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STUDIA AESTHETICA VII



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MYTH, PHILOSOPHY,  
ART, AND SCIENCE  
IN JAN PATOČKA'S THOUGHT

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## CONTENTS

|   |    |
|---|----|
| Vlastimil Zuska, Introduction: The Inspiring Thinking of Jan Patočka Today. . . . .                                     | 7  |
| Heleen J. Pott, Emotions, Persons, and the Body: William James and Jan Patočka . . . . .                                | 11 |
| Philippe Merlier, <i>Péri tès psychèpoias</i> . Patočka et l'art : une pensée de la création sans sujet. . . . .        | 21 |
| Ondřej Dadejík, Distance and Immersion: Phenomenological Aesthetics and the Question of a 'Paradigm Shift' . . . . .    | 31 |
| Felix Borecký, The Significance of the Concept of <i>Thauma</i> in Patočka's Philosophy of the History of Art . . . . . | 47 |
| Inês Pereira Rodrigues, Patočka, Myth, and Literature: Illustrations of the Possibility of Paradise on Earth . . . . .  | 57 |
| Daniela Blahutková, Patočka's Reflections on Faustus and Modern Art . . . . .   | 65 |
| Miloš Ševčík, Dominant Science and Influential Art: Jan Patočka on Relations between Art and Science . . . . .          | 73 |



## INTRODUCTION: THE INSPIRING THINKING OF JAN PATOČKA TODAY

This volume is based on papers given at an international conference in Pilsen, on 9 December 2013. The articles are versions of the papers which have been developed after discussion and modification initiated by the interaction of the participants. The collection is, among other things, testimony to the intellectual legacy of Jan Patočka (1907–1977), which continues to inspire thinkers today. Explicitly or implicitly, the individual contributions go through a number of Patočka's key concepts, including care of the soul, solidarity of the shaken, *chōrismos*, the theory of three movements of human existence (*tří životní pohyby*), and asubjectivity. A brief outline of the orientations of the individual contributions and the interconnections that exist amongst them will perhaps be useful here. These interconnections exist despite the relatively wide range of approaches used by the authors, which results in part from their working in different countries and institutions.

For clarity, we can distinguish, on the one hand, 'extensive' or comparative articles, that is, essays that see parallels between Patočka's thinking and that of the great philosophers past and present (including William James, Hans-Georg Gadamer, Gilles Deleuze, David E. Cooper, and Cornelius Castoriadis), while presenting Patočka's reflections from other angles, often achieving a partial synthesis and finding surprising links, and, on the other hand, 'intensive' essays, immersed deep in Patočka's philosophical legacy.

In the first group, we would include Heleen J. Pott's contribution 'Emotions, Persons, and the Body: William James and Jan Patočka', which tackles corporeity, a big topic and one fundamental to Husserlian phenomenology from Husserl and Max Scheler to Merleau-Ponty. Taking the line that considers the emotions to be the embodiment of consciousness, Pott's extends it back to William James and American Pragmatism (to which I would add the British philosopher of psychology E. F. Stout, who met Husserl in person). James's and Patočka's view of the emotions as the feeling of physical change comports with recent neurobiological and neurophilosophical conclusions (for example, those of Antonio Damasio and Daniel Kahneman) and, thanks to the thorough consideration of the parallels between James's and Patočka's work, she provides food for thought not only to philosophers, psychologists, and neuroscientists, but also to aestheticians and theorists of art.

Another extensive article, Philippe Merlier's '*Péri tès psychèpoias*. Patočka et l'art: une pensée de la création sans sujet', explores the self-creation of the soul (the psyche), that is, not only the personality or the self, but also asubjective creativity as its basis, which

Merlier interprets on the foundations of Patočka's theory of the three movements of human existence and the project of asubjective phenomenology (Negative Platonism). He compares Patočka's concept of *chōrismos* – distance at the core of the consciousness of existence – with the views of Deleuze, Foucault, and Castoriadis, and comes to the conclusion that the essence of the psyche is processual and continuous self-creation, as the feed-back link of the grasping of the asubjective challenge of revealing. Patočka, according to the author, and I find this conclusion acceptable and useful, was thus heading in the same direction as Deleuze with the concept of becoming, Lyotard with the concept of the subject in a nascent state, Ilya Prigogine with the primacy of becoming before being, and, before them, Alfred North Whitehead with his concept of the actual occasion, concrescence, negative and positive prehensions, the nexus and the society of events. Asubjective creativity thus conceived can then be randomly revealed, for example, in the work of British modernist poets like T. S. Eliot and understandably a number of other creative people, whether in the context of philosophy, the humanities, or art.

We would include Ondřej Dadejík's 'Distance and Immersion: Phenomenological Aesthetics and the Question of a "Paradigm Shift"' in the same group. In this essay, Dadejík focuses on the possible tension, present in every aesthetic experience, between distance, the exclusion of practical and other interests from actual experience, on the one hand, and immersion, 'forgetting about the world', on the other. This tension, even paradox (the coexistence of two opposing movements of consciousness), is also the source of a number of controversies in contemporary aesthetics. Dadejík explores possible ways of solving the paradox by tracing the development of aestheticians' views about this topic in recent decades, with an inclination to a developing phenomenological view, a misleading paradigmatic change in the understanding of the aesthetic object as an event-object and the 'joint venture' of the original scheme of the subject-object pair. It is in surmounting this scheme with the help of the concept of environment that he finds a possible solution to this apparent paradox, and he supports it with an analysis of Patočka's discussion of the experience of space, implicitly referring to Patočka's project of asubjective phenomenology.

On the borderline between the extensive and the intensive approach is Felix Borecký's contribution to this volume, 'The Significance of the Concept of *Thauma* in Patočka's Philosophy of the History of Art'. Aristotle's concept of *thauma* or wonder at the beginning of all knowledge is developed by Borecký in connection with Patočka's division of the two fundamental states in the development of Western civilization and culture into the prehistoric and the historical ages and the situating of the emergence of the history of art and aesthetics, that is, two disciplines whose scholars consider the historicity of the relevant cultural segments right up to the present day. With reference to Gadamer, he then analyzes a certain reductivity in Patočka's approach.

The intensive approach is taken in the articles by Inês Pereira Rodrigues, Daniela Blahutková, and Miloš Ševčík. The first of these articles, 'Patočka, Myth and Literature: Illustrations of the Possibility of Paradise on Earth', analyses Patočka's conception of myth and responsibility as a key concept of mythic thinking. In it, Pereira Rodrigues compares the conception of universal love and the possibility of a new paradise in the works of Patočka and Dostoevsky; the basis of her conclusion is Patočka's theory of three



movements of human existence, particularly the third, the movement to truth and the understanding of one's own responsibility.

It is no coincidence that the next article too, 'Patočka's Reflections on Faustus and Modern Art', by Blahutková, links Patočka with literature, in this case Thomas Mann's novel *Doktor Faustus*. In Patočka's analyses, Blahutková examines the crisis of meaning and the resulting crisis of art in the 1920s, which Patočka finds expressed precisely in this novel (and here we may hear an echo of Husserl's *The Crisis of the European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology*, 1936), and she considers his making precise the cognitive value of art, long before the boom in the cognitivist approach in aesthetics and the philosophy of art.

The 'depth' analysis of Patočka's thinking is then concluded by Ševčík in his essay 'Dominant Science and Influential Art: Jan Patočka on Relations between Art and Science'. In Patočka's works, Ševčík explores the discussion of the relationship between science and art in its widest social connections. Since the nineteenth century, and probably even since the Renaissance, science has generally been understood as the rule of power (or, in the words of Francis Bacon, knowledge is power) and the rapid development of technologies shapes modern society often negatively. One need only recall the changes in the models of behaviour which are linked, for example, with the mass spread of mobile telephones. Art and its role necessarily had to change with this development, and they changed from the religious and ethically oriented art of classical antiquity and the Middle Ages, and became, in supreme expressions, a protest against, and the subversion of, the technological age. The author then presents Patočka's analysis of the 'solidarity of the shaken', evoked by experiences from the front lines of the First World War, which, for Czechs, acquired a new dimension during the years of Communist 'normalization' policy (1969–89) after the crushing of the Prague Spring reform movement. Together with Patočka, Ševčík finds in art the potential to limit this scientific and technological Power that lacks responsibility and reflection. The relationship between Power and art manifests a dialectical nature or, to put it differently, a complementary feedback relationship, in which increasing Power, together with the effectiveness of technology and of new scientific discoveries, simultaneously accelerates the opposite spiritual pole and therefore also the orientation of part of the population, finding the expression of this movement in the sphere of art. The concrete expression and evidence of the correctness of the presented analyses appears also in current numbers of applicants to universities – an important predominance of the demand for study in the humanities and the arts over an interest in technical fields. Patočka, and together with him Ševčík, who offers insightful interpretation, believes in the possibility of limiting that Power, that inorganic principle of technological growth 'no matter what the cost', and, unlike Heidegger's lamentation that 'now only some god can save us now', he expects that well-considered responsibility, solidarity of the shaken, and (artistic) movement towards truth will have the power to bring 'deliverance' of this sort.

This collection of essays is therefore evidence of the continuing contribution and relevance of Patočka's thinking, which is clearly not a closed chapter in the history of Czech philosophy; rather, it is a powerful source of inspiration and a basis for the young generation of philosophers, aestheticians, sociologists, and other scholars from all over the world, which they can continue to build on.

This collection follows on from two preceding monothematic issues of the periodical *Acta Universitatis Carolinae* (nos 1/2011 and 1/2013), which are also devoted to Patočka. It is one of the main results of a project funded by the Grant Agency of the Czech Republic, ‘The Question of Art in the Thought of Jan Patočka’ (GAČR P409/11/0324).

*Vlastimil Zúška*  
*Prague, August 2014*

## EMOTIONS, PERSONS, AND THE BODY: WILLIAM JAMES AND JAN PATOČKA

HELEEN J. POTT

### ABSTRACT

In this essay, I argue that there are striking parallels between the later work of the American pragmatist William James and the philosophy of Jan Patočka. Taking the naturalistic approach of existential moods in James as my point of departure, I show how both James and Patočka consider the dynamics of the feeling body to be the key to human self-understanding. They both see emotion as a paradigmatic form of embodied consciousness. What has remained an implicit and intuitive view in James gains a pronounced philosophical articulation in Patočka.

**Key words:** Jan Patočka; William James; emotion; body; individuality

### LES ÉMOTIONS, LES INDIVIDUS ET LE CORPS : WILLIAM JAMES ET JAN PATOČKA

Dans cet article l'auteur tente de mettre en évidence les parallèles frappants qui existent entre les travaux du philosophe et psychologue américain William James, chef de file du « pragmatisme », et la philosophie de Jan Patočka. En prenant l'approche naturaliste de James (1902) comme point de départ, l'auteur montre comment James et Patočka ont tous deux vu dans la dynamique du corps une clé permettant de comprendre la condition humaine. Tous les deux considéraient également l'émotion comme une forme paradigmatique de l'intelligence incarnée. Ce qui est demeuré implicite et intuitif dans l'oeuvre de James a pris une articulation philosophique dans les travaux de Patočka.

### EMOCE, OSOBY A TĚLO: WILLIAM JAMES A JAN PATOČKA

V tomto článku chci ukázat, že mezi dílem amerického pragmatisty Williama Jamese a filozofií Jana Patočky existují překvapivé paralely. Jako východisko si vybírám naturalistický přístup u Jamese (1902) a ukazují, jakým způsobem James i Patočka považují dynamiku těla za klíč k lidskému sebepochopení. Oba považovali emoci za paradigmatickou formu vtěleného vědomí. To, co zůstalo v Jamesově díle implicitním a intuitivním, bylo filozoficky artikulováno v dílech Patočkových.

## I. Introduction

Two different perspectives have dominated the philosophical debate on emotions over the past century. According to one, emotions are personal experiences that are cultured, learned, meaningful, and have a moral dimension – they are to be understood as cognitive phenomena based on evaluative judgements. According to the other, emotions are primarily events in the body, closely bound up with bodily changes such as racing of the heart, shortness of breath, sweaty palms, trembling lips, tensing muscles, and changes in facial expression. They may express themselves in bodily behaviour such as jumping

for joy or striking out in anger, and are causally determined by processes taking place in the chemistry of the brain, the blood circulation, and the digestive system. Emotions are therefore to be explained as involuntary bodily responses that can only indirectly be regulated and controlled.

Both perspectives have proved to be quite fruitful over the years, and philosophers today agree that it would be useful to have a theory that accounts for the cognitive as well as the bodily aspects simultaneously. This, however, is easier said than done. It proves not at all simple to move beyond the dichotomy and to restructure the concept of emotion in such a way that it involves the head and the body at once. Over the past half a century, most theorists have chosen an easy way out, by classifying emotions as disembodied cognitive phenomena in the 1970s and 1980s, and then shifting to evolutionary-based non-cognitive (neuro)physiological approaches in the 1990s. It is only recently that advances in theories of the affective brain and in the philosophy of embodied cognition have resulted in an increased interest in more integrative accounts of how subjective emotional experience is structured and how it relates to the body.

Many proponents of such an integrative account have rediscovered the writings of William James as a main source of inspiration. James's psychological theory of emotions, presented in *Mind* (1884) and reprinted in *The Principles of Psychology* (1890), has been unanimously praised by neuroscientists (Damasio, LeDoux, Panksepp) as well as philosophers (Jesse Prinz), for defining emotions as 'feelings of bodily changes' and for its focus on the role of the autonomous nervous system in situations of acute emotional disturbance. James defended the claim that if we abstract from this 'coarse' emotion the feelings of all its characteristic bodily symptoms and expressions, we have nothing left behind, no 'mind stuff' out of which the emotion can be constituted. Without the body, the experience would be 'pale, colourless, destitute of emotional warmth'.<sup>1</sup>

James's later work on emotion, particularly *The Varieties of Religious Experience* (1902), has been reanimated recently by the philosopher Matthew Ratcliffe (2008). In Ratcliffe's reading, James was primarily interested in emotions as 'existential feelings', a neglected but phenomenologically unified group of affective phenomena that are simultaneously bodily feelings and experiences of practical possibilities in the world. James's original contribution, according to Ratcliffe, is that he reconceptualized intentionality so as to include bodily feeling in its structure.<sup>2</sup>

I am aware of the current controversy over James's view of emotion, but this essay is not the place to go deeper into that discussion. Instead, I follow Ratcliffe (2008), and argue that James's account of emotions boils down to a naturalistic phenomenological theory of affective feelings, which shows striking parallels to Patočka's discussion of 'moods' and 'movement' in *Body, Community, Language, World* (1998) and to his theory of embodied personhood.

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<sup>1</sup> William James, 'What is an Emotion?', *Mind* 9 (1884), 194.

<sup>2</sup> Matthew Ratcliffe, *Feelings of Being* (London: Oxford University Press, 2008), 219–41.

## II. Emotions in James's *Varieties*

In psychology, James's influence has mainly been the effect of his claim that emotions are physiologically mediated 'feelings of bodily changes'. Less widely known is that in his old age James was still actively interested in the topic of emotion. Eight years before his death, he published his thoughts on the subject in *The Varieties of Religious Experience* (1902), which would become one of his most popular books. It has been in print for more than a century now; and in the psychedelic 1960s it was a cult book. But thus far, it has hardly received any attention from psychologists working in the field of emotion – most probably because they have mistaken it for a work on theology, not on human feelings and emotions.

Yet this is precisely what we find in *The Varieties of Religious Experience*: a detailed, but unsystematic account of emotions, conceived from a somewhat unfamiliar, spiritual perspective. *Varieties* focuses on emotional feeling – it aims to rehabilitate the emotional element of religion, as James puts it himself.<sup>3</sup> The book defends the provocative claim that emotional feelings, in matters of religion and spirituality, have absolute priority over the findings of the rational intellect. Religion's essence is mystical experience, according to James, and mystical states of consciousness are deep, intense states of feeling – states of inspiration, of feeling connected to some higher, profoundly meaningful reality. *Varieties* analyses the significance of these 'mystical' states, by examining how they are related to more commonplace emotions and feelings, and by explaining why they are so important in human life. The book deals with all sorts of spiritual enthusiasms: experiences of ecstatic affirmation and joy, related to traditions in Christianity, Islam, Buddhism, and Vedanta; but also 'psychedelic' experiences, induced by the use of alcohol, mescal, peyote, cocaine, chloroform, ether, and other drugs that stimulate what James calls 'the mystical faculties of human nature' and bring a temporary 'high'. States of being 'moved' by poetry or art are included as well. Music is also placed on the mystical ladder, because listening to good music is a way of opening oneself up to a whole new realm of reality, says James. On the continuum, there are progressively greater feelings of affirmation, unification, and enlargement of vision, which involve deeper, more significant levels of the self. The higher we climb, the more intense is the positive feeling involved. At the top are full-fledged mystical states such as those experienced by a small group of classical mystics, who see the whole universe in a new light. At the bottom, seeing them as the opposite of euphoria, James situates negative psychotic experiences of anxiety and despair, or 'religious mysticism turned upside down', as he puts it.

Emotional disorders like existential 'Angst' and depression are given quite a lot of space and serious attention in *Varieties*, which is one of the reasons why the book is unique. James did not draw a fixed line between normal and abnormal, religious and secular experience. Just like Freud, he was pioneering the psychology of the unconscious, and by focusing on the more extreme and unfamiliar versions of emotional feeling, he was making a methodological point. Extremes like mystical ecstasy and psychotic depres-

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<sup>3</sup> William James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard UP, 1982), 341–2: 'I do believe that feeling is the deeper source of religion, and that philosophical and theological formulas are secondary products, like translations into another tongue.'

sion should, according to James, be considered expanded forms of ordinary emotional states. The more exotic cases can provide us with a better understanding of the basic reality that is involved. Or, as he put it:

I say that it always leads to a better understanding of a thing's significance to consider its exaggerations and perversions, its equivalents and substitutes, and nearest relatives elsewhere [...] Insane conditions have this advantage, that they isolate special factors of mental life, and enable us to inspect them unmasked by their more usual surroundings.<sup>4</sup>

### III. At Home in the World

*Varieties* is organized around a number of 'first-hand' testimonies of mystical emotion, written down by celebrated saints and famous literary writers, as well as ordinary people. On the basis of a careful analysis of all these personal documents James lays out the scope of a (sketchy and imprecise) phenomenological psychology that is grounded in two elementary dispositions: a sense of belonging, of feeling at home in the world, and a sense of not belonging, feeling unhappy and disconnected. The two dispositions are so deeply rooted that they seem to come close to personality traits: James distinguishes between the 'healthy-minded' individual, who feels confident and protected most of the time, and the 'sick soul', who is miserable and lonely. Healthy-minded people – Walt Whitman is one of his main examples – are natural-born optimists, they have an instinctive sense of belonging and seem to be blind to all the negative aspects of life, philosophically immune in the face of evil. They accept suffering and death as natural and unproblematic. James sees this positive attunement to life as an essential characteristic of the religious condition. In mystical experience, positive feelings of acceptance and belonging become intensified, and may ultimately result in complete euphoria, an oceanic feeling of oneness with God or Nature, or the Spirit of the World.

It is not, however, the happy person, living in harmony with the world, who is the most likely candidate for such mystical ecstasy. In *Varieties*, James's sympathy is clearly with the 'sick soul', who has a deeper, more sensitive view of reality than his superficial, optimistic counterpart. Mystical experience is the prerogative of the unhappy individual, the pessimist who finds that 'unexpectedly, from the bottom of every fountain of pleasure, something bitter rises up, a feeling coming from a deeper region and often with an appalling convincingness'.<sup>5</sup> James's example of a 'sick soul' is inspired by Tolstoy's autobiographical *My Confession*, where the Russian writer describes his experience of a severe depression in which the world is rapidly losing all its practical familiarity. Tolstoy writes: 'I felt that what I had been standing on had collapsed and that I had nothing left under my feet.'<sup>6</sup> Tolstoy will be saved by a sudden religious awakening, mysteriously intruding the self from a corner of the unconscious, a sense that all is ultimately well, even though the outer conditions remain the same.

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<sup>4</sup> Ibid., 35.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., 163.

<sup>6</sup> Leo Tolstoy, *A Confession*, trans. Aylmer Maude (Mineola, NY: Dover Publications, 2005), 14.

In *Varieties*, James presents a huge variety of such ‘existential feelings’, as Matthew Ratcliffe has called them in *Feelings of Being* (2008),<sup>7</sup> and examines their transformations over time. They all share the hedonic qualities of pleasure or pain, but they are more flexible and changeable than the global dispositions of well-being or ill-being, more like parts of an inner ‘stream of consciousness’, a continually changing flow of experience. They can be found in religious and in non-religious persons alike, and include quite commonplace and ordinary experiences, such as feeling alive, anxious, guilty, blessed, frustrated, detached, inspired, hopeful, lost, estranged, in love, out of love, overwhelmed, indifferent, cut off, out of touch with things, at peace with things, empty, unreal, exhausted. They are not the suddenly occurring ‘coarse’ emotions that James examined in his earlier work, they are not directed at some specific object, and they do not include feelings of some specific part of the body. ‘Existential feelings’ are more like moods, remaining in the background of consciousness most of the time – we may not even notice them unless they take on an unusually intense form, as, for example, in mystical ecstasy or in psychotic depression. They are so basic that they precede the separation the division between subject and object.

Heidegger would capture this foundational layer of emotional experience by the German word *Befindlichkeit*, to be translated as ‘a way of finding oneself in the world’. ‘The mood has already disclosed, in every case, Being-in-the-world as a whole, and makes it possible first of all to direct oneself towards something.’<sup>8</sup> Existential feelings – moods, dispositions, emotional states – frame and colour all our perceptions, thoughts, behaviour, and self-awareness. They determine how things matter to us, and constitute our pre-intentional ‘openness’ to the world.

#### IV. Feeling through the Body

This Heideggerian analysis goes well with James’s insight that mystical states have a noetic quality and present themselves as revelatory for a wider and more profound world, a deeply meaningful ‘reality’, which discloses itself to the mystic. An aspect that is not covered in Heidegger’s treatment of the topic, however, is reference to the body, which is frequent in James’s account. James describes the phenomenality of existential states most of the time in terms of movements and bodily conditions, as feelings of expansion or contraction, approach or withdrawal, reaching out or turning away, of tension or relaxation, pleasure or pain. ‘We pass into mystical states from out of ordinary consciousness as from a less into a more, as from a smallness into a vastness, and at the same time as from an unrest to a rest’,<sup>9</sup> he writes. In this experience, one’s consciousness suddenly ‘widens’, so that things that were at the ‘fringe’ of consciousness are suddenly grasped, that which was marginal becomes central. The feeling is a feeling of enlargement and liberation, getting free from restraints.

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<sup>7</sup> Ratcliffe, *Feelings of Being*, 2.

<sup>8</sup> Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time* (New York: Harper & Row, 1962): 176.

<sup>9</sup> James, *Varieties*, 330.

This polarity of expansion and contraction seems to be the underlying structure of all the other existential feelings as well: emotional feeling can be described as a feeling of bodily movement in space and time. One either feels like welling up, reaching out towards the world, or one feels like shrinking back, turning away from it. Positive states like hope and happiness open us up; negative states like anxiety, guilt and shame narrow us down. Being happy makes you outgoing; you may feel like dancing or embracing the world. Being depressed makes you heavy and immobile; you can't reach out to the world anymore; you may feel completely out of touch.

Even with aesthetic emotions, where at first sight there seems to be no readiness for specific movements at all – just a blissful paralysis – the feelings involved are feelings of bodily movement all the same. People who have experienced intense aesthetic inspiration often describe it metaphorically as a state of being overwhelmed and knocked over by force, when confronted with something sublime or beautiful; a feeling state that sometimes results in kneeling down and silently weeping, melting away in joy.

This stress on the bodily dynamic of existential feelings is resolutely rejected by Heidegger, who had no place for the body proper in his analysis in *Being and Time*. Yet, it is through the body that the person is connected to the possibilities of a given situation. Here, James's approach seems much closer to Patočka's, who in his well-known lectures on the 'lived body' also highlights the corporeity of our fundamental openness to the world. Before we start perceiving, thinking, and acting, the world already has us in a mood, in a particular position, a stance and movement, Patočka says in *Body, Community, Language, World*.<sup>10</sup> Every instance of dealing with *pragmata*, as Heidegger would say, presupposes a sense of bodily contact, a sense of balance and orientation in the world. Human life is a realization of possibilities that we identify with in a practical sense, irreflectively, and that we act upon. We can do so only because we are feeling bodies that are able to move.

Patočka would have no difficulty with James's pragmatist view that feeling is functional, and that we have feelings because we need to move and act on our own. More systematically than James, his later philosophy focuses on the dynamics of the body and the crucial role of movement in human existence. What we feel, subjectively, are movement intentions in space and time, attractions and repulsions, corresponding to practical possibilities in the environment. Emotions are 'e-motions': feelings of being moved in a certain situation, experiences of simultaneous alterations in our sense of reality and our self-awareness. The living, 'lived' body is the key to understanding our being-in-the-world. Without the body, no meaningful relationship with the world and the self could be furnished.

