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Patočka and the Problem of the End of History

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DECLARATION

I hereby declare that no portion of the work referred to in this thesis has been submitted in support of an application of another degree, or qualification thereof, or for any other university or institute of learning. I declare that this thesis is my own independent work. All sources and literature are cited and included.

Prague, 25th of July

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ABSTRACT

Jan Patočka defines history as an epoch that arises out of a problematisation of the world, as an ability to draw on the faculty of openness and gain insight into the nature of being, as opposed to the preproblematic world of prehistory. Such distinction here informs the reading of the present as of an era that has departed from the fundamental tenets of the historical comportment of being, formulating the phenomenon of the end of history and the subsequent emergence of post-history. Since history emerged with the formation of the *polis* and the birth of the European spirit, post-history is, thus, positioned in an analogous relation to post-Europe. Through overcoming of both history and Europe, in critical reflection and responsibility, post-history and post-Europe, as the outcome of the end of history, come to challenge the teleological perception of history, offering a reevaluation of the technocratic preoccupation with progress and, hopefully, creating a new region of openness that would enable a future in responsibility.

KEYWORDS

Jan Patočka, philosophy of history, the natural world, openness, end of history, post-history, post-Europe

TABLE OF CONTENTS:

DECLARATION	iii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	iv
ABSTRACT	v
KEYWORDS	v
TABLE OF CONTENTS	vi
1. INTRODUCTION	1
2. DRAFTING THE KEY PILLARS OF HISTORY	4
2.1. HISTORY, HERESY, THE NATURAL WORLD	5
2.2. THE NATURAL WORLD AS THE PREPROBLEMATIC WORLD	10
2.3. THE BIRTH OF HISTORY AS EUROPE IN <i>POLEMOS</i>	16
3. THE END OF HISTORY	23
3.1. THE END OF HISTORY AS A RETURN	25
3.1.1. KOJÈVE: THE END OF HISTORY, THE END OF DESIRE	25
3.1.2. END OF HISTORY AS THE RETURN TO THE PREHISTORICAL.....	27
3.2. POST-HISTORY AS POST-EUROPE	34
3.2.1. UNLEARNING OF EUROPE	38
3.3. A NEW FOUNDATION OF FUTURES IN ANTICIPATION	40
4. CONCLUSION	44
BIBLIOGRAPHY LIST	47

1. — INTRODUCTION —

The attempt of comprehending the present, as a moment in suspension between the past and the future, often seems to arise out of the ungraspability of the present, as a confrontation with the world that leaves us perplexed. The seeking of the root of a present condition in the past might present us with a schema of a supposedly logical sequence of events, or points on this linear timeline we call history, yet it rarely provides us with insight into the workings of the past. The question is whether the present moment has always felt so uprooted from itself or whether that is an aspect of the human condition that has arisen just recently. At the moment, the world certainly seems to be on fire, but perhaps it has been on fire ever since history began. In the pursuit of the diagnosis of the present, one undeniably realises that these contemporary fires, as well as these contemporary floods, are of unprecedented violence, of unprecedented scale. To turn to Jan Patočka for answers in the understanding of today and the anticipation of tomorrow is to turn to a philosopher who impresses with his insight — he warns with his scepticism about the present but uplifts with his hopefulness for the future.

In this thesis, I would like to primarily address the part of Jan Patočka's oeuvre that concerns itself with the philosophy of history and the conceptualisation of Europe and its successive derivative — post-Europe — while aiming to critically distil theoretical implications that emerge in the text that could be of certain importance as interpretative clues for the present. Despite the fact that Patočka is usually not perceived as a philosopher of political philosophy but rather as a phenomenologist, even the vast subject of *being in the world* can undeniably be seen as a condition deeply imbued with politics throughout his work. Thus, the question of the natural world and its phenomenological nature here gain on importance as crucial elements in the forming of history. It is the relationship of human beings towards the natural world and their placement within the natural world that oscillate throughout time that becomes one of the fundamental criteria in the definition of an epoch. In this analysis, I aim to present clear distinguishing points between the era of prehistory and history, in order to

understand the positioning of the present in relation to both of these epochs, as *the end of history*.

In the *Heretical Essays in the Philosophy of History* (1975), Patočka establishes the emergence of history as a certain problematisation of the world as opposed to the perception of the natural world of prehistory, with its “pregiven meaning, [being] modest but reliable”(1975:12). I hope that through the establishment of history as an antithesis to prehistory, I would be able to draw on these distinguishing characteristics that would subsequently allow a re-evaluation of whether these key tenets are still manifested in the present in an identical manner or have potentially developed further, similarly to how Patočka observes a paradigm shift that comes to differentiate the new era of post-Europe from its predecessor, Europe. Eventually, I would try to base my inquiry into the possibility of living in the epoch of post-history on Patočka’s definition of history and relate it to the imaginings of more optimistic futures, of futures in responsibility.

The question of the end of history is here treated as a potential opening of a new epoch, a paradoxical overlapping of both decay and capacity for new growth in responsibility. As such, by relying on the complexities of Patočka’s writing, I am to devise an understanding of the end of history and the epoch of post-history that begins with such end as possibilities for an overturn and a manifestation of a new region of openness that draws on self-reflection, awareness and responsibility. Such reformulation of the end of history aims to be an active counter-interpretation of history, rejecting the idea that the future cannot bring about anything that would transgress the dictate of capitalist liberal democracies. The end of history thus becomes a call for a revival of care and responsibility, a possibility of an epoch that has the capacity to be critically aware of itself and constantly performs such awareness in its world-building practices. With this self-awareness, the end of history as a prelude to post-history and post-Europe can serve as a critical tool for the reframing of both the faculty of insight and technology and can become a new historical arena for the enactment of openness in the world.

Openness as a capacity of a human being in the world is considered in its historicity, as an ability that corresponds to what is apprehensible in certain historical epochs, relating to a certain collective pool that is nurtured through the accumulation of individual encounters with the world (Patočka, 1975). It is this collection of images and imaginative tendencies, constructed on the individual experiences that have been shared and communicated, that establish a collectivity from which history can emerge. To be in openness is thus to also be in *polemos*, in constant confrontation with the world that presupposed that being, thus,

human being and history as well, emanates from the ontological darkness of the *nothing* (Dodd, 2016:85-88).

The literature that has been considered for the construction of this thesis were predominantly Patočka's *Heretical Essays in the Philosophy of History* from 1975, considered mainly in their English translation by Erazim Kohák. This key work on the nature and the emergence of history was accompanied by the works that tackle the concept of Europe, primarily *Europa und Nach-Europa*, an essay from the early 1970s, published in the Czech translation as *Evropa a doba poevropská* in 1992, addressing the self-perception of Europe, its spiritual pivot points and its ultimate decline. These two trajectories that enabled the creation of a parallel between the concepts of Europe and post-Europe, on one side, and history and post-history, on the other, were additionally substantiated by works that dive into a deeper analysis of the natural world and the three Patočkian movements of existence. Thus, through the reading of Patočka's conception of history and Europe, his conceptualisation of openness as deeply historical and his understanding of the natural work throughout time, it is possible to derive a definition of the end of history, which coincides with the emergence of post-Europe. Together they come to constitute a beginning of a new epoch, enabling a new region of openness, a critical reflection and subsequent unlearning of Europe — a restructuring that could bring forward a future in responsibility.

2. — DRAFTING THE KEY PILLARS OF HISTORY —

To tackle the potential concept of the end of history, it would be important to first attempt to grasp the definition of history itself. It is through the understanding and rigorous study of history that one arrives at the understanding of the present and the informed anticipation of the future, thus it is only possible to approach the idea of the end of history, of a possible post-history, through the general conception of that which it in sequence dialectically overcomes. Just as the idea of post-Europe inherently contains Europe as such as its pivotal point of both spatial and temporal orientation and classification, the end of history unavoidably relies on the understanding of history itself. Patočka's insight into the nature of history and its significance is undeniably grounded in the European intellectual heritage, strongly influenced by his reading of the ancient Greeks and his preoccupations with the care for the soul. However, I will also attempt to address his methodological takes and definitions of history that transgress the conventional Eurocentric categories of temporal classifications and allow for a more contemporary interpretation, which is already being conducted from a quite likely post-European epistemological perspective. The end of history is, thus, conceptualised as enabled by its symbiotic relationship with the era of post-Europe, asking for a re-evaluation of that which has constituted Europe and brought forward the catastrophes of the present.

I find it important to note that even the act of sifting through the body of the text itself, searching for the interpretative cues on the understanding of history that could potentially be aligned with the necessities of the present, is a consequence of an extending personal process of unlearning through critical reading, which is still in progress and, thus, incomplete. Actively struggling to learn through the unlearning process myself, I strive to also accommodate the following interpretative takes in the context of the potential existence of the emerging world of the post-Europe and post-history. Thus, my comprehension of Patočka's conception of history attempts to also contain its awareness of its own historicity and its own image of the future that it projects in anticipation.

In the following chapter, I will focus on Patočka's way of distinguishing of history from prehistory as based on his understanding of the natural world as prehistorical. In the exposition, on the phenomenological foundation of Patočka's thought on history the concept of openness is emphasised in its historicity, as a capacity of a human being in the world that arises at a particular moment in time. The three movements of existence, as conceptualised by Patočka, *the movement of anchoring*, *the movement of self-surrender* and *the movement of truth*, being the movement of existence in the narrow sense, are evoked in their connection to their analogies in the domains of human activities — labour, work and ultimately action. The state of being in togetherness in the world, the interconnection with both human and non-human entities that surround the human that is dwelling in the world, is interpreted as a consequence of the first movement of existence and the contingencies of the natural world that frame the human condition in its entirety. The prehistorical world is seen as the world of continuity of meaning that is ruptured in the problematisation of the world — which is a crack through which history appears. History in the narrow sense and the European spirit as its accompanying parallel is seen as founded on the newly discovered ability of being in openness, on *polemos* that allowed humans to go from dwelling to the making of history.

2.1. — HISTORY, HERESY AND THE NATURAL WORLD —

Before one dives into the distinctions between prehistory and history and arguments for its potential end, a brief summary of the general theoretical framework could be a helpful introduction. Here it would be useful to digress and refer to the guiding points of Paul Ricoeur's preface to the French edition of the Heretical Essays [Essais hérétiques sur la philosophie de l'histoire] from 1981, in which he explains where the heretical nature of Patočka's essays lie.

As an introduction, it presents a rather concise overview of the phenomenological framework of Patočka's inquiry into the nature of history. It is the First Essay, Reflections of Prehistory (1975), which contains a rather dense exposition on the "problem of the 'natural conception the world'", or, as Husserl named it, the *Lebenswelt*, the world of our lives (1975:1), that links Patočka's phenomenological practice with his philosophy of history. In a rather

practical manner, Ricoeur prepares the reader and summarises that what is heretical in Patočka's characterisation of history, as a phenomenon that is emergent from the prehistorical, are the implications that arise in the question of the natural world itself — history is marked by its problematic character as a consequence of the natural world being heretically defined as the world of prehistory (1981). Patočka's exposition on the interconnections between politics, philosophy and history theoretically departs from the phenomenological standpoint of Husserl and Heidegger, including their views on history, which are then overcome and somewhat subverted.

