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Jan Patočka: On Art and Philosophy

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In my case, a paraphrase of Patočka's own saying characterizing his relation to Comenius ("The author is not a Comeniologist"),¹ might run thus: The Author is not a Philosopher. The task of arranging the volumes of Patočka's *Collected Works* (published in thematic collections²), which are intended to include essays touching

¹ Cf. PATOČKA, J. O nový pohled na Komenského/ For a new view on Comenius. *Kritický měsíčník*, 1941, vol. 4, no. 5-6, p. 222. Cf. also SCHALLER, Klaus: 'Autor není komeniolog'. Patočka als Comeniusforscher, Patočka jako komeniolog (The author is not a Comeniologist). In SCHALLER, Klaus. *Comenius 1992*. Gesammelte Beiträge zum Jubiläumsjahr. Schriften zur Comeniusforschung. Veröffentlichungen der Comeniusforschungstelle im Institut für Pädagogik der Ruhr-Universität Bochum, vol. 22. Sankt Augustin: Academia, 1992, p. 265-286

² Cf. a discussion of the project of the *Collected Works*: CHVATÍK, I., KOUBA, P. Patočka's *Collected Works*. Scheme II. *ACTA* (Scheinfeld), 1987, no. 2, p. 12-26 + The Editor's Response - Diskussion Forum. *ACTA* (Scheinfeld), 1987, no. 3-4, p. 27-32 + Úvodní poznámka k Sebraným spisum (An Introductory Remark to *Collected Works*). In PATOČKA, Jan. *Péče o duši I*. Sebrané spisy sv. 1 (Care for the soul I). Praha: Oikoymenth, 1996, p. 7-9; NEMEC, J. Comments on Scheme II for Patočka's *Collected Works*. *ACTA* (Scheinfeld), 1987, no. 2, p. 26; CHVATÍK, I., KOUBA, P., PETRÍČEK, M. Struktura 'Sebraných spisů' Jana Patočky jako interpretací problém/ Structure of Jan Patočka's *Collected Works* as a problem of interpretation. *Filosofický časopis*, 1991, vol. 39, no. 3, p. 400-405

on the topics of art, literature and culture generally, places before the editor the challenging problem of interpretation.

The editor who attempts to select a group of texts that should create a meaningful whole, is confronted with the situation determined by the integral character of the work. Here, one cannot speak of a philosophy of art independent of the rest of Patocka's work (not to mention the many fragments of manuscripts or unpublished essays). If one were to remove from their context those studies which treat the subject of art or particular art works in one way or another, the final selection would be so reductive as to raise the question of why Patocka placed so much emphasis in these essays on the position and character of art. The collection would have at best an incidental value. It is therefore obvious that should the editor want to fulfil his task at least in part, he must justify his standpoint and clarify the criteria according to which he has assembled the volume with respect to Patocka's work as a whole.

The conception adopted here forms a kind of virtual chronology: texts which have as their theme Patocka's cultural focus in general are included, as well as texts which introduce the contours of key questions of his thought in various periods, and texts treating concrete artistic or aesthetic problems. The conception thus constitutes a kind of compromise between chronological and thematic criteria.

If there is one thing that characterizes Patocka's work from the point of view of the reader, it is first and foremost its integrated nature. In the spirit of the introductory sentence of the work *Prirozený svet jako filosofický problém* (The Natural World As A Philosophical Problem): "The problem of philosophy is the world as a whole."³ No matter how one approaches Patocka's work, one is struck by its integral character. This is apparent not only in the breadth of the view which opens up again and again on the basis of detailed interpretations (conscious of the necessity of testing the movement of earlier philosophy); but also in the systematic orientation towards the elaboration of the questions posed from the perspective of his own original philosophy. This constantly holds up for inspection that frequently tested whole – the entirety of European knowledge and philosophy. At the same time, this enquiry is always concrete and dialogical, both in its relation to other texts and to the entire tradition of certain questions, and in its constant debate with itself.

I must also state at the beginning that I concentrate only on a certain circle of contextual problems within Patocka's work, in particular, that which opens up at

³ PATOCKA, Jan. *Prirozený svet jako filosofický problém*! The natural world as a philosophical problem. Praha: Cs. spisovatel, 1992, p. 13

the end of the thirties. For the time being, I leave aside the connection between Patocka's reflection of Ingarden's phenomenology of the artistic work with his experience of Prague Structuralism on the one hand (R. Jakobson, M. Mukarovský, E. Utitz), and, on the other hand, the Prague philosophical (aristotelian) aesthetics (K. Svoboda, *L'esthétique d'Aristot*, 1927) contiguous with the Vienna school of art history. I am also aware that these comments can be nothing more than a simplification, in the final analysis.⁴

The response to the question of the philosopher Jan Patocka's (1.7.1907 – 13.3.1977) relation to art and artistic and cultural issues always begins with the assertion that this relation was determined from the beginning by his family milieu. Patocka's father, a school inspector, classical philologist and theoretician of aesthetic culture, was one of the young critics of the 1890s who postulated the modernist principles for Czech literature in polemics with the older generation. Thanks to his father, in his youth Patocka acquired an intimate knowledge of the classical literature of antiquity in particular.⁵ Later he studied not only philosophy, but also Romance and Slavic philology. This orientation certainly had a significant impact on the manner in which he approached texts. He was an outstanding interpreter who had a masterful grasp of context and of literary-linguistic connections. In addition, he focused his enquiry deliberately on the artistic work as such, and did not use the work as a supporting or illustrative argument for his own purposes, a common enough habit among philosophers. The question with which he turns to the work, or rather, the question which the work provokes in him, is a