## V. Self Regulation and the Body

Consequently, both James and Patočka see the subject as an embodied, active agent, not as a Cartesian rational thinker or a living system aiming at reproduction and self-

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<sup>10</sup> Jan Patočka, *Body, Community, Language, World*, trans. Erazim Kohák (Chicago: Open Court, 1998), 43.



preservation. The I, in Patočka's words, is 'the primordial awareness of effort'.<sup>11</sup> In his lecture 'Three Types of Phenomenology', he writes:

How we are includes an entire scale of feelings and emotions, all in a practically undifferentiated mode. [...] A mood 'comes over us' but it is our mood, we are in the mood. We are wont to say, 'How are you feeling?' [...] In a mood we feel how we are. Depression and elation that rises up within us can tell us more about ourselves, about our interest, about what it is in which we have become involved, than an explicit, willing decision to act. Mood is closely linked with corporeity, with being as a body. Our posture is rooted in mood. Our attitude betrays our mood. [...] Mood constrains or encourages us. We grasp it corporeally, we feel it in our dynamism. We grasp certain possibilities in it: at times we live in a mode of defying all, at other times we float lightly, as on wings. The corporeal, dynamic subject is rooted in such postures. Further components of the way we are feeling – for instance, pleasure, pain – are corporeal states in the matrix of a self-understanding lived experience.<sup>12</sup>

Emotional 'postures' are states of 'readiness for action'<sup>13</sup> – they do not prompt us actually to realize specific actions or behaviours, but they can be very helpful, by making us see situations in life as less difficult than they are, easier to cope with. In the famous case of the 'Alpine climber', which he describes in 'The Sentiment of Rationality',<sup>14</sup> James gives the example of a climber who must execute a dangerous jump she has not performed before. If she is engaged by a mood of confidence and optimism, she is likely to perform a jump that would otherwise be impossible. But as soon as she starts to doubt and fear, and realistically to calculate the chances of success, her preparations are likely to lead to catastrophe.

The transformative power of emotion is what James had in mind in his chapters on the phenomenon of conversion, presented as a therapeutic instrument in the struggle against depression and the loss of meaning in modern life. James testifies repeatedly of the good that it can bring to people, the sudden resurgence of energy in the midst of despair. Mystical experience may result in personal rebirth, as in Tolstoy; it can create new centres of personal energy that may attune the subject to a meaningful reality again. Of course, transformations of the self may also be triggered by more everyday emotions such as falling in love. But in all instances of personal regeneration, the structure is the same: there is an explosion of energy and a new willingness to live, a new engagement with the world as a whole, even though everything in it has remained the same.

According to his biographers, James's interest in the powers of mysticism was motivated by his private struggle with a serious depression in his late twenties. He has his own symptoms in mind when he describes a case of acute existential Angst in *Varieties*:

I went one evening into a dressing room in the twilight to procure some article that was there; when suddenly there fell upon me without warning, just as if it came out of the darkness, a horrible fear of my own existence. Simultaneously there arose in my mind the image of an epileptic patient whom I had seen in the asylum, a black-haired youth, with greenish

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<sup>11</sup> Ibid., 25.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., 78–9.

<sup>13</sup> A central concept in Nico Frijda, *The Emotions* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1984).

<sup>14</sup> William James, 'The Sentiment of Rationality', *Mind* 4 (1879).

skin, entirely idiotic, who used to sit all day on one of the benches, against the wall, with his knees drawn up against his chin. That shape am I, I felt, potentially. There was such a horror, [...] that it was as if something solid within my breast gave way entirely [...] and I became a mass of quivering fear. After this, the universe had changed for me altogether. I awoke morning after morning with a horrible dread at the pit of my stomach, and with a sense of the insecurity of life that I never knew before, and that I have never felt since.<sup>15</sup>

For months, James felt completely disoriented and lost. In *Varieties*, he concludes that he could relate this experience of extreme anxiety to religious experiences, but more by contrast than identity with them. 'I mean that the fear was so invasive and powerful that if I had not clung to scripture-like texts like "the eternal God is my refuge [...]" I think I would have grown really insane'.<sup>16</sup> That is why James – who certainly was not a traditional Christian and was not used to prayer – finds that religion is among the most important biological functions of mankind, as an effective strategy of coping and self regulation, in times of deep personal crisis.

## VI. Conclusion

In James's later writings on existential moods and feelings, some striking parallels with Patočka's philosophy of movement and the body can be found. In a sketchy, intuitive way, James anticipates a phenomenological view as to how the personal and cognitive features of emotion could be integrated with its bodily dynamics. Much that remains implicit and fuzzy in his account, is systematically exposed by Patočka in his lecture series, collected in *Body, Community, Language, World* (1998). Both Patočka and James take the feeling body as our primary access to the world, and as the key to self-understanding and self-regulation. It is through moods, that the subject assesses the environment and experiences how she is moved by its practical possibilities. The body is not just an object; it is first and foremost a subject – an active, striving I, feeling inspired or repulsed by the world. Embodied feelings open and close horizons of possibilities. Just like Patočka a century later, James considers emotional feelings to be 'feelings of the body', to be the place where *Leib* and *Körper* converge and where meaning and action are born – emotions literally move us.

If, therefore, we wish to understand who we are, as embodied human beings, we have to start here.

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<sup>15</sup> James, *Varieties*, 129.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 130.

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## **PÉRI TÈS PSYCHÈPOÏAS. PATOČKA ET L'ART : UNE PENSÉE DE LA CRÉATION SANS SUJET**

PHILIPPE MERLIER

### **ABSTRACT**

Si le sens objectif de la philosophie et de la science diffère du sens subjectif de la vie exprimé par l'art, toutefois l'autocréation de l'âme peut exprimer par l'art un universel objectif; philosophie, art et psychanalyse créent des significations vivantes.

Peut-on encore penser la création sans le sujet? La psychè, ni substance ni sujet, se crée par elle-même et cette autocréation est décrite dans la théorie de Patočka des trois mouvements de l'existence humaine.

Mon intention est de décrire cette autocréation de la psychè, que ce soit dans « l'enracinement », « la reproduction » ou la « percée », et d'en approcher l'examen aux niveaux phénoménologique, psychanalytique, et socio-politique. La psychè a pour essence la création et pour finalité : l'autonomie. Je veux montrer que la création peut être processus sans sujet créateur, mouvement d'asubjectivation.

### **PERI TES PSYCHEPOIAS: PATOČKA AND ART: A THEORY OF CREATION WITHOUT SUBJECTIVITY**

If the objective meaning of philosophy and science is different from the subjective meaning of life as it is expressed by art, the self-creation of the soul can express, through art, a universal objective; philosophy, art, and psychoanalysis create living meanings.

Can we think of creation outside the subject? The psyche, which is neither substance nor subject, is self-created, and it is described in Patočka's theory of the three movements of human existence.

My intention in this article is to describe the self-creation of the psyche within the deep-root-movement, the reproduction-movement, and the truth-movement, and examine it from the phenomenological, psychoanalytical, and sociopolitical points of view. The essence of Psyche is creation; its purpose is autonomy. I seek to demonstrate here that creation can be a subject-free process, an asubjective movement.

**Key words:** Jan Patočka; creation; art; literature; asubjective phenomenology

### **PERI TES PSYCHEPOIAS. PATOČKA A UMĚNÍ: TEORIE TVORBY BEZ SUBJEKTU**

Jestliže je objektivní smysl filozofie a vědy odlišný od subjektivního smyslu života, který je vyjádřený uměním, může sebetvorba duše prostřednictvím umění vyjadřovat univerzální cíl. Filozofie, umění a psychoanalýza vytváří živé významy.

Můžeme přemýšlet o tvoření mimo subjekt? Duše, která není ani substancí ani subjektem, je vytvořena sama sebou. Tato sebetvorba je popsána v Patočkově teorii tří pohybů lidské existence.

Mým záměrem v tomto článku je popsat sebetvorbu duše v pohybech zakořenění, reprodukce a pravdy a rozebrat tuto sebetvorbu z fenomenologického, psychoanalytického a sociopolitického hlediska. Podstatou duše je tvoření a jejím cílem je autonomie. Snažím se tu ukázat, že tvorba může být procesem bez subjektu, asubjektivním pohybem.

## I.

Si le sens objectif de la philosophie et de la science diffère du sens subjectif de la vie exprimé par l'art, toutefois l'autocréation de l'âme et un sens asubjectif de la vie peuvent exprimer par l'art un universel objectif, et au-delà de la distinction entre sens objectif et sens subjectif, philosophie, art et psychanalyse créent des significations vivantes.

Peut-on encore penser la création sans le sujet ? Qu'est-ce que la *psychè* ? Elle est ce à quoi les étants apparaissent, d'une façon chaque fois inédite ; elle est réceptacle de ce qui apparaît. Sans quelle soit substance ni sujet, elle se crée par elle-même et cette autocréation est mise en œuvre dans la théorie de Patočka des trois mouvements de l'existence humaine – qui trouvent tous trois leur fondement chez Husserl. Cette théorie s'inscrit dans la conception patočkienne du soin de l'âme et du souci de l'autre qui est la condition de possibilité de la réalisation d'un être en différents modes.

Mon intention est de décrire comment la *psychè* se crée elle-même, que ce soit dans « l'enracinement », dans « la reproduction » ou dans la « percée », et d'approcher l'examen de cette autocréation sur trois plans : au niveau de sa genèse phénoménologique, de sa genèse psychanalytique, et de sa dimension socio-politique. Il est loisible de concevoir une *psychè* qui n'est pas subjectivation, une *psychè* dont l'essence est la création et la finalité : l'autonomie. Je veux montrer que la création peut être conçue comme un processus sans sujet créateur, que la création est un mouvement d'asubjectivation.

## II.

Tout d'abord, l'âme qui prend soin d'elle-même fait l'expérience d'une séparation intérieure – le *chôrismos*, qui la meut vers la liberté ; elle est habitée par une irréductible négativité qui rend possible la création de soi. On la trouve à l'œuvre dans l'esthétisation de la vie du sujet qui se soucie de soi (a) mais également dans la création littéraire où l'écrivain devient anonyme, asubjectif et étranger dans sa propre langue (b)

a) Concernant l'esthétisation de la vie individuelle, il n'y a pas de rupture historique entre l'antique *épiméléia heautou* et le *modus vivendi* préconisé par le christianisme – qui ne fait que reprendre en le transformant le principe des techniques ascétiques, mais une continuité du IV<sup>e</sup>s. av. J.-C. au III<sup>e</sup>s. ap. J.-C. En revanche, la culture antique de soi est diamétralement opposée au culte contemporain du moi, même s'il y a là aussi reprise et transformation, car « le renversement s'est produit dans le christianisme lorsque l'idée d'un soi auquel il fallait renoncer (parce qu'en s'attachant à soi-même on s'opposait à la volonté de Dieu) s'est substituée à l'idée d'un soi à construire et à créer comme une œuvre d'art », selon Michel Foucault.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> František Kupka, *La création dans les arts plastiques*, trad. E. Abrams (Paris : Cercle d'art, 1989), 203.

<sup>2</sup> Michel Foucault, *Dits et Ecrits IV* (Paris : Gallimard, 1994), 622ff.

L'esthétisation moderne de la vie de l'*ego* n'a plus rien de commun avec le soin de l'âme grec antique, mais ce qui intéresse Patočka, c'est de repenser en philosophe phénoménologue en quoi le souci de soi peut sauver l'homme de la crise du sens. Et ce souci de soi permet de redonner à la *psychè* une signification nouvelle : pré- et a- subjective, qui ne soit pas recouverte sous les alluvions du subjectivisme et du psychologisme. La *psychè* asubjective est la couche archéologique de la subjectivité après réduction, ce qui reste une fois l'*ego* lui-même mis hors circuit.

La *psychè* ne crée ainsi son existence propre qu'en étant désobjectivée : en se confrontant à l'autre, au réel et à la société, en se souciant de façon responsable du monde, de la vie et du Tout.

b) Par analogie, la fin de l'écriture littéraire réside aussi dans une création, en un sens, asubjective. Car elle consiste, écrit Deleuze<sup>3</sup>, à « porter la vie à l'état d'une puissance non personnelle ». Ecrire implique de devenir asubjectif, de fuir ce petit « moi qui nous est plus cher que tout » afin de devenir-autre. Le phénomène de l'écriture selon Deleuze suppose un parler asubjectif, un personnage conceptuel, des percepts.

Un parler asubjectif : le verbe jaillit dans la source de l'apparaître. Plusieurs auteurs illustrent ce parler asubjectif. Par exemple, H. F. Amiel s'escrime à s'impersonnaliser et décrit dans son journal l'amère sagesse de l'insignifiance de soi : « Je me suis retiré de la vie subjective [...] Je suis devenu presque incapable de vie individuelle, subjective et morale, tant je me suis sevré du désir et de la volonté ». <sup>4</sup> Ou encore le poète hétéronymique Fernando Pessoa :

En fragments je brise mon âme  
Et en personnes différenciées  
Celui qui se croit une identité propre est dans l'erreur,  
Je suis divers et ne m'appartiens pas  
Si ce que je sens m'est étranger,  
Si de moi je suis absent,  
Comment l'âme en est-elle venue  
A finir en individu?<sup>5</sup>

### III.

Qu'est-ce qu'un personnage conceptuel? Un personnage conceptuel, c'est l'invention d'une figure, une hypostase ou une altérité mais ce n'est pas un sujet ; Jan Patočka donne comme exemples le Socrate de Platon, le chevalier de la foi de Kierkegaard ou le Zarathoustra de Nietzsche.

Et qu'est-ce qu'un percept? C'est un sentir originaire d'avant toute subjectivité, une situation de perception sans sujet, indépendante d'une subjectivité qui l'éprouve. « Le

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<sup>3</sup> Gilles Deleuze et Claire Parnet, *Dialogues* (Paris : Flammarion, 1996), 47-91; Gilles Deleuze et Félix Guattari, *Qu'est-ce que la philosophie ?* (Paris : Minuit, 1991), 165-168.

<sup>4</sup> Henri Frederic Amiel, *Journal intime de l'année 1857* (Paris : Bibliothèque 10/18, 1965), 54-56.

<sup>5</sup> Fernando Pessoa, *Visage avec masques*, trad. Armand Guibert (Paris : Méréal, 1997), 65-66.

percept, c'est le paysage d'avant l'homme », dit Deleuze : « les percepts sont des êtres qui valent par eux-mêmes et qui excèdent tout vécu. Ils sont, en l'absence de l'homme ». Ce sont les collines de Faulkner ou la steppe de Tolstoï. Ils désignent l'unité et l'entrelacement du sentant et du senti décrits par l'écrivain, l'artiste, le créateur.

Patočka décrit comment l'écrivain extrait du *logos* courant « l'expression de la vie telle qu'elle ne cesse de jaillir en nous du présent vivant »<sup>6</sup> : sa pensée vise le dire situationnel adéquat et exprime la vie se faisant. Le *Dasein* humain lui-même, quand il s'approprie ses possibilités existentielles, doit projeter « le schème de tout étant possible non pas en le combinant à partir de ses propres vécus, mais à la manière de l'écrivain qui projette l'intrigue d'un roman ».<sup>7</sup> Et il n'est pas d'intrigue sans situation. Créer suppose de s'asubjectiver. Qu'est-ce que s'asubjectiver? Ce n'est pas seulement sortir de soi, c'est accomplir toujours de nouveau l'acte libre de l'*épokhè*, et par l'*épokhè* de la subjectivité : le retour à la *psychè* elle-même.

Il existe chez l'artiste et chez le philosophe – cet « artiste de la raison » (Kant), une certaine qualité de subjectivité, qui rejoint l'objectivité quand l'expression du sens touche l'universel. La création exprime un sens métaphysique, fût-il lui-même nié, sans jamais le réduire à un savoir ni à un objet par opposition à un sujet. L'idée qui dirige l'œuvre d'art, c'est une « qualité métaphysique », dit Patočka en reprenant ce terme à Roman Ingarden : « la qualité métaphysique est comme le sens global qui s'explique ou se développe dans toutes les composantes de l'œuvre ».<sup>8</sup> Grâce à sa signification intérieure, l'art est ce qui sauve l'homme de la réalité techno-scientifique et de la production qui l'objectivent.<sup>9</sup>

#### IV.

La *psychè* se crée elle-même en devenant autre, étrangère à soi et ce, dans les trois mouvements de l'existence humaine.

##### a) *La création monadique du sujet pré-égoïque existe dans le mouvement d'enracinement par l'ontogenèse du « je peux »*

Le mouvement d'enracinement concerne le souci de soi. En tant que premier rapport au tout et première relation à l'autre qui s'établit par le jeu, il correspond à l'âge d'or de « la caverne primordiale ».<sup>10</sup> Ce mouvement primordial représente « l'*ostinato* de la polyphonie de la vie » ; ce moment passé dessine la « courbe fermée (de) la complétude dans l'incomplétude, [du] tout dans l'instant ». Patočka le décrit comme un sentiment d'unité et de fusion caractérisé par « l'irradiation du besoin et le bonheur de l'attachement ». Il s'agit de l'attachement à un autre mais qui n'est pas encore perçu comme tel. *La dimension*

<sup>6</sup> Jan Patočka, *L'Ecrivain, son objet*, trad. E. Abrams (Paris : P.O.L., 1990), 91.

<sup>7</sup> Jan Patočka, *Qu'est-ce que la phénoménologie ?*, trad. E. Abrams (Grenoble : Millon, 1988), 211.

<sup>8</sup> Jan Patočka, *L'Art et le Temps*, trad. E. Abrams (Paris : P.O.L., 1990), 354.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 364–367.

<sup>10</sup> Jan Patočka, *Le Monde naturel et le mouvement de l'existence humaine*, trad. E. Abrams (Dordrecht : Kluwer Academic Publishers, Bruxelles: F.U. Saint-Louis : 1988), 107–113.



créatrice de ce premier mouvement réside dans l'acquisition du « je peux » corporel accompagnée du plaisir ludique : l'enfant découvre les mouvements de son corps propre qu'il va maîtriser peu à peu, il *imagine* des possibles motiles et déjà sa liberté se manifeste dans ses « mouvements vécus ontogéniques ».

Le premier mouvement d'enracinement paraît lui-même antérieur à l'opposition husserlienne entre le monde propre de l'*ego* et le monde étranger de l'autre.<sup>11</sup> Ce mouvement d'ancrage, lié aux besoins vitaux, a bien en effet un idéal de vie propre : c'est un idéal *esthétique* (« aïsthétique »), une immédiateté, une ouverture à l'être. Patočka compare le mouvement de la vie humaine, « mouvement d'un rapport à l'être en totalité »<sup>12</sup> à une polyphonie musicale, dont le mouvement d'enracinement est la basse continue. Il recèle en lui « un sentir *avant* les sens proprement dits, s'appuyant sur le phénomène de la cénesthésie ».<sup>13</sup> Instinctivement sentant et senti, l'être dans l'ancrage s'ouvre au monde, entre et se meut en « consonance sympathétique » avec lui, grâce aux mouvements que son corps organise, anime et rythme. Ce qui se crée alors dans le mouvement d'enracinement de l'âme sentante qui s'incarne, c'est une consonance cosmique : « la motricité, l'émotivité, l'imagination dans le sentir » forment une « impulsion » qui permet « la sympathie sensorielle avec le monde ».<sup>14</sup>

Par conséquent, le mouvement d'unification de soi à l'œuvre dans le processus de constitution du schéma corporel est un « proto-mouvement instinctif » qui attache le nouveau-né à la Terre-mère nourricière. Cet archi-mouvement devance la constitution du corps-propre, pré-réflexif et pré-égoïque. Ce premier mouvement de l'existence n'est autre que la *genèse*, le fondement tellurique de notre corporéité.

Cet état originaire est tout à fait comparable à ce que Castoriadis appelle l'état monadique :<sup>15</sup> cet état est le postulat sans lequel l'histoire de la *psychè* est impossible. Dans cet état d'indifférenciation première où l'être individué est tout l'être, la monade (qui n'est pas encore un *je*) contient un mouvement vers l'unification du tout. L'état monadique est l'état d'avant la mère comme objet séparé (objet partiel), l'état antérieur à toute fusion avec la mère, quand il n'y a pas de distinction pour le nouveau-né entre le sein maternel et lui. La monade est en deçà de l'état fusionnel. « La monade organise l'expérience du plaisir en tant qu'expérience totale, totalitaire, complète, absolue. Cette expérience aimanterait pour toujours le psychisme, dont l'objet du désir sera le retour à cet état ». Il se pourrait même que philosophie et politique s'originent dans « cette manie, cette rage de l'unification » première. L'état monadique selon Castoriadis ne présente-t-il pas quelque coïncidence étonnante avec « la complétude dans l'incomplétude » de l'ouvert fermé sur soi selon Patočka?

Il y a, me semble-t-il, une sorte de correspondance entre les trois mouvements de l'existence chez Patočka et les trois phases de Castoriadis : le premier mouvement part du monde fermé vers l'âme qui se soucie du monde – celle du *Timée*? *Peidōs* informe qui reçoit le tout ? – comme l'état monadique contient en son sein une poussée vers l'uni-

<sup>11</sup> Edmund Husserl, *Méditations Cartésiennes*, trad. G. Peiffer et E. Lévinas (Paris : Vrin, 1986), 74–129.

<sup>12</sup> Jan Patočka, « [Leçons sur la corporéité] », in Jan Patočka, *Papiers Phénoménologiques*, trad. E. Abrams (Grenoble : Millon, 1995), 113.

<sup>13</sup> Patočka, « [Leçons sur la corporéité] », 103.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, 104, 108–109.

<sup>15</sup> Cornelius Castoriadis, *Figures du pensable (Les Carrefours du labyrinthe VI.)* (Paris : Seuil, 1999), 243–299.

fication du tout. Le deuxième mouvement lié à l'ouverture à l'autre serait analogue à la phase triadique, qui désigne chez Castoriadis l'installation du jeu entre l'*infans*, la mère et le sein : l'enfant découvre qu'il n'est pas tout-puissant et transfère cette toute-puissance à sa mère ; « ce processus de projection est capital car tout au long de la vie, l'autre sera (au moins potentiellement) facteur d'aliénation, on pourra toujours mettre quelqu'un d'autre dans le lieu de la toute-puissance ». Et le troisième mouvement serait comparable à la création de signification imaginaire dépassant le sens institué.

b) *Mais comment passe-t-on de la proto-histoire phénoménologique et psychanalytique de la monade qui s'auto-crée, à la créativité de l'individu?*

*Le mouvement de production permet la création dans le travail et la lutte, au sein de la vita activa.*

Le mouvement de reproduction est celui du prolongement du soi ne se souciant que des choses et qui lui apparaissent « seulement dans leur ustensilité ».<sup>16</sup> L'homme se forme et se « trans-forme » continuellement au sein de sa communauté avec les choses et les autres : ce mouvement du présent tourné vers lui-même pour répondre à ses besoins se réalise dans le travail et la lutte. Ce deuxième mouvement, le mouvement du travail, caractérisé par le prolongement de soi dans les choses et la production, est un mouvement « de création et de destruction ».<sup>17</sup> En quel sens? Création au sens du prolongement de soi dans le dehors : c'est « la sphère de l'intelligence dans l'entente » de la production, de l'organisation et du pouvoir, dans le calcul des enchaînements matériels et des intérêts individuels. Destruction au sens où ce monde du travail démultiplie « les armes idéologiques servant à aveugler les autres et à s'aveugler soi-même ». *Stricto sensu*, il vaut mieux parler ici de production plutôt que de création, car ce mouvement de « reproduction » se situe dans un rapport entre le corps et la chose, tandis que la création suppose plutôt un rapport entre l'un et le tout, ou entre l'homme d'une part, et l'être et le néant d'autre part.

L'idéal de ce mouvement est l'*ascèse*, « une ascèse provisoire de l'utilitaire » au sens d'une *Aufhebung* de l'immédiateté – sa fin est son dépassement. Dans le mouvement du travail l'individu n'est qu'un rôle, une fonction, il réalise sa tâche, s'en acquitte « mais cette réalisation n'est pas pour lui une réalisation de soi ». Se réaliser soi-même dans le travail n'est possible en effet que par la création ; c'est elle qui confère l'estime de soi et la reconnaissance sociale. « Il vaut mieux être un créateur maladroit qu'un technicien stérile », dit Jankélévitch.<sup>18</sup> Le travail, c'est l'homme qui s'explique avec la Terre. Un autre lui résiste, il s'échange avec la nature et se découvre dans son appartenance au sol. Il n'est pas encore lui-même, soi : il est interchangeable dans le travail, du point de vue sociétal (alors qu'il était unique et irremplaçable du point de vue monadique) et il est en un autre sens aussi « asubjectif », puisqu'il se donne anonymement à tous les autres – comme dans le Contrat Social chacun se donnant à tous ne se donne à personne. Il est impersonnel

<sup>16</sup> Patočka, *Le Monde naturel*, 113–118.

<sup>17</sup> Patočka, « [Leçons sur la corporéité] », 111ff.

<sup>18</sup> Vladimir Jankélévitch, *Traité des vertus III. L'innocence et la méchanceté*, (Paris : Flammarion, 1986), 156.

dans le mouvement de reproduction : il se fait autre et ainsi s'aliène dans son rapport étranger à la terre.

Le deuxième mouvement du travail se fonde sur la notion husserlienne d'intersubjectivité, à travers cet échange des visées d'un monde commun qui inscrit les consciences dans la culture et dans le monde de la vie. Car le monde de la vie a bien pour vertu de réaliser la monade, traversée par la communauté sociale-historique.

Ce deuxième mouvement est même nécessaire pour comprendre le passage de la production à la création. « Aucune œuvre ne serait possible sans ce deuxième mouvement », note Patočka,<sup>19</sup> qui passe ainsi du travail à l'œuvre, comme H. Arendt mesure la séparation entre l'utilité du travail de l'*animal laborans* et la durabilité de l'œuvre de l'*homo faber*.<sup>20</sup> L'artiste peut même séparer les deux en vue de les réconcilier dans sa création : « créer comme un dieu en travaillant comme un esclave », disait Brancusi.

