

MARTIN HEIDEGGER AND JAN PATOČKA: TWO CONFLICTING PARADIGMS ON A PHENOMENOLOGICAL GENEALOGY OF EUROPE

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Abstract:

This paper explores two different, even opposite, genealogies of Europe in contemporary phenomenology by Martin Heidegger and Jan Patočka. On the one hand, the paper focuses upon Heidegger's 1936 lecture on "Europe and German Philosophy", which is one of his lesser-known texts. In light of this reading, the paper examines a series of key commentaries by Éliane Escoubas, Franco Volpi, Franco Chiereghin, and Reiner Schürmann. On the other hand, the later Jan Patočka's discourse on Europe lies upon utterly different hermeneutic premisses, construing a new humanism and renewing the metaphysical tradition in the form of negative Platonism. It concludes by arguing that the major differences between Heidegger's and Patočka's phenomenological genealogies of Europe are, first, their different stances toward Western metaphysics and humanism, and, second, their divergent understandings of historical lifeworlds.

Key words: Martin Heidegger, Jan Patočka, Europe, Greece, Rome, metaphysics, humanism, care for the soul, modern technology, negative Platonism, historical lifeworlds.

(I)

To cope with Heidegger's "Euroanalysis" represents a major hermeneutic task which cannot be isolated as such from its onto-historical premisses. A first thing to note is that the questioning of Europe occurs rather late in Heidegger's phenomenological discourse, in the mid-thirties, and is simultaneous

with a newly discovered sense of actuality, which nevertheless—contrary to what is the case for Husserl—does not explicate itself in terms of a diagnosis of a crisis.¹ A second thing to note is an issue related to a triad of operating concepts within Heidegger's lecture courses and writings in the 1930s and 1940s which have a different hermeneutic status, i.e., Europe, the West, and the Occident. As the conceptual clarification of these terms and their respective use has already been discussed at length,² I will restrict myself to highlighting one instance where this differentiation becomes acute. In the 1941-42 lecture course entitled *Das Ereignis* (GA 71, 2009; *The Event*, 2013), the questioning of Europe occurs at a particular moment of the course, where a question is raised about the "old" and the "new" with regard to modernity. What is "modernity," after all? Heidegger replies that it is "the age which is eager for the new and which reckons on the new for the human being's own self-reckoning. Modernity [*die Neuzeit*] is not simply the 'new time' [*die 'neue Zeit'*] following in the wake of an obsolete one, whereby the series is discerned and divided up by some indefinite observer and appraiser. It is a consummated start: the new order" (Heidegger 2013: 79).³ The "new" for modernity—which is another term for Europe—does not pertain to the innovative

¹ See in this respect the subtle suggestion made by Jacques Derrida that Heidegger's mentioning of "Weltverdüsterung" in *Introduction to Metaphysics* does not turn the 1935 lecture course into a discourse on Europe's crisis: Derrida 1987: 74-76.

² See for instance: Gasché 2008: 95-101.

³ German original: *Das Ereignis*, Gesamtausgabe, vol. 71.

or to the creative, but to an arrangement—more specifically, to the “arrangement of all arrangements” made possible by “machination,” i.e. by modern technology (*Machenschaft*). In this light, Heidegger distinguishes between Europe or the Occident and the West by identifying Europe’s “newest modernity” with the “errancy of machination”—that is, with the technology-driven new or innovative—and the West with the old, which is nevertheless not forever gone, but still related to its inception: “What is European and planetary is the ending and completion. The West is the beginning” (Heidegger 2013: 80).⁴ Within this sharp distinction between the Western as the “old” becoming inceptual and “the European” becoming planetary—that is, “consummated” (*vollendete*) metaphysics in the form of modern technology—is the intermingling of four fundamental Greek words—*ιδέα*, *φύσις*, *τέχνη*, *δόξα*. In Rodolphe Gasché’s words: “In terms of the history of Being, Europe as the place that dominates the planet by technology is the culmination of the forgetting of what announced itself in Greece—the commencement of the Occident” (Gasché 2008:103). In what follows, we will take as our starting point a lecture given by Heidegger in 1936 in Rome, one year after Husserl’s well-known 1935 Vienna lecture (Husserl 1970), entitled “Europe and German Philosophy” (Heidegger 1993). Strangely enough, this is one of the lesser-known of the texts in which Heidegger explicitly thematizes Europe as a philosophical theme, even though it belongs to a critical period of his work that marked a turning point in his thought. The 1936 lecture on Europe is contemporaneous with a series of lecture courses and writings, such as the lecture course on *Hölderlin’s Hymns “Germania” and “The Rhine”* (1934/35); the lecture on *Introduction to Metaphysics* (1935); the first lecture course on Nietzsche (*The Will to Power as Art*, 1936-37); the essay on *The Origin of the Work of Art* (1935/36); and, last but not least, the 1936 lecture on *Hölderlin and the Essence of Poetizing*.

⁴ Here Heidegger engages in a critical exchange with Spengler and with his idea of the West, which, for him, “settles its demise as its highest progress” (Heidegger 2013: 81). In this respect, he identifies calculative objectification as the essence of modern machination, its main accompanying features being actuality, objectivity, steadfastness, securedness, goallessness and decisionlessness, effectiveness, and last but not least, unlimited order (*ibid.*, 69).

