

The Nostalgic Movement of Responsibility in Patočka's Later Teaching

Peter McDowell
Education

Charles Darwin University

In evaluating Jan Patočka's last writings, Erazim Kohák discerns a subtle deviation from the phenomenological programs established by Husserl and Heidegger, namely the absorption of elements readily identifiable as Romantic or Nietzschean or otherwise attributable to Heidegger's later thinking; or classical motifs, like the tradition of consolatory writing after Augustine (and reappearing in Comenius).

While not wishing to invalidate Kohák's interpretation, the paper claims that these components reflect, more fundamentally, a nostalgic dimension within Patočka's late philosophy, which, rather than signalling, say, an apocalyptic fissure in his philosophical style, derives instead from the abstract regulation of European civilisation (as Patočka conceives it).

The paper argues that Patočka's final works, especially *Plato and Europe* and the *Heretical Essays in the Philosophy of History*, comprise coordinated attempts to establish a 'teaching' that challenges contemporary philosophy to recapture the dire significance of technologically-mediated cultural decadence, and to appreciate that varieties of nostalgia, and consonant acts such as sacrifice, form an important means of disturbing the *status quo*.

As a teaching, a substantive philosophical curriculum emerges, centred around the interdependent topics of "care of the soul", phenomenology of history, the concept "Europe", and the metaphysics of phenomena (supported by clarifying investigations of the life-world). A dialogic pedagogy accompanies this curriculum, interleaving philosophical responsibility with sustained reflection. Moreover, recalling Patočka's earnest attempts to reconfigure Aristotle's philosophy of movement, autochthonous transitions between the three movements of human existence punctuate the general progression of topics, systematically so in *Body, Community, Language, World*.

Introduction

To reiterate means to attempt to, through new ways, new words, new methods, say the same thing. *We have to say what is, again, over and over, and always in a different way, but it always has to be the same thing!*¹

This paper is attempting to convey a particular reading of Jan Patočka's later teaching.

Inspired by the way Erazim Kohák introduced Patočka to English-speaking readers in the 1970s, '80s and '90s, emphasising a commonality of purpose spanning five decades, the writer is wanting to show that there is a strong programmatic aspect to Patočka's late works, a program that becomes essentially pedagogic–pedagogic but not didactic.

The paper will try to explain how Patočka, in his late works (which, we must remember, comprise an assortment of published articles, lecture notes, reportata of unofficial gatherings, privately circulated typescripts, and so on),² makes his emerging pedagogy absolutely central to his personal philosophy. In other words, it is argued, in the period from the late 1960s until his untimely death in 1977,³ Patočka is trying to establish a teaching—just like his great philosophical predecessors (Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, etc.)—who established teachings that Patočka is in constant, critical conversation with.

¹ Jan Patočka, *Plato and Europe*, trans. Petr Lom (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2002), 90; italics in the original.

² Erazim Kohák, *Jan Patočka: Philosophy and Selected Writings* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1989), 351.

³ *Ibid.*, 3.

As Paul Ricœur emphasises famously in his preface to Patočka's *Heretical Essays in the Philosophy of History*,⁴ Patočka had a real status as a teacher, and since, by definition, inspirational teachers develop a teaching somehow, we might ask ourselves, what precisely is Patočka's teaching?

We turn now to the guiding thread of the paper.

In his summaries of Patočka's work, prepared for English readers over the course of some twenty years, Kohák detects several discordant or extraneous elements, elements that could be described as non-phenomenological, Romantic, and so on (to be discussed further in a moment). In response to these perhaps not invalid findings, the paper argues that the appearance of these elements (or motifs), which we can admit as discordant or extraneous if we wish, is not so much the result of a fundamental rupture, or a fresh, errant impetus within Patočka's mature thinking—in response to shifting political circumstances⁵—but rather, elements that relate, fundamentally, to the formation of Patočka's teaching.

So, to ask again, why is the teaching important?

Because the pedagogy helps to consolidate and redirect the philosophy. Indeed, the nature of the teaching can be foreshadowed here. It is characterised by movement, dynamism, dialogism, and heteroglossia.⁶ Yet, unexpectedly, there is a certain nostalgic element,⁷ which, in effect, helps to promote this movement and dialogue, though, importantly, avoiding systematisation and didacticism.

The nostalgia, if pursued in a constructive manner, enables sustained critique, recovery, and reconstruction of the context (or “concrete situation”⁸) needed to understand where European thinking has arrived—arrived at today for its inheritors.⁹ Indeed, in a way, this nostalgic movement could easily appear as a Nietzschean genealogy,¹⁰ or a rhapsodic application of genetic phenomenology,¹¹ but again, there is a pedagogic motive behind the appearance of these motifs, which we will now explore in more detail.

