thinking

togetherness

Andrej Božič (*Ed.*)

THINKING TOGETHERNESS

Phenomenology and Sociality

Dr. **Andrej Božič** is research fellow at the Institute Nova Revija for the Humanities (Inštitut Nove revije, zavod za humanistiko; Ljubljana, Slovenia).

The scientific monograph is published as part of the effectuation of the research program *The Humanities and the Sense of Humanity from Historical and Contemporary Viewpoints* (P6-0341), the research project *The Hermeneutic Problem of the Understanding of Human Existence and Coexistence in the Epoch of Nihilism* (J7-4631), and the infrastructure program *Center for the Promotion of the Humanities* (I0-0036).

The publication of the book is financially supported by the Slovenian Research and Innovation Agency (ARIS).

CIP - Kataložni zapis o publikaciji
Narodna in univerzitetna knjižnica, Ljubljana

165.62:316(082)

THINKING togetherness : phenomenology and sociality / Andrej Božič (ed.). - Ljubljana : Institute Nova Revija for the Humanities, 2023. - (Humanistična zbirka INR = The Humanities Series INR)

ISBN 978-961-7014-40-2
COBISS.SI-ID 172262659

Andrej Božič (*Ed.*)

THINKING TOGETHERNESS

Phenomenology and Sociality

INR INSTITUTE NOVA REVIJA FOR THE HUMANITIES

Ljubljana 2023

Table of Contents

Dean Komel — Andrej Božič
Thinking Togetherness. Foreword 9

Presuppositions and Implications

Dragan Prole
Sociality in the Husserlian Cave 15

Iaan Reynolds
Abstraction and Self-Alienation in Mannheim and Husserl 31

Filip Borek
***Schwingung* at the Heart of Phenomenon. Intersubjectivity and Phenomenality** 45

Transcendentality and Intersubjectivity

Zixuan Liu
What Is the Irreality of Social Reality? Higher Visibility Transcendental Intentionality 63

Noam Cohen
Subjectivity as a Plurality. Parts and Wholes in Husserl's Theory of Intersubjectivity 89

Anthony Longo
Intersubjectivity, Mirror Neurons, and the Limits of Naturalism 103

Ka-yu Hui
The Expressive Structure of the Person in Husserl's Social Phenomenology. From Subjective Spirit to Cultural Spiritual Shape 117

Developments and Refinements

Liana Kryshevska
The Notion of the Social World in Gustav Shpet's Conceptualization and the Ways of Phenomenology 131

Daniele Nuccilli
Wilhelm Schapp on the Narratological Structure of Intersubjectivity 143

Daniel Neumann
Sharing a Realistic Future. Gerda Walther on Sociality 157

Jan Strassheim
"Passive" and "Active" Modes of Openness to the Other. Alfred Schutz's Phenomenology of Intersubjectivity 169

Andrzej Gniazdowski
Phenomenology of the Total State by Aurel Kolnai 183

Max Schaefer
Renewing the Erotic Relation. Michel Henry and the Lover's Night 205

Collectivity and Community

Marco di Feo
The Ontological Root of Collective Intentionality 227

Lucia Angelino
Sartre and Freud as Resources for Thinking the Genesis of a We-Perspective 241

Marco Russo
The Theater of Appearances. Social Phenomenology of Excentricity 255

Nerijus Stasiulis
The Ontology of Sociality 269

Dario Vuger
On Circumlocution as Method. From Heidegger and Debord Towards a Philosophical Praxis 279

Silvia Pierosara
Managing the Absent. On the Role of Nostalgia in Individual and Social Relations 299

Particularities and Totalitarities

Michal Zvarík

Socrates and *Polis* in the Thought of Jan Patočka and Hannah Arendt 313

Zachary Daus

On the Significance of Mutual Vulnerability in Hannah Arendt's Conception of Freedom 327

Fabián Portillo Palma

Isolation and Loneliness as Categories of Social Being. Arendt and the Origin of Totalitarian Movements 339

Gintautas Mažeikis

Faustian Hope and Power. Bataille, Bloch, Habermas 351

Guelfo Carbone

A Way Out of Nazism? Heidegger and the "Shepherd of Being" 365

Dean Komel

On Totalitarium 381

Individuality and Expressivity

Evgeniya Shestova

Communication in the Text Space. Phenomenology of the "Logic of Question and Answer" 401

