Heresy And Heritage: Jan Patočka on Philosophy, Politics, and the Arts

May 3–6, 2017

Husserl Archives at KU Leuven, Centre d’Etudes Tchèques at ULB, Embassy of the Czech Republic in Brussels

2017 marks the 40th anniversary of two key events in European intellectual history: the publication of Charter '77, the declaration of respect for human rights in Communist Czechoslovakia, and the death of the Czech philosopher Jan Patočka (1907-1977). At the time of his death, Jan Patočka was one of the rare thinkers who recognized the centrality of the philosophical question and destiny of Europe. 40 years later, in the aftermath of the Fall of the Berlin Wall, the establishment of the European Union, and the political collapse of the divide between Eastern and Western Europe, the questions pursued by Patočka’s thinking and raised by the publication of Charter '77 still remain as pressing as ever.

In order to commemorate these two events, the Husserl Archives at KU Leuven, the Centre d’Etudes Tchèques at ULB, and the Embassy of the Czech Republic in Brussels are pleased to announce the organization of a four-day international conference to be held in Brussels and Leuven, May 3–6, 2017. The aim of this conference is to bring together intellectual historians, philosophers, writers, and political thinkers to debate and discuss the legacy of Charter ’77 and the significance of Jan Patočka’s philosophy.

Beginning on Wednesday 3rd May 2017 with an opening ceremony at the Prague House in Brussels, on Thursday 4th May 2017 a one-day conference Jan Patočka - Phenomenology and the European Heritage will be held at KU Leuven, on Friday 5th May 2017 a one-day conference “The Writer and his Object”: Jan Patočka, Art and Engagement will be held at Université Libre de Bruxelles, the whole event will close on Saturday 6th May 2017 with a public discussion on the legacy of Charter 77 and “Patočka and the question of Europe”.

Call for Papers for the day at Université libre de Bruxelles
“The Writer and his Object”: Jan Patočka, Art and Engagement

As part of a four-day event to mark the 110th anniversary of Jan Patočka’s birth, the 40th anniversary of his death and the publication of the Charter 77 human rights declaration in Czechoslovakia, the Centre d’Etudes Tchèques, Université Libre de Bruxelles, is organizing a one-day event dedicated to the contribution of Jan Patočka’s phenomenological thinking to the theory of interpretation and to the theory of art in general. At the same time, we want to invite colleagues to initiate a discussion on the « engaged » dimension of Jan Patočka’s writing.

Patočka dedicated numerous texts to the question of art. In texts such as “The Writer and his Object” (Spisovatel a jeho věc, 1969) Patočka developed his own “philosophy of literature” and in his important text “Study on the Past Character of Art” (Učení o minulém rázu umění, 1965, text published first in German) he reflected on the nature of aesthetic experience.

His engagement with the thinking of Hegel on the question of theory of art is manifested also by his translation into Czech of Hegel’s key work, the Lectures on Aesthetics (Vorlesungen über die Ästhetik)

More particularly, Patočka wrote essays focused on specific Czech writers and artists such as the poet Karel Hynek Mácha (1810-1836), Josef Čapek (1887-1945), Jaroslav Durych (1886-
1962) and many others. In his studies, he explored the frontiers and differences between literature and philosophy and focused on philosophical topics developed by artists. Moreover, we should note that these major texts reflecting Patocka’s thinking on art were written at dramatic moments of Czech(oslovak) history – the first mentioned in 1969, the ambivalent year following the suppression of the Prague Spring and the Warsaw Pact invasion of Czechoslovakia in August 1968. The text was to be published in a volume of texts from 1968-1969 entitled Struggle for the Meaning of the Present (O smysl dneška). Nevertheless, due to political circumstances the whole issue of the book was destroyed. As for the text on Mácha, it was published in 1944, during WWII and the “Protectorate” imposed on Bohemia and Moravia. The prologue to his own German translation of Durych’s novel The Rainbow of God (Boží duha) was published in 1975, in the middle of the “normalisation” period (the Czech version of the novel was published for the first time in 1969, seven years after the author’s death). For all these reasons we propose exploring this under-researched topic of the potentially “engagé” dimension of Patocka’s writing on art. The discussion is overdue.

We welcome paper proposals on topics such as:
Patocka’s interpretations and thinking on art and aesthetics
Papers focusing on specific texts, links and parallels between Patocka’s thinking and works of particular artists and writers
Sociocultural and historical aspects/circumstances of Patocka’s writing on art and thus its potentially « engagé » dimension
Papers on Patocka’s concept of aesthetic experience
Papers on Patocka’s phenomenological thinking and its contribution to the theory of interpretation and to aesthetics in general

Please submit full papers in English (max: 4,000 words) before January 1, 2017. Decisions of accepted papers will be communicated February 1, 2017. Papers as well as queries can be submitted to petra.james@yahoo.com

CALL FOR PAPERS for KU Leuven
Jan Patocka - Phenomenology and the European Heritage

As part of this four-day event to mark the 110th anniversary of Jan Patocka’s birth, the 40th anniversary of his death and the publication of the Charter 77 human rights declaration in Czechoslovakia, the Husserl-Archives: Centre for Phenomenology and Continental Philosophy at KU Leuven will host a philosophical conference to explore Jan Patocka’s phenomenological legacy, May 3–4, 2017.

We welcome contributions regarding the following possible topics or any other relevant theme:

- Patocka and the idea of Europe in the philosophy of history (Hegel, Husserl, Heidegger et al.)
- The Greek polis as the cradle of European politics (Arendt, Strauss, Foucault et al.)
- The care for the soul (and the care for death) and the Greek inheritance to Europe.
- Europe or Christianity? Patocka’s radicalization of the Christian heritage
- Europe from its center: the Czech perspective from Mitteleuropa
Challenging the phenomenological heritage: Patocka’s asubjective phenomenology

Please submit full papers in English (max: 4,000 words) before January 1, 2017. Decisions of accepted papers will be communicated February 1, 2017. Papers as well as queries can be submitted to patocka.kuleuven.be@gmail.com.