Esse or *Habere*. To Be or To Have: Patočka's Critique of Husserl and Heidegger

Abstract

In this paper, I discuss Jan Patočka's conviction that despite scientific knowledge appearing to be the only arbiter for *the* correct understanding of what-is, it cannot tell us how to live a good life. Patočka's claim is that knowledge is nothing more than *technē*, the art of the precise calculation of things based only on their usefulness. Consequently, because the scientific explanation of nature cannot account for the world in which we live (for our finite existence), this natural world is covered by formal constructs leading to the existential crisis of European societies. In sketching Patočka's appropriation and critique of Husserl's and Heidegger's explanation of the crisis, I conclude with Patočka's claim that present society is defined by the mode of *having* as opposed to the *care for our being*. For Patočka, we must take responsibility for our thinking and acting instead of blindly appropriating 'scientific' explanations that turn nature into things that humans have a right to possess. Yet responsibility is not something calculable that everybody can acquire by consulting the latest user-friendly manuals. Becoming responsible for the way we think and act is a continuous struggle; it is a struggle to become who we want to be. In this struggle, formal knowledge is not sufficient.

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> As elsewhere in history, perhaps it is time to realise that the real way forward might be going back to beginnings.[1]

In this paper, I discuss Jan Patočka's conviction that despite scientific knowledge appearing to be the only arbiter for the correct understanding of what-is, it cannot tell us how to live a good life. In sketching Patočka's appropriation and critique of Husserl's and Heidegger's explanation of the existential crisis of European societies, I conclude with his claim that society today is defined by the mode of having as opposed to being, leading to this crisis.[2]

Patočka believes that modern societies' drive for "ever-new technologies" cannot overcome this *existential* crisis. Following Martin Heidegger's analysis, he emphasizes that it is not technology *per se* but the technological 'spirit' of the age that *is* the problem. Techno-science dominates our lives and the state is nothing more than the "great generator and storehouse of power." On the one hand, technological advancements have changed our lives substantially, removing most of the toil; on the other hand, techno-knowledge—concerned only with formal structures—cannot answer the question: what does it mean to live a good life. Despite all advances, "no society, no matter how well-equipped it may be technologically, can function without a moral foundation, without convictions that do not depend on convenience, circumstances, or expected advantage." For Patočka, "the point of morality is to assure not the functioning of a society but the *humanity* of humans. Humans do not invent morality arbitrarily, to suit their needs, wishes, inclinations, and aspirations. Quite the contrary, it is morality that defines what being human means."[3]

The only way to preserve our humanity—in the face of technological domination that endangers not only the planet but humans as well—is to think and act responsibly.[4] A spiritual person knows that "understanding is no mere observation of facts, it is not 'objective

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[1] "Ako inde v histórii, aj tu sa možno ukazuje, že skutočná cesta vpred je cesta naspäť k začiatkom" (Patočka, Jan. "Motto." *Kapitoly z Dejín Slovenského Myslenia*. Vladimír Bakoš. Bratislava: Polygrafia SAV, 1995: 7.).
[2] For a different account of the tension between 'to be' and 'to have,' see Fromm, Erich. *To Have Or To Be?* World Perspectives. New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1976..
[3] Patočka, Jan. "The Obligation to Resist Injustice." Trans. Erazim Kohák. *Jan Patočka. Philosophy and Selected Writings*. Ed. Erazim Kohák. The text released on 3 January 1977. Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, (1977) 1989: 340-343..
[4] Patočka, Jan. "The Dangers of Technicization in Science according to E. Husserl and the Essence of Technology as Danger according to M. Heidegger." Ibid., (1973) 1989: 327-339..

knowledge'." It is the never-ending pursuit of meaning as a way of life.[5] For Patočka, "philosophical reflection" must be a "matter of *inner conduct*."[6]

Reflections on the State of Our Contemporary World

According to Patočka, to understand the crisis of modern society is to recognize how the rise of modern science with its correlate technology has changed the way that we think about the world. Human knowledge seems anything but finite. The awe-inspiring nature in which we live and of which we are part is reduced by science to a collection of things and processes that can be mastered and ultimately possessed by finite human reason by means of mathematics. The result is scientism, as Patočka terms it, following Husserl. It is "a limitless, uncontrolled mathematicism."[7] True, in ancient times, Democritus and Plato also privileged mathematics as a way to understand all that-is. Yet, by converting shapes existing in pure space and time into numbers, Descartes was the first to show "the possibility of its *universal* application."[8] For Descartes, geometry becomes the model of clarity and distinctness, free of "any subjectivity, without any perspectival quality."[9] As Patočka notes, using the "arithmetization of geometry," we leave the world of our experience behind and "pass over to universal *formalization*."[10] Each thing in nature—and here we also include forces which scientific explanations can convert into mathematical computation—is conceived as "an autonomous object, ontologically independent of anything external and in that sense substantival, varying only in details we discover as we become familiar with the way things function *within* this schema."[11]

Husserl identified two more "revolutionary ideas" that changed the modern scientific understanding of our imprecise world into a formal construct. Linked with the name of Galileo, "they are the ideas of precise causality"[12] and of the "indirect mathematization of

[5] Patočka, Jan. *Heretical Essays in the Philosophy of History*. Trans. Erazim Kohák. Ed. James Dodd. Chicago and La Salle, Illinois: Open Court, 1996..
[6] Patočka, Jan. *Plato and Europe*. Trans. Petr Lom. Cultural Memory in the Present. Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2002..
[7] Patočka, Jan. "Cartesianism and Phenomenology." Trans. Erazim Kohák. *Jan Patočka. Philosophy and Selected Writings*. Ed. Erazim Kohák. Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, (1976) 1989: 285-326.. See also Patočka, Jan. "Edmund Husserl's Philosophy of the Crisis of the Sciences and his Conception of a Phenomenology of the 'Life-World'." Trans. Erazim Kohák. *Jan Patočka. Philosophy and Selected Writings*. Ed. Erazim Kohák. Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, (1971) 1989: 223-238..
[8] Patočka. "Cartesianism.".
[9] Patočka, Jan. *Body, Community, Language, World*. Ed. James Dodd. Chicago and La Salle, Illinois: Open Court, 1996..
[10] Patočka. "Husserl's Philosophy of the Crisis.".
[11] Patočka. "Cartesianism.".
[12] Patočka. "Husserl's Philosophy of the Crisis.".

qualitative contents."[13] Husserl explains the problematic nature of indirect mathematization. The difficulty is not simply in the process of idealization of things achieved by their conversion into mathematical formulas. It is the ignorance of the basic presupposition of this methodology, namely, that it is based "on *a certain hypothesis*" that things *can be* transposed into numbers so that we can master nature by way of calculation, "thereby bringing it under the rule of thought." This method is and remains only a hypothesis, "which is constantly being verified and yet will always remain hypothetical."[14] However, we have become duped by technological successes, since more and more things, forces, magnetic fields, light, sound, and so forth can be exchanged for numbers and dealt with in a formal manner. We believe that nature is nothing other than "the sphere of efficacy" and precise "causality, without which prediction is impossible."[15]

Patočka's preoccupation with our contemporary world continues and expands Husserl's and Heidegger's analyses.[16] For him, as well as for them, technological science rules our lives, primarily because present-day science is defined in terms of effectiveness and utility, aiming "at releasing forces for action and domination, for ordering the world, for transformation of things for purposes foreign to them; they come to be understood purely as a means which humans have not only a right but a duty to exploit and expand."[17] Science is techno-science. According to Patočka, the difference between a scientist and a technician is one of degree and not one of essence.[18] Similar to Heidegger's claim, for Patočka, this techno-science aims to 'uncover' nature's workings in order to use its riches as a stockpile for further consumption and exploration. Paradoxically, this also leads to the integration of humans into a standing

