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Of the Memory of the Past: Philosophy of History in Spiritual Crisis in the early Patočka and Ricoeur

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Abstract

This paper argues that Jan Patočka and Paul Ricoeur endured their own cognitive-spiritual crisis, particularly during the development and outbreak of war in the 1930s. Their philosophies of history are thus, on the one hand, born of a rethinking of modern philosophy from the time of Galileo and Descartes, and on the other, a suffering of crisis that Europe itself was suffering. Stemming from the historical and philosophical context of Husserl's epistemology in the Krisis, both Ricoeur and Patočka had to confront history and the decadence of European sciences, as it concerns the difficulty of remembering the past and describing events in history. These responses to the problem of modern philosophy and science in Europe point to the symptom of spiritual crisis due to 'modern man' having no unified worldview. By means of care of the soul and the challenging of the state in action, a hermeneutics of peace emerges from their spiritual crises.

Keywords: History, Crisis, Memory, Peace, Violence, Jaspers, Masaryk

> "While an enmity to culture is grinding to powder all that has hitherto existed (with an arrogant assumption that the world is now beginning entirely afresh), in the process of reconstitution the mental substance can only be preserved by a sort of historical remembrance which must be something more than a mere knowledge of the past and must take the form of a contemporary vital force." (Jaspers [1931] 1957, 130)
> "Peace is an immense task if it is to be the crowning of justice." (Ricoeur [1949] 1967, 226)

Behind Jan Patočka's *Heretical Essays* (*Kacířské eseje*, 1975) and Paul Ricoeur's *Time and Narrative* (*Temps et récit*, 1983-5) and *Memory, History, Forgetting* (*La mémoire,*

l'histoire, l'oubli, 2000), works that encompass a lifetime and encapsulate a century, lies a shadow. A shadow that haunts Europe.[1] The question of how to remember the past conjures up ghosts, particularly remembering trauma rooted in crisis. World War I had been the "suicide of Europe" (Ricoeur 1998, 15; Patočka 1996, sixth essay). Writing between the wars during the birth of Czechoslovakia as a nation, Jan Patočka (1907–1977) endured a cognitive-spiritual (*geistige*) crisis, particularly during the development and outbreak of war in the 1930s, before the *Shoah*. Yet his early writings are a kind of prophecy of what might occur. Paul Ricoeur (1913-2005) endured a spiritual crisis during the *Shoah* and likewise responded to the need for both care of soul and state.

Our aim is to trace these two philosophers' thoughts and efforts to cope with the event, as linked as it is to the role of violence in culture and history.[2] While most scholars emphasize their later works, this article will entirely situate their original interest in history and the philosophy of history *within* their own early philosophical history. Since our goal is not primarily biographical even if their personal stories are a form of history and are woven together with their philosophy, this essay rather uncovers the fact that these early writings were closer to the event. Following Patočka and Ricoeur on the historical crisis in this period helps illuminate what was invisible – the event brings to light what was only previously implicit. Born from the ashes of memory and its inherent trauma, the possibility of action arises. "In this respect, 'action…looks like a miracle'." (Ricoeur 2004, 489)

Aviezer Tucker, in his *The Philosophy and Politics of Czech Dissidence from Patočka to Havel*, poses the following question: "What is the reason for the crisis that apparently led to the self-destruction of Europe in the twentieth century?" (2000, 59)[3] This question gets at the heart of an inquiry into the *historical* event of the *Shoah*, an event which cannot be taken lightly or glossed over. Was it reason or rationality that caused the self-destruction of Europe? Or was it senseless acts of cruelty? Our answer, if Tucker's question can possibly be answered, is that a spiritual crisis in Europe occurred, a crisis of reason which following Patočka and Ricoeur requires a

coming to grips with how the Enlightenment project and its trust in reason has truly failed us. For the two philosophers considered here, we must read backwards (or what Ricoeur calls "questioning back"[4]), and reflect anew on what has happened. Their proposal in light of the event is thus action – writing a philosophy of history as a therapeutic act in the face of trauma. Their *telos* is to make meaning of the senselessness of World War I and World War II. But this is not historical as such. Thus, to pose the problem of spiritual crisis in history is to retain some sense of historical science, which is neither based on (deductive-nomological) laws nor entirely subjective.[5] "Historical explanation, therefore, is essentially retrospective, not predictive" (Eldridge 2016, 22). Simply speaking, meaning is not causal in the way that science is, and history requires narrative. It is thus a small part of this story to which we turn.

1. Coming to History

> "a calling…endowed with memory, astuteness of the spirit, and a noble and affable mind." (Plato, Republic, 487a)