Needless to say, the two prominent figures with whom Heidegger was most deeply engaged at the time were Nietzsche and Hölderlin. Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe has argued that Hölderlin’s influence upon Heidegger accounts for his Hellenocentrism, which should, nevertheless, not be identified with the Romantic imitation of the Ancients. Heidegger’s rejection of Romanticism on the grounds of its being a manifestation of the modern metaphysics of subjectivity had both philosophical and political consequences, not just for Germany, but also (and foremost) for Europe’s past and present, as it implies a critique of National-Socialism as an exacerbated form of aestheticism (Lacoue-Labarthe 1990: 58-59). In his *Typographies II*, Lacoue-Labarthe elaborates further on Heidegger’s alignment of Hölderlin’s poetics with Nietzsche’s reception of Greek tragedy, to the extent that both the poet and the philosopher try to recuperate the Greek inception. In this respect, Heidegger radicalizes a typically German intellectual tradition, which points out the “German distress” and the need for a cultural redetermination through Greek *polis*, and even more through Greek tragedy (Lacoue-Labarthe 1986: 116). Lacoue-Labarthe points out that Germany’s striving for self-determination is also a striving to disengage itself from the predominant Latin artistic forms—French classicism, especially in painting, and also Italian opera—by participating in the authentic Greek form of tragedy as an expression of “the Dionysian” that has not gone through Latin intermediaries. The outcome of this has been a dilemma constitutive of mature modern German culture due to the paradoxical—Lacoue-Labarthe qualifies it as psychotic—coexistence of imitation in order to gain authenticity with the need for “the proper.” Lacoue-Labarthe insists, nevertheless, that Heidegger’s critique of *latinitas* is far too subtle to justify the overall rejection of the Latin imitation of Greek Antiquity typical of most of Germany’s intellectual trends in the 19th century. Heidegger’s 1936 lecture on Europe is in fact the very first instance in a series of instances which bear witness to his intense reflection on the issue of Europe—its origins, its fate, and its future. This reflection culminates in his 1942-43 lecture courses on the Presocratics, and reaches its end in the 1946 *Letter on Humanism*, where in a much commented-upon paragraph Heidegger explicitly denounces the *romanitas* and its offspring, the *humanitas*, bequeathed to modern

Europe through the Renaissance (Heidegger 1998: 244).

(II)

The opening remarks of Heidegger's 1936 lecture can be summarized as follows: could "the duty of our historical existence" lead us to a transmutation capable of overcoming "the mere either-or of Europe's salvation or its destruction"? (Heidegger 1993: 31).⁵ However, it would be hasty to identify Heidegger's discourse of Europe in the mid-thirties with the *Zeitgeist* which dominated the European intellectual scene.⁶ The leading thread of Heidegger's critique of today's Europe is the complete denial of culture—in particular, European culture—as a "realization of values" and a "cultural functioning" (*Kulturbetrieb*).⁷ Against the discourses on Europe's cultural system (*Kultursystem*) which insist on playing on the old culture-barbarism dichotomy, Europe should seek for an "essentiality" to be linked inextricably with its Greek (more specifically, pre-Platonic) inception. But what kind of link does modern Europe have or should have to its Greek inception? Heidegger argues that this link is of a hermeneutic kind. Φύσις, δόξα, ἀλήθεια, ιδέα are some of the fundamental Greek words that should be heard anew, thus identifying Europe's spirit and history as the transmutation of the inception (*Wandlung des Anfangs*) (Heidegger 1993: 38). In this respect, it is clear that diagnosing Europe's present state—and perhaps also its future state—implies the acknowledgment of its history as the history of Western metaphysics.

Heidegger's critique of modern "*Kulturbetrieb*" stems from the very essence of European culture, which is both metaphysical and technological, inex-

tricably intertwining culture and "machination."⁸ On the contrary, for Heidegger, an originary discourse on Europe should be of an intrinsically ontological nature.⁹ It is at this point that a double stake arises: first, the stake of the "inception"—its appropriation or misappropriation—and, second, the stake of authenticity—that is, the appropriation or misappropriation—through language. Modern Europe is born out of the Romanization of the ancient world, and is the product of failing to grasp the Greek inception: "we today still see the Greek world with Roman eyes—[...] also, and this is the only decisive thing, within the historical metaphysical dialogue of the modern world with that of the ancients" (Heidegger 1998b: 43). This last claim is explicitly treated in Heidegger's courses on *Parmenides* (1942/43) and *Heraclitus: The Inception of Occidental Thought* (1943). It is most certainly not fortuitous that it is in this context that the Athens/Rome dichotomy becomes dramatically apparent precisely on ontological-hermeneutic grounds, that is, through the originary/translation, authentic/inauthentic dichotomies. It would, nevertheless, be impossible to fully evaluate this assertion without following the thread of the course itself: it starts with posing the Aristotelian themes of man as ζῶον λόγον ἔχον, and of predication as λέγειν τι κατὰ τινος, having as its purpose to go back to what precedes the Aristotelian λόγος and toward the λόγος of the inceptuous thinkers.