[13] Ibid.. See also Patočka, Jan. "The Dangers of Technicization in Science according to E. Husserl and the Essence of Technology as Danger according to M. Heidegger." Trans. Erazim Kohák. *Jan Patočka. Philosophy and Selected Writings*. Ed. Erazim Kohák. Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, (1973) 1989: 327-339..
[14] Patočka. "Husserl's Philosophy of the Crisis.".
[15] Patočka. "Cartesianism.".
[16] See, for example, Blecha, Ivan. *Jan Patočka*. Malé Monografie. Olomouc: Votobia, 1997; Dubský, Ivan. *Filosof Jan Patočka*. Praha: Oikoymenh, 1997; Dodd, James. "Editor's Introduction." *Body, Community, Language, World*. Jan Patočka. Chicago and La Salle, Illinois: Open Court, 1996: xi-xxxi; Kohák, Erazim. "A Philosophical Biography." *Jan Patočka. Philosophy and Selected Writings*. Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1989: 3-135.. See also Findlay, Edward F. *Caring for the Soul in a Postmodern Age: Politics and Phenomenology in the Thought of Jan Patočka*. Albany: State University of New York Press, 2002..
[17] Patočka, Jan. *An Introduction to Husserl's Phenomenology*. Trans. Erazim Kohák. Ed. James Dodd. Chicago and La Salle: Open Court, 1996..
[18] Patočka, Jan. "Několik Poznámek o Pojmu 'Světových Dějin'." *Péče o Duši: Soubor Statí a Přednášek o Postavení Člověka ve Světě a v Dějinách. Stati z Let 1929-1952. Nevydané Texty z Padesátých Let*. Eds. Ivan Chvatík and Pavel Kouba. Sebrané Spisy Jana Patočky. Svazek 1. Vol. I. Praha: Oikoymenh, (1935) 1996: 46-67..

reserve.[19] On the one hand, humans "become the ruthless rulers of an abstract object to which they have only an abstract relation," on the other hand, because within this schema they are also "objects in the world," they become part of a "technology of human resources." Humans, instead of being in charge of this huge scientific apparatus—originally devised to master nature to their advantage—become part of this contrivance that increasingly ransacks the earth. This techno-science turns the process into something anonymous, seemingly run by 'objectivity' itself. As Patočka explains, "the abstractly personal relation to the world is thus a technology which becomes its own purpose."[20] Any opposition to this type of 'management of nature' is eliminated by charges of subjectivity, irrationality, backwardness or traditionalism, while an exploitation of nature and humans continues.

According to Patočka, Husserl identifies the present crisis as a problematic fusion of "modern scepticism" and the "hypostatization of natural-scientific methodology." Since for Husserl, the idea of science gave cultural and political meaning to Europe "for more than two millennia," he is convinced that to overcome this crisis, it is imperative to expose the ways in which this excessive stress on form in place of content covers over the natural world in which we live. The conversion of lived nature into the "*more geometrico*" prototype leads, according to Husserl, to the demise of the human "freedom of truth" because humans "no longer [live] among things as they actually are but only among [their] own subjective processes."[21] Since nature is now understood in a formal manner, there is no link leading to "authentic reality," to the world we actually live in. 'Man' on this model is also conceptualised as "the geometric man," one more abstract thing fitted into the overall formal system. For Husserl, this is the result of the "subjective standpoint" of modern philosophy. This "bad subjectivism" leads to scepticism.[22] Scepticism in its modern version cannot "resolve the question of how it is that all that is, *is* for a subject, and yet the subject is merely a part of all that is."[23] To put it differently, 'man' is supposedly the one who gives meaning to all that-is, while, at the same

[19] See also Heidegger, Martin. "The Question Concerning Technology." Trans. William Lovitt. *The Question Concerning Technology and Other Essays*. New York: Harper TorchBooks. Harper & Row Publishers, 1977: 3-35..
[20] Patočka. *Husserl's Phenomenology*..
[21] Patočka, Jan. "Masaryk's and Husserl's Conception of the Spiritual Crisis of European Humanity." Trans. Erazim Kohák. *Jan Patočka. Philosophy and Selected Writings*. Ed. Erazim Kohák. Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, (1936) 1989: 145-156.. For a similar analysis, see Heisenberg, Werner. "The Representation of Nature in Contemporary Physics." Trans. O. T. Benfey. *The Discontinuous Universe*. New York: Basic Books, 1972: 122-135..
[22] Patočka. "Masaryk and Husserl.". See Husserl, Edmund. *Cartesian Meditations: An Introduction to Phenomenology*. Trans. Dorion Cairns. The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1973..
[23] Patočka. "Masaryk and Husserl.".

time, he is a part of nature as one object among many others. In short, man lives in a continual schizophrenic relation to the world.[24]

According to Husserl, "modern scepticism is brought about by bad naturalistic subjectivism, that is, by the mixing of subjectivism with the methodological objectivism of modern natural science."[25] In his last work, *The Crisis of European Sciences*, Husserl shows that this predicament is connected with the mathematization of nature.[26] He traces the beginning of mathematization of sciences to Galileo. Husserl's new rigorous science aims to describe how nature is buried under geometrical scientific formulas. He suggests that science, as the organ of reason, is the basis on which European civilization was built. Husserl believes that by re-constituting "*philosophy as a science* which seeks not simply to gain objective knowledge but to justify such knowledge" we can hope to overcome the crisis.[27] We need to expose the links that led to this decadence of science that set in motion the collapse of meaning in our everyday life, and to find the 'cure' to restore the scientific spirit to its full health. Thereby we will help sciences to return to 'normal condition' that is characterized by the search for truth that can always be vindicated.[28] Patočka notes that for both Husserl and Heidegger, the spirit of scientific *and* philosophical inquiry is the search for truth. Yet their understanding of what truth is differs.[29]

As Patočka says, for Husserl, "technicization is something negative, a certain *steresis*, a lack of meaning which can be in principle eliminated by greater attention to the observed continuities of meaning. A broader foundation of a new level, that of the effective

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[24] See also Patočka, Jan. "The 'Natural' World and Phenomenology." Trans. Erazim Kohák. *Jan Patočka. Philosophy and Selected Writings*. Ed. Erazim Kohák. Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, (1967) 1989: 239-273.. The result is what Michel Foucault calls the empirico-transcendental doublet. See Foucault, Michel. *The Order of Things. An Archaeology of the Human Sciences*. Trans. Anon. New York: Vintage Books, 1994..

[25] Patočka. "Masaryk and Husserl.".

[26] Husserl, Edmund. *The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology: An Introduction to Phenomenological Philosophy*. Trans. David Carr. Northwestern University Studies in Phenomenology & Existential Philosophy. Evanston: Northwest University Press, (1954) 1970.. See also Husserl, Edmund. *Phenomenology and the Crisis of Philosophy. Philosophy as Rigorous Science and Philosophy and the Crisis of European Man*. Trans. Quentin Lauer. New York: Harper TorchBooks, Harper & Row Publishers, 1965; Heidegger, Martin. *What is a Thing?* Trans. W. B. Barton Jr. and Vera Deutsch. Eugene T. Gendlin, an Analysis. Lanham: University Press of America, Inc., 1985..

[27] Patočka. *Husserl's Phenomenology*.. See also Patočka. "Masaryk and Husserl.".

[28] Patočka, Jan. "Husserlova Idea Evropské Racionality." Trans. (from German to Czech) Karel Novotný. *Péče o Duši: Soubor Statí a Přednášek o Postavení Člověka ve Světě a v Dějinách*. Eds. Ivan Chvatík and Pavel Kouba. Sebrané Spisy Jana Patočky. Svazek 3. Vol. III. Praha: Oikoymenh, (1974) 2002: 161-185..