⁴ About these relationships cf. BLOSS, Jochen, STRÓZEWSKI, Władysław, ZUMR, Josef. *Intentionalität - Werte - Kunst, Husserl - Ingarden - Patocka*. Beiträge zur gleichnamigen Prager Konferenz vom Mai 1992. Praha: Filosofia, 1995. Cf. also a remark about a connection of Patocka's phenomenology with particularly Jakobson's structuralism by PETRÍČEK jr., M. Jan Patocka a myšlenka přirozeného světa / Jan Patocka and the idea of the natural world. *Filosofický časopis*, 1990, vol. 38, no. 1-2, p. 23. This relationship is particularly recognizable from PATOCKA, J. Roman Jakobsons phänomenologischer Strukturalismus. *Tijdschrift voor filosofie*, 1976, vol. 38, no. 1, p. 129-135. In one of his last private seminars Patocka also dealt with an introduction to an analysis of the relationships between phenomenology and structuralism. Into this complex of problems belongs also his philosophical reflection on the theoretical assumptions of H. Read's *Art of Sculpture* (PATOCKA, Jan: Úvahy nad Readovou knihou o socharství / Reflections on Read's book about the art of sculpture. In CERNÝ, Václav (ed.). *Sborník petadvaceti*. Praha: Cs. spisovatel, 1969, p. 180-191).

⁵ Cf. for example J. Zumr's interview with J. Patocka: ZUMR, J. K filosofovým šedesátinám. S Janem Patockou o filosofii a filosofech / To the philosopher's 60th birthday. With J. P. about philosophy and philosophers. *Filosofický časopis*, 1967, vol. 15, no. 5, p. 585-598

philosophical question;⁶ the answer, however, remains as an idea in the concrete character of the artistic form.

The attempts made thus far to classify the accounts of art within Patocka's philosophy as a whole have taken one of two basic directions. On the one hand, they have focused on Patocka's explication of several aspects of Hegel's aesthetics, and the related conception of modern art as an examination of the meaning of the work itself and thus referring only to itself. Understood in this light, modern art represents the true realm of human freedom for which there is no place in our world, constructed as it is by the modern natural sciences and technology. Art thus allows one to see things as they are, in their originality, and draws attention to the constructed character of our world as a kind of total alienation.⁷

On the other hand, the second type of interpretation presents Patocka's conception of art, both modern and classical, in relation to his conception of the so-called three movements of human existence.⁸ In this conception, art realizes the third movement, the movement of transcendence, the breaking into freedom as openness.⁹ Both approaches essentially thematize Patocka's location of the problem of modern art within the context of his discussion with Heidegger. What is character-

⁶ Cf. CHVATÍK, K. Jan Patocka: Kunst und Zeit. *Philosophische Rundschau*, 1988, vol. 35, no. 4, p. 316-323

⁷ BIEMEL, W. Bemerkungen zu Jan Patockas Deutung der Kunst. *Phänomenologische Forschungen*, 1994, 1985, no. 17, p. 32-52 + Einleitung. In PATOCKA, Jan. *Kunst und Zeit*. Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1987, p. 14-30 + Zu Patockas Deutung der Kunst. In GATZEMEIER, Matthias (ed). *Jan Patocka. Ästhetik - Phänomenologie - Pädagogik - Geschichts- und Politiktheorie*. Aachen: Alano Verlag, 1994, p. 1-14

⁸ Cf. KOHÁK, Erazim: Jan Patocka. A Philosophical Biography. In KOHÁK, Erazim (ed). *Jan Patocka. Philosophy and Selected Writings*. Chicago University Press, 1989, p. 102-103. For a conception of these three movements cf. for example PATOCKA, Jan. *Telo, společenství, jazyk, svět / Body, community, language, world*. Praha: Oikoymenh, 1995, p. 101ff + Co je existence/ What is existence. *Filosofický časopis*, 1969, vol. 17, no. 5-6, p. 682-702. Cf. also an analysis of the development of this conception by Patocka - for example that of P. Rezek (REZEK, Petr: Lidský život a lidská existence jako pohyb u Jana Patocky/ Human life and human existence as movement by Jan Patocka. In REZEK, Petr. *Jan Patocka a vec fenomenologie/ J. P. and the matter of phenomenology*. Praha: Oikoymenh, 1993, p. 68-78), or of PETRÍČEK, M. Jan Patocka a myšlenka přirozeného světa/ J. P. and the idea of the natural world. *Filosofický časopis*, 1990, vol. 38, no. 1-2, p. 22-43.

⁹ SRUBAR, Ilja: Zur Stellung der Kunst in Patockas Philosophie. In PATOCKA, Jan. *Kunst und Zeit*. Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1987, p. 31-45. About the three movements of human existence cf. also SRUBAR, Ilja: Zur Entwicklung des Phänomenologischen Denkens von Jan Patocka. In PATOCKA, Jan. *Die Bewegung der menschlichen Existenz*. Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1991, p. 7-29

istic of both approaches is that they proceed from the texts of the 1960s and 1970s. That is to say, they proceed from texts treating the classical myth and tragedy, Hegel's *Aesthetics* and his teaching on the so-called past character of art, and in particular from the study 'Umení a čas' [Art and Time].¹⁰ Therefore these accounts can progress in a markedly restricted manner. They see everything from the perspective of Patocka's late philosophy, when his enquiry concentrated on the philosophy of existence and the determination of the source and character of European history. This found definitive expression in the *Kacířské eseje* [Heretical Essays] and, linked with the question of meaning and ethics, in the last completed study 'Kolem Masarykovy filosofie náboženství' [About Masaryk's Philosophy of Religion], from 1976.¹¹