Manca Erzetič

The Hermeneutics of Testimony in the Context of Social Mediation 413

Andrej Božič

"Mitsammen." Paul Celan's Poetry in the "In-Between" of (Cultural) World(s) 427

Antonia Veitschegger

Disagreement about an Art Work's Value. Why It Is Unavoidable, What It Consists In, and How to Deal With It 443

Technologies and Controversies

Joaquim Braga
On Don Ihde's Concept of Technological Background Relations 459

Žarko Paić
The Body and the Technosphere. Beyond Phenomenology and Its Conceptual Matrix 475

Paolo Furia
Uncanniness and Spatial Experience. A Phenomenological Reading of the COVID-19 Lockdown 511

Authors 533

Index of Names 539

Michal Zvarík

Socrates and *Polis* in the Thought of Jan Patočka and Hannah Arendt

Abstract: The article addresses differences between Jan Patočka's and Hannah Arendt's interpretation of Socrates and of his relation to politics. For Patočka, Socrates discovered human transcendence over the givenness of relative goods and their dependence on "comprehensive meaning," which is "given" negatively. From this, it follows that the only meaningful life-project is living in problematicity, and freedom in its true sense consists in a non-determination from the positively given meaning. While also in Arendt's view Socrates adopts a distance from things and given meaning through thinking, where she stresses its negativity as well as its ability to dissolve general moral prescripts and paralyze action, she, however, limits the political significance of thinking to the situation of emergency in abnormal political circumstances. Freedom for her is always the freedom to act, which is based on opinions representing a distinct place of the actor in the world. For Patočka, on the other hand, Socrates represents true politics calling for an awakening to problematicity.

Keywords: Jan Patočka, Hannah Arendt, Socrates, problematicity, philosophy, politics.

As is generally known, Jan Patočka's late considerations on the concept of history are to a large extent indebted to Hannah Arendt's work, especially her elucidation of the human condition through human activities of labor, work, and action. Appropriating her views allowed Patočka to originally distinguish differences between the pre-historical and the historical era of humanity. The former is formed through self-understanding in light of the

This work was produced at the Department of Philosophy at the Faculty of Philosophy and Arts of the Trnava University. It was supported by the Agency APVV under the project *Philosophical Anthropology in the Context of Current Crises of Symbolic Structures* (APVV-20-0137).

"modest" meaning of the world and the place of man within it. Pre-historical mankind sees its role primarily in the preservation of life and the world through labor and work; it is dominated by the bondage of life to itself, to self-preservation and self-sustenance. All of this takes place under the shelter of myth, providing human life with meaningfulness. The latter era is marked by revealing the problematicity of the whole, which affectively disrupts and shakes the modesty of pre-historical, accepted meaning, which in its approach of non-questioning appropriation is disclosed as incomplete, insufficient, and unsatisfactory. The crucial threshold between pre-history and history comes with the birth of the city (*polis*) and philosophy. Thus, for Patočka, history is in the first place to be understood as *a spiritual history*, as coping with the revealing of problematicity through care for the soul. Despite Patočka's indebtedness to Arendt, I aim to show that their views on the nature of action and freedom are in fact quite diverse. I intend to demonstrate this through stressing differences in their interpretations of Socrates and his political entanglements.

Patočka on Socrates's discovery of problematicity

For late Patočka, history in the true sense consists in *the care for the soul*, which can be characterized as a specific struggle for meaning in facing and appropriating problematicity. Let me adumbrate the specificity of this attitude by briefly comparing it to the pre-historical attitude. In the pre-historical age, devoid of problematicity *per se*, the human being could rely on a certainty of meaning, which permeates the wholeness of the world. This does not mean, however, that human life is deprived of problematic moments as such. Pre-historic life is aware of specifically human toils and turmoil, it still suffers from pain, poverty, sickness, and death. Yet, such experiences do not present a challenge to the meaningfulness of the world, since their meaning is merely relative and integrated into the absolute meaning of the whole. Problematicity, on the other hand, is introduced into human life, when this overall, absolute meaning is found insufficient, illusory, when the former, uncritically accepted meaning becomes shaken. Thus, it cannot provide a securing shelter anymore, and with it the relative meanings of our particular activities, which depend