The history that is come to after the event is not the same history that is come to before the event. The difference is one of memory. The overriding interpretation of history in the Anglo-Saxon context was that of positivism. Ever since Leopold van Ranke, (philosophy of) history has concerned itself primarily with evidence. "Patočka's starting point is the history of thinking, with particular focus on the idea of evidence. He sketches the historical unfolding of this concept" (Učnik 2015, 39). As the topic of Patočka's dissertation, *The Concept of Evidence and its Significance for Knowledge* (1931) already pointed out, evidence is historical and modern science must "navigate between the Scylla of empirical evidence, which is by definition changing, and the Charybdis of the 'rationalists' immutable, *a priori* ideas, which are supposedly innate." (Učnik 2015, 32) Evidence is neither owned by empiricism nor by rationalism, but rather originates with Descartes's clear and distinct ideas.[6] This means that meaning replaces analysis, or critique replaces evidence, as stuck as it

is in between the Scylla of empiricism and the Charybdis of rationalism.[7] Unlike Descartes or Locke, according to Patočka in 1933, "Plato is the person who conceived of a society which is governed purely spiritually and founded on the life of the spirit." ([1933] 2007b, 13) Spirit here thus refers to "being itself" and the "ultimate bases of all value." It is by means of purification that "inner and active" philosophy gives "necessary unity to the life of the individual and of society, to give life that inner center that one potentially nurses within oneself as the unfulfilled meaning of one's life" (ibid.). Patočka's emphasis on both Plato and myth, which as a "symbol that suggests unity and continuity," contrasts modern philosophy's need for clarity and distinctness. Philosophical myth is "the naïve manifestation of spiritual needs, which express themselves in an instinct for mythology" (ibid., 16). Myth is useful for life in allowing us to care for the soul which, as Patočka quotes from Plato's *Republic*, is "a calling…endowed with memory, astuteness of the spirit, and a noble and affable mind" (ibid., 15, quoting Plato 487a).[8]

In his comments on the mundane and extramundane, Patočka prefaces his thoughts with the fact that he is not doing philosophy, but rather "only a modest attempt to rend philosophy from forgetting… an anamnesis" (Patočka 2007b, 18). Already this is a thesis for the memory of the past spread throughout his works. The mundane position in philosophy, as stated in "Platonism and Politics," is intellectualism as a "mode of mundane life, a way to fill time" (ibid., 14), whereas an extramundane [*mimosvětské*] position assumes a separation between the world and philosophy, which has no point of contact. "The world can cancel the existence of the philosopher and, behold, philosophy *enters into history* by means of it!" (ibid., 23) Whereas the goal of present-day science emphasizes quantitative and technical understanding, the goal of ancient philosophy was understanding. "The unreflective life gives rise to myth and poetry, mighty visions that are the depositories of an immediate self-understanding of life in the form of models seen, of exalting events, of intoxicating, appealing enthusiasm" (ibid., 24). The poet and the hero live by courage and danger, challenged by the

philosopher, and it was their shadows that executed Socrates, since philosophy does not bring salvation in this world or the next. This is the message of how the extramundane enters the world and is put to death. "Philosophizing brings joy to those who philosophize (in varied ways, to be sure, and entailing a hard, painful struggle with oneself for oneself), because there lives in it the passion to understand.... it contains a calm clarity about the whole of life." (ibid., 26)

What is important here, whether for Ricoeur or Patočka, is action.[9] We might at this early stage call them Arendtian *avant la lettre*. Action in the face of the *Shoah* was the only way to cope with this spiritual crisis, and for all of them, publishing their thoughts was a form of action. This is where, as early as 1934 when Arendt is 28, Patočka is 27 and Ricoeur 21 years old, without reading each other or interacting, they may whole-heartedly agree. The entirety of *The Origins of Totalitarianism* was a reaction to the shock of the *Shoah*, as Anya Topolski calls it.[10]

In two early essays of Patočka's, "Some Comments on the Concepts of History and Historiography" ("Několikpoznámek k pojmůmdějin a dějepisu") and "Some Comments on the Concept of 'World History'" ("Několikpoznámek o pojmu 'světových dějin'"), he takes this a step further.[11] When Patočka writes, "*Gnothi seauton* is a call to recognize its own limits, an invitation to *sophrosyne*" ([1934] 2007a, 140),[12] this calling or vocation of a philosopher is to bring the extramundane, the knowing of oneself or care of the soul, *into* the world and action. Acting in time, in history, is the problem of the "sciences de l'esprit" (ibid.). Why do we study history, he asks, or better, why read works of history? The answer, to put it simply, concerns care of the soul. This is the purpose of the memory of the past, not to dwell melancholically or nostalgically on that which is past, but to propose action in light of it.[13] "All that which we understand to traverse history is charged with signification in our actual life; history is incompatible with indifference," Patočka writes, and it carries with it an "irresistible fascination" (Patočka [1934] 2007a, 145, my translation). This fascination cannot be understood in a Kantian, Hegelian, or even Diltheyan vein,

but rather "manifests [itself] under the species of esteem and contempt, love and hate, admiration and compassion" (ibid.). Nevertheless, as mentioned above, history is a science of the past, which means the "science of the real par excellence." As with their later works, *Heretical Essays* and *Memory, History, Forgetting*, Patočka and Ricoeur point to the ontological and epistemological "real," which in Patočka's words of 1934 can be read "under a lively [*vécue*] figure, savage, a final expression of the ultimate lack of a common measure between life and knowledge." (ibid., 144) The important point here is the insistence on the ontological-spiritual and epistemological-spiritual together with the ethical. Philosophy of history thus enters history by means of spiritual crisis, and this already as early as the 1930s. "The past," for Patočka, "is thus an urgent call launched to our freedom, which engages it to awaken to its own question" (Patočka 2007a, 151, my translation). Here he expands upon this urgent call, articulating a core agreement which he will have with Ricoeur: "The construction of the historical world commences by memory, passes by decision and develops itself by repetition. Memory opens the horizon of the past; the decision assigns a perspective and a measure; repetition conducts to vision a complex of relations, a general outline of the meaning of the historical process," (ibid., 153) This historical inquiry cannot exist "without esteem and love, hate and resistance," thus making it "one of the most powerful factors of historical life itself" (ibid.).