What is at stake here is the interpretation of the λόγος prior to, but also in spite of, the *Aussage-Urteil-Begriff* triad. This leap back to the Greek inception is made possible through the hermeneutic approach to ἀλήθεια, and it is in the context of the transcription of the inceptuous ἀλήθεια and λόγος that the question of *translating* (*Übersetzung*) and *transposing* (*Übersetzen*) is raised (Heidegger 1998b: 11).¹⁰ A set of other themes in the *Parmeni-*

⁵ The need to cope with a tragic dilemma to which a responsible answer must be given is also present in other key writings and courses of the same period, such as the notorious *Contributions to Philosophy (Of the Event)*. Both the historico-cultural and political implications of this have repeatedly been pointed out by the *Heidegger-Forschung*. See in particular: Schürmann 1992; Dallmayr 1993: 96-105; Sluga 1993: 53-74; Schmidt 1999.

⁶ See Manfred Riedel's account of the reasons why we should not identify Heidegger's European discourse with the "Geist in Gefahr" debates of the thirties: Riedel 1993.

⁷ The critique of "cultural functioning" is omnipresent in Heidegger's lecture courses of the same period. See for instance: Heidegger 2012: 78.

⁸ Heidegger 2012: 110. "Culture" is here closely related to lived experience (*Erlebnis*), which Heidegger criticizes—along with "machination"—as a manifestation of the abandonment of Being. Here "culture" and lived experience are treated as offspring of anthropology and Cartesianism which deny the crucial question, namely, the question of whether modernity is grasped as an end and/or another inception (*anderer Anfang*).

⁹ See for instance: Scott 2001: 7.

¹⁰ See in this respect Éliane Éscoubas' treatment of Heidegger's questioning on translation in the *Parmenides* course: Éscoubas 2010: 122-125. Éscoubas identifies two themes within the topic of the "Übersetzen" treated in the introductory chapters of the course: the theme of the

des course helps us orient ourselves to what is translated and into what, such as the distinction between inception (*Anfang*) and beginning (*Beginn*),¹¹ which necessarily raises the question of translation as something more than a simple transition or transposition (*Übertragung*).¹² This theory of translation occurs within the context of the treatment of the status of ἀλήθεια in Parmenides, and not (for instance) in Heraclitus; it also seems relevant to note that it is in the *Parmenides* course that we witness an exacerbation of the Athens/Rome dichotomy. Heidegger distinguishes between three forms of translation—transposition, reformulation, reinterpretation—which are non-originary and derived forms of translation. What is the form of translation that qualifies the passage from the Greek—pre-Platonic and Platonic—to the Latin? This translation has the form of an *Umdeutung* which introduces a major breach in the metaphysical history of truth due to the transition from the Greek ἀληθές to the Latin *verum*. The historical—or, better, historial (*geschichtlich*)—significance of this shift in the understanding of truth makes Heidegger speak of it as the originary event: “What is decisive is that the Latinization [of the Greek world by the Romans] occurs as a transformation of the essence of truth and Being within the essence of the Greco-Roman domain of history [...] That is why the historical state of the world we call the modern age, following historiographical chronology, is also founded on the event of the Romanizing of Greece” (Heidegger 1998b: 42-43).

In fact, it is in light of the major event of the Romanization of Greece that ἀλήθεια becomes *veritas* and λόγος becomes *ratio*. What is, nevertheless, proper to the *Parmenides* course is the situating of the breach between the originary *Grundwörter* and their *Umdeutung*, which is no longer the Platonic beginning, but rather the Greek world taken as a whole and set against “the Roman.”¹³ But what makes the latter independent and even in conflict with its Greek antecedent? It is here that Heidegger’s interpretive tour-de-force shows its

strength, in the sense that it implicates prospectively the completion of metaphysics in Nietzsche and its realization in modern technology. But if the Roman experience is that of the “domain of the *imperium romanum*,” the latter is to be viewed within a primarily legal and political perspective, i.e., in light of the *imperium* as the essential ground of law (*iustum*). The point of transmutation between “the Greek” and “the Roman” is posited at the convergence between the *imperium* and domination understood as command.¹⁴ From there a direct line is to be drawn from the Roman *imperium* to the commanding essence of Nietzsche’s “non-Greek” (“*ungriechisch*”) will to power, realized as the “will to will” in today’s contemporary planetary technology: “If we experience and come to know these nexuses historically, as our history, i.e., as modern European ‘world’-history, will it then surprise us that in Nietzsche’s thought, where the metaphysics of the Occident reaches its peak, the essence of truth is founded in certitude and ‘justice’?”¹⁵

Nothing manifests more clearly Heidegger’s transcription of the Greek/Roman dichotomy into the authenticity/inauthenticity one than his persistence in posing the Latin transcription of the Greek ψεύδος as the counter-essence of ἀληθές, of which the roots are to be sought in the archaic Greek world—in Parmenides, but also in Homer and in Hesiod—as *falsum* and, in correlation to it, ἀλήθεια as *veritas*.¹⁶ The translation of ψεύδος into *falsum*, which has the character of an “*Umdeutung*,” opens up a new hermeneutic domain, that of *fallere* (σφάλω), i.e., overthrow or bring to a downfall. This is how Heidegger explicates the conceptual net of *ius-imperium-veritas/falsum*: “By way of Roman civilization, both the imperial/civil and the imperial/ecclesiastical, the Greek ψεύδος became for us in the Occident the ‘false.’ Correspondingly, the true assumed the character of the non-false. The essential

proper (*le propre*) and the theme of secondarity (*secondarité*).