[29] See Patočka. "Danger of Technicization.", especially the later version of this paper, Patočka, Jan. "Nebezpečí Technizace ve Vědě u E. Husserla a Bytostné Jádro Techniky Jako Nebezpečí u M. Heideggera (2. version)." Trans. (from German to Czech) Ivan Chvatík. *Péče o Duši: Soubor Statí a Přednášek o Postavení Člověka ve Světě a v Dějinách*. Eds. Ivan Chvatík and Pavel Kouba. 2. version. Sebrané Spisy Jana Patočky. Svazek 3. Vol. III. Praha: Oikoymenh, (1974) 2002: 193-226..

transcendental subjectivity, could overcome this state of affairs."[30] Despite Husserl's critics claiming that his philosophy is a replay of the old Platonic Forms, Patočka disagrees.[31] "Husserl's 'Platonism' has nothing in common with the metaphysics of ideas and forms." His new rigorous science is not compatible with Plato's or Aristotle's search for the "path to true being and goodness." Husserl's endeavour is firmly rooted in the modern conception of science, "transforming original living relations and given life into precisely manipulable idealities, transforming them by idealization into objects of a higher order."[32] Husserl's motivation is not to inquire into the possibility of the good life, as Plato and Aristotle did, but to search for the clarity of formal knowledge. His is the completion of Descartes's project to find the indubitable starting point for our knowledge of nature. While Descartes wanted to constitute the transcendent *res extensa* from the immanence of the ego,[33] in Husserl, the transcendental ego devours all things into itself. There is no transcendence left, all is immanence. For Patočka, a remedy by way of the transcendental ego being the last ground of meaning sidesteps the *historical* basis of meaning and truth. A return to the *Lebenswelt* makes sense but not as a way to absolute subjectivity but only as a way toward an illumination of finite human responsibility for meaning, clarity and truth.[34]

Heidegger too speaks about the technological spirit of the modern age that treats humans and things on the same level. Yet he claims that the mathematization of science is a symptom that is impossible to 'cure' through the instantiation of another science, no matter how rigorous. Although mathematization characterizes modern techno-science, this mathematization alone is not enough to explain the techno-science. The Greeks also used arithmetics and geometry. So, the problem seems to be: is the loss of meaning we experience *because* of the mathematization of nature by formal science, or, did formal science mathematise nature because there was no meaning to start with? If it is the first case, the new science, however rigorous, will perpetuate the scientific model which seeks to explain everything from its domain and will be absorbed into its formal structures; if it is the second case, the new science questioning the ground of sciences will not be able to ask questions about the lack of meaning

[30] Patočka. "Danger of Technicization.".
[31] See also Patočka, Jan. "The Husserlian Doctrine of Eidetic Intuition and Its Recent Critics." *Husserl. Expositions and Appraisals*. Eds. Frederick A. Elliston and Peter McCormick. Notre Dame, London: University of Notre Dame Press, 1977: 150-159..
[32] Patočka. *Husserl's Phenomenology*..
[33] See Patočka, Jan. *Úvod do Fenomenologické Filosofie*. Eds. Jiří Polívka and Ivan Chvatík. Praha: ISE, Oikoymenh, Edice Oikúmené, ve spolupráci s Archivem Jana Patočky, 1993..
[34] Patočka, Jan. "Nebezpečí Technizace ve Vědě u E. Husserla a Bytostné Jádro Techniky Jako Nebezpečí u M. Heideggera (1. version)." *Péče o Duši: Soubor Statí a Přednášek o Postavení Člověka ve Světě a v Dějinách*. Eds. Ivan Chvatík and Pavel Kouba. Sebrané Spisy Jana Patočky. Svazek 3. Vol. III. Praha: Oikoymenh, (1973) 2002: 147-160..

purportedly being external to sciences' domain. In both cases, the clarification of meaning is sought only within the scientific model itself. Whichever scenario, it is like Socrates asking Euthyphro, "is the pious being loved by the gods because it is pious, or is it pious because it is being loved by the gods?"[35] For Patočka, then, it is not possible to reverse the crisis by introducing another science. The new science does not change the ground on which techno-science is erected because it accepts it.

Consequently, Patočka agrees with Heidegger that philosophy cannot be science, that is, another *technē*. Philosophy by its very nature is not objective as "scientific truths and scientific systems are."[36] Philosophical questioning should seek to expose ossified conventional meanings by 'shaking the complacencies' of our thinking. The subject matter of philosophy is truth. For Patočka, the principle of all principles is: truth must show itself to us, we cannot force it if it does not want to reveal itself to us or if it does not want to dwell with us.[37] As the Greeks already knew, truth—*aletheia*—reveals and conceals itself at the same time. We need to pay attention to the phenomenon *of* the phenomenon—the process of revealing as such—not to something that is already revealed. Hence, Patočka insists that the task of phenomenology should be to examine this process of revealing.[38] Philosophical truth is a way of life; it cannot be objective, given to everyone in the same way under the same circumstances, as sciences purport to do by the mathematization of things and processes into formal system. Patočka suggests that "where philosophy is asked to establish and prove itself just like some mathematical or natural scientific theory, there it has already capitulated."[39] Yet originally, philosophy *and* science were this "way of life in truth and towards truth," the way of responsibility.[40] This changed when science took a different road. How does Patočka describe this trajectory?

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[35] Plato. "Euthyphro." Trans. G. M. A. Grube. *Complete Works*. Ed. John M. Cooper. Indianapolis, Cambridge: Hackett Publishing Company, 1997: 2-16..
[36] Patočka. *Plato & Europe*..
[37] Patočka. *Úvod*..
[38] Ibid.. See also Patočka. *Husserl's Phenomenology*; Patočka. "'Natural' World."; Patočka, Jan. "What is Phenomenon?-Phenomenology and Phenomenological Philosophy-Phenomenon and Truth." Trans. Petr Lom. *Plato and Europe*. Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2002: 15-37..
[39] Patočka. *Plato & Europe*..
[40] Patocka, Jan. "Evropa a Doba Poevropská." Trans. (from German to Czech) Vera Koubová. *Péce o Duši. Soubor Statí a Prednášek o Postavení Cloveka ve Svete a v Dejinách. Stati z Let 1970 - 1977. Nevydané Texty a Prednášky ze Sedmdesátých Let*. Eds. Ivan Chvatík and Pavel Kouba. Sebrané Spisy Jana Patocky. Vol. 2. Praha: Oikoymenh, (1970-1977) 1999: 80-148..

The End of the Ancient Cosmos and the Beginning of the Scientific World View

Patočka traces the origin of the 'mathematization' of nature to the Greeks, "who first discovered science in the sense of a consistent sequence of reasoning, in the form of mathematical theory."[41] This was concurrent with the beginning of proto-philosophy. For Patočka, philosophy and science grew out of the entirely new spirit characterized by "the shaking of the familiar and 'given' certainties" of the mythological world, in order to *see* "what *truly* is."[42] This is also the beginning of history, as he defines it.[43]

According to Patočka, the ancient Greeks were the first to question the mythological explanation of reality. Until then, humans lived in a mythical world, referring "explicitly only to *parts* of all there is, never to the world *as a whole*." In a mythical world, answers were given before questions because the mysterious and threatening world was illuminated by myths and legends that humans fully accepted.[44] As he explains, "in this world humans can encounter spirits, demons, and other mysterious beings, but they do not encounter the mystery of manifestation as such."[45] When the world manifests itself as something that needs an explanation, this certainty disappears. Philosophy, as the question of being and what-is, becomes the space where new meaning is sought. For Patočka, "the constant shaking of the naive sense of meaningfulness"—in other words, problematising mythological explanations—shows the way toward a "new mode of meaning."[46] History begins when humans start probing for reasons to explain what-is, when "modest but reliable"[47] mythological timeless explanations of the world become meaningless, and questions are hard to formulate. As he says, "philosophy is unthinkable without questions. But to develop or pose a question means precisely to find an explicitly empty space, to find something that in a certain sense is not here."[48] This was a profound realisation of the ancient Greeks. Our whole Western philosophical tradition has developed from that spirit.

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[41] Patočka. *Husserl's Phenomenology*..
[42] Patočka, Jan. "Author's Glosses to the *Heretical Essays*." Trans. Erazim Kohák. *Heretical Essays in the Philosophy of History*. Ed. James Dodd. Chicago and La Salle, Illinois: Open Court, 1996: 139-154..
[43] See Patočka. *Heretical Essays*..
[44] Patočka. *Husserl's Phenomenology*..
[45] Patočka. *Heretical Essays*..
[46] Ibid..
[47] Ibid..
[48] Patočka. *Plato & Europe*..

