacity, and obstinacy – persistently undermines the pretensions of the constituting consciousness.

However, insights suggesting a revision of Husserl's subjectivism and the transcendental-phenomenological idealism which follows from it are not be found only in later-day phenomenology. Recent and contemporary phenomenology does indeed inquire into what comes "after the subject." The question is raised of how to think the subject-relatedness of experiential life, which can no longer be thought along the guidelines of the reflective self-ascertainment of the "pure inwardness" of intentional consciousness. However, holding all too fast to Heidegger's idea of a "phenomenology of the inapparent," recent phenomenology finds itself entangled in a different problem, inasmuch as it considers the deposition of the subject from the perspective of an *absolute superiority*, be it of the "total other" (Levinas), the "unconditional gift" (Marion), or "pure life" (Henry). These positions then lose sight of the givenness of the world that constitutes the unthematic horizon of such experiences as well, i.e., the problem of the "natural world." Dominique Janicaud's critique of the so-called "theological turn" of phenomenology and his advocacy of an empirically "sobered phenomenology" have been widely publicized.[21] It is, however, often overlooked that his criticism does not so much apply to the thematic orientation shared by the proponents of this turn as insist on their risk of failure to accompany their attempts at going beyond the limit of the immediately given with an adequate methodological reflection on the *possibility* of such a transgression.

Though his voice has as of yet been granted very little importance in these discussions, Jan Patočka would have been an important advocate of this critique and defender of the program that goes with it. His "a-subjective phenomenology" raises the issue of the subject whose status, since Husserl, has been wavering between reflective-theoretical underdetermination and transcendental overdetermination. Patočka's thinking proposes to correct this difficulty by going back to the central motifs of Heidegger's analysis of Dasein. On the other hand, he adamantly refuses to approve or condone the late Heidegger's anti-intellectualism and anti-humanism which, when all is said and done, seem to reflect nothing more than a "sheepish materialism,"[22] as Levinas puts it. The definition of the world as an interplay of possibilities leads Patočka, on the contrary, to place the *responsibility* of the being who moves in the phenomenal field and experiences himself as addressed by the

[21] Dominique Janicaud, "The Theological Turn of French Phenomenology," in D. Janicaud et al. (eds.), *Phenomenology and the "Theological Turn": The French Debate*, transl. B. G. Prusak (New York: Fordham University Press, 2000), pp.16–103.

[22] Emmanuel Levinas, *Totality and Infinity*…, op. cit., p. 299 (translation modified); on the abovementioned "anti-intellectualism," cf. Emmanuel Levinas, *Otherwise than Being or Beyond Essence*, transl. A. Lingis (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1981), p. 184.

"lines of force"[23] of appearance at the very center of his thought, which is thus a thinking of man's "finite freedom." In this perspective, to a certain extent, he stands the idealism of Husserl's transcendental phenomenology on its head. Pointing to a "non-subjective meaning of perception,"[24] from which he deduces the "primacy of self-showing" materialized as "world-apriori," Patočka's theory of "appearing as such" leads consequently to an insight into the "transcendence of the world."[25] He insists, therefore, with Merleau-Ponty, on the irreducible originarity of the subject-related modes of appearing, which he holds to be Husserl's original discovery. However, their bodily givenness – such is his critique – should not be referred back to a "subjective foundation of appearing."[26] On the contrary, they should be taken as indicative of the field-character of appearing itself. Referring them back nonetheless to another foundation – Husserl's "absolute ground of Being" – would mean committing "transcendental subreption," i.e., in Marc Richir's words, an "inadmissible transferal of the evidence of the phenomenological sphere to the alleged subjective sphere, which becomes coexistent solely in and through this transferal."[27]

Avoiding this temptation of reduction, Patočka is brought to recognize, with Merleau-Ponty, "as the fundamental philosophic problem[,] this *presumption* on reason's part." The discovery of the autonomy of the phenomenal field, the appearance of which can, therefore, not be understood as the "external unfolding of a pre-existing reason,"[28] implies the necessarily "creative," or more precisely "practical character" of reflection. Insofar as the idea of total adequacy between that which reflects and that which is reflected on is abandoned, it becomes apparent that reflection cannot circumvent the opacity of facts, but must confront it and *deal with it practically*. This means, however, that reflection should not be thought through

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[23] Jan Patočka, "Epoché und Reduktion in den 'Fünf Vorlesungen,'" in *Vom Erscheinen als solchem. Texte aus dem Nachlaß*, ed. H. Blaschek-Hahn and K. Novotný (Freiburg and München: Alber, 2000), Text V, p. 124. The same phrase can be found in Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, transl. C. Smith (London and New York: Routledge, 1962), p. 357. In relation to the "structure of exigency in the world," Sartre refers to its character as appeal. (Jean-Paul Sartre, *Being and Nothingness: An Essay in Phenomenological Ontology*, transl. H. E. Barnes [New York: Washington Square Press, 2001], p. 36.)

[24] Jan Patočka, "Weltganzes und Menschenwelt. Bemerkungen zu einem zeitgenössischen kosmologischen Ansatz," in *Die Bewegung der menschlichen Existenz*…, op. cit., p. 259.

[25] For a development of this thought in Patočka, see Karel Novotný, "Die Transzendentalität der Welt: Epoché und Reduktion bei Jan Patočka," in Rolf Kühn and Michael Staudigl (eds.), *Epoché und Reduktion* (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 2003), pp. 153–175. On the "world-apriori," see Jan Patočka, "Epoché und Reduktion," in *Die Bewegung der menschlichen Existenz*…, op. cit., pp. 421–422, and *Vom Erscheinen*…, op. cit., Text VII: "Von der Epoché als Ausschaltung der These des Seienden zur Epoché des Seins – zum Sein als an sich haltend," esp. pp. 191 ff.

[26] Cf. Jan Patočka, "Der Subjektivismus der Husserlschen und die Möglichkeit einer 'asubjektiven' Phänomenologie," in *Die Bewegung der menschlichen Existenz*…, op. cit., pp. 276 ff.

[27] Marc Richir, "Möglichkeit und Notwendigkeit einer asubjektiven Phänomenologie," in Matthias Gatzemeier (ed.), *Jan Patočka, Ästhetik – Phänomenologie – Pädagogik – Geschichts- und Politiktheorie* (Aachen: Alano-Verlag, 1994), p. 70.

[28] Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, op. cit., pp. 56, 54.

falling back on a universal reason but, on the contrary, solely in *reaching out* to a field of experience, which thereby attains transcendental meaning precisely in its unclosable perspectivity and limitation. Patočka is a convinced and vehement advocate of this way of thinking the non-objectivizable horizonality of the world, its non-objectifiable openness, which discloses our possibilities and, ultimately, our freedom to act in it with others.

Such is, in brief, the framework in which Patočka's a-subjective phenomenology becomes relevant for our topic. In the following, I will show how the thesis of the "transcendentality of the world," conceptualizing through universalization of the epoché the insight into the autonomy of the appearance-field, offers an approach to the phenomenon of violence.

2 Dimensions of Violence

The phenomenological perspective does not focus on the question of whether violence is or is not legitimate. The inquiry into the legitimacy of violence presupposes an order, normatively decreeing what is or is not just or justified. Phenomenology refrains from this way of approaching the phenomenon, taking a presumptively universal viewpoint. With good reason, for the question of the legitimacy of violence gets all too easily entangled, under these circumstances, with the problem of a justification of violence, understood and posited as "counter-violence." Nothing, however, would seem more dangerous than such self-righteousness of reason, misusing its presumption of universality in order to discredit, stigmatize, and ultimately violently exclude or assimilate the other.

The perspective which phenomenology opens, as opposed to this logic, is entirely different, characterized by what, in continuation of Husserl, could be described as an "ethical epoché."[29] It is a perspective which reveals the oppressiveness at work in the founding act of every order, as well as in the practices of its maintaining. Of course, this by no means calls into question the fact, frequently emphasized by Foucault, Merleau-Ponty and Waldenfels, "that order *exists*" (*daß* es *Ordnung* gibt).[30] We are merely forcefully reminded of the irreducible *contingency* of all order, i.e., the fact that its establishing is "beyond good and evil." If this epoché is taken seriously, the central question claiming our attention becomes that of what violence *does* and *how* it goes about it, and no longer the question of its causes and eventual justifiability. In this respect, our thesis – which can invoke an

[29] Cf. Edmund Husserl, *Erste Philosophie (1923/24). Zweiter Teil: Theorie der phänomenologischen Reduktion*, ed. R. Boehm (Den Haag: Martinus Nijhoff, 1959), Husserliana VIII, p. 319. To follow up on this train of thought, see also Bernhard Waldenfels, *Schattenrisse der Moral* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2006), pp. 47–48.

[30] Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things. An Archaeology of the Human Sciences* (London and New York: Routledge, 1970), p. xx; Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, op. cit., pp. xxii, 70; cf. in particular Bernhard Waldenfels, *Der Stachel des Fremden* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1990), pp. 112–113.

etymological root of the word – is that violence *violates*.[31] It violates, and it does so – hence its amorphous essence – in manifold ways.

To begin with, violence violates the integrity of the self. This integrity has many faces. Violence can concern both corporeal and categorial integrity, as well as the narrative identity of the subject, founded therein. Against this background, one can define violence, with Bernhard Waldenfels, as a *violation of the claims* raised by a being capable of relating with itself.[32] These claims are not necessarily normatively secured, legally warranted or actively raised. On the contrary, the subject raises already, or rather embodies claims prior to their articulation in the framework of a common order, i.e., on a pre-linguistic, pre-normative and pre-legal level. From a phenomenological viewpoint, the claims violated here are therefore claims on *meaning*. To specify our initial definition, what violating violence destroys is *meaning*. But this specification is far from sufficient. It leaves the phenomenon still underdetermined. The point should be considered in greater detail, for violence cannot simply be defined as that which destroys meaning – that is, after all, something that can also be caused by natural events, which we then characterize metaphorically as violence. Violence, on the other hand, typically attacks a more fundamental level, namely, the level of our inner, pre-intentional socialization. Violence attacks and, eventually, destroys our intersubjectively founded *possibilities to elicit a meaning from the world*. For this reason violence affects, not only the structures of meaning within which the subject habitually moves, but also, correlatively, the *ways* in which it understands itself and makes sense of the world. It affects, first and foremost, our corporeal existence as such, further, our bodily founded abilities to actualize and modify sedimented structures of meaning, and finally the habitual self-apperception of a being that conceives of itself as the history of the possibilities intersubjectively open to it.

To put it differently, one could also say that violence, in its manifold modes, affects what Husserl calls the primordial "I can"[33] – what enables us, not only to optimize the appearance series, so as to bring the given to evident givenness, but moreover to transcend any given situation by objectifying, thematizing as *possibilities*, and realizing the horizonal nexuses of reference which go to make it up. The most fundamental form of our "I can" is, as Husserl also says, our "corporeal functioning," our "functioning corporeal existence,"[34] which is the target of *physical violence*. Other forms of violence – for instance, *mental or linguistic violence* – are aimed

[31] Here, we are following Pascal Delhom's reflections; see his "Verletzungen" in Mihran Dabag et al. (eds.), *Gewalt. Strukturen, Formen, Repräsentationen* (München: Fink, 2000), pp. 279 ff.

[32] Bernhard Waldenfels, *Der Stachel*…, op. cit., p. 115.

[33] Husserl's most crucial reflections in this respect can doubtless be found in his *Ideas Pertaining to a Pure Phenomenology and to a Phenomenological Philosophy. Second Book: Studies in the Phenomenology of Constitution*, transl. R. Rojcewicz and A. Schuwer (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1989), pp. 151–169.

[34] Edmund Husserl, *Zur Phänomenologie der Intersubjektivität. Dritter Teil*, op. cit., p. 507; cf. also MS B III 2, 9b (1931), where Husserl refers to the "functioning of the living body," corresponding with "my functioning act- and affectivity."

against higher-level forms of the "I can." They affect correlatively our "habitual body" which, in the form of habitus and language, gives access to various worlds of meaning and other "special worlds," such as, e.g., culture, religion, or politics, beyond the everyday world of perception and pragmatic action. The forms of *social or cultural violence* leveled against these formations are aimed, correspondingly, against the collective idealizations of the "I can" founded in such a tradition of meaning-formation and meaning-sedimentation. These idealizations, which guide our action, are pre-given in the form of socially derived knowledge, as schemata of perception and interpretation of the life-world passed on through tradition. To speak with Schütz, these forms of violence thus concern the life-worldly idealizations of the "I can do it again" and the "and so forth and so on," which embody the generative infrastructure of our life-worldly inventory of knowledge in the shape of pre-given structures of meaning. Keeping in mind this correlation between the "I can" and its intersubjective, life-worldly foundation, the meaningful structure of our life-world, conceived of as a special world, can be understood as an encompassing concretization of our bodily "I can." This means, however, that all forms of violence on all other levels – in particular the ultimately founding level of "functioning corporeity" – have a retroactive effect on our embodiment.

Returning now to Patočka, we can say that he assumes, with Heidegger, that meaning cannot be reduced to a constitutional achievement of the ego, but rather that it is grounded in our *Being-in-the-world*. In other words, the world's meaningfulness is grounded in the projections which Dasein projects and realizes for the sake of its Being. The disclosure of the world takes place under a pragmatic, rather than a theoretical motive. Like Merleau-Ponty and Schütz, Patočka is, however, critical of how this starting-point (the structure of care) brings Heidegger to neglect, to a large extent, the intersubjective and corporeal, i.e., *intercorporeal* foundation of this theme itself, and of his reinterpretation of the appearance-field (the phenomenological sphere of the *sum*) as the product of a free projection.[35] Patočka seeks to avoid these weak points of Heidegger's approach, ascribable essentially to his too exclusive interpretation of the authenticity-inauthenticity relation. He is aiming at a phenomenological description of the human being in the "practice of the accomplishment of his possibilities … in which alone his access to the understanding of Being can open up." As Ilja Srubar further notes, the emphasis of his thinking shifts, with this objective, from fundamental ontology to a "phenomenology of the historical life-world."[36] Patočka understands the life-world as the initially and most often unthematic horizon of reference, which is originally opened up and concretized through the practical enactment and co-enactment of one's own and others'

[35] See, for example, Jan Patočka, "The 'Natural' World and Phenomenology," in *Philosophy and Selected Writings*, ed. and transl. E. Kohák (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1989), pp. 270–271, and "Was ist Existenz?" in *Die Bewegung der menschlichen Existenz*…, op. cit., p. 248; on the question of the reinterpretation of the appearance-field, see Jan Patočka, *Vom Erscheinen*…, op. cit., Text III: "Leib, Möglichkeiten, Welt, Erscheinungsfeld," pp. 87 ff.

[36] Ilja Srubar, "Ist Phänomenologie aktuell? Zur praktischen Phänomenologie Jan Patočkas," in *Phänomenologische Forschungen*, no. 30 (Freiburg and München: Alber, 1996), p. 176.

possibilities. What seems decisive here is that Patočka, in hearkening back to the horizonal reference-whole of the life-world, does not, unlike Husserl, put its *infinitude* in the forefront, thereby setting the objectifying optimization tendency of our intentional life as its exclusive framework of determination. He insists rather, along with Heidegger, on the fundamental *finitude* of the world-horizon.[37] The potential unclosability of this horizon, which appears in Husserl's constitutional analysis, in the framework of the intentional self-explication of the ego, is thus overridden by its affectively conditioned character of withdrawal, in the light of which the world pre-intentionally discloses itself to us.[38]

This dynamic – i.e., ultimately historical – connection between self, other, meaning, and world, grounded in our bodily passivity, is interpreted by Patočka as an "existential interweave of relations." Patočka further determines this interweave by pointing out its *character as movement*, through which the Being of life in the world becomes manifest. This insight is summed up in his theory of "the movement of human existence." Understanding existence as *a meaningful process of bodily co-movement*, liable to take part in the "life of things and of the world" which carries it, renders possible a radical phenomenological analysis of interpersonal violence, which really goes to the root of this phenomenon. To be more precise, it is in the context of his discussion of the possibility of "loss of meaning" that Patočka touches on the issue that is of such paramount importance to us:

> Because the meaning of things is inseparable from our openness for things and for their significance, we can say that wherever this openness is absent the world cannot speak to us and, as a result, human life as dwelling in the world is not possible. It follows further that human life is not possible without either a naive or a critically acquired confidence in an absolute meaning, a global meaning of the totality of what is, of life and of events. Where human life is confronted with absolute meaninglessness it can only surrender and give itself up. V. Mrštík [who took his own life] therefore speaks of "the dreadful immobility of suicides." The antinomy of meaning and meaninglessness, of meaning and Being, seems so to suggest that life is only possible thanks to the perennial illusion of total meaning, which certain experiences show precisely to be an illusion.[39]

These considerations, which bring to the fore with great clarity the fragility of the correlation unfolding between the meaningful structures of our life-world and the movement of our existence, will guide us in the concluding chapter of our reflection. This correlation is what is at stake, in different ways, in the various forms of violence which breach and may even shatter it. Against this background, we begin to realize that we are condemned to immobility not only by direct,

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[37] For Patočka's "commitment to finitude," cf. Jan Patočka, "The 'Natural' World…," op. cit., pp. 267–268.

[38] On Husserl's questionable reinterpretation of pre-intentional world-openness as an intentional relation, which might be described in terms of his theory of constitution, cf. Klaus Held, "Die Endlichkeit der Welt. Phänomenologie im Übergang von Husserl zu Heidegger," in Beate Niemeyer (ed.), *Philosophie der Endlichkeit* (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 1992), pp. 137–138.

[39] Jan Patočka, *Heretical Essays*…, op. cit., pp. 58–59.

physical violence, but also by subtler forms of violence, which stereotype, for example, our collective identities or cause our cultural life-worlds to become ossified. Caught up in such situations, we find ourselves prisoners of a process of ongoing desensibilization to the consequences of our own actions and the suffering of others. We thus easily fall victims to schemata of interpretation and re-action that are themselves prone to violence. The vicious circle of violence and seemingly legitimate "counter-violence" is, therefore, not something we would have to deconstruct on the basis of any kind of hegemonic moral ascription, or against the hypothetical horizon of a communicative rationality setting the conditions for its implementation. Rather, in order to understand how violence becomes *possible* even vis-à-vis the fundamental ethical appeal of the "face" of the other (Levinas), we should reclaim the dimension of our forgotten and politically exploitable intercorporeal sensibility to the vulnerability of others which unfolds in the *co-movement* of our existence.

3 Violence as Damaged Movement

If order to put the question of what is *fundamentally* at stake in the issue of violence in the horizon of Patočka's conception of life-movement, we must first review the essential elements of this concept. Patočka's basic insight implies that the movement of human existence is far from being a mere process *in* the world. Rather, he understands it as a self-relational and world-opening event. He was led to this insight by his study of the "natural world," the historical movedness of which he comprehends in his later thinking as anchored in the "movement of a world-being"[40] – a being which not only possesses the world, but also understands it in different ways. In other words, Patočka understands the acting human being as part of the encompassing "world-drama,"[41] the many-layered dynamic of which Heidegger pushes into the background in order better to bring out the fundamental-ontologically eminent possibility of an "authentic potentiality-for-Being." Though his starting-point is, without a doubt, the analysis of Dasein, Patočka turns against Heidegger at the point where Heidegger pits the revealing of the event of Being against the unconditional description of the concrete existential fabric of relations within which alone a comprehensive phenomenology of human life can be articulated. He turns against Heidegger on seeing Heidegger's critique of Husserl's subjectivism slip into the "irrationalism of a pre-existing Being," into a movement "lacking all human closure, all practical value," a process which thus "leaves entirely aside what man is and can be to man."[42]

[40] Jan Patočka, "The 'Natural' World…," op. cit., p. 269.

[41] Jan Patočka, "Der Raum und seine Problematik," in *Die Bewegung der menschlichen Existenz*…, op. cit., p. 115.

[42] Jan Patočka, "The 'Natural' World…," op. cit., p. 271.

Uncovering the "phenomenal field" as the "space" of the encounter between man, fellow man, and being, Patočka aims at something more encompassing. His reflections are directed toward the dynamically enacted unity of this field, disclosed in the *co-movements* of human existence and founded in the *self-movedness of lived corporeity*. Returning to this field, which shows us a world manifesting itself in the movement of understanding, while at the same time itself carrying this movement in its unclosable non-objectivity, Patočka describes the *movement* of human existence. This movement thus becomes the object of a phenomenology of human life, inquiring into the manifoldness of its accomplishments. Though Patočka speaks here of accomplishments, these should be understood in the light of the *possibilities*, never projected in advance, through the realization or the refusal of which existence relates to itself and only thus enacts its own unity along with the unity of the things it encounters and the world which discloses itself in the process.[43]

With an eye honed for the life-world as a dynamic field of possibilities, above which man cannot raise himself through understanding, Patočka then explains human existence as the accomplishment of a threefold movement, of a world-opening character, which his reflection brings into correlation with life's fundamental modes of temporalization.[44] The first mode of this movement consists in a past-related, instinctive-affective moment of "anchoring" or "sinking roots." In this movement, man, originally accepted by the other, takes possession of himself, his capacities and the world, in such a way as to feel at home in it. The world, articulated by this movement along the lines of near and far, home and abroad, love and hatred, becomes a universal orientation space. With Levinas, one could call the affective center of this space the "dwelling,"[45] i.e., the place where subject and world penetrate each other "under cover and in the shadow of what is always already found."[46] The second mode, residing in the development and mastering of our capacities (and, thereby, of the world and the others), rendered possible by the moment of anchoring, in the horizon of our need-conditioned self-sustenance, is termed by Patočka "self-extension," "reproduction," or even "insertion in the nexus of things." This mode is related to the present and concerns the necessity of our "confrontation with things and other human beings in their coming to terms with things."[47]

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[43] Cf. Jan Patočka, "Nachwort des Autors zur tschechischen Neuausgabe (1970)," in *Die natürliche Welt als philosophisches Problem. Phänomenologische Schriften I*, ed. K. Nellen and J. Němec, transl. E. and R. Melville (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1990), p. 243.

[44] The essential components of Patočka's conception appear for the first time in an essay originally published in Czech in 1965. See Jan Patočka, "Zur Vorgeschichte von der Wissenschaft der Bewegung: Welt, Erde, Himmel und die Bewegung des menschlichen Lebens," in *Die Bewegung der menschlichen Existenz*…, op. cit., pp. 132–143; or "Notes sur la préhistoire de la science du mouvement: le monde, la terre, le ciel et le mouvement de la vie humaine," in *Le monde naturel et le mouvement de l'existence humaine*, ed. and transl. E. Abrams (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1988), pp. 3–12.

[45] Cf. Emmanuel Levinas, *Totality and Infinity*…, op. cit., pp. 152–168.

[46] Jan Patočka, "Was ist Existenz?" op. cit., p. 256.

[47] Ibid.

The essential traits of this movement are the fragmentation of life, identification with a series of roles, and the reshaping of things. It is an essentially instrumental understanding of the world which goes hand in hand with an absorption of bodily-needy existence in the world, i.e., a reification of man, leading eventually to his alienation,[48] a reification in which the original "with-one-another" tends to live itself out in the mode of "one-against-another." Finally, Patočka describes the third mode of life-movement, the movement of "breakthrough," which is only possible on the basis of the two above-mentioned modes. This movement breaks through the "dispersion, the 'fall' into things and their domination,"[49] resulting from the movement of insertion, and which ultimately obfuscates our finitude. Insofar as this movement toward a beyond leaves behind the fixed coordinates of our anchoring, we experience the loss of our previous ascriptions of meaning and self-images. This entails a turn outwards, which breaks through the circle of self-forgetfulness, but does not simply close in a new image of the self. As an insight, not into being, but into that which "is essentially different from what is and which enables all encounter [sc., with being], the possibility *par excellence*, the world, [i.e.,] *Being as a nexus of meaning and key to all understanding* [my emphasis],"[50] this movement implies a radical self-surrender. Patočka therefore describes this movement as "self-attainment through self-abandonment."[51] Life, in fact, finds itself only in order to give itself away, i.e., to make possible the freedom of others.[52] Its task consists in "creating a community united in commitment, which gives itself up in devoted service and transcends the individuals,"[53] as well as the power of reification which seemed to seal their separation.

In the framework of a reflection on interpersonal violence, Sartre says in one section of his *Notebooks for an Ethics* that violence is "the refusal of being born."[54] Patočka, for his part, proffers a central insight into the essence of human existence when he ascertains that "[o]ur birth is a movement,"[55] i.e., the holistic movement of our being-accepted, of our self-reproduction and of our possibility to overcome the thereby resulting self-alienation. Here, the connection I am aiming at comes clearly and distinctly to the fore. Violence, which we have defined as violating, does not only destroy lived meaning; it does not only violate our animate bodily "I can"; it does not only transform the higher-level nexuses of meaning by

[48] As Patočka further explains, we are dealing here, not with a possibility opposed to that of an "authentic potentiality-for-Being," but rather with a necessity founded in our bodily mode of existence.

[49] Jan Patočka, "Zur Vorgeschichte von der Wissenschaft der Bewegung…," op. cit., p. 140.

[50] Jan Patočka, "Was ist Existenz?" op. cit., p. 256.

[51] Ibid.

[52] Cf. Jan Patočka, "Zur Vorgeschichte von der Wissenschaft der Bewegung…," op. cit., p. 141.

[53] Jan Patočka, "Nachwort des Autors…," op. cit., p. 267.

[54] Jean-Paul Sartre, *Notebooks for an Ethics*, transl. D. Pellauer (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1992), p. 175.

[55] Jan Patočka, "The 'Natural' World…," op. cit., p. 269.

means of which we elicit meaning from our special cultural worlds. Rather, violence affects more profoundly – and this is my thesis – the movement of existence itself, i.e., the encompassing prefiguration on the basis of which alone the dynamic of the phenomenal field can unfold.

From this perspective, one can say that violence is not merely a phenomenon among others. On the contrary, it concerns the essence of phenomenality as such. Attacking the very roots of the movement of human existence – an existence, to be more precise, which can itself appear only on the basis of its unthematic relation with the pre-existing whole of the world-horizon – violence ruptures phenomenality. As already stated, violence, in violating and destroying meaning, does not only deprive us of space for action in the world, i.e., of the schemata of our self-reproduction and self-extension. More fundamentally, it ossifies the world it creates. In other words, violence objectifies the constitutive horizonality of the life-world and thereby robs its victims of the encompassing nexus of meaning in the openness of which alone man himself can appear. At the same time, the deprivation of the world is, paradoxically, a *withholding of its withholding*, that is to say, the objectification of its openness. The depersonalization that goes hand in hand with this objectification has further consequences. It tears the victim of violence from his original anchoring in the intersubjective connection. It does so not only by destroying "the unity of the meaningful situation,"[56] as Patočka puts it, in the context of which we understand each other. It attacks moreover the movement of anchoring itself. It does so by affecting our Being beyond the objectively shared meaning (affecting thus the ineffability of the individual) – i.e., by shattering the 'we' that constitutes itself in common relation to the non-objectivity of the world, in putting it into words. Put differently: violence *does not speak*, it is not a call – hence, he who inflicts violence acts, as Levinas writes, "alone."[57]

If our reading of Patočka's conception of movement opens a phenomenological perspective in which to analyze the phenomenon of interpersonal violence, this raises the question whether it would not also be possible to thematize other forms of violence from the same point of view. In this context, one can say that the subtlest violence seems to be the violence directed against the movement of breakthrough, against the possibility of transcending the "world of violence" itself, as Sartre once put it (in other words, of transcending toward a possible future which is not exhausted in the pre-outlined possibilities of the leveled present). What undermines this possibility is the *violence of the ideological*, amounting to a successively progressing deprivation of the world in the sense mentioned above. Ideology – according to Patočka – takes hold of "[m]an externally, as a certain force in the overall complex of forces, a force to be used for a certain social aim which is alone valid and valuable, so that everything else, including not least the will and

[56] Ibid., p. 260.

[57] Emmanuel Levinas, *Difficult Freedom. Essays on Judaism*, transl. S. Hand (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1990), p. 6.

activity of the individual, acquires its significance from this aim alone."[58] Bringing thus to a head the instrumentalization of man, ideology represents the opposite of a commitment to finitude, which it is far from *overcoming*. If ideology leaves us indifferent, it is because, in its total negation of the possibility of self-transformation through self-surrender, it fails to address our inmost being. Life, under these conditions, is no longer able to face the violence of the "highest … meaning"[59] to which it can be exposed, the shock of the Other, which it senses as possible. This means that ideology must sustain with all its force the "dispersion of atomized life" which feels itself threatened and responds by violence to anything seeking to introduce an inner continuity into this dispersion or to externally question its phantasmic wholeness. The movement of breakthrough is a struggle against the insensibilization resulting from ideology's attempts to elude finitude and mortality as liable to call this totality into question. On this struggle, Patočka notes:

> Such a conflict is not initially an attack but a *provocation to a counterattack*, to repression, to suppression. Only the defense against the primary repression, against the might which only now becomes what it is, brings about a *revolt*. The revolt need not always manifest itself as physical violence; that is present secondarily, as a consequence, though closely linked to the fact that *wakefulness is always finite*. Wakefulness is a *renewal*; it is an authentic disclosure of life, not in its past depth and passive allottedness, but in the appeal of its dependence to be assumed, to embrace what, as a finite destiny, cannot be avoided, what is inescapably *coming*, yet for this very reason makes it possible not to squander oneself away, not to disperse in continual aversion from oneself.[60]

Levinas approaches the same problem from a different perspective when, at the end of *Otherwise than Being*, he poses the question that is decisive for his "Ethics of the Other," *a question concerning the abyss that separates ethics from politics in his work*:[61]

> The true problem for us Westerners is not so much to refuse violence as to question ourselves about a struggle against violence, which without blanching in non-resistance to evil, could avoid the institution of violence out of this very struggle.[62]

How then are we to avoid the positing of violence as "counter-violence," as Kant already wrote of it, i.e., justifying itself as violence and thereby setting into motion a spiral which so often can no longer be contained? Patočka, stating at one point – probably under the impression of the issue of the Second World War – that it is at times necessary and not necessarily inhuman "to kill and execute,"[63] seems to avoid

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[58] Jan Patočka, "Ideology and Life in the Idea," in *Living in Problematicity*, ed. and transl. E. Manton (Praha: Oikoymenh, 2007), p. 43.

[59] Jan Patočka, "The 'Natural' World…," op. cit., p. 267.

[60] Ibid., p. 266.

[61] On this question, cf. my article "Praxis der Nicht-Indifferenz. Zum Verhältnis von Ethik und Politik nach Emmanuel Levinas," in Ludger Hagedorn and Michael Staudigl (eds.), *Über Zivilisation und Differenz. Beiträge zu einer Phänomenologie des Politischen* (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 2008), pp. 121–145.

[62] Emmanuel Levinas, *Otherwise than Being*…, op. cit., p. 177.

[63] Jan Patočka, "Ideology and Life in the Idea," op. cit., p. 48.

this problem, not to say to carry on the cataclysmic logic of sovereign political action. When, on the contrary, he later emphasizes the "solidarity of the shaken" as consisting precisely in saying "'no' to measures of mobilization that perpetuate the state of war,"[64] one should agree without reservation: Patočka here anticipates a deconstruction of our traditional political categories which wholly rely on the identification of freedom and autonomy and their transferal to the register of sovereign action.[65] There should be no doubt about the necessity of a reflection on such a deconstruction in the light of the unleashing of unlimited violence that can be presently ascertained in the allegedly post-ideological era of globalization. Urging us to put into practice this deconstruction, "from freedom, for freedom"[66] – namely, the fragile freedom of the other – the dissident thought of Patočka, the heretical phenomenologist, remains without a doubt of inestimable significance for our present.

[64] Jan Patočka, *Heretical Essays*…, op. cit., p. 135.

[65] Cf. Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1958), p. 234; and, more precisely, on this topic, James Mensch, *Embodiments. From the Body to the Body Politic* (Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 2009), pp. 97–98. For a concrete outline of a "politics of vulnerability" that runs counter to the above-mentioned logic of sovereignty, see Debra Bergoffen, "February 22, 2001: Toward a Politics of the Vulnerable Body," in *Hypatia*, Vol. 18, no. 1, 2003, pp. 116–134.

[66] Jan Patočka, *Heretical Essays*…, op. cit., p. 168.

Part III
The European Heritage: Politics, History and Religion

Questioning as a Prerequisite for a Meaningful Protest

Petr Pithart

The thesis I propose to examine this evening will be that the philosopher Jan Patočka significantly influenced the political life of this country through the final stage of his life and work. I realize, of course, that we are by and large skeptical of any direct links between philosophizing and politics, particularly as regards connections with happy ends. I am not thinking here of the misuse of philosophy for political purposes which contributed to both Nazi and Communist totalitarianism.

The positive link I find in Patočka's case is, in a way, simply a fulfillment of his own idea of philosophy as responsible for the birth of history and, hence, inseparable from politics. He believed that politics and philosophy, as two closely related expressions of freedom, were what made man first become truly historical, no longer living merely from day to day, but struggling to secure a space of recognition and freedom for himself and his fellows. Patočka defines politics, in the primitive sense of the word, as living from freedom, for freedom.

His death was the last word of his Socratic philosophizing: he stood up to the powers that be and paid the price.

Like Socrates, Patočka never committed himself to any particular ideology. He risked his life, not for an unchallenged objective, but for the right and freedom to challenge, investigate, and question. His ambition was not to define priorities for us, but rather to lead each and every one of us to full individual responsibility.

His philosophy shaped the understanding of the meaning of the Charter 77 movement, at least among the signatories of the founding manifesto, quite aside from his role as one of the first three spokespersons. Thanks to his influence, Charter 77 was not a mere local dissident initiative among others in Central and Eastern Europe. Charter 77 set itself apart by lasting a full thirteen years, up through the fall of Communism, while maintaining maximum internal diversity of thought and complete tolerance, at no time yielding to the temptation of provincial nationalism, cheap anti-Communism or other one-sided ideologies.

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Though it stepped into the background soon after the 1989 "Velvet Revolution," the Charter influenced, in this sense, the manner in which power was then transferred. Without Charter 77 and the people who had gathered around it and proven themselves over the years, political power would have remained in the hands of the Communists under a new disguise, as in Poland or Hungary. In fact, an organization called Revival (*Obroda*), launched almost exclusively by ex-Communists less than a year before the changes, was ready to take over. Its activists even made informal contacts with the "normalization" establishment before November 1989. The name they chose for themselves is, by the way, quite revealing.

It is, in part, thanks to the Charter that, whatever reservations we may have about our political life, it has been stable since the transfer of power, with significant economic development in recent years and progress toward the rule of law. Last but not least, Charter 77 produced the thinker-statesman Václav Havel, who has attracted attention and provoked to thought far beyond the borders of our country.

You may be asking what a philosopher can have had to do with all this, or how he achieved it. The fact is that it was he who, in the closing months of his life, imparted to Charter 77 the fundamental ethos which was to survive until the fall of Communism, when it significantly determined the manner in which power was transferred. While Havel was the public face on Charter 77, Patočka was the binding force and moving spirit behind it. This, despite the fact that most signatories knew him only by name and never saw him alive.

I began by formulating a thesis on Patočka's significant influence on Czech political life, but this still requires an explanation. In actual fact, the legacy through which Patočka shaped the Charter has to do with his questioning, dialogical mode of thought, especially in his later years.

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Death does not always come, nor life end, with a punch line. There are, however, lives whose end has a major impact not only on the life, but also on the thought and action of many others. This punch line and influence are the fruit of lifelong merit. I believe, in this sense, that Patočka's "civic testament" lends a logical punch line to his entire life.

We Czechs often quote T. G. Masaryk, who used to say that societies live on the ideas that presided over their birth. Masaryk applied this to the modern-day state of Czechoslovakia, founded in 1918. It is a reminder – calling on us to remain faithful to our original resolutions – which has been present in the Czech mind for well on a century, a message "worth carving in stone." In my opinion, Patočka's "testament" was the founding idea of Charter 77 and functioned likewise, as a memento, throughout the Charter's existence.

More precisely: Jan Patočka's life came to its climax in a stance expressed in two brief, yet very intense texts on the meaning of Charter 77. This stance is what made the Charter 77 into a unique community and set its future course. The fact that the Charter never became an opposition movement in the usual sense of the word brought both advantages and – in particular later on, when new power structures had to be built – disadvantages. Be that as it may, Patočka's interpretation of Charter 77 was the logical continuation and culmination of his philosophical convictions.

On the other hand, if Patočka had not become the guiding spirit behind Charter 77, he would have remained just one of many philosophers in the confined spiritual arena of twentieth-century Central and Eastern Europe, reflecting in more or less abstract terms on public life and its actors in a conceptual framework mapped out around such keywords as the *polis*, history, the intellectual and the person of spirit.[1]

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Jan Patočka's fateful encounter with Charter 77 was neither coincidental nor predestined. Václav Havel and the former 1968 Minister of Foreign Affairs, Jiří Hájek, had already been designated as the first two of the Charter's trio of spokespersons, and there were only two candidates for the third and remaining position, meant to represent the spiritual – i.e., Christian – branch of Czech dissent, alongside the representatives of the civil society and reformed Communism. The founders' choice of Jan Patočka was wise, though it definitely shortened his life, exposing him to enormous pressure from the secret police. If Václav Havel opted for Patočka, it was doubtless because he intuitively sensed the force underlying the urgency of Patočka's Socratic questions.

The other person considered for the job was Professor Václav Černý, several times forced out of his chair at the Charles University Faculty of Arts in Prague. He was an eminently respectable, extremely cultivated literary historian, a Romance languages scholar, a man of integrity, witness and active member of the resistance movement under Nazi Occupation, then commentator and implacable critic of the course of events in the immediate post-war years, yet at the same time a man of angry, personal answers, rather than unsettling questions. Like most orators, Černý used questions as dressed-up answers. Perhaps that is why he appeared to be a more radical and outspoken critic of the Communist regime than Patočka.

While Černý pontificated, Patočka asked authentic questions, with the aim, not to set hands on a sought-after certitude, but ever and ever again to unsettle and to awake. His questions were urgent, frank, and challenging. His two main texts on Charter 77, written in January and March 1977, were not bolts out of the blue; like Socrates, he had been "corrupting the minds of youth" at clandestine lectures years before anyone imagined Charter 77.

Patočka "corrupted the minds of youth" through a very different approach from that of classical oppositionists. Perhaps Christians would say he called on them to "launch into deep waters." He did not merely invite them to protest or actively resist government oppression. He led them to experience and understand his key concept of "shakenness" which, in the broader context of that time, motivated much more than mere gestures of verbal resistance, expressing disgust with Husák's "normalizing" of Czechoslovakia or questioning the authority of a regime that collaborated with occupying forces.

This concept was derived from literary portrayals of what soldiers experienced in the trenches of the First World War. This helped Patočka grasp the depth of the disintegration of certainties Europeans had inherited from the *belle époque,*

[1] Cf. Jan Patočka, "The Spiritual Person and the Intellectual" [1975], in *Living in Problematicity*, ed. E. Manton, transl. E. Manton and E. Kohák (Praha: Oikoymenh, 2007), pp. 51–69.

the all-encompassing gravity of the crisis of Western civilization, and the need for adequate responses. An adequate response could not come out of momentary political expediency, political reactivity, or any form of action dictated from without.

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Those who witnessed the process confirm that the Charter 77 manifesto was originally conceived as a response to Czechoslovakia's 1975 Helsinki commitments. It proposed to engage a "constructive dialogue" with the regime concerning the respect of human rights, or lack thereof, in Czechoslovakia. To this end, it was drafted straightforwardly, without pathos or strong words.

When the text came out, some people both inside and outside the movement criticized it for not going far enough. They thought it should have been more radical, less legalistic. Some even held it to be inadmissibly accommodating. It clearly did not aim at laying the foundations for a traditional political opposition. It seemed at first glance a mere inventory of consequences (in the sphere of civil and political rights violations), unconcerned with the causes of the overall impasse. A few even took it ironically, as an ingenious intellectual game, a way to pass the buck through pretending to want constructive dialogue with the establishment, while knowing that no such dialogue was possible. Charter signatories were suspected of intending to use their alleged good will as a shield against persecution, though they were in fact attacking the very core of the regime. Even stronger words were used to criticize the founding manifesto, described as an expression of low, sneaky Czech Švejkism: it was a protest, but a toothless and phoney protest, since it involved no risk. It was actually loyalism pretending to be a protest, a loyalist protest.

As someone who was actively involved at the time, I can confirm that these doubts did indeed exist. I am not sure what would have become of Charter 77 if it had not been for Jan Patočka.

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Two things soon became clear. First of all, the establishment looked upon Charter 77 neither as an offer of dialogue nor as Švejkism. It attacked the movement and its supporters on all fronts, bringing out its heaviest artillery.

Secondly, Jan Patočka explained that the founding document, far from passing the buck, was in actual fact transcending time and politics. In January and March 1977, i.e., on the very eve of his death, he explained in two texts that this was not a political act in the strict, party-manifesto sense of the word. He explained that Charter signatories were obeying their sense of duty rather than pursuing vested interests. They were inviting others to act similarly, out of respect for what is higher in man, out of a sense of moral obligation, rather than exclusively or mainly in submission to the carrot and the stick.

Still, two short texts, written in January and March 1977, could not in themselves suffice to bring such a strong influence to bear on many Charter signatories over the next thirteen years or, in some cases, for the rest of their lives. These essays were in fact only the tip of an iceberg, emerging from the dark waters and despair of the seven years prior to the Charter. The so-called "normalization period" was a

time of helplessness and hopelessness, in which all action had been impossible. Jan Patočka was then exploring Czech history in a way that has prompted some to speak of a dark period in his thought, others, not necessarily contradictorily, of a consolatory philosophy. Consolation is here to be understood as a kind of satisfaction: the relief and consolation brought by putting exact, non-illusive names on things. All the more so when the presently experienced bitter end is explained as unavoidable.

Be that as it may, it was a time when Patočka was asking the sort of questions some ask only in the middle of a long tunnel, when they can see no light at either end. Patočka asked similar questions after the 1938 Munich Agreement and during the years separating the end of the Prague Spring and the beginning of the Charter. Those times when the only thing that made sense seemed to be sheer survival, i.e., returning to an ahistorical life, life under "the rule of Day," false peace and undeserved concord.

Asking questions without even hinting at an answer takes a lot of courage. Perhaps the only time we can succeed in doing so is once we have admitted that the darkness surrounding us is absolute and that there are no signs of hope. In other circumstances, or if we lack courage, we generally ask our questions in a way that implies or even leads directly to an answer. But these are only rhetorical questions.

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In his two texts explaining the meaning of Charter 77, Patočka seems to be thinking along two tracks at once: referring both to his understanding of the "solidarity of the shaken," explicated in his *Heretical Essays in the Philosophy of History* (particularly in the fifth essay, "Is Technological Civilization Decadent, and Why?"), and to the challenge to the prevalent interpretation of Czech history raised in his long semi-private text known under the title "What Are the Czechs?"

The phrase "solidarity of the shaken" has doubtless also been used as a prop and an incantation, adding luster to the everyday reality of the persecuted dissidents. That, however, never entirely hid its original meaning: only shakenness as a result of exposure to the forces that move the world, only an acute awareness of danger, makes us feel an urgent need for meaning. If we do not agree that everything is allowed, if we refuse to yield to aggression and nihilism, then that means there is something worth sacrificing for. Sacrificing does not mean dying, but rather suffering for that *something*, and suffering together, i.e., living in the "solidarity of the shaken." When people harbor no illusions, yet go on searching for meaning, their solidarity does not lead to the unity of a conviction concerning the supreme Good, but rather unites them in opposition to evil and its imminent threats.

