

**Solidarity of the Shaken:
The Ethical and the Political
in the Thought of Jan Patočka**

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I, Michaela Belejaničová, declare that the work presented in this dissertation is my own. It was carried out in accordance with the requirements of the University's Regulations and Code of Practice for Research Degree Programmes and that it has not been submitted for any other academic award. When information has been derived from other sources, I confirm that this has been indicated in the work.

Abstract

In his final work, *Heretical Essays in the Philosophy of History* (1975), Jan Patočka introduces the concept of a novel political community – the *solidarity of the shaken*. Conventional interpretations argue that this concept laid the phenomenological foundations of the civic initiative of Charter 77 and the politics of dissent. This view, however, reduces the scope of Patočka's philosophy and undermines the contemporary relevance of his thought. The aim of this dissertation is to abstract Patočka's ideas on the solidarity of the shaken from the context of Czech dissent and to highlight its relevance in a wider scholarly debate on the concept of community.

First, I examine the development of Patočka's idea of the crisis throughout his philosophical career. I describe the phenomenological foundations of the crisis, as well as Patočka's critical reflections on the political situation of his time. All these developments of the crisis climax with the emergence of the salvific community – the solidarity of the shaken. Second, I analyse a movement from the experience (*Erlebnis*) to history. I contrast the solidarity of the shaken with Ernst Jünger's idea of solidarity as *Frontgemeinschaft*, both of which emerge from the conditions of the frontline. Patočka observes that Jünger's *Frontgemeinschaft*, being founded on the Nietzschean doctrine of *will to power*, sets a par excellence foundation for a reductively materialist history and is insufficient as a response to the crisis. However, both solidarities are constituted via transcendence. Third, I reconstruct the concept of transcendence described in Jünger's essay 'Across the Line' (1953), which heralds history by 'extension' of nihilism and the idea of transcendence in Patočka's works founded on ethical principles. Finally, I analyse in detail the ethical foundations of the solidarity of the shaken – the concepts of *sacrifice* and *care for the soul* – and I focus on the outcomes of these solidarities in the political realm.

Patočka defines the solidarity of the shaken in an attempt to revive the positive aspects of solidarity and to break with the regressive (if not sinister) uses to which it was put in the 20th century. More importantly, via the solidarity of the shaken, Patočka responds to the perils of materialist history, which laid the foundations for fascism and the communist regime in Czechoslovakia, and which represents danger regarding how to solve the crisis of democracy and the challenges of neo-liberal globalisation today.

Impact Statement

This thesis began with the question of how Jan Patočka's concept of the *solidarity of the shaken* can contribute to the current discussion on the political community and how his thought might offer an alternative solution to the crisis of democracy. In order to respond to the problems of the contemporary political crisis, one needs to focus not on the values of slowly perishing liberal democracies. To form a counterweight to sinister solidarities (e.g., alt-right movements based on the principle of a solidarity *against*), one needs to focus on concept of a community itself as the only realistic alternative to the spreading tendencies of these sinister movements. That is, what is needed is the emergence of a new democratic solidarity which can challenge the polarisation and militarism of society and its selfish exploitation of resources. In light of this possibility, this thesis examines Jan Patočka's concept of the solidarity of the shaken and considers how this and other various types of political communities are constituted.

So far, there has been little work undertaken to clarify this central concept of Patočka's political philosophy. Nevertheless, the examination of the foundations of such a community could challenge the rising tendencies of alt-right movements across Europe and offer an alternative response to the crisis of democracy.

This thesis aims to liberate Patočka from being viewed solely as a philosopher of Czech dissent and to contextualise his philosophy within the wider scope of Western European thought. To do so, it avoids the peril of fetishization and melancholy (which the martyrological aspect of Patočka's fate is exposed to) and thus releases his philosophy from being viewed as exclusively laying foundation for Czech dissent. This thesis engages his thought in a critical dialogue with thinkers who significantly contributed to the development of the ideas of philosophy of history and political community. The major conclusion here is that communities based on the politics of identity belong to the so-called solidarities against. Their driving force is not a grounded, rational, pragmatic reasoning but rather an emotional hostility and animosity against the other. Through his idea of the solidarity of the shaken, Patočka proposes a novel political community, the founding principle of which is openness and *problematicity* – the effort to critically assess reality around us and to collectively seek the truth.

Non-academic benefits stem from this dissertation, mainly in the field of education. Many issues remain unsettled concerning the constitution of communities, including their foundations and their potential impact on the political realm. This research seeks to show that philosophy can help to answer some of the most pressing political dilemmas of today. The main argument of this thesis is that the study of the ethical foundations of a community can help to navigate in the political realm and to distinguish between various forms of communities and their agendas in this post-truth age.

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Introduction

Jan Patočka's death is surrounded by myth, which to a great extent affects the interpretation of his philosophy and links his thought with the sentiment of dissent exclusively. On March 1st, 1977, Jan Patočka, despite being confined to bed with chronic bronchitis, decided to meet Dutch Foreign Minister Max van der Stoep. The meeting enraged the Czechoslovak authorities, as they perceived it as interference in Czechoslovakia's political affairs.¹ Thus, the police visited the Czech philosopher in his home several times between the 1st of March and the 3rd. On the 3rd of March, the Czechoslovak secret police took Patočka to a police station, where he underwent an exhausting 11-hour interrogation, after which he returned home. However, Patočka felt unwell and was taken to hospital, where he wrote two more essays: 'What We Can Expect from Charter 77' and an interview for *Die Zeit*.² Unfortunately, 10 days later, Patočka fell unconscious and died in Prague hospital on March 13th, 1977. The cause of death was a brain haemorrhage.³

Immediately, Western scholars reacted to Patočka's death. Richard Rorty, in his essay 'The Seer of Prague', describes Patočka's death as follows: 'Three months after the publication of the Charter, on March 13, 1977, he died of a brain haemorrhage, while being interrogated.'⁴ Rorty, in his statement, sets the foundation of a martyr-narrative, which very quickly and without any further critical questioning became the norm for assessing Patočka's life, death and his philosophical legacy.⁵ Patočka became the Socrates

¹Jonathan Bolton, *Worlds of Dissent: Charter 77 The Plastic People of the Universe, and Czech Culture under Communism* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2012), p. 159.

²Ibid., p. 158.

³Ibid.

⁴Richard Rorty, 'The Seer of Prague', *The New Republic*, 205, (1991), 35-40 (p. 36).

⁵See, for example: Edward F. Findlay, *Caring for the Soul in a Postmodern Age: Politics and Phenomenology in the Thought of Jan Patočka* (Albany: State University of New York, 2002), p. 1; Erazim Kohák, *Jan Patočka: Philosophy and Selected Writings* (Chicago & London: The University of Chicago Press, 1989), p. 131.

of Prague.

The strong emphasis on his martyrdom established Patočka as the philosopher of Czech dissent. The myth of Patočka's martyrdom was significant for Czech dissent, the meaning of which bestowed 'a self-identification on a larger community, of presenting beliefs to the outside world, and of inspiring it to further cohesiveness and activity.'⁶ The myth not only categorised Patočka as a Czech martyr belonging to the cohort of Czech heroes such as Jan Hus, Comenius, Masaryk, and Palach, who sacrificed their lives for the Czech nation,⁷ it also represented a momentum, reassuring and justifying political action of Czech dissent, 'inspiring it to further cohesiveness and activity.'⁸

Bolton, however, observes that 'accounts, exaggerating the martyrological aspects of Patočka's death, do no service to his memory.'⁹ The legend portrays Patočka either as an unfortunate individual or as a representative of a typical fate,¹⁰ and it thus causes an undesirable sentiment of melancholy and *depoliticises* and clearly confines the relevance of his thought to a particular historical and intellectual context. In her work *Walter Benjamin: Overpowering Conformism* Esther Leslie portrays the impact melancholy and fetishisation of philosophers' tragic fate can have on their philosophical legacy: '[a] tragic hero, torn apart by melancholy and the difficulty of existing, becomes detached from the political history in which and against which he was engaged actively, and is made a passive victim of a sorrowful fate.'¹¹ This involves 'a danger of memory as disempowerment'¹², which results in, 'the tendency for memory and memorials to fetishize the act of remembering and not the remembrance of acting'¹³. The melancholy subject 'dwells on fragments, clouded by a tormented sense of occluded significance in dwelling in insignificant things.'¹⁴ In order to avoid the peril of fetishisation and melancholy, the martyrological aspect of Patočka's fate are exposed to; it is necessary to re-think and highlight the rele-

⁶Bolton, *Worlds of Dissent*, p. 160.

⁷Ibid., p. 160.

⁸Ibid.

⁹Ibid., p. 159.

¹⁰Esther Leslie, *Walter Benjamin* (London: Reaktion Books, 2007), p. 218.

¹¹Esther Leslie, *Walter Benjamin: Overpowering Conformism* (London and Sterling, Virginia: Pluto Press, 2000), p. 213.

¹²Ibid.

¹³Ibid.

¹⁴Ibid., pp. 213-214.

vance of Patočka's philosophy to the contemporary political situation, releasing his philosophy from the cocoon of the legend of his martyr death and liberating him from being viewed solely as a philosopher of dissent.

The crisis in the contemporary political realm reaches beyond the crisis of liberal democracy. It could be best described as the era of neo-liberal globalisation, which has opened up a new opposition between the economic and political elites, both of whom exercise their power over seemingly powerless citizens. The tendencies of isolationism and fear and the formation of various sinister forms of solidarity are spreading throughout Europe. Fear of the other (be it immigrants or minorities) leads to the formation of alliances and groups that promote ideas of hatred and that justify means of violence to achieve their ends. Far-right movements have gradually been gaining strength in all European countries in the past decade and have been undermining democratic principles by propagating irrational fear and emotions of hatred and disgust. Due to citizens' disappointment with the political situation and fear of losing their national and religious heritage, such an attitude appears to many to be the only reasonable solution to the challenges of neo-liberal globalisation. The fascist alternative and populist rhetoric, which operates with the ideas of racism, gender inequality, and xenophobia, promises to protect citizens and to guarantee their material well-being.

In order to respond to the problems of the contemporary political crisis, one needs to focus not on the values of the world's slowly perishing liberal democracies. In order to form a counterweight to these sinister solidarities, it is no longer sufficient solely to appeal to the ideals and principles of democracy. In order to challenge the problem of citizens' solidarity with the ideology of alt-right, one needs to focus their attention on the concept of a community itself, as the only realistic alternative to the spreading tendencies of alt-right movements is the emergence of a new democratic solidarity, which will challenge the polarisation and militarism of the society and the selfish exploitation of resources. In light of this possibility, it is necessary to examine solidarity and to consider how various types of political communities are formed. In this regard, Patočka's idea of the *solidarity of the shaken* offers a possible alternative for such a community, and his view could challenge

the rising tendencies of far-right movements. Similarly to Chantal Mouffe¹⁵ and Nancy Fraser,¹⁶ he astutely recognised that nothing but a community embodies the aspect of the ethical in the realm of the political.

This thesis focuses on Jan Patočka's concept of the solidarity of the shaken, which appears in his final work, *Heretical Essays in the Philosophy of History* (1975). Patočka did not write a single essay devoted to the examination of the solidarity of the shaken exclusively. A concise and detailed examination of the concept is missing. He explains neither how the solidarity of the shaken is constituted, nor what the aim of such a community would be regarding the political realm. He mentions the concept only five times throughout his entire scholarly career; thus, leaving his readers with only a few, enigmatic indications and puzzling traits. It is unknown whether Patočka was planning to develop the concept further and whether he would have if not for his unexpected death, meaning he did not have the time to fully clarify the key idea of his emerging political philosophy. Patočka leaves the idea only half-formulated but connected to claims and concepts that remain mysterious to most commentators.

Although Patočka wrote his essays in 1975, for some unknown reason he links this hypothetical solidarity with the conditions of political violence – the First World War frontline experience – and argues that the solidarity of the shaken emerged out of the line of fire of the frontline trenches. Patočka refers to the vivid descriptions of the frontline experiences offered by Ernst Jünger in his *The Struggle as the Inner Experience* (*Der Kampf als inneres Erlebnis* [1922]) and Pierre Teilhard de Chardin's *Writings of the Time of the War* (*Écrits du temps de la guerre* [1916–1919]). Moreover, Patočka associates the solidarity of the shaken with metaphors of *day* and *night*, conversion as *metanoia*, and *sacrifice*, which only further problematise the concept. Rather than being illuminating, Patočka's ideas are ambiguous and open to a variety of interpretations.

In my dissertation, I argue that Patočka did not invent the obscure vocabulary he used *ex nihilo*. Concepts such as frontline experience, sacrifice and the metaphors of day

¹⁵Chantal Mouffe, 'Democratic Citizenship and the Political Community', in *Dimensions of Radical Democracy, Pluralism, Citizenship, Community*, ed. by Chantal Mouffe (London & New York: Verso Books, 1992), pp. 225-239 (p. 238).

¹⁶Nancy Fraser, 'Toward a Discourse Ethic of Solidarity', *Praxis International*, Vol. 5, No. 4 (1986), 425-429 (p. 428).

and night were commonly used by thinkers in the inter-war and post-war eras in their examination of *community* (*Gemeinschaft*). I, therefore, extend the conventional interpretations of Patočka's final text as being an exclusively critical reflection of Edmund Husserl's and Martin Heidegger's models of philosophy of history and propose a *new* reading of *Heretical Essays*, examining them as a contribution to the scholarly debate on the concept of *Gemeinschaft*.

Historical Context

Patočka was writing about the solidarity of the shaken in 1975, during the period of normalisation in Czechoslovakia. During this time, Patočka was not allowed to pursue his academic career; he was expelled from the university in 1972 and forced into premature retirement.¹⁷ His works were banned under a severe censorship regime.¹⁸ Patočka, however, continued delivering (illegal) seminars to his students in the so-called 'Underground University' and was persistently writing and publishing his essays in *samizdat*. Patočka in his works from this period, either his published lectures *Plato and Europe* (1973) or *Heretical Essays in the Philosophy of History* (1975), or even his two essays on Charter 77,¹⁹ despite the favourable setting and opportunity, does not encourage his students to take political action to overturn the communist regime in Czechoslovakia. Instead, Patočka talks about ethical principles and moral underpinnings, and about the forgotten ideal of *care for the soul*, which are, he believes, the core elements of political action. Patočka, instead of encouraging his students to fight physically the totalitarian regime in Czechoslovakia, offers them hope. He discusses the salvific community of the solidarity of the shaken, a community that adopted the notion of care for the soul. Thus, Patočka, in his work, does not lay a foundation for rebellion, nor for a resistance group in the primary sense of the term. The solidarity of the shaken does not embody a 'political opposition that contests power'²⁰ in the common sense; instead, the concept represents a

¹⁷ Kohák, *Jan Patočka*, p. 106.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 27.

¹⁹ Jan Patočka, 'The Obligation to Resist Injustice', in Kohák, *Jan Patočka*, pp. 340–342; Jan Patočka, 'What We Can and Cannot Expect from Charta 77', in Kohák, *Jan Patočka*, pp. 343–345.

²⁰ Jérôme Melançon, 'Jan Patočka's Sacrifice: Philosophy as Dissent', *Continental Philosophy Review*, Vol. 46, No. 4 (2013), pp. 577–602 (p. 580).

community that undermines the ruling regime via a strong *ethical* principle – care for the soul – that enables it to reveal the truth about the world and the political authorities and power in particular.

Conventional interpretations argue that the solidarity of the shaken represents a phenomenological foundation for the civic initiative of Charter 77, of which Patočka was a spokesman.²¹ They argue that the novel political community directly correlates with Charter 77.²² In my thesis, however, I argue that the solidarity of the shaken cannot be reduced only to the civic initiative of Charter 77; that is, to a solidarity that opposed the communist regime in Czechoslovakia only. The solidarity of the shaken has a much broader scope and meaning; it represents a phenomenological foundation for all non-violent resistant movements that fight against all forms of injustice via ethical means.

Philosophical Context

Conventional interpretations of *Heretical Essays* argue that the essays are the result of Patočka's critical readings of the philosophies of history of his contemporaries Husserl and Heidegger.²³ There are indeed some very striking similarities between these thinkers. Pa-

²¹‘The signers [of Charter 77], of course, knew that their action would expose them to intense persecution and would cost them all the advantages that the regime was willing to offer its subjects as a bribe for silence. But that is just the point: the solidarity of the shaken, as Patočka presents it, is a community of those who know that those advantages are not what life is about.’ In: Kohák, *Jan Patočka*), p. 131; ‘Charter 77, the actual solidarity of the shaken [...]’ In: Aviezer Tucker, *The Philosophy and Politics of Czech Dissidence from Patočka to Havel* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2000), p. 74.

²²In his two writings on Charter 77, Patočka does not mention the concept of the solidarity of the shaken. The reason for this might be that the two essays describing the objectives and purpose of Charter 77 were aimed at the general public, which may not have been familiar with Patočka's phenomenological works and his idea of the solidarity of the shaken in particular.

²³Kohák examines the problem of history in the *Heretical Essays* in the following context: ‘This is also why, in spite of his kinship with Husserl, Patočka here considers Heidegger's rather than Husserl's phenomenology as the appropriate framework for his raising the question of history. Both are philosophies of truth yet for Husserl that truth is a matter of ultimate clarity of rational insight, and so basically static and ahistorical, the perspective of a disinterested spectator. History in his view could be almost the story of the way to that absolute clarity not that clarity itself. It is Heidegger, for whom truth is the involved drawing out of being, and life in truth an ongoing effort to transcend the world in freedom, reaching out to a horizon whose revealing always at the same time conceal, that presents a framework for understanding history capable in Patočka's words, of ‘defending the autonomy of being against the subjectivism.’ In: Kohák, *Jan Patočka*, p. 122. Or as Stojka argues: ‘There are no doubts that in Patočka's model of history we find various resources and possible examinations of problems, which differentiate his [Patočka's] theory from the standpoints of his predecessors – from Husserl's conception of the European History and a novel understanding of science, as well as from Heidegger's final statement regarding one's preparation for the event (*Ereignis*) by means of thinking and poetry.’ In: Róbert Stojka, *Patočkova filozofia dejín* (Košice:

točka, in his idea of solidarity, follows Heidegger's concept of *existence of Dasein* as it appears in *Being and Time* (1927). He is fascinated by Heidegger's examination of human beings in the concrete world; his idea of being in the world and being with others. Both Heidegger and Patočka elaborate greatly on the concept of *finitude*, and while Heidegger speaks about *anxiety*, Patočka uses the concept of the *loss of the meaning*, a phenomenon that triggers *shaking* and opens up the possibility for an authentic existence. In Heidegger's case, it is precisely anxiety that causes a human being to be confronted by one's own finitude. In the case of Patočka, it is the loss of any support, the loss of meaning, the loss of the metaphysical ground that leads a human being to the realisation of one's finitude and to face nothingness. Although Patočka is, to a great extent, influenced by Heidegger, he shares the starting point of his analysis of the solidarity of the shaken with him), he overcomes Heidegger. From Patočka's perspective, Heidegger fails to portray the link between living with others and the political realm. Patočka is interested in the political dimension of living with others and elaborates on the topic of politics. He draws a parallel between the Greek *polis* (city) and the situation in Czechoslovakia at the time and attempts to reinvent the meaning of the conditions of pure meaninglessness.

Patočka's analysis of Husserl and Heidegger in *Heretical Essays* only partially explains the solidarity of the shaken. These references do not fully clarify what the concept represents in the political realm, nor its purpose. In my thesis, therefore, I argue that, to answer these questions, we need to focus our attention on Patočka's analysis of the context in which he examines the solidarity of the shaken – the conditions of the front-line, his references to Pierre Teilhard de Chardin and Ernst Jünger, as well as the cryptic metaphors of day, night, *metanoia*, sacrifice and the concept of *polemos*. Patočka's analysis of Jünger's and Teilhard de Chardin's examinations of the frontline experience seem, initially, only a minor reference, overshadowed by his extensive analyses of the geopolitical situation of Europe after the Second World War.

University of Pavel Jozef Šafárik, 2013), p. 16. Another conventional examination of Patočka's idea of history is provided by Findlay: 'The subject of the fifth essay is framed as a question, and it again draws on the Heideggerean analysis of the character of technology.' In: Findlay, *Care for the Soul in a Postmodern Age*, p. 133. And finally Derrida argues: 'What is implicit yet explosive in Patočka's text can be extended in a radical way, for it is heretical with respect to a certain Christianity and a certain Heideggerianism but also with respect to all the important European discourses.' In: Jacques Derrida, *The Gift of Death*, trans. by David Wills (Chicago & London: University of Chicago Press, 1995), p. 30.

However, Patočka's analyses of Jünger's and Teilhard de Chardin's views on the frontline experience actually represent an important moment and in order to obtain a better understanding of the solidarity of the shaken on both its phenomenological and political levels, we need to pay more attention to these references. A close reading of Patočka's comments on Jünger and Teilhard de Chardin helps us to *contextualise* Patočka's concept of the solidarity of the shaken better and to understand the role of the idea in the political realm.

In *Heretical Essays*, Patočka argues that although both Jünger and Teilhard de Chardin discovered in the frontline trenches a positive power of *polemos*, they failed to overcome the *nihilism* that the frontline experience as the manifestation of war represents. Jünger utilises this momentum to expound his ideas on *total mobilisation*, which in principle encouraged the outbreak of another war. Interpreting this concept in Patočka's argument, Jünger misses the opportunity the frontline experience presented and only extends and transforms that experience into active nihilism. Teilhard de Chardin, on the other hand, sees in the frontline experience a strong Christian motif. He speaks about the frontline experience as the appearance of the *holy*, the *divine*, which in Patočka's view only leads to social seclusion and isolationism for private benefit. Patočka argues that Teilhard de Chardin's ideas do not overcome the nihilism of the war either, but only extend it further in the form of passive nihilism. This might seem an unimportant argument that does not reveal much about the solidarity of the shaken and its characteristics. However, in this very context, Patočka claims that nihilism can be overcome, and that this is possible only by the solidarity of the shaken.

The Jünger references in particular may create an impression that, in his notion of the solidarity of the shaken, Patočka refers to a conservative Christian form of solidarity as an attempt to re-create Jünger's idea of *Frontgemeinschaft* (the community of the frontline) and its values. By the solidarity of the shaken, Patočka does not propose any form of religious Christian brotherhood, nor the conservative community of the *Frontgemeinschaft* either – a camaraderie of the front, in which men are unified by their commonly shared experience. In my thesis, I argue against these assumptions by examining the foundations of this form of the solidarity, as well as its radicalised form *Volksgemein-*

schaft (the national community), as celebrated in Heidegger's infamous *Rector's Speech*.²⁴ Furthermore, I demonstrate that the solidarity of the shaken represents a novel form of community, a counterweight to all sinister forms of solidarities, being bound by national, religious, racial and class affiliation. The solidarity of the shaken represents the *groundless* community, which is *open to all*, and the aim of which is to search for the meaning in the conditions of the shaking.

The idea of the solidarity of the shaken is usually interpreted as an ethical community that shares nothing except the experience of the shaking itself. It is a community of those who went beyond their individual egoistic needs and opened up to solidarity with others. The 'shaken' implies that this is a community of those whose lives were disturbed and radically undermined by some traumatic experience that forced them to reassess their values. However, the concept may also indicate a community of those who embrace the end of metaphysics, namely that one cannot rely on God, on traditions and on beliefs. All certainties have been 'shaken', and we are called to face up to and take responsibility for that.

Following the German Nazi occupation of Prague in the spring of 1939, Patočka was expelled from the Faculty of Philosophy due to the closure of all Czech universities. During this period, Patočka wrote a few very important essays in which he expressed his disagreement with the philosophy and values of National Socialism. In 1939, he wrote an essay entitled *Czech Culture in Europe*, in which he interpreted the values of humanism, which he believed are not inherent to the Czech nation but belong to European heritage at large. Patočka also wrote his famous interpretations of Karel Hynek Mácha's poems, which were published as 'The Earth as a Symbol' (1939). In this essay, he introduces enigmatic symbols and the dialectics of nature and history, time and eternity. Patočka further develops these symbols and metaphors in *Heretical Essays*, in his examination of the solidarity of the shaken, especially when he introduces the dialectic of day and night and discusses the frontline trenches as the moment of being swallowed by *Mother Earth*, which, from his perspective, may signify the beginning of history.

Following the Second World War, in 1946, Patočka wrote his famous essay 'Ideol-

²⁴Martin Heidegger, 'The Self-Assertion of the German University and The Rectorate 1933/34: Facts and Thoughts', *Review of Metaphysics*, 38.3, (1985), pp. 467–502.

ogy and the life in the Idea'. In this essay, he openly criticises ideologies – be they fascism, communism or liberalism, and argues that not ideology per se, but the idea must be always embodied in the political realm. Patočka observes in the ideology of fascism and, later also, in other ideologies, something very peculiar, a universal pattern for all of them. All ideologies, Patočka believes, create an illusion that *work*²⁵ and *production* represent the highest values and accomplishments of a human life, while a human being is reduced to a *force* that makes this technological progress possible. Jünger promotes the idea of *titanism* and *heroism* and speaks about the typus of the worker, who is half human and half machine.²⁶ Patočka, however, sees beyond this demagogy, beyond the reduction of the world and man to mere objects and forces. In his emphasis on the spiritual realm and on care for the soul, he aims to reveal that there is something more important and valuable than the techno-scientific progress of civilisation – the *soul*, the *spirit*. This notion may sound too abstract, but if we imagine Patočka's situation when not intellect and spirit but only manual work was valued and appreciated, then Patočka must have felt an overwhelming urge to save what belongs of European heritage, but which was slowly and definitely vanishing.

The idea of being reduced to a worker and a force must have been shocking for him. Nevertheless, intelligentsia in totalitarian regimes were considered a danger and the cause of rupture for the smooth running of industrial society and, thus, something that must be diminished. Patočka, however, was aware that such a society has no future. Therefore, his aim was to demonstrate that it is precisely the soul that defines us as humans and that we need to cultivate this soul through maintaining a constant dialogue with ourselves. He believed in the necessity of the spirit, the solidarity of the shaken that would shake the system, the society and represent the source of a constant rupture. Only in this way can humanity escape being reduced to force, to an amorphous mass, and maintain

²⁵Here, I refer to the concept of *work* in the Arendtian sense, as introduced in *The Human Condition*. Work, compared with labour, leaves behind durable things, and these things become the part of our world, in which we live. An ultimate aspect of work is violence, because, to produce durable objects, we violate and exploit materials from the environment (i.e. raw materials). In contrast, labour is associated with biological needs and the idea of self-preservation. While work has a clearly defined beginning and end, labour is cyclical and constantly repeats itself. See: Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 2nd edn (Chicago & London: The University of Chicago Press, 2013), p. 136-139.

²⁶Ernst Jünger, *The Worker: Dominion and Form*, ed. by Laurence Paul Hemming, trans. by Bogdan Costea and Laurence Paul Hemming (Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 2017), p. 69.

their dignity. The concept of the solidarity of the shaken should be considered a critical reaction to all potential totalitarian regimes and misleading ideologies, not just to the totalitarian regime in Czechoslovakia at that time.

As Patočka, via his examination of the concept, contributes to a wider discourse on *Gemeinschaft*, in my examination I focus on the possible links between the solidarity of the shaken and Ernst Jünger's idea of *Frontgemeinschaft*, which further developed into the typus of the *worker*. My aim is to debunk the myth that Patočka's idea of the solidarity of the shaken was in any way associated with the sinister forms of solidarities – be it Patočka's effort to re-create a community of *Frontgemeinschaft* or *Volksgemeinschaft* in the political realm of then communist Czechoslovakia. Although there might be an overlap between the solidarity of the shaken and Jünger's *Frontgemeinschaft* – the constitution of both of these communities describes the same movement from the frontline trenches to the event (the beginning of history) - the concept of *transcendence* they elaborate on to achieve the moment of history (the event) radically differs. I argue that while Jünger's community of *Frontgemeinschaft* is founded on the ideas of the *extension of nihilism* and *will to power*; Patočka's solidarity of the shaken is founded on strictly ethical principles.

The concept of the solidarity of the shaken was inspired by Plato's *The Republic*, representing an ethical authority that protects the city (*polis*). If we decontextualise Patočka's idea of the solidarity of the shaken from the polis from the context of Ancient Greek thought, we will obtain a community that reminds us that there is something beyond our everydayness, something that is worth suffering for. The solidarity of the shaken reminds us of integrity, of being faithful to one's ideas and of maintaining a constant inner dialogue with oneself (just as Socrates did). Furthermore, the concept reminds us that the highest ideal is not work as many ideologies try to convince us; to live a good life in the city, one needs to implement care for the soul, which means one needs to free oneself from the attachment to mundane life, to the everydayness, and to embrace one's finiteness, because only this places life in perspective.

Literature Review

The Concept of Solidarity

Solidarity is usually associated with socialist ideals. The notion represents fellowships, unions and movements bound by commonly shared interests and responsibilities, as well as sentiments of compassion and empathy for other, usually vulnerable, marginalised and excluded people. Following the socialist ideals, solidarities are movements that aimed to defend and protect the rights of workers. However, solidarity is a highly ambiguous concept; as it became popular, it was misused by far-right movements. In German National Socialism, for instance, the concept of ‘European solidarity’ called for political loyalty between European people. This form of solidarity was founded on the atrocious ideas of ‘the racist myth that Europeans belonged to the ‘Aryan race’’,²⁷ and ‘a European-wide consensus of the extreme Right on anti-communism, anti-Semitism, anti-democratic and ultra-nationalist views’.²⁸ The notion of European solidarity presupposed ‘the existence of cross-border relations within Europe.’²⁹ Therefore, this solidarity does not possess solely positive connotations, but might also take on its more sinister form. Furthermore, solidarity can be founded either on stark *antagonism* towards the other (solidarity against...) or on *openness* to and empathy with the other (solidarity with...). While the first form maintains the security of the group and usually stems from fear, hatred and disgust of the other, the second entails risk, contingency and uncertainty about outcomes.

Probably the most famous discourse on solidarity is by Émile Durkheim – a French sociologist who distinguished between two forms of solidarity: *mechanical* solidarity, based on kinship and similarity,³⁰ and *organic* solidarity, based on mutual (economic) interdependence.³¹ The solidarity of the shaken, however, escapes these Durkheimian characteristics. The notion escapes both the aspect of kinship and economy, and instead becomes a solidarity based on *ethical* principles and is constituted in the moment of *tran-*

²⁷Johannes Dafinger, ‘Show solidarity, live solitarily: the Nazi ‘New Europe’ as a ‘family of peoples’’, *European Review of History: Revue européenne d’histoire*, Vol. 24, Issue 6, (2017), pp. 905–917 (p. 905).

²⁸Ibid.

²⁹Ibid.

³⁰Émile Durkheim, *The Division of Labor in Society*, trans. by W.D. Halls (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1997), p. 31.

³¹Ibid., p. 149.

scendence.

In his book *Mutual Aid: A Factor of Evolution* (1902), anarchist and revolutionary Peter Kropotkin argues that the feeling of human solidarity is ‘deeply lodged in men’s understanding and heart, because it has been nurtured by all our preceding evolution’.³² This quote reveals that Kropotkin focuses on solidarity from the perspective of its *evolutionary* development, stretching from the primitive forms of savage solidarities to the significance of solidarities in the establishment of social institutions.

Other well-known essays and debates on the concept of solidarity include Jean Luc Nancy’s essay *Fraternity*, which examines the concept of *brotherhood*. The essay earned stark criticism from Jacques Derrida, who argued that solidarity as brotherhood presupposes solely the community of men – brothers, while excluding all others.³³ In *Contingency, Irony and Solidarity*, Richard Rorty discusses the solidarity of comrades³⁴ united solidarity by their mutually shared interest and affiliation. The solidarity Rorty presents in his work, therefore, is similar to that of Jean Luc Nancy in presupposing the group of the excluded – of those who are not brothers and who do not share the same values. Despite the potential overlap between these forms of solidarity and the solidarity of the shaken, I argue that the community of the solidarity of the shaken escapes the idea of the exclusion of the other. The solidarity of the shaken, being founded on ethical principles is open to everyone regardless of their race, nation, religion or gender. The foundation of this solidarity is the experience of the ‘shaking’ itself.

Patočka’s Legacy

Writings that emerged between the 1970s (the period of normalisation in communist Czechoslovakia) and the early 1990s (the period immediately following the Velvet Revolution in November, 1989, which heralded the collapse of the communist regime) more or less directly perceive Patočka’s philosophy as closely connected to the dissident move-

³²Peter Kropotkin, *Mutual Aid: A Factor of Evolution* (New York: Cosimo Inc., 2009), p. 292.

³³Jacques Derrida, *Rogues: Two Essays on Reason*, trans. by Pascale-Anne Brault and Michael Naas (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2005), pp. 65–66.

³⁴Richard Rorty, *Contingency, Irony and Solidarity* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1989), p. 190.

ment of Charter 77. While writers like Václav Bělohradský³⁵ and Václav Havel³⁶ utilise Patočka's works to create an ethical moral platform for the philosophy of Czech dissent, others, such as Petr Rezek³⁷ in his work *Philosophy and Politics of Kitsch* (1990), fervently criticise the endeavours of Czech dissident groups and try to dissociate Patočka's philosophy from its strong attachment to dissidence.³⁸ Writings from this period (especially those of Bělohradský and Havel) aimed to create a strong bond between the philosophy of Patočka and the political events of his time. Havel, in particular, reacted against Machiavelli's political philosophy and, with the help of Patočka's thought (the ethical principles of *living in truth* and care for the soul), revitalised a strong bond between politics and morality. Of course, Havel's efforts to utilise Patočka's philosophy to express his own political thoughts were driven by the euphoria that surrounded the collapse of communism in the Eastern Bloc and led to the transition to democracy (or, more specifically, to Western capitalism). Rezek did not follow Havel's agenda but, like other dissident philosophers (Dubský, Němec and Kohák), portrayed Patočka as a phenomenologist exclusively. In the effort to save Patočka's phenomenology from the social and political turn that Havel strived for, Rezek criticised and mocked Havel's efforts. While Havel, to a great extent, contributed to the popularisation of Patočka's philosophical legacy in the 1990s, this did not counter, as Rezek predicted, the simplification and misinterpretation of Patočka's ideas. However, Rezek's solution of analysing Patočka's work using an orthodox phenomenological interpretation leads to another extreme of approaching Patočka's philosophy, when the readership of his is reduced to only a very small circle of phenomenology specialists.

³⁵Václav Bělohradský, *Přirozený svět jako politický problém: Eseje o člověku pozdní doby* [1977-1989] (Prague: Edice orientace, 1991).

³⁶Václav Havel, *The Power of the Powerless: Citizens against the State in Central-eastern Europe* [1978], ed. by John Keane (London & New York: Routledge, 2010).

³⁷Petr Rezek, *Filozofie a politika kýče* (Prague: Ztichlá klika, 2007).

³⁸However, these two opposing perceptions of Patočka's philosophy also clearly modify the understanding of his notion of the solidarity of the shaken. Seeing Patočka's philosophy as closely related to the politics of Czech dissidence suggests a possible interpretation of his concept of the community – namely, that the solidarity of the shaken had already materialised in realpolitik and took the form of the dissident movement relating to Charter 77. On the contrary, those authors who criticise the connection between Patočka's philosophy and Czech dissidence perceive the solidarity of the shaken in more universal terms: as a community that has not found its concrete materialisation in history yet – as a community that is abstract and that serves as a phenomenological form guiding the creation of such communities – while its concretisation in realpolitik remains open to speculation.

One of the most notable works assessing Patočka's scholarship from the lens of dissent is Aviezer Tucker's work, *The Philosophy and Politics of Czech Dissidence from Patočka to Havel* (2000). It represents the most comprehensive piece on both the philosophical and political foundation of Czech dissidence, spanning the drafting of Charter 77 up through the Velvet Revolution in 1989 and its aftermath. Tucker explores the influence of the philosophies of both Patočka and Havel on Czech dissidence from an entirely theoretical perspective. He bases this claim on his lack of involvement in the signing of Charter 77, which he argues allows him to evaluate this topic without the bias of political or ideological agenda.³⁹ Although Tucker wrote his book *The Philosophy and Politics of Czech Dissidence* 10 years after the collapse of communism, when the euphoria of the Velvet Revolution had faded, he examines Patočka's phenomenology to explore the relationship between politics and philosophy – a question that was widely discussed in philosophy at that time. Tucker responds to misinterpretations of Patočka's philosophies that had appeared in the decade following the Velvet Revolution, and he furthers the dialogue concerning the moral and political implications of phenomenology within the practical execution of politics. Tucker's effort to understand and comprehensively explain the philosophical tradition of phenomenology from which Patočka's thought emerged, and to highlight his contribution to the continuing debate on philosophy (as phenomenology) and politics reawakened interest in the philosopher's works. Tucker presents Patočka as a thinker who undermines materialist philosophies, which entail the objectivisation of a human being to a *homo faber*, the technological manipulation of human resources, and the myth of historical progress – themes that remain relevant in the political realm today, but the significance of which was overlooked in the 1990s.

Another similar work which appeared in this period also focuses on Patočka's philosophy (albeit only marginally) is Jonathan Bolton's *Worlds of Dissent, Charter 77, The Plastic People of the Universe, and Czech Culture under Communism*. In contrast to Tucker's book, Bolton does not primarily focus on Patočka's philosophy, instead examining his connection to Charter 77 and the Charter's aftermath, which climaxed with the philosopher's martyrdom.

³⁹Tucker, *The Philosophy and Politics of Czech Dissidence*, p. 18.

Another work from this period which introduced Patočka's philosophy to the Anglo-American audience is Edward Findlay's work *Caring for the Soul in a Postmodern Age: Politics and Phenomenology in the Thought of Jan Patočka* (2002). This work interprets Patočka's philosophy as freed from its links to dissent. Findlay presents Patočka as a political philosopher but suggests that Patočka's political philosophy is not a conventional one that should be presented through the analysis of 'competing forms of government or development of an ideal type of institution'.⁴⁰ Findlay points out that Patočka approaches political philosophy through the examination of the principle of care for the soul in particular. He reconstructs Patočka's link between the soul and politics more concretely when he places care for the soul into the very heart of the politics of dissidence.⁴¹ However, Findlay takes a step further and investigates how the idea of care for the soul can benefit the postmodern age. Although Findlay rejects Patočka's idea that the accountability of politics evolves from metaphysical foundations, he argues that the contribution of Patočka's care for the soul in the postmodern age is related to his metaphysical foundation as the search for the 'whole'.⁴²

In the essay 'The Gift of Death' (*Se Donner la Mort*) (1993), Jacques Derrida reconstructs what he calls a 'mystogenealogy' of European responsibility.⁴³ Derrida's central text, which becomes the subject of his critical examination, is Patočka's *Heretical Essays in the Philosophy of History* (1975), alongside texts from Martin Heidegger, Emmanuel Lévinas, Søren Kierkegaard, the Hebrew Bible and the New Testament. Derrida's essay is the only writing devoted to the examination of Patočka's ethical philosophy, with an emphasis on the concepts of responsibility, sacrifice of one's life and mortality at large. Through the exploration of Patočka's ethical concepts and equipped with the accounts of other thinkers, Derrida introduces his own view on the role of moral responsibility in the political realm. In contrast to Tucker or Findlay, Derrida did not have to introduce the philosophy of the Czech thinker to the French audience, as Patočka's books were widely accessible through translations by Erika Abrams.⁴⁴ However, Derrida

⁴⁰Findlay, *Care for the Soul in a Postmodern Age*, p. 177.

⁴¹Ibid., p. 160.

⁴²Ibid., p. 163.

⁴³Derrida, *The Gift of Death*, p. 6.

⁴⁴In the 1980s and the early 1990s, Erika Abrams translated the most notable works of Patočka to

undoubtedly introduced the little-known Czech philosopher to a wider philosophical (particularly Anglo-American) audience and triggered an interest in Patočka's writings on a broader scale. While Derrida portrays Patočka as a bold, experimental thinker, his reading of Patočka's text also provoked controversy. Derrida argues that Patočka's ideas on European responsibility lead to a heretical religious philosophy – a heretical Christianity – which culminates in heretical forms of political philosophy.⁴⁵

While current trends in Czech scholarship cover topics focusing mostly on Patočka's phenomenology and aesthetics,⁴⁶ the majority of Anglo-American interpretations of Patočka's works view his phenomenology as linked to the problem of the political realm and examine problems of freedom,⁴⁷ Europe,⁴⁸ phenomenology and violence,⁴⁹ the crisis of meaning⁵⁰ and the problem of human rights.⁵¹ The current research focuses on the overlooked aspects of Patočka's political and ethical philosophy. This particular approach argues that Patočka's philosophy is relevant to contemporary political and philosophical discourse as well as to contemporary political and social enquiries, thus overstepping the previous framing of Patočka's philosophy as primarily one of dissent.

This thesis continues this approach of analysing the political and ethical aspects of Patočka's thought. In addition, this research not only integrates philosophical and phenomenological approaches to Patočka's philosophy but also makes his thought more accessible and emphasises its continuing relevance. In this regard, this research adopts an interdisciplinary approach that assesses Patočka's thought not only from a perspective of political philosophy, phenomenology and ethics but also from the perspective of his-

French, such as Jan Patočka, *Platon et l'Europe*, trans. by Erika Abrams (Lagrasse: Verdier, 1983); Jan Patočka, *Essais hérétiques sur la philosophie de l'histoire*, trans. by Erika Abrams (Lagrasse: Verdier, 1983).

⁴⁵Derrida, *The Gift of Death*, p. 29.

⁴⁶With an exception of some most recent philosophical/sociological examinations of rational civilisation: Jakub Homolka, *Koncept racionální civilizace: Patočkovo pojetí modernity ve světle civilizační analýzy* (Prague: Togga, 2016).

⁴⁷Francesco Tava, *The Risk of Freedom: Ethics, Phenomenology and Politics in Jan Patočka*, trans. by Jane Ledlie (London & New York: Rowman & Littlefield International, 2015).

⁴⁸*Thinking after Europe: Jan Patočka and Politics*, ed. by Francesco Tava and Darian Meacham (London: Rowman & Littlefield International), 2016; *Phenomenology and the Idea of Europe*, ed. by Francesco Tava (Abingdon and New York: Routledge, 2018).

⁴⁹James Dodd, *Violence and Phenomenology* (New York: Routledge, 2009).

⁵⁰Lubica Učník, *The Crisis of Meaning and the Life-World: Husserl, Heidegger, Arendt, Patočka* (Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press, 2016).

⁵¹James R. Mensch, *Patočka's Asubjective Phenomenology, Toward a New Concept of Human Rights* (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 2016).

tory, literature and culture. This approach aims to effectively broaden the relevance of his thought.

Methods

As mentioned, to understand the concept of the solidarity of the shaken, we need to consider an important dimension of *Heretical Essays* that is often overlooked: Patočka's analysis of the frontline experience provided by Ernst Jünger and Pierre Teilhard de Chardin. Although this aspect may seem like a minor point of no great significance, this is an important moment in Patočka's argument, because the comparison of these three views of the frontline experience and their possibility to overcome the state of the crisis (be it nihilism, the ongoing state of war or the loss of meaning) casts a fresh perspective on the concept of the solidarity of the shaken.

Attention is paid predominantly to a close reading of the texts and to a comparative analysis thereof. Patočka and Jünger, in their examination of community, operate with very similar notions, such as frontline experience, sacrifice and history. It is, therefore, necessary to map these particular notions with the help of a *conceptual* method to reveal whether the use of a specific notion is identical from one author to another. In other words, it is necessary to determine whether the particular thinkers I am discussing, in using the same specific terminology, refer to the same set of phenomena.

As Patočka does not provide an analysis of the solidarity of the shaken in the form of an explicit, self-contained concept, since he did not devote an entire work to the conception of the solidarity of the shaken, it is of paramount importance to trace, analyse and *reconstruct* his particular approach in constructing an account of the concept. One further aim here, therefore, is to employ not only a *comparative* analysis of the texts, but also to apply and transpose particular arguments from other thinkers' approaches (Heidegger in particular) to that of Patočka.

A major peculiarity of Patočka's work is that he presents his ethical and social ideas as a counterweight to the specific totalitarian reality of communism. Bearing this in mind, it is of central importance to *abstract* his thoughts on the solidarity of the shaken from this context and to highlight the relevance of his concept of community on a more general

level. Although Patočka's conception of the solidarity of the shaken has, in fact, already found its application in political practice on at least on two occasions (the first was in 1977 by Charter 77 in communist Czechoslovakia, and the second in 2008 by Charter 08 in the People's Republic of China), I do not focus on these case studies; instead, I consider the historical development of *Frontgemeinschaft*, its developments during the period of the Conservative Revolution, and the resonance of these ideas in the contemporary realm of far-right movements that have gradually gained popularity in Europe. Through my analysis of this historical genealogy of these sinister forms of communities, I highlight the vital aspects of the solidarity of the shaken (as the solidarity with...) and present the concept as a potential answer to the sinister forms of solidarities (as the solidarity against...). I demonstrate the relevance of Patočka's thought in both political philosophy and political practice, extending beyond the isolated context and experience of communist countries.

Chapter Outlines

The solidarity of the shaken represents a salvific community that overcomes the crisis. Patočka's idea of the crisis, however, evolves throughout his entire scholarly career. In the early 1930s, Patočka formulated a highly conventional and too predictable definition of the crisis as linked to the problem of modernity. In 1975, he set the concept of the crisis into a very obscure context of binary oppositions and added a discussion of the enigmatic concepts of day and night, profane and sacred. The first chapter maps the development, and increasing complexity, of the concept of the crisis throughout Patočka's scholarship.

The second chapter explores the relationship between Jünger's idea of *Frontgemeinschaft* and Patočka's idea of the solidarity of the shaken. Through a close reading of Patočka's fifth and sixth *Heretical Essays* and Jünger's inter-war works 'Total Mobilization', *The Worker* and *On Pain*, I examine the foundations of each of these communities and argue that the solidarity of the shaken represents Patočka's critical answer to the shortcomings of Jünger's community of the frontline. I demonstrate that Patočka, through his critical reading of Jünger in *Heretical Essays*, very effectively sharpens his own lifelong project of the philosophy of history, the accuracy and validity of which need to be questioned in relation to contemporary times. I argue that each of these thinkers offers us

their own model of history, and I focus on the political implications of these models. By the idea of the solidarity of the shaken Patočka offers a critical response to materialist history, which laid the foundations not only for fascism⁵², but for communism as well (as recognised by Patočka). I further argue that the solidarity of the shaken, as a community that strictly rejects materialist history, fights against all regimes and ideologies that are based on the premises of violence and active nihilism – be they contemporary neoliberal globalisation or the rising tendencies of the alt-right, among others.

The third chapter focuses on the concept of *transcendence*. This chapter describes the foundation of the solidarity of the shaken – the premises that allow for the constitution of a community. In *Heretical Essays*, Patočka makes a clear distinction between his and Jünger's treatment of political violence, both of which centre on frontline experience. From Patočka's perspective, Jünger's treatment of the experience (*Erlebnis*), which is foundational for his model of history, only deepens the idea of active nihilism, which is foundational for the idea of continual warfare.⁵³ Patočka offers an alternative to this particular treatment of the frontline experience. To overcome nihilism in both its active and passive forms, Patočka argues that it is necessary to *transcend* the experience of political violence (the frontline) and that this can be conducted only by the community – the solidarity of the shaken.⁵⁴ Heidegger also criticises Jünger. In his essay 'On the Question of Being', Heidegger argues that Jünger is a devoted continuator of Friedrich Nietzsche's idea of nihilism.⁵⁵ While in his ambition to overcome the experience of the frontline Patočka suggests the movement of transcendence, Jünger, as Heidegger astutely recognises, follows the movement of *rescendence*.⁵⁶ In this chapter, I critically portray Heidegger's influence on Patočka's philosophy, especially on the concept of technology, which became the springboard for Patočka's idea of transcendence (as overcoming the

⁵²As Walter Benjamin claimed in his work: Walter Benjamin, 'Theories of German Fascism: On the Collection of Essays War and Warrior', *New German Critique*, 17 (1979), pp. 120–128 (p. 127).

⁵³Patočka, 'Kacířské eseje o filosofii dějin', in *Péče o duši, soubor statí a přednášek o postavení člověka ve světě a v dějinách. III, Kacířské eseje o filosofii dějin*, ed. by Ivan Chvatík and Pavel Kouba (Prague: Oikoyomenh, 2002), pp. 13–132 (p. 129); Jan Patočka, *Heretical Essays in the Philosophy of History*, trans. by Erazim Kohák (Chicago and La Salle, Illinois: Open Court, 1996), p. 134.

⁵⁴Ibid., p. 129; Ibid., p. 134.

⁵⁵Martin Heidegger, 'On the Question of Being', in *Pathmarks*, ed. by William McNeill, trans. by William McNeill (Cambridge & New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998), pp. 291–322 (p. 291).

⁵⁶Ibid., p. 292.

crisis), founded exclusively on the ethical grounds. Patočka argues that crisis caused by the techno-scientific reality (*Gestell*) can be disturbed and overcome only by the moment of sacrifice. I argue that, although Heidegger's account seems to incorporate some ethical ideals (e.g. 'the turn' / *die Kehre*), his understanding of transcendence is impersonal, avoiding any deeper sense of ethics and humanism. At the same time, Heidegger fails to explain how his idea of transcendence is relevant to the political situation of his time. Patočka, on the other hand, proposes a very personal and spiritual model of transcendence based on ethics – sacrifice and care for the soul, both of which are foundational for the constitution of the solidarity of the shaken and instrumental in the resolution of the crisis, at the core of which is the prevalent idea of nihilism.

The fourth chapter reconstructs the central concepts of Patočka's understanding of transcendence: as sacrifice and care of the soul. I argue that these ethical categories represent a breakthrough moment from which the solidarity of the shaken comes into existence. Patočka encourages human beings to distance themselves from the mundane material world and to instead open up to the very problematicity of the world – and to *sacrifice* themselves for no particular reason (e.g. the wellbeing of the next generation, fame or heroism) other than for the sake of sacrifice itself.⁵⁷ Only the moment of sacrifice, as leaving one's old mode of existence behind and opening up to the new mode of living – an 'unsheltered life'⁵⁸ – leads, as Patočka believes, to the constitution of a community: the solidarity of the shaken.

In the final chapter, I closely examine the relationship between the ethical and the political within the solidarity of the shaken. This chapter formulates two main arguments. First, the analysis of Patočka's definition of the solidarity of the shaken portrays the necessity of ethics in the realm of the *political*. Reading his analysis of the solidarity of the shaken, it is clear that the concept is, primarily, an ethical project. Ethics serve here as a tool to undermine, *shake* and disturb the totality of the political realm. Second, the focus on the Conservative Revolution and National Socialism reveals further characteristic features of the solidarity of the shaken. This particular historical context helps us to understand the concept of *the political* in Patočka's philosophy. Namely, that by

⁵⁷Patočka, 'Kacířské eseje', p. 125–126; *Heretical Essays*, p. 140.

⁵⁸Ibid., p. 50; Ibid., p. 39.

the solidarity of the shaken Patočka proposes a concept of *the political* that is in line with ideas of *agonism (agonistic model of democracy)*,⁵⁹ as opposed to Schmitt's idea of *antagonism*.⁶⁰ The intention is to *decontextualise* the concept from both the conditions of German Nazism and Czechoslovak communism, and to question the relevance of the concept today.

⁵⁹Chantal Mouffe examined the concept of the agonistic model of democracy. See, for example: Chantal Mouffe, *Democratic Paradox* (London and New York: Verso, 2000), p. 102; Chantal Mouffe, 'Deliberative Democracy or Agonistic Pluralism?', *Social Research*, 66.3, (1999), pp. 745–758.

⁶⁰Carl Schmitt, *The Concept of the Political*, trans. by Georg Schwab (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 2008), p. 29.

Chapter 1

The Crisis

Introduction

The *solidarity of the shaken* is unthinkable without the concept of *crisis*. Patočka is occupied with the idea of the crisis throughout his entire scholarly career, from the early 1930s, when he formulates a very conventional definition as linked to the problem of modernity, to the late 1970s, when he sets the concept into a very obscure context of binary oppositions and includes a discussion of the enigmatic metaphors of *day* and *night*. All these developments of the crisis, however, do have something in common: they are closely linked to the idea of Europe and its spiritual heritage.

In the 1930s, Patočka discussed the *spiritual* crisis, which is the result of one-sided rationality. This chapter first focuses on his essay ‘Masaryk’s and Husserl’s Conception of the Spiritual Crisis of European Humanity’ (1936), and, from the same period, *The Natural World as a Philosophical Problem* (1936). The key concept from which Patočka develops the idea of the crisis is his critical reading of Husserl’s idea of the *lifeworld*. While the essay portrays the foundations of the concept of the crisis, in *The Natural World* Patočka engages in a critical dialogue with his predecessors Edmund Husserl and Martin Heidegger and depicts a clearly defined idea of the crisis. ‘For Patočka, the crisis in our modern world is a crisis of meaning.’⁶¹

Other notable works that examine the concept of crisis are *Supercivilisation and its*

⁶¹Učník, *The Crisis of Meaning*, p. 134.

*Inner Conflict*⁶² and the essay 'Ideology and the Life in Idea' (1946). Patočka transfers his ideas on the crisis to the political realm. He speaks about the crisis as a form of *supercivilisation*, by which he is not referring to some symbolic, dystopian and futuristic civilisation. Instead, he refers to a very concrete reality in the Czechoslovakia of his time – namely, the communist regime after 1948, the radical period of freedom suppression and the justification of violence that was introduced by the wave of Stalinization. In his essay 'Ideology and the Life in Idea' (1946), Patočka argues that the concept of the ideology becomes *critical* once it is detached from the *Idea*. Patočka's concept of the crisis is, therefore, not only a theoretical philosophical reflection stemming from his phenomenology, but increases its urgency by being closely intertwined with the critical reflections on the brutal political regime in the Czechoslovakia of that period.

Although, in 1972, the authorities banned him from writing, Patočka did not surrender, and with the help of students he organised an illegal series of seminars held in secret in the flats of dissidents. The transcript of these lectures was later published as *samizdat* under the title *Plato and Europe* (1973). Patočka examines the problem of Europe. In his lectures and, later, in his book *Europe and the post-European Age* (1972–1973), he discusses the crisis of Europe. He argues that Europe has reached its end and moved to the so-called *post-European age*. The reason for this radical shift from the European to the post-European age is the forgetting of the European ideal of *care for the soul*. Care of the soul not only enabled the emergence of geographical Europe, but also represented a driving force for the movement of history. Patočka, however, does not perceive the end of Europe as a tragedy; instead, he rethinks how a human being living in the post-European era can respond to the challenges of that age: 'Nothing really ends with post-Europe, whose 'post-', rather than a simple overcoming acquires the meaning of an insightful stance toward Europe's ongoing conflicts and crises.'⁶³

Finally, this chapter focuses on Patočka's last expression of the crisis and examines his final work, *Heretical Essays in the Philosophy of History* (1975). In this text, Patočka

⁶²It is not known when Patočka wrote this essay. Some sources argue this was in the late 1940s just after the end of the Second World War, some sources argue Patočka wrote his essays on Supercivilisation in the early 1950s.