Ancient world

Patočka explains that this novel Greek attitude, from which proto-science ensued, was characterized by initial uncertainty, due to the realisation that mythical narratives no longer explained the world. Yet the 'shaking of meaningfulness' expressed by legends did not mean that humans found themselves in the world without meaning. For Patočka, the shaking of meaning opens the way toward new explanations of the world.[49] As Hans-Georg Gadamer remarks, albeit in a different context: "*Only those who go along know that there is a way*."[50] Suddenly, phenomena revealed themselves in a new light that astonished the Greeks. This astonishment led them to pose new questions. These questions were ground-breaking: Why is there something rather than nothing? What is the world? Why do things exist? How can we know things that are transient and always given to us differently? On what basis can we communicate about them? This drive to understand all that-is was coupled with the entirely new impetus peculiar to the Greeks. While mythology proclaimed that things in the world are such and such, these descriptions were final, and there was no other way to understand the world. By contrast, for the Greeks, to understand meant, first and foremost, to give reasons why it was so and to provide evidence for their claims. This new proto-scientific spirit was tied with the rise of mathematical science.

Mathematics as such is not yet science. The ancient Egyptians and the Babylonians also knew mathematical propositions, but the Greeks alone realised that correct propositions—if they to be valid all the time—must be demonstrated. In their search for demonstration of the mathematical propositions, the Greeks discovered the idea of the internal consistency of the deductive process of reasoning, reasoning whose validity can be discerned without recourse to unreliable human experience.[51] Thus, in arithmetics we can speak of sets and numbers whose validity can be maintained at all times, and everywhere, and by every person familiar with the formal order. Within this system, we can carry as many "possible substitutions and variations" as we want without changing the meaning of the formula. For every x, y, z we can substitute any number whatsoever, so long as our substitutions are uniform. If we follow the formal rules, we "agree on anything whatsoever that can be subordinated to the conception of such a

[49] See also Ricœur, Paul. "Preface to the French Edition of Jan Patocka's Heretical Essays." Trans. James Dodd. *Heretical Essays in the Philosophy of History*. Chicago and La Salle, Illinois: Open Court, 1996: vii-xvi..
[50] Gadamer, Hans-Georg. "Martin Heidegger-85 Years." Trans. John W. Stanley. *Heidegger's Ways*. SUNY Series in Contemporary Continental Philosophy. Albany: State University of New Press, (1974) 1994: 111-120..
[51] See Gadamer, Hans-Georg. "Filosofie Mezi Vedou a Prirozeným Svetem [*Wissenschaft und Lebenswelt*]." Trans. (from German to Czech) Ivan Chvatík. *Fenomén Jako Filosofický Problém. Sborník Prací k Filosofii Jana Patocky a Eugena Finka*. Eds. Ivan Chvatík and Pavel Kouba. Praha: Oikoymenh, 2000: 250-269..

quantitative set" as long as questions and answers are formulated from within this formal structure.

Likewise, in geometry, everyone can grasp the plane figures existing in pure space and time fixed by formal rules. For example, starting with the art of measurement, we draw on "certain privileged configurations taken from ordinary observation,"[52] for example, a straight line such as an edge of an existing physical object that we can align with another object and that, in succession, with another, and so on. We abstract from this initial *modus operandi* to construct some sort of yardstick that can be used by everybody, everywhere. "This peculiarity lies at the beginnings of a process of unlimited refinement of measuring procedures whose initially subjective-objective scope becomes, to be sure, purely conventional in the course of the development."[53] As a consequence of the discovery of this measuring routine, ancient civilizations built those astonishing structures that we still admire.[54]

Yet only the ancient Greeks realized that, although we cannot achieve the final objective goal because we can only approach it in the process of ever more refining it, we can conceive of it as something ideal, and thereby unchanging. We can *think* it as something separate from the world of experience. We know that 'empirical' measurements are always imprecise, but we can *imagine* the final objective limit that, to be sure, can never be realized but it can guide us as something ideal. We take that imagined ideal *telos* of a procedure and consider it in isolation. This is the way the Greeks abstracted from everyday practical experience to posit something as the ideal form. In geometry, we can create in our mind an ideal triangle, or a straight line extended to infinity.[55] These ideal outcomes of our thought processes "have the immense advantage: what is true of them can be ordered as a system and exhausted by a rigorous method which, except for certain rules of admissible and inadmissible ordering of propositions, admits nothing external, disruptive, and uncontrolled in its progression."[56] Then, in turn, this anticipated ideal object—now understood as truth-in-itself—can guide us in our unpredictable everyday life. Likewise, in philosophy: Platonic Forms are the kind of 'measurement' that in the world of our experience can neither exist, nor be exact.[57] By way of "such an operation"—removing all the contingencies that make up our empirical observations—we perform an "*idealization*" of a given inexact thing, turning it into an ideal

[52] Patočka. *Husserl's Phenomenology*..
[53] Patočka. "Husserl's Philosophy of the Crisis.".
[54] Patočka. *Husserl's Phenomenology*..
[55] See, for example, Aristotle. "*Metaphysica*." Trans. W. D. Ross. *The Basic Works of Aristotle*. Ed. Richard McKeon. The Random House Lifetime Library. New York: Random House, Inc., 1941: 681-926..
[56] Patočka. *Husserl's Phenomenology*..
[57] Patočka. "Husserl's Philosophy of the Crisis.".

object that is possible for all to think. From then on, we can speak about those ideal objects without recourse to the experiential world, because we understand "a priori, for instance, that we can find a number corresponding to any set of entities, regardless of its magnitude."[58]

Given this certainty when dealing with the objects of geometry, it becomes clear why the ancient Greeks realized these possibilities. The Greeks, by an "explicitly objectifying act and its meaning correlate, mathematical objectivities," turned particular things encountered by us in different ways into "truly objective" units, thus instantiating something that was "intersubjectively *identical*."[59] The fluctuating, nebulous world of our experience and of particular "ungraspable perspectives" is transformed into a uniformly comprehensible system to which everyone can gain equal access. It is by way of these steps that the Greeks conceived of the idea of absolute truth that is within reach of all and sundry: "a truth no longer relative to a world of perspectives and approximations, or life-world, but a truth that is absolute in the sense of the ideal of nonrelativity and precision."[60]

Similarly, the "*world as a whole* is originally nothing objective." We are not even aware of its presence, since the only way we can encounter it is through things *in* the world. Although, we come across things in our everyday activities, we do not think about them. They are there and we use them for our projects. Each particular thing leads to another, this keyboard I am using to write sentences leads me to the computer, the computer to the table on which it stands, a table points to the room, the room to the house, the house in turn points to the street, the city, and so on and so forth. I can never know the whole of that-is, but things are always pointing beyond themselves to something further, to the world. The world is not a thing I can think of or experience as a whole. This whole—that I cannot describe otherwise than by way of encountered things—is more that all those things I can name. According to our projects, things are revealed and concealed and they disappear into "the abyss of nonbeing" that demarcates "the whole to which all belongs." To inquire about this whole, it "must, however, be first *explicitly torn out* of this everyday obvious functioning." Only then, can we think about those "perennially incomplete" relations, connections, perspectives that take for granted being and the "existence of a *whole*."[61]

[58] Patočka. *Husserl's Phenomenology*.. Yet the "objectification of shape," as Patočka notes, took much longer. Leibniz, for example, "did not believe that it could be possible to express any concrete, sense-given shape whatever mathematically" (Patočka. *Husserl's Phenomenology*.).
[59] Patočka. *Husserl's Phenomenology*..
[60] Patočka. "Husserl's Philosophy of the Crisis.".
[61] Patočka. *Husserl's Phenomenology*..