A confrontation with bibliographical data, however, offers another perspective, which indeed informed the conception of the first samizdat edition of Patocka's texts about art and philosophy. It also constituted the starting point for deliberations on an edition prepared within the framework of his collected works.¹² Chronology opens up a much wider perspective on the relation which is the subject of our interest here. Patocka's concentration on questions related to art developed roughly in two stages: in the period shortly before and during the war; and again from the end of the fifties. Shorter studies which, like many of Patocka's reflections on the theme of art, were determined by a contemporary event. His lifelong discussions with his friend, literary critic Václav Cerný about the principles of criticism

¹⁰ In particular PATOCKA, Jan: Die Lehre von der Vergangenheit der Kunst. In LANDGREBE, Ludwig (ed). *Beispiele*. Festschrift für Eugen Fink zum 60. Geburtstag. Den Haag: M. Nijhoff, 1965, p. 46-61 + Hegeluv filosofický a estetický vývoj (Hegel's philosophical and aesthetical development). In HEGEL, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich. *Estetika*. Praha: Odeon, 1966, vol. I, p. 9-56 + Umení a čas/ Art and time. *Orientace*, 1966, vol. 1, no. 5, p. 12-22

¹¹ PATOCKA, Jan. *Heretical Essays in the Philosophy of History*. Transl. by E. Kohák. Chicago/ Lasalle: Open Court, 1996 (cf. also P. RICOEUR's Preface to the French Edition of Jan Patocka's Heretical Essays in the Philosophy of History, p. VII-XVI). See also Kolem Masarykovy filosofie náboženství / About Masaryk's philosophy of religion. In PATOCKA, Jan. *Tri studie o Masarykovi/ Three studies on Masaryk*. Ed. by I. Chvatík, P. Kouba. Praha: Mladá fronta, 1991, p. 53-119; cf. KARFÍK, F. Proc je Patockova filosofie dejin kacířská? / Why is Patocka's philosophy of history heretical?. *Reflexe*, 1994, no. 12

¹² NEMEC, Jirí, SOUCEK, David (ed.). *Jan Patocka. Bibliografie 1928-1996/ J. P.: Bibliography*. Completed by I. Chvatík, K. Novotný, V. Soudilová-Schifferová, L. Švandová. Praha: Oikoymenh, 1997; PATOCKA, Jan. *Umení a filosofie I-III* (Art and philosophy). Ed. by J. Nemeč, P. Rezek. Praha: circulated typescript, 1977 (the origin of the samizdat "blue edition" of the Archive collection of J. Patocka's works, in the following cited as AS)

and the character of European Romanticism, or reflections like the one on the painter and writer Josef Capek, convince us that for Patocka, the artistic experience and creation were spheres which always preceded philosophy. They pointed out, in an irreplaceable manner, new or hidden manifestations of the world of meaning and the approach to it.

When speaking about these stages, one should keep in mind both what links them together and what distinguishes them from one another. In the reflections at the end of the thirties and in the forties, art figures as a distinctive type of "Bildung" (culture)¹³, as a clearly defined area of the spirit and its history, in particular Romanticism and its mythology. In the second period Patocka turns to aesthetics as a philosophical discipline, to its history and body of knowledge. Philosophical reflection then understands art in terms of its distinct character and develops – again through comparisons with mythology (classical rather than Romantic) – the conception of art as the opening up of the sphere of freedom.

The moment when Patocka first turns to art systematically as an object of reflection is characteristic. I have in mind the essays *Ceská vzdělanost v Evropě* [Czech "Bildung" in Europe] and 'Myšlenka vzdělanosti a její dnešní aktuálnost' [The Idea of "Bildung" and Its Contemporary Relevance].¹⁴ At the time when the foundations of European humanity were being shaken, Patocka turned to a consideration of the European idea of culture (Bildung) and the history of its Czech manifestation. Thus it is essentially this context of the idea of humanity and of culture which forms the first of the fundamental connections in Patocka's view. At the same time, these texts from the beginning of the occupation and World War II demarcate that linking-up of the conceptions of history, rationality, humanity and art, with the questions treated in his second doctoral thesis [for becoming a docent]: *Přirozený svět jako filosofický problém*; that is, with questions concerning the historical character of man and, in particular, the question of meaning. These three spheres are never disconnected again; the problem of history, the problem of humanity and the problem of meaning will be the starting point for Patocka's

¹³ There is no English equivalent for the Czech expression "vzdělanost". Therefore, I prefer the use of the German term "Bildung" to the English "culture" or "cultivatedness" as translated by Kohák (cf. ft. no. 8, p. 42).

¹⁴ PATOČKA, J. Myšlenka vzdělanosti a její dnešní aktuálnost / The idea of "Bildung" and its contemporary relevance. *Kritický měsíčník*, 1938, vol. 1, no. 6, p. 241-253 + *Ceská vzdělanost v Evropě* / Czech "Bildung" in Europe. Praha: V. Petr, 1939

philosophy here on, regardless of whether one refers to it as a philosophy of history, a history of philosophy, aesthetics, or any other name.¹⁵

It is necessary to state here that the starting point of Patocka's philosophical 'project', as Petríček calls it,¹⁶ is phenomenology as a descent from "sclerotic theses... to the sources of live experience".¹⁷ For Patocka, the encounter with Husserl's personality was a real meeting with philosophy;¹⁸ he conceived his second doctoral work on the foundation of stimuli from Husserl's lectures, which formed the beginning of *Crisis*, published long after his death. The critical revision and unfolding of phenomenology created a substantial part of Patocka's thought, just as they were a part of the French post-war philosophy, again from the 1960s. The study included here, 'Prostor a jeho problematika' [Space and Its Issues],¹⁹ in which the question of corporeality is raised, developed in discussions with the Brno art historian V. Richter. The discussions arose in the context of his attempt at a phenomenologically inspired philosophy of art history, following on from the Vienna school of art history.²⁰ At the same time, it represents one of Patocka's attempts at a