Croiser la conception patočkienne du mouvement du travail avec les analyses de Castoriadis sur les rapports entre *psychè* et société peut sans doute se révéler très fertile : la *psychè* monadique de l'*infans* est décloisonnée par l'institution imaginaire de la société, la présence d'autrui rompt le circuit fermé de la monade psychique et le plaisir de représentation se substitue au plaisir d'organe. Le travail – et *a fortiori* l'œuvre, permet alors d'élargir les possibilités d'autonomie de l'individu. Et dans une société, accroître le nombre d'individus aspirant à l'autonomie peut et doit faire l'objet d'une œuvre politique.

c) *De la production du travailleur et de la création de l'œuvre,  
à la psychè comme création*

*L'autocréation de soi dans la percée.*

Le mouvement de percée désigne le souci de l'être et de l'autre, la conversion du regard, le revirement, le retournement (*obrat, obrácení*) où se joue enfin vraiment la rencontre du monde pour lui-même. Les formes institutionnalisées du mouvement de percée sont l'art, la philosophie et la religion.

Tandis que dans le deuxième mouvement de l'existence, l'individu s'identifie à son rôle social, il s'appréhende dans le troisième mouvement – qui surmonte dialectiquement les deux précédents, « dans son essence humaine et sa possibilité la plus propre ». <sup>21</sup>C'est l'étape du revirement : « l'étant se dévoue à l'être », il s'ouvre enfin vraiment aux étants et aux autres. Tourné vers l'avenir, l'étant humain découvre un nouveau rapport à l'être et à l'univers : qu'il vive dans sa possibilité veut dire qu'il réalise par lui-même « une modalité de la *praxis* ». Sa création réside dans son dévouement à l'être. Il se perçoit lui-même comme « un habitant de la Terre ». Il apparaît comme un étant parmi d'autres, mais dont il se sent responsable (par son souci du Tout, il peut même se retirer librement dans le sacrifice). « Dans la philosophie asubjective, le sujet dans son apparaître est un "résultat" »

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<sup>19</sup> Patočka, *Le Monde naturel*, 113–118.

<sup>20</sup> Hannah Arendt, *Condition de l'homme moderne*, trad. G. Fradier (Paris : Calmann-Lévy, 1983), 123–231.

<sup>21</sup> Patočka, *Le Monde naturel*, 118–124.

au même titre que tout le reste ». <sup>22</sup> En tant que ce qui reste une fois l'ego épochalisé, il peut derechef être conçu comme *psychè* en un sens inédit, une *psychè* qui n'est pas « subjective » <sup>23</sup>

La loi de l'apparaître réside dans l'irréductible dualité de l'apparition et de ce à quoi elle apparaît. Le ce-à-quoi l'apparaissant se montre n'est pas ce qui crée l'apparition, l'apparaître « a un être autonome mais n'est pas un étant indépendant » <sup>24</sup> c'est en cela que sa structure est asubjective. Par conséquent, *la psychè ne crée pas d'apparition mais apparaît comme création*. Son apparaître est sa création. L'âme crée son propre mode de corrélation avec ce qui apparaît.

Le troisième mouvement de l'existence humaine décrit par Patočka se fonde sur les analyses de Husserl *Sur la synthèse passive* <sup>25</sup> il est lié à une phénoménologie asubjective de l'expérience perceptive, celle-là même qui nous oblige souvent à corriger nos croyances perceptives, qui déçoit nos attentes et rature le sens pré-donné et déjà institué, *en faisant apparaître un sens nouveau et irréductible à toute donation de sens subjective*. C'est ainsi qu' « en modifiant nos convictions, nous ne transformons pas seulement le système de nos connaissances, mais nous nous transformons également nous-mêmes », précise Laszlo Tengelyi. <sup>26</sup> Ici réside l'autocréation de soi. Des horizons de sens s'auto-génèrent dans l'existant, comme chaque rayon de lumière cosmique est nouveau dans la perception.

Ce troisième mouvement désigne la percée dans le monde comme lieu de toute apparition : la conception patočkienne du monde comme *a priori* universel du se-montrer de l'étant est étroitement liée à sa phénoménologie asubjective. Cet ultime mouvement de l'existence est asubjectif, dans la mesure où il est lié à tout le champ phénoménal qui ne relève d'aucune structure de sujet ; cette asubjectivité dans l'acte pur d'apparaître rejoint alors « l'accomplissement phénoménalisant de l'être » heideggérien. Patočka parvient de cette manière à réconcilier Husserl et Heidegger sur la question du fondement de l'apparition.

La *psychè* est ce qui reçoit ce qui apparaît, elle est ce à quoi l'étant apparaît. *La psychè est donc condition de l'apparition et autocréation de soi dans l'apparition*.

## V.

Sous l'angle psychanalytique, C. Castoriadis considère l'essence même de la *psychè comme création*, « imagination radicale, flux perpétuellement émergent de représentations, de désirs et d'affects ». <sup>27</sup> L'élucidation de l'inconscient est une activité *poïétique* de déconstruction-reconstruction des significations imaginaires socialement instituées.

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<sup>22</sup> Jan Patočka, « Corps, possibilités, monde, champ d'apparition », in Jan Patočka, *Papiers Phénoménologiques*, trad. E. Abrams (Grenoble : Millon, 1995), 127.

<sup>23</sup> Jan Patočka, *Platon et l'Europe*, trad. E. Abrams (Paris : Verdier, 1983), 206.

<sup>24</sup> Patočka, « Corps, possibilités, monde, champ d'apparition », 128.

<sup>25</sup> Edmund Husserl, *Sur la synthèse passive (1918-1926)*, trad. B. Bégout et J. Kessler (Grenoble : Millon, 1998).

<sup>26</sup> László Tengelyi, « La phénoménologie asubjective et la théorie des trois mouvements de l'existence chez Patočka », in Jan Patočka, *phénoménologie asubjective et existence*, dir. R. Barbaras (Paris&Milano : Mimesis, 2007), 149.

<sup>27</sup> Castoriadis, *Figures du pensable*, 287.

Sur le plan psychique de la sublimation, la création consiste à investir l'objet qui nous procure un plaisir de représentation en acceptant qu'il soit plus tard investi socialement par les autres : « le créateur crée à un niveau où il y a la possibilité pour l'objet qui surgira de sa création d'être socialement investi ».<sup>28</sup> La création, c'est une synthèse de la liberté et de la nécessité, en tant qu'elle se dégage du donné et pose des possibles nouveaux.

La création chez Castoriadis désigne le surgissement d'une nouveauté radicale, sans continuité dialectique – ce n'est pas une éclosion comme celle de la plante qui était en puissance contenue dans la graine. Cet imaginaire radical fait surgir ce qui n'a encore jamais été. L'âme est *autokineton* et « la pensée est auto-crétation ».<sup>29</sup>

Le soin de l'âme, d'abord objet de la philosophie depuis Socrate, réinterprété par la phénoménologie, est aussi, en un certain sens, objet de la psychanalyse :<sup>30</sup> « c'est parce que la psychanalyse a affronté le problème de l'âme comme telle, de son organisation, des forces qui s'y manifestent, des lois de son fonctionnement [...] que son objet apparaît dans sa dureté irréductible : comme signification vivante, *logoi embioi* ».<sup>31</sup> La psychanalyse renouvelle radicalement le discours de l'âme et en retrouve également les apories, d'après Castoriadis qui rappelle que l'un de ses fondements est que « si le passé (de la *psychè*) n'était pas *création*, on n'aurait pas besoin d'y revenir ». C'est parce que le passé psychique est création constante qu'on y revient dans la cure, et c'est parce que la *psychè* se crée elle-même qu'il chaut de s'en soucier.

## VI.

Je propose l'idée que la création est pré-subjective dans l'art antique avec les mythes, qu'elle devient subjective à la Renaissance (quand l'artiste commence à signer son œuvre), et s'avère post-subjective dans certaines formes de l'art contemporain.

Mouvement intentionnel vers ce qui n'est pas encore, la *psychè* serait une réceptivité agissante qui informe et sculpte l'apparaître. La création psychique jaillit ainsi du *chôris-mos*, de cette liberté dissidente à laquelle est destinée la responsabilité de l'âme soucieuse du Tout – puisqu'il n'est pas de responsabilité « sans rupture dissidente et *inventive* avec la tradition ».<sup>32</sup> La création, dès lors, n'est autre que l'essence de la *psychè* qui, en toute liberté, répond à l'appel asubjectif de l'apparaître, lui donne sens, et compose ainsi laophonie de sa propre existence.

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<sup>28</sup> Cornelius Castoriadis, *Sujet et vérité dans le monde social-historique, séminaires 1986-1987, La création humaine I* (Paris : Seuil, 2002), 125.

<sup>29</sup> Castoriadis, *Sujet et vérité*, 313.

<sup>30</sup> Cornelius Castoriadis, *Histoire et Création, textes philosophiques inédits (1945-1967)* (Paris : Seuil 2009), 99-112.

<sup>31</sup> Cornelius Castoriadis, *Les Carrefours du Labyrinthe I* (Paris : Seuil, 1978), 65-72.

<sup>32</sup> Jacques Derrida, *Donner la mort* (Paris : Galilée, 1999), 47.

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## DISTANCE AND IMMERSION: PHENOMENOLOGICAL AESTHETICS AND THE QUESTION OF A 'PARADIGM SHIFT'

ONDŘEJ DADEJÍK

### ABSTRACT

This article is concerned with the question of how two obvious but apparently antithetical features of aesthetic experience – distance and immersion – can be integrated into one theory. The author criticizes the contemporary neglect of the first feature (distance or disinterestedness), and argues for a more dialectical notion of aesthetic experience which would include both of them. To this end, the article starts, in section one, by re-examining the main points in the evolution of phenomenological aesthetics, which some authors consider a chief source of this neglect. The presence of two questions is emphasized: (1) the idea of a distinctive perception which we traditionally call aesthetic and can trace back to Kantian roots and (2) the process of breaking with the subject-object model of experience. In the end of this section, the question is raised whether the successful elimination of the latter means the necessary rejection of the former. In section two, the author argues for a negative answer to this question, and a candidate for a 'new paradigm' of aesthetics is considered – the idea of the environment. As the conclusion to this section, the compatibility of the idea of the aesthetic mode of perception in the traditional sense, together with the original sense of the idea of environment, is defended. Lastly, in section three, these findings are made more specific and confirmed by turning to Jan Patočka's analyses of the experience of space.

**Key words:** Jan Patočka; phenomenological aesthetics; distance; immersion; space

### DISTANCE ET IMMERSION : L'ESTHÉTIQUE PHÉNOMÉNOLOGIQUE ET LA QUESTION DU « CHANGEMENT DE PARADIGME »

Cet article tente de savoir à quel point deux traits évidents mais apparemment antithétiques de l'expérience esthétique, à savoir la distance et l'immersion, peuvent être inclus au sein d'une même théorie. L'auteur critique le rejet actuel du premier de ces deux traits (la distance ou le désintéressement) et argumente au profit d'une conception plus dialectique de l'expérience esthétique qui prendrait en compte chacun des deux aspects. Pour cela, l'article commence par réexaminer les moments clés de l'esthétique phénoménologique que certains auteurs considèrent comment la principale source d'inspiration de ce refus. L'accent est mis sur la présence de deux aspects : 1°) l'idée d'une forme spécifique de perception, traditionnellement désignée comme esthétique et que l'on peut faire remonter jusqu'à ses racines kantienne; 2°) le processus de libération du modèle sujet-objet de l'expérience. À la fin de cette partie, la question est posée de savoir si l'élimination effective de ce modèle signifie également l'abandon nécessaire de la notion de distance. Dans la deuxième partie de l'article, l'argumentation se fait au profit d'une réponse négative, et un candidat à un « nouveau paradigme » est examiné sous la forme de la notion de milieu (*environnement*). À la fin de cette partie, l'auteur défend la compatibilité de l'idée du mode esthétique de la perception, dans le sens traditionnel du terme, avec le sens originel de la notion de milieu. Dans la troisième et dernière partie de l'article, ces constatations sont spécifiées et confirmées à l'aide des analyses de l'expérience de l'espace du philosophe Jan Patočka.

## DISTANCE A PONOŘENÍ: FENOMENOLOGICKÁ ESTETIKA A OTÁZKA „ZMĚNY PARADIGMATU“

Článek se zabývá otázkou, nakolik mohou být dva samozřejmé, avšak zjevně protikladné rysy estetické zkušenosti – distance a ponoření se – zahrnuty do jedné teorie. Autor kritizuje současné odmítnutí prvního rysu (distance, či nezainteresovanosti) a argumentuje ve prospěch dialektičtějšího pojetí estetické zkušenosti, které zahrnuje oba rysy. Za tímto účelem článek začíná přezkoumáním hlavních momentů ve vývoji fenomenologické estetiky, která je některými autory považována za hlavní inspirační zdroj onoho odmítnutí. Zdůrazněna je přítomnost dvou témat: (1) idea specifického druhu vnímání, které je tradičně označováno jako estetické a které lze stopovat až k jeho kantovským kořenům; (2) proces vymaňování se ze subjekt-objektového modelu zkušenosti. V závěru této části je položena otázka, zda úspěšná eliminace tohoto modelu rovněž znamená nutné opuštění pojmu distance. V druhé části je argumentováno ve prospěch negativní odpovědi na tuto otázku a dále je přezkoumán kandidát na „nové paradigma“ – pojem „prostředí“ (*the environment*). V závěru této části je obhajována kompatibilita pojmu estetického modu vnímání v tradičním smyslu a původního významu pojmu prostředí. V závěrečné třetí části jsou tato zjištění specifikována a potvrzena pomocí analýz zkušenosti prostoru českého filozofa Jana Patočky.

Aesthetic experiences involve two features that, I suppose, we would all – aestheticians, philosophers, and laymen – agree on. When we experience great works of art or outstanding examples of natural beauty, we can exercise a kind of distance from the exclusive pursuit of our everyday practical interests; we can feel a temporary release from the all-pervasive entanglement in our ordinary concerns. Nevertheless, everyone knows that aesthetic experiences are not only experiences of disinterest or indifference; they are also experiences of a heightened interest, of being absorbed, moved, or involved. These two features – distance and immersion (or detachment and involvement) – form one of the essential dichotomies, or antinomies, lying at the heart of modern aesthetic theory. As a consequence, they create the tension that is behind many (if not all) the influential attempts to define the notion of aesthetic experience. For the purpose of such a definition, they can be used either in isolation (one of them becomes the main or only feature defining the notion of aesthetic experience) or in a kind of more or less dialectical relationship to one another. The first possibility leads to the elimination of this tension, but, I believe, at the cost of the explanatory scope of such a theory. The other is more inclusive, but it has to face the apparent paradox of two antithetical features that must be integrated into a single theory.

Much of this essay is an attempt to argue for the latter possibility, because I want to claim that it is the only available way to keep the notion of the specific kind of perceiving (or thinking, imagining, and so forth) which we call *aesthetic*, alive. For this purpose, I re-examine, in section one, the main points in the evolution of phenomenological aesthetics. In this section, I emphasize two matters that occur in aesthetically relevant phenomenological writings and also play the main role in contemporary aesthetics in general: (1) the idea of the distinctive kind of perception that we traditionally call aesthetic and can be traced to Kantian roots and (2) the process of breaking with the bipolar model of mind, or the subject-object scheme, which is so deeply embedded in Western thought. Some aestheticians, influenced by the phenomenological movement, claim that the exaggeration of the idea of distance is the cause of undesirable conceptual divide between subject



and object in the notion of aesthetic experience. At the end of this section, I ask whether the successful elimination of the latter means the necessary rejection of the former. In section two, I argue for a negative answer to this question, and reconsider the candidate for 'a new paradigm' of aesthetics – the concept of the environment. I examine here further possibilities of this notion by confronting Arnold Berleant's approach with David E. Cooper's critique of the contemporary use of this concept. As a conclusion to this section, I defend the compatibility of the idea of the aesthetic mode of perception in the traditional sense with the original sense of the concept of the environment (and thus with the framework of the process of emancipation from the subject-object model of experience). Lastly, in section three, after playing two phenomenologically inspired approaches against one another, I turn to phenomenology itself. I consider Jan Patočka's analyses of the experience of space, and emphasize and confirm the findings from earlier sections.

## I. The idea of distance and the abyss of the mental representations

Edward S. Casey begins his overview of the evolution of phenomenological conceptions of aesthetic experience by referring to Kant's *Critique of Judgement*, specifically to his explanation of beauty deduced from the first moment of the 'Analytic of the Beautiful'. According to Kant, as Casey emphasizes, the judgement of taste bears on formal features that inhere in the object judged, since these inspire certain feelings in the subject: 'Taste is the faculty for judging an object or a kind of representation through a satisfaction or dissatisfaction without any interest. The object of such a satisfaction is called beautiful.'<sup>1</sup>

Casey underlines the central role of experience in the context of the third critique: the outcome of any judgement of beauty is, as we have seen, the subject's feeling and thus it is the experience that counts, not the object, which is primarily at stake in matters of knowledge. 'In order to decide whether or not something is beautiful, we do not relate the representation by means of understanding to the object for cognition, but rather relate it by means of the imagination (perhaps combined with the understanding) to the subject and its feeling of pleasure or displeasure.'<sup>2</sup> The crucial point here is the moment of immediacy, for the basis of this specific judgement is always a *feeling*, or, in other words, a directly experienced quality without the necessary mediation of any concept. We do not need to know what kind of object is in a front of us to judge it beautiful. More precisely, we do not conceptualize it with regard to any theoretical or practical purpose. We do not recognize the object with respect to any general, immaterial entity (concept, category, type, or kind), of which it is the case. Instead, Kant says, 'we linger in our contemplation of the beautiful, because this contemplation reinforces and reproduces itself'.<sup>3</sup>

For a long time, it seemed that the notion of the aesthetic field thus defined, with the emphasis on the dominance of the subject's experience, opened a plausible way to understanding the sources of aesthetic value – both in art and in the aesthetic experience of natural objects. Nevertheless, despite the important role played by experience or, in

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<sup>1</sup> Immanuel Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, ed. Paul Guyer, trans. Paul Guyer and E. Matthews (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 96.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 89.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 107.

the Kantian version of it, by the experiencing of the subject, the aesthetic field remains hopelessly split, with the object on one side and the subject's experiencing on the other side of the aesthetic domain. As Casey rightly claims with reference to Heidegger's 'Der Ursprung des Kunstwerks' (written 1935–36):

From the 18th century onward, recourse to experience has meant the subjectification of the artwork in the abyss of mental representations. Neglected are dimensions of the artwork that surpass the domain of subjectivity and representation, e.g., Being and the Open, Earth and World. Rather than being the contents of any possible subjective experience, these factors transcend such experience. From the very start, they take us somewhere else.<sup>4</sup>

The gradual overcoming of this bipolar model, which was for a long time inseparably linked to the era of representationalism in Western thought, also appears, as Casey suggests, within the evolution of the phenomenological approaches to aesthetic experience. The shadows of mentalism or representationalism, which were still present in the work of the founders of phenomenology and its early figures (Edmund Husserl and Roman Ingarden), were gradually eliminated, and eventually<sup>5</sup>, Casey writes, 'once the dogma of representationalism is removed from the schema, there is room for a more constructive and expansive notion of aesthetic experience and its contents. The major phenomenological aestheticians offer us a model for experiencing art in enriched and nuanced ways without being committed to the primacy of representation and its associated subjectivism.'<sup>6</sup>

According to Casey, this successful 'exorcism' of the subject-object schema within the evolution of phenomenological thinking 'happens mainly through an emphasis on the concrete complexity of perception that takes us out of our minds and into the environment place-world whose analogue is the world of the artwork: a world that is no mere assemblage of things but a poignant actuality that bristles with imaginative possibilities.'<sup>7</sup> Consequently, the notions of the aesthetic object and aesthetic experience have been extensively reinterpreted within this development. The old idea of the aesthetic object based on this bipolarity, understood against the background of the relationship between subjective representation and a mere physical continuum, has, Casey argues, been superseded 'by opening up the aesthetic object to the ingression of place-worlds while reconceiving aesthetic experience as a form of feeling that not only ties subject to object but melts down their very difference', and 'then the diremptive bipolarity inherent in representationalism gives way to a more ample vision of what art and its experience can mean in expressive artworks.'<sup>8</sup> The notion of *object* (and complementarily of *subject*) then becomes, to a certain extent, a simplification or even a misinterpretation. More precisely,

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<sup>4</sup> Edward S. Casey, 'Aesthetic Experience', in *Handbook of Phenomenological Aesthetic*, ed. Hans Reiner Sepp and Lester Embree (Dordrecht, Heidelberg, London, New York: Springer Science, Business Media B. V., 2010), 1.

<sup>5</sup> Casey has in mind the work of the next generation of phenomenological philosophers, especially Mikel Dufrenne and Maurice Merleau-Ponty. As I seek to demonstrate in the final section of this article, we may usefully add Jan Patočka's writings to his list.

<sup>6</sup> Casey, 'Aesthetic Experience', 1.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 6.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*

we should speak about the 'situation of aesthetic perception', rather than about the experience of a self-contained entity, which has the character of substance and attribute. For it is, after all, such a fundamental situational structure out of which further differentiations of subject and object and other constellations of things emerge. The aesthetic object in the sense of 'opening up [...] to the ingression of place-worlds' (even if its focus is a solid thing) is never concerned with a static given, and should thus be understood in its processuality, that is, more like a movement, dynamism, in a word, an *event-object*.

Besides these more or less successful efforts to jettison the burden of representationalism in the work of phenomenological philosophers, we can, however, still identify there the presence of that Kantian figure with which Casey began his overview. The following example originates in Ingarden's *Cognition of the Literary Work of Art* (1937). Here, he describes the initial phase of aesthetic experience:

The occurrence of a preliminary aesthetic emotion (in one's stream of experiences) usually entails, first of all, a *check* on the previous 'normal' course of experiences and activities concerning the objects of the surrounding real world. What we were occupied with a moment before, though perhaps very important to us then, can suddenly lose its significance, become uninteresting, and we are indifferent to it. We therefore do not continue – even if 'for a moment' – our business during which the quality (usually related to an object) evoking the preliminary emotion imposed itself on us. For example, how often when walking a mountain path – paying attention to the details of a way which is not always safe – are we involuntarily 'struck' by the so-called beauty of the landscape? We then stop automatically. The details of the bends of the path we had climbed up to the summit have become uninteresting; we have no longer have time for them; something else is 'attracting' us now. Similarly, we often suddenly interrupt a talk about some practical or theoretical matter, because we have been accidentally dazzled by a casual quality evoking a preliminary emotion, for example, beauty and a peculiar expression of someone who has just passed by on the street.<sup>9</sup>

Apparently, for Ingarden, that mode of perception, which 'reinforces and reproduces itself', or the exercise of which is worthwhile for its own sake, and not for any practical or theoretical purpose, does not lose its significance at all. But one may object that Ingarden's theory of aesthetic experience is still too influenced by its Husserlian origins and the purely intentional character of consciousness (and is thus still burdened with residues of mentalism). Take, then, for example, Heidegger's description of the way a work of art displays meaning-contexts that are otherwise concealed by objectivizing appropriations:

To work-being there belongs the setting up of a world. Thinking of it within this perspective, what is the nature of that in the work which is usually called the work material? Because it is determined by usefulness and serviceability, equipment takes into its service that of which it consists: the matter. In fabricating equipment – e.g., an ax – stone is used, and used up. It disappears into usefulness. The material is all the better and more suitable the less it resists perishing in the equipmental being of the equipment. By contrast the temple-work, in setting up a world, does not cause the material to disappear, but rather causes it to come forth

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<sup>9</sup> Roman Ingarden, 'Aesthetic Experience and Aesthetic Object', *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, 21:3 (1961): 297. Translation amended.

for the very first time and to come into the Open of the work's world. The rock comes to bear and rest and so first becomes rock; metals come to glitter and shimmer, colors to glow, tones to sing, the word to speak. All this comes forth as the work sets itself back into the massiveness and heaviness of stone, into the firmness and pliancy of wood, into the hardness and luster of metal, into the lighting and darkening of color, into the clang of tone, and into the naming power of the word.<sup>10</sup>

What does Heidegger mean by 'work material'? How is it that we notice it in a work of art, and experience 'the massiveness and heaviness of stone, firmness and pliancy of wood, hardness and luster of metal, the lighting and darkening of color', and so forth? For this, Heidegger provides a negative explanation strongly resonating with the Kantian aesthetic legacy. On the one hand, it is the practical everyday determination of things, their 'usefulness and serviceability', which must disappear from a work of art. On the other hand, such refraining from the ubiquitous determination of things makes possible – *causes* – the material to re-appear and come 'into the Open of the work's world'.

