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In the name of the Author: The artificial unity of Jan Patočka's scattered works

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Abstract. At the time of his sudden death in 1977, the Czech philosopher Jan Patočka left a large philosophical legacy with no will and testament. For the last 43 years, the editors of his *Collected Works* have been reconstructing a unified and thematically articulated *oeuvre* from the more than 10,000 pages found in his drawers and boxes. It should in the end include not only the texts published during Patočka's lifetime but also his many unpublished manuscripts, fragments, variations, drafts of unfinished philosophical projects, notebooks and letters. After demonstrating in which sense the death of the *author* coincides in Patočka's case with the birth of his *oeuvre*, the article aims to show that the unity of Patočka's work is not something given, but rather something to be artificially reconstructed, in an always disputable fashion, since the internal coherence of its various thematic divisions is necessarily itself a matter of ongoing interpretation.

Keywords. Jan Patočka, Author function, Body of work, Complete Works, Editorial practice.

INTRODUCTION

During my six years' experience as co-editor of Jan Patočka's *Collected Works*, I personally witnessed the series of uncomfortable choices and questions that the chief editors, Ivan Chvatík and Pavel Kouba, experienced when faced with the puzzling mass of texts and manuscripts that the Czech philosopher left to posterity. How can such a scattered bundle be transformed into a single *body of work*? The general questions that every editor of a "*Complete Works*" has to ask are well-known: how to delineate the body of work of an author? Where to situate the limits of this strange unit, better rendered by the French term *oeuvre*? Is everything the author left to posterity in his or her drawers and boxes worthy of publication? Should one reorganize the texts left behind according to their chronological order or their thematic affinities? Should the editors take their literary and philosophical qualities into consideration as well when

trying to discern the centre and the periphery of the *oeuvre*; should they differentiate the unpublished manuscripts according to their state of completeness, thus dividing the body of work into main sources and marginalia (drafts, fragments, occasional texts)? Difficulties arise on all sides if we raise the question of the unity of work of any prolific author, but in the case of Patočka they are exacerbated because of the particular circumstances under which he wrote.

In his country of origin, Patočka enjoyed the status of an “acknowledged author” only intermittently: for a large part of his life, he was prevented from publishing officially because of the censorship practiced first under the German occupation (from 1939 to 1945) and then under the Communist regime (from 1948 to 1965 and again from 1969 until 1977). From the perspective of the institutions of the time, the textual legacy left by Patočka at the time of his sudden death in 1977, after strenuous interrogations by the State Police, was considered to be either the dangerous fantasies of an anti-Marxist and bourgeois spirit, or political pamphlets that could be used as forensic evidence for further defamation. In this sense, Patočka was less of an author than a pernicious mastermind, and his textual legacy did not constitute so much a summary of his life-long *oeuvre*, as a collection of various pieces of evidence about his misguided political stance. At the same time however, Patočka’s collaborators, friends, “pupils” and exiled Czech thinkers assumed – unlike the state apparatus – that a major *author* died that day and that it was their responsibility to take as much care as possible of the texts left behind in order both to make them accessible to the interested public and to preserve them for posterity¹. Consequently, the first editors of the samizdat collection of Patočka’s texts were immediately confronted with the famous

¹ A certain taste for thrill and adventure emerges behind Ivan Chvatík’s story (2007) about his decision, in the aftermath of Patočka’s death and prior to their probable sequestration by the police, to carry away all his papers, first to a safe place and subsequently to Vienna where the first provisional Patočka Archive was improvised.

Foucauldian question: «is everything he wrote and said, everything he left behind, to be included in his work?» (Foucault [1969]: 118).