¹⁵ A substantial source of Patocka's conception of "Bildung" was the stimulus of E. Utitz. Cf. UTITZ, Emil. *Die Sendung der Philosophie in unserer Zeit*. Leiden: A. W. Stijhoff's Uitgevermaatschappij N. V., 1936

¹⁶ PETRÍČEK jr., Miroslav: Patockuv filosofický projekt / Patocka's philosophical project. In PATOCKA, Jan. *Prirozený svět jako filosofický problém* / The natural world as a philosophical problem. Praha: Cs. spisovatel, 1992, p. 269-280

¹⁷ PATOCKA, Jan. *Telo, společenství, jazyk, svět* / Body, community, language, world. Praha: Okoymenh, 1995, p. 1

¹⁸ Cf. ZUMR, J. K filosofovým šedesátinám. S Janem Patockou o filosofii a filosofech / To the philosopher's 60th birthday. With J. P. about philosophy and philosophers. *Filosofický časopis*, 1967, vol. 15, no. 5, p. 585-598; also PATOCKA, Jan: Erinnerungen an Husserl. In BIEMEL, Walter (ed.). *Die Welt der Menschen - Die Welt der Philosophie*. Festschrift für Jan Patocka. Den Haag: M. Nijhoff, 1976, p. VII-XIX + NEMEC, Jirí, NELLEN, Klaus. Nachwort der Herausgeber. In PATOCKA, Jan. *Die natürliche Welt als philosophisches Problem*. Ed. by J. Nemeč, K. Nellen. Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1990, p. 285

¹⁹ Prostor a jeho problematika / Space and its issues. *Estetika*, 1991, vol. 28, no. 1, p. 1-37. This study is connected with Patocka's correspondence with V. Richter deposited at the Patocka Archive in Prague. In the late 1960s Patocka referred in his lectures about corporeality to Merleau-Ponty's analysis of perception (*Telo, společenství, jazyk, svět*, cf. ft. no. 8). P. Ricoeur also mentioned this connection (RICOEUR, P. *Od filosofie přirozeného světa k filosofii dějin* / From the philosophy of the natural world to the philosophy of history. *Filosofický časopis*, 1997, vol. 45, no. 5, p. 744)

²⁰ PATOCKA, Jan: Doslov k nevydanému souboru Richter, Václav. *Studie z dějin umění* / Afterword to the unpublished collection of V. Richter's studies in art history. In PATOCKA, Jan. *Umení a filosofie*. Praha: AS, 1977, vol. 3, p. 438-462

new formulation of phenomenological problems, manifested also in the subsequent consideration of aesthetic problems.²¹

The basic meaning which the discussions in the Prague Philosophical Circle (founded 1934, cf. note 15) had on Patocka's philosophical personality has already been the subject of critical research. Patocka worked in the Circle as the Czech secretary (L. Landgrebe was his German counterpart).²² Peter Rezek has analyzed Patocka's reference to the possibility of the spiritual individual expressly relating to the meaning of the whole, perceiving the universal inter-relatedness and then newly shaping life.²³ Art (like philosophy, science and religion) is then one of the routes to this universum. Rezek refers directly to the essays 'životní rovnováha a životní amplituda' [Equanimity and Amplitude of Life] and 'Ideologie a život v ideji' [Ideology and the Life in the Idea],²⁴ which are also included in the present edition. They are included here in order to draw attention to Patocka's concentration on the relation of art – and likewise science²⁵ – to philosophy: various thematizations of the essential step towards that before which "our fearful limited outlook flees", the step towards the idea as an expression of inner freedom.

When Patocka began in 1938 to reflect on Czech culture, the balance was not in favor of Czech modern art (*Ceská vzdělanost v Evropě*, cf. footnote no. 14). He did not find in Czech modern culture one point of support for the management of the crisis in which the Czech nation found itself at that time, other than the work of

²¹ Cf. PATOČKA, Jan: Roman Ingarden. In INGARDEN, Roman. *O poznávání literárního díla*. Praha: Cs. spisovatel, 1967, p. 261-276 + Zu Roman Ingardens Ontologie des malerischen Kunstwerks. *Philosophische Perspektiven*, 1972, no. 4, p. 117-125 + Zu Roman Ingardens Philosophie des malerischen Kunstwerks. In PATOČKA, Jan. *Umení a filosofie*. Dodatky. Ed. by I. Chvatík. Praha: AS, 1985, vol. 4, 4.11

²² Cf. LANDGREBE, L. Erinnerungen an meinen Freund. Jan Patocka. Ein Philosoph von Weltbedeutung. *Perspektiven der Philosophie*, Neues Jahrbuch, 1977, vol. 3, p. 295-312. Patocka was also an active frequent visitor of the lectures at the Prague Linguistic Circle (founded in 1927).

²³ Cf. REZEK, Petr: Patockova fenomenologie ducha v kontextu Prazského filosofického kroužku/ Patocka's phenomenology of the spirit in the context of the Prague Philosophical Circle. In REZEK, Petr. *Jan Patocka a vec fenomenologie*. Praha: OIKOYMENH, 1993, p. 116-124

²⁴ *Kritický měsíčník*, 1939, vol. 2, no. 3, p. 101-106 + *Kritický měsíčník*, 1946, vol. 7, no. 1-2, p. 8-14

²⁵ For example, the study 'O spolupráci filosofie a vedy' / On the cooperation between philosophy and science (*Ceská mysl*, 1938, vol. 34, no. 3-4, p. 196-209) is also included in the edition for the same reason.