on their nexus to an absolute counterpart, suddenly lose their appeal. In other words, the manifestation of problematicity, to which we find ourselves passively exposed, threatens us with nihilism. According to Patočka, there are several attitudes one might adopt, when facing the problematicity of absolute meaning. In the first case, one might escape or avoid the appeal of problematicity and re-anchor oneself in the former meaning, that is, in self-deception and in pretending that, in fact, nothing significant had happened. The other option is resignation to any meaning, the attitude of the "terrible stagnation of suicide" (Patočka 2002, 67). While at first glance such a view might be seen, especially in comparison to the former, as an authentic response to problematicity, as a kind of "dogmatic skepticism," it is actually an illusion of its own kind. Thus, there seems to be only one option as an appropriate response to the revelation of problematicity, which is neither escape nor resignation, but the appropriating of problematicity as a new life-project. Such an appropriation entails the constant search for meaning and finds meaning in this constant search. It is a permanent readiness and openness towards the shaking and examination of everything that appears to stand firmly on the grounds of absolute meaning. As is generally known, Patočka attributes the discovery of this attitude to Socrates:

> […] this discovery of the meaning in searching, which follows from its absence, as a new life-project is the meaning of Socrates's existence. The permanent shaking of the naïve awareness of meaningfulness is the new way of meaning, the discovery of its nexus with mystery and being and the whole. (Patočka 2002, 69.)

What will interest us, here, is the question of how this radical change of perspective instigated by the appropriating of problematicity affects the meaning of crucial political concepts of action and freedom.

The connection between Socrates and care for the soul as his life-project can already be seen in Plato's *Apology*. Here, Socrates states:

> For I go around doing nothing but persuading both young and old among you not to care for your body or your wealth in preference to

> or as strongly as for the best possible state of your soul as I say to you: Wealth does not bring about excellence, but excellence makes wealth and everything else good (τὰ ἄλλα ἀγαθά) for men, both individually and collectively." (30a7-b2.)[1]

In this passage, we can see the close interconnection between the care for the soul and the good things, which Patočka addresses in his work *Eternity and Historicity*. While at first glance Socrates's appeal might strike us as being merely moralistic, it actually reveals the inherent problematicity of what we deem to be good. Socrates points to the fact that between various things, which are good, there is always a certain organization or hierarchy at play, which allows us to give preference to some of them over others. Thus, things do not appear to be good in the same way. Furthermore, such a hierarchy might actually be false.

According to Patočka, Socrates's central discovery is the question of the Good as *the question* (Patočka 2006b, 143). This discovery entails the fact that the nature of the good has a specific kind of givenness, which usually does not come to the center of our attention. In fact, as a question, it first and foremost remains concealed. Usually, good appears as something at hand, already known in advance, because we almost always encounter good things. Their goodness is inherently presupposed, inasmuch as it does not have to be explicitly mentioned.[2] Our every action is motivated by reaching some good as an end (τέλος) or "for the sake of which" (οὗ ἕνεκα). Yet, we might ask, what gives all these "goods" we are striving for their goodness? Truly, the good appears to be something common to them. If that is so, though, how are we supposed to understand this "common feature"? Is it something "essential"? Already here, it appears that between the Good itself and particular "goods," there is some kind of difference at play.

Patočka clarifies the concealment of the question of the good in a similar way—and with similar diction—to Heidegger's posing of the question of

1 The English translation of Plato's dialogues is taken from Plato 1997.
2 In Plato's Republic, we read: "Therefore, let no one catch us unprepared or disturb us by claiming that no one has an appetite for drink but rather good drink, nor food but good food, on the grounds that everyone after all has appetite for good things, so that if thirst is an appetite, it will be an appetite for good drink." (438a1-5.)

being. For Heidegger, too, the question of being has to be discovered first and properly, since it is dissembled through the allegedly self-evident meaning of being. The very fact that we permanently encounter beings—and for this reason we simply take the meaning of being for granted—is evidence of its primal obscurity (Heidegger 1967, 4). The same goes for the relation between a good thing and the Good itself; we might be even tempted to say that we first and foremost live in forgetfulness of the Good (Patočka 2006b, 144). Just as the mystery of being leads Heidegger to ask after that distinctive being, to which being means something, i.e., *Dasein*, so, according to Patočka, is Socrates led by the problematicity of the good to the soul as the ground of its manifestation.