⁶³Francesco Tava, 'The Brave Struggle: Jan Patočka on Europe's past and future', *The Journal of the British Society of Phenomenology*, 47.3, (July 2016), 242-259 (p. 243).

does not distance himself from the idea of the crisis being a consequence of modernity and one-sided rationality. On the contrary, he further expands his ideas on the spiritual crisis as a loss of meaning. He expresses this idea through the metaphor of the frontline experience, which from his perspective represents the climax of the techno-scientific age. Yet, once again, Patočka transfers his ideas on crisis to the political realm. The ideas on the end of Europe remain present in this text, especially his extensive analyses of the geopolitical crisis of Europe and its aftermath. He focuses on the crisis as the impossibility to encompass the world as the conflict of the opposites. The crisis, therefore, stems from the individual's reluctance or even impotence to see the world as fully *problematic*. Thus, Patočka's unexpected turn in defining the crisis culminates in an original view, the parallel of which cannot be found in the thoughts of his contemporaries. He moves from the popular discourse on the concept of crisis, in which he engages in the debate with other thinkers, reflecting on the widespread scholarly debate on the crisis of modernity, to a very dark and unusual view of a solitary man, a hermit, a philosopher of the night. Patočka's final thoughts on the crisis lurk in 'dialectic metaphors' of day and night, peace and war, life and death, sacred and profane – the conditions in which the solidarity of the shaken begins to form. In these final essays, Patočka draws a direct link between the crisis and the community of the solidarity of the shaken.

In each of these periods of examining the crisis, Patočka is concerned about the possibility to overcome the crisis; however, 'Patočka's approach is to give his readers a history of problems rather than offering solutions.'⁶⁴ In each of these stages, he implicitly shakes his readers off the rigid schemes and the delineated frameworks in which they tend to think and encourages them to open up, to *turn* and to change the way they think. In the 1930s, Patočka proposed stepping beyond one-sided rationality and seeking a revival of personal faith in the context of radical subjectivism.⁶⁵ In the 1950s, he warned against the dangers of supercivilisation and advised on ways how to resist the allure of ideology. In the mid-1970s, Patočka revitalised the forgotten Ancient Greek ideal of *care for the soul*. Yet, in his final works, the effort for care for the soul climaxes into 'a gigantic conversion,

⁶⁴Učník, *The Crisis of Meaning*, p. 137.

⁶⁵Patočka, Jan, 'Masaryk's and Husserl's Conception of the Spiritual Crisis of European Humanity (1936)', in *Jan Patočka: Philosophy and Selected Writings*, ed. by Erazim V. Kohák (Chicago & London: The University of Chicago Press. 1989), pp. 145-156 (p. 155).

of an unheard-of *metanoein* (μετανοεῖν).⁶⁶

All these open questions about the crisis, however, gradually lead us to one of Patočka's most enigmatic thoughts – the solidarity of the shaken – the idea, which for the very first time, appears on the final pages of the *Heretical Essay*, yet is an idea that Patočka never fully explored. The understanding of Patočka's concept of the crisis clarifies the role of the solidarity of the shaken and the challenges the solidarity of the shaken faces. Patočka's account on the crisis demonstrates that this new political subjectivity represents a *salvific* community, which, as Patočka believes, leads humanity out of the conditions of crisis. This chapter questions whether the solidarity of the shaken, being Patočka's solution to the crisis, could resonate with the citizens of his time, who were living under the communist regime. More importantly, this chapter determines whether the solution to the crisis is valid concerning the moral and political crisis in Europe today.

I The Spiritual Crisis of Europe: Masaryk and Husserl

In his essay 'Masaryk's and Husserl's Conception of the Spiritual Crisis of European Humanity' (1936), Patočka compares these two thinkers and draws philosophical parallels centred on the question of the spiritual crisis. Patočka did not choose to examine their definitions of crisis by chance. Masaryk ignited, in his student Husserl, an interest in philosophy. Husserl, a few years later, encouraged his student Patočka to continue in his study of philosophy.⁶⁷ These three thinkers not only follow a very similar philosophical tradition but, moreover, Patočka considered himself to be a continuator of the Enlightenment tradition as it was set by Masaryk and further developed by Husserl.

Masaryk, being a philosopher,⁶⁸ focused on problems that further resonated in Patočka's philosophy – be it his criticism of positivism, the topic of the Czech national

⁶⁶Z toho hlediska nebyly by pak dějiny postupným zjevením nesmyslnosti veškerenstva, aspoň by tím nebyly nutně, a existovala by snad i možnost pro lidstvo, aby realizovalo ve shodě s tím smysluplnou existenci - pod podmínkou obrovité konverze, neslýchaného metanoein.' Patočka, 'Kacířské eseje', p. 80; *Heretical Essays*, p. 75.

⁶⁷Kohák, *Jan Patočka*, p. xi.

⁶⁸His philosophical scholarship has been overshadowed by his political career of a statesman. In: *Ibid.*, p. 10.

rebirth,⁶⁹ or humanism.⁷⁰

Husserl is primarily a logician and a metaphysician, animated by an almost paradoxical fusion of a passion for the most fundamental, most general conceptions with an equal passion for the finest details, turning to the most varied aspects of existence with the same interest. Masaryk is in the place a civilizer and an organizer; Husserl is the last contemplator in the Western European metaphysical tradition. What do they have in common?⁷¹

In his essay, Patočka argues that both Masaryk and Husserl came from entirely different backgrounds; therefore, naturally, their philosophies appear to be dissimilar. According to Patočka, Masaryk is very much focused on social, political and moral philosophy, blending his philosophical thought with anthropological and sociological perspectives. Husserl, on the other hand, is a phenomenologist who thoroughly and relentlessly examines all aspects of human existence. Despite Patočka's open admiration for Husserl's work, he recognises him to be the 'last contemplator in the Western European metaphysical tradition.'⁷² Parallels can be drawn between Patočka's labelling of Husserl's and Heidegger's descriptions of Nietzsche. In his book *What Is Called Thinking?* (1951–1952), Heidegger refers to Nietzsche as the 'West's last thinker',⁷³ by which he means that Nietzsche unmasks the peril of one-sided rationality; however, Nietzsche does not destroy the metaphysical tradition. Through his stark criticism of metaphysics, the doctrine of Christianity and morality, Nietzsche seeks to blend philosophy and rationalism to create a new foundation for thought. By parallel, then, assigning some afterlife to Patočka's words from 1936, Patočka does not perceive Husserl as a thinker who would destroy the system of totalising metaphysics by his phenomenological method and replace it with a completely new platform. Instead, Patočka argues that Husserl – similar to Nietzsche's effort – only proposes a corrective of an old metaphysical system (the tradition of West-

⁶⁹Ibid.

⁷⁰Chapter 7 of Patočka's work, *Infinity and historicity* is devoted to the examination of Masaryk's concept of subjectivism and his views on religion and positivism among other themes. Patočka perceived Masaryk's philosophical program to be not just a theoretical scholarship, but it was, as he says, an embodiment of humanism itself. '[B]yl humanitou vtělenou.' In: Jan Patočka, 'Masaryk kritikem 'přehnaného' subjektivismu', in *Péče o duši I. Soubor statí a přednášek o postavení člověka ve světě a v dějinách*, ed. by Ivan Chvatík and Pavel Kouba (Prague: Oikoymenth, 1996), pp. 159-164 (p. 161).

⁷¹Patočka, 'Masaryk's and Husserl's Conception of the Spiritual Crisis', p. 146.

⁷²Ibid.

⁷³Heidegger, *What Is Called Thinking?*, trans. by Fred D. Wieck and J. Glenn Gray (New York, Evanston and London: Harper & Row Publishers, 1968), p. 46.

ern thinking), yet does not fully overcome it. Patočka, at this point, does not engage in an in-depth critical analysis of Husserl's phenomenology. However, by these statements, he expresses his critical point towards Husserl's position and prepares the ground for his project of a subjective phenomenology,⁷⁴ which he defined later.

[B]oth Husserl's and Masaryk's philosophical activity is marked by a conviction that European humanity is passing through a protracted spiritual crisis whose roots must be sought deep in the past, at the very beginning of modern thought.⁷⁵

Patočka argues that Masaryk and Husserl agree on one fundamental point, namely that humanity is swept up in an ongoing and long-lasting spiritual crisis, which, as the philosophers Masaryk and Husserl describe it, is not a recent phenomenon that emerged in the 20th century as a consequence of the First World War. The crisis had been developing from the 17th century up until the end of the 19th century,⁷⁶ and its roots reach back to the beginning of modernity.⁷⁷

Patočka observes that both thinkers speak about the spiritual crisis, the source of which is neither political and economic instability, nor is it social insecurity. The spiritual crisis is related to a failure of European thought, which evolved out of the underestimation and ignorance of the spiritual realm. Science and rationality are essential, while all other forms of thinking that escape the exactness of the natural sciences are considered invalid and misleading. These forms promote the conviction that the political and social problems that challenged Europe emerged only as consequences of a much deeper and intense crisis – that of a spiritual origin.

⁷⁴ *Asubjective phenomenology* is Patočka's own model of phenomenology. It is the result of his criticism of Husserl's model of phenomenology - his strong attachment to subjectivism in particular. 'In the universal epochē it becomes apparent too that, just as the self is the condition of possibility of the appearing of mundane things, so the world, as the horizon of horizons (not as the totality of realities), is the condition of possibility of the appearing of the self. The egoic is, of course, never perceived or in any way immediately experienced in and of itself but rather only as the organizational center of a universal structure of appearance which cannot be reduced to anything appearing as such in its individual being. For this reason, we call this structure the world.' In: Jan Patočka, 'Epoché und Reduktion. Einige Bemerkungen', in *Die Bewegung der menschlichen Existenz*, ed. by K. Nellen, J. Němec and I. Šrubar (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1991), p. 415-423 (p. 421).

⁷⁵ Patočka, 'Masaryk's and Husserl's Conception of the Spiritual Crisis', p. 146.

⁷⁶ Edmund Husserl, 'Philosophy and the Crisis of European Man', in: *Phenomenology and the Crisis of Philosophy*, trans. by Quentin Lauer (New York: Harper & Row Publishers, 1965), pp. 149-192 (p. 178).

⁷⁷ As Pippin argues in his article 'Nietzsche and the Melancholy of Modernity', there was a widespread romantic and late 19th-century suspicion that modern natural sciences and technology were spiritually destroying European culture. See: Robert B. Pippin, 'Nietzsche and the Melancholy of Modernity', *Social Research*, 66.2 Hope and Despair (1999), pp. 495-520 (pp. 495-496).

The discourse on the crisis Patočka describes in the early 1930s was nothing new or unusual. He analysed the views of two thinkers who contributed to the mainstream debate on the spiritual crisis. The analysis he proposed developed as a conventional and perhaps too predictable interpretation of the crisis, which emerged with the beginning of modernity. The aim of young Patočka was to contextualise the thought of Masaryk and Husserl into a broader philosophical discourse and to anchor and locate his view on the problem.

The concept of the spiritual crisis had been formulated by thinkers such as György Lukács, Georg Simmel and Max Weber, among others. Lukács refers to the spiritual crisis by examining *ordinary life*:

A life that excludes accident is flat and sterile, an endless plain without any elevations; the logic of such a life is the logic of cheap security, of passive refusal before everything new, of dull repose in the lap of dry common sense. But tragedy needs no further accident; it has incorporated accident into its world forever, so that it is always and everywhere present in it.⁷⁸

To describe the ordinary life, he uses expressions such as flat, sterile, endless, and plain, without any elevations. To locate this concept in the broader philosophical context, an ordinary life represents what Nietzsche, in his work *Will to Power*, called passive nihilism.⁷⁹ Lukács argues that individuals are challenged by the spiritual crisis. They are banished from tragedy and subsume to ordinary life. Tragedy, on the other hand, is closely intertwined with meaning, in the sense that the possibility of tragedy presupposes the possibility of meaning. Individuals, however, deliberately seek asylum in ordinary life and cheap security, which deprives them of novelty and new possible meaning. The ordinary life hinders one from being elevated to the new realm, to the realm of what Lukács calls the real life (as opposed to the ordinary life). However, the cause of one's inclination for cheap security is not ignorance; rather, it is fear of the unknown, the unpredictable, and the new.

⁷⁸György Lukács, 'The Metaphysics of Tragedy (1910)', in: György Lukács, *Soul and Form*, ed. by John T. Sanders and Katie Terezakis, trans. by Anna Bostock (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009), pp. 175–198, (p. 179).

⁷⁹'Nihilism as decline and recession of the power of the spirit: as passive nihilism.' In: Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*, trans. by Walter Kaufmann and R.J. Hollingdale, ed. by Walter Kaufmann (New York: Random House, 1968) p. 17.

For Simmel, the spiritual crisis unfolds as the tragedy of culture.⁸⁰ ‘Life cannot express itself except in forms which have their independent existence and significance. This paradox is the real, ubiquitous tragedy of culture.’⁸¹ Similar to Lukács, Simmel sees the cause of the spiritual crisis in the form of a restraint that prevents one from living an authentic life. Simmel observes that there is a tendency to describe life in pre-given conventional forms, which, however, do not always correspond to the reality of life itself. It is precisely this discrepancy between the authentic, spontaneous and independent life and the prescribed rigid forms of culture that causes the tragedy of culture itself. The tragedy of culture emerges when forms of objective culture begin to dominate the individual culture and aim to transform it, when the individual’s culture (the authentic, spontaneous and independent) is being submissive to the *objective* culture (the prescribed, rigid unchangeable forms). The culture turns into a paradox and ends in a complete deadlock.

In *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (1904), Weber identifies the spiritual crisis with what he calls the *iron cage* (*stahlhartes Gehäuse*) of rationality.⁸² Weber observes that the rising tendencies of rationalisation reside at the very heart of capitalist societies. Rationality, through its means of calculation and bureaucracy, restrains and controls society. Weber uses the metaphor of a cage as a one-sided aggressive form of rationality that deprives individuals of their freedom and spontaneity and leads to the state of the spiritual crisis.

When Husserl and Masaryk speak about the spiritual crisis, they refer to the same reality.⁸³ They develop their accounts of the spiritual crisis out of their criticism of positivism and the decline of spiritual thought. What both these thinkers find problematic is what Patočka calls ‘the positivist hypostatization of natural-scientific methodology’⁸⁴ (the critical situation, in which the mere abstraction positivism presents is extended to the real event), and the tendency of ‘natural-scientific dogmatism’,⁸⁵ which leads to one-

⁸⁰Georg Simmel, ‘The Concept and Tragedy of Culture (1919)’, in: *Simmel on Culture: Selected Writings*, ed. by David Frisby and Mike Featherstone (London, Thousand Oaks, New Delhi: Sage Publications, 2000), pp. 55–75, (p. 72).

⁸¹Ibid., p. 94.

⁸²Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, trans. by Talcott Parsons (London and New York: Routledge, 2005), p. 123.

⁸³Patočka, ‘Masaryk’s and Husserl’s Conception of the Spiritual Crisis’, p. 146.

⁸⁴Ibid.

⁸⁵Ibid.

sided rationality. Both thinkers – in their way – formulate critical remarks against positivists and propose solutions regarding how these tendencies of natural-scientific dogmatism can be undermined to reverse the spiritual crisis.

i Modern Irreligiosity

Patočka recognises that what connects Husserl with Masaryk is their shared conviction that the roots of the spiritual crisis must be sought in modern irreligiosity.⁸⁶ Masaryk was a humanist and a profoundly religious person.⁸⁷ Husserl condemns religion to answer the challenges of the spiritual crisis; yet, he finds the concept of the *sacred* in the *European sciences (Wissenschaft)*.⁸⁸

In his examination of the spiritual crisis, Patočka focuses on Masaryk's *Suicide and the Meaning of Civilization* (1881). Masaryk sees the spiritual crisis as a 'mass social phenomenon of modern civilization'.⁸⁹ He believes that the growing tendency of suicide is directly dependent on the decline and loss of religiosity in society.⁹⁰ Masaryk roots his criticism of positivism in his observations of the existential positioning of an individual in society and the world, arguing that the outburst of the spiritual crisis is directly related to the weakening power of religion and personal faith in the *irreligiosity of the masses (nenábožnost mas)*.⁹¹ Human beings have lost their connection to the world and themselves; they have been swept up in feelings of *alienation*. Masaryk's answer to the spiritual crisis is, therefore, straightforward. He proposes the revitalisation of religion in the form of personal living faith, which stems not from a religious doctrine, but from the return to the life and teaching of Jesus Christ.⁹² For Masaryk, Patočka argues: 'religion is primarily

⁸⁶Ibid.

⁸⁷Karel Čapek, *Talks with T. G. Masaryk*, ed. by Michal Henry Heim, trans. by Dora Round, 2nd edn (North Haven: Catbird Press, 1995), p. 47; Karel Čapek, *Masaryk on Thought and Life: Conversations with Karel Čapek*, trans. by M. & R. Weatherrall (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd, 1944), p. 81.

⁸⁸Sciences as *Wissenschaft* include not only natural sciences but also humanities, such as social sciences and theology and others. Sciences as *Wissenschaft* represent a systematic study in any discipline in general.

⁸⁹Patočka, 'Masaryk's and Husserl's Conception of the Spiritual Crisis', p. 146.

⁹⁰'U těch národů, kteří jsou beznábožní, je počet sebevražd velmi značný, u národů nábožných není sebevražednosti, nebo aspoň v míře mnohem nepatrnější.' In: Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk, *Sebevražda bro-madným jevem společenským* (Praha: Čin, 1929), p. 241.

⁹¹Masaryk, *Sebevražda*, p. 157.

⁹²Ibid., p. 132.

a feeling of trust and love in a dedication to the world and to one's task.'⁹³ Yet, the significance of Masaryk, according to Patočka, resides in his bold decision to reject the view of positivism. Through his fervent emphasis on the reawakening of spiritual thought in the form of personal faith, Masaryk aims at undermining Comte's natural-scientific dogmatism, which according to him resides at the very root of the spiritual crisis.

In our time we everywhere meet the burning need for an understanding of spirit, while the unclarity of the methodological and factual connection between the natural science and the sciences of the spirit has become almost unbearable.⁹⁴

Husserl observes that the link between the natural sciences and the sciences of the spirit has been broken; yet, the ignorance and abandonment of the sciences of spirit have consequences. What we face is the one-sidedness of science, which leads to unclarity. Husserl believes that the 'burning need' for the sciences of spirit needs to be satisfied. Husserl's understanding of modern irreligiosity is, therefore, related to the problem of the spiritual sciences – namely, how rigorous sciences replace the spiritual sciences and, ultimately, discredit them, as though they are misleading and not accurate enough.

For the idea of science, of theory, is, according to Husserl, virtually the guiding idea of European humanity, that in the name of which Europe has lived culturally and politically for more than two millennia, that which gives to the European the content and meaning of his existence and is capable of continuing to do so once we have resolved the internal difficulties of the present situation in the sciences, continuing to inspire the European and to continue making him the leader of all humankind.⁹⁵

European sciences (*Wissenschaft*) occurred in the crisis, due to 'mistaken rationalism'.⁹⁶ Modernity placed immense emphasis on natural sciences while simultaneously distancing itself from the spirit, not recognising its significance. Husserl realises that there is an infinite number of questions to which science must respond; yet, in many cases, it is unable to find answers.⁹⁷ The natural sciences fall short of answering existential questions that a human being is confronted with, and one is left with meaninglessness and a

⁹³Patočka, 'Masaryk's and Husserl's Conception of the Spiritual Crisis', p. 149.

⁹⁴Husserl, 'Philosophy and the Crisis of European Man', pp. 187–188.

⁹⁵Patočka, 'Masaryk's and Husserl's Conception of the Spiritual Crisis', p. 148.

⁹⁶Husserl, 'Philosophy and the Crisis of European Man', p. 179.

⁹⁷The methodology of the sciences – which operates predominantly using calculation, measurements, and experiments – aims to capture the world as objective. Husserl observes that there is something fundamentally missing in the foundation of science. He realises that the rigorous system of the sciences describes the world in a simplified and reduced manner. Exact sciences are the cause of tremendous scientific and

lack of clarity. ‘Precisely this lack of genuine rationality on all sides is the source of what has become for man an unbearable unclarity regarding his own existence and his infinite tasks.’⁹⁸ Therefore, Husserl perceives the natural sciences as being imperfect and far from being self-sufficient.

In his essay, Patočka recognises this condition and argues, ‘the crisis, that is, uncertainty, unclarity, affects the most rigorous of the sciences with whose foundation [Husserl] had begun to concern himself.’⁹⁹ Husserl sees the core of the European heritage in the sciences. He considers science and knowledge to be the elements that define Europe. Therefore, when he speaks about the crisis of the European sciences, he is pointing to the crisis of Europe.

Husserl, however, does not search for an answer to the spiritual crisis in religion, as Masaryk does:

Religion remains for him [Husserl] an entirely emotional and conceptually inadequate version of profound philosophical motifs. In the last instance the philosopher has something more, something better than religion.¹⁰⁰

As Patočka argues, religion is, for Husserl, an emotional and conceptually vague interpretation of philosophical ideas. Yet, unlike religion, philosophy possesses more powerful tools to express these motifs clearly and succinctly. Husserl’s solution to the spiritual crisis – or, in other words, the way to overcome unclarity and uncertainty in their foundation – is to restructure the system of the sciences. To preserve ‘inner clarity and rationality’,¹⁰¹ he attempts to find ‘philosophy anew in the sense of rigorous science’,¹⁰² which would take the form of systematic phenomenology. In his effort to resolve the spiritual crisis, Husserl focuses on the resuscitation of the *sacred* within the system of the European sciences and to restructure the system of the European sciences under one overarching and all-encompassing spiritual science – philosophy (or *Philosophia prima*),¹⁰³

technological progress for humanity; however, despite their scope, they fall short of encompassing and describing the world in its fullness.

⁹⁸Husserl, ‘Philosophy and the Crisis of European Man’, p. 179.

⁹⁹Patočka, ‘Masaryk’s and Husserl’s Conception of the Spiritual Crisis’, p. 147.

¹⁰⁰Husserl, ‘Philosophy and the Crisis of European Man’, p. 179.

¹⁰¹Edmund Husserl, *Logical Investigations*, ed. by Dermot Moran, trans. by J. N. Findlay (London and New York: Routledge, 2001), p. 15.

¹⁰²Dermot Moran and Joseph Cohen, *The Husserl Dictionary* (London and New York: Bloomsbury, 2012), p. 253.

¹⁰³Husserl’s *first philosophy* (*Erste Philosophie*, *Philosophia prima*) refers to ‘the self-grounding, self-

as only philosophy can undermine the one-sided rationality that the philosophy of positivism promotes.

Husserl undermines the premises of positivism in his project on *transcendental phenomenology*. The method he uses is *reduction (epochē)*,¹⁰⁴ which he develops in his *Ideas I* (§ 61). He aims to purify all our experiences from the sediments of psychologism and naturalism and to present an experience as it is, as it manifests itself.¹⁰⁵ Through the reduction of all experience to its pure phenomenal form, Husserl aims to avoid all prescribed meanings and imprints that experience already carries, as sediments of old meanings may only lead to the distorted image of the experience. His ambition is to reveal the true essence of things and experiences – that is, to reveal what they are and not what they appear to be in specific contexts or social situations. Reduction eventually leads to a new form of experiencing the world around us and, thus, offers an alternative to the positivistic view, which would allow us to go beyond the naturalistic world.

What must be shown in particular and above all is that through the epochē a new way of experiencing, of thinking, of theorizing, is opened to the philosopher; here, situated above his own natural being and above the natural world [...] All natural interests are put out of play.¹⁰⁶

Reduction does not mean a simplification of phenomena. To perform transcendental reduction and to approach experiences and things as pure phenomena, one is called to leave all natural interest behind: all prescribed axiological judgements, all ontic questions, all questions regarding the quality and utility of things. ‘It is from this very ground I have freed myself through the *epochē*; I stand *above* the world, which has now become for me, in

justifying presuppositionless science of all science, namely phenomenology’. See: Moran and Cohen, *The Husserl Dictionary*, p. 125. The first philosophy is not only another discipline that would encompass and ground all other disciplines and sciences. Instead, Husserl perceives the first philosophy as an entirely different and peculiar form of thinking, which is unique and distinctive from all other forms. See: Robert Sokolowski, ‘Husserl on First Philosophy’, in: *Philosophy, Phenomenology, Science: Essays in Commemoration of Edmund Husserl* (2010), pp. 3–23 (p. 4).

¹⁰⁴Reduction (*epochē*) is also identified as ‘abstention’ (*Enthaltung*), ‘dislocation’ from, or ‘unplugging’ or ‘exclusion’ (*Ausschaltung*). In: Dermot Moran, *Introduction to Phenomenology* (London and New York: Routledge, 2000), p. 147.

¹⁰⁵Edmund Husserl, *Ideas Pertaining to a Pure Phenomenology and to a Phenomenological Philosophy: General Introduction to a Pure Phenomenology*, trans. by F. Kersten (The Hague, Boston, Lancaster: Martinus Nijhoff Publishers, 1983), p. 140.

¹⁰⁶Edmund Husserl, *The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology: An Introduction to Phenomenological Philosophy*, ed. by John Wild, trans. by David Carr (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1970), p. 152.

a quite peculiar sense, a *phenomenon*.¹⁰⁷ The point of reduction is to free oneself from all metaphysical meaning of phenomena, which distort their original meaning. Therefore, transcendental phenomenology, through the method of reduction, can be perceived as a specific form of transcendence – as going beyond, which promises a new insight and a new perspective.

Husserl reaches [the new common] level in the process of reduction, which is not some kind of a logical conclusion, a logically constructed solution of the problem posed, but rather a living active process into which the subject must, so to speak, grow, in order to realize its full philosophical scope. We need to pass through the process of reduction in order to recognize its universality and fruitfulness; otherwise the idea of reduction sinks into a mere abstract schema of bad subjectivism.¹⁰⁸

Patočka does not interpret this reduction as an exclusively theoretical and logical process; from his perspective, the reduction represents an active process and a form of living.¹⁰⁹ The reduction is a continuous transformation of the self, in which an individual realises and grows one's agency to fully engage in critical philosophical thinking in the realm of science. Through the method of reduction, Husserl, therefore, aims to overcome not only the shortcomings of positivism, but also to resolve the problem of the positivist subject.¹¹⁰ One must develop and grow in order to realise one's full scope and the potential of philosophy.

In his effort to resolve the spiritual crisis, Husserl broadens the method of transcendental reduction. He believes that phenomenological insight is not a perspective that exclusively belongs to philosophy. All sciences and thought need to adopt this specific insight and be grounded in philosophy, because only philosophy as phenomenology can free European sciences from metaphysics and modern rationalistic objectivism and anchor all sciences in the new ground – in philosophy, which is free of naturalism and mistaken rationalism.

In short, Husserl's solution to the crisis is a rebirth of Europe out of the spirit of radical theory. This rebirth, then, is possible only because the course of history is governed by leading ideas in which the flow of events is ultimately articulated, and because the idea of knowing, the *theoria* free of all prejudgement, is such an all-

¹⁰⁷Ibid.

¹⁰⁸Patočka, 'Masaryk's and Husserl's Conception of the Spiritual Crisis', pp. 146–147.

¹⁰⁹Ibid., p. 148.

¹¹⁰Ibid.

embracing leading idea whose bearer, European humanity, is called, thanks to it, not only to become the master of the earth and of the world, but also to determine and interpret all its ideas.¹¹¹

Husserl strives for the rebirth of Europe as the rebirth of the European sciences. This act entails the rebirth of the spirit, which from Husserl's perspective is the most important yet absent aspect. Similar to Masaryk, therefore, Husserl, at the same time, adopts the thought of Comte, namely that leading ideas influence the flow of events. Husserl, however, gives primacy not to religious faith, as Masaryk does, but to European humanity, which is not only the bearer of these ideas, but also has the agency and capacity to interpret and determine these ideas.

ii New Faith

In his essay on Masaryk and Husserl, Patočka does not present a consistent view on the problem of the spiritual crisis. However, strong influences from both philosophies are evident in Patočka's later works: be it Husserl's idea of the crisis of Europe, his idea of the transcendental phenomenology, the critical examination of which led Patočka to the formulation of his own project of 'asubjective' phenomenology; or, Masaryk's religion as personal faith, which led Patočka to rethink the heretical form of Christianity.

From the critical assessment of Masaryk's and Husserl's philosophies, Patočka concludes that the spiritual crisis is a problem of 'personal faith in the context of radical subjectivism'.¹¹² However, Patočka's critical remarks suggest that personal faith in the realm of positivist subjectivism cannot be revived and corrected by either religious personal faith or by a new, transcendental subjectivity and its agency of reduction.

We cannot depend on the theological idea of European culture; rather, we need to engage ourselves actively in realizing those ideal goods about which we have convinced ourselves that we can live only with them and for them. A determined faith, though, demands an enthusiasm drawn from the great examples of both active and theoretical life, an enthusiasm that we derive from the devotion of those whom we see working and serving the way Masaryk and Husserl do.¹¹³

Patočka realises that to believe in some ideals – either in Christianity or theoretical phi-

¹¹¹Patočka, 'Masaryk's and Husserl's Conception of the Spiritual Crisis', p. 148.

¹¹²Ibid., p. 155.

¹¹³Ibid.

losophy – is not a sufficient answer to the spiritual crisis. To overcome the crisis, one is called to be responsive more than to believe in either theological or theoretical philosophical ideas of European culture. However, what Patočka values about these two thinkers is that, despite their idea of faith not being a sufficient answer to the problem of the spiritual crisis, they offer a form of faith that aims to challenge ‘bad subjectivism’. Being inspired by Masaryk and Husserl, their philosophies, lives and testimonies, Patočka finds this faith in the combination of both the theoretical life and the active life. Although Patočka, in his essay, does not offer any ultimate answers to the spiritual crisis, his analysis of Husserl’s and Masaryk’s thinking already suggest that his ideas on how to overcome the crisis will ultimately reside in a more dynamic, existential aspect of one’s being.

II The Natural World as a Philosophical Problem

In the same year as he write his essay ‘Masaryk’s and Husserl’s Conception of the Spiritual Crisis’, Patočka wrote his essay ‘The Natural World as a Philosophical Problem’, in which he provides a very detailed phenomenological insight into the idea of the spiritual crisis. ‘Patočka rejects the nihilistic tendencies that have become prevalent in our age by affirming humans’ finitude, situatedness, and inability to exist in a world bereft of meaning. For Patočka, the crisis in our modern world is a crisis of meaning.’¹¹⁴ In his view of the crisis as a crisis of meaning, Patočka was influenced and inspired by Husserl’s *Crisis of European Sciences* (1936) and Heidegger’s views on modern techno-science.

Man has no unified worldview. He lives in a double world, at once in his own naturally given environment and in a world created for him by modern natural science, based on the principle of mathematical laws governing nature.¹¹⁵

Patočka speaks about the situation of a human being in the world, arguing that a human being lives in a double world. Human beings live in their naturally given environment (authentic world) and, at the same time, in an ‘artificial’ environment that was created for them by modern natural science and which is described through mathematical for-

¹¹⁴Učník, *The Crisis of Meaning*, p. 134.

¹¹⁵Jan Patočka, ‘Přirozený svět jako filosofický problém’, in *Fenomenologické spisy I.*, ed. by Ivan Chvatík and Jan Frei (Prague: Oikoymenth, 2008), pp. 127-261 (p. 129); Jan Patočka, *The Natural World as a Philosophical Problem*, ed. by Ivan Chvatík and Lubica Učník, trans. by Erika Abrams (Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 2016), p. 3.

mulae. A human being lives in a world that is inauthentic, distorted and manipulated. This ‘schizophrenia’ in seeing the world as double is critical, as it prevents an individual from accessing the truth and from seeing the world as it is. Patočka claims that, ‘[t]he disunion that has thus pervaded the whole of human life is the true source of our present spiritual crisis.’¹¹⁶ Patočka aims at reviving unity; however, ‘the unity underlying the crisis is not unity of the things composing the world.’¹¹⁷ On the contrary, Patočka aims to revive the unity that is primarily dynamic and performed by the mind and spirit.¹¹⁸

Patočka speaks about the situation of man in the world,¹¹⁹ placing great emphasis on the aspect of *corporeality*.¹²⁰ He argues that, ‘[Body] is a fundamental component of human finitude, since it is on the basis of his corporeality that man stands in causal interaction [...] with the things of his environment that limit him.’¹²¹ However, as Patočka points out, ‘man is not merely a thing among other things [...] man is above all *aware* of his situation, he *understands* his own finitude.’¹²²

Patočka argues that finite human beings and the world are intimately intertwined. A human being is not only a being ‘thrown’, being placed as a thing among other things; the relationship between a human being and the world is profound, dynamic and complex. Patočka emphasises that the world is not composed of a set of unchangeable objects that only passively present themselves to human beings. The world is closely related to the very essence of humanity, and the world enables humanity to establish an understanding of reality in their consciousness. In return, human beings possess knowledge about the world and strive to discover it and to know it.

In this context, however, Patočka claims that the spiritual crisis evolves out of subjectivism and the subjective method, which, he believes, is identical to arbitrariness.¹²³ Therefore, in ‘The Natural World as a Philosophical Problem’ (1936), Patočka proposes

¹¹⁶‘[n]ejednota, která tím postoupila celý náš život, je vlastním zdrojem duševní krize.’ Ibid.

¹¹⁷‘jednota, která stojí za krizi, nemůže být jednotou věcí, z nichž se svět skládá.’ Ibid.

¹¹⁸Ibid.

¹¹⁹Ibid., p. 191; Ibid., p. 53.

¹²⁰Ibid.

¹²¹‘Je to základní komponenta lidské konečnosti, poněvadž na základě své tělesnosti stojí člověk v kauzální interakci [...] s věcmi svého okolí, jež je omezují.’ Ibid., p. 191; Ibid., p. 54.

¹²²‘člověk není pouze věc mezi věcmi [...] nýbrž ví především o této situaci, *chápe* svou vlastní konečnost.’ Ibid.

¹²³Ibid., p. 129; Ibid., p. 3.

an alternative to the subjective method – phenomenological analysis – which he discovers in the philosophy of language and speech.

The spiritual crisis, as Patočka defines it in ‘The Natural World as a Philosophical Problem’, stems from the separation between the world of science (how the world is described through mathematical formulae) and the human experience.¹²⁴ Nevertheless, Patočka concludes that the spiritual crisis can be potentially resolved by the revival of the unity of spirit, which can be shaped and sustained only through philosophy. For Patočka, however, the spiritual crisis is not solely a negative phenomenon; he perceives it as an opportunity to ‘rethink the problematic nature of science’.¹²⁵

III Supercivilisation

In the early 1950s, Czechoslovakia was experiencing the most radical form of communism reinforced by Stalinization. This was the period infamous for the radical collectivisation of private property, strong surveillance strategies by the State Secret Police ŠTB (including physical and psychological torture), show trials and executions of ‘traitors’ of the regime – non-communists, communists with the links to West, Jews, the bourgeoisie and all other ‘enemies’ of the state. Among the most striking public trials were those of Rudolf Slanský – a Czech Jewish politician accused of being a Titoist and a Zionist¹²⁶ – and Milada Horáková – a Czech politician living in the West accused of plotting to overthrow the communist regime in Czechoslovakia.¹²⁷

In the 1950s, Patočka’s works were under strict censorship – much more severe than it had been a decade previously.¹²⁸ In the gloomy circumstances of the Stalinization of Czechoslovakia, Patočka wrote an essay on the crisis in which he develops his theory of supercivilisation (*nadcivilizace*).¹²⁹ For Patočka, supercivilisation is a radical manifestation

¹²⁴Učník, *The Crisis of Meaning*, p. 153.

¹²⁵Ibid.

¹²⁶Alan Casty, *Communism is Hollywood: The Moral Paradoxes of Testimony, Silence, and Betrayal* (Lanham, Toronto and Plymouth: The Scarecrow Press, 2009), p. 156.

¹²⁷Wilma Iggers, *Women of Prague: Ethnic Diversity and Social Change from the Eighteenth Century to the Present* (Providence and Oxford: Bergham Books, 1995), p. 301.

¹²⁸Kohák, *Jan Patočka*, p. 137.

¹²⁹Jan Patočka, ‘Nadcivilizace a její vnitřní konflikt’, in *Péče o duši I, Stati z let 1929-1952, Nevydané texty z padesátých let*, ed. by Ivan Chvatík and Pavel Kouba (Prague: Oikoyomenh, 1996), pp. 243-303.

of modernity, the heart of which is all-encompassing rationality. Patočka's texts stem not only from the recognition of the crisis – the communist regime as a form of supercivilisation – but also from Patočka's restless efforts to understand the communist regime and its premises. Patočka, in his texts on supercivilisation, explores the ideas of Marxism, with an emphasis on the loss of meaning and the concept of revolution in particular. Despite Patočka's criticism of the communist regime in Czechoslovakia, as a radical manifestation of supercivilisation, he (perhaps surprisingly) does not find solace in liberalist ideas either. As Marek Skovajsa argues, for Patočka, liberalism represents only another 'moderate' form of supercivilisation that is pervasive in the West.¹³⁰

One of the most characteristic aspects of the supercivilisation is will to power.¹³¹ Patočka, however, argues that will to power is not an eruptive, revolutionary power of emotional fanaticism;¹³² instead, it is an anonymous, impersonal force. Patočka speaks about the rationalistic form of life, which was pervasive in Czechoslovakia in the 1950s.¹³³ Furthermore, supercivilisation is deprived of its inner problematicity.¹³⁴ Rational organisation is the key to all life questions. Problematicity as if does not exist.

This critique of the regime is probably one of the most explicit. However, Patočka softens his tone and, in the 1970s, speaks about care for the soul, as if understanding that there is no point in fighting against the communist regime with all its might. Patočka notes that there is the same motif repeating itself in all ideologies – be it Nazism or Communism. He observes that all ideologies (liberalism including) aim to reduce a human being to a force, to suppress what is unique in a person and to reduce people into an anonymous force that only makes the progress a nation, of a civilisation, possible.¹³⁵ These ideas, for Patočka, are extremely dangerous. Therefore, he changes his tone, organising illegal seminars on care for the soul. Patočka speaks about the spirit, the soul, and the agency of the soul to care for itself. However, Patočka discusses also care for the soul

¹³⁰Marek Skovajsa, 'Moderatní nadcivilizace: nekonečná krize liberalizmu a možnost jejího překonání', in *Dějinnost, Nadcivilizace a Modernita, Studie k Patočkově konceptu nadcivilizace* (Prague: Togga, 2010), pp. 81-123 (p. 82).

¹³¹Patočka, 'Nadcivilizace a její vnitřní konflikt', p. 248.

¹³²Ibid.

¹³³Ibid., p. 249.

¹³⁴Ibid., p. 250.

¹³⁵For a more comprehensive analysis of ideologies, see: Patočka, 'Ideology and the Life in the Idea' (1946).

in the city. Despite drawing a link between the corruption of the Ancient Greek *polis* and the necessity to care for the soul in the lawless city, the analogy with the communist regime in Czechoslovakia is quite obvious, and his message is very clear.

Patočka claims that only care for the soul can save us from the moral marasmus of the communist period and its reduction of human beings to workers. He argues that there are values that are greater than our everyday life, material wellbeing and social status. Physical work and cultivating the progress of the communist state is not the highest aim of human existence. He discusses care for the soul to warn his students not to become enticed by the idle talk of communism, but to remain truthful to the ethical principles Europe is founded on.

IV Plato and Europe

In 1968, the Soviet army invaded Czechoslovakia. The initial aim of the Soviet troops was to strengthen their power, exert their authority in the region and to normalise the ‘too-liberal’ communist regime in Czechoslovakia under the leadership of Alexander Dubček. The occupation, however, led to tragedy, which traumatised people for the next few generations. The strict political regime implemented immediately following the occupation caused an enormous wave of immigration into Western Europe and elsewhere. A feeling of betrayal seeped into the lives of Czechoslovak citizens:

Our despair was not about the Communist regime. Regimes come and go. But the borders of civilizations endure. And we saw ourselves being swallowed up by a very different civilization. Inside the Russian empire so many other nations were in the process of losing even their language, their identity. And I realised the obvious fact (the astoundingly obvious fact): that the Czech nation is not immortal; that it too could cease to exist.¹³⁶

As Milan Kundera argues, the sentiment of fear and anxiety that the Occupation in 1968 triggered did not grow so much from the possibility that the Soviet Union would bolster the regime of terror, but from the realisation that their national European identity may perish and be destroyed by their powerful so-called ally.

¹³⁶Milan Kundera, ‘The Total Rejection of Heritage, or Iannis Xenakis’, in *Encounter: Essay*, trans. by Linda Asher (London: Faber and Faber, 2010), pp. 74-80 (p. 76).

In 1972, shortly after the Soviet Occupation of Czechoslovakia, Patočka was expelled from the university once again and forced into premature retirement.¹³⁷ His professional career as a scholar was over. The banishment from university, however, freed him to focus on topics that were forbidden under communist censorship.¹³⁸ Patočka began writing extensively on Greek philosophy. In 1973, he delivered a series of illegal, underground seminars that took place in secret in the flats of dissidents and students. These seminars were later published as a volume of lectures entitled *Plato and Europe*.

Patočka explored the problem of the crisis once again. Compared with his earlier works (e.g. *Supercivilisation and its Inner Conflict*), Patočka does not address the political situation in Czechoslovakia directly. Instead, he focuses on the crisis in the Ancient Greek *polis* and speaks about the necessity of care for the soul in the city. One, however, cannot overlook the parallel between the situation in the Ancient Greek *polis* and communist Czechoslovakia. Patočka is deeply concerned about the future and fate of Europe and its spiritual heritage of care for the soul. He emphasises the origins of European identity, the roots of which date to the Ancient Greek tradition. What deeply connects these seemingly unrelated eras is that both occur in a spiritual vacuum. Nevertheless, Patočka's starting position is not politics or the call for political action; these themes are secondary, if not absolutely absent in Patočka's essays. His starting point is ethical, which can be further extended and applied to the political realm. Patočka realises that the crisis he portrays in these lectures cannot be resolved by politics, and that the core of the crisis resides elsewhere, beyond the political realm. In his seminars, Patočka breaks the myth and the ideology that communism presents to its citizens and states that there is something valuable, yet forgotten, which defines each individual – the forgotten Ancient Greek ideal of care for the soul, which defines Europe. In this context, Patočka highlights the significance of Socrates, who exercised care for the soul in the city. In the seminars *Plato and Europe*, Patočka examines Socrates' life and fate. He speaks about Socrates' sacrifice and its meaning. When Patočka was delivering his seminars, he could not predict the tragic irony of this aspect of sacrifice, namely that he would very soon follow in the footsteps of Socrates.

¹³⁷Kohák, *Jan Patočka*, p. 9.

¹³⁸Findlay, *Caring for the Soul in a Postmodern Age*, p. 53.

i *Existential Crisis*

In the opening chapter of *Plato and Europe*, Patočka observes that the most pervasive sentiment of his time is not one of ‘deep helplessness and inability to stand upon anything in any way solid.’¹³⁹ It is not despair and uncertainty that is the cause of the existential crisis; instead, ‘something is carrying us away; and what is carrying us away is contradictory, it prevents us from taking a univocal position. We do not know what we want; no one knows.’¹⁴⁰ Patočka’s word choice suggests that humanity is confronted not so much with helplessness, but rather with the growing feeling of indifference and boredom. Patočka speaks about the boredom of modern technological everydayness, which is centred on work, production and accumulation.¹⁴¹ Furthermore, he discusses the sentiment of alienation (*pocit odcizenosti*),¹⁴² describing its consequences: ‘What grows from it is surprisingly something like a will to power, but a power that has no subject. It is not that someone should want this power; it is just accumulated and does what it wants with us.’¹⁴³ The sentiment of alienation creates room for the emergence of a will to power, in which the subject of this power is absent. Although there is no subject, the power is clearly ‘individualizing’¹⁴⁴ in the sense that ‘[it] does what it wants with us’.¹⁴⁵ A human being is swept up by this power and seems unable to take any action or to resist this anonymous power without a specific agent. The constantly re-occurring motif of an anonymous power – ‘force’ – appears in Patočka’s writings, especially in relation to his analysis of techno-science and the crisis as the loss of meaning.

The motif of power without a subject is further developed in Patočka’s *Heretical Essays*, especially in his examination of the power of total mobilisation. He examines

¹³⁹‘hluboká bezradnost a neschopnost postavit se na něco jakýmkolvek způsobem pevného [...] že mohou nějak dirigovat svoje osudy, že lidstvo může ovládat svoje záležitosti.’ In: Jan Patočka, ‘Platón a Evropa’, in *Péče o duši, soubor statí a přednášek o postavení člověka ve světě a v dějinách. II, Stati z let 1970-1977, nevydané texty a přednášky ze sedmdesátých let*, ed. by Ivan Chvatík and Pavel Kouba (Prague: Oikoymenh, 1999), pp. 149–355 (p. 153); Jan Patočka, *Plato and Europe*, trans. by Petr Lom (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2002), p. 5.

¹⁴⁰‘cosi nás unáší; a to, co nás unáší, že je rozporné, takové, že nám brání zaujmout jednoznačný postoj, nevíme, co chceme, nikdo to neví.’ In: Patočka, ‘Platón a Evropa’, p. 153; *Plato and Europe*, p. 6.

¹⁴¹Tucker, *The Philosophy and Politics of Czech Dissidence*, p. 67.

¹⁴²Patočka, ‘Platón a Evropa’, p. 153; *Plato and Europe*, p. 6.

¹⁴³Ibid.

¹⁴⁴Michel Foucault, ‘The Subject and Power’, *Critical Inquiry*, 8.4 (1982), 777–795 (p. 782).

¹⁴⁵Patočka, ‘Platón a Evropa’, p. 153; *Plato and Europe*, p. 6.

Jünger's idea of power, which originates in the First World War frontline trenches, but which is extended to everydayness to accelerate the progress of the (German) nation further. Although Patočka's reading of Jünger can be viewed as sympathetic, Patočka raises critical points against Jünger's position. Patočka not only claims that the power of total mobilisation stems from the individual's loss of meaning, but also that its individualising agency reduces a human being to a force and forms a new subject, which in Jünger's case is a new type of man – the man-machine individual (*the worker*).¹⁴⁶

Boredom, which Patočka briefly mentions in *Plato and Europe*, and the effort to escape the everydayness and mundaneness of the quotidian life leads to the search for ek-stasis – the orgiastic¹⁴⁷ experience – which culminates, as Patočka believed, in wars and revolutions.¹⁴⁸ In *Philosophy and Politics of Czech Dissidence from Patočka to Havel*, Tucker draws a parallel between the situation of normalised Czechoslovakia and the post-First World War conservative revolution:

The grayness, boredom and averageness of normalised Czechoslovakia must have appeared to Patočka at least as dreary as modern society appeared to those German conservative revolutionaries half a century earlier after they returned from the front.¹⁴⁹

Despite the possible similarities between the situation of normalised Czechoslovakia and the movement of the conservative revolution and pervasive emotions that Tucker presents in his analysis on boredom, there is, I believe, a stark difference between the two. The conservative revolution, which evolved out of the *Frontgemeinschaft* (the frontline community), became carried away with the sentiments of boredom and disappointment due to the outcome of the First World War. This feeling escalated into a constitution of a much more radicalised, sinister form of community *Volksgemeinschaft* (national community) in Nazi Germany. Reading his last two *Heretical Essays*, in particular, Patočka is aware of the danger of emotions (e.g., boredom and disappointment) being directive in one's political action; therefore, in response, he emphasises the importance of care for

¹⁴⁶'Power within the work-world can therefore be nothing other than the representation [*Repräsentation*] of the form of the worker. Here lies the legitimation of a novel and special will to power. We recognize this will because it is the master of its means and weapons of attack, and because it has not a derivative but, rather, a substantial relationship to them.' In: Jünger, *The Worker*, p. 44.

¹⁴⁷Patočka, 'Kacířské eseje', p. 101; Patočka, *Heretical Essays*, p. 100.

¹⁴⁸Tucker, *The Philosophy and Politics of Czech Dissidence*, p. 67.

¹⁴⁹*Ibid.*, p. 75.

the soul in the city. Not emotions, but rather, following Socrates' method of constantly questioning all phenomena around us, and the restless search for truth, have the agency to save us from the crisis. Care for the soul does not offer ultimate answer either; rather, care for the soul reveals the world and all phenomena as a problem and seeks to respond to the problematicity of the world instead.

ii The End of Europe

In the first lecture of *Plato and Europe*, Patočka announces the end of Europe.¹⁵⁰ Europe is at its definitive end – not only as a political and economic empire, but also as a spiritual entity. Nothing remains of old Europe. Exploring this argument, Patočka questions what brought Europe to what it is now. Locating the core of the crisis, he determines the causes of the decline of Europe. Generally, the cause of Europe's decline was the two world wars: 'this enormous power definitely wrecked itself in the span of thirty years, in two wars, after which nothing remained, nothing of her power that had ruled the world.'¹⁵¹ Europe as a political and economic empire lost its power; the locus of power moved to Russia and the US instead.¹⁵² The cause of the end of Europe was its fragmentation and disunity (*nejednota*) and the tendency towards the isolationism of little sovereign states¹⁵³ 'at various levels'.¹⁵⁴

In his lectures in *Plato and Europe*, Patočka speaks also about the 'worldly fall'¹⁵⁵ and the 'decline of nature and man as if it were an irreversible and inescapable fall'.¹⁵⁶ By the 'end of Europe', Patočka refers primarily to the spiritual end of Europe, which is

¹⁵⁰'Evropa skončila.' In: Patočka, 'Platón a Evropa', p. 156; *Plato and Europe*, p. 9.

¹⁵¹Ibid., p. 157; Ibid., p. 9.

¹⁵²Patočka, 'Kacířské eseje', p. 91; *Heretical Essays*, p. 87.

¹⁵³There is something of an irony here. While Patočka criticises the fragmentation of the European states and sees them as the cause of the crisis, while superpowers took over from Europe, Masaryk, in contrast, praises small nations (such as Czechoslovakia) and recognises in them a high potential. Masaryk wrote about small nations in 1918 when there was a chance for small nations to get influence. However, Patočka wrote about the crisis of Europe after the Second World War - in the 1950s and the 1970s, at the time, when the small nations, Masaryk was writing about, were violently suppressed, betrayed by powerful nations, gradually losing their identity.

¹⁵⁴'na různé úrovni.' Patočka, 'Platón a Evropa', p. 157; *Plato and Europe*, p. 9.

¹⁵⁵'světového pádu.' Ibid., p. 154; Ibid., p. 6

¹⁵⁶'toho úpadku, v kterém je příroda a člověk, takového jakoby nevyčísitelného a neodvratného pádu.' Ibid.

defined by the erasure of European heritage.¹⁵⁷ He argues that this issue is not a problem of political powers and regimes, but that '[w]e are the authority of our own decline; we are responsible for our decline.'¹⁵⁸

Patočka argues that the potential solution to the crisis reaches beyond metaphysics. Metaphysics (the absolute, the ultimate truth, moral standards, religion, etc.) falls short in providing an answer to the crisis. As Patočka says: 'In this situation something like metaphysics is laughable!'¹⁵⁹ Studying pre-Socratic philosophy and the Greek *polis*, Patočka rediscovers the soul and its agency of care, which symbolise the forgotten European heritage and could form a counterweight and alternative to metaphysics, which fails to resolve the crisis of Europe.

V Heretical Essays

Compared with his previous writing, in his final work, *Heretical Essays in the Philosophy of History* (1975), Patočka focuses predominantly on the concept of history. He reaches back to the thoughts of pre-Socratic philosophers (to Heraclitus in particular) and rethinks the concept of the crisis in the framework of binary oppositions.¹⁶⁰ The key concepts that Patočka focuses on in his examination of the crisis are *λόγος* (*logos*) and *πόλεμος* (*polemos*).

Patočka depicts the crisis in his sixth heretical essay, 'Wars of the Twentieth Century and the Twentieth Century as War.' In this essay, he examines the image of the First World War and the powerful image of the frontline experience. The First World War, from Patočka's perspective, represents a historical event, which was, in a sense, cosmic¹⁶¹ and had the capacity to transcend humanity.¹⁶² Patočka does not aim to offer a criticism of the First World War; rather, although he did not participate on the frontline,

¹⁵⁷Ibid., p. 157; Ibid., p. 9.

¹⁵⁸'[J]sme autoritou svého vlastního úpadku, [...] jsme za svůj úpadek zodpovědni.' Ibid., pp. 259-260; Ibid., p. 125.

¹⁵⁹'V téhle situaci ku příkladu něco takového jako metafyzika, to slovo jenom vyslovit je na posměch!' Ibid., p. 153; Ibid., p. 6.

¹⁶⁰Patočka portrays the oppositions of [1] historicity vs non-historicity, [2] everydayness vs sacredness and [3] upheaval vs decline. In: Patočka, 'Kacířské eseje', pp. 100-102; *Heretical Essays*, pp. 98-100.

¹⁶¹Ibid., p. 117; Ibid., p. 119.

¹⁶²Ibid.

the event greatly impacted him and his philosophy. Patočka claims that the First World War was very different from all previous wars because the strategies implemented in that war represented the culmination and climax of the techno-scientific tendencies pervasive in European culture since modernity. The First World War, therefore, represents, for Patočka, a breaking point, beyond which it is difficult to rethink humanity again and which, instead, calls for a radical turn, a radical transformation of thinking.

Patočka, however, observes another aspect. He criticises the way in which war is perceived. He argues that we live in an illusion of a one-sided perspective, in which we approach war ‘from the perspective of peace, day, and life, excluding its dark nocturnal side.’¹⁶³ The explanation of war is insufficient, not also because it is constructed with the help of 19th-century ideas,¹⁶⁴ which ignore the aspects of night, of war, and of death, and therefore fail to explain the fundamental problems of the 20th century. In his reconstruction of the crisis, Patočka observes that the 20th century is characteristic for its ‘deep addiction to war.’¹⁶⁵

In his examination of war, Patočka focuses on the analysis of the war experience – the First World War frontline experience – borrowing the analyses of the frontline experience offered by Pierre Teilhard de Chardin and Ernst Jünger. Patočka’s reading of their theories is sympathetic; he uses their views of the frontline experience to construct his own argument. Although Patočka perceives the experience as an extremely critical and horrifying event, he argues that, in the very depth of the abyss of the frontline trenches, there was something ‘deeply and mysteriously positive.’¹⁶⁶ To overcome the critical situation of the frontline experience, Patočka argues that one needs to open up to the situation, to ‘lean out into the night, into struggle and death.’¹⁶⁷ One is called to break with the illusion of how things appear on the surface, or are presented to us by political authorities; instead, one is called and encouraged to sacrifice oneself and to expose oneself to the truth about the situation and change one’s way of thinking accordingly.

These arguments can be decontextualised from the environment of the First World

¹⁶³Ibid., p. 118; Ibid., p. 120.

¹⁶⁴Ibid.

¹⁶⁵Ibid.

¹⁶⁶Ibid., p. 122; Ibid., p. 126.

¹⁶⁷Ibid., p. 127; Ibid., p. 131.

War frontline experience and extended to the political realm. The political realm, for Patočka, represents the realm of the ‘constant shaking’,¹⁶⁸ in which the naïve and stable meaning is constantly being shaken and undermined, and a new meaning is being bestowed and shaken again. The political realm is, therefore, unstable and uncertain. Yet, as Patočka argues, to respond to the constant shaking of the political realm and its challenges, one is called to open up to its shaking. One is called to expose oneself to the very problemat�city and to seek the truth responsibly in this sphere of shaking, instead of falling for illusions and making judgements and conclusions by focusing solely on how things appear on the surface.

However, to obtain this mindset, one is called to sacrifice one’s private, mundane, everyday life and enter the contingent and risky political realm. Patočka speaks about self-sacrifice,¹⁶⁹ which eventually leads to a change of mind – ‘a gigantic conversion, of an unheard-of metanoein’.¹⁷⁰ Only the grand conversion of humanity, the conversion in the philosophical rather than religious sense, has the capacity to overcome the crisis, the ongoing state of war that characterises the 20th century, following Patočka’s argument.