the Catholic writer Jaroslav Durych. This criticism derived from the point of view opened by Masaryk's maxim of setting the highest spiritual goals, the so-called ideals of humanity. This remains Patocka's theme for the whole wartime period. In the essay 'Myšlenka vzdělanosti a její dnešní aktuálnost', he states: "To say exactly what distinguishes an educated person from an uneducated person in both senses [that is, from a naive person and from a superficial, poorly educated person – D.V.] is difficult: for our purpose here an approximation may serve: an uneducated person moves on a definite ground, on a ground of (imagined) certainties; an educated person (which means essentially: one who is still educating himself..) moves on an essentially unfinished, indefinite, uncertain, or not entirely secure ground... The free, autonomous ideal lives in culture, because culture cannot be replaced with an exclusive, definite forming of the human spirit."²⁶ Thus it is not a matter of forming a worldview, but of strictness towards oneself, towards others, and humility before one's ideal. This ideal, as is later revealed, is a new version of the ideal of the free human spirit. This kind of "Bildung", of culture always has a historical horizon; it draws its material from history and is essentially the Greek idea of culture.²⁷ From here Patocka sets forth a number of types of culture, several of which he directly assigns to Czech intellectuals as tasks for elaboration. This concerns, in particular, the so-called aesthetic culture, literary and analytical, focusing on the great works, posing all the essential human questions. And it also concerns philosophical culture: "The philosophical type of culture wants to concentrate reflection on the entire human life, on the relation between its meaning and fate, on its entire framework, which is the world."²⁸ He deduces the following tasks for both types of culture, from the point of view of the contemporary historical trauma: 1/ to think through the relation to antiquity, where the entire history of European "Bildung" (culture) began; 2/ to think through the relation to the great modern cultures - that is, the French culture, beginning with classicism, and the German culture, in which according to Patocka, the idea of European

²⁶ Cf. ft. no. 14, p. 247

²⁷ Cf. the analysis of the term Bildung by H. G. Gadamer (GADAMER, Hans Georg. *Wahrheit und Methode*. Grundzüge einer philosophischen Hermeneutik. Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck), 1960, p. 7-16 (in particular p. 8-9).

²⁸ Cf. ft. no. 14, p. 250

"Bildung" reached its peak. At the same time, the distinctly modern debate of Rationalism with the idea of the humanity accompanies this culmination.²⁹

The wartime studies included here develop from analysis of the Enlightenment and the reaction to it in German Idealist philosophy, in particular in Herder. Patocka analyzes both types of reactions in German philosophy to the new term of reason, dating from Descartes. That is, he looks at Kant's rupture from the old metaphysics and posing of new questions about the character of reason; and Herder and Goethe's opposition to the Rationalist 18th century and attempts to return to speculative reason. Patocka also considers the twofold approach to nature: on the one hand, as a mathematical object construed by the natural sciences; and on the other hand, as "harmonious nature, elevated, divine, provident, internally purposeful, unified living nature – the cosmos of antiquity and the Renaissance"³⁰. Through analysis of these stances, Patocka establishes the essential obscurity and inconsistencies in Herder's thought, which, however, brought about the "renaissance of the cosmos of antiquity" in German Idealism and Romanticism. First and foremost, this meant a revival of the mythological structures of thought.

From the problems of the German Enlightenment, Patocka then went on to analyze the Romantic answer to the radical change which had taken place with the overturning of the old metaphysical relation between the individual and the world, the relation of the individual to the divine and thus to his own mortality. Patocka pursues these questions in two studies: *Symbol země u K. H. Máchy* [The Earth as a Symbol in K. H. Mácha]³¹ and in the analysis of myth in Romanticism.³² According to Patocka, one can find this answer in the Romantic conception of myth.

Thus one finds oneself back on the territory of Patocka's relation to antiquity, which, as mentioned above, was a determining factor in his philosophy from the beginning. One also arrives at the realization that this myth in Patocka's explication follows on from the accounts of the natural world, influenced by Heidegger's conception of the fundamental relation of the individual to existence (notes on the

²⁹ Patocka followed this task consequently also during the post-war periods: for example he translated Hegel's *Phenomenology of the Spirit* and his *Aesthetics*

³⁰ PATOCKA, Jan. *Dvojí rozum a příroda v německém osvícenství* / The two senses of reason and of nature in the German Enlightenment Praha: V. Petr, 1942, p. 15

³¹ Praha: V. Petr, 1944

³² The manuscript 'Mýtus v naší romantice, zvláště u Erbeny' [Myth in our romanticism, in particular by Erben] is deposited in the Jan Patocka Archive at the Center For Theoretical Study (Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic and Charles University), Prague.

reading, for example, of *Sein und Zeit* are deposited in Jan Patočka Archive). Study of Mácha from the end of the sixties likewise develops this aspect;³³ the central concern of these studies is Mácha's thematization of the experience of so-called original temporality (in comparison with Heidegger's temporality of existence) and the breaking of time through eternity.

What is essential is that Patočka in the 1940s, following on from the interpretation of Mácha by Dmitrij Tschyzewskij, sees Mácha's polarized symbolism (in particular on the temporality – eternity axis) as a representation of mythological thinking. It may serve us here as an example of the Romantic conception of myth in general: "It seems to us that the basic form of Mácha's thought is a kind of polarity, which, however, sees and resolves the relation of opposites in a peculiar light, hardly seen anywhere else; as a result, the original duality, the original tension, finally appears as a unity; not a unity of harmony, but rather a unity of an incurable shortcoming, a longing and grief. In Mácha's last meditation there is something elevated above every metaphysical harmony, above the metaphysical happy ending so characteristic of many idealisms. At the same time, however, it avoids the weaknesses of vulgar dualism which patches up the world without scrutinizing it. The peculiar intensity of Mácha's view is caused by the fact that at the bottom of his intention one finds not metaphysics but mythology."³⁴