From a phenomenological perspective, Socrates makes it explicit that every action is based on presupposed layers of meaning, which, in the end, point to some latent, uncritically accepted general horizon. Let us briefly consider, for example, the movement of Plato's dialogue *Laches*. It begins with the question whether fathers who wish to educate their sons should let them be taught in the art of fighting in heavy armor, and for this reason they ask the publicly prominent figures Nicias and Laches for counsel. Socrates, however, stresses that the answer to such a question presupposes knowledge of the meaning of education, which consists in the improvement of the soul; and since it is excellence (ἀρετή), which makes the soul better, the educator should know what excellence means. And, with it, he should know the meaning of particular excellences, such as courage. Mere relatively good things are in their meaning dependent on some general, "absolute" account of the good in itself. From this move from particular action towards general understanding arises the search for *eidos* as something identical in all particular cases as the search for an answer to the question "what is" (τί ἔστιν) some *x*, where *x* stands for, e.g., virtue, piety, courage, temperance, etc. At first glance, the problem of the Good appears as a problem of *unity*, which is expressed in *eidos* through its *definition* (λόγος), i.e., abstract meaning. From this point of view, one could be tempted to understand the difference between particular goods and the Good itself as the problem of *unity of speech* (*logos*), to which one can adopt an *objective*, personally non-engaged, "neutral" attitude (Patočka 1990, 113–114). Yet, what Socrates is rather pointing to is the relation between speech and the soul in the sense of human existence (Patočka 1990, 112). It is the character of our soul,

which constitutes the latent background and the field for the appearance of something as good, and which escapes our attention due to our direct focus on the particular, relative end. For Socrates, speech is merely a bridge, through which the condition of the soul as a field of appearance becomes explicit. The dialogue functions as a *means* to become aware of one's own existence.

Thus, the Socratic refutation (ἔλεγχος) as a negative result of search for *eidos*, is not merely a revealing of paradox in speech. *Elenchus* causes *aporia*, an internal state of helplessness and paralysis, which should not be mistaken for a mere synonym of paradox. It rather fulfils three internally intertwined functions.[3] The first is its *diagnostic* function, which consists in its manifestation of our internal *disunity*, an unhealthy rupture in our very soul. The second function is *destructive*, for it reveals that our actions are led by a merely contingent life-project, which is unable to legitimate its claim for "absoluteness." By destruction of this allegedly true general horizon, the refutation makes manifest the problematicity of one's existence. And, finally, if one is able to withstand the destructive appeal of refutation, then its third, *maieutic* function might be applied. "Maieutic," here, is not to be understood as the delivering of a certain idea from the hidden depths of the soul to clear expression in speech, as Plato's *Theaetetus* might suggest (150d). Rather, it is "a sort of 'existential maieutics,' the revealing of a *new, essential possibility of own being*" (Cajthaml 2010, 53).

According to Patočka, for Socrates Good itself is revealed *negatively*; we become aware of it as a non-given, as a *transcendence* beyond our reach. From this follows the possibility of a new life-project, in which a human being grasps itself as "unaccomplished, given at hand to itself, in order to understand its own essential will, to give meaning to its life" (Patočka 2006b, 146). The fact that a human being has a task to become accomplished does not mean to live in accordance with claims of "absolute" meaning prescribed by cosmic order, nature, authority, or tradition. Rather, it means free self-projecting in and through the meaning of wholeness, which lets itself be negatively experienced as the denial of being given.

3 Here, I follow Cajthaml 2010, 52–53.

The two trials

At first glance, it might seem that with paralysis delivered by refutation and caused by manifestation of the Good in its non-givenness as a result comes the loss of freedom. For Patočka, on the other hand, "[t]he experience of freedom is always a comprehensive experience, the experience of comprehensive 'meaning.'" The experience of freedom rises from awareness of one's own transcendence and distance from what is "given and sensual" (Patočka 2006a, 322). Socrates reveals this nature of freedom *vis-à-vis* our relation to problematicity. With a change of perspective, one might come to understand that instead of being free he was silently determined through alleged meaning of some relative good without the explicit relation to the non-given Good itself. Here is the root of the Socratic statement that "no one does wrong willingly," meaning that we usually act in the shadow of forgetfulness of the Good, in ignorance of this existential relation, which silently determines the nature of the soul. In such determination, we act on the grounds of accidental, contingent reasons, which lack justification and are contradictory. Therefore, the unity of life is fractured into contingent fragmentary actions, stemming from accidental impressions, and it dissolves into the privation of a firm form. For this reason, Socratic paralysis is the inevitable first step we must undertake, if we want to regain freedom in its true sense. The negativity, with which the Good itself shines, places us in the position of a choice between true freedom from inner self-determination and a self-alienating return to the alleged evidence of externally given relative goods.