Unfortunately, given the constraints of the occasion, many relevant topics will only be touched upon, and, of course, the manifold barriers of language, cultural distance, professional status (the author being a lecturer in Education), and so on, will all play their part in influencing the reception of this particular reading.

Kohák's Reading

We first turn briefly to Kohák's reading of Patočka.

Kohák's homage to Patočka in English has spanned several decades. His wide-ranging critical commentary is generally affirming, recognising Patočka's long-running faithfulness to Husserl's phenomenological program; but from its earliest expression onwards, there has been a certain uneasiness underlying Kohák's comments, stated and intimated in various ways, which largely

⁴ Paul Ricœur, “Preface to the French Edition of Jan Patočka's *Heretical Essays*”. In Jan Patočka *Heretical Essays in the Philosophy of History*, trans. Erazim Kohák, ed. James Dodd (Chicago, IL: Open Court, 1996).

⁵ Kohák, *Jan Patočka*, 106.

⁶ See M. M. Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays*, trans. Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 1981).

⁷ See Svetlana Boym, *The Future of Nostalgia* (New York, NY: Basic Books, 2001).

⁸ Patočka, *Plato and Europe*, 181.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 9.

¹⁰ Friedrich Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morals*, trans. Walter Kaufmann (New York, NY: Random House, 1967).

¹¹ Jacques Derrida, “‘Genesis and Structure’ and Phenomenology”, in *Writing and Difference* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1978).

indicates that, in the latter stages of his career, Patočka begins to deviate inauspiciously from the phenomenological enterprise, especially as practiced by Husserl and the “pre-turn” Heidegger.¹²

In his interpretive study of Husserl’s *Ideas I*,¹³ titled *Idea and Experience*, Kohák detects that Patočka, the Husserlian disciple, has ostensibly, under Heidegger’s subtle influence, become afflicted with a “mystical skepsis”,¹⁴ by entertaining the “heresy” that the central notion of “evident givenness” might be somehow questionable.¹⁵

Subsequently, in his exquisite meditation on “the moral sense of nature”, the monograph *The Embers and the Stars*, Kohák discerns in Patočka’s later writings a deeper Heideggerian “kinship”, this time in relation to Patočka’s epochal approach to the philosophy of history.¹⁶

Then, in a subsequent article in *The Review of Metaphysics*,¹⁷ introducing Patočka’s oeuvre to the international community of English-speaking academic philosophers, Kohák notices an unresolved tension in Patočka’s late work, emerging, more-or-less, from having endured the influences of the pre- and post-war (fascist and communist) periods. Kohák proceeds to argue that the prevailing hopelessness of the Soviet era¹⁸ brought forth a sequence of politically tolerable postures, including various classical studies and consolatory writings in the manner of, for example, Saint Augustine¹⁹ and Comenius.²⁰

Finally, in the translator’s postscript to *Heretical Essays*, there is explicit recoil.²¹ There, Kohák notices extraneous, pre-Socratic motifs, unfittingly dialectical, such as the Heraclitean emphasis on war and strife, interpretable somehow as either Romantic, Nietzschean, or even apocalyptic.

For Kohák, the Patočka of *An Introduction to Husserl’s Phenomenology* (mid 1960s)²² and *Body, Community, Language, World* (late 1960s, in a more “hopeful” political climate)²³ seems to be the phenomenological “high-water mark”, with subsequent works somehow drifting away from the Husserlian, and even the Heideggerian, approaches to phenomenology.

In general terms, this progression of critical views is reaffirmed in Kohák’s sustained intellectual biography,²⁴ where the trajectories of Patočka’s thinking are placed in far richer historic-political

¹² Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson (Oxford, UK: Basil Blackwell, 1962).

¹³ Edmund Husserl, *Ideas Pertaining to a Pure Phenomenology and to a Phenomenological Philosophy. First Book: General Introduction to a Pure Phenomenology*, trans. Fred Kersten (The Hague, Netherlands: Martinus Nijhoff, 1983).

¹⁴ Erazim Kohák, *Idea and Experience: Edmund Husserl’s Project of Phenomenology in Ideas I* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1978), 106.

¹⁵ See Husserl, *Ideas I*, 326.

¹⁶ Erazim Kohák, *The Embers and the Stars: A Philosophical Inquiry into the Moral Sense of Nature* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1984), 20.

¹⁷ Erazim Kohák, “The Crisis of Rationality and the ‘Natural’ World”, *The Review of Metaphysics* 40, no. 1 (1986): 79-106.

¹⁸ See Leszek Kołakowski, “Hope and Hopelessness”, *Survey: A Journal of East & West Studies* 17, no. 3 (1971), 37-52.