It is, in part, thanks to Patočka that Charter 77 set itself apart by never building castles in the air out of reassuring ideologies. That is in itself remarkable, given thirteen years of intense communication among so many strong personalities representing a whole range of distinctive political opinions. Perhaps the explanation lies in the tone set by Patočka: a genuine binding force is not generated in a community of emotions or shared ideals, but rather follows from an awareness of danger. André Glucksmann has said that, thanks to Patočka, Czechoslovak dissidents

fought against disease, rather than to promise good health. They fought against a universal danger. They stood up, without dogma or anathema, to the possibility of the end of the world. They made do without common roots, without shared ideals, without national, religious, cultural, or class banners. The unity of the convinced made way for the unity of the shaken.

The Charter never attempted to build castles in the sky, to play one ideology off against another, but rather worked systematically toward laying a foundation for a future solid construction: Patočka states that the Charter signatories commit themselves above all to subordinate politics to justice, and not the other way round.

The rule of law, the only positive demand put forth by the Charter, has yet to be fully attained in the Czech Republic, seventeen years after our *anno mirabilis*. Nonetheless, the Czech Republic is – alongside Poland – the one EU member state which has pursued, despite several changes in government, a foreign policy paying consistent attention to solidarity with those whose civil and political rights are denied in their own countries. Unfortunately, most EU member states are willing to look the other way if their commercial interests are at stake. Hopefully, we will not be far from the truth in explaining this principled approach through a residual commitment to the legacy of Charter 77 and a Masarykian fidelity to the ideas that presided over the birth of democratic Czechoslovakia.

As for the second inspirational source for Patočka's texts on the Charter, I believe his thoughts on action come from the series of letters written in the 1970s to a German friend and published posthumously under the title "What Are the Czechs?" Against the backdrop of his consideration of small and grand Czech history, he regards action as contrary, not to thinking, but to scholars' non-committal intellectual ruminations, to sophists' unquestioning and detached playing with ideas, to politicking sectarians' calculations. On the other hand, bringing into view the problematicity of the situation, viewing reality as something that constantly resists us, is, for Patočka, a political act.

These two key ideas changed the situation. What previously was interpreted as toothless Švejkism appeared henceforth as an answer to the voice of existential anxiety. Unlike the irresponsibly philosophizing intellectual, Patočka's "person of spirit" exposes himself to problematicity through the political act of commitment to the cause of Charter 77; the consequences of this act cannot be foreseen, as every initiative immediately passes into other hands. His experience of "shakenness" is thus, in a way, structurally akin to Martin Heidegger's phenomenon of *Angst*.

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We have lived, and strived, in a time and space bizarrely defined, on the one hand, by Švejkism as a reminder of the meaninglessness of all action and, on the other, by Heidegger's pathetic rhetoric. Our "compass" in that time and space was a philosopher who did not preach truths, but rather encouraged us to pose such questions as would free us from our illusions and perhaps expose us to the experience of being shaken.

It is difficult to evoke those circumstances thirty years later. Contemporary commentators speak only of the myth of a philosopher who lent the legalistic strategy

of the Czech anti-communist dissent its existential and perhaps even historical depth. They then casually add that this is now just a pleasant memory whose symbolic value could be summed up in a single word: sacrifice.

In today's "post-historical" world – so they say – everything is different: our civilizational upheavals are over once and for all, so neither the past nor the future should any longer be of concern to us. I doubt that. Reminiscing here and now about how the Socratic courage of a Czech philosopher to ask radical questions steered a movement which can be said to have shaped history, I am thinking of the future. Among other reasons, because I know that Europeans recently lacked such courage, when tragedy unfolded in their own backyard, in former Yugoslavia.

As long as we prefer questions to answers, we cannot look upon history from without. However assertive and aggressive our present may be, in particular as shown in the tabloid press and advertising industry, it cannot keep us from questioning. We shall go on asking, What happened, and why? What is going to happen, and again why? Somewhere in the tension between these two questions lies the meaning we are so persistently searching for – shaken perhaps, but unrelenting. We continue searching, with Jan Patočka and his clairvoyance, despite present-day nihilism.

In this I believe.

Jan Patočka's Socratic Message for the Twenty-First Century

Rereading Patočka's "Charter 77 Texts" Thirty Years Later

Martin Palouš

It is a distinct honor and a great challenge for me to take part in this conference assembled, thirty years after the death of Jan Patočka, for the purpose of "exploring the significance of his work and its continuing influence on contemporary philosophy." I intend to avail myself of this opportunity to take a look at a few short texts dealing with Charter 77, written by Patočka in the last weeks of his life. I will be focusing on the following questions: What is the place of these texts in the corpus of Patočka's works? How do they fit into the overall context of his philosophical investigations, inspired essentially by Husserl's phenomenology? What is the message of his Socratic teaching for us today, at the beginning of the twenty-first century?

Before I continue, I wish to thank publicly all those who, in the past decades, have worked resolutely and unrelentingly to preserve Patočka's philosophical heritage: up through 1989, under the difficult conditions of a totalitarian regime, and since then as editors of the *Collected Works*, now appearing through the meticulous care of the Patočka Archive in Prague. It is thanks to all these courageous and hard-working people that we may now study the whole of Patočka's philosophy, delve into the deep, wonderful, and adventurous world of his thought. There are surely quite a few names meriting mention here. I believe, however, that Ivan Chvatík deserves the highest credit and appreciation as the main architect and genuine founding father of the project.

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According to its founding declaration dated January 1, 1977, Charter 77 was created as "a loose, informal and open association of people of various shades of opinion, faiths and professions, united by the will to strive individually and collectively for the respecting of civic and human rights in our own country and throughout the world."[1] The legal basis for Charter 77's future activities was the

[1] Quoted from the English version of the "Manifesto of Charter 77" conserved in the Library of Congress (http://rs6.loc.gov/frd/cs/czechoslovakia/cs_appnd.html).

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entry into force of two major United Nations human rights covenants,[2] published in the Czechoslovak Register of Laws No. 120 of October 13, 1976.

Signatories came from all walks of life – Christians of various denominations, Jews, ex-Communists expelled from the party for their revolt in 1968, independent liberal intellectuals and quite a few young people with no specific background, creed, goals or expectations. They may have had different motives for signing, and most did not pay much attention to the legal reasoning of the founding declaration, yet all sent one and the same message to the Czechoslovak authorities: we cannot remain silent, with hypocrisy as an accepted norm in today's Czechoslovakia, where all basic human rights "exist, regrettably, on paper alone"[3] and many people have become "victims of a virtual apartheid."[4] Patočka not only joined this Central European "tea party," but agreed to assume the role of one of the three Charter 77 spokespersons. In this capacity, he wrote a series of texts which – as he died shortly afterwards of a stroke suffered following prolonged police interrogations – are now regarded as a kind of political testament.

Do these texts, now included in Volume 12 of Patočka's *Collected Works*, have something to say that should not escape our attention here? It is clear that Patočka did not write them in an environment that would generally be considered as opportune for philosophizing: in tranquil isolation, given a chance – to paraphrase Parmenides' ancient poem – to set out upon the "well-spoken path of the Goddess" (ἐς ὁδὸν βῆσαν πολύφημον ἄγουσαι δαίμονες), "lying far indeed from the beaten paths of humans" (τήνδ' ὁδόν – ἦ γὰρ ἀπ' ἀνθρώπων ἐκτὸς πάτου ἐστίν).[5] Quite the contrary, he wrote them in the midst of the most serious political struggle he had ever engaged in, interrogated daily by the secret police and threatened by the State Prosecutor with charges of subversion and "anti-socialist" activities. When one reads these texts thirty years later, it is nonetheless obvious that, in spite of their focus on actual matters connected with the extremely difficult first weeks of existence of Charter 77, it is a philosopher who is speaking: a philosopher well aware that his audience is not the usual academia, but the entire *polis*, all of his fellow citizens, whom he must address accordingly, i.e., not as a Parmenidian or Platonic scholar, with his spiritual eye turned to the sphere above the heavens, but after the fashion of Socrates, the first, as Cicero put it in his *Tusculan Disputations*, who "called philosophy down from heaven, and placed it in cities, and introduced it even in homes, and drove it to inquire about life and customs and things good and evil."[6]

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[2] The "International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights" and the "International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights."

[3] "Manifesto…," op. cit.

[4] Ibid.

[5] Parmenides, in Hermann Diels (ed.), *Die Fragmente der Vorsokratiker*, B 1, 2–3 and 27.

[6] M. Tullius Cicero, *Tusculanarum disputationum libri quinque*, ed. C.F.W. Müller (Leipzig: Freytag, 1904), Lib. V, § 10: "Socrates autem primus philosophiam devocavit e cælo et in urbibus conlocavit et in domus etiam introduxit et coegit de vita et moribus rebusque bonis et malis quærere."

In the frequently quoted text "What Charter 77 Is and What It Is Not," Patočka brings "to everyone's clear consciousness" "the truths of which we are all in some sense aware":[7]

> The idea of human rights is nothing other than the conviction that even states, even society as a whole, are subject to the sovereignty of moral sentiment: that they recognize something unconditional that is higher than they are, something that is binding even on them, sacred (inviolable), and that, in their power to establish and maintain a rule of law, they seek to express this recognition.[8]

The concept of human rights in the international covenants the authors of the Charter 77 manifesto were referring to has its roots in the European Enlightenment of the late eighteenth century. Patočka's moral argumentation, his invocation of "the truths of which we are all in some sense aware," sounds, however, more like a voice out of a distant past, reviving something that does not really fit into the contemporary human rights discourse, but rather hearkens back to premodern, largely abandoned spiritual traditions. His argument that respect for human rights represents the moral foundation of all human societies (and no society, he says, can function without such a foundation!) – that such rights are constituted, not simply by human nature, but through our recognition of the sovereignty of moral sentiment – shifts our focus from the modern emancipated individual, perceived as their bearer or "owner" (possessing them simply as something he or she is "entitled" to), to the age-old conflict between politics and philosophy. It turns our attention to the trial of Socrates, who seems to have been the main source of inspiration for Patočka's approach to political matters in general, his great example and precursor with regard to his own activities in the public realm.

The similarity between Patočka and Socrates[9] – in Patočka's words (quoting Heidegger), perhaps "not the greatest, but … the most authentic philosopher"[10] – calls for some comments. Let me quote what Hegel has to say about certain widespread Socratic "traditions" in his *Lectures on the History of Philosophy*: "*Indem Sokrates auf diese Weise der Moralphilosophie ihre Entstehung gab …, hat ihn alle Folgezeit des moralischen Geschwätzes und der Popularphilosophie zu ihrem Patron und Heiligen erklärt, und ihn zum rechtfertigenden Deckmantel aller Unphilosophie*

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[7] Jan Patočka, "Čím je a čím není Charta 77," in *Sebrané spisy*, sv. 12, *Češi I*, ed. K. Palek and I. Chvatík (Praha: Oikoymenh, 2006), p. 429; quoted from the English translation: "The Obligation to Resist Injustice," in *Philosophy and Selected Writings*, ed. and transl. E. Kohák (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1989), p. 341.

[8] Ibid.

[9] Socrates did nothing, according to his own words reproduced by Plato, but to go about persuading Athenians, young and old, not to take thought for their persons and properties, "but firstly and chiefly to care about the greatest improvement of the *soul*." Plato, *Apology of Socrates*, 30a8–30b1, transl. B. Jowett, The Internet Classics Archive (www.classics.mit.edu/Plato/apology.html).

[10] Jan Patočka, "Mají dějiny smysl?" in *Kacířské eseje o filosofii dějin*, *Sebrané spisy*, sv. 3, *Péče o duši III*, ed. I. Chvatík and P. Kouba (Praha: Oikoymenh, 2002), p. 80; quoted from the English translation: "Third Essay: Does History Have a Meaning?" in *Heretical Essays in the Philosophy of History*, ed. J. Dodd, transl. E. Kohák (Chicago and La Salle: Open Court, 1996), p. 75.

erhoben; wozu noch vollends kam, daß sein Tod ihm das populär-rührende Interesse des Unschuldig-Leidens gab."[11] Patočka's Socratic appeal in his Charter 77 texts escapes, without a doubt, Hegel's taunting remarks. He is a genuine philosopher, speaking from the apeirontic depth of his thought.

One could draw another parallel, inasmuch as Socrates, in the *Apology*, states that he felt, since childhood, the call to obey his "inner oracle."[12] Patočka's Socratism too is something that was present throughout his philosophical life, long before his open conflict with the Czech *polis*. From his early writings in the 1930s to the 1977 Charter texts, Patočka grappled with the problem of "negative Platonism,"[13] the problem of returning from Plato's positive doctrine of separately existing Ideas to the essentially negative and dialectic wisdom of his master. He repeatedly expressed his conviction that the real beginning of philosophy does not lie in Socrates' words, in his *logos*, but in his deed – "Socrates is this deed."[14] In this sense, philosophy's most important task is not to speculate *in abstracto* but, as Patočka wrote already in 1936, at age twenty-nine, "to criticize life in all its components and manifestations";[15] "to express what society has hitherto wanted without being aware of it, to put into words its unvoiced tendencies, but also to show what is behind them, to clarify their essence, their genesis, their intricacies and problems, and to attempt then to resolve them."[16]

The figure of "Socrates the philosopher" – whether he be "a literary myth or a historical reality"[17] – plays a prominent role in Patočka's thought. "Socrates," he wrote in an unpublished text from the late 1940s, "is the inventor of the question of good,"[18] a question that is not meant to "give way to an answer."[19] What Socrates asks of us, in raising this question, is not to escape it through an answer, but to let it prevail: "to stick with it and understand its meaning."[20] Consequently, the adequate philosophical response to the question of good is not a philosophical doctrine – a set of metaphysical propositions claiming the status of eternal truths – but a new orientation of human life, philosophy as "caring for the soul." Patočka sums up:

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[11] Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Sämtliche Werke*, ed. H. Glockner, Bd. 18: *Vorlesungen über der Geschichte der Philosophie, Zweiter Band* (Stuttgart: Fr. Frommanns Verlag, 1959), p. 47.

[12] Plato, op. cit., 31d1.

[13] Jan Patočka, "Negativní platonismus. O vzniku, problematice, zániku metafyziky a otázce, zda filosofie může žít i po ní," in *Sebrané spisy*, sv. 1, *Péče o duši I*, ed. I. Chvatík and P. Kouba (Praha: Oikoymenh, 1996), pp. 303–336; "Negative Platonism: Reflections concerning the Rise, the Scope, and the Demise of Metaphysics – and Whether Philosophy Can Survive It," in *Philosophy and Selected Writings*, op. cit., pp. 175–206.

[14] Jan Patočka, "Kapitoly ze současné filosofie" [Chapters from Contemporary Philosophy] in *Sebrané spisy*, sv. 1, op. cit., p. 98.

[15] Ibid.

[16] Ibid., p. 92.

[17] Jan Patočka, "Negativní platonismus…," op. cit., p. 308; "Negative Platonism…," op. cit., p. 180.

[18] Jan Patočka, "Věčnost a dějinnosť" [Eternity and Historicity], in *Sebrané spisy*, sv. 1, op. cit., p. 143.

[19] Ibid.

[20] Ibid., p. 144.

> Socrates discovered man as the being most different from all others – the human being as originally unfinished, yet committed unto his own hands in order to understand his essential will and to give meaning to his life. For such a being, the events of life must take on significance; and a being for whom events have significance is a historical being. Socrates is the discoverer of human historicity.[21]

This is the point. It is precisely *this* discovery that contemporary philosophy – after all its confusions, willfulness, and erratic moves, all its fruitless efforts to do away with or seemingly overcome the metaphysics of the past – should choose, according to Patočka, as its starting-point. It is to Socrates and his finite human wisdom, ἡ ἀνθρωπίνη σοφία,[22] that we look today for guidance and inspiration at our historical crossroads, at this moment of deep spiritual and political crisis in Western civilization. Patočka concludes: "*si licet parva comparare magni*, philosophy is starting over again with Socrates."[23] What does this statement mean? If what the Socratic beginning is all about is not Socrates' word alone, but his deed, where do we begin?

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I will come back later to the Socratic element in Patočka's Charter 77 texts. Let me first digress from this theme to comment on a viewpoint which seems clearly to have had a significant influence on Patočka, at least in the final stage of his philosophical life: the point of view introduced into contemporary philosophical discourse on political matters by Hannah Arendt.

"I avoid the expression 'political philosophy,'" Arendt remarked to Günter Gaus in a radio interview in 1964, later published in a collection of her essays, because it is "extremely burdened by tradition,"[24] by a deeply rooted conviction of philosophers that political matters can be approached "philosophically," from the standpoint of a thinker who isolates himself from all his fellows in order to think. If politics and philosophy are to be brought together, what must serve as a starting-point is their tense relationship, the "vital tension between man as a thinking being and man as an acting being."[25] Given this tension, the human matters here at issue cannot be dealt with from a neutral, objective perspective, as when speaking of nature, as if one were to become all of a sudden a spokesperson for the whole of humankind. Human matters are always given us as something relating to our own lives, in the unique situation in which we find ourselves, in our concrete existence, in our concrete historical society.

In the same vein, Arendt wrote in 1956, in a letter to her teacher and lifelong friend Karl Jaspers: "*Nun habe ich den Verdacht, ... daß diese abendländische Philosophie nie einen reinen Begriff des Politischen gehabt hat und auch nicht*

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[21] Ibid., pp. 146–147.

[22] Plato, op. cit., 23a6.

[23] Jan Patočka, "Věčnost a…," op. cit., p. 214.

[24] Hannah Arendt, "'What Remains? The Language Remains': A Conversation with Günter Gaus" (radio interview of Hannah Arendt with Günter Gaus, 1964), in *Essays in Understanding 1930–1954*, ed. J. Kohn (New York, San Diego and London: Harcourt Brace, 1994), p. 2.

[25] Ibid.

haben konnte, weil sie notgedrungen von dem *Menschen sprach und die Tatsache der Pluralität nebenbei behandelte*."[26]

These two quotations, in my view, aptly characterize the basic task Arendt set for her own in-depth investigations of *vita activa* and *vita contemplativa,* pursued with unmatched clarity and precision in *The Human Condition* and *The Life of the Mind*: to return from empty political categories and concepts to "things themselves" in the realm of politics; to view political matters primarily through the lens of our own personal experience in the tragic twentieth century; to try to understand totalitarianism as its central event, as something that did not strike European civilization like a bolt out of the blue, but rather emerged, as she puts it in the Preface to the first edition of *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, as "the subterranean stream of Western history"[27] that "has finally come to the surface and usurped the dignity of our tradition."[28]

Arendt's starting from her own political experience, from what she held to be her "personal problem,"[29] did not mean, however, that she intended to remain forever chained to her own, however painful or persistent, idiosyncrasies. What she was seeking in her work as a "political theorist," as she called herself,[30] was to offer a "political theory" transcending her personal point of view, a theory erected as a bridge between past and future, opening a new perspective, an opportunity to begin anew "after Auschwitz." Her insights and political ideas were not to be framed in the Platonic vision of a "perfect state," but to "function" as acts of reconciliation, "saving counsels" of ancient drama,[31] helping us, as members of the planetary humanity constituted by the unprecedented tragedies of the twentieth century,[32] to understand totalitarianism, "to come to terms with and reconcile ourselves to … a

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[26] Hannah Arendt and Karl Jaspers, *Briefwechsel 1926–1969*, ed. L. Kohler and H. Saner (München and Zürich: Pieper Verlag, 1985), p. 203.

[27] Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (New York and London: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1973), p. ix.

[28] Ibid.

[29] Cf. Hannah Arendt, "'What Remains?…," op. cit., pp. 10–11: "First of all, the generally political became a personal fate when one emigrated. Second … friends collaborated or got in line. The problem, the personal problem, was not what our enemies did, but what our friends did."

[30] Ibid., p. 1: "My profession, if one can even speak of it at all, is political theory."

[31] Cf., for instance, the following passages from *The Suppliant Maidens* by Aeschylus: Pelasgos, the king of Argos: "I cannot aid you without risk of scathe / Nor scorn your prayers – unmerciful it were / Perplexed, distraught I stand and fear alike / the twofold chance, to do or not to do" (376–380); "A deep saving counsel here there needs / An eye that like a diver to the depth / Of dark perplexity can pass and see / Undizzied, unconfused…" (407–409), transl. E. D. A. Morshead. (An excellent interpretation of this passage can be found in Eric Voegelin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 15, *Order and History II: The World of Polis*, ed. A. Moulakis [Columbia and London: University of Missouri Press, 2000], pp. 321–327).

[32] Cf. what Eric Voegelin said in his review of Arendt's *Origins of Totalitarianism* about the emergence of totalitarian mass movements in the twentieth century: "The putrefaction of Western civilization, as it were, has released a cadaveric poison spreading its infection through the body of humanity. What no religious founder, no philosopher, no imperial conqueror of the past has achieved – to create a community of mankind by creating a common concern for all men – has now been realized through the community of suffering under the earthwide expansion of Western foulness." (Eric Voegelin, "The Origins of Totalitarianism," in *Collected Works*, Vol. 11, *Published Essays 1953–1965*, ed. E. Sandoz [Columbia and London: University of Missouri Press, 2000], p. 15).

world in which such things are possible."[33] This did not mean blindly applying the French proverb *tout comprendre, c'est tout pardonner*, but rather cultivating the only "inner compass we have,"[34] our understanding, our common sense, our common capacity for healthy judgment. If we are determined to avert the possibility that similar or even greater horrors than Soviet gulags or Nazi "death factories" may one day happen again – "if we want to be at home on this earth, even at the price of being at home in this century, we must try to take part in the interminable dialogue with the essence of totalitarianism."[35]

There is an essential prerequisite if future totalitarian tendencies in our thought are to be averted. What must be overcome, as Arendt emphasized in her conversation with Günter Gaus, is the extreme burden of the tradition of Western political philosophy. Does this mean that this tradition is to be discarded? No. What Arendt suggests is that Western political philosophy should be examined in a new way. In the realm of the political, we should first of all free ourselves of the perspective of "One Omniscient Knower" that dominates our Western epistemology.[36] We should adopt a worldview springing from the primordial tension between acting and thinking, politics and philosophy. What should be rediscovered, or rather constituted anew, by the proposed Arendtian turn is, as she wrote to Jaspers, the "pure concept of the political" that "Western philosophy has never had, and could not have." What should be carefully thought through is what this philosophy has "dealt with tangentially" and passed by without proper attention: "the fact of plurality," i.e., the fact that plurality is a fundamental aspect of the human condition.

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Patočka seems to have discovered the thought of Hannah Arendt only in 1970, when working on his last big project, the *Heretical Essays in the Philosophy of History*.[37] He resumes, for his own analyses, Arendt's elementary distinctions between labor, work and action – "three fundamental human activities," each of which corresponds "to one of the basic conditions under which life on earth has been given to man"[38] – referring these concepts back to the part of the *Nicomachean Ethics* where Aristotle differentiates between various forms of free human life – the life of gratification or enjoyment (*bios apolaustikos*), the life of politics or action (*bios politikos*), and the life of contemplation or study (*bios theōrētikos*).[39] There is no doubt

[33] Hannah Arendt, "Understanding and Politics (The Difficulties of Understanding)," in *Essays*…, op. cit., p. 308.

[34] Ibid.

[35] Ibid., p. 323.

[36] I borrow this term from the founder of American pragmatism, William James (*Pragmatism: A New Name for Some Old Ways of Thinking* [New York and London: Longmans, Green & Co., 1907]). Quoted from *The Writings of William James, A Comprehensive Edition*, ed. J. J. McDermott (New York: Modern Library, 1968).

[37] See note 10 above.

[38] Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1958), p. 7. See also Jan Patočka, *Kacířské eseje*…, op. cit., p. 51; *Heretical Essays*…, op. cit., p. 40.

[39] Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1095b–1096.

that Patočka used Arendtian distinctions, in a coherent and creative manner, in his search for the origins of European history. Nonetheless, in going through all his references to her analyses and observations, not only in the final text of the *Heretical Essays*, but also in the preparatory manuscripts and lectures from this period,[40] I was puzzled by his total silence as concerns Arendt's central point: human plurality as an essential aspect of our human condition, neglected by Western political philosophy. How can he have accepted some of her greatest insights, while at the same time closing his eyes to core elements of the revolution she wrought in contemporary political thinking? Does this mean that Patočka, in spite of his own deep insights into the origins of European politics and philosophy, articulated with great intellectual strength and passion in his *Heretical Essays in the Philosophy of History*, remained captive of the Western tradition, which Arendt saw as an "extreme burden"? That, despite all his efforts to restore "the link between philosophy and the spirit of the *polis*"[41] in his investigations of Europe's origins, Patočka simply missed what, according to Arendt, is the living heart of political phenomena? That he too is one of those philosophers who have no "pure concept of the political," and by whom the "fact of plurality" has been "dealt with tangentially"? The answer is clearly no.

To clarify this point, we would need a precise and sufficiently detailed comparison of Arendt's and Patočka's interpretations of the relation between politics and philosophy, of the "tension between man as a thinking being and man as an acting being." I cannot broach this subject in the framework of today's short talk. What I can and shall do instead – to defend Patočka against possible questions and critiques on the part of Arendtians – will be based solely on my experience with Charter 77 and my rereading of his texts about it. His resort to moral argument, to "the truths of which we are all in some sense aware," proves clearly that Patočka remained, to the end of his life, a Socratic philosopher, forced rather by circumstances than by a desire for political engagement to assume an active role in public affairs. There is, in these texts, a good deal of evidence that he was indeed always a thinker and never a politician; he went public, in a Czechoslovakia sick with the totalitarian plague, not to engage himself in politics properly speaking, but to think out loud and publicly inquire into the roots of our political crisis with the philosophical help of his old Socratic questions and ideas. Surprisingly, regardless of his possible neglect of human plurality in his philosophy of history and his reflection on Europe's foundations, his Socratic action contributed substantially to the opening of a new public space where human plurality could re-emerge in the specific phenomenon of a "parallel *polis*."[42] It was precisely this body politic, destined to live a mere thirteen years – certainly not just a courageous and virtuous, but in

[40] Published in Jan Patočka, *Sebrané spisy*, sv. 3, op. cit., pp. 147–514.

[41] Jan Patočka, *Kacířské eseje*…, op. cit., p. 52; *Heretical Essays*…, op. cit., p. 41.

[42] The concept of a "parallel *polis*" comes from Václav Benda, whose seminal essay on this topic, written in 1978, initiated an important and rich discussion in dissident circles. Benda's essay "The Parallel Polis" and other contributions to this debate (including my own text "Jan Patočka versus Václav Benda," which I am developing in the present essay) have been published in H. Gordon Skilling and Paul Wilson (eds.), *Civic Freedom in Central Europe: Voices from Czechoslovakia* (Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire: Macmillan, 1991).

many ways a bizarre and problematic community of the "shaken," composed not only of the signatories of Charter 77, with their various opinions, faiths and professions, but also of many others, resolved to resist totalitarianism on their own terms – that has remained as part and parcel of Patočka's spiritual inheritance, "left by no testament"[43] to future generations.

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Rereading Patočka's Charter 77 texts thirty years after the facts, I had to struggle, for obvious reasons, with my own idiosyncrasies. While a bygone world has left its mark on these documents, when read as a whole – six short pieces, in chronological order – they may be compared to Socrates' three consecutive speeches before the Athenian court which, if we can trust Plato, go to make up his *Apology*. These six texts either articulate Patočka's own views on Charter 77's essence and mission, or react to different instigations – the malicious media campaign against Charter 77, the threats of the State Prosecutor, questions raised by foreign journalists or circulating among the general public. They reflect the events of the last weeks of Patočka's life, yet all deal with one and the same old question: what, apart from its recognized customs, its valid laws, its form of government and all the practical aspects of daily affairs, enables a body politic to exist qua body politic? Whatever politicians themselves may have to say to this point – whether they appeal to religion or to ideology, to enlightened self-interest or to collective well-being as the elementary *raison d'être* of a state – their answers are, from Patočka's Socratic perspective, either insufficient or totally irrelevant. The adequate response to this question cannot come from their realm, but only from a higher sphere, above, or shall we say rather outside of politics. Even states, having the power to enact and enforce binding laws, must first and foremost honor the rule of law. Even sovereign states are obliged to respect the elementary fact that our humanity has precedence over any political role we may be assigned to or pressed to play as citizens. Not only individual human beings, but states and society as a whole are, by necessity, "subject to the sovereignty of moral sentiment."[44] Sticking to this simple premise, signing Charter 77 cannot be perceived, according to Patočka, as a "political act in the strict sense."[45] Charter 77 "constitutes no competition or interference with political power in any of its functions";[46] hence, it is "neither an association, nor an organization,"[47] but a simple "outgrowth of the conviction"[48] that no society "can function without a moral foundation."[49]

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[43] Cf. Hannah Arendt's Preface to the collection of essays *Between Past and Future: Eight Exercises in Political Thought* (New York: Viking Press, 1961), p. 3. She starts here with her understanding of the gap dividing the past and the future, and quotes in this context "perhaps the strangest of the strangely abrupt aphorisms into which René Char, French poet and writer, compressed the gist of what four years in the *résistance* had come to mean to a whole generation of European writers and men of letters," i.e., "*notre héritage n'est précédé d'aucun testament* – 'our inheritance was left to us by no testament.'"

[44] Jan Patočka, "Čím je a čím není…," op. cit., p. 429; "The Obligation…," op. cit., p. 341.

[45] Ibid., p. 429/342 (Czech/English).

[46] Ibid.

[47] Ibid.

[48] Ibid., p. 429/341 (Czech/English).

[49] Ibid.

Patočka not only renewed Socrates' basic question, but revived his very spirit in the pages he devoted to Charter 77. When he spoke of the Charter 77 manifesto as "an expression of the *joy* of our citizens to see their country, through its signature confirming human rights and giving this document force of law in Czechoslovakia, acknowledge the higher, moral basis of all things politic," "an expression of the[ir] willingness to do their part in bringing about the realization and public fufillment of the principles"[50] guiding the newly adopted human rights obligations, it was an irony that could only be understood as a slap in the face to Communist power-holders. His observation that, after the fierce attacks on Charter 77 signatories, "people have once more become aware that there are things for which it is worthwhile to suffer, that the things for which we might have to suffer are those which make life worthwhile,"[51] necessarily took on, for the attackers, the meaning of an all-out declaration of war. When the secret police started interrogating and trying to intimidate him day after day, hounding him to his death, his reaction to these threats was a clear act of Socratic courage.

There is, however, one argument advanced by Patočka in his Charter 77 texts that compels further examination: Charter 77, he writes, "never sought more than to educate. But what does that mean? Each individual must learn for himself, though he can often be affected by examples, warned by bad results, or taught by dialogue and discussion."[52] We all recall the exchange, in the *Apology*, between Socrates and his accusers concerning the problem of the education of youth. Who is a good educator and, on the contrary, who corrupts the young?[53] In Ancient Athens, the *polis* itself was held to be the best educator,[54] but what happens, then, in times of crisis? Is the best teacher still the mass of law-abiding citizens, the *polis* as a whole, with its dubious customs and decadent culture, or rather the philosopher? Socrates' answer to this question, and the verdict of the Athenians, are well known. From that point on, *polis* and philosophy went their separate ways.

This divorce brings us back to Arendt's argument that plurality is a fundamental aspect of the human condition and that today, perhaps more than ever before, our thought should include a "pure concept of the political." Does the Socratic choice – the choice of being in unity, in agreement with oneself, over being in "harmonious relations" with all others in the *polis* – always lead to philosophy's profound alienation from public affairs, as was apparently the case in all the Socratic schools, starting with Plato's Academy, after the death of Socrates? Or is there still a chance that the *polis* may, after all, be reformed, or even saved, through the force of the Socratic deed? With the same proviso Patočka made when speaking of this

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[50] Ibid.

[51] Jan Patočka, "Co můžeme očekávat od Charty 77?" in: *Sebrané spisy*, sv. 12, op. cit., p. 443; quoted from the English translation: "What We Can [and Cannot] Expect from Charter 77," in *Philosophy and Selected Writings*, op. cit., p. 346.

[52] Ibid.

[53] Plato, op. cit., 24c–25c.

[54] Cf. Pericles' Funeral Oration, in Thucydides, *The History of the Peloponnesian War*, 2.41: "In short, I say that as a city we are the school of Hellas."

deed – *si licet parva comparare magnis* – I believe he himself, through his own Socratic action, proved that the answer to this question need at least not always be negative. Though the dissident parallel *polis* was an unusual and imperfect body politic – totally dependent on the bigger whole it was but a tiny part of, living under state repression, in a permanent state of siege, just a bunch of self-appointed citizens with no territory or protective walls – surprisingly enough, it did manage to start something genuinely new. It was a vulnerable, colorful, bizarre entity, yet a new beginning!

Those who signed the founding declaration of Charter 77 may have been initially motivated *more Socratico*, by the desire to live in peace with their own souls, in unity with themselves. They discovered, however, in the course of events, that launching into this adventure was not a mere matter of personal integrity, constituted in the "silent dialogue between me and myself." They discovered what it means to leave the protective walls of one's private life, to step into the public arena and call on one's fellows. They discovered the binding power of acting together. They discovered that the essential political virtue is not success in the struggle for power, but rather the building of trust, the ability to take concerted action, the readiness of each and every one to support the others in the face of danger, to maintain the spirit of solidarity. In short, they discovered, each in his or her own way, on his or her own terms, the same fact that Arendt held to be a fundamental prerequisite of political life: the fact of plurality, essential to our human condition, yet dangerously absent from the basic concepts of our political thought.

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With this quite simple, yet practical discovery in mind, I shall in conclusion go back once more to human rights. When we read Jan Patočka's Charter 77 texts, it is immediately obvious that the author is not a lawyer, but a philosopher. His assertion that the obligation of states to respect human rights can be inferred from their being subject in general to the "sovereignty of moral sentiment" is simply too fuzzy for jurisprudence. In order to be understood in the context of contemporary public international law, it would have to be translated into "legalese," and would certainly need to be more specific – for instance, regarding international responsibilities ensuing from the violation of this obligation and possible compulsory measures that could be brought to bear on a non-yielding, "unrepentant" violator. The question of the legal subjectivity of individuals in contemporary international human rights law is also, without a doubt, a great deal more complicated than Patočka's straightforward view of self-defense in the field of human rights as the civic duty of individuals, stemming from their moral beliefs and convictions.

Lawyers, of course, have full right to raise their professional questions, as they were invited to do in the early stages of Charter 77, when Patočka was writing his last texts. They are, however, at risk of missing the main point of Patočka's Socratic deed and legacy – as actually happened in the days following the publication of the Charter 77 manifesto on January 5, 1977, some being blinded by juridical rigor, others acting simply out of fear and opportunism. In actual fact, the focus on human rights is not only an outgrowth of the moral conviction of isolated individual citizens.

It is also the main contents of their "non-political politics." It is the only political program, the only political objective their "parallel *polis*" ever had, other than the general call for governments to obey their own laws: the strengthening of respect for a new principle, a new rule of conduct in the international realm, which is slowly gaining ground in the contemporary phase of human history, i.e., the rule of law instead of a mere balance of power in international relations – the conviction expressed by Patočka, in his first text on Charter 77, that here also, and not only in the domestic affairs of nation-states, politics "should be subordinated to justice, not vice versa."[55]

The world has undeniably changed in the past thirty years. Since 1989, Communism is a bygone thing in Europe. Charter 77 has retired from active business a long time ago, and only three aging former spokespersons now guard its legacy. Czechoslovakia has disappeared from the map, but both the Czech Republic and Slovakia are free countries, members of NATO and the EU. Europe is reunited, the old bipolar stability irretrievably gone. Everything seems to be in flux. What would Jan Patočka have to say to all this? It's hard to guess. Observing the political processes we are part of, endeavoring to understand the world around us with its new opportunities, its dangers and challenges, our best bet is to hearken anew to his questions, renewed from a distant past: such is Patočka's Socratic message for the twenty-first century.

[55] Jan Patočka, "Čím je a čím není…," op. cit., p. 430; "The Obligation…," op. cit., p. 342.

Fear, Courage, Anger: The Socratic Lesson

Marc Crépon

2007 is for us a year of many commemorations. We are or will shortly be celebrating the centenary of the birth of Jan Patočka and the thirtieth anniversary of his death, as well as the anniversary of Charter 77, of which he was one of the initial trio of spokespersons. From the first moment of his commitment until the end of his life, Patočka exemplified a *Socratic politics*, to quote the preface to the 1981 French translation of his *Heretical Essays* in which Paul Ricœur terms this attitude "the most radical question that Western Europe can take from the heart of that which was once the center of Europe."[1] It is this strangely and enduringly relevant issue that I would like to address today, a quarter of a century later, now that the political regime that made it necessary has long since disappeared. Without a doubt, the mention of Socrates echoes the circumstances of Patočka's last days, the fact that he was literally "put to death by the Powers that be"[2] because he did not yield to the regime's politics of fear – as Ricœur then wrote in an obituary published in the French daily *Le Monde*. But the true basis for this phrase is elsewhere. In the 1970s, the period leading up to Charter 77, Patočka was conducting an inquiry into the legacy and the fate of Europe which brought him to revisit Plato's dialogues and meditate on the figure of Socrates with an intensity due in part to the "post-totalitarian" (a word coined by Václav Havel) political situation Charter 77 was to be a response to. The portraiture of Socrates is something of a classic exercise in the history of Western philosophy – something one finds in Hegel, Nietzsche, Kierkegaard, and many others. In this sense, the picture Patočka has left us is perhaps nothing other than a *portrait*

[1] Paul Ricœur, "Préface," in Jan Patočka, *Essais hérétiques sur la philosophie de l'histoire*, transl. E. Abrams (Lagrasse: Verdier, 1981), p. 15. See English translation: "Preface to the French Edition of Jan Patočka's Heretical Essays," in Jan Patočka, *Heretical Essays in the Philosophy of History*, ed. J. Dodd, transl. E. Kohák (Chicago and La Salle: Open Court, 1996), p. xvi.

[2] Paul Ricœur, "Jan Patočka, le philosophe-resistant," in *Le Monde*, Vol. 34, no. 9995, March 19, 1977, p. 4; "Jan Patočka: A Philosopher of Resistance," transl. R. Kearney, in *The Crane Bag*, Vol. 7, no. 1, 1983, p. 118.

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of Socrates as an oppositionist, as a resister, or again, though he probably would not have approved the term, *as a dissident*. This is what I will be dealing with in the first part of my talk. In order to do so, I shall have to make a detour – which I hope will not prove overly lengthy – following paths that should lead us back to the indissociably moral and political commitment I am proposing to define, though they may at first seem far afield.

I

For the author of the 1973 lectures subsequently published under the title *Plato and Europe*,[3] or of their German counterpart, the long essay entitled "Europe and Post-Europe,"[4] there are, in fact, two names which stand out as meaningful far beyond the significance attending upon mere knowledge of their works: Democritus and Plato. Claiming their inheritance may, of course, provoke a misunderstanding it is important to dispel before going any further. What is at issue is the destiny of Europe – a destiny that cannot be defined and confined within any notion of identity. Paradoxically, perhaps, these two names do not imply the enclosure of Europe within its Greek roots. If it is true, as Patočka attempts to demonstrate, that they refer to both a possibility (that of *a different view of the world*) and a body of imperatives (*a transformation of human life*), neither possibility nor imperatives are a matter of belonging, something that can be determined through geographical, cultural, or other criteria. On the contrary, if we can – and should – inherit from them, it is in the sense that both trace our relation to things back to a way of seeing entirely different from the view that indexes them to particular, always momentary interests (the life or survival of any one individual, family, or whatever community): to an "insight" of which phenomenology has become and remains the ultimate transformation. If it is true that the distinctive characteristic of such an "insight" is to restore to our relation to the world the concern for its foundations, thus opening up what Patočka calls "an essential and explicit relation to the unchanging,"[5] if it is true, moreover, that this "relation to the unchanging" demands to be shared, it is no less certain that this sharing has come down to us (and become our own) solely insofar as its vocation is to cross over epochs and borders, to transcend linguistic and cultural barriers, as well as all other defining confinements resulting from the calculated appropriation of the world that Patočka was at the same time denouncing in his *Heretical Essays*.

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[3] Jan Patočka, *Plato and Europe*, transl. P. Lom (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2002).

[4] Jan Patočka, "Europa und Nach-Europa. Die nacheuropäische Epoche und ihre geistigen Probleme," in *Ketzerische Essays zur Philosophie der Geschichte und ergänzende Schriften*, ed. K. Nellen and J. Němec (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1988), pp. 207–287; quoted in the following from the French translation: "L'Europe et après. L'époque posteuropéenne et ses problèmes spirituels," in *L'Europe après l'Europe*, ed. E. Abrams, transl. E. Abrams and M. de Launay (Lagrasse: Verdier, 2007), pp. 37–136.

[5] Ibid., pp. 236–237/73 (German/French).

The names of Democritus and Plato are thus put forward at the start of the inquiry, not by way of signifying Europe's anchorage in one specific culture and one specific past (Ancient Greece), but rather in order to go back to something more fundamental, prior to the relation to the world upheld and implemented by technological domination: back to the two directions taken, in the course of European history, by this "*relation to the unchanging*" which both Democritus' and Plato's thought has passed on to us. I speak of two directions because the quest for an ultimate ground has simultaneously taken on the form both of a philosophical exploration of the essence of the world (total understanding of its composing elements, their structure and their configuration) and of *an inquiry into the possibilities of transforming human life to which this exploration gives rise*. The two together have shaped the destiny of Europe. Keeping the soul in contact with the unchanging, they constitute what Patočka calls the "care for the soul." They are, therefore, or should be indissociable. Nonetheless, each one has shown a tendency to supplant the other, with varying success in various periods of history.

> European metaphysics will have to find its way ever again between these two terms and these two figures of its destiny; it will be activated ever again within limits drawn by the two extremes either of a quasi-exclusive orientation toward things or of an equally limitless regard for man's practical ethical efforts to reach his essential core.[6]

Understanding the European heritage on the basis of these two orientations, with their complementarity and their – always possible – antagonism, one should then draw all the conclusions, first and foremost as concerns the domination of technology in the planetary era. When we say, as Patočka never ceased repeating in the 1970s, that the "post-European" period is characterized by the *general adoption of knowledge and practices indexed on the power calculus*, we express merely an overweening effect of the crushing, suffocating hegemony of one orientation over the other. The hegemony is such that, as Husserl already remarked in *The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology*, the relation of science and technology to their original ground, to the "insight" without which they would never have existed, is itself suppressed. This however does not mean that the reflection on Europe's heritage, the task of re-collection or re-appropriation advocated by Patočka, involves turning our backs on technology, resisting it, rejecting it, or even accusing it of all evils; what is intended here is rather to make possible a different understanding of the meaning of its domination. Patočka's reflection means to make us understand what technology is *exclusive* of – that is, what it tends to confiscate at the very heart of the European heritage. It shows us that technology should be questioned not only on the basis of the orientation in which it is grounded (that which directs the mind toward acquiring knowledge of things) but, no less, from the viewpoint of the other orientation (that which impels man to inquire into the ethical and political grounds of a life he will, thereby, be in a position to share with others). Though we do not yet realize it, we are already on our way back to Charter 77.