These insights are crucial in explicating Patočka's understanding of the conflict between Socrates and the City of Athens escalating in the public trial. Only on the surface is it just *one* trial, where Socrates stands as a culprit. Yet, as Patočka stresses, there are *two trials* happening at once (Patočka 1991, 33–34). The first, the explicit one is aimed at Socrates whose questioning is seen as a danger, and for this reason his threatening, "sophistic" behavior must be silenced. The second one, on the other hand, is not obvious and directly visible. It is a trial where the culprit is the City of Athens, the meaning of life of its citizens being based on the unjustified grounds of non-critically accepted meaning.

Let me briefly describe this conflict between the "natural" and the Socratic attitudes towards the problem of human finitude, one of the central issues in Plato's *Apology*. The problem of finitude is crucial, because it reveals whether we can live a life of unity and can justify our free non-determination. Socrates takes the example of our possible relation to death, in order to demonstrate our ignorance dissembled as knowledge: "To fear death, gentlemen, is no other than to think oneself wise when one is not, to think one knows what one does not know" (29a4–6), because, in this attitude, it is assumed that death is inevitably something wrong. In *Apology*, there are several examples of how such a presupposition affects human actions: defendants representing their families at court, in order to instigate compassion in judges regardless of whether it is just (34c–35b); men acting according to the order of thirty tyrants who do not hesitate to bring the democrat Leon of Salamis for execution (32c4–e1), and, of course, Socrates's prosecutors who presuppose that the threat of death will silence his philosophizing. Socrates's position, on the other hand, is one of knowledge of one's own ignorance. We do not know whether death is something bad, merely some deep, dreamless sleep, or the gate to a blissful afterlife. For this reason, it is foolish to act as if we knew that death is the worst of all things (29a7–b1).

In the first cases, the actions are affected by the directly given meaning of death, which is uncritically accepted and thus determines the scope of the given "meaningful" possibilities prescribing its avoidance. Such an action is unaware of its own distance and the transcendence of this givenness. Because of our distance from things, we are allowed to examine them, place them in different contexts and see possible contradictions. In dissembled ignorance, this existential position, however, remains concealed. A human being, projecting itself in accordance with unexamined meaning, in the end renounces its own freedom, which is dissolved into disunity and is unaware of its internal contradictions.

The trial of Socrates does not merely show two different attitudes, but primarily their conflicting relationship. Socrates, officially the defendant, but in fact a judge, represents a kind of politics, which consists in the awakening of Athens, its upliftment towards freedom and excellence through critical self-examination in the care for the soul. Since politics strives for the good, Socrates was throughout his life a true politician whose "politics" was realized

through private dialogues, consisting in the examination of individuals instead of holding offices and rhetorical persuasion of the masses. As Patočka stresses, Socrates's "privateness [*soukromost*] is the *true* relation towards the public, it is inner restitution aimed at restitution of the public" (Patočka 1991, 60). Such politics causes awakening, *shaking* of allegedly self-evident meaning, and calls for negative manifestation of the Good as a root of real excellence (*aretē*). But, from this stance, it is implicitly evident why Socrates's philosophizing *must be* private. Since critical examination is destructive, since it reveals the soul in contradictory disunity, and sets a task to confront problematicity through its appropriation as a life-project, one is tempted to avoid its claims and see the awakener as the true culprit:

> […] an unfree and inauthentic life is characterized by deep forgetting of itself, forgetting, which does not want to be reminded of it and resists it with all its powers, so the awakener will be hated, slandered, and chased to death. (Patočka 1991, 68.)