In this context, Patočka emphasises the concept of truth as *alētheia*.¹⁷¹ He argues that simplification of thought, in the sense that one is not willing to see things in their full problemat�city, and diversion from the truth have specific *biopolitical* reasons.¹⁷² This idea can be better understood if we return to Socrates and the tension between truth and opinion (*doxa*). Once a human being stops striving for the truth and becomes satisfied with the view that the political realm is grounded in, the citizen is prone to manipulation and tyranny. Patočka calls for *living in truth*. He calls for the revival of the idea of seeing the world as a whole. By this, he does not mean one’s effort to seek certainty and exactness in the world; on the contrary, Patočka calls for responsibility – the necessity of being open to the realm of constant problemat�city.

¹⁶⁸Ibid., p. 70; Ibid., p. 62.

¹⁶⁹Ibid., p. 125; Ibid., p. 129.

¹⁷⁰Ibid., p. 81; Ibid., p. 75.

¹⁷¹Ibid., p. 59; Ibid., p. 50.

¹⁷²Ibid., p. 125; Ibid., p. 129.

Conclusion

Patočka's concept of the crisis represents a highly complex problem that had been forming throughout his entire scholarly career. While his ideas on the crisis may vary, they all have something in common: Patočka concludes that the roots of the political, economic and geopolitical crisis can be found in the spiritual decline of humanity and the rising tendency towards techno-science. Patočka does not, however, moralise and preach about how to overcome this crisis from a moral perspective. His analysis is free from any moral judgements. He does not propose ultimate solutions to the crisis either. Instead, he unfolds the crisis as a problem.

In the 1930s, Patočka spoke about the spiritual crisis and the effort to step beyond one-sided rationality. He sought a revival of personal faith in the context of radical subjectivism. In the 1950s, the time of Stalinisation, Patočka warned against the allure of ideology and that ideology becomes dangerous once it detaches from the *Idea*. In the mid-1970s, Patočka introduced the forgotten Ancient Greek ideal of *care for the soul as the solution to the crisis*, which in his final essays evolves into a conversion of *metanoia* – a radical change of mind that humanity needs to undergo to overcome the spiritual crisis.

In his examination of the spiritual crisis, Patočka prepares the ground for the reconstruction of a new political subjectivity – the community of the solidarity of the shaken. He introduces the concept on the very last pages of *Heretical Essays*. Yet, Patočka closes by addressing Ernst Jünger:

And Jünger writes at one place that the combatants in an attack become two parts of a single force, fusing into a single body, and adds: 'Into a single body – an odd comparison. Whoever understands it affirms both self, and the enemy lives at once in the whole and in the part.'¹⁷³

Patočka presents Jünger as one of the Western thinkers who, like himself, perceives history as the interplay between *logos* and *polemos*. Patočka appears uncritical towards Jünger, focusing on the similarities between their ideas of the frontline experience and the concept of the community. However, in my next chapter, I argue that Patočka is rather critical of Jünger's treatment of the frontline experience, which, as Patočka argues, only leads to

¹⁷³Ibid., pp. 130-131; Ibid., pp. 136-137.

active nihilism, rather than to the effort to overcome it.¹⁷⁴

¹⁷⁴Ibid., p.128; Ibid., p. 134.

Chapter 2

From the Experience (*Erlebnis*) to History

Introduction

In his final work, *Heretical Essays in the Philosophy of History* (1975), Jan Patočka introduces the concept of a novel political community: the solidarity of the shaken. Patočka sets the idea in an obscure context. He argues that the solidarity of the shaken emerged out of the conditions of the frontline (an environment of political violence), is a prerequisite for individuals' turn to history, and is instrumental for the transformation of political violence into history.

Many conventional interpretations claim that the *Heretical Essays* are the result of Patočka's critical examination of the philosophies of history, formulated by his predecessors Edmund Husserl and Martin Heidegger. In *Heretical Essays*, Patočka critically assesses two concepts of history, both of which evolve from phenomenology. He criticises Husserl's idea of European history as being based on teleology, and Martin Heidegger's concept of history regarding his emphasis on ontology.

Nevertheless, to perceive Patočka's final essays exclusively from this perspective makes only partial use of the content of his work. Husserl's and Heidegger's philosophies of history fall short in clarifying the final two *Heretical Essays*. The problems occur towards the end of the sixth essay, when Patočka introduces a series of enigmatic con-

cepts into the discussion, including the concept of sacrifice and the turn as *metanoia*. Even though the *Heretical Essays* were written in the 1970s, Patočka draws a clear link between history and the frontline experience via an examination of the First World War. He discusses the concept of the solidarity of the shaken: a community of salvation that conveys the turn to history. He emphasises the concept of a turn – *metanoia* – and calls for the necessity of sacrifice. These enigmatic concepts are of only marginal importance in Husserl’s and Heidegger’s discourses on history, and are used in a slightly different context. If one reads Patočka’s final account of history solely through the lens of these predecessors’ philosophies of history, Patočka’s understanding of history remains obscure.¹⁷⁵

To understand the entire content of the *Heretical Essays* and Patočka’s final formulation of history, readers need to consider another important dimension of the essays that is often overlooked: Patočka did not invent the obscure vocabulary he used *ex nihilo*. The concepts of the turn, the call for sacrifice and the frontline experience were commonly used by thinkers in the inter- and post-war eras, especially in their examination of community (*Gemeinschaft*). Patočka’s final essays, thus, need to be read not only as a criticism of Husserl and Heidegger, but also, importantly, as a critical contribution to the discourse on the concept of community and a criticism of a model of material history that was gradually developed by Ernst Jünger in his inter-war works ‘Total Mobilization’ (*Die totale Mobilmachung*) (1930), *The Worker: Domination and Form (Der Arbeiter: Herrschaft und Gestalt)* (1932), and the essay *On Pain (Über den Schmerz)* (1934). For a new reading of Patočka’s work, it should be acknowledged that he was familiar with these works of Jünger and that he refers to Jünger’s inter-war writings in *Heretical Essays* on various occasions.¹⁷⁶

However, following these few references to Jünger, it is evident that Patočka’s criticism is not explicitly directed against Jünger’s works. Instead, Patočka realises that Jünger’s proposals in these three works are not an idealistic utopian dream, but a new

¹⁷⁵Nicolas de Warren argues: ‘In a review of the English translation of the *Heretical Essays*, one finds that the reviewer passes over the Sixth Essay in silence; an unsuspecting reader walks away merely thinking that the *Heretical Essays* ended with a ‘rather depressing’ and – it is implied – an absurd reflection on ‘war.’ In: Nicolas de Warren, ‘Homecoming. Jan Patočka’s Reflection on the First World War’, in *Phenomenologies of Violence*, ed. by Michael Staudigl and Chris Bremmers (Leiden & Boston: Brill, 2013), pp. 207-243 (p. 209).

¹⁷⁶Patočka, *Heretical Essays*, p. 114; *Ibid.*, p. 122; *Ibid.*, p. 125.

mainstream tendency, a model of materialist history¹⁷⁷ – the path that Europe was certainly still following even 40 years after Jünger wrote his works. Unlike Jünger, Patočka recognises the catastrophic and devastating consequences that the movement of history proposed by Jünger had already led to. Thus, the *Heretical Essays* need to be read not just as a criticism of Husserl's and Heidegger's accounts of history, but primarily as Patočka's mature account of history, which is an antidote to Jünger's idea of materialist history.

The aim of the *Heretical Essays* is to investigate the origin of Jünger's vision of materialist history and to offer an alternative solution that could save Europe from spiritual and moral decline. In the essay 'Total Mobilization' (1930), Jünger evolves his idea of materialist history through examining the frontline experience. To understand Jünger's reasoning, Patočka returns, so to speak, to the conditions of the frontline and examines the structure that Jünger proposes in his development of materialist history. Patočka, in his own reconstruction of history in the *Heretical Essays*, follows the very same trajectory – stretching out from the individual's experience on the frontline to the beginning of history. Although both thinkers follow the same structure, they differ radically in their treatment of this movement (i.e. from the frontline experience to history) and in their ultimate definition of history. Patočka points to the shortcomings of Jünger's vision and, in his effort to do so, highlights that which is absent in Jünger's concept of materialist history and which he believes needs to become the core of history – the ethical, moral dimension and the idea of humanism.¹⁷⁸

¹⁷⁷Patočka criticises the concept of materialist history in his other essays as well. In: Jan Patočka, 'Nebezpečí technizace ve vědě u E. Husserla a bytostné jádro techniky jako nebezpečí u M. Heideggera', in *Sebrané spisy svazek 3: Péče o duši III*, ed. by Ivan Chvatík and Pavel Kouba (Prague: Oikoymenh, 2002), pp. 147-160; Jan Patočka, 'The Dangers of Technicization in Science according to E. Husserl and the Essence of Technology as Danger according to M. Heidegger (Varna Lecture, 1973)', in Erazim Kohák, *Jan Patočka: Philosophy and Selected Writings* (Chicago & London: The University of Chicago Press, 1989), pp. 327–339; Jan Patočka, 'Věčnost a dějinnost', in *Péče o duši I, Stati z let 1929-1952, Nevydané texty z padesátých let*, ed. by Ivan Chvatík and Pavel Kouba (Prague: Oikoymenh, 1996), pp. 139-242 (p. 235).

¹⁷⁸Although Patočka does not explicitly argue that ethics and humanism are a prerequisite of his understanding of history, one can conclude this from his argument's emphasis on corporeity and vulnerability, as well as from his emphasis on certain Christian elements, which are foundational for the constitution of the solidarity of the shaken. Patočka particularly lays emphasis on the element of sacrifice as being deprived of all economy behind it – sacrifice for the sake of sacrifice itself, or for no reason. In: Patočka, *Heretical Essays*, p. 140. Further, Patočka emphasises another fundamental moment for the constitution of the community – the moment of 'loving those who hate us' and of 'prayer for the enemy', by which he overcomes the antagonistic relationship between the friend and the enemy proposed by Schmitt. See: Carl Schmitt, *The Concept of the Political*, trans. by Georg Schwab (Chicago & London: The University of Chicago Press, 2008), p. 29; while also making the effort to preserve the political. In: Patočka, 'Kacířské

What, then, is the role of the solidarity of the shaken in this context? The solidarity of the shaken represents Patočka's final answer to the problem of the spiritual and moral decline of Europe, to the problem of materialist history, and as a counterweight to Jünger's concept of the worker.

By introducing the novel community of the solidarity of the shaken, Patočka aims to break with the idea of a worker, which, as Jünger believes, is the extension of Friedrich Nietzsche's doctrine of *will to power* (*der Wille zur Macht*) to both the post-war age and Realpolitik. The solidarity of the shaken represents a negation of the worker – the masters of planet Earth, an *Übermensch*. Instead, Patočka proposes the solidarity of the shaken: a community of defiance, a community of those who resist the power of the State and who are willing to sacrifice themselves neither for the sake of supporting the economy of the State and its technological programme (*Gestell*), nor for the sake of their appearance of heroism and chivalry, but for no reason, for the sake of sacrifice itself.¹⁷⁹

This chapter primarily aims to clarify the nature of the solidarity of the shaken, the key concept of Patočka's philosophy of history. This clarification requires a novel interpretation of Patočka's *Heretical Essays* as a critical contribution to the German inter-war discourse on the community (*Gemeinschaft*),¹⁸⁰ with an emphasis on the critical reading of Jünger's three inter-war writings, in which the model of materialist history is formulated. This reading casts new light on the solidarity of the shaken, a concept that is fun-

eseje', p. 129; *Heretical Essays*, p. 130.

¹⁷⁹'To znamená obět těchto obětovaných přestává mít svůj relativní význam, není požadovanou cestou k programu výstavby, pokroku, zvýšení a rozšíření životních možností, nýbrž má význam pouze sama v sobě.' In: Patočka, 'Kacířské eseje', p. 113; 'That means: the sacrifice of the sacrificed loses its relative significance, it is no longer the cost we pay for a program of development, progress, intensification, and extension of life's possibilities [as is the case in Jünger's self-sacrifice], rather, it is significant *solely in itself*.' In: Patočka, *Heretical Essays*, p. 130.

¹⁸⁰The discourse of *Gemeinschaft* gains its popularity in the post-WWI era. Ernst Jünger introduces the idea of *Frontgemeinschaft* – a community whose foundation was a mutually shared experience of the front-line and 'a strict new social ethic arising from the model of soldierly life.' In: Robert Thomas Schechtman, *Community and Utopia: The Discourse of Gemeinschaft and the Search for a New Modernity in Germany* (Ann Arbor: ProQuest, 2011), p. 151. These ideas of Jünger's about *Frontgemeinschaft* ultimately serve as a springboard for the Nazi idea of a community. The ideology of fascism misused people's fascination with and desire for belonging to a community and seduced them into supporting the dystopian dream of the Third Reich. Patočka is aware of the genealogy of the concept of *Gemeinschaft*. The notion of the solidarity of the shaken represents his attempt to critically contribute to the discourse and to revitalise those original ideals that were inherent in the concept. Despite the negative connotations, he does not condemn the idea of the community. He is well aware of the ethical importance of the phenomenon in the political realm. In the *Heretical Essays*, Patočka revitalises those premises of the community which became tacit and even lost in the German discourse – the idea of *humanism* and the European ideal of *care for the soul*.

damental to understanding Patočka's account of history, and yet, until now, has been a source of confusion and misunderstanding. I argue that Patočka, through his critical reading of Jünger in *Heretical Essays*, polishes and sharpens his own life-long project on the philosophy of history and points to its validity and accuracy in contemporary times.

The idea of the solidarity of the shaken, which is central in this treatment of history, represents Patočka's final testament, expressing his hope that the spiritual and moral decline in Europe can be overcome. The concept is Patočka's response to the dangers of material history, which Walter Benjamin recognises in his essay 'Theories of German Fascism' (1930) to be foundational for the ideology of fascism. Patočka overcomes this argument and observes that the dangers of materialist history formed the beginnings of and were still pervasive in the communist regime in Czechoslovakia during his time

On a broader scale, Patočka's solidarity of the shaken is an answer to those forms of politics that are pursued through the means of active nihilism: forms of politics that are in opposition to universal rights and the principles of liberal democracy.

I Jünger's Vision of History

Jünger's three inter-war works describe a complex and consistent vision of history that is built upon the idea of the progress of civilisation and revolve around the concept of *Gestell*¹⁸¹ – 'the *enframing* which presents all things according to one's own intrinsic technical programme'.¹⁸² Jünger perceives *Gestell* as 'the product of worker's creativity

¹⁸¹The concept of *Gestell* originates in the philosophy of Heidegger. In: Martin Heidegger, 'The Origin of the Work of Art', in *Off the Beaten Track*, trans. by Julian Young and Kenneth Haynes (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), pp. 1-56 (p. 54); Martin Heidegger, 'Only a God Can Save Us: Der Spiegel's Interview with Martin Heidegger', in *The Heidegger Controversy: A Critical Reader*, ed. by Richard Wolin (London & Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1993), pp. 91-116 (p. 107); Martin Heidegger, 'On the Question of Being', in *Pathmarks*, trans. by William McNeil (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), pp. 291-322 (p. 313); Jünger is inspired by Heidegger's definition of *Gestell* as the 'ultimate possibility of technology as the end of completion of metaphysics'. In: Frank Schallow and Alfred Denker, *Historical Dictionary of Heidegger's Philosophy* (Lanham, Md.: Scarecrow Press, 2010), p. 100; Jünger incorporates this idea of Heidegger in his development of history and perceives the category of *Gestell* to be a solution to the desired overcoming of nihilism.

¹⁸²Francesco Tava, *The Risk of Freedom: Ethics, Phenomenology and Politics in Jan Patočka*, trans. by Jane Ledlie (London & New York: Rowman & Littlefield International, 2015), p. 43.

itself,¹⁸³ in which the novel typus of ‘the worker is the whole that wills itself.’¹⁸⁴ The idea of total mobilisation represents the means by which Jünger’s material history is realised. Considering that total mobilisation serves as a means for achieving the progress of civilisation in line with *Gestell* and is a result of the worker’s will, the concept represents the extension and deepening of Nietzsche’s philosophy of will to power.

On first reading these three inter-war writings, it is difficult to detect Jünger’s personal attitude towards such an idea of materialist history; Jünger never explicitly states whether it is beneficial to humanity. His voice in these three works has the qualities of a prophet who only experiences the horrific events of the frontline and then contemplates the application and extension of this experience for the future development of the world and society. Rather than arguing that this model of materialist history is either ultimately beneficial or detrimental to humanity, Jünger, without any emotions, only diagnoses the situation of his time and describes what outcomes his model of material history could achieve for the further technical development of civilisation.

Jünger’s reconstruction of history stems from the retrospective evaluation of the events of the First World War and the frontline experience, as developed in his famous war memoir *Storm of Steel (In Stahlgewittern)* (1920). Although Jünger himself, unlike Patočka, served on the frontline, one may conclude that, despite his personal experience, he arrived at some unexpected, obscure and surprising conclusions. Jünger, instead of contemplating humanism and an individual’s existential drama in the conditions of the frontline, *celebrates* the war and its violence¹⁸⁵, focusing on the heroism and chivalry of frontline soldiers, aestheticising¹⁸⁶ the experience of horror.

Jünger explicitly avoids existential sentiments and, in his examination of the frontline experience and the First World War, focuses instead solely on those aspects that sup-

¹⁸³Wolf Kittler, ‘Gestalt to Ge-stell: Martin Heidegger Reads Ernst Jünger’, *Cultural Critique*, 69 (2008), 79–97 (p. 84).

¹⁸⁴Ibid.

¹⁸⁵Both in the work ‘Total Mobilization’ and in the essay ‘Battle as an Inner Experience’ (*Der Kampf als inneres Erlebnis*) (1926).

¹⁸⁶‘In the course of the following days, more bodies were discovered in the undergrowth – evidence of the attackers’ heavy losses, which added to the gloomy atmosphere that prevailed there. As I was making my way through a thicket once, on my own, I was dismayed by a quiet hissing and burbling sound. I stepped closer and encountered two bodies, which the heat had awakened to a ghostly type of life. The night was silent and humid; I stopped a long time before the eerie scene.’ In: Ernst Jünger, *Storm of Steel*, trans. by Michael Hofmann (London: Penguin Books, 2004), p. 107.

port the central idea of his materialist history – the progress of civilisation and the implementation of the intrinsic technological programme (*Gestell*). Although he depicts the terror of the First World War in a naturalistic and true-to-life manner, Jünger speaks about a ‘grand war’, emphasising the heroism and manliness of the warriors. The truth of the war – with its existential alienation, dirt, weaknesses and vulnerability of its soldiers – remains unacknowledged. From this perspective, Jünger’s early writings describing the terror of the frontline can be considered pro-war, or anti-Remarque in political terms.

Jünger avoids describing soldiers in personal terms. They are either young idealists¹⁸⁷ or disillusioned warriors,¹⁸⁸ neither of which exclude the idea of heroism, glory and chivalry. However, as Hannah Arendt, referring to Jünger’s *Storm of Steel*, argues:

[T]he worshippers of war were the first to concede that war in the era of machines could not possibly breed virtues like chivalry, courage, honour, and manliness that it imposed on men nothing but the experience of bare destruction together with the humiliation of being only small cogs in the majestic wheel of slaughter.¹⁸⁹

Although, as Woods argues, ‘Jünger is well aware of the pacifist argument that in modern warfare technical progress results in meaningless slaughter and suffering’,¹⁹⁰ he intentionally avoids acknowledging that, ‘in a force field of destructive torrents and explosions, was the tiny, fragile human body.’¹⁹¹ In other words, despite his concern about the meaninglessness of war, Jünger is reluctant to express this awareness. In his war memoir, and later in his inter-war writings, Jünger attempts to metaphorically *armour* that tiny, fragile

¹⁸⁷‘We had come from lecture halls, school desks and factory workbenches, and over the brief weeks of training, we had bonded together into one large and enthusiastic group. Grown up in an age of security, we shared a yearning for danger, for the experience of the extraordinary. We were enraptured by war. We had set out in a rain of flowers, in a drunken atmosphere of blood and roses. Surely the war had to supply us with what we wanted; the great, the overwhelming, the hallowed experience. We thought of it as manly, as action, a merry duelling party on flowered, blood-bedewed meadows. ‘No finer death in all the world than...’ Anything to participate, not to have stayed at home!’ In: Jünger, *Storm of Steel*, p. 14.

¹⁸⁸‘After only a short time with the regiment, we had become thoroughly disillusioned. Instead of the danger we’d hoped for, we had been given dirt, work and sleepless nights, getting through which required heroism of a sort, but hardly what we had in mind. Worse still was the boredom, which is still more enervating for the soldier than the proximity of death.’ *Ibid.*, p. 19.

¹⁸⁹Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (New York: Harcourt, 1973), p. 329.

¹⁹⁰Roger Woods, ‘Ernst Jünger, the New Nationalists, and the Memory of the First World War’, in *German Novelists of the Weimar Republic: Intersections of Literature and Politics*, ed. by Karl Leydecker (Martlesham & Rochester, NY: Boydell & Brewer, 2006), pp. 125–140 (p. 129).

¹⁹¹Walter Benjamin, ‘The Storyteller: Reflections on the Works of Nikolai Leskov’, in *Selected Writings, Volume 3, 1935-1938*, trans. by Edmund Jephcott, Howard Eiland, and Others, ed. by Howard Eiland and Michael W. Jennings (Cambridge, Massachusetts and London, England: The Belknap Press and Harvard University Press, 2002), pp. 143-166 (p. 144).

human body to protect the frontline participants both from the trauma of the experience and from its memory.

Jünger does not strip the warriors of their armour and fails to show that, under the armour, there is a vulnerable human being. On the contrary, the meaning he finds in the frontline is to overcome every weakness and eschatological and existential sentiment. He encourages the participants of the frontline to become indifferent to pain by ignoring the wounds, trauma and shellshock that the experience caused.

Patočka distances himself from such a treatment of the frontline experience, and in *Heretical Essays* suggests a counter-balancing perspective to Jünger's vision of the war. In Patočka's essays, someone standing in the frontline trenches is not a hero, but primarily a human being portrayed in all his vulnerability, pain and powerlessness. Patočka strips the frontline participant of his armour. The meaning that Patočka finds in the terror of the frontline is the opportunity for the participant to be deeply shaken by the experience, which, in principle, makes the warrior stronger.

Patočka's meaning of the frontline resides in the possibility of embracing its negativity to shake off meaninglessness and to find a new meaning in the formation of a community – the solidarity of the shaken – with other frontline participants who have experienced the same conditions, for whom vulnerability is prerequisite, regardless of their nationality, gender, religion or other affiliation.

However, one needs to ask whether Jünger, after experiencing the horror of the frontline trenches, was capable of writing about humanism, vulnerability and corporicity in the same way as Patočka. One cannot assume that Jünger was not, himself, shaken by the experience; his reality is war, and it is his trauma and fear that disables him from opening up to the full problematicity of the experience, which, in turn, prevents him from taking off his armour and being truly human. To paraphrase Benjamin, beyond the surface of the man of steel, there is a fragile, broken human being who is unable to speak.¹⁹²

On the other hand, Patočka, who did not personally experience the frontline in its full terror, cannot write about the experience in the way Jünger does. Perhaps only some-

¹⁹²Benjamin, 'The Storyteller', p. 144.

one who was not too close to the horrors of the frontline can maintain a reasonable distance and contemplate the community of the solidarity of the shaken being based on the premises of humanity and transcendence.

i Total Mobilisation

In 'Total Mobilization', Jünger portrays the process of both the technical and spiritual mobilisation of the world. The concept of spirituality for Jünger has slightly different connotations than in Patočka's work. Jünger's model of materialist history accompanies an enthusiasm – a spiritual experience – to transform a materialistic, egoistical bourgeois German society and to herald an idealistic, age of the worker. The worker represents a visionary creator, a new spiritual future for the German nation.¹⁹³ From Patočka's perspective, spirituality is also foundational for the constitution of the community, but his concept of spirituality does not stem from reaching beyond a certain social class; rather, it stems from transcending the materialist, mundane world.¹⁹⁴

Jünger opens the essay with an explicit celebration of war. What fascinates him about the First World War is that 'the genius of war was penetrated by the spirit of progress.'¹⁹⁵ The First World War implemented technology in its warfare that radically changed combat. Technology transformed the war, turning it from a primitive battle between two warriors into a sophisticated strategy that dynamically and efficiently enhanced the progress of civilisation.¹⁹⁶

Jünger praises the war for its ability to eliminate life and to convert it into energy, arguing that its importance resides in 'the growing conversion of life into energy.'¹⁹⁷ If one visualises Jünger's argument, one sees in the frontline trenches not the struggle and suffering of the war participants, but solely a dehumanised line of flames – the energy produced by the war. Jünger describes how these energies of the frontline are transformed

¹⁹³Schechtman, *Community and Utopia*, p. 66.

¹⁹⁴Patočka, 'Kacířské eseje', p. 129; *Heretical Essays*, p. 125.

¹⁹⁵Ernst Jünger, 'Total Mobilization', in *The Heidegger Controversy: A Critical Reader*, ed. by Richard Wolin (London & Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1993), pp. 119–139 (p. 123).

¹⁹⁶For a detailed analysis of the transformation of the nature of warfare on the Western Front, please see: Brian Bond, *Britain's World Wars against Germany: Myth, Memory and the Distortions of Hindsight* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), p. 125.

¹⁹⁷Jünger, 'Total Mobilization', p. 126.

and extended to the post-war (*Nachkrieg*) age. To envision such an extension, he introduces the phenomenon of total mobilisation:

In this unlimited marshalling of potential energies, which transforms the warring countries into volcanic forges, we perhaps find the most striking sign of the dawn of the age of labour [*Arbeitszeitalter*]. It makes the World War a historical event superior in significance to the French Revolution. In order to deploy energies of such proportion, fitting one's sword-arm no longer suffices; for this is a mobilization [*Rüstung*] that requires extension to the deepest marrow, life's finest nerve. Its realization is the task of total mobilization: an act which, as if through a single grasp of the control panel, conveys the extensively branched and densely veined power supply of modern life towards the great current of martial energy.¹⁹⁸

Total mobilisation, from Jünger's perspective, is the only way that the energies and powers produced in the war (on the frontline) can be extended to the post-war age. Countries swept up by the war are transformed by total mobilisation into 'volcanic forges',¹⁹⁹ the epicentres of energy. In total mobilisation, Jünger proposes a clear shift – a transition after the war into the age of labour (*Arbeitszeitalter*). Jünger argues that the energies of the war are transferred to the post-war age as energies of labour. To achieve this shift from the war to labour and to preserve those war energies in the form of labour, Jünger believes that the means of the war – active nihilism and violence, two underpinnings of total mobilisation – need to extend to 'the deepest marrow',²⁰⁰ 'life's finest nerve'²⁰¹ of post-war society. Total mobilisation is the principle process of the empowerment (*Ermächtigung*) of power.²⁰² Only the means of active nihilism (the extension of war to the post-war age) as Jünger believes, guarantee the enhancement of progress for the German nation, while at the same time '[i]t takes excessive [instrumental] violence to keep the system of total mobilisation in place.'²⁰³

Jünger, in 'Total Mobilization', does not hide his fascination with the First World War. The sentiment by which Jünger is driven in his treatment of the war is very aptly formulated by Benjamin: 'But there is something rather special about this last war. It

¹⁹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰⁰ Ibid.

²⁰¹ Ibid.

²⁰² Kittler, 'Gestalt to Ge-stell', p. 88.

²⁰³ Michael Geyer, 'Restorative Elites, German Society and the Nazi Pursuit of War', in: *Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany: Comparison and Contrasts*, ed. by Richard Bessel (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996) pp. 134 - 164 (p. 153).

was not only one of material warfare but also a war that was lost. And in that special sense it was the German war.²⁰⁴ Benjamin recognises that authors such as Jünger do not praise the First World War solely for it being a material warfare, which through its implementation of technology could become the means for the further enhancement of progress in the post-war age. He argues that their accounts of the war are not objective due to their perception of the First World War being a 'cultic war'²⁰⁵ – one that 'belongs' to the German nation, yet one that was lost.

The logic behind Jünger's treatment of the First World War and the frontline experience – in which he focuses on its energy and avoids discussing the existential and eschatological dimensions (the foundations of the ethical realm) – is biased. His treatment arguably stems from the trauma of the lost war and from the desire to fulfil the First World War's broken promise to the German nation.

[I]n the defeated nation of Germany especially, dealing with the 'inherited burden of the lost war' proved a difficult legacy for the politically and ideologically deeply fractured society, which failed to find a collective language of mourning and remembrance following the war.²⁰⁶

Jünger's examination of the war evolves from his treatment of it as a German fetish and his own obsession with it – the result of which was somehow to extend the war to the post-war age at any cost and to achieve the state of what Benjamin calls 'eternal war'²⁰⁷ and Patočka calls 'the state of a continual war'.²⁰⁸ Jünger believes that only such an extension of the energies and powers of the war to the post-war age would lead to an upheaval of the German nation and to an enhancement of technological progress.²⁰⁹

²⁰⁴ Benjamin, 'Theories of German Fascism', p. 127.

²⁰⁵ Ibid.

²⁰⁶ Silke Fehleemann and Nils Löffelbein, 'Gender, Memory and the Great War: The Politics of War Victimhood in Interwar Germany', *Psychological Trauma and the Legacies of the First World War*, ed. by Jason Crouthamel and Peter Lesse (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), pp. 141-164 (p. 142).

²⁰⁷ Benjamin, 'Theories of German Fascism', p. 127.

²⁰⁸ Patočka, 'Kacířské eseje', p. 129; *Heretical Essays*, p. 134.

²⁰⁹ The idea of total mobilisation is not only a utopian dream of Jünger. The idea became implemented in and foundational for further development of the society and the State in both Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany. As Geyer argues: 'The system of surveillance and terror [by which author refers to total mobilisation] was crucial to the regime of forced labour and in this capacity formed an ever-growing part of the Nazi war effort. In this regime we can plainly see the elements that total mobilisation theorists had mapped as the prerequisite for modern war. The anonymisation and atomisation of individuals and their assessment entirely in terms of use-value, the violence of a merely functional distribution of human resources as well as surplus of terror which came as an intrinsic element with this kind of total war mobilisation [...].' In: Geyer, 'Restorative Elites', p. 153.

ii *The Worker*

Jünger, through his idea of total mobilisation, announces a new war – the eternal, perpetual war transformed into ‘a gigantic labor process [*Arbeitsprozesses*]’.²¹⁰ In the context of this transformation, Jünger announces a new typus: ‘It thus turns out that each individual life becomes, ever more unambiguously, the life of a worker; and that, following the wars of knights, kings, and citizens, we now have wars of workers.’²¹¹

In *Storm of Steel*, Jünger praises the transformation of the courageous warriors into strong, insensitive individuals capable of withstanding physical pain. He dreams about individuals who, under the negative conditions of the frontline, are transformed into bundles of energies, into ruthless ‘men of steel’, ‘men who march straight ahead like iron machines, insensitive even at the moment catastrophe shatters them’.²¹²

The worker, however, represents neither a new social class (a community), nor a new subjectivity – an individual: ‘[T]otal work-character breaks through collective boundaries just as much as through individual ones.’²¹³ Rather, Jünger dreams of a new breed of men – a new type of soldier²¹⁴ who, in the conditions of the post-frontline, post-war era, is willing to take action aligned with the interests of the authority of the State in the name of the technological programme (*Gestell*). *Gestell* becomes a key ‘environment’ for the worker, who not only finds his home in its conditions, but also – through the implementation of the Nietzschean will to power – wills and directly creates and cultivates *Gestell* (the world made by men).

The new ‘typus’²¹⁵ that Jünger heralds in his ‘most protofascist book’,²¹⁶ *The Worker (Der Arbeiter)*, stands in conscious opposition to the proletariat worker proposed by Karl Marx in his work *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844*. The worker referred to by Jünger is demonstrably not the proletarian figure of socialist discourse, which presumably not without a sense of irony, he dismisses as a mere emanation of bourgeois

²¹⁰Jünger, ‘Total Mobilization,’ p. 126.

²¹¹Ibid., p. 128.

²¹²Jünger, *Storm of Steel*, p. 57.

²¹³Jünger, *The Worker*, p. 65.

²¹⁴Kittler, ‘Gestalt to Ge-stell’, p. 82.

²¹⁵Jünger, *The Worker*, p. 75.

²¹⁶Elliot Y. Neaman, *A Dubious Past: Ernst Jünger and the Politics of Literature after Nazism* (Berkeley, Los Angeles & London: University of California Press, 1999), p. 43.

conceptions.²¹⁷

Both Jünger and Marx develop the concept of the worker as having an antagonistic relationship with bourgeois society. Marx's workers, due to their being alienated and exploited by the bourgeois society, and Jünger's veterans, due to their post-frontline trauma and psychological and physical disabilities,²¹⁸ represent marginalised classes in post-war society. For Jünger, bourgeois society (due to its members' life in comfort and boredom) is a cause of the stagnation of the post-war German nation, the solution to which he envisions in a primal struggle.²¹⁹ Reminiscent of the image of Zarathustra, when he 'announces the arrival of the overman who will supplant the last men',²²⁰ the stronger breed of man – the worker – will subordinate and gradually supplant the weaker class of the bourgeois. Jünger's typus of the worker, so conceived, not only excludes all non-German nations, but also creates an antagonistic tension within German society itself.

However, there is another, more fundamental difference between Jünger's and Marx's understandings of the worker. Despite Patočka being critical of the Marxist materialist understanding of history, one can still trace remnants of humanism in Marx's position. Patočka criticises Marx for his effort to remove 'metaphysics [transcendence] as engaged with ideas from Hegelianism, its [European] heritage from history'²²¹ and his being concerned about the problem of how to create an understanding of the human being that is both material and historical.²²² Although Marx diminishes and transforms the humanist concept of man – central to which is the category of the soul and spirit, and corporeity – and promotes the ideal of subjective material being, his effort is to liberate the workers from alienation to guarantee their dignity. He strives for equality and the humane condition of the labour process, which is all in line with the premises of materialist history.

²¹⁷ Antoine Bousquet, 'Ernst Jünger and the Problem of Nihilism in the Age of Total War', *Thesis Eleven*, 132 (2016), 17-38 (p. 29).

²¹⁸ Such a marginalisation of war veterans can be observed in Karl Binding and Alfred Hoche's study, *Allowing the Destruction of Life Unworthy of Living* (1920), which shortly after the war called for the annihilation of the mentally disabled people. The more recent echoes of the problem of war veterans' marginalisation can be found in e.g., Sebastian Faulk's war novel *Birdsong* (1993).

²¹⁹ In his *The Worker*, Jünger fervently criticises bourgeois society. See: Jünger, *The Worker*, pp. 8-17.

²²⁰ Tracy B. Strong, *Politics without Vision: Thinking without a Banister in the Twentieth Century* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012), p. 10.

²²¹ Patočka, 'Věčnost a dějinnost', p. 235.

²²² *Ibid.*

In comparison with Marx, Jünger's formulation of the worker is contrasting. Jünger 'seeks to get at the essence of labour through a phenomenology of automation.'²²³ The worker 'yields to increasing predictability, efficiency, and discipline'²²⁴ and eliminates all aspects that make him a human and imperfect. The reason for such an 'inhuman' turn within Jünger's definition of the worker stems from his conviction that the workers are faithful to *Gestell* and that they cultivate their environment through the workers realising their practical technological project together.

iii *Metaphysics of Pain*

In the work *On Pain* (1934), Jünger announces a new metaphysics of pain that serves as a foundation for the new typus of the worker:

[Pain remains] the only measure promising a certainty of insights. Wherever values can no longer hold their ground, the movement toward pain endured as an astonishing sign of the times; it betrays the negative mark of a metaphysical structure.²²⁵

Jünger observes that the post-war era is an age of nihilism, in which the old metaphysical structures and old traditional values lose their validity. He realises that humanity is not yet ready to establish a new axiomatic foundation, but also that returning to the old metaphysical values is impossible at this stage. Jünger, however, suggests a solution regarding how this state of nihilism can be overcome: He introduces a new metaphysics of pain that undermines the traditional metaphysical structures. Authentic physical pain, human suffering and one's acceptance of death become the only measures and guarantees of certainty. Moreover, pain, risk and conflict lay the foundations for the idea of what Jünger calls the conservative politics: 'Pain, not pleasure, risk and sacrifice, not security, conflict, not comfort are axiomatic assumptions of conservative politics.'²²⁶

The lesson Jünger learnt in the frontline trenches is that, to overcome the trauma of the horrors of the frontline, and to surmount debilitating passive nihilism (which from his perspective stems from the existential sentiment), one needs to resuscitate and cultivate one's own relationship with pain. The relationship with pain, as he proposes in the

²²³Neuman, *A Dubious Past*, p. 43.

²²⁴Ibid.

²²⁵Ernst Jünger, *On Pain*, trans. by David C. Durst (New York: Telos Press Publishers, 2008), p. 47.

²²⁶Ibid., p. xxxiii.

essay, is not one based on the principles of empathy and compassion with other participants of the frontline, with other human beings who mutually shared the very experience of horror (as Patočka suggested). Jünger's worker does not represent an empathic and compassionate human being who relates to others through the passage of one's own vulnerability and corporeity. The principles of ethics and moral responsibility – empathy and compassion – are entirely absent in Jünger's vision. In the essay *On Pain*, Jünger argues:

The secret of modern sensitivity is that it corresponds to a world in which the body is itself the highest value. This observation explains why modern sensitivity relates to pain as a power to be avoided at all costs, because here pain confronts the body not as an outpost but as the main force and essential core of life.²²⁷

In line with his portrayal of pain in the frontline memoir *Storm of Steel* (1920), in the work *On Pain*, Jünger calls for the necessity of the individual to withstand one's pain²²⁸ and to become indifferent to one's suffering, as only the ability to become insensitive towards suffering and pain can overcome nihilism and best serve the idea of total mobilisation.

Jünger's treatment of the phenomenon of pain has a very specific purpose. As Noys suggests, pain becomes the worker's *jouissance* (a perverse enjoyment), indistinguishable from the process of labour.²²⁹ Pain, as presented by Jünger in his essay, represents a type of masochism,²³⁰ which is instrumental regarding the enhancement of the labour process and indispensable for the achievement of the desired progress of civilisation.

Jünger's metaphysics of pain stems from his fervent criticism of bourgeois society.²³¹ Jünger perceives the bourgeoisie as a nihilistic society that stands as an obstacle to the ambitions of total mobilisation and as the main cause of the stagnation of progress, which prevents the German nation from achieving material upheaval. He criticises bour-

²²⁷Ibid., p. 17.

²²⁸Ibid., p. xxix.

²²⁹Benjamin Noys, *Malign Velocities: Accelerationism & Capitalism* (Winchester & Washington: Zero Books, 2014), p. 2.

²³⁰Ibid., p. 2.

²³¹In his formulation of the antagonism towards the bourgeoisie, Jünger was primarily influenced by the ideas of Carl Schmitt and his work *The Concept of the Political*, in which Schmitt proposes the concept of the political as the friend-enemy opposition. For more details about the relationship between Schmitt and Jünger, see: Geoff Waite, 'Heidegger, Schmitt, Strauss, The Hidden Monologue, or, Conserving Esotericism to Justify the High Hand of Violence', *Cultural Critique*, 69 (2008), 113–144; Peter Uwe Hohendahl, 'Reflections on War and Peace after 1940, Ernst Jünger and Carl Schmitt', *Cultural Critique*, 69 (2008), 22–51.

geois society for its attachment to the values of safety and security, for its constant effort to eliminate pain at any cost for the sake of pursuing its vain interests and a comfortable life in boredom. He believes that these attitudes towards comfort and the tendencies towards eradication of pain carry negative political implications for society at large, and that, as soon as these traits are recognised, they must be questioned and possibly eliminated:

No claim, however, is more certain than the one pain has on life. Where people are spared pain, social stability is produced according to the laws of a very specific economy, and, by a turn of phrase, one can speak of a 'cunning of pain' that never fails to reach its aim. At the sight of this state of widespread comfort, one is prompted to ask immediately where the burden is borne.²³²

Through proposing a new metaphysics of pain, Jünger proclaims the end of bourgeois society. The worker – the new type of soldier who is capable of withstanding all pain – will supplant the bourgeois individual and his liberal values, as only those individuals capable of stepping outside their comfort zone can carry out total mobilisation and act in line with its technological programme.

Jünger, in his idea of conservative politics, aims to replace 'individual liberty, security and pacifism'²³³ through 'authority, discipline and militarism'²³⁴ via his metaphysics of pain. The metaphysics of pain that resides at the heart of his vision, so conceived, does not indicate a society built on ethical, liberal, democratic principles, but is a cold-blooded, disciplined, militant arrangement/regime that takes the form of a modern post-war army. Jünger speaks about a community of *Frontgemeinschaft*, which originates within the mutually shared experience of the frontline and within 'a strict new social ethic arising from the model of soldierly life.'²³⁵ As some readers of Jünger's works argue, the collective entity, Jünger proposes, is the community of 'elite soldiers from every country, created by the war.'²³⁶ This community exceeds the limitations of national identity and connects frontline warriors transnationally: 'we frontline soldiers of the globe (*wir Frontsoldaten des Erdballs*).'²³⁷ The worker represents a 'global figure and his rule in different coun-

²³²Jünger, *On Pain*, p. 13.

²³³*Ibid.*, p. xxix.

²³⁴*Ibid.*

²³⁵Schechtman, *Community and Utopia*, p. 155.

²³⁶Nikolaus Wachsmann, 'Marching under the Swastika? Ernst Jünger and National Socialism, 1918-33', *Journal of Contemporary History*, 33(4) (1998), 573-589 (p. 576).

²³⁷Jünger, *Der Kampf als inneres Erlebnis*, p. 46

tries would eventually lead to his world domination.²³⁸ However, Jünger, in his metaphysics of pain, goes further:

We saw that man is able to resist the assault of pain to the degree that he is capable of self-detachment. This self-detachment, this functionalization and objectification of life increases uninterruptedly. The age of security has been superseded with surprising speed by another, in which the values of technology prevail. The logic and mathematics now governing life are extraordinary and awe inspiring. One has the feeling the game is too sophisticated and logical for the human mind to have devised.²³⁹

Jünger argues that the *typos* of the worker is capable of withstanding pain to the extent that he loses himself and becomes detached from his personal interests. He argues that the situation in the post-war era has changed and that the illusion of security (which bourgeois society, or the 'last man', used to believe in) has now been replaced by the technological age, which overpowers modern individuals and calls for a different response to reality. The worker in the technological age, in the world of total mobilisation, needs to deprive himself of all his individual private rights; is called to leave his personal, domestic life behind (such a mode of living undoubtedly belongs in bourgeois society); and needs to open up to the higher meaning. The worker needs to be ready to serve the 'higher' aim. Jünger, in this context, heralds the overcoming of nihilism and the beginning of the age of history, which is manifested in the worker's willingness to sacrifice himself:

We consider it therefore a mark of superior achievement when life gains distance from itself or, in other words, when it is able to sacrifice itself. This is not the case wherever life is regarded as the ultimate value rather than as an outpost.²⁴⁰

In his concept of history, Jünger insists on the centrality of pain. Nothing but one's relationship with pain will convey the transition from bourgeois society into the age of worker in the sense that the metaphysics of pain will eventually overcome the age of nihilism (which is pervasive in society due to the bourgeoisie and their values) and will herald the age of history. The worker is encouraged to withstand pain to the extent that he is capable of self-sacrifice for the 'higher' cause²⁴¹. However, Jünger proposes that self-sacrifice in this context stands for neither a compassionate and humble giving up of

²³⁸ Wachsmann, 'Marching under the Swastika?', p. 586.

²³⁹ Jünger, *On Pain*, p. 46.

²⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 31.

²⁴¹ *Ibid.*

one's life for other human beings, nor for a rebellious moment of resistance against the political power of authorities and the State. 'The instilled capacity to succumb tremendous expenditures of suffering for the sake of modern progress is yet another expression of total mobilisation and the modern will to power.'²⁴² Self-sacrifice, from Jünger's perspective, is primarily an act of (self-)destruction that is performed for a 'higher' cause in the name of the cultivation of *Gestell*: 'The fighter willingly gives up life in the act of destruction not because of some extrinsic grievance nor driven by some passionately held ethical commitment but because of a total submission to authority.'²⁴³

The metaphysics of pain finds its ultimate fulfilment in the act of self-sacrifice, which Jünger identifies with the emergence of history. This idea is foundational and instrumental for Jünger's dream of a synergy between human beings and machines: what Jünger calls 'organic construction'²⁴⁴ – 'the man-machine symbiosis'²⁴⁵ (such as kamikaze 'manned planes' and torpedoes).²⁴⁶ In more concrete terms, the worker undergoes the act of self-sacrifice (which is identical to the moment of de-personalisation) to boost technological progress even at the cost of losing his life: 'Pain is not truly suffered for its own sake and endured, but becomes overcome in the form of sacrifice for values and thus 'de-materialised,' or better: 're-materialised' through an anonymous distance towards the lived body.'²⁴⁷

iv Nietzsche

Jünger's ambition to undermine nihilism through the incorporation of the metaphysics of pain may, at first, resemble Nietzsche's effort to overcome nihilism through the individual's implementation of the ideal of will to power. Jünger's idea to replace bourgeois society with a new breed of man – the worker – is reminiscent of Nietzsche's ideas of the death of the last man and his being supplanted by the superman, as formulated in his works *The Will to Power* and *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*.

²⁴²De Warren, 'Homecoming', p. 230.

²⁴³Jünger, *On Pain*, p. xvi.

²⁴⁴Ernst Jünger, *Der Arbeiter – Herrschaft und Gestalt, Sämtliche Werke Band 8* (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1981), p. 306.

²⁴⁵Kittler, 'Gestalt to Ge-stell', p. 84.

²⁴⁶Jünger, *On Pain*, p. xxxviii.

²⁴⁷De Warren, 'Homecoming', p. 230.

To draw a parallel between Jünger and Nietzsche, the worker represents, '[T]he lord of the planet earth, the Übermensch, the one who will supplant Nietzsche's 'last man', the bourgeois.'²⁴⁸ Jünger openly admits that, in his formulation of history, he had indeed been deeply influenced by the philosophy of Nietzsche. Similarly, Heidegger, in his essay 'On the Question of Being' (1952), perceives Jünger as the last and most devoted Nietzschean thinker,²⁴⁹ despite his criticism that Jünger's materialist history did not actually divorce itself from nihilism, but instead remained trapped in its zero-levelling, or even encouraged the sharpening of active nihilism.²⁵⁰ Although Jünger's ideas may appear reminiscent of Nietzsche's thought, one can observe a severe distortion of his ideas of will to power and the superman on various levels.

My idea is that every specific body strives to become master over all space and to extend its force (–its will to power) and to thrust back all that resists its extension. But it continually encounters similar efforts on the part of other bodies and ends by coming to an arrangement ('union') with those of them that are sufficiently related to it: thus they then conspire together for power. And the process goes on [...]²⁵¹

Similar to Jünger, Nietzsche argues that it is not moral principles, but passions and the desire to become master, that should be the driving force of one's actions, as these principles are not bestowed by any authority but represent the very 'reality' that is intrinsic and natural to every human being.²⁵² What Nietzsche actually describes here is the moment of overcoming nihilism through the ideal of will to power, which guarantees freedom to a human being. Jünger, in his formulation of the worker, also strives for such a liberation of the individual from the nihilistic society of the bourgeoisie and their decadent values.

However, in his interpretation of will to power, Jünger operates with a slightly different concept of freedom. In *The Peace*, Jünger describes his idea of freedom: 'The state as supreme symbol of technical achievement takes the nations in its toils, yet they live in

²⁴⁸Kittler, 'Gestalt to Ge-stell', p. 82.

²⁴⁹Heidegger, 'On the Question of Being', p. 292.

²⁵⁰As Heidegger in the essay argues: 'Your work *Der Arbeiter* (1932) provides a description of European nihilism in the stage, which succeeded the First World War. 'Die totale Mobilmachung' (1930) is derived from your study; *Der Arbeiter* belongs to the stage of active nihilism.' Ibid., p. 192.

²⁵¹Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*, trans. by Walter Kaufmann and R.J. Hollingdale, ed. by Walter Kaufmann (New York: Random House, 1968), p. 636.

²⁵²Friedrich Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil: Prelude to a Philosophy of the Future*, ed. by Rolf-Peter Horstmann and Judith Norman (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), p. 36.

freedom, under its protection.²⁵³ In comparison with Nietzsche, Jünger's individuals do not achieve their freedom through the rejection of metaphysics only. Following Jünger's quote, freedom is achieved and guaranteed by the authority of the State. To support this argument, Jünger uses the following metaphor: 'It is thus that nature fashions shellfish with a hard, gleaming embossed shell and a delicate interior in which the pearls are hidden. In this differentiation lies the welfare of states and the happiness of individuals.'²⁵⁴

What at first appears to be freedom obtained through individuals exercising will to power ultimately turns into freedom that is guaranteed by the will to power of the State. Only the submission of the worker to the power of the State, his obedience and his effort to fulfil the needs and aims of the authority will ultimately benefit the prosperity of the State, which will, thus, guarantee the protection and wellbeing of its citizens. In this respect, Jünger's supposedly Nietzschean ideal of will to power begins to resemble the authoritarian rule of a sovereign of Hobbes's *Leviathan*. In his work *Beyond Good and Evil* Nietzsche argues:

[Anything that] is a living and not a dying body... will have to be an incarnate will to power, it will strive to grow, spread, seize, become predominant – not from any morality or immorality but because it is living and because life simply is will to power... 'Exploitation'... belongs to the essence of what lives, as a basic organic function; it is a consequence of the will to power, which is after all the will to life.²⁵⁵

The ideal of will to power is synonymous with life: 'life simply is will to power'.²⁵⁶ Will to power is what causes the growth of those who exercise the ideal, even at the price of crossing the borders of morality. In this context, Nietzsche uses the term 'exploitation', which, from his perspective, is an unavoidable outcome. These Nietzschean motifs can be traced in Jünger's formulation of history as well. However, it appears that Jünger is not as concerned as Nietzsche about the life of the superman (the worker). What Jünger prioritises is the flourishing of the German nation and the progress of civilisation. Self-sacrifice – the culminating point at which a historical age is announced – is, as Jünger believes, a result of one's own will to power. Nevertheless, what appears to be a participa-

²⁵³Ernst Jünger, *The Peace*, trans. by Stuart O. Hood (Hinsdale, Illinois: Henry Regenery Company, 1948), p. 61.

²⁵⁴Ibid., p. 60.

²⁵⁵Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, p. 259.

²⁵⁶Ibid.

tion in the mutually shared and implemented technological programme (*Gestell*) through the will to power, is in reality an enslavement – the workers' radical act of submission to the authority of the State – for the sake of the continuation of the war. It is not the worker (the superman) who, through his agency of will to power, exploits and exhausts the State or challenges the power of the authorities; on the contrary, it is the authority of the State that sacrifices individuals to secure the smooth flow of history.

There is, however, another fundamental difference between Nietzsche and Jünger – namely, their understanding of the concept of the superman. Jünger's understanding of the superman is moulded by the conditions resulting from the eternal war (in the post-war age), in which the superman (the worker) appears. Although Nietzsche was writing about the necessity of war,²⁵⁷ the motif of war is not central in his writings. Jünger's perception of the worker through the lens of Germany losing the war results in the *Übermensch*, which represents, primarily, a new race, a new breed of man, a strong chauvinistic and nationalistic individual. As Ohana argues, 'The Nietzschean superman was distorted by Jünger into nationalist elitist, powerful figure which found its existential significance in the First World War'.²⁵⁸

Second, the subject that Jünger describes is 'not a private individual, but a type'.²⁵⁹ On the one hand, what appears to be a strong individual who essentially masters the world through symbiosis with a machine loses his sovereignty and himself. 'The 'machine' 'abases' the worker through 'an anonymous and impersonal slavery'.²⁶⁰ Jünger's will to power is not for the achievement of his own utility, but rather is subordinated to serving the State and society.

Jünger in his inter-war works introduces a worker-soldier figure, which, however, does not fight spontaneously any longer, but rather is 'called up for work'.²⁶¹ In his inter-war works and war memoirs, Jünger created a new reality, in which there is hardly any

²⁵⁷In: Friedrich Nietzsche, *Human, All Too Human, A Book for Free Spirits*, ed. by Alexander Harvey (Auckland: The Floating Press, 2013), p. 477; Friedrich Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morals*, trans. by Douglas Smith (Oxford & New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), p. 64-66; Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*, p. 982; Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, p. 259.

²⁵⁸David Ohana, 'Nietzsche and Ernst Jünger: From Nihilism to Totalitarianism', *History of European Ideas*, 11 (1989), 751-758 (p. 754).

²⁵⁹Ohana, 'Nietzsche and Ernst Jünger', p. 755.

²⁶⁰Bousquet, 'Ernst Jünger and the Problem of Nihilism', p. 20.

²⁶¹Ohana, 'Nietzsche and Ernst Jünger', p. 756.

difference between the frontline trenches, battlefield and mobilised world.²⁶² Soldier and worker, war and peace, war and work become identical concepts.²⁶³

II Patočka's Criticism of Jünger

i The End of Metaphysics and the Decadent Life

In the fifth of *Heretical Essays*, 'Is Technological Civilization Decadent and Why?', Patočka questions the problem of modernity and modern nihilism and defines what exactly makes one's life and society decadent:

A life can be said to be decadent when it loses its grasp on the innermost nerve of its functioning, when it is disrupted at its inmost core so that while thinking itself full it is actually draining and laming itself with every step and act. A society can be said to be decadent if it so functions as to encourage a decadent life, a life addicted to what is inhuman by its very nature.²⁶⁴

Patočka describes decadent life as a life that is out of balance, no longer possesses control over itself and clings to inhuman phenomena which are foreign to the life's nature. The decadent life 'loses its grasp on the innermost nerve of its functioning'²⁶⁵ and is disrupted at its very core.

Patočka develops his discourse on decadence in the wake of the decline of metaphysics, with the awareness that one reliable meaning is no longer available. With the metaphor of a disrupted 'inner nerve', therefore, Patočka does not appeal to the problem of the missing moral values and moral concepts. On the contrary, the inner core designates something that is 'inseparable from human life in its intrinsic nature, its very being'.²⁶⁶ What Patočka refers to is the lost 'self-awareness that comes with an understanding of history and the care for the soul'²⁶⁷ In a decadent world, however, a human

²⁶²Ibid.

²⁶³Ibid.

²⁶⁴'Je úpadkový takový život, kterému uniká sám vnitřní nerv jeho fungování, který je porušen ve svém nejvladnějším jádře, takže domnívaje se, že je plným životem, ve skutečnosti se každyým svým krokem a činem vyprázdňuje a mrzačí. Je úpadková společnost, která svým fungováním vede k úpadkovému životu v propadlosti tomu, co není povahou svého bytí lidské.' In: Patočka, 'Kacířské eseje', pp. 99-100; *Heretical Essays*, p. 97.

²⁶⁵Ibid.

²⁶⁶Ibid.

²⁶⁷Findlay, *Caring for the Soul in a Postmodern Age*, p. 118.

being does not only lose this self-awareness. After the end of metaphysics, one finds it difficult to accept the world as it is – as essentially problematic – and tends to replace the lost metaphysical meaning with simplified explanations of the world.