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[6] Ibid., pp. 243–244/81 (German/French).

The concern with rehabilitation of this other orientation is what explains the privileging of Plato's thought in Patočka's work. Of course, one cannot claim that there is no connection between Plato and Democritus. In "Europe and Post-Europe" and *Plato and Europe* Patočka makes a painstaking inventory of their similarities and the points where they meet. Nonetheless, atomism remains, in itself, a prefiguration of the orientation which disposes the soul to overcome its errancy in the world by searching for the ground of the universe of things. Turning the soul toward knowledge of the basic things, atomism expects this knowledge to transform man, of and by itself, without his pursuing any other goal than that of reaching the truth of the universe. The question, then, is whether or not this intended unity is equal to the "unifying formative action"[7] Patočka hopes and prays for – action which, alone, could contribute to making the world a world. Is knowledge, traced back to its foundations, capable of accomplishing this task? Is the unity of this sort of knowledge the field where Europe and, in the planetary era, the rest of the world are to seize their chance? Is this the only form of unity upon which we could (and should) *still today* found some sort of faith and hope? Was this not, by the way, Husserl's project – shared by the whole of phenomenology?

Meditating on Plato's writings in the 1970s, coming to terms with the figure of Socrates, his teaching, as well as his fate – all of this brings Patočka to measure the insufficiency of what can only be understood as an amputation of the European heritage, withdrawn into but one of its two branches. Looking exclusively to the unity of science in the planetary era would mean missing out on the major legacy of the "care for the soul." It would also mean denying *ourselves* (a "we" by no means limited to us Europeans) every chance of rethinking anew the relation between this technology (with which we have to live) and the "formative action" (without which it would end up rendering life impossible). What is it then – what can we take from Socrates' and Plato's heritage – that might give this chance back to us? What we can take is the very thing which nurtured the spirit of Charter 77, not to say literally inspired it. What heritage was it then (as it is doubtless still now) imperative to claim? First and foremost, a way of seeing – assuming, as I recalled above, that the care for the soul is truly to be defined as "insight," a sight no longer exclusively turned toward the ground of things but, henceforth, directing itself equally (or, perhaps, above all) toward *the truth of moral and political relations*, the truth of what Patočka terms, in a limpid phrase, "the essential possibilities of human Being-with-one-another."[8]

Now, for such possibilities to be viewed in their truth, our sight must first of all *free itself from tradition*, i.e., free itself from the certainties, the dogmas, the opinions in the name of which such and such a regime, such and such an institution (mark the word) makes its decisions. In his magnificent portrait of Socrates, this *liberty* is the first distinctive feature that Patočka retains as a constituent of our heritage. Socrates is the man who opposed the confiscation of moral and political

[7] Ibid., p. 226/59 (German/French).

[8] Ibid., p. 231/66 (German/French): "die Grundmöglichkeiten des menschlichen Miteinanderseins."

relations by a blinded and unthinking state. He was the first to demonstrate, at the risk of his life (the same risk run by Patočka as spokesperson for Charter 77), that no ossified tradition, no consensual opinion can claim to exhaust the meaning of these relations and replace the search for their truth. He thus showed the virtue of *courage* to be consubstantial with the "moral insight" directed toward this sphere. In writing this portrait, Patočka must have had in mind his own situation and that of so many others in a society which, as Václav Havel put it in his 1975 open letter to Gustav Husák,[9] stifled moral relations and jeopardized any political relation other than submission – a society in which telling the truth supposed overcoming ubiquitous fear, something that was possible only *at the risk of one's life*. Here, already, we are beginning to understand (every line added to the portrait makes it clearer) what *the Socratic example and heritage* must have meant to a thinker about to be deputed to speak for Charter 77.

Danger is indeed a key issue for Patočka in his long essay on "Europe and Post-Europe," as also in the *Heretical Essays*. Insight into the truth of moral and political relations cannot be separated from a reflection on life, survival, and death – from the dizzying understanding of that which, in the moral and the political, *necessarily* transcends attachment to life and fear of death. This is perhaps what we would find most difficult to "re-appropriate" and call ourselves heirs to. In the all-pervasive process of adopting and adapting characteristic of the planetary era, nothing stands out so much as the pursuit of this or that convenience of life, the heightened craving for comfort and protection – *at all costs*. The abundance or scarcity of these commodities becomes the exclusive criterion for an on-the-spot judgment ignoring all forms of questioning – the matter of a common knowledge which takes the place of all reflection on the foundations of a just relation. All is done then to bind us to the image of a secure life and heighten the fear of death in our hearts. All is done to subordinate the organizing and control of our relations to the *fear* of losing this security.

Socrates is the man who, at the risk of his own life (but this holds for Patočka as well), forever disrupted the tranquil order of certainties and put *courage* in the place of fear. He instilled into the *polis* the *poison* (or should one rather say the *medicine*?) of a discursive quest for foundation and justification, from which it was never to recover. It would be a mistake to underestimate the effects of this instillation, to view it as a meager heritage, not up to the problems of the post-European era. What is at issue here is the scope left, in the organization of moral and political relations, for aporia, uncertainty, non-knowing, as fundamental modalities of calling into question. What is at issue is the possibility of a politics based on the fact that nothing in these relations is self-evident; whatever their obviousness and immediacy, there is nothing about them that does not require clarification, foundation, justification. Socrates reminds us that there is no assurance (social, moral, political, or whatever) that cannot be *shaken*. His lesson of courage passes over the ages and across borders to let us know that nowhere, in no society, can these relations be

[9] See English translation in Václav Havel, *Living in Truth: 22 Essays Published on the Occasion of the Award of the Erasmus Prize*, ed. J. Vladislav (London: Faber & Faber, 1990).

founded on resignation – nor on the sad affect of fear or, today as in the past, *still in so many places*, on the thousand and one faces of terror, where (between fear and terror) it becomes impossible to tell one from the other. As concerns the care for the soul passed down to us by Socrates – a caring *at once* for our own soul and for the soul of the community – Patočka can then, in Prague, in the 1970s, call it "the death of the *polis*":

> The soul, regenerated in Socratic caring, lives in a new community which is no longer that of the past, but rather its eternal essence and archetype, the care for the soul is the death of the *polis*, and between the former life, founded on opinion and ancestral tradition, and life founded on insight (albeit an essentially negative, seeking insight), there will henceforth be no peace.[10]

The "soul" should not, therefore, be seen as an obsolete term that could be dismissed without further ado. Rather, this term reminds us that no politics disregards the emotions through which the soul can be moved. Fear, courage and anger are affects of the soul which power relies on and knows how to manipulate. Not one of these affects is exempt from the threat of instrumentalization. Concerning fear, Patočka – like Havel at the same time – insists in his Charter 77 texts on the extent to which it endangers the very possibility of just moral and political relations. As to courage and anger, both can be taken over and forced into the power calculus by what he calls in the *Heretical Essays* the "forces of the day." The care for the soul (refusing to submit to these forces) finds here its primary legitimation. It is a way of thinking and acting that runs counter to any exploitation of this sort – which is not limited to non-democratic regimes. The care for the soul overcomes all forms of intimidation and provides anger and courage, as we shall soon see, with an object that resists appropriation by the power calculus.

For all that, the care for the soul cannot be reduced to a principle of resistance. It goes beyond, branching into three modalities whose indissociable complementarity is the very crux of *our heritage*. If the care for the soul can be viewed as the death of the *polis*, it is in fact because it is an ontological project, a critical and political project, and a project of life all in one – three aspects analyzed successively in "Europe and Post-Europe" in particularly intense passages:

1. The care for the soul is an ontological project inasmuch as it supposes – in accordance with the thesis exposed in the fundamental texts published in French under the title *The Natural World and the Movement of Human Existence*[11] – that the soul is aware of the movement which, carrying it away from ordinary, conventional existence toward an inquiry into the primary grounds and principles, is thereby imparted to the whole of Being. The care for the soul finds its truth in a progression accomplishing, beyond the necessary movements of sinking roots and reproduction, this movement of breakthrough, which cannot be confined within any established knowledge or science, and does not attempt to hide behind any dogma.

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[10] Ibid., p. 261/102 (German/French).

[11] Jan Patočka, *Le monde naturel et le mouvement de l'existence humaine*, ed. and transl. E. Abrams with an Introduction by H. Declève (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1988).

Caring for the soul, in this sense, implies renouncing the kind of illusory tranquillity (being "at peace with oneself," "at peace with one's conscience," etc.) procured by the pretension of possessing truth once and for all – i.e., renouncing all guaranteed meaning, all definitive answers. The soul thus becomes aware of the place it occupies in the whole of Being.

2. It is a critical and political project because the care of the soul cannot be reduced to the care of *one's own* soul. It is always, simultaneously and constitutively, care *for* the soul of the community. If it is true that it manifests itself principially in the implementation of a moral insight that makes possible a different life form, then this insight, as Patočka tells us (in reading Plato), must be transposable to the project of a community of justice founded on education. The word "soul" should not lead us astray. It does not refer to the hypothetical "spirit" or "genius" of any particular people. The care *for* the soul of the community does not aid or abet particularities. It is the care for *possibilities* of Being-with-one-another which demand justification and are yet to be founded. And the care for the soul also points to something else, in cases where, in a political context knowing no exigency of education and justice, the sage or philosopher, Socrates or whoever, comes into conflict with the *polis*. It points to the importance of affects in the organization of the body politic. It reminds us that, if the question of the soul is political, it is because the state generally attempts to influence the soul of its citizens – for example, by imposing the passions required for the exercise of its power – and because fear, resignation, renouncement, or discouragement, as well as the feeling of comfort and security, which are all affects of the soul, are at the same time means of governing. In his meticulous reading of *The Republic*, Patočka pays particular attention to this analogy between the different moments of the soul, its structure and composition, and those of the state. If, for Socrates as for the author of the *Heretical Essays*, care of the soul entails risking his life, it is because it involves a type of questioning and calling into question that clash head-on with the affects on which an unjust organization of the *polis* is based. Disrupting at once two composite structures – that of the citizens' soul and that of the *polis* – the care for the soul calls back to mind, for those who might have forgotten it, the radical incompatibility of this sort of affects with the project of a just society, drawing the improbable portrait of a future community that would be freed from them – the community of justice – and showing the way to their overthrow.

We understand then why the figure of Socrates is placed at the heart of the European heritage: in order to make us wish for, hope, and believe once again in this sort of community. Not to let us forget that such a community requires an entirely different "economy of affects" from that based on fear and submission, an economy that educates and "upraises," rather than maintaining ignorance and debasing. Fear, discouragement, and all other forms of *ressentiment* are then substituted by courage – a subject Patočka recurs to again and again – and, above all, by the *thymos*, dealt with in some of the most vibrant passages of "Europe and Post-Europe" – the upward-borne *thymos* which encourages us to overcome the instinct of self-preservation binding us to life and to the satisfaction of our most primitive needs at any price.

> Given its tendency toward surpassing, the *thymos* presupposes something non-immediate, something worth surpassing oneself for, i.e., worth exposing oneself to danger. It is a natural surpassing of the instinct of self-preservation at any price, a surpassing of life. This is what directs the *thymos* upward. Self-esteem, which lets no one come near and acquires legitimacy through risk of the self: such is the *thymos*.[12]

There would be a great deal to say about the analysis Patočka proposes of this notion (the *thymos*), so difficult to define, as well as of his portrait of those whom Plato designates as the "guardians of the state" – these spiritual guardians whose "inner commitment" is described as "the opposite of the cold and distant contempt with which a police officer encounters the public."[13] I shall mention here only two points that I believe to be decisive. The first is the great heed paid in "Europe and Post-Europe" to the importance of the education of the guardians (the *paideia*) in Plato. Inasmuch as it makes them what Patočka calls "persons of spirit,"[14] this education is the first condition of the community of justice, in the fiber of which we can discern, so to say, a reverse image of those who today set themselves up as guardians of our security. The second point is the connection between that which is here defined as "spirit" and *the care for the soul*. The persons of spirit, according to Patočka, are those who do not separate "insight" from action – those in whom the pursuit of truth (wisdom) goes together with the courage required by the pursuit of justice. These, however, are things that do not necessarily follow the same movement. Their harmony is by no means obvious. This is why something like the *thymos*, as Patočka explains it (in terms close to those used to describe the second movement of human existence), is necessary. The *thymos* is an ardor or anger that defies the instinct of self-preservation and stands up not only to fear but, more generally, to everything that disheartens and makes us feel inclined to give up and withdraw into the private sphere – it is the surpassing of life at risk of one's life.

3. As stressed above, the care for the soul implies a threefold project. The third moment, inseparable from the first two, concerns the knowledge of the soul *as a whole* – i.e., its relations with "the physical world, the lived body, and incorporeal Being."[15] It has to do with the kind of "insight" all humans are led and destined to bring to bear face to face with their own life, their finitude, and their inevitable death. The care for the soul carries those who accept it toward a Being that has no physical existence, a Being that can be discovered only by going against the general trend of reality. This *movement* is what accounts for the precariousness of existence. Without this progression, in which the soul surpasses its own reality, neither the ontological project nor the critical and political project of a community of justice would be possible. Both suppose something that Patočka describes in the final passages of his manuscript, in a tone reminiscent of the last chapter of the *Heretical Essays*: a veritable about-turn of existence, a conversion in which life no

[12] Ibid., p. 277/124 (German/French).

[13] Ibid., p. 273/118 (German/French).

[14] Ibid., p. 210/41 (German/French).

[15] Ibid., p. 281/129 (GermanFrench).

longer lets itself be confined to a "clinging to life, a deceptive game of hide-and-go-seek with death,"[16] but rather stands apart from reality and its bondages, while at the same time taking full responsibility.

This responsibility is doubtless what goes to make up the spirit of Charter 77. It is also what focuses the European heritage. Nothing, in any of the three projects briefly passed in review, can be reduced to any one specificity: to one or several languages, to say nothing of a character or spirit (the European character, the spirit of the Occident, etc.). The care for the soul implies no system of values referable to an authority or an institution, whatever it may be. On the contrary, if Patočka, in his reflection on the European heritage, is indeed in search of a "unifying formative action," non-reducible to Europe's past domination, the care for the soul meets all the criteria required for such an action. Far from letting itself be confined to any one specific cultural tradition, its heritage shows the way, *everywhere*, to a radical calling into question which no certainty of whatever nature, no denomination or allegiance, can avoid. Beyond all divergences, all acknowledged, claimed, or fantasized differences of belonging, the care for the soul endows faith anew with the one dimension that can make it lasting: that of leading life, with an implacable critical exigency, "to the utmost of its movement (which is the movement of the soul)."[17]

II

These are the themes that carry Patočka's reading and interpretation of the founding declaration of Charter 77, as well as his commitment alongside the signatories, as their spokesperson – the themes which give the Charter universal significance. Everything the portrait of Socrates enjoins us to meditate upon is to be found again in the brief text entitled "What Charter 77 Is and What It Is Not." Patočka here starts off by tracing what is at issue back to the twofold orientation we also began with. He reminds the reader of the necessity of moral standards that cannot be reduced to technical reason – including the (always calculating and self-interested) rationale of power. He points to the need for unconditional principles – principles that are not affected by any ideological allegiance whatsoever – the very principles Charter 77 is meant to be a reminder of. Now, all that which is called for in the name of these principles comes clearly under the heading of *care for the soul*:

> If human development is to match the possibilities of technical, instrumental reason, if a progress of knowledge is to be possible, humankind needs to be convinced of the unconditional validity of principles which are, in that sense, "sacred," valid for all humans and at all times, and capable of setting out humanity's goals. In other words: we need something that in its very essence is not technological, something that is not merely instrumental; we need a morality that is not merely tactical and incidental, but absolute.[18]

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[16] Ibid., p. 283/131 (German/French).

[17] Ibid., p. 284/131 (German/French).

[18] Jan Patočka, "The Obligation to Resist Injustice," in *Philosophy and Selected Writings*, ed. and transl. E. Kohák (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1989), p. 340.

What the Charter is proposing to do, in other words, is to make heard and to impose on all, beginning with the powers that be, a "moral truth" that does not aim at prescribing a specific organizational model of society or even at suggesting a particular view, but rather at asserting on principle and putting in practice a *caring for man* which is first and foremost the care for the soul. This care should not, however, be subject to re-appropriation, to any "humanist" or other hijacking. We must not let ourselves be misled by the idea of a moral truth. Patočka was well aware of the ways in which calling upon such an idea might be instrumentalized by all powers, as he also realized the dangers of mixing up morals and politics. Thought and action are caught between two pitfalls, which draw the line of their aporia. On the one hand, they cannot do without unconditional principles. To renounce this exigency would mean, albeit tacitly, to lend support to everything the powers can come up with to establish and preserve their domination, to all the laws, decrees, measures of surveillance and control that serve this purpose, in the name of order, security, or whatever. Without unconditional principles, these power techniques – as we know (and Patočka knew better than any of us) – have no limit. On the other hand, simply asserting this exigency does not solve the problem. For all particular morals can themselves, as one out of many, be used as power techniques. The force of constraint and habit (which are part of the essence of morals) rank among the tools of domination. Nothing then is less sovereign than the quite conventional moral sentiment called upon, according to the circumstances, *to justify everything*: the arbitrariness of individual or collective wishes, needs, leanings, or desires. Nothing is, therefore, more common than the (basically nihilistic) temptation to abandon, in return, politics (i.e., the care of the community) to the rationality and technicity of this calculus – to give up the moral exigency.

In these conditions (which are also those of oppression), there is an urgency to refuse such a renouncement – i.e., beyond the two pitfalls, to restore its sovereignty to *moral sentiment*, irreducible to any belonging, cultural, denominational, or other. This is the exigency answered, in an indissociably moral and political manner, by the "care for the soul." It is in this sense – and only in this sense – that it represents an inexhaustible source of inspiration for those who demand the respect of these principles. The universality and fundamental inviolability of human rights, the imperative respect of which is called for by Charter 77, find here their foundation:

> The idea of human rights is nothing other than the conviction that even states, even society as a whole, are subject to the sovereignty of moral sentiment: that they recognize something unconditional that is higher than they are, something that is binding even on them, "sacred" (inviolable), and that, in their power to establish and maintain a rule of law, they seek to express this recognition.[19]

But above all – and I would like to conclude here – Patočka stresses in the most explicit fashion that this care (taking the form of recognition and assertion of these unconditional principles) is the only way open to us all to overcome the life entangled in fear and the pursuit of compensatory material assets (the commodities of consumer

[19] Ibid., p. 341.

culture) described by Václav Havel, in these same years, in his open letter to Gustav Husák. This is why his lesson, nurtured by Plato's dialogues, reaches beyond the conditions particular to post-totalitarian regimes. In fact, nothing of that which he proposes can be confined to specific historical circumstances – our own existence, our need for security, comfort, protection at all cost, our culture of anxiety and fear are called into question by the exigencies of the care for the soul. If it is true that the care for the soul, as a common heritage, ultimately constitutes the motivation of a responsibility shared by both the state and its citizens, then this responsibility is also ours. Nothing is ever assured or definitive, and Charter 77 has, without a doubt, lost nothing of its actuality. Along with the other signatories of the Charter, Patočka reminded Czechoslovakian political officials of the standard of political and moral responsibility to which they were held by their signature of the two International Covenants, on Civil and Political Rights, and on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, but at the same time he urged all his fellow citizens to consider more than fear and self-interest in their own actions, in all spheres of existence. Enjoining political officials, whatever the circumstances, independent of all calculus and scheming, not to forget the "moral, transcendent foundation of all things politic,"[20] he recalled to all that political commitment, consisting in sharing a common responsibility, is meaningless if it is not rooted in the dimension of care for the soul which has to do with "a person's obligation to himself" – i.e., "among other things, *the obligation to resist any injustice done him*."[21] In other terms (which are not to be found in Patočka), that means that if the care for the soul is constitutive of all individuation in all spheres of existence, not as support for any particular form of individualism, but inasmuch as it allows each person not only to exist as an individual, but also to bequeath existence, then it imposes on each one the obligation to denounce (to bring to the attention of others) injustice wherever it occurs. This (and this alone) is how it becomes care for the soul of the community. Neither passivity nor indifference, silence, or complacency[22] is compatible with the duties of the individual toward himself and (indissociably) toward others. I am liable to others both for the wrong that is done me, for the injustice I suffer, and for any wrongs or injustices of which I am aware. Such is the first meaning of *solidarity*. Such is the twofold appeal addressed to us still today by Patočka. On this hundredth anniversary of his birth, the final word should be his, as his was the risk:

> Thus no individual who is genuinely oppressed but who is determined not to surrender his obligation to speak out for himself – which is his obligation to his society as well – should

[20] Ibid. Cf. French translation: "Ce qu'est la Charte 77 et ce qu'elle n'est pas," transl. E. Abrams, in *Esprit*, no. 352, February 2009, p. 165.

[21] Jan Patočka, "The Obligation …," op. cit., p. 342. [My emphasis.]

[22] Cf. Jan Patočka, "What We Can [and Cannot] Expect from Charter 77," in *Philosophy and Selected Writings*, op. cit., p. 343: "Let us not mince words: submissiveness has never led to relaxation, only to greater severity. The greater the fear and servility, the more they dare and will dare. Nothing can make them relax their grip except a corrosion of their confidence – a realization that their acts and injustice and discrimination do not pass unnoticed, that the waters do not close over the stones they throw."

> rightly feel isolated and at the mercy of overwhelming circumstances. The aim of Charter 77 is thus the solidarity – spontaneous and exempt from all external obligatoriness – of all those who have understood the significance of moral sentiment for real society and its normal workings.… Not simply or primarily fear or profit, but respect for what is higher in humans, a sense of duty, of the common good, and of the need to accept even discomfort, misunderstanding, and a certain risk, should henceforth be our motives.[23]

[23] Jan Patočka, "The Obligation …," op. cit., p. 342–343; "Ce qu'est la Charte 77 et ce qu'elle n'est pas," op. cit., p. 167. See also Jan Patočka, "What We Can …," op. cit., p. 346: "[P]eople have once more become aware that there are things for which it is worthwhile to suffer, that the things for which we might have to suffer are those which make life worthwhile, and that without them all our arts, literature, and culture become mere trades leading only from the desk to the pay office and back."

Patočka on Techno-Power and the Sacrificial Victim (*Oběť*)

Ľubica Učník

> Man is a mere reed, the weakest thing in nature; but he is a thinking reed. The entire universe need not arm itself to crush him; a vapor, a drop of water, is sufficient to cause his death. But if the whole universe were to crush him, man would still be nobler than his destroyer, because he knows that he dies, and also the advantage that the universe has over him; but the universe knows nothing of this. Our whole dignity, therefore, consists in thought. From this we must rise, not from space and time which we cannot fill. Let us endeavor then to think aright, this is the principle of morality.[1]

The Czech philosopher Jan Patočka, one of the last students of Edmund Husserl, is not widely known in Anglo-American philosophy. If known at all, he has been mostly regarded as an interpreter of Husserl. In 1995, the translation of Derrida's book *The Gift of Death* brought Patočka to the notice of a broader philosophical audience. Regrettably, Derrida's exposition does not do justice to Patočka's thinking.

There is nothing surprising about Derrida's misreading of Patočka. If one wants to learn about Nietzsche, for example, one should not start with Heidegger's or Deleuze's works on Nietzsche. To begin one's study of Nietzsche with Heidegger might teach one something of Heidegger's thinking; but to claim that Heidegger's exposition is the only possible reading of Nietzsche would be foolish.

Derrida would agree with this assessment. After proclaiming Patočka to be "an essentially Christian" thinker, he provides a typically Derridean caveat, stating, "it matters little in the end,"[2] since, "the alternative between [the] two hypotheses

[1] Blaise Pascal, *Pensées: Notes on Religion and Other Subjects* (London and New York: J. M. Dent & Sons Ltd., 1960), ed. L. Lafuma, transl. J. Warrington, no. 391.

[2] Jacques Derrida, *The Gift of Death*, transl. D. Wills (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1995), p. 48.

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(Christian text or not, Patočka as a Christian thinker or not) is of limited pertinence."[3] Edward Findlay, for example, has stated that "Derrida's portrait of Patočka is somewhat myopic."[4]

As suggested in my comparison with the reading of Nietzsche, it is important to realize that Derrida's reading imputes to Patočka an aim and an intention that is rather Derrida's own than Patočka's. For Patočka, history is not primarily a history of responsibility, as Derrida maintains, but a confrontation with the old, disintegrating tradition. Derrida implies otherwise when he states that, for the Czech philosopher, "separating orgiastic mystery from Christian mystery … announces the origin of responsibility,"[5] whereby "the history of responsibility is tied to a history of religion."[6]

For Patočka, the history *of* responsibility and the history *of* Christianity are subspecies of history. As Patočka explains, "religious experience [is] a phase of the human past which knows only a 'small' human meaning, a meaning that is absolute, but unquestioned and naively unbroken, a meaning simply given and found without seeking."[7] Prior to any history of responsibility or of Christianity, history begins with the opening of a space for questioning. This goes back to archaic Greece, when myths ceased to provide viable explanations of the world, and nature revealed itself anew. The question "what is all of this?" was then answered, for the first time, without recourse to myths or gods. For Patočka, philosophy and politics created this open space for questioning, thus initiating history.[8] History, as he understands it, "is nothing other than the shaken certitude of given meaning. It has no other meaning or goal."[9] History is nothing other than this questioning attitude: reflection on thinking instead of uncritical acceptance of traditional beliefs. It is against this background that Patočka then asserts: "Today's danger is that, knowing so many particulars, we are losing the ability to see the questions and that which is their foundation."[10]

If one wishes to address the history of responsibility, as Patočka does, one must address the issue from the space of questioning. The act of questioning can rest on nothing other than the *will* to question. To question, according to Patočka, means to renounce all prior metaphysical foundations, be they gods or Platonic Ideas. That is why Patočka's discussion is not underwritten by any transcendence. The heresy of Patočka's approach is to "the conception of history which holds progress for an absolute necessity which requires the sacrifice of individual subjectivity."[11]

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[3] Ibid., p. 49.

[4] Edward F. Findlay, "Secrets of European Responsibility: Jacques Derrida on Responsibility in the Philosophy of Jan Patočka," in *Philosophy Today*, Vol. 46, no. 1, Spring 2002, p. 17. See Findlay's critique of Derrida's misrepresentation of Patočka as a Christian thinker.

[5] Jacques Derrida, op. cit., p. 4.

[6] Ibid., p. 5.

[7] Jan Patočka, "Author's Glosses," in *Heretical Essays in the Philosophy of History*, ed. J. Dodd, transl. E. Kohák (Chicago and La Salle: Open Court, 1996), pp. 139–140.

[8] Ibid., p. 139.

[9] Jan Patočka, *Heretical Essays*…, op. cit., p. 118.

[10] Ibid.

[11] Jan Patočka, "Author's Glosses," op. cit., p. 147.

This understanding "is so widespread that we can, without exaggeration, consider it the (latent or overt) philosophy of history which dominates contemporary humanity."[12] The pre-eminent figure for Patočka is Socrates, the only thinker who was not afraid to admit that his knowledge consisted of not knowing,[13] that his wisdom was merely human.[14]

The central issue for Patočka is "whether historical humans are still willing to embrace history,"[15] i.e., whether we are still willing to question what is given to us unreflectively. For Patočka, following Husserl, the question of reflection is crucial. Reflection means living in truth.[16]

The problem of presenting Patočka's ideas is complicated by the Czech word *oběť*. The Czech *oběť* could be translated into English by the words: sacrifice, victim, or casualty. Erazim Kohák translates it as sacrifice, or sacrificial victim. Although Kohák notes the difficulty in translating the word *oběť*, he does not consider the problem of etymology.[17] The Czech word *oběť* is *not* derived, as is the English (or French) word *sacrifice*, from the Latin *sacra* with its conspicuous ties *ad res divinas*. The etymological history of the form and meaning of the word sacrifice can lead to a crucial misunderstanding of Patočka's writings on this subject, as Derrida's interpretation of Patočka demonstrates. The etymology of "sacrifice" can unproblematically lead to the claim that Patočka is a Christian thinker.

When Patočka speaks of *oběť*, translated as sacrifice or sacrificial victim, especially in his discussion of the front experience, one should therefore remember that the translated word "sacrifice," or "sacrificial victim," contains not only the idea of a sacrifice, but also the idea of a victim and a casualty, as in victims or casualties of war, especially civilian casualties (in and after the Second World War, when the line of combat became blurred with "aerial warfare … striking anywhere with equal cruelty").[18] At present, victims (*oběti)* of war also include civilian casualties (*oběti*).

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[12] Ibid.

[13] See, for example, the analysis of Plato's *Apology* in Jan Patočka, *Sokrates. Přednáška z letního semestru 1947* [Socrates. Lectures from the Summer Semester 1947] (Praha: samizdat, 1977).

[14] Plato, "Apology," transl. G. M. A. Grube, in *Complete Works*, ed. J. M. Cooper (Indianapolis and Cambridge, Massachusetts: Hackett Publishing Co., 1997), 18a–35e, esp. 20d.

[15] Jan Patočka, *Heretical Essays*…, op. cit., p. 118.

[16] Cf. Jan Patočka, *Plato and Europe*, transl. P. Lom (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2002), p. 43.

[17] Erazim Kohák, "Translator's Notes" in Jan Patočka, *Philosophy and Selected Writings*, ed. and transl. E. Kohák (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1989), p. 339: "Patočka takes advantage of the fact that in both Czech and German the same word (*oběť*, *Opfer*) is used to speak of a victim (as of an earthquake) and of a sacrifice (as a religious sacrifice). This enables him to claim that technicization claims many victims/sacrifices. I have tried to suggest this by resorting to the term *sacrificial victim*. However, Patočka's point does not depend on the pun but rather on the fact that even in the technological age so many people experience their own victimization as a sacrifice and the victimization of others as their 'being sacrificed on the altar of progress.' As long as that is so, nihilism has not prevailed."

[18] Jan Patočka, *Heretical Essays*…, op. cit., p. 132.

It is precisely this polysemy of the word *oběť* that Patočka brings into play. This polysemy is also at play in the German word *Opfer*.

In this paper, I will present that aspect of Patočka's thinking which has to do with the existential crisis of today's society. In dealing with this subject, it is important to keep in mind that Patočka, despite his Heideggerian vocabulary, attempts to think our current existential crisis by taking insights from *both* Heidegger *and* Husserl.

For Patočka, the existential crisis of today's society and the perpetual wars disguised as peace are two sides of the same problem. They are the outcome of the transformation of nature into a standing-reserve of energy for humans to use as they see fit.[19] Stripped of unpredictable and contingent elements, nature is transformed into a formal system written in mathematical symbols that can be potentially understood by everyone, everywhere, and at all times. If the book of nature is written in the characters of geometry, as Galileo thought, it follows that the idea of responsibility for nature as the environment in which we live is not clear.

Yet not everything in the world is open to such calculative transformation. For Patočka, the phenomenon of the sacrificial victim is an example of the impossibility of calculation, and therefore also of prediction, which is the *sine qua non* of modern scientific knowledge. Patočka's exposition offers a way in which to combat the understanding based on calculation alone. The phenomenon of sacrifice can challenge our techno-scientific understanding of the world by showing the futility of attempts to use solely objective – i.e., formal – knowledge to account for the world we live in.

The Natural World

> Can we live in this world, where historical occurrence is nothing but an unending concatenation of illusory progress and bitter disappointment?[20]

According to Patočka, "the problem of the 'natural' world" became prominent with the positivist movement and its crusade to end "traditional metaphysics not only outside of but also within the sciences."[21] Yet, as Patočka notes, Husserl in his critique of positivism recognized that the natural world is not something obvious,

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[19] See ibid. For Heidegger's discussion of *Gestell*, see Martin Heidegger, "The Question Concerning Technology," in *The Question Concerning Technology and Other Essays*, transl. W. Lovitt (New York: Harper & Row, 1977), pp. 3–35.

[20] Edmund Husserl, *The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology: An Introduction to Phenomenological Philosophy*, transl. D. Carr (Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 1970), § 2 [p. 7].

[21] Jan Patočka, "The 'Natural' World and Phenomenology" [1967], in *Philosophy and Selected Writings*, op. cit., p. 239. See, for example, Ernst Mach, *The Analysis of Sensations and the Relation of the Physical to the Psychical* [1897], transl. C. M. Williams and S. Waterlow (New York: Dover Publications, 1959), especially Chapter One: "Introductory Remarks: Anti-Metaphysical."

given to us in all its integrity; its description is rather a task to be accomplished.[22] For "humans of the industrial age,"[23] the world is split in two. On the one hand, it is the objective world of natural science; on the other, it is the world we live in.[24] One world is imprecise, changing and unaccountable; the other is precise, defined by strict causality and mathematization. Science presupposes the natural world, the world of accidents, flux, and change, from which science paradoxically derives its system of the mathematical lawfulness of nature,[25] transforming it methodically through idealization into the mathematized world of exact causality.[26] Forgetting its own methodological procedure, this new constructed nature purged of every particularism and contingency becomes the "real" world, while the natural world is held to be its inferior "subjective 'reflection.'"[27] As Patočka comments: "Nowhere in nature can we observe pure momentum in the strict sense, and yet the law of momentum holds, and rigorous kinematics would be unthinkable without it."[28]

This hypothetical formal structure leads "not so much to perceive nature as to calculate it."[29] As Patočka sums up, "to construe and calculate means at the same time to predict."[30] Modern science becomes "a specialized mode of knowing, one which applies once tried and proven formal schemata of objectivity to ever new regions of being and new aspects of our experience."[31] Far from being negligible, this objectification of nature is constitutive of modern human experience.[32]

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[22] Jan Patočka, "'Přirozený svět' v meditaci svého autora po třiatřiceti letech," in *Přirozený svět jako filosofický problém* (Praha: Československý spisovatel, 1992), p. 208; [see German translation: "Nachwort des Autors zur tschechischen Neuausgabe (1970)," in *Die natürliche Welt als philosophisches Problem. Phänomenologische Schriften I*, ed. K. Nellen and J. Němec, transl. E. and R. Melville (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1990), p. 222].

[23] Jan Patočka, *Heretical Essays*…, op. cit., p. 95.

[24] Jan Patočka, "'Přirozený svět' v meditaci…," op. cit., p. 207; ["Nachwort des Autors…," op. cit., p. 221].

[25] Jan Patočka, *Přirozený svět jako*…, op. cit., p. 9; [*Die natürliche Welt als*…, op. cit., p. 25]. See also Jan Patočka, *Úvod do fenomenologické filosofie* [Introduction to Phenomenological Philosophy (lecture course, 1969/1970)] (Praha: Oikoymenh, 1993), p. 75.

[26] Jan Patočka, "'Přirozený svět' v meditaci…," op. cit., p. 207; ["Nachwort des Autors…," op. cit., p. 221]. Husserl formulates the critique of this split in understanding nature by way of a question. He asks, if "every psychological judgment involves the existential positing of physical nature, whether expressly or not," then "how is natural science to be comprehensible in absolutely every case, to the extent that it pretends at every step to posit and to know a nature that is in itself – in itself in opposition to the subjective flow of consciousness?" (Edmund Husserl, "Philosophy as Rigorous Science," in *Phenomenology and the Crisis of Philosophy. Philosophy as Rigorous Science and Philosophy and the Crisis of European Man*, transl. Q. Lauer [New York: Harper & Row, 1965], pp. 86, 88.)

[27] Jan Patočka, "The 'Natural' World…," op. cit., p. 240.

[28] Jan Patočka, *Heretical Essays*…, op. cit., p. 70.

[29] Ibid.

[30] Jan Patočka, "Cartesianism and Phenomenology," in *Philosophy and Selected Writings*, op. cit., p. 292.

[31] Ibid., p. 286.

[32] Jan Patočka, "'Přirozený svět' v meditaci…," op. cit., p. 207; ["Nachwort des Autors…," op. cit., p. 221].

The problem is that this sort of knowledge – essentially a hypothetical knowledge based on certain assumptions – is increasingly used to predict the functioning of society as well, as if human existence were also something unchanging, a type that could be used to predict a development of society as a whole. Is it possible, however, to understand human existence as something calculable? Though there have been a great many attempts to do so, human existence cannot be transformed into a formal system applicable to everyone. We accumulate statistics to understand everything, as if numbers had the magical power to freeze all reality into a static system. Then, as if those numbers revealed some lawful manner in which society functions, we calculate in order to discover solutions that can be applied in each instance.

Capitalism, with its drive for raising productivity, for incorporating everyone and everything in its striving for higher and higher profits, is based on this model of understanding of humans. In this sense, "the 'human' assumes a form which may be capable of increasing productivity and its consequences, but is unable to understand it."[33] In this exclusively modern project of transformation of nature, humans, stripped of understanding, are incorporated into a "standing-reserve"; we become part of the calculated stockpile, as powers among other powers, things among other things, waiting "on order" for a further assault on the world's resources.

Techno-Science as Historical Manifestation of Truth

> The exclusiveness with which the total world-view of modern man, in the second half of the nineteenth century, let itself be determined by the positive sciences and be blinded by the "prosperity" they produced, meant an indifferent turning-away from the questions which are decisive for a genuine humanity. Merely fact-minded sciences make merely fact-minded people.[34]

For Patočka, the natural world, the world we live in, is historical. There is no hidden world to be uncovered beneath our modern one. Humans live in the world that was already here before they were born and that will still be here when they die.[35] As Patočka would say, following Heidegger, we are thrown into a world that preceded us, and all we can do is to understand it as such.[36] Admitting that human understanding of the world is historical, that the world reveals itself to humans differently at different times, one must say that, in our time, modern techno-science is what, in its very specific formal manner, uncovers nature, thus "making truth possible."[37]

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[33] Jan Patočka, "The Dangers of Technicization in Science according to E. Husserl and the Essence of Technology as Danger according to M. Heidegger" (1st version, 1973), in *Philosophy and Selected Writings*, op. cit., pp. 337–338.

[34] Edmund Husserl, *The Crisis of European Sciences*…, op. cit., § 2 [pp. 5–6].

[35] Jan Patočka, "Author's Glosses," op. cit., p. 152.

[36] Jan Patočka, "The Dangers of Technicization…," op. cit., p. 331.

[37] Ibid.

Since techno-science has already reduced nature to a resource, it can disclose only calculable entities. Everything exceeding this domain of calculability based on utility is by definition outlawed from the rationally ordered universe.[38]

To challenge this prevalent understanding, Patočka invokes Socrates' claim that our human wisdom is limited to the position we occupy in the world, maintaining that we cannot know all, as if we were impartial, disinterested spectators, looking from above on the world we live in.[39] Scientific explanations of the world show similar limits. Science levels "all understanding of Being to pure presence at hand,"[40] i.e., to physicalism. "Physicalism" is simply "a systematic application of the idea that the sphere of the objects of physics" – in other words, nature – "is the sphere of efficacy, and specifically of exact causality, without which prediction would be impossible."[41]

The Wars of the Twentieth Century and the Twentieth Century as War

> Behind all this was a brutal and ruthless use of intellect which basically recognized, mechanically increased, and accelerated production. But could they create an olive tree or a horse? … I had admired these super-philistines long enough – these servants of forces unknown to them. As long as such admiration lasts, destruction will increase and human standards decrease. A mind that endangers worlds cannot create a fly. The huge scaffolding reveals itself as a scaffold indeed. If knowledge is power, one must know first what knowledge really is.[42]

For Patočka, this transmogrification of nature into a resource for humans' manipulation became obvious during the First World War, which was fought for power, and not in the name of any lofty ideas. In this war, the one-sided rationality of modern

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[38] As Patočka notes in the working manuscript "Evropa pramenem dějin" [Europe the Wellspring of History] (*Sebrané spisy*, sv. 3, op. cit., pp. 474–475): "The true nature of modern society … is not *industrial*, but rather *decadent*…. Europe has not mastered the problem raised by the end of the Roman Empire and the emergence of a new social structure of laboring *moral* subjects – free workers mean the predominance of technology, leveling, the development of a technical rationality exhaustive of the drab everyday; this, along with the enormous energy potential it generates, accumulates dynamite which has done its work in the shattering course of events in the twentieth century, leaving today's Europe in a state of hedonistic disintegration."

[39] Jan Patočka, *Plato and Europe*, op. cit., p. 62.

[40] Jan Patočka, "Cartesianism…," op. cit., p. 288.

[41] Ibid., p. 287. Husserl's critique of naturalism expresses the same insight: "Thus the naturalist … sees only nature, and primarily physical nature. Whatever-is is either physical, belonging to the unified totality of physical nature, or it is in fact psychical, but then merely as a variable dependent on the physical, at best a secondary 'parallel accompaniment.' Whatever-is belongs to psychophysical nature, which is to say that it is universally determined by rigid laws." (Cf. Edmund Husserl, "Philosophy as Rigorous Science," op. cit., p. 79).

[42] Ernst Jünger, *The Glass Bees*, transl. L. Bogan and E. Mayer (New York: The New York Review of Books, 2000), p. 95.

techno-science was played out for the first time. If God does not exist, then it is up to the strongest state to use its power to take what it assumes as its right.[43] As Patočka points out, this role was played by Germany in the First World War, but the logic behind it was the techno-scientific understanding of the world that continues to the present day, and in which war goes on under the guise of peace. As he says, "[i]t is above all the ever-deepening techno-scientific aspect of … life. It is the organizing will of [the strong state's] economic leaders, of its technocratic representatives who forge plans leading inevitably to a conflict with the existing global order."[44]

The First World War shaped not only the tenor of the twentieth century, as Patočka suggests. Its *pathos* extends into the twenty-first as well, exemplifying the enactment of "cruelty and orgiasm" leading to "a disintegration of traditional discipline and demonization of the opponent." As he also notes, "never before [had] the demonic reach[ed] its peak precisely in an age of greatest sobriety and rationality."[45]

For Patočka, it is in the name of this sobriety and rationality that "the day," as he says, is reduced to the level of our material needs and interests.[46] In this age of energy, to think about "the day," and indeed "life," is thus to think about biological life as the highest good, as if life were only a matter of sustenance and bodily desires that could be provided for by consumer goods elevated into the fulfillment of all human aspirations.

If, however, we look at human life from the perspective of those at the front, the sacrifice of their lives is not something calculable. Many lives have been destroyed, many more irrevocably transformed by that experience, and those lives are not reducible to statistics. Nevertheless, those killed, or physically or mentally maimed, are added up, transformed into statistics, presented to the public as a necessary sacrifice to preserve our freedom and way of life. Self-sacrifice is demanded of those sent to the front in order to achieve this aim. Yet, far from self-sacrifice, they are sacrificed for (in the name of) the lives of others. The soldiers' lives become "something relative, related to peace and to the day."[47] According to the aims of the day, human lives become disposable, utilized to preserve the value of life *per se*, yet actually wasted according to the aims of the day. Understanding life as something relative to something else (something the state/Force can dispose of in order to preserve something else) already implies, as Patočka notes, "a dark awareness that life is not everything," that it is not the highest value it is ostensibly presented to be, and that it "can relinquish itself" (*vzdát se sebe*).[48]

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[43] Cf. Jan Patočka, *Heretical Essays*…, op. cit., p. 121.

[44] Ibid., p. 122.

[45] Ibid., pp. 113–114.

[46] Ibid., p. 120.

[47] Ibid., p. 129.

[48] Ibid.