¹¹ On the distinction between inception and beginning in the middle Heidegger: Zarader 2008.

¹² “Sprechen und Sagen sind in sich ein Übersetzen” (Heidegger 1992: 12). Cf. Éscoubas 2010: 127-132.

¹³ See the explication of ἀλήθεια as ομοίωσις against its Roman, and also its Scholastic, interpretation as *rectitudo* (Heidegger 1992: 49-50).

¹⁴ “Wir denken das “Politische” römisch, d.h. imperial” (Heidegger 1992: 63).

¹⁵ Heidegger 1998b: 139. The development of the course culminates in the historial triad of *veritas*, *rectitude*, *Gerechtigkeit*. See in this respect: Fóti 1992.

¹⁶ Éliane Éscoubas remarks that the abrupt transition from the Greek to the Latin conceptuality would lead us from an intra-idiomatic (within the same language, the Greek) to an interlinguistic (from the Greek to the Latin) translation. For Heidegger, this transmutation as such seems to inaugurate “une temporalité successive, une temporalité de la mésestante ou de la catastrophe” (Éscoubas 2010: 136).

realm of the imperial *fallere* determines the not-false as well as the *falsum*. The not-false, said in Roman fashion, is the *verum*” (Heidegger 1998b: 46).

(III)

But how are we to view this “tripling of the mirrors” (Zarader 2008) which makes “the Roman” a repetition of “the Greek,” and the non-originary an “*Umdeutung*” of its inception?¹⁷ Eliane Escoubas,¹⁸ on the one hand, raises the question of a possible proximity between this interpretation of “the Roman” and Europe in the interwar period. Would the Roman exacerbation of the Greek experience through its “imperial” *Wandlung* be the forerunner of nationalist-socialist Europe?: “is it not with this notion of desolation/desertification that the encounter of imperial Rome and National Socialism takes place? Is this how imperial Rome becomes the very figure of National Socialism? If so, must we not recognize that Heidegger’s ‘explanation’ of National Socialism finds its accomplished theoretical form in the *Parmenides*...?” (Escoubas 1992: 156). On the other hand, Franco Volpi and Franco Chiereghin undertake a hermeneutic approach to Heidegger’s writings from within the scope of “the Roman” as such. For Volpi, Heidegger’s radical uniterality, which reduces philosophical *romanitas* to a derivative and decadent form of conceptuality, loses sight of one basic fact—which is philosophical and, in a broader sense, cultural—i.e., the originality of the Roman experience for the making of European consciousness. Volpi situates Heidegger’s interpretive bias in favor of the Greeks within the continuity of the idealistic and Romantic Graecomania, while he claims at its radicalization (Volpi 2001: 289). Nevertheless, the Latin transposition of the originary Greek conceptuality—which is closely linked to Heidegger’s critique of metaphysical subjectivism and humanism—is only one side of the coin, the other being a set of new concepts that contributed to the emergence of a new cultural paradigm, mostly the concepts of *religio* and *pietas* (Volpi 2001b). But if Roman *religio* has been a major topic of investiga-

tion for phenomenologists such as Hannah Arendt, the most stimulating point in Volpi’s analysis is his critique of Heidegger’s silence as to the affective status of Roman *pietas*: nowhere in Heidegger’s writings and lecture courses of the late 30s is there a place for this historical *Grundstimmung* proper to the Roman world (Volpi 2001: 299).

In similar terms, Chiereghin argues that Heidegger’s depreciation of “the Roman” leads to the loss of what it could contribute to the determination of Europe’s future in the productive intertwining of the initial and the subsequent inceptions of thought. Chiereghin denies Heidegger’s focus on the Roman experience as an experience of translation joined with domination, and also his conviction that it was with the Romans that the extreme groundlessness of European metaphysics began to appear.¹⁹ He shows the inadequacies of Heidegger’s critique with regard, for instance, to the translation of the Aristotelian *ὁδὸς ἡμετέρα* into *privatio*, which loses thereby all its hermeneutic wealth. In this light, the focus of his reconstruction of the Roman experience and its significance for the birth of Europe is the reactivation of other key terms which are proper to it as such, even if they do not receive a treatment by Heidegger: *religio*, *fides*, and *pietas*. Heidegger’s conjunction of the Roman *ius* with the *imperium* is negligent of these three foundational elements, and therefore does injustice to what an originary Roman experiential domain would be (Chiereghin 1993: 199-200).

(IV)

While I recognize the importance of these interpretive viewpoints, I must insist upon a major hermeneutic contribution to research on the middle Heidegger which, to a certain extent, deepens Escoubas’ claim about the significance (hermeneutic, but also cultural and political) of the Greek/Roman dichotomy in texts such as the *Parmenides* lecture course, *Plato’s Theory of Truth*, and the *Letter on*

¹⁷ “The Roman” in Heidegger is, nevertheless, never treated independently. On this issue: Gadamer 1987.