The extensive analysis of Mácha's mythology, based on the symbol of mother-Earth, indicates how the mythological antithesis differs from the antinomic antithesis (Kant), and the dialectical (Hegel): "Mythological thought also has an antithetical polarity... Heracleitus drew from this his faith in the harmony of opposites. The meaning of the contradiction is more dramatic than the mere logical meaning: these are things which struggle together, drive one another away and hate one another to the death. These opposites are presented here in a relation of inseparability: day and night, dawn and the dying of light, up and down (with all the aliquot tones of the divine and elevated in contrast to the low and contemptible), health and sickness. Thus a polarity is established, a coincidence of opposites, something infinitely more alive than the mere synthetic opposition of dialectics; it is something better suited to the more elemental layers of our life than metaphysical speculation. It lacks the methodical character of metaphysical

³³ Cas, vecnost a casovost v Máchove díle/ Time, eternity and temporality in Mácha's work. In GREBENÍCKOVÁ, Ruzena, KRÁLÍK, Oldrich (ed.). *Realita slova Máchova*. Praha: Cs. spisovatel, p. 183-207

³⁴ Cf. ft. no. 31, p. 9

speculation; but it enlivens such speculation with its own vigor."³⁵ In short, myth here opens up a perception of Being itself as openness, before which everything often falls into nothingness.

In the second study (cf. ft. no. 32), which clearly emerged either in parallel or in close succession, Patocka attempts to formulate a conception of Romanticism from the point of view of its mythology. The manuscript dates from some time in the last years of the war; it has about 90 pages of continuous text and gives a thorough critical overview of the various earlier theories and approaches to myth, with a clearly tendency towards Patocka's own conception. This includes the empirical experience of anthropologists, as well as the modification that occurred with the Romantics. The rest of the text includes sketches of analyses of Novalis, Hölderlin and J. Kollár. He did not get as far as Erben's work. Nonetheless, the study constitutes a unique attempt to place the Czech National Revival within the overall structure of the Enlightenment upheaval and the reaction to it. What accompanies these reflections on myth is a constant reference to the idea that the mythological structure here represents a whole approach to the world; that is, an approach through the medium of which existence presents itself to us. It is therefore clear that a contemplation of the late reflections on classical myth and Attic tragedy and the so-called myth of the pact with the devil (the analysis of the Faust legend, Goethe's *Faust* and *Doctor Faustus* by Thomas Mann) must direct our attention to Patocka's formulation of human existence as movement. It must also direct our attention to his interpretation of Plato's conception of care for the soul, which appears in the interpretations to date; and to the period in which there is a clear linking up of this thematization of myth as a primary wholeness of thinking and relating to the world and to the divine, a thematization of the world of meaning (the spirit), with meditations on the natural world.

The conception of the natural world, the world of the everyday, is, as is well known, set against the conception of the world as construed by empirical sciences. As Miroslav Petríček said in jest: "This is, however, a world in which we can only believe: a world which is very precise, but not at all vivid; the fact that light is an undulation is something I know but don't see." However, this world is presented to us as the true one, while the world in which we live is denigrated as imprecise, derived. "The world outlined by exact science appears as a field of objective laws, and the individual who submits to them as a part of this world lives his life as if in the mode of a non-person, as if in the third person; as a result, he constantly feels

³⁵ Ibid., p. 7-8

the conflict between his sense of freedom and the objective judgment of science."³⁶ The natural world is the world of an original unity. That Patocka finally approached the question of the natural world, human freedom and the problem of the whole from the point of view of the problems of existence, as formulated by Heidegger, now moves beyond our theme. I merely point out here the connection of the problem of the natural world as an original whole with the turn-about in Patocka's thinking to a focus on myth, and the modern myth at that, at a time when the very foundations of humanity were in doubt.

The work *Prirozený svet jako filosofický problém* elaborates the long-term program of a critic of objective scientism and a description of the pre-theoretical world (on the foundation of which it is necessary to found the universum of science): "it seeks to give only a kind of orientation in the ideal prehistory of theoretical thought."³⁷ In the description of Husserl's natural world of human life (natürliche Welt, Lebenswelt), Patocka makes use of Heidegger's analysis of existence in the world, of the temporality of existence. What is fundamental is how a person relates to his world. In addition to the dimension of distance (alienation) – nearness (home) and

³⁶ Cf. ft. no. 16, p. 273

³⁷ PATOCKA, Jan. *Prirozený svet jako filosofický problém.* / The natural world as a philosophical problem. Praha: Cs. spisovatel, 1992, p. 36. In his later work, a greater part of which remained unpublished, he also dealt with history of this idea.

Patocka's (second) doctoral thesis includes an extensive treatment of language and its analysis, because in language, that "first stage of our theoretical consciousness", the phenomena of the natural world present themselves to us. Thus, of course, the problem of the meaning of the whole and the theoretical power of speech-logos opens up, which is always at the foundation of every bit of knowledge. But let it be emphasized here that at the beginning of Patocka's mature thought stands this consistent insight into language, which also enables him to perceive adequately the fields of meaning in the analyses of texts. The question of meaning, which is always key in an explication of an artistic work, the question of hermeneutics, is, as we read in *Negative platonism* from the fifties, the Socratic question, the question which differentiates Socrates from metaphysics: to reveal the basic conflict in man between "his relation to the whole (logos), which is inseparably his, and the inability, the impossibility, of expressing this relation in the form of ordinary, finite knowledge. Thus Socrates elevates himself, in comparison to an ordinary way and direction of life, to a new level: it is not possible to articulate here objective, meaningful and positive statements, here he – despite the sovereignty of living – operates in complete void; he expresses his new truth – because the problem of truth is being concerned here – only in an indirect way, in the form of a question, in the form of a sceptical analysis, negation of all finite statements ... The substance of metaphysics, as created by Plato, Aristotle, Democrit, dwells in that, that the Socratic (presocratic) question is given again an answer, which is derived from the question itself by the philosopher." PATOCKA, Jan. *Negativní platonismus.* Praha. Cs. spisovatel, 1990, p. 17-18