It has to be stressed that the first editors of the samizdat collection dealt with this thorny issue in 1977 according to the practical concerns of that time; from the intimidating amounts of papers left in Patočka’s boxes and drawers, they selected those that were deemed to be of interest to the public and were not available in print at the time. In a sense, the first publication project of Patočka’s body of work was oriented by the needs of the hour and without the ambition to be exhaustive. But the question of the boundaries of Patočka’s work arose again as early as 1987 when the project and the composition of Patočka’s *Complete Works* became hotly debated among Czech dissidents, exiled editors, and translators. All of them regretted that Patočka’s legacy was unavailable to those wishing to study his texts in their completeness and agreed in 1987 to prepare a collected edition in exile, but various proposals competed. The matter of dispute concerned the thematic divisions as well as the extent of the pieces to be published². The project *Sebrané spisy* [Collected Works] was reevaluated in the aftermath of the Velvet Revolution in 1989 under the newly restored conditions of liberal democracy and the new possibility of having a complete edition backed by the Czech Academy of Sciences. While the political dimension of editing Patočka’s work became less important, the difficult editorial choices became all the more explicit: the parsing between the centre and the periphery of Patočka’s body of work had to be reconsidered several times during the slow and painful publication process that was initiated in 1996 and, after 19 volumes already issued, is not yet finished. My present contribution aims not only to highlight the manifold difficulties and aporias met by the editors, but above all to analyze the peculiar relationship that holds between

² The debate around three different conceptions of the scope and the composition of new edition of *Patočka’s Works* in exile is faultlessly summarized and its main proposals reprinted in Petruželková [2017].

Patočka's name as an author and the oeuvre organized *post hoc* around it. More precisely, I will ask how various aspects of Patočka's philosophical figure affected the unsettled and competing criteria according to which his works were to be classified, organized and redistributed into a seemingly coherent body of work. While Patočka's *name* is supposed to guarantee the unity of the work posthumously published under it, one should not neglect the fact that "Jan Patočka" refers not only to a singular person or his biography, but also to the thoughts, stances and gestures attributed to him by editors, as well as to the expectations, appraisals and symbolic projections associated with such a name within the public space.

THE DEATH OF THE AUTHOR, THE BIRTH OF THE WORK

Let us begin with the most basic editorial question. If one is supposed to publish the *Collected Works* of Patočka, where does one draw the line? If "collected" is intended in the sense of "complete", then *everything* must be published, but can we easily agree on what *everything* means? Since the beginning of the newly conceived project after 1989, the editors were sure to include everything that Patočka himself had actually published during his lifetime. However, his published texts constitute the smaller part of what this prolific author left behind, for the reasons mentioned above. Between 1996 and 1999, the editors revised the extent of the manuscripts to be incorporated in *Sebrané spisy* several times, until they decided to include almost all the drafts of his unpublished works, assuming that only the circumstances prevented Patočka from giving his ideas a complete form worthy of being divulged. New doubts arouse nevertheless, since Patočka's private correspondence and personal diaries are replete with philosophical ideas, criticisms of his phenomenological predecessors, reviews of his recent lectures, and self-referential notes about his ongoing projects. Several of Patočka's sketches also merge into excerpts from his concomitant reading. Unlike the first samiz-

dat edition, the post-revolution *Collected Works* are supposed to include Patočka's correspondence and notebooks in the final volumes. Does it mean that it would be consequent to publish *all* his private letters, marginal annotations, occasional notes, and private diaries? Where shall we stop? Should one include even a laundry bill, as Foucault hyperbolically asked in his lecture *What Is an Author* (1969)? Or, less hyperbolically, should one publish Patočka's annotated *excerpta* from other authors that served him as preparatory notes for his own papers? To paraphrase Foucault, such hesitations are endless once we consider how a body of work should be extracted from the millions of traces left by Patočka after his death (Foucault [1969]: 119).

It is worthy of note that Patočka's case is in this regard contrary to Heidegger's. Unlike Patočka, whose life ended abruptly and unexpectedly, Heidegger took great care, in the final years of his life, to think through the details of his personally organized *Gesamtausgabe*. Thus, Heidegger succeeded in imposing his sovereignty not only on the arrangement, but also on the chronological order in which his work should be progressively made available to the public long after his own death. In Patočka's almost reverse case, it might be said that *the death of the Author coincides with the birth of the Oeuvre*.