Hannah Arendt on Socrates

Hannah Arendt's work is to a decisive extent dedicated to the meaning and significance of political action, especially the rehabilitation of its bad reputation caused by the mistrust of philosophers since the trial of Socrates (Arendt 1998, 12). For this reason, it might be surprising that late Arendt turns attention to Socrates as a paradigmatic figure of thinking, on the basis of which she praises political non-participation. Socrates not only allows her to conceptualize the relation between thinking and action, but also to address contemporary issues of responsibility *vis-à-vis* the moral disasters of totalitarian regimes, mostly the question, on the one hand, why people of morals are too easily willing to change their system of morals for another one, where what before had been prohibited becomes now allowed, and, on the other hand, why non-conformists who distrusted one system of morals did not accept the new one, what kept them from participating in political crimes. While the former "suffered" from *thoughtlessness*, i.e., the inability to critically examine given moral concepts, the latter indulged in the processes of thinking, which led them to the realization

of what they would be actually doing, if they participated in crimes. These people, according to Arendt, shared the view that if they had anything to do with such crimes, they would be unable to live with themselves.

As with Patočka's, Arendt's portrayal of Socrates emphasizes that the experience of thinking has a natural tendency towards *negativity*, which results in a paralyzing effect on our opinions and actions. First of all, the activity of thinking requires a detachment from the world and its immediately pressing matters. It takes place in the distancing from what is immediately given. While indulging in thinking, it is as if all surrounding things and people were not present for the time being and other activities were brought to a halt (Arendt 1978, 175). In thinking, we find ourselves in solitude, and cease to be present for the world, and vice versa. However, the paralysis brought forth by thinking is not an immediate result of detachment, because our stream of thoughts might be interrupted at any time, either because of our spontaneous decision or due to circumstances around us, which might coerce us to turn our attention to them.

Detachment, however, is a necessary condition, because thinking is a process of examining concepts whose meaning is usually uncritically presupposed and accepted. In our everyday orientation in the world, we rely on concepts as "frozen thoughts" (Arendt 1978, 171) with their alleged self-evident meaning. They usually function as "prejudices," through the lens of which an orientation in the world, every action, and opinion are possible. Assuming distance allows us to ask what they actually mean and see their place in the chain of meanings. Socrates distorts their non-critical acceptance by searching for explicit justification. For this reason, through thinking he attempts to "defrost" their alleged firmness and subjects them to *movement* (Arendt 1978, 170). Since this movement is potentially infinite—because every concept also requires justification by concepts, which have yet to be justified—, the final justification seems impossible. For this reason, "thinking inevitably has a destructive, undermining effect on all established criteria, values, measurements of good and evil, in short, on those customs and rules of conduct we treat of in morals and ethics" (Arendt 1978, 174–175).

At this point, it is fully legitimate to ask whether Socratic thinking does not bring nihilistic tendencies. If every concept, on which we ground our moral attitudes, can become a theme of thinking, and if in the end none of

these concepts can be justified, are we not in a situation where everything is possible, because "without God, all things are permitted"? In fact, however, and this point interests Arendt most, thinking is the safeguarding of human beings in times, when conventional values are shaken or even turned upside down. Thinking forms a barrier, which protects individuality from falling into nihilism as a mere negation—and yet, in its essence, a *Doppelgänger*—of conventionalism. Thus, our search for the root of Socratic paralysis must go beyond nihilism (Arendt 1978, 176).

The answer to the question why thinking is dangerous because of its distance from conventional norms and yet does not fall into nihilism is found in the very structure of the thinking person, in the simple fact that, when I think, I am in silent dialogue with myself. But as a dialogue presupposes two selves at least, it is in this detachment from the world that I find my own inner plurality, a certain duality, which at the same time calls for a unity of myself. In the moment of solitude, I cease to be there for others, and others for me, in order to find my "other I," the unity as a relation to myself. From this perspective, Arendt interprets the crucial Socratic passage from Plato's *Gorgias*: "I think it's better to […] have the vast majority of men disagree with me and contradict me, than to be out of harmony with myself, to contradict myself, though I'm only one person." (482b6-c3.)