Jaspers believes that the condition modern man finds himself in is due to both western (primarily European) consciousness and spiritual crisis, and that this, in turn, effects the wider culture. What he means by spiritual crisis seems to be the same as for Masaryk and Patočka. "The natural sciences," Jaspers writes, "with their rationalization, mathematicization, and mechanization of the world … denuded [that world] of spirit…. The despiritualisation of the world is not the outcome of the unfaith of individuals, but is one of the possible consequences of a mental development which here has actually led to Nothingness." (Jaspers [1931] 1957, 20) The historical period of "the present situation" concerns the period after WWI, and he finds this to be the

second time "man has broken away from nature to do work which nature would never have done for herself, and which rivals nature in creative power." (ibid., 22) As Masaryk and Husserl were also to point out, the first time that this occurred was when Bacon, Descartes, and Galileo were writing. For Jaspers, as in his work regarding the Axial period, an epoch has a "spiritual principle" in the sense of "a specific feeling of life," "a sociological structure," and a "particular economic order or a particular system of government." (ibid., 28-9) It follows that the spiritual ties to the political and moral as much as a religious crisis and should not be reduced to one of these value-spheres, all of which is contrasted to titanism or nihilism.[14] Arendt also gained this emphasis on the political-moral from Jaspers.

Whereas "Masaryk believed that the order of history could provide a clue to the meaning of being human and the being of the cosmos" (see Kohák 1989, 26), Patočka is challenging a "spirit" behind – or moving – history.[15] The impulsion of war, Masaryk claims, is derived from the myth of the omnipotent absolutist State. Moreover, when Patočka looks at the State, he sees "an example of such originary power" at once imperialist and legal, another "that which is often named spirit, tries to know the conscious relations of the human and his own world in the forms of philosophy (and science), art, practical knowledge, religion" (Patočka 2007a, 160, my translation). He considers what "powers" mean here with regards to historical processes. "In reality, these powers are only effective in historical configurations, philosophies, political movements, States." (ibid., 161)[16] What this means is that facts do not point to a life, a history, or an event, what Ricoeur will later term narrative. In speaking of profound and superficial history, however, it is impossible to read current events or the specific crisis into this text. There appears no particular historical reference.[17] Memory of the past, or coming to history, means *true* and *good* memory and thus transcends "an idea, realized in the annals of such and such people, or such and such nation." (Patočka 2007a, 152) Instead, the "construction of a historical world commences by memory, passes by decision and develops itself by repetition."

(ibid., 153) This threefold movement of memory, decision, and repetition becomes important later as anchoring, self-extension, and breakthrough (see Patočka 2016, 160-180). Memory of the past is necessary for survival in that it becomes a therapy or cure for history. Thus, coming to history is as much a hermeneutical as a care-filled event in which the future is uncertain.

2. The Personal and the Professional

> "At these times the troubled soul, languishing with a presentiment, a foretaste of the future, has something akin to a prophetic vision." (Dostoyevsky [1846] 1985, 138)

As a close friend of Patočka's for over forty years, Ludwig Landgrebe speaks to the life of the man himself and not just his thought: "our conversations were never purely philosophical," and that they took place "for nights on end in my Prague years between 1933 and 1939." (Patočka 2016, ix) These years haunt the philosophy of the time, and perhaps the life and country, if not all of Europe itself. They are the transition place of both a country and between wars. No one knew what would come. Compare these words of Landgrebe to Ricoeur's own words about the same time period: "I had been warned by André Philip, who himself had not made that choice: he was clearly opposed to Munich, while I was hesitant." (Ricoeur 1998, 15)[18] Experiencing these years in "a kind of exile" in Prague, Landgrebe says, "[t]alk of personal life, family, comments on the alarming political situation in Europe, common concern for the future of Germany… For me, the development of Patočka's philosophy is inseparably linked with the history of a friendship." (Patočka 2016, ix) While being guided through the homeland and Prague in particular, "[h]istory came alive on these occasions in its interwovenness with art and literature." (ibid., x) Here is a document in history concerning a time "near and far, familiar and alien" (ibid., xv). Similarly, Ricoeur mentions Patočka as regarding these years: "We see this, moreover, in all the writings of

Patočka: he says everywhere in them that it was the First World War that constituted the turning point; the First War was the 'suicide of Europe'." (Ricoeur 1998, 15).