The preoccupation with the natural world is a foundation on which further insight into the phenomenon of history is based. The idea of the natural world is as a concept very much distinct from what the mathematically oriented natural sciences treat as nature or the object of their scientific inquiry. It is this mathematical approach of the natural sciences that permeates the contemporary human world to such an extent that it has become “virtually impossible to recognize the ‘natural world’ of our everyday experience therein” (Patočka, 1975:2).

However, despite such overall understanding of reality, that is paradoxically both unified and polarised in Cartesian dualism, fluctuating between modern natural sciences and mechanistic physics, “a deep intuition” (ibid) has the capacity to access certain true experience and thus be assured of the coherent nature of the world (ibid). The attempts to define and understand the original “natural” world bring also forward the questions that touch upon the matter of the physical existence of the body in the world and the interaction that occurs between a physical being and their surrounding environment in which they are intrinsically embedded. It is significant that these physical and material dimensions of being in the world are directly linked with the accessibility and the uncovering of that which is inherently immaterial or perhaps even absent. Patočka establishes such connection through a negation — neither the presence of the universe nor history and spiritual relations unfold within the realm of the mathematical conception of the world as constructed by the natural sciences (1975:3). However, how to understand this world of our lives, this *Lebenswelt* that seems to elude any definition yet is evidently exactly that into which our being in the world is entirely embedded in?

Husserl develops the concept of *Lebenswelt* as tacking something that is “familiar yet remains unknown” (ibid) but could potentially be accessed through a very fundamental change in the attitude towards the world, in which one would no longer focus primarily on

the objects that exist in the world but would rather become receptive to the way in which the objects themselves manifest. Such change, which he formulates as “performing the epoché”, would bring back an attitude that has been interrupted by the internalisation of the perspectives employed by the natural sciences (Husserl, 1970:148). The experience of the “universal, absolutely self-enclosed and absolutely self-sufficient correlation between the world itself and world-consciousness”, meaning the experience in which a consciousness stands immediately vis-a-vis the world that is manifesting itself, occurs in the domain of the pre-given world that grounds as such (Husserl, 1935: 151). Thus, the problematics of the discovery and the following analysis concern themselves not with the world itself but with the phenomenon of the world as it manifests. Such manifestation inherently appears to someone, for appearing always occurs in a relational configuration of appearing to somebody particular, who has the capacity for the uncovering. Even though for Husserl, the natural world, “the concrete self-manifestation of what-is” (Patočka, 1975:4) is prescientific and originates in the naïve pre-theoretical life, it is not prehistorical — for, according to Patočka, none of the attempts to revoke the authentic truths of the natural world have ever extended to “humans in the concrete phenomena of work, production, action and creation” that come to constitute history (1975:5).

Nonetheless, it is the influence of the Heideggerian perspective that leads Patočka astray towards his heretical conclusion. The openness to the world, the capacity of being receptive to the phenomena of the world that manifest, comes to designate a human being as a “wholly distinctive structure that distinguishes itself from all others in that it understands being” (ibid), as being openness itself. It is in front of a human being that the world unfolds, that it becomes a phenomenon that manifests itself in order to appear, in order to be apprehended. Thus it is through the enactment of openness that what-is gains the potential of becoming a phenomenon that emerges forth from its original condition of obscurity (ibid).

However, being that manifests itself as a phenomenon that appears can be as if pulled out of concealment only within the scope of certain possibilities of that which can be uncovered at a given time. Patočka calls upon what Heidegger formulates as “the region of openness” (Heidegger, 1993:39), to denote that which allows uncovering in a particular historical moment. It would mean that everything can be pulled out of its obscurity into the light only in a concrete epoch, in order to be apprehended as an existence that manifests itself, for otherwise it would not perhaps even be recognised as such. Thus, the world of a particular moment in time is as a structure constituted by that which has come to be intelligible in that particular era, meaning that that which appears as existent cannot equal to that what-is

(Patočka, 1975:8). If all the uncovering of being from the world that-is happens within a framework of certain temporal movements and history, then the manifestations of phenomena, being essentially occurrences of un-concealment, are unavoidably historical. Unlike for Husserl, for whom the natural world is a material constant that extends through time as an invariable, Patočka recognises that this perception of what-is is also a product of its historicity, in which all instances of new uncovering of being bring forward “ever new historical worlds which themselves, qua [ontico-ontological] syntheses, must be something original” (1975:11).

Patočka reformulates even mental and psychological processes of imagination and memory as phenomena that emerge from obscurity, into the psychic sphere through the faculty of being in openness. As they are somewhat derivative of other phenomena, as if phenomena of phenomena, or a secondary manifestation of a primary manifestation, they do not in themselves contain but rather point towards that which bears meaning within itself (Patočka, 1975:9). Even though embodied apprehension of the phenomena that manifest occur on the level of individual bodies and lives, which in themselves contain meaning, only when they transcend the framework of these particular embodiments and are reproduced as secondary phenomena that can be communicated and shared, can they become collectively relatable and relevant (ibid.) Thus, imaginative possibilities, and memory and language practices, as capacities of a collective psyche, become “reservoirs of what manifests itself” (ibid), transmitting past experiences towards the present in a manner that allows expanding of the horizon of being in openness. As they are reiterated in multiple individual mental spaces and transmitted through time and space, it is these derivative phenomena that come to construct a collectivity, facilitating a continuous widening of the given region of openness, constantly announcing a possibility for a new epoch.

Even though the phenomenological foundation of Patočka’s thought might appear to be rather removed from the historical contingencies that individual lives are embedded in, at least a superficial understanding of this framework is required as it is of twofold importance, theoretical and subjective.

Firstly, the subtle shifts in the phenomenological approaches have rather fundamental consequences on the theorising of lived human reality — it is the understanding of the natural world as prehistorical rather as only pre-theoretical that distinguishes Patočka’s understanding of phenomena that manifest themselves through emergence from the

concealment of what-is from the predominant phenomenological approaches of Husserl and Heidegger. As opposed to the mathematically organised conception of the world, as constructed and employed by the natural sciences that obstruct the perception of the world of experience, it is the condition of being in openness in the encounter with the universe that channels a deeper intuition that has the capacity of comprehending the coherence of the world. It is this openness of a human being in the world that becomes a platform for what-is to emerge from its primordial concealment, to manifest as a phenomenon in an appearance directed towards the one who wishes to apprehend. As both palpable and intangible manifestations, including spiritual intersubjective relations and the history itself, unfold, they reproduce as secondary phenomena, as psychic processes that transcend the boundaries of individual bodies, becoming pools of meaning that accumulate particular events and singular encounters with the world. As accumulation in collectivity, these repositories of instances of being in openness come to formulate a certain historicity of the world that can be uncovered. Each being in openness can cause the world to unfold only within the given historical regions of possibilities, meaning that even the apprehension of the manifesting aspects of what-is and the subsequent world of experience are inherently of a historical nature, contained within a certain epoch.

Of subjective importance for the construction of this thesis is also the notion of heresy itself as it arises from Patočka's reworking of phenomenological conceptions of his mentors. Patočka himself thus becomes an example of overcoming certain traditions that burden and bind, a concrete manifestation of the malleability of thought and adaptability of intellectual history. Even though Patočka's tendencies of gravitating towards the ideas such as the core principle of the European spirit and Europe, which are deeply rooted in his admiration of the ancients and shall be addressed in the following chapters of the thesis, could appear as a glorification of European tradition and the past, his writing also contains many instances of pleas for a different future that in a way must understand the past in order to unlearn from its mistakes. It is through a profound insight into the workings of history that a responsible paradigm shift can be induced proactively. In his expansion of the conception of the natural world and phenomenological methods, Patočka was able to push phenomenology towards the inclusion of concrete human affairs, such as labour, work, production and action, and tackle human beings in their lived experiences and political existence — which ultimately comes to entail also the conscious world-making practices of uncovering of being that the future in perpetuity requires.

2.2 — THE NATURAL WORLD AS THE PREPROBLEMATIC WORLD, AS THE WORLD OF LABOUR —

The natural world in its ambiguity, in its own historical fluidity, is a world that remains present throughout time. Yet Patočka also utilises the term to denote a human condition that preceded history — the preproblematic world of prehistory, whose characteristic of being natural in its absolute becomes a differentiating factor between the two epochs (1975:12). Such preproblematic world is a world in which there is no necessity for the conceptualisation of the transition between being in obscurity and emergence into the apprehending light of manifesting — the mysterious and the absent, the ungraspable and the unknown can remain as such without the profound need of being pulled out into the domain of openness and explicitly informed knowledge. It is a world in which even the darkest corners of the obscure are understood because the world is fully intelligible, and thus meaningful (ibid).

Human beings of the preproblematic world of history are given their place in the world in relation to the superhuman that establishes and stabilises the order of the universe — they do not occupy the anthropocentric pivot point of the world, around which the entire constellation of being revolves. Yet their place is known and understood (ibid). Patočka illustrates such condition of being in the world, of dwelling unproblematically, which seems rather impossible to even practically imagine in the current technocratic age, through the example of the “so-called ‘natural’ peoples” (ibid), the peoples that in his collection of short essays on the heritage of Europe, *Europa und Nach-Europa* or *Evropa a doba poevropská*, published posthumously in 1992, he calls “pre-Europeans (1992:12). Patočka’s analysis of the identity of Europe and its role of the key weaver of history, including its problematic implications, will be more extensively addressed in the following chapters but it is important to indicate how tightly interlinked the problematisation of the world as the formulation of history is with Europe and its heritage. But how can we even begin to imagine and relate to a world in which there is no need nor space for the process of uncovering, which has become the essence of the European pursuit of meaning of life as such? However distant and strange, is this not the image of the simple life we image when we project our frustrations with our oppressive present onto our internalised colonial phantasies of the noble savage? Perhaps it

is exactly this continuous obsession with the natural and the pristine wilderness of the world that that this preoccupation entails that points towards that which has been irretrievably lost when history was born.

However, let us remain for a moment with the characterisation of the natural peoples, trying to grasp them as those who dwell unproblematically to such an extent that they escape the European characterisation of linear timelines and ‘rational’ progress, and articulate such human primordial condition in terms of labour, work and their everyday activity. To dwell in an unproblematic way could mean to inhabit the earth in the manner similar to non-human living entities “living in order to live” (Patočka, 1975:13), entirely invested in the activities necessary for mere survival of their physical bodies, if there were not for the burden that the human existence feels like (Patočka, 1975:15).