¹⁸ Escoubas 1992 (French original: Escoubas 1988. Heidegger, la question romaine, la question impériale. Autour du “Tournant”. In : Richir M-Éscoubas É (eds), Heidegger. Questions ouvertes. Collège International de Philosophie/Ed. Osiris, Paris, 173-189).

¹⁹ That this negative stance towards Latin conceptuality is only related to its being the forerunner of modern European metaphysics is shown by the fact that *not all* Latin concepts are treated negatively, and not in all periods of Heidegger’s philosophy. See for instance the early Heidegger’s interpretation of *cura*: Caputo 1994. It is, therefore, the historical-epochal transmutations of *latinitas* and *romanitas* that seem to be the targets of the middle Heidegger’s critique.

Humanism. I refer to Reiner Schürmann's explication of "the Greek" and "the Roman" in Heidegger in his monumental *Broken Hegemonies*.²⁰ At the heart of Schürmann's idiosyncratic reading of the middle Heidegger is the critical question of the latter's epochal restructuring of Western metaphysics in relation to the Law's "double bind" structure (Schürmann 1992: 49-50). Schürmann transfers the conflictual structure of the law to the middle Heidegger's phenomenological-hermeneutic understanding of temporality and, more specifically, of epochality within Western metaphysics. But apart from this, given that in Heidegger's perspective *ius* along with *imperium* are the two key themes of Latin conceptuality—taken to be a genuinely juridical-political moment—the question to ask is how this event shapes the self-understanding of modern Europe. It is obvious that I cannot reconstruct Schürmann's complex interpretive strategy here. Suffice it to say that his interpretation offers an insightful account of the cleavage between the Greek and the Roman epochs or "hegemonic phantasms," the latter being situated at the decline of the *Anfang*.²¹ This is, hermeneutically speaking, the most generous and—at the same time—the most demanding reading of Heidegger's understanding of the ontological difference as being of an intrinsically epochal nature.

Schürmann begins by distinguishing between metaphysical and phenomenological difference. The former relies upon the anchoring of beings upon an *archē*, whereas the latter is not fixed forever in the Greek beginning of metaphysics, but "is always located epochally; [...] [the] ultimate foundation has its age, during which its function of grounding goes unquestioned, but [...] with the epochal reversals in history what is held to be ultimate in first philosophy appears to be so only for a while." (Schürmann 1978: 359)²² Consequently, the phenomenological "destruction" of the epochal *archē* for each metaphysical age—Greek, Roman, modern, planetary—lies in the revelation of its double bind structure, as Heidegger sets upon to explicate repetitively in his lecture courses of the late '30s and early '40s. Nothing shows in a more eloquent manner Heidegger's thinking about phenomenological difference as utterly epochal than the clear opposition of the principle

(*archē*) to the origin (Schürmann 1979: 167). Schürmann distinguishes between the translating or transposing strategies between the metaphysical epochs that Heidegger thematizes in the *Parmenides* course and what would be the transference proper to the "anarchic" origin of the ontological difference. Schürmann gives us an original reading of this transferring strategy as a sym-bolic (*sym-ballein*) strategy (Schürmann 1979).

Schürmann's phenomenological genealogy of the epochal turns of metaphysics is fully developed in his *Broken Hegemonies*. Taking as a starting point the shattering of the doctrine of principles in Europe from Kierkegaard and Nietzsche to Heidegger, Schürmann, largely inspired by the middle Heidegger's history of Western metaphysics, sets out to investigate the latter's epochal constitution, where "epochal" is to be understood in a phenomenological sense.²³ Three epochs of metaphysics—the Greek, the Latin, the Modern—that coincide with the three epochs of Europe are treated by Schürmann, each of them governed by a hegemonic phantasm (*fantasme hégémonique*): the One (Áí), Nature (*Natura*), and Conscience. For each of the three there is one key figure who inaugurates the epochal turn of discontinuity: Parmenides for the Greek "epoch," Cicero for the Latin, and Luther for the Modern.

But how does Schürmann's *récit* contribute to our question about the Greek/Latin origins of metaphysics (and Europe)? For him, the Greek epoch starts with Parmenides and closes with Plotinus. The phenomenological doctrine in Parmenides—as in the Greek tragic poets, such as Aeschylus—still preserves traits of a "phenomenological differend" that will disappear from the sphere of metaphysical questioning later on with Aristotle. Schürmann applies the two "anarchic" principles to explain the epochal shift from Greek φύσις to Roman *natura*. Through Cicero's transcription of the middle Stoics *natura*, a new "hegemonic phantasm" is instituted, and with it the φύσις-νόμος dichotomy becomes decisively disengaged from its Greek antecedent: kinetic φύσις designates one of the two realms, therefore it cannot be a law by itself and cannot be raised to a single "hegemonic phantasm," which is true of the Latin *natura*. The shift in the understanding of nature is also not without con-

²⁰ French original: Schürmann R (1996) Des hégémonies brisées. T.E.R., Mauzevin.

