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THE LIFE OF THE SHAKEN

Abstract: Based on the analysis of texts by Jan Patočka, the author explores two concepts of human existence. The concept of three movements of life and the concept of two basic forms of life are examined in this paper, with the aim of referring to similarities and differences between them and to try to point out the essentials from these concepts. The motivating question that gives rise to author's efforts in this paper is: "What kind of agreement can be found between different concepts?"

Keywords: Jan Patočka; movement of existence; life in truth; conversion; philosophy; care for the soul.

Jan Patočka (1996c, p. 64) wrote in his third chapter of *Heretical Essays in the Philosophy of History* that philosophy did not shake the modest or small meaning of life in order to impoverish humans, but on the contrary, it shook them with the intention to enrich them. Being shaken involves a transformation or metamorphosis of life, which could be seen by others and from the outside as an impoverishment, because the shaken is no longer interested in such things or in such manners of being what they were before, they do not want to live only day by day; however, to those who have really been shaken towards transforming their lives, being shaken is enrichment, because they are now able to live their lives for real; they are led to discover a freedom to orientate their own lives, and to move from "LETHE" (covertness) to "ALETHEIA" (disclosedness, truth). Those who have been shaken in this way live an insecure life and are no longer able to abide the confidences of their former lives. They are also unbridled by the fear of death because death is now consciously accepted as part of what is natural. Who or what is the origin of that shakenness? Patočka claims it is philosophy understood as the love of wisdom, or perhaps as the wisdom of love, as Radim Palouš wrote. Palouš, a former student and later a friend of Jan Patočka, emphasized this less common interpretation of the Greek word "PHILOSOPHIA" as the essence of philosophy for people in the "helping professions."

How can we speak about a kind of shakiness in which all certainties are lost? What sort of shakiness is this? What is being shaken? And for what purpose? These are the main issues to be discussed in this text. In connection with these inquiries, a further question must be asked about Patočka's theory of life movements. What kind of movements accompanies being shaken? How can each of these movements be described? This paper examines Patočka's thoughts, which deepened throughout the course of his life, and crystalized in at least two basic forms. Each of these forms will be characterized and compared in this paper. The motivating question that gives rise to my efforts in this paper is obvious. I want to know: I want to know what kind of agreement can be found between these different forms? That question is not new,¹ and today it may be more common than we are willing to admit. Indeed, it may be one of those questions that accompany us in our lives without always being said or considered; perhaps we ask it without even realizing it.

First of all, however, it would be useful to make a little introduction to a phenomenological approach to the world.

The natural world

Jan Patočka approaches the question of the natural world as the main philosophical problem for phenomenologists. Followers of Gabriel Marcel's standpoint might not be willing to open a book like Patočka's *The Natural World as a Philosophical Problem*, especially because of the expectations that the author has in such an approach to thinking about the "natural world," viewed as a "problem," and not as a "mystery." However, we would like to assure Marcel's devotees that appreciation of the natural world's mystery is definitely not strange to Jan Patočka (1996c, p. 75–77; cf. Palouš, 2016, p. 96–98). Readers should understand that Patočka is not a positivist who believes that all of reality can be reduced to problems that can be solved once and for all; but he is willing to enter into dialogue with such positivism. Indeed, Patočka's willingness to conduct a dialogue is what distinguishes the philosophical and non-philosophical ways of life.

A disciple of Husserl, Jan Patočka asks the question "What is phenomenology?" (2009, p. 497–523). All of his lifelong work corresponds to this question. Therefore, he could not inquire about the natural world without also knowing that this question relates to the very essence of his being, which the philosopher encounters as a mystery; but at the same time, the answers to questions about the mystery of our being sometimes could and sometimes even should be rendered in words so that it could be possible to establish and to lead a dialogue with others. This could be possible if such answers made some sense, had orientation, if meanings meant something, if they were not completely chaotic or dark, and if at least some answers

¹ Maybe it is one of the oldest questions at all (Gn 2:20b): "But for the man there was not found a helper to complement him."

and the ensuing life choices could be shared with someone to form something precious: the common world. Is this “the natural world” for human beings?

Although Patočka’s studies may seem complex and sometimes even dark, if the reader endures with this author, and if he or she wrestles with Patočka’s criticisms, views, attitudes and then considers these things in light of his or her own life choices, this person will have a chance to see and to learn from the life path of a thinker who is respected not only in the Czech Republic, but also in Europe and the world at large.² Thinking about Patočka’s work as a means of shedding light upon our own lives can lead us to experience the joy of embarrassing thoughts, but also a transformation of our life choices; following Patočka, choices should be really ours, and as free as possible so that our conduct and actions in this world can be human.