Such a provocative statement might be intended in at least two interconnected meanings. First of all, it points to a temporal coincidence between the two events: by the end of the year of his death, Patočka's pupils had published the first volume of his *works* that would ultimately include in what is known as the "Archive Collection" the 22 volumes published between 1977 and 1989 (28 volumes were originally planned). Secondly, Patočka might have been considered to be an author without an oeuvre in the sense of *Hauptwerk*. While writing copiously and without interruption, he did not publish the sort of fully integrated, autonomous kind of text that one could call his *opus magnum*. To be sure, he succeeded in finishing three major books during his lifetime. However, *The Natural World as Philosophical Problem*, Patočka's *Habilitations-Schrift* from 1936, was later considered by

the author himself to be too indebted to Husserlian subjectivism³. Patočka's second book *Aristotle, his Predecessors and his Successors* (1964) certainly represents an original analysis of the Aristotelian concept of movement and space, its subsequent abandonment in Early Modern philosophy and its contemporary relevance; however, it cannot be considered an original expression of Patočka's personal philosophy, but rather a prerequisite of his own phenomenology of the movement. Finally, his most quoted and widely translated *Heretical Essays in the Philosophy of History* include six various lectures about historicity, Life-world, the movement of human existence, the essence of technology and the lessons that we can learn from the atrocities of the twentieth century. It is debatable, however, if these essays constitute the fully-blown and definitive expression of the abovementioned topics in the integrated structure of an autonomous book. Furthermore, a study of Patočka's manuscripts and the many working drafts and revisions clearly demonstrate Patočka's repeated dissatisfaction while editing his autograph texts for publication. When comparing the texts that were simply meant to be translated, one can note that Patočka systematically preferred to reformulate instead of simply translating his thoughts: after three or four pages of minor editing (reformulations, additions), he progressively deviated more and more from his original text, often tackling the same problems from a new angle or introducing new concepts missing from the original "text to be translated". These constant re-writings, dissatisfactions and addenda make Patočka an author "immer unterwegs" whose oeuvre exists in such a manner that its "not yet" belongs to it, if we paraphrase Heidegger's notion of Dasein (Heidegger [1929]: 79). The tendency to provide Patočka's reader with a *Denkweg* is thus an understandable, even though problematical temptation for the editors⁴. This

is the deeper meaning of seeing in Patočka an almost exemplary case of an *Oeuvre* born at the time of death of his author.

THE COMPOSITION AND THE COHERENCE OF PATOČKA'S OEUVRE

With regard to the composition of Jan Patočka's *Collected Works*, the editors' primary choice was thematic. The planned 28 volumes are divided into twelve thematic ensembles. Several volumes are secondarily divided between published and unpublished texts (but also between major and minor pieces), while the chronological order comes into play only within these smaller groups, as a third criterion to be taken into consideration. Published, more or less finished, and completely unfinished fragments dating from all the different periods of Patočka's life are thus reassembled around the following "core" themes: *Care of the Soul, Art and Time, the Czechs, Phenomenology, Writings about Comenius, Lectures on Ancient Philosophy* and others, concluding the whole body of work with *Notebooks and Correspondence*.

The resulting impression of Patočka being an author of such large thematic units is the first sense in which we can understand the artificiality of Patočka's *oeuvre* to which I referred in my title. Even the students of philosophy at the Faculty of Arts at Charles University in Prague are sometimes led astray by the impression of this post-hoc unity, as demonstrated by several misguided attributions appearing in their essays: "In his work entitled *Care of the Soul*, Patočka writes..." However, Patočka has never written such a book, not even an essay bearing such a title. It was chosen after Patočka's death by the editors of the samizdat collection especially because of the recurring occurrence of this Platonic notion in sev-

³ This is evident from Patočka's extensive self-criticism in his two afterwords written in 1970 and 1976 (Patočka [2009]: 265-334; 367-378).