²¹ On the issue of decline or fall from the Presocratic inception: Naas 1998: 80-84.

²² See also: Schürmann 1982.

²³ Schürmann 2003: 19-20. On Heidegger's hermeneutic priority: 47. For a concise account of Schürmann's argumentation in *Broken Hegemonies*, see Maggini 2006.

sequences for the self-understanding of the Romans on practical grounds, as the Latin institution is primarily of a political nature.²⁴ But what renders this epochal difference most apparent is the shift in the understanding of the relation between nature and law, e.g. Cicero's characterization of law as "the force of nature" (Schürmann 2003: 227).

From Cicero and Augustine to medieval Scholasticism, the "hegemonic phantasm" of natural law remained intact, to be shaken down only by late medieval Scholasticism and the mystic Meister Eckhart. But in order to differentiate between the Greek and the Latin "epoch," Schürmann elaborates on the opposition between tragic νόμος in Aeschylus and Roman *lex* by introducing another key concept, that of *imperium*. By elaborating on Heidegger's critical affirmation of the primacy of the Roman *imperium*, Schürmann argues that the "imperial experience" is the *archē* of the Latin epoch, the principle which constitutes the phenomenality of the phenomena from Roman Stoicism up to medieval Europe. Schürmann echoes Heidegger once more when he observes, against all hermeneutic preconceptions, that the radical discontinuity within European metaphysics and history is not the one between medieval and modern Europe, but the one between the Greek and the Latin "epoch."²⁵ But the nature-law-force triad comes with a second radical displacement of the Greek institution: the priority of will over reason. Greek teleology, e.g. in Aristotle, is epistemic through and through, whereas the governing factor of the Latin era is the conjunction of teleology and will, the latter being designated by Schürmann as "integrative will" (Schürmann 2003: 245).

Schürmann's overwhelming *récit* of the origins and principles of European metaphysics, and also of European history as such, retains much of—and yet distances itself considerably from—Heidegger's understanding of the epochality of Western metaphysics and its historical actualization. He stresses, first, the cleavage between "the Greek" and "the Roman" in comparison to the relative continuity between "the Roman" and "the Modern" (till Nietzsche), and, second, the fundamental transposition of the φύσις-νόμος dichotomy as the basis of a new understanding of the political as such.

²⁴ Schürmann 2003: 223. For Schürmann, this stands for Cicero's Rome as well as St. Augustine's Jerusalem.

²⁵ For Schürmann, the Christian "hegemonic phantasm" is no different in its premisses from its Roman antecedent: Schürmann 2003: 238, 261.

(V)

If Heidegger's account of Europe is inextricably linked to his critique of metaphysics and modern technology, Jan Patočka's account of it is undoubtedly more focused upon an integral phenomenological project of European history and culture, with a background in the philosophy of history.²⁶ Patočka repeatedly denied the modern constructions of the philosophy of history—Hegelian, Marxian, or Comtian—while admitting that it is only Europe that possesses history as an intrinsic possibility (Patočka 1996: 33-35). Patočka's phenomenological philosophy has been the topic of numerous analyses, either autonomously or in light of Jacques Derrida's reading of his *Heretical Essays in the Philosophy of History* in the 1990s. I choose to adopt a hermeneutic *topos* he himself introduced in the phenomenological discourse on the "heritage of Europe" before treating the question of Europe's Greek and Roman origins. Before doing so, allow me one or two introductory remarks on Patočka as a phenomenologist of Europe *par excellence*. On the one hand, his phenomenology of history is undoubtedly determined by his Central European identity.²⁷ On the other hand, Patočka's experience of the turmoils of the war and of the post-WWII period is beautifully condensed in a short phrase from one of his last interviews.²⁸ But what is Patočka's idea of the heritage of Europe?

There is a distinct moment in Patočka's discourse on Europe in his book *Plato and Europe* in which he undertakes the task both as a phenomenologist and a humanist. Contrary to Heidegger, his use of "crisis" brings him close to its Husserlian antecedent. In the introductory part to the 1977 lectures,

²⁶ Patočka's engagement with history is made possible methodologically by his often repeated differentiation between phenomenology and phenomenological philosophy: "Phenomenological philosophy differs from phenomenology in that it not only wants to analyze phenomena as such, but also wants to derive results from this; it wants to derive *results*, as is said, that are *metaphysical*." (Patočka 2002: 32-33; his emphasis).

²⁷ Patočka has been marked by the personality of the politician and philosopher Thomas Masaryk, first President of the Republic of Czechoslovakia, to whom Patočka has dedicated a series of essays. See: Patočka 1986. For an overall account of Patočka's positions on Europe from a historical, philosophical, and political viewpoint: Laignel-Lavastine 1970: 127-237. See also: Havel 1999.

²⁸ "Pour être pertinente, une pensée philosophique, quelle qu'elle soit, doit prendre position sur la ligne du front" (Patočka 1993: 31).