Although the turning point of modernity can be traced back to the 16th century and is intertwined with the shift of focus from 'being' to 'having',²⁶⁸ central to Patočka's analysis of the 20th-century war decadence is the infamous motif of total mobilisation. The use of the inner nerve metaphor in Patočka's essays is, therefore, not accidental. One can read it as a reference to what a frontline survivor and writer Ernst Jünger, in his inter-war essay *Total Mobilisation (Die totale Mobilmachung)* (1930), calls 'the deepest marrow and the life's finest nerve'.²⁶⁹

As it has been previously discussed, in this inter-war essay, Jünger describes the age of total mobilisation. He argues that the First World War was a significant historical event because it released unlimited energy and force. This energy can be utilised and extended to transform countries swayed by the war into 'volcanic forges'²⁷⁰ – powerful epicentres of energy, labour and production which would dynamically and efficiently enhance civilisation's progress in the post-war (*Nachkrieg*) times. To envision such an extension, he introduces the phenomenon of total mobilisation and argues that in order to achieve this desired elevation of the warring countries into the age of labour (*Arbeitszeitalter*), the means of war – active nihilism and violence (two underpinnings of total mobilisation) – need to be extended 'to the deepest marrow', 'life's finest nerve',²⁷¹ of post-war society.

In the fifth and sixth of the *Heretical Essays*, Patočka on several occasions refers to the concept of total mobilisation.²⁷² Patočka sees the war as both the product and the instrument of total mobilisation. It not only turns the world into war but also maintains the war, and all with the goal of preserving the smooth and uninterrupted progress of civilisation. In the 20th century, war energies through the means of total mobilisation did penetrate the innermost nerve of life and society. The obsession with the material

²⁶⁸Daniel Leufer, 'The Dark Night of the Care for the Soul – Politics and Despair in Jan Patočka's Sixth Heretical Essay', in: *Thinking after Europe: Jan Patočka and Politics*, ed by Darian Meacham and Francesco Tava (London and New York: Rowman & Littlefield), pp. 161-181 (p. 164).

²⁶⁹Jünger, 'Total Mobilization', p. 126.

²⁷⁰Ibid.

²⁷¹Ibid.

²⁷²E.g., Patočka, 'Kacířské eseje', p. 112; *Heretical Essays*, p. 114.

progress of civilisation supplanted self-awareness, understanding of history and turned the entire 20th century into the age of war.²⁷³ In the world swayed by total mobilisation, all things, both human and material, have assumed the pattern of war or the expression of force.²⁷⁴ Force penetrates all spheres of human existence and turns it into a battlefield.²⁷⁵

The motif of the *force* occurs in Patočka's works on several occasions, especially in relation to his analysis of techno-science and the crisis of the loss of meaning. The first references can be observed in his work *Plato and Europe* and his analysis of the care for the soul. Patočka refers to force more explicitly in his two final *Heretical Essays*. In the opening chapter of *Plato and Europe*, Patočka speaks about a force, that 'is carrying us away'.²⁷⁶ He argues that this force is 'contradictory'²⁷⁷ and 'prevents us from taking a univocal position. We do not know what we want; no one knows'.²⁷⁸ As discussed previously, Patočka speaks of an existential crisis, the outcomes of which are the feelings of boredom and indifference and the sentiment of alienation.

However, in *Plato and Europe*, Patočka already links the idea of the anonymous force with the technological age. He argues that this force, which overpowers human beings, emerged in the industrial age, when the centre of one's attention was work, mundane existence, production, and progress. Patočka argues that the anonymous force becomes highly reminiscent of the *will to power*.²⁷⁹ There is no subject that would exercise its power over human beings, yet the anonymous power 'does what it wants with us'.²⁸⁰

Patočka observes that being focused on work, production, and progress absorbs a human being and leads to one being reduced to a force. All aspects of one's existence are reduced to force, such that the plan of technological progress becomes possible. Although Patočka at that time did not write about Jünger and his materialist philosophy of history, these ideas already, even if only implicitly form a counterweight and serve as an implicit criticism of Jünger's ideas on technology, the worker, and his idea of *Gestell*.

²⁷³Patočka, 'Kacířské eseje', p. 117; *Heretical Essays*, p. 119.

²⁷⁴James Dodd, 'The Twentieth Century as War', in: *Jan Patočka and the Heritage of Phenomenology*, ed. by Ivan Chvatík and Erika Abrams (Dordrecht and London: Springer), pp. 203–214 (p. 203).

²⁷⁵Patočka, 'Kacířské eseje', p. 128; *Heretical Essays*, p. 133.

²⁷⁶'co nás unáší.' In: Patočka, 'Platón a Evropa', p. 153; *Plato and Europe*, p. 6.

²⁷⁷'rozporné.' Ibid.

²⁷⁸'brání [nám] zaujmout jednoznačný postoj, nevíme, co chceme, nikdo to neví.' Ibid.

²⁷⁹Ibid.

²⁸⁰Ibid.

In the context of being carried away and absorbed by the anonymous force, Patočka develops his idea of the care for the soul. He revives the forgotten Ancient Greek ideal of the care for the soul to battle the danger of being alienated. He presents this care as something that grounds and gives a weight to the soul, to one's being. This care equips one's soul with a substance and prevents it being carried away due to the lightness of its being. This care grounds the soul with problematicity, burdening it with responsibility and concern for the world around. Thus, while force empties the soul and turns human beings into an anonymous mass, the care for the soul fills it and makes it 'solid'.²⁸¹

In his fifth and sixth *Heretical Essays*, Patočka further develops the motif of force. He argues that, '[h]umans have ceased to be a relation to Being and have become a force, a mighty one, one of the mightiest'.²⁸² Patočka develops the concept of force as contextualised in the broken relationship between a human being and Being (or between a human being and Force). A human being separates from Being and, as a result, turns into a force, into an existent (a being) among other existents. In other words, a human being becomes alienated, separated from the world, and ceases to understand the world and oneself. Force becomes one's reality. All activity is in the service of force, in the service of transforming and releasing powers. A human being becomes a constituent of this force machinery. One is stripped of all mystery²⁸³ and transforms into a force – turning from a knowing subject to the one that only transforms.²⁸⁴

These 'mythical' descriptions of force by Patočka become clearer when, towards the end of the fifth *Heretical Essay*, he draws a link between his idea of force and the industrial civilisation. He argues that the technological age and the industrial revolution 'alienate humans from themselves, depriving them of dwelling in the world, submerging them in the everyday alternative, which is not so much toil as boredom, or in cheap substitutes and ultimately in orgiastic brutality'.²⁸⁵ The technological age forces upon human beings

²⁸¹'pevn[á]' In: Patočka, 'Platón a Evropa', p. 224; *Plato and Europe*, p. 86.

²⁸²'Člověk přestal být vztahem k Bytí a stal se silou, mocnou, jednou z nejmocnějších.' In: Patočka, 'Kacířské Eseje', p. 114; *Heretical Essays*, p. 116.

²⁸³Ibid., p. 114; Ibid., p. 117.

²⁸⁴Ibid., p. 114; Ibid., pp. 116-117.

²⁸⁵'Odcizuje člověka sobě samému, bere mu obývaní světa, ponořuje jej do alternativy každodenní ani-již-lopoty jako nudy, nebo laciných náhražek a posléze brutálních orgiasmů.' Ibid., p. 115; Ibid., p. 117.

a certain mode of being.²⁸⁶ Similar to his work *Plato and Europe*, yet in a much more radicalised form, Patočka argues that a human being is reduced to force and experiences a sentiment of alienation. Humans are 'destroyed externally and impoverished internally, deprived of their "ownness," of that irreplaceable I, they are identified with their roles, standing and falling with them'.²⁸⁷

However, while in his work *Plato and Europe* Patočka proposes the revival of the care for the soul to be a possible way out from being reduced to force, in his *Heretical Essays*, he proposes a more complex answer: 'The chief possibility, however, which emerges for the first time in history with our civilization, is the possibility of a turn from accidental rule to the rule of those, who understand what history is about'.²⁸⁸ The answer to force is to embrace history instead of letting oneself be carried away and fascinated by force; he proposes being ruled by those who understand. Here, Patočka implies the rule of a community of the solidarity of the shaken, which from his perspective is indeed capable of embracing history.

Patočka speaks about a new power, this community (i.e., the community of the solidarity of the shaken) is equipped with the power of strife. As he argues, '[t]he power generated by strife is no blind force. The power that arises from strife is a power that knows and sees: only in this invigorating strife is there life that truly sees into the nature of things [...]'.²⁸⁹ Patočka, therefore, proposes a counterpower, the power of strife, which would outweigh force.

Patočka closes his fifth essay with a realisation that the question of decadence exceeds the mere enquiry of civilisation:

Perhaps the entire question about civilisation's decadence is incorrectly posed. There is no civilisation as such. The question is whether historical humans are still willing to embrace history.²⁹⁰

To find an answer to the problem of decadence, one is called to renew one's relationship

²⁸⁶Ibid., p. 31; Ibid., p. 15.

²⁸⁷'Člověk je tak ničen vnějškově a ožebračován vnitřně, připravován o svou "samost," o nezaměnitelné já, je ztotožněn se svou rolí, s ní stojí a padá.' Ibid., p. 115; Ibid., p. 117.

²⁸⁸'Ale hlavní možnost, která se s naší civilizací vynořuje, je prvně v dějinách se naskytující možnost zvratu z vlády náhodilé do vlády chápajících, oč v dějinách běží.' Ibid., p. 115; Ibid., p. 118.

²⁸⁹'Ale moc, která se vytváří skrze boj, není slepásila. Moc vyrostlá ze sporu je vědoucí, vidoucí: jediné v tomto tonifikujícím sporu je život, který opravdu vidí do povahy věcí [...]' Ibid., p. 53; Ibid., p. 42.

²⁹⁰Ibid., p. 116; Ibid., p. 118.

to history and understanding of it; one is called to revitalise the 'innermost nerve', which in the post-metaphysical age has been penetrated by war energies and disrupted at its very core.

ii *The Frontline Experience*

Patočka states that war is 'an idea foreign to all philosophies of history'²⁹¹ and in itself 'does not have power of bestowing meaning.'²⁹² However, within the 'dehumanizing power of total mobilization'²⁹³ that drives the machinery of the war, Patočka discovers a moment which has the capacity to elevate above, to transcend and break with the mesmerising power of total mobilisation and the illusion of war. Patočka discovers the lived experience of the frontline (*Fronterlebnis*), to which he attaches a considerable significance.

While the war approaches life and death through the perspective of the day – 'impersonally and statistically, as if it were merely a reassignment of roles'²⁹⁴ – the frontline experience reveals the unknown, the contingent and mysterious side of the war. Unlike the impersonal phenomenon of war, the frontline captures war in its truthful, naturalistic and authentic manifestation, with its horrors, frights and existential battles. The frontline experience, so conceived, remains the spark of authenticity in an unshakeable machinery of war. Although the frontline experience represents, as Patočka argues, 'absurdity par excellence',²⁹⁵ an event which is 'horrifying',²⁹⁶ '[t]he frontline is the resistance to [...] 'demoralising', terrorising, and deceptive motifs of the day'²⁹⁷ – to the impersonal forces of war. The frontline experience, so conceived, as Patočka believes, has the capacity to become an event which can change the entire course of history. It has a capacity to 'transcending humankind'²⁹⁸ and save it from the dangers of total mobilisation.

²⁹¹'myšlenka cizí všem filosofím dějin.' Ibid., p. 118; Ibid., p. 120.

²⁹²'[válka není] něco vykladajícího, co samo za sebe má moc smyslodárnou.' Ibid.

²⁹³Warren, 'Homecoming', p. 208.

²⁹⁴'distancovaně a statisticky, jako by znamenala pouhou výměnu ve funkcích.' In: Patočka, 'Kacířské eseje', p. 125; *Heretical Essays*, p. 129.

²⁹⁵'absurdita par excellence.' Ibid., p. 123; Ibid., p. 126.

²⁹⁶'hrůzná.' Ibid., p. 122; Ibid., p. 125.

²⁹⁷'fronta je rezistence vůči těmto 'demoralizujícím', terorizujícím a přelstvájícím motivům dne.' Ibid., p. 129; Ibid., p. 134.

²⁹⁸'lidstvo přesahující.' Ibid., p. 117; Ibid., p. 119.

Patočka wrote the Heretical Essays in 1975, and unlike other thinkers, Patočka never served on the frontline. Therefore, in his depictions, he does not speak from his personal experience. Patočka, however, was not the first philosopher who was occupied by the idea of the frontline experience. An entire generation of thinkers before him were fascinated by the phenomenon and tried to understand its meaning, Dietrich Mahnke, Edmund Husserl, Georg Simmel and Max Scheler among them.²⁹⁹ Although each of these thinkers approached the frontline from a slightly different perspective, the discourse on the frontline shares some common features, and most of the authors follow a very similar trajectory. The analysis of the frontline experience culminates in a belief in a radical breakthrough event – a radical moment of liberation from the previous conditions, the establishment of peace or bestowal of a new meaning. Additionally, the narrative describes a double movement the frontline participants usually undergo: (1) first the moment of self-surrender, depersonalisation, in which one overcomes their individuality³⁰⁰ and gives up on their personal interests, and (2) second, a moment of *transcendence* when the warrior opens towards ‘something greater’³⁰¹) and constitutes ‘collective fused body (*Gemeinschaft*).’³⁰²

Patočka, in his analysis, follows a similar pattern and in his discourse on the frontline experience incorporates the analyses offered by two of his predecessors and frontline survivors: Teilhard and Jünger. Yet Patočka’s response to the frontline conditions differs to a great extent from his predecessors’ treatment of the frontline experience. Following Jünger and Teilhard’s perspectives, Patočka observes that in the very depth of the frontline trenches, there is something ‘deeply and mysteriously positive.’³⁰³ By the ‘positive’, Patočka refers neither to the initial enthusiasm of the young warriors, so powerfully portrayed in Jünger’s memoir *The Storm of Steel*,³⁰⁴ nor to a perverse desire to find satisfaction in the return of the natural elements into life. By the ‘positive’, Patočka refers to a moment of realisation of an insight, which awakens in the frontline trenches and stays with the warriors for many years even after the war: ‘The person on the frontline is

²⁹⁹Warren, ‘Homecoming’, p. 214.

³⁰⁰Ibid.

³⁰¹Ibid.

³⁰²Ibid.

³⁰³‘hluboce a záhadně pozitivního.’ In: Patočka, ‘Kacířské eseje’, p. 122; *Heretical Essays*, p. 126.

³⁰⁴Jünger, *Storm of Steel*, p. 5.

gradually overcome by an overwhelming sense of meaningfulness.³⁰⁵ So conceived, the frontline is not only a line of fire, a centre of accumulated energies that is the product of total mobilisation; the frontline experience is first of all 'the locus of a distinctive Life'.³⁰⁶

Patočka recognises another common trait in their interpretations, namely that both thinkers 'emphasize the upheaval by the frontline [otřes frontou]'.³⁰⁷ Both thinkers realise that the frontline experience 'is not an immediate trauma but a fundamental transformation of human existence: war in the form of the frontline marks humans forever',³⁰⁸ Patočka agrees with these claims and, as aligned with these observations, he argues that: '[W]hoever lived through the front has become a different person',³⁰⁹

iii Responsibility

To portray the problem of the decline of the 20th century, Patočka opens up an enquiry of the First World War. Similar to his predecessors, he argues that the First World War was a very particular event of the 20th century. The First World War implemented war strategies, which caused the climax within the techno-scientific tendencies pervasive in European culture since modernity. Patočka aims to redefine the First World War in new terms. He realises that the First World War had been explained in terms of nineteenth-century ideas, which he uses to refer to the following two tendencies: (1) explaining the war as an outcome of nihilism and 'an eternal return of the same as the solution to the crisis'³¹⁰ - leading back to Nietzsche; and (2) the idea of overcoming decadence by returning to Byzantine Christianity³¹¹ - as proposed by Dostoyevsky. Patočka perceives these mainstream ideas as insufficient for obtaining an understanding of the events of the First World War. Therefore, he breaks with these two limiting and outdated proposals and aims to re-examine the problem of the Great War in a completely new light.

In his fifth *Heretical Essays*, Patočka reveals to readers a deeper, phenomenological

³⁰⁵'Přemáhající pocit smysluplnosti, kterou však je těžké formulovat, se nakonec zmocňuje člověka fronty.' In: Patočka, 'Kacířské eseje', p. 122-123; *Heretical Essays*, p. 126.

³⁰⁶Ibid.

³⁰⁷'vyzvedají otřes frontou.' Ibid., p. 122; Ibid., p. 125.

³⁰⁸Ibid.

³⁰⁹'kdo prošel frontou [...], je jiný člověk.' Ibid.

³¹⁰'věčný návrat jako řešení krize.' Ibid., p. 97; Ibid., p. 92-93.

³¹¹Ibid.

understanding of the war by introducing two distinctions. First, he distinguishes between the profane and the sacred (the orgiastic), and then between the authentic and the inauthentic. These distinctions are closely intertwined and not only create his very distinctive understanding of war, decadence, and the technological programme of *Gestell* but also lay foundations for his project of overcoming decadence and his idea of responsibility, respectively.

For Patočka, the profane is 'the realm of the work and of the enslavement of life, its bondage to itself'³¹² The profane refers to the world of labour, humans' attachments in the world, relationships with material things, and encounters with others. The profane grounds a human being in a certain place and forms a relationship of interdependency between one and others. The profane can be perceived as an everyday burden that one carries, a certain form of everyday duty one conducts. Drawing a parallel with the theory of the three movements of human existence, as introduced in *Body, Community, Language, World* (1968/1969), another of Patočka's works, the profane could be identified with what he describes within the second movement of human existence, the mode of existence, which is characterised by 'the movement of self-sustenance, of self-projection – the movement of our coming to terms with the reality we handle, a movement carried out in the region of human work.'³¹³ Patočka perceives it as 'the movement of work whose basic categories are those of the purposive, the utilitarian, the pragmatic.'³¹⁴ It is the realm of the average, anonymity, in which people cease to live their existence in fullness. Patočka realises that the second movement of human existence, which is characterised by the category of 'the profane' is intrinsically inauthentic. This is because the profane stands as an obstacle to the full expression of one's existence, one's freedom, and reduces one to a social role³¹⁵ that fits into an organised picture of society.

The sacred or the orgiastic, on the other hand, creates a counterweight to the profane. It turns the everydayness of the material world—with its attachment to life, work, and the material things—upside down. It frees human beings from the burden of work

³¹²'oblast práce a sebeužarmění života, jeho poutanosti k sobě samému.' Ibid., p. 101; Ibid., p. 99.

³¹³Jan Patočka, *Body, Community, Language, World*, trans. by Erazim Kohák, ed. by James Dodd (Chicago and La Salle: Open Court), p. 148.

³¹⁴Ibid., p. 150.

³¹⁵Ibid., p. 151.

and channels out the accumulated and suppressed energy. The orgiastic is an escape from our everyday life and its burden. It is identical to the exceptional and astonishing. The orgiastic is an event in which a human being 'enter[s] to stand in a relation to extraordinary powers which galvanize[s] them to the point of frenzy.'³¹⁶ However, once a human is confronted with the orgiastic, he or she will no longer feel themselves³¹⁷ While the profane grounds and burdens a human being with work and responsibility, the sacred or the orgiastic frees a human being from its inauthenticity, releases uncontrollable freedom and shows one's existence in a completely different light.

Reading Durkheim, Patočka concludes that a human being lives in two different worlds that are entirely incompatible. These worlds are the everyday one (characterised by the profane), which burdens and grounds them, and the ecstatic, extraordinary, orgiastic one, (characterised by the orgiastic and demonic), which 'is fundamentally opposed to the sense of enslavement experienced by the human alone.'³¹⁸

However, as Patočka points out, although the orgiastic may seem authentic, at least more authentic than the profane, it is nothing but a mere flight from responsibility. The point for Patočka is, therefore, not only to escape the ordinary (the profane), which is considered to be inauthentic, but also to rise above the orgiastic and align it with responsibility, and as such to overcome decadence.³¹⁹ As he argues, '[t]he demonic needs to be brought into a relation with responsibility as originally and primarily it is not.'³²⁰ Patočka characterises the relationship between the profane and the sacred (the orgiastic) as follows:

We believe that *I* in this sense emerges at the dawn of history and that it consists in not losing ourselves in the sacred, not simply surrendering ourselves within it, but rather in living through the whole opposition of the sacred and the profane with the dimension of the problematic which we uncover in the responsible questioning in a quest for clarity with the sobriety of the everyday, but also with an active daring for the vertigo it brings; overcoming everydayness without collapsing in self-forgetting

³¹⁶ '[vstupuje] a je ve vztahu k mimořádným možnostem, které jej galvanizují až do frenzie.' In: Patočka, 'Kacířské eseje', p. 102; *Heretical Essays*, p. 100.

³¹⁷ Ibid.

³¹⁸ 'je v bytostné opozici k tomuto jen člověkem pocítovaném ujařmení životem.' Ibid., p. 101; Ibid., p. 99.

³¹⁹ Ibid., p. 103; Ibid., p. 102.

³²⁰ 'Démonično musí být uvedeno ve vztah k odpovědnosti, v němž původně a prvotně není.' Ibid., p. 102; Ibid., p. 100.

into the region of darkness, however tempting.³²¹

In the sway of the profane and the orgiastic, Patočka discovers a critical moment. He recognises that responsibility (and so does history) unfolds in the tension between the profane and the sacred. Responsibility unfolds in the very problematicity of this tension and in the quest of the constant questioning, as a response to the tension between the profane and the orgiastic. Responsible (or historical) life, thus conceived, opens up neither in one's submission to the everydayness, to its burden, nor in forgetting oneself in the alluring realm of the orgiastic and ecstatic. Responsible life opens up in 'the inner mastering of the sacred through its interiorization, by not yielding to it externally but rather confronting internally its essential ground.'³²²

Responsibility and thus history represent an inner activity, an activity of the soul. It is the effort to master the tension between the profane and the orgiastic, to encompass its problematic character. Responsibility and history begin there, where a human being realises that life, which unfolds as a constant oscillation between the profane and the sacred, is decadent and that there must be a way to escape it. Following Patočka, 'History originates as a rising above decadence, as the realization that life hitherto had been a life in decadence and that there is or that there are possibilities of living differently [...].'³²³ Patočka identifies the beginning of responsibility with the third movement of human existence, as the moment of 'shaking'. While the first two movements are the 'movements of finite beings [...]' The third movement is an attempt to break through our earthliness³²⁴ It begins with a shock, disappointment and is characterised by Patočka as the movement of 'self-achievement'.³²⁵ While the previous two movements presented to us a relatively stable and consistent picture of the world and the society, the third movement of human existence reveals the world as 'shaken', as constantly changeable, problematic, as identical

³²¹'Domníváme se, že *já* v tomto smyslu se vynořuje v počátku dějin a spočívá v tom, v posvátnu se nikoli ztratit, nikoli vzdát se tam prostě samých sebe, nýbrž vyžít v odpovědném kladení otázek vyjasňujících objevenou problematicnost, s každodenní střízlivostí, ale též s činnou odvahou k závratí, kterou působí, celou opozicí mezi *sacrum-profanum*; *překonat* každodennost, aniž se sebezapomenutě zhroutíme do oblasti temna jakkoli lákavého.' Ibid., p. 103; Ibid., p. 102.

³²²'vnitřní zvládnutí posvátného jeho interiorizací, tím, že se mu neoddáváme vnějškově, nýbrž vnitřně se konfrontujeme s jeho bytným základem [...].'³²² Ibid.

³²³'dějiny vznikají jako povznesení z úpadku, jako pochopení, že život dosud byl životem v úpadku a že existuje jiná možnost či možnosti, jak žít [...].'³²³ Ibid., p. 104; Ibid., p. 102.

³²⁴Patočka, *Body, Community, Language, World*, p. 151.

³²⁵Ibid.

to an open question.

The examination of the relationship between the profane and the orgiastic brings another distinction into focus, which Patočka introduces in this context: the distinction between the authentic and the inauthentic life. Whereas the inauthentic life stands for the tendencies of shaking off one's responsibility, distancing oneself from history, from the innermost nerve of civilisation, which in Patočka's thought is represented by the inner activity of care for the soul, the authentic life stands for the effort to embrace history in its full problematicity. To live responsibly, to live a historical life, means to 'embrace history'³²⁶ in the sense that one is willing to embrace the tension between the two worlds that a human being oscillates between. Authentic, responsible life, as historical life, must therefore 'not only pull itself away from the world, but also away from the annihilation of the world promised by demonic mystery.'³²⁷

If we now apply these two distinctions to Patočka's understanding of the war, the war, represents a moment of the demonic, which carries one away from one's ordinary everyday life. However, to align this situation of decadence with responsibility, one is called to embrace the problematic character of the situation and to respond to it with the inner activity of care for the soul, which manifests itself as the quest for constant questioning.

iv Day & Night

Jünger, in his treatment of the frontline experience in 'Total Mobilization', intentionally and for a particular reason ignores and avoids discussing the existential and eschatological dimension of the frontline experience. Either because of his own personal trauma from the frontline or because of his nationalistic obligation and the desire to extend the lost German war to the post-war age, he evades questioning the frontline experience for what it is and focuses instead on the movement and extension of the energies and powers produced on the battlefield.

Patočka is critical of such a treatment of war and realises the dangers that such an

³²⁶'přiznávat k dějinám' Patočka, 'Kacířské eseje', p. 116; *Heretical Essays*, p. 118.

³²⁷James Dodd, 'On the Line: Jünger and Heidegger' in *Violence and Phenomenology* (New York: Routledge, 2009), pp. 77-109 (p. 118).

approach entails. In *Heretical Essays*, Patočka reacts to Jünger's understanding of war and defines the idea of total mobilisation as follows:

War is simultaneously the greatest undertaking of industrial civilization, both product and instrument of total mobilization (as Jünger rightly saw), and a release of orgiastic potentials which could not afford such extreme of intoxication with destruction under any circumstances.³²⁸

Patočka points to the rationale behind Jünger's concept of total mobilisation. He argues that total mobilisation is not only an instrument that maintains war, but, at the same time, war represents a product of total mobilisation itself. In other words, total mobilisation represents both means and ends of war. However, Patočka claims also that such a treatment of war has its very particular purpose, namely, to maintain and to enhance the progress of the industrial civilisation. The purpose of Jünger's idea of total mobilisation is to sustain the state of emergency – war – in which everything is permitted and in which orgiastic powers and means of violence can be justified. Jünger, following Germany's loss in the First World War, attempts to determine the easiest, if not necessarily ethical, way to accelerate the progress of the German nation, finding the solution precisely in the idea of a continual war, a never-ending cycle of warfare. He discovers total mobilisation, which produces war and is maintained through the means of war. Patočka clarifies the origin of the materialist form of history, which is closely related to the perspective from which the phenomenon of war is approached:

[All political constructs and establishments] approached war from the perspective of peace, day, and life, excluding its dark nocturnal side. From this perspective, life, especially historical life, appears as a continuum within which individuals function as the bearers of a general movement which alone matters; death means a change in functions; and war, death organized en masse, is an unpleasant but necessary interlude, which we need to accept in the interest of certain goals of life's continuity but in which we can seek nothing 'positive'.³²⁹

³²⁸ 'Válka je zároveň největší podnik průmyslové civilizace, produkt i nástroj totální mobilizace (jak správně viděl E. Jünger) i uvolněním orgiastických potencialit, které nikde jinde nemohou si dovolit krajnost opilství ničením.' In: Patočka, 'Kacířské eseje', pp. 127-128; *Heretical Essays*, p. 114.

³²⁹ '[Všechny politické konstrukty a establishmenty] všechny pohlížejí na válku z hlediska míru, dne a života s vyloučením jeho temné noční stránky. Z tohoto hlediska jeví se život hlavně právě dějinný, jako kontinuum, v němž jednotlivci jsou jakými nositeli obecného pohybu, na němž jediné záleží, smrt má význam výměny ve funkcích, válka, tato masově organizovaná smrt, je nepřijemnou, ač nutnou pauzou, kterou v zájmu jistých cílů kontinuity života je nutno vzít na sebe, ale níž jako takové není co 'pozitivního' hledat.' In: Patočka, 'Kacířské eseje', p. 118; *Heretical Essays*, p. 120.

Patočka argues that the forms of materialist history, which Jünger's model is an example of, perceive the war from the perspective of 'peace, day and life'.³³⁰ In the materialist model of history, as Patočka recognises, war stands at its centre and represents an undesirable, yet necessary break that supports the continuum of life of the whole society. The life of an individual does not represent an ultimate value. Under certain conditions, the life of an individual needs to be sacrificed to preserve the continuity. In other words, the perspective of the day, peace and life and the elimination of the nocturnal, mysterious and orgiastic aspect of war supports the justification of war and its violence. What matters for this perspective is to maintain history and its uninterrupted flow and to serve as the enhancement of the technological progress of society, even at the price of the suppression of individuals' rights and liberties, in the sense that the individual becomes obedient and submissive towards the demands of the authority, and is obliged to act consistently with the 'higher' cause of society in mind.

As a critical response to Jünger's treatment of war and the frontline experience, in which he eliminates all existential and eschatological aspects, Patočka proposes a new perspective on how the war experience should be perceived. He argues that war and the frontline experience should not be seen as they appear solely from the perspective of the day, peace and life, but that one should consider war's nocturnal, mysterious and orgiastic side also.

The opposition of day and night that Patočka introduces in the context of his examination of the experience of war (the frontline experience) and history originates from three sources. First, Patočka takes inspiration from pre-Socratic thinker Heraclitus and his idea of polarity, which is a prerequisite for alterations in the world. The other source that Patočka develops his opposition from is Greek mythology, when he examines Sophocles' play *Antigone*. However, the idea of polarity takes on more definite contours through his analysis of Czech Romantic poet Karel Hynek Mácha's poems, *Máj* and *Cikáni*.

³³⁰Ibid., p. 128; Ibid., p. 129.

v *Heraclitus*

Heraclitus believes that opposites form a unity and, together, undergo a restless change in the material world. Patočka's notion of day and night, which he introduces in *Heretical Essays*, originates from the idea of polarity that Heraclitus formulated in one of his famous fragments: 'God is day night, winter summer, war peace, satiety hunger, and it alters just as when it is mixed with incense is named according to the aroma of each.'³³¹ Patočka does not believe in the logical and rational rigidity that modernity places immense emphasis upon, but in the Heraclitean idea of polarity (which underlies a cosmological, natural law) being a foundational prerequisite for the existence of the world and a being. Patočka argues that it is not uniformity but polarity that is the source of all being:

without it being is entirely impossible, that polarity implements itself immediately, as soon as the world comes to existence, in polarity emerges time, space, oppositions and tension, the Sun and planets, light and organisms... everything is penetrated by the same power of the loving opposition, which is the source [and awakening of] diversity and maintains unity by the act, which allows the blood of our passions and painful inner struggles flow across the universe.³³² [M.B]

What interests Patočka most is the idea of movement and the restless transformation that Heraclitean polarity allows for. The succession of opposites (in the sense that day follows night, which is then followed by day, and so on) introduces movement, which is, from Patočka's perspective, the most fundamental characteristic of our world. The world, so conceived, does not represent a static entity, a sum of inert beings, but rather a dynamic whole that changes invariably. The Heraclitean motif of polarity, which Patočka implements in his binary opposition of day and night, breaks with the idea of the totality of the world and portrays the world as diverse in its multitude.

³³¹Louis P. Pojman, *Classics of Philosophy*, ed. by Louis P. Pojman, 2nd edn (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), p. 14.

³³²'že bez ní není bytí vůbec možné, že polarita se uplatňuje okamžitě, jakmile vzniká svět, v ní a jí vzniká mu čas, prostor, éter, protiklady a napětí slunce a planety, světlo, organismy...vše je mu prolno touž silou milujícího protikladu, který budí různost a udržuje jednotu týmž aktem, který celým kosmem nechává kolovati tutéž krev našich vášní a bolestných vnitřních zápasů.' In: Jan Patočka, 'Symbol země u K. H. Máchy', in: *Umění a čas I, Soubor statí, přednášek a poznámek k problémům umění, Publikované studie*, ed. by Daniel Vojtěch and Ivan Chvatík (Prague: Oikoymenh, 2004), pp. 104–124 (p. 107).

vi *Antigone*

Patočka discovered another distinction of day and night in Greek mythology through his reading of Sophocles' *Antigone*. Patočka believes that the Greek mythological understanding of day and night is relevant to the conditions in the First World War and the political situation of his time.

Simply, stemming from what is indeed our limit, beyond which all human meaning mutes. This limit is death. Beyond it, there is a night, which our meaning does not penetrate. A mythical insight consists in the following: the night is not nothing, although from our perspective, from our human opinion and understanding, it behaves like mere nothing – otherwise it would belong to our share, to our human νόμος of the day. Obscure, yet an undeniable and basic fact of death shows that the [human] νόμος has its end, that the night cannot be grasped by the day, but the day can [be grasped] by the night. The night surrounds the day. This does not mean anything else than the world is not the human world, but the world of gods. [M.B]³³³

Patočka introduces an image of our world as being divided by a line. On one side, there is the world of day – everydayness, our mundane material world³³⁴ (the only perspective Jünger focuses on in his treatment of war and the frontline experience), and on the other side, there is the world of night – the demonic, the mysterious.³³⁵ Once the line is crossed, in the sense that a human being leans from the day to the night, from seemingly 'normal' to the realm of the demonic and mysterious, every human meaning of our everydayness, our mundane, material world, suddenly becomes silenced.

While in the everydayness the meaning of our mundane, material world makes perfect sense, once the line is crossed, a human being is challenged by a radical loss of this meaning. Patočka, however, emphasises that the line does not divide the day from the night, in the sense that meaning is divided from sheer nothingness; night, in this context,

³³³Jednoduše, vycházejí od toho, co je určitě naší hranicí, za kterou zmlká každý lidský smysl. Touto hranicí je smrt. Za ní je noc, kterou náš lidský smysl neproniká. Mytické nahlédnutí však spočívá v tom: tato noc není nic, i když se pro nás pro náš lidský názor a chápání chová jako pouhé nic – jinak by totiž patřila k našemu přídělu, k lidskému νόμος dne. Nepochopitelný, a přece naprosto jistý a základní fakt smrti ukazuje, že tento [lidský] νόμος má svůj konec, že není posléze možno uchopit noc dnem, nýbrž den nocí. Noc je to, co ze všech stran obklopuje den. To znamená nic jiného, než že svět není lidský svět, nýbrž svět bohů.' In: Jan Patočka, 'Ještě jedna Antigona a Antigone ještě jednou (1967)', in: *Umění a čas I, Soubor statí, přednášek a poznámek k problémům umění, Publikované studie*, ed. by Daniel Vojtěch and Ivan Chvatík (Prague: Oikoymenh, 2004), pp. 389-400 (p. 393).

³³⁴Patočka, 'Kacířské eseje', p. 100; *Heretical Essays*, p. 127.

³³⁵Ibid.

represents 'something': the realm of the unknown, mysterious meaning that appears to be nothing due to the impossibility of a human being making sense of it. The realm of the night represents the mysterious, the unknown, which is, for us, under ordinary conditions, incomprehensible, yet still 'something'.

Patočka argues that the realm of day has an end. Yet, to bestow a new meaning of everydayness, one needs to draw a meaning neither by exhausting the old, which is now no longer a valid meaning of the everydayness, nor by escaping to the realm of fantasy and ideals. One is called to draw a meaning from the realm of the night, from the mysterious and yet unknown. The meaning of the everydayness is limited and final, surrounded by the night, its deep darkness and mystery, which represent the source of an all-new bestowal of meaning.

Patočka identifies the line that divides day from night with the phenomenon of death. He believes that there are some experiences that can cause an individual to cross this line; in other words, to face the phenomenon of death. When the line is crossed, the meaning of the day loses its validity, in the sense that it becomes radically confronted with an experience of death (e.g. the frontline experience). However, to re-obtain the new meaning for one's everydayness, one is called to free oneself from strong attachments to the previous meaning (the meaning of the everydayness). One is called to expose oneself to the very experience, let the experience transform oneself and let the mystery, the conditions that we are in and that we do not necessarily understand at this point, cast a light of meaning upon our meaningless conditions occurring in the human being, through the experience of being directly confronted by death.

Patočka proposes a new idea on how war experience can be perceived: through the perspective of *Weltgeheimnis* – the perception that sees the war in its entirety, including the realm of 'the secret of the world'³³⁶ – the dark and mysterious. Patočka, in his treatment of war, calls for the necessity of '[leaning] out into the night, into struggle and death that it cannot do without this component of life, which, from the point of view of the day, appears as a mere non-existence'.³³⁷ He suggests a form of transcendence in the per-

³³⁶Tava, *The Risk of Freedom*, p. 34.

³³⁷'[vyklonění] života do noci, boje a smrti: neodepsatelnou této položky v životě, která se zdá z hlediska dne pouhou neexistencí.' In: Patočka, 'Kacířské eseje', p. 127; Patočka, *Heretical Essays*, p. 131.

ception of the war and of the frontline experience, because the moment of transcendence (as seeing beyond how these phenomena appear on the surface), from his perspective, is the only means by which such an experience of death and radical loss of meaning can be overcome. Patočka argues that it is necessary to detach oneself from the perspective of the ordinary, the meaning of the everydayness, and to immerse oneself in the risky, in the unknown, in the contingent that the night, the struggle and death provide.

vii Máchá

Patočka expands the meaning of opposition by taking inspiration from the Czech poet Karel Hynek Mácha. For Mácha, '[O]riginal duality, the original tension appears as a unity, yet not a unity of harmony, but a profound lack, passion and sorrow.'³³⁸ Patočka argues that Mácha incorporates the Heraclitean idea of polarity in his poems and overcomes its original understanding. Mácha's poems indicate that such polarity is the source of constant deficiency, desire and sorrow.

The aim of Mácha's novelty is not, however, to trigger a feeling of pessimism and sentimentality; Mácha proposes an immense constitutive potential, an open challenge that creates room for new possibilities, desires and beginnings:

Máchá's view is neither pessimism, nor sentimentality; it is misleading to observe in his works some lamenting over the fate of a human being, either with regard to the notion of time or metaphysics; on the contrary, it represents a challenge to all horrific excesses of the life and the world, in order to emerge face to face, and persistence towards their horrific stare of the uplifting power, which is inherent to everything, which is in the genuine sense of the word the last.³³⁹ [M.B]

To fulfil the promise of the new beginning that Mácha's account of polarity opens up, a human being needs to withstand and persist with the challenge that is the negative conditions of polarity. In the concrete opposition of day and night, to experience a new beginning (a new day), a human being needs first to withstand and persist with the experience of the negative (the night). One needs to embrace the night in its full manifestation

³³⁸'[P]ůvodní dualita, původní napětí se objeví posléze jako jednota, ale nikoli jednota harmonie, nýbrž nevyčísitelného nedostatku, touhy a trudu.' In: Patočka, 'Symbol země u K. H. Máchy', pp. 107–108).

³³⁹'Máchův pohled není pesimismus, není sentimentalita; je falešné spatřovat u něho nějaké vzdychání nad osudem člověka, časným i metafyzickým; jest to naopak výzva ke všem strašlivým módnostem života a světa, aby se objevily tváří v tvář, a vydržení jejich děsivého pohledu povznášející mocí, která je vlastní všemu, co je v pravém smyslu slova poslední.' Ibid., p. 108.

of horror.

For Mácha, the Heraclitean polarity that he introduces in his poem *The Night* represents a key principle of human life. In this poem, Mácha highlights the opposition between light and darkness, light and dark night, stars and earth. While the former 'positive' elements of these opposites represent something out there, something unreachable by a human being, the latter 'negative' elements represent our lived reality.

It exists within us, it stretches within us an original opposition between a desire for light and the never-ending surrender to the earth, dark abyss, which does not allow to get closer to the flare of stars. The realm of light is not accessible; Mother Earth holds us tight and reshapes us again and again. She transforms us to plants or birds, which again desire the light, yet a different, a completely different world. Mother Earth, our genuine reality is obscure – dark night.³⁴⁰ [M.B]

Mácha believes that the earthly negative elements – Mother Earth and the night (not the stars and the light) – represent the genuine natural environment, our true home, which holds human beings in her abyss and transforms her, despite her reluctance to accept it, due to the darkness of the negative earthly elements.

However, Mácha believes (and Patočka implements this idea in his philosophical thought) that the possibility of constituting something new – a new beginning – arises from human beings facing the negativity that they participate in with courage and honesty. One is called to embrace the night, the element of Mother Earth, the reality that one is standing in and genuinely belongs to. People are called to not run away from reality, but embrace it in its full problematicity, in the horror such a reality entails. This approach should be taken because neither of the elements in this binary opposition is total or irreversible, as the unity of these elements and their constant interchangeability presupposes that even night has an end and, in principle, will be followed by day, which will be replaced by night, and so on. Moreover, the experience of night is necessary in this context, as only the negative element of night can actually trigger the desire for its opposite. In other words, perhaps from a slightly Platonic perspective, to know the Good, one needs first to embrace the Evil. One cannot know one's desires if one has not experienced

³⁴⁰Polarita, kterou Mácha cítí jako osu lidského života, je vyjádřená v básni *Noc*, symboly světla a tmy, jasné a temné noci, hvězdy a země. Existuje v nás, napíná se v nás praprotiklad mezi touhou k světlu a věčným propadnutím zemi, temné hlubině, již nedovolí jít k hvězdné záři. Říše světla je nedostupná; matka Země nás pevně drží a proměňuje v nové a nové tvary; vrací nás v podobě rostlin nebo ptáka téže touze po světle, po jiném, docela odlišném světě. Matka země, naše pravá skutečnost, je temná - je temná noc.' Ibid.

deficiency, and to know being, one first needs to recognise 'nothingness'.³⁴¹

Precisely in this [somnambulant, gloomy, mysterious] realm, there are the deepest and most fundamental truths, unclearly proposed, yet it is necessary to read them with courage, because their nature is invariably horrific. [...] the absolute finitude of an individual, death as an irreversible and infinite fate of a human being, given not by a contemplation but 'feeling': the human being 'feels that he will perish forever', and precisely in this, there is the character 'sans réplique' of this recognition (knowledge), as the feeling does not come back.³⁴² [M.B]

Patočka argues that, at the bottom of this negative experience of night, in the very depths of the earth – our reality – there resides something very positive: something that is the source of a new beginning. He argues that night, and not day, possesses the most fundamental truths, which will be revealed to those who embrace darkness, who face the truth courageously and are willing to see it.

viii Night and the Frontline

Patočka's image of the frontline experience is closely related to Mácha's image of night and the personification of Mother Earth. The frontline experience represents the experience of night. However, this experience, following Mácha's poetry, does not stand for an obscure momentary state of a human being. In the frontline trenches, the participant lies in the hostile womb of Mother Earth – the experience that represents the genuine reality, the place that one naturally belongs to. The participant of the frontline is physically connected to reality through being positioned in the trenches.

Although the image of the night – the frontline experience – represents reality, the human being tends to close his eyes before it, to ignore it, and to escape to other worlds – to the world of high ideals and fantasy. Instead of embracing reality in its full problematicity, the human being tends to reach up to the stars prematurely. An example of

³⁴¹Ibid., p. 113.

³⁴²Existují v člověku stránky neurčitého, nejasného původu, jež stojí v úzkém vztahu k osudovým otázkám, jimiž se jeho život rozhoduje; stránky somnambulní, mráкотné, noční, tajemné, plné významu a těžké konsekvencemi. Právě v této oblasti jsou nejhlubší a nejzávažnější pravdy nejasně sugerovány, je však nutno je s odvahou přecítit, protože jejich povaha je pravidelně hrůzná. Tak jest například naprostá konečnost individuality, smrt jako neodvratný a věčný úděl člověka, dána nikoli úvahou, nýbrž 'citem': člověk 'cítí, že zhyne navždy', a právě v tom je charakter 'sans réplique' tohoto poznání, poněvadž cit se nevrací.' Ibid., p. 116.

such a tendency is Jünger's model of materialist history, when Jünger ignores the essence, the truth, which lies at the very bottom of the frontline trenches – the existential and eschatological dimension of the experience and, due to his being traumatised by the frontline experience, due to his obsession with heroism and impossibility to accept the defeat, dreams about the day, about a man of steel who will transpose the energies of the frontline back into the everydayness and, it is hoped, fulfil the Germanic desire to finally win the lost war.

Heraclitus, Sophocles and Mácha teach us that, despite experiencing night, the very embodiment of negativity and horror – the frontline experience – this negative situation is not something total and irreversible. The world is not the sum of entities that are static, total and unchangeable, but a constantly transforming, moving whole in which night will be followed by day and day will be followed by night and so on. All three thinkers equip us with the hope that every situation, however negative and horrific it may be, will ultimately have an end, because the opposites are closely related and are inseparable.

Patočka, in his examination of Mácha's romantic poems, draws an analogy between the experience of night and the frontline experience. The opposition between night and day, as based on Mácha's poetics, however, may sound idealised and romantic. Moreover, if we read Jünger's memoir, *Storm of Steel*, one can observe that the reality of the frontline participants was considerably different. The experience of night did not lead to an apocalyptic moment of the revelation of truth, but to severe trauma, to silence, to the impossibility of recalling one's experience, and to the ignorance of all existential questions. Through his examination of Mácha's poems, Patočka reveals the epicentre of the truth, which does not reside in the realm of desired ideals, in the stars, in the day, in the light, as Jünger writing his essay 'Total Mobilization' may have assumed. On the contrary, the epicentre of the truth resides in the very negativity and darkness of our experiences, in the horror that not even Jünger, despite his being on the frontline, dared to embrace.

Despite the seeming irrationality of Patočka's position, which turns the foundation of Jünger's materialist history upside down, the implementation of the polarity between day and night, Patočka follows a very specific, yet sophisticated movement. What appears to be an absolute descent into the very darkness of the night, and even what physically ap-

appears to be a descent into the very abyss of the earth – to the very bottom of the frontline trench – actually represents a springboard for the movement of transcendence, which results in a possible overcoming of nihilism of the frontline experience. At the same time, what Jünger in his model of materialist history perceives to be an overcoming of the frontline experience – the moment of what he calls ‘crossing the line’,³⁴³ through the means of the continuation of day, which he achieves through the extension of energies and forces of the frontline, is actually the moment of descent, or zero-levelling. This levelling is an extension of active nihilism into the realm of everydayness, which is something even a sceptic of humanism such as Heidegger is critical of.³⁴⁴

Patočka, in his treatment of the frontline experience and war, proposes a new horizon – *Weltgeheimnis*, incorporating both the everyday and nocturnal perspective. This new horizon is a clear antidote to and criticism of Jünger’s horizon of materialist history *Gestalt* (‘a metaphysical concept to denote the all-encompassing reality active behind individual appearances’),³⁴⁵ at the heart of which resides the technological enframing of *Gestell*. Patočka, by emphasising night, encourages a human being to return to the very manifestation of the world, to the world as a whole,³⁴⁶ as he believes that the world as a whole is a source of a restless changeability (Heraclitus), the source of meaning (Sophocles’ *Antigone*), and the source of truth and a new beginning (Mácha).

Jünger’s horizon of *Gestalt* already prescribes a certain reality to individuals. However, the concept represents an artificial, inauthentic technological and industrial world, in which the room for freedom (represented by changeability, new meaning and beginning) is entirely missing.

Patočka’s shift of the horizon from *Gestalt* to *Weltgeheimnis* does not represent a

³⁴³Ernst Jünger, ‘Across the Line’, in: Martin Heidegger and Ernst Jünger, *Correspondence 1949-1975*, trans. by Timothy Sean Quinn (London: Rowman & Littlefield International, 2016), pp. 67-102 (p. 67); Ernst Jünger, *Über die Linie* (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1951), p. 21.

³⁴⁴Martin Heidegger, ‘On the Question of Being’ in *Pathmarks*, trans. by William McNeil (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), pp. 291-322 (p. 299).

³⁴⁵Neuman, *A Dubious Past*, p. 43.

³⁴⁶[W]hat is characteristic of human life is that it relates to the whole: that human life is life in the whole. Not *above* the whole: not in such a way that we could seize the *universum* and objectify it, as positive metaphysical theory has always wanted to.’ In: Jan Patočka, ‘Negative Platonism, Reflections Concerning the Rise, the Scope, and the Demise of Metaphysics – and Whether Philosophy Can Survive It’, in *Jan Patočka, Philosophy and Selected Writings*, ed. by Erazim Kohák (Chicago & London: The University of Chicago Press, 1989), pp. 175-207 (p. 201).

stubborn emphasis on the ethical perspective of the frontline experience. Instead, Patočka, by incorporating the nocturnal aspect, aims to broaden the very possibilities of human beings, emphasising their freedom to search for the meaning of this experience themselves through the employment of their agency to question, to think critically and to make free decisions in these conditions.

III Solidarity

In *Heretical Essays*, Patočka draws a link between his understanding of history and the frontline experience. He explicitly criticises the treatments of the frontline proposed by both Pierre Teilhard de Chardin and Jünger, and introduces new perspectives through which the war experience of the frontline should be assessed:

How can the front line experience acquire the form which would make it a factor of history? Why is it not becoming that? Because in the form described so powerfully by Teilhard and Jünger, it is the experience of all individuals projected individually each to their summit from which they cannot but retreat back to everydayness where they will inevitably be seized again by war in the form of Force's plan for peace. The means by which this state is overcome is the solidarity of the shaken.³⁴⁷

Patočka argues that the frontline experience has the potential to become what he calls 'a factor of history'.³⁴⁸ The frontline represents an experience that may trigger the individual's turn to history – the new beginning, the new social and world order. In other words, the frontline represents an experience in which an individual is directly confronted with death, but which, at the same time, does not have to lead to an absolute loss of meaning.

Patočka claims that the treatments of the frontline experience, as proposed by Teilhard de Chardin in *Writings in Time of War* (1968), and Jünger in his war memoir *Storm of Steel* (1920), and then, later, in *Total Mobilisation* (1930), strip the frontline experience of agency. The main reason Teilhard and Jünger miss the opportunity for the frontline to trigger the beginning of history is succinctly expressed by Patočka through the utter-

³⁴⁷Jakým způsobem může *frontová zkušenost* nabýt té podoby, která by ji učinila dějinným faktorem? Proč se jí nestává? Protože v podobě, kterou tak mocně vylíčili Teilhard a Jünger, je [to] zkušenost každého jednotlivce vrženého zvláště k svému vrcholu, z něhož nezbyvá než sestoupit zpátky do všedního dne, kde se ho zase zmocní nezbytně válka v podobě mírového plánování Síly. Prostředkem, jak tento stav překonat, je *solidarita otřesených*. In: *Ibid.*, p. 129; *Ibid.*, p. 134.

³⁴⁸*Ibid.*

ance that, in their treatments, the frontline represents ‘the experience of all individuals projected individually each to their summit from which they cannot but retreat back to everydayness where they will inevitably be seized again by war in the form of Force’s plan for peace.’³⁴⁹

Here, Patočka points to two fundamental problems. First, the participants of the frontline descend from the summit back to their everydayness, in which they are seized by the eternal war, which refers to their inability to see the frontline experience as it is. Both Teilhard and Jünger assess the frontline experience solely from the perspective of the day; they are incapable of transcending the frontline experience.

The result of such a treatment is that, despite the participants of the frontline being confronted by the experience of death – the horror of the experience (they reach the summit) – they miss the opportunity to expose themselves to the new meaning that resides in the very darkness of the experience: the moment that is constitutive for Patočka’s disclosure of history.

Instead of the movement of transcendence, the movement that both Teilhard and Jünger follow is the movement of descendance, or what Heidegger in ‘On the Question of Being’³⁵⁰ calls ‘rescendence’ (they subsume to meaninglessness). Both Teilhard and Jünger, in their examinations of the frontline, follow the movement that creates obstacles regarding the possibility of the new beginning – the upheaval of history – that Patočka strives for. Ultimately, such a movement of rescendence leads only, as Patočka argues, to ‘the state of a continual war’:³⁵¹ to a further deepening and extending of the idea of nihilism in both its active and passive forms.

Second, Patočka reveals another problematic issue. He states that both Teilhard and Jünger misrecognise the necessity for unity (‘unity of action, performed by a Spirit’),³⁵² which is a prerequisite for the further movement of history. In other words, both thinkers treat the frontline as being experienced by ‘each individual [...] individually’.³⁵³

Patočka does not deny the transformative power that the frontline experience has

³⁴⁹Ibid.

³⁵⁰Heidegger, ‘On the Question of Being’, p. 292.

³⁵¹Patočka, ‘Kacířské eseje’, p. 129; *Heretical Essays*, p. 134.

³⁵²‘dynamickou jednotou činností, kterou duch vykonává.’ In: Patočka, ‘Přirozený svět jako filosofický problém’, p. 129.

³⁵³Patočka, ‘Kacířské eseje’, p. 129; *Heretical Essays*, p. 134.

upon each individual. He is, however, convinced that, once the frontline has been experienced in isolation, it leads to completely different outcomes.

In *Heretical Essays*, Patočka does not characterise what particular effect the experience of the frontline, once experienced in isolation, has on an individual and their post-war existence. Patočka believes human beings' experience of the frontline horror is not an immediate trauma, but a long-term transformation of human existence. As he argues, 'war in the form of the frontline marks humans forever.'³⁵⁴

Through a close reading of Teilhard's and Jünger's works, one can observe two extreme tendencies that ultimately support the state of the ongoing warfare. The frontline experience, as described by these two thinkers, does not lead to the upheaval of history in Patočka's sense of the word, but rather, due to the individualistic tendencies and the strong bond to the everydayness, the experience supports the ongoing state of nihilism in its two different forms.

In *Writings in Time of War* (1968), Teilhard describes a participant who, after experiencing the horror of the frontline, finds asylum in deep religious faith.³⁵⁵ He writes also in his essays that the participants may alternatively start to redefine life in terms of the absurd.³⁵⁶ Both of these alternatives, in principle, lead to feelings of capitulation, passivity and de-motivation. The frontline participants, through their scepticism and ignorance, become reluctant to act in the political realm. Although this attitude does not initially seem dangerous, it eventually has radical consequences: the individual leaves the political space to itself. Emmanuel Lévinas aptly describes this attitude of inactivity and passivity and its consequences in the final passages of *Totality and Infinity*. He argues that, 'politics left to itself bears Tyranny within itself.'³⁵⁷ Lévinas, with his argument,

³⁵⁴'válka jako fronta poznamenává navždy' Ibid., p. 119; Ibid., p. 125.

³⁵⁵Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, 'The Promised Land', in *Writings in Time of War*, trans. by René Hague (New York & Evanston: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1968) pp. 278-288 (pp. 285-286). As de Warren argues, critically examining Teilhard's essay 'La Nostalgie du Front': 'The miracle of combat transforms soldiers into figurations of Christ yet, by the same token, equally renders Christ into the figuration of a soldier. The gift of death that 'allows each combatant to attain a human essence greater than himself is the ultimate secret of the incomparable impression of freedom that he experiences, and which he shall never forget.' Yet, this secret of the front, once revealed, remains precarious.' In: de Warren, 'Homecoming', p. 238.

³⁵⁶Teilhard de Chardin, 'The Promised Land', pp. 285-286.

³⁵⁷Emmanuel Lévinas, *Totality and Infinity: An Essay on Exteriority*, trans. by Alphonso Lingis (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1979), p. 252.

clearly suggests that politics without any response from citizens leads to devastating consequences, in which it will succumb to the state of tyranny.