As Patočka shows,[49] the meaning of life changes drastically on the front. The aims of the day – presenting war as a steppingstone to a better future, progress, life – become unintelligible. Life is suddenly experienced as something very different from this "utility" to be sacrificed to preserve a day for others. "The sacrifice of [those] sacrificed [*oběť těchto obětovaných*]"[50] is no longer something relative to something else, but "is significant *solely in itself*."[51]

According to Patočka, those who are forced to live in this region between life and death "are assaulted by *an absolute freedom*, freedom from *all* the interests of peace, of life, of the day." Life becomes something "beyond which there can be nothing." The experience at the front is no longer experienced in terms of their "vocations, talents, possibilities, their future"; rather, the highest goal is simply to live.[52] The realization that life is not relative to anything outside of itself also reveals the non-relativity of sacrifice. This intuition can offer us a glimpse of a certain possibility to "*overcome force*."[53] Recognizing that "a will to war could objectify and externalize humans as long as they were ruled by the day, by the hope of everydayness, of a profession, of a career, simply possibilities for which they [had to] fear," we also comprehend that "peace and its planning, its programs and its ideas of progress," in using fear as a threat to force humans into war, disregard human "mortality."

Yet, as Patočka asks, why does the war experience not make any difference? Why does it not impel people to work against war? It is important to understand that war fought in the name of force, or of power, does not end with the declaration of peace. This premonition is already in Jünger. Writing *after* the war, he states: "Apart from … considerations of mere utility, … there ought to be some means of helping [desperate fellows] decently over the intervals of peace … so that they would be at hand when wanted."[54] Peace becomes nothing more than war fought with other means, "appealing to the will to live and to have."[55] Leaving their front

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[49] Citing Ernst Jünger and Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, who fought in the war.

[50] Jan Patočka, "Kacířské eseje o filosofii dějin," in *Sebrané spisy*, sv. 3, *Péče o duši III*, ed. I. Chvatík and P. Kouba (Praha: Oikoymenh, 2002) p. 125; *Heretical Essays*, op. cit., p. 130.

[51] Ibid.

[52] Ibid., pp. 125–126/129–130 (Czech/English).

[53] Ibid., p. 126/130 (Czech/English): "This absolute freedom is the understanding that *here* something has already been achieved, something that is *not* the means to anything else, a stepping stone to…, but rather something above and beyond which there can be nothing. This is the culmination, this self-surrender which can call humans away from their vocations, talents, possibilities, their future. To be capable of that, to be chosen and called for it in a world that uses conflict to mobilize force so that it comes to appear as a totally objectified and objectifying cauldron of energy, also means to *overcome force*. The motives of the day which had evoked the will to war are consumed in the furnace of the front line, if that experience is intense enough not to yield again to the forces of day. Peace transformed into a will to war could objectify and externalize humans as long as they were ruled by the day, by the hope of everydayness, of a profession, of a career, simply possibilities for which they must fear and which they feel threatened. Now, however, comes upheaval, shaking that peace and its planning, its programs and its ideas of progress indifferent to mortality."

[54] Ernst Jünger, *Copse 125: A Chronicle from the Trench Warfare of 1918*, transl. anon. (New York: Howard Fertig, Inc., 2003), pp. 199, 198.

[55] Jan Patočka, *Heretical Essays*…, op. cit., p. 133.

experiences behind, survivors accept life that is geared only towards things, life of consumerism: *carpe diem*, enjoy the pleasures of the moment without concern for the future! Not life in itself, but things make life pleasurable.[56]

Is pleasure the only criterion of a good life?

To confront the will to live in things alone – reduced to the will to have – is not easy, since the face it shows to us is that of the manifold pleasures of our consumer society. One way to stand up to this domain of calculability is to recall Patočka's claim that techno-science is historical, revealing nature as a mere set of calculable resources. We should realize that, if scientific inquiry, transformed into technological expansion, has converted nature into consumer goods that can be owned and sold on the market, these offerings of our consumerist society are dependent on the plundering of nature. Techno-science – as might and power – destroys nature in its striving to uncover more and more energy to sustain its being. In the process, humans become a standing-reserve, all "subject to the crack of the whip."[57]

Sacrifice

> Prehistoricity is not characterized by a deprivation of meaning, it is not nihilistic like our own times. Prehistorical meaning may be modest, but it is not relativistic. It is a meaning which is not centered on humans, but rather relates primordially to other beings and powers. In that modest meaning humans can live in a human way and, at the same time, understand themselves as they understand a flower or a beast of the field. They can live at peace with what-is, not in a devastating struggle with it that sacrifices life's possibilities, stored up over countless eons, to what is most humdrum and most utterly meaningless about human existence.[58]

The idea of sacrifice entails the impossibility of calculation, an impossibility of prediction which in turn makes us see the futility of objective knowledge, its incapacity to account for everything, including human existence. To sacrifice one's own life, the only life one has, is to act in the belief that, if one cannot live a good life, life is not worth living. It is to act with no prospect of a reward, here or beyond. No God will reward one for this act. Calculability can get nowhere with it. It is impossible to account for a deed done with nothing to be gained in exchange.

How are we to understand the sacrifice of people like South Korean farmer Lee Kyoung Hae, who stabbed himself in protest against the World Trade Organization's policies: sacrifice of life without any outlook on "compensation"?[59]

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[56] See note 38 above.

[57] Jan Patočka, *Heretical Essays*…, op. cit., p. 133.

[58] Ibid., p. 74.

[59] See, for example, John Vidal, "Farmer Commits Suicide at Protests," in *The Guardian*, September 11, 2003; Christine Ahn, "Death at the WTO," in *Common Dreams.org*, September 12, 2003; David Redmon, "Privatization Is Suicide," in *Consumers, Commodities and Consumption*, Vol. 5, no. 1, December 2003.

Given that technology is a mode of managing the world based on the possibility of predicting the way things function, an understanding of the hopelessness of incorporating sacrifice into the "utility calculus" can open the way to a different understanding of the world and of human beings. *One way* of confronting the present-day existential crisis might thus be to think of the phenomenon of the sacrificial victim, since it means stepping outside of the realm of calculability. To speak of sacrifice is to point to a different understanding of humans, nature, and technology – to an understanding that is not bound by calculation alone.[60] As Patočka suggests, "sacrifices represent the constant presence of something that does not occur in the calculations of the technological world."[61]

One can speak of sacrifices in many different ways. Is it true that a sacrifice to no purpose, with no object in mind, is unpredictable? What precisely is meant here by "object"? Let us consider a few examples. A mother sacrificing her life for the life of her child is something we can understand. We would not necessarily do the same, but her deed can be incorporated into a rough calculus of predictability of human behavior. More, if someone gives up his life, it is always for something "in exchange," something he can identify with: for example, he can die *for* his "mate, family, nation, society, class,"[62] religion. The choice to die simply because life is not worth living, as Socrates did,[63] cannot be incorporated into calculations, for it defies the common understanding of life as the highest good. But what if the *idea* for which life is sacrificed is beyond our terms of reference? Can we speak then of unpredictability?

In our modern world, the value of life is the highest value. To cite but one of many examples, we all claim to have a right to liberty, property, and life. This set of Western assumptions is challenged by suicide bombers, who take not only their *own* life, but also the lives of others, for an abstract ideal. The problem is twofold: (1) the Western rational consumer cannot grasp the degree of desperation that leads a person to destroy his or her own life for an ideal; and (2) to die for something abstract seems, to the rational consumer, to be a "sacrifice" in exchange for nothing. It is thus an act that can only be explained in terms of irrationality. Asking ourselves what kind of people would sacrifice their own life, we find the answer usually in brainwashing or, to speak in Kantian terms, heteronomy: these are people following orders, children indoctrinated with fundamentalist dogmas, or even mentally retarded. In short, people acting irrationally. No further explanations are generally sought.

One way to counter the presentation of this type of irrationality is to replace the abstract ideal with something translatable into the consumer logic dominating most Western societies. If we substitute for the ideal an object for which the suicide bombers exchange their lives, the abstract idea can then be quantified and integrated into computation. But to proceed in this way is *not* to make the actions of the suicide

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[60] Jan Patočka, "The Dangers of Technicization…," op. cit., pp. 335–339.

[61] Ibid., p. 337.

[62] Jan Patočka, "Poznámky o antické humanitě. Boj a smír" [Notes on Ancient Humanity. Strife and Reconciliation], in *Sebrané spisy*, sv. 5, *Umění a čas II*, ed. D. Vojtěch and I. Chvatík (Praha: Oikoymenh, 2004), p. 13.

[63] Plato, op. cit., 38a.

bombers any more rational. Instead, this procedure acts to pass a judgment on the irrationality of the "object" of exchange, thus implicitly assigning their actions to the sphere of the irrational. Our war on terror is presented as the war of rationalism against this irrational desire to die. The suicide bombers (so the story goes) are not dying for some pure ideal, but exchanging their lives for something explicable – say, the seventy-six virgins who allegedly await them in some world beyond. We thus have two understandings of life: one, biological, that can be satisfied with consumer goods; the other, relinquishing this life for, e.g., the seventy-six virgins. How are these two visions to be reconciled? Perhaps they are not.

Another example can be set against the present-day vision of the supposed irrationality of sacrifice. During the Vietnam War, several Buddhist monks set themselves on fire in protest against United States intervention. News film footage showed their agonized deaths. Here in Prague, this type of self-sacrifice is immediately recognizable. In 1969, Jan Palach and Jan Zajíc set fire to themselves in protest against the Soviet orchestrated invasion of Czechoslovakia. These acts of self-immolation were clearly not something understandable in the normal course of events. Yet, they were not actions that could endanger *us*, so they were not relegated to the sphere of the irrational.

For Patočka, the sacrificial victim is *not* the sacrificial martyr. Martyrs "exchange" their life for some idea that others can recognize. As Patočka understands sacrifice, it is quite the contrary. The notion of sacrifice *does not* extend beyond our human life. As he notes, the dead know only posthumous triumph. We build monuments, organize parades, dedicate songs to unknown soldiers after their death, as if they were still with us, as if all of this mattered to them, forgetting that their death has meaning only for us.[64] The problem is that we refuse to envisage *our own* death as meaningful. We behave as if we were never to die, dispersing ourselves in myriad projects. And society as a whole behaves in a similar way. Death can be dealt with statistically, as a change of function, but it cannot be incorporated into life's calculus as something meaningful in itself. Modern technological society functions for life alone. Our own death also eludes the logic of calculation.

Both phenomena – our own death *and* sacrifice – are tied to the realization that we are finite human beings and cannot be reduced to "controllable, calculable reactions and ways of behaving."[65] Our own death in its singularity exceeds calculation that can only account for things repeatable in one form or another. For modern understanding, the only *meaning* of death – if we can even use such a term – is simply that we are no more. Death is meaningless because humans cannot face the sole certainty of life: that we will die and that we can neither take things with us from this world, nor extend the meaning of our life beyond it. For Patočka, to confront the certainty of our own death can lead to one of two possible ways of living. Either, face to face with life's finitude, we return to the banal truth of the

[64] Jan Patočka, "Poznámky o…," op. cit., p. 13.

[65] Hans-Georg Gadamer, "Existentialism and the Philosophy of Existence," in *Heidegger's Ways*, transl. J. W. Stanley (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1994), p. 5.

everyday – *carpe diem!*[66] – drowning in the world of things; or we realize that we can die at any moment and that no one can replace us in this respect. To realize this without fear is to realize that we are responsible creatures, the only creatures, as far as we know, who can assume responsibility not only for themselves, but also for others, and even for the whole of nature, insofar as we realize that this world is not ours to consume. To confront our finitude without fear is what the Ancients called "*meletē thanatou*, care for death."[67] To realize our finitude is to realize that we are not immortal, that our life is finite, and that we should be responsible for the way we live. To care for death is to care for the only life we have. As Patočka notes, modern humans have lost not only God, but the *cosmos* as well. They have lost the ability "to *live* with the universe"[68] because they *see* it solely as a resource.

For Patočka, the modern human concern for having, tied to the desire for power, is of no consequence in the face of death. Hence, to think about *our own* death and sacrifice is to think about an existence that refuses to live by and in things. To acknowledge the role and importance of sacrifice is to acknowledge that someone may be willing to relinquish his life rather than to live a life defined solely by needs and desires, forgetting that there is something more to life than mere possession.

Patočka's conviction led him to become a signatory of Charter 77.[69] It was his belief that nature and society reduced to calculable resources should be confronted by those who realize that life without a responsible attitude is not worth living. Patočka's "solidarity of the shaken" is the solidarity of those who understand that reducing everything to calculability incorporates humans too into a system that only feeds the aims of the state, day and life. For Patočka, "humans do not invent morality arbitrarily, to suit their needs, wishes, inclinations, and aspirations. Quite the contrary, it is morality that defines what being human means."[70] For him, then, signing this document was something that was not motivated "simply or primarily [by] fear or profit." It was "a sense of duty, of the common good, and of the need to accept even discomfort, misunderstanding, and a certain risk."[71] Landgrebe explains that, for Patočka, it was "the duty of the philosopher not to remain silent about injustice."[72]

Patočka died in hospital from a brain hemorrhage after prolonged interrogation by the secret police. He lived and died according to his belief: if life cannot be lived

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[66] Jan Patočka, "'Přirozený svět' v meditaci…," op. cit., p. 249; ["Nachwort des Autors…," op. cit., p. 265].

[67] Jan Patočka, *Heretical Essays*…, op. cit., p. 105.

[68] Jan Patočka, "Poznámky o…," op. cit., p. 13.

[69] The Charter 77 manifesto was released in January 1977. It was a call to the government of the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic, which had recently signed the Helsinki Agreement, to uphold its commitment to this treaty, stipulating the citizens' fundamental human rights. See Jan Patočka, "The Obligation to Resist Injustice," in *Philosophy and Selected Writings*, op. cit., p. 341.

[70] Ibid.

[71] Ibid., pp. 342–343.

[72] Ludwig Landgrebe, "An Obituary," in *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, Vol. 38, no. 2, December 1977, p. 290.

in a just society – in a society where humans are *not* reduced to calculable resources – one has no choice but to fight for the kind of society one believes in. Otherwise, life is not worth living. As Landgrebe writes, "Patočka has chosen a fate for which Socrates was the great model. In the beginning of philosophy, Parmenides spoke of the signs that stand on the difficult path to truth. Patočka's death has placed one such sign."[73]

Conclusion

> Under modern conditions, not destruction but conservation spells ruin because the very durability of conserved objects is the greatest impediment to the turnover process, whose constant gain in speed is the only constancy left wherever it has taken hold.[74]

In his last work, *Heretical Essays in the Philosophy of History*, Patočka concentrates on the analysis of force and power. For him, the state has become the "great generator and storehouse of power, having all other powers, physical and spiritual, at its disposal."[75] This power comes from techno-science's drive to exploit the resources of the world, accumulated through millennia.

According to Patočka, Heraclitus' idea of *polemos* may help shed some light on new possibilities that can be taken up by our present time; possibilities that refuse calculation as the *one and only* explanatory horizon of our lives.[76] *Polemos* as "strife" is the "insight," "common to all," which enables us to see "into the nature of things" and to understand that power, or rather "Force," in the name of "progress,"

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[73] Ibid.

[74] Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1998 [1958]), p. 253.

[75] Jan Patočka, "The Obligation…," op. cit., p. 340.

[76] For Patočka, *polemos* is strife, and not – as Paul Ricœur and Jacques Derrida claim – war. For Ricœur's claim, see his "Preface to the French Edition of Jan Patočka's Heretical Essays" (in *Heretical Essays*…, op. cit., pp. vii–xvi). For Derrida's reading, see *The Gift of Death* (op. cit., pp. 16–17). For a critique of their readings, see Edward F. Findlay, *Caring for the Soul in a Postmodern Age: Politics and Phenomenology in the Thought of Jan Patočka* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2002), pp. 142–144. As Patočka writes (*Heretical Essays*…, op. cit., p. 42): "Heraclitus speaks of that which is 'common to all,' which 'nourishes' all 'human law,' that is, the *polis* in its general functioning and particular decisions. What though is this divine law? 'We must know that *polemos* is what is common, and that strife is justice (*dikē* = *eris*), and that all things come into being through *eris* and its impulsion.' … Yet the power generated from strife is no blind force. The power that arises from strife is a power that knows and sees: only in this invigorating strife is there life that truly sees into the nature of things – *to phronein*. Thus *phronēsis*, understanding, by the very nature of things, cannot but be at once common and conflicted. To see the world and life as a whole means to see *polemos*, *eris*, as that which is common; ξυνόν ἐστι πᾶσι τὸ φρονέειν: 'insight is common to all.'"

releases more and more energy to sustain its sway over nature. In the name of this progress, life is supposedly elevated to the highest good, while at the same time humans are sacrificed to maintain this exponentially increasing drive to release more and more energy. Force incorporates humans into its schemes and uses them as another resource to advance its arrogant march over the earth.

In Patočka's analysis, *polemos* as "strife" is the foundation from which a political space can emerge.[77] To reflect on the importance of *polemos* is to reflect on the political realm. *Polemos* unites the agonistic citizenry and the law, thus making possible a political space[78] – by definition, devoid of physical violence – where all are equal and can confront different ways of thinking and acting.[79] The modern age has replaced such strife with the calculative administration of human needs and interests, allegedly to be fulfilled by an assortment of consumer goods, thus leading to the present situation of general apathy as an expression of the reign of day and of biological life.[80]

[77] Ibid., p. 43: "Thus *polemos* is at the same time that which constitutes the *polis* and the primordial insight that makes philosophy possible. *Polemos* is not the destructive passion of a fierce raider but, rather, the creator of unity. The unity it founds is more profound than any ephemeral sympathy or coalition of interests; adversaries meet in the shaking of the given meaning, and so create a new way of being human – perhaps the only mode that offers hope amid the storm of the world: the unity of the shaken but undaunted. Thus Heraclitus sees the unity and the common origin of philosophy and the *polis*."

[78] Ibid.: "Therewith the question of the origin of history seems decided. History arises and can arise only insofar as *aretē*, the excellence of humans who no longer live simply to live, builds a space in which to assert itself, insofar as it sees within the nature of things and acts in accordance – building a *polis* on the basis of the law of the world which is *polemos*, and uttering what it sees as disclosing itself to a free, exposed yet undaunted human being (philosophy)."

[79] For a similar analysis, see Hannah Arendt, "Introduction into Politics," in *The Promise of Politics*, ed. J. Kohn (New York: Schocken Books, 2005), pp. 165–168.

[80] For yet another similar analysis, see also Jacques Rancière, *Dis-agreement. Politics and Philosophy*, transl. J. Rose (Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, 1999).

The Twentieth Century as War

James Dodd

The title of my contribution refers to the last of Jan Patočka's *Heretical Essays* – "The Wars of the Twentieth Century and the Twentieth Century as War."[1] My intention here is not to speak to the merits of Patočka's remarks on the history of the world's wars in the twentieth century, nor to evaluate his brief account of the origins of the First World War in this essay. I am a rather poor historian, and have no desire to torment you with my rather myopic opinions on the history of the past century. What I would like to do instead is to offer you some philosophical reflections on war, taking as my point of orientation Patočka's thesis that, in the twentieth century, war became a culminating spiritual moment in the history of humanity. War has always had the potential to challenge our beliefs about who and what we are, but what Patočka argues is something much more extreme: his argument is that the very shape of things, both human and material, has taken on the pattern of war, or the expression of force – in short, that the wars of the twentieth century turned the twentieth century itself into the very expression of war. Patočka's claim is provocative, to say the least; it is also deeply disturbing. It expresses the suspicion, common to the last century, that a line has been crossed, that somewhere civilization has gone beyond a point of no return, unleashing unimaginable forces and chains of events, the consequences of which can scarcely be imagined. This suspicion pre-dates the development of nuclear arms, and in my view represents one of the most fundamental philosophical challenges of the legacy of the twentieth century: the idea that our wars have opened a great chasm separating us from the rest of history.

Patočka's approach to the question of war in this essay is couched in the discourse of European nihilism. One could perhaps object that this language of nihilism, decay, or decline, where war is all too easily defined as a kind of disease or disorder, is of limited use in formulating the problem of war: we risk begging the question

[1] Jan Patočka, *Heretical Essays in the Philosophy of History*, ed. J. Dodd, transl. E. Kohák (Chicago and La Salle: Open Court, 1996), pp. 119–137.

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as to whether or not the issue is limited to the causes of war and how to cure it, or stop it. Yet Patočka's discussion of European decadence and decline in the fifth of the *Heretical Essays*, which forms the basis of his discussion of war in the sixth and last, is more subtle than that. His concern is not so much to provide us with a diagnosis of what ails Europe, as to illuminate the fact that the central question of European nihilism, what is at stake, is the manner in which we are to relate to ourselves. That is, the decline in question here is measured in accordance with the standard of a life that is called to relate to itself as a task, that holds itself to itself thanks to an insight into its truth. Thus the focus is not on the effectiveness of abstractions, such as "values," to hold social life together, nor even of an ideal of "health" that would allow us to assess the spiritual condition of the age; such broad strokes do not get to the heart of the matter. More, by substituting a discussion about "Europeans" and "civilization" and "world history,"[2] they tend to obscure the fact that the question is about "us," that we are talking about ourselves.

Ultimately, Patočka is not altogether comfortable with his reflections on European nihilism, as can be seen from the end of the fifth essay, where he remarks, "perhaps the entire question about the decadence of civilization is incorrectly posed. There is no civilization as such. The question is whether historical humans are still willing to embrace history."[3] The embrace of history, and the spiritual basis that makes such an embrace possible, is the real aim here.

To pursue this aim, Patočka brings to bear two essential distinctions. The first is the distinction between the *sacred* and the *profane*, or between the exceptional and the ordinary. The profane is the world of toil and labor, the daily striving for the procurement for life's needs; as such, it opens the horizon for the engagement with the world as the sum total of involvements and affairs that make up our encounters with others and our relations with things and materiality. The profane is life itself in its existential density, rooted in a place held fast by a heavy saturation with the worldly. When we want to evoke the heaviness of experience, its opacity or stupidity, we seek to express the profane. This opacity and stupidity is the origin of the sense of our existence as being borne along by a great flood of being: our society, our world, the very horizon of the meaningful itself is lent a completeness and permanency, a place and a face, in the form of the profane.

The sacred, or the demonic, is on the other hand that which suddenly seems to escape the closure of this completeness of the profane, negating it and annihilating its hold on us. The demonic stands outside and apart from that heaviness and density that would seem to always already have everything assimilated. The sacred, which Patočka also calls the orgiastic, disrupts the cycle of the everyday, throws off the burden of preparing for the tomorrow that belongs to the reign of a life

[2] This is reflected in Patočka's definition of decadence in the fifth essay (ibid., pp. 98–99): "A life can be said to be decadent when it loses its grasp on the innermost nerve of its functioning, when it is disrupted at its inmost core so that while thinking itself full it is actually draining and laming itself with every step and act."

[3] Ibid., p. 118.

composed of an infinity of tomorrows and the necessities they imply. We evoke the demonic when we wish to represent the sense that there is somehow, against all reason and expectation, an escape from our existence, our very self; that this self which is what it is only when consumed by the flow of existence, or saturated with the world, is nevertheless something with which we can part ways.

The other distinction is between *authenticity* and *inauthenticity*, or between a responsible life in truth and the flight from responsibility. This can be read in part in straight Heideggerian terms of *Eigentlichkeit* and *Uneigentlichkeit,* where the point is to contrast the possibility of the self-clarity of an embrace of history with the tendency of historical existence to obscure itself to itself. This obscurity arises from the tendency we have to grasp ourselves, understand ourselves, in terms of the world as a pre-given horizon of sense in which we navigate in accordance with assuming this or that role. Turning towards our roles, we turn away, in an important sense, from ourselves; a historical existence that reads its own history as a reflection of patterns and meanings already in place, already articulated as constituting the horizon of the world, implies a covering over of the Being of historical existence as such. To be historically, to embrace history, is not simply to act out a story; it is to grasp, as Patočka would put it, its own inner source.

At first glance, it might seem that we have here two versions of the same distinction. Perhaps the sacred is simply another way to describe authenticity, insofar as both represent a fundamental break with the everyday. But Patočka's central thesis in the fifth essay is that there is a distinction between these distinctions: he wants to convince us that there is a difference between the sacred and the responsible on the one hand, and between the inauthentic and the everyday on the other. Moreover, the difference between these two distinctions, I wish to argue, is essential to understanding Patočka's thesis that the twentieth century is war.

The distinction between these two distinctions is best illuminated by pointing out that the concept of responsibility, as it is developed by Patočka in the *Heretical Essays* and elsewhere, does not map completely onto the concept of authenticity in Heidegger. This is a complex issue, one that is perhaps better left to the real Patočka experts, and for my purposes I wish to emphasize only one aspect of the question of Patočka's relation to Heidegger. For Heidegger, the question of authenticity is one that is deeply problematic to its very core, to the point to which even the question itself, the question of the very possibility of authenticity, has no real definite shape for us; moreover, our traditions, whether philosophical or theological, are characterized more by an obfuscation of the insight into its possibility than by its genuine articulation. This lies behind Heidegger's taking great pains to liberate the ontological question of Dasein from its analogues in theology and philosophical anthropology in *Sein und Zeit* – the goal is always seen as requiring a fundamental radicalization of the question of Dasein's Being, in order to bring the *very question as such* into view at all.

Patočka, I would like to suggest, is not nearly as suspicious. For him, there is a very definite way in which authentic responsibility has taken shape within the European tradition and experience, namely, in the form of what he calls the *care for the soul*, whether in its Greek or Christian manifestation. Where Heidegger situates

the problem of responsibility in the raw possibility of the historical moment, in Dasein as the "lighting" of Being (*Lichtung des Seyns*), Patočka accepts at face value, so to speak, the claims of philosophy and religion to have expressed this ultimate in the figure of a disciplined self-relation. To be sure, for Heidegger, the historical moment of Dasein is necessarily shaped by the metaphysical tradition, and the metaphysical tradition for Patočka is far from grasping its own historical essence; yet this overlap does not reduce the one approach to the other. For the idea of the care for the soul, as Patočka presents it, implies that authenticity is not a singular event; the suggestion is that it has been articulated as a task, which means that it can be engaged in the form of an abiding acquisition – in fact, one that Patočka argues lies at the very heart of the idea of Europe. Now, it may be, as Patočka suggests in the lectures published under the title *Plato and Europe*, that the historical meaning of the care of the soul be in the final analysis completely lost to us, that the ruin of Europe lie precisely in the fact that any form of life that would be guided by the ideal of the care for the soul has long been rendered impossible.[4] Be that as it may, Patočka's contention is that this heritage is at least a partially formulated possibility of our existence, and his trust in its basic terms – terms such as "soul," "the divine," "person," "politics" – enables him to develop a conception of authenticity that is arguably thicker and richer than the one we find in Heidegger.

An important part of Patočka's alternative to Heidegger is the difference between the two distinctions I have sketched above: namely, between authenticity and inauthenticity on the one hand, and between the demonic and the sacred on the other. At the core of the question of the care of the soul for Patočka is the struggle, and with that the *choice*, that is defined by the difference between these two distinctions. The task of responsibility has, in other words, a context in which emerges its own possibility as an exception to everydayness: it enters a field that is already in turmoil, already set into motion thanks to the exceptionalism represented by the orgiastic or demonic, and which in advance puts responsibility itself into question. For responsibility can formulate its sense as care of the soul only if it meets the implicit challenge represented by the experience of the demonic: for the demonic has proven that the meaning of things, of the world, is not without exception, that it can all be given up, by giving in to the power of mystery. This possibility of giving up the world, this surprise discovery of an otherwise hidden fragility, is a pre-given, already experienced phenomenon faced by any emergence of a consciousness on the way to solidifying itself as a responsible subject.

Authentic life, as historical life, must thus not only pull itself away from the world, but also away from the annihilation of the world promised by demonic mystery. The line constituted by this double refusal is the choice around which responsibility takes shape: the soul is responsible only as that double refusal of the positive oblivion of the world, as well as the negative oblivion of its destruction.

This line drawn between the demonic and the responsible is very different from that which defines the difference between the authentic and the inauthentic proper.

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[4] Jan Patočka, *Plato and Europe*, transl. Peter Lom (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2002), pp. 8–14.

The latter can be described in Heideggerian terms: to stand apart from the everyday, to deny its pre-eminence in the understanding of oneself, to guard oneself against the self-obscuring tendencies of a fallenness into a received meaning of Being – all of this takes place in the inwardness of one's resoluteness towards death, a drama that plays itself out only in the confines of the soul. The line between the authentic and the inauthentic separates a somebody that could be anybody from that fundamental encounter with oneself out of the nontransferable Being towards one's own death.

Things are different with the demonic. The drama here is not between two different existential modalities of what amounts to an understanding, a grasping of oneself, but between the self and what emerges as the force of the nonself. The demonic is a force, an exteriority, that is within us only in being against us; it is an outside that intrudes in such a way that does not assume the form of an understanding that would articulate the possible – it is radically other than understanding as such, in any form in which understanding can be said to constitute the parameters of a self. The task of responsibility for Patočka is thus more complicated than the task of authenticity for Heidegger, for it includes bringing this force of the nonself under the power of responsibility. The demonic, as Patočka stresses, cannot be annihilated, only mastered, overpowered in the form of a life that is able to graft onto itself that which nevertheless remains radically contrary to it.[5]

The idea that the demonic represents an overwhelming transcendence, one that even as incorporated functions in a state of tension with responsibility, is at the heart of Patočka's understanding of religion: religion is precisely that primordial attempt to bring together the orgiastic with the responsible, the sacred with a newly fashioned everydayness that orders itself in such a way that respects the violence of the demonic.[6] The history of the various incorporations and suppressions of this self-forgetting, which result in a defeated but not extinguished irresponsibility at the heart of responsibility, is at the core of Patočka's reflections on the "unthought" essence of Christianity that has gotten some attention through Derrida's reading of it in his essay *The Gift of Death*.[7] For my purposes here, since I am an even worse theologian than historian, I wish only to emphasize that, for Patočka, a thick conception of responsibility must take into consideration that front line, so to speak, which is first formed by the violent breaking open of the everyday by the demonic. The idea is that we cannot fully understand what responsibility is, and, with that, what the care for the soul promises us, unless we grasp the significance of the disruption implied by that enormous release from bondage, from the identification with life, that the demonic represents. Yet the converse is also true: we do not understand the significance of this line until we learn to see it through the prism of the care for the

[5] Jan Patočka, *Heretical Essays*…, op. cit., p. 99: "Thus the dimension of the sacred and the profane is distinct from that of authenticity-responsibility and escape, … it cannot be simply overpowered, it has to be grafted on to responsible life."

[6] Ibid., p. 101.

[7] Jacques Derrida, *The Gift of Death*, transl. D. Wills (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1995).

soul. For the demonic, the exception, does not in and of itself emerge as problematic, not even from the point of view of the everyday; violence does not originally take the form of a problem by simple virtue of the fact that it destroys. It is a problem first and foremost in the rise of a subject crystallizing around the choice of self that draws a line between itself and *both* everydayness and the "orgiastic leap into darkness."[8]

In *Plato and Europe*, Patočka traces this idea of the subject to Platonism, but what is of more interest to us is Patočka's account of its Christian modification. In Plato, following Patočka's account, the soul is understood in terms of its relation to the Good, or a transcendent identity that defines the proper foundation of a life in truth, for it defines precisely what life as such most is – thus the concern of the soul is to orient itself towards that which makes it what it is. Platonic ontology is an expression of the sense that there is a definite choice, that within the soul are the resources for making a positive choice for an existence that, taken in itself, is given as a whole, a One. Authenticity here emerges as a fusion with a stability that cuts itself off from the falsity of the inauthentic, a light that belongs inwardly to a soul that accepts and encounters its essence in its capacity to know and to be. The means for the subjugation of the demonic, therefore, belong properly to knowledge itself – and they are presented in Platonism by way of a metaphysics of the soul whereby the vision of the Good, and the purity it implies, brings the subject to itself, shaping and holding it fast to its self-responsibility, in a kind of field of force in which the demonic is incorporated as a kind of erotic mystery of the light.

In Christianity, again in Patočka's account, this ontological stability of the choice of the soul for itself in authenticity is complicated by the emergence of a peculiar form of historical consciousness. This consciousness takes the form of an existential instability that fundamentally disrupts the ontological stability afforded to the soul by the Platonic One. Instead of the vision of the Good, what takes precedence in Christianity is the relation to a Love that is both self-giving and self-receding, to a Person with whom the soul stands in a relation defined not by insight, but by an abyss. This abyss renders death problematic in a different manner than in Platonism, since the abyssal character of the relation to the divine problematizes and destabilizes the relation of the soul's destiny to knowledge – in short, knowledge, and the insight of knowing, no longer determines the manner in which the soul is to be held to itself, thus responsible. The soul here is not founded on a relation to Being, but to its own properly historical truth, its destiny, thus forming the contours of an existence that is historical through and through: "the idea that the soul is nothing present *in advance*, but only *in the end*, that it is historical in all its being and only as such escapes decadence."[9] This is not a rejection of the theme of the care of the soul, as if in historicity, or thanks to original sin, such care no longer had any sense; it is, on the contrary, a deepening, though an abyssal deepening, of the same.

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[8] Jan Patočka, *Heretical Essays*…, op. cit., p. 103.

[9] Ibid., pp. 107–108.

This Christian moment further complicates, and problematizes, the question of responsibility. Above all, it complicates the theme of escape, of release. As we have already seen, the task of responsibility can be likened to a refusal of two possibilities of escape: on the one hand, inauthenticity is the escape from the knowledge of the task of oneself as such; it is the tendency for human life to understand itself in terms of the given world or context of things and persons, or as a history that has somehow already been told. Likewise, the demonic is another kind of escape, not from the task of responsibility as such, but from the monotony, the bondage, and the closure of everydayness. With the Christian radicalization, *both* of these escapes are illuminated by an abyss, the nothingness that they both conceal: the escape of inauthenticity now takes the form of a reduction of possibilities to a "commonality" that conceals, in bad faith, the abyssal character of historical existence, while the escape of the demonic flees above all the suffocating *boredom* of everyday life, into the abyss that lies at the origin of its unsettledness.

This abyss, this nothingness of life, distorted by both the sacred and the everyday, is in historical consciousness the true resource of responsibility. This is also, *mutatis mutandis*, Heidegger's thought, but in Patočka it is situated in a far more dense account of the different lines of force that define Dasein's relation to this nothing. The sacred orgiastic is a "problem" for responsibility because responsibility is for Patočka also a kind of escape from the grip of the everyday – both the sacred and the responsible hold the everyday in contempt, both express an admiration for what stands apart, out "into the abyss." Thus even the demonic, from this perspective, is not merely a tendency towards a mute obscurity of darkness, but as a conscious impulse towards the moment of exception, it is the consciousness of a kind of *truth* – though it is a truth that takes a form that responsibility must deny.

With these two distinctions, the distinction between them, and the idea of a radicalization of historical consciousness in the form of Christianity, we have the essential background to Patočka's discussion of war in the sixth of the *Heretical Essays*. The next step is the idea that the twentieth century represents a radicalization of a new kind, one that follows the logic neither of the demonic nor of authenticity, but of everydayness itself.

For Patočka, the burden of the everyday, as a closure that threatens to ossify the very sense of human possibilities, is not something contingent or static, nor is it arbitrary. Its dominance is characterized by an evolving absolutization, a progressive and inexorable closure of the possibility of the exception. Like Nietzsche, Patočka sees the contemporary age as a radicalization, and with that a culmination of this closing off of the origin of the new. And this dawning closure, Patočka warns, serves to intensify the demonic impulse to the exception, and with that its violence: "A new flood of the orgiastic is an inevitable pendant to the fallenness (*propadlost*) into things, into their everyday procurement, into bondage to life."[10]

The dominance of the everyday, of this *Verfallenheit*, this entanglement with things, draws on resources of the self, in particular the capacity of the soul to know:

[10] Ibid., p. 113.

for in the form of technology, or a knowing that operates solely on the level of organization and manipulation, everydayness has appropriated knowledge as an instrument of its self-closure. To be sure, one of the consequences of the self-distancing of Christianity from Platonism was a more problematic relation between knowing and responsibility, but insight and self-understanding had nevertheless remained hallmarks of the subjugation of the orgiastic. Now technoscience, fully alienated from the task of self-clarity, threatens to *unbalance* any harmony between the orgiastic and the responsible. Self-knowledge now takes the form of a technique of the everyday, one that fashions for itself a "historical understanding" that limits itself to the conceptualization of roles or positions in a totality of social relations, heedless of the demonic insistence on the exception.

Yet the orgiastic is also appropriated, taken up as a resource for this dominance of the everyday. The violence of the demonic, the increasing assertion of the impulse against boredom, is shaped within technological civilization into expendable and employable energy or force. Here the bondage to things becomes an increased ability to transform things, to render them radically manipulable by an organizing knowledge. The care for the soul degenerates into a new kind of decadence, one where the orgiastic is unleashed from its responsible constraints, but where it is given a place, even a *purpose* within the everyday, in the form of a bondage to *conflict* as a primarily *social* phenomenon: "The whole weightiness of life, the whole of its interest in its own Being, becomes compressed into the realm of social conflict. Everydayness and the fervor of the fight to the finish, without quarter, go together."[11]

Patočka is here trying to understand the "deep falling prey to war"[12] that he believes characterizes the twentieth century, and which leads him to characterize the twentieth century *as* war. The idea is one of a "revolt of the everyday," of an everydayness that shapes itself by employing the very possibility of its own transcendence. Man here becomes Force itself, and war is the ultimate expression of an ontological state that no longer relates to the fundamental question of Being in any other way than from within the horizon of this new shape (*Gestalt*) of the whole.[13]

This brings Patočka to the point where he articulates what could be called the thesis of the constitutive character of violence. This is also one of the most important "heretical" theses of the *Heretical Essays*, namely, the idea that "war itself might be something that can explain, that has itself the power of bestowing meaning."[14] At the core of Patočka's argument is a variation of the argument of the decadence, or decay, of Europe: "The shared idea in the background of the First World

[11] Ibid.

[12] Ibid., p. 120.

[13] Ibid., p. 113–114: "In this century, war is the full fruition of the revolt of the everyday.… The same hand stages orgies and organizes everydayness."

[14] Ibid., p. 120. Patočka argues here that this possibility has been consistently overlooked by all philosophies of history that were employed in the last century to tackle the problem of the First World War, for they all approached war from "the perspective of peace, day, and life."

War was the slowly germinating conviction that there is nothing such as a factual, objective meaning of the world and of things, and that it is up to force and power to create such meaning within the realm accessible to humans."[15] This both on the side of those who willed a change in the world and those who fought to preserve it – the shared assumption was that "nothing" guided history as such, "nothing" formed the bedrock of an order that was what it was, independent of the force that we are capable of unleashing. The point here is not that people no longer believed in values; rather the notion has more to do with the sense in which a value "is" a value at all, as something that orders the world. The conviction was that the ordering character of valuation is just a kind of violence, a force that opposes or defends.

This in turn implies a certain economic perspective: forces, after all, in themselves only the manifestations of energy, can under the proper circumstances be harnessed and deployed at will. They may be locally irrational and "demonic," but perhaps in a global sense they are constitutive. More, the transformation of the world, the emergence of its future – those infinite tomorrows being produced by the everyday – is possible only if forces are set free, and not unduly kept in check by unprogressive "economic" structures that would prevent their proper exploitation. Here the attraction to war begins to come into view: "Why must the energetic transformation of the world take on the form of war? Because war, acute confrontation, is the most intensive means for the rapid release of accumulated forces."[16] That is, if the everyday has taken on the radicalized form of a self-shaping, if our understanding of the kind of beings that we are is that we are just the potential to create ourselves from out of our own will, then war is in that sense the very archetype of that moment of a willful break from the given situatedness of life towards a new world, uniquely shaped by force.

This also begins to bring the reason why any kind of "mobilization" could be captivating for life, even a mobilization against mobilization itself, or a "war against war." For what is tempting about war is not that war is good "for its own sake," but the sense that the violence of war could be for the sake of the everyday, that its very violence against the world can fold back into the service of the ever expanding exuberance of peace and life.[17]

I take this complicity of the everyday, of ordinary life, in war to be a central notion of Patočka's argument. War is in the end neither authentic nor demonic, though it relates to both in essential ways. The violence and ferocity of the orgiastic is not alone constitutive of the wars of the twentieth century; the cataclysm of war is not a mere function of the sacred breaking free of a rationalized, industrialized

[15] Ibid., p. 121.

[16] Ibid., p. 124.

[17] Ibid., p. 127: "The war against war seems to make use of the new experiences, seemingly acts eschatologically, yet in reality bends eschatology back to the 'mundane' level, the level of the day, and uses in the service of the day what belonged to the night and eternity. It is the demonism of the day which poses as the all in all and manages to trivialize and drain dry even what lies beyond its limits."

society that has established a realm of "mere life" that refuses to stand apart from itself. Rather, for Patočka, in the twentieth century, war has become something else. In war the everyday imitates the "standing apart" of transcendence, of its other, and governs the tension between itself and its other, between the day and the night, for its own sake. In war the everyday incorporates death, so to speak, in the form of a threat that it uses to increase its hold on the living.[18] Facing death in the mode of the hold of life, of a continuous bondage to mere living, is also a kind of bondage to war: war usurps the place of the refusal of the sacred, of facing death in a manner that would not force it to be translated into a bondage to life. War has thus become the paradoxical normalization of something that cannot be normalized, that can never be a confirmation of life, and it does so through force alone.[19]

However, at the heart of this normalization or economy of violence, where the demonic becomes a mere expenditure of energy, death the trivializing turn back to a mode of existence that ultimately rejects all death, Patočka discerns a disruption or ungovernable point of departure expressed by the image of the front line itself. The front line disrupts the paradoxical economy of war waged for peace. It is a kind of open secret, one that sharply divides those who go and those who stay, those who are sacrificed for peace and those for whom the future of mere life is promised. The difference embodied in the front line already points to the emptiness of a life lived only for life, for the very possibility of sacrifice "indicates a dark awareness that life is not everything, that it can relinquish itself."[20]

Here we have a third distinction that Patočka relies upon in order to understand the essence of responsibility. It is a distinction between two faces of sacrifice. The mobilization of force, the hand that sends the warrior to fight, grasps the meaning of this sacrifice relative only to life, to peace: one gives oneself for a world, a way of life, a home, an idea. But on the line, sacrifice is not illuminated by the day, by the categories of the sense of the world, but takes on an absolute, non-relative significance. That is, here the act of sacrifice crystallizes into an *absolute freedom*. On the line, there is a total dissolution of the day in the firestorm of what it itself has generated – at the heart of the everyday, of its economics, lies a null point or meridian of motive, where the motives of the day no longer hold sway. Death, however orchestrated and chosen it may otherwise be, here stands apart.[21]

Patočka sees this dissolution, this line of death and absurdity, not as a loss of self, but as a *peak* of the self, as a standing apart that bears the mark of the orgiastic in its violence but also of the authentic in its self-gathering. Here night, the eternal,

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[18] Ibid., p. 129: "How do the day, life, peace, govern all individuals, their bodies and souls? By means of death; by threatening life."

[19] Ibid.: "So peace rules in the will to war. Those who cannot break free of the rule of peace, of the day, of life in a mode that excludes death and closes its eyes before it, can never free themselves of war."

[20] Ibid.