Regarding the choice of the terminology, even though the consulted translation of *The Heretical Essays* (trans. Erazim Kohák, 1998) uses the term “work” to refer to the domain of human activities that preserve life itself, that also as such correspond to the first movement of existence, the *movement of anchoring* (1998:148), the term “labour” that Arendt utilises in her triangulation of human activities for the same domain, arguably resonates more clearly with what state of being is meant to be communicated here. Labour as “life itself” (Arendt, 1958:7) contains the connotation of the Sisyphean burden of ever-self-consuming expenditure of energy for the sake of gathering the expended once again. On the other hand, the term “work” can function rather ambivalently, oscillating between sustaining life in terms of the preproblematic life and “coming to terms with the reality we handle” (Patočka, 1998:148) as production. Additionally, for the contemporary understanding of care, which shall be addressed as well, it would only be sound to talk of “labour of care” as it is as well a cycle of activity that occurs within itself, as opposed to “work” in Arendt’s sense, or subsequently “production” in Patočka’s terms, that operates with an aim that lies beyond itself.

Patočka touches upon a very significant relation between the problematisation of the world, and the space and time needed for such problematisation, in terms of having the means to step away from the self-consuming burden of labour. The preproblematic world is a world in which the human activity that is imaginable is that which actively sustains life. It is a life that is solely devoted to the maintenance of the equilibrium of being alive in the immediate environment. In the first movement of existence the humanity is “sinking roots” (ibid) into

the natural world — through acceptance, they are becoming one of the integral particles in the ecosystem as a whole, into which they are symbiotically embedded, yet the world does not revolve around them. Such sphere of being in the world is the only autonomous one that can prevail on its own or become a foundation for the following movements and modes of comportment, including the second movement of existence, *the movement of self-sustenance* that encompasses such activities that fall under the category of labour that sustains. Since the first movement, this “primordial movement is related to our primordial past” (ibid), as Patočka explains in one of the lectures in the *Body, Community, Language, World* (1998), it circles back to the fact of corporeal existence in the natural world that endures through time. Even though, as it has been mentioned in the previous section, individual experiences of uncovering are communicated across the collectivity through references of the secondary manifestation of phenomena in language and collective pools of meaning, it is the first movement of existence that enables collectivity in wholeness with the world as such (Patočka, 1998:149). It is this affective movement that facilitates a world the lies underneath the world of functionality and practical preoccupations — it is the “central vital core ... which is not only an addition to the being of what surrounds us but a condition of the being of our life” (ibid) and an access point to the natural world.

The first movement of existence, is also the layer in which the “strangeness” of being human in the world becomes tangible (Patočka, 1975:30), which is compensated by the acceptance of those who welcome a new existence even prior to its physical emergence in the world. The movement of acceptance sets in motion the laborious strains of the second movement, *the movement of self-surrender* (1975:31), including the labour of care that it implies, that together with the first movement establishes the intersubjective relations in-between not only individual human beings but their immediate surrounding of the earth they inhabit with other sentient and non-sentient beings. Even though all three movements of existence are in constant motion of overlapping and being shared in collectivity, the first movement is what creates the feeling of safety that facilitates the possibility of being at home on earth — it is the state of being in touch with the “eternally unshakable ground” (ibid), of relating to something that envelops all being globally and equally. It is a state of being in which there is “no barrier that would separate off human society from the universe” (1975:34). The fact that Patočka calls the human beings “earthlings” (ibid) should not be interpreted as some restorative romanticisation of the connection between human beings and their environment but as a reiteration of that which is essential for the human condition — the contingencies of this planet that have so far sustained and enveloped all human lives.

However, even though the natural world, or the first movement of existence as it manifests, is that which brings all being into a coherent unity, it is also that what-is from which the particularities of a contingent reality stem. It could then be argued, that even though the natural world does not possess a political capacity in itself, as it is pre-theoretical, it is a source of a particularly embodied and embedded vantage point, and subsequently the original point of being from which epistemological perspectives are formed. The movement of acceptance is a locus of corporeality and the physical interaction with the world (*ibid*), being the membrane through which one interacts with the world in its immediacy pre-theoretically but then invariably on a theoretical level as well, for even self-reflection cannot be viable without concrete references in the natural world that grounds (Patočka, 1992:9). Both labour and the natural world can, thus, become concepts whose political consequences in lived realities should be considered — even though they are the fundamentals that precede not only history but also human beings in their political and social capacities, retroactively, as they become drawn into the mechanism of history, they come to matter as the origins of determining circumstances.

The prehistorical and preproblematic life is a life in which the finite nature of human individual human existences is ever present. It is the expression of human limits in contrast with the divine power that governs nature and humans with it, confining the human beings to their place in this grand “well-ordered household” (Patočka, 1975:20). The problematisation of the world, which would stem from the perception of the state of concealment of the world, is obstructed by the extensive necessity for constant labouring — in which the act of un-concealment of being is not possible since there is no space for it. However, this does not mean that the preproblematic, prehistorical human life would be devoid of meaning — there would just be no need for the pursuit of the metaphysical meaning of life. The meaning of a human life is, as all the meaning of the world, already pre-given in the juxtaposition with the divine and the superhuman (*ibid*). The burden of labour is in itself a paradoxical strain of existing, since it contains the key to the problematisation of life — that is that a human life can never be sustained in indifference but must be actively enacted, meaning always reconstructed — while also inhibiting the one who labours from confronting the world in openness (1975:15). The world in which the phenomenon of freedom has not yet manifested is “the world of work [labour]” (*ibid*), and not much more. As such it is an activity that “holds history at bay” (1975:16), even though history itself could never come to be without the equilibrium of life that only labour has the capacity to establish

and sustain. So, even though work [production] and action seem to occupy superior positions in the hierarchy of human activities, it is labour, the same labour which had been enacted in the preproblematic world, that is the ultimate foundation of human condition even today. It is through necessity, which we so desperately despise, and its subsequent pacifying that we retain this connection with the primordial world of the past.

Therefore, labour is perceived as an ahistorical activity that expresses “the bondage to life itself” (Patočka, 1975:15), the most fundamental project of self-sustenance, prevailing in the preproblematic world. It is an activity that, as Arendt puts it, leaves “no trace, no monument, no great work worthy of remembrance” (1958:81), always in perpetuity devouring itself. It is exactly this inability to produce a tangible result, which could prevail through time, that renders labour as ahistorical, despite being essentially that which fulfils the necessity of being alive. However, only when these physiological necessities are taken care of and the homeostasis of life is maintained, can such thing as work or production occur. Arendt points at the seemingly evolutionary sequence that creates a hierarchy in the relation between labour and work through the image of “the labouring body” in opposition to “the working hands” (1958:80), referring also to the etymological differences between words for such activities. While labour unavoidably expresses the connotation of bodily struggle, of sweating under the burden of leading a life, work has the capacity to culminate in a product that becomes a testament to the energy and effort expended. So, while the former inhabits a cyclical movement that is always orbiting around itself, the latter is a clear linear trajectory that has a given beginning and an end with an anticipated result.

However, it is rather signification that what both Patočka and Arendt come to immediately address is the issue of liberation from the tedious strain of labouring one’s life away for the sake of living that same life. Arendt links the burden and the responsibility of being the one who labours with the emergence of the distinction between the private and the public sphere of life. The “contempt for labouring” (1958:81), which arises from the desire to escape the necessity of life that is such a fundamental part of living as a human being on earth, displaces labour on those who are deemed as not worthy of being spared the fatigue of endless labouring, whose bodies are there to be used and exploited (ibid).

On the other hand, for Patočka, who tackles the labouring conditions of physical existence in the world, primarily through the metaphysical configuration of life and death — “the link between work [labour] and life [being] death”(1975:17) — such freedom from labour is what enables history. Once history has emerged, it is then only through a sublimation of labour

into history that it itself becomes historical (1975:16). A synthesis of these two directions might aid us in the articulation of the conditions for the emergence of history and its subsequent characterisation as an antithesis to the preproblematic world of prehistory, and become one of the keys to formulating the potential shift towards the domain of the end of history.

2.3 — THE BIRTH OF HISTORY AND THE WORLD IN *POLEMOS* —

When we think of history we, more often than not, think of the factual content of history books, of the series of events that have accumulated in the sediments that form the present. Even though history is somewhat interlinked with the phenomenon of collective memory and remembering, or rather vice versa, that memory and all the processes that facilitate it are integrated into the fabric of history, history itself does not equal the narratives that surround the particular events. The meaning of the narrative cannot be conflated with the actual meaning of the event, for while the meaning of the event itself is brought forward by those who had acted and suffered for it, the meaning of the narrative that communicates the content is its logical soundness that allows the establishing of a coherent causal sequence that linearly connects the past with the present (1975:28).

As it has been described in the previous section, Patočka defines the peoples of the preproblematic world as being entirely submerged in the activities that sustain their physical existences as completely intertwined with the natural environment they inhabit (1975:13). However, even though they seem to live in a way that does not allow them the opportunity to in any way extrapolate from the only possible activity which is labour, it is the recognition of such bondage to life and the subsequent burden of the avoidability of being forced to actively lead one's life that is always lurking under the surface, about to incite the first doubts that come to grow into the problematisation of the world and life as such (ibid). Thus, even problematisation of that what-is is already present in obscurity, suppressed until it encounters the fertile ground for manifestation (ibid). However, the world can remain as preproblematic, as a purely natural world, only until there is a need to begin to anticipate the life of tomorrow. Such planning *pro futuro* comes to require an overcoming of the transient nature of

individual lives in order to also image and facilitate a collective future (ibid). It is this striving for the future that brings forward the need for the recognition of the collective mental pools that communicate and preserve the social memory, in both oral and written forms (ibid). These reservoirs of meaning solidified through written traces are testimonies of individual encounters and perceptions of the immediate environment, that accumulate in a more collective understanding and conceptualisation of the world. It is in this turning point in time, in which humans begin to face the future, that work, or in Patočka's terms, production, and, even more importantly, action can become other viable human activities.

Even in its most initial stages of prehistory, the human existence as it emerges into the "fold of space" (Patočka, 1975:30) that has been prepared for its particular being, cannot be in indifference. In its vulnerability and helplessness it must be accepted by others and the world, so it grows into a force that develops its own capacities of acceptance and accommodation of those who are yet to appear in the world (ibid). There they come to enact the second movement of existence, *the movement of self-surrender*, in which the coexistence with others, that had been established in the first movement of existence, comes to be acted upon. It is the movement in which one grasps the present reality of things, coming to terms with the physical world that surrounds them, including those who have been put in their care (Patočka, 1998:150). However, as Patočka explains, this is also the domain in which the majority of human life occurs, a domain in which meaning is produced but conflict, suffering and guilt are encountered as well (ibid). Even though the third movement of existence, *the movement of truth*, that actively seeks meaning in the "regions of the first and the second movement" (1998:148), is not very significant in prehistory, it is still that what makes the manifestation of the whole, as a whole on a single plane, possible (Patočka, 1975:33). As the act of uncovering is not perceived as such, as both what-is and being occupy the same sphere, the third movement of existence, *movement of existence in a narrow sense*, remains the least prominent of movements, yet it is what drives all expression of "futural character" (ibid) in the thinking of what is yet to come, including art, collective imagination and myth, which is the first step towards the birth of history.