A return to the things as they are (to the things themselves), to a world that is the natural, not artificially constructed, is the basic impulse from which Edmund Husserl’s phenomenology arises. Whoever wants to follow this method must endeavor to perceive and describe phenomena by themselves, anew and without previous constructions. The post-doctorate thesis *The Natural World as a Philosophical Problem*, written by Patočka before he turned thirty, was governed by Husserl’s phenomenological method. Thirty-four years later, he spoke about this publication, writing an extensive afterword to the original work (which expanded the whole book by about one-third):

After many years, the author reached a critical distance from the notion of reflection, which was in the transcendental phenomenology the basis of the method and also of philosophy of the absolute subject. Therefore he tried to resolve the issue: he extended the historical overview to the whole contour history of the question to the present day and linked to this critical presentation with a description of life of the ultimate subject in the world. The life is perceived in the three basic movements, which are mutually related, each of which reveals another essential aspect of the natural world (Patočka, 2009, p. 643).

Patočka’s extensive afterword, entitled “*The Natural World*” in the Author’s *Meditation after Thirty-three Years*, was written for the second edition of the book in 1969, but the book was completed in 1970. However, due to communist censors, the book was not approved for open distribution; it could be bought only “for educational purposes” in the shop of the publishing house, and the buyer had to acquire written confirmation from one of the official state scientific institutions

2 Paul Ricoeur and Ludwig Landgrebe wrote great forewords into translated books of Jan Patočka. Renaud Barbaras (2007) wrote whole book about Patočka’s theory of the movement of existence. Jacques Derrida reflected Patočka’s thinking in book *The Gift of Death* (2007). There exist many articles about philosophical thoughts of Jan Patočka in many languages. His thoughts are compared with thoughts of Maurice Merleau-Ponty. Some other books about philosophical work of Jan Patočka: Findlay, 2002; Şan, 2012; Tava, 2015; Meacham & Tava (eds.), 2016.

that dealt with philosophy. According to Patočka's text we cited just above from the front of the cover of the book, the most significant writing in this second edition of the *Natural World* is to be found in the Epilogue; namely, a division of the subject's life into three basic movements expressing different ways of holistic naturalization and living.

Patočka did not focus on the description of the world as the sum of its parts. According to him, the world is not something that is given as things or relationships, nor is it life or experience:

The world in the original sense is not a set of things, but a connection or context of meaning, which is before human life, which is realizing itself, i.e. human life which understands itself actively. The world is nothing material, not purely factual matters or relationships. But it's not even life, the experience. The world is something the third, significantly different from beings, however, it is such that demonstrates and reveals what and how things are (Patočka, 2009, p. 352).

As Patočka points out, the world is what appears to be a whole with its meaning and purpose. This sense of the whole is something that perhaps only a human being can perceive, and Patočka calls it "giving sense to this world."

A movement as a formation in the truth

In 1969, Patočka published an article in *Filosofický časopis* ("Philosophical Journal") where he described the three movements of life that also appear in his Epilogue to *The Natural World*. In 1975, he published *Heretical Essays in the Philosophy of History* in samizdat. In its second essay titled, *The Beginning of History*, he wrote again about the three movements, as well as about the two basic concepts of life. Is there something in common between these two opinions? In order to answer this question, both concepts need to be briefly characterized. Although one critic of Patočka's philosophy has identified five versions of his doctrine of life movement (cf. Rezek, 2010, p. 106), I want to compare only two concepts: one takes place in three movements, and the other transpires in only two. Before characterizing these concepts, I want to make it clear that Patočka wrote about the movement of soul or movement of life mostly following Aristotle. Patočka himself pointed out that Aristotle completely transformed (cf. Patočka, 1999, p. 326) Plato's ontological concept of philosophical movement called "care for the soul" (cf. Patočka, 1999, p. 328).

The terms "movement" and "world" are connected: Man is a being of movement, by movement of our life we are afforded the opportunity to see the world as one, or as a whole, and it is from within this holistic vision that the world has meaning for a human being. This vision of the whole is seen by the psyche, according to Patočka (1999, p. 325–326). According to Aristotle, PSYCHÉ is somehow all of what *is* (DA

431b21)³ and NOUS is EIDOS EIDÓN (DA 432a2)⁴ and all things appear to be what they are thanks to NOUS⁵. PSYCHÉ is a principle of “local movement” (DA 432a 17⁶). Through the participation of the PSYCHÉ in all that *is*, each human being can understand all the other movements of beings and he or she sees them in relation to wholeness. The disparate “things” of the world are for human beings no longer disjointed, fragmented, or unrelated elements in a chaotic “world.” They become harmonized elements of a good order or KOSMOS. This is what makes things have a meaning for human beings.