[21] Ibid., p. 130: "The motives of the day, which had evoked the will to war, are consumed in the furnace of the front line, if that experience is intense enough not to yield again to the forces of the day."

the radically other to life, the end horizon of all possibility, "comes suddenly to be an absolute obstacle on the path of the day to the bad infinity of tomorrows."[22] More, the peak is historical, in the sense that what is grasped is the inner historicity of the choice one is, and not the span of life that one has been assigned and set up with in the world of the living: "To comprehend that *here* [on the front line] is where the proper drama of freedom is being acted out; that freedom does not begin only 'afterwards,' after the struggle is concluded, but rather has its place precisely within it – that is the salient point, the significant high point from which we can overlook the battlefield."[23]

What are we to make of this idea of the high point, the peak? First let us emphasize that its essential structure reflects that basic choice of responsibility as a rejection of both the everyday and the demonic. Yet it is also different. What is unique here is the idea of the demonic in the *service* of the everyday, the fusion of the two alternatives to responsibility in an overwhelming reality that no longer bears any trace of limit or restraint on what can be asked of us; our sacrifice is already calculated, already assumed as a given. This peak rises above an all-consuming reality that demands ever more sacrifice of life for the sake of an increasingly meaningless existence. But what can be *seen* from this high point? What is there to see, at this zenith of violence?

There is a passage in Patočka's *Plato and Europe* that might help us frame this question more precisely. There, Patočka is discussing the question of the guardians of Plato's ideal city, who have become necessary, in Socrates' account, once the "unbalanced, passionate *polis*" has led to war with other *poleis*. The guardians are those who will put themselves on the line, risking their own lives as well as "giving death" to others. Patočka understands the guardians as the fusion of "extreme insight and extreme risk."[24] That is, the class that does not live for itself but for the whole, for the *polis*, rests on a double foundation: *knowledge* and *extremity*. Both coalesce in the ability to live not in the context of the *polis* itself, but apart from it in essential respects, where nothing of life is as such identified for itself as what consumes it and charts its future. Both are constitutive of that constant "living on the battlefield" or in situations of extremity that characterize a "political" class *par excellence*, defined not in terms of privileges and the use of power, but in terms of those who participate in risk and have a view of the whole.

Thus our question could be reformulated in this way: is there an insight to which the extremity of the front correlates? Does it have a Platonic form – that is, is it a vision that brings us back to ourselves, holds us fast to existence in responsibility? Or does it have some new, radically non-Platonic, Christian form – that is, a relation to an abyss in which the soul discovers itself as a destiny, a pure self-transcendence that finds its home in the pure nothingness of violence against the now, against the present?

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[22] Ibid.

[23] Ibid., p. 134.

[24] Jan Patočka, *Plato and Europe*, op. cit., p. 118.

In the context of Patočka's essay, these are in fact the only two options. Either way, the peak, the experience of the violence of the line, is the moment around which the possibility of the responsible crystallizes; it is where a post-Christian responsibility becomes a historically actual possibility. It is the origin of the "shaken." This also allows us to fix more precisely Patočka's thesis that the twentieth century "is" war. It is war insofar as the history of the care for the soul in the twentieth century is the history of war, of war as the expression of the historical essence of the soul, of its destiny.

How compelling is this? Why does Patočka expect so much from war – that somehow it can shake us from being the dupes of force, that it can free us from the bondage and enslavement to a life-world gone insane with its addiction to violence?[25] Part of this has to do with a kind of faith in some decisive moment, a flash of clarity that illuminates the landscape – and more, the hope that this illumination can continue to exist in a different form, allowing the one who experienced it to bring it back home, as it were. One could perhaps say that what Patočka is hoping for in war is a kind of radicalized negative Platonism, a new experience of insight that is free of metaphysics.

But what if, on the contrary, what is precisely unique about war is that it never comes to a head, that an insight is never formed, a peak is never reached? And even if some sense of having hit the rock bottom of absurdity and the night were possible, that it cannot be brought home, back to the living? What if in war the question of responsibility takes a shape that has no place outside of violence, implying, perhaps, that it cannot represent any kind of lasting concrete acquisition or accomplishment beyond the line? What if neither one of the options hold, neither insight nor abyss, since both, however problematically, fail to provide any alternative to the sense of an accomplished life which is at the heart of Patočka's own conception of the care of the soul? If war is to be the twentieth century, or: if war is to be that around which the task of the care for the soul is to be experienced, then war itself must in some sense carry the function of a self-accomplishing existence. However abyssal, this component must be in place; otherwise, the front line would simply represent the utter dissolution of the self, however illuminating it may be; for a genuine self endures its own movement, incorporates its own insights, extends the light that it is. That this is a desideratum, is announced by Patočka's phrase, striking and full of pathos, of "the solidarity of the shaken."

What I have attempted to do here is to draw attention to a difficult, problematic, but to my mind important series of reflections that one can find in Patočka's writings, above all in the *Heretical Essays*. They are important because war is a constant in human existence, because today we are faced with wars both actual and possible, and it is our responsibility to face them. To remain true to our responsibility, we must also be clear as to what is at stake when it comes to war, what is at stake precisely for responsibility itself. For responsibility does not hover above the battle like some kind of angel of grace, deciding what is just and unjust, allowed and not allowed, but is rather on the ground, locked in battle, to the end.

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[25] Cf. Jan Patočka, *Heretical Essays*…, op. cit., pp. 131–132.

Negative Platonism: Between the History of Philosophy and the Philosophy of History

Johann P. Arnason

I should, first of all, explain the nature and direction of my interest in Patočka's work. It grows out of my work on the comparative analysis of civilizations, a field which I see as a branch of historical sociology, and a more markedly interdisciplinary one than others – which also means that it is more open to and more dependent on philosophical perspectives. This philosophical connection applies most obviously to the idea of "cultural ontology," introduced by Shmuel Eisenstadt to describe culturally specific interpretations of the human condition and its world horizons. And the notion of "horizon" is explicit enough to tell us what kind of philosophy is involved: we are dealing with phenomenological approaches, more precisely of the type that, in one way or another, takes a hermeneutical turn. The connection has been made by philosophers working in that tradition; the *locus classicus* is a formulation in the preface to Merleau-Ponty's *Phenomenology of Perception*, which I would like to quote in full: "It is a matter, in the case of each civilization, of finding the Idea in the Hegelian sense, that is, not a law of the physico-mathematical type, discoverable by objective thought, but that formula which sums up some unique manner of behavior towards others, towards Nature, time and death: a certain way of patterning the world which the historian would be capable of seizing upon and making his own. These are the dimensions of history."[1] As this very condensed statement tells us, a properly understood civilizational perspective overlaps – to a significant extent – with the philosophy of history.

Where does Patočka come into this picture? Fundamental affinities between him and Merleau-Ponty have been noted; and if we want, more specifically, to explore questions relating to cultural articulations of the world and their changing historical forms, the most obvious road to take would be a closer examination of Patočka's phenomenology of the world (from his first major work on the life-world to his last

[1] Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, transl. C. Smith (London: Routledge, 1962), p. xviii.

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writings) and of its links to the philosophy of history, with particular reference to the *Heretical Essays.* I will return to these issues. But I propose to begin with a different approach, focusing on a source from the middle period of Patočka's intellectual trajectory: the 1953 text on negative Platonism. It was originally conceived as the introductory chapter of a much longer work, but we can now only read it as a self-contained essay. It is, in my opinion, one of the most crucial parts of Patočka's work, connected to a whole range of problems which he discussed elsewhere. There are several reasons to see it as relevant to my present topic.

The first reason – and my original motive for trying to establish a link between negative Platonism and civilizational analysis – has to do with a brief passing remark that now – in light of later debates in other contexts – seems much more significant than Patočka could have suspected at the time. It is, in fact, a textbook case of how the hermeneutical effect of temporal distance (stressed by Gadamer) enables us to understand an author better than he could possibly have understood himself. Patočka's account of metaphysics as a mode of thought includes a reconstruction of its Greek sources; after characterizing the Socratic moment as a model of non-objectifying thought, of reflection in indirect pursuit of insight through questioning and negation of all positive statements and finite assumptions, he adds – in brackets – that if this pre-metaphysical background to Plato and Aristotle were to be taken as a starting-point for a critical destruction of the metaphysical framework imposed on the history of philosophy, new perspectives would open up for comparison with other traditions. Then we might gain a better understanding of the "affinities that link Greek philosophy to the Oriental beginnings of philosophy, which probably first developed in approximately the same 'axial age,' and which, for all their profound differences, are in many ways reminiscent of the 'pre-Socratic' era."[2]

The term "axial age" is taken from Karl Jaspers, whose work Patočka obviously knew; it refers to a period of exceptional intellectual and cultural creativity around the middle of the last millennium B.C.E., and to the separate but – *ex hypothesi* – in some ways comparable traditions – Greek, Judaic, Indian, and Chinese – that crystallized or underwent decisive changes at that time. Patočka's remark suggests a specific way of comparing intellectual developments in different civilizational centers. Parallels to the Greek vision of a fundamental human relationship to the world as a whole, essential to conventional knowledge of finite things but impossible to express in terms of that knowledge, might be found elsewhere. It seems likely – at least to an outsider like myself – that comparison with "disputers of the Tao" (to quote the title of one of the most seminal Western books about Chinese philosophy)[3]

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[2] Jan Patočka, "Negativní platonismus. O vzniku, problematice, zániku metafyziky a otázce, zda filosofie může žít i po ní," in *Sebrané spisy*, sv. 1, *Péče o duši I*, ed. I. Chvatík and P. Kouba (Praha: Oikoymenh, 1996), p. 309; ["Negative Platonism: Reflections concerning the Rise, the Scope, and the Demise of Metaphysics – and Whether Philosophy Can Survive It," in *Philosophy and Selected Writings*, ed. and transl. E. Kohák (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1989), p. 181].

[3] A. C. Graham, *Disputers of the Tao: Philosophical Argument in Ancient China* (Chicago and La Salle: Open Court, 1989).

would, in this regard, be more rewarding than any search for Indian counterparts. But the comparative perspective also applies – more implicitly – to the Greek invention of metaphysics through a reinterpretation of the relationship to the world; here a focus on analogies and contrasts in the Indian tradition seems *prima facie* more plausible.

Patočka did not pursue these questions. Comments in later writings never went beyond hesitant concessions to the effect that philosophical ways of thinking might have developed in non-European cultures. And on other occasions, he retreated to a more explicitly Euro- and Hellenocentric position, claiming that only the Greek "germ of Europe" had discovered the road to philosophical insight.[4] His Hellenocentrism was so consistent that he did not accept the conventional image of Europe as a product of – or heir to – two traditions, the Greek and the Judaic: as he argued, the Judaic component had to be transformed by Greek and more specifically Platonic ideas before it could enter into the historical formation of Europe. But notwithstanding these restrictive assumptions, it seems legitimate to read the statement quoted above in light of later debates on the axial age. Patočka was responding to Jaspers; about a quarter of a century later, S. N. Eisenstadt shifted the frame of reference from the philosophy of history to historical sociology. But, as noted above, his reinterpretation of the axial age placed a strong emphasis on what he called "cultural ontologies," culturally codified articulations of the world, and closer analysis of their patterns is bound to reactivate philosophical issues. Eisenstadt used the distinction between the transcendental and the mundane to define the common denominator of axial changes to older worldviews; his consciously cavalier treatment of philosophical concepts does not alter the fact that these terms belong to the language of European metaphysics, and that their Platonic pedigree is easy to establish. Ongoing discussions have raised questions about the applicability of this model to Indian and Chinese modes of thought. In view of this unsettled controversy, Patočka's outline of a different perspective – centered on the earliest stage of the Greek road to metaphysics, and on possible analogies elsewhere – may still prove fruitful.

But no further indications can be found in Patočka's own work, and this is not the proper place to revisit the axial age. Instead, I want to return to the text on negative Platonism and take a closer look at some aspects of Patočka's argument. The preceding remarks should serve to highlight the comparative civilizational side of issues which the text approaches from a purely intra-civilizational perspective. The focus will, in brief, be on metaphysics as a civilizational phenomenon, and on the new light that negative Platonism – as a trans-metaphysical, rather than post- or anti-metaphysical mode of the philosophical – throws on this theme. There are two aspects to the problem: the civilizational dimension of metaphysics, as well as the metaphysical dimension of civilization. On the latter point, the following dimension

[4] Jan Patočka, "Platón a Evropa," in *Sebrané spisy*, sv. 2, *Péče o duši II*, ed. I. Chvatík and P. Kouba (Praha: Oikoymenh, 1999), p. 227; [*Plato and Europe*, transl. P. Lom (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2002), pp. 88–89].

of Patočka's ideas also links up with Whitehead's claim that there can be no civilization without metaphysical presupposition (an insight that again remained underdeveloped on the comparative side).

A first indication may be found in Patočka's statement about the alliance of metaphysics and theology as the "fundamental spiritual fact of European civilization." He makes this point against the misguided dismissal of metaphysics as a more or less secularized offshoot of theology (this view was theorized by Auguste Comte, but shared by many nineteenth- and twentieth-century critics of the metaphysical tradition, not least those of the Marxist persuasion). As Patočka points out, metaphysics is older than theology, and it provided the language for a translation of revealed truth into theological doctrine. But some further comments may be added to this argument. To begin with, the "spiritual fact" is also – to a very significant degree – an institutional one: the theological frame of reference was essential to the core structures of medieval Western Christendom, and thus to the making of a distinctive civilization. This civilization was, moreover, the most decisive source of European identity. Opinions vary on Europe's geographical and historical boundaries, but no position on this issue can ignore the crucial medieval foundations. Here, then, we have a clear case of metaphysical components entering into a civilizational pattern, and a starting-point for comparison with other historical formations.

Another important aspect has to do with the translating role that Patočka rightly ascribes to metaphysics. We can – as he did – stress the transformative impact of Greek presuppositions on Judaic themes inherited by Christianity and transmitted through the Roman Empire, but this does not alter the fact that there are two sides to cultural translation. There was, in other words, a genuine inter-traditional and in the final instance inter-civilizational encounter, a crossing of cultural borders that changed both sides in radical and momentous ways. At the same time, the result of the encounter – the Christian, and more specifically Western Christian version of monotheism – also established a framework for understanding and re-interpreting the past. The Greek and – *ipso facto* – metaphysical roots of Christianity have provided the strongest grounds for envisioning a civilizational continuum that begins with classical antiquity. This claim is highly contested, and I am not proposing to settle the issue here. The continuity embodied in the metaphysical-theological nexus is much more difficult to establish in other domains. But one more point should be noted. It was the very incorporation of classical foundations that created preconditions for other ways of activating the same legacy, including those that turned classical models or sources against Christian traditions.

These comments should suffice to illustrate the range of metaphysical contributions to civilizational patterns; one particularly noteworthy aspect of the European case may be their role in the interplay of opening and closure – the appropriation of other traditions, past or present, and the efforts to recast the borrowings as integral parts of a self-contained whole. Let us now return to Patočka's argument and consider the internal logic that enabled metaphysics to function as a civilizational factor. It seems apposite to start with the strongly emphasized link between metaphysics and freedom. But this connection is a complex one, and it is important to distinguish several aspects. The most elementary point is that freedom appears as a

precondition for the articulation of a metaphysical stance: the metaphysical distance from the empirical world presupposes the more universal and fundamental indeterminacy that defines the human way of Being-in-the-world. The metaphysical project – or rather the multiple projects that make up the metaphysical tradition – may then be seen as a historical and in that sense particular expression of an underlying anthropological potential. But, as Patočka stresses, freedom is also a theme – even *the* theme – of metaphysics. He credits Socrates with having formulated the experience of freedom through the idea of non-knowing knowledge.[5] This was, however, the last act of the prehistory, rather than the beginning of metaphysics. With the shift from Plato's Socrates to Plato's own project, it becomes clear that metaphysical ways of thematizing freedom are also reinterpretations, with far-reaching theoretical and practical consequences.

The metaphysical interpretations that reflect the experience of freedom do not fit into a narrative of progress: there is no logic that would lead through a sequence of disguises to a direct grasp of the underlying phenomenon as such. If it is true that modern thought moved towards a more explicit focus and a stronger emphasis on human autonomy, it must be added that this new turn gave rise to new problems, alternative solutions, and re-elaborations of older metaphysical themes. German idealism transformed the principle of autonomous reason into a model of cosmic order in progress; the result was the most ambitious attempt to encompass and round off the whole trajectory of metaphysics. But the prominent role conceded to human action and history in the context of this all-embracing system became the starting-point for a renewed vision of radical autonomy. As the historical destinies of Marxism were to show, a humanism empowered by reconverted Hegelian notions was vulnerable to absorption into another metaphysical system, this time with a materialist orientation. In the end, freedom was redefined as the understanding of necessity, and human self-realization became the crowning stage of cosmic evolution.

The vicissitudes of Marxism were a crucially important part of the background to Patočka's reflections. But he saw this historical experience as an illustration of more general problems inherent in modern forms of life and thought; his philosophical approach was defined in terms of these broader horizons, and our reading of the text – half a century later – cannot but link its meaning and significance to that context. The vision of a history that culminates in human self-discovery, self-affirmation and self-realization lends itself to extensive variations. Its logic is easily transferred from the history of philosophy to the philosophy of history, and from there to new intellectual projects that seem at first sight to detach themselves from philosophical traditions. In particular, the same underlying interpretive scheme found expression in classical sociology. Emile Durkheim adumbrated but did not fully develop a theory of human societies moving from self-institution in the guise of religion to the more conscious and adequate medium of democratic politics.

[5] Jan Patočka, "Negativní platonismus…," op. cit., p. 324; ["Negative Platonism…," op. cit., p. 195].

Here the central actor of the narrative is neither the human individual nor humanity as a subject writ large, but society understood in a sense that draws on the same Kantian sources as German idealism. A very different version appears in Max Weber's account of historical transformations of the human condition: the moderns, or at least some of them, have "eaten off the tree of knowledge," understood that meaning is a human artefact projected onto the world, and thus grasped the previously self-misconstrued defining feature of cultural humanity. But the result is *Entzauberung* and a new threat to human autonomy, this time from the apparatuses that were supposed to translate adequate knowledge into effective power, but acquired an uncontrollable dynamic of their own. More recent treatments of the same problematic draw on both Durkheimian and Weberian ideas; Marcel Gauchet's "political history of religion"[6] is perhaps the most sophisticated project of this kind.

The recurrent adaptations of the interpretive scheme in question show that it corresponds to fundamental aspects of the experience and self-understanding that characterize the modern condition. At the same time, the contested status of every version, as well as the failure of ambitious attempts to translate theory into practice, suggest – at the very least – a need for correctives and counterbalancing perspectives. And countercurrents of a more polarizing kind, expressed in equally comprehensive interpretations and narratives, have also shaped the history of modern thought. The following discussion of Patočka's negative Platonism will take its bearings from this background. We are dealing with an argument and a narrative, and with a stance of sustained and articulate ambiguity on both levels; Patočka's project involves both a radical critique and a constructive recovery of metaphysics. It has some key points in common with the counter-discourses that challenged basic premises of the Enlightenment's quest for human autonomy, but it is also, in equally fundamental ways, receptive to concerns of the other side. To put it another way, it combines a philosophy of freedom with a critique of anthropocentrism (or radical anthropologism, as Patočka also called it). In the latter regard, it draws on one of the most extreme among the counter-narratives mentioned above, Heidegger's *Seinsgeschichte,* and on the concomitant critique of humanism (the text discussed here does not quote Heidegger's *Letter on Humanism,* but Patočka obviously knew it very well). On the other hand, Patočka was much more sensitive to the problematic and the aspirations of humanism than Heidegger was, and it certainly counted for something that he had directly witnessed a particularly troubling episode in its history. These ambiguities do not detract from the significance of the project. On the contrary: it can – and in my opinion should – be read as a particularly seminal expression of a central open debate in modern culture. Patočka was one of those thinkers who did more to articulate the internal pluralism of the modern universe of discourse than to argue for a unifying alternative (among contemporary thinkers, Charles Taylor is perhaps the prime example of

[6] Cf. Marcel Gauchet, *The Disenchantment of the World: A Political History of Religion*, transl. O. Burge (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997).

this approach). To avoid a misunderstanding, it should be noted that the assumption of an open debate – which I think is both an underlying premise of Patočka's work and a way to put his thought in proper perspective – is also a hermeneutical "prejudice" in the Gadamerian sense.

To clarify Patočka's specific position in this context, it seems best to return to his conception of the relationship between metaphysics and humanism. As he argues, the anti-metaphysical self-understanding of modern humanism – in its various guises – is misguided: the self-proclaimed exit from metaphysical illusions turns out to be a new version of the metaphysical quest for a founding center. The human subject who aspires to – in principle – unlimited cognitive and practical mastery over the world is the ultimate heir to older visions of an eminent and privileged being. In that sense, and irrespective of controversies about the precise logic of secularization, modern humanism draws on a theological heritage, unacknowledged by the most radical variants, but virulently active even when denied. This final twist to the metaphysical tradition can also be understood as a long-delayed breakthrough of tendencies present from the beginning. As the Greek founders of metaphysics saw, the knowledge that they sought – an insight into ultimate foundations and universal order – was of a divine nature, and humans aspiring to it were putting themselves on a par with the gods. In the end, imitation gave way to substitution, and a sovereign humanity claimed the place previously reserved for divine authority, plural or singular.

The connection between metaphysics and humanism is not only a matter of genealogy. The traditional pattern of metaphysical interpretations tends to reassert itself within a humanist frame of reference. As the history of nineteenth- and twentieth-century thought shows, it is tempting – although not uniformly necessary – to empower humanist ambitions by anchoring them in a more comprehensive worldview. This led, among other things, to a revival of the materialist strand of the metaphysical tradition. But the anthropocentric materialism that Patočka had in mind was thoroughly divorced from the Greek context in which a materialist model of world articulation had first been invented (there it was, as Patočka later showed, in his interpretation of Democritus, inseparable from the "care of the soul"), and an evolutionary perspective gave it a new twist. This trend culminates in the vision of human mastery over history and society, capable of "giving a unifying, final and effective meaning to the whole universe."[7] The quote is an exact description of the Marxist-Leninist phantasm, which thus turns out to be an estranged but authentic descendant of metaphysics.

There was, however, more to the Marxist-Leninist project. Its metaphysical ancestry and content were disguised by a claim to represent scientific rationality in its most perfect and all-embracing form. The "scientific worldview" served to justify a political program that aimed at a total restructuring of the social order. Last but not least, this fusion of scientific pretensions and political ambitions gave rise

[7] Jan Patočka, "Negativní platonismus…," op. cit., p. 316; ["Negative Platonism…," op. cit., p. 188].

to an ideological system that assumed the traditional roles of religion: it aspired to function both as a meta-institution and as a meta-interpretation. The description of Communism as a secular religion has been questioned, and the debate is often conducted in terms of analogies on the level of details, but the most decisive arguments have to do with this continuity on the level of socio-cultural roles and as a result of the very attempt to de-institutionalize religion in the most radical possible way. It was the mixture of a scientistic imaginary with a vision of political mastery and an unacknowledged religious dimension that made the regime totalitarian.

It may be instructive to compare this late outcome of complex historical developments with the beginning of the metaphysical tradition. Although Patočka insisted on distinguishing the work done in Plato's Academy from science in the modern sense, he also noted that Plato's efforts to systematize concepts prefigured the later paths of scientific inquiry.[8] Plato's brief and disastrously unsuccessful venture into politics was sublimated into ideas and texts that took on paradigmatic significance for a whole tradition of political philosophy, and thus affected political life in various indirect ways. And as Patočka argued at some length in later writings, Plato's metaphysical turn was linked to a project of religious reform. Among Greek thinkers, he made the most sustained attempt to transform myth into religion, and the result may – in Patočka's view – be described as the first strictly moral religion. It did not change Greek religious culture, but it created essential preconditions for the later Greek interpretation of the Christian message.[9]

In all these respects, then, Plato's thought had a problematizing and transformative potential that reached not only beyond his life and times, but also beyond the boundaries of philosophy in general. But the surplus meaning grew out of Plato's very efforts to construct a system. This paradoxical connection may stand out in clearer relief against the background of earlier Greek thought. The text on negative Platonism contains no explicit discussion of myth, but the argument seems to presuppose an interpretation of the kind developed in subsequent writings, especially in *Plato and Europe.* These later analyses draw on Greek as well as Biblical sources; they deal with myth as an articulation of the human condition, and more specifically of human encounters with the world. The most strikingly recurrent theme is a contrast between integration and exposure: a familiar, supportive and apparently self-contained world is confronted with another dimension that brings insight but also reveals the fundamental fragility, uncertainty and heteronomy of human life. This pre-articulation of human Being-in-the-world left its mark on Greek culture to such an extent that Patočka refers to a "mythical framework" of Greek philosophy: myth remains an active and indispensable vehicle of meaning within the philosophical universe of discourse. Myth is neither eliminated nor disqualified *en bloc* by philosophy; but the shift to philosophical reflection must nevertheless be seen as a radical innovation. It represents "explicit questioning face to

[8] Ibid., p. 324/195 (Czech/English).

[9] See especially Jan Patočka, "Platón a Evropa," op. cit., pp. 256–264; [*Plato and Europe*, op. cit., pp. 121–130.

face with the original apparentness of the world,"[10] or to quote a more lapidary formulation, the "emergence of problematicity" (*vynoření problematičnosti*). There are two sides to this new level of articulation. The hallmark of philosophy is a self-perpetuating interrogation of inherited frameworks and presuppositions; but at the same time, the world as a horizon of experience and articulation is brought into explicit focus. And, as Patočka insists, early Greek philosophy does thematize the world as a framework of appearing (*zjevování*), even if this dimension proved difficult to grasp and express.

If philosophy begins with a problematizing turn, there is no denying that metaphysics takes off with a systematizing intent. But the two moves, however different, are not mutually exclusive. The whole history of the metaphysical tradition is marked by an interplay of systematizing and problematizing trends, and internal debates have, at successive junctures, inspired attempts to recover the pristine problematics of earlier stages. It is, moreover, important to note that the Greek founders of metaphysics did not pursue systematizing projects to the same lengths as some of the most influential later representatives of the tradition. For Patočka, the most fundamental significance of Plato's unwritten teachings was that the sensitivity to problems had remained intact at the highest level of systematizing thought. This paradigmatic episode prefigured a crucial feature of the whole tradition: metaphysics became a dominant pattern of philosophical reflection and questioning, but it could never channel the interrogative dynamic on which it depended into a definitive systematic framework. The history of philosophy can therefore only be written in a pluralistic perspective: multiple versions of metaphysics (some of them more effectively dominant than others) confront each other and interact with currents that cross the boundaries of metaphysical thought.

The relationship between the three cultural and intellectual formations in question – myth, philosophy, and metaphysics – should now be examined more closely. The first point to note is that all three have civilizational connections and implications. Myth remained – through Homer and Hesiod as well as through other channels – a vital force in Greek culture, and became, in that capacity, an integral part of the philosophical field. The emergence of philosophy as the *par excellence* questioning mode of thought was closely linked to the whole innovative dynamic of the *polis* (Patočka later discussed this context in the *Heretical Essays*). As for metaphysics, and more particularly its pre-eminent Platonic form, its long-term civilizational ramifications have already been mentioned. In all three cases, we are dealing with configurations of meaning that intertwine with social forms of life. In very general terms, we can envisage a twofold relationship between philosophical reflection and civilizational patterns. On the one hand, philosophical discourses and traditions may thematize and articulate broader civilizational premises in particularly revealing ways; on the other hand, philosophical ideas developed in response to problems encountered on this level may translate into practical and institutional orientations, often through long-term processes and

[10] Ibid., p. 193/51 (Czech/English; quoting Petr Rezek's title for the fourth lecture).

with more or less significant adaptive twists. The varying combinations of these two trends are a matter for comparative study.

As has been noted, the historical sequence of myth, philosophy, and metaphysics is not reducible to a logic of cognitive progress. New modes of thought are not simply substituted for old ones. Philosophical reflection transforms mythical themes, but does not thereby invalidate or deactivate the mythical imaginary. The metaphysical turn changes the direction and the *modus operandi* of philosophical inquiry, but not in a way that would constitute a self-legitimating new beginning. In brief, the three frameworks continue to overlap and interpenetrate. Moreover, this general pattern allows for more specific and emphatic ways of reviving links to earlier phases. Patočka's own project is a prime example. As a glance at later writings has shown, a reappraisal of myth complements his rethinking of metaphysical questions and their experiential background. The reactivation of pre-metaphysical philosophy figures more prominently in the text on negative Platonism, but even here, the interpretation of Plato takes a very significant step towards a redrawing of boundaries between myth and philosophy. To describe the Ideas as "symbols of freedom"[11] is to suggest that the language and logic of myth may be more central to Plato's thought than the most authoritative readings of his work have assumed, and to link the interpretive history of philosophy to a more broadly focused cultural hermeneutics. And in all these regards, Patočka's particular way of reopening abandoned roads stands out against other choices. Notwithstanding his obvious and acknowledged debt to Heidegger, the two thinkers drew very different lessons from the recovery of Greek origins.

To cut a long story short, the idea of negative Platonism stands for a philosophical perspective that helps to make sense of these structural and historical interconnections. But it has yet to be shown that a reference to Plato – even if it takes the very unorthodox line proposed in Patočka's text – is essential to the argument. It might seem plausible to treat the internal and external contexts of changing modes of thought as historical expressions of human creativity, and therefore as a field for cross-cultural comparative study. This would, however, disconnect historical inquiry from philosophical reflection, in a much more radical fashion than Patočka was prepared to accept. The Platonic connection serves to maintain a philosophical anchorage that would otherwise be lost. But this part of Patočka's project is foreshadowed rather than completed in the text discussed here. It is developed in later writings, but without explicit links to the idea of negative Platonism. Here, as in many other cases, interpreters of Patočka's work are thus faced with the task of bringing together convergent but not fully integrated lines of argument.

The reinterpreted Platonic Idea is, according to Patočka, a symbol of freedom, but also a "call of transcendence."[12] The notion of transcendence must be clarified before taking any further steps. Given the negative twist to Platonism, it cannot

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[11] Jan Patočka, "Negativní platonismus…," op. cit., pp. 328–330; ["Negative Platonism…," op. cit., pp. 199–200].

[12] Ibid., p. 333/204 (Czech/English).

refer to transcendent reality in the sense conventionally equated with metaphysics. On the other hand, the critique of humanism excludes an anthropocentric reduction: there must be more to transcendence than the human ability to transcend external conditions and empirical data. The experience of freedom, as understood by Patočka, is also an experience of self-transcendence, and that aspect must involve a relationship to another element or dimension. If we take a broader view of Patočka's work, there can be no doubt about his conception of this other side to the existential movement of transcendence. The notion of the world was, as Domenico Jervolino puts it, "the great speculative theme of Patočka's life."[13] It is not absent from the text on negative Platonism, but its presence is muted, and when it comes into its own in later writings, it seems to unfold independently of the earlier attempt to argue with Plato against Plato. On closer inspection, however, the two phases can be seen as parts of a unifying and continuing problematic. The difference is not a matter of changing views on central questions, but rather of exploring complementary perspectives on an enduring and enigmatic topic.

A closer look at the crucial last part of the text on negative Platonism – section V – may bring this point out more clearly. Here the concept of the Idea is adapted to the perspective of negative Platonism, and in the course of the discussion, the term shifts between singular and plural in unexplained but potentially revealing ways. The section begins with a reference to Plato's "separated Ideas" and the traditional objections to them; Patočka then goes on to consider and reject the Kantian conception of regulative ideas as well as the more diffuse neo-Kantian turn to value orientations. In both cases, and especially in the latter, the plurality of ideas is more pronounced than it could be within the framework of metaphysical models centered on the ultimate unity of Being. But it is not the pluralizing shift as such that troubles Patočka; rather, he argues that regulation by ideas or values means subordination to empirical goals and activities, and that the transcendence symbolized by Plato's Ideas is wholly lost. This criticism presupposes the possibility of an alternative approach that would redefine transcendence in a less levelling way.

Patočka's attempt to fulfill this demand takes off from a twofold demarcation. On the one hand, the Idea as a symbol of freedom goes beyond action and experience, and thus cautions against the subjectivism that continues to tempt modern thought;[14] on the other hand, it represents "a power other than the objectivities extant in the universe, given in it, and simply there to be acknowledged."[15] The emphasis thus shifts back to a general unifying meaning, very different from Plato's doctrine but unmistakably grounded in an encounter with it; and the focus is on a trans-subjective and trans-objective dimension that Patočka equates with human Being-in-the-world. "Human life is life in the whole."[16] But this constitutive relationship

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[13] Domenico Jervolino, "Langage et phénoménologie chez Patočka," in *Études phénoménologiques*, Vol. XV, no. 29–30, 1999, p. 62.

[14] Cf. Jan Patočka, "Negativní platonismus…," op. cit., p. 330; ["Negative Platonism…," op. cit., p. 200].

[15] Ibid., p. 331/201 (Czech/English).

[16] Ibid.

is, as he insists, not to be identified with power over the world – neither the objectifying power pursued by metaphysics, nor the operative power that was later – with some assistance from evolving metaphysical traditions – achieved within limits and imagined beyond them.

The Idea is, then, redefined in relation to the world. This is the most explicit connection between negative Platonism and the phenomenology of the world. At the same time, the phenomenological perspective entails a new pluralizing turn. The transcendence that takes perception and understanding beyond the given – and ultimately towards the open-ended and enigmatic totality of the world – is also at work in other ways. It manifests itself in the fundamental historicity of a being capable of changing itself as well as its environment, and this ability is in turn inseparable from the distinctively human temporality that allows for changing cultural constellations of past, present, and future. A world that endures and unfolds in time is the common context of these multiple expressions and articulations. But their variety translates into different cultural choices and combinations. Another significant part of the picture emerges when the issue of imaginary beings and realities (*entia imaginaria*, to quote the term Patočka uses) is raised; they also embody the human capacity to envision and articulate the world, and they may be seen as "traces of the Idea at work in our … experience."[17] Patočka does not go beyond this brief hint; but it is enough to show that the new understanding of transcendence is bound to bring up the question of the imagination and its role in the realm of human freedom. That question had been posed – in radical terms but with inconclusive results – by Kant's critique of metaphysics, and reiterated by Heidegger in his book on Kant, with which Patočka was thoroughly familiar. It reappears as one of the problems to be tackled from the perspective of negative Platonism.

But, as noted above, the program sketched in 1953 was never carried out in the way then envisaged. Should we conclude that it was nothing more than an experimental detour on the road to the phenomenology of the world that became more and more explicitly central to Patočka's later work? There are good reasons to reject this view, and to look for a more substantive connection between the two problematics. As I have argued, a phenomenological notion of the world enters into the project of negative Platonism, even if references are confined to a necessary minimum. Is the dependence mutual, in the sense that a critical history of metaphysics – as outlined by Patočka – would be an integral complement to the phenomenology of the world? An early suggestion to that effect can be found in a text that Patočka wrote in French in 1937, for the Ninth International Philosophy Congress (it was not published in Czech until 1994). In the concluding section of a short but dense argument, he makes the following point: "If we say that the theme of philosophy is the world as a whole, we omit the way in which it is understood, and this way of understanding is essential to philosophy: the world as a whole is Kant's theme, as well as Husserl's

[17] Ibid., p. 334/204 (Czech/English).

or Aristotle's – but for each of them, it is a different theme, a different object."[18] The same paragraph refers to the multiple – and mutually incompatible – philosophical projects as "all disclosing certain articulations of the world." A philosophical (and more specifically phenomenological) focus on the world would, in other words, be one-sided without the insight that this theme lends itself to multiple interpretations. The history of philosophy exemplifies the spectrum of these interpretations. Seen against that background, the idea of Platonism appears as a meta-interpretation, in that it encompasses a whole tradition and points to a way beyond it. It should not be mistaken for an attempt to terminate the conflict of interpretations: it does not close the book on metaphysics. Rather, it proposes a new strategy for an ongoing dialogue with the tradition, in a spirit that would take its internal pluralism seriously.

To conclude, the two lines of reflection – the phenomenology of the world and the reappraisal of metaphysics through a new reading of Plato and his precursors – are fundamentally interrelated, but the connections were never spelt out in detail. This failure to integrate different but mutually supportive lines of inquiry may be seen as a particular – and prominent – aspect of a more general problem. If we agree – as the present writer does – with Jean Grondin's claim that the defining insights of phenomenology foreshadowed a hermeneutical turn (already apparent but unacknowledged in Husserl's later work),[19] it must be added that different versions of phenomenology discover the hermeneutical dimension from different angles. In a sense, all roads lead through Heidegger, but the approaches to his work vary as much as the directions of moves beyond it, and the outcomes depend on a whole range of other sources. In Patočka's case, a particularly complex and far-reaching variant of the hermeneutical turn remained unfinished. Its underlying orientation can be traced back to the simultaneous encounter with Husserlian and Heideggerian modes of phenomenological thought, and it results in ever-renewed efforts to synthesize basic insights of both sides. As Renaud Barbaras argues in a recent essay, "Patočka identifies the phenomenal level disclosed by the epoché with the *understanding of Being,* as thematized by Heidegger."[20] But he never ceased to meditate on the precise meaning and the broader implications of this claimed convergence. This ongoing self-interpretation of an original hermeneutic turn developed along multiple lines, including the reflections on the history of philosophy discussed above. The diversity of the interconnected problematics makes the reconstruction of Patočka's project a difficult, but also particularly rewarding task.

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[18] Jan Patočka, "Existe-t-il un canon définitif de la vie philosophique?" in *Travaux du IX^e Congrès international de philosophie*, ed. R. Bayer, t. X (Paris: Hermann et C^ie, 1937), p. 189; quoted from the Czech translation by F. Karfík: "Existuje definitivní kanón filosofického života?" in *Sebrané spisy*, sv. 1, op. cit., p. 104.

[19] See Jean Grondin, *Le tournant herméneutique de la phénoménologie* (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 2003), p. 7.

[20] Renaud Barbaras, "L'être et la manifestation. Sur la phénoménologie de Jan Patočka," in *Revue de métaphysique et de morale*, no. 4, 2006, p. 486.

Patočka's Concept of Europe: An Intercultural Consideration

Kwok-Ying Lau

1 Introduction

The present essay is a modest attempt to sketch an answer to the following questions: What is Patočka's concept of Europe? To what extent can his reflections on Europe, as those of a phenomenological philosopher from the "other Europe," avoid the Eurocentric overtones of their Husserlian counterpart? Can Patočka's conception of Europe lead to a non-Eurocentric reformulation of universalizable elements of European humanity, in such a way as to contribute to the enhancement of intercultural understanding?

Patočka's concept of Europe is a philosophical one. In the first place, it is established through neither a geopolitical nor a racial determination of the term, but by way of a philosophical reflection on "the problems of a post-European humanity."[1] Conducting his reflection as dissident European, and probably also as dissident phenomenologist, Patočka was the first philosopher within the wider phenomenological movement to raise such problems at a time when a certain figure of Europe – the Europe bent on "dominating the world" – "ha[d] perished, probably forever."[2] At first glance, such an attempt seems paradoxical, not to say doomed to failure. The purpose it hopes to serve is prospective – seeking ways to promote intercultural understanding in the era of post-European humanity – whereas its method of inquiry is retrospective – trying to reformulate elements of a European humanity belonging to the historical past. To engage in quest for the meaning and significance of a figure of humanity that has perished, probably forever – is this not

[1] Jan Patočka, "Die Selbstbesinnung Europas," in *Perspektiven der Philosophie*, Vol. 20, 1994, p. 241; quoted from the French translation: "Réflexion sur l'Europe," in *Liberté et sacrifice. Écrits politiques*, ed. and transl. E. Abrams (Grenoble: Millon, 1990), p. 181.

[2] Jan Patočka, *Platon et l'Europe*, transl. E. Abrams (Lagrasse: Verdier, 1983), p. 99; *Plato and Europe*, transl. P. Lom (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2002), p. 89.

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wholly illusory? Yet according to Patočka, the experience of the loss of naively accepted meaning – a phenomenon the author of the *Heretical Essays in the Philosophy of History* calls "problematicity" – is precisely what calls us into question and challenges us so sharply that we respond, by necessity, to that challenge by inquiring after the meaning concealed in a more profound, not immediately apparent level.[3] Thus, it is at the very moment when the meaning of Europe as a visible and tangible power, dominating the world through religious-ideological and technical-instrumental rationalities, is going into eclipse that the question of the "true" and profound meaning of Europe can be raised.

Patočka's concept of Europe is philosophical also in a second, historical-philosophical sense: Patočka closely followed the steps of Husserl in his seeking for the profound meaning of Europe. It is well known that in his last great work, *The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology*, Husserl gave a diagnosis of the spiritual crisis in which European humanity was immersed, and attempted to reactivate the profound meaning of Europe vis-à-vis her situation of loss of meaning. Patočka's own endeavor to reconquer the meaning of Europe was accompanied by a critical discussion of Husserl's reflections. Aware of Husserl's Eurocentric attitude, Patočka proposes, in one of his late private seminars, *Plato and Europe* (1973), a more radical backward questioning: going back not only to the idea of Greek philosophy, as did Husserl, but further beyond, to the situation in which Greek philosophy was born: its pre-reflective mythical environment.[4] If Patočka still understands the task of philosophy as the self-responsibility of humanity, he conceives of it no more in the Husserlian terms of universal rational science, but in terms of care for the soul. By a heroic interpretive effort Patočka invites us to go back to the Greek mythological framework that is at the root of the practice of philosophy as care for the soul. His backward questioning leads him to outline the philosophical anthropology underlying the Greek mythological framework that understands human existence as capable of truth and justice. Such an anthropological sketch has a double merit. Vertically it can serve as the basis for an ontology of the phenomenalization of the world. Horizontally it can provide elements for a dialogue with the conception of human existence of Mencius' Confucianism, one of the most representative and influential schools of the Chinese tradition of moral and political philosophy. For Mencius, the defining elements of being human are nothing other than the faculties of benevolence, righteousness, propriety and wisdom. These four terms are arguably Chinese variants of the concepts of justice and truth. Expanding upon these observations, I hope to show that Patočka's concept of Europe is non-Eurocentric and contains elements which may throw some kind of intellectual bridge between the Greek and the Ancient Chinese philosophical cultures.

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[3] Jan Patočka, *Essais hérétiques sur la philosophie de l'histoire*, transl. E. Abrams with a Preface by P. Ricœur (Lagrasse: Verdier, 1981), pp. 87–88; *Heretical Essays in the Philosophy of History*, ed. J. Dodd, transl. E. Kohák (Chicago and La Salle: Open Court, 1996), pp. 76–77.

[4] Jan Patočka, *Platon et l'Europe*, op. cit., p. 51; *Plato and Europe*, op. cit., p. 42.

2 Patočka's Critical Reading of Husserl's Diagnosis of the Crisis of European Humanity

Having organized, as Czech secretary of the *Cercle philosophique pour les recherches sur l'entendement humain*, Husserl's November 1935 Prague lecture, which was to form the basis of the later *Crisis* work, the young Patočka was very attentive to the old Freiburg master's diagnosis of the crisis of European humanity. In an essay published as early as 1936, he summarized this diagnosis in a clearly articulated passage:

> Husserl believes to have pinpointed the source of the spiritual crisis [of Europe].… [T]he idea of science, of theory is, according to Husserl, so to say, the teleological idea of European humanity, that in the name of which Europe has lived culturally, and politically as well, for more than two millennia, that which ensures European man the content and meaning of his existence.… In short, Husserl's solution to the crisis is a rebirth of Europe out of the spirit of radical theory. This rebirth, then, is possible only because the course of history is governed by teleological ideas which ultimately structure the flow of events, and because the idea of knowing, of a *theōria* free from all prejudice, is such an all-embracing teleological idea whose bearer, European humanity, is called, thanks to it, not only to become the master of the earth and of the world, but also to institute and interpret all its ideals. The European spirit is the great rationalizer of all ideals; all are placed in a new light through the European idea of an autonomous and unprejudged theory which brings clarity and coherence to all orders of life.[5]

Without further discussing Husserl's teleological idea of European humanity, nor analyzing the related idea of scientific rationality, Patočka concluded, towards the end of the article, that "we cannot depend on the teleological idea of European culture."[6] It is doubtless premature to affirm that Patočka, in 1936, was already aware of the Eurocentric (did this term even exist then?) overtones of Husserl's idea of European humanity, yet he disagreed openly with Husserl's teleological approach to the determination of European culture and the solution to her spiritual crisis.