Two other, more general, question or lines of discussion arise, which at the same time dominate – and not by chance – contemporary aesthetics. What is more important, these lines intersect at a very interesting point. Here, at this point of intersection, we encounter a problem as important as the question of a 'paradigm shift' within aesthetic theory in general. According to some influential contemporary aestheticians, to put it briefly, we are faced with the problem of re-thinking the old paradigm of modern aesthetic theory or searching for a new one or both.<sup>11</sup> How should we formulate this 'old paradigm'? Arnold Berleant, for example, identifies it, exactly in the Kantian vein, as a 'distinctive kind of attention, contemplative and disinterested, that is directed towards a work of art apart from any other consideration, particularly of use, that would compromise our satisfaction in its intrinsic value',<sup>12</sup> and quotes as a *locus classicus* of this doctrine the same passage of Kant's *Critique of Judgement* mentioned by Casey at the beginning of his overview of phenomenological concepts of aesthetic experience.<sup>13</sup>

According to Berleant, the idea of disinterestedness lies 'at the heart of a cluster of ideas' that developed in eighteenth-century English and French philosophy, and did not find explicit expression until Kant's third critique.<sup>14</sup> My purpose here is not to revise Berleant's outline of the history of modern aesthetics. But Berleant's claim includes one important point for our discussion. This cluster should contain other ideas regularly associated with disinterestedness, one of which is *distance*.<sup>15</sup> In a nutshell, Berleant holds that the result of this conceptual connection is the distancing of the object of perception, circumscribing it with clear boundaries, which results in the *isolation* of the art object or

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<sup>10</sup> Martin Heidegger, 'The Origin of the Work of Art', in *Poetry, Language, Thought*, trans. and ed. by Albert Hofstadter (New York: Harper & Row, 2001), 44–45.

<sup>11</sup> See, for example, Arnold Berleant, 'Historicity of Aesthetics I', *British Journal of Aesthetics* 26:2 (1986): 101–11; idem, 'Historicity of Aesthetics II', *British Journal of Aesthetics*, 26:3 (1986): 195–203; idem, 'Aesthetics and the Contemporary Arts', *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 29:2 (1970): 155–67; idem, 'Re-thinking Aesthetics', *Filozofski vestnik*, 20:2 (1999): 25–33.

<sup>12</sup> Arnold Berleant, 'Beyond Disinterestedness', *British Journal of Aesthetics* 34:3 (1994): 242–43.

<sup>13</sup> See note 1 of this article.

<sup>14</sup> Berleant, 'Beyond Disinterestedness', 244.

<sup>15</sup> According to Berleant, the 'cluster of ideas', which has the idea of disinterestedness as its key term, consists of contemplative character, distance, and universality. *Ibid.*, 245–49.

the object of aesthetic appreciation in general: 'In aesthetics, the isolation of the art object is the correlative of appreciative distance.'<sup>16</sup> To sum up: first, it seems, that the separation of the perceiving subject from the object perceived (and from the rest of the world as well) is a necessary consequence of the Kantian idea of disinterestedness; second, this separation results in another inadequate idea – namely, art objects and objects of aesthetic appreciation in general consist primarily of solid, self-contained, substantial entities, not processes, situations, or events. The question arises whether it is possible to keep these closely related ideas alive, face to face with evidence of contemporary neo-avant-garde art forms or the aesthetic appeal of urban and natural environments. No, it is not possible, says Berleant, who calls these ideas 'dogmas',<sup>17</sup> the significance of which is largely historical and the eternalization of them exaggerates their place and hinders aesthetic inquiry.<sup>18</sup>

In the contemporary critique of traditional aesthetics we encounter the same tendency that was identified by Casey in the evolution of phenomenological conceptions of aesthetic experience. This common tendency consists in the attempt to re-describe the concept of aesthetic object in terms of our active, engaged, and embodied being forming a part of the environment we live in. This should not be surprising, Berleant is, after all, considered the 'strongest proponent of the phenomenological approach' in environmental (or ecological) aesthetics<sup>19</sup> and he draws explicitly upon phenomenology for other areas of aesthetic theory as well (mainly for works of art and the aesthetics of our built environment). Nevertheless, Berleant also claims that the separation of the perceiving subject from the perceived object is a direct consequence (or even a correlative) of the doctrine of disinterestedness. But this second claim is far from being obvious, at least within the field of phenomenology.

The question then arises whether we need – for the re-description of the notion of aesthetic object – to abandon the idea of disinterestedness (which may of course transcend the version of the idea by which Kant defined genuine aesthetic judgement). In other words, in order to get out of the 'abyss of mental representations', which is the cause of subjectification of artworks (or aesthetic objects in general),<sup>20</sup> do we need to abandon the idea of a distinctive kind of perception, the exercise of which is worthwhile for its own sake, or, as Coleridge says, is 'carried forward not merely or chiefly by the mechanical impulse of curiosity, not by a restless desire to arrive at the final solution, but by the pleasurable activity of the journey itself'.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Ibid., 247.

<sup>17</sup> On this question, see, for example, the debate between Carlson and Berleant. Arnold Berleant, 'The Persistence of Dogma in Aesthetics', *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 52:2 (1994): 237–39; Allen Carlson, 'Beyond the Aesthetic', *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 52:2 (1994): 239–41.

<sup>18</sup> Berleant, 'Re-thinking Aesthetics', 28.

<sup>19</sup> See, for example, Ted Toadvine, 'Ecological Aesthetics', in *Handbook of Phenomenological Aesthetics*, ed. Hans Reiner Sepp and Lester Embree (Springer Science+Business Media B. V., 2010), 85–86.

<sup>20</sup> See, Casey, 'Aesthetic Experience', 1.

<sup>21</sup> Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *Biographia Literaria. Or, my Biographical Sketches of My Literary Life and opinions, and Two Lay Sermons*, I: *The Statesman's Manual*, II: *Blessed Are Ye That Sow Besides All Waters* (Eugene: Wipf and Stock, 2005), 149. Quoted by John Dewey in connection with the understanding of the aesthetic experience. See John Dewey, *Art as Experience* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1934), 5.

## II. The environment as an aesthetic paradigm

Let us recapitulate the argument. We began with Casey's critical review of the development of phenomenological accounts of the notion of aesthetic experience. Here we recognized two important concepts or ideas: first, the idea of a distinctive kind of perception, whose exercise is worthwhile for its own sake, which has Kantian origins and we call aesthetic. Second, the dualistic model of the notion of experience, which is characteristic of modern Western thought and is one of the main philosophical targets from the phenomenological point of view.

As we have seen, the same ideas are present in the current debate on re-thinking key terms of traditional aesthetics, with, however, one striking difference. On the one hand, Casey does not seem to imply that an undesirable subjectification of the notion of aesthetic experience and its correlate, isolationism concerning the object of aesthetic appreciation, are inevitable consequences of the idea of disinterestedness. On the other hand, Berleant, a phenomenologically inspired aesthetician, explicitly adopts such a position. He calls for a search for a new paradigm free from the shortcomings and errors of the old one. We now turn to the question of how this new, functional, vital notion of the aesthetic object, which is also supposed to display aesthetic qualities, might look. Later, I shall consider other possible arguments for this, which appear in the works of David E. Cooper and Jan Patočka. Lastly, I shall consider, by means of some of Cooper's and Patočka's useful insights, the compatibility (or, the above-indicated incompatibility) of Berleant's suggestion with the neglected idea or 'dogma' of disinterestedness.

First, let us resume the alleged shortcomings or errors of the 'old paradigm'. 'It is,' as Berleant sums up the main points, 'precisely by setting aside interest, "either of sense or of reason", that we become capable of receiving aesthetic satisfaction. Assuming a disinterested attitude frees us from the distractions of practical purposes and permits us to dwell freely on an object or representation of it, which we then regard as beautiful.'<sup>22</sup> Why should this notion of *the aesthetic* be defective? Whether it is the aesthetic experience of an artwork or the aesthetic experience of a natural object, this notion, according to Berleant, limits the density and layered structure of aesthetic experience, because not only artworks but also our environments 'possess the uncanny ability to insinuate themselves into our bodies, stirring up somatic and affective responses, and engaging us in ways that are difficult to reconcile with the contemplative ideal.'<sup>23</sup>

At first sight, serious problems encumber traditional aesthetics in many ways, not only in the domain of fine art. We are therefore led to suggest, according to Berleant, that the same quality of perceptual engagement, which is, for example, so evident and true of the experience of architecture, holds for the experience of environments in general. Berleant comes to the conclusion: 'if we take the environments as an exemplar, it becomes the model of engagement, a kind of experience far removed from tradition with which [we] began. We must then relinquish disinterestedness, an attitude, impossible to fulfil in

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<sup>22</sup> Arnold Berleant, 'The Aesthetics of Art and Nature', in *Landscape, Natural Beauty and the Arts*, ed. Salim Kemal and Ivan Gaskell (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 229.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, 230.

architecture or environment, equally, without bifurcating experience and turning it into a subjective response to an external and alien world.<sup>24</sup>

In this way, Berleant proposes the emergence of a new paradigm of the aesthetic, which is based on the negation of the old paradigm of the aesthetic attitude as a distinctive appreciative distance. Environment as a new aesthetic paradigm implies that 'the experience of environment as an inclusive perceptual system includes such factors as space, mass, volume, time, movement, color, light, smell, sound, tactility, kinaesthesia, pattern, order, and meaning. Environmental experience here is not exclusively visual, but actively involves all the sensory modalities synesthetically engaging the participant in intense awareness.'<sup>25</sup> Environmental experience, then, with the phenomenological inspiration behind it, serves as a model for aesthetic theory in general.

Concerning our somatic, imaginative, and cognitive place in the world we live in, Berleant clearly follows the development of phenomenological conceptions of aesthetic experience. We can note a number of aspects, or enriching moments, of openness to our lived place-worlds, which are in obvious contradiction with the notion of aesthetic object as a self-contained entity, having the character of substance and attribute. Nevertheless, one important question arises at this point: the environment as the new paradigm of the aesthetic should be able to offer new ways of understanding the distinction between *the aesthetic* and *the non-aesthetic* (if we are not to abandon the term *aesthetic* at all), for example, the distinction between the sense of my actually being a part of my environment, for all intents and purposes, and the sense of place, which is aesthetically significant. But in this respect Berleant's approach does not take us very far.<sup>26</sup> At this moment, the outright abandoning of the old paradigm of the minimal notion of the aesthetic results in blurring the distinction between aesthetic and non-aesthetic without offering a useful alternative.

But let us explore this suggestion of the environment as a new aesthetic paradigm more carefully. Maybe we should explore the notion of the environment itself. This is the approach of another phenomenologically oriented philosopher, David E. Cooper, who, in the early 1990s, offered the critique of the contemporary use of the notion of 'the environment' as it has been used in environmental thought. Cooper proposes that we should follow the once prevalent idea of the environment as a milieu, ambience, neighbourhood, and so forth. In this sense an environment is not something a creature is merely in (as in geographically, causally conceived, inert space), but something it has as a disposition. This relation of a creature to its environment is, according to Cooper, an 'intentional one. An environment is something *for* the creature, a field of meaning, or significance'.<sup>27</sup>

The notion of a 'field of significance' – behind which we recognize an explicit phenomenological inspiration<sup>28</sup> – is introduced to express how items within our surroundings,

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<sup>24</sup> Arnold Berleant, 'The Environment as an Aesthetic Paradigm', *Dialectics and Humanism* 1–2 (1988): 105.

<sup>25</sup> Arnold Berleant, 'Environmental Aesthetics', in *The Encyclopedia of Aesthetics*, ed. Michael Kelly (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 116–17.

<sup>26</sup> Allen Carlson points to this difficulty in his discussion with Berleant. See Carlson, 'Beyond the Aesthetic', 240.

<sup>27</sup> David E. Cooper, 'The Idea of Environment', in *The Environment in Question*, ed. David E. Cooper and Joy A. Palmer (London and New York: Routledge, 1992), 167.

<sup>28</sup> See, for example, David E. Cooper, *Philosophy of Gardens* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2006), 47–53.

or environment, 'signify or point to one another, thereby forming a network of meanings. It is this which confers cohesion, a certain "wholeness" on an environment, rather as episodes in a novel belong to a coherent narrative through pointing back and forth.'<sup>29</sup> The knowledge necessary for such a reading is 'practical, unreflective familiarity', Cooper says. But Cooper's 'literary metaphor' indicates that more than this fundamental, unreflective level of a 'reading' of our surroundings is at play here. Cooper implies that there is a way of transcending these constitutive acts of building our environment into a much larger network of possibilities.

It consists in a centrifugal movement of reflection, a movement by which we not only reflect and open that level of 'practical, unreflective familiarity', but also continually broaden, enrich, and revitalize it.<sup>30</sup> In Cooper's words: 'As a metaphor in a poem inspires a reader to reflect on one thing through the prism of another, so a natural phenomenon, for the person who "reads" it poetically, belongs to a vocabulary of symbols which prompt reflections and lend to them a poignancy they would not otherwise enjoy.'<sup>31</sup>

Now, we should ask: Where lies the difference between the practical, unreflective reading, which is constitutive for – ontologically speaking – the existence of our environment, and this 'poetical reading'? How can we further specify the relation between these two 'readings'?

Cooper expands on this question in his second article, which is focused on relations between environmentalism and 'aestheticism'.<sup>32</sup> He argues here against the tendency 'to drive a wedge between the appreciation of art and nature', and for this purpose he formulates, so to say, the minimal common core of both kinds of appreciation in question. And, what is important, he does this within the framework of his (originally phenomenological) idea of environment as a 'field of meanings' and at the same time in the traditional (or Kantian) sense: 'the distinctive mark of aesthetic appreciation or "the judgement of taste" is that it is "independent of all interest". Such appreciation is "disinterested" in that, unlike appreciation of a hot bath after a game of rugby or of a jury's just verdict, it is not due to the satisfaction of antecedent desires or "interests" – physical, moral or whatever.'<sup>33</sup>

Cooper, however, does not adopt and advocate this central piece of the 'old paradigm' in its minimal formulation, but he does offer its 'fleshed out' version. In art, Cooper suggests as an amendment the concept of 'alternative worlds', for the experience of which a work of art is an opportunity. Great works of art 'set up' these possible worlds and invite their exploration, Cooper says.<sup>34</sup> They are *alternative* worlds because we leave our everyday, practical selves in the experience of these works, and they are *alternative worlds* 'because of the rich and diverse dimensions provided for our exploration – formal, emo-

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<sup>29</sup> Cooper, 'The Idea of Environment', 167.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.* In this sense we may also differentiate between animals, which lack a reflective capacity, and human beings, who are capable of various kinds of reflection or 'reading' of the natural environment. The animal's lack of reflective capacity is, Cooper says, probably compensated for by a greater intimacy with their environment.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, 174.

<sup>32</sup> David E. Cooper, 'Aestheticism and Environmentalism', in *Spirit of the Environment: Religion, Value and Environmental Concern*, ed. David E. Cooper and Joy A. Palmer (London and New York: Routledge, 2008), 95–106.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, 103.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*



tional, narrative, symbolic, and so on.<sup>35</sup> These worlds can, however, also be constituted by our environments themselves: ‘Sometimes, a person who “goes into nature” is, somewhat literally, entering a different world from the city which is the milieu of his or her everyday, practically engaged existence. But even when a forest, say, is the milieu of a person’s “practical orientation” – as with a charcoal-burner – it can become an “alternative world”’.<sup>36</sup>

A ‘poetical reading’ of our living environment is thus based on the level of fundamental, ‘practical, and unreflective familiarity’, but at the same time, it is the expansion and enrichment of it. In this sense, it belongs to our basic movements, although it transcends the level of habitual, concrete, bodily knowledge of our surrounding. In aesthetic experience, we continually step out of the field of the actual, of the immediately given, in order to return there with new perspectives and possibilities thus gained. This movement would be impossible without the ability not to be *immersed* in being and to be temporarily *distanced* from it. Martin Jay points, in this sense, to the etymology of the word ‘interest’, that is, in aesthetic experience ‘we are no longer [...] *inter-esse*, but rather somehow outside it’.<sup>37</sup> In a word, we are disinterested. The idea of disinterestedness, then, seems to be not only functional within this context, but also offers a distinctive feature by which we can differentiate between the constitutive (non-aesthetic) reading and the re-constitutive (poetical) reading of our environment.

From this perspective, it seems that ‘the environment’ as a ‘new aesthetic paradigm’ is quite easily compatible with the old one. In other words, it becomes evident that in order to get rid of the troublesome legacy of representationalism and mentalism we need not abandon the idea of the aesthetic kind of perception in the traditional sense.

### III. ‘Living spatially’ and Horizons of Experience

One might, however, object that so far we have been considering only a mere conflict of two more or less adequate interpretations of phenomenological insight. That is why we now turn to the example of genuine phenomenological thought, that is, Patočka’s analyses of the experience of space. Well before Cooper, Patočka presented a range of very similar questions.<sup>38</sup>

First of all, Patočka describes the character of our ‘being in space’, which is, according to him, also intentional or, more precisely, *dispositional*. For Patočka, as well as for Cooper, there is an essential difference between our awareness of being in space, between our ‘living spatially’ and a neutral being in space as a part of it, among other things. In Patočka’s words:

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<sup>35</sup> Ibid.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid., 104.

<sup>37</sup> Martin Jay, ‘Drifting into Dangerous Waters: The Separation of Aesthetic Experience from the Work of Art’, *Filozofski vestnik* 20:2 (1999): 69.

<sup>38</sup> There are explicit references to Maurice Merleau-Ponty as the chief source of inspiration in Patočka’s, as well as in Cooper’s work, especially in connection with the primacy of our embodiment, that is, the primacy of perception, of our practical use of things, looking at them, touching them, and so forth.

A merely corporeal being can exist in space, can relate to space, nonetheless the lived spatiality of our body cannot consist in its objectively geometric relations as a thing. Our body is a life which is spatial in itself and of itself, producing its location in space and making itself spatial. Personal being is not a being like a thing but rather a self-relation which, to actualize this relation, must go round about through another being. We relate to ourselves by relating to the other, to more and more things and ultimately to the universe as such, so locating ourselves in the world.<sup>39</sup>

According to Patočka, we occur in the world not as fully self-conscious, finished subjects, but in the modality of 'primordial inside'.<sup>40</sup> This 'primordial inside' is not a primarily external geometrical relation (which is at best the abstraction from it), but is something that directs and leads all our relations to reality, determining what will be close and what will be remote, what will be familiar and what will be unfamiliar. The notion of 'primordial inside' denotes, according to Patočka, our original, bodily disposition of our being-in-the-world and thus the availability of all items around us.<sup>41</sup> The level of habitual, unreflective, practical familiarity is for both Cooper and Patočka an ever-present presupposition of the further building of our environment or the world.<sup>42</sup> Especially for Patočka, it is not a static or mechanical relation between an organism (or an 'I') and its surrounding; rather, it is a movement or 'primordial dynamism'.

Thus there is always available to us [Patočka writes] a body with certain skills and habits (for instance, I can play the violin). That is nothing trivial. All our activity presupposes this disposition of the body. Every level we reach with a learned skill has to be achieved, presupposes a certain type of mastery over the world. To learn something assumes that there is a body at my disposal.<sup>43</sup>

Very similarly to Cooper, Patočka differentiates between the 'environment' of an animal with its lack of reflective capacity and of human beings, who are capable of various or, we could say with Cooper, alternative kinds of reflection or 'readings' of his/her environment. Since animals thus have only a living 'context' at their disposal, human beings

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<sup>39</sup> Jan Patočka, *Body, Community, Language, World*, trans. Erazim Kohák, ed. James Dodd (Chicago and La Salle, Illinois: Open Court, 1998), 31.

<sup>40</sup> For a comparison of Patočka's considerations on the relationship between home and the dwelling (which include his concept of 'primordial inside') with Emmanuel Levinas's similar considerations on the same subject, see Miloš Ševčík, 'The Intimacy of Inside and the Danger of Outside: The Personal, Sensory, and Affective Aspects of Patočka's and Levinas's Concepts of Home and the Dwelling', in *House & Home from a Theoretical Perspective*, ed. Efe Duyan and Ceren Öztürkcan (Istanbul: DAKAM Publishing, 2012), 152–156.

<sup>41</sup> Jan Patočka, 'Prostor a jeho problematika', *Estetika* 28:1 (1991): 16–17.

<sup>42</sup> We do not usually reflect on or realize this presupposition. Nevertheless, it becomes extremely evident when we become disoriented. In Cooper's words: 'An environment as milieu is not something a creature is merely in, but something it has. This is why it can find itself without one, as when I am parachuted into the Sahara or a badger [is] removed to a laboratory. Neither of us then knows the way about; nothing is familiar or has anything of home for us. A creature without an environment would, of course, be an impossibility if the only sense of the term were that of The Environment or geographical bits of it. Each creature must, after all, be somewhere and not nowhere. Cooper, 'The Idea of Environment', 166–67. For a similar point made by Patočka, concerning the situation when we suddenly discover that we are somewhere we did not expect to be, while we became absorbed in reading on the tram or the train, see, Patočka, 'Prostor a jeho problematika', 18.

<sup>43</sup> Patočka, *Body, Community, Language, World*, 44.

have a much wider range of possibilities; they have a common world to which they turn and in which they engage on many levels:

An animal [Patočka notes] lives in an unceasing *immediately relevant* relation to its context, in the present, related to something that interests it immediately, affecting it. Humans, by the attitudes they assume, are constantly placing themselves into situations other than the directly present ones, into past, into the future, with all their quasi-structures – quasi-present, quasi-past, etc. (remembering is going into the horizon of the past where a course of life that once had been present is repeated in tokens; we move in the past as if it were present, hence quasi-present), going into imaginary worlds, into the world of reading, of thought sequences, of tasks not met, of duties that place us into a special space which is and yet is not.<sup>44</sup>

In both Cooper's analysis and Patočka's, the relation between 'I' and its environing referential totality of possibilities becomes essential. Both authors hold that it is not something that happens somewhere inside pre-existing, empty, neutral space, but is for both something that shows itself as grounding, a fundamental event within the process of constituting our experience of the environment or space. But there is one more important point, common to both philosophers. We already know that Cooper points out a kind of reflecting, which grows out of that pre-reflective establishment of one's environment. He emphasizes the possibility of the movement by which we not only reflect and open up the level of 'practical, unreflective familiarity', but also the dimension by means of which we also enrich and reconstruct it. Patočka too conceives human beings as transcending the level of the immediately given: 'Besides concrete movements in the realm of corporeal dynamism, with their meaning and purposes, creating the rhythm of repetition – habitual melodies corresponding to organic rhythms – there are also abstract and symbolic movements, imaginary, transcending the field of the immediately given, of actuality, and following pure possibilities. These, too, represent a thrust toward the world, embracing ever broader spheres.'<sup>45</sup>

Humans are able to place themselves into situations other than those directly present to their senses. We would say with Cooper, as well as with Patočka, that human beings are able to inhabit alternative worlds, or, say, to actualize a range of possibilities much wider than those accessible directly to our senses. But how are these possibilities accessible with all their quasi-structures, that is, with their alternative quasi-pasts, quasi-presents, and quasi-futures? Where do they come from?

Given, then, the importance of our everyday 'living in possibilities', we must not forget the foundation that makes it possible. In his essay 'The Problem of Space', Patočka points to the presence of the 'primordial surrounding' that exists before the divide (the borderline) between subject and object.<sup>46</sup> This 'originary surrounding' is still present, but not motionlessly, Patočka says. It is constantly of the same shape, but it is a 'shape-in-motion', a 'stationary shape' which is permanently pulsating. Every encounter with anything from the outside is in this sense a selection from this surrounding; it comes out of it, but it

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<sup>44</sup> Ibid., 32–33.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid., 46.

<sup>46</sup> Exactly in the direction of the evolution of aesthetically relevant post-Husserlian phenomenological thinking pointed out by Casey. See section one of the present article.

disappears in it again. Patočka differentiates between the centre and this opening and closing periphery, which is stationary, and is part of 'originary surrounding', which is not a geometrical centre, but part of 'me' or 'I', he says, which is the living creature, both the addressed and the responding organism. It is not any objectified structure; it is a continuous horizon.<sup>47</sup>

As we can see, Patočka in this connection re-introduces the originally Husserlian term 'horizon': 'every individual reality is given with its horizon, it is never present fully but rather in various perspectives which our experience unwittingly synthesizes.'<sup>48</sup> Taken literally, a horizon means, as Patočka writes, 'the ultimate visible in a landscape. Everything within the horizon is defined in relation to it. The lines of perspective, the tangents of our visuality, meet at the horizon. The most distant, least fulfilled determines the meaning of what is nearest, most concrete, most fully given.'<sup>49</sup> In its metaphorical (and thus philosophical) use it means the contextual limitation that determines the real potentiality of everything that is, from a given point of view, visible, audible, thinkable, imaginable, and so forth. From these considerations, we can now recognize the 'unreflective, practical familiarity' discussed above, which is ontologically inseparable from being of the environment in Cooper's sense, and is of this horizontal character. Everything that is available to us, what is at our disposal, brings with itself the perspective in which it is synthesized. But, as we have seen, we, unlike animals, do not depend only on 'context' in our lives, that is, we do not depend only on our unwitting, habitual, instinctively repeated interactions between our organism and its surroundings. As human beings, we have the world at our disposal. What does having at our disposal mean in this connection?

Even the simplest movement, such as a movement of my hand when reaching for something, 'is not a reality but a realization'; it emphasizes, according to Patočka, the processual character of our inhabiting the world.<sup>50</sup> The world understood in these terms is therefore not an aggregate of discrete, objectified items, but the horizon of horizons: it is 'the horizon of all reality in which each partial horizon has its place, where everything has its place – even dreams, the past, the future, imagination, schematization, nature, history – society, home, foreign contexts.'<sup>51</sup> Reaching, walking, handling things, but also reading, imagining, dreaming, playing something, all of these activities are purposive; they have the character of a movement with direction. Each of these movements involves a tension between its past, present, and future. All of them involve a tension between something that is and something that is not yet. On the terms introduced above, each of these activities or movements brings with it a different perspective, a different point of view, that is, a different horizon.