Yet we cannot even approximate the whole. It is something on a par with mathematical equations. We need to "*break free*" from contingent reality—as in geometry or arithmetics—in order to realize that there is "something independent of the given, something which its objectification presupposes and which for that very reason is not passively accepted, strictly speaking, but rather something accessible to us." Yet it is not an "*external givenness*." The world cannot be 'given' to us as something concrete or tangible. We can only grasp it by idealisation through mental operations, that is, only through "*internal freedom.*"[62] Only when we transcend our experience of things, can we realise that there *is* something more, something that we presuppose as the ground from which all that we see, hear, smell comes from. The world is the 'backdrop' to all that-is and yet we cannot master it by our finite human understanding. For a very long time, we have passed over the world without noticing it because of its strangeness and yet, at the same time, familiarity. Suddenly we feel as if we have woken up from a dream that we took for granted for so long. This whole, all that-is, gives meaning to every particular thing that we know and, yet, the whole as such is unknown to us. The moment we face up to this "simple wonder of all wonders," we begin to appreciate the whole, although it will always elude us as a whole. It is here and yet we cannot encounter it, it is 'something' and yet it is not a thing. This realisation that "all had been otherwise" than what we thought previously, that there is something more than the things we encounter, gives rise to "wonder, awe—*thauma*, *thaumazein*." For Plato, this wonder is the beginning of wisdom.[63] The Greeks were the first to *see* this relation to the whole, the relation to being, to that which underlies all that-is. From this realisation—that there is something which we do not encounter as such but it is the ground from which all originate and then, in turn, into which all disappear—came the idea of the Cosmos, unified, harmonious and complete in itself that one wonders about.

The Cosmos thus understood is tied with the speculative "conception of reason," derived from "Plato's and Aristotle's metaphysics." On this model, reason and the Cosmos are fused into a harmonious and eternal whole. Finite human reason can only approximate the nature of the one ultimate reality if the proper care is taken of the soul. Similarly, absolute truth as such is not available to us finite creatures. It "must be grasped by a perspective which is equally one and atemporal," as is being and truth because finite human understanding is defined by temporality, hence it cannot reach what is absolute. "This atemporal perspective, grasping

[62] Ibid..
[63] Ibid.. See also Plato. "Theaetetus." Trans. M. J. Levett and rev. Myles Burnyeat. *Complete Works*. Ed. John M. Cooper. Indianapolis, Cambridge: Hackett Publishing Company, 1997: 158-234; Aristotle. "*Metaphysica*.".

being directly and so identical with it, that is reason." Human reason can only partake in this ultimate reason by "an imitation of the working of reason as such or, later, of divine Reason which is itself, God." On this view, reason has a dual character, it is intuitive and discursive at once. "Discursive reason is here only an instrument, the middle term by which we arrive at intuition, direct insight, and it is only intelligible if we presuppose an intuitive reason that reaches the very essence of the world." Reason, truth, being, and the Cosmos form a unity, so if there is a change in any one of them, it will be directly reflected in all. Given their interrelation, "unity, regularity, and harmony of understanding the world will at the same time be close to its truth, its nature as it is in itself." To seek regularity and harmony is to find "the unity of the relations that bind individual things to each other" in a "universal analogy." The world is an "organic whole," where each member is "a metaphor of the whole or contains in it a summary, a hierarchical unity descending from the peaks of unity and harmony to the lowlands where only its traces can be found." To understand the Cosmos, one must understand the one unchangeable that all particular members of this whole faintly mirror. Particulars are important only if they can bring the whole Cosmos into view, revealing by analogy the one through its connection with it. Understanding is always from the top down, from the one to the many, because the one 'seeps' into the many as they emulate and reflect it, "offering some new key to the ultimate mysteries, letting them sparkle with a new sharpness." To know is to "speculate, to penetrate to the living heart of the world." Reason is fundamentally a "speculative reason, the seeker of unity, analogy, and harmony."[64]

The seventeenth century marks the end of this vision of the world.

The new science

For Patočka, transformations in thinking, and by extension in history, come on doves' feet,[65] sweeping away the configuration of knowledge that we took for granted. As he reminds us, modern mathematical natural science developed from esoteric deliberations of a few studious men in the sixteenth and seventeenth century to become, in the present, "the bridge, binding (*pouto*) and force of the planet." Thinkers in that period brought about changes not imagined by them. For their aspiration was not to demolish the traditional Cosmos. They sought to improve knowledge to make it more exact and harmonious. Yet the whole edifice of the

[64] Patočka, Jan. "Two Senses of Reason and Nature in the German Enlightenment: A Herderian Study." Trans. Erazim Kohák. *Jan Patočka. Philosophy and Selected Writings*. Ed. Erazim Kohák. Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, (1942) 1989: 157-174..

[65] "It is the stillest words which bring the storm. Thoughts that come on doves' feet guide the world" (Nietzsche, Friedrich Wilhelm. *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*. Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1969.).

ancient world—of all that-is, the world, as they knew it—collapsed.[66] What undermined the Cosmos was not the broadening of mathematical abstractions inherited from the Greeks to ever-new regions of nature but, rather, was the new way this abstraction was carried out.

From the fifteenth to seventeenth century, Platonic thinkers, such as Leonardo da Vinci, Copernicus, Kepler, to name just a few, were rebelling against the Aristotelian vision of the hierarchical Cosmos. Their accusations were not that the Aristotelian description of the Cosmos is not "scientific" or "objective," as we would assume from our modern standpoint. On the contrary, they militated against Aristotelians because nature, and by extension, the Cosmos was not "unitary, harmonious, and complete in itself." According to Patočka, and using Koyré's terminology,[67] the seventeenth century shift from a closed-world view of the Cosmos to the understanding of the universe as infinite cannot be understood without being aware of this discussion lasting well into the seventeenth century. The quarrel was between philosophers who considered Aristotle as the authority and those of the Platonic tradition. Galileo Galilei, closely associated with the beginning of modern physics, reacts to this philosophical quandary with his endeavour to formulate "consistently mathematised physics." Galileo thinks that his mathematical method will make the "harmonious, simple and unitary structure of the perfect, eternal Cosmos" more transparent.[68] His attempt had far reaching repercussions for our present understanding of nature and marked the beginning of modern physics and natural sciences.

This mathematization of nature extends far beyond the ideas of the Greeks.[69] For the Greeks, mathematics was the way to contemplate being in the harmonious working of the Cosmos. In order to bring back "confidence and meaningfulness"—shattered when myths ceased to explain the world—mathematics represented the privileged way to understand being and the ultimate reality, a way to come near to truth and being, which was revealed and concealed in the givenness of what-is. The concept of science changes dramatically from this initial Greek endeavour.[70] From now on, "the European spirit," that "great rationalizer of all ideals," introduces the concept of an "autonomous and unprejudged theory which brings clarity and

[66] Patočka, Jan. "Slova a Věci. Rozbor Antropologické Epochy Evropského Myšlení v 'Archeologii' Michela Foucaulta." *Světová Literatura*. No. 6. 1967: 229-234..
[67] See Koyré, Alexandre. *From the Closed World to the Infinite Universe*. Baltimore and London: The John Hopkins University Press, 1968.. See also Koyré, Alexandre. *Astronomical Revolution: Copernicus-Kepler-Borelli*. Trans. R. E. W. Maddison. New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1992..
[68] Patočka, Jan. "Galileo Galilei a Konec Starověkého Kosmu." *Vesmír*. Vol. 33. No. 1. 1954: 27-29..
[69] Patočka, Jan. "Komenský a Hlavní Filosofické Myšlenky 17. Století." *Komeniologické Studie. Soubor Textů o J. A. Komenském. Texty Publikované v Letech 1941-1958*. Ed. Vera Schifferová. Sebrané Spisy Jana Patočky. Svazek 9. Vol. I. Praha: Oikoymenh, (1956) 1997: 138-150..
[70] Patočka. "Cartesianism.".

continuity to all the orders of life."[71] Speculative knowledge that questions the naive confidence of opinions metamorphoses into "effective knowledge that intends to be guided solely by what is and [lets] mere objectivity [dictates] its theses."[72] The order of understanding thereby changes. "Unity, harmony, integrity cease to be the goals of knowledge and the marks of truth." The one ultimate reality that was reflected and imitated in the many and only partially accessible to finite human reason becomes suspect to modern mathematical reason. From then on, the "path of knowledge leads from one distinct point to another, within the mind," because "all else can mislead as well as lead."[73] Now, science—"a systematic expert theory working with a systematic conceptual constructs"[74]—is concerned only with the many by converting particulars into quantitative instances of the formal system and accessing them one by one. Science constructs a new picture of nature from the bottom up, believing that, eventually, human reason will master all that-is.