Human beings can live their lives as a *transformation*. The human soul is a DYNAMIS – as a possibility not yet present in the whole. Our aim is transformation as a possibility to realize being. Here we can also see a connection with the Socratic “examined life”, where philosophy means care for the soul. However, the difference is, according to Patočka, that the activity of Plato’s philosopher refers to what is eternal and necessary, whereas the activity of human beings generally refers to what may not be, or what is a mere possibility; the principles of nature are permanent and eternal, but the principles of human actions are not eternal; they fluctuate in motion and change. In human actions, we realize what is not yet. In our actions we can act out of freedom, whereas other beings act by necessity. Patočka (1999, p. 330) wrote about Aristotle, saying that he was the first one who recognized the freedom of man.

Three movements of existence

Patočka perceived three different possibilities for human life: “All three are movements, since there is a fundamental human possibility realized in each one, and the definition of movement is a possibility being realized” (2016, p. 164). Now let us briefly characterize each of these three movements of life.

The first movement of life is the movement of acceptance. It involves the anchoring and sinking of roots. Being an instinctive-affective movement, it is the most fundamental of the three movements with the other two built upon it (Patočka, 1995, p. 105; 1996c, pp. 29-34; 2016, p. 165). In this movement of life, human beings are accepted and subsequently they learn to accept others. This first movement is like a circling which is closing into itself (Patočka, 1995, p. 112).⁷ We can speak about

3 Cf. Aristotle, *De anima*: “the soul is in a way all existing things” (<http://classics.mit.edu/Aristotle/soul.3.iii.html>; http://homepage.westmont.edu/hoeckley/readings/Phil%20texts/Aristotle/aristotle_anima_final.pdf), cf. “in a manner the soul is all existent ...” (https://archive.org/stream/aristotledeanima005947mbp/aristotledeanima005947mbp_djvu.txt).

4 Cf. Aristotle, *De anima*, p. 77.

5 Patočka (1996a, p. 326) wrote: “The soul is EIDOS EIDÓN”.

6 Cf. Aristotle, *De anima*, p. 78: “TOPON KINÉSIN” – “the faculty of originating local movement”.

7 In *The Natural World as a Philosophical Problem* Patočka (2016, p. 169) wrote: “Precisely in this detachment, in this revolving around and within the self, which could mean *prima facie* that

this movement as an expression of certainty, safety and hospitality, for at the core of this movement is the world's hospitable environment, which allows life, and not merely occurrence (Svobodová, 2017, pp. 10, 14–16). When Klaus Schaller asked Jan Patočka in which movement we might find education, Patočka responded that it was in the first movement of acceptance. It is also important to remark here that the time dimension of this movement is the past.

The second movement of life is the movement of work, functioning (Patočka, 1995, pp. 107, 124) and defense; it is the movement of extending possibilities, but also of self-sufficiency by self-extension (Patočka, 1996c, pp. 30–34; 2016, p. 171). Where the first movement was circular, this second line of life is straight, pointing farther and farther, however, into many directions (Patočka, 1995, p. 112). During this movement, human beings observe the world as a set of things, including other humans, who they view only as things that can serve them, thus extending their options. This is why the second movement is also referred to as a *modus* of self-sufficiency, because if human beings act towards others as things, then they become manipulative. Human beings swept up in this movement see themselves likewise as things, manipulating themselves, and hence disposing of their authenticity such that they become like cogs in a machine that can be exchanged without problems. While the first movement pertains to the past, the time dimension of this movement is the present (Patočka, 1995, p. 106; 2016, p. 171). These first two movements are fully embedded in finitude, naivety, and in this sense, the earth is the power that rules over them (Patočka, 1995, p. 106; 2016, p. 169).