More than 30 years later, Patočka renewed his reflections on Europe by resuming a critical discussion of the late Husserl's attempt at a refoundation of the philosophical rationality of Europe – seeing a way to overcome the crisis of European civilization in the realization of the idea of philosophy as the self-responsibility of humanity. On the one hand, Patočka thinks that Husserl's phenomenological practice of philosophy – his intentional-historical approach to unveiling the original sources of European science in the *Crisis* – represents something new in terms of philosophical method and doctrinal contents, "new insofar as it refuses construction and refers back to the more original sources of experience which can, through prejudice,

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[5] Jan Patočka, "Masaryk's and Husserl's Conception of the Spiritual Crisis of European Humanity," in *Philosophy and Selected Writings*, ed. and transl. E. Kohák (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1989), p. 148. See also French translation: "La conception de la crise spirituelle de l'humanité européenne chez Masaryk et chez Husserl," in Jan Patočka, *La crise du sens,* t. 1: *Comte, Masaryk, Husserl*, transl. E. Abrams (Bruxelles: Ousia, 1985), pp. 24–25.

[6] Ibid., p. 155/37 (English/French).

be misinterpreted and go systematically unrecognized in their own essentiality."[7] On the other hand, he holds Husserl's idea of philosophy and philosophical rationality as universal scientific knowledge to be a typically old European one. This conception of knowledge posits as the supreme paradigm the intellectual sight of the knowing subject's radical self-understanding. It motivates the knowing subject to assume self-responsibility for this knowing activity as such. That is why, for Patočka, "Husserl's entire enterprise is founded upon the idea of the self-responsibility of knowledge."[8] But this intellectualist idea of philosophy is not free from presupposition: "It presupposes the self-responsibility of the thinker who relates to himself. The will to self-responsibility would have no sense, however, if there were not the possibility of irresponsibility which comes to light, e.g., in the purely technical conception of science."[9]

According to the intellectualist idea of philosophy, the only way for the knowing subject to avoid losing itself in the things of the external world is to reconquer its own subjectivity. But since subjectivity is not a thing, the perceptive intuitive method cannot be directly applied to it. Husserl's novelty in terms of method is to have invented the famous procedure of the reduction. Patočka patiently reconstructs Husserl's two ways to the operation of transcendental reduction which assures the reconquering of subjectivity as the ultimate source of legitimacy for the intellectual sight. These are respectively the well-known Cartesian way and the ontological way through the life-world as practiced by Husserl in the *Crisis*. The Cartesian way encounters more than one serious difficulty. (1) The subject, as absolute consciousness, is presented as a "residue" cut off from the world: this idealist approach makes it difficult to rescue the intersubjective world which is supposed to be the habitat of the community of transcendental egos. (2) As the lived-body of the subject is always a Being-in-the-world, the corporeal status of transcendental subjectivity, once cut off from the world, becomes doubtful. (3) The self-givenness of the intuitive content of a thing (*Sache*) is not guaranteed, as what is given can be assured only the ontological status of meaning.[10]

In contrast to the Cartesian way, the ontological way to reduction via the life-world has the merit of suspending the metaphysical positing of the natural world without suspending our original belief (*Urglaube*) with regard to this world. Thus, this way to reduction makes visible our intrinsic relation with the world; it has the great advantage of enabling the thematization of "the world-appearance, the world as framework of appearance."[11] What this reduction brings before the eye is not the sphere of pure immanence, but the entire realm of exteriority. It is a horizon of infinite possibilities, an inexhaustible abundance within which each appearing thing

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[7] Jan Patočka, "Die Selbstbesinnung…," op. cit., p. 247; "Réflexion sur…," op. cit., p. 188.

[8] Ibid., p. 248/188 (German/French).

[9] Ibid.

[10] Ibid., pp. 249–250/189–190 (German/French). Patočka's explanation of these three difficulties is extremely succinct; we have therefore somewhat elaborated on his own presentation.

[11] Ibid., p. 250/190 (German/French): "die Welterscheinung, die Welt als Erscheinungsrahmen."

can manifest itself. This is what we call the "world," within the framework of which everything appears and every kind of experience takes place. Itself "unconditioned," it is thus the condition of possibility of all appearance and experience. The world is "this whole, since always familiar, yet never known in its proper essence."[12]

Patočka, however, does not hesitate to point out that Husserl's concept of world is not exempt from ambiguity. The world has a double sense. "The world is first of all for [Husserl] the sum of experientiable beings, the '*universum*' of all there is."[13] Husserl himself says in the *Crisis* that the world is there for those naively absorbed in ongoing life as "*Universum der Vorhandenheiten*."[14] But as the sum of beings, the world itself can never be experienced originally. Husserl is, of course, well aware of this: "The world, on the other hand, does not exist as *an* entity, as an object, but exists with such uniqueness that the plural makes no sense when applied to it."[15] This is why Husserl always says that the world itself is a "world-horizon" (*Welthorizont*).[16] But to Patočka even the term world-horizon is not univocal. "We are conscious of the world simply as the horizon of every singular experience, in the sense that each such experience means an occurrence within this framework of the whole of being (which it, then, implicitly presupposes)."[17] Corresponding to every appearing object and every explicit act of consciousness there is a particular, multiply articulated consciousness of horizon. Yet, "the most encompassing horizon, the horizon of horizons, is … designated as *the world itself*; it means nothing other than an ever inadequate *intention* of totality."[18] In other words, what can be experienced are horizons of appearance of singular objects, whereas the horizon of horizons, the world itself, can never be directly experienced. It comes to the fore only as the intention of the world, i.e., as the objective, but empty intentional pole of subjective conscious experience. To Patočka, the thematization of the world as horizon by Husserl is paradoxical inasmuch as:

1. By thinking the world as horizon, in particular as horizon of horizons, Husserl succeeds in avoiding the difficulties of the Kantian antinomy: unable to provide a positive determination of the meaning of the world.
2. Yet the thematization of the world as horizon goes against the principle of original givenness, so essential to Husserl's phenomenological method. Admittedly, the world is primordial, but it can never be represented after the fashion of an

[12] Ibid., p. 252/192 (German/French).

[13] Ibid., p. 253/193 (German/French).

[14] Edmund Husserl, *Die Krisis der europäischen Wissenschaften und die transzendentale Phänomenologie*, ed. W. Biemel (Den Haag: M. Nijhoff, 1962 [1954]), Husserliana VI, p. 151; *The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology*, transl. D. Carr (Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 1970), p. 150.

[15] Ibid., p. 146/143 (German/English).

[16] Ibid., pp. 141/138, 146/143 (German/English).

[17] Jan Patočka, "Die Selbstbesinnung…," op. cit., p. 253; "Réflexion sur…," op. cit., p. 193.

[18] Ibid.

> object. Thus it cannot be understood according to the method proper to intentional objects of the conscious subjectivity. For example, the world as horizon of horizons cannot be assimilated to the horizon of a perceptual object. Since the world as horizon of horizons can never be given, it cannot be thematized either. Its thematization is but a quasi-thematization.

According to Patočka, Husserl, in interpreting (and not describing) the world as horizon, reduces it to the status of "mere 'horizonal intentionality.' The world is thus subjectivized and levelled to a present anticipation."[19]

Patočka's critical examination of Husserl's failure to truly thematize the world as horizon of horizons implies a no less critical judgment on the failure of the veritable thematization of the life-world in the *Krisis*. Although Husserl attempted to delineate the formal general structures of the life-world, every single life-world is particular: it is the ground of a particular community having experienced a particular history.[20] Thus life-worlds are always plural, one can never speak of *the* life-world.[21] Confronted with the difficulty faced by Husserl in the thematization of the life-world, Patočka directs his reflections towards a more profound depth underlying the life-world, which he calls the "world-mystery" (*Weltgeheimnis*):

> From the historical point of view, there are only life-*worlds*; all contain an ungraspable component which is *no doxa*, but which we interpret, through the *doxa*, as a sort of hyper-*doxa*. This ungraspable component is the world-mystery which embraces and penetrates each and every historical world as a whole, and which fundamentally determines even our modern … world, precisely in the guise of that which is never given as present in person, but always only as to be projected as present from out of this world.[22]

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[19] Ibid., p. 255/195 (German/French).

[20] It is precisely the historical nature of the life-world that renders its thematization difficult and complicated. Cf. the in-depth treatment of this problematic by Ludwig Landgrebe in his two articles, "The Problem of a Transcendental Science of the A Priori of the Life-World," in *The Phenomenology of Husserl: Six Essays*, ed. D. Welton (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1981), pp. 176–200; "The Life-World and the Historicity of Human Existence," in Bernhard Waldenfels, Jan M. Broekman and Ante Pažanin (eds.), *Phenomenology and Marxism*, transl. J. C. Evans, Jr. (London: Routledge & K. Paul, 1984), pp. 167–204.

[21] Just as Husserl was well aware of the non-givenness of the world as world-horizon, he was also completely cognizant of the non-givenness and, hence, the non-thematization of the "full universal being of the life-world": "But now the paradoxical question: Can one not [turn to] the life-world, the world of which we are all conscious in life as the world of us all, without in any way making it into a subject of universal investigation, being always given over, rather, to our everyday momentary individual or universal vocational ends and interests – can one not survey it universally in a changed attitude, and can one not seek to get to know it, as what it is and how it is in its own mobility and relativity, make it the subject matter of a universal science, but one which has by no means the goal of universal theory in the sense in which this was sought by historical philosophy and the sciences?" (Edmund Husserl, *Die Krisis*…, op. cit., p. 462; *The Crisis*…, op. cit., p. 383.) For a further discussion, cf. Werner Marx, "The Life-World and its Particular Subworlds," in *Reason and World: Between Tradition and Another Beginning*, transl. T. Yates and R. Guess (Den Haag: Martinus Nijhoff, 1971), pp. 62–76.

[22] Jan Patočka, "Die Selbstbesinnung…," op. cit., p. 256; "Réflexion sur…," op. cit., p. 196.

The world-mystery is the deepest and most hidden stratum of the life-world. It never comes to the surface as manifest. It provides, however, the basis on which the various life-worlds project their possibilities. In the case of Western Europe, the modern techno-scientific, "more and more technicized" world is the result of the projection of the possibilities of its particular world-mystery.[23] The life-worlds of other civilizations, each containing its own particular world-mystery, have not produced this projection.

Now if we try to reconstruct or regain contact with the so-called "primordial life-world," starting out from the scientific, technicized world of modern Europe and giving no heed to its particular world-mystery; if we think on the one hand that the universal rationality of modern natural science (European science) is self-evident, on the other that the life-worlds of all other civilizations, not having projected universal science, do not deserve consideration; if, disregarding thus their particular world-mystery, we believe to be enacting our self-responsibility, then what we are actually demonstrating is precisely the Eurocentric essence and reality of Europe.

Thus Patočka concludes that Husserl's theory of the life-world, thematized in the sense of self-responsibility as presented above, represents "one of the last links in the chain of typically European perspectives on foreign cultures and their worlds. That which is 'European' is placed above all other conceptions for seemingly 'objective' reasons, on the basis of its 'universal rationality'; the higher validity of the European principle, its necessity as opposed to the contingency of the other paths followed by human development, is naively presupposed, rather than proved."[24] In fact, it is well known that in the *Crisis* Husserl treats other great civilizations, e.g., those of India or China, as a "merely empirical, anthropological type." In his opinion, only "the Europeanization of all other civilizations" could avoid "a historical non-sense of the world."[25] Patočka was quite aware that such an attitude, full of Eurocentric overtones, "cannot provide the basis of understanding between different human worlds, cannot pave the way to universal human contact, but only to the destruction of the fundamental humanities through a generalized evacuation [*Entleerung*] of the world-mystery."[26]

Patočka's critical analyses of the crisis of European civilization show both similarities and differences compared to those of Husserl. Patočka agrees with Husserl that: (1) the crisis is the loss of meaning of the world as the original ground of human existence; (2) the crisis is deeper precisely in those respects where Europeans themselves are not aware of it.[27] At the same time, however, he departs from Husserl in more than one important way: (1) If it is true that Europe is different from other civilizations by virtue of her universal scientific rationality, that the

[23] Ibid.

[24] Ibid., p. 257/197 (German/French).

[25] Edmund Husserl, *Die Krisis*…, op. cit., p. 14; *The Crisis*…, op. cit., p. 16.

[26] Jan Patočka, "Die Selbstbesinnung…," op. cit., p. 257; "Réflexion sur…," op. cit., p. 197.

[27] Cf. ibid., pp. 271–272/210 (German/French).

latter is her specificity, "it is impossible to prove her supremacy on the basis of this specificity."[28] (2) Whereas Husserl thinks that "the Europeanization of all other civilizations" is the solution to the loss of meaning of the world, for Patočka the rise to hegemonic power of Europe is itself "the curse of the European spirit." The many efficient means invented by this spirit with a view to dominate the whole of humanity also serve the ends of self-destruction, as the recent history of the fall of Europe amply shows.

> The generalization of this spirit harbors universal dangers of which the most recent history of Europe offers an eloquent sample. This generalization appears today as an incontrovertible fact. The extra-European peoples all seem eager to appropriate this spirit in the hope of finding help against their poverty, privations, and need.[29]

Husserl is optimistic about the saving potential of Europe's universal scientific reason, whereas Patočka remains skeptical to the possibility of solving the crisis through universal, rational science: "Is it possible to accept the benefits without falling victim to the very worst misery, ending in massive repression and destruction of life? Without letting life itself be emptied for the sake of the means to maintain it?"[30]

When Patočka criticizes the thought underlying Husserl's idea of "the Europeanization of all other civilizations," when he points out that the path leading back from European scientific rationality to the life-world is still far from a return to the world itself, in the original sense, he is already thinking on the grounds of intercultural understanding.

> The problematic of life-world calls for the same critique addressed by Husserl himself to the "true world" of natural science: it has forgotten its foundation. As long as this foundation, common to all forms of humanity, however diverse, is not exhumed from its long oblivion, no real dialogue between "cultures" and "humanities" will be possible, for the "conversation," instead of aiming at that which is common, presents as universal its specific and particular starting-point.… Husserl himself falls into this temptation in presenting the ideal of the European *ratio* as the universal entelechy of humanity.[31]

Against Husserl, Patočka emphasizes "humanities" in the plural and calls for dialogue among them.

But how can intercultural dialogue truly begin? On a more primordial common ground, is Patočka's reply. What Patočka suggests is to regress further, to the world-mystery underlying the life-worlds. This is the level upon which any rational world is built. This is also the pre-reflective level of the world which can ground an original reflective understanding of being human. Only on the common ground of the world-mystery is intercultural dialogue possible.

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[28] Ibid., p. 272/211 (German/French).

[29] Ibid.

[30] Ibid.

[31] Ibid., p. 273/212 (German/French).

> Everywhere here [in the extra-European cultural traditions] there remains a lively sense of the world-mystery, a consciousness of the pluridimensionality of simple, yet inexhaustible life. The question now is to ground a spirit, a conception of humanity that will allow this originality, this "self-value," this independence to once again become effective – i.e., to give new life to these forgotten traditions, now reemerging amid the generalization of a Europe shaken in her hegemony.[32]

Laying out the common ground for intercultural dialogue on the world-mystery: Patočka understands this as one of the tasks awaiting humanity in the post-European era.

3 The Care for the Soul and the Philosophical Anthropology Underlying the Mythical Framework of the Greeks

It is in the 1973 seminar *Plato and Europe* that Patočka undertakes to expose the common ground of the world-mystery. This is done through an explication of the idea of care for the soul, in contrast to Husserl's pure *theōria*, as the philosophical heritage of Greek philosophy, which is also a European heritage.

Patočka begins by presenting a tragi-heroic vision of human existence in Ancient Greece. What distinguishes humans from all other beings is their consciousness of being capable of truth: man is aware of his capacity for discovering and disclosing truth. Man is conscious that one of the conditions of possibility of the appearance of things, of all phenomena, resides precisely in this capacity, inherent in the human being as such, though he is also cognizant that neither the phenomenal field nor the beings appearing within it are of his own creation. The tragedy of human existence consists in the fact that, while conscious of himself as capable of truth, man is also conscious of his precarious situation in the universe of all there is, i.e., the human being is finite and mortal. This consciousness puts man in a situation of fundamental distress, which is also a situation of accursedness.[33]

According to Patočka, what is heroic in the Greeks, and the Europeans after them, is that they succeed in transforming this situation of fundamental distress into an active and positive project of life. The Greeks achieve this through a philosophical program: to subject everything in the world, and the world itself, to the examination of the soul, so as to clarify and bring all things to light. This project concerns not only our thought, but also our praxis. To think and act always with clarity: this is a philosophical project.[34] Thinking and acting always with clarity is, of course, no more than a possibility of human existence, there is no guarantee that humans will necessarily realize this potential. In their project of life, humans

[32] Ibid.

[33] Jan Patočka, *Platon et l'Europe*, op. cit., p. 43; *Plato and Europe*, op. cit., p. 35.

[34] Ibid.

(Greeks or – later – Europeans) believe they can realize it. Though clearly human, this Greek vision of life, transforming ordinary life into a philosophical life, is not essentially different from that of the gods.[35] It is, therefore, heroic. "*Given certain circumstances, man would be capable of making at least the human world a world of truth and justice*. How this can be achieved is precisely the object of the care for the soul."[36] In other words, the Greeks practice the care for the soul as a philosophical project, which aims at transforming man from an accursed being into a being capable of truth and justice.

Patočka's philosophical explication of the Greek vision of human existence brings to bear both Husserlian and Heideggerian elements. The understanding of the human being as a being of truth is common to both Husserl and Heidegger. The two giants of German phenomenology also share an understanding of the human being as the being who cares for his own Being as capable of truth. Husserl however emphasizes the way in which this concern of the human being for his own Being takes the form of self-responsibility through radical self-reflection (acting as "functionary of humanity"), whereas Heidegger defines man as a being of truth by bringing into view his fundamental situatedness: it is because man is thrown into the world that he is close to things and, hence, capable of truth. Human distress is the consequence of our awareness of our thrownness. Patočka takes this non-rational element from Heidegger in the understanding of human existence. Seeking anew to comprehend the meaning of the Greeks' philosophical life project, he describes as follows human situatedness in relation to the present-day situation of Europe:

> [O]ur task [in these lectures] concerns the *supratemporal within the temporal*; we have been asking how to *get our bearings in our situation*, in the situation of our present world … characterized as one of fall, of a decline evident in all things and which has eminently manifested itself in our times inasmuch as our entire spiritual sphere, built over a period of two thousand years and materialized in state, legal, and cultural structures that lived and ruled the rest of the world from the European territory, has within a very short space of time collapsed. We are living after this collapse.… We wish here to orient our reflections in such a way that philosophy will not be for us solely that which it always has been and remains.… Metaphorically speaking, we are not concerned with the Platonic ascent from the cave, but on the contrary, with Plato's second step – the *return to the cave*.[37]

If the first act of Platonic philosophizing is an act of conversion, turning our gaze toward a realm of clarity, what Patočka proposes to do now is a conversion of this conversion: a backward questioning (or *Zurückfragen* in the Husserlian manner) which delves beneath the world of philosophical clarity, back to its pre-philosophical mythical environment, so as to reactivate the sense of the emergence of the philosophical spirit in man. Insofar as Patočka understands the human being as a being of justice as well, he brings something new in relation to both Husserl and Heidegger, yet old in respect to the Greek philosophers, and in particular to Plato.

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[35] Ibid., p. 44/36 (French/English).

[36] Ibid.

[37] Ibid., p. 50/41 (French/English).

We see here that Patočka shares Husserl's view on the importance of Greek philosophy as bringing about a decisive transformation of humanity (at least for Europeans after the Greeks): from the Greeks on, man considers the pursuit of truth and justice as his vocation. The sense of this vocation comes from his self-understanding as a being capable of truth. Yet Patočka differs from Husserl in the way in which he considers the pre-philosophical origin of Greek philosophy. What is important for Husserl is the lineage Socrates-Plato-Aristotle and the idea of philosophy as pure *theōria*, though he never explains where this idea of philosophy comes from. Patočka, unlike Husserl, sees the birth of Greek philosophy in its mythical framework. Just as the late Husserl traces the birth of science back to the ground of the pre-scientific life-world, Patočka puts the Greeks' first experience of truth, as hinted at in the lines quoted above, back into its pre-reflective mythical framework: "man cannot live without myths, because *myths are true*.… Insofar as man lives in truth … the first, radical, and still *unreflected apparentness* expresses itself in the *form of myth*."[38]

Unlike most rationalists, Patočka does not oppose myth to knowledge, on the contrary. For the author of *Plato and Europe*, "*myth* is no consolation, it is no stimulus, it is no shot of irrationality; it is the harsh awareness, or if you like, the *harsh uncoveredness of our uncoveredness*."[39] The human being lives in a situation of exposure to the whole of being and the disclosure of the world. If the vocation of Greek philosophy is the uncovering of the world as a whole, this vocation has been handed down to it from the mythical environment of archaic Greece.[40] Patočka describes a mythical framework composed of three essential parts, or moments, two of them prior to the Greeks.

1. The Biblical myth of the tree of knowledge and the tree of life. According to this myth, man is transformed after eating the fruit of the tree of knowledge, passing from the state of ignorance to the state of knowledge which distinguishes him from all other beings. Knowing from then on the distinction of good and evil, man loses his innocence forever. The price to pay is his original sin. He is forever accursed.
2. The Babylonian myth of Gilgamesh: myth of the search for eternal life following on the knowledge of human mortality.
3. The Greek myth of Oedipus. Oedipus is originally the incarnation of human uncoveredness. He represents the man of justice, who knows the difference between good and evil. Yet his own past has been concealed from him, bringing him subsequently to commit the crimes of parricide and incest by marrying his own mother. Precisely these acts are the epitome of evil and injustice. Oedipus is thus, at the same time, the symbol of erring and blindness to truth. "What this myth shows is the exact opposite of uncoveredness in uncoveredness itself:

[38] Ibid., p. 52/43 (French/English).

[39] Ibid., p. 57/48 (French/English).

[40] Ibid., p. 58/49 (French/English).

> error about good and evil."[41] In other words, this myth uncovers the unsurpassable duality of human existence: man is a being of uncoveredness and error, at once cursed and sacred.[42]

It is clear that Patočka uses these myths to outline some basic elements of a philosophical anthropology: the duality of human existence.

1. Man is a being of uncoveredness capable of truth, yet at the same time a being of error and ignorance.
2. Man commits evil despite the fact that he can tell right from wrong and endeavors to search for what is good.
3. Man, aware of his mortality, yearns for eternal life.
4. Man has the sense of justice and wants to be just, yet commits greater injustice because much remains concealed.

In comparison to Husserl, who never explicitly raises the question of the origin of the universalist vocation of Greek philosophy, Patočka has the merit of providing us with a clue to understanding the rise, in this framework, of the passion for universal knowledge, later to become the defining characteristic of European humanity. Patočka helps us to understand how a particular cultural ground and mythical environment was transformed and elevated into a universal motivation and movement of human civilization. There are then several questions that must be answered: If the universalist vocation is rooted in a particular cultural environment, how can it overcome its relativism? How can the philosophical-anthropological outline sketched above lay claim to universal validity? In other words, how can it escape the critique of Eurocentrism?

Husserl too draws his understanding of the task of humanity from a certain conception of what it means to be human: man is a being capable of using his reason and freedom to search for truth, such is his manner of exercising self-responsibility. This means that the human being is not purely factual, but also a being in search of meaning and significance. If Husserl's idea of humanity is criticized for its Eurocentric accents, it is because Husserl equates the idea of humanity with the idea of pure theory as the sole manner of exercising our self-responsibility. Pure *theōria* is a particular vocation born in the life-world of the Greeks (and, subsequently, of the Europeans). How can it, with no further proof, lay claim to universal validity?

Patočka proceeds differently. As we have attempted to show above, his starting-point is a different idea of philosophy, also originating in the world of the Greeks: the idea of the care for the soul, which is a philosophical project based on the understanding that man is a being capable of truth and justice. Tracing the birth of this idea back to its pre-reflective mythical environment, Patočka exposes the outlines of a philosophical anthropology: the human being has a dual ontological structure. He is a being capable of truth, but who can at the same time find himself in a situation

[41] Ibid.

[42] Ibid.

of concealment. He has a capacity for and a will to good, yet he errs. He cares for justice, yet he can commit injustice. Last but not least, the human being is aware of his mortality, yet he strives for eternal life. The ontological duality of human existence is a sign of its finitude.

For Patočka, the idea of philosophy as care for the soul is what singles out European humanity from the humanities in the plural.

> That is the peculiar thing about Europe: *only in Europe* was philosophy born in this sense, as man's awakening from out of tradition to the presence of the universe, only in Europe, or better said, in what was the germ of Europe – Greece. After the catastrophe of the Greek *polis*, the important thing became the living *heritage* of thought about a state where philosophers would be able to live, a state of justice founded, not on mere tradition, but rather on insight.[43]

Patočka not only describes the essence of this European tradition, but clearly prides himself on his feeling of sharing its heritage:

> this heritage is preserved throughout all the catastrophes, and that is why I believe it is possible – perhaps – to advance the thesis that *Europe*, especially Western Europe, but also what we call the "other Europe," arose out of *the care for the soul*.[44]

Can we say that Patočka, like Husserl, evinces some sense of Eurocentrism in raising too high the flag of the philosophical uniqueness of the European heritage? Is this Patočka's own version of the "Europeanization of all other civilizations"? In order to decide, we would have to examine not only the form but also the content of this assertion. We can already say at least this much: the content Patočka puts into this assertion is not the idea of universal science, as in Husserl, but rather that of the care for the soul, with its underlying conception of man as capable of truth and justice. In the following section, I shall try to show briefly that this philosophical-anthropological framework can build a bridge for dialogue between the European heritage as understood by Patočka and Pre-Ch'in Chinese Confucianism, especially that of Mencius.

4 The Philosophical-Anthropological Framework of Mencius' Theory of the Four Human Faculties: A Chinese Counterpart to the Idea of the Care for the Soul?

In this final section, I would like to introduce briefly Mencius' famous theory of the four types of spiritual dispositions, which is in fact based on a philosophical understanding of the essential characteristics that define the human being. It is impossible, in the limited framework of this paper, to undertake a deeper, contrasting analysis

[43] Ibid., p. 98/88 (French/English).

[44] Ibid., p. 99/89 (French/English).

of Mencius' anthropological conception with respect to the idea of the care for the soul as understood by Patočka. I shall, therefore, content myself with emphasizing the following point: if it is true that there is not in Ancient China a conscious and clearly articulated idea of philosophy comparable to that of the Greeks, the Pre-Ch'in Chinese thinkers show in practice that they do have a sense of philosophical reflection when they forge concepts such as the "Tao" (in many ways the Chinese equivalent of the manifold senses of the Greek term "*legein*") and "change" in order to understand events of a metaphysical and cosmological order, as well as "*ren*" (benevolence) and "*yi*" (justice) in order to understand the human and moral order. Mencius belongs to the second of these two categories. A successor of Confucius, he develops the Master's situational reflections into well-structured and argued treatises.

Now the Pre-Ch'in Chinese Confucians have their own reflection in regard to the philosophical-anthropological framework of the Greek idea of the care for the soul as exposed by Patočka, i.e., (1) human mortality, and (2) man as a being of truth and justice. The following passage reports a well-known dictum of Confucius on the importance and relative autonomy of the human order:

> Ji Lu [one of the disciples of Confucius] asked about serving ghosts and divinities. The master said, "As yet unable to serve the human, how can you serve ghosts?" Ji Lu said, "May I ask about death?" The master replied, "As yet not understanding the living, how can you understand death?"[45]

The quest for eternal life is not the concern of the Great Master, nor that of other great Pre-Ch'in Chinese thinkers such as Lao-Tzu and Chang-Tzu. This quest comes much later in the development of Chinese culture in the form of the Taoist religion which, from the philosophical point of view, is diametrically opposed to the Pre-Ch'in Taoist philosophers in their vision of life and death. What is important in Confucius' position showing a relative indifference toward the question of human death is his understanding of the distinction between the human and the divine order. Through his apparent indifference toward death, the Great Master wishes to emphasize the priority of the human order, which has its relative autonomy. This is the manifestation of at least the germs of a rational spirit. The following is reported to have been said of Confucius:

> The master did not speak of strange things, forces, chaos, spirits.[46]

Do we not see here the germination of a rational mind, essential to the emergence of the kind of spiritual practice called philosophy by the Greeks?

Let us turn now to Mencius' theory of the four types of spiritual dispositions or the "Four Beginnings" (四端說). In the frequently quoted translation given by Wing-Tsit Chan, it reads as follows:

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[45]Analects of Confucius, Book XI, Chap. 12,「季路問事鬼神。子曰：未能事人，焉能事鬼。曰敢問死。曰：未知生，焉知死。」.

[46]Ibid., Book VII, Chap. 20,「子不語怪力亂神」.

> All men have the mind which cannot bear [to see the suffering of] others. The ancient kings had this mind and therefore they had a government that could not bear to see the suffering of the people.… When I say that all men have the mind which cannot bear to see the suffering of others, my meaning may be illustrated thus: Now, when men suddenly see a child about to fall into a well, they all have a feeling of alarm and distress, it is not to gain friendship with the child's parents, nor to seek the praise of their neighbors and friends, nor because they dislike the reputation [of lack of humanity if they did not rescue the child]. From such a case, we see that a man without the feeling of commiseration is not a man; a man without the feeling of shame and dislike is not a man; a man without the feeling of deference and compliance is not a man; a man without the feeling of right and wrong is not a man. The feeling of commiseration is the beginning of humanity [*ren*]; the feeling of shame and dislike is the beginning of righteousness [*yi*]; the feeling of deference and compliance is the beginning of propriety [*li*]; and the feeling of right and wrong is the beginning of wisdom [*zhi*]. Men have these Four Beginnings just as they have their four limbs. Having these Four Beginnings, but saying that they cannot develop them is to destroy themselves.… When they [the Four Beginnings] are fully developed, they will be sufficient to protect all people within the four seas [the world]. If they are not developed, they will not be sufficient even to serve one's parents.[47]

Mencius begins by a phenomenological-like description to establish his theory of the four types of spiritual dispositions. His theory is actually a theory of the fourfold elements of the essence of man, namely, humanity or benevolence (*ren*), righteousness (*yi*), propriety (*li*) and wisdom (*zhi*). He maintains that man's vocation is to develop these four spiritual dispositions or human faculties. Without pretending that these four elements are the exact equivalent of the elements of the anthropological framework underlying the Greek idea of the care for the soul, we can arguably say that Mencius' theory comprises the Chinese version of elements constitutive of the conception of being human that Patočka values so much, namely, the human being as a being of truth and justice. In addition, Mencius is well-known for his insistence on the importance of justice over biological life.

> I like fish and I also like bear's paw. If I cannot have both of them, I shall give up the fish and choose the bear's paw. I like life and I also like righteousness. If I cannot have both of them, I shall give up life and choose righteousness. I love life, but there is something I love more than life, and therefore I will not do anything improper to have it. I also hate death, but there is something I hate more than death, and therefore there are occasions when I will not avoid danger.[48]

Mencius' sense of justice is acute: he will confront danger in order to preserve justice, at the risk of losing his own life. Is this not the message imparted by Patočka's whole life? Patočka himself was well aware of his destiny when he wrote these moving lines, a mere two months before his death as a result of prolonged and intensive police interrogation:

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[47] "The Book of Mencius," 2A:5, in *A Source Book of Chinese Philosophy*, ed. and transl. Wing-Tsit Chan (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1963), p. 65.

[48] Ibid., 6A:10, p. 57.

> We need something that in its very essence is not technological, something that is not merely instrumental; we need a morality that is not merely tactical and incidental, but *absolute*.… The point of morality is to assure, not the functioning of society, but the humanity of humans. Humans do not invent morality arbitrarily, to suit their needs, wishes, inclinations, and aspirations. Quite the contrary, it is morality that defines what being human means.… Not simply or primarily fear or profit, but respect for what is higher in humans, a sense of duty, of the common good, and of the need to accept even discomfort, misunderstanding, and a certain risk, should henceforth be our motives.[49]

This philosophical testimony of Patočka, which can be read as a resumé of his life action, is it not the best illustration of Mencius' attitude as regards the primacy of justice over biological life? Is it not celebrating, in a way parallel to Mencius, the preeminence of morality in what constitutes the human being's being human?

[49] Jan Patočka, "The Obligation to Resist Injustice," in *Philosophy and Selected Writings*, op. cit., pp. 340–343.

Beyond Myth and Enlightenment

On Religion in Patočka's Thought

Ludger Hagedorn

> *Qui Deum amat, conari non potest, ut Deus ipsum contra amet*.
> Baruch de Spinoza (*Ethica*, V, prop. XIX)
>
> *Everywhere light dictates that which even yesterday was naively construed to be pure of all religion or even opposed to it and whose future must today be rethought (*Aufklärung, Lumières, *Enlightenment*, Illuminismo*).*
> Jacques Derrida (*Faith and Knowledge*, § 8)

Religion in Jan Patočka – the topic may come as a surprise, at least there is no text, no essay in which he deals explicitly, "systematically," with the phenomenon of religion, or attempts a comprehensive commentary. The subject is also virtually absent from the growing secondary literature on Patočka.[1] It seems nevertheless – and this is the guiding thesis of the following reflections – that religious, in particular Christian motifs were, at a deeper level, of considerable, perhaps even decisive importance in Jan Patočka's thought. The aim of the present contribution, which *first* discusses Patočka's conception of religion and *second* exposes his idea of a "demythologized Christianity," is to more closely define the significance of these motifs.

An important preliminary remark: religion requires a confession of faith, indeed, it *exists* precisely through and as such a profession. In that sense, one would be justified in inquiring also after the personal creed of the philosopher Jan Patočka. Such biographically oriented ascriptions, however, incur the risk of prejudgment.

Translated from the German by Martin Chalmers.

[1] Observations on the significance of Christian themes for Patočka are to be found in Ivan Chvatík (cf. "Prolegomena zu einer Phänomenologie des Sinnes menschlichen Lebens in Jan Patočkas späten Essays," in Ludger Hagedorn and Michael Staudigl (eds.), *Über Zivilisation und Differenz. Beiträge zu einer politischen Phänomenologie Europas* [Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 2008], p. 185). Chvatík is rather critical of this Christian influence, seeing it as an unclarified and unassimilated religious residue.

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Reference to "faith" – actual or supposed – treats the question of the significance of religion for his philosophy as already answered. Consequently, I shall mention only the doubtless most significant biographical events: a Catholic by birth, Patočka left the Church in 1927 (at the age of twenty). His precise motives are unknown, but such a step was by no means unusual among Czech (or European) intellectuals between the two wars. What is more surprising is that Patočka went back on his decision and rejoined the Church the very next year, once again for unknown reasons. Social convention or family ties may have played a part, but that remains unclear.[2]

Furthermore, in his numerous articles on the history of the Czech lands, so deeply marked by religious conflict, Patočka displayed no consistent preference either for the Catholic side or the Protestant-Hussite one. What is expressed in these studies on Czech history can be understood as a "reflection" of his own "creed": over the years he evidently felt closer now to one and now to the other of the two confessions, and at times seriously thought of conversion; he was influenced not least by personal acquaintance, such as the close and long-lasting friendship with the Protestant theologian J. B. Souček.[3] All of this may indicate that Patočka held the "religious question" to be important (though experienced with varying degrees of urgency in different phases of his life), and that it remained a question which does not appear to have been "solved."

1 What Is Religion? or: What *Was* Religion?

The primary question, therefore, is not that of a profession of faith: "How do you feel about religion?"[4] What comes first, philosophically, is the more essential question: What is religion, or what is *a* religion? What is it, or what *was* it for Jan Patočka? The past tense speaks not only of the death of the philosopher – the centenary of whose birth and the thirtieth anniversary of whose death we celebrated in 2007 – but, perhaps, also of the death of what is being considered

[2] A more detailed assessment of the biographical context and of the role of the family is yet to be undertaken. Ivan Chvatík, director of the Patočka Archive in Prague, believes that Patočka's family is likely to have influenced him to go back to the Church. His son-in-law, Prof. Jan Sokol, however, in a conversation in January 2008, stressed the anti-clerical attitude of Patočka's father, which makes his reconversion to Catholicism look more like a rebellion against paternal authority than a lukewarm compliance with social or family conventions.

[3] In the January 2008 conversation mentioned above, Jan Sokol also reported that through his friendship with Josef Bohumil Souček (1902–1972), an outstanding theologian and Dean of the Protestant Theological Faculty at Prague's Charles University, Patočka had very seriously considered converting to the Protestant faith. What (or, rather, who) kept him from doing so was Souček himself, who explained to Patočka that it was by no means in the oecumenical idea to change faith and play one Church off against the other. On these biographical aspects of his religious beliefs, see also the insightful observations by Erazim Kohák ("A Philosophical Biography," in *Jan Patočka. Philosophy and Selected Writings* [Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1989], pp. 16–22).

[4] Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, *Faust I*, 3415. In German, this question ("Nun sag, wie hast du's mit der Religion?") is widely known as the "*Gretchenfrage*," a term which has come to be applied to any crucial inquiry.

here: religion itself. Is it perhaps the end of religion, looked upon as its entry into history, as the conclusion of a chapter of history, that enables Patočka to reply so unreservedly to such an important question? It is at any rate astonishing with what frankness and seeming lightness he defines religion. In what remains his best-known work, with a title asserting at once a relation to and a deviation from (or from *a*?) religion, he writes:

> Religion is not the sacred, nor does it arise directly from the experience of sacred orgies and rites; rather, it is where the sacred qua demonic is explicitly overcome. Sacral experiences become religious as soon as there is an attempt to introduce responsibility into sacrality or to regulate sacrality through responsibility.[5]

Religion, therefore, is tied to responsibility, it supposes responsibility, i.e., the access of a free human being to responsibility. It implies that the "demonic," to use Patočka's word, has been overcome. And this idea of a taming of the sacred, of an incorporation of the orgiastic and demonic into the sphere of responsibility, is precisely what inspired Jacques Derrida's reflection on the *Heretical Essays*, a reflection which in its play with the two focal points of mystery and responsibility perhaps best describes the ellipse within which Patočka has laid out his world, his history, his Europe, and also his religion, i.e., his Christianity. But we are running ahead of our subject. Let us first of all stick to *one* dimension. "In the proper sense of the word," writes Derrida (with and about Patočka, and perhaps going beyond Patočka), "religion exists once the secret of the sacred, orgiastic, or demonic mystery has been, if not destroyed, at least integrated, and finally subjected to the sphere of responsibility. The subject of responsibility will be the subject that has managed to make orgiastic or demonic mystery subject to itself.… Religion is responsibility or it is nothing at all. Its history derives its sense entirely from the idea of a *passage* to responsibility."[6] Why this emphasis on transition? Because responsibility can perhaps ultimately be conceived of solely in terms of constant transition, responsibility *as* a transition, as the constant passage of action into (or out of) the decision process. At the same time, however, this transition describes a historical development, a transformation, it marks a break, establishing a before and after. It is no wonder that Derrida particularly stresses this, with and in Patočka, when we see the emphasis with which Patočka makes this historical transition a central theme: for him, this transition does not take place *in* (within), but rather leads *into* history, it is a passage which means the emergence of both politics and history. (In the *Heretical Essays* he speaks of the "nearly simultaneous origin"[7] of these three related and mutually determining forms of freedom – philosophy, politics and history). In short: the birth of Europe in the Athenian *polis* of the fifth and fourth centuries B.C.

Politics, philosophy, history – but weren't we talking about religion? Yes indeed, and in the *Plato and Europe* lectures (another significant title), held only two years

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[5] Jan Patočka, *Heretical Essays in the Philosophy of History*, ed. J. Dodd, transl. E. Kohák (Chicago and La Salle: Open Court, 1996), p. 101.

[6] Jacques Derrida, *The Gift of Death*, transl. D. Wills (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1995), p. 2.

[7] Jan Patočka, *Heretical Essays*…, op. cit., p. 61.

before the publication of the *Heretical Essays*, Patočka quite clearly defines what the transition is, particularly stressing the words "*the transformation of myth into religion*"![8] and explicitly ascribing this transformation to Plato. In order to make this clearer, myth is set against and contrasted with religion: "Myth is a grand passive fantasy – a fantasy that is not aware that it is fantasy and that answers to certain deep affective needs of man. Myth is wholly practical. Religion, on the other hand, is something which requires a personal act of faith; it is something actively carried out by us."[9] The personal act, the person and his actions – this brings us back to the responsible subject and to responsibility in which, once again, religion seems virtually to disappear.

In his *Religion within the Limits of Reason Alone* Immanuel Kant distinguishes two sources or branches of religion: a religion of cult (of cult alone?), which seeks the favors of God, but at bottom does not prescribe a particular way of acting, knowing only entreaty, prayer, and desire, and a moral religion, interested in correct action and in the good conduct of life. According to Kant, the guiding principle of this moral religion would be: "It is not essential and hence not necessary for everyone to know what God does or has done for his salvation, but it is essential to know what man himself must do in order to become worthy of this assistance."[10] Patočka's concept of religion seems also to refer primarily to this second branch. In *Plato and Europe* this is explicitly emphasized, when he writes, the "Platonic religion [*sic!*] is the first purely moral religion,"[11] a religion which understands the divine as a principle, as the good which guides all actions.

Patočka, however, links Plato and the "Platonic religion" not only with the transformation of myth into religion in general, but also with a new idea of immortality: no longer immortality in the sense of a shadow existence, meaning a mere semblance appearing in dreams, etc., i.e., ultimately, an existence *for others*, but rather immortality in the sense of an everlasting soul, which continues living *from itself and for itself* even after death.[12] This idea of eternity imparts a new depth to the motif of the care for the soul. Plato's *epimeleia tēs psychēs* in this sense is one of the most important points taken up again by Patočka: not only a history-shaping, but above all an altogether practical motif (the "good life"), greatly reinforced by the idea of immortality. Curiously, however, this idea is always formulated – in Patočka too, and precisely in Patočka – in an "as if" mode: care for the soul means living and behaving "as if" it were immortal. The possibility that it really is or could be immortal does not seem to be of particular significance to Patočka (as emerges, for example, rather incidentally from his remarks on the proofs of immortality in the *Phaedo*, which – as he says – do not convince us, and "naturally" did not convince Socrates' interlocutors either).[13] What is of interest here is solely the reinforcement of the moral aspect, since this

[8] Jan Patočka, *Plato and Europe*, transl. P. Lom (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2002), p. 122.

[9] Ibid.

[10] Immanuel Kant, *Die Religion innerhalb der Grenzen der bloßen Vernunft*, in *Werke in zwölf Bänden*, ed. W. Weischedel, Bd. 8 (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1968), p. 704.