The most important text, however, for Patočka's spiritual crisis was "Masaryk's and Husserl's Conception of the Spiritual Crisis of European Humanity" (Patočka [1936] 1989a). He asks whether an article can help through "constructive violence." "Both Husserl's and Masaryk's philosophical activity," Patočka writes, "is marked by a conviction that European humanity is passing through a protracted spiritual crisis whose roots must be sought deep in the past, at the very beginning of modern thought." (ibid., 146)[19] This crisis was to disrupt life, and Husserl specifically sees this in terms of "a lack of clarity at the foundation of the sciences." (ibid., 147) According to Patočka, both Husserl and Masaryk see the symptom of this state in terms of irreligiosity: "The decline of religion in general consciousness then goes hand in hand with the decline of awareness of the ultimate tasks and possibilities of philosophy." (ibid., 149) It is, however, at least for Masaryk, "a feeling of trust and love in a dedication to the world and to one's task," which allows one to be able to act in light of the crisis.[20]In spite of the fact that Jaspers, Masaryk, and Husserl were already speaking of a spiritual crisis, especially concerning politics and the sciences, Patočka's sense of cultural crisis was broader than the looming Munich declaration. It is not that there are two different Patočka's, one before 1938 and one after, but the texts which we have looked at so far are presciently pointing to the difficulty that was to come to bear on the Czech nation itself. While there certainly is a crisis for Ricoeur as well, who was in a camp from 1940-1945 and the threat to France was a real one, their respective senses of crisis are different. In 1938, when Patočka publishes "The Idea of Culture and its Contemporary Relevance," it is important to see how the death of both Masaryk and Husserl were to affect him even before the Munich declaration. To speak of the spiritual crisis and to ignore its personal history is to miss something crucial. Since Patočka is interested in a man "who was capable of turning thoughts into acts, to whom thinking and living was one and

the same thing,"[21] the memory or discovery of Masaryk points to his truly Socratic approach to philosophy.

3. Loving Struggle

> "Is not the attempt to identify oneself with this question by a sort of 'loving struggle' quite akin to the efforts we make in order to communicate with our friends?" (Ricoeur [1949] 1967, 170)

We now leap to a period after the *Shoah*. The historical context is different, but the crisis still remains. Replacing Hegel's master/slave dialectic or ruse of history is the notion of loving struggle in which each term stands for the agonistic. For Ricoeur, "the terror of history and the terror of the psyche mutually precipitate each other": the same thing could be said about the city and the soul, as seen in Plato's *Republic*. If history (or the *polis*) is not at peace, then the soul must also be restless. Ricoeur also points to the Copernican Revolution and the unease in Descartes's *cogito* as being at the root of this crisis. In a number of his earliest publications, including *Freedom and Nature* [*Le voluntaire et l'involuntaire*,1950]and *History and Truth* [1955], there is a debate with the nihilism and crisis of science and history.[22] In "Husserl and the Sense of History," Ricoeur seeks to trace the contours of Husserl's sudden turn towards history in the *Crisis*[23] as events turned upon him.[24] As with Patočka's analysis of Masaryk and Husserl, Ricoeur's is a fascinating glimpse into several questions that would illuminate Ricoeur's work for decades. It is, both for Husserl and for Ricoeur, an attempt at an etiology of crisis – the rise of National Socialism–and, especially for Ricoeur, a sketching out of a project for avoiding or overcoming it.[25] Husserl's first foray into history identifies two competing concepts of the other, seen either naturalistically (from the point of view of the great objectifying project, Science), or idealistically (as a transcendental subjectivity). The first, to put the case very briefly, empties the other of meaning, rendering it indifferent, while the second endows her with immediate concern. The historical movement from the

first to the second is, for Husserl and Ricoeur, the ground of crisis; the movement back from the second to the first represents, for Ricoeur, a profound choice.

Learning to apperceive the Other as a "subject like me," Ricoeur argues, is the touchstone for what he calls "loving struggle,"[26]and the decision to undertake it represents for him the first and most basic ethical decision. In the other 1949 essay, Ricoeur considers the *political* implications of a historiography emptied of subjects, ideas, or imperatives, and reduced instead to the naturalistic and objective: such a history, he will argue, speaks violence. The project there will be to infuse meaning, or "consciousness" into politics by way of nonviolent *action* – love. This point rhymes through much of his later work, and may be called his categorical imperative: to re-connect the interior and exterior worlds, and to fill them both with subjects. In such a world, there cannot be violence, murder, or genocide. It is, moreover, a proposal for an active, engaged, thoughtful, and purposive life of peace.

Ricoeur enumerates several tasks of the "dynamic reason" that he believes guides Husserl's argument (and his own). The first is what later, in *Time and Narrative*, re-appears as configuration – the task of unifying "all significational activities," including "the whole field of culture." (Ricoeur [1949] 1967, 157) This involves a *decision* to endow the world with sense (or senselessness), to "give a rational form to himself and to his surrounding universe." (ibid., quoting Husserl 1970, §2) One "task" of "dynamic reason" is simply this choice, with a crucial new twist. "A task of an ethical character," he writes,

> involves a time having a dramatic character, for the awareness of crisis assures us that the infinite Idea can be buried, forgotten, and even debased. The whole history of philosophy is an open struggle between an understanding of the task as infinite and its naturalistic reduction, or, as the *Crisis* puts it, between transcendentalism and objectivism. (ibid., 158)

It is an interesting and unexpected interpolation: the choice is *dramatic* because it is *historical*, and also *ethical* because it is *present*; this stitching of the ethical into the temporal allows him to think through all four as linked pairs,

and therefore also to project them into the future, as a *task*. In what will become a paradigmatic Ricoeurian move, history and choice are woven into a single *quasi-drama*: loving struggle. Ricoeur puts it simply: one can engage "the object or the *cogito*." (ibid., 161)[27]

