

“TO LIVE IN TRUTH” – SOME THOUGHTS ON JAN PATOČKA’S LIFEWORK

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Between 1987 and 1992, “Selected Works” by Jan Patočka were published in Vienna. This five-volume edition in German has prompted the author to draw a sketch of life and work of the Bohemian philosopher, whose studies in Germany in 1933/4 (Edmund Husserl and Martin Heidegger being prominent among his teachers) set the course for the phenomenological thrust of his philosophic work, as is clearly demonstrated by the two volumes of the Vienna edition which are devoted to his phenomenological essays. The titles of two of the remaining volumes – *Ketzerische Essays zur Philosophie der Geschichte* (Heretical Essays on Historical Philosophy) and *Schriften zur tschechischen Philosophie und Geschichte* (On Czech Philosophy and History) point to the all-important part history played, for Patočka, in the framework of phenomenology. History was, in his words, its most profound level. And just as philosophy for him never was merely idle theorizing – active engagement being what

he sought – so history was not about perception, but about responsibility. It led to what he termed “solidarity of the upset”. That they – the upset – left an account of themselves in arts and sciences was convincingly shown in Patočka’s cultural philosophy and traced in subjects ranging from classical tragedy to the rebel leitmotif in the present rock culture. Striking examples can be found in the volume *Kunst und Zeit* (Art and Time).