In Patočka's case, the passivity of citizens indirectly supports the state of ongoing warfare. The alternative that Teilhard presents in *Writings in Time of War* (1968) can be identified with what Nietzsche, in *The Will to Power*, defines as passive nihilism – 'nihilism as decline and recession of the power of the spirit'.³⁵⁸ Teilhard ultimately emphasises the necessity of unity (solidarity) for the beginning of history. Despite its failure to be realised in practice, in his front line memoir, *Writings in the Time of War* (1968), Teilhard argues:

Here we come to the heart of the lesson taught us by the war: the conditions of human progress is that men must at least cease to live in isolations; they must learn to recognize a common goal for their lives (a goal set before them for ever in their heaven, transmissible by education, attainable and perfectible by disinterested research) – and the fiery energies still undoubtedly smouldering in men must be fanned into flame and directed in common towards that end – not in an individual, nor in a national, nor in a social, but in a human effort.³⁵⁹

In *Writings in the Time of War*, Teilhard laments the missed opportunity that the phenomenon of the frontline experience offered to its participants. He realises the necessity of unity, in the sense that individuals, to achieve progress, need to be unified by a shared goal (a mutually shared aim – *logos*) that exceeds the particularistic, nationalistic and chauvinistic ambitions of specific individuals and social groups. Teilhard realises that human progress, the First World War and the frontline experience offered an opportunity that would lead to a new destiny for humanity, which could have been realised only through a collective human effort to pursue a mutual goal that would connect all individuals; a goal that they would believe in and that would become a driving force for their further actions.

An alternative consequence of the individual's experience of the frontline is offered by Jünger in *Storm of Steel*. Jünger portrays a scenario that can be identified with Nietzsche's idea of active nihilism – 'nihilism as a sign of increased power of the spirit',³⁶⁰

³⁵⁸'Nihilism as decline and recession of the power of the spirit: as passive nihilism.' In: Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*, p. 17.

³⁵⁹Teilhard de Chardin, 'The Promised Land', p. 285.

³⁶⁰'Nihilism as a sign of increased power of the spirit: as active nihilism.' In: Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*, p. 17.

which again supports and extends the ongoing war through an active and violent involvement in it.

Patočka highlights the necessity of the unity of the participants in the frontline, which is a prerequisite of the turn to history and its further movement, even in the post-war era. Although he sees the frontline experience, as described by Teilhard and Jünger, as a missed opportunity, Patočka does not lose hope and, in this context, introduces a new subjectivity: the solidarity of the shaken. He believes that there is indeed a chance to break with and to overcome radically the crisis, which took the form of the state of ongoing war. He believes there is a chance to break with nihilism in both its active and passive forms and that this state can be overcome only by the community of the solidarity of the shaken. Jünger, in his treatment of the frontline experience, omits all aspects of the frontline that could potentially disrupt and shake the idea of history as a smooth continuum of life. He achieves this ambition by eliminating existential sentiments. He does not analyse the struggles of warriors in the frontline trenches, their fear of death, their unquenchable desires and sorrow. Instead, Jünger, even if the price is that his model of history is stripped of the last remnants of authenticity and humanity, encourages the worker to become strong and to withstand all pain to be able to serve the authority of the state and the higher aim of society.

Patočka recognises this ambition of Jünger's materialist model of history, namely, to preserve the smooth flow of history in the service of progress and the continuum of life. However, he divorces himself from these ambitions of Jünger's history, which evidently support the idea of totality, and argues instead that history is a realm of constant shaking, in which all our meaning and certainties are constantly being challenged and undermined. He sees the beginning of history not as a continuum of life, but as a realm of uncertainty, which is not necessarily and ultimately negative:

This beginning then reaches out to the future historical outreach, especially by teaching what humankind does not wish to comprehend, in spite of all the immense hardness of history, does not want to understand, something that perhaps only latter days will learn after reaching the nadir of destruction and devastation – that life need be understood not from the viewpoint of the day, of life merely accepted, but also from the view of strife, of the night, of polemos. The point of history is not what can be uprooted or shaken, but rather openness to the shak-

ing.³⁶¹

Patočka rejects the inauthentic, utopian, yet for some, alluring reality created by Jünger's idea of total mobilisation, which promises material welfare and wellbeing for society. Instead, Patočka argues that history begins with human beings understanding that history is nothing but the realm of a constant shaking and the ability and willingness of human beings to embrace the shaking and their willingness to respond to it. History begins with human beings returning to authenticity, to what Patočka calls *polemos*³⁶² – ‘the law of the world’,³⁶³ and their efforts to act in accordance with it. In this context, Patočka rejects Jünger's central position of war within his idea of total mobilisation, which justifies the means of violence for achieving the aims of the German nation. Although *polemos* possesses some connotations of war, Patočka describes *polemos* as a struggle, as a unity of two opposites.³⁶⁴ Patočka's model of history does not promise to guarantee the material

³⁶¹‘Tento počátek podává tak ruku všem dalším pokusům dějinného vzmachu, hlavně též tím, že učí tomu, čemu lidstvo nechce porozumět přes všechny nesmírné tvrdosti dějin a čemu možná naučí až ta pozdní doba, která dosáhla vrcholu ničení a zkázy: že životu je třeba porozumět nikoli z hlediska dne, z hlediska pouhého žití, života akceptovaného, nýbrž z hlediska boje, noci, z hlediska polemos. Že v dějinách nejde o to, co je možno vyvrátit, nebo čím lze otrástit, nýbrž o otevřenost pro to otrásající.’ In: Patočka, ‘Kacířské eseje’, p. 54; *Heretical Essays*, p. 44.

³⁶²According to de Warren: ‘Genuine historical existence and responsibility emerges with the twin appearance of philosophy and political life, both of which institute a fundamental ‘shaking’ of accepted meaning by ushering into existence and responsibility crystallizes around the event of polemos – a term that amidst various translations, but which is better left untranslated if we are to underscore its strangeness and polymorphous meaning; even if Patočka himself alternates between retaining the Greek term and providing multiple specifications, or translations, such as ‘battle’, ‘strife’, and ‘conflict.’ One of the difficulties of fathoming polemos consists in keeping its ontological significance apart from possible metaphorical and mythical applications.’ In: Nicolas de Warren, ‘Homecoming’, p. 219. ‘On the theoretical plane, polemos is insight; on the practical plane, polemos is a care of the soul, as well as an inter-subjective form of co-existence among those who have broken from the natural world.’ *Ibid.*, p. 221.

³⁶³‘Dějiny vznikají tam a mohou vzniknout tolik tím, že arête, ona výtečnost člověka, který nežije již pouze pro život, buduje prostor pro své uplatnění, že vidí do povahy věcí a jedná ve shodě s ní – buduje obec na základě světového zákona, kterým je polemos, a říká to, co spatřuje jako odhalující se svobodnému, nekrytému a neohroženému člověku (filosofie).’ Patočka, ‘Kacířské eseje’, p. 54; *Heretical Essays*, p. 43.

³⁶⁴In his formulation of the concept of polemos, Patočka is primarily influenced by Heidegger's interpretation of Heraclitus' Fragment 53: ‘War is both father of all and king of all: it reveals the gods on the one hand and humans on the other, makes slaves on the one hand, the free on the other.’ In: Martin Heidegger, *Nature, History, State: 1933-1934*, trans. by Gregory Fried and Richard Polt (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2015), p. 159. Heidegger (and Patočka adopts this idea of his) undermines the assumption, that polemos is identical with war in the human sense. He argues, that polemos represents strife: ‘that holds sway before everything divine and human, not war in the human sense.’ In: Martin Heidegger, *Introduction to Metaphysics*, trans. by Gregory Fried and Richard Polt (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 2000), p. 67. Fried interprets Heidegger's idea of polemos as: ‘War [polemos] is concerned with the fundamental limits of life and death, freedom and slavery, war sets the most extreme aspects of the human condition into their sharpest relief for the Greeks.’ In: Gregory Fried, *Heidegger's Polemos: From Being to Politics* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000), p. 27. Or as Žižek interprets it: ‘[T]he ongoing process

prosperity of society, but instead invites human beings to experience reality as it is, with all its shaking, uncertainty and struggles. He supplants Jünger's illusion with authenticity and with a call for responsibility.

IV Social and Political Implications

In his inter-war writings, Jünger introduces nothing but a soulless foundation for 'the nexus of dialectical-cum-revolutionary ideas, which can be summarised as the idea of progress'.³⁶⁵ His turn to history, as conveyed through his idea of total mobilisation, the underpinning of which is a new metaphysics of pain, is an attempt to propose a conservative revolution – 'axiomatic assumptions of conservative politics'.³⁶⁶ Jünger, traumatised by Germany losing the war, and due to his treatment of the war as a fetish, is myopic and overlooks the disastrous consequences that the disclosure of the material history that he proposes in his three inter-war essays may lead to.

The model of society that Jünger introduces in this context is reminiscent of the totally administered society formulated by the Frankfurt School – namely, by Herbert Marcuse, and further developed by Theodor W. Adorno. Marcuse characterises the totally administered society as follows:

The more rational, productive, technical, and total the repressive administration of society becomes, the more unimaginable the means and ways by which the administered individuals might break their servitude and seize their own liberation. To be sure, to impose Reason upon an entire society is a paradoxical and scandalous idea – although one might dispute the righteousness of a society, which ridicules this idea while making its own population into objects of total administration.³⁶⁷

Jünger's frontline community *Frontgemeinschaft*, which later transforms into the new typus of the worker heralds an industrial technological society, which the technological administration and 'its forces necessary for its reproduction [...] those of managing, en-

of struggle itself as the ultimate reality, as the process out of which all entities as well as their (temporary) order emerge.' In: Slavoj Žižek, *In Defense of Lost Causes* (London & New York: Verso Books, 2009), p. 149.

³⁶⁵Thomas Baldwin, 'Philosophy and the First World War', in *The Cambridge History of Philosophy 1870-1914*, ed. by Thomas Baldwin (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), pp. 363-378 (p. 377).

³⁶⁶Ibid.

³⁶⁷Herbert Marcuse, *One-Dimensional Man: Studies in the Ideology of Advanced Industrial Society* (London: Routledge, 2012), p. 9.

gineering, planning'³⁶⁸ took over. As is the case with the centrality of *Gestell* within the community in Jünger's work, the administered society 'assumes cultural hegemony [and] dehumanises thinking'.³⁶⁹ Moreover, such a model of administered society, in principle, leads to the decline of freedom and the decline of the individual,³⁷⁰ as Brown argues: 'The hegemony of technocratic rationality simultaneously massifies objective social existence and atomises, privatises and depoliticises subjective existence.'³⁷¹ In general, in the administered society, 'people more and more conform to the rhythm of production where the good life is the goods life'³⁷² and the critical thinking of an individual is precluded by solutions offered by the authority of the State.³⁷³

Patočka's idea of the solidarity of the shaken can be perceived as an antidote to the totally administered society. Patočka rejects the idea of progress being foundational for the establishment of a society and, instead, strives for the preservation of authenticity within it. He avoids the limitations of the totally administered society by re-introducing the horizon of *Weltgeheimnis*, which expands the possibilities and the community and guarantees individual freedom. Through the idea of the solidarity of the shaken, Patočka encourages people to apply their agency of critical thinking to the social and political realm, instead of blindly accepting the solutions of the authority, which may contradict the interests of individuals.

Conclusion

The main aim of this chapter was to introduce a novel reading of Patočka's final essays to present the main premises of his philosophy of history and to clarify the central concept of the solidarity of the shaken. If we perceive Patočka's *Heretical Essays* as a critical response to Jünger's model of material history and as a contribution to the popular discourse on

³⁶⁸Doug Brown, 'Institutionalism, Critical Theory, and the Administered Society', *Journal of Economic Issues*, 2 (1985), 559-566 (p. 560).

³⁶⁹Ibid.

³⁷⁰Herbert Marcuse, *One-Dimensional Man: Studies in the Ideology of Advanced Industrial Society* (London: Routledge, 2012), p. 52.

³⁷¹Doug Brown, 'Institutionalism, Critical Theory, and the Administered Society', *Journal of Economic Issues*, 2 (1985), 559-566 (p. 560).

³⁷²Ibid.

³⁷³Ibid.

the concept of community (*Gemeinschaft*), they not only reveal the source of the crisis in post-war Europe, but offer a potentially vital solution for overcoming such a crisis.

In the 1970s – the age of normalisation in communist Czechoslovakia – Patočka returned to the idea of the frontline trenches and followed the same trajectory as Jünger, connecting the individual's experience of the frontline to the beginning of history. The ambition of such an obscure framing of Patočka's essays was to highlight the dangers of Jünger's treatment of war.

Patočka criticises Jünger's ideal of total mobilisation, the priority of war powers and energies, and the effort to extend these forces to the post-war era with the ambition of further enhancing the progress of the German nation. Patočka argues that such a treatment of war is not only misleading, but also very dangerous, as it only further exhausts the idea of active nihilism and aims to achieve the progress of civilisation through justifying violence – the means of eternal war. He claims that Jünger's material history is nothing but a deepening and sharpening of active nihilism, in which the ideas of vitalism and progressivism are central.

In his response to Jünger, Patočka calls for the re-focusing of one's attention on what he describes as the mysterious and the nocturnal of the frontline experience. This shift of perspective does not aim to awaken an existential sentiment; rather, Patočka realises that existentialism and eschatology allow for a form of constitutive violence (the shaking), which lays ethical foundations for the upheaval of history and allows for the emergence of the solidarity of the shaken – a salvific community that can potentially overcome the crisis and convey a movement of history.

Patočka believed that Jünger's model of materialist history supports the idea of totality in the political realm. The ideas of progressivism and vitalism, which are central to Jünger's model, are two denominators that Patočka observed in the ideologies of fascism and communism. However, he recognised that such a totality can be undermined. He breaks with Jünger's illusion of history being a continuum and introduces a new perspective of history – history as a realm of constant shaking.

Nevertheless, Patočka realised that such a realm of shaking can be maintained and preserved not only by a change in perspective – how one sees the war (in its full prob-

lematicity) – but also by the emergence of an exclusively ethical community that would be willing to live in such a realm, and that, in return, would be willing to respond to its shaking.

The solidarity of the shaken, so conceived – represents an antidote to Jünger's *Frontgemeinschaft*, which leads to a society of surveillance, a par excellence example of the administered society. The solidarity, the premises of which are exclusively ethical, represents a community that breaks with the nationalistic and chauvinistic pathos of such a society. The members of the solidarity of the shaken are grounded in the groundless abyss of the shaking and are united by their willingness to embrace the reality as it truly manifests itself, and to embrace and respond to its very problematicity.

Although Patočka wrote his essays in the age of normalisation in communist Czechoslovakia, the relevance and necessity of such a dissenting movement needs to be reconsidered and re-examined in the light of the crisis of democracy we are experiencing in the political realm today.

Chapter 3

Transcendence

Introduction

Both Jünger and Patočka, in their contemplations of history, appear to be following the same pattern, which originates in an experience (*Erlebnis*) and leads to history – to the emergence of a new beginning. In both cases, these developments of history lead to the emergence of solidarity – in the case of Jünger, *Frontgemeinschaft*, and in the case of Patočka, the solidarity of the shaken. Despite the stark differences between these two developments, they share something in common; both thinkers believe that, to overcome the undesired state of nihilism, one must *transcend* it. Jünger's celebration of war, and Patočka's denial of the idea of war, may suggest how each of these thinkers approaches the problem of overcoming nihilism.

This chapter examines Jünger's post-Second World War essay 'Across the Line' (*Über die Linie*) (1955), which presents his ideas on overcoming the state of nihilism. Despite Jünger's disappointment with the governance of the Third Reich, which he argues was a manifestation of consummate nihilism, he does not deny nihilism. Instead, he aims at distilling positive aspects from nihilism that would trigger the new beginning. Jünger, therefore, despite being doomed to disappointment, did not lose his admiration for the philosophy of Friedrich Nietzsche and remained loyal to his doctrine of will to power, which is prevalent in his inter-war works and remained his core idea even after the end of the Second World War.

This chapter contrasts Jünger's idea of transcendence as 'crossing the line' with Patočka's idea of transcendence, which is based on ethics. While Jünger suggests the overcoming of nihilism in consummate nihilism reaching the *zero point*, and in its *contraction* and extension of positive aspects of nihilism, Patočka proposes a very personal method of how nihilism can be overcome. Patočka denies nihilism and is concerned about the individual's spiritual turn in these conditions. He calls for the necessity of *self-sacrifice*, arguing that a human being can respond to the conditions of nihilism only through one's capacity of *care for the soul*.

Jünger and Patočka may initially appear to be two completely unrelated authors. Jünger was not a philosopher, and he probably never read Patočka's works. Patočka, on the other hand, examines Jünger's works only in the very last *Heretical Essay*. However, both these thinkers were influenced by the philosophy of Martin Heidegger. The essay 'Across the line' was Jünger's present for Heidegger on his 60th birthday, to which Heidegger responded with his work 'On the Question of Being' (1956). Heidegger admired Jünger's work and became intrigued by his inter-war essay 'Total Mobilization' and the book *The Worker*, which he analysed in his seminar group in the 1930s. Heidegger praised Jünger for achieving what all Nietzsche literature was unable to achieve; namely, to communicate one's experience in the light of will to power.³⁷⁴ Patočka, on the other hand, was Heidegger's student. In his idea of solidarity, Patočka is inspired by Heidegger's *Being and Time* (1927) and his concept of existence, *Dasein*. Similar to Heidegger, Patočka focuses on human beings in the concrete world and being with others. Patočka sees great potential in Heidegger's idea of *anxiety*, which he transforms in his philosophy into the concept of the loss of meaning. Patočka believes that it is precisely the loss of meaning that triggers the moment of shaking and which has the capacity to launch an authentic existence. Despite the similarities between their philosophies, Patočka is critical of Heidegger, especially regarding the concept of transcendence as 'das Rettende'³⁷⁵.

³⁷⁴Laurence Paul Hemming, 'Work as Total Reason for Being: Heidegger and Jünger's Der Arbeiter', *Journal for Cultural Research*, 12.3, (2008), 231-251 (p. 237).

³⁷⁵Heidegger speaks about das Rettende – the saving power in his essay 'The Question Concerning Technology' (1954). See: Martin Heidegger, 'The Question Concerning Technology', in: *The Question Concerning Technology and Other Essays*, trans. by William Lowitt (New York: Harper Collins Publisher), pp. 3-35. 'Heidegger does not speak of saving power as the translation suggests, but of *das Rettende*, which means 'the freeing and protecting'. *Das Rettende* gives protection to disclosure and hence to human be-

Although Heidegger's account incorporates some ethical ideals (e.g. the turn/*die Kehre*), Patočka argues that his account of transcendence remains impersonal, avoiding any deep sense of ethics and humanism. Furthermore, Heidegger fails to describe the link between living with others and the political realm.

This chapter focuses on three accounts of transcendence that are closely intertwined. First, it examines Jünger's idea of transcendence as 'crossing the line' and his effort to overcome consummate nihilism. Furthermore, the chapter develops a critical dialogue between Jünger and Heidegger and focuses on the latter's criticism of the former's account. Finally, this chapter analyses the relationship between Heidegger and Patočka. Initially, it might seem that Patočka would have used against Jünger very similar arguments as Heidegger. However, this chapter points out the differences between Heidegger's and Patočka's accounts of transcendence and highlights the differences and describes the outcomes of their positions. The aim of this chapter is to develop a critical dialogue between the three authors, and to prepare the ground for an in-depth understanding of Patočka's transcendence, which is founded on exclusively ethical grounds.

I Jünger's Influence on Heidegger

In the early 1930s, Martin Heidegger became deeply involved in reading Jünger's works, especially 'Total Mobilization' (1930) and *The Worker* (1932). This interest led to a lifelong engagement with Jünger's thought, which continued until Heidegger's death in 1976.

Following their critical, yet friendly correspondence,³⁷⁶ Heidegger did not directly

ings when it is recovered in our lineage by freeing the essence of technology. The word saving in this context does not mean retention of something for later purposes, that is, it does not suggest a version of standing reserve. Nor does it suggest a being that causes or does something called saving. The thought of ontological difference is fully in play here, and *das Rettende* does not name a being and certainly does not name a power. Rather a draw of the Wesen or essence or coming to pass of technology, a draw in an absence of power, allows an opening that returns things from their retention for use and significance to their unuseful being, to their disclosiveness, their appearing in ceasing to be as they come to be.' In: Charles E. Scott, *On the Advantages and Disadvantages of Ethics and Politics* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1996), p. 76.

³⁷⁶Heidegger, Martin and Ernst Jünger, *Correspondence 1949-1975*, trans. by Timothy Sean Quinn (London: Rowman & Littlefield International, 2016).

reject Jünger's infamous celebration of war. Unlike Walter Benjamin³⁷⁷, he does not perceive Jünger's inter-war works ('Total Mobilization', *The Worker* and *On Pain*) to be dangerous, planting seeds for the ideology of fascism. Heidegger regards Jünger as a thinker who disinterestedly witnessed the events of inter-war and post-war Europe. He perceives him also to be a great 'diagnostician of modernity',³⁷⁸ whose language spoke to the readers of that time. Heidegger developed his own critique of modernity through his critical engagements with Jünger on the subject of nihilism.

i National Socialism and Technologism

Jünger's works influenced Heidegger's vision of technology, which he formulated in his work *The Question Concerning Technology* (1954). Jünger's inter-war works influenced, to an extent, Heidegger's infamous involvement in National Socialism. Both thinkers thought that humanity occurs in crisis and that it is necessary to seek ways to enable humanity to respond to it. However, they proposed different solutions to this issue. Jünger believed that the solution lies in total mobilisation and the new typus of the worker. The worker, whose actions are a result of the agency of the will to power, cultivated the technological programme of *Gestell*. On the other hand, Heidegger rejects Jünger's technological prognosis and expresses his desire to save the German nation from the peril of technological progress and its destructive powers. 'Heidegger's relationship to National Socialism cannot be understood unless we see the extent to which Heidegger believed that it offered an alternative to the technological nihilism predicted by Jünger.'³⁷⁹ However, while Jünger called on Germans to submit to that nihilism, Hitler – so Heidegger with the ambition to overcome nihilism, called on Germans to submit to the dangerous venture leading beyond such nihilism.³⁸⁰

Heidegger, similar to inter-war Jünger, is myopic towards the dangers of National Socialism and their misuse of technology for political ends through the means of biopol-

³⁷⁷For Walter Benjamin's critique of Ernst Jünger see: Walter Benjamin, 'Theories of German Fascism: On the Collection of Essays War and Warrior', *New German Critique*, 17 (1979), 120-128.

³⁷⁸Vincent Blok, 'An Indication of Being- Reflections on Heidegger's Engagement with Ernst Jünger', *Journal of the British Society of Phenomenology*, 42.2, (2011), 194-208 (p. 195).

³⁷⁹Michael Zimmermann, *Heidegger's Confrontation with Modernity, Technology, Politics, Art* (Bloomington, Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1990), p. 45.

³⁸⁰Ibid.

itics. However, unlike Jünger, Heidegger is influenced by the rhetoric of National Socialism and their criticism of democracy and modernity. He views the ideas of National Socialism as the future of humanity and as a possible way to avoid the menace of modernity. Heidegger, in his effort to escape Jünger's technological future forecast,³⁸¹ became a supporter of National Socialism, despite the fact that, in his lectures, he distanced himself from and even, on many occasions, mocked biologism and the pseudo-science of race.³⁸² According to Zimmermann, Heidegger believed that National Socialism would save Germany from technological nihilism by renewing and disciplining the German spirit.³⁸³ While Jünger's works may have inspired, albeit unintentionally, Heidegger's idealisation of National Socialism and his belief that National Socialism was the way out of the crisis, Jünger was never a supporter of the National Socialist Party. On the contrary, Jünger became an explicit opponent of National Socialism,³⁸⁴ criticising it for its 'halfway measures'.³⁸⁵ Jünger admired the Soviet Union and Prussian Leninism and inclined towards the materialisation of the idea of the total mobilisation of the East. Thanks to Leninism, Jünger believed, Soviet Russia was transformed into a highly organised, productive technological society.³⁸⁶

Heidegger's inclination towards National Socialism and his involvement in it arose out of his technophobic attitude and a naïve conviction that National Socialism's attitude towards technology was in line with protecting the German working class. He overlooked the point that National Socialism strives to enhance the progress of a nation through the means of total mobilisation, while exploiting the potential of total mobilisation for using technology in the same manner as other contemporary regimes, be it capitalism or Bolshevism.

Following the Second World War, Heidegger attempted to distance himself from National Socialism. Despite having been an explicit supporter of National Socialism, he

³⁸¹Vincent Blok, 'An Indication of Being', p. 195.

³⁸²Dermot Moran, *Introduction to Phenomenology* (London & New York: Routledge Taylor & Francis Group, 2000), p. 210.

³⁸³Zimmermann, *Heidegger's Confrontation*, p. 34.

³⁸⁴Jünger criticises the Second World War and the Third Reich in his work *On the Marble Cliffs*. In: Ernst Jünger, *On the Marble Cliffs*, trans. by Stuart Hood (Norfolk: A New Directions Book, 1947).

³⁸⁵Zimmermann, *Heidegger's Confrontation with Modernity*, p. 62.

³⁸⁶*Ibid.*

denied any possible links to the ideology. The quote in *Introduction to Metaphysics* (1953) became the centre of speculation regarding whether Heidegger was indeed a supporter of National Socialism:

In particular, what is peddled about nowadays as the philosophy of National Socialism, but which has not the least to do with the inner truth and greatness of this movement [namely, the encounter between global technology and modern humanity], is fishing in these troubled waters of 'values' and 'totalities'.³⁸⁷

The quote, which Heidegger presents in *Introduction to Metaphysics*, is ambiguous. The usage of the word 'greatness' illustrates the vagueness of the quote and results in two interpretations. The first interpretation, by the young Jürgen Habermas in 1955,³⁸⁸ suggests that Heidegger approves and celebrates the ideology of National Socialism. Greatness is viewed by Habermas as grandeur. If one reads the quote in this manner, Heidegger argues that the interpretations of National Socialism published by thinkers of the time harm the inner truth of the movement and degrade its greatness. However, in 1953, Christian Lewalter, in defence of Heidegger, overturns this interpretation and argues that the notion of greatness, in fact, possesses negative connotations. He relates greatness to being terrifying and monstrous. Lewalter argues that in 1935 Heidegger viewed the National Socialist movement as a 'symptom for the tragic collision [*Zusammenprall*] of technology and man, and as such a symptom it has greatness, because its effect reaches out to the whole West and threatens to drag it into decline.'³⁸⁹

Heidegger officially approved Lewalter's interpretation, and in an interview by *Der Spiegel*, he denies any possible involvement and support for National Socialism. Despite the controversy, which emerged after the Second World War, Heidegger supported the National Socialists because he regarded the cause of the crisis as reaching beyond modern technology. According to Zimmerman's interpretation, the democratic ideals, which stand as an obstacle to humanity's understanding of being, were, from Heidegger's perspective, the true cause of the crisis. Heidegger believed that National Socialism, being a new ideology, would replace those ideals and potentially save humanity from the crisis.

³⁸⁷ Martin Heidegger, *Introduction to Metaphysics*, trans. by Gregory Fried and Richard Polt (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 2000), p. 213.

³⁸⁸ Zimmermann, *Heidegger's Confrontation with Modernity*, p. 42.

³⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

He was convinced that National Socialism was the only hope for the German nation, and that it was the only way to escape the terrifying technological forecast proposed by Jünger in his inter-war works.³⁹⁰

II Crossing the Line

In the essay 'Across the Line' (*Über die Linie*) (1949), Jünger evaluates the post-Second World War social and political situation and contemplates the future of humanity. The essay differs from his inter-war works. Jünger changed his tone and heroism and titanism are no longer his central themes. Following the Second World War, in the essay, he is no longer interested in questions regarding the nation state either. He breaks away from his militant nationalistic and chauvinistic pathos and moves beyond territorial and national boundaries. He becomes a more attentive diagnostician of the social and political situation of that time and questions the future of world humanity on a planetary level (the planetary history of humanity).³⁹¹

The central image in Jünger's essay is the metaphor of the line. At first, it might appear that Jünger is referring to the traumatic experience of the frontline trenches. However, despite the strong connotations that the title of the essay may suggest, the image of the line does not stand for the frontline. The line is identical to a 'transitional state'³⁹² that 'divides the drama'³⁹³ – the age of consummate nihilism – from the new yet contingent (and not clearly specified by Jünger) era. Jünger questions whether humanity is ready to cross the line. In other words, he speculates on the possibility of humanity being ready to overcome consummate nihilism. Jünger proposes that crossing the line is a transitional stage that will end the era of nihilism and begin a new, brighter chapter for humanity. His idea of crossing the line would herald both the political and spiritual transformation of humanity. Crossing the line triggers a new vision of the world, in which 'striving to attain the highest possible position in life'³⁹⁴ (the will to power) is

³⁹⁰Vincent Blok, 'An Indication of Being', p. 195.

³⁹¹Ernst Jünger, 'Across the Line', in: Martin Heidegger and Ernst Jünger, *Correspondence 1949-1975*, trans. by Timothy Sean Quinn (London: Rowman & Littlefield International, 2016), pp. 67-102 (p. 88).

³⁹²Ibid., p. 74.

³⁹³Ibid., p. 87.

³⁹⁴Otto M. Rheinschmiedt, *The Fiction of Dreams: Dreams, Literature, and Writing* (London: Karnac

central.³⁹⁵

The line in Jünger's essay stands for the state in which nihilism is fulfilled. Yet, through a close reading of this essay, we may observe that crossing the line also possesses a very specific political implication. The phrase stands for liberation from the absolute power of the State (the Leviathan).³⁹⁶ Jünger, however, does not explain what the Leviathan (as the absolute power of the State) represents in this very specific context. In his article 'Jünger, Heidegger, & Nihilism', Alain de Benoist argues that the Leviathan in Jünger's essay 'Across the Line' refers to the governance of the Third Reich.³⁹⁷

Although the situation that arises after crossing the line is not described by Jünger in detail, his idea of transcendence as crossing the line strikingly does not deny nihilism. Crossing the line is not a simple refusal of nihilism. It may appear that, in his essay, Jünger actually apologises for nihilism.³⁹⁸ He distils from consummate nihilism those powerful elements that, according to him, would have been instrumental for the further cultivation of the history of humanity. In his defence of nihilism, Jünger undermines the myths about nihilism and highlights its powerful aspects – (1) order, (2) health/vitalism and (3) freedom (which evolve from the devaluation of values and the conventional axiological metaphysical distinction between good and evil).³⁹⁹ Although Jünger does not formulate

Books, 2017), p. 163.

³⁹⁵Jünger does not specify what his new vision of the world is. In his essay 'On the Question of Being', Heidegger identifies Jünger's idea of the new world with the *Gestalt* of the worker, which was formulated in Jünger's inter-war book *The Worker*. This is however only one possible interpretation. Jünger himself does not mention the concept of *Gestalt* in his essay 'Across the Line' at all.

³⁹⁶Jünger, 'Across the Line', pp. 94-95.

³⁹⁷[W]henver Jünger mentions nihilism, he refers first of all to the model of the totalitarian state, and most particularly to National Socialism. Indeed, the Third Reich exemplifies the social state where men are subject to an absolute order, an 'automatic' organization, in which the devaluation of all traditional morals went along with an undeniable exaltation of 'health.' In: Alain de Benoist, *Jünger, Heidegger, & Nihilism* (2010) <<https://www.counter-currents.com>> [accessed 11 January 2018].

³⁹⁸Therefore the essay 'Across the Line' can be perceived as a counterweight to the conventional criticisms of nihilism pervasive in the works of Christian thinkers such as Vladimir Solovyov, Helmut Thielicke or later by Seraphim Rose, who in his work *Nihilism* perceives nihilism as an absolutely negative phenomenon, as the absence of an absolute truth: 'Nihilism has error for its root, and error can be conquered only by Truth. Most of the criticism of Nihilism is not directed to this root at all, and the reason for this—as we shall see—is that Nihilism has become, in our time, so widespread and pervasive, has entered so thoroughly and so deeply into the minds and hearts of all men living today, that there is no longer any 'front' on which it may be fought; and those who think they are fighting it are most often using its own weapons, which they in effect turn against themselves.' In: Seraphim Rose, *Nihilism: The Root of the Revolution of the Modern Age*, 2nd edn (Platina, CA: St. Herman of Alaska Brotherhood, 2001), p. 5. Nihilism is perceived as the rejection of the absolute truth and its replacement with the relative truth.

³⁹⁹For Jünger's defence of nihilism see: Jünger, 'Across the Line', pp. 67-83.

it explicitly, his apology for nihilism serves as a springboard for the long-desired age of *will to power* (*der Wille zur Macht*). Jünger recognises the ambiguous nature of order, health/vitalism and freedom; nevertheless, he believes that it is precisely these powerful aspects of nihilism that can be instrumental in reaching the highest possible position in life – the will to power.

By his image of the crossing the line Jünger implicitly proposes the moment of transcendence. As the term ‘transcendence’ possesses connotations that are firmly attached to metaphysics, and since in his explanation of crossing the line, Jünger aims to avoid any metaphysical imprints, he avoids using the concept. Jünger speaks about crossing the line as if it were a transitional state; as if it were a mutation and metamorphosis of Ovidian fashion.⁴⁰⁰ However, following Heidegger’s argument (which he formulated in response to Jünger in his essay ‘On the Question of Being’), through the concept of crossing the line, Jünger proposes a very particular moment of transcendence,⁴⁰¹ aiming to ‘go beyond’ consummate nihilism. Crossing the line, as Jünger argues, leads to ‘a new turning approach of Being’.⁴⁰² However, while by crossing the line Jünger is hypothetically striving for transcendence of a certain type; according to Heidegger, the effort to transcend consummate nihilism in Jünger’s case actually subsumes an opposite movement – the movement of *rescendence*.⁴⁰³ This change is due to Jünger’s effort to extend only the idea of nihilism itself and to implement the ideal of will to power. In his criticism, Heidegger points to the shortcomings of Jünger’s ideas on crossing the line and introduces his own idea regarding how nihilism can be overcome.

i Technology and Nihilism

In his concept of crossing the line, Jünger does not distance himself from the realm of technology, nor does he reject nihilism itself. However, beyond Jünger’s seeming approval of nihilism and the increasing speed of technological progress, which ultimately turns against the individual, he suggests a very sophisticated movement by which these

⁴⁰⁰Ibid., p. 90.

⁴⁰¹Heidegger, ‘On the Question of Being’, p. 301.

⁴⁰²Jünger, ‘Across the Line’, p. 91.

⁴⁰³Heidegger, ‘On the Question of Being’, p. 301.

can be overcome. Jünger's reasoning evolves from his war experience, which proved shocking to his sensibilities. In order to protect himself from the terrorising memory of the frontline and from the horror of modern technology, Jünger became a detached observer who elevated modern technology into a superior power against which humankind was ultimately powerless.⁴⁰⁴ While on the frontline Jünger felt as if being only a cog in gigantic technological machinery 'by surrendering himself to this enormous process, he experienced an unparalleled personal elevation and intensity which he regarded as authentic individuation.'⁴⁰⁵

Jünger perceived technology as a framework, a certain reality that an individual cannot transform. Technological progress possesses primacy and is irreversible, representing destiny in the course of history. A human being is only a small and insignificant part of the whole technological machine. As there is very little, if any, chance to change the destiny of humanity, Jünger proposes that one can only change one's attitude within these conditions. Thus, the response of a human being towards the conditions of consummate nihilism and technological enslavement must be aligned with this sober realisation:

There is no way out, no sideways, no backward; what matters, rather, is to increase the force and speed of the process by which we have been gripped. We would do well then, to sense the dynamic excess of the time conceal an immovable centre. [*Gestalt?*]⁴⁰⁶

Jünger believes that 'the best way for humanity to cope with the onslaught of technology [is] to embrace it wholeheartedly.'⁴⁰⁷ Jünger does not escape the reality of technological growth. Unlike Heidegger, he is not technophobic. On the contrary, Jünger seeks possibilities regarding how a human being can embrace and take control of rapid technological progress. He presents his idea in an interview with Julien Hervier:

The whole of technology would be transformed: technology as we know it would become purely a preliminary stage, yielding to silent and pleasant devices that would be run by only a small number of men.⁴⁰⁸

When Jünger speaks about the transformation of the world and responsiveness to con-

⁴⁰⁴Zimmermann, *Heidegger's Confrontation with Modernity*, p. 49.

⁴⁰⁵Ibid.

⁴⁰⁶Jünger, *The Worker*, p. 125.

⁴⁰⁷Zimmermann, *Heidegger's Confrontation with Modernity*, p. 49.

⁴⁰⁸Julien Hervier, *The Details of Time: Conversations with Ernst Jünger*, trans. by Joachim Neugroschel (New York: Marsilio Publishing, 1995), p. 130.

summate nihilism and technology, which have primacy over human beings,⁴⁰⁹ Jünger contemplates a great breakthrough that would destruct all forms of ontological metaphysical ground (values, traditions, etc.). Through his idea of crossing the line, Jünger suggests a form of transcendence, but it is not merely about ‘going beyond’ the state of consummate nihilism. His idea represents a transition from one (old) world with a set of devaluating, already-deteriorating set of values to a new technological reality with a new set of values.

ii Reduction of Nihilism

To understand how Jünger imagines the moment of crossing the line, we need to consider his perception of the characteristics of the nihilistic world. Although, in his essay ‘Across the Line’, ‘nihilism remains more than ever at the centre of his preoccupations’,⁴¹⁰ Jünger’s examination of the nihilistic world lacks a definition of its essentials.⁴¹¹ The essay does not answer the question regarding what nihilism is. Jünger assesses historical circumstances and observes that humanity stands on the threshold of a brighter future. He claims that, after the tragedies of the two world wars, humanity is equipped with a great amount of experience, which supports the possibility that humanity will be conscious enough to find a way out of consummate nihilism. In his essay, Jünger defines the nihilistic world as follows: ‘The nihilistic world is in its essence a reduced and increasingly self-reductive world, which necessarily corresponds to the movement to the null point.’⁴¹²

Thus, Jünger characterises the nihilistic world as one that reduces itself to the extent that it reaches a null point (zero meridian). The nihilistic world, in other words, represents a realm in which a human being experiences a devaluation of all values.⁴¹³ The

⁴⁰⁹Jünger refers to technology as to dominion or a symbol of a superior power. See: Jünger, *The Worker*, pp. 124-125.

⁴¹⁰Antoine Bousquet, ‘Ernst Jünger and the Problem of Nihilism in the Age of Total War’, *Thesis Eleven*, 132 (2016), 17-38 (p. 32).

⁴¹¹In his essay ‘Across the Line’, Jünger does not offer a clear definition of nihilism. He is aware that nihilism is a very complicated phenomenon, which cannot be easily defined. Jünger draws an analogy between nihilism and death. Instead of providing the definition of what nihilism is in its essence, he focuses on the portraying the causes and outcomes of nihilism.

⁴¹²Jünger, ‘Across the Line’, p. 83.

⁴¹³In his essay ‘On the Question of Being’ Heidegger argues: ‘The line is also called ‘zero meridian’. You

world is deprived of its content and meaning and is reduced to its most basic form. The nihilistic world, so conceived, represents a realm in which a human being experiences the structuralisation and formalisation of meaning. If we read this argument in line with his apology for nihilism, the only aspects that remain in the nihilistic world (through its extension) are vitality, order and freedom – yet freedom is obtained by transcending the binary opposition of good and evil (overcoming the value system). Reduction to the point of the zero meridian represents a rather negative phenomenon, which Jünger portrays as an age of apocalypse, as an age of destruction and damage of the highest intensity, and as an entire annihilation. Reduction touches the human being directly. Consummate nihilism brings immense pain and suffering to the individuals experiencing it.

The entire world of machines, traffic and war along with their destructions belongs here. In frightening images, like the burning of cities, obliteration reaches the highest intensity. Pain is immense, and nevertheless the form of the age is realized in the midst of historical annihilation. Its shadow falls on the plowed earth, on the sacrificial ground. The contours of something radically new follow it.⁴¹⁴

Initially, the reduction of nihilism appears to represent drama. However, the age of consummate nihilism is necessary, as this period foreshadows and predicts the disclosure of a new (more positive) era. Jünger argues that crossing the line abolishes catastrophe, pain and suffering.⁴¹⁵ Pain and suffering are prerequisites for crossing the line. The crossing of the line, as Dodd aptly characterises it in his essay, is a catastrophe – yet it is a catastrophe with a positive outcome: ‘Nihilism is a catastrophe that takes the form of a contraction that is characteristic of what, in another sense, is an expansion.’⁴¹⁶ The nihilistic world is reduced. It is structuralised and mechanised, deprived of its values and meaning. This process results in the destruction of the world, which causes suffering to individuals. However, the reduction of nihilism releases a new positive power, leading to the re-constellation (realignment) of power relationships and the empowerment of individuals. ‘The more this world is set free into its development, the more it is reduced,

speaks of the zero point. The zero indicates nothing, indeed an empty nothing. Where everything presses toward nothing, nihilism reigns. At the zero meridian it approaches its consummation. Taking up an interpretation of Nietzsche’s, you understand nihilism as the process whereby ‘the highest values become devalued.’ In: Heidegger, ‘On the Question of Being’, pp. 291-292.

⁴¹⁴Jünger, ‘Across the Line’, p. 87.

⁴¹⁵Ibid., p. 87.

⁴¹⁶James Dodd, ‘On the Line: Jünger and Heidegger’ in *Violence and Phenomenology* (New York: Routledge, 2009), pp. 77-109 (p. 86).

the closer it comes to the null point of its reduction.'⁴¹⁷ The more reduced the world becomes, the more it expands, and, thus, the more liberated it manifests itself after the crossing of the line.

Jünger's essay appears to be an attempt to fulfil the Nietzschean prophecy on nihilism. The concept of crossing the line is a result of Jünger's observation and intuitive thinking. The discourse on crossing the line is based neither on facts nor on strong critical argumentation, but sounds more like wishful thinking than a series of strong evidence that support the thesis and can be taken seriously. Jünger believed that the Second World War represented a culmination of nihilism and that the conditions would only improve. He believed that crossing the line would be a grand event that would herald a new order and a new reality. These assumptions, however, lacked a firm foundation.

III Heidegger's Criticism of Jünger

Following their correspondence⁴¹⁸ in 1949, on Heidegger's 60th birthday Jünger dedicated his essay 'Across the Line' to his fellow philosopher. Five years later, in 1955, Heidegger responded to the essay and dedicated his response to Jünger on Jünger's 60th birthday. In 'Concerning "The Line"' (1955)⁴¹⁹, Heidegger critically examines Jünger's concept of the crossing the line - his idea of how the age of consummate nihilism can be overcome.

Heidegger is predominantly interested in Jünger's perception of nihilism. Both thinkers (and later Patočka as well) question whether the line can be crossed, or, paraphrasing the metaphor, whether the condition of consummate nihilism can be overcome. He examines Jünger's concept and points out the shortcomings and weaknesses of his position. While Jünger does not define consummate nihilism (he offers only a few vague indications that link consummate nihilism with the absolute power of the State – the Leviathan), Heidegger formulates a very clear picture of it:

Nihilism is consummated when it has seized all subsisting resources and appears

⁴¹⁷Ibid.

⁴¹⁸Martin Heidegger and Ernst Jünger, *Correspondence 1949-1975*, trans. by Timothy Sean Quinn (London: Rowman & Littlefield International, 2016).

⁴¹⁹Later, this Heidegger's essay was published under the title 'On the Question of Being.'

wherever nothing can assert itself as an exception anymore, insofar as such nihilism has become our normal condition. Yet in this condition of normality the consummation [*Vollendung*] only becomes actualized. The condition of normality is a consequence of the consummation.⁴²⁰

According to Heidegger, nihilism is consummated as soon as it is not perceived as an exceptional condition, turns into everyday reality and is accepted by individuals. Similarly to Heidegger, in his work *The Essence of Nihilism* (2016) Emanuele Severino argues that consummate nihilism becomes the 'normal condition' and causes what he calls 'the alienation of the West.'⁴²¹ An individual has been challenged by annihilation for a long time without even questioning it, which leads to the individual perceiving it as a new reality to which one does not pay any attention.⁴²²

In his prognosis, Jünger remains optimistic. He argues that the state of consummate nihilism is about to be overcome. Heidegger, in contrast, approaches the problem of overcoming nihilism cautiously. On the one hand, Heidegger's response to Jünger praises the latter's boldness. He argues that in *The Worker* Jünger reached 'what all Nietzsche literature thus far has been unable to achieve, namely to impart an experience of beings and the way in which they are, in the light of Nietzsche's projection of beings as will to power.'⁴²³ Heidegger perceives Jünger as a devoted continuator of Nietzsche's philosophy and especially his doctrine of will to power. However, he criticises Jünger's fundamental metaphysical position. He recognises that Jünger's strong emphasis on will to power causes the concept to remain entrapped in the realm of metaphysics –despite Nietzsche's own effort to overcome metaphysics.

As Jünger's concept of crossing the line resides in the realm of metaphysics, the possibility of the state of consummate nihilism being overcome remains questionable. To escape the realm of metaphysics, Heidegger proposes his own method for dealing with the problem of consummate nihilism. In his essay 'On the Question of Being', he dis-

⁴²⁰Heidegger, 'On the Question of Being', p. 297.

⁴²¹Emanuele Severino, *The Essence of Nihilism*, ed. by Alessandro Carrera and Ines Testoni (New York & London: Verso, 2016), p. 38.

⁴²²'The essential alienation of the West stands right before our eyes—but presents itself as supreme and indisputable evidence. If essential alienation irretrievably eludes our consciousness, this is not because it is hidden in some remote and unexplored region, but rather because it has long stood before us as so utterly indisputable that no one even deigns to pay it any heed.' Ibid.

⁴²³Heidegger, 'On the Question of Being', p. 295.

cusses a form of transition (not transcendence). He calls for the return to the question of Being and emphasises the concept of the truth as *alētheia*, which is essential in this context. It seems as if Jünger aims to overcome nihilism by force; a form of violence itself. He is led by intuition, which lacks firm foundation, evidence and strong philosophical argumentation. What matters to Jünger, is his belief that humanity is empowered by the experience they obtained in the two world wars and that they face the opportunity to break through into the new era. Heidegger, on the other hand, does not force crossing the line. He is very sceptical regarding such a simplistic solution to the problem of nihilism. He suggests one needs to return to the question of Being and to question the very essence of nihilism instead. More specifically, the re-opening of the question of Being will reveal those aspects of nihilism and those layers of the problems that are hidden to Jünger. Nihilism, for Heidegger, may be overcome spontaneously by returning to the question of Being. Not misleading representation, but Being is the source of truth as *alētheia*. Heidegger proposes a turn, a change of one's vision, which is prerequisite to the question of the overcoming of nihilism – crossing the line.

i Will to Power

Heidegger perceives Jünger to be a devoted follower of Nietzsche. However, Nietzsche, in Heidegger's view, is a thinker who missed his opportunity to overcome metaphysics. Nietzsche's thoughts were a radicalised and sharpened form of metaphysics. In his essay 'On Nietzsche' (1944-1945), Heidegger states this opinion explicitly: 'Nietzsche's thought, like all Western thought since Plato, is metaphysics.'⁴²⁴ Heidegger criticises Jünger and considers Jünger's thoughts as being a priori Nietzschean. Heidegger suggests that, if Jünger is a devoted follower of Nietzsche's philosophy, in his essay 'Across the Line', Jünger will, with all certainty, only strengthen and sharpen⁴²⁵ Nietzsche's metaphysical position. Therefore, in his essay 'On the Question of Being', Heidegger examines Jünger's concept of crossing the line based on his criticism of Nietzsche's thought.

⁴²⁴Martin Heidegger, 'On Nietzsche', in Günter Figal, *The Heidegger Reader*, trans. by Jerome Veith (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 2010), pp. 224 - 238 (p. 224).

⁴²⁵Vincent Blok, *Ernst Jünger's Philosophy of Technology: Heidegger and Poetics of the Anthropocene* (New York & London: Routledge Taylor & Francis Group, 2017), p. 59.

Nietzsche's metaphysics, however, is by no means comprehended thoughtfully; not even the ways to do so are indicated, on the contrary: instead of being worthy of question in a genuine sense, this metaphysics becomes self-evident and becomes superfluous.⁴²⁶

According to Heidegger, Jünger adopts Nietzsche's metaphysics without any prior critical examination. Metaphysics manifests itself in Nietzsche's conviction that 'Being' is an abstract category that does not speak to us any longer. He states that, 'There is, according to Nietzsche, no such thing as a transcendental world of eternal 'Being,' but only the perspectival estimation of values which is led by the will to power of life.'⁴²⁷ Nietzsche denies the category of 'Being' and replaces it with the category of will: 'The will to power is the term for the Being of beings as such, the essential of beings.'⁴²⁸ More precisely, the replacement of Being and its truth with the will opens up the room for metaphysics. This substitution, in principle, only empowers the main cause of nihilism – the forgetting of Being – and leaves the room for *nihil* (nothing) open. There is, however, something very problematic about the replacement of Being by the will. As Possenti paraphrases Heidegger, 'Nietzsche's thought is understood as the final stage of the entire Western metaphysical enterprise.'⁴²⁹ Nietzsche, by his denial of Being and its truth, which are central to Heidegger's thesis, 'unmasks the metaphysical question about the transcendent essence of things as will to truth.'⁴³⁰ For Nietzsche, there is no Being and no truth of Being; instead, 'there is only the world of becoming, which is characterised by contingency and change. The truth as the stable presence of the essence of things does therefore not originate in a transcendental world of the idea, but in the will to power, that is, the will to stabilize.'⁴³¹

It appears that both Nietzsche and Heidegger attempt to overcome the realm of metaphysics. However, they approach the problem from different ends of the spectrum. While Nietzsche grounds everything in will to power, meaning that the concept responds to the restless world of becoming and soothes it; for Heidegger, will to power is not a

⁴²⁶Heidegger, 'On the Question of Being', p. 295.

⁴²⁷Blok, *Ernst Jünger's Philosophy of Technology*, p. 24.

⁴²⁸Heidegger, 'On Nietzsche', pp. 226-227.

⁴²⁹Vittorio Possenti, *Nihilism and Metaphysics: The Third Voyage* (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 2014), p. 16.

⁴³⁰Blok, *Ernst Jünger's Philosophy of Technology*, p. 24.

⁴³¹*Ibid.*

sufficient horizon for a new order, a new beginning, which both Nietzsche and Jünger propose; the new beginning conceived would be only the result of 'the will of spirit and its totalizing self-movement.'⁴³² Will to power denies the originary question of the meaning of the truth of Being, the question that reaches *beyond* will to power. Thus, will to power, in a sense, totalises its own horizon by denying the originary.

If Heidegger perceives Jünger's proposal of crossing the line in the light of Nietzsche's metaphysics of will to power, the crossing of the line represents an attempt to overcome metaphysics by emphasising will to power. Heidegger argues that Jünger's position, in his essay 'Across the Line', is undoubtedly metaphysical as well. Nietzsche's metaphysics, therefore, undermines and damages the credibility of Jünger's proposal of crossing the line. The metaphysical character of his position stems from the doctrine of will to power, which Jünger implements and finds instrumental to his idea of crossing the line:

Beings as a whole, however, show themselves to you in the light and shadow of the metaphysics of the will to power, which Nietzsche interprets in the form of a doctrine of values.⁴³³

Heidegger argues that will to power cannot be a measure for the assertion of values. It is not the open realm of the truth of Being that asserts the values, but a will, which wills itself and asserts them. Heidegger perceives will as leading to a dead end as a movement that is self-totalising.⁴³⁴

Heidegger, however, recognises the problem in values themselves. Although Nietzsche endorses the category of becoming, (for example, transvaluation), the process of becoming ultimately arrives at yet another end, which is another hierarchy of values, and becomes entrapped in another totality – the totality of values. Therefore, from Heideg-

⁴³²Heidegger, 'On the Question of Being', p. 313.

⁴³³Ibid., p. 295.

⁴³⁴'But the essential means are those conditions under which the will to power, according to its essence, stands: values. 'In all willing there is estimating-' (XIII, 172). Will to power - and it alone - is the will that wills values. It must therefore at last explicitly become and remain what all evaluation proceeds from, and what governs all value estimating: it must become the principle of valuation. Hence as soon as the basic character of beings is expressly recognized as such in will to power, and as soon as will to power dares to acknowledge itself in this way, then the way we think through beings as such in their truth, that is, truth as the thinking of will to power, inevitably becomes thinking according to values.' In: Martin Heidegger, *Nietzsche Volumes III and IV: The Will to Power as Knowledge and as Metaphysics. Nihilism*, ed. by David Farrell Krell, trans. by Joan Stambaugh; David Farrell Krell; Frank A. Capuzzi (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 1991), pp. 199-200.

ger's perspective, will to power is not sufficient ground for transvaluation and becoming is not lasting. Will is only a temporary realm of contingency, which will eventually subsume to yet another totality – to metaphysics. The way out of this metaphysics of will to power, in Heidegger's opinion, is the return to the question of Being, and its truth. He aims to recover the originary in metaphysics and to reject the traditional form of metaphysics, which has been prevalent in Western thought since Plato.

Heidegger perceives Jünger's concept of crossing the line only as a further radicalisation of Nietzsche's proposal. 'Heidegger states that Jünger 'sharpen, hardens and articulates' Nietzsche's metaphysical design of the world, out of his essential experiences of the First World War.'⁴³⁵ However, Heidegger is correct in one respect: Jünger evolved his idea of crossing the line by reflecting on his experience from the frontline. The traumatic experience of the frontline even reinforced Jünger's belief that there is no higher entity, no higher metaphysical realm, which would become directive in the process of the transvaluation or asserting the new order. There is no higher Being that could have saved us from a catastrophe. 'Jünger experiences a deep abandonment and loneliness of man on earth, and this nihil of the Platonic idea in our time is evidence of his basic experience of nihilism.'⁴³⁶ On the frontline, Jünger experienced a pure form of nihilism, which led him to the abandonment of Platonism and the idea of the ontological difference: 'I felt no fear, only a feeling of inescapable loneliness in the middle of a mysterious, deserted world governed by silent powers'.⁴³⁷ After the frontline experience Jünger was convinced that there is no metaphysical measure (unity) for our world any longer.⁴³⁸ It has been replaced with 'contingency and variability (multiplicity)'.⁴³⁹

Although Jünger denies traditional metaphysics as Platonism, Heidegger believes that Jünger's emphasis on will to power in the concept of crossing the line preserves metaphysics. The primacy of will to power entails that Jünger regards beings as ontological entities, which are total and unchanging. As Heidegger puts it, Jünger perceives things

⁴³⁵ Vincent Blok, *Ernst Jünger's Philosophy of Technology: Heidegger and Poetics of the Anthropocene* (New York & London: Routledge Taylor & Francis Group, 2017), p. 59.

⁴³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 41.

⁴³⁷ *Ibid.*

⁴³⁸ *Ibid.*

⁴³⁹ *Ibid.*

as a 'standing reserve'.⁴⁴⁰ According to Blok, Jünger's approach suggests that the whole reality – all entities in this world – are not there just for their own sake; these entities are there to serve human beings' needs and to be beneficial for life. The entities need to be utilised necessarily; otherwise, there is no need or use for them at all: 'Will to power means that reality is grasped in terms of its benefit for life [...] a forest appears for instance as a potential producer of wood or as recreation after work.'⁴⁴¹ Heidegger disagrees with this perspective on life. His view is very different, if not opposing to that of Jünger. Heidegger perceives this world from the perspective of Being, which far exceeds all questions concerning the benefit and utility that the things (as entities) around us can have for us. Heidegger's Being even transcends the question of the meaning (*Sinn*) of things themselves. 'The presence of things to us is never exhausted by meaning: a friend, the sea, the tree, the flower – all that present themselves to us – are always more than how we present them.'⁴⁴² All things are more than just their meaning. The presence (*Anwesenheit*) of things constantly addresses us again and again⁴⁴³ and exceeds the meaning as such.

Specifically, this is the approach of late Heidegger, who revolted against the traditional metaphysics and opposed nihilism. He may have emphasised the category of Being as being, but for him, unlike Jünger or Nietzsche, Being is not an abstract category of an overarching metaphysical entity, which is the source of values and new beginnings. Being as being is an irreducible presence (*Anwesenheit*). Late Heidegger aimed to reorientate his philosophy to that of flesh and blood, to moods, to affective states and to death. His revolt against the traditional metaphysics was his effort to turn his ideas into the authentic philosophy of existence.