⁴ The intention to re-establish the coherence of Patočka's legacy under the auspices of a single, albeit poly-thematic path, is clearly acknowledged in the

paper "Struktura 'Sebraných spisů' Jana Patočky jako interpretační problém" [*The Structure of Jan Patočka's 'Collected Works' as a problem of interpretation*], written in 1991 by Ivan Chvatík, Pavel Kouba and Miroslav Petříček, the chief editors of the *Collected Works* at that time.

eral of Patočka's published and unpublished texts and lectures. In this samizdat edition, *Care of the Soul* provided an umbrella title for essays, lectures and unpublished drafts and fragments dating from 1929 until 1977 and revolving around themes as various as the critique of metaphysics, the destiny of Europe, the philosophy of history and the relation between politics and philosophy in the contemporary world. The post-revolutionary edition, unlike the samizdat edition, placing the six volumes of *Care of the Soul* after the first two volumes dedicated to *Art and Philosophy*, was inaugurated precisely with the *Care of the Soul I* in 1996 and placed the three volumes published under this heading at the beginning of Patočka's body of work. To establish *Care of the Soul I, II and III* as the starting point of *Collected works* is not an innocent editorial choice, insofar as it emphasizes the ethical dimension of Patočka's thought. The paradox is even more striking if one considers that Patočka never published a text that could be unequivocally identified as a piece of ethics. My aim, however, is not to question such an editorial choice or to point out its arbitrariness. What I want to stress instead is that in the eyes of the participants at his underground lectures it was the *figure* of Patočka that served as the main principle of organization. It is because of the ethical appeal that Patočka had on his pupils and later editors of his work that different kinds of papers were unified under such a heading. Those who study the coherence of the texts unified under the title *Care of the Soul* from a more philological perspective cannot but notice that most of Patočka's meditations revolve around the topic of the *philosophy of history* (see Karfík [1997]: 21-29).

Similar attempts to restore a unity behind the mass of scattered texts written in different contexts are manifest in the thematic wholes entitled *Umění a čas* [Art and Time] and *Češi* [the Czechs]. What strikes us from the outset in these two ensembles are the lengthy "Editorial comments" (in the former) and "Foreword" (in the latter) that reveal the editors' willingness to justify the coherence of the thematically varied texts included in these volumes and to defend the *ratio*

behind their composition into meaningful wholes. It betrays the intention to «clarify the criteria according to which [the editor] has assembled the volume with respect to Patočka's work as a whole» (Vojtěch [1999]). In 2004, Daniel Vojtech, who is Patočka's grandson, assumed the task of main editor of the two volumes entitled *Umění a čas*; the first volume includes all the texts published during Patočka's lifetime, and the second reassembles all the fragments, variations, preparatory notes, and even German originals, on the grounds that these texts were not included in the five volumes of the German edition of Patočka's *Selected Works*. Thus, the second volume departs from the original intention of publishing only Czech texts or translations in the name of exhaustiveness. Moreover, while in the earlier volumes edited by Chvatík and Kouba the editorial commentary was restricted to indications about the origin of the published texts, its variations and the circumstances of their release (in the case of previously published texts), the editorial commentary in *Art and Time* expanded considerably in comparison with the previous (and subsequent) volumes. Daniel Vojtěch, whose research interests focus on comparative literature, transformed the scope and meaning of editorial commentary into a paper and a personal interpretation of a special kind, whose goal is to present Patočka as a researcher *sui generis* in the field of literature⁵. To my understanding, the exuberance of this "editorial commentary" is not so much a reply to some specific requirements of the texts gathered in this volume, as it is a very visible symptom of the editor's will to reappropriate Patočka's legacy.