the dimension of states and moods, this is first and foremost temporality – its unity of presence in the wide sense, its historical character and movement between the past and the present: "we do not accept entirely the world of our fathers, which for us belongs forever to the past. In the succession of generations, however, certain common tasks remain which phrase time – historical time. The world of our home is the world of tradition and further, of impulses carried and passed on. Mythos forms a fantastic final margo in the historical dimension; mythos, which is so relevant to the inventory of the naive world, and only suppressed by the scientific consciousness."³⁸ In his late work Patocka reworked the theme of his first book from the perspective of history. In *Kacířské eseje*, in this respect he takes a stance explicitly against Husserl; with reference to the historical character of revelation itself and the typologies of the movement of human existence in the world, he emphasizes the necessity of an ontic-ontological synthesis in such a description, in contrast with the attempt at an invariable in Husserl's description of the natural world.³⁹

The turn toward the study of the history of the Romantic myth thus is connected not only with a concentration on the history of the reaction to the Enlightenment in German philosophy and the idea of humanity, but also with the original theme of Patocka's phenomenological study. It is probably not possible to relate the original myth directly to the conception of the natural world; but with the Romantic myth, reacting to the Enlightenment conception of reason, it is possible and in particular when the historical character of this conception is concerned.

At the foundation of Patocka's conception of myth is a belief in the original truth of myth for which philosophy can provide no substitute. Even though it defines itself against the myth, it follows the path which is opened by the myth. Therefore myth is constantly present in our thinking. The relationship of philosophy to myth is ambiguous and one cannot maintain the view, most likely proceeding from the 18th century, that the real knowledge - science replaced myth. Philosophy emerged through the problematizing of the mythical world and through a radical questioning. This questioning turns the undifferentiated certainty

³⁸ PATOCKA, Jan. *Prirozený svět jako filosofický problém* / The natural world as a philosophical problem. Praha: Cs. spisovatel, 1992, p. 89

³⁹ REZEK, Petr: Filosofie evropanství Jana Patocky jako metafyzika pohybu/ Jan Patocka's philosophy of Europeanism as a metaphysics of movement. In REZEK, Petr: *Jan Patocka a vec fenomenologie*. Praha: Oikoymenh, 1993, p. 58. About a phenomenological term of history by Patocka cf. PETRÍČEK jr., M. Patocka: dejiny, filosofie/ Patocka: history, philosophy. *Reflexe*, 1994, no. 12

of an answer, such as appears in myth, into its opposite, a negation. With its skepticism it brings the original whole of meaning into the movement of uncertainty. In the case of Plato's myth about the cave, however, this negative character touches on the entirety of life, and therefore this difference has a general, absolute character: it defines and separates our world from something totally different, "which is determined as its measure".⁴⁰ Plato's myth about the end of myth and the beginning of philosophy thus means that philosophy in the future will not be able to do without myth.

Patočka studies myth in the most varied forms, beginning with his first pre-war university lectures on Socrates and the first philosophy, through to the context of Greek tragedy, time and the literary work. At the beginning of the fifties, in connection with the conception of the so-called negative Platonism, Patočka's thematization of myth enters into relation with his conception of the historical time of human existence as a creative arrangement of time; that is, the future produces historical time. The historical time of human existence, the debate of the future with the past in the present, turned towards the new, the future, is thus a radically discontinuous critical rejection of all that is given in tradition. The relation to "to heteron", to the absolute other, already includes a mythical experience, but as the actual mythical beginning determining all the rest, rather than as the future.⁴¹ "Myth is the possibility enabling one to speak about the Other" (for Patočka through the medium of Plato's conception of "chorismos").⁴² The pre-metaphysical ground is a reminder of the foundation lying close to myth – the pre-Socratic intuition – non-metaphysical philosophy – the fact of revelation, that the entirety of the world not only is, but also reveals itself to us.⁴³

⁴⁰ PETRÍČEK jr., M. Mýtus v Patočkově filosofii/ Myth in Patočka's philosophy. *Reflexe*, 1992, no. 5-6, p. 6-4

⁴¹ Cf. PATOČKA, J. Cas, mýtus, víra/ Time, myth, faith. *Křestanská revue*, 1952, vol. 19, no. 3-4, p. 112-116

⁴² Cf. footnote no. 40, p. 6-7. Petríček suggests here a comparison of other conceptions of this relationship by Heidegger, Lévinas and Foucault.

⁴³ "Revelation as a basic philosophical theme indicates that Patočka, like many other phenomenologists, rejects Husserl's transcendental subjectivity, which, as the last support of the system would still be something existent, and thus also a traditional metaphysical term, and at the same time [he] wants to go a different route from Heidegger (even if this difference can be interpreted in this case as a parallelism): according to Patočka, the problem of revelation opens up the problem of being and not the other way around" (cf. footnote no. 40, p. 6-10). "... mythos, rather than logos, is capable of revealing an infinite, inexhaustible meaning – of