Heidegger recognised that Jünger's thoughts on crossing the line were very close to his own philosophy of life, but Jünger's experience and the mistrust of the category of Being brings Jünger closer to Nietzsche and his more tangible idea of will to power. From Heidegger's perspective, Jünger's adoption of will to power deprives his idea of crossing the line of its depth. Heidegger believes that Jünger's misunderstanding and abandonment of Being caused his thought to become entrapped within the metaphysics

⁴⁴⁰Heidegger, 'On the Question of Being', p. 313.

⁴⁴¹Blok, *Ernst Jünger's Philosophy of Technology*, p. 59.

⁴⁴²Richard Capobianco, *Heidegger's Way of Being* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2014), p. 42.

⁴⁴³Ibid.

of will to power instead. In his book *Ernst Jünger's Philosophy of Technology*, Blok argues that Heidegger's reading of Jünger is biased. Heidegger 'takes Jünger's writings a priori as metaphysical reflections in light of Nietzsche's metaphysics of the will to power'.⁴⁴⁴ Yet, Heidegger does not realise that Jünger aims to propose a non-metaphysical method, and that his philosophy is very close to the thought of Heidegger.⁴⁴⁵ The shortcoming of Heidegger's reading of Jünger's essay is his inability to distance himself from the idea that Jünger fully adopts Nietzsche's metaphysics of will to power without any critical assessment. He portrays Jünger as a thinker who 'pays full tribute to Nietzsche's metaphysics of the will to power and nowhere surpasses Nietzsche's line of thought'.⁴⁴⁶ This perspective that Heidegger adopts, however, makes him unable to see that Jünger presents Nietzsche's idea of will to power as free from 'positivistic and romantic connotations',⁴⁴⁷ which are pervasive in Nietzsche's discourse.

ii Turning of Being

Jünger's rhetoric suggests that crossing the line will lead to a form of transcendence. He describes crossing the line as the new turning of being⁴⁴⁸ – a being that shines forth and heralds the new beginning:

The moment in which the line is passed brings a new turning approach of Being, and with this, what is actual begins to shine forth. This will even be visible to dull eyes. New celebrations will follow.⁴⁴⁹

The reference to Being appears to be an attempt to move closer to Heidegger's thought. The quote by Jünger is reminiscent of Heidegger's concept of truth as *alētheia*: 'what is actual begins to shine forth'.⁴⁵⁰ Jünger appears to suggest that the turning of Being leads to enlightenment, a revelation, which in Heidegger's works is mediated only by transcendence. Heidegger responds to the quote by Jünger as follows:

You write: 'The moment at which the line is crossed brings a new turning of being,

⁴⁴⁴Blok, *Ernst Jünger's Philosophy of Technology*, pp. 2-3.

⁴⁴⁵Ibid.

⁴⁴⁶Ibid., p. 54.

⁴⁴⁷Ibid.

⁴⁴⁸Jünger, 'Across the Line', p. 91.

⁴⁴⁹Ibid.

⁴⁵⁰Ibid.

and with it that which is actual begins to shimmer'. This sentence is easy to read and yet difficult to think. Above all, I would wish to ask whether, conversely, it is not a new turning of being that would first bring the moment for the crossing the line. This question seems merely to reverse your statement.⁴⁵¹

Heidegger argues that this thesis of Jünger's is a contradictory one. When one approaches crossing the line from the perspective of the essence of nihilism, it is not crossing the line, which causes the moment of what Jünger calls a new turning of Being. The question of Being becomes a prerequisite for the possibility of crossing the line. Heidegger inverts Jünger's thesis and argues that not the speculative moment of crossing the line is the prerequisite to the new turning of being – to a historical breakthrough; however, the questioning of being and the questioning of the essence of nihilism (in this particular context), which may potentially open up the question of the possibility of a new breakthrough in the historical epoch (what Heidegger calls the leap [*Satz*])⁴⁵² are prerequisite to the new turning of Being.

Turning away and withdrawal [of Being], however, are not nothing. They prevail in a manner that is almost more oppressive for human beings, so that they draw the human being away, suck into his endeavours and activities, and thus ultimately suck these activities up into their withdrawing wake in such a way that the human being can come to the opinion [not the truth] that he now everywhere encounters only himself. In truth [in reality], however, his self is nothing more than ek-sistence being used up in service of the domination of what you characterise as the totalitarian character of work.⁴⁵³

Heidegger argues that the entire proposition of the turning of Being is rather intuitive. The concept of Being in Jünger's thesis is rather superficial, and could be potentially replaced by another term. Jünger and Heidegger when speaking about Being; they do not refer to the same phenomenon. There is a conceptual shift between Jünger's and Heidegger's understandings of Being. Moreover, something becomes known not always through the passage of the turning of Being. Heidegger claims that there is also an inverse quality of Being, when Being (especially in nihilism) turns in, hides and withdraws itself.⁴⁵⁴ The

⁴⁵¹Heidegger, 'On the Question of Being', p. 307.

⁴⁵²'A leap always involves a discontinuity in which one reaches a point where one can only throw oneself over to the other side. But we must not get the idea that the leap can be made easily, or straight off, without preparation.' John D. Caputo, *The Mystical Element of Heidegger's Thought*, New York: Fordham University Press, 1986.

⁴⁵³Martin Heidegger, 'On the Question of Being', pp. 307-308.

⁴⁵⁴*Ibid.*, p. 307.

movement of the withdrawal, however, has a special purpose also. If the Being withdraws itself, it enforces actuality. Focusing on the actuality of Being, instead of focusing on the essence of Being, leads to the danger that one subsumes to the opinion (*doxa*, not the truth itself) about the reality, and that the truth (*alētheia*) remains hidden before one's eyes.

Jünger, using his idea of crossing the line, aimed to escape the perils of consummate nihilism and seek a way towards a new historical epoch, the new existential *Gestalt*, in which a human being would exercise will to power. Heidegger argues that will to power, as well as other metaphysical categories presented by Jünger, does not enable an individual to move to another historical epoch and does not lead to an event (*Ereignis*). A human being needs to step first outside the realm of the actual, to distance oneself from it and to expose oneself to the realm of the openness, where the Being dwells.

Another aspect that Heidegger is critical of is that Jünger introduces the moment of the turning of Being as a one-off happening that causes the transference from the epoch of nihilism to a new historical era. Heidegger debunks Jünger's 'misunderstanding' of the turning of Being as a salvific and apocalyptic moment emerging in one particular moment. Heidegger argues that human beings and Being belong together; they are intimately interrelated. Human essence dwells in the Being, and it either deliberately resides in its oblivion or exposes itself to the openness of Being.

Heidegger recognises that Jünger's 'turning of Being' is nothing but a 'makeshift',⁴⁵⁵ a cliché, which Jünger uses intentionally to induce an apocalyptic and salvific moment of a historic breakthrough. In Jünger's work, 'the turning of Being' is a moment that follows the crossing of the line. The turning of Being is something independent from a human being and human essence; it is an external event, an apocalyptic shining through that the human being observes and witnesses.

Heidegger, through his criticism of Jünger's concept of crossing the line being metaphysical, points out a very fundamental aspect of Jünger's project. Jünger, by crossing the line, proposes a form of transcendence going beyond consummate nihilism. However, in Heidegger's view, Jünger's emphasis on representation, will to power, and the *Gestalt* of

⁴⁵⁵Ibid. 308.

the worker, causes his crossing of the line to be only an extension of modern metaphysics. Although Jünger aims to propose transcendence, crossing the line takes on a different, if not opposite direction, to what Heidegger calls *rescendence*.

Transcendence, understood in its multiple meanings, turns around into a corresponding res-cendence [*Reszendenz*] and disappears therein. This kind of descent via the *Gestalt* occurs in such a way that the presence of the latter represents itself, becomes present [*answesend*] again in what is shaped [*Geprägten*] by its shaping. The presence that belongs to the *Gestalt* of the worker is power. The representation of presence is his domination as a 'new and special kind of will to power' (*Der Arbeiter*, p. 70).⁴⁵⁶

Transcendence transforms into *rescendence* whenever the *Gestalt* becomes the source of meaning. As the *Gestalt* ascribes meaning, it possesses power. The *Gestalt* focuses predominantly on presence and on its representation, which is its domination as the will to power. The result is that the *Gestalt* and the way it ascribes meaning deprives crossing the line of the possibility to convey the movement of transcendence and descents via the *Gestalt*.

Technology, as mobilization of the world through the *Gestalt* of the worker, is manifestly grounded in the reversal of transcendence into the rescendence of the *Gestalt* of the worker, whereby the presence of this *Gestalt* unfolds into the representation of its power.⁴⁵⁷

As metaphysics resides at the very centre of the concept of crossing the line, Heidegger concludes that such a reversal of transcendence into *rescendence* does not lead to an event (*Ereignis*) or to a new beginning, but to a proposal of a new technological realm. However, Jünger does propose a new beginning.

iii The Problem of Essence

Heidegger argues that Jünger's conclusion about crossing the line as the overcoming of consummate nihilism is premature; the idea lacks any persuasive argument and evidence. Heidegger argues that, to propose a strong foundation for the possibility of crossing the line, Jünger needs to approach the issue from a different perspective. Heidegger argues that, while 'You [Jünger] look across and go across the line; I simply take a look at the line

⁴⁵⁶Ibid., pp. 300-301.

⁴⁵⁷Ibid., pp. 301-302.

that you have represented.'⁴⁵⁸ The critical remark Heidegger makes is that Jünger treats the possibility of crossing the line intuitively, as something self-evident, as an event that is obvious to its observers and that does not need any deep analysis since the course of history clearly points to its possibility. Heidegger finds it problematic that Jünger does not question the essence of nihilism, that he does not offer a clear definition of nihilism, and that he omits portraying the relationship between nihilism and Being. However, Jünger does assess historical circumstances and believes that humanity is equipped with a great amount of experience,⁴⁵⁹ which supports the possibility that humanity is conscious enough to find a way out of the state of consummate nihilism and herald a new, brighter historical age.

Heidegger encourages Jünger to take a step back and, prior to discussing crossing the line, focus on the phenomenon of the line itself. The change in perspective from the act of crossing (movement of nihilism, *trans lineam*⁴⁶⁰) to the line itself (the essence of nihilism *de lineam*⁴⁶¹) would, Heidegger believes, offer a more accurate answer to the possibility of crossing the line. Heidegger, through focusing on the essence of nihilism, aims to close the fundamental gaps in Jünger's analysis. According to him, Jünger's analysis lacks an adequate determination of the essentials of nihilism:

You know that an assessment of the human situation in relation to the movement of nihilism and within this movement demands an adequate determination of the essentials. Such knowledge is extensively lacking. This lack dims our view in assessing our situation.⁴⁶²

Heidegger claims that Jünger's treatment of nihilism is a diagnostic one, in which he compares nihilism to the detecting of a cancer-causing agent within society. Thus, Jünger offers (and Heidegger recognises this) a very descriptive and imprecise definition of nihilism, relating its circumstances and causes instead of its essence. Rather than focusing

⁴⁵⁸Heidegger, 'On the Question of Being', p. 294.

⁴⁵⁹'On the contrary, one might very well recommend types of conduct, practical advice for negotiating the nihilistic terrain, since, in the end, there is no lack of experience. The free man is already obligated by reason of self-preservation to think about how he will behave in a world where nihilism not only rules, but, what is worse, has become the norm. That such a reflection has already become possible is the first sign of better, clearer weather, of a view that reaches further than the domain of powerful obsessions.' In: Jünger, 'Across the Line', p. 89.

⁴⁶⁰Heidegger, 'On the Question of Being', p. 292.

⁴⁶¹Ibid.

⁴⁶²Ibid.

on nihilism as being 'comparable to discovering the causes of cancer'⁴⁶³ and on the prognostic and diagnostic treatment of nihilism, Heidegger proposes a different approach to the problem. He argues that it is necessary to return to the question of the essence of nihilism, which is a precursor to the entire problem of crossing the line.

I remain content to presume that the only way in which we might reflect upon the essence of nihilism is by first setting out on a path that leads to a discussion of the essence [*Wesen*] of being. On this path alone can the question concerning the nothing be discussed. But the question concerning the essence of being dies off if it does not relinquish the language of metaphysics, because metaphysical representation prevents us from thinking the question concerning the essence of being.⁴⁶⁴

However, Heidegger's concept of the essence (*Wesen*) of nihilism remains enigmatic. Questioning the essence of nihilism means discussing the question concerning nothing. By questioning the essence of nihilism, Heidegger aims to reach the very depth of the problem of the line and to derive some conclusions from the outcomes of his critical investigations of the essence of the line itself. It is the focus on the line itself that will, as Heidegger believed, cast a fresh light on the phenomenon of crossing the line and expose those problematic issues that remain hidden while crossing the line is exclusively focused upon. It is the focus on the essence of nihilism that will eventually offer an alternative answer to a question that Jünger never posed, yet to which he eagerly responded – namely, whether and to what extent crossing the line as the overcoming of nihilism has happened, and who are those lucky individuals who have managed to cross the line?

However, Heidegger reveals another problem related to the essence of nihilism. He argues that, to question the essence of nihilism, one needs to leave the metaphysical representation of nihilism behind because it stands as an obstacle to grasping the essence. Heidegger not only criticises Jünger for not questioning the essence of nihilism in his essay, he also suggests that Jünger does not treat the phenomena (nihilism and crossing the line) as they manifest themselves, as they are in their being. Jünger, instead, focuses on the representational properties of nihilism as things are represented in our world, which, according to Heidegger, is highly misleading.

Heidegger undermines the relationship between the concept of the human being

⁴⁶³Ibid.

⁴⁶⁴Ibid., p. 306.

and the line being two separate entities:

The human being not only stands within the critical zone of the line. He himself – but not taken independently, and especially not through himself alone – is this zone and thus the line. In no case does the line, thought as a sign of the zone of consummate nihilism, lie before the human being in the manner of something that could be crossed. In that case, however, the possibility of trans lineam and of such a crossing collapses.⁴⁶⁵

Through questioning the essence of nihilism, Heidegger concludes that the essence of the line is closely intertwined with the human essence.⁴⁶⁶ Jünger portrays the human being as an external observer of the line. However, Heidegger argues that the human being is nothing but the line itself. If we consider Heidegger's argument seriously, the transition Jünger proposes is not a crossing – a movement that takes place outside the human being when that person does not need to be transformed; Jünger actually believes that the human being enters the critical zone, having already been transformed by the traumatic experience of the two world wars. Heidegger, through assuming that the essence of nihilism is closely intertwined with the human essence, suggests that crossing the line, the grand transition, actually happens within a human being; to cross the line, a human being needs to experience a certain transformation within herself – the turn (*die Kehre*).⁴⁶⁷ The turn that Heidegger proposes may bring us closer to Patočka's solution to overcoming the crisis, which is the turn as *metanoia* – the outcome of which is the constitution of the solidarity of the shaken. However, Heidegger does not go that far. The turn from his perspective is humanity's effort to return to the question of Being, to break with the oblivion of Being with which nihilism operates. The turn Heidegger proposes does not stand for an existential transformation of a human being, but implies a radical shift within one's way of thinking. Only if one were to embrace the question of being could one truly speculate about crossing the line as concerning overcoming the state of consummate ni-

⁴⁶⁵Ibid.

⁴⁶⁶This implies that the human essence, in its thoughtful commemoration, belongs to the nothing, and not merely as some addition. If, therefore, in nihilism the nothing attains domination in a particular way, then the human being is not only affected by nihilism, but essentially participates in it. In this case, however, the entire 'subsistence' of human beings does not stand somewhere on the side of the line, in order then to cross over and take up residence on the other side with being.' In: Heidegger, 'On the Question of Being', p. 311.

⁴⁶⁷Heidegger, Martin, 'The Turning', in: *The Question Concerning Technology and Other Essays*, trans. by William Lovitt (New York: Harper Collins Publishers, 2013), pp. 36-49.

hilism.

IV Patočka on Dangers of Techno-science and Sacrifice

To understand Patočka's idea of transcendence, we need first to clarify his relationship with Martin Heidegger; namely, his critical reflection on Heidegger's view of technology. I will focus on the critical examination of Patočka's text 'Four Seminars on the Problem of Europe' (1973),⁴⁶⁸ Analysis of this text helps to clarify Patočka's critical position on the philosophy of Heidegger. Moreover, such an analysis illustrates Patočka's own proposal of how the era of nihilism, which he characterises as the age of techno-science, can be overcome.

In his four seminars, Patočka is concerned about *appearing* (*zjevování*).⁴⁶⁹ He criticises his predecessor, Edmund Husserl for his subjectivist tendencies. Husserl argues that appearing is always mediated by a subject.⁴⁷⁰ Patočka, similarly to Heidegger disagrees with Husserl's position and aims at overcoming his phenomenology as transcendental idealism, which 'saw all truth and meaning grounded in the transcendental subjectivism.'⁴⁷¹

As a critical response to Husserl, Patočka, inspired by Heidegger, examines the forms of appearing without the subject. He discovers this form of appearing in Heidegger's idea of truth as *alētheia* (*ἀλήθεια*) and as such lays the foundations of his *asubjective phenomenology*.⁴⁷² The model of asubjective phenomenology may suggest appearing without a subject. However, Patočka's model claims that the subject is indeed present; however, being cannot be constituted *from* a subject. In other words, being is not constituted from the subject's understanding of being; mere understanding is not enough. The core of asubjective phenomenology shifts and is no longer a subject but appearing itself – appearing, which is mediated by the revelation of the truth as *alētheia*. Heidegger

⁴⁶⁸Jan Patočka, 'Čtyři semináře k problému Evropy', in *Sebrané spisy svazek 3: Péče o duši III*, ed. by Ivan Chvatík and Pavel Kouba (Prague: Oikoymenth, 2002), pp. 374-423.

⁴⁶⁹Patočka, 'Čtyři semináře', p. 380.

⁴⁷⁰For Husserl's examination of transcendental subjectivism See for example: Edmund Husserl, *Cartesian Meditations: An Introduction to Phenomenology: An Introduction to Phenomenology*, trans. by Dorion Cairns (Dordrecht: Springer, 1999).

⁴⁷¹Moran, *Introduction to Phenomenology*, p. 187.

⁴⁷²Patočka, 'Čtyři semináře', p. 380.

argues that being is always mediated only through *Dasein* and that the being of *Dasein* manifests itself as care (*Sorge*): ‘*Dasein* is a being, which is concerned in its being about that being.’⁴⁷³ *Dasein*, however, is not absolute, but rather finite: ‘But *Dasein* discloses the certain possibility of death as possibility only by making this possibility as its own-most potentiality-of-being possible in anticipating it.’⁴⁷⁴ Beings (entities) never manifest themselves alone, but only through Being.

Patočka further discusses the idea of care (*Sorge*) in Heidegger’s work *Being and Time* (1927).⁴⁷⁵ Patočka argues that things and Being are not results of our subjectivity.⁴⁷⁶ Although in *Being and Time*, Heidegger does not really clarify what Being is, he claims that Being makes us who we are.⁴⁷⁷ Therefore, not understanding is the opening factor, but understanding is something intrinsic, something that makes us who we are, which is care (*Sorge*) or the turn (*Kehre*), as suggested by Heidegger.

Another aspect that Patočka was deeply concerned about in Heidegger’s philosophy is the problem of *finiteness*. Patočka argues that the first thing one needs to see is one’s *finiteness*. This is something one should not ignore or try to run away from, but try to be open to it. The tendency is to close one’s eyes before finiteness and to try to avoid it. Patočka expressed these ideas in his four seminars,⁴⁷⁸ and he adopts and further develops these thoughts on the significance of one’s finiteness in his other works – the *Heretical Essays* (1975) in particular.

In his another essay from the same period ‘The Dangers of Technicization’ (1973), Patočka further develops his ideas on techno-science.

And therein precisely lies the danger. The uncovering that prevails at the essential core of technology necessarily loses sight of uncovering itself, concealing the essential core of truth in an unfamiliar way and so closing man’s access to what he himself is – a being capable of understanding in an original relation to the truth. Among all the securing, calculating, and using of raw materials, that which makes all this possible is lost from view – man henceforth knows only individual, practical truths, not the truth.⁴⁷⁹

⁴⁷³Heidegger, *Being and Time*, p. 185.

⁴⁷⁴*Ibid.*, p. 253.

⁴⁷⁵For the Heidegger’s analysis of the care (*Sorge*), see: Heidegger, *Being and Time*, pp. 184-193.

⁴⁷⁶Patočka, ‘Čtyři semináře’, p. 384.

⁴⁷⁷For the analysis of *Dasein* as being as self, see: Heidegger, *Being and Time*, pp. 111-113.

⁴⁷⁸Patočka, ‘Čtyři semináře’, pp. 385-386.

⁴⁷⁹‘A právě zde leží nebezpečí, Odhalenost, která vládne v bytostném jádře techniky, nutně ztrácí

The danger of technology, as Patočka argues in his 'Varna Lecture', does not reside in the possibility of human beings being enslaved by technology;⁴⁸⁰ instead, technology stands as an obstacle towards individuals' access to truth. Nevertheless, neither Patočka nor Heidegger, when they speak about truth, has in mind the concept of truth as exactness. Both Heidegger and Patočka operate with the concept of truth as *unhiddenness* – *alētheia*.

Technology, however, offers a very peculiar description of the world, of 'what is'.⁴⁸¹ Heidegger, Patočka argues, speaks about the realm of *Gestell*. In his 'Four seminars' Patočka argues that *Gestell* does not leave things to manifest themselves as they are in their truth.⁴⁸² Instead, *Gestell* is the understanding of 'what is'. Individuals see the world not as it is, as it manifests itself, but rather through the perspective of *Gestell*. Therefore, a human being obtains a very limited and distorted picture about reality, which does not correspond with truth as *alētheia*, but greatly limits our perspective. The world, therefore, does not remain authentic, but is seen and described in the forms *Gestell* offers to us. *Gestell*, however, represents a danger for a human being and her existence. The understanding of the world in line with *Gestell* stands 'outside' the human being. Although the ambition of *Gestell* is clarity, *Gestell* transforms not just human beings and the world, but also transforms one's perception. *Gestell* aims to cast a new understanding of the world and things around us and to explain them in the most comprehensive way possible. Understanding as clarity, therefore, is not the aim and the core of humanity as such, but becomes the main ambition of *Gestell*. Patočka links *Gestell* with society. From his perspective, *Gestell* leads to the constitution of a society that is mobilised and administered. Patočka argues that human beings in the realm of *Gestell* take action; however, one is led by an anonymous and arbitrary 'force' that leads one to fulfil 'purposeless purposes'.⁴⁸³ For Patočka, *Gestell* is meaningless and has withdrawal and closeness within itself.

In his 'Four seminars' Patočka speaks about the situation of a human being as well,

odhalování samo ze zřetele, nebývalým způsobem skrývá bytostné jádro pravdy, a tímto způsobem člověku uzavírá přístup k tomu, čím sám jest – totiž bytostí, která může být v původním vztahu k pravdě. Pro samé zajišťování, vypočítávání a používání stavů je to, čím je toto vše umožněno, vytrácí ze zorného pole: člověk zná nyní už jen jednotlivé praktické pravdy, ale ne pravdu.' In: Patočka, 'Nebezpečí technizace', pp. 151-152; Patočka, 'The Dangers of Technicization', p. 331.

⁴⁸⁰'technika člověka zotročuje'. In: Ibid., p. 150; Ibid., p. 331.

⁴⁸¹Patočka, 'Čtyři semináře', p. 388.

⁴⁸²Ibid.

⁴⁸³Ibid., p. 390.

arguing that he becomes ‘one-dimensional’⁴⁸⁴ and experiences alienation. A human being is deprived of one’s sovereignty and is reduced to a thing within the structure of *Gestell*. However, a human being lives in an illusion that they are in charge of *Gestell* – in the sense they obtain a clear insight and understanding of the world and that they conduct, control and are in charge of all actions within *Gestell*. This is however only an illusion. Although *Gestell* aims to introduce clarity, to cast fresh understanding on all things and the world around us, in reality, it triggers *forgetfulness*⁴⁸⁵ (concealment); one not only forgets about the turn from an authentic world to the reality of *Gestell*, but one also forgets what is intrinsic and significant for each human being: being and understanding.

Patočka further portrays the historical perspectives of *Gestell*, arguing that it represents a radicalisation of our historical relationship with things.⁴⁸⁶ The world of things is easier to approach and understand than the realm of ourselves.

In the life, which is subjected to *Gestell*, everyone is replaceable and no one feels unique. In this mass era everyone is no one. Life empties itself, yet, at the same time everyone is attached to life.⁴⁸⁷ [M.B]

Things and objects no longer exist in the realm of *Gestell*, as it treats things and human beings only as standing reserves (*Bestand*), which is precisely where the hardness and cruelty of *Gestell* originates. *Gestell* creates a world of mediocrity, replaceability, and manipulation. We live in a culture which is anesthetised,⁴⁸⁸ insensitive. In this particular era, therefore, human suffering and tragedy play significant role.

As discussed in chapter one – on the crisis, Patočka criticises Husserl’s solution to the spiritual crisis: the effort to restructure European sciences. Patočka sees this particular solution as insufficient. Heidegger, on the other hand proposes the solution of *Das Rettende*.⁴⁸⁹ He speaks about *Das Rettende* – a realm of art, a realm of unnecessary – which forms a counterweight to the progress and calculation of *Gestell*. A human being in the realm of *Das Rettende* is not simply easily replaceable; one’s life is non-equivalent

⁴⁸⁴ Here Patočka might be inspired by Herbert Marcuse’s work *One-dimensional Man*. Ibid.

⁴⁸⁵ Ibid., p. 391.

⁴⁸⁶ Ibid., p. 393.

⁴⁸⁷ Ibid., p. 402.

⁴⁸⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁸⁹ Ibid.

to other lives, as it is in *Gestell*. The realm of *Das Rettende* perhaps does not equip one with complete clarity; nevertheless it equips a human being with another, much more essential form of understanding.

On the other hand, Patočka believes that Heidegger's solution of *Das Rettende* as a counterweight to *Gestell* is more radical than the Husserl's proposal. Heidegger's solution to the crisis touches the problem of existence and its authenticity at its very centre. Patočka, however, argues that Heidegger's solution of *Das Rettende* is insufficient. Patočka argues that although Heidegger, to an extent, through *Das Rettende* proposes a certain distancing of life from *Gestell*, the solution is insufficient because life does not surrender completely. Instead, life expects some form of 'Gunst des Sein'⁴⁹⁰ (favour of being) in return for its distancing from *Gestell*, which one finds in the realm of the art and which represents a form of saving grace. Patočka argues, to confront *Gestell* directly, one needs to prove that 'its power [the power of *Gestell*] is not absolute.'⁴⁹¹

In the radicalisation of stretching from the self-emptying of life to the overcoming of the attachment to the world, the victory of life takes place. It is the overcoming of the inner conflict, in which the essential foundation of a human being resides, which at the same time, conceals and manifests itself.⁴⁹² [M.B]

With this claim of the emptying of life, Patočka suggests the idea of *kenōsis* (κένωσις), but freed from the theological explanation of the word. He speaks about *kenōsis* as the detachment from the reasoning of *Gestell*, as leaving everything, the old meaning, the old self behind. *Kenōsis*, in Patočka's sense, can be interpreted as a figurative death, which is necessary in order to detach from the world and the realm of *Gestell*.

In his 'Four seminars', Patočka does not discuss the question of self-giving further. However, with these ideas, he is already preparing for his discussion of sacrifice. By sacrifice, one does not expect grace, a 'Gunst des Seins', in return. Instead, sacrifice is acceptance of one's absolute alienation, one's powerlessness and finitude. Patočka's effort to overcome the spiritual crisis by sacrifice, therefore, contrasts with Husserl's effort to overcome it by 'knowing' and Heidegger's effort to overcome it by art.

How then does one free oneself from the reality of *Gestell*? To free oneself is possi-

⁴⁹⁰Ibid.

⁴⁹¹Ibid.

⁴⁹²Ibid., p. 393.

ble only through *unconcealment* (*odhalování*),⁴⁹³ through searching for truth as *aletheia* (*ἀλήθεια*). The unconcealment of truth reveals that one can free oneself from the strong attachment to life. Patočka, however, suggests that, at the very end of this unconcealment, a human being experiences a moment of *kenōsis* (self-emptying) and acceptance of the tragic meaning of one's existence, which is powerfully manifested in Matthew 27:46: 'My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?' ('Eli, Eli, lema sabachthani?'). Patočka aims to purify Christianity from metaphysics and to undermine the metaphysical explanation of death and the promise of immortality, which is the core of the Christian doctrine. He believes that we do not need these aspects to obtain the meaning of one's existence.

On the contrary, the promises of the afterlife and immortality only mock and ridicule the tragic meaning of human existence. Instead of replacing the attachment to life with the belief of the immortality of the soul, Patočka proposes a heretical secular meaning of Christianity, which resides not in closing one's eyes before something, but 'looking-in' [*nablédnutí*] to things and discovering meaning within, even if the reality is terrifying. This approach involves accepting the tragic meaning of one's existence, which is meaningful per se. In other words, Patočka might be very much inspired by Christianity, by the Scriptures, and even by the persona of Jesus; however, he aims to secularise these aspects of Christianity and display them as meaningful and instrumental within one's existence. Nevertheless, Patočka aims to avoid the metaphysical dimension of Christianity, which proves itself misleading.

Conclusion

This chapter aimed to portray the relationship between (1) Martin Heidegger and Ernst Jünger and (2) Martin Heidegger and Jan Patočka. All three thinkers are concerned about nihilism and contemplate the possibility of its overcoming. Each of these thinkers offers their proposal of how the state of nihilism can be overcome.

Jünger, being a devoted follower of Nietzsche, does not see the problem of nihilism as being a result of the age of techno-science. Jünger's criticism of nihilism stems from

⁴⁹³Ibid.

his disappointment with the governance of the Third Reich. Jünger examines the possibility of the 'crossing the line'. Unlike Heidegger and Patočka, Jünger is not critical of the age of techno-science and proposes that one can overcome nihilism by distilling 'positive' aspects of nihilism. Therefore, Jünger does not deny nihilism at large but focuses on its 'purification' instead. Precisely the positive aspects of nihilism, Jünger believes, will become instrumental concerning the overcoming of nihilism and will herald the new historical era.

Heidegger is critical about Jünger's idea of the crossing the line due to its secure attachment to metaphysics. Heidegger criticises Jünger's idea of the 'crossing the line' for its superficial approach towards the concept of nihilism, his fervent emphasis on the Nietzschean doctrine of will to power and due to Jünger's mistreatment of the concept of Being. Heidegger does not approve Jünger's attitude to techno-scientific realm and proposes a return to the question of *Being* instead.

Although Patočka is to a great extent influenced by Heidegger's philosophy, in his works from the 1970s, he formulates his account on techno-scientific age (age of nihilism) and proposes his solution on how the critical techno-scientific reality of *Gestell* (a human being lives in) can be overcome. Patočka's position represents an antidote to Jünger's simplistic 'crossing the line'. Patočka strictly rejects the realm of techno-science and nihilism at large. His position represents an antidote to Jünger's simplistic 'crossing the line'. Patočka's response to the age of nihilism, which takes on the form of *Gestell*, however, overcomes Heidegger's solution of *das Rettende* as well. Patočka calls for a more radical form of transcendence, which would negate the entire logic of *Gestell*. He finds this negation of *Gestell* in sacrifice – absolute surrender and detachment from life.

In the following chapter, I will examine Patočka's concept of sacrifice and will portray how sacrifice relates to the ideal of the care for the soul. I will argue that sacrifice and the care for the soul represent ethical ideals, which Patočka integrates into the political realm. First, I will manifest how ethical incorporates itself within the realm of politics. I will point to the necessity of ethics within politics. Second, I will show how sacrifice and the care for the soul restlessly revitalise the realm of the political and undermine its totality.

Chapter 4

The Ethical: Sacrifice and Care for the Soul

Introduction

In his two essays from the 1970s, Patočka proposed a way to overcome the techno-scientific reality that confronts a human being. Based on his critical assessment of Heidegger's failure to extend his philosophical thought to the political realm, Patočka argues that the only way to undermine the logic of *Gestell* would be through an absolute detachment from its logic. Overcoming *Gestell* is possible only through what Patočka calls *self-sacrifice*.

In this chapter, I will examine two closely intertwined ethical concepts in Patočka's philosophy: sacrifice and care for the soul. I will analyse Patočka's two works: his essay 'The Dangers of Technicization in Science according to E. Husserl and the Essence of Technology as Danger according to M. Heidegger' (1973), known as the 'Varna lecture', and his series of lectures called *Plato and Europe* (1973). Patočka proposes sacrifice as a means by which the spiritual crisis – which manifests as the techno-scientific reality of *Gestell*, as the world of calculation, formalisation of meaning and mathematical formulae – can be overcome.

I will reconstruct the concept of sacrifice in Patočka's philosophy and argue that self-sacrifice, as Patočka proposes, represents a complex concept which cannot be reduced

to an act of self-immolation. His idea of sacrifice is aligned with the conviction that 'to philosophise is to learn how to die'.⁴⁹⁴ Sacrifice, so conceived, means to leave one's mundane day-to-day existence behind and to live a philosophical life. Self-sacrifice, in Patočka's works, requires one to detach oneself from one's secure life and to set oneself on a journey of searching for the truth. However, sacrifice, Patočka proposes, does not stand for a heroic act of dying in its immediacy; in philosophical sacrifice, one is open to the possibility of one's death. Perhaps the best example of this philosophical sacrifice is the sacrifice of Socrates, who remained faithful to the truth, to his ideas and preserved his integrity, until the very end, even for the price of his life. Philosophical sacrifice, however, cannot be understood without another ethical ideal, which Patočka proposes in his lectures *Plato and Europe* – the care for the soul. In the second part of this chapter, I will reconstruct the care of the soul – its significance and its relevance to the political realm. I will examine the links between Socratic teaching and Patočka's philosophy. With the help of Hannah Arendt's analysis of Socrates's fate and the crisis in the polis, I will critically examine the relevance of the ethical ideal of the care for the soul in the political realm – first concerning the crisis of the Athenian polis and second concerning Patočka's situation in communist Czechoslovakia.

The aim of this chapter is first to show how the ethical realm is represented in Patočka's philosophy and how Socrates shaped Patočka's thought. Second, I will critically examine how the ethical – as embodied by sacrifice and the care for the soul – can be implemented within the realm of politics. I will question the necessity of ethics in politics and will point to its significance both in the Ancient Greek polis in Socrates's times and in Communist Czechoslovakia in Patočka's times.

I The Crisis

Patočka introduces the concept of sacrifice in an obscure context. He argues that humanity occurred in a state of *spiritual* crisis, which stems from the strong tendencies of the *one-sided rationality* of modern techno-science. Life is perceived through calculation and

⁴⁹⁴Michel de Montaigne, *The Complete Essays of Montaigne*, trans. by Donald M. Frame (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1965), p. 56.

measurement, and the meaning of the world is formalised and reduced to mathematical formulae. To translate this tendency into the political realm, Patočka speaks about the 20th century being a century of war. He believes that the one-sided rationality of modern techno-science was played out for the first time in the First World War. To demonstrate this view, he speaks about the powerful frontline experience. Since the First World War, Patočka believes, we have been living in a crisis that takes the form of an ongoing war – a ‘smouldering war’ – that awaits another violent outburst.

These views may seem extremely gloomy, if not exaggerated, but we need to bear in mind the situation and context in which Patočka was writing his essays on sacrifice: under the totalitarian regime of communism in Czechoslovakia. During his life, Patočka witnessed the Nazi Coup d’état and the Soviet occupation. He lived during the era of the Cold War, when the threat of war as another outburst of violence was realistically present.

As discussed in chapter three, the danger of techno-science does not reside in the possibility of a human being becoming enslaved by techno-science⁴⁹⁵ – Patočka is not concerned about that; instead, explaining the world and human life through rigorous science and mathematical formulae is an obstacle to humans having access, as Patočka says, ‘to what he [man] himself is – a being capable of standing in an original relation to truth.’⁴⁹⁶ A human being only recognises partial and individual truths, as enabled by rigorous science, measurement and calculations, leading to a distorted picture of reality, meaning one lives in a world that is vulnerable to manipulation. Patočka, therefore, questions how this spiritual crisis can be overcome. In other words, how can human beings restore their relationship with truth? How can they obtain the lost access to what they themselves are?

Patočka is deeply influenced by his predecessors Edmund Husserl and Martin Heidegger. In his essay ‘The Dangers of Technicization’ (1973), Patočka critically examines his predecessors’ reflections of techno-science and points out the shortcomings of their

⁴⁹⁵‘And therein precisely lies the danger. The uncovering that prevails at the essential core of technology necessarily loses sight of uncovering itself, concealing the essential core of truth in an unfamiliar way and so closing man’s access to what he himself is – a being capable of standing in an original relation to truth. Among all the securing, calculating, and using raw materials, that which makes all this possible is lost from view – man henceforth knows only individual, practical truths, not the truth.’ In: Patočka, ‘The Dangers of Technicization’, p. 331.

⁴⁹⁶Ibid.

proposed solutions to the spiritual crisis. Patočka argues that this crisis cannot be overcome by the mere restructuring of the European sciences (as proposed by Husserl), nor by turning to the forgotten idea of Being (as proposed by Heidegger). Patočka claims that there must be a much more radical solution: one that would escape the calculation. Patočka finds it in the concept of sacrifice. '[S]acrifices represent a persistent presence of something that does not appear in the calculation of the technological world.'⁴⁹⁷ Sacrifice 'demonstrates what technology denies, the reality of a hierarchy, of something higher.'⁴⁹⁸ Patočka is not referring to some Christian God; what he means is, there is something beyond the world of techno-science, beyond calculation and measurement – the *spirit*, the *soul*, something that defines a human being. Nothing but sacrifice repeatedly reveals the soul and, thus, responds to the formalism of the techno-scientific world. Nothing but sacrifice restores the broken relationship of what human beings themselves are – beings capable of standing in an original relation to truth.

II Sacrifice

Sacrifice is a very complex concept with a variety of its meanings. There are various examples of sacrifice: from Ancient Greek mythology (Prometheus), the Old Testament (the case of Abraham sacrificing his son Isaac), the New Testament (the *kenotic* idea of sacrifice of Jesus Christ), from philosophy (sacrifice as dying for ideas: Socrates, Hypatia) and from more recent history (Maximilian Kolbe or Jan Palach).

What does Patočka mean when he speaks of sacrifice? Patočka did not devote an entire study to the examination of the concept of sacrifice. In his final work, *Heretical Essays*, Patočka argues that sacrifice is something that is *called for*, something that is necessary. Patočka talks about 'a dark awareness that life is not everything, that it can sacrifice itself.'⁴⁹⁹

Another point that Patočka raises in his discussion on sacrifice is that one cannot expect anything in return for sacrifice. The outcome of sacrifice is highly contingent in its

⁴⁹⁷Patočka, 'The Dangers of Technicization' p. 337.

⁴⁹⁸Erazim Kohák, *Jan Patočka: Philosophy and Selected Writings* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1989), p. 116.

⁴⁹⁹Patočka, 'Kacířské eseje', p. 125; *Heretical Essays*, p. 129.

nature. Sacrifice neither promises any ultimate changes in the concrete world (in the political realm), nor does it guarantee anything regarding the future prospect of humanity. Sacrifice neither leads to the wellbeing of future generations, nor to the fame of those sacrificed.⁵⁰⁰ Sacrifice does not lead to the awakening of some form of collective consciousness either. None of these factors is an objective of sacrifice. Patočka strongly emphasises this aspect, warning that if these were the ambitions of sacrifice, sacrifice would nullify itself. Sacrifice, therefore, generates a meaning for itself in the moment of its occurrence. Patočka speaks about sacrifice as *self-sacrifice*,⁵⁰¹ adding:

[S]acrifice acquires a remarkably radical and paradoxical form. It is not a sacrifice *for* something or *for* someone, even though in a certain sense it is a sacrifice *for* everything and *for* all. In a certain essential sense, it is a sacrifice for nothing, if thereby we mean that which is no existing particular.⁵⁰²

To understand Patočka's idea of self-sacrifice, we cannot reduce it only to an act of dying, to an act of self-immolation. This idea is not what Patočka has in mind when he speaks about sacrifice. Sacrifice needs to be perceived in the broader context of his academic scholarship and life. Sacrifice, for Patočka, is not a one-off act of rebellion; rather, it is a *mode of life* of living one's life as sacrifice. It is putting one's life and body on the line, while being entirely open to the possibility of death.⁵⁰³ Patočka states that a human being, throughout one's existence, focuses exclusively on life and fears death. Patočka is a thinker who does not regard death as the negation of life. Influenced by Heidegger's *Being and Time* (1927), Patočka agrees that death is the only certainty in life, and that no one is replaceable in the moment of dying. The ambition to deny death, to live as if death does not exist and does not concern us, leads to an inauthentic life and to spiritual decline.

Patočka sees a strong political aspect in the effort to diminish death. What he observes is that the motif of ignoring death and solely celebrating life is very common to all ideologies – be they fascism, communism or the ideology of liberalism. This approach is commonly misused as a *biopolitical* tool of surveillance. Ideologies create an illusion that

⁵⁰⁰Jan Patočka, 'Zpěv výsostnosti', in *Umění a čas I*, ed. by Daniel Vojtěch and Ivan Chvatík (Praha: Oikoymenth, 2004), pp. 416-430. (p. 419).

⁵⁰¹Patočka, 'Kacířské eseje', p. 125; *Heretical Essays*, p. 129.

⁵⁰²Patočka, 'The Dangers of Technicization', p. 339.

⁵⁰³Patočka, 'Kacířské eseje', p. 125; *Heretical Essays*, p. 129.

life and death are separate. Life represents the highest value a human being can possess; whereas, death is demonised and represents an undesired break of life. Human beings live in the illusion that it is life – mundane, everyday life – that is worth living. Death represents a threat for human beings; therefore, everything outside the norm can be punished by death. Loss of everydayness and death are feared, and humanity is kept under surveillance. Patočka, however, is convinced that, ‘life is not everything but that it can sacrifice itself. That self-sacrifice, that surrender, is what is called for.’⁵⁰⁴ Patočka encourages human beings to sacrifice in the sense that he encourages them to leave their mundane life behind and to live a philosophical life.

Patočka belongs to the cohort of thinkers who share the conviction, which echoes throughout the entire history of philosophy, that ‘to philosophise is to learn how to die’.⁵⁰⁵ In the dialogue *Phaedo*, for instance, Plato argues that philosophy is a ‘preparation for death’ (*melete thanatou*).⁵⁰⁶ The main task of philosophy is ‘to cultivate the appropriate attitude towards death’.⁵⁰⁷ Philosophy prepares us to face the terror of annihilation without offering promises of an afterlife. Philosophy, therefore, becomes a movement of liberation through which we become free of the given, free of the political order.

The old wisdom, ‘to philosophise is to learn how to die’, entails two aspects that are closely intertwined with Patočka’s thought:

1. That philosophy is not an academic enterprise, a solely descriptive activity. Instead, philosophy is a performative act of self-giving.
2. That philosophy is the *openness* and *willingness* to search for truth and to see things as they are. Philosophy means to take on our responsibility for the world and for others by inspiring them to do the same.⁵⁰⁸

There are many examples of this form of sacrifice (sacrifice as living a philosophical life)

⁵⁰⁴Ibid., p. 120.

⁵⁰⁵Montaigne, *The Complete Essays of Montaigne*, p. 56.

⁵⁰⁶Plato, *Phaedo*, trans. by Eca Brann, Peter Kalkavage and Eric Salem (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing, 1998), p. 34.

⁵⁰⁷Simon Critchley, *The Book of Dead Philosophers* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 2008), p. xxi.

⁵⁰⁸Melançon, ‘Jan Patočka’s Sacrifice’, p. 578.

in the history of philosophy: Hypatia, Giordano Bruno, and Simone Weil – philosophers who were searching for truth and remained open to the possibility of death. However, probably the most exemplary case of sacrifice as living a philosophical life, which influenced Patočka immensely, was that of Socrates.

Patočka examines Socrates' fate in the series of lectures *Plato and Europe* (1973). In a state of war, during the period of the crisis of the *polis*, in political conditions that are highly reminiscent of Patočka's own situation, Socrates walks around Athens and talks to fellow citizens. He engages in dialogues with people and undermines the opinions of those who falsely assume they have knowledge about what is good:

[Socrates] shakes up the certainty on the basis of which the city has existed hitherto, and at the same time he does not say what is good, he only invites people to think, that they think like him, that they search, that everyone responsibly examine their every thought. That means that they should not accept mere opinion [*doxa*], as if it were insight, as if it were a looking-in [*nahlédnutí*] – to live from true insight into what is here, what is present.⁵⁰⁹

What concerns Patočka, in his essay, is the Socratic message of the constant search for truth versus widespread opinion (*doxa*). Socrates questions – *shakes up* – the certainty upon which the city has existed and promotes the principle of humanity, namely that 'it is better to undergo injustice than commit it.'⁵¹⁰ However, in doing so, Socrates avoids any moral judgement. He promotes this principle (the principle of humanity) not by simply moralising, preaching and persuading people about what is morally good: '[Socrates] only invites people to think, that they think like him, that they search, that everyone responsibly examines their every thought.'⁵¹¹ As Hannah Arendt, in her essay on Socrates, points out, 'Socrates did not want to educate the citizens';⁵¹² rather, he encouraged citizens to 'responsibly examine their every thought',⁵¹³ to think critically and to replace mere opinion (*doxa*) with a thorough 'looking-in' [*nahlédnutí*]. Socrates encourages us to search for truth, to question all the 'facts' and 'truths' that one takes for granted without any critical assessment.

⁵⁰⁹Patočka, *Plato and Europe*, p. 85.

⁵¹⁰Ibid., p. 84.

⁵¹¹Ibid., p. 85.

⁵¹²Hannah Arendt, 'Socrates', in *The Promise of Politics*, ed. by Jerome Kohn (New York: Schocken Books, 2005), pp. 5–39 (p. 15).

⁵¹³Patočka, *Plato and Europe*, p. 85.

In his lectures *Plato and Europe*, Patočka questions what this investigating that Socrates pursues actually is. Patočka concludes that the constant questioning, the search for the truth that Socrates restlessly chases is nothing more than the ideal of care for the soul.

Only through it [*care for the soul*] does the soul become what it can be – *harmonious*, not in contradiction, no longer running the risk of shattering into contradictory pieces, thus finally joining something that endures, that is solid. After all, everything has to be founded upon what is solid. This is the basis of our acting morally, and this is also the foundation of thought, for only thinking that shows what is solid, stable, shows what is.⁵¹⁴

To sacrifice in the sense of living a philosophical life is identical with the ideal of care for the soul. To sacrifice means to leave the secure realm of the private, mundane life behind and, instead, journey into the realm of the constant *shaking* that the public sphere entails. Patočka, however, clearly argues that care for the soul is the solid foundation of the *polis*. This point recalls Machiavelli's words: 'I love my native city more than I love my own soul.'⁵¹⁵ These words stand in stark contradiction to those of Patočka. Care for the soul is a foundation for our thoughts, for our acting morally in the city, as Patočka says. However, why is it necessary to act morally in the city? What is the purpose of care for the soul in the *polis*? How can a philosopher help other citizens in the *polis*?

Thanks to the moral foundation that care for the soul facilitates, we can outline a city in which the citizens who care for the soul can live in and cultivate the city through the 'looking-in' [*nablédnutí*].

That is the city where Socrates and those like him will not need to die. For this a world of experience is needed; for this a plan of what is truth is needed, an outline of all being. For this a city must be planned out. What is its essence, and what the soul is capable must be examined. That is the meaning of the figure of Socrates.⁵¹⁶

Patočka, however, argues that care for the soul in the city is a dangerous enterprise for a philosopher. This is because the citizens who care for their soul undermine the stability of the lawless city. This situation was precisely the case with Socrates: the city levelled

⁵¹⁴Ibid., p. 86.

⁵¹⁵Niccolo Machiavelli, 'Familiar Letters, 16 April, 18 April 1527, No. 225 To Francesco Vettori', *Machiavelli: The Chief Works and Others, Volume 2*, trans. by Allan Gilbert (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1989), p. 1010.

⁵¹⁶Patočka, *Plato and Europe*, p. 88.

two charges against him – ‘corrupting the youth of Athens and failing to acknowledge gods’⁵¹⁷ – and he was sentenced to death.

Plato devotes only four dialogues to the events of Socrates’ trial and death (*Eutypbro*, *Apology*, *Crito* and *Phaedo*). In *Phaedo*, ‘Socrates’ words are suffused with Plato’s belief in the immortality of the soul’,⁵¹⁸ Plato’s *Apology* offers a rather different view of the matter. Socrates says that death is not something to be feared. For Socrates, death does not represent a danger, despite the authorities of the *polis* attempting to create this illusion, so that they can place both the body and the soul under surveillance. As Socrates says in his *Apology*, death is one of two possibilities: ‘Either, it is annihilation and the dead have no consciousness of anything; or, as we are told, it is really a change: a migration of the soul from this place to another.’⁵¹⁹

Care for the soul equips Socrates with openness and integrity. Not even death represents an obstacle towards remaining loyal to truth, his ideals and his convictions. Socrates’ death, and Patočka is very well aware of this, can be regarded as a ‘political show trial and execution of an innocent dissident at the hands of tyrannical state’⁵²⁰

i Political Action

Despite Patočka’s involvement in the civic initiative of Charta 77, as its spokesman, political action is secondary and perhaps even unconnected to his philosophy.⁵²¹ The seminars *Plato and Europe* (1973) were delivered after Patočka was expelled from the university and forced into premature retirement. The seminars were illegal, taking place in secret, organised by dissidents and Patočka’s students. This setting represented a perfect opportunity to mobilise students and to encourage them to overthrow the communist regime in Czechoslovakia. However, Patočka did not take this opportunity and, instead, devoted the lectures to the examination of care for the soul and its significance to the city. Patočka noted the problem of one-sided rationality, which caused a spiritual vacuum in

⁵¹⁷Critchley, *The Book of Dead Philosophers*, p. 20.

⁵¹⁸Ibid., p. xvii.

⁵¹⁹Costica Bradatan, *Dying for Ideas: The Dangerous Lives of the Philosophers* (London and New York: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2015), p. 128.

⁵²⁰Critchley, *The Book of Dead Philosophers*, p. xvi.

⁵²¹Melançon, ‘Jan Patočka’s Sacrifice’, p. 578.

the society. Therefore, in his lectures, he ‘primarily offers hope to students discouraged by communism.’⁵²² He reminds the students that there is something more important than the mundane, everyday life, the techno-scientific reality and progress. He speaks about the soul and its agency to care for itself. Patočka reminds his students not to fall for the lies of the communist ideology – that they are not just a ‘force’ that advances the progress of the State, but that each of them has a soul that defines them.

At the time Patočka was delivering his seminars *Plato and Europe*, he could not have predicted their appropriateness, namely that he would very soon follow in the footsteps of Socrates. The Czech philosopher died in a Prague hospital on March 13, 1977.⁵²³ However, to annihilate a body in no way means to annihilate the soul. Following Patočka’s death, interest in his philosophy increased immensely, and his political career continued. The philosopher became even more unsettling for political authorities, and his philosophy and political activism became a driving force for many. Similar to Socrates, Patočka and his tragic fate constituted a new community, a new *polis* founded upon the care for the soul, upon a philosophical truth, something he extensively examined in his lectures *Plato and Europe*.

III Socrates and Care for the Soul

In his examination of the decline of *polis* and Socrates’ fate Patočka points to a twofold problem:

The contemporary decline of the Athenian community is, as we know, represented by the fate of Socrates. Socrates’ fate is for Plato the criterion, from which it is clearly evident that the contemporary city that wants to be traditional is no longer capable of this today, and in reality, latent tyrannical opinion rules over it.⁵²⁴

Following Plato, Patočka states that, after the death of Socrates, a traditional community was no longer possible. Moreover, the community (*polis*) became vulnerable to the

⁵²²Ibid.

⁵²³As discussed in the Introduction, the cause of death was a brain haemorrhage suffered under a series of exhausting interrogations at the hands of the Czechoslovak secret police (ŠtB). Patočka had been under interrogation for his involvement in a civic movement of Charta 77, in protest, in the name of human rights. See: Findlay, *Caring for the Soul in a Postmodern Age*, p. 1.

⁵²⁴Patočka, *Plato and Europe*, p. 110.

tyranny of opinion (*doxa*). On the one hand, Patočka observes that the fate of Socrates played an essential role in the development of European thought, namely that his fate (sacrifice) ignited the beginning of a political community. ‘Our tradition of political thought began when the death of Socrates made Plato despair of polis life [...]’.⁵²⁵ Concerning the development of the political situation in Athens itself, the death of Socrates caused the *polis* to spiral into a crisis.⁵²⁶

What concerns Patočka is the Socratic message of the constant search for truth versus widespread opinion (*doxa*) and how this opposition impacts the political realm. The *polis* (the community) adopts and grounds itself in an opinion (*doxa*) – a seeming truth, a rigid certainty about the *polis*, which is accepted by citizens without any further critical assessment. The significance of Socrates stems from his aim to undermine and *shake* these certainties, revealing their tyrannical nature. Socrates encourages the citizens to ‘responsibly examine their every thought’,⁵²⁷ to think critically and to replace the opinion (*doxa*) about the *polis* with a thorough ‘looking-in’ [*nablédnutí*] into things and the world around us.

The method of doing this is dialegesthai, talking something through, but this dialectic brings forth truth not by destroying doxa or opinion, but on the contrary by revealing doxa in its own truthfulness.⁵²⁸

By examining Hannah Arendt’s essay ‘Socrates’, we can ascertain that the aim of Socrates was not to deny opinion as *doxa*, but rather to bring forth what is truthful in it. Therefore, the aim of Socrates was ‘to improve [citizens’] *doxai*, which constituted the political life in which he took part’.⁵²⁹ His ambition was ‘to make the city more truthful by delivering each of the citizens of their truths’.⁵³⁰

In his work *Plato and Europe* Patočka speaks about the care for the soul:

Because man, or the human soul – that which knows about the whole of the world and of life, that which is able to present this whole before its eyes, that which lives from this position, that which knows about the whole and in that sense is wholly

⁵²⁵ Arendt, ‘Socrates’, p. 6.

⁵²⁶ ‘The rapid decay of Athenian polis life in the thirty years which separate the death of Pericles from the trial of Socrates. The conflict ended with a defeat for philosophy [...]’ Ibid., p. 26.

⁵²⁷ Patočka, ‘Platón a Evropa’, p. 222; *Plato and Europe*, p. 85.

⁵²⁸ Arendt, ‘Socrates’, p. 15.

⁵²⁹ Ibid.

⁵³⁰ Ibid.

and in the whole within this explicit relation to something certainly immortal, that which is certainly eternal, that which does not pass away beyond which there is nothing – in this itself has its own eternity.⁵³¹

The care for the soul manifests itself as an inner dialogue, restless questioning and critical judgement, which is the basis for all further moral action. As a result, the care for the soul, following Patočka's quote, makes one's soul reliable and stable, in a sense, one's soul maintains its truthfulness and integrity. Care for the soul, for Patočka, does not represent 'a kind of pallid intellectualism';⁵³² instead, it 'is the attempt to embody what is eternal within time, and within one's own being.'⁵³³ Therefore, care for the soul represents an internal⁵³⁴ activity through which the soul undergoes 'the formation of the soul itself by itself'⁵³⁵. The soul through the agency of the care for the soul becomes less vulnerable towards myths, lies, untruths, conspiracies and perceives and assesses the world and all phenomena in it critically.