An analogous case of editorial self-justification might be seen in the two volumes entitled *Češi* [The Czechs], introduced by a lengthy "Foreword" by Karel Palek. This seven-page-long foreword, in which the editor defends the thematic coherence of the volumes, contrasts strikingly with the brevity of the forewords in *Phenomenologi-*

⁵ It is worth noting that the editorial commentary, for the first time in the *Collected Works*, includes its own footnotes.

cal Writings (Collected Works VI, VII and VIII), where the editors did not feel any need to justify the indisputable fact that Patočka was a phenomenological philosopher. What we are witnessing in *The Czechs* is a disputable choice for thematic unity that requires the editor to rationalize his decisions to include or exclude various texts left by Patočka without a testament. And it is undeniable that some of the writings included in *The Czechs* could have been attributed to completely different thematic wholes: Patočka's textual contributions to Charter 77 seem thematically closer to the essays included in *Care for the Soul*, while other writings about literature might be coherently integrated into *Art and Time*, especially when they are not limited to the study of particular Czech author(s), but revolve around the social function of literature *tout court* (see Patočka [1968]). However, such embarrassing choices are almost inevitable when the *Collected Works* are divided according to thematic, rather than chronological criteria, since it is only natural that a single piece of work can deal with questions belonging to various study areas. The only unproblematic core of the volume entitled *The Czechs* is constituted by a collection of letters addressed by Patočka to his German friend Hildegard Ballauff, which became an occasion for a larger meditation about the place and the role of his small nation in Europe's intellectual history and global politics. In 1982 one hundred and ten pages of these letters were gathered by Ivan Chvatík into an independent essay and published under the title "Was sind die Tschechen? Kleiner Tatsachenbericht und Erklärungsversuch". It is true that such an attempt has its internal coherence and contributes to a reconsideration of Patočka not only as a phenomenologist, but also as a meticulous and insightful scholar in the field of Czech intellectual history. At the same time, this epistolary exchange apart, one is obliged to question the inner thematic coherence of this collection, where one can find side by side essays comparing Masaryk's and Husserl's respective stances with regard to the crisis of European rationality; papers and transcripts of talks about literary theory and the philosophy of literature;

reviews written by Patočka about different Czech authors (philosophers, writers, politicians and historians); the abovementioned essays by Patočka about Charter 77 in which he expressed in the most explicit way his politico-ethical commitments. Only Patočka's name and the tacit assumption that everything he left has its conceptual coherence justifies such a compilation, where the author functions as a «principle of unity» (Foucault [1969]: 128.).

It can be universally acknowledged that chronological order emphasizes the persona of the author, allowing the reader to witness his or her intellectual maturation, while thematic division gives priority to the *oeuvre* (see Petruželková [2017]: 130). However, in the peculiar case of Patočka's thematically divided body of work, it is necessary to add that his name as an author visibly functions as a principle both of the work's unity and of its internal division, allowing the editors to regroup his sometimes heterogeneous texts into more or less coherent ensembles. When Patočka died as a person, he was reborn as an author, as a «particular source of expression who, in more or less finished forms, is manifested equally well, and with similar validity, in a text, in letters, fragments, drafts, and so forth.» (Foucault [1969]: 128-129). Such a resurrection presupposes, however, a considerable amount of editorial and interpretative endeavour that has necessitated – for more than forty years! – the postulation and justification of new continuities, the neutralization of contradictions and the operation of some exclusions. This is because the unity of Patočka's work is not something given, but rather something to be reconstructed, in an always disputable fashion, from various manuscripts, notes, letters, drafts and other sources. Removed from Patočka's drawers and boxes, these are then redistributed in newly constructed wholes. In other words, the editors repeated scholarship's habit of using the author's name to impose consistency on a body of writing and speeches that often responded to different situations and therefore scattered in various directions.

MAJOR AND MINOR WRITINGS

If we leave for now the thorny questions concerning the reallocation of texts according to their themes, we can focus on the issue raised by the composition of Appendices. However negligible it might seem, the issue of Appendices is no less challenging than the thematic division itself. The composition of Appendices constitutes not only a practical problem for editors, but also a theoretical problem of differentiation between what we should consider as a minor text and what belongs unmistakably to the main body of the author's work. An analysis of the Appendices, their purpose and the principles of their composition, will allow me to raise some doubts about the possibility of any coherent and indisputable distinction between the central and the marginal texts of an author.