Now, from previous considerations concerning Patočka's distinction between the 'context' (the living environment of an animal) and the 'world' (the living environment of a human being) we know that for Patočka human beings are able to step aside – if just for a moment – from the ordinary, pre-reflective flux of life, and create beside, or even against, this established course of life a further range of alternative possibilities. As Patočka puts it:

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<sup>47</sup> Patočka, *Body, Community, Language, World*, 46.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, 34.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, 45.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, 34.

Every action has its goal, making things appear as we wish and can. When we de-realize reality in play, what we seek to do is to broaden reality so that it would present to us one possibility among others. One thrust toward the world, toward the object, takes place in reality and in possibilities, it starts with the given and transcends it in planning, projection, imagination.<sup>52</sup>

Our 'living in possibilities', our openness to the environing place-world includes, thus, as a necessary component, the possibility of 'de-realization of reality'.

There are outstanding opportunities for such a 'broadening of reality', such as reading a novel, listening to a piece of music, watching a movie, or experiencing natural beauties. Whatever we will call these situations – aesthetic or otherwise – we should notice that the *de*-realization of reality as a necessary condition of its broadening includes a productive, momentarily distancing ourselves from it. As we have seen, without the ability not to be *immersed* in being (*inter-esse*) and to be temporarily *dis*-interested in our ordinary pre-reflective course of life, we would hardly be able to enter alternative quasi-pasts, quasi-presents, and quasi futures with their horizons of experience. In conclusion, then, I am claiming that even the example of Patočka's analyses of experience of space show that the re-description of the notion of aesthetic object in terms of process, and in terms of the primacy of our bodily emplacement in the world, does not require us to abandon the idea of a specific distance in which we can still recognize Kantian origins of the concept of aesthetic experience and which we traditionally call aesthetic.

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## THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE CONCEPT OF *THAUMA* IN PATOČKA'S PHILOSOPHY OF THE HISTORY OF ART

FELIX BORECKÝ

### ABSTRACT

In his essays on general history, Patočka locates the *thaumatical* shake-up together with the beginning of philosophy, politics, and history in classical Greece, when man first stepped back from being and became able to reflect freely upon everything that exists (his *Lebenswelt*). The author seeks to demonstrate that a similar *thaumatical* shake-up also occurred in art history with the coming of the aesthetic era. Here, art no longer serves to affirm a religious or ideological order, as it had in the preceding artistic era; instead, art turns towards the individual, who, by means of the work of art, reflects upon the world he or she lives in.

The author concludes that the art of the artistic era has similarities with the pre-historical age in which *thauma* was not yet present, and the art of the aesthetic era shares features with the historical age in which, by contrast, *thauma* is the central factor. Liberating wonder brought the pre-historical age to an end in ancient Greece with the discovery of philosophy, politics, and history, giving birth to the historical age in Europe. By contrast, the artistic era did not cease to be dominant till modern times; it was then that *thauma* became the crucial aspect for the reception of art and gave birth to the aesthetic era. Here, the philosophy of art or aesthetics, the history of art, and the politics of art were revealed.

**Key words:** Jan Patočka; *thauma*; history of art; artistic era; aesthetic era

### LE SENS DU CONCEPT *THAUMA* DANS LA PHILOSOPHIE DE L'HISTOIRE DE L'ART DE PATOČKA

Dans les textes consacrés à l'histoire générale, Patočka relie l'ébranlement *thaumatique* à la naissance de la philosophie, de la politique et de l'histoire dans la Grèce antique, au moment où, pour la première fois, l'homme, s'émancipant de l'état, est parvenu à réfléchir librement l'ensemble de l'existant (le vécu). Dans notre essai, nous cherchons à montrer qu'un pareil ébranlement *thaumatique* a eu lieu dans l'histoire de l'art, avec l'avènement de l'ère esthétique. C'est à partir de ce moment que l'art n'a plus servi à affirmer un ordre religieux ou idéologique, comme c'était le cas lors de précédente ère artistique, mais qu'il s'est tourné vers l'homme en tant qu'individu qui, par l'intermédiaire de l'œuvre d'art, réfléchit sur son existence.

De là, il est possible de conclure que l'art de l'ère artistique ressemble à l'époque pré-historique où le *thauma* n'était pas encore présent, et que l'art de l'ère esthétique partage des traits communs avec l'époque historique dans laquelle le *thauma* constitue, au contraire, le facteur central. Un étonnement libérateur est venu conclure l'époque pré-historique dans la Grèce ancienne, avec l'avènement de la philosophie, de la politique et de l'histoire, donnant ainsi naissance à l'époque historique de l'Europe. La domination de l'ère artistique, ne cesse pour sa part qu'à l'époque moderne où le *thauma* devient l'aspect crucial pour la perception de l'art, entraînant le passage à l'ère esthétique. C'est à partir de ce moment que se développent la philosophie de l'art, l'esthétique, l'histoire de l'art et la politique de l'art.

## VÝZNAM POJMU *THAUMA* PRO PATOČKOVU FILOSOFII DĚJIN UMĚNÍ

Ve studiích věnovaných obecným dějinám Patočka thaumatický otřes spojuje se vznikem filosofie, politiky a dějin v období klasického Řecka, kdy člověk poprvé odstupuje od jsoucnosti a dokáže poprvé svobodně reflektovat vše stávající (svůj životní svět). Snažíme se ukázat, že k podobnému thaumatickému otřesu dochází i v dějinách umění, a to s příchodem tzv. estetické éry. V ní umění přestává sloužit k potvrzování náboženského či ideologického řádu, jako tomu bylo v předchozí éře umělecké, a obrací se k člověku jako k individu, jež prostřednictvím uměleckého díla reflektuje svět svého života.

Docházíme k závěru, že umění tzv. umělecké éry vykazuje podobné vlastnosti s před-dějinnou epochou, v níž ještě není *thauma* přítomné, a umění tzv. estetické éry má zase styčné rysy s epochou dějinnou, v níž je naopak *thauma* zásadním činitelem. Před-dějinnou epochu ukončuje osvobodivý údiv již v období klasického Řecka objevením filosofie, politiky a dějin a dává zrod evropské dějinné epoše. Umělecká éra naproti tomu přestává být dominantní až v moderní době, kdy se *thauma* stává pro recepci umění klíčovým aspektem a dává vznik éře estetické. V ní se objevuje filosofie umění neboli estetika, dějiny umění a politika umění.

### I

Jan Patočka belongs to those philosophers that situate the beginning of European thinking and the origin of history in classical Greece from the fifth to the fourth century BC. In Patočka's reflections on history, classical Greece represents the point when the two basic ages, the pre-historical and the historical, split. Only at that time was man able to step back from the collectively binding meaning of myth; only the Greek could, for the first time, consciously reflect on the whole world he lived in and could unfold 'the possibility basic to human beings, to win or lose themselves'.<sup>1</sup> In accordance with a great number of other thinkers, Patočka traditionally refers to Aristotle's concept of *thauma*, which Aristotle, in his first book of *Metaphysics*, described as the inception of all knowledge (*thauma archē tēs sofias* – wonder is the beginning of wisdom).<sup>2</sup> This wonder, this awe at what actually is,<sup>3</sup> is a productive condition to take up a free relation to the world, and it is only by virtue of this wonder that philosophy, politics, and history were born in classical Greece. In formulations of what this first thaumatical distance is, Patočka often uses the Czech word *otřes* (a shaking-up). Recall the passage from *Heretical Essays* in which Patočka describes this thaumatical shaking-up:

Nothing of the earlier life of acceptance remains in peace; all the pillars of the community, traditions, and myths, are equally shaken, as are all the answers that once preceded questions, the modest yet secure and soothing meaning, though not lost, is transformed. It becomes as enigmatic as all else. Humans cease to identify with it, myth ceases to be the word of their lips. In the moment when life renews itself *everything* is cast in a new light. Scales fall from eyes of those set free, not that they might see something new but that they might see in a new way.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Jan Patočka, *Heretical Essays in the Philosophy of History* trans. by Erazim Kohák (Illinois: Open Court, 1996), 36.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., 40. See also Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, trans. William David Ross (Blacksburg: Virginia Tech, 2001), 4: 'For all men begin, as we said, by wondering that things are as they are.'

<sup>3</sup> Patočka, *Heretical Essays*, 40.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., 39–40.



## II

The human beings of the pre-historical age lived in immediacy, their lives were not yet problematic, the openness of being was not yet revealed, 'humanity here [in that age] lives only in order to live, not to seek deeper, more authentic forms of life.'<sup>5</sup> They concentrated on the acceptance and preservation of life (protection, work, production). The global meaning of life was prescribed to them by mythical-religious notions which were collectively binding within society. According to Patočka, no great difference exists between natural societies (non-historical events of primeval societies) and pre-Greek civilizations (prehistorical events); consequently, the difference between the two consists only in the degree of the maintenance of its traditions. (Above all, the invention of writing helps to maintain complicated rituals and to develop more complex social organization.) For both of them, it holds that the meaning of a man's life is determined by the collectively binding traditions and myths. Pre-historical people accepted the global meaning without questioning it, and were in agreement with it in the society.

Only thanks to the thaumatical shaking-up did man actively step back from accepted meaning and become free. By virtue of this distance, man consciously and on his own achieved the meaning of his existence, for which he assumes responsibility. The global meaning of his existence and of the world he lives in is no longer provided by any mythological-religious system or ideology; from now on, it is up to the individual to take care of it (care of the soul; *péče o duši*). The thaumatical shock is thus a trigger quality that can lead man to authentic global meaning and the natural world: thanks to global meaning, man finds orientation in the fundamental relations of his being in the world, his natural world. *Thauma* raises doubts about an assured accepted life, the distance of it, and the unfolding of the free bestowing of meaning to new possibilities of our lives. *Thauma* is formative not only for the birth of philosophy, but also for the discovery of politics and history.

In the further historical development, this free access to philosophy, politics, and history was dwindling away. Whereas the ancient Greek emerged from the wonder by means of which he found the global meaning of his life and orientation in the world he lived in (*Lebenswelt*), the following periods did not return to the thaumatical shaking-up, and instead substituted metaphysics for it. Metaphysics turns away from *thauma*; it takes a particular meaning and makes it absolute: it transforms this meaning into a necessary, universal truth which is eternally valid under any circumstances. Instead of coming out of the field of appearance, the truth of metaphysics is based on an indubitable construction. The most influential conceptions of metaphysics, in Patočka's view, are Platonism (ideas as eternal and immutable beings), Democritean atomism, Christianity, which is, together with the idea of the eternal and infallible God, based on Platonism, and modern mechanical metaphysics.

The last-mentioned type of metaphysics, according to Patočka (following Husserl's *Crisis*), is the most dangerous. Modern science introduced the 'invention of idealization', promoting the idea that the right world is in itself the world of science, and that what we experience in the current natural world is but a contingent subjective untruth.<sup>6</sup> Ancient

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<sup>5</sup> Ibid., 29.

<sup>6</sup> Edmund Husserl, *The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology*, transl. by David

science did not yet know this kind of consistent idealization, and idealized only certain 'islets of reality', in particular geometric figures. Contrary to this, modern science 'thus seeks to control nature in its totality'.<sup>7</sup>

Modern man therefore lives in a bivalent world: 'the world that naturally surrounds him and the world produced by modern science based on the mathematical laws of nature. This disunity, which pervades all our lives, is the true cause of the spiritual crisis we are going through.'<sup>8</sup> This schizophrenia, typical of modern man, is difficult to overcome. The modern era no longer provides global meaning common to all society; the old ideological orders became untrustworthy. The dominating science (natural meta-physics) is unable to accomplish this aim, because science, by definition, is limited to a certain area of reality owing to strictly determined axioms. It is able to provide only particular meaning. Similarly, philosophy, despite its role of providing an 'unfragmented spiritual view of the whole', cannot, in the reality of the modern era, achieve this aim.<sup>9</sup>

### III

The only spiritual activity that for modern man can moderate this ambiguity between the world of science and technology on the one hand and the world he experiences on the other is art. The principal function of art, according to Patočka, is to reveal to man the global meaning of his life and to remind him of the natural world. Patočka defines the 'natural world' as that which is given 'without explicit theoretical endeavour, without theoretical effort and art, that is, naturally [...], the most characteristic trait of the natural world we consider that *there is* without our free intervention, based solely on the mere fact of our experience before all our theoretical standpoints.'<sup>10</sup> The basic aim of phenomenology is to reveal and describe this primordial world and the things in it, as they naturally appear to man and as man encounters them in the pre-theoretical world. If art is able to achieve this aim, then it is not surprising that Patočka considers art to be the chief domain that phenomenology should investigate.

Art and art history constitute the main theme of Patočka's essay 'Art and Time'.<sup>11</sup> Here, he distinguishes the history of art between the artistic and the aesthetic era. (This division is implicitly present in most of Patočka's writings on art.) Let us briefly recall the basic

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Carr (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1970), 48–49: 'But now we must note something of the highest importance that occurred even as early as Galileo: the surreptitious substitution of the mathematically substructured world of idealities for the only real world, the one that is actually given through perception, that is ever experienced and experienceable – our everyday life-world.'

<sup>7</sup> See Jan Patočka, 'Spisovatel a jeho věc', in Jan Patočka, *Češi I* (Prague: OIKOYMENH, 2006), 285: 'usiluje takto zvládnout přírodu v jejím celku'.

<sup>8</sup> Jan Patočka, 'Přirozený svět jako filosofický problém', in Jan Patočka, *Fenomenologické spisy I*, (Prague: OIKOYMENH, 2008), 129: 'totiž ve svém přirozeně daném okolí a ve světě, který pro něj vytváří moderní přírodověda, založená na zásadě matematické zákonitosti přírodní. Nejednota, která tím prostoupila celý náš život, je vlastním zdrojem duševní krize, kterou procházíme.'

<sup>9</sup> Patočka, 'Spisovatel a jeho věc', 292: 'neroztříštěný duchovní pohled na celek'.

<sup>10</sup> Patočka, 'Přirozený svět jako filosofický problém', 134. 'bez našeho výslovného teoretického přičinění, bez teoretického úsilí a umění, tedy přirozeně [...], za jeho rys nejcharakterističtější pokládáme, že *jest zde* právě bez našeho svobodného zásahu, na základě pouhého faktu naší zkušenosti přede vším stanoviskem teoretickým.'

<sup>11</sup> Jan Patočka, 'Umění a čas', in Jan Patočka, *Umění a čas I* (Prague: OIKOYMENH, 2004), 303–18.

characteristics of the two eras. The art of the *artistic era* serves the religious or ideological order in a particular society and confirms the course of that society. In mythical times, in classical antiquity, the Middle Ages, and the beginning of the modern era, the aesthetic experience elevated man to the global meaning that was common to all members within that society; since collectively binding, it was commonly accepted. Thus, for example, Phidias' Statue of Zeus at Olympia is proof of the ubiquitous rule of the gods over terrestrials in ancient times, or, similarly, a Gothic church affirms that the Christian order administers the operation of the world.

In the modern, *aesthetic era*, art also elevates man from everyday concerns towards the global meaning of life. This meaning is no longer collective; it is individual. From this point on, art turns towards individuals, and initiates the articulation of the proper existential meaning of an individual man. Cézanne's or van Gogh's paintings do not affirm the ruling order in the world, but instead stimulate the spectator to articulate his or her proper understanding of the world. Patočka says that these works of art express the world in themselves.

The aim of art in both eras is thus to recall the natural world and to provide global meaning. Yet they are radically different. The aesthetic perception of the ancient Greek was completely different from that of modern man. For a Greek of the fifth century BC, Phidias' Statue of Zeus was a symbol that referred to something he considered to really exist, something on which he agreed with other members of the community (*polis*), that is to say, it referred to the Deity that directs the cosmos. This collectively binding meaning is no longer present in the art of the aesthetic era. Giacometti's figurative sculpture is a symbol whose meaning culminates in the singular interpretation of a specific spectator. It is rather a dialogue between the work of art and its spectator, and its result is the constitution of an individual existential meaning.

#### IV

In *Heretical Essays*, the theme of art is not the focus of Patočka's attention. Here, he relates revelation of *thauma* to the philosophy, history, and politics of classical Greece, but he does not mention what happened to art and its development. I assume that the artistic era, discussed in 'Art and Time', shares traits with Patočka's description of the pre-historical age in *Heretical Essays*. Much as in the pre-historical age, in the artistic era man's understanding of the natural world and global meaning is non-problematic. By means of art, man turns towards global meaning, but he does not assume it to be a problem. The turning point was at the beginning of the modern era, and it is closely related to the development of modern science. From that time on, the unprecedented discrepancy between science (and technology, its product) and the world we live in (the natural world) increases, and we, modern people, cannot easily reconcile the two. It is precisely in this era that the role of art is more important than ever before. Art in the modern era remains the spiritual activity that can recall the entirety of life, but in the new *aesthetic era* it stops being at the service of the collective ideological order, because this collectively shared order providing commonly binding global meaning no longer exists. Unlike Phidias' statue, which recalled the rule of the gods on Earth, and unlike the Gothic and even the

Baroque church, which represented the proof of the existence of the Holy Trinity, the art of the aesthetic era turns towards man as an individual. Global meaning is constituted from the dialogue between the work of art and the spectator.

Is this transformation of the function of art in the modern age not similar to the falling of the scales from the eyes with which Patočka describes the origin of philosophy, politics, and history in classical Greece in the fifth and fourth centuries BC? Is the advent of the aesthetic era not analogous to these miraculous forms of reflection that ancient Greece arrived at in philosophy, politics, and history? And is Greek *thauma* not necessary for the revelation of aesthetics?

The fundamental feature (we may say necessary condition) of the modern approach to art is precisely this *wonder*, this innovative quality of the work of art. This quality leads the spectator towards the work of art and stimulates him or her to take an aesthetic attitude. The art of the *artistic era* naturally also abounds with aesthetic qualities that have led man from practical concerns towards aesthetic contemplation, but only since the modern aesthetic era has man been stimulated to perform this contemplation on his own, individually. The modern spectator stands in front of the work of art not as a member of a collective but as an individual.

If the art – of both the artistic and the aesthetic era – is a ‘reminder of the global meaning of life’ (*připomínka celostního životní smyslu*), that is, if art leads man to reflect on the essential relations of the natural world, then the art of the aesthetic era must be thaumatical. Modern aesthetics often uses the term ‘deformation’ or ‘defamiliarization’. The innovative (deformative) power of art has now become important. The reason why modern art increasingly concentrates on originality and stylistic refinement is that the function of the art of the aesthetic era is to shake up the given meaning and awaken reflection on man as an individual and on the world he lives in.

This concerns several important aspects which are not explicitly developed by Patočka. The aesthetic attitude was born in the aesthetic era. If art no longer affirms the accepted world (if art is no longer part of the world man lives in), but instead creates an alternative world whose depiction leads man to reflect on the accepted world, then a need arises to introduce a special concept that describes and delimits a reflective attitude of this kind. The aesthetic attitude constitutes a cornerstone of modern aesthetics, and occurs in the writings of most of the leading scholars in the field.

The history of art began to develop in the aesthetic era. The significance of artistic value increases, and a related question is to be posed: when was the work of art created and when did it become to any extent innovative regarding the historical phase it belongs to? ‘Progress’ in art, the idea that each new work of art has to be an informed surpassing of preceding works of art, is a fundamental axiom of the reception of modern art.

Furthermore, the politics of art was born. The artist lost his position in the community and created, with his work, an alternative community. He has ceased to be an ordinary artisan working to fulfil the orders of a governing ideology, and is instead someone who strives to express alternatives. While ancient art obediently served its community and was politically engaged without reflecting on this engagement, the degree of engagement became an important theme in the aesthetic era. In other words, the political impact of art began to be reflected on.

As the revelation of *thauma* in ancient Greece was connected with the birth of philosophy, history, and politics, so too were the philosophy of art or aesthetics, the history of art, and the politics of art discovered with the advent of the aesthetic era.

## V

Although Patočka's thaumatical understanding of the art of the aesthetic era implicitly considers these traits of modern art, one must not forget that the main function that Patočka attributes to the art of both eras is a cognitive one. Art has to express the essential relations of man's being in the world. In the modern, aesthetic era, the role of *thauma* acquires great importance because it is more and more difficult to arrive at the natural world and the global meaning of life. For Patočka, *thauma* is above all the means by which we can attain cognition, the truth. If man in the modern era had not lost his consciousness of global meaning, art would not have been expected to be full of this innovative quality which initiates reflection.

We find two traits implicit in Patočka's reflections on the art of the aesthetic era. The first trait, common to both the artistic and the aesthetic era, consists in expressing man's essential relations with the world. The second trait, proper only to the art of the aesthetic era, is the innovative power of *thauma*. Both traits are extremely important, and if one or the other is missing in a modern aesthetic object, then it cannot be considered art in the true sense of the word. Rather, it will be an unsuccessful candidate for a work of art or quasi-art.

(1) Works of modern art which are based only on defamiliarization are, in Patočka's view, barely worth acknowledging. As a philosopher who looks for ways to take up the authentic global meaning of life in dispersive modern civilization, Patočka would consider useless most art works that do not seek to do anything but shock or amuse. To provoke a deformation which lacks a profounder aim, which does not have anything to reflect upon, which has nothing to say, would, for Patočka, not be a real art. Regarding Patočka's prevailing conservative interpretations of specific art works and artists,<sup>12</sup> we may reasonably suppose that he would categorize most works of modernism and the Avant-garde as quasi-art. As a defender of the cognitive dimension of art, Patočka would consider these works as newer forms of art for art's sake, that is, something far from his own standpoints.

(2) But an absence of innovative power in a modern work of art is, for Patočka, an equally fatal shortcoming. If the art of the modern era seeks to express an essential aspect of the lived world without choosing to depict this with deformative qualities, but, by contrast, relies on forms that have already been used, then it will only be quasi-art, as in the formalism of art for art's sake. Patočka would likely declare such art to be derivative or art that seeks only commercial success (consumer art). The essential is expressed only by means of pertinently chosen qualities, which have finger on the pulse of their times, but also arouse the wonder that is indispensable for the reception of modern art.

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<sup>12</sup> In his considerations, we encounter authors such as Karel Hynek Mácha, Karel Jaromír Erben, L. N. Tolstoy, F. M. Dostoyevsky, William Faulkner, Thomas Mann, A. P. Chekhov, Jaroslav Durych, and Ivan Vyskočil, but almost no one writing in the styles of the Avant-garde (art for art's sake, Surrealism, and so on).

Hence, Patočka requires that real art have both of these traits. In the essay 'Art and Time', he emphasizes the innovative feature *thauma*; in the essay 'The Writer and His Cause' and in most of his essays on specific works of art, he accentuates the expression of the essential.

## VI

The philosophical aspect, *thauma*, must be present in the aesthetic experience of man in the modern, aesthetic era. Art as art was not revealed in ancient Greece but in the modern era. Patočka attributes a positive function to the modern era (which is rejected by phenomenologists because, among other things, it entails the loss of the natural world, the introduction of technology into all aspects of human life, and brought about the oblivion of being). A very important insight of Patočka's is that he contemplates the history of art in relation to the history of science and technology. The relationship between them can usefully be characterized as a relation of direct proportionality. The greater the difference between the scientific worldview and the natural world, the greater the need for aesthetically experienced art. In 'Art and Time', Patočka writes that the transformation of the artistic era into the aesthetic era occurred in the late nineteenth and the early twentieth century.<sup>13</sup> In my opinion, this date should be considered not the beginning of the aesthetic era but the peak of a long-lasting dynamic process. We can easily find works of art which anticipate aesthetic perception before the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries (for example, in literature, in the works of Cervantes, Sterne, and Diderot.) In Patočka's thinking, the influence of non-artistic reality on the development of art is not negligible, even though in modern times it is increasingly overwhelmed by science and technology.

One may reasonably object that Patočka's conception of politics and history, as defined in his *Heretical Essays*, is too closely bound to what they have in common with philosophy. It is more difficult to find particular differences in Patočka's formulations. The common feature, crucial to the birth of all three domains, a feature that could even be called a model, is *thauma*.

In the political domain, the ancient Greek liberated himself from life in the 'great household', transforming his hitherto accepted life in such a way that he recognized other people as free and equal to himself. He sought to develop communal life and, within this collective of mutually equal people, to develop his own human possibilities.<sup>14</sup> The process was similar in the historical domain. The ancient Greek ceased to maintain the immutable tradition that had been fully accepted by pre-historical civilizations. By actively distancing himself from pre-historical times, he entered history, and his life was freed from traditions. Eventually, philosophy was born of the same thaumatical trunk.

Doubting all the certainties of accepted life and, in addition, distancing oneself from these certainties leads one to the development of free thinking and to freely bestowing

<sup>13</sup> He calls it a 'real revolution'. Patočka, 'Umění a čas', 303.

<sup>14</sup> Political life consists in 'demonstrating that in which humans can be in principle equal in competition with each other'. Patočka, *Heretical Essays*, 38; In Czech: 'V politickém životě jde o "předvedení toho, čím člověk může být v závodu se sobě zásadně rovnými"'. Patočka, *Kacířské eseje*, 49.

meaning to new possibilities of life. Thanks to *thauma*, the ancient Greek no longer naively accepted his life as something self-evident, but fundamentally transformed it into an *initiative* revealing philosophy, politics, and history.