Patočka reflects on what we really mean when we talk of Europe's situation as a situation of crisis, or—even more—as an end: “Europe, that two-thousand-year-old construction, which managed to lift up mankind to an altogether new degree of self-reflection and consciousness, and strength and power as well, [...] is definitely at an end.” (Patočka 2002: 9).²⁹ Referencing Husserl, Masaryk, Arendt, and Scheler, Patočka talks of two “creative waves”—the Greek wave and the Roman wave—which gave birth to Europe not as a geographical entity, but as a spiritual reality or, in his own terms, as a “plan for life” which worked in the form of a “creative destroying.” It is here that the phenomenological theme of the life-world comes to elucidate his reflection under the form of alienation from the life-world. Hence, the key factor in the birth of medieval—but also modern—Europe seems to be none other than the spirit of Greece epitomized in the Platonic “care of the soul” (*tho psychis epimeleisthai*). By dedicating a lengthy analysis to his understanding of phenomenology, Patočka makes clear that, if Europe's life plan is to be understood and preserved for the future, this is possible only within the limits of phenomenology, since investigation into the phenomena—into appearing and manifesting, and also into their relation to human existence—is the proper task of phenomenology.

Reactivating Plato's legacy in the form of a revised metaphysical position designated as negative Platonism,³⁰ Patočka is led to a unique phenomenological reflection on European culture based on his account of myth (*muthos*) as the genuine framework for the genesis of Greek spirituality. What is then clear is that if Rome is “something more general, something more encompassing” than Greece, and modern Europe is, in its turn, “something more gen-

eral, something more encompassing,” then Europe does not have two foundations—Greek and Roman—but only one, which is Greek: “On my understanding, as I have tried to depict it, Europe stands on *one* pillar—and that is because *Europe is a looking-in*, Europe is life founded upon seeing what is.” (Patočka 2002: 89-90; his emphasis). Contrary, then, to Arendt's claim about the proximity of Christian philosophy and political thought to its Roman antecedent, Patočka evokes Nietzsche's condemnation of Christianity as mere “Platonism for the people” in order to assert the Greek, specifically Platonic, background of Christianity. He also rephrases as the act of founding a city, i.e., Rome, “on the changeability of human affairs” played against the Greek ideal of truth and justice exemplified by Plato's *Republic*. Even if he accepts, as is already the case in the *Heretical Essays for the Philosophy of History*, Arendt's account of the Athenian *bios politikos* in *The Human Condition*, he nevertheless stresses the striving character of life in the *polis* for which Heraclitus more than Aristotle could be an inspiration: the life of the Greek *polis* is *polemos*, it is unity in conflict, which he generalizes to the history of the West and beyond (Patočka 1996: 43).

It is in Plato—and in Plato's Socrates—that a first inquiry into *bios politikos* founded upon the care for the soul becomes possible, and this is the formative moment for Europe up to today: “The surviving of the heritage is obviously also its change, but this metaphysical foundation still endures. And surprisingly, upon it the domain of European life is spread out, is generalized” (Patočka 1996: 129).³¹ The exchange between Greece and Rome—or with other historical realities to come—has always been the confrontation of philosophy with non-philosophy, with brute reality which is essentially unphilosophical.³² One element that nevertheless could be rightly ascribed to the Roman beginning is the experiencing of the possibility of generalization. Europe would not be possible without the process of generalization and universalization, which is nevertheless not recognized as a

²⁹ Patočka's pessimism as to the fate of Europe is closely related to his reflection on what he designates as the “post-European era”: Crépon 2007: 282-283.

³⁰ The basis of such a reappropriation of Platonic metaphysics is the experience of finite freedom as the core of metaphysical experience: “While metaphysics discovers a new universe, taking it as its starting point and transcending it, the interpretation of experience discovers, uncovers, sheds light on this, our given life-world, uncovering what had been hidden in it [...] It is, however, also possible to find support for such an interpretation even in the work of metaphysics and in the tradition, since traditional metaphysics, in its constructive approach, undoubtedly also based itself on the experience of transcendence and on the inner drama of freedom” (Patočka 1989: 197).

³¹ For an incisive account of the intertwining between Platonism viewed as a civilizational phenomenon which embraces European culture as a whole and as a “trans-metaphysical” phenomenon: Arnason 2011: 217-218.

³² A definite outcome of this “unphilosophical” evolution of modern Europe is the prevailing of “overcivilization,” first in its moderate and then in its radical version. See: Karfik 1999: 19-22.

founding principle (Patočka 1996: 221). Thus, generality, abstraction, and universality were not born in Greece, though the content of Europe's successive generalization up to today's global era has been Greek in its essence. The historical process responsible for Europe's double face is none other than the "care of the soul" which gives birth to the problematicity of meaning³³ and, thus, to history and politics, and the cleavage between the ideal and the real, the philosophical and the non-philosophical. This second aspect of European history and culture came to light in Rome to determine largely what we could designate, following Patočka, as "hegemonic" Europe.³⁴