The turn towards history in the narrow sense is the choice of the life that constantly aims to reach forward, to constantly progress. It is a state of being in a constant leap of faith, a voluntary abandonment of the pre-given and the certain, a life in chosen precariousness of meaning. Instead, the epoch of history is in the evoking of the problematic, in the possibility to generate a more demanding meaningfulness that presupposes obscurity, allowing it to

uncover being through openness and investment in responsibility (Patočka, 1975:63). In these attempts to grasp life with what it can offer so one can become fully human in European terms, the world gains the opportunity to manifest, to no longer be merely a backdrop of the self-sustaining cycle of life but a phenomenon that can be actively sought out in openness, apprehended and understood through the light shed on the fabric of *polemos*, becoming a vehicle of meaning that humans can subsequently impose on themselves (1975:39). However, that also means that the meaning of human lives can no longer be the derivative of the superhuman through negation but must be in constant rediscovery, devised through the conscious being in the world and the process of active self-ascribing of meaning upon oneself (1975:41) in the collective configuration of a political body, such as in the *polis*. The ideal of autonomous bestowal of meaning is the point of conjunction of both the source of the Western, European spirit, philosophy and the beginning of history in Patočka's, also clearly European, terms.

It is important to note that the distinction between history and prehistory is a notion that has been devised by history itself (Patočka, 1975:36), in its attempt to distance itself and overcome the idea of the stagnating period of prehistory. Even though the distinction of prehistory and prehistory in the phenomenological terms that here concern us is not entirely congruent with the conventional Western periodisation of history, such distinctions should not be employed without reflection (1992:27) — if we are to think about history in the narrow sense and minimise the Eurocentrism that it inevitably implies, we must try to consider both history and Europe as formations and conditions in the world that had had their predecessors and will have their successors. Thus, even the periodisation itself as the revolt against the natural world of prehistory already contains the seed of the evolutionary implications of progress, including the imperialistic tendency of Europe that will have developed. These in conjunction will be addressed further in the following chapter, in connection with the technocratic turn of Europe and the self-perception of Europe as such, hopefully, leading to the possibility of arriving at the era of post-Europe and post-history.

Therefore, history imagines itself to begin with the questioning of the whole of the world that in prehistory would have been fully intelligible and accepted as it is, inquiring into the nature of manifestation itself. It opens up the stage for an encounter with the world that perceives the world in its obscurity and has the capacity to recognise its phenomenological nature, apprehending the phenomena as they manifest, and the ability to bring forward original worlds through accumulation through time. Thus, it is rather this newly gained

ability to rationally observe and reflect the world in the manner that is very much more akin to the key tenets of the European spirit (Patočka, 1992:8) than the sole act of keeping track of time or chronologically marking the events through time that comes to constitute history. By referring to the non-European traditions of event-keeping, in which the written document of the past serves as an instruction for the preservation of the way of operating within the grand household of life that is self-consuming, Patočka alludes to his narrower European definition of history (1975:28), as of an era of the primacy of insight into the world and the capacity for life in action. Thus, even the emerge of writing, which might be the most practical tool for marking and organising collective pools of meaning, cannot be conflated with the European ideal of “proper” history itself, as it can also be an “extremely effective medium for the petrification of life forms” (1975:35), being a way to solidify tradition in a manner that is reminiscent of prehistory in its ontological metaphor, that is perceived as lacking any expression of the desire for progress beyond repetition whatsoever.

However, organised togetherness of humans, which relies on writing as a tool for the participation in the collective pools of meaning and knowledge, can create the conditions in which individual lives transcend their physical transience (1975:37), and come at least slightly closer to immortality that had been reserved solely for the gods. It is also through these acts of memory keeping for posterity and their transmission that aggregates of human collectives become historical in their whole. These are also the means by which human beings access their political existences of action and the opportunity to live a life that goes beyond self-consumption (ibid), which again brings us to the question of labour.

As it had been mentioned in the previous chapter, according to Arendt, the political life is enabled by the rupture between the private sphere of the household, *oikos*, and the public sphere of the *polis* (1958:28). The public life of political capacities presupposes a liberation from the necessity of life, which is maintained by those who labour under the urgency of physical existence in the private sphere of life (1958:32). This rupture that displaces labour and work as the supporting domain for the superior sphere of political existence, coincides with the beginning of history, as it is understood also by Patočka — it liberates humans from “mere self-consumption and dissolution in transience” (1975:38). However, while Arendt puts emphasis on the idea of performing excellence in the competitive realm of the public sphere as separate (1958:49), for Patočka, this constant “*reaching forth*” (1975:38) can never be perceived in isolation. The acceptance and self-extension of labour that the private sphere facilitates enables the political domain of life, yet the political domain comes to reciprocally

affect the sphere of the household by providing it with meaning (ibid). History in such beginnings is, thus, enacted by those who through the privilege of being liberated from necessity gain the access to the public sphere, yet is invariably constructed on the backs of those who labour in invisibility.

The beginning of history and the formalisation of the European spirit can be both tied to the emergence of the *polis*, which expresses the political ideal of the striving towards universalism and the rationality of Europe. What both history and philosophy of the European spirit rely on is the abandonment of the prehistorical and preproblematic certainties of life, and the subsequent pursuit of the understanding of being, accessing it in openness towards the world (1975:41). As opposed to the first two movements of existence that ground and accept, physically nurture and accommodate, the core of the political existence, as a part of the body of the *polis*, is the state of confrontation with the others, of being in constant opposition with others who are exercising their freedoms in the public sphere of life in action (1975:42). Thus, in *polis*, both meaning and political power are no longer an organic extension of the cosmos but are something that is always arrived at in contestation (Dodd, 2016:83). Despite being in conflict, those who participate in the political sphere are deemed to be bound together exactly by the seeming universality of *polemos*, which is what allows insight into that which manifests, into the being that emerges from what-is — thus, the same force constitutes both the foundations of the *polis* and the essence of philosophy, as insight into the being of the world (1975:43).

Polemos as confrontation is not perceived as a mere violent exception but as a constant pivot point of both the political sphere and history. As anything that deviates from the perfect homeostasis of existence, including all discomfort, lack of understanding and grounding, *polemos* finds its root in the fact of human finitude and delimitation — it is the realisation that a human life, thrown up in reaching forth of its own historicity, is the problematisation itself that as such is emerging from *nothing* (Dodd, 2016:85). It is only in this dark, in this suspension above the dark pit of *nothing* that insight into the nature of things, *phronēsis*, becomes an option as a “flash of being out of the night” (Patočka, 1975:42-3). Thus, it is insight that is brought forward as a reaction to the all-enveloping darkness that in history becomes that which binds universally.

Patočka is rather explicit in his attempts to narrow down the definition of history — history becomes an endeavour of the purely European spirit, based on the idea of excellence, *arête*, being a testimony of a life that is no longer lived solely for the sake of living but has a newly

accessed capacity of rational insight into the nature of things (ibid). As such, the emergence of history, as well as the emergence of the political sphere of life, announces a new “permutation of the fundamental openness to the world” (Dodd, 2016:82), a new kind of world in its entirety.

Even though the English translation does not entirely express its volatile nature, the state of *reaching forth* [vzmachu] is a movement towards the future that by its definition is a leap in *polemos* without any pre-given foundation, enwrapped by the darkness of obscurity in which light of meaning can be pursued. History is, thus, as well an endeavour that is not standing “on the firm ground of generative continuity, [as] it is not backed by the dark earth, but only by darkness ... confronted by its finitude and its permanent precariousness of life” (Patočka, 1975:38). This darkness is perceived as ontological, that which enables the existential state of uprootedness, “the groundlessness of existential possibility” (Dodd, 2016:84).

Patočka’s reading of Heraclitus and the understanding of *polemos*, as that which is common to all (Heraclitus, 1987) is quite similar to Heidegger’s take on such commonality in *Introduction to Metaphysics* (1953), in which *polemos* is intrinsically bound to *logos* and nature. The phenomenon that is manifested out of the darkness of what-is, is affixed by the faculty of *logos*, seen and delimited accordingly within “the realm of the individuated *cosmos*” (Patočka, 1975:42), while such world opened up in the confrontation is what is common to all. Such commonality is marked by the understanding of *logos* being the key characteristic of being human which must be common to all those who act in the political arena. Thus, neither *polemos* nor *polis* precede each other but reinforce each other in continuity. It is in this commonality that Patočka at a two-fold political consequence of being in *polemos* — being in the constant comportment of *inter arma* (1975:41), in the anticipation of war, and the enactment of solidarity in the recognition of the unity of existence (1975:43). Such a state of war should be understood as being in a constant confrontation with the world, requiring never-ceasing labour of creation of meaning, while standing in solidarity with those who have been uprooted from the world in the same manner. Patočka’s thorough analysis here already hints at his diagnosis of the contemporary world which has lost one of the two tenets of *polemos* in its original sense — a world in which the state of being in confrontation has turned inwards and dissolved all solidarity, a world in which insight and knowledge have become information, exploitation and already uncontrollable technological progress (ibid). With the increasing technological capabilities, human beings come to enter the world as a force of exponentially growing destructive

capabilities and the primordial state of dwelling soon enough becomes long-forgotten prehistory. *Polemos*, which Patočka still perceives as the “truly dignified beginning” (1975:44) of history and of Europe, has definitely transformed, in the misunderstanding of itself, into the doom of both.

3. — THE END OF HISTORY —

This chapter finally arrives at the conception of the problem of *the end of history* as conceptualised by Jan Patočka, not only in terms of his explicit definition of the post-historical being in the world but also including the implicit analogies to his argument on the emergence of post-Europe. The end of history should be able to demarcate a distinct era of being that in certain aspects should clearly differ from the problematics of history, in the same manner in which history challenges the pre-given of prehistory. Even though *the end of history* and *post-history* could be used almost interchangeably, these two formulations will be used in reference to their durational character. *The end of history* shall be treated as a transitional period in which the foundation of history overlaps with that which emerges in opposition, as a prelude to the era of *post-history*, which, on the other hand, could as such emancipate itself from history to be fully distinguishable. Since *the end of history* is arguably also that which characterises the moment of the present, the temporal duration of such transitional period is also immediately experienced in currently lived lives, that are led in this in-between. Perhaps such experience of being neither here nor there, even on a larger historical scale, points at a more fundamental issue of the fleeting nature of the present in the European consciousness. In the Western teleological perception of time, the present is “nothing but a vanishing point of transition toward what is to come” (Haraway, 2014: 242), suspended in-between that which it strives to overcome and that which it means to seize.