The third movement is an attempt to break the earthliness (Patočka, 1995, pp. 106, 112; 2016, p. 175). It can be characterized as a breaking from the “certainty” of the first two movements. It is this movement that first shakes us out of our naivety and invites us to discover our authenticity. This is the movement from *ASCHOLIA* (business) towards *SCHOLÉ* (free time); it is the movement of conversion, of self-submission, as well as the movement of truth (*ALÉTHEIA*), un-covertness or openness. Although all three movements are parts of movement of existence, this third is the real movement of existence (from latin: *ex-*, *sistō*), revelation of authenticity, of self-finding, the movement of authentic way of life. By living a “political” or community life in truth, people care for the community or *POLIS*. Patočka wrote about this movement as the most humanly significant of the three (1996c, pp. 33–34; 2016, p. 175). In this movement, we come to understand that our human finality cannot be overcome by any practical activity; man is no longer perceived as a thing, and with this realization we turn away from anonymous consumer life; in this movement of true existence, man accepts his finality like a soldier in the first line

the individual in his independence is a closed world unto himself, that for himself he is everything, we feel an emptiness, a want – a need to be accepted and supported in the whole of our being, and not merely in our functions, in whatever our life happens to be materially lacking at this or that moment.”

of defense; from now on, he has his life in his own hands only; now he acts freely and with full responsibility. As Patočka writes, “The movement of breakthrough, or actual self-comprehension, is the most important” (2016, p. 175), because it leads to the care for the soul (EPIMELEIA TÉS PSYCHÉS). Such caring humans live from their own essential possibilities and with their own responsibilities, i.e. in truth, they are free, they live with freedom. And whereas the first and second movements concern the past and present respectively, the future is the temporal dimension of this final movement.

After this brief characterization of three movements of life, let us turn to another crystallization of Patočka’s concept of human existence. In this crystallization, only two fundamental forms of living are discussed.

Two fundamental modes of living

In the second chapter of *Heretical Essays* entitled, “The Beginning of History,” Patočka wrote not only about three movements of life, but also about two fundamental modes of living. This concept of the two life’s modes or forms builds upon thoughts about home⁸, the distant and the alien that appear also in Patočka’s (2016, p. 57) first edition of *The Natural World*. I think that this concept could be also compared with Patočka’s thoughts about the closed and open soul (cf. Patočka, 1970, pp. 61-74; 2011a; 2011b).

The first fundamental mode of living is the life of acceptance; it is life at home, in closedness, or in the OIKOS (house, household) (cf. Patočka, 1996c, p. 37).

The second mode of living is an “unsheltered life, a life of outreach and initiative” (Patočka, 1996c, p. 39); Patočka describes it as a political life – as life in the POLIS – but also as a life in openness, living in the mode of initiative and preparation. It is “a life in active tension, one of extreme risk and unceasing upward striving” (Patočka, 1996c, p. 38), and it comes only after the shaking of life’s “small” meaning that was initially bestowed by acceptance. This “event of the shaking” is precisely the very difference between the life in the second and the third movements (from the concept of three life movements mentioned above) and, at the same time, it is the difference between the first and the second modes of living described here. When this second mode of life is taken up, however, human beings become free to bestow “meaning on themselves in the light of the way the being of the world into which they have been set manifests itself to them” (Patočka, 1996c, p. 41).

In a letter to Milada Blekastad in Norway on 17th February 1976, Jan Patočka (2011a, p. 146) characterized the two basic concepts as follows:

[There is] the first [concept], according to which intelligentsia – although being able to fundamentally improve its standing – assumes an unconditionally

8 Patočka (2016, p.168, cf. p. 56) wrote: “the structure home/alien, which can be regarded as one of the essential dimensions of the natural world.”

servant position, i.e. by unconditionally serving as productive force. And, [there is] the second [concept], according to which it has a unique opportunity in history (since one of its components is the decisive productive force of modern society) to shape, in the solidarity of the shaken, a genuine spiritual power and to solve those problems, which had been introduced by the Enlightenment in an imperfect way in the form of the idea of human rights, democracy in a modern sense, etc.

On 10th May 1970, Jan Patočka wrote (2011b, pp. 282–283) to Stanislav Sousedík also about a spiritual power and a need of conversion:

All this presupposes some kind of a great conversion on the part of the intelligentsia... [T]oday, *conversion* of the intelligentsia involves the transition from the ‘closed soul’ of modern idealism and the 19th century, to an ‘open soul’, which considers itself in unity with the world, to which it is sent as the place of its revelation, i.e. uncovering in its being; this, in turn, means [that the ‘open soul’ sees itself] not only in what is given, what can be asserted and what is condensed in the real being, but also what is not given in such a way, but what *this whole everything in us* is calling for. (In my opinion, Phenomenology involves the disclosure and study of this aspect of the world.)... [T]his “conversion” [is] immensely important; it involves the true purpose of future *education*.

When Patočka wrote about closed and open soul, the word “soul” meant “the personal life” or “the way of life”. Whereas the open soul experiences its essential dependence on something else, it goes beyond its own natural self, its own self-sufficiency and autonomy, the closed soul has its center in itself, all the reality relates only to itself, perceives itself as infinite because it does not know about its limitations, or its finality. To the repertoire of the closed soul belong usurping, possessing, and dividing, whilst, on the contrary, the open soul is not lost in the world and its contents. However, humans with an open soul are capable of sacrifice, they are completely free to give their care or even themselves to others.