First of all, what is the function of the Appendices in Jan Patočka's *Collected Works*? The main reason for including Appendices corresponds to the editors' task of making available to the public the *whole* body of work. Simultaneously, the collection of variants, drafts and preparatory notes, when cross-referenced with the finalized texts, should allow the readership and scholarship to locate with ease alternative versions of the same text and to trace the genealogy of the author's thought. In conformity with such an aim, Ivan Chvatík and Pavel Kouba first justified their decision to include the fragments in the appendices of the first samizdat edition in the following way: «In the Appendices section, we publish sketches and fragments (...) that can contribute to a better delineation of the author's horizon of thought and enhance the intelligibility of the published texts» (Chvatík and Kouba [1988]: 334). A similar idea is expressed by the same editors in the "Foreword" to *Care of the Soul III* in 2002, where Ivan Chvatík and Pavel Kouba decided to include all the more or less consistent fragments, drafts and variations in the *Collected Works*⁶, since they

constitute «an important tool for tracing the evolution of the author's thought» (Patočka [2002]: 9). To my understanding, the possibility of reading an author anew is the most convincing *raison-d'être* for including *almost everything* in the *Collected Works* and letting the scholars decide what they are able to take out of it. When challenging previously established readings, the most suitable method might be to search within the supposedly minor texts buried deeply in the *Appendices*. We could consider these as Archives *sui generis*, since for any serious researcher interested in understanding and developing the thought of his author, it is not only the result that counts, but also the tortuous route that had to be undertaken before its final formulation.

At the same time, the editors of Patočka's collected works are constantly seduced by the desire to establish hierarchies between the texts and to re-orient the reader according to their own standards of what is philosophically important and what is not. This axiological division between the main corpus and its margins is suggested in the "Foreword" to the *Care of the Soul I*, where the editors characterize the status of the texts published in the appendices in mostly negative terms: «we publish in the appendices the finalized texts and lectures that are merely echoing the problems addressed by the texts included in the main division» (Patočka [1996]: 8). The hierarchical distribution of texts into major and minor prevails here, as is confirmed by another quotation from the editor's comments: «a minor article that does not bring any new motifs and that appears as a mere variation of the previous papers» (Ibid.). As Adéla Petruželková rightly states in her thorough analysis of the editorial issues raised by Patočka's *Collected Works*: «The appendices arbitrar-

included in the *Collected Works* and would be available only in the *Archive Collection*; in other words, accessible only to scholars visiting Jan Patočka's Archives. Filip Karfík's philologically oriented criticism (1997) of this original conception has had considerable weight in this turnaround in editorial strategy. For a detailed analysis of the composition of the Appendices and their role within the *Collected Works* of Jan Patočka, see Petruželková [2017].

⁶ This is contrary to their initial announcement in the "Foreword" to *Care of the Soul I* (1996), i.e. the first volume of the whole *oeuvre*, according to which the variations, fragments and drafts were not supposed to be

ily divide the work into ‘centre’ and ‘periphery.’» (Petruželková [2017]: 188). The assessment of the relative importance of a particular text within the whole body of Patočka’s work is surely the most dubious criterion for deciding if it deserves to be included in the main division or relegated to the appendices. Even though it does not constitute the only criterion used by the editors, it is arguably the one having the most profound effect on the way in which we access Patočka’s legacy. What other perspectives and criteria have the editors adopted when establishing the division line between the major texts and appendices?