This new rationalism aims to take control not only of nature but of all human relations.[75] The initial impulse is to make 'man' the owner, conqueror and conductor of all that-is.[76] The way toward mastery is by formalization of all aspects of life, subsuming them to the power of thought. Thus, "science becomes a specialized mode of knowing" drawing into its formal domain ever more "regions of being and new aspects of experience." New science is concerned with "form rather than content," it is defined by "prediction as well as 'retrodiction,' construction, mechanism, 'making'," it is progressively specialised by building up "positive knowledge" by converting gradually "existing things into mathematical or generally formal schemata," and, finally, where things or events cannot be transformed into

[71] Patočka. "Masaryk and Husserl.".
[72] Patočka. "Cartesianism.".
[73] Patočka. "Herderian Study.".
[74] Patočka, Jan. "Negative Platonism: Reflections Concerning the Rise, the Scope, and the Demise of Metaphysics-and Whether Philosophy Can Survive It." Trans. Erazim Kohák. *Jan Patočka. Philosophy and Selected Writings*. Ed. Erazim Kohák. Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, (1953) 1989: 175-206..
[75] Patočka speaks of four domains that changed during this period. First is mathematization of nature, then theories of statehood, third, Vico's historical methodology 'proved' that history is not the antiquarian, and, therefore, inconsequential testimony of the things past, but it is the factual self knowledge of humans that can be mastered by a special methodology. In contrast to Herodotus's or Thucydides's histories that narrated the Greek and barbarian heroic deeds in order to make them 'immortal' by preserving them for posterity; scientific history takes into account only 'neutral facts' which become the "new conception of reality" by erecting another controlled creation based on "a reconstruction of the past on a documentary basis" (Patočka. "Cartesianism."). The last domain that changed under the new conception of reason is education. As Patočka notes, "to write the history of ideas of the seventeenth century would mean to write history of origin and mutual relations of these four big concepts" (Patočka. "Komenský a Myšlenky 17. Století.").
[76] Patočka. "Komenský a Myšlenky 17. Století.".

the formal system of mathematics, such as history or linguistics, it turns various descriptions into data that can be critically compared, evaluated and conserved.[77]

Francis Bacon had already sketched out the new definition of knowledge. Knowledge is not about uncovering the harmony of the world. Rather, knowledge is power and we are "*regnum hominis,*" or as Descartes will say later, "*maîtres et possesseurs de la nature*." The world ceases to be a "fundamental limit for us," becoming simply a "reservoir of raw material."[78] In the ever accelerated race to manipulate nature, now understood as a resource for humans, knowledge becomes an efficient instrument used to discover more and more 'facts' in order to utilise them. The new reason then builds its new tool, technology, without which new science is impossible.[79] This techno-knowledge—based on mathematics that constitutes its core—becomes applied science, aiming to break down nature, of all that-is, into a collection of things destined for consumption and further exploitation. It becomes a cumulative assembling of functional facts, instantiating and sustaining the 'constant progress of humankind.' Already in Descartes, *res extensa* becomes "the primary domain of such dominating knowledge, the primordial terrain on which mathematical forms are applied and where, as a result, universal causality and precise predictability prevail." Patočka acknowledges that for Descartes, *res extensa* could not yet be the domain of causality. His unresolved problem was "the interaction between body and soul," yet his conviction that "the world is *res extensa*" paved the way to the mathematical objectification of nature with its idea of the calculability of causality.[80] The natural world, the world in which we live, is turned into concepts and hypotheses that can be replicated and thought identically by anyone everywhere. To be sure, this type of knowledge is never final. Yet, since it is always articulated in schematic formulas, it is, in a sense, not open to 'contemplation'. Facts are known by being measurable, and hence falsifiable, opening the way for further measures.[81] If no such measure is possible, there is nothing. The mystery of the world vanishes.

Patočka points out that this type of reasoning is nothing new. People in practical life and in the sphere of production have always used "that sober, calculating element which wants

[77] Patočka. "Cartesianism.".
[78] Patočka. *Husserl's Phenomenology*..
[79] For a different understanding of the role of technology, see Ihde, Don. *Technology and the Lifeworld. From Garden to Earth*. The Indiana Series in the Philosophy of Technology. Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1990..
[80] Patočka. "Cartesianism.".
[81] See Popper, Karl R. "Science: Conjectures and Refutation." *Conjectures and Refutations*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1963: 33-39..

nothing but things themselves and fears nothing so much as illusion and self-deception."[82] Consider Galileo's defence of his formal geometrical concepts, justifying them by examples from commerce, in other words, from the sphere of concrete human practice. In the *Dialogue Concerning The Two Chief World Systems*, Simplicio is puzzled when presented with the formal attributes of abstract objects being transposed to natural objects as a tool explaining the 'book of nature.' For him, "it is the imperfection of matter which prevents things taken concretely from corresponding to those considered in abstract." This type of doubt seems naive to those who take the scientific mastery of the world of objects for granted. Galileo's answer is taken from the world in which we live, from *practical life*:

> Just as the computer who wants his calculations to deal with sugar, silk, and wool must discount the boxes, bales, and other packings, so the mathematical scientist (*filosofo geometra*), when he wants to recognize in the concrete the effects which he has proved in the abstract, must deduct the material hindrances, and is able to do so. I assure you that things are in no less agreement than arithmetical computations. The errors, then, lie not in the abstractness or concreteness, not in geometry or physics, but in a calculator who does not know how to make a true accounting.[83]

Calculation, formalism and prediction—a mode of thinking applicable to everyday exchanges—migrates from practical life into the new scientific endeavour and becomes the foundation of human knowledge. The imprecise, fuzzy aspects of objects recognised by us in the world become a hindrance to new knowledge. The new turn is executed, nothing escapes the cold hard language of objectivity. The formal scientific explanation of reality is supposedly all there is. Yet Galileo could not complete his system. He was, as Patočka says, the last Platonist. He could not imagine the total abstraction of objects, since abstraction is always the abstraction of a *physical* object. A hurled thing, given the force of gravity and its weight, *must* follow a curved trajectory. Galileo could not visualise a weightless object totally removed from nature and considered only formally. For him, a thrown object following a straight line is an impossible idea. Hence, the final concept of linear movement was left to Newton, who was by then free of the Platonic and Aristotelian heritage.[84]

Newton was the first to synthesize this new understanding of nature, thus his method and resulting system "served as the motive and model for all further efforts." Physical nature, converted into quantifiable figures, populates the space of formal knowledge as clear and distinct ideas. Accordingly, with the new conception of knowledge, reality is redefined,

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[82] Patočka. "Herderian Study.". See also Arendt, Hannah. *The Human Condition*. Second ed. Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, (1958) 1998..
[83] Galilei, Galileo. *Dialogue Concerning The Two Chief World Systems-Ptolemaic and Copernican*. Trans. Stillman Drake. Albert Einstein, Foreword. Second ed. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, (1630) 1967..
[84] Patočka. "Galileo Galilei.".

becoming "simply a world of observed facts and of necessary conceptual constructs, a world without analogies and hierarchical orders, where truth is what is observed and constructed from case to case." Science investigates nature from "a perspective through the eyes of pure mathematical objectivity: nature stripped of all magic."[85] Human desire to control and thereby have power over nature shaped the new mode of life. Everything is now controllable and predictable. Humans become "the masters and *as if* the owners of nature."[86] The shift is from the contemplative approach to the whole or the Cosmos to the calculating method of a collection/aggregate of things—now called nature—that can be mastered. The situation is turned on its head; scientific formulas supposedly explain our practical life, not the other way around, as previously.