We should, nevertheless, admit that it is not possible to follow Patočka's reflection on Europe without placing it in the wider context of his phenomenological project.³⁵ The latter is structured upon an ontology of life-movement, the core of which lies in his analysis of the three movements of human existence.³⁶ It is with regard to this phenomenological ontology of movement that Patočka differentiates himself both from Husserl and Heidegger, writing that his "philosophical conception offers greater possibilities than the absolute which Husserl finds. Heidegger's inquiry is more profound, it is an inquiry into the ground of existence" (Patočka 1999: 176). Patočka's critique of the early Heidegger focuses on his treatment of being-in-the-world, as he explicitly accuses him of introducing a concept of the world that is too abstract, focusing on the question of understanding. Patočka opts, on the contrary, for a much more nuanced phe-

nomenological treatment of worldliness, where both local worlds—the world of the child or the animal—and historical worlds can emerge before the eyes of the phenomenologist.³⁷ This differentiation of what someone could expect from a phenomenology of the world shapes Patočka's philosophy of history and culture to its very core. In the *Heretical Essays*, he proceeds to an analysis of what he designates as a natural or primitive—that is pre-historical—lifeworld, referring back to Heidegger's analysis of the tool, and to the Arendtian labor-work-action triad. He concludes by asserting the ahistorical nature of labor and work, and thus of Heidegger's conception of the worldliness of the world, which is primarily practical, against Arendt's analysis.³⁸

What are the most significant differences between Heidegger's and Patočka's account of Europe's heritage—and also of its future? First, there is undoubtedly a big difference in their understandings of metaphysics and humanism.³⁹ If for Heidegger humanism has to be overcome, Patočka is, on the

³³ Patočka closely links problematicity to historicity: Patočka 1996: 12-13.

³⁴ On Patočka's clear opposition between "philosophical" and "hegemonic" Europe: Merlier 2009: 192-194; Maggini 2014.

³⁵ This hermeneutic perspective turns out to be crucial for determining the weaknesses of Husserl's understanding of the crisis of European sciences: "The objectification which Husserl traced as the essential happening in man, as a component of essential human history, must therefore be linked to a fundamental movement of human existence. Husserl himself does not do that, since his philosophical analyses do not include the problem of the overall movement which is human life in the world." (Patočka 1989: 270).

³⁶ For James Mensch, Patočka's phenomenological ontology of movement has explicit political implications, as it interferes with his conception of major components of the European cultural and political heritage, such as the concept of universal human rights, which needs to be critically redefined: Mensch 2011.

³⁷ "If by world we mean a certain region, for instance all *reality*, everything real *in objective time*, we do not mean by it only the complex of realities but primarily the mode of being of the real [...] What, though, do we mean when we speak of the world of ancient Romans, a child's world, the world of primitives, the animal 'world' [...]? That is again an ontic conception of the world, though not of a world of being that is simply given but rather of the world of a living being" (Patočka 1999: 114; his emphasis). The same goes for Patočka's critique of the world in Husserl: "Unfortunately, we are forced to admit that the so-called phenomenological metaphysics which Husserl puts forth as the result and the basis of his analytic description of the 'natural' world is in the end disappointing [...] It is, in truth, a complete inversion of the physicalist view, more than Copernican reversal" (Patočka 1989: 233). Husserl's failure to produce an adequate concept of both the natural world and historical life-worlds is reflected in his diagnosis of the crisis of European humanity.

³⁸ Patočka 1996: 16. Here lies the core of Patočka's confrontation with Heidegger, but also with Marxism. Let us note, however, that while Arendt's analyses of the labor-work-action triad are omnipresent in Patočka's discourse, her Aristotelianism does not form the leading thread in Patočka's search for radical historicity through finitude; it is Nietzsche more than Aristotle that impregnates his polemical discourse.

³⁹ It is not fortuitous that in *Plato and Europe* Patočka makes an explicit reference to Heidegger, as the latter had decisively identified metaphysics and Platonism (Patočka 2002: 127). On the contrary, by evoking Plato's teaching of the soul, he inserts a specific, dogmatized version of Platonic metaphysics within the "future of European life" (ibid).

contrary, a humanist *par excellence*, though in an entirely new sense which distances itself decisively from metaphysical anthropologism.⁴⁰ Patočka's reading of humanism as the European heritage par excellence is intrinsically linked to his critique of Heidegger's hermeneutics of modernity in relation to his formulation of the *Seinsfrage*.⁴¹ Second, it is important to note the divergences in the way the two phenomenologists perceive historical worlds. In Heidegger, historical worlds are clearly "epochs" in the history of being, whereas Patočka criticizes Heidegger's reluctance to question the historical character of the world as such: "in all human uncovering of being, originating in history, there emerge ever new historical worlds which themselves, qua syntheses, must be something original—that means that they do not possess a common part or component that remains unchanged when it becomes part of the whole. We do not even perceive in the same way as ancient Greeks even though, physiologically speaking, our sense organs are the same [...] Human worlds do perhaps approximate each other, but that level is in no sense autonomous" (Patočka 1996: 11).

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⁴⁰ "Though the adjective that best characterizes Patočka's phenomenology of appearing is doubtless 'antihumanistic,' it still implies the idea of responsibility [...] The task of thinking consists first of all in uncovering the illusions of anthropologism [...] Nonetheless, freedom, distancing from things, is what constitutes my own personal perspective of experiencing appearance and performing acts in the world" (Rodrigo 2011: 85).

⁴¹ See Arnason 1992.

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