A dense and sometimes obscure discussion follows, of Husserl's long meditations on Galileo and Descartes. The first, the story goes, turns increasingly to "experimental logic" and the formal proof of exterior, objective truths. As a result, for Husserl, the psychic became separated from the physical, "since the physical is mastered only in consequence of abstraction from consciousness." (ibid., 164) Descartes, whose *cogito* formed the foundation of a universal transcendental subjectivity, remained "a prisoner of the evidences of Galileo; likewise, as he saw it, the truth of the physical is mathematical, and the whole enterprise of doubt and the cogito only served only to reinforce objectivism." (ibid., 165) This applies as much to Descartes and Galileo as to Spinoza, Leibniz, and Wolff. Even Kant's "transcendental subjectivism" still managed to miss the point for Ricoeur, because "the consolidation of objectivity by this subjective founding preoccupied him more than the operation of the subjectivity which gives sense and being to the world." (ibid., 166) All three, Ricoeur explains, represent for Husserl a turn away from a universal science of the *ego-cogito*, the "ultimate source of every positing of being and value," to the exterior, objective world, and the truth-procedures associated with it. "The aim of the entire history of philosophy," Ricoeur argues, "is the catharsis of the sick modern spirit. This return to the ego is modern man's opportunity." (ibid., 167)

In his closing "critical remarks," Ricoeur undertakes a critique that contains many germs of later ideas: chiefly, the search for the consecration of sense, or reason, in history; the importance of the creative use of history in service of truth; and finally, the content of loving struggle, the question that links the interior *ego-cogito* with the world of history. As François Dosse has emphasized, Ricoeur's favorite motto was: "La plus court chemin de soi à soi passe par autrui."[28] Ricoeur, though, is not talking only about *Sorge* in the Heideggerian

sense, but *love*. Like Patočka, his decision to undertake this work is an ethical decision to take up hermeneutic, literary, and poetic tools. It is a horizon, rather than a destination in which Ricoeur's proposal for a project grounds his fundamental thesis of *l'homme capable*.

4. The Violence of History

> "For it is history and not the purity of our intentions that counts" (Ricoeur [1949] 1965, 224)

In Ricoeur's essay, "Non-violent man and his Presence to History" (1949), which was "to all appearances…so contingent in its origin," he attempts to relate history and (non)violence. He used the stateless citizen Garry Davis as the key example for how one "actor" in history imposes itself through the power of nonviolence.[29] The occasion of this article is the now lost event of Garry Davis, who after serving as an Allied pilot in WWII gave up his American citizenship in 1948 to become a world citizen. He believed that peace would be actualized if everyone were to give up nationalism. Garry Davis is "the non-violent man" of the article's title.[30] Ricoeur's "notes devoted to violence and non-violence […] presupposes the prior conviction that there is some value in non-violence." (Ricoeur [1949] 1965, 223) However, Ricoeur wants to show that nonviolence is not a passive or powerless activity – he later places this article as the first within the section entitled "The question of power" in *History and Truth*.[31] Nonviolent forms of resistance, as in the case of Garry Davis, are forms of power.

Ricoeur's task here, unlike the etiology of Husserl, is to fulfil a project of understanding violence in history, and can be tied to Ricoeur's project in "Husserl and the Sense of History," not in terms of explicit reference, but in terms of a practical task or act subject to consciousness. But there is a presupposition (or prior conviction) at work behind his article: that Jesus' "*Sermon on the Mount* has to do with our history and the whole of history, with its political and social structures, and does not deal merely with private acts without historical significance." (ibid.) This sermon demands

something *difficult*, Ricoeur says, and introduces a vertical dimension into history, which does not easily assimilate itself: "the *Sermon on the Mount*, with its non-violence, wishes to enter history, that its intention is practical, that it calls for incarnation and not evasion." (ibid., 224) History thus spells out "the complete meaning of what we have willed" through action and not intention (ibid.).

A mere four years after the end of the second World War, all were inescapably aware of the lack of nonviolence as a tactic of political power, and perhaps disenchanted with its idealism. On every doorpost, under each rug, the reality of violence lingered. Yet writing about it can be a form of healing: "The *ethical* nature of consciousness is essentially opposed to the *historical* course of events. History says: violence. Consciousness rebounds and says: love." (ibid., 228) Writing expresses the paradox that is known in the human heart–that we have violence as a part of ourselves, but we are not only violent. If pacifism does not take into account the reality of violence, does not become aware of it, it is naïve and worthless. But having encountered it and *chosen* otherwise, it is an action of deep consciousness, which "can only come from *elsewhere*." (ibid.) This "empire of violence" is as much personal as political, as much empirical as ideological, as much structural as cultural. Nonviolence as much as violence is not particular to the left or right, but undergirds human nature. Ricoeur utilizes the example of a riot exploding in the street, in which "something in me is unleashed, something for which neither profession, nor home, nor daily civic duties provide an outlet." (ibid., 225) This is the savage "nether regions of consciousness" or what Patočka will later call the orgiastic. Yet the psychology of such a consciousness is not the same as the history: "something savage, something wholesome and unwholesome, youthful and unformed, a sense of the novel, of adventure, of availability, a flair for rugged brotherhood and for prompt action" (ibid.). One can see how aspects of Husserl's "sense" of history compare to a sense of violence at the heart of humanity. History concerns the structural aspects of this violence, what Ricoeur calls "the structures of terror." It is the relationship of the psychic to

history, the personal to the philosophical, the soul to the city, where one realizes how "terror becomes history while history nourishes itself with terror. This is what the pacifists, hypnotized by battle-fields, too readily overlook." (ibid., 226) What is it that pacifists miss in the consciousness of violence? Conflict and violence is as central to the State as it is to the individual person. The city reflects the soul, and thus the political is always engaged whenever one acts just as, for Husserl, in developing a science one cannot avoid history. "What is at stake in politics in the strict sense is power: on the level of the State it is essential to know who commands and who is subordinate – that is, who retains the sovereignty, for whose profit, within what limits, etc." (ibid.)