[11] Jan Patočka, *Plato and Europe*, op. cit., p. 122.

[12] Cf. ibid., p. 126.

[13] Ibid., p. 127.

"belief" (no longer a myth!) requires an individual stance and explicitness, as Patočka explains using the examples of the Socrates of the *Apology* or the *Phaedo*, who must position himself in relation to his non-being (or being-no-longer) in a way that takes account of the care for the soul.

And there is a further important aspect: as with Kant, Christianity seems to be for Patočka too the religion which corresponds above all to this conception of a pure morality. With his idea of a "religion of the good life," Kant refers to its intrinsic potential for insight and reflection. This religion is not so much revelation as reflecting faith, matching pure practical reason. The (in Derrida's word) "dizzying"[14] consequence of this Kantian concept would be that only the Christian religion liberates a reflecting faith, so that the idea of a pure morality that is non-Christian would be a contradiction in terms. And Patočka, like Kant, seems driven to this view by an internal systematic necessity, so that we can, with Derrida, refuse to see his referring only to his own religion as "an omission" or "the guilt of a failure to develop a comparative analysis"; on the contrary, it seems "necessary to reinforce the coherence of a way of thinking that takes into account the event of Christian mystery as an absolute singularity, a religion *par excellence* and an irreducible condition for a joint history of the subject, responsibility, and Europe. That is so even if, here and there, the term 'history of religions' appears in the plural, and even if one can only infer from this plural a reference to Judaic, Islamic and Christian religions alone, those known as religions of the Book."[15]

On the face of it, the more or less exclusive reference to Christianity appears to contradict its Greek origin, what Patočka calls the "Platonic religion." The contradiction is resolved, however, when we see now how Patočka interprets the figure of Socrates and his conflict with the *polis*:

> The community now destroys this man who is an envoy of the divine.… There is an opposition here between that which is perfectly unjust and appears to be just [the old order and community], and him who is perfectly just, yet appears to be unjust [Socrates], and is therefore inevitably condemned by the world and assumes by necessity this consequence. The sin of the world falls upon his head, the guilt falls on the head of the just. In actual fact, we have here before us features of the Christian myth.[16]

Christ – Socrates – Christ. Greek religion entirely retranslated from the Christian, Christianity fully conceived in terms of the Greek inheritance. This is a conception which understands religion primarily as morality, morality as reflection and responsible decision-making, reflection as a response to the experience of difference expressing itself as the difference between two distinct worlds, whether the "true" and the "appearing," "apparent" world (the Platonic view), or the "divine" and the "human" one (the Christian view). This is a difference which came into Christian theology as Platonism and through Platonism, and all of this makes it clear, despite the emphasis on the Christian, how far we have come from any specific religion, from any individual gospel or revelation. Does this mean that religion, for Patočka,

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[14] Jacques Derrida, "Faith and Knowledge: The Two Sources of 'Religion' at the Limits of Reason Alone," in *Acts of Religion*, ed. G. Anidjar (New York and London: Routledge, 2002), p. 50.

[15] Jacques Derrida, *The Gift*…, op. cit., p. 2.

[16] Jan Patočka, *Plato and Europe*, op. cit., p. 128.

is simply another word for responsibility, for insight, even for reason? It would almost appear so when he writes: "In Christianity, there is a moment of insight, for example, inasmuch as Christian dogmas are not considered something to be accepted blindly.… These dogmas have meaning, they make sense. In this, there is something that no other spiritual domain has." Leading up to the characteristic final remark: "Again the Greek is reflected here."[17] The reflex of the Greek in Christianity, and reflection as such as *the* expression of this mirroring – does that not mean that the "Platonic religion" and the "Christian religion" are virtually identical, interchangeable at will, both nothing more than contingent historical titles for the triumphant rise of European reason?

"Heresy – mystery – responsibility." Derrida placed his reading of Patočka under these three headings. We have already mentioned mystery, albeit simply to see it eliminated; we have discussed responsibility at length, but what has become of heresy? We could quickly deal with that question by taking into account the considerable dose of heresy, of dissent, of deviance that comes along with the concept of responsibility itself, namely, insofar as the responsible decision always necessarily presupposes an element of difference, an element of standing apart and relating to moral commandment. Yet, for all the force and bindingness of this requirement, Jan Patočka's "heresy" seems to me to be more concrete and obvious. Its first, most evident unorthodoxy consists in the break with the principle of infinity: the supposedly timeless religion of reason is subordinated to history, it is the expression of the guiding principle of rise and fall,[18] it is an event in history or – to use Patočka's own terms – the event of history: responsibility, religion, coming to the fore, then again leaving the stage.

Thus we find in Patočka more or less the same emphasis put on what pertains to the beginning (the emergence of politics and philosophy in the Athenian *polis*, analogous, for example, to Hannah Arendt's reflections in *The Human Condition*) and – or even more so – on thematizing the end. He uses a whole arsenal of concepts including the prefix "post": *post-Europe* and the post-European (it seems that in Patočka all discussion of Europe – his theme! – is already governed, not to say rendered possible by this prefix); the much-discussed *post-histoire*, understood, not as a completion or coming-to-itself of history in the Hegelian sense, but on the contrary as a drying up, a way of fleeing or eschewing the problematicity and open-endedness of historical existence; and, finally, also the *post-Christian*, the post-Christian era, spoken of in the 1940s, in a monumentally conceived but unfinished work on the philosophy of history, as a historical stage long under way and which has become the reality we live in.[19]

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[17] Ibid., p. 129.

[18] Upswing and downfall are the two leading principles of Patočka's understanding of history and human spirituality; cf. Jan Patočka, *Heretical Essays*…, op. cit., p. 102: "History originates as a rising above decadence…"

[19] Parts of this project have been published in German translation; see Jan Patočka, *Andere Wege in die Moderne*, ed. L. Hagedorn, transl. L. Hagedorn and S. Lehmann (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 2006).

What is behind this "after"-thinking? What is the element linking all these reflections? Do they perhaps reveal something of a fundamental orientation in Patočka's philosophizing? The issue seems to be always the same, one and the same crisis of a specific civilization, of a specific spirit (*Geist*), of a specific historical figure that would appear to have come to its end. It is a thinking of crisis and from crisis – the already long-ongoing crisis that Patočka sees reaching its climax in the wars of the twentieth century. Various motifs combine for Patočka in a single great symptom of crisis: the rise of moral nihilism, the ontological dominance of framing (*Gestell*), as Nietzsche and Heidegger have felt it. The crisis is thus spiritual and philosophical, but also political, finding its most eloquent expression in the particularity of the European nation-states (for Patočka perhaps the greatest political calamity). And these leitmotifs are, by the way, what above all explains Patočka's obsession with war ("The Wars of the Twentieth Century and the Twentieth Century as War" is the title of the sixth and best-known of his *Heretical Essays*), war not as a love for things martial, but as the unoverseeable and disastrous encounter of these various elements: the unleashing of technology in the service of particularist interests that no longer follow any idea, but are exclusively hypostases of power, drawn together in a single movement, which – to use Nietzsche's words – is rushing "restless, violent, headlong" towards catastrophe, "like a river that wants to *reach the end*."[20]

One cannot but notice that Patočka's philosophizing, particularly inspired by the idea of an end and explicitly viewing itself as a reflection on this catastrophe, as thinking *after* Europe's supposedly final catastrophe, as *post*-historical and *post*-Christian, stands nonetheless under the spell of Europe, its history and its Christianity. This is not a contradiction, quite the contrary. Nor are we suggesting that Patočka speaks of the decline of certain principles only to go about rescuing and perpetuating them through the back door. Such an intent would merely downgrade all talk of the end to an empty threatening gesture. What is aimed at here is to take the end seriously while *simultaneously* inquiring after what is hidden or concealed in it, what the end as such preserves – in the sense of the Hegelian "sublation" (*Aufhebung*), meaning both negation and preservation. Patočka himself once formulated this idea with reference to Europe: it may be that Europe will fully and completely take shape only in "overcoming and abolishing" itself, that is, in becoming a post-Europe and, precisely in this expropriation, opening up to its proper determination. We could ask now what this idea means for Christianity. Is there perhaps also an authentic, true, deepened Christianity *after* the end of Christianity? The question seems legitimate, the answer too appears obvious, yet it misses the crux of the matter. In fact, the idea of life in death, of resurrection

[20] "Was ich erzähle, ist … *die Heraufkunft des Nihilismus*.… Unsere ganze europäische Cultur bewegt sich seit langem schon mit einer Tortur der Spannung … wie auf eine Katastrophe los: unruhig, gewaltsam, überstürzt: wie ein Strom, der *ans Ende* will…" Friedrich Nietzsche, *Nachlaß November 1887–März 1888*, in *Kritische Studienausgabe* (KSA), ed. G. Colli and M. Montinari, Vol. 13 (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1999), p. 189. Quoted by Patočka in the fourth of his *Heretical Essays*…, op. cit., p. 93.

through death, does not mean something *for* Christianity, but *is the* very Christian idea. In this sense, Christianity is not merely a question *also* raised by all this "after"-thinking, but rather the central impulse of the whole movement. Derrida clearly realizes this when he states: "What is implicit, yet explosive in Patočka's text can be extended in a radical way, for it is heretical with respect to Christianity and a certain Heideggerianism, but also with respect to all the important European discourses. Taken to its extreme, the text seems to suggest on the one hand that Europe will not be what it must be until it becomes fully Christian, until the *mysterium tremendum* is adequately thematized. On the other hand it also suggests that the Europe to come will no longer be Greek, Greco-Roman or even Roman. The most radical insistence of the *mysterium tremendum* would be upon a Europe so new (or so old) that it would be freed from the Greek or Roman memory that is so commonly invoked in speaking of it.… What would be the secret of a Europe emancipated from both Athens and Rome?"[21] Or, in other words, what will Christianity be – after the end of Christianity?

2 The Figure of a "Demythologized Christianity"

We have explained the fundamental difference between myth and religion in Patočka's conception, how he sees religion taking on its proper shape only by turning against myth. At the same time, however, we must ask to what extent that which is here defined as religion is indeed *specifically* religious. It is fairly obvious that the metaphors mobilized – by Patočka, among others – to mark the historical overtaking and overcoming of myth are themselves derived from a specific mythology, that is, the myth of light in Occidental enlightened thought. *Lumières*, Enlightenment, *Aufklärung* – it is not only the self-understanding of such movements that points in this direction, the whole of European philosophy is full of it: *phos*, *phainestai*, visibility = cognizability, viewing (*Schau*) – from Plato to phenomenology. The phenomenologist Patočka also makes extensive use of these symbols. Is it then an oversight that the sixth and most disturbing of the *Heretical Essays* is so deeply marked by a symbolism that appears to speak an entirely different language? There we find phrases such as "the demonism of the day," "night and eternity," even the "preponderance of Night" – formulations which appeared to Ricœur as "frankly shocking" and "alien."[22] If, however, one reads the appropriate passages more closely, it is clear that no mere inversion or perversion of symbolism is intended. Instead, what is expressed is an understanding of these symbols' deep, paradoxical mutual dependence and transcendence: the demonic nature of day, of the everyday, where everything is simplified and flattened out, where everything becomes graspable,

[21] Jacques Derrida, *The Gift*…, op. cit., p. 29.

[22] Cf. Paul Ricœur, "Preface to the French Edition of Jan Patočka's Heretical Essays," in Jan Patočka, *Heretical Essays*…, op. cit., pp. viii, ix.

comprehensible, manipulable, where there is no longer any place for "modesty, respect, *restraint* before that which should remain sacred, holy, or safe: unscathed, immune,"[23] where the light of day reigns in such a way that it develops a dark, all-consuming demonism (totalitarianisms). On the other hand, it is precisely in the deepest forsakenness of night, when all relative nexuses of meaning are shaken, that another clarity, a "truth," a meaning becomes apparent (this is the dimension of "shaking" repeatedly stressed by Patočka, the space of the "breakthrough" which occurs in what appears to be the most intractable situation, as shown in his interpretation of Dostoevsky's story "The Dream of a Ridiculous Man").[24]

The darkness of myth, the light of enlightenment – the essence of religion is still thought primarily in terms of this dichotomy. Religion here appears as a hermaphrodite, an "enlightenment" of myth that has got stuck halfway, a quasi-mystical infiltration of enlightenment, unable to rid itself of residues of the unenlightened. Religion thus stands – systematically, but also historically – *between* myth and enlightenment. Drawing on Hegel, one could speak of "the pastness of religion," a figure of the spirit which once had a historical role, yet must of necessity be overcome, outbid. Patočka himself often comes close to this stance, as expressed, for example, in his talk of the post-Christian, which – as suggested – should doubtless be understood as post-religious in general. We also find in him another commonplace of discussions on religion, which tends to be associated with an obscure feeling, in contrast to philosophy, characterized as clear and differenciated viewing (*clara et distincta*). In the "Author's Glosses to the *Heretical Essays*," for example, we read: "If spiritual life is the fundamental upheaval (shaking of life's immediate certainties and meaning), then religion *senses* this upheaval, poetry and art in general *describe and depict* it, politics converts it into the very practice of life, while in philosophy it is grasped in understanding, conceptually."[25] Though with a different turn (the concept vs. the dark inkling), this is basically once again the same dichotomy of light and dark, of enlightenment and myth. But how could one think a religion, religion in general, beyond myth and enlightenment? In the Capri seminar on religion, Jacques Derrida broached this question in a meaningful and eloquent way under the telling title "Faith and Knowledge." His program of an overcoming of the dichotomy of faith and knowledge, reason and religion,[26] is very

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[23] Cf. Jacques Derrida, "Faith and Knowledge…," op. cit., p. 68: "*Scruple*, hesitation, indecision, reticence … – this too is what is meant by *religio*."

[24] Cf. Jan Patočka, "Die Sinnfrage in der Epoche des Nihilismus: Masaryk – Dostojewski – Kant – Nietzsche – Heidegger," in *Tschechische Philosophen im 20. Jahrhundert*, ed. and transl. L. Hagedorn (Stuttgart and München: Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, 2002), pp. 209–312; see also French translation: "Autour de la philosophie de la religion de Masaryk," in Jan Patočka, *La crise du sens*, t. 1: *Comte, Masaryk, Husserl*, transl. E. Abrams (Bruxelles: Ousia, 1985), pp. 139–216.

[25] Jan Patočka, *Heretical Essays*…, op. cit., p. 143.

[26] Jacques Derrida, "Faith and Knowledge," op. cit., p. 66: "It would be necessary to demonstrate, which would not be simple, that religion and reason have the same source." – In fact, Derrida is also talking about himself here, for his project is full of references and motivations that do not so much reveal this common source as again and again circle around it.

similar to the reflections he had developed just a few years earlier in his explicit discussion with (and beyond) Patočka. Central to his argument are what he terms the two sources of the religious: the "*unscathed* (the safe, the sacred, or the saintly) and the *fiduciary* (trustworthiness, fidelity, credit, belief, or faith, 'good faith' implied in the worst 'bad faith')."[27] For Derrida, what constitutes religion can be described in the form of an ellipse defined by these two foci. The common figure may entice into neglecting the irreducible duality, the tension of the two forces, and placing the emphasis, instead, entirely on one or the other form of the religious. Derrida thematizes this exclusion on the example of the two philosophers who were doubtless most important to his own work. The (false) alternative is between a "sacredness without belief (index of this algebra: 'Heidegger') and faith in a holiness without sacredness, in a desacralizing truth, even making of a certain disenchantment the condition of authentic holiness (index: 'Levinas')."[28] Without saying it in so many words, Derrida seems to hold the view that Patočka's conception is more strongly permeated by religion's ellipse, by the one figure in the tension between its two inherent forms or sources. This finds concrete expression, for example, when Patočka on the one hand thematizes the "redemptive" in the consolation of Being, but on the other hand derives precisely this discovery from the claim of the other, as shown by the trembling little girl who finally brings the ridiculous man to put off his suicide in Dostoevsky's "Dream of a Ridiculous Man."

Faith *and* knowledge, then, instead of the traditional dichotomy of faith or knowledge. But is not this faith precisely religion's unenlightened residue, its dark side – or, instead of faith, should one rather say: blind faith? Patočka is by no means reluctant to put a name on such blindness, to explicitly denounce the fanatic, auto-immunizing tendencies of religious movements. There is ample proof of this in his reflections on the philosophy of history. An early characteristic essay, of central importance to his whole work, can be taken as representative. In it he criticizes "ideology" which, under the right conditions, "acts all the more vigorously and resolutely, the more fatalistic and objectivistic it is. The examples are known: Muslim fatalism, as an incentive in the battle against the infidels; the Hussite Taborite fatalism of God's chosen flock; Reformation fatalism, with its preordained 'callings' and the need to 'prove oneself' in life. It is, however, no less certain that, if a crisis is to be avoided, all ideology requires the constant control of the idea."[29]

Here, then, ideology appears as fatalistic and fanaticizing auto-immunization, calling for the control of an idea. We may perhaps reformulate: blind, unreflected

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[27] Ibid., p. 98.

[28] Ibid., p. 99.

[29] Jan Patočka, "Ideology and Life in the Idea" [1946], in *Living in Problematicity*, ed. and transl. E. Manton (Prague: Oikoymenh, 2007), p. 45. The chosen examples, from Islamic radicalism to the Hussites and the Protestant work ethic (Weber read, so to speak, with Heidegger), are quite instructive. Though they would of course require much more extensive commentary, a judicious assessment could bring to light the most important aspects of Patočka's historical and political views.

faith, in need of foundation and confirmation, if it is not to be radicalized, in need of feedback – but through what, from what? Reason, knowledge, insight? Hardly – at least, not through that alone. Considering with what passion Patočka lays out his idea of the "idea," how he conceives it as an existential conquest, an inner struggle, a conversion, a *metanoia*, etc. (all religious terms), it is clear that some sort of faith is assuming here a very central function. Above all, could we not turn this all around? Is there not also an ideology of reason, an altogether rational, but equally blind hypostasis of "true" insight which asserts itself by force? Patočka cites over and over again quite a few historical examples: from the violent excesses of the French Revolution and its aftermath to the totalitarianisms of his own day. This irrational violent discharge amid supposed "sobriety" is a topic of tremendous fascination to him, and it seems this is precisely what he has in mind when he speaks of the "demonism of the day." Could we not say, then, that the idea calls for that remnant of "unanchoredness" (another central concept of Patočka's), of possible shakenness, of openness, which only faith can provide, inasmuch as it gives us the confidence to leap over this unfathomable? Ideology believes that it already knows everything (be the source of that certainty what it may) and, hence, it is immune to doubt; "the idea" knows there is much it can and must only believe, and this doubt makes it ready to accept a risk: the risk of responsibility. The idea seems to be the idea it is only insomuch as it arises from and remains bound to this form of responsibility.

But, coming back to the metaphor of light, this means at the same time that something altogether decisive has taken place. The idea is separated from the lucidity of pure viewing (*Schau*) and contemplation, it is precisely not the Platonic Idea, but, rather, has been drawn into the unfathomable, the paradoxical that goes hand in hand with the concept of responsibility and could be formulated as follows: responsibility must necessarily be guided by knowledge, base itself on knowledge (decisions are made "in all con*science*," "to the best of our knowledge"), we must know what we are doing, under what conditions and with what intention – but, *at the same time* and just as necessarily, the responsible decision *cannot* be guided by this knowledge, not only and not exclusively, for if it were content to follow simply what it knows, it would not be a responsible decision, but a mere algorithm, the mechanical transposition of a cognitive pre-given. This paradox of responsibility, this "abyss of responsibility,"[30] seems for Patočka to mark the point at which a religious element clearly comes into play – but not only that: put more precisely, it is the point at which Christianity, the Christian legacy, explicitly turns *against* the Greek-Platonic one, as indicated in the following, significant passage of the *Heretical Essays*:

> Nietzsche coined the saying that Christianity is Platonism for the people and there is much truth in it, in that the Christian God took over the transcendence of the onto-theological conception as a matter of course. In the Christian conception of the soul, though, there is a

[30] Jacques Derrida, *The Gift*…, op. cit., p. 28.

> fundamental, profound difference. It is not just that, as St. Paul would have it, the Christian rejects the Greek *sophia tou kosmou* (metaphysics) and its method of inner dialogue – intellectual sight – as the way to that Being which belongs inseparably to the discovery of the soul. The chief difference appears to be that it is only now that the inmost content of the soul is revealed, i.e., that the truth for which the soul struggles is not the truth of insight, but rather the truth of its own destiny, bound up with eternal responsibility from which there is no escape *ad secula seculorum*.[31]

The truth of one's own destiny, which cannot be brought to light in any "view" (*Schau*), the obscure reasons of the heart, Pascal's *raisons du cœur*, to which Patočka repeatedly refers – this explicitly Christian mainspring of European history would accordingly be an element that does not oppose responsibility, but on the contrary is its indispensable precondition, that which alone enables it to be brought to life. More, Patočka's whole conception of history seems to be heading towards the irreplaceability of just this legacy. Derrida calls it the "Christian mystery" or "Christian secret." The marginalization, the repression, the suppression of this secret would mean, for Patočka, exactly what he understands as not only the post-Christian, but also the post-European and post-historical epoch. History is the history of responsibility, and every attempt at its totalizing appropriation would be what forces responsibility – which is always also to be understood as a responsibility rooted in faith – out of history, turning it into post-history.

At the heart of Patočka's conception of history we would accordingly be dealing with the history of a twofold mystery: the incorporation of the demonic or orgiastic mystery in responsibility (the passage to history proper), and the impending loss or increasing eclipse of the second, Christian mystery (a process which would be tantamount to the end of European history as a history of responsibility). Derrida's reflections on Patočka revolve around these two mysteries, around the history of this twofold elimination. Derrida has, thereby, also cleared the way for a better view of Patočka's own unconventional interpretation of Christianity, which seems to amount to saying that Christianity, as he understands it, has yet to arrive at itself.

> Implied, though never explicitly reflected upon and grasped philosophically as a central question [in the Christian drama of salvation with its care for the soul], is the idea that the soul is by nature wholly incommensurate with all thinglike being, that this nature has to do with its concern for its own Being in which, unlike all other beings, it is infinitely interested; and that an essential part of its composition is responsibility, that is, the possibility of choice and, in this choosing, of arriving at its own self – the idea that the soul is nothing present *in advance*, but *only in the end*, that it is historical in all its being and only as such escapes decadence. By virtue of this foundation in an abyssal deepening of the soul, Christianity remains thus far the greatest, unsurpassed but also unthought-through upsurge that has enabled humans to struggle against decadence.[32]

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[31] Jan Patočka, *Heretical Essays*…, op. cit., p. 107.

[32] Ibid., p. 108. This passage is also notable for the way Patočka understands Heideggerian approaches from the perspective of Christianity and interprets them with reference to Christianity, whereas in Heidegger Christian terminology is employed precisely for a movement of breaking away from Christianity. This "reintegration" of Heidegger into a Christian context is in itself already a kind of "heresy."

"Never explicitly reflected upon and grasped philosophically" – it can hardly be put more clearly that, for Patočka, the figure of Christianity is a future one, still in the process of emerging or to be discovered. As in the above-mentioned idea of a generalization of Europe through its downfall, he seems to be pursuing a similar figure in relation to Christianity as well: the idea of a "sublation" of Christianity, i.e., of its preservation (or the maintenance of some core of it) even after its suspension, and through its suspension. An authentic Christianity, then, after the end of Christianity – but what is it supposed to be like? What does this Christianity mean to Patočka, and how does it relate to the figure of Christianity familiar to us? Patočka's "heresy" (and it is Ivan Chvatík, above all, who has made clear that this term should be understood in its original meaning, in relation to Christianity) will become evident if we take a look at what is *not* meant by this Christianity:

- As was already suggested in the discussion of the *Phaedo*, it obviously does not mean individual immortality. In Patočka's posthumous writings there is an unequivocal reference to this "immortality" as "crude cynicism, which makes a mockery of the meaning of the tragic element in human life in general, and in particular in that life which is cruelly and absurdly destroyed."[33]
- It is not tied to the idea of a transcendent God; God, the divine, is experienced solely in the "shaking" of this world, "in a fundamentally problematic world, in which every other, 'natural' access to the divine is obstructed.… In truth … the Christian God too lives with man, appears to him, is near or distant in a quite different way than merely in this theological wasteland. The Christian God too is with us in history, he is the living hope of a world-conversion, of the truth of this conversion contained in absolute self-sacrifice. Like the old gods, the Christian God too has to *rely* on man, that is what Eckhart, that is what the German Idealists were trying to say, the Christian mystics too."[34]
- Finally is it also not the Kantian idea which understands God with reference to man's moral behavior, as a postulate necessary to thought. Admittedly, Patočka's starting-point too lies, as we have pointed out, in man's moral struggle (ultimately, a struggle over rise and fall), but in the sense of a breakthrough to another, new meaning of life, a historical one, experienced existentially, conquered from out of the dependence on others, unlike Kant's "moral subject, wherein the purpose of the universe is contained," but which "is enclosed in itself."[35]

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[33] Jan Patočka, "Čtyři semináře k problému Evropy" [Four Seminars on the Problem of Europe], in *Sebrané spisy,* sv. 3, *Péče o duši III*, ed. I. Chvatík and P. Kouba (Prague: Oikoymenh, 2002), p. 403. See also French translation: "Séminaire sur l'ère technique," in Jan Patočka, *Liberté et Sacrifice. Écrits politiques*, ed. and transl. E. Abrams (Grenoble: Millon, 1990), p. 299.

[34] Jan Patočka, "Deset náčrtů ke Kacířským esejům" [Ten Preliminary Studies to the Heretical Essays], in *Sebrané spisy*, sv. 3, op. cit., pp. 451–452.

[35] Jan Patočka, "Die Sinnfrage…," op. cit., p. 224. In this essay, the last one Patočka wrote before his death in 1977, there is, conducted above all with reference to Dostoevsky and his scandalous claim that "all are guilty for all," an in-depth discussion of and turn against the idea of the "Kantian God," a moral God of guilt, reward and punishment.

If, however, all these basic convictions of Christianity are put in doubt, if even Kantian moral theology (the indissoluble association of pure morality and Christianity) is rejected as a late product of Christianity, what then entitles Patočka to speak of Christianity at all, to describe it even as the "greatest and unsurpassed" historical possibility? There are three verses from Philippians in which all is said:

> Who [Christ Jesus], being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: / But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: / And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.[36]

This, Christianity's perhaps most difficult, paradoxical, "heretical," and unbearable idea (Nietzsche never tires of attacking the tastelessness and "scandal," the absurd misrepresentation of an enslaved god), this idea of God becoming man, here further reinforced by the world "servant" and the obedience unto the cross, this renunciation of God – theologians speak of *kenōsis*, "emptying" – this one and only idea is what Patočka's interpretation of Christianity seems to come down to, though he never explicitly mentions the passage from Philippians quoted above. The history of Christianity, he once wrote, is "the entry of the suffering God into history, his unique triumphal march and his distancing in a world incapable of transformation."[37] For Patočka, however, the idea of renunciation is not only linked with an interpretation of Christianity and its historical role, rather this idea taken from Christianity seems to be the central and tacit leitmotif of his entire philosophical thought. In the above-quoted passage of the fifth of his *Heretical Essays*, he states:

> The proper life of the soul, its essential content, does not come from gaining sight of the Ideas, and so from a bond to that being which agelessly, eternally *is*, but rather from opening itself to the abyssality of divinity and humanity, of the wholly unique and, therefore, definitively self-determining divino-humanity, that unparalleled drama to which the proper life of the soul relates throughout.[38]

This figure of self-opening, of overcoming subjective closure and enclosure, is it not the constantly varied idea recurring in almost all of Patočka's writing? We find it as the motif of the open soul in the studies on Comenius, in the reflections on art and literature, devoted to such breakthroughs toward sense-bestowing, and of course, not least, in the broad field of politics and history, which Patočka always thinks from the central category of shaking, of a conquest of meaning following on and from the collapse of all relative significance, even in such a technical approach as that of his a-subjective phenomenology – everywhere we come upon the same figure of a "poor" philosophy, of "negativity" ("Negative Platonism" is the title of one of Patočka's best-known essays), of constitution of meaning precisely from the absence of a "positive" idea, his understanding of phenomenology as the endeavor

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[36] Philippians 2:6–8.

[37] Jan Patočka, "Deset náčrtů …," op. cit., p. 452.

[38] Jan Patočka, *Heretical Essays*…, op. cit., p. 108.

"to set against the fundamental concept of modernity a *seeking* path"[39] – again and again it all comes down to the one central theme of liberation and, hence, of winning oneself through loss, through renouncement. It would seem that for Patočka there is no more powerful, no more radical idea for expressing this than the Christian notion of the suffering God who renounces himself and undergoes this poverty, negativity, and dependence. Is it not significant that, speaking of the third and most important movement of human existence, he not only works with concepts such as breakthrough, shaking, openness, but quite explicitly characterizes this movement as "winning oneself through self-surrender," as "self-abandonment"?[40] How else, unless in terms of the fundamental Christian theme, are we to understand this? The idea of God's renunciation, His relinquishing of power and glory, His descent into humanity – a power which has its profoundest utterance in powerlessness – it is this paradox, this scandal, which may indeed be understood as the most powerful symbol of love and devotion, of "gift" (we are once again reminded of Derrida's "gift of death"), a symbol that, in self-relinquishment, also entails letting-be, acknowledgment of otherness, and a truly radical thinking of plurality. It is not so important (or rather: it does not seem so important, for Patočka), whether or not God is really "there," whether he has indeed renounced himself in Christ; what counts is solely the idea, the motif, the most radical and historically most significant conception of what may be described as winning oneself through self-surrender. Is that still Christianity? Here is precisely where Patočka's heresy makes itself clear.

In one of his posthumously published manuscripts Patočka notes: "Resurrection too is nothing but this gaining of meaning through sacrifice: transformation of the world."[41] Gaining of meaning, transformation of the world – again the central motif of breakthrough, of shaking, which has already been discussed. But there is another word here: "sacrifice." This term is more and more frequently used, particularly in Patočka's late texts (e.g., in the 1973 Varna lecture).[42] It seems often to be one of the most puzzling and difficult chapters of his thought altogether, something that may be viewed as willfulness, and that takes on an almost eerie significance with regard to his own life and fate. In the context of what has just been said, however, this concept of sacrifice is merely the final, consistent and comprehensible consequence of Patočka's thought, a conclusion that can only be outlined here.

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[39] Jan Patočka, "Was ist Phänomenologie?" in *Die Bewegung der menschlichen Existenz. Phänomenologische Schriften II*, ed. K. Nellen, J. Němec and I. Srubar (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1990), p. 452.

[40] Cf. Jan Patočka, "The 'Natural' World and Phenomenology," in *Philosophy and Selected Writings*, op. cit., p. 270.

[41] Jan Patočka, "Deset náčrtů…," op. cit., p. 451.

[42] Jan Patočka, "Die Gefahren der Technisierung in der Wissenschaft bei Edmund Husserl und das Wesen der Technik als Gefahr bei Martin Heidegger," in *Die Bewegung der menschlichen Existenz*…, op. cit., pp. 330–359.

The concept of sacrifice is of mythical origin. It arises from the idea of associating oneself with the divinity through giving up something valuable, through self-denial or self-abasement, thereby "binding [this higher being] to oneself and assuring oneself of its power and favor as a result of the reciprocity so provoked."[43] This economy of sacrifice, something done in expectation of something in return, is precisely what Patočka, with his own notion of sacrifice, wishes to breach. Sacrifice is indeed, in his view, that which breaks most radically and forcefully with this kind of economy, for "sacrifice means precisely drawing back from the realm of what can be managed and ordered, and an explicit relationship to that which, not being anything real itself, serves as the ground of the appearing of all that is real and in this sense rules over all. Here 'there is' Being no longer in withdrawal, but in explicitness."[44] "In this way, sacrifice acquires a remarkably radical and paradoxical form. It is not a sacrifice for something or someone, even though in a certain sense it is a sacrifice for everything and for all. In a certain essential sense, it is a sacrifice for nothing, if thereby we mean that which is no being. Such an understanding of sacrifice might basically be considered that in which Christianity differs from those religions which conceived of the divine always as a power and a force, and of sacrifice as the activity which places this power under an obligation. Christianity, on the other hand, placed radical sacrifice … at the center and rested its cause on the maturity of the human being.… The ripe form of de-mythologized Christianity is perhaps to be sought in this direction."[45]

We have already pointed out the extensive parallels that can be drawn between Christ and Socrates (Socrates too as a figure assuming guilt). That was then temporarily pushed out of sight by the radical distinction between Christianity and other religions, in particular the "Platonic religion." The parallel with the figure of sacrifice can now be drawn again, and even extended in a way one may find intimidating. Derrida nevertheless takes this step when he asks: "How does one give *oneself* death [*se donner la mort*]? How does one give it to oneself in the sense that putting oneself to death means dying while assuming responsibility for one's own death, committing suicide but also sacrificing oneself for another, *dying for the other*, thus perhaps giving one's life by giving oneself death, accepting the gift of death, such as Socrates, Christ and others did in so many different ways. And perhaps Patočka in his own way?"[46]

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[43] Ibid., p. 355.

[44] Jan Patočka, "The Dangers of Technicization in Science according to E. Husserl and the Essence of Technology as Danger according to M. Heidegger," in *Philosophy and Selected Writings*, op. cit., p. 332. (This text – as well as the French translation: "Les périls de l'orientation de la science vers la technique selon Husserl et l'essence de la technique en tant que péril selon Heidegger," in *Liberté et Sacrifice*, op. cit., pp. 259–275 – is a translation of the first version of the Varna lecture, considerably divergent from the above-quoted revised text included under the same title in 1991 in the volume *Die Bewegung der menschlichen Existenz*.)

[45] Ibid., p. 339.

[46] Jacques Derrida, *The Gift*…, op. cit., p. 10.

Patočka's interpretation of Christianity, his view of a "demythologized Christianity" based on the idea of *kenōsis*, finds perhaps its most powerful expression in the central Christian motif of the Crucifixion. By way of conclusion, let us pick a few sentences from the wealth of Patočka's posthumously published studies and preliminary reflections toward the *Heretical Essays*:

> Why hast thou forsaken me? – the answer lies in the question. What would have happened if thou hadst not forsaken me? Nothing; something can happen only once thou hast forsaken me. The sacrifice must be carried through to the very end. He has forsaken precisely in order that there be nothing, no thing here any more for me to hold on to. No thing – but that is not to say that this *nothing* may not, in the poet's words, contain "the All."[47]

[47] Jan Patočka, "Čtyři semináře…," op. cit., p. 413; "Séminaire sur l'ère…," op. cit., pp. 310–311 [quoting Goethe's *Faust II*, 6256].

The Responsibility of the "Shaken"

Jan Patočka and his "Care for the Soul" in the "Post-European" World

Ivan Chvatík

The first three volumes of the Prague edition of Jan Patočka's *Collected Works* bear the collective title "Care for the Soul." It will be clear to any reader of Plato's dialogues that this is a translation from the Greek, *epimeleia tēs psychēs*. It was more precisely the subject of a cycle of eleven private lectures that we arranged for Patočka, forced out of academe, to give in the homes of various friends and students in 1973–1974. Recorded on tape and transcribed, the series was then published as a samizdat volume under the title *Plato and Europe*.[1] Faced subsequently with the task of editing Patočka's *Nachlaß*, we realized, however, that we would do better to reserve the heading "Care for the Soul" for a wider use. The texts that come under it are to be found already among Patočka's earliest works, and they form, in a sense, the core of his lifelong philosophical endeavor. At the very beginning of his career Jan Patočka repeatedly posed the question of what sense there is in becoming a professional philosopher, in devoting one's entire life to philosophy. He was to remain faithful until his dying day to the answer he then articulated:

> [P]hilosophizing is not a purely intellectual activity that can be exhaustively clarified and justified.… Philosophizing presupposes an act of courage, risk and resolve, staking one's life on a hope that may turn out to be misleading and unfulfillable.… [T]he philosopher should master the art of remaining his whole life long in what is, to a certain extent, a precarious position, as he can never, through acquired certainties, eradicate his own deciding.[2]

When we decided then to entitle the first three volumes of the *Collected Works* "Care for the Soul," we added an explanatory subtitle defining the ensemble as "A Collection of Papers and Lectures on the Position of Man in the World and in History."

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[1] Cf. Jan Patočka, *Plato and Europe*, transl. P. Lom (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2002).

[2] Jan Patočka, "Kapitoly ze současné filosofie" [Chapters from Contemporary Philosophy], in *Sebrané spisy*, sv. 1, *Péče o duši I*, ed. I. Chvatík and P. Kouba (Praha: Oikoymenh, 1996), p. 87.

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The high point of this introductory section is Patočka's doubtless best-known work, the *Heretical Essays in the Philosophy of History*.

The reason for placing the texts dealing with the philosophy of history at the beginning of the *Collected Works* can also be found in one of Patočka's first publications. Along with Heidegger, Patočka realized in those early days that the human mode of Being, characterized mainly by freedom, is essentially different from the mode of Being of things. Human freedom is transcending facticity through projecting possibilities. Yet this freedom is always anchored in a concrete situation. Distance from facticity does not mean that facticity has been done away with. Our facticity – i.e., our thrownness among things and situations created by the acts of those who projected their possibilities in the past – limits our freedom. Our free possibilities, which it is up to us to seize, are anchored in these limitations. The human mode of Being has, accordingly, a historical character.

Patočka feels, therefore, as a philosopher, the need to deal with history. As early as 1935, this brings him to make some essential distinctions.[3] "Superficial," "perfunctory" or "surface" history, "where events and their bearers are not described with a view toward grasping their *meaning* for life,"[4] is distinguished from the description of "inner" or "deep" history, i.e., the historiography bent on grasping "life in flux with its possibilities, the coming together of which, in simultaneous unity, forms the world."[5] This "deep," "universal" history has two faces: (1) "the philosophical history of the world in general," meaning "the analysis and constitution of the world and time … from the viewpoint of philosophical reflection," i.e., metaphysics and the history of the understanding of Being; and (2) "philosophy of history" in the sense of "the historiography of the world proper," in other words, the reconstruction and interpretation of forces and powers active in history which interest us inasmuch as their significance and effect persist up to the present day.[6]

The texts on the philosophy of history assembled under the heading "Care for the Soul" were thus chosen to serve as an introduction to the *Collected Works* because they form the framework for Patočka's further philosophical investigations. How do they relate to Plato's concept of care for the soul? In what sense do they deserve the Platonic title we have bestowed upon them?

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It is clear from Patočka's earliest writings that he views Plato and Plato's Socrates not only as a prototype of all philosophizing but also as the true founders of European civilization, the spiritual forebears of Europe. According to Patočka, the hidden

[3] Cf. Jan Patočka, "Několik poznámek o pojmu 'světových dějin'" [A Few Remarks on the Concept of "World History"], in *Sebrané spisy*, sv. 1, op. cit., pp. 46–57; see French translation: "Quelques remarques sur le concept d''histoire universelle'" in Jan Patočka, *L'Europe après l'Europe*, ed. and transl. E. Abrams (Lagrasse: Verdier, 2007), pp. 155–171.

[4] Ibid., p. 51/162 (Czech/French).

[5] Ibid., p. 55/169 (Czech/French).

[6] Ibid.

continuity of a philosophical endeavor can be traced throughout the spiritual history of Europe – a project aiming at life founded in rational insight. Beginning with Socrates, the figure of the responsible human individual is anchored in this endeavor.

Patočka explains his understanding of the philosophical "care for the soul" in the first of the two texts quoted above:

> If the creator of a philosophy is himself a strong personality, he can succeed in fulfilling the philosopher's greatest task – in being not only the self-consciousness, but rather the true living conscience of his time: he can put the finishing touches to this life-form and criticize it through his own life, bring its ideals to completion, give them a new turn and a new form; put question marks in front of dead ends so as to bring to the fore what such a person is capable of presenting us with as alone worthy and noble. Socrates was such a philosopher.… In the beginning [of philosophy] was the deed, a deed which meant the possibility to criticize life in all its components and manifestations, to criticize it in ultimate depth, to inquire into its ultimate and exclusive end, in regard to which all individual ends are but means. Socrates was this deed.[7]

Comparing these words, written in 1936, with what Patočka has to say in the texts and lectures from his later years, we may succeed in coming closer to his understanding of this Socratic deed in a way that will at the same time cast light on the connection between the various philosophical themes he dealt with over the whole of his intellectual career.

In the third of the *Heretical Essays* – "Does History Have a Meaning?" – Patočka approaches this question through a reflection on the "relation between the concepts of meaning and of Being."[8] He evokes Heidegger's motif of the phenomenon of loss of meaning, the experience of the nullity of all things, through which we can explicitly relate to Being and realize the wonder of wonders: that being *is*. Passing through the negativity of meaning confronts us with the positivity of being which is, however, neutral with respect to meaning. "[A]nd it is *the same* beings that manifest themselves now as meaningful, now as meaningless."[9] Returning to existent things after the experience of ontological anxiety, the moral we should bring back with us is as follows:

> Undergoing the experience of the loss of meaning means that the meaning to which we shall perhaps return will no longer be for us simply a fact given directly in its integrity; rather, it will be a reflected meaning, in search of a ground it will be able to answer for. As a result, meaning will never be simply given or acquired once and for all.… [M]eaning can arise only in an activity which stems from a searching lack of meaning, as the vanishing point of problematicity, as an indirect epiphany. If we are not mistaken, then this discovering of meaning in the seeking ensuing from its absence, as a new project of life, is the meaning of Socrates' existence.[10]

It is immediately clear that Patočka interprets Socrates in 1973 in about the same way as in 1936. This time, however, the question concerns not only the beginning

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[7] Jan Patočka, "Kapitoly…," op. cit., p. 98.

[8] Jan Patočka, *Heretical Essays in the Philosophy of History*, ed. J. Dodd, transl. E. Kohák, (Chicago and La Salle: Open Court, 1996), p. 58.

[9] Ibid., p. 57.

[10] Ibid., pp. 60–61.

of philosophy, but also the beginning of history. Socrates as a philosophical symbol marks the turning point which, according to Patočka, separates the "pre-historical" epoch from "history proper." History proper, in his view, is at once the history of Europe and the history of the care for the soul. Or again, as Jacques Derrida reminds us, clarifying and completing Patočka's analyses on several points in his long essay *Donner la Mort*[11] – the first part of which was presented in 1992 as a lecture at the Central European University in Prague – "the history of responsibility."

In this paper, I would like to attempt to delve deeper into the conclusion Patočka reaches concerning this history, and to suggest ways in which we ourselves might resume and continue his train of thought.

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In a discussion with a group of young divinity students subsequent to the publication of the second edition of his 1936 thesis on the "natural world" – an encounter which took place some time in 1972 and which we succeeded in taping[12] – Patočka clearly formulates the motivation behind his concept of the philosophy of history: the wish to find a way out of the "relativistic nihilism" of the present world situation.

As we have already indicated, history proper is, for Patočka, the history of human understanding of the world and of the human situation in the world, insofar as it represents life *above* the level of simple self-consuming sustenance. As early as the 1930s, Patočka characterizes this movement toward a higher level of life than that of mere animals as an *upswing*. Prior to this historical upswing, mankind was nearly completely absorbed by providing for sustenance. Humans, however, differ from animals in that even the most primitive people exceed in some way this biological level. The initial transcending can be summed up under the headings of "rite" and "myth." Patočka connects this mode of transcendence with the pre-historical period. History proper begins only when man explicitly realizes that rising above the mere biological level may be what it means to be human.