It is fair to object that Patočka is reductive in his consideration of politics and history when he concentrates only on the common denominator of *thauma*. His conception of politics has been criticized by Petr Rezek as overly philosophical. Unlike in philosophy, in the domain of politics one need not remain on the boundary of the world, experiencing the difference between appearance (*zjev*) and what makes appearance possible (*zjevování*), that is, experiencing 'the explicit relation with Being'.<sup>15</sup> Following Hannah Arendt, Rezek assumes that engagement in the world is central to political action in which, unlike philosophy, man does not experience a relationship with that which makes appearance possible at all. For this reason, rather than 'that which makes appearance possible', it would be more precise to use the term 'appearance', which is more suitable to the domain of the politician. Patočka's philosophical conception of politics cannot grasp action in the world, including political action. It grasps only action that remains on the boundary of the world.<sup>16</sup>

Similarly, one may criticize Patočka's conception of history. For example, Hans-Georg Gadamer, who shares Patočka's philosophical point of departure for understanding the foundation of history, offers convincing arguments that history has been revealed by modern man and not, as Patočka asserts, by the ancient Greek. Gadamer declares that the revelation of historical consciousness is:

very likely the most important revolution among those we have undergone since the beginning of the modern epoch. Its spiritual magnitude probably surpasses what we recognize in the applications of natural science, applications which have so visibly transformed the surface of our planet. [...] Our present-day consciousness of history is fundamentally different from the manner in which the past appeared to any foregoing people or epoch. We understand historical consciousness to be the privilege of modern man to have a full awareness of the historicity of everything present and the relativity of all opinions. [...] Today no one can shield himself from this reflexivity characteristic of the modern spirit.<sup>17</sup>

Is this Gadamerian determination not more acceptable? According to Patočka, the ancient Greek discovered history while casting doubt on the mythological traditions of preceding cultures and while defining himself against them. Does not the right revelation of history consist rather in what Gadamer describes, in awareness of the historical relativity that concerns not only the past of preceding cultures and traditions but also the present in which the man who looks at the past and researches it lives.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> Petr Rezek, 'Životní pohyb pravdy a život v pravdě u Jana Patočky', in Petr Rezek, *Filosofie a politika kýče*, (Prague: Jan Placák – Ztichlá klika, 2007), 93.

<sup>16</sup> Rezek, *Filosofie a politika kýče*, 104.

<sup>17</sup> Hans-Georg Gadamer, 'The Problem of Historical Consciousness', trans. by Jeff L. Close, *Graduate Faculty Philosophy Journal*, 5:1 (1975): 8.

<sup>18</sup> It would be worth comparing Gadamer's profound considerations on the history of art with Patočka's. Whereas Patočka sees the crucial rupture between the old and modern art, Gadamer poses the task of 'bridging the enormous gap between the traditional form and content of Western art and the ideals of contemporary artists.' Hans-Georg Gadamer, *The Relevance of the Beautiful*, Trans. Nicolas Walker (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 12. By means of the concepts of play, symbol, and

In this essay, instead of a critique of Patočka's concepts, I have followed his considerations of the thaumatical foundation of spiritual actions, such as philosophy, politics and history, and I have attempted to reconsider them for the sphere of art. Analysing Patočka's thinking, I have come to the conclusion that the art of the artistic era has similarities with the pre-historical age in which *thauma* was not yet present, and, the art of the aesthetic era shares features with the historical age in which, by contrast, *thauma* is the central factor. Liberating wonder brought the pre-historical age to an end in ancient Greece with the discovery of philosophy, politics, and history, giving birth to the historical age in Europe. By contrast, the artistic era ceased to be dominant, not before modern times, when *thauma* became the crucial aspect for the reception of art and gave birth to the aesthetic era. Here, the philosophy of art or aesthetics, the history of art, and the politics of art are revealed.

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feast, Gadamer reveals 'anthropological foundations upon which the phenomenon of art rests and from the perspective of which we must work out a new legitimation for art.' Gadamer, *Relevance of the Beautiful*, 5.



## PATOČKA, MYTH, AND LITERATURE: ILLUSTRATIONS OF THE POSSIBILITY OF PARADISE ON EARTH

INÊS PEREIRA RODRIGUES

### ABSTRACT

In a couple of different works, Jan Patočka discusses the possibility of building a new paradise on earth, relating it to myths of a primeval paradise as well as some works by Dostoevsky. In some of Patočka's writings, this possibility of a paradise on earth also appears, described as 'new love' or 'universal love'. Unlike the myths of a time before the Fall, the possibility of an earthly paradise would be true to the human condition of finitude, understanding, and freedom. However, what is – or is there – the possibility of heaven on earth? What are the differences between the original paradise and the promise of this one? What is 'love', or are there different loves?

**Key words:** Jan Patočka; myth; literature; paradise; love

### PATOČKA, MYTHE ET LITTÉRATURE : ILLUSTRATIONS DE LA POSSIBILITE D'UN PARADIS SUR LA TERRE

Dans certains de ses textes, Jan Patočka réfléchit sur la possibilité d'établir un nouveau paradis sur terre, en établissant un lien entre cette idée et les mythes du paradis originel, ainsi qu'avec plusieurs textes de Dostoïevski. Cette idée d'un nouveau paradis terrestre est également décrite par Patočka comme un « amour nouveau » ou un « amour universel ». Contrairement aux mythes se référant aux temps immémoriaux d'avant la « chute », la possibilité d'un paradis sur terre serait fidèle à la condition humaine de finitude, à la compréhension et à la liberté. Que recouvre cette idée de paradis sur terre? Quelles sont les différences entre le paradis originel et la promesse de ce nouveau paradis? Qu'est-ce que « l'amour »? ou bien existe-t-il différentes sortes d'amour?

### PATOČKA, MÝTUS A LITERATURA: ILUSTRACE MOŽNOSTI RÁJE NA ZEMI

V několika svých textech rozebírá Jan Patočka možnost vybudování nového ráje na zemi a vztahuje tuto myšlenku k mýtu o prvotním ráji a několika Dostojevského textům. Tato možnost nového ráje je Patočkou také popsána jak „nová láska“ nebo „univerzální láska“. Na rozdíl od mýtů o době před vyhnáním z ráje odpovídá možnost pozemského ráje situaci lidské konečnosti, svobody a lidské schopnosti porozumění. Co však znamená tato možnost nebe na zemi? Jaký je rozdíl mezi původním rájem a příslibem tohoto nového? Co je „láska“? Nebo existují různé lásky?

I

In two different works, Patočka refers to the myth of a time before the Fall. The myth of the Golden Age, originally ancient Greek, describes a time of harmony among all beings. Patočka discusses the Golden Age in his essay about Masaryk and the philosophy

of religion (in relation to Dostoevsky)<sup>1</sup>, and in another essay, he mentions the myth of Genesis, and the expulsion from the Garden of Eden.<sup>2</sup> In each version of this myth of an original and harmonious time, there is, at least in Patočka's interpretation, a component that points to a future possibility of a different kind of paradise.

When discussing the myth of Genesis, Patočka is clear about this function of myth: the tree of knowledge stands as the symbol of the particular role and responsibility of man, that is, that he is, and even can be, responsible at all. The original couple is expelled from the Garden because they have tasted the fruit of the tree. At the same time, it is man's understanding of both himself and the world that brings man to the possibility of his proper being. The myth, then, serves both to provide an image of our present time – as having fallen out of our original harmony with the world –, and also to show our future 'most proper' possibility. Patočka writes:

Myth penetrates the mysteries of human life with profound and remarkable foresight. [...] Once we understand the intention of myth, we see that it doesn't only make transparent the present reality of man, but that it also has the position, the attitude, the opening to the future where our most proper possibility is opened.<sup>3</sup>

The second articulation of the ancient myth that appears in the Patočka works that I am discussing here again contains the possibility (it is always a possibility)<sup>4</sup> of heaven on earth. Dostoevsky retells the myth of a primeval time in his short story *The Dream of a Ridiculous Man*, which Patočka discusses in his essay about Masaryk and the philosophy of religion.<sup>5</sup> In Dostoevsky's story, we read the description of one man's (possibly dreamt) visit to a planet that is the living manifestation of the myth of the Golden Age:<sup>6</sup> it is a planet on which all beings live in harmony with one another and in a communion of 'universal love'. We are told that all animals and humans there live together in peace, humans die happily and without fear, and it is as if the whole planet were in an embrace of fraternal love. Humans love each other and have children, but there is no jealousy, sensuality, or possessiveness. Dostoevsky writes: 'It was like being in love with each other but an all-embracing, universal feeling.'<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Jan Patočka, 'Deux études sur Masaryk', in Jan Patočka, *La Crise du Sens*, vol. I, trans. Erika Abrams (Paris: Ousia, 1985).

<sup>2</sup> Jan Patočka, 'Méditation sur "Le monde naturel come problème philosophique"', in Jan Patočka, *Le Monde Naturel et le Mouvement de l'Existence Humaine*, trans. Erika Abrams (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1988).

<sup>3</sup> Patočka, 'Méditation sur "Le Monde Naturel comme Problème Philosophique"', 120. The English quotations are my translations from Erica Abrams's translation from the Czech to French. In each case, I provide the French in the footnotes: 'Le mythe pénètre les mystères de la vie humaine avec une profonde et remarquable clairvoyance. [...] Dès lors que nous comprenons l'intention du mythe, nous voyons qu'il ne rend pas seulement transparente la réalité présente de l'homme, mais qu'il contient également la position, l'attitude, l'ouverture à l'avenir où se déclôt notre possibilité la plus propre.'

<sup>4</sup> This is an interesting point that is left here without being further explored: perhaps an essential aspect of 'paradise on earth' is that it must always remain a work in progress, unfulfilled, like the third (or proper) movement of existence.

<sup>5</sup> Jan Patočka, 'Deux études sur Masaryk', in Jan Patočka, *La Crise du Sens*, vol. I, trans. Erika Abrams (Paris: Ousia, 1985), 95–216.

<sup>6</sup> Patočka discusses Dostoevsky's story as an illustration of the myth of the Golden Age. In fact, the man in the short story lands in what he surmises to be the Greek Archipelago or continent.

<sup>7</sup> Fyodor Dostoyevsky, *The Dream of a Ridiculous Man*, trans. Constance Garnett (Adelaide: Univer-

We are, then, here again witnesses to the Fall, brought about by the same man who is in awe of the planet. Without really knowing how or why, he introduces lies and deceit into this perfect community. It starts slowly, he says, as if from a simple game of seduction, and brings it to progressive decay into hatred and war.

Like a vile trichina, like a germ of the plague infecting whole kingdoms, so I contaminated all this earth, so happy and sinless before my coming. They learnt to lie, grew fond of lying, and discovered the charm of falsehood. Oh, at first perhaps it began innocently, with a jest, coquetry, with amorous play, perhaps indeed with a germ, but that germ of falsity made its way into their hearts and pleased them. Then sensuality was soon begotten, sensuality begot jealousy, jealousy — cruelty [...].<sup>8</sup>

From cruelty comes war and eventually the destruction of the entire once so happy planet. Then, back on earth, or awake from a dream, this same man dedicates himself to making paradise on earth. He says he has seen the truth and will spend the rest of his days preaching it.

In each of these illustrations, what brings about the Fall is the same thing that is the seed of the possibility of a new, and different, type of paradise. In the myth of Genesis, it is by assuming the understanding specific to humankind, an understanding related to responsibility and one's own finitude (the same responsibility comes from eating of the tree of knowledge) that a new possibility of heaven on earth is announced. What brings about the Fall and the expulsion from paradise is precisely that which can also come to make heaven on earth possible – the perfectly true and authentic man, the one who has responsibility. It is, then, through recovery and reaffirmation – in a different form – of what can bring about the Fall that a new 'kingdom' is possible.

It is fair to say that the same happens (although perhaps less linearly) in Dostoevsky's illustration of the myth in *The Dream of a Ridiculous Man*: it is the corrupting of the mythical Golden-Age planet which leads the one responsible for the Fall to want to build a new paradise on earth; and his decision is taken not only from a sense of guilt, as if he were merely trying to replace something he had broken. Here, the new paradise on earth is, as in the myth of Eden, built (or to be built) upon the Fall. It is, I believe, built on love for the Fall, on the faultiness or imperfection of men. Dostoevsky's ridiculous man has a vision and an urge to teach the possibility of heaven on earth not only because he saw the original paradise and wishes to recreate it; his newly understood love for humanity is founded – or so I wish to argue – on the Fall itself.

In a Patočkian perspective, we can see the three movements of existence articulated here. Patočka says as much when discussing the myth of the Garden of Eden in his "Přirozený svět" v meditaci svého autora po třiatřiceti letech' (translated by Erika Abrams as "Méditation sur "Le monde naturel comme problème philosophique" and published in *Le monde naturel et le mouvement de l'existence humaine*). The original paradise is a state of unreflective peace and belonging, a sort of happy fusion to an all encompassing envi-

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sity of Adelaide), part IV, <<http://ebooks.adelaide.edu.au/d/dostoyevsky/d72dr/>> Accessed 4 January 2014.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., Pt V.

ronment, here corresponding to the first movement of existence.<sup>9</sup> The Fall corresponds to the second movement of an expulsion from this place of comfort, which leads to a life of strife, competition, and struggle for power. The third movement as the creation of the new paradise could not then of course simply be a return to the original fusion state, a mere going back to some sort of uterine existential condition, with all its comforts and limitations. The third movement of existence incorporates the first two and realizes the proper movement as such. In a sense, it realizes the other two explicitly.

What this means is the paradises before and after the Fall must be different, and so too must the love empowering and animating each one be different. The Fall would be included as an intricate and assumed part of the third movement of realization, here corresponding to the establishment of heaven of earth; the Fall is present in the new paradise (as is the first movement in the form of the original paradise) since the third movement overcomes those first two movements; it assumes them, and, in owning up to them, it surmounts them.

Regarding the myth of the Garden of Eden, Patočka clearly affirms the need – if there is to be a possibility of a new revival myth – for coming to be in relation to understanding, death, and responsibility – that is, it is clear in this case that the Fall is necessary. Patočka writes: ‘the proper being is here confronted face to face in his mortality, the proper being that disdains escape and claims his responsibility, that is, his destiny.’<sup>10</sup> The same is of course true in Dostoevsky’s version of the myth of the Golden Age. A Fall is required in order for the sprouting of a possibility of a new paradise on earth. What is perhaps not explicit is how this new paradise would differ from the original one before the Fall, and how the Fall itself would be the seed of this new sprouting. My questions here are: what is a paradise on earth and how could we possibly conceive it?

## II

In his essay about Masaryk and the philosophy of religion, and in his discussion about Dostoevsky’s short story, Patočka asks, ‘What brought about the Fall?’ What was the event that could have caused such a terrible outcome or sequence of events? There is no single event; there is no one act that brings about the Fall. The Fall is brought about by the condition of humans as free beings. ‘The cause is the possibility of decline, of leaving the good path that even the happy ones have in them, as free beings.’<sup>11</sup> Freedom for man is freedom to choose the wrong path, to lie, to escape oneself. It is, as Patočka writes in another essay, ‘the freedom to choose damnation’: ‘The freedom that is peculiar to man, that distinguishes him even from angels, is the freedom to choose damnation.’<sup>12</sup> Dostoevsky’s utopian planet may be beautiful, but it is not human. The human condition

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<sup>9</sup> Patočka, ‘Méditation sur “Le Monde Naturel comme Problème Philosophique”’, 120.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., ‘l’être propre est ici affronté face à face dans sa mortalité, l’être propre qui dédaigne la fuit et se réclame de sa responsabilité, c’est à dire, de son destin.’

<sup>11</sup> Patočka, ‘Deux études sur Masaryk’, 69: ‘La cause, c’est la possibilité de fléchir, de quitter le bon chemin, que même les heureux recèlent en eux, en tant qu’êtres libres.’

<sup>12</sup> Jan Patočka, ‘Le sens du mythe du pacte avec le Diable’, in Jan Patočka, *L’Écrivain, son Objet*, trans. Erika Abrams (Paris: P.O.L. 1990), 132: ‘La liberté qui est le proper de l’homme, qui le distingue même des anges, est donc liberté pour la damnation.’

includes the capacity for truth and the capacity for untruth; the possibility truly to find oneself necessarily implies the possibility to lose oneself.

Paradise on earth, if it is to be on earth, would then have to include this freedom; in short, it would have to include the ever-present possibility of the Fall. And in taking the three movements as an example, it will have to incorporate it explicitly, not only to include it (which the original paradise already does since there is a Fall), but also to assume it. The future paradise must own up to the human inclination towards its own decline. This is illustrated in Dostoevsky's ridiculous man's assuming responsibility when he tells us that he initially had thought of hiding the fact that he had been the one who caused the Fall of the happy planet: 'Do you know, at first I meant to conceal the fact that I corrupted them, but that was a mistake – that was my first mistake! But truth whispered to me that I was lying, and preserved me and corrected me.'<sup>13</sup>

There is then a notion of responsibility – if the Fall is brought about by human freedom, the positive 'turn' of that fault would be responsibility. Here responsibility is not for one singular action one would claim responsibility for, but rather responsibility for our freedom; because we are free, we are responsible for our actions, for who we are, and for the world we are in, for what it is and how it can turn out.

What is the positive aspect of paradise on earth? Dostoevsky writes:

Suppose that this paradise will never come to pass (that I understand), yet I shall go on preaching it. And yet how simple it is: in one day, in one hour everything could be arranged at once! The chief thing is to love others like yourself, that's the chief thing, and that's everything; nothing else is wanted – you will find out at once how to arrange it all.<sup>14</sup>

The answer, then, is love. More specifically, 'to love others as oneself'. What this means is unclear (at least for me). Nevertheless, Patočka seems to agree, and talks about a 'new love' or 'universal love' that would be, or would bring about, the community of earthly paradise. This is a specific view of love (or special type of love) different from the more private, romantic one. Patočka, in fact, offers a somewhat disconcerting description of it:

It is like in vital, biological love, except that the communion is now free, without borders, universal. Here, love is not sympathy, compassion; the destiny of the other which one shares is that of the same glory, a shared victory over egocentricity that overcomes itself. Biological love is a simple metaphor, incomplete and inconsequent, of that last and true love.<sup>15</sup>

In the original paradise, however, the community was bound by a universal love, by a connection with all other living beings, without possession or affirmation of gain by an

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<sup>13</sup> Dostoevsky, *The Dream of a Ridiculous Man*, Pt V.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> Jan Patočka, 'Le monde naturel et la phénoménologie', in Jan Patočka, *Le monde naturel et le mouvement de l'existence humaine*, trans. Erika Abrams (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1988), 45: 'Il en va comme dans l'amour vital, biologique, si ce n'est que la communion est désormais libre, sans clôture, universelle. L'amour n'est pas ici sympathie, compassion; le destin de l'autre que l'on partage est celui d'une même gloire, d'une victoire commune sur l'égocentricité qui se dessaisit de soi. L'amour biologique est une simple métaphore, incomplète et inconséquence, de cet amour vrai et ultime.'

individual; in the possible future paradise on earth, therefore, if it is to be a manifestation of human freedom – and this includes an inclination to lie, to deceive, to desire – how will the love of the new paradise be different? The love that binds or animates the future paradise cannot be a return to a harmonious, conflict-free, all-embracing affection. It must, apparently, include and accept desire, want, treachery, jealousy, and so forth. In fact, the question arises of whether we would want to live in a community where there was no sensuality, no seduction, or no desire in the selfish, possessive, and passionate sense. It seems there must be a way to recover this, to rehabilitate it without annihilating it, to transform it without losing its fiery vitality.

There is a resonance of this appropriation and recovery of the negative in Patočka's description of the 'solidarity of the shaken' and the discussion of *Night and Day*. In that description, the discussion is turned towards the notion of meaning and truth. The solidarity of the shaken is the community of those who have understood that meaning is problematic, that it is historical and therefore our responsibility. There is an uncertainty and faultiness which must be accepted, and an ownership of the darkness in the world – 'The opening brings to the fore the necessary guilt of each of us'.<sup>16</sup> If meaning is not established once and for all and depends on our understanding, then we are responsible for 'negative meaning' in the past and for the possibility that we may mishear and misstate it in the future.

The possibility of a paradise on earth would also own up to the freedom we *are*, which, as we have just seen, is bound to truth and meaning. The responsibility for this freedom is a responsibility for our place in the world as the ones capable of truth. As we are the ones capable of meaning and truth, we bear a relation to the world in which we are the ones responsible for the meaning the world has; we are, in a sense, responsible for what the world *is*. This, then, is a responsibility, in Dostoevsky's beautiful terms, 'for everything and everyone'.

Patočka describes 'universal responsibility' in one of his essays about the myth of Faust:

The feeling of universal responsibility is therefore not a mystical union, fusion, the identity of all in universal sympathy. It is a feeling of solidarity in the participation in truth and in what makes it possible: human destiny. What does that responsibility in the universal sense mean? Nothing other than this: to submit to judgement and therefore to the true and universal law and community; to want to be judged, knowing one is an accomplice in all evil; to want to bear and pay for one's own share in that universal inequity without fleeing from it into the private sphere, in the aesthetic or pleasurable attitude – to want to participate in universal justice as the only circumstances in which the soul as such can exist, the soul as a being whose being is a development that rises away from decline.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Patočka, 'Deux études sur Masaryk', 214–15: 'L'ouverture fait entrer en ligne de compte la culpabilité nécessaire de chacun entre nous.'

<sup>17</sup> Patočka, 'Le sens du mythe du pacte avec le Diable', 140: 'Le sentiment de responsabilité universelle n'est donc pas l'union mystique, la fusion, l'identification de tous dans une sympathie universelle. C'est un sentiment de solidarité dans la participation à la vérité et à ce qui la rend possible: au destin humain. Que signifie cette responsabilité au sens universel ? Rien d'autre que ceci : se soumettre au jugement et, partant, à la loi et à la communauté vraie et universelle ; vouloir être jugé en sachant qu'on est complice de tout mal; vouloir porter et payer sa part de l'iniquité universelle, sans la fuir dans la sphère privée, dans l'attitude esthétique ou ludique – vouloir prendre part à la justice universelle

It is this notion of 'being responsible for everything and everyone' which appears in Dostoevsky's *Brothers Karamazov*, and is presented as the 'new love'. This new love, here reaffirmed as different from a mystical fusion or universal sympathy, is then associated to an understanding and acceptance of responsibility for, in Patočka's words, 'truth and that which makes it possible: human destiny'. Truth and meaning are the destiny of human beings, in the sense that it is human beings who have a sense of truth, who have a relationship to meaning. This universal love, then, is the care for being in a relation to truth; it is that very relationship.

In this way, we would think of love as the opening of the understanding that we *are* in relation to the world – when taken up in universal responsibility, in the commitment to being responsible for everything and everyone, love is the attitude, the opening of meaning from which things appear. In his essay on Masaryk and the philosophy of religion, Patočka writes: 'Being is not what we love, but *that by which we love, that which gives to love, on the basis of which we let things be what they are [...]*'<sup>18</sup> Love is a commitment to the world; it is our assuming of responsibility for our connection to all things, for our understanding that we are the relationship to their manifestation and meaning. Patočka describes it as 'benevolent rapture', of letting things appear as they are, as themselves and not always in relation to us. Universal love does not include the negative in the sense of the instances of the particularity of faulty beings – in the sense that we would love others as we love ourselves because we recognize their faults as similar to our own, in a sympathetic connection. Rather, it includes the negative in the sense that the negative is an intrinsic part of what allows us to be capable of truth. It is a love that supports the human propensity towards the Fall, which recognizes in it the possibility for change, seeing that it is absolutely necessary for potentially approaching a tender dedication to the world. There would be no love, in this sense, without understanding – which becomes a loving understanding – for our great responsibility. It is of course that same love arising from a sense of being responsible for the truth and meaning in the world which would create paradise on earth.

In this way, it is our turning towards our freedom and responsibility, and owning up to them which could bring about heaven on earth. As we read in *The Brothers Karamazov*: 'life is paradise, and we are all in paradise, but we won't see it; if we would, we should have heaven on earth the next day.'<sup>19</sup>

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comme à la seule situation dans laquelle l'âme comme telle puisse exister, l'âme en tant qu'étant dont l'être est un essor qui relève hors de la déchéance.'

<sup>18</sup> Patočka, 'Deux études sur Masaryk', 168. Italics in the original.

<sup>19</sup> Fyodor Dostoevsky, *The Brothers Karamazov*, trans. Constance Black Garnett (Raleigh, NC: Hayes Barton Press, 2007), 269.

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## PATOČKA'S REFLECTIONS ON FAUSTUS AND MODERN ART

DANIELA BLAHUTKOVÁ

### ABSTRACT

The article deals with two Jan Patočka essays, each written to mark the 25th anniversary of the publication of Thomas Mann's novel *Doctor Faustus* (1947). In these essays, the writer is defined as an 'interpreter of myth'. In contrast to his essays 'The Concern of the Writer' (1969) and 'Art and Time' (1966), Patočka here examines the relationship between modern art and myth in two essays on Faustus. The article presents Patočka's interpretation of the fundamental subject of Faustus literature in its metamorphosis from the sixteenth century to the twentieth, and points out that Patočka's Faustus essays manifest an important aspect of his concept of modern art.