As in Husserl's *Crisis*, so catastrophe lies at the very heart of the collective:

> It is principally when the group bound by the State is in a catastrophic situation that the depths of the civilized (*policée*) consciousness, rejoining the pathos of abstractions, bursts into the open, it is at the moment where I discover my belonging to a perishable communal adventure, to a history broken into many histories, to a thread of history threatened with being cut, it is at this moment that I am carried by the lyricism, bitter and bloody, that *La Marseillaise* symbolises: this grand historical death, in which my individual death is intertwined, elicits the most solemn emotions of existence – 1789, 1871, 1914, 1944 … and they resonate in the deepest and most profound levels of our unconscious. (ibid., 227, ellipses in the original)

Whereas the English translations break this passage into sentences, it is all one complete thought in the French and should be tied together with the phenomenology of any patriotic song in which the glories and barbarism of war or nations are praised.

To take nonviolence seriously is as much a task as the achievement of science. For Ricoeur, achieving science or truth is to recognize one's fallibility and tendency towards conflict and crisis, becoming conscious of the fact that we wish to reduce the Other/ the external to oneself/ the internal. Taking violence seriously and the violence of history, then, "is already to transcend it by judgement. The *ethical* nature of consciousness is essentially opposed to the *historical* course of

events." This is the loving struggle of coming to consciousness: "Its bond is a bond of indignation; by this bond it poses an end to history: its suppression as violence; at the same time it poses the human as a possible friend to the human" (ibid.).

As an ending to Ricoeur's own text of 1949, he asks the question of whether nonviolent resistance can be a "historical success" or is it just a "symbolic gesture." It suffers from a negative motto, "thou shalt not kill." (ibid., 231) Ricoeur's main question, however, for both of these articles is whether it is possible to formulate history and nonviolence in positive, affirming, truthful, and practical terms, not reducing interiority to exteriority, or Other to self. One way of doing this has to do with the loving struggle born of spiritual crisis, the transformation of "thou shalt not kill" to "thou shalt love." There is still a danger in the "cyclical nature of the actions which I perform" since I am led again "to oppress" and the nature of violence begets violence.[32] If the inevitable course of history is the curse of progressivist violence and this same logic runs through the scientification and objectification of the external world, then Galileo's, Descartes's, and Husserl's violence to truth are structurally the same as the state's desire for progressivist violence: all wish to reduce the other to the same.

Echoing much of the spiritual crisis in Patočka's work, there is a fundamentally practical conclusion to these two early articles of Ricoeur's: in imagining otherwise, consciously living, and acting,

> there is neither compromise nor synthesis […] if faith is not total, it denies itself. If nonviolence is the vocation of a few, it must appear to them as the duty of all; for someone who lives it and no longer merely looks at it, nonviolence aims to be the whole of action, its will is to construct history (ibid., 233).

This lay sermon echoes an ancient Greek tragic figure, Antigone, who Ricoeur discusses later and who was a vulnerable and yet powerful woman who acted nonviolently "in the face of power." (Ricoeur 1992, 245) Her words ring out still today: "These laws weren't made now or yesterday. They live for all time, and no one knows when they came into the light." (Sophocles 2003, 21)

Precisely in the way that Husserl's epistemology in the *Krisis* had to confront history and the problem of European sciences, both Ricoeur and Patočka veer from Husserl regarding the difficulty of remembering the past and describing events in history.[33] Patočka's writings includes references to "home," "refuge," "alien," but he is still aware of the human and the extrahuman dimension.[34] Their responses to the problem of modern philosophy and science in Europe point to the symptom of spiritual crisis, particularly in the 1930s and 1940s, due to modern man having no unified worldview, living in a double world "at once in his own naturally given environment and in a world created for him by modern natural science, based on the principle of mathematical laws governing nature." (Patočka [1936] 2016, 3) These first sentences of Patočka's habilitation of 1936 profoundly prophesy not only the following forty years of his own work, but also Ricoeur's need through memory of the past to find the harmony between capability and fallibility as much in his earlier as his later works. This paper has been a key for reading their later works by posing some of the missing pieces in history and science. Their Socratic philosophical project, that is, the care of the soul and state, as seen in Antigone or Chelčický in their epochs, can be seen as the red thread that ties both Patočka's and Ricoeur's work and lives together in the same historical epoch.[35]

NOTES

[1] See Derrida 1994, ch. 1. It could equally be said that this shadow still haunts America, Asia, Africa and civilization as we know it. The crisis that haunts the philosophical scene of the twentieth century and still today is Husserl's "philosophical-historical idea of Europe," which concerns the so-called "triumph of reason in history." (Carr 2010, 84-5, quoting Husserl 1970, 269)

[2] As Michael Staudigl has put it in his recent edited volume *Phenomenologies of Violence*, "It follows thus that violence can neither be comprehensively treated from the perspective of discursive constructivism, nor with respect to the theory of social action alone. In light of this insight, not only essentialist and naturalist, but also instrumentalist and socio-ontological theories of violence, which have long shaped the discourse on violence in terms taken from the philosophies of history and theories of civilization, have become more and more unacceptable in recent decades. Anti-essentialism and anti-naturalism consequently determine the recent discourse on violence." (Staudigl 2013, 3) Staudigl only briefly mentions Patočka in this volume (19n), and claims that "[Ricoeur's] account

fails to acknowledge the fact that our bodily integrity is neither a pre-given nor static entity, whereas our personal identity were to be held as something dynamic, open, and malleable" (24). However, he has recently returned to Ricoeur much more positively in Staudigl 2016.