However, if we are to discuss the concept of the end of history in Patočka’s terms and as a derivative of his philosophy of history, it would be useful to begin with Alexandre Kojève and his note on post-history that appears in his *Introduction to the Reading of Hegel: Lectures on the Phenomenology of Spirit* (1946). The connection with Kojève is significant not only in terms of his influence on Patočka’s reading of Hegel’s *The Phenomenology of Spirit* (1807), and subsequent understanding of the nature of history and his formulation of the idea of the end of history but also as a foundation for more contemporary permutations of the idea, which will be very briefly touched upon as well. Even though the term *the end of history* is currently

associated with concrete political, social and economic conditions of late capitalism, echoed in the popularly disseminated truism that “it is easier to imagine an end to the world than an end to capitalism”, attributed to Slavoj Žižek and Fredric Jameson, the following chapters aim to arrive at a more optimistic conclusion. Based on the previous chapters that rely on Patočka’s understanding of openness as historical, it is feasible to argue that even in the timeframe of the end of history each individual uncovering of being still is a new addition to the accumulation that always comes to constitute a new world, performatively facilitating a new region of openness. The end of history, and its culmination in post-history, might still happen to develop into an era of a new reflection, of a different perception of progress, time and collectivity.

If one particular moment in time enabled in conjunction both Europe and history, then their successors could also be emanating from conditions they have in common. A realisation of the decline of Europe happens in parallel with the realisation of the changes in the historical comportment of history in the narrow sense. Thus, post-history is here also understood as accompanied by the emergence of post-Europe and vice versa. Just as history and the formation of the *polis* that came to be Europe are not in the linear causal relation, in which it could be clearly posited which caused the other, but come to enforce each other through enactment of the preoccupations they share, in an analogous manner, post-history and post-Europe inherit such relation of performing each other in interconnection. If a new world of post-Europe were to become the regenerated world that has the capacity to overcome the developed decadence of Europe and unlearn from the mistakes of the European spiritual heritage, which is how Patočka imagines the ideal scenario of this world in emergence (1992:15-16), it would be accompanied by a post-historical attitude of being in the world. Even though the individual lived experiences in the world of the present testify to how laborious the efforts of enacting a change in the collective attitude must be for it to bear fruit, a shift has always occurred in the accumulation of individual encounters with the world that come to constitute the collective pool of meaning. In these terms, *the end of history* is a paradoxical transition that could contain both the realisation of the European decline, visible in the overall decadence and a return to the prehistorical concern with life as sustenance, and an attempt to restore humanity as such. It is this twofold orientation of the the end of history, in which profound critical awareness of the past and a leap towards a liveable future overlap, that enables the emergence of post-history as a potential new epoch — such new historical comportment is, however, possible only through constant performing of critical revaluation and care.

3.1. — THE END OF HISTORY AS A RETURN —

To talk of *the end of history* is to unavoidably encounter an uncertainty about what the future might have in store for the world of human beings. Despite its definitions that often rely on the seeming predictability of post-history as deterioration of the European potential, as a new era that emerges in its historicity, out of the accumulation of time and individual discoveries of being, as such it must mark something new, that in the past had lied in obscurity. Therefore, *the end of history* can be interpreted as having itself the capacity of manifesting out of this obscurity of the future as a phenomenon that is actively being pulled out of darkness as something original that enters the light of insight, and comes to constitute a new region of openness. Thus, even in Patočka, for whom the end of history “consists of a return to the prehistorical stage of existence” (Paparusso, 2016:201), a circling back to the life of labour and mere physiological preservation of life, one might encounter hopeful reflections on the unfolding of the future that could accommodate these ambivalent notions.

3.1.1. — KOJÈVE: THE END OF HISTORY, THE END OF DESIRE —

For Kojève, the era of post-history, or the condition of the post-historical man to be precise, is that in which the performance of tasks of history is no longer required because equilibrium and agreement have been reached in all domains of human existence (Bloom, 1969). In such world, human beings are free, for they have reached the state of ultimate social and political agreement. They have overcome labour as they solved the problem of necessity, they have discovered all the truths possible, which have become universally accepted and understood (ibid). However, if post-history is the ultimate stage towards which history has been dialectically overturning itself towards, in its pursuit of reason, how come that such sequence of events that should have culminated as the pinnacle is dominated rather by the evident decay and decline of humanity?

Kojève posits that humans exist in a relation with time and desire, or as historical time in which the direction of towards the future is held in supremacy above other temporal aspects (Paparusso, 2016:202). Nature, as the natural world, is what is constant throughout time, yet can be interrupted by these human leaps towards the future, directed towards the non-natural

(ibid). A human existence that is “Self-Consciousness” is driven by a Desire that has transcended a mere animal desire that regulates biological survival — such “Desire must therefore be directed toward a non-natural object” (Kojève, 1969:5), aiming beyond the reality provided by the natural world. What is to be understood as Desire in Kojève’s terms in that which is the only phenomenon that can concern itself with that which lies beyond the physical reality — however, it is also “but a revealed nothingness, an unreal emptiness” (ibid). Such conception of Desire as that which uplifts a biological existence, opening up possibilities for fulfilment and purpose that transgress the boundaries of mere physiological survival is rather reminiscent of the uprootedness of *polemos*. The act of desiring Desire, similarly to *polemos*, is an act manifesting the anticipation of the future, a leap towards an object that the present does not contain. Desire as a force that gains historical importance causes a disruption in the homeostatic biological being and incites action that has historical consequence (Kojève, 1969:4). It is driven towards the transformation of the natural, or even its destruction, in which an objective physical reality can be overcome in the construction of the subjective reality in turn (ibid).

However, what makes Desire as such a foundation for the human condition for Kojève, is the ability of Desire to establish a collectivity, as “Desire must be directed toward another Desire” (1969:5). It is only when these multiple Desires are directed towards each other that a herd, an organic conglomerate of beings, can become a society, that comes to produce a political human being (1969:6). In these reciprocally directed Desires, a fundamental interpersonal Desire is manifested, and that is a human desire to be recognised by others as an existence that is something more than just a natural life caught up in the cycle of self-sustenance. Historical acts and history itself, as emergent from the multiplicity of Desires, should dialectically move towards a universal “absolute recognition among human beings” (Paparusso, 2016:202), and should this goal be attained, history would reach its ending point in the fulfilment of itself (ibid). Such end of history would mark a rise of conditions of being in which all human existences would be able to emancipate themselves from necessity and be recognised by others in collectivity as such. While history was founded on the distinction between the Master and the Slave, in which a human being can only be either one or the other, the end of history begins when such distinctions are neither viable nor necessary any longer — there a dialectical synthesis of Master and Slave in Hegelian terms dissolves these categories as such, allowing a discovery and realisation of capacities and possibilities that in history would have remained obscured (Kojève, 1969:42-45). In these terms, “human history is the history of desired Desires” (Kojève, 1969:6), which ends once there is nothing left to be desired.

It is important to note that despite the image of the ultimate equality of earth that Kojève's understanding of the end of history might evoke, the end of history is here conceptualised through an obsessively Eurocentric perspective that favours progress and is entirely submerged in its teleological perception of history. Influenced by Hegel and his interpretation of the wars of Napoleon, even for Kojève it was Napoleon who broke history and brought "Man's historical evolution" to an end by opening up a "space of the universal revolutionary force" (1969:160), after which all political actions have become mere reiterations of this glorious [sic] event. Thus, even though the theoretical framework of Kojève's perception of the end of history could appear as a truly egalitarian project that history aims towards, its concrete historical localisation points at its rotten European core that Patočka will advocate for it to be overcome. It is exactly this spirit of Europe that brings the "backward civilizations of the peripheral provinces into line with the most advanced European historical positions" (ibid), that eliminates the anachronistic, conquers and exterminates the Other, and culminates in the wars of the twentieth century.

3.1.2. — END OF HISTORY AS THE RETURN TO THE PREHISTORICAL —

As the previous chapter covered in more detail, history in Patočka's terms emerges with the phenomenon of *polemos* in which human beings are suspended above the darkness of the nothingness that precessed and conditions all being. They are in a leap *reaching forward*, anticipating the future, while constructing the future through the anticipation itself. Such new form of being in confrontation with the world in contrast with unproblematically dwelling in the world, is a condition in which newness can emerge for itself, as a result of newly attained capacity for insight into the nature of things through being a platform in openness on which phenomena manifest. The emergence of history is emergence of the formation of the *polis*, and thus the emergence of philosophy as such. However, this way of *seeing* in which the faculty of sight becomes directly attached to the faculty of reason that no longer merely observes but probes into the being of the that which is perceived, is a form of being in the world that is "developed *only* along western lines" (Patočka, 1975: 143). In his glosses to the *Heretical Essays*, Patočka reflects on the seeming evolutionary character that history appropriates when it positions itself as an enlightened antithesis to the naïvety of prehistory — history as such in brought forward in conjunction with the western European spirit, whose claimed universality is not where the history begins but where it in its European terms, as European, ends (ibid).

Even though Patočka subtly hints at different modes of understanding of the problem of the end of history even in the *Heretical Essays* (1975:72-75), the clearest definition appears in an unpublished lecture from 1972, titled “Christianity and the Natural World”, which is quoted by Riccardo Paparusso in his paper *The End of History and After* (2016) — I will, thus, refer to the rather large passage of this lecture that is quoted there.

Patočka’s reading of the contemporary moment in time and the conditions of being that it imposes leads him to perceive sequences of certain historical events as cyclical rather than teleologically linear. Even though history has been an era of constant leaping forward in order to escape the human condition of labouring as a mere biological existence that dwells in the world, it would seem that these human-caused historical creations in fact “open up ever-renewed possibilities of falling back below the level of freedom that was originally reached” (Patočka, 1972). Thus, even though history might be interpreted as series of attempts to overcome the burden of biological existence, the laborious necessity of physiological survival, it seems to end in a point in which it once again succumbs to a life that is confined solely to its biological-economic domain (Paparusso, 2016). The dilemma of history and its subsequent end is exactly in this “oscillation... [and the question of] how [it is] possible that man, having emerged from the prehistorical stage and having crossed the historical process, was able to return to that biological level” (Patočka, 1972).

The realisation of the cyclical or oscillatory character of history is the fissure through which an antithesis to the western teleological perception of history and the supremacy of the future could be devised. As such it presents a possibility for a reflected alternative to the perception of the European history as a *teleological nexus*, that dominated even Edmund Husserl’s understanding of history (Patočka, 1975:44). As such the European history should be a clear evolutionary sequence of instances of performing insight and rationality, of leading a life in responsibility based on the care for the soul. Since the faculty of reasons is what is deemed to constitute a human being and should be as a characteristic universal, the teleological nexus should have been also be universally applicable. However, as it is this capacity for insight that distinguishes the European spirit from the rest of the world that is left on the fringes of European consciousness, the teleological nexus of history, and history as such also come to be, in their striving towards the universal, oddly particular. It is the generalisation of the European heritage in its false universality that accompanied the attempt of Europe to conquer the entire world, causing the beginning of the decline of Europe and, therefore, history as well (Patočka, 1992:11).