**Key words:** Jan Patočka; Thomas Mann; Faustus; modern art; literature

### LES REFLEXIONS DE PATOČKA SUR FAUST ET SUR L'ART MODERNE

Dans cette contribution, l'auteur analyse deux essais de Jan Patočka, datant des années 1970 et écrits à l'occasion du 25<sup>ème</sup> anniversaire de la publication du roman *Le Docteur Faustus* (1947) de Thomas Mann. Patočka définit l'écrivain comme un interprète de mythes. Contrairement à ce qui était son approche dans « L'Écrivain et son objet » (1969) ou dans « L'Art et le temps » (1966), Patočka étudie, dans ces essais, la relation entre l'art moderne et le mythe. L'article expose l'interprétation que Patočka donne du sujet principal de la littérature faustienne, à travers ses diverses métamorphoses, depuis les récits populaires du XVI<sup>e</sup> siècle jusqu'au roman de Thomas Mann, et tente de montrer que les essais faustiens de Patočka représentent un aspect important de sa conception de l'art moderne.

### PATOČKOVY ÚVAHY O FAUSTOVI A MODERNÍM UMĚNÍ

Článek se zabývá dvěma texty Jana Patočky ze 70. let, které byly psány k pětadvacátému výročí vydání románu *Doktor Faustus* (1947) Thomase Manna. Patočka v nich spisovatele definuje jako „ztvárnovatele mýtu“. Na rozdíl od esejů „Spisovatel a jeho věc“ (1969) či „Umění a čas“ (1966) zkoumá Patočka ve faustovských esejích vztah mezi moderním uměním a mýtem. Článek představuje Patočkovu interpretaci základního tématu faustovské literatury v jejích proměnách od knížky lidového čtení po Mannův román a poukazuje na to, že Patočkovy faustovské eseje ukazují významný aspekt jeho pojetí moderní umělecké tvorby.

I

This article is concerned with two considerably different versions of Jan Patočka's article written to commemorate the 25th anniversary of the publication of Thomas Mann's novel *Doctor Faustus* (1947). Both versions were originally written in German. The earlier

version, entitled 'Die Faustlegende von gestern und von heute: Einige Leserbetrauchtungen über den Doktor Faustus' (The Faustus legend then and now: A reader's reflections on *Doctor Faustus*, 1972),<sup>1</sup> remained unpublished; the later version appeared as 'Der Sinn des Mythos vom Teufelspakt: Eine Betrachtung zu den Varianten der Faustsage' (The meaning of the myth of the pact with the Devil: Observations on versions of the Faustus story).<sup>2</sup>

The main reason why I focus on these two essays is that Patočka understood Mann's Faustus novel as a contemporary work of art. It is also one of the very few works of modern literature which Patočka decided to analyse in detail. Moreover, I believe that his thoughts on Mann's novel reveal interesting accents that are different from those in Patočka's writings on the nature of modern art. In his articles about art, such as 'The Concern of the Writer' (1968)<sup>3</sup> and 'Art and Time' (1966),<sup>4</sup> modern art is seen as divorced from a supra-individual epic basis and from the tradition of collectively shared meaning.<sup>5</sup> 'The Meaning of the Myth of the Pact with the Devil' is the only essay in which Patočka, in analysing a contemporary novel, describes a writer as a 'shaper of myth'.<sup>6</sup>

## II

I admit that the task I have undertaken, to search Patočka's interpretation of Mann's novel for links to his theory of modern art and literature, is demanding and, given Patočka's own approach to the matter, perhaps not even quite suitable. In 'The Faustus Legend Then and Now', Patočka does not focus on the question of whether Mann's *Doctor Faustus* fits the notion of modern art as art of a 'subjective style', to use a formulation from 'Art and Time'. Even so, one can at least come to some preliminary conclusions regarding Patočka's view of Mann's novel as an example of modern art. In the following, that is precisely what I aim to do.

Patočka's idea of the poet as someone who deals with myth is somewhat reminiscent of his analysis of the pre-philosophical reflection of reality. In his *Heretical Essays in the*

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<sup>1</sup> Jan Patočka, 'Die Faustlegende von gestern und von heute: Einige Leserbetrauchtungen über den *Doktor Faustus*', in Jan Patočka, *Umění a čas II* (Prague: OIKOYMENH, 2004), 314–29. In my article, I use the Czech translation, Jan Patočka, 'Faustovská legenda včera a dnes: Nad románem Thomase Manna *Doktor Faustus*', in Jan Patočka, *Umění a čas II* (Prague: OIKOYMENH, 2004), 105–19.

<sup>2</sup> Jan Patočka, 'Der Sinn des Mythos vom Teufelspakt: Eine Betrachtung zu den Varianten der Faustsage', in Jan Patočka, *Umění a čas II*, (Prague: OIKOYMENH, 2004), 330–62. In my article, I use the Czech translation 'Smysl mýtu o paktu s ďáblem: Úvaha o variantách pověsti o Faustovi', in Jan Patočka, *Umění a čas I* (Prague: OIKOYMENH, 2004), 510–25.

<sup>3</sup> Jan Patočka, 'Spisovatel a jeho věc', in Jan Patočka, *Češi I* (Prague: OIKOYMENH, 2006), 280–92.

<sup>4</sup> Jan Patočka, 'Umění a čas', in Jan Patočka, *Umění a čas I*, (Prague: OIKOYMENH, 2004), 303–18.

<sup>5</sup> A complex analysis of Patočka's differentiation between the binding, objective meaning in the art of classical antiquity and the personal, individual meaning of the modern art is provided in Miloš Ševčík, 'Umění minulosti a přítomnosti v Patočkových interpretacích Hegelovy teze o minulém rázu umění', *Acta Universitatis Carolinae. Philosophica et Historica* 1 (2011), *Studia Aesthetica* IV: 75–94.

Ševčík deals here with Patočka's differentiation of the two kinds of 'meaning' in the art of the past and in the art of today. *Ibid.*, 77–81. The article also refers to the correction of this conception in Patočka's later reflections of the ontological origin of the artworks of both eras; nevertheless, it points out, that Patočka did not sufficiently clarify the relation between the two eras. *Ibid.*, 90–91.

<sup>6</sup> Patočka, 'Smysl mýtu o paktu s ďáblem', 510.

*Philosophy of History* (1973–75), he describes the epic as the genre that is fundamentally connected with the mythical consciousness and the expression of the universal objective meaning of life and things.<sup>7</sup> What kind of mythical or collective consciousness does a late medieval folk legend express? And how and why do writers treat mythical subject matter in the era of the 'disintegration of mythical consciousness'?<sup>8</sup>

In 'The Meaning of the Myth about the Pact with the Devil', Patočka presents us with a definition: 'A myth is a question with which people turn to people, a question coming from a depth that lies even deeper within a person than *logos* does. And this radical question, which we do not pose but which considers us as a question calls upon the poet for explicit formulation and treatment.'<sup>9</sup>

One such question, which, in Patočka's view, is shared by both Greek and Christian culture, is the subject of the soul. Faustus literature reflects the question of the immortality of the soul and in particular the question of whether a soul can be sold and lost.<sup>10</sup> The development of Faustus literature between the sixteenth and the twentieth century inspired Patočka's analysis both of spiritual movements and of developments in this era and also his analysis of the role of the poetic narratives used to express them.

Patočka links the subject matter of the legend of Doctor Faustus (which was first published by Johann Spies in 1587) and the disintegration of the spiritual world of the Middle Ages. At the dawn of the modern era, the danger that stemmed from the Christian concept of freedom came to the fore. The first aspect of the Faustian is titanism, which Patočka defines as the arrogance of knowing what is good but consciously denying it and choosing the opposite in order to 'rise to a position of someone participating in the taking of decisions about the fate of the world, even if only temporarily.'<sup>11</sup> Patočka emphasizes the motif of having such knowledge at one's disposal. This feature of the Faustus character indicates something typical of the spiritual trend in the modern era. For mankind at the dawn of the Reformation period, this motif is linked with a warning about losing oneself (becoming separated from God, surrendering to demons and delusions). Patočka reminds us that in Spies's book of folk tales, Faustus is deceived; he never achieves a higher level of existence, does not become a magus discovering the secrets of things. Instead, he succumbs to the temptation of easily satisfying his immediate desires, and thus wastes his dearly bought time.<sup>12</sup>

What in Goethe's famous version of the story is different from other versions? In Patočka's view, the main difference is that the gravity of losing one's soul is missing from Goethe's version. In his view of Faust, Goethe, according to Patočka, tries to demonstrate 'the flourishing of the German spirit in poetry and other intellectual pursuits as a portent of the general spiritualization of the period'.<sup>13</sup> Goethe believes that man is always justified as long as he is spiritually moving forward, gaining experience, striving for more. Within this celebration of the active attitude, the demonic is depicted as uncreative,

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<sup>7</sup> See Jan Patočka, *Heretical Essays in the Philosophy of History*, trans. Erazim Kohák, (Chicago: Open Court, 1996), 24–25, 35–36.

<sup>8</sup> Patočka, 'Spisovatel a jeho věc', 283.

<sup>9</sup> Patočka, 'Smysl mýtu o paktu s ďáblem', 511.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>11</sup> Patočka, 'Faustovská legenda včera a dnes', 107.

<sup>12</sup> Patočka, 'Smysl mýtu o paktu s ďáblem', 513–14; Patočka, 'Faustovská legenda včera a dnes', 107–08.

<sup>13</sup> Patočka, 'Smysl mýtu o paktu s ďáblem', 515.

empty, and somewhat toothless. Patočka notes that even Faustus's revolt becomes weak and unimpressive. The Faustus character is not dangerous; this Faustus does not question the established order of the world. What we see is rather the evil of a mind that takes no account of others and wants to grasp the material pleasures of life. Faust does not gain the fullness of life. Quite the opposite: by seeking to prolong pleasure, he invites physical annihilation and death, which, however, befalls not him but Gretchen. Patočka emphasizes the importance of the question of guilt, which Goethe introduces into the Faustus story with Gretchen's death. Guilt is a precondition of atonement and hence of redemption. In Part II, Goethe depicts the stages of Faust's penance, his catharsis by means of 'beauty, liberation, and his supporting of others'. He presents an image of spiritualization, the rise of the spirit, which in Goethe's version of the story was in fact immanently present in all the phases of Faust's development.<sup>14</sup>

Mann, in Patočka's view, does not endorse Goethe's humanism. Germany, as Mann experienced it, represented the opposite of the spiritualization that Goethe had in mind. Mann thus had to treat the Faustus theme in a world that was 'soulless', completely objectified, and deprived of all magic, where 'it seems that people not only co-determine but also fully shape the meaning of the universe'<sup>15</sup> and neglect their immortal soul. Patočka demonstrates that Mann's solution is to describe the descent of the 'most beautiful human spirit' into the depths of a cold, demonic world. The power and gravitas of evil again comes to the fore, as does the motif of a pact, of selling oneself – though in this case, the pact is about gaining a soul.<sup>16</sup>

This is Patočka's initial view of the story of Mann's protagonist, the brilliant composer Adrian Leverkühn, who 'subscribes to the cold evil of the world and, driven by the will to power, surrenders to this evil'.<sup>17</sup> We can clearly see here how this Faustus essay reveals Patočka's thoughts about the twentieth century as a century of the night, of unleashed blind powers. Within this framework, Patočka reads Leverkühn's story as a story of rebirth, a transition from abuse of free will to self-realization in humble service, self-sacrifice, and the loss of self in a work that would be the truth about a soulless era. It is with delight that Patočka acknowledges Mann's transposition of Faustus the scholar and alchemist to Faustus the artist. This Faustus is active not in the world but against the world as a whole. In Leverkühn, his self-examination and outward passivity are the notable features which distinguish him from previous Faustus characters. At the same time, Patočka points out, his activity against the world is indisputable. Leverkühn's life is a quest to meet a single crucial challenge: to wrest art from a soulless era, to achieve a new breakthrough in music.<sup>18</sup>

Patočka maintains that in this process Leverkühn undergoes a change. The proud self-denial of an ambitious individual gradually turns into service, fate, something unavoidable. In his private life, Leverkühn experiences his brilliance and exceptionality with a sense of guilt, and bears his fate with remorse, but does not consider himself privileged. Writing a work that is 'the truth of an era that has no soul', Leverkühn overcomes his

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<sup>14</sup> Ibid, 516; Patočka, 'Faustovská legenda včera a dnes', 110.

<sup>15</sup> Patočka, 'Faustovská legenda včera a dnes', 112.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> Patočka, 'Smysl mýtu o paktu s ďáblem', 525.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid, 522–23.

introversion and natural reserve.<sup>19</sup> His work, which in Patočka's view is a dream about a new community, awakens Leverkühn's soul and awareness of his responsibility for his life, his work, and for the world he has entered by his existential decision. His assumption of universal responsibility is the definitive act by which Leverkühn loses his titanism, gains an immortal soul, and ends his conscious existence. Patočka summarizes it, saying: 'the genius, the great magus of art must disappear; his madness, though incomprehensible to the public, is an internally unavoidable confirmation of the gravitas of his change.'<sup>20</sup> The final lesson of this novel about a soulless era is, in Patočka's view, therefore about the assumption of responsibility and the total loss of self – paradoxically, its seriousness opens the way for hope.

We note that Patočka views the assumption of responsibility, which is at the same time a step towards transcendence and the defeat of demons, as the key motif not only in Mann's *Faustus* novel. He sees it also in his interpretations of other twentieth-century works of literature, in particular William Faulkner's *The Wild Palms* (1939) and Jaroslav Durych's *Boží duha* (*The Iris of God*, 1955). But it is in Mann's work that Patočka finds it most closely linked with the notion of the emergence of a soul, the awakening of that which is capable of truth and enables clarity about oneself.

The essential concept of Patočka's interpretation of Mann's *Faustus* novel is the 'soulless era', and what he is actually talking about is the twentieth century and its art. Especially in 'The Faustus Legend Then and Now', Patočka carefully notes the way Mann presents the state of modern art. Patočka shows that Mann, by means of the character of a brilliant composer, is actually dealing with the end of the subjective stage in the development of art and the turn towards the 'objective, elemental stage, [...] the emergence of a new emotional warmth which music, currently in the service of technical intellectuality, denies.'<sup>21</sup> Patočka notes that Leverkühn strives for art of a 'higher union', for art as 'the servant of a community which will comprise far more than 'education' and will not have culture, but will perhaps be a culture.'<sup>22</sup> In Patočka's view, Mann is here considering an important subject of German classic aesthetics, the notion of 'art as the renewal of man, as something that is part of the education of humankind',<sup>23</sup> but Mann shifts the emphasis, stating that 'first, one has to acquire the dimension of responsibility, in which an 'immortal soul' should emerge. From this restoration to health then emerges a turn to a new art which could be a suitable vehicle of further renewal.'<sup>24</sup>

### III

Reading 'The Faustus Legend Then and Now', one feels that Patočka sympathizes with this aspect of Mann's endeavour. Patočka wrote several essays expressing certain expecta-

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<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, 532.

<sup>20</sup> Patočka, 'Faustovská legenda včera a dnes', 118.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, 116.

<sup>22</sup> Thomas Mann, *Doctor Faustus*, trans. Helen Tracy Lowe-Porter, (London: David Campbell Publishers, 1992), 328.

<sup>23</sup> Patočka, 'Faustovská legenda včera a dnes', 117.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, 118.

tions he had of his contemporaries. 'The Concern of the Writer', for example, starts with the anticipation of an era that would overcome the crisis and start a renewal that would leave behind the powerlessness of reason and return to objectivity.<sup>25</sup>

In his 'Notes on Ancient Humanity: Strife and Reconciliation' (1941, unpublished), Patočka expresses a critical view of his times, saying:

It is somehow a misfortune of modern man that he has only literature, not poetry in the full sense of the word. In comparison with ancient Greek poetry [...] more recent poetry is almost an abstract game. The first portent of the crisis of modern man having been overcome, having been addressed, could come once again in the form of poets who would not deal with all matter of things, substantial or irrelevant, but with the one fundamental thing alone: they would again formulate the idea of being human.<sup>26</sup>

Patočka also discusses the contemporary crisis in art in 'Epicality and Dramaticity, Epos and Drama' (1966), where he notes the 'acute crisis of epic narration, that is, the crisis of an objective, moral world'.<sup>27</sup> He points out that literature is turning to the kind of artistic mimesis which does not describe and state meaning, but only searches for meaning and helps to shape it. He claims that the main (and dramatic) task of living art is to reveal the 'fundamental event, which cannot be stated, but can only be carried out, performed'.<sup>28</sup>

In Patočka's view, Mann achieves precisely this when presenting his *Faustus* novel as a poetic mythical explication of the times, as poetic mythical reflections on the fate of Germany and Europe as a whole on the threshold of the post-European era. Patočka appreciates that his near-contemporary, Mann, transcended the level of the subjective, tentative, and aesthetic, descended in his reflections on the era to the level of mythical powers, and managed to employ 'his creative powers in the service of subject matter which [...] accompanies a certain part of mankind in their quest for self-understanding'.<sup>29</sup>

The notion of 'accompanying a part of mankind in their quest for self-understanding' has a clearly different emphasis than the subjective notion of pure creation, which dominated Patočka's thoughts about modern art in his essay 'Art and Time'.<sup>30</sup> At the same time, however, Mann's novel fits well with Patočka's other analyses of modern literature especially in the aspect of Mann's novel not describing or didactically depicting some ready-made meaning but searching for it and shaping it. In Mann's account, the Faustian subject undergoes a basic, non-arbitrary metamorphosis, and *Doctor Faustus* becomes literature about the crisis of meaning. This novel also fits Patočka's definition of modern art being art without harmonic emphasis, art of unrest and pain, as Patočka puts it in his 'Art and Time'. *Doctor Faustus* also fits the notion of intellectually demanding art which does not strive to accommodate entertainment or self-confirmation, but requires that the

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<sup>25</sup> Patočka, 'Spisovatel a jeho věc', 280.

<sup>26</sup> Jan Patočka, 'Poznámky o antické humanitě. Boj a smír. Prožití a promyšlení v antice', in Jan Patočka, *Umění a čas II*, (Prague: OIKOYMENH, 2004), 29.

<sup>27</sup> Jan Patočka, 'Epičnost a dramaticčnost, epos a drama', in Jan Patočka, *Umění a čas I*, (Prague: OIKOYMENH, 2004), 357.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

<sup>29</sup> Patočka, 'Faustovská legenda včera a dnes', 105.

<sup>30</sup> Patočka, 'Umění a čas', 316–17.

perceiver remain open to the meaning of the work. On the other hand, *Doctor Faustus* is, at least in the narrow sense, an example of a 'great epic' rather than of the 'acute crisis of the epic', and thus does not conform to other claims made by Patočka.

Over and above claims that Patočka explicitly made in some of his other writings about art, his view of Mann's novel can be summarized as follows: Modern literature does not just witness the autonomy and freedom of the individual. It does not just celebrate the particular, subjective grasp of the meaning of the reality. It also retains the ability to 'bring to light' and reflect on matters which open the 'gravity of life and its ultimate tensions and hopes' to a contemporary human being. It has a cognitive value that can be shared. In this culture, the writer assumes the position of a responsible intellectual. If the modern crisis of meaning is a drama, as Patočka notes in 'Epicality Dramaticity, Epos and Drama', the writer's task is to feel and creatively to articulate this fundamental contemporary event and thus 'accompany' his contemporaries 'in their quest for self-understanding'.<sup>31</sup>

Patočka also considers these themes in some of his other interpretations of modern works of literature, which he wrote in the 1960s and 1970s.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> See Patočka, 'Epično a dramaticita, epos a drama', 357–58.

<sup>32</sup> See Patočka's essay (written for radio) about William Faulkner's novel *The Wild Palms* (Jan Patočka, 'Zpěv výsostnosti', in Jan Patočka *Umění a čas I*, (Prague: OIKOYMENH, 2004), 416–32) and the preface to his and Frank Boldt's translation of Jaroslav Durych's short novel *Boží duha* into German (Jan Patočka, 'Vorwort zu: J. Durych: *Gottes Regenbogen*', Jan Patočka, *Umění a čas II*, (Prague: OIKOYMENH, 2004), 347–357).

- . 'Spisovatel a jeho věc.' In Jan Patočka, *Češi I*, 280–92. Prague: OIKOYMENH, 2006.
- . 'Vorwort zu *Gottes Regenbogen* von Jaroslav Durych.' In Jan Patočka, *Umění a čas II*, 347–57. Prague: OIKOYMENH, 2004.
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## DOMINANT SCIENCE AND INFLUENTIAL ART: JAN PATOČKA ON RELATIONS BETWEEN ART AND SCIENCE\*

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### ABSTRACT

The article deals with Jan Patočka's considerations on the mutual relation of science and art as two important ways towards the comprehension of reality. Patočka believes that science provides the tool to reveal objective and binding truth and that modern and contemporary art is able to reveal subjective and individual truth. Art thus functions as a corrective to the dominance of science and technology. However, art as such emerges only in a time of dominant scientific and technical approaches to reality. Along these lines, the article emphasises that the mutual relations of art and science should be conceived as dialectical.

**Key words:** Jan Patočka; modern art; contemporary art; science; truth

### LA SCIENCE DOMINANTE ET LES INFLUENCES DE L'ART : JAN PATOČKA, LES RELATIONS DE LA SCIENCE ET DE L'ART

L'article se penche sur les réflexions de Jan Patočka concernant les relations mutuelles de la science et de l'art, comme deux formes importantes de la compréhension de la réalité. Patočka, voit dans la science un instrument qui permet de révéler une vérité objective et globale, alors que l'art moderne et contemporain est capable de relever une vérité subjective et individuelle. Selon lui, l'art fonctionne donc comme un correctif à la domination de la science et de la technique. Mais cette fonction de l'art n'apparaît qu'à une époque où domine l'attitude scientifique et technique envers la réalité. L'article souligne ainsi, que la relation mutuelle de la science et de l'art devrait être comprise comme une dialectique.

### DOMINUJÍCÍ VĚDA A VLIVNÉ UMĚNÍ: JAN PATOČKA O VZTAHU VĚDY A UMĚNÍ

Článek se zabývá úvahami Jana Patočky o vzájemném vztahu vědy a umění jako dvou významných způsobů porozumění skutečnosti. Patočka se domnívá, že věda nabízí nástroj k odhalení objektivní a závazné pravdy a že moderní a soudobé umění je schopno odhalovat pravdu subjektivní a individuální. Umění tedy působí jako korektiv dominance vědy a techniky. Umění jako takové se však zjevuje jedině v době dominance vědeckého a technického přístupu ke skutečnosti. Článek zdůrazňuje, že z tohoto hlediska je zapotřebí chápat vzájemný vztah mezi vědou a uměním jako dialektický.

## I. Introduction

In this article, I follow Jan Patočka's considerations on relations of science and modern and contemporary art. At first, I deal with Patočka's conception of the constitution

\* This essay is based on my previous paper, elaborated in some respects. Miloš Ševčík, 'Relação entre ciência e arte na filosofia de Jan Patočka', in: *Filosofia e História da Ciência no Cone Sul. Seleção de Trabalhos do 6º Encontro*, de Andrade Martins, Roberto et al. eds. (Campinas: AFHIC, 2010), 431–438.

and character of science. Patočka shows that science is the principal means of the governance of Force, i.e. of the impersonal principle, which dominates in contemporary society. Further, I deal with the difference between religious art of the past and modern and contemporary art, which protests against the dominance of Force. I also point out Patočka's considerations, which show that Force – as represented by modern science and technology – sets up the tendencies aimed against the reinforcement of Force. The experience with modern and contemporary art, or the experience from the front line, enables us to establish solidarity as a means of limiting, or even as a way of overcoming Force. In conclusion, I point out that relations between the material conditions of existence and spiritual life, as described by Patočka, can be called dialectical.

## II. The Constitution and Nature of Science

In his *Heretical Essays in the Philosophy of History* (1973–76), Patočka describes a gradual change in the ways reality was understood in European spiritual history. He assumes that the understanding of reality originally served as an instrument of 'care for the soul' and truth was a matter of 'life-long investigation, self-control and self-integration.' The understanding of reality was thus basically subjected to a moral goal. In antiquity, as well as in the medieval period, knowledge was inseparable from prevailing religious and ethical views.<sup>1</sup> A thoroughgoing change in the understanding of the meaning of knowledge came only with the arrival of modern science, which focuses mainly on a practically oriented ability to predict, while ethical concerns are, of necessity, left aside.

Nevertheless, Patočka also indicates that presuppositions of a modern understanding of nature are already present in antique and medieval views of nature.<sup>2</sup> Ancient metaphysics considers that what is real in nature is graspable only through reason. Christian medieval philosophy and theology deal predominantly with the relation of man to God and they approach nature with a 'cold distance and distrust.' Nature is the subject of abstract considerations and theoretical constructions. The proximity of God to man is finally conceived as a guarantee of security for 'mathematically clear' speculations on nature. Nature as such, visual nature, is no longer interesting for science. On the basis of such philosophical opinions, nature becomes overtly formal; in the conception of mathematical natural science, nature is the subject of construction and experiment. To a large extent, the birth of modern science is thus caused by previous spiritual development.

Patočka especially emphasises that modern science understands nature as a 'Force' and that, in modern civilisation, this approach is of decisive importance. He states that modern science views nature as fully inorganic, non-demonstrative and a system of scientific formulas. Nature is seen as fully predictable and thus an entirely usable, exploitable system, a system of minable potentialities and a huge reservoir of energy. In modern times, the knowledge of reality thus becomes an instrument of power and manipulation. The universality of modern science is a 'formalising universality' and it was at the end

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<sup>1</sup> Jan Patočka, *Heretical Essays in the Philosophy of History*, trans. Erazim Kohák (Chicago and La Salle: Open Court, 1996), 82–84.