Today, relativistic nihilism – which for Patočka means more or less the same as Heidegger's *Gestell* – seems to represent a downward movement, bringing life back to the level of mere sustenance, albeit in a much more sophisticated form than in pre-historic times. In comparison to the upswing of history, the present state is thus, in fact, a *decline*. This explains the question which serves as title to the fifth of the *Heretical Essays*: "Is Technological Civilization Decadent, and Why?"[13] An affirmative answer would mean that history has reached its end, that we have come back to the pre-historic level, to a form of life concerned exclusively with sustaining itself (in relative luxury).

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[11] Jacques Derrida, "Donner la mort," in Jean-Michel Rabaté and Michael Wetzel (eds.), *L'éthique du don. Jacques Derrida et la pensée du don* (Paris: Métailié-Transition, 1992); *The Gift of Death*, transl. D. Wills (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1995).

[12] Published in French translation: Jan Patočka, "Le christianisme et le monde naturel," transl. E. Abrams, in *Istina*, Vol. XXXVIII, no. 1, 1993, pp. 16–22.

[13] Jan Patočka, *Heretical Essays*..., op. cit., pp. 95–118.

Confronted with this situation, Patočka adopts the following strategy: if history is the history of human understanding, and if understanding is something historical, then this understanding not only changes in the course of history, but preserves its former figures. Older forms of understanding retreat or are pushed into the background, grafted onto or absorbed by subsequent avatars, but there is continuity. On the basis of this continuity Patočka proposes to deploy a rescue operation.

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Patočka divides history up to the present day into two major periods. The dividing line is the birth of Christianity. Each of the two great periods is defined by an epoch-making upheaval, or "conversion," a change in humans' understanding of themselves and the world. To rescue us from today's decline, Patočka suggests nothing less than a new "gigantic conversion," "an unheard-of *metanoein*,"[14] that would thus be the third in the line of conversions. We shall see later that the Greek word "*metanoein*," and the Latin-derived "conversion" (*konverze*), both part of the Christian lexicon, are not used here by chance.

The first conversion is presented in the fifth of Patočka's *Heretical Essays* through an explication of life in decline following Heidegger's analysis of Dasein in *Being and Time*.[15] Man relates to himself in a different way than to all other beings. Man is interested in himself, his life makes a difference to him: he is interested in his Being, *bearer* and *executor* of his own Being. As Heidegger says, his Being is "*überantwortet*" to him, delivered over to him, assigned to his care. From "*überantworten*," there is but a tiny step to "*verantworten*," with its meaning of responsibility: *how* he bears his Being is up to him, he answers for it. How, then, should he bear it? When Heidegger says with Pindarus: "be who you are! be yourself!"[16] his meaning is not immediately clear, and he himself, after several hundred pages of explanation, admits that he is not satisfied with the result. Patočka answers the same question in his fifth essay through a shortcut reminiscent of Heidegger: "True, authentic Being consists in our ability to let all that is be as and how it is, not distorting it, not denying it its own Being and its own nature,"[17] i.e., neither distorting our own nature, our essence, our humanity – authentic Being consists for us in being truly human.

What does that mean – to be truly human? We seem to end up in a vicious circle. Both Patočka and Heidegger are aware of this, and it was already clear to poets and philosophers at the dawn of history. Avoiding this circle is not only a difficult task for philosophers in the abstract, it also concerns our practical everyday lives. To employ all our forces to this end means to live in upswing. To refuse this task or to attempt to ease the burden of it means to live in decline. But these are not questions people ask simply off the bat. Patočka, by bringing to light the genealogy of this

[14] Ibid., p. 75.

[15] Ibid., p. 98.

[16] Pindarus, *Pythian Ode II*, 72: "γένοι οἷος ἐσσὶ μαθών."

[17] Jan Patočka, *Heretical Essays*..., op. cit., p. 98.

whole line of questioning, adds a useful supplement to Heidegger's analysis of human existence and its authenticity.

Coming back to the first conversion, we can define it as the passage from pre-historical life in myth to the life of a free being confronted with the whole of what-is, and called on to prove him- or herself with no support in the traditional, mythical understanding of the world inherited from the past. This passage is a gradual process.

In the mythical world the gods reign as an unquestioned matter of course. Humans occupy a modest place, called upon above all to provide for their own sustenance. A necessary part of this concern is service to the divine rulers on whom human life is dependent in every respect. In sacred rites, humans fall prey to an orgiastic exaltation that swallows them up entirely in a demonic way, but at the same time raises them rudimentarily above the level of providing for sheer survival.[18] In contrast to this sacred exaltation, the concern for sustenance is progressively understood as toil, as a burden.[19] (Animals, having no relation to the divine, do not feel this concern as a burden.) The sacral orgy then takes on the added function of relieving this burden, and appears, thereby, as its indispensable counterpart. Patočka shows the ambiguity of this orgiastic sacrality. It is an upswing inasmuch as it raises above the level of mere sustenance, but also a decline, a direct threat to man in his sustenance and self-reproduction, inasmuch as it falls prey to demonic ecstasy.[20] Because of this ambiguity, one cannot view the opposition of the sacred and the profane as equivalent to Heidegger's opposition between authentic existence and the inauthentic decadence of "the ordinary day in which we can lose ourselves among the things that preoccupy us."[21] Heidegger does not seem to have taken into account this orgiastic-sexual side of human life. Yet precisely this aspect is essential to the structure of the human mode of Being. According to Patočka, history begins when and where the ambiguity of this sphere is first thematized.

All of this means that the orgiastic dimension cannot be overpowered, but must be related to responsibility by grafting onto responsible life, as Patočka explains in the first pages of the fifth essay.[22] Man progressively succeeds in disciplining it through interiorization. In epic and dramatic poetry, in the Olympic games, the orgy is symbolically displayed to the spectator who can thus experience it in his innermost self, in his soul. It is a kind of sacred *theōria* through which orgiastic rupture with the everyday is cleansed of demonic destructiveness. "This relating to responsibility, that is, to the domain of human authenticity and truth, is probably the germinal cell of the history of religion."[23]

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[18] Ibid., pp. 98–99.

[19] Ibid., p. 99.

[20] Ibid., pp. 100–102.

[21] Ibid., p. 99.

[22] Ibid.

[23] Ibid., p. 101.

Man then begins asking explicit questions which thematize, with everyday sobriety, the problematicity of the human condition. The sacred functions as the disciplined moving force of this development. Hermes lends Odysseus a helping hand, Athena calms the Erinyes, Eros with Diotima urges man to tend toward beauty and, ultimately, toward *diakosmēsis*, procreation in beauty, and efforts in view of organizing a good society. Interiorization progressively gives birth to a new, disciplined man who becomes aware of his individuality, of his freedom. This process is the emergence of the individual soul. *Theōria* is extended to encompass the entire universe. Man leaves myth behind and stands face to face with the universe as a whole. Philosophy and politics come into existence, history begins – "as a rising above decadence, as the realization that life hitherto had been a life in decadence and that there is or that there are possibilities of living differently"[24] than in toil and orgy. This new possibility is the free life in the city-state – the Greek *polis.*

On leaving myth behind, man is profoundly shaken, put into a position hitherto reserved for the gods, while at the same time realizing that he is not equal to this task. Pre-Socratic philosophers seek to gain anew a solid foothold, no longer on mythical ground, handed down from the past, but on the present basis of their own insight, be it with the help of the gods, as described in Parmenides – a foundation that can be nothing elusive or inconspicuously changing, but must, on the contrary, be perfectly stable, eternal, divine.

Philosophical attempts to secure such a foundation repeatedly fail. The sophists discover the power of discourse, capable of relativizing anything firm, upholding tyrannical views which lead the *polis* to its ruin. Socrates in turn mercilessly analyzes everything that had till then been taken for granted, viewed as certain, unchanging and clear, not in order to relativize it, but rather to show, through dialogue with his fellow citizens, where they are going wrong, misunderstanding or contradicting themselves in their views on the good conduct of life. He who contradicts himself is empty, hollow, i.e., actually inexistent, though he hides this from himself through empty discourse. Socrates shames those he confutes, but gives no advice; faithful to his "non-knowing," he endeavors to lead their soul to tell for itself good from evil. On the backdrop of unbridled sophistry, and as its counterpart, Socrates thus develops a technique of dialogue as serious philosophical reflection known as dialectic – a rigorous technique of assessing the value of human opinions and ideas, a method that enables to discern which opinions are viable, sensible, good – and which are not. These dialogues with his fellow citizens are what he calls "care for the soul."

Socrates, whom Patočka presents as Plato's forerunner, is however not enough for Plato and his time. He asks the right question, but does not give a clear, positive answer. The question of where to find a firm ground on which to base human reasoning can no longer be put off. The answer is given by Plato who reinforces

[24] Ibid., p. 102.

Socrates' dialectic as a means of rising above the deceitful world of appearances and politics to the divine world of unchanging, constant, eternal Ideas, the highest of which is the Idea of the Good. The care for the soul now acquires a new meaning. The task of the soul becomes to acquire knowledge of the constant, rational and divine structure of the universe, represented by the consistent, non-contradictory system of the Ideas, in order to become itself consistent and non-contradictory. Only in becoming thus constant and consistent with itself will the soul be able to attain a vision of the Good that is *above* the Ideas and serves as their ultimate foundation. "This view is as unchanging and eternal as the Good itself."[25] The journey in search of the Good undertaken by Plato's care for the soul leads ultimately to the immortality of the soul, an immortality "different from the immortality of the mysteries. For the first time in history it is individual immortality, individual because inner, inseparably bound up with its own achievement."[26]

The result of the first conversion is thus an individual, free and responsible soul, which chooses its destiny and remains in its heart of hearts the bearer of a disciplined sacred orgiasm as an inherent part of itself. Yet, despite its inner life, this soul retains a trait of exteriority: the Platonic lover of wisdom relates to the divine impersonal Good as he would to an external object.

The falsity of the Platonic relation to the Good is revealed by Christianity, which shows it to be an intellectual construct. The Platonic lover of wisdom assumes erroneously – i.e., "believes" merely – that he is in direct rational contact with his metaphysical mainstay. Paul labels Greek philosophy "foolishness."[27]

Christianity is more realistic. It maintains that the divine Good is transcendent, infinitely exceeding man, and cannot be mastered through human knowledge. Instead of the philosophers' chimerical belief, Christianity offers a faith that is not grounded in reason alone. Christianity transforms the impersonal absolute Good into a personal God who, being absolutely good, is infinitely beneficent.[28] To give faith to this "good message," to the evangel of Christ, is to undergo a "second" conversion.

Before the infinite Beneficence of God all men are always already guilty, however hard they try not to sin; man is guilty because he can never, in his finitude, perceive all the circumstances and consequences of his acts. The relation between man and God is fundamentally asymmetric. God, being omniscient, sees man absolutely, in the inmost depth of his being, whereas man has no direct access to God as transcendent. Thus God sees man secretly and from within.[29] Man, conscious of being at all times seen "from within," learns to see himself in a God's eye view and becomes far more interiorized than in Platonism, relating in his inner being at once to himself and to the personal, yet inaccessible God. Man relates to himself as a

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[25] Ibid., p. 105.

[26] Ibid.

[27] 1 Corinthians 1:20: "hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world?"

[28] Cf. Jan Patočka, *Heretical Essays*..., op. cit., pp. 106–107.

[29] Cf. Jacques Derrida, op. cit., p. 102/109 (French/English).

sinner and to God as infinite Beneficence, as a person he begs to forgive his ever-present sin. The intimate relation of the always sinning to the infinitely Beneficent by whom he is seen secretly from within gives birth to a new figure of the human individuality. The human soul has now a hidden, secret interiority which it shares only with God; following God's view, it sees how it is in itself, *per se*, regardless of its role in society. In relation to the *personal* God, the human being becomes a *person*. The transformation of God into a person and the transformation of man into a person is one and the same transformation. Patočka, however, remarks: "What a person is, that is not really adequately thematized in the Christian perspective."[30]

The problem of overcoming the everyday and the orgiastic – i.e., the task of history proper, taken over by Christianity from Greek antiquity – remains moreover unsolved.[31] The new-born person with his deepened individuality is gradually contaminated by individualism, bent solely on playing an important role in society.[32] Reprobate Platonic rationalism remains active, leading to the triumphal march of modern natural science and the endeavor to build a similarly successful rational theology. The contradictoriness of this attempt to acquire *more geometrico* an exact knowledge of God himself is unveiled by Immanuel Kant. Shortly afterwards Friedrich Nietzsche denounces Christianity as nihilistic. Traditional Christian sacrality no longer fulfills its task of disciplining the orgiastic,[33] no longer channels and gives meaning to the aspiration to rise above the everyday.

In the meantime modern technicized society is emerging, and the knowledge of the universe that "had originally in Plato been a bulwark against orgiastic irresponsibility … passe[s] into the service of everydayness."[34] Its sole meaning is henceforth to facilitate total mastery of nature, in thrall to the less and less toilsome, more and more profligate maintenance of life. Thanks to technology, labor is no longer a hardship, and man conceives hope of eventually freeing himself of it completely. It makes way, however, for boredom, while orgiastic energy finds an outlet in wars, genocides and political witch-hunts.[35] The original upward impulse of the second conversion ends in decadent nihilism. From this point of view, there is no difference between totalitarian dictatorship and liberal democracy which both bring humanity back to a well-nigh pre-historical level.

In his introduction to the above-mentioned 1973 private lecture series known as *Plato and Europe* Patočka raises the question of what can be done here. He answers with no hesitation: the first step is to reflect on the situation in which we find ourselves. "The naive situation and the conscious one are two different situations."[36] The entire train of thought we have followed in Patočka is just such a reflection on

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[30] Jan Patočka, *Heretical Essays*..., op. cit., p. 107.

[31] Ibid., p. 110.

[32] Cf. ibid., p. 115.

[33] Ibid., p. 113.

[34] Ibid., p. 112.

[35] Ibid., pp. 112–113.

[36] Jan Patočka, *Plato and Europe*, op. cit., p. 1.

our present situation. Let us now take it further. What else does Patočka analyze as characteristic of our times?

First of all he undertakes an in-depth reflection on Heidegger's notion of *Gestell.* Patočka largely agrees with Heidegger's analysis of the presently reigning mode of Being, but not with his suggestion as concerns the means of seeing this era to its end. In a period of worsening Communist dictatorship, Patočka does not want to merely "prepare readiness"[37] and wait for salvation from the realm of art. He interprets the domination of *Gestell* as a conflict within Being: after the collapse of metaphysics, positive science and its outgrowth, technology, have succeeded in so far-reachingly uncovering what-is that this discovery has completely covered up, concealed the understanding of Being which makes it possible. Patočka proposes to solve through conflict the conflict in Being consisting in revealedness causing concealment – to solve it, more precisely, by means of a sacrifice which would not be for anything existent but rather for appearing as such: to overturn the total leveling down to the sustaining of life for life and make clear that man is fully human only when he exceeds this level.

The idea of this authentic sacrifice in Patočka may appear to be of Christian origin. In the "meditation" he added in 1970, by way of afterword, to the second Czech edition of his 1936 thesis, *The Natural World as a Philosophical Problem*, he parallels the Christic sacrifice to the death of Socrates in the context of the "third movement of human existence."[38] Both sacrificed their lives in order to make something apparent, to show that humanity is fully human only if it overcomes its bondage to life, insofar as it is capable of living above the level of mere sustenance. Through his appearance, through his endeavor to care for his soul, the perfect man of truth – Christ, Socrates – launches an attack against everything that governs the world of decline, closed off in the sphere of mere concern for survival. For this reason, he is condemned and put to death. Both Socrates and Christ could have avoided violent death yet both willingly underwent it. And in both cases their sacrifice was connected with the idea of immortality. Such is precisely the meaning of the "third movement": to break through the level of sheer survival and open it up to the dimension which, though no being, is nonetheless the condition of the world of existing things.[39]

In a private seminar a few years later, Patočka goes even further. He takes up once again the motif of Christ's sacrifice, citing the last words of Christ on the cross: "Eli, Eli, why hast thou forsaken me?" What Patočka suggests here is already

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[37] Martin Heidegger, "Nur noch ein Gott kann uns retten," in *Der Spiegel*, no. 23, 1976, p. 209. See English transl. by W. Richardson: "Only a God Can Save Us," in T. Sheehan (ed.), *Heidegger: The Man and the Thinker* (Chicago: Precedent Press, 1981), pp. 45–67.

[38] Jan Patočka, "'Přirozený svět' v meditaci svého autora po třiatřiceti letech," in *Přirozený svět jako filosofický problém*, ed. I. Chvatík and P. Kouba (Praha: Československý spisovatel, 1992), pp. 249–250. See also French translation: "Méditation sur *Le monde naturel comme problème philosophique*," in *Le monde naturel et le mouvement de l'existence humaine*, ed. and transl. E. Abrams (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1988), pp. 122–123.

[39] Ibid., p. 251/124 (Czech/French).

a passage to the third conversion. He refuses to take these words as a rhetorical question, viewing them rather as a statement of fact: God has forsaken us. The idea of eternal life after death and the promise of bliss beyond is, with regard to the horrors of this world, crude cynicism.[40] The sacrifice must be carried through to the very end, to ultimate nothingness, to make apparent that the divine – what is really governing the world – is no being, be it the supreme being, but rather a non-being, NOTHING, i.e., appearing as such.

Patočka was a phenomenologist. That is to say that the problematic of manifestation, of appearing, of the phenomenon, was at the center of his attention throughout his life. In the 1950s, he made an explicit attempt to connect this topic with the theme of history, and started work on a project meant to fulfill the task he set himself in the 1935 article quoted above, i.e., to sketch a "universal history"[41] of the European world in the philosophical sense. Apart from the introductory study, entitled "Negative Platonism,"[42] a detailed outline of eight chapters[43] and several unfinished texts coming under this heading were found among his papers after his death. The themes touched on were to be dealt with later under other titles, reemerging in the studies on "asubjective phenomenology," the doctrine of the "three movements of human existence," or the philosophy of history laid out in the *Heretical Essays.*

The introductory essay, "Negative Platonism," is of interest to us here in two respects. On the one hand it shows clearly why and in what sense Patočka distinguishes between Socrates' and Plato's philosophy, while on the other making clear in what way he contemplated following in Plato's footsteps.

As stated above, Patočka views Socrates as a prototype of the philosopher in general. "Socrates' mastery lies in absolute freedom: he is constantly freeing himself of all the bonds of nature, of tradition, … of all physical and spiritual possessions."[44] By means of his questioning, which is a "negation of all finite assertions,"[45] he enters "a space in which nothing real provides support,"[46] and so "uncovers one of the fundamental contradictions of being human, the contradiction between man's intrinsic and inalienable relation to the whole, and his inability … of expressing this

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[40] Jan Patočka, "Čtyři semináře k problému Evropy" [Four Seminars on the Problem of Europe], in *Sebrané spisy,* sv. 3, *Péče o duši III*, ed. I. Chvatík and P. Kouba (Prague: Oikoymenh, 2002), p. 403. See also French translation: "Séminaire sur l'ère technique," in Jan Patočka, *Liberté et Sacrifice. Écrits politiques*, ed. and transl. E. Abrams (Grenoble: Millon, 1990), p. 299.

[41] Jan Patočka, "Několik poznámek…," op. cit., p. 55; "Quelques remarques…," op. cit., p. 168.

[42] Jan Patočka, "Negative Platonism: Reflections concerning the Rise, the Scope and the Demise of Metaphysics – and Whether Philosophy Can Survive It," in *Philosophy and Selected Writings*, ed. and transl. E. Kohák (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1989), pp. 175–206.

[43] See French translation in Jan Patočka, *Liberté et sacrifice*…, op. cit., pp. 379–381.

[44] Jan Patočka, "Negative Platonism...," op. cit., p. 180.

[45] Ibid., p. 181.

[46] Ibid., p. 180.

relation in the form of ordinary finite knowledge."[47] On the other hand, Patočka sees Plato as offering an answer to the Socratic question. It is he who, in the "space in which nothing real provides support," beyond the ultimate limits of our whirligig world of phenomena, builds, or better said, happens upon "the other world," the world of transcendent Ideas, of absolutely positive realities which are the true source of knowledge. Plato is thus for Patočka the founder of metaphysics, whereas Socrates "did not venture into metaphysics proper."[48] If overcoming metaphysics has now become indispensable, we shall have to "understand metaphysics itself, extracting from it, in a purified form, its essential philosophic will, and bearing and carrying it further."[49] The pre-metaphysical Socrates, grasped by Plato along with his care for the soul but, according to Patočka, exploited in an inappropriate, i.e., metaphysical way, is claimed by Patočka's *Heretical Essays* for what we have been calling the "third conversion." The inspiration drawn from Socratic philosophy will concern the motif of human freedom and, conjointly, the ability of humans to transcend all objective givenness toward a "non-being," toward the non-objective "Idea" (in the singular) which is now the symbol of freedom and an abbreviation of the whole realm of what makes man human in contrast to animals. This motif leads to a new, "asubjective" concept of human subjectivity: the Idea "stands above both subjective and objective existents,"[50] i.e., above both the process of experience and its material content. "The experience of freedom takes place in man, man is its locus – but that does not mean that he is adequate to this experience."[51] The Idea "is what gives to see … not in the purely … sensory sense in which animals also see; rather, it gives to see … in a 'spiritual' sense in which one can say that we see, we apprehend in that which is given … something more than is directly contained in the givenness.… [W]e apprehend more than we perceive."[52] "All conceptions according to which the Idea is not simply something thanks to which we see," adds Patočka, "but also that *which* we *ultimately see* [my emphasis] are anthropomorphic."[53] This is where the forces of memory and recollection, of fantasy, combination and negation spring from.[54] Finally, what is most important for Patočka's conception of history as an upward movement: the philosophy of negative Platonism "preserves for humans the possibility of relying on a truth that is not relative and 'mundane,' even though it cannot be formulated positively, in terms of content."[55] This philosophy justifies the struggle of man "for something elevated above the natural and the traditional …, against the relativism of values and norms – even while agreeing

[47] Ibid.
[48] Ibid., p. 195.
[49] Ibid., p. 188.
[50] Ibid., p. 200.
[51] Ibid., pp. 200–201.
[52] Ibid., p. 199.
[53] Ibid., pp. 202–203.
[54] Ibid., pp. 199–200.
[55] Ibid., p. 205.

with the idea of the fundamental historicity of man and the relativity of his orientation in his environment, [the relativity] of his science and practice."[56]

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Let us try, then, to formulate what belongs in the framework of the third conversion.

At the end of the sixth and final "heretical essay," after the nightmarish description of the twentieth century as war, Patočka states explicitly that "the means by which this state [i.e., war in the form of Force's planning for peace] can be overcome is the *solidarity of the shaken*."[57] In the context of the foregoing analysis of front-line experiences, concentration camps, and persecution of dissidents it might seem that Patočka's "shaken" are but the lucky few who have survived these various trials and tribulations. I suspect that would be a serious mistake. The shock due to these boundary experiences is merely an extremely acute symptom of another shock which has hit the majority of mankind and been going on for many decades already (having in fact begun more than two hundred years ago) – the shock due to the death of God and the collapse of metaphysics. These two losses are equivalent to the loss of absolute meaning – the dreaded Nietzschean *nihil* is here. Absolute values, absolute meaning, hope of absolute truth, be it in infinity, hope of absolute justice in the Christian paradise – all of this has vanished with the smoke from the conflagrations lit by twentieth century wars. To quote Patočka: "dogmatic nihilism [is] a correlate of dogmatic assertions of meaningfulness, of those theses which metaphysics, and the dogmatic theology associated with it, has taken credit for."[58] With this epochal shock, our situation resembles that in Ancient Greece at the time of the first conversion, and everything indicates that Patočka indeed means to draw this parallel. We dare suppose that a similar shock also foreshadowed the birth of Christianity. Christianity is again at issue today, although in an opposite sense. Whereas in the second conversion faith was acquired, here faith is being lost. In the above-quoted passage of the sixth essay, at the beginning of the next paragraph, Patočka speaks again of "[t]he solidarity of the shaken – shaken in their *faith* [my emphasis] in the day, in 'life' and 'peace.'"[59] In the context, the quotation marks clearly mean the idealized form of these concepts, guaranteed by God.

The starting-point is thus an epochal shock. Two sentences after first mentioning the solidarity of the shaken, Patočka identifies those shaken as "persons of spirit," "capable of conversion."[60] To leave no doubt as to the parallel intended with the first and second conversion, the normal Czech word for *turn* (*obrat*) is associated here with the *Greek* term for the *Christian* conversion: *metanoia*. The "shaken" "persons of spirit" are then characterized as "those who are capable of understanding what life and death are all about, and so what history is about."[61] That is to

[56] Ibid., p. 206.

[57] Jan Patočka, *Heretical Essays*..., op. cit., p. 134.

[58] Ibid., p. 75.

[59] Ibid., p. 135.

[60] Ibid., pp. 134–135.

[61] Ibid., p. 134.

say – in Patočka's words, as concerns history – "history *is* the conflict of *mere life*, bare and chained by fear, with *life at the peak*."[62] Patočka's emphasis on the verb "is" clearly indicates that he means here the essence of history, i.e., what history is at its core, and as we have already seen, history is where there is an upswing, where humans rise in some way above the level of mere self-sustaining life, even risking their lives to maintain themselves above this level. If man is not willing to slave to bare life, Force or *Gestell* threatens him with death. The person of spirit nonetheless refuses such slavery as below his dignity. Should things go that far, he will be willing to sacrifice his life. For what? Nothing. Simply to *show* that such a slavish "living just to live" is not what life is all about. And this is exactly what Patočka says next: the understanding of persons of spirit "must in the present circumstances involve … the basic level, that of slavery and of freedom with respect to life."[63]

But that is not enough. Just as important or perhaps even more so is what is said at the end of the third essay, when Patočka explicitly thematizes the problematicity of absolute meaning.[64] Here, he does not yet speak of the solidarity of the shaken, but the Greek word *metanoesis* (verbal noun = *metanoia*) is already present and, with it, the exigency of the third conversion. Just as in the sixth essay, it concerns "that part of humanity which is capable of understanding what was and is the point of history."[65] And here too, the point is an *upward move.* It is now quite sure: the point of history is to rise above the level of mere self-sustaining life. And here, toward the end of this essay inquiring after the possible meaning of history, Patočka states clearly what this move is aiming at: it is "a reaching for meaning."[66] Reaching for meaning in a situation where meaning has been lost, where instead of meaning there is nothing, *nihil*. Of course, the relative meaning of providing for sheer survival, dictated by the Force of the *Gestell*, has not been lost. But, as Wilhelm Weischedel argues, without absolute meaning, all relative meaning is, in last resort, meaningless.

We come here to the most baffling passage of Patočka's *Heretical Essays.* They who understand what history is all about should be "capable of the discipline and self-denial demanded by the stance of unanchoredness in which alone a meaningfulness both absolute and accessible to humans, because problematic, can be realized."[67] Which meaning, then? *Absolute* or *problematic*? How can Patočka afford such an absolute contradiction?

Here at last we come back to Socrates and his care for the soul. How else indeed are we to understand Patočka's stating and asking, for example: "Humans cannot live in the certitude of meaninglessness. But does that mean that they cannot live

[62] Ibid.

[63] Ibid., p. 135.

[64] Ibid., p. 75.

[65] Ibid., pp. 75–76.

[66] Ibid., p. 75.

[67] Ibid., p. 76.

with a sought for and problematic meaning?"[68] To quest for meaning while at the same time knowing it to be questionable, realizing that any super-temporal, absolute meaning once and for all is sheer nonsense – that is precisely what Socrates was doing, dialoguing with his fellow citizens and dispelling their illusions as to the value of their naive and dogmatic beliefs. A few lines lower down on the same page we come on an inconspicuous, yet very important note: "Perhaps Socrates knew this."[69]

We understand now why Patočka needed to construct a Socrates distinct from Plato, despite the fact that the substance of our knowledge of Socrates all comes from Plato's dialogues. He needed a Socrates who had not yet succumbed to the urge to find or invent an absolute foundation.

What does it mean that the persons of spirit who are today "at the peak of techno-science" are driven to "take responsibility for meaninglessness"[70]? How are we to understand "taking responsibility for meaninglessness" if not as admitting guilt in the loss of meaning and pledging ourselves to ascertain what should be done to change this situation, so as not to repeat the same mistakes. That is precisely what Socrates brings his partners in debate to understand. It is a matter of mobilizing all the powers of the mind in order to search, in a serious and disciplined debate of the soul with itself, or better, with others, for what *good* can be done in a given situation. This quest for the good in a situation is precisely Socrates' care for the soul. It presupposes no metaphysical contact with the absolute Good. It is a reaching for meaning under the guidance of the Idea as Patočka formulated it in his "Negative Platonism," a reaching meant to rise above the level of mere sustenance. In this sense, the meaning discovered by the Socratic dialectic is absolute. It is not a relativistic "all is allowed." And it does not matter that this meaning may, in a new situation, turn out to be false and lead to decline. One has simply to try and try again.

To be sure, this hermeneutical structure of responsible human decision-making is something we already know from Christianity. There it had the form of sin, forgiveness and repentance. It is familiar to Heidegger too, in *Being and Time*, under the heading of *Wiederholung*, "repetition."

And let us not forget the "self-denial"[71] mentioned by Patočka in relation to the third conversion. To understand this, we must recall what we have already seen concerning the primordial demonic, orgiastic drive, disciplined and preserved throughout the two previous conversions. This is still to be maintained in the third conversion, in the disciplined form of "self-denial," as a motor or hormone pushing mankind to reach upwards.

After the death of God, or shall we say rather, now that God has forsaken us, now that – shaken to the bottom of our soul by the two world wars – we have at last grasped this fact, we cannot go on believing in an immortal soul. Nonetheless,

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[68] Ibid., p. 75.

[69] Ibid.

[70] Ibid., p. 76.

[71] Ibid.

the structure the soul acquired in Christianity remains. Man has assimilated as his own the God's eye view, he has learned that he must answer for his deeds – no longer to a transcendent God who sees him secretly, but to himself (cf. Heidegger's voice of conscience and even Socrates' *daimonion*) and others who also take up the position of intimate witness. In contact with God, our soul has learned that it is not in its power to act with complete knowledge of the situation and, hence, that it inevitably bears a burden of "sin." But there is no more *mysterium tremendum*, our soul need no longer tremble in the uncertainty of mercy or eternal damnation. It is quite capable of damning itself for sure. But it has also learned to repent of its sins and so knows how to reflect and put right in repetition the wrong it has done. What previously was cause for trembling, i.e., the impossibility to found our decisions on absolute knowledge, is now explicitly thematized as a situation of problematicity which we must endure, projecting meaning in Socratic debate with ourselves and others, with no absolute support. Our only "foothold" can and must be the wonder – neutral as far as meaningfulness is concerned – that being *is*, that it *appears*, and that we are part of this miracle of appearing. The support we find in this foothold is no alleviation in our problematic situation, nothing to ease our decisions. It is up to us, through our intelligence, to reconsider ever again what is *good* to do in our given situation, up to us to answer for our acts, to ourselves and to others, to judge what we have done. One can, as of old, call the miracle of Being and appearing (*that* being *is* and that it *appears*) "divine", but it is no absolute Tribunal, above all because we ourselves – *to whom* being appears – are part of the miracle.

The regard for the miracle of appearing and existing, for this mysterious Nothing, is what distinguishes this new and shocking human position from the Nietzschean solution as presented by Patočka. In both cases man is able to bestow meaning only on a small part of the world within the reach of his mind. But whereas in Nietzsche this sense-bestowing is relative (depending only on man's own will – and, in this sense, all is allowed), Patočka understands man as a partner in the miracle of appearing in which the others too have a share, along with all the objective non-ego which appears. So long as humans are open in such a way, respecting others and working with them in solidarity in the hermeneutic circle of sense-bestowing in which things appear (Patočka would say with Heidegger: so long as humans "let all that is be as and how it is, not distorting it, not denying it its own Being and its own nature"),[72] all is not "allowed" to them, free as they may be. Their essential post-metaphysical freedom, acquired through the shock of the loss of God, is precisely what brings them to decide for solidarity with those who have undergone a similar shock and, thus, to maintain life above the level of mere sustenance and, again and again, to find meaning for it. They maintain life in an upward surge which makes it possible for it to have authentic history. One example of such a solidarity of the shaken, and consequently of historical action, will surely

[72] Ibid., p. 98.

be, in the future also, the maintenance of an open space for social freedom where people like Socrates and Patočka will not be made to die for political reasons.

In this conception, the miracle of appearing and Being cannot be said to be an instance of absolute meaning as called for by Weischedel (quoted by Patočka) in view of the possibility of meaningful acts. If we were to say that this miracle enables us to find meaning in our acts just as it makes possible our appearing to ourselves, i.e., our existing, we would have to admit forthwith that the miracle of appearing also makes possible for our acts to prove meaningless, and for ourselves to cease to appear to ourselves and to others. In the hermeneutical quest and constitution of meaning, absolute meaning is not necessary for acts to be meaningful. It is fully made up for by the blundering, fumbling, groping solidarity of the shaken.

Bibliography of Patočka's Cited Works

The following indications, by no means complete, are based on the bibliography established by Ladislava Švandová for the Czech edition of the *Centenary Papers* and, of course, on the complete, continuously updated bibliography (collective work of Jiří Němec, David Souček, Ivan Chvatík, Karel Novotný, Věra Schifferová and Ladislava Švandová, taking into account the ongoing contributions of Patočka scholars the world over) available for consultation at the Prague Patočka Archive, or electronically at www.ajp.cuni.cz. Deliberately limited to the works cited in the various contributions to the present volume, we believe it can nonetheless be of use to scholars and students, considering the impressive number of publications which have taken place since Erazim Kohák's first English bibliography appeared over twenty years ago. As all the texts cited in the preceding pages have not as yet been translated into English, nor can all readers be expected to be native English speakers, to say nothing of the interest for non-Czech speakers of comparing translations, we have decided to indicate, for all quoted individual texts, in the second and main part of this list, at once the original versions (in bold-faced type), and the existing translations, not only in English, but also in French, German, Italian and Spanish, by alphabetical order of the first occurrence in the volume. For texts published more than once, we list only the latest – and, for the original versions, the first – editions. The collections of essays in which most of these translations are to be found are listed in detail in Part I. Similarly, Part III provides details concerning the volumes of the Prague edition of Patočka's *Collected Works (Sebrané spisy Jana Patočky)* referred to in abbreviated form in the main list, in which dates and brief explanatory comments on manuscript fragments, preparatory studies, and posthumously published works have been added in square brackets.

I Collections

English

Jan Patočka. Philosophy and Selected Writings, ed. and transl. with an Introductory Study (pp. 3–135) by Erazim Kohák (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1989), 386 pp.

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Negative Platonism: Reflections concerning the Rise, the Scope, and the Demise of Metaphysics – and Whether Philosophy Can Survive It, transl. E. Kohák, in *Philosophy and Selected Writings*, pp. 175–206; Czech original: ***Negativní platonismus. O vzniku, problematice, zániku metafyziky a otázce, zda filosofie může žít i po ní*** [1953], ed. Ivan Chvatík and Pavel Kouba (Praha: Oikoymenh, 2007), 71 pp.; French: *Le platonisme négatif. Réflexion sur les origines, la problématique et la fin de la métaphysique, ainsi que la question de savoir si la philosophie peut y survivre*, transl. E. Abrams, in *Liberté et sacrifice*, pp. 53–98; Spanish: *El platonismo negativo*, transl. I. Ortega Rodriguez, in *Libertad y sacrificio*, pp. 57–103.

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Postface de l'auteur à la traduction française du Monde naturel comme problème philosophique – notes et fragments, ed. E. Abrams, in *Papiers phénoménologiques,* (MSS 3G/12, 3G/9, 3G/8, 3G/11, 3G/13), pp. 131–144; Czech and German originals of MSS 3G/9 and 3G/12 and unedited French texts of MSS 3G/8, 3G/11 and 3G/13: *Rozvrh, příprava a koncept doslovu k francouzskému vydání díla Přirozený svět jako filosofický problém*, in *AS/PS-3*, pp. 2.15.1–22.

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no. 1, pp. 1–37; French: *L'espace et sa problématique*, transl. E. Abrams, in: *Qu'est-ce que la phénoménologie?* pp. 17–96.

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Séminaire sur l'ère technique, transl. E. Abrams, in *Liberté et sacrifice*, pp. 277–324; Czech: ***Čtyři semináře k problému Evropy*** (Four Seminars on the Problem of Europe), in *SS-3/PD-III*, pp. 387–423; Spanish: *Cuatro seminarios sobre el problema de Europa*, transl. I. Ortega Rodriguez, in *Libertad y sacrificio*, pp. 273–342. [The French translation includes only the three sessions discussing the 1973 Varna lecture; the Czech original (pp. 374–386) and Spanish translation (pp. 273–291) introduce these three sessions with an earlier one dealing with the first lecture of the *Plato and Europe* series.]

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The Spiritual Person and the Intellectual, transl. E. Manton, in *Living in Problematicity*, pp. 51–69; Czech: ***Duchovní člověk a intelektuál***, in *SS-3/PD-III*, pp. 355–371; French: *L'homme spirituel et l'intellectuel*, transl. E. Abrams, in *Liberté et sacrifice*, pp. 243–257; German: *Der geistige Mensch und der Intellektuelle*, transl. L. Hagedorn, in *Texte – Dokumente – Bibliographie*, pp. 103–123; Italian: *L'uomo spirituale e l'intellettuale*, transl. F. di Stefano, in *Micromega* (1996), no. 2, pp. 166–186; Spanish: *El hombre espiritual y el intelectual*, transl. I. Ortega Rodriguez, in *Libertad y sacrificio*, pp. 249–271. [Private lecture held on April 11, 1975.]

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Italian: *Il sogettivismo della fenomenologia husserliana e l'esigenza di una fenomenologia asoggettiva*, transl. G. Di Salvatore, in *Che cos'è la fenomenologia?* pp. 285–311; Spanish: *El subjetivismo de la fenomenología husserliana y la exigencia de una fenomenología "asubjetiva,"* transl. T. Padilla, in *El movimiento de la existencia humana*, pp. 113–135.

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[Supercivilization and its Internal Conflict.] Czech: ***Nadcivilizace a její vnitřní konflikt*** [ca. 1953], in *SS-1/PD-I*, pp. 243–302; French: *La surcivilisation et son conflit interne*, transl. E. Abrams, in *Liberté et sacrifice*, pp. 99–180; Spanish: *La supercivilización y su conflicto interno*, transl. I. Ortega Rodriguez, in *Libertad y sacrificio*, pp. 105–186. [Manuscript linked with Chapter VIII of the "negative Platonism" project: "Constructions of History."]

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Spanish: *Universo y mundo del hombre. Observaciones a un planteamiento cosmológico contemporáneo*, transl. T. Padilla, in *El movimiento de la existencia humana*, pp. 85–92.

[What Are the Czechs?] French: *Qu'est-ce que les Tchèques? Petit compte rendu et tentative d'explication*, transl. E. Abrams, in *L'idée de l'Europe en Bohême*, pp. 13–113; German: ***Was sind die Tschechen? Kleiner Tatsachenbericht und Erklärungsversuch***, 3rd. ed., in *Schriften zur tschechischen Kultur und Geschichte*, pp. 29–106. [Series of letters written to H. Ballauff in the first half of 1970s, put into essay form by the author and Ivan Chvatík with a linguistic revision by Klaus Nellen.]

What Charter 77 Is and What It Is Not. See above *The Obligation to Resist Injustice*.

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III Czech Collected Works. List of Abbreviations

Archivní soubor = Samizdat typescript edition of Patočka's *Nachlaß* (the so-called *Prager Abschrift*): twenty-seven blue-bound A4-size volumes, illegally reproduced in 100 copies between 1977 and 1989.

AS/PD-3 *Archivní soubor. Péče o duši*, sv. 3: *O smysl dneška* (Care for the Soul, Vol. 3: For the Meaning of Today), ed. Ivan Chvatík and Pavel Kouba (Praha: samizdat, 1988), 407 pp.

AS/PS-1 *Archivní soubor. Přirozený svět a pohyb lidské existence*, sv. 1 (The Natural World and the Movement of Human Existence, Vol. 1), ed. Ivan Chvatík (Praha: samizdat, 1980), 245 pp.

AS/PS-2 *Archivní soubor. Přirozený svět a pohyb lidské existence*, sv. 2 (The Natural World and the Movement of Human Existence, Vol. 2), ed. Ivan Chvatík (Praha: samizdat, 1980), 304 pp.

AS/PS-3 *Archivní soubor. Přirozený svět a pohyb lidské existence*, sv. 3 (The Natural World and the Movement of Human Existence, Vol. 3), ed. Ivan Chvatík (Praha: samizdat, 1980), 251 pp.

SS = Sebrané spisy Jana Patočky – Collected Works of Jan Patočka edited by the Jan Patočka Archive, Prague, planned in thirty volumes, fourteen of which have appeared at the time the present volume is going to press.

SS-1/PD-I *Sebrané spisy*, sv. 1, *Péče o duši I* (Vol. 1, *Care for the Soul I*), ed. Ivan Chvatík and Pavel Kouba (Praha: Oikoymenh, 1996), 505 pp.

SS-2/PD-II *Sebrané spisy*, sv. 2, *Péče o duši II* (Vol. 2, *Care for the Soul II*), ed. Ivan Chvatík and Pavel Kouba (Praha: Oikoymenh, 1999), 398 pp.

SS-3/PD-III *Sebrané spisy*, sv. 3, *Péče o duši III* (Vol. 3, *Care for the Soul III*), ed. Ivan Chvatík and Pavel Kouba (Praha: Oikoymenh, 2002), 842 pp.

SS-4/UČ-I *Sebrané spisy*, sv. 4, *Umění a čas I* (Vol. 4, *Art and Time I*), ed. Daniel Vojtěch and Ivan Chvatík (Praha: Oikoymenh / Filosofia, 2004), 544 pp.

SS-5/UČ-II *Sebrané spisy*, sv. 5, *Umění a čas II* (Vol. 5, *Art and Time II*), ed. Daniel Vojtěch and Ivan Chvatík (Praha: Oikoymenh / Filosofia, 2004), 452 pp.

SS-6/F-I *Sebrané spisy*, sv. 6, *Fenomenologické spisy I: Přirozený svět* (Vol. 6, *Phenomenology I: The Natural World*), ed. Ivan Chvatík and Jan Frei, (Praha: Oikoymenh / Filosofia, 2008), 471 pp.

SS-7/F-II *Sebrané spisy*, sv. 7, *Fenomenologické spisy II: Co je existence* (Vol. 7, *Phenomenology II: What Is Existence*), ed. Pavel Kouba and Ondřej Švec, (Praha: Oikoymenh / Filosofia, 2010), 670 pp.

SS-8.2/F-III.2 *Sebrané spisy*, sv. 8.2, *Fenomenologické spisy III/2: O zjevování samém* (Vol. 8.2, *Phenomenology III.2: On Appearing as Such*), ed. Ivan Chvatík, Pavel Kouba, and Jan Frei – scheduled to appear in 2011 or 2012.

SS-12/Č-I *Sebrané spisy*, sv. 12, *Češi I* (Vol. 12, *The Czechs I*), ed. Karel Palek and Ivan Chvatík (Praha: Oikoymenh / Filosofia, 2006), 901 pp.

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