[3] See Nicolas de Warren's comments, "Patočka's reflections can equally be seen as a call to conscience in the 20th-century's quest for the cultural meaning of the first World War, and through such remembrance, for the secret of Europe's historical destiny. And yet, Patočka's reflections elicit unease, if not bewilderment and alarm" (Staudigl 2013, 207).

[4] It is, in other words, what Ricoeur describes as "a method of questioning back. This method, practiced by Husserl in his *Krisis*, stems from what Husserl calls a genetic phenomenology – not in the sense of a psychological genesis but a genesis of meaning. The question that Husserl raised concerning Galilean and Newtonian science, I am raising concerning the historical sciences" (Ricoeur [1983] 1985-1988, i. 179). *Cf*. also Patočka's*Heretical Essays*: "Yet European civilization became a global link in precisely that form which Husserl's *Crisis of the European Sciences* showed to be decadent, that in it a loss of meaning takes place, the loss of that very meaning-bestowing teleological idea that, for Husserl, makes up the inner, spiritual essence of Europe." (Patočka 1996, 45)

[5] Both science and history share this problem, which Ricoeur discusses in *Time and Narrative* ([1983] 1985-1988, i.182-192) and *Memory, History, Forgetting* ([2000] 2004, 331ff.). For a more recent discussion, see Eldridge 2016, 16-28.

[6] Cf. Ricoeur [1940] 2016, 23-52. If, as Učník writes, "all the claims that Patočka addresses in his lifelong *oeuvre* are, *in nuce*, already there: situational knowledge; the problem of the body; the question of meaning, which is the goal of life and the world; and the two different constitutions of the world, objective and subjective" (2015, 39), then Ricoeur also addresses the main themes *in nuce* in his "Attention" from 1940.

[7] To point to the second part of Ricoeur 2004 on "History, epistemology" or the fourth essay of Patočka 1996, they both provide and presuppose the necessary background of this emergence of the discipline of philosophy of history. For a more introductory but fair treatment to both continental and Anglo-Saxon philosophies of history, see Day 2008.

[8] Myth, or the symbol, "gives rise to thought" and is equally important for Ricoeur. *Cf*. Ricoeur [1960] 1965, 6-12; [1960] 1967, 3-10 &161- 174, 347-357; Deckard & Makant 2017.

[9] Ricoeur's very first publication was in 1935 and titled "L'appel de l'action." (Vansina 2000, 68) See also Ricoeur [1940] 2016.

[10] Topolski 2015, 11ff. There she is showing the commonality between Levinas and Arendt, but most of the things that Levinas and Arendt share, Patočka and Ricoeur might share as well (i.e. phenomenology and reacting to Heidegger). See also Učnik 2016, ch. 3.

[11] It is interesting to note that this same year Ricoeur defends a master's thesis and an *agregation*, but also loses his sister and grandmother, and this after losing his parents as an infant and becoming a "pupille de la nation." (Dosse 2008, 22-3; see also Pellauer and Dauenhauer 2016)

[12] For the best work on the development of Patočka between 1934-1936, see Martin Rabas 2015, "Spor o smysl lidských dějin a dějiny člověka jako boj o smysl. K prvním Patočkovým statím o problematice historie a historiografie" [A Dispute over the Meaning of Human History and History of Manas a struggle for meaning. On the first Patočka's Writings on the Issue of History and Historiography]. However, I am broadening the work of this time period beyond the dispute.

[13] What is missing in Gasché 2009 and Carr 2010 is how Masaryk and Jaspers were guides, even more than Husserl and it may have been under Masaryk's influence that Husserl came to an understanding of the crisis of European sciences (see Kohák 1989,

11). Although Jaspers is quite critical of pacifism and its naiveté (see Jaspers [1931] 1957, 100-106), there are seeds for a more optimistic philosophy of peace in Ricoeur than seen in Jaspers or Dodd (2017).

[14] *Cf.* Ricoeur 1991, 84-92, for Patočka's relation to nihilism as well as his preface to *Heretical Essays*.

[15] This is best developed in his "Some Comments on the Concept of Universal History" from 1935, the same year Husserl was to come to Prague. See Patočka [1936] 1989b, for a further discussion of titanism and nihilism.

[16] Inasmuch as a later Wittgenstein lifeworld philosophy imbues this text, so might Bergson's *Creative Evolution* and *Two Sources*. There has not been much written on Bergson's influence on Patočka, but is worth mentioning that he wrote an introduction to the Czech edition of *Two Sources* published in the following year. That title might also be behind Patočka's text of 1936, "Two Conceptions of the Meaning of Philosophy." For another reading of the Bergsonian memory-image, see Deckard and Overcash 2016.