<sup>2</sup> Patočka, *Heretical Essays*, 110–112.

of the nineteenth century that this understanding of reality became dominant, which meant that all other existing ethical and religious notions were identified as artificial and restrictive.

This scientific view of nature as a Force, however, also pertains to people. Human beings are seen as 'items' in the process of accumulation and transformation of useful natural resources; people are 'accumulated, counted, used and manipulated.' This scientific view of reality determines all areas of life: social, economic, political and even private. The technological system of industrial production develops, based on this general scientific view of nature. Industrial production creates a 'self-regulating,' autonomous system, a system of 'free production'. Industrial production absorbs distribution and is capable of planning future consumption. This production exceeds natural needs, creates unnatural desires and forces consumers to devote all their energies towards acquiring offered products. This situation inevitably leads to humanity's 'hidden imprisonment' and the entrapment of the consumer.<sup>3</sup> In this context, Patočka foregrounds a process which strengthens Force and which uses people as instruments in the process of its own development, the process of its own growth. On the one hand, the process of industrial production is initiated by the people; on the other, the people become part of the objective process of an accumulative Force. Patočka states that it is evident that contemporary civilisation is essentially scientific and technological, i.e. the very existence of this civilisation is linked to modern science and technology and modern humankind is materially dependent on scientifically created technologies. Patočka emphasises at the same time, however, that a Force which arises out of a scientific view of reality, and which is used by technology, also has a far-reaching manipulative effect on humankind, depriving it of its freedom.

It is beyond dispute that Patočka's characterisation of the modern conception of reality as a Force is inspired by Edmund Husserl's and Martin Heidegger's opinions. Husserl deals with the decadent nature of modern science in the book *Crisis of European Sciences and Phenomenological Philosophy* (1935–36), and points out that in mathematically-oriented, exact scientific research, the original meaning of human understanding is lost. Husserl assumes that the purpose of phenomenology is to recover the original human world, which is concealed by artificial scientific construction in present time.<sup>4</sup> In a number of essays – for instance, in the essay 'The Questions Concerning Technology' (1953), Martin Heidegger deals with the question of technology and observes that the specific nature of understanding reality, in which fascination over the ability to transform and dispose of objects dominates, is documented in present time. Heidegger shows that science, in principle, is technology because it always reveals reality as available and transformable. However, Heidegger notes that such a view of reality, as a complex of available and transformable particulars, eliminates the possibility of uncovering truth. The danger of technology lies in this elimination.<sup>5</sup> For example, Patočka addresses Hus-

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<sup>3</sup> Patočka, 'Umění a čas', in Jan Patočka, *Umění a čas I* (Praha: OIKOYMENH, 2004), 311–312.

<sup>4</sup> Edmund Husserl, *Crisis of European Sciences and Phenomenological Phenomenology*, trans. David Carr (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1970), 3–7.

<sup>5</sup> Martin Heidegger, 'The Question concerning Technology', in Martin Heidegger, *The Question concerning Technology and other Essays*, trans. William Lovitt (New York: Garland Publishing, 1977), 3–35.

serl's and Heidegger's opinions on the essence of technology in his essay, 'The Danger of Technologization in Science in E. Husserl and the Fundamental Core of Technology as a Danger in M. Heidegger' (Nebezpečí technizace ve vědě u E. Husserla a bytostné jádro techniky jako nebezpečí u M. Heideggera; 1973–1975). In contrast to these thinkers, however, Patočka always recognises the preconditions of overcoming the contemporary forms of science and technology, which can be seen as dehumanising and thus dangerous, through the very realisation of scientifically understanding reality and its technological dominance.<sup>6</sup>

### III. Two Eras in the History of Art

In Patočka's considerations on the role of art in society, this historical transformation in the understanding of reality is shown from a different angle. In his essay 'Art and Time' (1966), Patočka distinguishes two distinct periods in the cultural history of humankind. The first he calls an 'era of artistic culture'. During this time, art was the prevailing conduit through which man approached reality. Divinity revealed itself through works of art and the intention of the human gaze was able to penetrate through art to that divinity. Thus, a work of art was not seen as such, as an independent reality. The intention of the viewer went through a work of art, as if through a window, to reality – a reality that needed to be grasped. Art represented a manner of 'experiencing, feeling, and considering' It enabled access to a 'festive, extraordinary, decisive and divine' aspect of reality. This era lasted from prehistoric times until the nineteenth century. In the nineteenth century, Patočka claims, a second era began, one that still endures. This is the 'era of aesthetic culture' or the 'reflected era', where the prevailing manner of relating to reality is mediated by abstract terms. All objects, including works of art, are scientifically analysed. During this time, new areas of science that deal with art – in particular, aesthetics and the history of art – appear and develop. New scientific disciplines carry out extensive research and deliver much new information, Patočka observes. Artistic creativity is discovered as a special kind of activity, separate from the purely technical one. A work of art is now seen as an independent reality. The intention of the spectator's view is thus not filtered through a work of art towards something else, but stops at the work itself. A work of art becomes a window into a world that is now just the world of that work.<sup>7</sup>

Patočka describes the process of change in the nature and function of art with the help of Gehlen's and Ingarden's concepts of the visual arts. Gehlen's theory of 'image-rationality' layers presupposes that there are three layers of sense in the artwork: the layer of formal elements, the layer of primary objects and the layer of secondary ideas.<sup>8</sup> Patočka shows that art has been gradually simplified in its layer structure. In the nineteenth century, art shed its layer of secondary ideas, i.e. the layer of mythological and religious notions. During the twentieth century, the layer of primary objects, i.e. the

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<sup>6</sup> Jan Patočka, 'Nebezpečí technizace ve vědě u E. Husserla a bytostné jádro techniky jako nebezpečí u M. Heideggera', in: Jan Patočka, *Péče o duši III* (Praha: OIKOYMENH, 2002), 147–160.

<sup>7</sup> Patočka, 'Umění a čas', 306–307, 310.

<sup>8</sup> Arnold Gehlen, *Zeit-Bilder zur Soziologie und Ästhetik der modernen Malerei* (Frankfurt am Main – Bonn: Athenäum Verlag, 1965), 7–17.

layer of imitated natural objects, disappeared. In spite of having been partially restored by, for instance, Mondrian or Kandinsky, the layer of secondary ideas existed only as a part of particular artworks in the twentieth century. The spectator is no longer bound to believe in expressed, philosophical or religious meanings. Correspondingly, Patočka invokes Ingarden's conception of a 'metaphysical quality,' i.e. of a certain atmosphere, which gathers around objects depicted in the image.<sup>9</sup> In the past, this metaphysical quality predominantly unveiled the mystery of divinity. It displayed 'harmonic grandeur' and this presentation revealed an artwork's beauty. Patočka also shows that the metaphysical quality of the image has lost its persuasiveness and is no longer binding.

Patočka posits that both the artworks of the era of artistic culture and the artworks of the era of aesthetic culture always open a certain 'world'.<sup>10</sup> In this respect, he follows Heidegger's notion of a work of art as a means of uncovering truth, i.e. of opening a particular 'world'. In his essay 'The Origin of the Work of Art' (1935–36), Heidegger shows that only a world open in a work of art leads us to an understanding of what it is to be a person, an animal or a plant.<sup>11</sup> Patočka persists with this notion of the 'opening of a world,' a concept of an artwork's general meaning, but he also admits that over the past several centuries the status of this meaning has changed radically. Contemporary art is no longer capable of providing an objective, 'binding' meaning; though it still offers a 'subjective' and individual overall meaning, i.e. a meaning that does not aspire to indisputable applicability and objective validity. Patočka is alert to the idea that modern and contemporary art no longer describe an objective, binding world; instead, they express a world that is always subjective and individual. In this way, modern and contemporary art gives rise to a myriad of mutually independent, highly varied and mutually, far-removed meanings. This plurality of different meanings and metaphysical qualities causes a certain feeling of 'disharmony', or even 'disquiet' and 'pain'. Given then that modern art inspires disquiet, disharmony and pain, what is its meaning? Patočka's answer is based on the premise that, in our times, a work of art proves human freedom. A work of art is proof that a person is not just an 'accumulator and transformer' of natural forces. A work of art proves that a person is a 'real creative force, freedom'. It represents a massive protest against the subjection of human beings to the objective process of production, a process of strengthening Force. At a time when science and abstract notions reign, at a time when human beings are counted as usable items in the process of production, art becomes a haven of human freedom.<sup>12</sup> In contrast to Heidegger, Patočka believes that, in a time of prevailing science and technology, art is able to uncover the truth, to uncover an overall meaning. Even if the nature of meaning expressed by modern and contemporary art differs radically from the meaning articulated by art in the past, the role of art, which is to uncover the truth, remains totally un-substitutable in present time.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Roman Ingarden, 'The Picture', in Roman Ingarden, *The Ontology of the Work of Art*, trans. Raymond Meyer and John T. Goldthwait (Athens OH: Ohio UP, 1989), 190–91.

<sup>10</sup> Patočka, 'Umění a čas', 308–309.

<sup>11</sup> Martin Heidegger, 'The Origin of the Work of Art', in Martin Heidegger, *Off the Beaten Track*, trans. Julian Young and Kenneth Haynes (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 21.

<sup>12</sup> Patočka, 'Umění a čas', 315–316.

<sup>13</sup> Jan Patočka, 'Die Lehre von der Vergangenheit der Kunst', in *Beispiele. Festschrift für Eugen Fink zum 60. Geburtstag*, ed. Ludwig Landgrebe (Den Haag: Martinus Nijhoff, 1965), 60–61.

#### IV. The Influence of Science on Art and the Influence of Art on Science

Patočka thus believes that art is visible as a separate reality only in a modern sense, when it has lost its ability to reveal an objective and binding meaning. It is the influence of modern science, which enables the visibility – and thus the independent existence – of art itself. Patočka also points out that science and technology, which itself depends on science, in concrete ways both influence or even determine the character of modern art. Modern art uses scientifically developed materials and technical methods. These new materials and technical methods fundamentally enrich and widen the expressive abilities of art; in fact, modern art cannot allow itself not to use these materials and methods.<sup>14</sup> In the essay 'Arnold Gehlen on Modern Plastic Arts' (Arnold Gehlen o moderním výtvarnictví; 1965), Patočka argues that, from a certain perspective, modern art uses the same working method as science, because it focuses on invisible realities. From this perspective, modern art accomplishes the 'loss of visibility,' which afflicts contemporary scientific and technical civilisation in general. However, Patočka adds that the appropriation of scientific methods is only the 'external manifestation' of the tendency of modern art to visualise reality in a different way. In modern art, it is possible to observe a number of attempts to arrive at the 'fundamental, most elementary levels of visualisation,' right 'up to the visualisation of the invisible present'. Various ways of visualising in modern art contrast with the 'classic, canonised' manner of 'perspective representation.'<sup>15</sup> In the review '*Remarks on Polyperspective in Picasso* by W. Biemel' (*Poznámky o polyperspektivě u Picassa* od W. Biemla; 1966), Patočka argues that perspective representation of a Renaissance origin does not offer things as they are; on the contrary, it violates things, because it applies a 'mechanical and abstract' conception of reality to things. According to Patočka, modern art thus indicates the artificiality of the modern scientific view of reality.<sup>16</sup>

However, it is also probable that contemporary art also reflects the overall character of the contemporary technical era, i.e. the era which dynamically changes in many respects. In this context, in the essay 'Teaching on the Past Character of Art' (1965), Patočka meditates on the problem with the generality of contemporary art. It is evident that contemporary art is not able to offer a generally shared and binding truth. However, he shows at once that the process of changes to the scientific view of the world, and the process of changes and development to technical means, sweep contemporary art up in their path. Art cannot escape the scientific and technical process of 'fierce' change and it changes radically. The generality of art does not concern the individual work of art and what it expresses, but rather it concerns the process of its rise, a certain common 'procedure or measure'. Patočka supposes that such a common procedure will, in future, probably prevent the use of earlier, conventional artistic manners and idioms. Such a procedural generality of art forbids any eventual reconciliation of its opposites, any harmony among expressions of individual artworks. Reconciliation and harmony are attainable

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<sup>14</sup> Patočka, 'Die Lehre von der Vergangenheit der Kunst', 60.

<sup>15</sup> Jan Patočka, 'A. Gehlen o moderním výtvarnictví', in: Jan Patočka, *Umění a čas I* (Praha: OIKOYMENH, 2004), 214–215.

<sup>16</sup> Jan Patočka, '*Poznámky o polyperspektivě u Picassa* od W. Biemla', in Jan Patočka, *Umění a čas II*, (Praha: OIKOYMENH, 2004), 33–34.

only through the very process of change. Patočka conjectures that, above all, the present age is disharmonic. For this reason, contemporary art cannot hide disharmonies; quite the opposite, it must 'provoke' them. If contemporary art does not present disharmonies, it is found 'untrue'.<sup>17</sup> Patočka notes that, in contemporary art, the link between processes of contemporary art and scientific methods can be seen as a form of protest. Artistically rendering the nature of prevailing scientific methods, in fact, leads to a curbing, a limiting of the methods' power. The artist's ability to reflect the general nature of reality works as an emphatic reminder of its dehumanisation. It is far from certain that contemporary art is able in all cases to delve deep enough, or to call attention to the true causes of problems in our times; but the very fact that art critically 'appeals' cannot be doubted.<sup>18</sup>

In the essay 'The Concern of the Writer', Patočka also suggests that contemporary art has to conform to the contemporary manner of planning distribution. The traffic of culture is industrialised in the present. Such industrialisation means the artist is only a cog in the complicated, mechanistic wheel of offer and demand. Out of a motivation to increase economic profits, such a complicated mechanism must, of course, use the means of mass communication. To become involved in the operation of this mechanism is tempting for the artist, both for economic reasons and for the reason of affecting the wider public. But of course, the mechanism of the cultural market presents a considerable risk to the artist, namely, the risk of losing his or her specific manner of expression and depth of content. However, this does not imply that the artist should give up the opportunity of reaching out to the mass public and leave the task to journalism. Patočka recommends the artist to use the contemporary canals of cultural distribution, so that the artist retains his or her own specific expression and depth.<sup>19</sup> Without any doubt, the industrialised traffic of culture is able to grab hold of art in its material essence; however, the meaning of art necessitates that it remains untouched, even in a situation like this. Patočka believes that contemporary art needs to stay 'nearby contemporary life,' not because we can 'get lost in its labyrinths', but because we can be liberated from these labyrinths.<sup>20</sup> From Patočka's statements, it is possible to infer that mechanisms of cultural distribution are utilised by contemporary art; however, such utilisation serves the distribution of artistic protest, whose aims oppose the principles that set these mechanisms in motion.

Patočka does not doubt art's ability to influence events in contemporary society, nor does he doubt the effective potential of artistic protest. He believes that art can have an impact on contemporary society, especially through its leading elite, the technical intelligentsia of today. A contemporary scientist is in constant need of contact with art because art's meaning can balance out the specialisation required of a leading scientific worker. The greater the degree of scientific specialisation, the greater the need for an overall meaning expressed in the works of art. Art thus protects the contemporary scientist from 'intellectualism', 'dogmatism' and sterility. Patočka adds that once this overall meaning is understood and absorbed, i.e. once each area of specialisation comes to terms with the limitations of its field of expertise, a feeling of mutual 'solidarity' will be established amongst members of the contemporary intelligentsia, despite all their differences. In this

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<sup>17</sup> Patočka, 'Die Lehre von der Vergangenheit der Kunst', 60–61.

<sup>18</sup> Patočka, 'Arnold Gehlen o moderním výtvarnictví', 215.

<sup>19</sup> Jan Patočka, 'Spisovatel a jeho věc', in: Jan Patočka, *Češi I* (Praha: OIKOYMENH, 2006), 292.

<sup>20</sup> Patočka, 'Umění a čas', 314.

way, an artist will find him or herself at the very centre of the intelligentsia. Art will not be a 'powerless protest' but an influential moral appeal capable of 'leading society to a new future'.<sup>21</sup>

Nevertheless, it is also possible to explain the influence of contemporary art on the technical intelligentsia by virtue of what contemporary art demonstrates. In 'Post-European Time and its Spiritual Problems' (Doba poevropská a její duchovní problémy; 1970), Patočka shows the change art has undergone from the times of modernistic and post-cubistic tendencies. In contrast to modern art, contemporary art does not offer to seek out the invisible, the laws of construction, nor the deformation of form. Contemporary art rather offers the 'forces of the neo-technical world', including 'the commercial projected onto the absolute', 'energy affected by a gush of shining colours', 'radiation made material', 'geometry of movement' and 'humanity disintegrated into a multiple of individuals'.<sup>22</sup> Patočka assumes here that contemporary art reflects time, which has a dangerous side, but which also offers positive opportunities. In the essay 'Spiritual Fundamentals of Life in Present Time' (Duchovní základy života v dnešní době; 1970), Patočka suggests that the opportunity is open for humankind, in its contemporary 'technical assertion', to be 'governed by reason'. He envisions a time when the technical intelligentsia will take up the decisive role in society, stand tall with the vanguard of the 'general spiritual solidarity' and push the 'general interest' through.<sup>23</sup>

## V. The Solidarity of the Shaken

In *Heretical Essays in the Philosophy of History*, Patočka deals in some detail with the potential of such a community, a community that advocates views contradictory to the interests of the Force. He states that this potential stems from the evident danger present in the current rule of the Force. The danger inherent in human involvement in the process of strengthening the Force became obvious in the devastating wars of the twentieth century. The accumulated Force uses the conflicts of war to release itself. A large war delivers the fastest transition of accumulated energy 'from potentiality to actuality'. Persons, and even whole communities, then function in such transitions as 'mere relays'. At the same time, however, it should be borne in mind that the Force does not primarily target destruction and self-exhaustion. The opposite is the case: the Force 'intends' to build, to grow in size. The Force's goals are thus basically peaceful, but in some cases war is used to promote its peaceful aims. To meet its peaceful goals, i.e. in its effort to strengthen itself, the Force uses the impersonal state machinery. This machinery drives millions into the 'hellfire' using 'mendacious demagogy' and incessant pressure.<sup>24</sup>

Patočka's notion of how to overcome this omnipresent Force is extraordinary. He speaks of his experience on the war front as being truly liberating. The Force actually

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<sup>21</sup> Patočka, 'Spisovatel a jeho věc', 291–292.

<sup>22</sup> Jan Patočka, 'Doba poevropská a její duchovní problémy', in Jan Patočka, *Pěče o duši II* (Praha: OIKOYMENH, 1999), 31–32.

<sup>23</sup> Jan Patočka, 'Duchovní základy života v naší době', in Jan Patočka, *Pěče o duši II* (Praha: OIKOYMENH, 1999), 13–14.

<sup>24</sup> Patočka, *Heretical Essays*, 124–128.



calculates everything from the viewpoint of continuing life, from the perspective of future control, future domination and exploitation. An individual who is controlled by the Force, an individual who is catapulted by the Force onto the front line in the midst of war, feels his mortality, becomes aware of the final possibility of the non-continuance of life and comes face to face with the finite nature of future time. And this insight breaks the dictating power of the Force. The potency of social control in appealing to life's goals and human values becomes ineffective in the case of a person confronted with death.<sup>25</sup> Patočka then considers how to transpose this front-line experience of freedom from the mandate of the Force to a time of peace, i.e. to a time when the Force does not reveal itself in conflict, indeed, to a time when it prepares for war. The basic instrument for preserving the 'positive' part of the front-line experience during the period of a Force's peace of arms is the 'solidarity of the shaken'. This solidarity appears among front-line fighters who, through conflict, jointly become aware of their mortality and, therefore, also their basic fragility, as well as the basically problematic character of their goals in life. In general, this solidarity appears among those who, despite their differences and conflicts, recognise a sense of belonging together, a sense of alliance. This solidarity of the shaken can become a moral 'authority'; not one that offers a positive programme but one that speaks in 'prohibitions, warnings and restraints,' preventing 'acts and measures'. Patočka also emphasises the need to involve the technical intelligentsia in this struggle with the Force, especially the technical experts who need to understand their position in this struggle. The limitation, or even the overcoming, of the Force is only possible when that part of humankind that truly understands current scientific and technological options also becomes aware of the basic outline of the current situation, when it realises that now, the Force also has the capacity for 'general destruction'. The Force can be overcome when 'researchers and applied scientists, discoverers and engineers' also feel the 'inner discomfort of their own comfortable situation,' when they feel the influence of the 'solidarity of the shaken' themselves and start to act in the spirit of the general solidarity.<sup>26</sup>

## VI. Phenomenological Dialectics

Art is thus revealed as a means of restricting the Force or even an instrument by which it can be overcome. At the same time, however, it becomes apparent that the Force itself – in the form of science and technology – enables the rise of this instrument and strengthens its effectiveness. At a time of the Force's growing power, art enables the solidarity of the intelligentsia to be established, a group able to efficiently strive towards weakening the Force. This solidarity is, after all, continuously bolstered by the Force's growing pressure on the individual. Yet this pressure can drive the individual to a point where it is effectively immune to the Force's power. In general, the growing pressure and effect of the Force thus fosters both the establishment and growing strength of a spiritual community that shares the common aim of limiting the Force's effect. This clearly demonstrates the dialectical nature of the whole situation. The Force itself appears to be

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<sup>25</sup> Ibid., 129–131.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., 135–136.

something fully non-spiritual, but it arises out of the consequence of a certain spiritual movement. The material side of current social life is based on the development and effect of the Force, but at the same time, it also enables and supports development in the realm of the spiritual, development that ultimately leads to the suppression or even the overcoming of the Force.

The dialectical nature of this situation is acknowledged by Patočka himself. In *Heretical Essays in the Philosophy of History*, he refuses to tarnish contemporary industrial civilisation as decadent, because firstly, this civilisation is the result of a spiritual development, and secondly, this civilisation opens an altogether unique realm, a possible life 'without violence and with equality of opportunity'.<sup>27</sup> Explicitly, Patočka addresses himself to the dialectical nature of the contemporary social situation in the essay 'Intelligentsia and Opposition' (Intelligence a opozice; 1969). Patočka states here that the contrast between material reproduction of life and its spiritual nature is today 'reasonable on the grounds of reason'.<sup>28</sup> Patočka points out that the very nature of industrial production is rational. The rational essence of industrial production has only become apparent today, because only today has industrial production become technical. It means that industrial production is governed by technicians, which are, a part of the contemporary intelligentsia. Patočka argues that technicians are connected by 'close relations' with other members of the intelligentsia. The contemporary intelligentsia thus penetrate industrial production and influence the character of all society in an important way. From this perspective even, the interest of production proves to be the general interest and, with respect to such a generality, it is of 'moral interest'. It is thus possible to argue that the contrast between spiritual life and material reproduction of life is illusive. In fact, industrial production has grown up on the basis of reason; the intelligentsia penetrate this production, govern it and are able to subordinate the aims of production to 'moral imperatives'. Today, this predominance of the intelligentsia proves that materiality has been sublimated into a form of reason. However, Patočka repeatedly warns the contemporary intelligentsia to adopt a more active approach towards reality and to assume their role in society, for which they are destined by their very essence.

Even though Patočka repeatedly criticises George Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel's metaphysical dialectics of history and Karl Marx's materialistic dialectics of history, he acknowledges that the dialectical nature of historic processes is evident. However, he highlights that, in philosophy, dialectics have to be subordinated to phenomenology. Dialectics is alive if it enables us to conceive, to understand phenomena. On the contrary, dialectics is dead if it crosses the borders of those phenomena. In such a case, the result is philosophical myth, such as idealistic or materialistic dialectics. In general, Patočka supposes that dialectics emerges in dependence with phenomenology.<sup>29</sup> However, it is not an auxiliary philosophical method; it is what the phenomenological method is able to uncover in phenomena.

In Patočka's conception of historical process, we thus encounter the idea of mutual influence, or rather, the conditioning of the spiritual development and material life of

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<sup>27</sup> Ibid., 118.

<sup>28</sup> Jan Patočka, 'Intelligence a opozice', in Jan Patočka, *Češi I* (Praha: OIKOYMENH, 2006), 245–248.

<sup>29</sup> Patočka, *Heretical Essays*, 149.

society. The material level of social life generates the conditions for the development of spiritual life and, on the contrary, spiritual development determines or at least rectifies the nature and aims of the material development of society. However, the assumption does not hold that history aims to arrive at some investable destination, metaphysical or political. Patočka rather maintains that we encounter auto-regulative principles throughout the development of history via the mutual influence and conditioning of the material and spiritual aspects of history. The society may escape impending catastrophes, because the very principles at work in the rise of these threats create the opportunity to avoid these dangers. In other words, the principles that lead to the genesis of such dangers are the principles that lead to the elimination of these dangers.

## **VII. Conclusion**

I have tried to present the fundamental aspects of Patočka's conception of the relation between art and science as two very important approaches to reality. According to this conception, art emerges as a corrective to the dominance of science. Such dominance leads to the subordination of man to the Force. Art, on the contrary, proves human freedom. In particular, I have attempted to show that science itself creates and reinforces the possibilities of correcting its own bias and that the Force understood by science and utilised by technology, in fact, tends to restrict itself. Art emerges only in time of a Force's dominance and that Force's mechanisms further enlarge the possibilities of art's impact. The relations of art and science can thus be called dialectical. The material reality of social life is the result of a certain spiritual development and, conversely, the development of material relations causes the development of spiritual life. Solidarity established on the basis of art's influence or on the basis of shaking off the experience of war can enable the constitution of mechanisms that restrict a Force's dominance. Thanks to such mechanisms, science can become truly knowing, because it may be governed and practised by those who know both its importance and limits.

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