

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.¹ 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.² 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

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

² 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.³ 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.⁴ 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.⁵ For example, Patočka addresses Hus-

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

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

⁵ 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.⁶

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.⁷

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.⁸ 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

⁶ 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.

⁷ Patočka, 'Umění a čas', 306–307, 310.

⁸ 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.⁹ 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'.¹⁰ 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.¹¹ 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.¹² 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.¹³

⁹ 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.

¹⁰ Patočka, 'Umění a čas', 308–309.

¹¹ 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.

¹² Patočka, 'Umění a čas', 315–316.

¹³ 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.¹⁴ 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.'¹⁵ 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.¹⁶

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

¹⁴ Patočka, 'Die Lehre von der Vergangenheit der Kunst', 60.

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

¹⁶ 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'.¹⁷ 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.¹⁸

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.¹⁹ 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.²⁰ 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

¹⁷ Patočka, 'Die Lehre von der Vergangenheit der Kunst', 60–61.

¹⁸ Patočka, 'Arnold Gehlen o moderním výtvarnictví', 215.

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

²⁰ 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'.²¹

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'.²² 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.²³

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.²⁴

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

²¹ Patočka, 'Spisovatel a jeho věc', 291–292.

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

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

²⁴ 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.²⁵ 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.²⁶

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

²⁵ Ibid., 129–131.

²⁶ 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'.²⁷ 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'.²⁸ 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 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.²⁹ 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

²⁷ Ibid., 118.

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

²⁹ 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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