For Arendt, the main problem of Socrates is the problem of "unity of myself, that in whatever I do I should not contradict myself." My every act, every misdeed I have ever done or might do, even in greatest secrecy, always has a witness in my person. If Socrates says that it is better for him to be in contradiction with anybody else than with himself, he means this: I should not do anything that I may not be able to justify in the court of my inner dialogue, for I will become unreliable to myself, unable to actualize the inner friendship. Or, as Arendt put it:

> […] the reason why you should not kill, even under conditions where nobody will see you, is that you cannot possibly want to be together with a murderer. By committing murder you would deliver yourself to the company of a murderer as long as you live. (Arendt 2005, 22.)

We could say that in thinking I gain inner plurality, which is a source of—to use the language of A. J. Steinbock—inner diremptive experience, where I grasp myself potentially split between my optimal and real I.[4]

It is here, where we find a root of the paralysis, which the activity of thinking brings. Potentially, any action can become an object of scrutiny. In such examination, we can see a certain concept at play in the network or horizon of allegedly self-evident meanings that are co-present. Yet, our thinking is also the ability to rip these firm concepts from the co-present context of meaning and bring them into potentially infinite movement, in which former certainty is revealed as indeterminate, non-justified vagueness. Arendt was very well aware that in political action we rely not on absolute insights into the eternal essence of thing, but solely on limited perspectives expressed as mere opinions. But as we see, the power of thinking might dissolve any apparently solid opinion. Thinking in this regard does not call for action, but rather warns us against doing anything that might lead to an inability to live with oneself. Instead of telling us what to do, it discourages us as a warning (Arendt 1978, 190).

We can conclude that from the Arendtian point of view the activity of thinking has rather a bittersweet taste. As already mentioned, most of Arendt's theoretical interest was invested in the defense of political action, which in the course of history became deprived of its significance and meaning. Yet, action has dangers of its own, and Arendt underlines that in times of political emergency, it is the reclusive distance of thinking from any political participation, which can at least save the human soul, when the world appears beyond remedy: "The manifestation of the wind of thought […] at the rare moments when the stakes are on the table, may indeed prevent catastrophes, at least for the self." (Arendt 1978, 193.) Such is the case of Socrates who preferred harmony with himself before participating in the misconduct of the Council—massively driven to commit injustice by their frustration at the results of the battle—or the thirty tyrants who under the threat of death sought to engage Socrates in their crimes (*Apology* 32a-e). And, for Arendt, it was thinking, which brings concepts into a whirlwind, that stopped those few from letting themselves be

4 For the concept of diremptive experience in the scope of moral emotions see Steinbock 2014, 72. By applying the concept of diremptive experience here I do not imply that Steinbock would consider it in Arendt's sense as a "by-product of thinking".

carried like leaves in the "objective" wind by a totalitarian tendency to bind the plurality of people, in order to make them act as one through the movement of terror (Arendt 1979, 465–466).

Conclusion

Despite the great similarities we find in Patočka's and Arendt's interpretations of Socrates, we should not ignore important differences. Their return to Socrates is motivated by the search for an antidote to those powers, which in the era of modernity tend to rule over human individuality and devalue its significance and dignity (Učník 2013). For Patočka, Socrates is a philosopher of freedom, which can be attained only in appropriating the attitude towards the non-givenness of the Good itself, i.e., from the *problematicity* of own existence. On the other hand, Arendt rather limits the Socratic remedies to the times of political emergency (Arendt 1972, 65), when they may serve as a protecting guard against actions, which might lead to living in contradiction. If we can speak of some notion of care for the self or care for the soul in Arendt, it is a concept whose significance is too limited to become a grounding horizon of political life *per se*. Socrates's "politics" is true, but only when the political sphere is in crisis, in abnormal condition. Unlike Socrates, she remains a philosopher of action, which is not aimed at changing human beings through education. Action is oriented on changing the world, an open space of action, which people in plurality co-constitute as common fabric by their words and deeds. Only such an interpersonally constituted world can be home to freedom, which is always freedom to act. Acting entails being visible to others, and only in this way can a human being attain worldly reality. From the Arendtian perspective, Patočka's political philosophy is restricted to the Socratic voice, which warns against misdeeds inadequately "justified" by non-reflected, uncritically accepted contexts of meanings. Such is a political participation that does not aim to act itself, but to declare the "No!" to politics of personal irresponsibility, which hides behind alleged "objective powers."