However, it was not Socrates himself, but it was Plato who developed the definition of the Socratic dialectic, which became the foundation for what he calls care for the soul. The soul that both Plato and Patočka refer to is not identical to the Christian soul, nor the soul described in psychology. Both Plato and Patočka refer to the Ancient Greek concept of the soul, which represents the subject of emotional, mental and psychological states and functions, and the bearer of moral qualities and virtues, such as justice (*δικαιοσύνη*) and courage (*ἀνδρεία*). As influenced by Democritus' and Plato's examinations of the soul, for Patočka, the soul is the ability of rational critical insight and the possibility to see things as a whole.

This experience of the soul about it itself discovers at the same time that there exists a depth of being, which we unveil only when we swim against the natural current and against all general tendencies of our mind and all our instinctive equipment directed to reality, to materialness.⁵³⁶

⁵³¹'Protože člověk, totiž lidská duše - to znamená to, co ví o celku světa a života, co si ten to celek je s to postavit před oči, co žije z toho postavení, co ví o celku a v tom smysle je celistvě a v celku v tomhle výslovném vstažení k něčemu, co je určitě nesmrtelné, co určitě je věčné, co nepomíjí, mimo co není nic -, má v tomhle samo svoji věčnost.' In: Patočka, 'Platón a Evropa', p. 160; *Plato and Europe*, p. 13.

⁵³²Ibid, p. 224; Ibid., p. 87.

⁵³³Ibid.

⁵³⁴Ibid, p. 223; Ibid., p. 87.

⁵³⁵'formaci duše sebou samou' Ibid., p. 230; Ibid., p. 93.

⁵³⁶'Tato zkušenost duše o sobě samé zároveň objevuje, že existuje hloubka bytí, kterou odhalujeme teprve

Care for the soul, Patočka argues, equips a human being with a new perspective that stands in opposition to the mainstream vision and is even a resistant response to it. In contrast to Edmund Husserl's idea of *reduction*, care for the soul is not an attempt to access the first cause of phenomena; instead, its aim is to obtain a certain form of understanding of the world and oneself.

Based on the Socratic dialectic method, care for the soul occurs through constant questioning.⁵³⁷ It has the form of a conversation that is ordinarily divided into two persons, but it can also take place within the core of the soul itself.⁵³⁸ The objective of care for the soul is the new formation of oneself through the agency of the human soul to 'looking-in' (*nahlédnutí*). The human being, through care for the soul, returns to what she is in her nature – namely, a being to whom the world and all phenomena manifest themselves.

This new thought, this completely new ideal, that everything man does and thinks has to be answered for in this kind of way, means a new forming of the self, a new forming of that which man, so to speak, is by nature a being to whom the world shows itself, manifests itself. In some way, this forming is within our power; we form ourselves in some kind of way.⁵³⁹

Patočka speaks about the possibility of the formation of a new subjectivity. Care for the soul, however, is not dependent on any external power or a third party; it is something that comes from within, and every single individual has power over their soul.

Patočka argues that Socratic dialectic moves beyond being a mere method and becomes, instead, a form of existence:

Socrates does not provoke by his care for the soul. [...] He does not provoke, but his whole existence is a provocation to the city. He is the first who, face to face with secret tyranny and the hypocritical remains of old morality, poses the thought that the human being focused on truth in the full sense of the word, examining what is good, not knowing himself what is positive good, and only refuting false opinion,

tenkrát, když plaveme proti přirozenému proudu a proti všeobecnému sklonu naší mysli a našeho instinktivního zařazení, které směřuje k realitě, k věčnosti.' Ibid., p. 259-260; Ibid., p. 125.

⁵³⁷'Starost o duši se odehrává dotazujícím se myšlením.' Ibid., p. 229; Ibid., p. 91.

⁵³⁸'má formu *rozhovoru*, který je obvykle rozdělen na dvě osoby, ale může se odehrávat také v nitru duše samotné.' Ibid.

⁵³⁹'Tato tehdy nová myšlenka, tento úplně *nový ideál*, že všechno, co člověk dělá a co myslí, se musí takovýmto způsobem zodpovídat, znamená přece *novou formaci sebe*, novou formaci toho čím člověk takřikajíc od přírody je, totiž bytostí, které se zjevuje, které se ukazuje svět. [...] Tuto formaci mám nějakým způsobem v moci, nějakým způsobem se formuji.' Ibid., p. 233; Ibid., p. 95.

has to appear as the worst of all, the most irritating.⁵⁴⁰

Patočka regards Socrates as the first person who challenged tyranny and the old morality by questioning and undermining the seeming truth about authorities. Via his method of investigation and constant questioning, Socrates reveals what is supposed to remain hidden from ordinary citizens – the truth about *polis*. Therefore, the significance of Socrates, for Patočka, resides precisely in Socrates' ability to challenge and resist tyrannical power using nothing but dialectic itself, or – to use Plato's terminology – by care for the soul. As Patočka states, Socrates and his dialectic represent a danger for both authorities and philosophers themselves:

For without a doubt, the care for the soul in a lawless city endangers a human being, it endangers the kind of being that stands for the care of the soul, just as that being endangers the city. And it is altogether logical that the city then treats it accordingly.⁵⁴¹

The role of a philosopher, as proposed by Socrates, differs from the suggestion introduced in Plato's *Republic*;⁵⁴² namely, to govern the city, to become a philosopher-king. Patočka, following Socrates, depicts the role of the philosopher as follows:

In what way can a philosopher who is in such dire straits help others? In a philosophical way, through the outline of a city, where the philosopher can live, where the man who is to care for the soul can live, the man who is to carry out the philosophical thought that it is necessary to live and think on the basis of looking-in [*nablédnutí*], nothing else but that.⁵⁴³

The role of a philosopher is not to 'rule over others'.⁵⁴⁴ As Arendt in her essay on Socrates, argues: 'The role of philosopher, then, is not to rule the city but to be its 'gadfly', not to tell philosophical truths but to make citizens more truthful.'⁵⁴⁵ Stemming from Socratic dialectic, the aim of the philosopher's political function is to encourage citizens to search for truth and to strive for a city that guarantees freedom for all citizens

⁵⁴⁰Ibid, p. 225; Ibid., p. 87.

⁵⁴¹Ibid, pp. 223-224; Ibid., pp. 85-86.

⁵⁴²'There is nothing inherently impossible in the idea of a philosopher ruler. Philosophers might gain political power, or an existing ruler might become a philosopher; and the public would soon be persuaded of the benefits of philosophic rule. But the philosophic training must be the right one, and the changes in society would have to be radical.' Plato, *The Republic*, p. 259.

⁵⁴³Patočka, 'Platón a Evropa', p. 226; *Plato and Europe*, p. 88.

⁵⁴⁴Ibid., p. 337; Ibid., p. 207.

⁵⁴⁵Arendt, 'Socrates', p. 15.

– even citizens such as Socrates. With this argument, Patočka clearly steps beyond the political realm and steps into the realm of the ethical. Patočka disagrees with Plato and, like Aristotle, expresses preference for the philosopher not as a political figure, but as an ethical figure, as a person who strives for the highest and the divine⁵⁴⁶ – for the truth. For Patočka, it is precisely the divine that becomes the measure of the city.

i Philosophy and Politics

Patočka examines the relationship between politics and philosophy in Socratic teaching. He argues that Socrates revealed that being disinterested and unconcerned about the truth, or a passive acceptance of opinion (*doxa*) in which a political reality is rooted, causes society to become vulnerable and open to tyrannical rule: ‘[Socrates] revealing of others’ ignorance is based on revealing their secret dispositions for tyranny. Athenian democracy is in fact, eaten through with the poison of tyrannical learnings.’⁵⁴⁷ Although Socrates was, above all, a philosopher who did not take political action, his philosophical method significantly impacted the political realm.

Hannah Arendt examines the relationship between politics and philosophy in Socrates’ teaching, observing that he does not emphasise political action as much as he stresses thought – philosophy itself: ‘The underlying assumption of this teaching is thought and not action, because only in thought can the dialogue of the two-in-one be realised.’⁵⁴⁸ Socrates calls for the importance of thought and philosophy to be recognised, because only thought (not action), can reveal the truth about phenomena. The search for truth reveals what is supposed to remain hidden and destroys ‘the specific political reality of the citizens’.⁵⁴⁹ Therefore, it is thoughts (not actions) that undermine and shake the illusionary character of the political reality and reveal the political reality as it is. Socrates ascribes dominance to philosophy and not to political action. He aims to ‘make philosophy relevant for the polis’.⁵⁵⁰ His ambition is not to demonstrate ‘how philosophy looks

⁵⁴⁶Patočka, ‘Platón a Evropa’, p. 337; *Plato and Europe*, p. 207.

⁵⁴⁷Ibid., p. 223; Ibid., p. 85.

⁵⁴⁸Hannah Arendt, ‘Socrates’, in *The Promise of Politics*, ed. by Jerome Kohn (New York: Schocken Books, 2005), pp. 5–39 (p. 23).

⁵⁴⁹Ibid., p. 25.

⁵⁵⁰Ibid., p. 26.

from the viewpoint of politics, but how politics, the realm of human affairs, looks from the viewpoint of philosophy.⁵⁵¹ The ambition of Socrates is to ‘discover in the realm of philosophy those standards, which are appropriate for a city.’⁵⁵²

However, the aim of Socrates, in this respect, is not to transform the city radically through a political *coup d'état*. Instead, he aims to *improve* the city, to implement those philosophical standards and values that guarantee freedom for their citizens and philosophers, to create a city where philosophers would be left alone and their freedom to think would be protected by the authorities of the state.⁵⁵³

ii Care for the Soul as the Solution to the Crisis

Patočka speaks about the relevance of care for the soul in the city, arguing that the concept aims to create a city, a community, in which freedom and justice are at its very centre. Similar to Arendt, Patočka calls for a society, a state, in which people are not persecuted for their ideas, for their thoughts, for their efforts to express what they think, for their critical thinking, or for their criticism of political authorities.

Although Patočka analyses the Greek *polis* through the means of decontextualisation and the transference of these arguments, it is evident that he uses his examination of Socrates to criticise the political situation in Czechoslovakia. Patočka draws some parallels between the decline of the Ancient Greek *polis* and the spiritual crisis in Czechoslovakia. He claims that, in both cases, the citizens are, in a way, satisfied with the opinion regarding the political situation, which makes the political realm vulnerable to tyranny – in the modern case, to the rhetoric and apparent reality of the totalitarian communist regime. Patočka states that there is a lack of responsibility in both cases, not only because of ignorance and conformity among citizens, but also due to their fear of the political authorities.

Patočka believes that the higher, the eternal and virtuous (the care for the soul represents) is able to resist decline, to express one's disagreement with the situation one is

⁵⁵¹Ibid., p. 31.

⁵⁵²Ibid.

⁵⁵³‘The only thing that philosophers from then on wanted with respect to politics was to be left alone; and the only thing they demanded of government was protection for their freedom to think.’ Ibid., p. 26.

in and to challenge one's position and fate. As Findlay argues, Greek philosophy is 'a conscious decision no longer to accept life and its inevitable decline as simply given.'⁵⁵⁴ Greek philosophy with its ideal of the care for the soul teaches us to reject a life in decline.⁵⁵⁵ Greek philosophy and its relation to the eternal discovered human freedom,⁵⁵⁶ and this is where its significance resides. Care for the soul in the city strives for a free society. This simple expression of resistance and the effort to not accept things as they are plant the seeds of freedom. It is an act of resistance that, by having reached on something higher and something eternal, can improve the city.

Patočka speaks about the freedom of spirit that care for the soul provides. Without care for the soul, spiritual freedom would be unthinkable. '[T]he course of our lives [...] is determined by our pursuit of the higher movement or our capitulation to the lower.'⁵⁵⁷ A human being, so conceived, is faced with an opportunity to choose a mode of life. One can be either content with the lower (the decline), or say 'no!' to the lower and open oneself to eternity. The latter, however, is mediated only through the agency of care for the soul.

The freedom of care for the soul reveals the world as it truly is, in its full problematicity. However, what does that mean for a human being? Havel offers one answer in his essay 'The Power of the Powerless'.⁵⁵⁸ In the essay, he illustrates the example of the greengrocer, who lives a secure, non-problematic life, yet exists in a state of complete moral and spiritual decline. The greengrocer does not care for his soul. He fulfils the duty of an obedient citizen serving the ideology of communism, fulfilling its rituals regularly. Although the greengrocer does not agree with the ideology of communism, he performs all these rituals to live a secure and undisturbed life – to remain safe from the political authorities. Slavoj Žižek would even argue that the greengrocer is living a relatively happy life.⁵⁵⁹ Al-

⁵⁵⁴Findlay, *Caring for the Soul in a Postmodern Age*, p. 59.

⁵⁵⁵Ibid.

⁵⁵⁶Ibid.

⁵⁵⁷Ibid., p. 60.

⁵⁵⁸Václav Havel, 'The Power of the Powerless', in: *The Power of the Powerless, Citizens against the State in Central-eastern Europe*, ed. by John Keane (London & New York: Routledge, 2010), pp. 10-60 (p. 21).

⁵⁵⁹'In a country like Czechoslovakia in the late 1970s and 1980s, people actually were in a way happy. Three fundamental conditions of happiness were fulfilled there: 1. Their material needs were basically satisfied – not too well satisfied, since the excess of consumption can in itself generate unhappiness. It is good to experience a brief shortage of some goods on the market from time to time (no coffee for a couple of days, then no beef, then no TV sets): these brief periods of shortage functioned as exceptions,

though the life of a greengrocer is not the life of freedom and of one's moral integrity, it is what Milan Kundera would identify with his idea of the unbearable lightness⁵⁶⁰ – accepting a lack of meaning in one's existence for the sake of temporary pleasure, utility or simply for the sake of living a secure life, as it was the case of Havel's greengrocer. Care for the soul disturbs and shakes this unbearable lightness. To provide meaning to one's existence care for the soul burdens an individual with responsibility. Although life in care for the soul is the life in truth, it does not offer an easy way out. It is not a state in which pain and suffering disappear instantly. The freedom that care for the soul reveals does not grant happiness to a human being. What Patočka proposes through the ideal of care for the soul is the effort to step out of one's comfort zone, to live philosophically, as Socrates did – to live an authentic life in *problematicity*, with the burden of responsibility.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I examined Patočka's idea of the ethical within his philosophy, namely his two ethical categories – sacrifice and the care for the soul. I explained their origin and analysed their significance and relevance in the political realm. I argued that sacrifice, Patočka proposed in his philosophy, critically reacts to the techno-scientific reality of *Gestell* by reviving the lost access of a human being to the truth. I argued that as inspired by Socrates' teaching and his philosophical method of constant questioning, Patočka proposed a form of philosophical sacrifice, which entails an absolute openness to one's finiteness and one's possibility of death. This form of sacrifice entails a detachment from life, from the misleading perception that life is the highest value one can possess and replaces this assumption with the call to search for the truth instead.

which reminded people that they should be glad that such goods were generally available – if everything is available all the time, people take this availability as an evident fact of life and no longer appreciate their luck. Thus life went on in a regular and predictable way, without any great efforts or shocks; one was allowed to withdraw into one's own private world. 2. A second – extremely important – feature: there was the Other (the Party) to be blamed for everything that went wrong, so that one did not feel truly responsible – if there was a temporary shortage of some goods, even if a storm caused great damage, it was 'their' fault. 3. And last, but not least – there was an Other place (the consumerist West) which one was allowed to dream about, and even visit sometimes – this place was just at the right distance: not too far away, not too near. In: Slavoj Žižek, 'Happiness after September 11', in *Welcome to the Dessert of the Real: Five Essays on September 11 and Related Dates* (London and New York: Verso, 2002), pp. 58-82 (pp. 58-60).

⁵⁶⁰See: Milan Kundera, *The Unbearable Lightness of Being*, trans. by Michael Henry Heim (New York and London: Faber and Faber, 2000).

In this chapter, I aimed to portray the necessity of philosophical sacrifice in the political realm. I argued that the idea of philosophical sacrifice represents neither the heroic moment of self-immolation nor an act of rebellion against political authorities. Significance of the Socratic philosophical sacrifice resides in its being aligned with the truth. Sacrifice, Patočka proposes, strives for the truth, integrity of thought and critical insight – the aspects which are inevitable for the political realm as such.

I also argued that philosophical sacrifice does not do away with another ethical ideal, Patočka proposes – the care for the soul, the main aim of which is to search for the truth and critically question the world and all phenomena. Its political relevance resides, first of all, in its agency to undermine the opinion (*doxa*) and reveal the truth about phenomena. The care for the soul with its restless questioning, therefore, helps to reveal myths, untruth, and conspiracies within the political realm. It helps to reveal demagoguery, the rhetoric of populism and political decisions based on passions and emotions.

However, the ideal of the care for the soul was not necessary only in the times of the crisis of the Athenian polis and communist Czechoslovakia. Although in this chapter, I have to an extent questioned the relevance of the ethical principles of sacrifice and the care for the soul in the political realm, the fifth chapter will further develop their relevance concerning politics. I aim to decontextualise these ethical principles of sacrifice and the care for the soul from the environment of the Ancient Greek polis and communist Czechoslovakia and to translate these Patočka's abstract ideas into more concrete political terms. The last fifth chapter will aim to contextualise Patočka's ethical ideals of sacrifice and the care for the soul in the historico-political background in which the solidarity of the shaken emerged and to highlight that the community, Patočka proposes, is based on exclusively ethical principles, the central significance of which is to undermine and disturb the totality of the political realm. The analysis of Patočka's ethical principles in the political will helps us to understand better the characteristics of the solidarity of the shaken – its foundation, which is exclusively ethical, its aim and purpose.

Chapter 5

Solidarity of the Shaken: Ethical and Political Implications

Introduction

Although Patočka's philosophy centres mostly on the topics of phenomenology and the philosophy of history, much of his work throughout the 1970s – in which he reconstructs the concept of the solidarity of the shaken – comprises a clearly defined political philosophy, especially his writings examining Charter 77⁵⁶¹ and *Heretical Essays in the Philosophy of History*. He approaches this discipline from an unorthodox perspective, eschewing the examination of political establishments and spending little time extolling the virtues of democracy over totalitarianism. Instead, Patočka constructs his political philosophy around his asubjective phenomenology and the philosophy of history.

In his reconstruction of the solidarity of the shaken Patočka returns to the conditions of the First World War. He analyses the experience of the frontline, which represents the climax of the techno-scientific age. In his examination of the frontline experience, Patočka places great emphasis on the idea of strife (*ερίς*) and the interplay of opposites. He introduces the metaphors of day and night, examining the relationship between them. It

⁵⁶¹Jan Patočka, 'The Obligation to Resist Injustice', in Erazim V. Kohák, *Jan Patočka: Philosophy and Selected Writings* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1989), pp. 340–342; Jan Patočka, 'What We Can and Cannot Expect from Charta 77', in Erazim V. Kohák, *Jan Patočka: Philosophy and Selected Writings* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1989), pp. 343–345.

is precisely this tension between opposites that becomes paramount in his reconstruction and understanding of his novel community – the solidarity of the shaken.

As discussed in the Introduction, Patočka does not offer any concise and detailed examination of the solidarity of the shaken. He explains neither how the solidarity of the shaken is constituted, nor what the aim of such a community would be regarding the political realm. Patočka mentions the concept only five times throughout his entire scholarly career, and so leaves his readers with only a few, enigmatic indications and puzzling traits. It is unknown whether Patočka was planning to develop the concept further, nor whether he would have if not for his unexpected martyr's death, which left him with no chance to fully clarify the key idea of his emerging political philosophy.

This chapter reconstructs the concept of the solidarity of the shaken, contextualising it within not only the historical circumstances in which it emerged, but also regarding the contemporary political philosophical discourse. Setting the solidarity of the shaken in the conditions of the frontline trenches suggests that Patočka aimed to offer an alternative to the sinister forms of political communities that were emerging in inter-war and post-war Europe. Therefore, the argument is that Patočka not only realised the significance, power and agency of a political community, he also portrayed solidarity in a positive light, clear of all the sinister connotations it obtained in inter-war and post-war Europe. It is difficult to predict how the idea of the solidarity of the shaken would have developed further. Regardless, it appears that the concept is increasingly and strikingly relevant today, when far-right movements are growing across Europe, when truth is replaced with conspiracies and lies, and when xenophobic, homophobic and anti-Semitic/Islamophobic opinions are widely accepted by the masses.

The first part of this chapter critically assesses Patočka's definition of the solidarity of the shaken. However, due to the missing definition, the focus is on the reconstruction of the solidarity of the shaken, examining the key concepts that Patočka associates with the community - struggle (*polemos*), Force, resistance and history. The aim is to examine all these counter-definitions that Patočka introduces in his final *Heretical Essay*, and to design a mosaic that creates a coherent image of the solidarity of the shaken.

The second part of the chapter focuses on the background of the solidarity of the

shaken, including the historico-political context from which the community emerged. As Patočka set the solidarity of the shaken in the First World War frontline trenches, the phenomenon of the frontline is analysed, and the events that immediately followed the First World War frontline experience are examined. The aim is not to offer a historical analysis but to develop further the idea of the frontline experience and to focus on the metaphors of day and night and their role in this particular historical situation. The second part of the chapter concentrates on the concept of the community that the frontline experience created in post-First World War Europe.

This chapter formulates two main arguments. First, the analysis of Patočka's definition reveals the necessity of ethics in the realm of the political. Reading his analysis of the solidarity of the shaken, it is evident that the concept is, primarily, an ethical project; ethics serves as a tool to undermine, shake and disturb the totality of the political realm. Second, the focus on the Conservative Revolution and National Socialism illustrates further characteristic features of the solidarity of the shaken. This particular historical context helps to understand the concept of *the political* in Patočka's philosophy. With the solidarity of the shaken, he proposes a concept of the political that is in line with ideas of *agonism (agonistic model of democracy)*,⁵⁶² as opposed to Schmitt's idea of *antagonism*.⁵⁶³ The intention is to decontextualise the concept from both the conditions of German Nazism and Czechoslovak communism, and to question the relevance of the concept today.

I The Solidarity of the Shaken

i War and the Frontline Experience

Patočka takes a historically specific experience of the First World War frontline and portrays it as an event of cosmic magnitude that could have changed the course of history:

The First World War provoked a whole range of explanations among us, reflecting the effort of humans to comprehend this immense event, transcending any individ-

⁵⁶²The concept of agonistic model of democracy is examined by Chantal Mouffe. See e.g.: Mouffe, *Democratic Paradox*, p. 102; Mouffe, 'Deliberative Democracy', pp. 745-758.

⁵⁶³Schmitt, *The Concept of the Political*, p. 29.

ual, carried out by humans and yet transcending humankind – a process in some sense cosmic.⁵⁶⁴

Although Patočka speaks about the historical significance of the First World War, intentionally, in his reconstruction of the solidarity of the shaken, he does not refer to the abstract concept of war. Instead, he focuses on the *experience* of war – the frontline.

Patočka argues that the solidarity of the shaken emerged out of the frontline trenches. This community was constituted in the conditions of the frontline and through one's loyalty to the experience. The First World War frontline experience, therefore, has, for Patočka, an immense significance. On the one hand, Patočka sees the frontline experience as a moment in which techno-science reaches its peak. On the other hand, the frontline experience has for Patočka a more symbolic, metaphorical meaning. As Ricoeur argues, for Patočka, the frontline experience is 'capable of leading humankind out of war into a true peace'.⁵⁶⁵ The frontline experience is an absolute experience:⁵⁶⁶ 'The grandiose, profound experience of the front with its line of fire consists in its evocation of the night in all its urgency and undeniability.'⁵⁶⁷ The frontline experience cannot be read literally; instead, it represents a universal image, a proto-form upon which Patočka explains his philosophy of history, stretching from an experience of political violence to the movement of history. He explains how and by what means an experience of political violence can be overcome, and what the foundations of a political community might potentially be.

In his examination of the frontline experience, Patočka distinguishes between two realms – day and night. Surprisingly, by day, Patočka refers to a realm that is misleading. Day is the world of appearances – how things look on their surface only. The night, on the other hand, from the phenomenological perspective, is the realm with rather positive connotations. Night represents the realm of the truth; it reveals things as they are. The

⁵⁶⁴'První světová válka vyvolala u nás celou řadu výkladů, které obrážely snahu lidí pochopit toto obrovské, každého přesahující dění, lidmi nesené, a přece lidstvo přesahující – dění nějak kosmické.' In: Patočka, 'Kacířské eseje', p. 117; *Heretical Essays*, p. 119.

⁵⁶⁵Paul Ricoeur, 'Preface to French Edition of Jan Patočka's *Heretical Essays*', in: Jan Patočka, *Heretical Essays in the Philosophy of History*, trans. by Erazim Kohák (Chicago and La Salle, Illinois: Open Court, 1996), pp. vii – xvi (p. xv).

⁵⁶⁶'Zkušenost fronty však je zkušenost absolutní.' In: Patočka, 'Kacířské eseje', p. 125; *Heretical Essays*', p. 129.

⁵⁶⁷'Veliká, hluboká zkušenost fronty s její linií ohně spočívá však v tom, že vyvolává noc s její naléhavostí a nezanedbatelností.' *Ibid.*

concepts of war and the frontline experience, through the lens of Patočka's night and day dialectics, emerge in a different light. The general concept of war is linked to the realm of the day; whereas, the frontline experience belongs to the realm of the night. War is a general concept one observes from a distant and disinterested perspective. The frontline experience, in contrast, brings us to the very epicentre of the war. The frontline captures war in its truthful and authentic manifestation, with its horrors, frights and existential battles.

This chapter argues that, although Patočka's metaphors may be reminiscent of the rhetoric used by sinister philosophies of national solidarity (e.g. *Frontgemeinschaft* or *Volksgemeinschaft*); he uses these abstractions to point to an alternative. His aim is to reveal how these precarious conditions can be utilised and overcome for the sake of the further development of history.

ii *Dialectics of Day and Night*

The frontline experience represents, in Patočka's work, the darkest nocturnal experience: 'The grandiose, profound experience of the front with its line of fire consists in its evocation of the night in all its urgency and undeniability.'⁵⁶⁸ The frontline experience, as an experience of the night, is separated from everyday reality and hidden from the sight of ordinary people. In the nocturnal experience, the reality of the day is turned upside down. The frontline represents a different reality, in which anything becomes possible, in which the realm of absolute freedom manifests itself in its fullness.

In his characterising of the frontline experience, Patočka follows Teilhard, who regards the frontline as 'freedom from all the interest of peace, of life, of the day.'⁵⁶⁹ The frontline experience 'liberates' us from the burden of the day, from all misleading aspects that the day presents to us – the illusion of peace⁵⁷⁰, our being preoccupied with our day-to-day existence and as such, the frontline experience reveals a profound depth to

⁵⁶⁸'Veliká, hluboká zkušenost fronty s její linií ohně spočívá však v tom, že vyvolává noc s její naléhavostí a nezanedbatelností.' In: Patočka, 'Kacířské eseje', p. 125; *Heretical Essays*, p. 129.

⁵⁶⁹'svoboda od všech zájmů míru, života, dne.' Ibid.

⁵⁷⁰Patočka believes that after the First and the Second World War Europe existed in a condition that looked like peace but in reality, was a state of an ongoing war awaiting its next violent outburst: 'Vítězný mír je iluzí, v níž se vítěz mravně rozkládá, a [...] válka trvá [...]' Ibid., p. 124; 'A victorious peace is an illusion in which the victor morally disintegrates. The war evidently goes [...]' Ibid., p. 127.

our existence.

Patočka points out that the experience of the frontline requires one to be personally involved in it in order to be transformed by it. The frontline experience is unimaginable to people immersed in their everydayness. A disinterested observer⁵⁷¹ can neither imagine the true horror of the frontline trenches, nor truly empathise with its participants (victims), unless they experience it themselves.

How do the day, life, peace, govern all individuals, their bodies and souls? By means of death; by threatening life. From the perspective of the day life is, for all individuals, everything, the highest value that exists for them. For the forces of the day, conversely, death does not exist, they function as if there was no death, or, as noted, they plan death impersonally and statistically, as if it were merely a reassignment of roles.⁵⁷²

In *Heretical Essays*, Patočka analyses the metaphors of day and night. He considers the light and the everydayness to be misleading and illusionary. The day is only a tool of biopolitics, through which individuals and communities are manipulated. Conversely, Patočka celebrates the night, arguing, ‘yet in the depth of that experience there is something deeply and mysteriously positive’.⁵⁷³

Everydayness is linked with the idea of peace,⁵⁷⁴ which was a mere illusion for Patočka living in the 1970s during the Cold War in communist Czechoslovakia. Moreover, the illusion of a perfect political system that the Communist Party aimed to create did not, in any way, reflect the reality of the regime. At the same time, he states how difficult it is to ‘break free of the rule of peace, of the day, of life in a mode that excludes death and closes its eyes before it, can never free themselves of war’.⁵⁷⁵ The experience of the night (the frontline), therefore, represents an opportunity to break with the everydayness. Night signifies the moment of rupture, which shakes the day and everydayness and points to their illusionary character. The night reveals the truth about the day and exposes

⁵⁷¹‘nezaujat[ý] divák[...].’ Ibid., p. 100; Ibid., p. 98.

⁵⁷²‘Jak vládne den, život, mír nad každým jednotlivcem, nad jeho tělem a duší? Pomocí smrti, ohrožením života. Z hlediska dne je pro jednotlivce život vším, je nejvyšší hodnotou, která proň existuje. Pro síly dne naopak smrt neexistuje, ty si počínají jako by jí nebylo, či, jak bylo řečeno, plánují smrt distancovaně a statistic, jako by znamenala pouhou výměnu ve funkcích.’ Ibid, p. 125; Ibid., p. 129.

⁵⁷³‘[A]le v jejím prožitku je na dně něco hluboce a záhadně pozitivního.’ Ibid, p. 122; Ibid., p. 126.

⁵⁷⁴Ibid, p. 125; Ibid., p. 129.

⁵⁷⁵‘Není možno zbavit se války tomu, kdo se nezbaví vlády míru, dne, života v té podobě, která vynechává smrt a zavírá před ní oči.’ Ibid.

the truth about the situation. Although it may seem too violent and too unpleasant, the moment of the night and its shaking are necessary as they open up a realm of freedom that allows for new possibilities and subjectivities.

Patočka's strong emphasis on the night may appear to be puzzling and disturbing. Patočka's metaphor of the frontline experience as night may suggest that he celebrates war and violence, and that the breakthrough of history can be achieved only through means of violence. His choice of these concepts brings him close to other thinkers of his time – such as Jünger⁵⁷⁶ or Heidegger⁵⁷⁷ – who promoted the idea of National Socialism in the inter-war period. The celebration of night carries strong, negative connotations linked with the discourse of National Socialism, both on the emblematic, symbolic level and also on the concrete, historical level. On the symbolic level, one can observe the necessity of the night in seizing the new, brighter day. Living through the night is inevitable to be able to greet the dawn, to see the great rise of history and the new beginning. On the historical level, it was precisely the night that contributed to the success and rise of the ideology of National Socialism – be it the Night of the Long Knives (*Nacht der langen Messer*) in 1934, or the Night of Broken Glass (*Kristallnacht*) in 1938, events that can be perceived as 'the periods of National Socialist domination on the attitudes to the night'.⁵⁷⁸ The night in National Socialism represents events that are meant to be kept secret, hidden from the sight of ordinary people, and yet which represent the true reality of the regime. Revolution happens at night. The National Socialists were well aware that the night entails immense vulnerability. They were aware also of the uncertainty and contingency of their actions (or better, crimes) and the excitement that the night trembles with. The night, therefore, is not used only as an innocent metaphor to praise National Socialism as a dawn, as the first appearance of light that heralds a new, bright and positive future for the nation.⁵⁷⁹

⁵⁷⁶Here I mean the ideas of machination, domination and form. See: Jünger, *The Worker*; Jünger, *Storm of Steel*.

⁵⁷⁷Martin Heidegger, *Ponderings II–VI: Black Notebooks 1931–1938*, trans. by Richard Rojcewicz (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 2016).

⁵⁷⁸Joachim Schlör, *Nights in the Big City: Paris, Berlin, London 1840–1930* (London: Reaktion Books, 1998), p. 280.

⁵⁷⁹This also brings to mind the contemporary, ultra-nationalist, and far-right Neo-Nazi party in Greece – Golden Dawn. They use the same rhetoric.

To think that Patočka, in his celebration of the night, praises a particular political regime or approves achieving ends employing means of violence would be a mistake. However, his great fascination with the night is undeniable. Patočka is aware of the significance of the realm of the nocturnal and of its potential. It is precisely in the night – in the realm of absolute freedom – and not in the day that the solidarity of the shaken is constituted. It is in the critical frontline battle and its existential struggle, and not in secure everydayness and its illusionary peace, that the community is united.

iii Polemos

Patočka links the solidarity of the shaken with another concept – *polemos*. He interprets Heraclitus' famous Fragment 53, which is as follows: 'War [*polemos*] is both father of all and king of all: it reveals the gods on the one hand and humans on the other, makes slaves on the one hand, the free on the other.'⁵⁸⁰ Initially, it may seem that Heraclitus, in Fragment 53, celebrates and urges us to war (*polemos*). He seems to argue that war is a father (a creator) of everything, and a king (a governor) of all things. Heraclitus seems to suggest that the power of war creates and governs, and that all things emerge from and are ruled by war.

There is another striking aspect of Fragment 53. Heraclitus suggests that war crystallises new social relationships. He reveals how war organically and naturally re-organises society into a new hierarchy, in which the strongest, the winners, become free, and the defeated become slaves. Heraclitus suggests that the foundation of this social hierarchy has a violent nature. It is from violence that all things originate and by which all things are governed. The social hierarchy he speaks about in Fragment 53 is constituted out of violence, on the principle of natural selection. Heraclitus' Fragment 53, therefore, appears puzzling, as it not only evokes a Nazi glorification of a strife (*επις*), but also the ideas of natural selection and social Darwinism, in which only the strongest individuals become free, and all others become enslaved.

In his book *Heidegger's Polemos: From Being to Politics*, Gregory Fried invites us to re-read Heraclitus' Fragment 53 along different lines. He focuses on Heidegger's inter-

⁵⁸⁰Fried, *Heidegger's Polemos*, p. 29.

pretation of *polemos* as it appears in his works.⁵⁸¹ According to Fried, the key concept for understanding the fragment is the ‘cosmological principle of strife [ερις] – that is, a principle that explains the origin and dispensation of the worlds. Here Heraclitus asks his reader to imagine this *polemos* with a wider meaning, as something that is general, or common, to all things that come to be.’⁵⁸² Fried reinterprets Heraclitus’ Fragment 53 along Heidegger’s lines. Heidegger distances himself from all ambiguous connotations of *polemos*. Instead, he argues that Heraclitus, by *polemos*, neither refers to war in its primary sense, nor does he speak about *polemos* as the spirit of war. *Polemos* is the strife, the unity of opposites, which is the most essential and fundamental ‘principle operative in the world as [Heraclitus] sees it’.⁵⁸³ The whole point of Fragment 53 is, therefore, not to celebrate war but to capture the strife, the main principle of opposites in a unity: ‘Opposition is necessary to the cosmos, for without it, the bow is unstrung; things united in the hidden harmony of conflict lose their very definition when that strife ceases.’⁵⁸⁴

Following Fried’s analysis, Heraclitus presents *polemos* in Fragment 53 as being a foundation of order in the world.⁵⁸⁵ *Polemos* is not reduced to war. Heraclitus’s emphasis on philosophical strife and the unity of opposites makes *polemos* a metaphysical concept.⁵⁸⁶ *Polemos* represents an element that is beyond things and is both ‘destructive and productive’.⁵⁸⁷ Patočka describes *polemos* as the law of war, which is the foundation of everything human. He is indebted to Heidegger’s interpretation of *polemos* as the principle from which all things originate:

At the dawn of history, Heraclitus of Ephesus formulated his idea of war as the divine law which sustains all human life. He did not mean thereby war as the expansion of ‘life’ but as the preponderance of the Night, of the will to freedom of risk in the aristeia, holding one’s own at the limit of human possibilities, which the best choose when they opt for lasting fame in memory of mortals in exchange for an ephemeral prolongation of a comfortable life.⁵⁸⁸

⁵⁸¹Heidegger examines *polemos* in *Being and Time* (1927), ‘The Self-Assertion of the German University and The Rectorate 1933/34: Facts and Thoughts’, Hölderlin’s Hymns ‘Germania’ and ‘The Rhine’ (1934/1935) and later in his *Introduction to Metaphysics* (1953).

⁵⁸²Fried, *Heidegger’s Polemos*, p. 24.

⁵⁸³Ibid., p. 22.

⁵⁸⁴Ibid., p. 23.

⁵⁸⁵Ibid., p. 25.

⁵⁸⁶Ibid., p. 23.

⁵⁸⁷Ibid., p. 25.

⁵⁸⁸Na počátku dějin formuloval Hérakleitos z Efesu svou myšlenku o válce jako tom božském zákonu,

War as *polemos*, however, does not mean a tool of the expansion of human life. Instead, war as *polemos* means to acknowledge the night and the openness to the realm of the nocturnal. Patočka regards *polemos* as openness to war. However, he does not mean a war in its primary sense; rather, he conceives of *polemos* as ‘a new war, the war against war’,⁵⁸⁹ as means by which the state of the crisis and nihilism could be resisted and eventually overcome.

War as *polemos* reveals the world to be problematic and leads to the realisation that, to see the world as it really is, and not only as a sum of misleading appearances, one needs to step out of one’s everydayness and one’s comfortable life and step into the realm of the nocturnal: ‘life leans out into the night, into struggle and death.’⁵⁹⁰ This movement of stepping from the day to the night means to become exposed to freedom, which does not expel risk. Patočka undermines any negative connotations that Heraclitus’ understanding of *polemos* in Fragment 53 may carry and regards *polemos* as a power that is exclusively uniting:

Polemos is not a destructive passion of a wild brigand but is, rather, the creator of unity. The unity it founds is more profound than any ephemeral sympathy or coalition of interest; adversaries meet in the shaking of a given meaning, and so create a new way of being human – perhaps the only mode that offers hope amid the storm of the world: the unity of the shaken, but undaunted.⁵⁹¹

Patočka highlights the significance of the power of *polemos* in the political realm. He supports this argument even further when, in his *Heretical Essays*, he argues that ‘[p]olemos is at the same time that which constitutes the *polis* and the primordial insight that makes philosophy possible’.⁵⁹² Patočka links *polemos* with the solidarity of the shaken and argues that the unity *polemos* creates is a coalition that is not based on identity, mutual sympathy or based on commonly shared interests between adversaries. The adversaries

z něhož se živí všechno lidské. Nemyslil tím válku ve významu expanze, ‘života’, nýbrž jako převahu Noci, onu vůli k svobodě rizika v té *ἀριστεία*, tom ukázaní se dobrým na hranici lidských možností, kterou volí ti nejlepší, když se rozhodují pro trvajícím proslulost v paměti smrtelníků výměnou za efermní prodloužení pohodlného života.’ In: Patočka, ‘Kacířské eseje’, p. 130; *Heretical Essays*, p. 136.

⁵⁸⁹ ‘nové války, války proti válce.’ Ibid, p. 123; Ibid., p. 127.

⁵⁹⁰ ‘vykloněnost života do noci’ Ibid, p. 127; Ibid., p. 131.

⁵⁹¹ ‘Πόλεμος není pustošivá vášně divokého nájezdníka, nýbrž je tvůrce jednoty. Jednota jím založená je hlubší než každá efermní sympatie a zájmová koalice; v otřesenosti daného smyslu se setkávají protivníci a tvoří tím nový způsob bytí člověka – možná ten jediný, který v bouři světa poskytuje naději: jednotu otřesených, ale neohrožených.’ In: Patočka, ‘Kacířské eseje’, p. 54; *Heretical Essays*, p. 43.

⁵⁹² ‘Πόλεμος je tedy zároveň to, co tvoří obec, pranahlédnutí, které umožňuje filosofii.’ Ibid.

in the frontline trenches, according to Patočka, do not unite because of their commonly shared sympathy and interest. There is something more profound happening. In the solidarity of the shaken, the adversaries meet in the conditions of the frontline and undergo an experience of the shaking – the considerable disappointment and witness the bestowal of a new meaning. War as *polemos*, therefore, reveals that adversaries actually belong together, that they are connected in their very vulnerability and finiteness. Patočka argues that *polemos*, thanks to its nature, can create unity within difference. *Polemos* so conceived represents, for Patočka, a necessary democratic principle that supports difference, the power of *demos* and equips seemingly powerless groups and communities with hope.⁵⁹³

War can show that among the free some are capable of becoming gods of touching the divinity of that which forms the ultimate unity and mystery of being. Those, though, are the ones who understand that *polemos* is nothing one-sided, that it does not divide but unites, that adversaries are only seemingly whole, that in reality they belong to each other in the common shaking of the everyday, that they have thus touched that which lasts in everything and forever because it is the source of all being and is thus divine.⁵⁹⁴

Towards the very end of his *Heretical Essays*, Patočka interprets Heraclitus' puzzling passage from Fragment 53: 'it reveals gods on the one hand and humans on the other, makes slaves on the one hand, the free on the other.'⁵⁹⁵ Similar to Heraclitus, Patočka argues that war (as *polemos*) has the capacity to differentiate between gods and slaves. Patočka neither supports interpretations that claim war crystallises a new social hierarchy of the winners and the defeated, nor does he metaphorically refer to the problem of mortality in the sense that those who died in the battle touched divinity. In his quote, Patočka draws

⁵⁹³Patočka's claim that *polemos* is a creator of unity in difference can be understood as his attempt to overcome the Schmittian understanding of the *political* as the friend-enemy opposition. Patočka refers implicitly to the concept of *camaraderie*, which is also introduced by Jünger (in his work *Storm of Steel*). Patočka argues that the solidarity of the shaken is the community which transcends identity, sympathy, shared experience and interest. The solidarity of the shaken is the community of those, who understand that even the enemy is connected to them in the very moment of the shaking, the frontline experience mediates.

⁵⁹⁴'Válka je s to ukázat, že mezi svobodnými někteří jsou s to stát se bohy, dotknout se božství, toho totiž, co tvoří poslední jednotu a tajemství bytí. To jsou však ti, kteří chápou, že *πόλεμος* není nic jednostranného, že nerozděluje, nýbrž spojuje, že nepřátelé jsou jen zdánlivě cizí, ve skutečnosti, že patří k sobě ve společném otřesu všedního dne; že se tak dotkli toho, co ve všem všady a na věky trvá, protože je pramenem všeho jsoucna, co tedy je božské.' In: Patočka, 'Kacířské eseje', p. 131; *Heretical Essays*, p. 136.

⁵⁹⁵Fried, *Heidegger's Polemos*, p. 21; 'War, as father of all things, and king, names few to serve as gods, and of the rest makes these men slaves, those free.' In: Heraclitus, *Fragments*, p. 29.

a distinction between those who understand the principle of *polemos* and those who do not. What does Patočka mean by this distinction, and what social distinction does this lead to? Those who understand *polemos* recognise that, in the conditions of the front-line, adversaries belong together. What is actually happening on the battlefield is that both friend and enemy are shaking off their illusions and the meaning that they (prior to the frontline experience) used to take for granted. Those who understand *polemos* do not see the world along old lines of friend and enemy; instead, they are capable of seeing the world as *polemos*, where everything is problematic. Therefore, using Patočka's language, those who understand *polemos* are free, and they do not cling to everydayness and the old distinctions of 'friend' and 'enemy'. Instead, they are capable of overcoming this view and of embracing the solidarity of the shaken. In contrast to this position are those who, despite the shaking that the frontline experience triggers, are entrapped in the meaninglessness of everydayness and are, thus, enslaved.

That is the same sentiment, the same vision which Teilhard sees before him when he experiences the superhuman divine at the front line. And Jünger writes at one place that the combatants in an attack become two parts of a single force, fusing into a single body, and adds: 'Into a single body – an odd comparison. Whoever understands it affirms both self and the enemy, lives at once in the whole and in the part. [...]' – Is it an accident that two of the most profound thinkers of the front line experience, so different in respects, arrive independently at comparisons that revive Heraclitus' vision of being as *polemos*? Or does something open up to us therein of the meaning of the history of western humanity which will not be denied and which today is becoming the meaning of human history as such?⁵⁹⁶

Towards the very end of the final *Heretical Essay*, Patočka argues that Teilhard and Jünger did discover the power of *polemos* in their own analyses of the frontline experience. However, Patočka concludes that both Teilhard and Jünger had seen and perhaps even understood *polemos*; yet, it did not become a directive principle of the further movement of history. In the cases of Teilhard and Jünger, *polemos* remained at the level of an unfulfilled

⁵⁹⁶“To je týž cit a táž vize, ktorou má pred sebou Teilhard, když na frontě prožívá nadlidské božské. A Jünger hovoří na jednom místě o tom, že bojující se stávají v útoku dvěma částmi jedné síly, splývající v jediné těleso, a dodává: ‘V jedno těleso přirovnání zvláštního druhu. Kdo tomu rozumí, schvaluje sebe i nepřítele, žije zároveň v celku i částech. Ten si pak může myslet božstvo, které si nechává tato pestrá vlákna klouzat mezi prsty – s úsměvavými ústy.’ - Je náhoda, že dva z nejhlubších uvažovatelů frontového zážitku, jinak tak hluboce odlišní, přicházejí sami od sebe na příměry, které obnovují Herakleitovu vizi bytí jako πόλεμος? Nebo se v tom otvírá něco z neodbytného smyslu dějin západního lidstva, který se dnes stává smyslem dějin člověka vůbec?’ In: Patočka, ‘Kacířské eseje’, p. 131; *Heretical Essays*, pp. 136-137.

promise, despite its potential and agency, has not become the meaning of human history as yet. Neither Teilhard nor Jünger, despite their discovery of *polemos* in the conditions of the frontline, based their philosophies of history on this principle. Instead, as already discussed in details in Chapter 2, Teilhard subsumed to metaphysics and passive nihilism by regarding *polemos* as a Christian divine law. Jünger preferred to extend *polemos* to lay the foundation of the idea of Conservative Revolution, which further developed in the politics of National Socialism.

In his formulation of the concept of *polemos*, Patočka is influenced also by Heidegger's interpretation of Heraclitus's Fragment 53.⁵⁹⁷ Heidegger (and Patočka adopts this idea of his) argues that *polemos* represents strife: 'that holds sway before everything divine and human, not war in the human sense.'⁵⁹⁸ Heidegger's understanding of the concept of *polemos*, however, develops throughout his scholarship. Except for some minor references to the concept, Heidegger offers his extensive analysis in *Being and Time* (1927). He translates *polemos* as strife (εἰς) and struggle (*Kampf*). In his own translation of Fragment 53, he replaces the word 'things' with 'being'; thus, laying the foundations of ontology.⁵⁹⁹ In the book, Heidegger examines another of Heraclitus' fragments (Fragment 1)⁶⁰⁰ and concludes that *polemos* is identical to the concept of *logos* (λόγος)⁶⁰¹ – namely, that strife (or the power of *polemos*) does not separate; rather, it unites opposing parties. Moreover, Heidegger introduces the concept of truth as *unconcealment* – *alētheia* (ἀλήθεια)⁶⁰² – which is crucial for Patočka's philosophy of history. Both these aspects (*logos* and truth as *alētheia*), which appeared in Heidegger's work as early as 1927, resonate in Patočka's writings and his interpretations of *polemos*.

In Heidegger's *Being and Time*, the concept of *polemos* lays the foundation for both

⁵⁹⁷'War is both father of all and king of all: it reveals the gods on the one hand and humans on the other, makes slaves on the one hand, the free on the other.' In: Heidegger, *Nature, History, State*, p. 159.

⁵⁹⁸Heidegger, *Introduction to Metaphysics*, p. 67.

⁵⁹⁹Fried, *Heidegger's Polemos*, p. 30.

⁶⁰⁰'Though this word is true evermore, yet men are as unable to understand it when they hear it for the first time as before they have heard it at all. For, though all things come to pass in accordance with this Word, men seem as if they had no experience of them, when they make trial of words and deeds such as I set forth, dividing each thing according to its kind and showing how it truly is. But other men know not what they are doing when awake, even as they forget what they do in sleep.' In: Heraclitus, *Fragments*, p. 36.

⁶⁰¹Heidegger, *Being and Time*, p. 211.

⁶⁰²Ibid.

politics and the idea of community. Nevertheless, the concept is exceptionally problematic because it formed the foundation for the politics of National Socialism (Heidegger was an active supporter) and because it embodied the unifying element of the German national community of the *Volk* (*das Volk*). In his 'Rector's Speech', Heidegger addresses the younger generations. He is not only criticising bourgeois society, but also pointing to the tradition as being dead. Heidegger intends here to create an academic community of young individuals willing to conduct an intellectual revolution and to carry the burden of one's fate and history.⁶⁰³ Heidegger not only dreams about the breakthrough of history; he has a clear idea of who will carry out this historical change. He speaks about the German national community of the *Volk* (*das Volk*). However, for Heidegger, 'the Volk is not to be defined racially-biologically'.⁶⁰⁴ He has in mind the German *Volk*, comprised of German intelligentsia from universities.

Although Patočka's solidarity of the shaken is constituted by the power of *polemos*, it represents a community that is very different from (if not opposed to) Heidegger's idea of the *Volk*. Both thinkers agree that *polemos* is a power that destroys old meaning and, yet, is capable of creating new meaning as well. However, while Heidegger speaks about the power of *polemos* that, through struggle, creates a strictly national community of Germans, Patočka's view of *polemos* is more radical compared with Heidegger's. Unlike Heidegger, Patočka distances himself from the ideas of national identity and resemblance. Patočka's community as the solidarity of the shaken is open to everyone, regardless of their racial, national, religious and gender affiliation. *Polemos*, for Patočka, represents a power that destroys all old meaning (including the nationalist pathos) in the very conditions of the shaking. The community Patočka proposes is founded on *polemos* and its nature of being problematic. The solidarity of the shaken takes its shape through a simple understanding that things might be different than we expect them to be, that they might be problematic.

To extend the argument that Heidegger's idea of the *Volk* is strictly nationalistic

⁶⁰³Heidegger, 'The Self-Assertion of the German University and The Rectorate 1933/34: Facts and Thoughts', p. 470.

⁶⁰⁴Gregory Fried, 'The King Is Dead: Heidegger's 'Black Notebooks'', *Reading Heidegger's Black Notebooks 1931-1941*, ed. by Ingo Farin and Jeff Malpas (Cambridge, MA and London: MIT Press, 2016), pp. 45-59 (p. 50).

– celebrating the German nation as a salvific community that will carry out the idea of history – we can turn to Heidegger’s other explorations of *polemos*. In his Hölderlin’s lectures (1934/35), Heidegger turns to Hölderlin ‘for insight into the destiny of the German people’⁶⁰⁵ due to his conviction that ‘[Hölderlin] has not yet become a force in the history of our people’⁶⁰⁶ (meaning the German *Volk*). Heidegger regards Hölderlin as a poet who was also deeply inspired by Heraclitus’ idea of strife, which stems from the unity of opposites. Reading Fragment 53, Heidegger argues that *polemos* as strife (*ερίς*) is foundational for the authentic, historically rooted community – *das Volk*. Heidegger examines Fragment 80⁶⁰⁷ and Fragment 67 also,⁶⁰⁸ focusing on Heraclitus’ motif of *panta rhei* (as everything flows), concluding:

This [panta rhei] does not mean that everything is continually in a process of change and without subsistence, but rather that you cannot take up position on any one side alone, but will be carried through strife as conflict, to the opposite side.⁶⁰⁹

According to Fried, in his Hölderlin’s essays, Heidegger is seeking ‘a new language for political community’.⁶¹⁰ The language Heidegger proposes, however, escapes ‘the liberal conception of citizenship, civil society’⁶¹¹ that Heidegger associates with the ‘homogenization occasioned by the history of metaphysics and the crisis of nihilism.’⁶¹²

During this period, Heidegger translated the Greek *polemos* into German using two terms: *Kampf* (struggle) and *Streit* (strife).⁶¹³ Later, Heidegger distanced himself from these interpretations of *polemos* that evoked a Nazi narrative. In his work, *Introduction*

⁶⁰⁵Fried, *Heidegger’s Polemos*, pp. 28-29.

⁶⁰⁶Martin Heidegger, *Hölderlin’s Hymns ‘Germania’ and ‘The Rhine’*, trans. by William McNeill and Julia Anne Ireland (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 2014), p. 195.

⁶⁰⁷‘Yet there is need to know: battle is constantly there participating [in all beings], and therefore ‘right’ is nothing other than strife, and all beings that come into being are by way of strife and necessity.’ In: Heidegger, *Hölderlin’s Hymns*, p. 113; ‘We must know that war is common to all and strife is justice, and that all things come into being and pass away through strife.’ In: John Burnet, *Early Greek Philosophy*, 3rd edn (London: A & C Black, 1920), p. 137.

⁶⁰⁸‘The God is day and night, winter and summer, war and peace, satiety and hunger; he changes however like fire; every time the latter is mixed with incense it is named [which means: it is] according to the scent [of the incense] at that time.’ In: Heidegger, *Hölderlin’s Hymns*, p. 113; ‘By cosmic rule, as day yields night, so winter summer, war peace, plenty famine. All things change. Fire penetrates the lump of myrrh, until the joining bodies die and rise again in smoke called incense.’ In: Heraclitus, *Fragments*, p. 25.

⁶⁰⁹Heidegger, *Hölderlin’s Hymns*, p. 113.

⁶¹⁰Fried, *Heidegger’s Polemos*, p. 29.

⁶¹¹Ibid.

⁶¹²Ibid.

⁶¹³Ibid., p. 30.

to *Metaphysics* (1953), Heidegger focuses on *polemos* and its cosmological significance. He replaces *Kampf* (struggle) with the more neutral expression of *Auseinandersetzung*, which means ‘confrontation or struggle but that also means a debate or discussion, a coming to terms and settling of accounts, an explanation’.⁶¹⁴ Heidegger ‘distances himself from a stark master-and-slave interpretation of the fragment [53]’⁶¹⁵ and focuses on the ontological meaning of *polemos*, which becomes foundational for his idea of ontological politics.⁶¹⁶ Heidegger returns to the ideas from *Being and Time*, namely that, ‘Polemos and logos are the same’.⁶¹⁷

Reading the *Black Notebooks* (1931-1938), Heidegger became disillusioned with National Socialism very quickly – both at the personal level and ideological level. He probably very soon understood that the philosophy of National Socialism was not at all aligned with his philosophy of history, and that the German *Volk* began following a completely different path. The concept of *polemos*, therefore, remains an ambiguous term that is highly problematic and, although one may strip it of the negative connotations of being identical with war, one may still misuse it for the justification of sinister forms of solidarity – as Heidegger did.

iv Salvific Community

In his sixth *Heretical Essay*, Patočka presents the solidarity of the shaken as a salvific community that is capable of overcoming an undesired state of crisis:

The means by which this state is overcome [the state of nihilism, the state of continual warfare] is the solidarity of the shaken; the solidarity of those who are capable of understanding what life and death are all about, and so what history is about. That history is the conflict of mere life, barren and chained by fear, with life at the peak, life that does not plan for the ordinary days of a future but sees clearly that the everyday, its ‘life and its peace’, have an end.⁶¹⁸

By the ‘state’, Patočka means the frontline experience. More broadly, he refers to a certain

⁶¹⁴Ibid., p. 32.

⁶¹⁵Ibid., p. 33.

⁶¹⁶Ibid., p. 32.

⁶¹⁷Heidegger, *Introduction to Metaphysics*, p. 65.