In both letters cited above, a role of intelligentsia was stressed. For Patočka, the intelligentsia means human beings caring for the soul. In text titled *Duchovní člověk a intelektuál* (Spiritual Man and Intellectual), the difference between intellectuals and spiritual humans or intelligentsia is clearly described. The life of Socrates is an example of the spiritual life of man, whilst Protagoras or Hippias are examples of intellectuals (cf. Patočka 1996b, pp. 356, 358). In a lecture in 1975, the words about fear could be or should be the most inspiring (cf. Patočka 1996b, p. 366): Searching and sometimes seeing the true of life and world, the spiritual man is able to act, even up to self-sacrifice, without fear. The basis for not being afraid, to live without fear, is right in what he sees. He is able to see sense or meaning of sacrifice like Socrates.

Patočka pointed out the role of education in the conversion or in the “event of the shaking” many times. After “a great conversion of intelligentsia” from the closed soul to the open soul, a community of the shaken is striving to live in truth and care for the souls – this is a non-indifferent life in POLIS and for POLIS.

Two or three, an accordance behind the difference

When we take a closer look, we will notice that the third movement of existence is the life of an open soul, it is the life of outreach, initiative and authenticity, as well as the life of truth; it is the life of the free spirit that lives after the conversion, after being shaken out of naivety. Likewise, it is the life of the free giving himself or herself to community (POLIS), the true life of existence. The first two movements are a precondition of the third movement: Giving himself or herself without the acceptance is not possible. Likewise, without first becoming lost and coming into awareness of one's 'lostness', there cannot be a movement of conversion, or a movement of self-finding and the care for the soul.

What, though, makes humans just and truthful is their care for their soul. [...] Care for the soul means that truth is something not given once and for all, nor merely a matter of observing and acknowledging the observed, but rather a lifelong inquiry, a self-controlling, self-unifying intellectual and vital practice. (Patočka, 1996c, p. 82)

It is precisely what the first two of the three movements have in common that creates the possibility for the second crystallization of Patočka's concept of history or human existence where only two fundamental modes are discussed. If we simply compare these two versions of Patočka's teachings, we can see what is most important in both, it is the conversion, an "event of the shaking," an exodus from dealing with things in the world as things only, from reification to the living in the world where we trying to perceive everything and everyone as a unique phenomenon. After such a conversion, one lives an unsheltered life of initiative and care for the soul, in openness; it is a life of the open soul.

Conclusion

In one letter, Jan Patočka wrote about how he sensed physically and conceived the concept of his future work on the philosophy of history. One can see that living his life in this way, with care for the soul, or the life of the open soul, he had been giving himself in his entirety to the truth. This thinker, whose philosophy was not only a rational discourse, dialogue, or interpretation, but indeed a life choice, a form of life that has been incarnated and penetrated into all its parts, has sought a true, uncovered, natural world. What he had perceived, he combined into the philosophical concepts. The concept of three basic movements, where each of them mutually forms motion of human existence, is one of Patočka's most original thoughts.

If Patočka presents on the one hand an analysis of the three life's movements which are all a movement of existence and on the other hand the two basic concepts of life, one can see the most important or essential element in both concepts, just by this comparison: It is the "event of the shaking", when one loses his or her

naivety, certainty and safety. It is the event of conversion, when one begins life in truth, caring for the soul. Jan Patočka pointed out the role of the spiritual man or of intelligentsia, who are living the unsheltered life, in openness, who care for their soul and the soul of others and for the community's life in truth. Only life that is repeatedly examined can have meaning. Seeing this, one can live without fear, like a human being, humanly.

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ŻYCIE WSTRZAŚNIĘTYCH

Streszczenie: Analizując teksty Jana Patočki, autorka bada dwie koncepcje ludzkiej egzystencji. Najpierw przedmiotem rozważań jest koncepcja trzech ruchów życiowych, a następnie dwóch podstawowych form życia. Badaniu przyświeca z jednej strony cel wydobycia zasadniczych elementów tych koncepcji, a z drugiej ukazanie ich podobieństw i różnic. Pytanie, które przyświeca wysiłkom autorki, brzmi: Jakie elementy wspólne da się wskazać w tych dwu różnych ujęciach?

Słowa kluczowe: Jan Patočka; ruch życiowy; życie w prawdzie; nawrócenie; filozofia; troska o duszę.

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