In several volumes, the function of the Appendices consists of reassembling the sketches, fragments and rejected variations, insofar as these pieces are incomplete. The criterion of completeness was adopted mostly in *Care of the Soul III*, *The Czechs II* and, to a certain measure, in *Art and Time II*. However, it could not be applied generally for the whole *Collected Works* because of the extent and importance of the unfinished works in which Patočka ventured even more daringly into uncharted territories than in his published and polished texts. This explains why several volumes of the *Complete Works* are dedicated entirely to unfinished projects that rightly deserve to be read on their own. These consist of: (1) what are described as the “war manuscripts” published under the title *Interiority and the World*, that, according to Filip Karfík’s attempt at reconstruction (2000/2001), constitute Patočka’s unfinished “opus grande”; (2) the important mass of unpublished and mostly unfinished phenomenological papers from 1950 to the 1970s that were gathered under the title *On Appearing as Such* and that constitute Patočka’s most daring departure from the teachings of Husserl and Heidegger; (3) as well as one thousand pages dedicated to Comenius published in the form of articles during Patočka’s lifetime, two larger works concerning the Czech philosopher and pedagogue which were intended to constitute monographs of their own: the almost finalized manuscript *Didactics and Pansophia. Studies on Comenius’ philosophy of education*, and a collection of comparative analysis and prepara-

tory drafts also intended to compose a monograph about *Comenius – Cusanus – Descartes*. All these larger publication projects, however unfinished, rightly deserved their place in the “central” part of Patočka’s legacy and were appropriately published in separate volumes or as their main divisions.

Adjacent to the criterion of completeness is that of authorization, since the unfinished texts were never explicitly accompanied by their author’s *imprimatur*. However, Patočka’s attitude towards his unpublished-unfinished texts and fragments was far less incendiary than that of Kafka or Foucault, since we have at least one proof of his willingness to leave his textual legacy to posterity. In 1971 Patočka, without informing his closest pupils, brought a large collection of his manuscripts to Strahov Museum of Czech Literature. These dated from 1929 to 1963 and included, apart from the abovementioned “war manuscripts” revolving around the theme of *Interiority and World*, large fragments of a monumental project about the history of early-modern philosophy, metaphysical diaries and many other materials⁷. Preserved in eleven boxes in Strahov Museum and without any accompanying explanation about their destiny, these thousands of pages were surely not condemned to be burnt or buried, even though they constitute, like all the other manuscripts left in Patočka’s apartment, a legacy without a testimony. The authorization issue also concerns the tape recordings of Patočka’s public lectures, private seminars and even the discussions that followed Patočka’s presentation. Although none of these were authorized for publication, they constitute an important part of Patočka’s oeuvre, even though they are sometimes relegated to the Appendices, probably with regard to the lesser degree of their authorial factor. Thus, in *Care of the Soul III*, Appendices II comprises 150 pages of highly edited transcripts of Patočka’s lectures and seminars, based on tape recordings. With the inclusion of discussions in these semi-private, underground seminars, the voice of sever-

⁷ For the composition and the importance of the “Strahov legacy”, see Karfík [2001/2002].

al of Patočka's pupils became a part of their master's *oeuvre* (see Patočka [2001]: 424-431).

Another criterion, often used by the editors, establishes the difference between the central and the marginal part of the *Completed Works* according to genre and content. If the text is considered to have been written for an occasion and concerns nothing else, as might be the case with reviews, recommendations or eulogies, it is relegated to the Appendices (in most volumes) or to the section entitled "Essays on philosophers and occasional texts" (Patočka [2009]: 527-635). Writings where Patočka approached his theme or question systematically or historically are thus contrasted with texts written for a particular circumstance. Even in these cases, the name of the author functions, although surreptitiously, as a principle of differentiation: while the first group of "major" writings supposedly manifests author's own intentions, expresses his own thought and results from his particular intellectual endeavor, the second group is downgraded to "minor", as if the occasion alone (the one hundred and tenth anniversary of Husserl's birth, Heidegger's death or that of Van Breda, a new publication or translation to be reviewed etc.) was sufficient in itself to trigger Patočka's writing and exhausted its value.