The idea of a teleological direction does not have to be eliminated in its entirety, for Patočka still posits *ratio* as the original incitement of movement of change and historical permutations, even in the era of post-Europe and possibly post-history — as such he proposes even a possibility of rationality in a responsible alliance with technology that would enable a technological insight, bringing *ratio* in its original sense back as the authentic insight into the world (1992:21). It is important to emphasise that for such revival of the faculty of insight, it would be crucial to understand insight as a process of being in the world, as a movement through life, and by no means as an finalised product of work or as property that could be owned (1992:32)

On the other hand, Paparusso argues that Patočka's understanding of history, that leads him to his definition of post-history as a return the mode of being that resembles prehistory rather than history, is supported by the *telos* of human freedom and being in responsibility that in the oscillatory movements of history happens to forget itself (2016:205). Without memory, this *telos* is a “*telos* without *logos*”, which, in this lack, is consequentially unable to produce a teleological process and even induces a regression, a reduction of the existence to its mere biological framework once again (ibid). In contrast to the dialectical understanding of history as development of Hegel and Kojève, the lack of memory of itself inhibits such *telos* from becoming quantitatively measurable as progress, escaping the mathematically organised conception of the world of the modern natural sciences. It comes resemble Patočka's characterisation of responsible life (Paparusso, 2016:207), as described in the *Fifth Heretical Essay* in connection with responsibility in Christianity, as “a gift from something which ultimately, though it has the character of the Good, has also the traits of the inaccessible and forever superior to humans” (1975:106). Such life in responsibility, that considers the other and is willing to self-sacrifice is a manifestation and enactment of “a self-forgetting goodness and a self-denying (not orgiastic) love” (ibid).

Therefore, a *telos* that cannot retain any memory of itself is a *telos* that is in constant re-emergence as something that is new in its entirety. Just as a self-sacrificing individual act in responsibility does not appear in a sequence of logically progressing acts of selflessness, yet has the capacity to influence history, such displaced *telos* can, as a preoccupation of a given moment in time, also constitute history, without necessarily fulfilling a goal, in which the teleological nexus would culminate (ibid). The *telos of freedom* that forgets itself is a constantly transforming and reappearing direction of history in which it is given space and opportunity to arise in a form that correspond to the necessities of a given era, adjusting to its political and economic systems, to its material and spiritual conditions. Thus, if each epoch can be

interpreted as having its own *telos* that is invented and devised, even post-history would not have to be a lost era without direction but a conscious re-imagination of its own *telos*.

On the side note, the conceptualisation of the *telos* of Western history as particular and fragmented is also a methodological take on the problem of the end of history which can be a counterargument to the contemporary interpretation of Kojève's teleological view. Kojève's theory has been crucial for the formulation of the most dominant perspectives on the end of history, such as that of Francis Fukuyama, for whom the teleological nexus of history, driven by the enabling of freedoms, culminates in liberal democracy as the universal, "final form of human government" (1989:4). For Patočka, liberalism is an attempt to "methodologically continue in the old tradition of the imperialistic Europe" (1992:22), masking an unbridgeable gap between freedom and liberties that liberal democracy offers. In terms of its historical sustainability, already in *Europe and post-Europe*, Patočka urges for a critical reconsideration of this system of government that so desperately relies on the uncontrolled overproduction of capitalism, exploitation and the subsequent destruction of the earth (1992:23). Therefore, if there is to be a future for the human kind, a new system must be devised.

Patočka reads the contemporary historical mood, in which a return to the prehistoric mode of being is observable, as based on the return to the mere biological existence in the world as a metabolism that sustains itself in order to reproduce (1975:74). However, the contemporary condition, characterised by a spiritual decline, is not as similar to the prehistorical dwelling on earth, for while prehistory is marked by the pre-given abundance of meaning, the present is characterised by its evident deterioration and decline (ibid).

While prehistory experienced the wholeness of the world in which human beings occupied their appropriate place which was bestowed upon them by higher forces, the societies of the late industrial age have conquered a new position in the world for themselves, in which they can no longer tap into the unifying factor of the natural world which constitutes the prevailing human condition. The natural world has thus been reduced to the material existence of raw resources that are to be extracted and exploited, with humanity reaching a point in which the obsession with the exponential development can be diagnosed as pathological (Patočka, 1975:96). Thus, the contemporary condition of existing within the framework of advanced capitalism and neoliberal democracy in which one regresses back into the mode of living that is concerned solely with sustenance starkly differs from the life in prehistory where human beings had not yet become a destructive force in the world — for while in prehistory the bondage to life as continuous labouring and providing of sustenance was very much congruent

with the primordial foundation of the human condition, the technocratic era in which one labours indefinitely is a situation that was exacerbated artificially. Therefore, such return could be rephrased not as prehistorical but as ahistorical, for the prehistorical mode of being presupposes a fully intelligible unified natural world, which the technocratic movement of history has rendered completely obsolete. Such an ahistorical being could be a characteristic of the mode of comportment that links prehistorical dwelling on earth with the current diagnosis of the present.

Patočka's understanding of the technological age of the present and the realisation of its grave dangers is very much influenced by both Husserl and Heidegger, in which technology, despite its optimistic beginnings in the pursuit of the truth, became the cause for the loss of foundation of a life based on insight, as is explained in his lecture from 1973, *The Dangers of Technicization in Science according to E. Husserl and the Essence of Technology as Danger according to M. Heidegger*. To briefly summarise, the seed of the overextending state of the general deterioration of meaning is rooted in science becoming *têchné* that unreflectedly aims to mathematically calculate the manifestation of the natural world, replacing subjective experience of the world with "the objectifying idealizations" that are then conceived as universal undeniable truths of the world (1973:14). Unlike Husserl, Heidegger perceives the crisis of meaning as an essential compound of the contemporary era in which the scientific mathematical interaction with the world becomes a way of accessing being (*ibid*) — as such the natural world becomes "the chief storehouse of the standing energy reserve" (Heidegger, 1977:21). For Patočka, the danger and the already lived consequence of irresponsible employment of technology is that technology as uncovering is an uncovering that can no longer even understand nor reflect itself as uncovering, as it is "concealing the essential core of truth in an unfamiliar way and so closing man's access to what he himself is — a being capable of standing in an original relation to the truth." (1973:16). In Heideggerian terms, the historical condition of the technological age is that of *Enframing* [*Gestell*] — "the nothing technological" which conditions everything that emanates, formulating all perceived phenomena that manifest themselves in terms of their relation to nature as depositories of raw energy and material, as "standing reserve" (1977:21-24). Thus, unlike the natural world of prehistory that had been obscured by the primordial veil of unity, the ability to uncover being in the technological age is inhibited by this unfamiliar artificial mediation of reality of *Gestell* in which insight that goes beyond the practically applicable facts, into the nature of being, is almost impossible.

In the interpretation of the end of history as a return to the prehistorical mode of being, as it appears in Patočka's aforementioned unpublished lecture on history and Christianity from 1973, the contemporary epoch shares certain features of being in the world with the prehistorical mode of preproblematic dwelling. However, as an era that is entirely enraptured in its technological advancements and the progress as quantifiable by the seeming objectivity of the mathematically oriented natural sciences, the relationship with meaning is entirely different than that of prehistory. What the present and the preproblematic world do seem to have in common is the reduction of human existence to its biological survival and its reproductive capacities — labour in its perpetual nature of self-consumption re-enters the stage of human existence as the dominating human activity that sustains. However, while labour in prehistory is a direct and immediate consequence of the reality of the natural world into which human beings are intrinsically embedded as a part of the ecosystem they inhabit that functions as a coherent whole, labour in the technocratic era is a regression, for what was once reachable through being in openness is once again entirely concealed. So, if the natural world of prehistory was a world in which concealment was not even perceived as such, for everything would have been intelligible as one whole, subtly held together by the third movement of existence, then the present is the era of total concealment in its absolute. This could be seen as the marking point for the beginning of the end of history, for history, as a human endeavour based on the insight, is founded on the emergence of the recognition of the phenomenal world that emerges out of what-is, and the ability to distinguish between the obscured and the apprehensible. In the end of history, understood as total concealment, everything is visible under the light, yet nothing seems to be truly intelligible.

Here Patočka's reading of the dangers of technicization of the world and insight rely on Heidegger's coining of the term *Gestell*, "the name for the essence of modern technology" (1977:20) that comes to mark the contemporary condition of being entirely enveloped by technology. In such state, which is also in itself historical, insight as an extension of human openness is replaced by the omnipresence of technology that comes to mediate the world in its entirety. Through the lens of the technocratic eye that probes for facts and information, the natural world is not longer perceived as that from which the human condition as such stems but as an aggregate of energy and material that can be extracted and transformed to facilitate exponential growth.

When openness is no longer a viable nor applicable human ability as a being in the world, when the world can no longer manifest to those who wish to encounter it in order to apprehend its phenomenal nature, a regression back into the domain of a purely biological existence must occur. Technology, when employed without reflection and responsibility comes to replace the

human faculty of reason as the main gatherer of insight of the world — as such it presents all the information collected and obtained as objective universal truths in which there is very little space left for an authentic subjective experience of the world. Such world is a "world devoid of a metaphysics in the sense of a duplication of the world", of the differentiation between being and what-is, a "ground [that] refuses to yield to us" (Patočka, 1973:16). This is the point in which the humankind also departs and forgets about the darkness of *polemos*, for everything is suddenly illuminated by the violent eye technology. This is the misunderstanding of comprehending the world that Patočka warns against — "life [needs] be understood not from the viewpoint of the *day*, of life merely accepted, but also from the view of strife, of the night, of *polemos*" (1975:44). The technological turn in history that heralds the end of history is marked by the absolute domination of nature and a leap towards the conquest of the cosmos, yet, paradoxically, it is no longer humanity that rules over all this matter it appropriated for itself as property, but *Gestell*, "the essential core of technology... [ruling] over all that is... [remaining] concealed in its rule" (Patočka, 1973:17).

3.2. — POST-HISTORY AS POST-EUROPE —

While the end of history has been understood and described as a transitional period in which both the foundation of history and the essence of Europe seem to be crumbling away, post-history can be interrupted as an ontologically distinguishable epoch in itself. As such, it, however, fully relies on Patočka's conceptualisation post-Europe, as an announcement of a future that transgresses, disrupts and critically deconstructs the hegemony of Europe and its heritage. To think of post-Europe is however not to obliterate Europe in its entirety, neither as a politically coherent body nor in terms of its spiritual core — it is an overcoming that still contains Europe as its point of departure, that acknowledges it as its source and its predecessor, and exactly through this realisation and recognition can comprehend its past mistakes and learn from them through a process of unlearning.