⁶¹⁸‘Prostředkem jak tento stav překonat, je solidarita otřesených. Solidarita těch, kdo jsou s to pochopit, oč běží v životě a smrti a následkem toho v dějinách. Že dějiny jsou tento konflikt pouhého života, holého a spoutaného strachem, se životem na vrcholu, který neplánuje budoucí všední den, nýbrž vidí jasně, že všední den, jeho život a ‘mír’ mají svůj konec.’ In: Patočka, ‘Kacířské eseje’, p. 129; *Heretical Essays*, p. 134.

proto-form, an experience that is parallel to the state of nihilism. Patočka, however, argues that the frontline experience can be transformed into an event of history in which the conditions of nihilism (in the sense of continual warfare) can be overcome. He argues that this transformation is possible only by the community of the solidarity of the shaken - a salvific community that can save Europe from the crisis.

The solidarity of the shaken is capable of overcoming the crisis because the community understands what 'death and life is about, and so what history is about'.⁶¹⁹ This community does not see the world as one-sided, as comprising only everydayness; instead (following Heraclitus and his concept of *polemos*), this novel community is highly aware of the tension between opposites and understands that the world is, primarily, problematic.

Patočka is aware that the solidarity of the shaken is not a community that would possess political power. The members of the community are in no way noble or powerful. They are neither heroes nor titans. Rather, the solidarity of the shaken represents a community of those on the frontline whose lives 'do not really matter', those, who can die and be sacrificed for the means of the day, just like soldiers in the frontlines. Therefore, when Patočka speaks about the solidarity of the shaken, he speaks about the people - *demos* - including those who are powerless, excluded and marginalised. However, even those powerless people, Patočka believes, have the agency to obtain certain power.

In his second *Heretical Essay*, Patočka explains the point of history as, 'not what can be uprooted or shaken, but rather the openness to the shaking.'⁶²⁰ Patočka argues that the first precondition for the overcoming the crisis is to expose oneself to the shaking, and to the moment of being transformed by this shaking. One obtains power by stepping out of one's comfortable, private zone and acting in alignment with the truth that the shaking reveals. The solidarity of the shaken, therefore, does not close one's eyes before reality and its problematicity. The solidarity of the shaken opens to reality as it is and to the shaking it entails. However, being open to reality and its shaking means not that,

[T]hey might see something new but that they might see in a new way. It is like

⁶¹⁹Ibid.

⁶²⁰'Že v dějinách nejde o to, co je možno vyvrátit nebo čím lze otřást, nýbrž o otevřenost pro to otřásající.' Ibid., p. 54; Ibid., p. 44.

a landscape illuminated by lightning, amid which humans stand alone, with no support, relying solely on that which presents itself – and that which presents itself without exception. It is the moment of creative dawning, ‘the first day of the creation,’ mysterious and more pressing for enfolding and bearing with it the astonished.⁶²¹

Patočka’s quote evokes Plato’s allegory of the cave (514a–520a).⁶²² Shaking deprives one of the illusions of appearing. Shaking deprives one of seeing ‘the shadows thrown by the fire on the wall of the cave opposite them.’⁶²³ By referring to the allegory of the cave, Patočka does not aim to defend Plato’s metaphysical position and the concept of the one supreme Idea, the absolute truth (which casts shadows on the wall); he uses the metaphor to argue that one tends not to search for truth; rather, without any further critical examination, one adopts mere opinions. He argues that once we reject seeing the world as problematic, we are entrapped as prisoners in the very similar conditions as Plato describes in his allegory of the cave. The way to escape these conditions of living in a misleading reality is, for Patočka, the necessity of life leaning out into the night,⁶²⁴ into the conditions of *polemos* and into the very problematicity itself. This position, however, is possible only through our being open to the shaking, as only shaking has the capacity to remove our old meaning and to prepare the ground for the bestowal of new meaning.

v *From Myth to the Truth*

Patočka associates the solidarity of the shaken with the concept of truth. The solidarity of the shaken is the community of those, who in the conditions of the shaking restlessly search for the truth. In this context, Patočka distinguishes between the pre-problematic world and the problematic world. To live in a pre-problematic world means to live in ‘a world of a pre-given meaning, modest but reliable’.⁶²⁵ A human being lives in a world in which meaning is provided by myths and by generally accepted ‘truths’. ‘This world is meaningful, that is, intelligible, because there are therein powers, the demonic, the gods

⁶²¹‘Ale ne aby viděl nové věci, nýbrž aby viděl nově: jsou zde jako krajina bleskem ozářená, v níž stojí sám, bez opory a odkázan pouze na to, co se mu ukazuje, a tot ukazující se – je všeco bez výjimky; je právě okamžik tvůrčího rozbřesk, první ‘den stvoření’, záhadný a tím naléhavější, že žasnoucího objímá, nese v sobě a unáší s sebou.’ Ibid., p. 51; Ibid., p. 40.

⁶²²Plato, *The Republic*, pp. 278–286.

⁶²³Ibid., p. 279.

⁶²⁴Patočka, ‘Kacířské eseje’, p. 127; *Heretical Essays*, p. 131.

⁶²⁵‘svět daného, sice skromného, ale spolehlivého smyslu’ In: Ibid., p. 28; Ibid., p. 12.

that stand over humans, ruling over them and deciding their destiny.⁶²⁶ With the shaking, however, the situation changes radically. Shaking strips the world of its illusion. It proves myth and the generally accepted truth to be invalid and opens a realm of problematcity. The shaking leaves a human being in a previously unimaginable position. With the disappearance of myth, a human being is left alone, standing in an uncertain world without any firm ground or support that one can rely on. There are no longer answers to the questions. Suddenly, human beings stand in the problematic world alone and are urged to search for the answers themselves.

Similar to other thinkers – reaching back to Plato and Aristotle – Patočka believes that the problematic world or philosophy begins with an experience of wonder: ‘thauma archē tēs sofias (wonder is the beginning of wisdom).’⁶²⁷ As Patočka argues, ‘We wonder: to wonder means not to accept anything [as] self-evident, to stand still [...]’.⁶²⁸ Wonder represents a rupture (a shaking). Although the material world may always seem the same on the outside, wonder causes one to pass a point beyond which there is no return. Suddenly, the world appears in a completely different light. The world has been turned upside down.

In Patočka’s work, wonder is an ambiguous phenomenon. Initially, it may seem that wonder, which the shaking triggers, is something positive, as it shakes of one’s pre-problematic perception of the world, liberates a human being and sets a human being on the path of seeking the truth. Patočka, following Plato and Aristotle, argues that wonder is the beginning of wisdom – philosophy, politics and history.⁶²⁹ However, the moment of wonder leads to a great shock, disappointment and astonishment, when reality and everything one believes in collapses and loses its validity. A human being loses firm ground and is called to search for the truth herself.

Although Patočka’s depiction of the shaking may sound abstract and distant, his metaphor of the frontline captures the movement from myth to problematcity and depicts human beings’ strife regarding the bestowal of new meaning. To express wonder,

⁶²⁶‘Má smysl, tj. srozumitelnost, tím, že existují moci, démonično, bohové. Kteří stojí nad člověkem, vládou a rozhodují o něm.’ Ibid., p. 28; Ibid., p. 12.

⁶²⁷Patočka, ‘Kacířské eseje’, p. 51; *Heretical Essays*, p. 40.

⁶²⁸Jan Patočka, *Living in Problematcity*, ed. by Eric Manton, trans. by Eric Manton (Prague: Oikoy-menh, 2007), p. 55.

⁶²⁹Patočka, ‘Kacířské eseje’, p. 132; *Heretical Essays*, p. 139.

Patočka uses the image of the frontline, pointing to it as an experience of pure absurdity, in which meaning is completely lost, and yet which offers a chance for a new bestowal of meaning. Soldiers enter the war with enthusiasm, illusions, beliefs, ideals of sacrificing themselves for the country, and maybe with the feeling of hatred for the enemy. However, on the battlefield, their enthusiasm may turn into despair and terror. The fight for their country may seem an absurdity, and their hatred may turn into a realisation that the person behind the barricades is in the same position as they are – desperate, powerless and fearful. The night suddenly falls upon all the alluring propagandist words about the day and peace and the arguments about why war matters. What the soldiers see is not heroism, but a life ‘barren and chained by fear’.⁶³⁰ In this absurd and meaningless situation, one cannot rely on the meaning of the day any longer, on the promises and propaganda. The truths and convictions that draw soldiers to the frontline trenches appear pathetic. The soldiers are left in this situation without any support and are called to make up the meaning of this absurdity by themselves. The frontline, therefore, refers to an experience of wonder, when ‘[s]cales fall from the eyes of those set free, not that they might see something new but that they might see in a new way’.⁶³¹ In conditions such as the frontline, one is shaken – yet, at the same time, one is called to seek and discover the truth about the world self-critically, single-mindedly and thoughtfully.

When Patočka speaks about truth, he does not refer to ‘truth as perfect clarity which knows no obscure places’.⁶³² His concept of truth is ‘inspired by the finitude of being [and] is open to the eternal mystery of what-is.’⁶³³ The truth for Patočka is very reminiscent of Heidegger’s concept of truth as *alētheia* (ἀλήθεια). Truth stands for ‘the uncovering of the being of what-is to which thus inevitably belongs its concealment, as the Greek expression *alētheia* expresses it’.⁶³⁴ As Patočka argues, things ‘are emerging out of

⁶³⁰‘holého a spoutaného strachem’ In: Patočka, ‘Kacířské eseje’, p. 129; *Heretical Essays*, p. 134.

⁶³¹‘svobodnému spadly šupiny z očí, ale ne aby viděl nové věci, nýbrž aby viděl nově’ Ibid., p. 51; Ibid., p. 40.

⁶³²‘pravdu jako dokonalou jasnost, která zná temná jen jako otázky, průchodiská pro odpovědi.’ In: Patočka, ‘Kacířské eseje’, p. 59; *Heretical Essays*, p. 50.

⁶³³‘inspirovaná konečností bytí, je otevřená pro věčné tajemství jsoucího, které právě v tomto jeho tajemství, inspirujícím k otázkám zůstávajícím otázkami, hledí uchovat jeho podstatnou pravdu’ Ibid.

⁶³⁴‘odhalenost bytí jsoucího, k níž tak patří nezbytně jeho zahalenost, jak je to vyjádřeno v řeckém výrazu ἀλήθεια’ Ibid.

darkness; it means to see the lighting of being over all that is, the open night of what-is'.⁶³⁵

vi *Freedom and Political Life*

Shaking, in Patočka's work, is closely related to the category of freedom. Inspired by the philosophy of Heidegger, Patočka understands freedom as 'letting being be what it is, not distorting being'.⁶³⁶ Freedom so conceived not only opens a passage for understanding the world (and not replacing the problematicity of the world with a meaning that would be more convenient), but also such a manifestation of meaning undermines the meaning we took for granted and shakes that very meaning. This moment of freedom can be perceived as the revelation of truth, which has been hidden. Freedom, as presented by Heidegger and adopted by Patočka, leads to truth and is its main objective: 'Freedom, in the end, is freedom for truth, in the form of the uncovering of being itself, of its truth, and not only of what-is'.⁶³⁷ Shaking, therefore, shakes things out of myth and illusion, and they are allowed to manifest themselves as they are. The old and misleading meaning collapses. However, as for Patočka truth is not an ultimate clarity, but unconcealment, or as stated in his essay 'The Spiritual Person and the Intellectual' (1975) that truth is a journey,⁶³⁸ things are being constantly shaken and re-shaken, and one is called to actively and restlessly search for the truth and to bestow new meaning.

Political life, for Patočka, is a realm of constant shaking. As he argues in his *Heretical essay*, political life 'is essentially an unsheltered life'.⁶³⁹ However, even in this realm of pure shaking and unbound freedom, one is called to employ one's responsibility and to search for the truth. The emotions pervasive in politics – be they fear, anger, envy, hatred or disgust – often are the guiding principle in the political realm.⁶⁴⁰ However,

⁶³⁵'zjevenim se z temna, vidět blesk bytí nad veškerenstvem, otevřenou noc jsoucn' Ibid., p. 53; Ibid., pp. 42-43.

⁶³⁶'ponechání jsoucna tím, čím jest, k nezkreslování jsoucna' Ibid.

⁶³⁷'Svoboda je posléze svoboda pravdy, a to v podobě odhalenosti samotného bytí, pravdy bytí samého, a nikoli jen jsoucn.' Ibid.

⁶³⁸Jan Patočka, 'Duchovní člověk a intelektuál (1975)', in *Sebrané spisy svazek 3: Péče o duši III*, ed. by Ivan Chvatík and Pavel Kouba (Prague: Oikoymenh, 2002), pp. 355-371 (p. 358); Jan Patočka, 'The Spiritual Person and the Intellectual', in *Living in Problematicity*, ed. by Eric Manton, trans. by Eric Manton (Prague: Oikoymenh, 2007), pp. 51-64 (p. 55).

⁶³⁹'Je to život v podstatě ničím nekrytý' In: Patočka, 'Kacířské eseje', p. 50; *Heretical Essays*, p. 39.

⁶⁴⁰Martha C. Nussbaum, *The Monarchy of Fear: A Philosopher Looks at Our Political Crisis* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2018), p. 12.

Patočka aims to offer an alternative and propose a community – the solidarity of the shaken, whose guiding principle would be that of truth. Patočka’s emphasis on the truth as *alētheia*, however breaks with assumption that the solidarity of the shaken would be founded on ultimate metaphysical truth. The principle of one ultimate truth would lead to another extreme – to religious fanaticism, which is (to a very similar extent) guided by emotions detached from truth. The solidarity of the shaken, in its search for the truth, is set on a journey. They constantly see anew and make collective decisions based on truth as it manifests and reveals itself in the conditions of the very shaking.

Patočka does not present freedom in his works as a privilege; it is not a condition in which human beings suddenly find themselves. Rather, freedom represents an agency that is intertwined with responsibility. Shaking enables the following:

1. Shaking frees us from the traditional ways of disclosing reality. After shaking, one realises that myth and the meaning we used to rely on are no longer a sufficient resource of meaning.
2. Shaking enables freedom through being open to new forms of perception – that things may not be what they appear to be on the surface. Shaking reveals to us that there is another realm – the night – which was hidden from us before the moment of the shaking.
3. Shaking enables us to make collective decisions based on being liberated from myth and tradition, and being able to see the world in a new light.

vii History

Patočka argues that history, similarly to politics and philosophy ‘arises from the shaking of the naïve and absolute meaning.’⁶⁴¹

We can speak of history where life becomes free and whole, where it consciously builds room for an equally free life, not exhausted by mere acceptance, where after the shaking of life’s ‘small’ meaning bestowed by acceptance, humans dare undertake new attempts of bestowing meaning on themselves in the light of the way the

⁶⁴¹‘Dějiny vznikají otřesem naivního a absolutního smyslu v téměř současném a vzájemně se podmiňujícím vzniku politiky a filosofie.’ In: Patočka, ‘Kacířské eseje’, p. 83; *Heretical Essays*, p. 77.

being of the world into which they have been set manifests itself to them.⁶⁴²

History, for Patočka, begins ‘where life becomes free and whole’⁶⁴³ and where history ‘consciously builds room for an equally free life.’⁶⁴⁴ However, history can appear only with shaking, when, after the shaking, one does not accept the meaning offered by myth any longer, but instead seeks for meaning oneself based on truth as *alētheia*, when ‘humans dare undertake new attempts of bestowing meaning on themselves in the light of the way the being of the world into which they have been set manifests itself to them.’⁶⁴⁵

History, for Patočka stands for ‘the unfolding of embryonic possibilities present in the shaking.’⁶⁴⁶ Therefore, those, who are not open to the shaking, history ‘appears to end in the nihilism of a deprivation of meaning.’⁶⁴⁷ To carry the movement of history, however, one needs to have a particular perspective or view of the world. One is called to be detached from the day, from the immediacy of, and focus on, everyday life and to lean into the realm of the nocturnal to understand history as unfolding possibilities.

History, Patočka argues, is a conflict between two modes of life: ‘barren and chained by fear’⁶⁴⁸ on the one hand, and ‘life at the peak’⁶⁴⁹ on the other. While the barren life in fear is preoccupied with the everydayness and its main focus is day-to-day survival, and planning for the next day, the life in fear stems from the belief that whatever the day presents to us is the truth, and that one lives in the realm of peace. Patočka argues that the fear comes exactly from this one-sided perspective of seeing the world, our lives and reality from everydayness. Such a voluntary unwillingness to embrace things as they are, however, plays in favour of political powers, which use it to jeopardise and threaten individuals for the sake of their surveillance and obedience.⁶⁵⁰ History, therefore, represents

⁶⁴²‘Dějiny jsou tam, kde se život stává svobodným a celým, kde buduje uvědoměle prostor pro rovněž takový svobodný, pouhou akceptací se nevyčerpávající život a kde v důsledku otřesení ‘malého’ životního smyslu, který akceptace v sobě nese, se odhodlává k novým pokusům osmyslit se sám ve světle toho, jak se mu ukazuje bytí světa, do něhož je postaven.’ Ibid., p. 51; Ibid., pp. 40-41.

⁶⁴³‘kde se život stává svobodným a celým’ Ibid.

⁶⁴⁴‘kde buduje uvědoměle prostor pro rovněž takový svobodný’ Ibid.

⁶⁴⁵‘se odhodlává k novým pokusům osmyslit se sám ve světle toho, jak se mu ukazuje bytí světa, do něhož je postaven.’ Ibid.

⁶⁴⁶‘rozvinutím možností zárodečně založených v tomto otřesu’ Ibid., p. 83; Ibid., p. 77.

⁶⁴⁷‘dějiny zdanlivě vyúsťují v nihilism smyslu zbaveného jsoucna.’ Ibid.

⁶⁴⁸‘*pouhého života*, holého a spoutaného strachem’ Ibid., p. 129; Ibid., p. 134.

⁶⁴⁹‘životem na vrcholu’ Ibid.

⁶⁵⁰‘How do the day, life, peace, govern all individuals, in their bodies and souls? By means of death; by threatening life. From the perspective of the day, life is, for all individuals, everything, the highest value

the tension between these two modes of life and one's ability to understand this tension. Patočka does not urge to adopt life at the peak straightaway. He is very cautious, and argues that one simply needs to understand what history involves.

The solidarity of the shaken from Patočka's perspective is a community, which carries out the movement of history. It is the solidarity of those, who are capable of embracing history – the conflict between the everyday secure life (the life that is limited by fear) and the life at the peak (the life of the realm of constant shaking, the life in danger, without security that there will be another day, that there will be a tomorrow). Compared with his predecessors, Husserl and Heidegger, who argue that history starts with philosophy, Patočka (as influenced by Arendt's philosophy of *vita activa*) believes that the realm of history cannot be opened up solely by theoretical philosophy. He believes that there must be more to the moment to take 'decisions concerning how to act in a concrete situation'⁶⁵¹ and to take political action in line with this decision. The solidarity of the shaken represents a movement that is politically active and, yet, expresses its concern immediately, as the immediate response to the moment of shaking. The political action, however, entails danger and has contingent outcomes.

Returning to Patočka's argument that the solidarity of the shaken may represent a group of individuals unwilling to live in constant fear and obedience to the regime of communist Czechoslovakia, despite the security and protection the authoritarian regime offers them; such individuals leave their secure places and express their disagreement with authorities. In other words, the solidarity of the shaken is a political community that

that exists for them. For the forces of the day, conversely, death does not exist, they function as if there was no death, or, as noted, they plan death impersonally and statistically, as if it were merely a reassignment of roles. Thus in the will to war, day and life rule with the help of death. The will to war counts on generations yet unborn, conceiving its plans from their viewpoint. So, peace rules in the will to war. Those who cannot break free of the rule of peace, of the day, of life in a mode that excludes death and closes its eyes before it, can never free themselves of war.' In: *Ibid.*, p. 129; 'Jak vládne den, život, mír nad každým jednotlivcem, nad jeho tělem a duší? Pomocí smrti, ohrožením života. Z hlediska dne je pro jednotlivce život vším, je nejvyšší hodnota, která proň existuje, Pro síly dne naopak smrt neexistuje, ty si počínají, jak by jí nebylo, či, jak bylo řečeno, plánují smrt distancovaně a statisticky, jako by znamenala pouhou výměnu ve funkcích. Ve vůli k válce tedy vládne den a život polocí smrti. Vůle k válce počítá s budoucími generacemi, které zde ještě nejsou, své plány koncipuje z jejich hledisek. Ve vůli k válce tak vládne mír. Není možno zbavit se války tomu, kdo se nezabývá vládou míru, dne života v té podobě která vynechává smrt a zavírá před ní oči.' *Ibid.*, p. 125.

⁶⁵¹Ivan Chvatík, 'Jan Patočka and the Possibility of Spiritual Politics', in *Thinking After Europe: Jan Patočka and Politics*, ed. by Francesco Tava and Darian Meacham (Lanham, Maryland: Rowman and Littlefield, 2016), pp. 31–38 (p. 36).

resists a political regime. This community embraces history in the sense that they understand the tension between their life in security (the life that is untrue) and the life on the peak (the life without any future perspective, and probably no tomorrow for them or their relatives and friends). How bizarre and absurd it may sound that precisely these people – who are capable of this change of mind (*metanoia*), who are able to see beyond and underneath, who are willing to change and sacrifice their lives and future – are the future of Europe and represent the salvific community, the solidarity of the shaken that Patočka speaks about. The solidarity of the shaken is, therefore, a community of free people. Freedom, however, does not stand for something positive here; rather, freedom represents a constant shaking and uncertainty. As Patočka argues, ‘History is not a perception but a responsibility.’⁶⁵²

II Conservative Revolution and National Socialism

i Walter Benjamin

In a short yet eloquent essay, ‘Theories of German Fascism: On the Collection of Essays War and Warrior’, Benjamin points to myopia in authors like Jünger who paradoxically failed to recognise that, despite their aversion to the fascist regime, by celebrating war and through their effort to sustain eternal war, they actually created par excellence conditions for the ideology of German fascism. Despite the fact that Jünger, by the community of the frontline soldiers (*Frontgemeinschaft*), which turned into a mass of workers, opposes the bourgeois society that brought Hitler to power, it was the very same community of frontline soldiers that laid a par excellence foundation for the fascist society. As Benjamin put it: “What developed here, first in the guise of the World War volunteer and then in the mercenary of the *Nachkrieg*, is in fact the dependable fascist class warrior.”⁶⁵³ Benjamin criticises Jünger’s celebration of war and suggests a new perspective on the events of the war. He strictly rejects Jünger’s treatment of the war as a fetish (a cultic war that belongs

⁶⁵²‘Historie není pohled, nýbrž zodpovědnost.’ In: Patočka, ‘Kacířské eseje’, p. 58; *Heretical Essays*, p. 49.

⁶⁵³Walter Benjamin, ‘Theories of German Fascism: On the Collection of Essays War and Warrior’, *New German Critique*, 17 (1979), 120-128 (p. 127).

to the German nation) that was reinforced by the Germans' defeat in the war. Instead, he suggests returning to the core of the war and that it is necessary to question the essence of the war once again:

The war that this light exposes is as little the 'eternal' one which these Germans now worship as it is the 'final' war that the pacifists carry on about. In reality that war is only this: The one fearful, last chance to correct the incapacity of peoples to order their relationships to one another in accord with the relationships they possess to nature through their technology. If this corrective effort fails, millions of human bodies will indeed inevitably be chopped to pieces and chewed up by iron and gas.⁶⁵⁴

The war should not be celebrated for its violence, for its energies, forces and powers, as Jünger suggested. Instead, it should be perceived as an opportunity, as a rupture (*cesura*) in the smooth flow of history, that serves as '[t]he one fearful, last chance to correct the incapacity of peoples to order their relationships to one another.'⁶⁵⁵ Benjamin argues that the German nation needs to break from the rationale of total mobilisation, as the idea of total mobilisation is the cause of the stagnation of the German nation. The emphasis on technology can lead to devastating consequences for humanity. Benjamin, however, strictly rejects the other option – its other extreme end – namely, the possibility of overcoming the war with love and encouragement, which would probably lead only to some sort of kitsch politics, in which rhetoric would have a more important role than political action itself. Benjamin perceives war as an event that offers an opportunity to correct relationships with one another, which, and Patočka would have agreed with Benjamin on this point, is constitutive of the emergence of solidarity.

Benjamin believes that seeing war as the last opportunity to correct people's relationships to one another and to nature through their technology⁶⁵⁶ is a tedious journey, and that individuals strive for an immediate change – an overturn, a revolution. However, Benjamin warns against these tendencies and argues that, while reliance on technology will lead to a catastrophe in which technology will backfire on us and, in turn, lead to the deterioration of humanity, only a form of community that stems from the restoration of human relations can save humanity from eternal warfare. Jünger very aptly portrayed the

⁶⁵⁴Ibid.

⁶⁵⁵Ibid.

⁶⁵⁶Ibid.

foundations of this situation in his vision of the future of materialist history conducted through means of total mobilisation – the core of which is active nihilism and, if necessary, the use of violence.

ii Conservative Revolution

In his works from the 1930s, Jünger displays his clear affiliation with the general idea of the Conservative Revolution and its movement. The aim of this analysis is not to provide a detailed historical examination of the Conservative Revolution.⁶⁵⁷ Instead, to distil some essential characteristic features of the solidarity of the shaken, this chapter focuses on a particular aspect of the Conservative Revolution and portrays the link between the Conservative Revolution and National Socialism. The Conservative Revolution is an intriguing phenomenon that emerged after the First World War and aimed to redefine the understanding of German nationalism and to establish a new order. The Conservative Revolution emerged as a movement that fought against communism and internationalism and simultaneously rejected all ideas linked to democracy and liberalism. The core of the Conservative Revolution was the ethnic community of *Volksgemeinschaft*, which evolved out of the community of frontline veterans, *Frontgemeinschaft*, as Jünger and other prominent figures (frontline veterans themselves) proposed in their memoirs, political pamphlets and novels. The movement was established by First World War veterans and had supporters including Ernst Jünger, Carl Schmitt, Max Scheler and Thomas Mann, among others.⁶⁵⁸

The communities mentioned above harboured a sentiment of disappointment with the First World War and were composed of soldiers returning from the frontline trenches to ‘normal’ life, to their everyday reality. Instead of recognition for their heroism, the veterans existed on the edge of society.⁶⁵⁹ The *camaraderie* among frontline participants and First World War veterans stems from their alienation and being misunderstood by the bourgeois society of the time. As Benjamin, in *The Storyteller*, observes, many frontline

⁶⁵⁷For the detailed analysis of the Conservative Revolution, please see Richard Evans book: Richard J. Evans, *The Coming of the Third Reich* (London: Penguin Books, 2005).

⁶⁵⁸Joseph J. Bendersky, *Carl Schmitt: Theorist for the Reich* (Princeton, Princeton University Press, 2014), p. 17.

⁶⁵⁹Due to their emotional trauma and often physical handicaps, they were unable to integrate into society.

veterans were unable to express their experiences in words.⁶⁶⁰ What they experienced in the frontline trenches existed beyond the linguistic realm and could be understood only by *comrades* – those who shared the same horrific experience and do not need words, only their dark memories, to understand.

The community of *Frontgemeinschaft*, which later evolved into *Volksgemeinschaft*, was based on the *camaraderie* among those on the frontline. Jünger, as well as other First World War veterans, in response to the great sentiment of post-war disappointment, dreamt about an elite community of frontline participants. This community aimed to deliver finally their broken dreams – dreams they had fought for in the First World War.

Initially, the idea of the Conservative Revolution may seem like a moral duty of First World War veterans such as Jünger. Frontline trench experience defined the lives of many; yet, it stood as an obstacle between them and the rest of society. Despite the seeming innocence and nobility of the Conservative Revolution project, the ideas of nationalism, anti-liberalism and conservatism that it promoted represented a clear danger. One cannot deny the political impact of the idea of the Conservative Revolution and *Frontgemeinschaft* on the development of National Socialism and the ethnic community of *Volksgemeinschaft*. However, many prominent figures of the Conservative Revolution movement (including Jünger) distanced themselves and refused to join the National Socialist Party.⁶⁶¹

The Conservative Revolution represents the ideological foundation of National Socialism. Through their attempts to redefine German nationalism, Jünger and other thinkers laid down the ideological foundation of, and prepared room for, National Socialism in several ways. First, although the Conservative Revolution is not identical to National Socialism, the latter is only a step away from the former. National Socialism can be, therefore, perceived as the radicalised version of the Conservative Revolution. It is National Socialism in its becoming stages.

Despite the efforts of the Conservative Revolution to distance and separate itself

⁶⁶⁰ Benjamin, 'The Storyteller', p. 144.

⁶⁶¹ Members of the *Frontgemeinschaft* – the proponents of the Conservative Revolution – were ambivalent towards National Socialism. Some of them joined the party; some of them became victims of the Long Knives night. Jünger rejected the offer to become a member, while Schmitt – who ideologically shared more with the national socialists than anyone else – also rejected National Socialism.

from National Socialism, and despite its efforts to criticise Nazism and the National Socialist Party, the idea and movement of the Conservative Revolution contributed to – and needs to be held accountable for – the ideas promoted by National Socialism. Such ideas became widespread and accepted by the masses thanks to the ideology of the Conservative Revolution.

If this is the case, then it was the Conservative Revolution that did all the ideological work for National Socialism. Its members created the ideological theories based on Nietzsche's philosophy, in which they praised man's barbaric and animal self,⁶⁶² his vitalism and will to power and his rejection of morals. National Socialists only seized an opportunity and built up their fascist ideology on the ideas formulated and developed by the Conservative Revolutionaries. Of course, the interpretation of the ideas of National Socialists was radicalised, enriched by the strong emphasis on nationalist, racial and anti-Semitic concepts. 'Yet although Jünger was, in his own words, able to publish practically nothing in Germany after 1941, the Nazi regime sought to exploit his early work for its ends.'⁶⁶³ Although Jünger never joined the Nazi Party, and although he practically stopped publishing his protofascist works after his resistance towards the Nazi regime in 1933, the National Socialists openly affiliated themselves with Jünger's works in the inter-war period, in which he formulated his vision of materialist history: *The Worker (Der Arbeiter)*, 'Total Mobilization' ('Die Totale Mobilmachung') and *On Pain (Über den Schmerz)*. The National Socialists considered these works by Jünger – *The Worker*, in particular – to be the main pillars of their ideology. As Sombart argues, just in *The Worker* itself, Jünger formulates three main pillars of the Nazi ideology: (1) the industrial-technical revolution; (2) the completion of the State as the highest instance; and (3) the German vocation in the State.⁶⁶⁴ Despite Jünger's spiritual resistance towards the Nazi regime, his ideas became key concepts of the ideology of National Socialism.

The ethnic community (*Volksgemeinschaft*) evolved out of the idea of *Frontgemeinschaft*; however, its foundation is not a camaraderie developed in the frontline trenches through a commonly shared experience. The inner ideological cement of *Volksgemein-*

⁶⁶²Roger Woods, *The Conservative Revolution in the Weimar Republic* (Basingstoke and New York: Palgrave, 1996), p. 38.

⁶⁶³Ibid., p. 118.

⁶⁶⁴Niklaus Sombart, 'Junger in uns,' *Streit-Zeit-Schrift* 6, no. 2 (September 1968): 7-9.

schaft is the idea of national and ethnic purity. Despite these differences, these two communities have something in common. What connects them is their clear identification of the enemy – the other. In the case of the *Frontgemeinschaft*, the other is the enemy on the other side of the frontline; in the case of the *Volksgemeinschaft*, it is any non-German, non-Aryan person. Therefore, the core of both communities is the same – it is the concept of the political as defined by Carl Schmitt (however, the Conservative Revolution introduces a moderate version, while National Socialism introduces a radicalised version).

The initial intentions of Jünger and other Conservative Revolutionaries may have been noble and positive – in the sense that they considered it their moral duty to display solidarity and affiliation with other frontline participants and First World War veterans, as the frontline experience defined their existence. However, Jünger, being traumatised by Germany losing the war and by the frontline experience, could not predict the disastrous consequences his ideas would have. However, despite the efforts of the Conservative Revolutionaries to distance themselves from National Socialists, they need to be held accountable for the fact that they contributed to a general acceptance of the ideas of nationalism, anti-liberalism and anti-democracy. The Conservative Revolutionaries enabled the rise of the Third Reich and its power. Foundation of the *Frontgemeinschaft* was not faithfulness to the very truth of the frontline experience; rather, the Conservative Revolutionaries became carried away by their broken dreams and expectations and replaced the truth about the experience with sentiment and nostalgia. Their ideology, and therefore their politics, was impregnated by pity, anger and anxiety (about being recognised and understood). This position offered a great opportunity for the National Socialists to build up their ideology on the foundation provided by the Conservative Revolutionaries.

iii Patočka's Implicit Criticism of the Conservative Revolution

In *Heretical Essays*, Patočka takes the above argument one step further. He is predominantly driven in his criticism of Jünger by his personal experience with the communist regime in Czechoslovakia. He observes that the 20th century due to their emphasis on techno-science turned into an age of eternal warfare, and only a spiritual community

founded on strong ethical principles – the solidarity of the shaken – Patočka hopes, can overcome it.

If one abstracts Patočka's thoughts on the solidarity of the shaken from the context of the ideology of fascism and the oppressive communist regime, one may realise that the relevance of the solidarity of the shaken did not vanish with the Velvet Revolution in 1989. The community's relevance did not cease with the disappearance of the Czechoslovak dissident movement and the collapse of the communist regime in the country. The solidarity of the shaken is an answer to those models of society that follow the rationale of totally administered societies, and to those forms of politics that employ active nihilism and justify violence – for example, a war for democracy or terrorism, among others. Patočka's concept of the solidarity of the shaken does not propose a leftist alternative either. His position is neither left nor right; instead, it is based strictly on ethics and responds to challenges of both the radical right and the radical left. Patočka proposes the politics of truth based on humanism.

If we read Patočka's concept of the solidarity of the shaken in the context of the Conservative Revolution, it is clear why he sets the concept in the frontline experience. In his examination of the frontline experience and the emergence of the community, Patočka understood one crucial aspect – namely, that all ideologies and propaganda as we perceive them originated far before they emerged. If we consider the example of the Conservative Revolution and National Socialism, it is evident that the ideas of *Frontgemeinschaft* developed far before the ideology of National Socialism transformed them into its much-radicalised version of the *Volksgemeinschaft*. What appeared to be a cordial gesture and moral obligation turned rapidly into a destructive authoritarian regime full of hatred, in which any means of force (including violence) was acceptable for the achievement of its ends. This context is precisely that in which the message of the solidarity of the shaken is significant for the times of Jünger, for Patočka's time and the situation today. The solidarity of the shaken, with its ability to respond to the shaking in its immediacy, prevents evil ideas from becoming gradually acceptable to the masses. The community, through its secure attachment to the truth (as *aletheia*), undermines and resists everything that could endanger the future of democracy. Patočka realised the necessity of such a spiri-

tual authority in his time.

III The Political

i Antagonism

Ernst Jünger maintained a long-term friendship with Carl Schmitt, who, similar to Jünger, was deeply involved in the Conservative Revolution. Compared with Jünger, however, Carl Schmitt's position was much more radical. Schmitt greatly emphasises the concept of *völkisch* and sympathises with the idea of racial purity.⁶⁶⁵ What connects these two thinkers is their friendship, which lasted for more than 50 years. Throughout this friendship, they exchanged a significant number of letters full of expressions of mutual admiration. Following their correspondence, Jünger read Schmitt's *The Concept of the Political* in October 1930.⁶⁶⁶ Jünger expressed his enthusiasm regarding Schmitt's ability to define the concept of the political so aptly and to the point. He was impressed also by Schmitt's ability to concisely and clearly define the theme that Jünger himself had been developing throughout the 1920s in his inter-war works.⁶⁶⁷

There is also considerable overlap between the themes that both authors write about. (1) They are both motivated by a great sentiment of alienation, which arose from the First World War experience,⁶⁶⁸ as well as their disappointment with bourgeois society. Both thinkers criticise individualistic tendencies and, as promoters of the Conservative Revolution, point towards the importance of the community (*Gemeinschaft*). (2) Jünger and Schmitt, in their own ways, formulate the concept of the friend and the enemy. In his proposal for the *Frontgemeinschaft*, Jünger emphasises the idea of *camaraderie*. In *The Concept of the Political* (1932), Schmitt defines the political as based on the 'friend and enemy' opposition. Schmitt, compared with Jünger, focuses on the idea of the enemy and the effort to completely exterminate the enemy. (3) The concept of friendship that both authors promote in their writings relates to the idea of elitism. The friend is the unique,

⁶⁶⁵ *The Oxford Handbook of Carl Schmitt*, ed by Jens Meierhenrich, Oliver Simons (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), p. 465.

⁶⁶⁶ Ernst Jünger and Carl Schmitt, *Briefe 1930-1983*, p. 7.

⁶⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

⁶⁶⁸ Carl Schmitt volunteered in the First World War in 1916.

privileged being – differentiated from the mass bourgeois society. The friend is a member of the unique community, be it a frontline soldier or a German. Elitism, however, can be observed in another aspect – namely, both Jünger and Schmitt put themselves in a position of an elitist diagnostician of modernity. They put themselves in the upright position of an observer of the social and political situation, and propose solutions on how to resolve the crisis of modernity. (4) The final aspect that connects these two authors is their admiration and glorification of war.⁶⁶⁹ Schmitt, similar to Jünger, perceives war as inevitable, regarding it as conducting politics by other means.⁶⁷⁰

Conservative Revolutionaries reject the idea of their community being organised into a party. They reject the idea of class (e.g. the bourgeois), and they perceive the world through the lens of *Gestalt*, in which the Schmittian opposition of friend and enemy plays a significant role. Friend and enemy opposition – or, better, the effort to identify the enemy – serves as a point of orientation in both *Frontgemeinschaft* and its radicalised form of *Volksgemeinschaft*. In his definition of *Frontgemeinschaft*, Jünger focuses on the examination of the friend.⁶⁷¹ Schmitt, on the other hand, pays significant attention to the category of the enemy.⁶⁷² Both thinkers, moreover, regard friendship as the effort to overcome – to transcend – individualism and to find meaning in a community of friends who share similar worldviews, convictions, passions and who can sacrifice themselves for their beliefs. As discussed in chapter 2 already, in his book *The Worker* Jünger takes one step further and eventually overcomes the communitarian aspect. His idea of *Frontgemeinschaft* culminates in the development of the *typus* of the worker.

ii *Agonism*

In the authorial glosses in *Heretical Essays*, Patočka argues that, ‘There is not only struggle but also solidarity, there is not only society, but also community, and community has

⁶⁶⁹Richard Wolin, ‘Carl Schmitt: The Conservative Revolutionary Habitus and the Aesthetics of Horror’, *Political Theory*, 20.3, (1992), 424-447 (p. 440).

⁶⁷⁰Schmitt, *The Concept of the Political*, p. 34.

⁶⁷¹Jünger, *Storm of Steel*; Ernst Jünger, *The Adventurous Heart: Figures and Capriccios* (Candor, New York: Telos Press Publishing, 2012).

⁶⁷²Schmitt, *The Concept of the Political*, p. 29.

other bonds besides a common enemy.⁶⁷³ Patočka examines the concept of the political in his book *Body, Community, Language, World* (1968/1969) when he introduces three movements of human existence. He is highly influenced by Hannah Arendt's philosophy, especially by her concept of *Vita Activa*⁶⁷⁴ and of labour, work and action. The authors' understandings of the political, however, differ.⁶⁷⁵

While Schmitt defines the concept of the conflict clearly – as a tension between friend and enemy, Patočka defines the conflict as history. Referring to Hannah Arendt's examination of the passage from the *Nicomachean Ethics*,⁶⁷⁶ Patočka opposes 'totality of life'⁶⁷⁷ and 'life as a totality'⁶⁷⁸ and argues that:

Perhaps, though, from these reflections, based on Aristotle's distinction of the active life, we could deduce the very beginning of history in the proper sense of the word. We can speak of history where life becomes free and whole, where it consciously builds room for an equally free life, not exhausted by mere acceptance, where after the shaking of life's 'small' meaning bestowed by acceptance, humans dare undertake new attempts at bestowing meaning on themselves in the light of the way the being of the world into which they have been set manifests to them.⁶⁷⁹

Patočka is well aware of the nature of the political. The political is unthinkable without the category of the conflict. The conflict preserves and maintains the political. The conflict 'cannot be resolved by applying rules (including laws)',⁶⁸⁰ and it is highly undesirable to eradicate the conflict, as this would mean the end of the political per se. Patočka realises this notion and, in his *Heretical Essays*, proposes the idea of *polemos* and the tension between the opposites. The whole of *Heretical Essays* can be read as Patočka's effort to define the concept of the political. Patočka's effort, however, is neither to resolve the con-

⁶⁷³'Neexistuje jen boj, nýbrž i solidarita, existuje nejen pospolitost, ale i společenství a společenství zná jiná pouta než společného nepřítele.' In: Patočka, 'Kacířské eseje', p. 140; *Heretical Essays*, p. 149.

⁶⁷⁴Arendt, *The Human Condition*, p. 12.

⁶⁷⁵In *Human Condition* Arendt argues that the political goes hand in hand with the category of freedom. Freedom, however, is neither the aim of the political nor its objective. Freedom is a very expression of the political.

⁶⁷⁶Arendt, *The Human Condition*, pp. 12-17.

⁶⁷⁷Patočka, 'Kacířské eseje', p. 51; *Heretical Essays*, p. 40.

⁶⁷⁸Ibid.

⁶⁷⁹'Možná však, že na základě těchto úvah již samy navazují na Aristotelovy distinkce života činného, bylo by lze odvodit sám počátek dějin ve vlastním smyslu slova: dějiny jsou tam, kde se život stává svobodným a celým, kde buduje uvědoměle prostor pro rovněž takový svobodný, pouhou akceptací se nevyčerpávající život a kde v důsledku otřesení 'malého' životního smyslu, který akceptace v sobě nese, se odhodlává k novým pokusům osmyslit se sám ve světle toho, jak se mu ukazuje bytí světa do něhož je postaven.' Ibid., p. 51; Ibid., pp. 40-41.

⁶⁸⁰Zweerde, 'Friendship and the Political', p. 151.

flict nor to replace the political with the ethical concepts and categories, by replacing the conflict with some kitsch discourse of evoking love and hope as an answer to the sinister forms of solidarities. Patočka sees things clearly and is aware that the political realm despite its having negative connotations of struggle and conflict is as important as the realm of the ethical and that the diminishing of the realm of the political (the conflict) would lead to undesired consequences. However, at the same time politics without ethics would lead to another extreme situation, in which, paraphrasing Lévinas, politics is as if left to itself and as such '[it] bears a tyranny within itself'⁶⁸¹

A second consequence: the enemy is no longer the absolute adversary in the way of the will to peace; the enemy is not here only to be eliminated. The adversary is a fellow participant in the same situation, a fellow discoverer of absolute freedom with whom agreement is possible in difference, a fellow participant in the upheaval of the day, of peace and of life lacking all peaks. Here we encounter the abysmal realm of the 'prayer for the enemy', the phenomenon of 'loving those who hate us' – the solidarity of the shaken, for all their contradiction and conflict.⁶⁸²

In this passage, Patočka makes two crucial points. First, he undermines Schmitt's understanding of the political – his antagonistic position. Second, Patočka reaches beyond Schmitt's definition of the enemy. He argues that the frontline experience reveals that the enemy is not an adversary that one needs to exterminate. A frontline participant is a fellow in the same situation, with whom it is possible to agree. What Patočka proposes is a form of agonistic politics,⁶⁸³ and he claims that conflict, which is so inevitable for the political, does not need to be turned to antagonism, when the friend and enemy try to eliminate each other through violence. The political can also be maintained, Patočka argues, in a dialogue,⁶⁸⁴ in which both sides mutually respect each other despite their differences and otherness.

It may seem that when Patočka speaks about the fellow participants in the same situation that (similarly to Jünger and Schmitt in their ideas of *Frontgemeinschaft* and *Volks-gemeinschaft*) he aims to propose that the fellow participants are linked to each other by a form of *camaraderie* – a form of particular friendship, which emerges out of the mutu-

⁶⁸¹Lévinas, *Totality and Infinity*, p. 252.

⁶⁸²Patočka, 'Kacířské eseje', p. 126; *Heretical Essays*, p. 131.

⁶⁸³Mouffe, *Democratic Paradox*, p. 102.

⁶⁸⁴*Ibid.*, p. 110.

ally shared experience (e.g. frontline experience), yet the ambition of which is to suppress one's individuality. Camaraderie, unlike friendship, aims to institutionalise friendship. It aims to organise friends into a political community.

Patočka, in his idea of the solidarity of the shaken does not deny the idea of friendship. There is, however, something very peculiar about Patočka's idea of friendship, which distinguishes his concept of the community from that proposed by Jünger and Schmitt. In his portrayal of friendship, Patočka does not mean only some sort of narcissistic coalition of identity. Reading Patočka's passage, it is evident that his idea of friendship does not abandon care for the other, which is, in his text, expressed by the idea of the 'prayer for the enemy'.⁶⁸⁵ Praying for the enemy evokes the idea of goodwill. By praying, we wish someone well. However, it is undeniable that the motif of the prayer for the enemy is Christian.⁶⁸⁶ The idea of the prayer for the enemy undermines the Schmittian dichotomy of the friend and the enemy; even the enemy becomes someone I am called to care for, I am called to love. If the solidarity of the shaken aligns with the idea of loving one's enemies; it represents a community (*Gemeinschaft*) based on love. Nevertheless, what kind of love has Patočka in mind when he speaks about the solidarity of the shaken? Stemming from the examination of love, as offered by C. S. Lewis in his work *Four Loves*, in his idea of the solidarity of the shaken Patočka speaks about love as *agape* (ἀγάπη, *agapē*),⁶⁸⁷ which is universal and inclusive, yet almost impossible to achieve. If this situation were the case, the solidarity of the shaken would represent a political dream.⁶⁸⁸

However, Patočka uses the idea of love and prayer for the enemy not to propose some Christian form of theocratic solidarity of Eastern Christian type⁶⁸⁹, which would form a counterweight to the aggressive Western individualism. Instead, Patočka proposes the idea of caring for and loving enemies to create a counterweight to the idea of the

⁶⁸⁵'modlitby za nepřítel' In: Patočka, 'Kacířské eseje', p. 126; *Heretical Essays*, p. 131.

⁶⁸⁶Matthew 5:44: But I say to you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which spitefully use you, and persecute you.

⁶⁸⁷Or what in his work *The Four Loves* C.S Lewis distinguishes as love as charity. See: C.S. Lewis, *The Four Loves*, (London: Harper Collins, 2002), p. 163.

⁶⁸⁸Zweerde, 'Friendship and the Political', p. 160.

⁶⁸⁹The solidarity of the shaken would become highly reminiscent of what Nikolai Lossky and Vladimir Solovyov (as well as other Slavophiles) understood by the term of *sobornost*.

political, as proposed by Schmitt and the Conservative Revolution movement, to point to the possibility of overcoming the ideas of enmity they entail and to replace enmity with the dialogue between two opposing sides. More precisely, by his solidarity of the shaken, Patočka aims to overcome ‘the possibility of ‘war’’,⁶⁹⁰ which defines the political for Schmitt. By his solidarity of the shaken he aims to overcome the whole tradition of the antagonistic political discourse of war (*Krieg*), and replace it with struggle (*eris*), because only the struggle has capacity to transform antagonism and prevent its leading to physical violence.⁶⁹¹

Conclusion

Christ’s dicta of ‘loving those who hate us’⁶⁹² and of ‘prayer for the enemy’⁶⁹³, Patočka incorporates in his reconstruction of the solidarity of the shaken, overcome another aspect of the politics of friendship, namely its being exclusive and selective to choose carefully which individuals are lovable and can be friends and which are not. The politics of friendship, so conceived, are not solely inclusive; it excludes specific individuals from the community.⁶⁹⁴ In contrast to friendship, the solidarity of the shaken is open to everyone, regardless of their affiliation; however, ‘[t]he problem with the idea that one ought to love not only one’s neighbour, but even one’s enemy, is not only that it turns into a too-hard-to-achieve task (for ‘saints’ only), but also that it becomes abstract-universal and fails to do justice to concrete feelings of love and sympathy.’⁶⁹⁵ The solidarity of the shaken, so conceived, becomes not only a political dream, but (following Žižek’s argument) universal abstract ideas such as equality, tolerance and universal love are, ultimately, strategies to avoid encountering thy neighbour.⁶⁹⁶

Although one may argue that the solidarity of the shaken is a utopian dream, which is too hard to be achieved, there is something very particular, which differentiates the sol-

⁶⁹⁰Zweerde, ‘Friendship and the Political’, p. 155.

⁶⁹¹Ibid.

⁶⁹²‘milování těch kdo nás nenávidí’ In: Patočka, ‘Kacířské eseje’, p. 126; *Heretical Essays*, p. 131.

⁶⁹³‘modlitby za nepřítele’ Ibid.

⁶⁹⁴Jacques Derrida, *The Politics of Friendship*, trans. by George Collins (London and New York: Verso Books, 2005), p. 21.

⁶⁹⁵Zweerde, ‘Friendship and the Political’, p. 158.

⁶⁹⁶Slavoj Žižek, *Conversations with Žižek* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2003), p. 72.

idity of the shaken from all other ethical communities. Patočka was aware that in the political realm, there is a considerable need for an ethical community, which would shake and undermine the totality politics. The solidarity of the shaken is based on ethical ideals of 'loving those who hate us' and of 'prayer for the enemy', which transform antagonism to agonism. However, the very central ideal of the solidarity of the shaken is Socratic sacrifice and the care for the soul, as the effort to search for the truth. Precisely a community, which incorporates these two ethical ideals, has the agency to safeguard the society from the danger of totality, demagoguery, conspiracies and lies by restlessly unmasking the real character of and revealing hidden truth and about political power and authorities.

Conclusion

In his final work, *Heretical Essays in the Philosophy of History* (1975), Patočka offers a solution by which the ethical can be implemented in the realm of the political and serve as a powerful tool for the revitalisation and transformation of the political sphere. The aim of this dissertation was to examine Patočka's bold proposal. To express how Patočka implants the ethical within the political, it was necessary to reconstruct his enigmatic concept of a novel political community – the solidarity of the shaken – which he introduces near the end of his final essays.

To illustrate the concept of the solidarity of the shaken, I adopted a rather unorthodox approach and developed the reconstruction of the concept as an antithesis of the sinister form of solidarity developed by Ernst Jünger – *Frontgemeinschaft*. I argued that both thinkers, Patočka and Jünger, described a very similar movement, which leads from an experience (*Erlebnis*) to history, in that both recognise a moment of crisis and strive for its overcoming. In both cases, we can observe a certain moment of transcendence. However, Jünger perceives transcendence as a moment of the extension of nihilism, which, from Patočka's perspective, would be only a further deepening of techno-science. In contrast, Patočka proposed transcendence that takes the form of an existential self-surrender or self-sacrifice: 'leaning out into struggle'.⁶⁹⁷ Patočka's response to the situation of the crisis might appear to be a weakness. However, his philosophy ultimately reveals that this moment of apparent weakness is actually a strength. Patočka describes how the response to the crisis leads to a moment in which a new beginning (e.g. philosophy, history, political life) originates, and out of which the solidarity of the shaken is constituted.

The comparative analysis in this research highlighted that Patočka's solidarity of

⁶⁹⁷Patočka, 'Kacířské eseje', p. 127; *Heretical Essays*, p. 131.

the shaken, unlike *Frontgemeinschaft*, is founded on exclusively ethical principle of self-sacrifice. The comparative analysis suggested also that the purpose and the guiding principle of the solidarity of the shaken is to care for the soul in the political realm. In other words, the aim of the solidarity of the shaken is to restlessly search for the truth in the political realm, to reveal the truth about the political establishment and authority, and to allow the truth (not emotions and passions) to be the guiding principle in one's actions.

To date, the solidarity of the shaken has largely been associated with the Czechoslovak dissent movement and with the civic initiative of Charter 77. However, in my research I sought to de-historicise Patočka's thought from this particular realm and to apply the solidarity of the shaken in a different context. As such, I examined the concept in relation to the sinister forms of solidarities emerging in the inter-war period linked to the Conservative Revolution. The effect of this de-historicising shift is to debunk any possible myths that Patočka's references to Jünger, in *Heretical Essays*, may evoke, namely that the solidarity of the shaken is a conservative, right-wing community promoting Christian European values, and that Patočka, through this concept, aimed to reconstruct a form of *Frontgemeinschaft* in the Czech underground. The overarching aim of this thesis was to strictly deny these speculations.

Instead, in my research I demonstrated that the solidarity of the shaken is a highly relevant concept and that Patočka's thinking carries an immensely important message that can offer an alternative answer to the challenges of the political realm today. In my thesis I performed a detailed analysis of each of the solidarities (the solidarity of the shaken, *Frontgemeinschaft* and *Volksgemeinschaft*) and highlighted the foundations upon which they originate. While the solidarity of the shaken is founded on openness to the other, *Frontgemeinschaft* or the community of Conservative Revolutionaries (and later *Volksgemeinschaft*), represents a form of *camaraderie* between people who share the same memory and same experience but which is strongly underpinned by politics of identity, as it is open only to people of the same nation and race. While the former solidarity (the solidarity of the shaken) entails risk and contingency, the latter (*Frontgemeinschaft*) seeks security. In my thesis I outlined also the motivations, aims and objectives each solidarity follows. The solidarity of the shaken is driven by truth (as *aletheia*). In contrast,

the Conservative Revolution and the communities that appear within this movement are motivated by feelings of anxiety, anger, hatred, disgust, envy and the desire for revenge.

The aim of this research was not only to decontextualise the solidarity of the shaken from its materialisation in Charter 77 within communist Czechoslovakia, but also to extend Patočka's thinking on the political community and to determine its relevance today. In other words, to question, what implications do Patočka's philosophy and the solidarity of the shaken have regarding the contemporary political crisis.

In the research I suggest that, today, in an age of a gradually disintegrating Europe, there is a pressing need for a pan-European, cross-border solidarity to fight xenophobia, aggressive nationalism and misanthropy. However, such solidarity is not possible without strong ethical principles. Therefore, the solidarity of the shaken, with its ethical principles of sacrifice, self-surrender and the restless search for truth as its central pillar, offers a fitting phenomenological foundation for how such a community can be constituted.

This research offers one possible interpretation of the solidarity of the shaken (as spiritual authority) through an extensive analysis of the problem that had previously been missing. The significance of the solidarity of the shaken resides in its secure attachment to the truth. Truth (as *aletheia*) becomes the guiding principle of the solidarity of the shaken in assessing, shaking and undermining the political realm. The solidarity of the shaken, so conceived, prevents evil ideas from becoming gradually acceptable to the masses. The solidarity of the shaken undermines and resists everything that could endanger the future of democracy.

Patočka's idea of the solidarity of the shaken, therefore, offers a par excellence answer to the crisis in the contemporary political realm, which I have described as the era of neoliberal globalisation. It emerges out of the shaking – out of disappointment with the political situation. However, it unmasks populist rhetoric, which operates with the ideas of racism, gender inequality, and xenophobia, and which promises to 'protect' citizens and to guarantee their material well-being. Through the ethical principles it detaches from the mundane world of the everydayness and seeks for the truth to undermine demagoguery and totality of ideologies. The significance of the solidarity of the shaken, therefore, resides precisely in its integrity and remaining truthful to one's ethical ideals. It is not suf-

ficient to question the values of slowly perishing liberal democracies any longer. Only by the emergence of the new democratic solidarity - the solidarity of the shaken represents, one can respond to the problems of the contemporary political crisis and challenge the spreading tendencies of alt-right movements.

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