If one surveys the role of the Appendices in the *Collected Works* as a whole, it is easy to see that the editors more than once adopted the criterion of *value* when deciding to relegate a text or a portion of it to the Appendices rather than include it in the main section of writings, considered to be the most representative. Thus, the appendices introduce a sometimes questionable axiological separation between major and minor texts. I have already mentioned the problematic inclusion of Patočka's texts concerning Charter 77 in the volume dedicated to *The Czechs*. The question of their rightful inclusion into Patočka's oeuvre concerns not only the choice of the appropriate volume, but also their place within it. Now, one of the astonishing aspects of the 900-page-long volume *Češi I* is the relegation of these famous Charter 77 texts to "Appendices I". These essays not only do not belong in a place where

they are almost "buried" (pages 423 – 448 of the volume), but surely do not meet either of the abovementioned criteria adopted by the editors. No one could reasonably argue that these essays are "occasional writing" in the sense that they are merely triggered by an occasion that exhausts their meaning and value. Nor is it possible to see them as "study material" for scholarship interested in further bifurcations of Patočka's main line of thought.

If one reads these short yet powerful essays, in particular "What Charter 77 is and what it is not" and "What We Can Expect from Charter 77?" (Patočka [1977a] and [1977b]), one might regret that they were not integrated in the same volume as the *Heretical Essays*, since it is possible to establish a connection between the thesis about the "solidarity of the shaken", developed in the *Sixth Heretical Essay* and the political consequences established in these late politico-ethical statements⁸. Published as they are side by side with some "minor texts" about Czech authors, they seem to be situated out of context and deprived of the value they deserve. However, my purpose is not to criticize Palek's editorial choice as erroneous, but rather to point out a certain aporia. If these essays were published with *Heretical Essays*, whose last chapter is filled with the undeniable pathos of self-sacrifice, and if they were given a primary place alongside Patočka's final philosophical testaments, it would only increase the myth of Patočka's heroism in the aftermath of political repression in 1977. The decision to separate *Heretical Essays* from reflections about the meaning of Charter 77 might be a plausible way of avoiding a potentially mythologized, unilateral and unhealthy reception of Patočka's legacy. Such a threat is even more imminent if we take into account the circumstances of Patočka's death, circumstances that

⁸ This link was followed by the first editors of the samizdat "Archive Collection" who in 1988 inserted Patočka's reflections on the significance of Charter 77 into the same volume as the *Heretical Essays*, thus reinforcing the impression that Patočka's political engagements are in line with his considerations about the meaning of history, politics and sacrifice.

further suggest their own symbolic value as the final achievement of Patočka's work and life.

CONCLUSION

As it should be clear by now, both the thematic division and the hierarchical division of Patočka's *oeuvre* unavoidably lead to many puzzling alternatives and to the recurring requirement of choosing the lesser of two or more evils. To be sure, not all editorial choices undertaken in the composition of the *Complete Works* are fully justified and the criteria for the separation between the centre and the margins are not always applied in a coherent and substantiated manner. However, the present editorial achievement represents a hard-won and almost unfeasible balance between a critical edition, allowing scholars to browse through the genetic ties connecting Patočka's texts, and an intelligibly divided edition that allows readers to find their own path through the perplexing and daunting mass of Patočka's legacy.

For the time being, we can only express the hope that future possibilities of digital editing will allow the scholars interested in the genealogical aspects of Patočka's thought to navigate with greater ease through several variants of the same papers, to contrast their respective elisions or addenda, or to compare the preparatory drafts with the final results on a single screen. To be sure, the first and most obvious advantage of such an option is to liberate the reader from the necessity of browsing through different volumes and the intimidating amount of information about intertextual relations contained in the editorial comments. At the same time, an even more essential merit of a digital edition would consist of providing a possibility to gather various texts revolving around similar topics independently of the present thematic division that runs the risk of petrifying our conception of the unity of Patočka's *oeuvre* and its inner articulation. A set of markers and cross-references adopted for a suitable research tool would then allow the scholars to emancipate themselves from the hidden interpretative

schemes suggested by the current state of composition and to overcome the abovementioned problematic partition between central and marginal writings. Instead of being guided by an already established layout, Patočka's reader would participate in re-shaping the contours of his work and to redesign a pre-given form of its understanding in accordance with Eco's notion of *opera aperta*. In this way, we might say that not only Patočka's *oeuvre* was born the day of the author's death, but that it is and will be systematically resuscitated in new and potentially unexpected ways by each new regrouping of its inner components.

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