In his essay *Europe and post-Europe* [*Europa und Nach-Europa*] (1992), Patočka departs from the observation that the present moment is in some aspects already qualitatively different from the beginning of the twentieth century, for the world has become in its entirety enraptured in

the continuous advancements of technology (1992:15-16). Such is the world of the planetary era that was brought forward by the attempt to Europeanise the whole of the world but resulted in the undeniable decay of Europe and the West. If we are to distinguish Europe as a political body and the body of the European spiritual heritage, then the end of the reign of Europe as the prior, with its project of conquering the whole world, was brought about by the false generalisation of the latter (1992:11). Europe had been the spiritual tradition of that had had the capacity perform the faculty of insight as the opening of the world — however, throughout history, it chose to depart from this original insight *from within* that through openness discovers the meaning of the world, and came to favour the approach *from without*, that conquers and exploits (1992:12). Thus, the decline of Europe is rooted in this misinterpretation of insight and subsequently of knowledge, and the misunderstanding of being in *polemos*. However, as such the hypothesis of the emergence of the epoch of post-Europe should not be interpreted as a purely ideological construction of human history. Patočka emphasises that European history is not founded on the superiority of idealism over materialism, of ideologies over socio-economic factors, but on the attempt to gain an understanding of the given reality of what-is through the faculty of insight (1992:12). The decline of Europe is a sign of a profound change in the fabric of its philosophical spirit, that can only be ameliorated on the planetary level through the overcoming that post-Europe could provide.

A beginning of an interpretative search into the possibility of post-Europe would not even be a possibility were there not for an attempt to take a radical step away from the conventional European methods and concepts that formulate the dominant interpretations of history. Only once any “latent Eurocentrism” (Patočka, 2002:2) is critically addressed and distanced from, can a historical analysis of the world escape the grasps of the binary articulation of historical events, and consider the human capacity for insight and being in openness as a historical factor. Such approach to history also requires a critical reflection on the conception of history as a teleological nexus — as has been mentioned in the previous chapter in more detail — in which history as a whole is interpreted through the lens of a continuous unified objective time as a universal process applicable to all being. Patočka problematises the teleological perception of history as it is framed by a perspective that aims to encompass all historical events and comprehend them from above as mere “dents” (*ibid*) in the fabric of time, which come to logically progress in attainment of a concrete metaphysical goal. Patočka admits that it is possible that the imagining of the progression of events that culminate in the fulfilment of such goal constitutes a conceptualisation of history that in the context of the European spiritual tradition and its own movement through time has been an appropriate approach that

produces an image that is intelligible in its coherence — however, its problematic character is truly revealed once its direction is forcefully imposed on other non-European movements through time (ibid). It is the European teleology, which is founded on the secularised Christian understanding of history (ibid), that imposed itself and its ideal of progressive change in a logical sequence on the rest of the world, that created a foundation for the imperialistic aspirations of Europe.

Thus, even the presupposition that the whole world that is constituted by a multiplicity of both human and non-human entities can be contained in one singular interpretation of history must be deemed as highly problematic. The natural world, despite its endurance through time as the constant that grounds all existence, is the world that without exception manifests historically, through the contingencies of lived experience and the possibilities of a given epoch. As such, the natural world is approachable only through that which the given moment in time allows to manifest to the being in the world, based on the accumulation of encounters with the world through time, meaning that such manifesting phenomenon cannot transcend the framework of history nor attain universality (2002:3). The historical world is a world in the perpetual making, in constant emergence, thus even the historical time manifests in its continuous transformation. The realisation of this fluid impermanence of both the frame of history and the phenomenal nature of the world is the first step towards the understanding of human history that acknowledges its own epistemological perspective and its own embodiment in the world and thus challenges the dominance of the universalist Eurocentric perspectives on history.

The traditional periodisation of history which Europe devised through the events that it deemed as crucial and transformative, as those that moved the world forward (ibid), is as well a reflection of the self-perception of Europe that understood itself as the progressive driving force of the planetary timeline, discarding all movements that deviated from its teleological aim as prehistorical and irrelevant. As such, periodisation itself is consequentially also an aspect of a historical method that must be scrutinised if parallel historical narratives and timelines are to be acknowledged as arenas in which the natural world manifests in a different manner. The decline of Europe as the most dominating political and imperial force in the world illuminates the fact that European history is not the history of the world in its entirety but a history of a very particular fragment of the world, which happened to have aspirations of a cosmological scale.

The destruction of Europe and the decay of the European spirit is historically located in the outcomes of the two world wars of the twentieth century, in which Europe lost its position as

the most dominant power in the world — however, its universality tendencies and globalising aspirations have continued shaping the course of global history despite being disattached from its European core (Novotný, 2016:303). The pursuit of universality comes to still underpin the “techno-rational civilisation” of today, in which *ratio* becomes solely instrumental, leaving no space whatsoever for subjectivity (ibid). Thus, even though “Europe has always been in a sense subjective, here we encounter a world of absolute perfect objectivity” (Patočka, 1992:17), which is no longer apprehensible through individual subjective insight but solely through the “unified God’s Eye View, a homogenisation” (Novotný, 2016:304).

The destruction of Europe and the decay of the European spirit occurs within the framework of *Gestell*, in which the natural world is no longer a place of dwelling nor a depository of what-is from which meaning can manifest but the source of accumulation suitable for extraction of raw materials and energy. Technology that establishes the frame of the *Gestell* had become the locus of the *reaching forth* as the mean of propelling into the future without actually having the capacity to truly enable a long term future — once *polemos* of being in the dark of nothing is replaced by the probing light of the technological eye, being in openness with the world, as the original source of history, becomes obsolete. Such mindless preoccupation with excessive accumulation of material, energy, and political and military power, can only be confronted through a conscious responsible insight, of which Europe and possibly even its immediate offspring are not very likely to be capable of (Patočka, 1992:28). Therefore, there must be an active, revolutionary attempt of dissociating from the European phenomenon, in order to comprehend its movement, its errors and even begin to conceptualise the era in which such unsustainable tenets of Europe can be overcome.

As it has already been established in the first chapter and reiterated throughout the previous section of the second chapter, history in the narrow sense emerges as a phenomenon that is tightly interlinked with the formulation of the *polis*, as a political body that channels the confrontation of *polemos*. History as such, as the realisation of the double world that allows being to manifest from what-is, as a fracturing of the unified whole of meaning of prehistory, is an endeavour whose root can be located at the beginning of Europe. Thus, if history should have its successor, the epoch that is established through the transfiguration of the end of history, it must correspond with that which overcomes Europe upon its decline. If so, then post-history as post-Europe, and post-Europe as post-history, will be founded on a common principle of *unlearning Europe*.

It is somewhat contradictory that even though history has been throughout Patočka’s philosophy of history defined as an endeavour of purely European terms, it could potentially continue

through post-history as another cycle of the historical comportment of openness. Post-history when accompanied by post-Europe can be an arena for the rediscovery of insight, openness and the awareness of the binding natural world, without falling into the Eurocentrism that history as an era presupposes. In the world that no longer revolves around Europe (1922: 11-17), the historical mood in its most fundamental sense of being in *polemos*, allowing being to be uncovered, produced and maintained, through the performance of solidarity and self-reflection aware of its delimitation, could reemerge as an appropriated reiteration, as post-history.

3.2.1. — UNLEARNING EUROPE —

In the recognition of the plurality of the post-European world that can enable a space for the emergence of the non-European, the possibility of a new historical era of post-Europe requires the overcoming of “Cartesian subjectivism, as a source of techno-scientism with an asubjective phenomenology based on an ontology of being-in-the-world as movement” (Novotný, 2016:305). Through this phenomenological turn, the “post-European epoch [becomes] the epoch of opportunity, of great chances that could lead all humanity of the future not only towards a technical understanding [technický rozum] but towards the self-reflection reason as well [rozum rozumějící sobě samému] (Patočka, 1992:21).

Patočka’s understanding of Europe and history in their interconnection is founded on the spiritual principle in which “the soul is focused on the unconcealing of things, on their complete unconcealing, on the truthfulness of revealing things” (Patočka, 2002:79). However, even the concept of openness in the sense of encountering the world, or the concept of the ‘open soul’ as Patočka proposes in the 1960s (Novotný, 2016:307) must be understood in the context of a conscious reevaluation of its European heritage — only as “an active distancing from the aggressive reach of technology’s pursuit of world domination” (ibid) can openness facilitate construction of the world that is self-aware and can accommodate all multiplicities equally.

Despite the fact that the idea of expanding the opportunity for an authentic insight into the world can from the perspective a European consciousness that is becoming aware of its historicity and the baggage of its heritage be both presented and perceived as rather benevolent and optimistic, it once again reiterates the Eurocentric notion that only Europe holds the key to the uncovering of being. Thus, even such a project that aims towards inclusivity of the multiplicity of the phenomenal natures of the world can still be a project of Eurocentric universalism. As such, it once again perpetuates the idea that Europe and the European spirit are, when it comes to

insight, regardless of whether technological or phenomenological, spiritually superior to the rest of the world (ibid). However, Karel Novotný, in his essay *Europe, Post-Europe and Eurocentrism* (2016), argues that Patočka prevents such Eurocentric approach to openness through positing that “European self-determination consists in ‘first actually introducing ’the non-European reflection and ‘permitting ’it to ‘bear fruit’” (2016:308) — as such the demand of openness and the “open soul” is thus not a practice of being in the world that is to be imposed on the other but a re-evaluation of the mode of being that Europe and the European subject need to apply exclusively to themselves. As such openness in multiplicity does not become a new project of spiritual colonisation but a critical reorientation inwards, a new attempt to understand the movement of the European heritage. As such insight as a process of being in the world can become a tool for assessment of not only the European history and its consequences but also a critical reflection of the present, that actively strives to transgress the boundary of the *Gestell* and escape the clutches of the technocratic illumination. Such reevaluation of the metaphysics of history is simultaneously a revision of the metaphysics of European philosophy as such, and “quite likely its destruction” (Patočka, 2002:5).

The process of *unlearning Europe* does not mean that Europe in its entirety must be discarded but that those aspects of its tradition that have created the sense of European superiority and caused the uncontrollable technological turn of the progress the devours must be overcome. Only this displacement of the European in the epoch of post-Europe and post-history can compensate for the generally pessimistic outcome for Europe and the uncertainty on what the plenary configuration might bring in the near future — it is also only through the mitigation of *Gestell* and the conscious self-critical rediscovery of the capacity for openness that a liveable future can be anticipated. To unlearn Europe means to actively reflect upon the current conditions of being on the earth as a whole without imposing the particular European insight on others, but also not falling into the traps of individual interest in their particularity (Patočka, 1992:21). Only if the post-European humanity manages to avoid the past errors of Europe and prevent them from happening once again, can it begin to confront the situation of a planetary catastrophe that they have been led into by these misunderstandings of the European spirit (ibid). Post-history, as well as post-Europe, is in this sense not an era that arises organically but can become a distinct era with its expanded understanding of openness as self-awareness only through active performance of responsibility in the world. As such, it must be an accumulation of individual efforts to critically assess and challenge the hegemony of the corrupted globalised Western spirit, which in collectivity as secondary phenomena can establish a new original region of openness, in which historicity is not an accepted contingency but an

active attempt of building the world that could envision a future of not merely surviving but as thriving in a newly regained humanity.