This philosophical starting point and its development in the late lecture cycles about Plato and Europe thus also form the framework for the above-mentioned late reflections by Patocka on the position of myth in the dramas of Sophocles and in the Faust legend. At the same time, it must be remembered that this theme was not introduced by chance at that the end of the sixties and beginning of the seventies. The confrontation with modern calculating reason, which eliminates everything related to moral objectivity (in particular, Christian), here accentuates the world of the original meaning of myth as a moral problem. The experience of the natural world which is always in history (and as we have seen, myth is at the beginning of history and at the beginning of the reflection on meaning), is conceived as an original wholeness – freedom, in contrast with partiality and the reductive character of a mediated "received" objectivity. It is now easier to understand why Patocka's thinking also turned towards the questions of the Czech National Revival and Romanticism, to reflections on history and the conception, or philosophy, of Czech history in Palacký and Masaryk. Patocka had already confronted Masaryk's analysis of the crisis in European society, further to his second doctoral work, with Husserl's conception of the crisis of the European sciences.⁴⁴ Therefore it is necessary to refer in this connection to the parallel chronology of essays collected in the volumes *Péče o duši* [Care for the Soul], I-III of the *Collected Works*, as well as to the volume of Patocka's Czech studies, which will also include the original collection *O smysl dneška* [Concerning the Meaning of Our Time].⁴⁵ In this collection Patocka gathered together his reflections on the National Theatre, J. Jungmann and B. Bolzano, the so-called national program and others. In doing so, he put these historical reflections into relation with reflections on the role of the intelligentsia at the end of the 60s (not only in Czechoslovakia). Thus he made it evident what kind of meaning the return to the potential of the National Revival and to the questions of the outline of Czech history had for contemporary philosophy.

Around the mid-fifties, Patocka analyzed the aesthetics of Palacký as the foundation of his conception of history and translated Hegel's *Aesthetics*. Through these projects, Patocka began to think through again the entire sketched complex of

carrying or pointing out the trans-reflexive foundation of our thought. Philosophy (logos) knows this foundation only as a postulate" (ibid., p. 6-14).

⁴⁴ PATOČKA, J. Masarykovo a Husserlovo pojetí duševní krise evropského lidstva/ Masaryk's and Husserl's conception of spiritual crisis of European mankind. *Kvart*, 1936, vol. 3, no. 2, p. 91-102

⁴⁵ PATOČKA, Jan. *O smysl dneška*/ Concerning the meaning of Our Time. Praha: Mladá fronta, 1969

questions in a series of texts. These were dedicated, on the one hand, to the consequences of Hegel's conception for modern aesthetics (already here one finds the conception of the work as an opening to freedom as openness); and on the other hand, as mentioned above, to an account of classical myth from the perspective of the historical crisis and wars of the 20th century.

The study 'Umeni a cas' [Art and Time]⁴⁶ examines the ontology of modern art through the historical transformation of the function and meaning of the work of art. Modern art, as the art of the epoch dominated by intellectual knowledge, lacks the metaphysical quality as the harmonic dominant, as had been achieved in the art of religious or artistic periods. That is, it includes a multitude of such qualities which are often mutually incommensurable and, at the same time, equally powerful. This diversity, great quantity, but also lack of definition of meaning, the absence of a final saving distant goal on the horizon, is always disharmonic, even painful. This happens in our world designed by the empirical sciences, by mathematical natural science, and under the domination of what Patocka later calls science-technology. This age objectivizes humanity and sets up the consuming individual as an ideal. While philosophy is still uncertain in the conceptual designation of the source of human freedom, art demonstrates the presence of human freedom, at least "in so far as art is the creation of works whose way of looking at things includes its meaning in itself, as in a certain experience which does not point to anything other than itself."⁴⁷ This is the art of an aesthetic epoch, as Hegel anticipated it in his aesthetics as a historical discipline. Modern art carries within itself the fundamental historical conflict of its premises, created in the 19th century, from which different resolutions proceed in the 20th century. In the 19th century art often looked for answers in the creation of so-called artistic utopias. The art of the 20th century similarly does not designate or describe the ordinary world; however, it does fully express the world and is itself an irreplaceable part of our reality. The manifestation of inner freedom of modern art is a concentration on the signifying layer of meaning, sacrificing the signified-narrated metaphysical layer; that is, an emphasis on the layer which it is itself. And what is essential – this meaning is created by a participation in the work, and is created only through a communication of the elements which otherwise remain 'dumb'.

In his last extensive study, which Patocka circulated in samizdat in the fall of 1976, he turns again to the problem of meaning, this time focusing on its geneal-

⁴⁶ PATOCKA, J. *Umeni a cas/ Art and time. Orientace*, 1966, vol. 1, no. 5, p. 12-22

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 19

ogy, beginning with Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* and ending with Masaryk and Nietzsche.⁴⁸ The analysis of Dostoevsky's *The Brothers Karamazov* constitutes one of the centers of this reflection on modern moral theology. In particular through the analysis of the character of Ivan Karamazov, Patocka points out the anticipation of the analysis of existence and the discovery of a thus-far unknown region of meaning, as that, "for which we must work and devote ourselves: we are its shelter, its reality, which can, or even must, hope that in accompaniment with that openness towards the existence of others and those things, for the care of which meaning directs and entrusts us, a new life will emerge, a new land will be revealed and perhaps even something divine."⁴⁹ This reflection is, of course, confronted with Nietzsche's "history" of future centuries as centuries of ideological wars. It is not irrelevant that at this very time Patocka turns to the problem of human rights as a manifestation of freedom which Europe protected and may lose.

In Patocka's thought, art, like myth, constitutes those rationally non-negotiable regions of original meaning and human freedom, which objective thought and philosophy can only approach as a conception, striving for the kind of truthfulness which would be sufficient for these regions without, at the same time, reducing them.

⁴⁸ Okolo Masarykovy filosofie náboženství/ About Masaryk's philosophy of religion. In PATOCKA, Jan. *Tri studie o Masarykovi*. Praha: Mladá fronta, 1991, p. 53-119

⁴⁹ Ibid., p. 86