[17] Just a couple years later, however, when he writes, "The idea of culture" and "Czech culture in Europe," he does refer much more to particular historical events and the particular country of Czechoslovakia (see Patočka 1991).

[18] See also Carr 2010 for his description of Husserl's personal and philosophical crisis.

[19] During the 1940s, he worked on a recovery of history: the Strahov Nachlass show Patočka's need to re-read and present a renewed humanism in Europe. His writings on the Renaissance, 17th and 18th centuries, which comprise 1000s of pages of manuscript (held in the Patočka archive in Prague) are intended to tell a different story of the birth of natural science as *the shadow* behind the world wars of the twentieth century. However, many of these manuscript pages are more a "metaphysical daybook" rather than a system.

[20] The recent film *Masaryk* (2016), directed by Julius Sevcík about Jan Masaryk (1886-1948) concerns this crisis in history, revealing both a political and personal side. See also Albright 2012 for a similar intertwining of the personal and the professional with respect to Czech history. In spite of the fact that Jaspers, Masaryk, and Husserl were already speaking of a spiritual crisis, especially concerning politics and the sciences, Patočka's sense of cultural crisis was broader and can be situated with regards to the context of Czechoslovakia. Ricoeur (1998) also speaks of a crisis in France and for the best discussion of it, see Dosse 2008, chapters 4-6.

[21] See Chvatík, 2015, 141, quoting 1938, "A Year Ago He Died," *Sebranespisy* XII: 542. See also the text of 1946 on Masaryk: "'the idea of our entire life as a state so far was fundamentally Masaryk's' and that Masaryk is a philosopher of the modern-day crisis of mankind who 'could see all of the new life as a crisis, as a moment of illness, as a state pregnant with horrors and demons.'"

[22] See also Arendt [1943] 1978, 55-66. For another, more recent discussion of this, see Butler 2015, ch. 3.

[23] A series of lectures given by Husserl in Prague and Vienna on "The Crisis of European Humanity" during 1935 and 1936, collected together later as *Die Krisis der europäischen Wissenschaften und die transzendentale Phänomenologie: Eine Einleitung in die phänomenologische Philosophie* in 1954 [translated as *The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology: An Introduction to Phenomenological Philosophy* (Husserl 1970)].

[24] Ricoeur 1967, 143-174; the original essay was published in France in 1949 in the *Revue de métaphysique et de morale* as "Husserl et le sens de l'histoire," collected in *À l'école de la Phénoménologie* (Ricoeur 1986).

[25] *Cf.* Staudigl's comment, "the dream of reducing violence found in the meta-narrative of historical progress, that 'basic credo of the theories of civilization (actively promoted,

with supposed justification, in the name of Enlightenment reason), has met with profound disillusionment." (Staudigl 2013, 4)

[26] This phrase appears in Ricoeur [1949] 1967, 170. The term comes from Karl Jaspers.

[27] He puts it even more simply in Volume 3 of *Time and Narrative:* "either one counts the cadavers or tells the stories of the victims" (Ricoeur 1985-1988, iii.188). Cf. Staudigl 2016, 769.

[28] Dosse 2008, 532-546.

[29] See Ricoeur [1949] 1965, 10. I have fiddled with the translations of the French from this text – with a nod to Al Lingis' translation in Ricoeur 1964.

[30] The original publication of this article was in an issue of *Esprit* (février 1949), of which the entire issue was dedicated to the pacifism of Garry Davis. See Dosse 2008, 160-1.

[31] The French, *Histoire et Vérité*, was originally published in 1955, but with further French editions published in 1964 and 1967. The English translation is of the 1964 edition (Ricoeur 1965), and was the first book of Ricoeur's translated into English.

[32] Unlike Staudigl (2013, 17-18), who quotes Merleau-Ponty, violence is not inevitable or part of our fate. Ricoeur's *l'homme capable* allows for another metaphysic. The rhyming of Ricoeur's loving struggle and violence of history with Patočka's later terminology of responsibility and orgiastic in *Heretical Essays* seems uncanny. See Patočka 1996, fifth essay; Derrida 2008; Staudigl 2016, 764.

[33] For example, Hus, Comenius, or Masaryk for Patočka or Jesus, Garry Davis, and Patočka himself for Ricoeur.

[34] We do not have the space to compare Patočka's use of these terms to Arendt's "We Refugees," (1943) "The Jew as Pariah," (1944) "The Moral of History," (1946) and others (see Arendt 1978), but her essays here prepare her for *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (Arendt 1951), and she certainly rhymes with this philosophy of history in spiritual crisis.

[35] Earlier versions of parts of this paper have been presented to the SRS (Society for Ricoeur Studies) in Rochester, New York, the WNCCCP (Western North Carolina Circle for Continental Philosophy) in Asheville, NC, and the Polish Phenomenological Association in Warsaw, Poland. Thank you to the audiences there, to the anonymous reviewers of this journal, and particularly to Gordon Cappelletty, Paul Custer, Devon Fisher, Mindy Makant, and Mark Valcourt in the Ricoeur reading group, and to my students Jordan Makant and Denisa VonSchmittou for their comments on an earlier draft. I also wish to thank Ivan Chvatík and Jan Frei of the Patočka archives in Prague, but especially Lucie Čermáková for her hospitality.

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