3.3. — A NEW FOUNDATION OF FUTURES IN ANTICIPATION —

We have arrived at the concept of the end of history, and the era of post-history, through an attempt of a thorough understanding of the emergence of history, all in order to at least partially grasp the diagnosis of the present and hopefully hints at a possible spiritual turn that must be undertaken if there is to be any future for human beings on earth. Patočka's insight into the nature of history and the movements of existence that have sustained it could still aid us in the articulation of these necessities of the future. It is evident that the current preoccupation with technological progress and constant economic growth is a configuration of values and interests is a herald of unavoidable doom. The moment in time that is marked by the end of history is an era in which both the decay of the old and that which is to be overcome overlaps with the possibility of a new possibility of emergence in its originality — as that which succeeds history, post-history must be an era of reflection and of healing in collectivity, a world in which the third movement of existence, *the movement of truth*, once again becomes a possibility in its authentic form.

Let us recall the concept of *polemos* as understood by Patočka as that which “constitutes the *polis* and the primordial insight that makes philosophy possible” (1975:43), being that which binds all being in collectivity. *Polemos*, despite its confrontational character that encompasses all strife, struggle and conflict of existence, is not a celebration of war but a striving for a self-imposed meaning that always arises in the confrontation with the world, which as historical comportment comes to drive the process of history. If *polemos* is to become relevant once again in post-history as that which enwraps all being in the world, then it must be grasped in its radical ontological form — as that which is an equivalent of the nothing from which all being emanates, *polemos* is the darkness that through discomfort and *uprootedness* in the world allows the light of insight to manifest. Patočka in a way predicted that the potential of *polemos* in its radical responsible form might be “something that perhaps only later days will learn after reaching the nadir of destruction and devastation” (1975:44). However, the potential revival of *polemos* in post-history, as the return to the darkness of mystery and the concealed,

for which Patočka advocates, warning against the dangers of the constant day of the *Gestell* (ibid), must rely equally on the aspect of solidarity it was meant to uphold.

Patočka emphasises that appearing to those who are in openness in the world is highly interconnected with *responsibility*, as the phenomena that manifest do not make themselves known arbitrarily — the state of being in *responsibility* is the only comportment in which human being can face the crisis of the world and the crisis of the deterioration of meaning (Ritter, 2019:149). Patočka proposes a formulation of a new spiritual direction in togetherness, *the solidarity of the shaken*, as a possibility of enduring the crisis on an intersubjective level. However, what the solidarity of “the shaken”, “the solidarity of those who are capable of understanding what life and death are all about, and so what history is about” (1975:134) is founded on is not common in terms of a political community but on individual encounters with the overwhelming nature of the world (Ritter, 2019:154). It is these encounters with the world that aim to transgress the mere biological existence in the world that point at the individual subjective character of insight and the ability to access the world in openness, that in collectivity accumulates despite not occurring in a body of a community — as such they are “the same experience suffered *separately*” (ibid).

Martin Ritter, in his essay *Passing Through the World (as) Crisis* (2019), argues that *polemos* is in all its aspects acting through negation, and even in the terms that favour solidarity, it is still enacted through a rejection, which does not correspond to the idea that *polemos* can serve as “a *positive*, meaning-bestowing principle” (ibid). However, even if the polemic world is not sufficient for the sustaining of meaning and togetherness, the natural world as that which materially grounds all existence, is that which remains constant and thus has the capacity to uphold throughout time, even during the epochs in which it is not perceived as such. The natural world persists as the “unitary, unique whole” (Patočka, 2016:54), grounding the being-in-the-world in their interconnection with other being, while simultaneously establishing their specific perspective from within (2016:56).

If post-history is to anticipate a future, then the vast environmental crisis that humanity is facing requires a radical repositioning in relation to the conceptualisation of the natural world. Therefore, here I propose post-historical circling back towards the understanding of the natural world — however, not in terms that characterise the end of history in which human beings regress back into their biological existences that barely survive, but in terms of conscious seeking of the interconnectedness of all living and non-living entities that the natural world contains. Such a turn towards the natural world as that which holds all existence together in

coherent systems of coexistence does not have to be a total obliteration of history as a return to the prehistorical dwelling but a conscious realisation of the connection encountered through openness.

However, if this concrete natural world is to endure the human-induced ecological crisis, it is not enough to merely reject the teleological perception of history but of time in its entirety. In her essay, *Speculative Fabulations for Technoculture's Generations: Taking Care of Unexpected Country* (2014), Haraway addresses the changes that have been triggered in the immediate environment in which all being is embedded, problematising the concept of linear time and the insufficient ethics of care it has the capacity to imply. Haraway asks how can we “re-ground responsibility and accountability to time, generations and place in a way that might lead to ecological and social restoration and reconciliation” (2014:100), and how to as those who inherited the problematics of Europe as colonisers “participate in decolonising generational practices” (ibid). As opposed to the Western teleological perception of time, in which the past is overcome so the future can be attained, Haraway presents an example of a non-teleological reading of the time in which, instead of the future, one “faces” the past — therefore, they come to be in continuous responsibility and “ongoing care in a thick and consequential present” (ibid). As such, the present is no longer a fleeting point in-between, as an ontologically ungraspable transition, but a perceptible accumulation of indebtedness towards both the ancestral past and the future of the offspring. In such equation, the material aspect of the natural world is encountered in openness, not through abstract categories but as matter imbued with meaning that is to be discovered and accounted for through responsibility. Once the natural world is recognised as a material carrier of history, as the singular body of matter that circulates throughout the world, post-history can become an epoch that exists simultaneously in the comprehension of the unity of the world and being in *polemos*. Being in the darkness of *polemos*, uprooted from the certainty of the pre-given meaning while being in the certainty of the interconnectedness of the world is a contradiction that can facilitate “generational *obligation of and capacity for responsive attentiveness*” (Haraway, 2014:102). The epoch of post-history must, therefore, learn to inherit the past it wishes to overcome and reconcile with it. As such, it must learn to live with the consequences and the damage induced by the ruthlessness of *Gestell*, and regardless of the effort needed, learn how to take care of this transformed natural world, for there is no other home (Patočka, 2016:56).

4. — CONCLUSION —

This thesis began as an attempt of understanding Patočka's conception of history as a possibility of arriving at the definition of the end of history. The definition of the problem of history has been arrived at through an exposition on the emergence of history from the preproblematic world of prehistory, which aided in the articulation of its potential end and decline. Apart from the end of history, which came to be treated as a transitional era in between history and post-history, post-history as the successor of history came to be formulated through an analogy with post-Europe. Post-Europe was thus considered for the openness and unpredictability, as a potential for a change in the collective consciousness and a departure from the European historical comportment. Post-history, accompanied by post-Europe, is optimistically interpreted as a possibility for a historical paradigm shift in which the Western consciousness could become self-critical and reflect on the catastrophes that its preoccupation with exponential progress, stemming from its teleological perception of time and history, brought upon the world. Such speculative reading of the present aimed to be an enactment of such critical reflection on the European spirit itself, asking how one can understand the present in order to facilitate a livable future.

To reiterate the key points of the thesis, it would be useful to begin with the conception of the natural world that upholds all being in unity. The natural world is in Patočka's terms defined as prehistorical rather than pretheoretical, which is the aspect of his phenomenological reading of history where his heresy lies. As opposed to the natural world of prehistory, history is marked by the newly emergent possibility of problematisation of the world, which one encounters through the faculty of openness in the world. As such, the phenomenological nature of the natural world manifests to those who confront it in their attempt to apprehend being that emanates from what-is. History, in its problematisation of the world, ruptures the unified world of prehistory that did not recognise the state of obscurity as such — the preproblematic world is the world in which there is no doubling, no distinction between what-is and what manifests, for the world in its entirety is perceived as one intelligible whole. With its pre-given unified meaning, it is a world of unproblematic dwelling in which the only viable human activity is that of labour that sustains the physiological existence in the world.

It is the liberation from the necessity of constant labouring of sustenance that comes to enable both the emergence of history and the formulation of the public sphere of life in which politics and the formation of *polis* will manifest. Therefore, history becomes an endeavour that aims to transcend the delimitation of individual biological life, a pursuit of a life that transgresses the boundary of necessity. The historical era as such departs from the simplicity and the comfort of the primordial world and enters an era in which humanity gains the freedom of being able to impose their own meaning upon themselves, transcending the pre-given meaning and their place in the universe of prehistory, yet they also encounter the perils of the confrontation with the nothing.

History in the narrow sense and the European spirit are interpreted as parallels that emerge from the newly discovered ability of being in openness that presupposes the enwrapping darkness of *polemos*, from which the insight into the light of being is possible. Therefore, *polemos* must be considered in its ontological function, as the condition for openness in the world, as the realisation of the state of obscurity of what-is. In the uprootedness of the *polemos*, history is the constant leap of *reaching forth* in its concern for the future, levitating in existential possibilities.

The possibility of uncovering is treated as deeply historical, for it depends on the historical moment within which the phenomenal world unfolds. The domain of being that can be accessed in a given era of particular historical contingencies, is established through a region of openness that corresponds to the accumulations of individual encounters with the world that come to constitute a collective pool of meaning, imagination and memory. Therefore, each enactment of openness in the world occurs on the individual subjective plane, yet as a secondary phenomenon that can be conveyed and communicated through the means of language throughout a collectivity, it enters these collective pools that come to constitute history. In its cumulative nature, each act of openness that uncovers a new fraction of being comes to establish a new original world — therefore, the world of history is a world that is in perpetual creation, constantly announcing a possibility of the emergence of a new era.

The end of history and the subsequent epoch of post-Europe stem from the observation that the world of the present is a world that qualitatively differs from the beginning of the twentieth century, temporally corresponding with the decline of Europe and the emergence of post-Europe. The issue of decline and the thesis of regression back into the domain of the prehistoric existence that can no longer encounter being that characterises the concept of the end of history comes to be an argument that disrupts the conception of history as a teleological nexus that governs all movements of time universally. The historical time can,

thus, be interpreted in its emergent nature, as being brought forwards by the fragmented multiplicity of directions that arise within particular historical conditions, and not by one dominant goal that is attained in a logical sequence of events. The conception of the teleological nexus is criticised as the locus of Eurocentric imperialistic tendencies and the development of the technocratic era of uncontrollable consumption of energy and resources of the earth. The moment of the end of history is characterised by the deterioration of all meaning under the technological framework of *Gestell*, whose mathematically oriented instrumental *ratio* illuminates all there is as objective facts. Such a world is the world of absolute objectivity, in which there is no space left for a subjective experience of the world, thus, neither for the subjective encounter of being.

Therefore, post-history and its analogy post-Europe must become a possibility of reevaluation of the misunderstandings of history and the European spirit, an enactment of *unlearning Europe*. As a process that requires a constant self-reflection and a displacement of key European tenets of insight and rationality, it can become a world-building practice that in responsibility confronts its innate Eurocentrism and reappropriates insight to be able to accommodate the multiplicity of the post-European epoch. Post-history as the successor of history has the capacity to learn from the past errors of Europe, and though this process of unlearning, challenge the notion of teleological linear time and history, reevaluate the meaning of progress and exponential growth in *Gestell*, and through being in conscious openness and responsibility in the world, learn to accommodate both the burden of the past and care for the future.

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