From Patočka's point of view, unlike Arendt's, the trial of Socrates reveals that the public sphere is rather a place of dissembling than of appearance and manifestation of actors as who they are. There are two intertwined reasons

for that. First, public space is dominated by the tendency to take givenness for granted and remain unaware of human distance and transcendence of it. And, second, when facing the claims of the problematicity of human existence, its calls to attain a unity in remaining open to negativity, public actors tend to avoid and escape these claims. Patočka's final warning could consist in the claim that every one of our actions seems to be "fragmentary," for they are grounded in non-reflected, accidental reasons, in which the final context of meaning is overlooked. By acting, we must pay the price that in the end we do not know what are we actually doing.

Bibliography

Arendt, Hannah. 1972. *The Crises of the Republic*. San Diego—New York—London: Harcourt Brace.

---. 1978. *The Life of the Mind. Thinking*. San Diego—New York—London: Harcourt Brace.

---. 1979. *The Origins of Totalitarianism*. San Diego—New York—London: Harcourt Brace.

---. 1998. *The Human Condition*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.

---. 2005. "Socrates." In H. Arendt, *The Promise of Politics*, ed. by J. Kohn, 5–39. New York: Schocken Books.

Cajthaml, Martin. 2010. *Evropa a péče o duši*. Praha: OIKOYMENH.

Heidegger, Martin. 1967. *Sein und Zeit*. Tübingen: Max Niemeyer Verlag.

Patočka, Jan. 1990. *Sókratés. Přednášky z antické filosofie*. Praha: Státní pedagogické nakladatelství.

---. 1991. *Platón. Přednášky z antické filosofie*. Praha: Státní pedagogické nakladatelství.

---. 2002. "Kacířské eseje o filosofii dějin." In J. Patočka, *Péče o duši III*, ed. by I. Chvatík and P. Kouba, 11–144. Praha: OIKOYMENH.

---. 2006a. "Negativní platonismus." In J. Patočka, *Péče o duši I*, ed. by I. Chvatík and P. Kouba, 303–336. Praha: OIKOYMENH.

---. 2006b. "Věčnost a dějinnost." In J. Patočka, *Péče o duši I*, ed. by I. Chvatík and P. Kouba, 139–242. Praha: OIKOYMENH.

Plato. 1997. *Complete Works*. Ed. by J. M. Cooper and D. S. Hutchinson. Indianapolis—Cambridge: Hackett Publishing Company.

Steinbock, Anthony J. 2014. *Moral Emotions: Reclaiming the Evidence of the Heart*. Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press.

Učník, Ľubica. 2013. "Patočka's Socrates: The Care for the Soul and Human Existence." *Investigaciones Fenomenológicas*, vol. Monográfico 4/II: *Razón y vida*: 87–100.

"The publication edited by Andrej Božič on *Thinking Togetherness. Phenomenology and Sociality* presents a novel and up-to-date account of phenomenology, which comprehends this philosophy as an essentially intersubjective or a communal enterprise; in the volume, phenomenology exceeds narrow limits of subjective life of consciousness, and focuses on various phenomena connected to the public, communal, and political spheres. […] The book can serve both as a textbook in the heritage of the phenomenological movement and as a collection of original studies."

Assoc. Prof. Dr. **Witold Płotka**

Institute of Philosophy, Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński University in Warsaw

"The comprehensive collection of contributions entitled *Thinking Togetherness. Phenomenology and Sociality* represents an important scientific achievement within the field of phenomenological philosophy. The monograph, the central topic of which is the elucidation of some of the essential dimensions of the social, was prepared, as already a simple glimpse over the table of contents reveals, in cooperation with an assemblage of authors from across the world. Such an international configuration of the whole composed of 32 chapters, meaningfully arranged into seven thematic sections, imparts upon the volume the character of an extensive and exhaustive, panoramic scrutiny of the phenomenological manner of confronting the question what co-constitutes the fundamental traits of inter-personal co-habitation with others. […] *Thinking Togetherness. Phenomenology and Sociality*, therefore, not only offers a historical account with regard to the development of phenomenology, but also quite straightforwardly concerns its relevance within the philosophical research that deals with the contemporary problems of society."

Assoc. Prof. Dr. **Sebastjan Vörös**

Department of Philosophy, University of Ljubljana

thinking

togetherness

INR INSTITUTE NOVA REVIJA FOR THE HUMANITIES

ISBN 978-961-7014-40-2