Patočka, following Husserl, explains that the problem is that reflections on scientific discoveries are not part of 'scientism.' Modern science is no longer philosophical; it is not "a shaking of the naive confidence." In other words, "science becomes a specialized mode of knowing, one which applies tried and proven formal schema of objectivity to ever-new regions of being and new aspects of experience."[87] This type of knowledge—dealing chiefly with formulas and hypotheses—is applied to all spheres of life. The result is "the sentiment of alienation" as "every human initiative or deed is socialized, controlled, and integrated into current affairs and carried off alone into the unknown."[88] Instead of the 'clarification' of present scientific predicament, the tendency is to look for more formulas.

Esse or *Habere*: Conflict between To Be and To Have

Patočka notes that social and historical circumstances shape all the concrete structures of human life which include not only language, law and the state, but also the objects of material civilization. These structures are the result of what he calls the fundamental conflict (*prakonflikt*) that is enacted over our relationship towards the whole, which is the basis of our humanity.[89] It is "the conflict between being and having, *esse* and *habere*." There are two possibilities, according to Patočka. Either we accept a distance between us and the whole of what-is—we *are* if we let what-is to be as that which gives meaning to every-*thing*—or, we disregard this distance. Modern techno-science's solution is to disregard the whole as

[85] Patočka. "Herderian Study.".
[86] Patočka. "Cartesianism.".
[87] Ibid..
[88] Patočka. *Plato & Europe*..
[89] See also Patočka, Jan. "Světový Názor, Obraz Světa, Filosofie." *Péče o Duši: Soubor Statí a Přednášek o Postavení Člověka ve Světě a v Dějinách*. Eds. Ivan Chvatík and Pavel Kouba. Sebrané Spisy Jana Patočky. Svazek 3. Vol. III. Praha: Oikoymenh, (1942) 2002: 589-597..

something existing in its own right, reducing the whole to the aggregate of things, to which we assign meaning according to the formal schema—thereby deluding ourselves that we can *possess* and master all that-is.[90] For Patočka, our civilisation is the victory of *habere*. Patočka further claims that this new possessive understanding of nature extends to our entire human condition. The mode of possessiveness defines our relationship with others. Instead of compassion, selflessness and the care for the soul, we categorize, classify, catalogue, and label others in accordance with their usefulness.

This new understanding permeated all spheres of life. Concern with chattels superseded and negated the old Socratic questions what it is that makes us just and how to lead the good life. 'Goodness' of life is indexed by the quantity of material objects, for example, gadgets in our homes or by obscure and expensive holiday destinations. We no longer contemplate the questions of the good, just and beautiful. To do that, one needs time and time is money, as the saying goes. Instead, we can buy the expertise of experts. They will tell us all there is to know, they will guide us if we are uncertain; we can buy a dietician or a personal trainer. Applied ethics is offered as another *technē* to be mastered through experts on what is good and bad. If we do not have enough money for a consultation, we can buy different manuals for different life contingencies. Based on the latest scientific discoveries, writers tell us what is the best to eat, what products to use, how to take care of our bodies, what to buy to be happy. We simply do not need to think. Experts sell us their expertise as one product among many others on the market. In the process, everything is turned into things that we can purchase and own. Material goods fulfil all our needs.

Immanuel Kant had already observed this lack of thinking. He thought that it was "laziness and cowardice" of many to dispose of "lifelong tutelage." It is easier to follow others, instead of using one's own capacity to reason. Similar to "domestic cattle" that do not know how to live in the wilderness, humans too are scared "to take a single step" toward freedom. They rely on books to tell them what and how to think, on a priest to make certain their righteous observance of moral conduct, on a dietician to prescribe the right regiment for their bodies. Similarly, in political matters, they rely on the "statutes and formulas" of the state legislature without question. So, even in the event of a revolution, people simply turn around and adopt another set of rules because "new prejudices will serve as well as old ones to harness [these]

[90] Patočka, Jan. "Negativní Platonizmus a Problémy Duchovního Světa." *Péče o Duši: Soubor Statí a Přednášek o Postavení Člověka ve Světě a v Dějinách*. Eds. Ivan Chvatík and Pavel Kouba. Sebrané Spisy Jana Patočky. Svazek 3. Vol. III. Praha: Oikoymenh, 2002: 601-603..

unthinking masses."[91] Albert Schweitzer lays the blame on "the overorganization of our public affairs" that "culminates in the organization of thoughtlessness."[92] The hallmark of our society is—what Arendt also calls thoughtlessness—"the heedless recklessness or hopeless confusion or complacent repetition of 'truths' which have become trivial and empty."[93]

The 'official' language we encounter is formulaic and virtually unintelligible to most of us. Yet we accept it without question because, similar to formal systems, questioning can only be within the given structure. It seems that probing into the many issues that affect our way of living is impossible. For Patočka, the split between our natural world of experience and the formulaic models of sciences, economics, government agencies, and education fosters this lack of thinking because formulaic language makes us feel powerless, as we become aware of the "horrible trend toward the abyss."[94]

How can we reflect on this hurling toward the abyss? If the current state of affairs is not a lack of reasoning capacity, laziness or cowardice of people, but is the historical consequence of a changed way of thinking, then to reflect is to try to understand. As Patočka points out, until mathematical reason replaced contemplative reason, it was the care of the soul with its concern for being, the "care to *be*" that defined people's thinking and acting. This was replaced by another motif, the "care to *have*, care for the external world and its conquest," galvanized by a "sudden wild *scramble* for the riches of the world."[95] The care for material things took the place of the care for our own being. The *meaning* of our lives was reduced to the possession of material goods. This way of thinking gradually circumscribed all spheres of life, "politics, economics, faith, and science," thereby transforming them. This type of knowledge has no use for the care of the soul, reflection, or questions that seek to understand the world outside and beyond the formal system. As far as science is concerned, the soul is not a 'thing' that can be converted into a mathematical formula. Therefore, it simply does not exist.

Conclusion

Our civilization has adopted a way of thinking along the lines of abstraction and formalization which is characteristic of modern science and technology. Yet technology in itself is neither

[91] Kant, Immanuel. "What is Enlightenment?" Trans. Lewis White Beck. *Foundations of the Metaphysics of Morals and What is Enlightenment?* Second, Revised ed. New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., (1784) 1997: 83-90..
[92] Albert Schweitzer cited in Fromm. *To Have Or To Be?*.
[93] Arendt. *The Human Condition*..
[94] Patočka. *Plato & Europe*..
[95] Patočka. *Heretical Essays*..

good nor bad. As Heidegger points out, the nature of technology is to reveal things, so, in its core, technology *is* revealing and concealing what-is. The problem is its one-sided uncovering of things. Modern techno-science is *technē*, the art of precise calculation based only on a thing's expediency. In our historical setting, technology *is* the way truth reveals itself. It is for that reason that Husserl's hope to recover the original meaning of science, as the way towards truth, is misguided. Truth does reveal itself, but it is in the form of calculability. Techno-science has already decided what counts as truth within its formal schema. Any other possibility of uncovering things is *a priori* discredited as unscientific, therefore untrue. The only truth is the one that is objective, calculable, utilizable and always ready to be transformed into another form of computable usefulness. Techno-science presents this quantifiable truth as the only truth, as if it was the only way to understand the world. The original, imprecise, subjective world in which we live is dressed in the garb of objectivity that purports to be true for everyone and everywhere: "a precise universe of truths for all."[96] Truth understood as revealing and concealing that is accessible in the givenness of what-is is flattened to only one possible explanation. Within this formal system, nature and humans are already given meaning according to the system that has become global. Truth as such is reduced to singular practical truths assessable according to the need of the moment. We have all become a stockpile used according to objective calculations based on utility *for* the system. This understanding has already become part of our thinking. We all *are*, but we already understand ourselves according to this monstrous technological apparatus. Being is already defined by techno-science.

Thus, another rigorous science cannot reverse the spiritual crisis, as Husserl thought, because it accepts the ground of modern science. As Patočka notes, the relation between subject and object as the starting point for phenomenology is not radical enough. Phenomenology must begin with finite human existence. This is Heidegger's starting point. For him, the crisis is not only the crisis of the sciences that are corrigible through the revelation of the hidden presuppositions that lie at the basis of this way of thinking. For Heidegger, the present-day crisis is more substantial because it implicates the innermost core of humans whose understanding of the world is already utilitarian. Hence, the crisis cannot be overcome by the radicalization of reflectivity. In the end, Heidegger's understanding of history as the destiny of being seems to suggest that it is history in the sphere of thinking only.[97] Yet history does

[96] Patočka. "Danger of Technicization.".
[97] See also Taminiaux, Jacques. *Heidegger and the Project of Fundamental Ontology*. Trans. Michael Gendre. Albany: State University of New York Press, 1991; Taminiaux, Jacques. *The Thracian Maid and the*

not follow any logic of being, empirical or otherwise. We are finite human beings, for whom the destiny of being is a repeated rising out of decline/decay. There is no possibility for us to recover original truth. Truth is always covered over by the historical situation we happen to be in, be it progress, enlightenment or power. As it happens, our own situatedness is defined by techno-science. For Patočka, then, the most urgent task of philosophy is to challenge the victory of *habere* by confronting the scientific explanation of the world, to show that it is not the only way to see and understand nature and ourselves.[98]

After the end of the First World War, the nature of science altered dramatically. Originally, scholarly thinkers conducted scientific investigations as a part of scientific study at universities. That changed when science, under the sign of research, migrated into special institutions which were increasingly controlled by commercial interests. Technology, without which science can no longer function, became the unrivalled power in the world. This techno-power influences the life of everybody. It changes our way of thinking. It transmutes politics from the sphere of justice into managerial efficiency based on calculating votes according to the latest re-election goals rather than considerations of the good and just life.[99] Techno-power constitutes the basis of all productive forces.[100] This power of techno-science is also behind the incessant expansion of industry and trade into the whole world, not only the industrialised.[101] This power sweeps aside all "conventions" that stand in techno-science's way of releasing energy, without which techno-science cannot function. Modern warfare represents the most acute example of the power of modern techno-science,[102] as it reveals nakedly this process of transforming the "world into a laboratory for releasing reserves of energy accumulated over billions of years." For Patočka, it is nothing less than "a transvaluation of all values under the sign of power."[103]

The way to re-think the spiritual crisis of Europe is Patočka's return to Socrates as the one who knows that he knows nothing. Socrates showed that 'man' is *not* the measure of all things

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Professional Thinker. Arendt and Heidegger. Trans. Michael Gendre. Albany: State University of New York Press, 1997..

[98] Patočka. "Nebezpecí Technizace (1).".

[99] Patočka, Jan. "O Principu Vedeckého Svedomí." *O Smysl Dneška. Devět Kapitol o Problémech Světových i Českých*. Purley, Surrey, England: Rozmluvy, (1969) 1987: 25-30.. For a similar claim, see also Rancière, Jacques. *Dis-agreement. Politics and Philosophy*. Trans. Julie Rose. Minneapolis, London: The University of Minnesota Press, 1999; Agamben, Giorgio. *Means Without End. Notes on Politics*. Trans. Vincenzo Binetti and Cesare Casarino. Theory out of Bounds. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000..

[100] Patočka. "O Principu.".

[101] Patočka, Jan. "Morálka Obecná a Morálka Vedce." *O Smysl Dneška. Devět Kapitol o Problémech Světových i Českých*. Purley, Surrey, England: Rozmluvy, (1969) 1987: 31-50..

[102] Patočka. "O Principu.".

[103] Patočka. *Heretical Essays*..

as Protagoras thought.[104] Refusing material comfort, Socrates went around the *agora* questioning everybody in order to expose ossified ways of thinking that all took for granted. As Patočka explains, Socrates was not a teacher. He refused to teach anything at all.[105] His aim was to reveal the lack of meaning which was covered over by sophistry. Yet his 'midwifery' opened the way to clarification and possibility of new meaning, which we can *see* if we care for our soul. Thus, the care for the soul animates Socrates' endeavour.

> The care of the soul takes place through *questioning one's way of thinking*. The form of this questioning is such that one of the participants in a conversation allows himself to be questioned. It takes the form of a conversation that is ordinarily divided between two persons, but it can also take place within the core of the soul itself. To allow the question to arrive, one must problematize one's own and the other's way of thinking.[106]

For that reason, our way towards clarity is "the striving to come to an agreement with oneself and with others" through "the clarifying of our own views, opinions."[107] Taking Socrates as an example of the possible way to clarity, Patočka explains that in Plato's allegory, the philosopher on his way out of the cave and back inside "carries out apparently two, although in reality *one and the same*, movements" that are animated by the search for meaning. We are always in the cave, and what "we try to formulate in the impetus out of the cave is itself a part of the cave. This also means that the very *outcome* of this philosophizing is there, inside that cave."[108] Thus, the instantiation of another science, however rigorous, will cover the world once again in the immanence of the transcendental ego. The new science will become another measure for all that is in the cave. Similarly, to speak of the destiny of being, as Heidegger does, is to forget that finite beings inhabit this world. For Patočka, then, to reflect and search for the clarity of understanding is to take up responsibility not only for knowledge but also for our finite existence.

However, to care for one's soul means also to care for the just *polis*. To be able to live the good life means to take care of the soul in a *polis* where the highest good is justice. In short, only if we become responsible for our own thinking and acting can we draw near justice and truth—without which the good life is a chimera. Yet responsibility is not something calculable that the latest user-friendly manuals will help us to guesstimate. To approach clarity—as a necessary presupposition of responsibility—is possible only as a *way*, as a

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[104] See Plato. "Theaetetus."; Plato. "Cratylus." Trans. C.D.C. Reeve. *Complete Works*. Ed. John M. Cooper. Indianapolis, Cambridge: Hackett Publishing Company, 1997: 102-156..
[105] See Patočka in Palouš, Martin. "Filosofovat se Socratem." *Filosofický Časopis*. Vol. XXXVIII. No. 1-2. 1990: 45-58..
[106] Patočka. *Plato & Europe*..
[107] Patočka. *Husserl's Phenomenology*..
[108] Patočka. *Plato & Europe*..

never-ending quest defined by questioning our own beliefs. For Patočka, the Socratic questioning is not an elucidation of the given knowledge that we try to make clearer. The Socratic search for clarity is a "leap into new meaning," it is a realization that the old order is crumbling and the new is not yet. It is the search for a new meaning, which can only be realized in the "clarity of the problematic situation."[109]

Thus, the Socratic questioning is an intervention in the vacuum between two different orders, the dissolving mythical world and the new world of the *polis*. For Patočka, the lesson from the ancient Greeks is worth reflecting on. As he sees it, our own age is in such a political and moral vacuity, when the old order is disintegrating and the new is not yet. The search for new meaning can only be realized by taking up our responsibility for the way we think and act. To do that we must question meanings passed on to us by tradition, which in our case is the scientific explanation of all that-is. To problematise knowledge that pretends to be the only explanation of the world means to pose an open question that can potentially 'unseat' given fossilized meanings. For Patočka, as for Socrates, the search can only be "in the mode of questioning because the question is built up on an awareness of the problematic nature of meaning."[110] To question is to take up the responsibility for meaning as a way of life. Yet this responsibility is not easy, it is a continuous struggle to become who we want to be. In this struggle, formal knowledge is not sufficient.

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[109] Patočka. "Glosses.".
[110] Ibid..

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