¹⁹ Augustine, *Confessions*, trans. R. S. Pine-Coffin (London, UK: Penguin, 1961).

²⁰ John Comenius, *The Labyrinth of the World and the Paradise of the Heart*, trans. Howard Louthan and Andrea Sterk (Mahwah, NY: Paulist Press, 1998).

²¹ Jan Patočka, *Heretical Essays in the Philosophy of History*, trans. Erazim Kohák, ed. James Dodd (Chicago, IL: Open Court, 1996), 159.

²² Jan Patočka, *An Introduction to Husserl’s Phenomenology*, trans. Erazim Kohák (Chicago, IL: Open Court, 1996).

²³ Jan Patočka, *Body, Community, Language, World*, trans. Erazim Kohák, ed. James Dodd (Chicago, IL: Open Court, 1998).

²⁴ Kohák, *Jan Patočka*.

context (an expansive story to which others have made important contributions).²⁵ Unfortunately, we cannot go into these matters here.

The present paper, however, is making a counter-claim, namely, that of the two works just mentioned, the latter especially, *Body, Community, Language, World*, is combining with important subsequent works, *Plato and Europe*, the *Heretical Essays in the Philosophy of History*, and other contemporaneous published writings, to establish Patočka's teaching, a teaching that has its own accompanying pedagogy and philosophical curriculum.

An Alternative Reading

At the very the end of *Plato and Europe*, originally conducted in lecture-cum-seminar format, right where the discussion between the participants finally breaks off, there is an interesting impromptu comment from Patočka that suggests an alternative (but still mutually consistent) reading to Kohák's:

All sorts of nostalgia, which in European life always surface with periodical urgency—which we call Renaissance or romanticism—they are all related to the sentiment that something is not quite right with this peculiar abstract civilisation, that somewhere, it has a deep 'wound'.²⁶

Although quoted here largely out of context, the passage is mentioning, ostensibly, the same things that Kohák is having trouble assimilating: incongruent or unanticipated romanticism and Renaissance (which might also allude to Husserl's Cartesianism),²⁷ and since Patočka himself is identifying their presence, we do not really need to deny Kohák his reading.

Actually, the status of this interesting passage is ambiguous, as it follows some rhetorical questioning surrounding the work of Lévi-Strauss, who features at key points in *Plato and Europe*, and so whether this nostalgic position is attributable to Lévi-Strauss, or rather, whether Patočka is rehearsing a critique of Lévi-Strauss, or actually presenting his own view, is a moot point.

But, nonetheless, in making these comments, whether referring to his own thinking or not, Patočka is foreshadowing the crucial appearance of nostalgic elements within the history of philosophy.

From this passage, the items specifically identified by Kohák appear to be somehow historically structural, that is, directly related to the history of Europe. In other words, this brief passage can be read as more than simply a personal view. Rather, Patočka is signalling the importance of nostalgia—nostalgia that is variegated—identified here with two explicit labels, Renaissance and romanticism.²⁸

Actually, the text of *Plato and Europe* breaks off here—these are literally the final comments—with a claim that the problem of the “wound” and its affiliated nostalgia is particularly urgent. Of course, a deeper historical interpretation of this urgency is developed directly in the *Heretical Essays*.²⁹

From here, notwithstanding the potential ambiguity in the quoted passage, the present paper is affirming, on the basis of evidence accruing elsewhere in *Plato and Europe*, and in the other late

²⁵ Ludwig Landgrebe, “Jan Patočka”, *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 38, no. 2 (1977): 287-290; Ivan Chvatík, “Geschichte und Vorgeschichte des Prager Jan Patočka-Archivs”, in *Jan Patočka and the European Heritage*, ed. Ivan Chvatík, Studia Phænomenologica (Bucharest, Romania: , “Remembering Jan Patočka: Opening Speech at the Conference in Prague, April 23, 2007”, in *Jan Patočka and the Heritage of Phenomenology: Centenary Papers*, ed. Ivan Chvatík and Erika Abrams (Dordrecht, Netherlands: Springer, 2011).

²⁶ Patočka, *Plato and Europe*, 223.

²⁷ Edmund Husserl, *Cartesian Meditations: An Introduction to Phenomenology*, trans. Dorian Cairns (Dordrecht, Netherlands: Kluwer Academic, 1965).

²⁸ See Paul Oskar Kristeller, *Renaissance Thought and the Arts: Collected Essays* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1990); Anthony K Thorlby, *The Romantic Movement* (London, UK: Longmans, 1966).

²⁹ See the Sixth Essay.

works mentioned, that nostalgia and nostalgic moves are integral to Patočka's philosophical rhetoric, and significantly, to the establishment of Patočka's pedagogy and teaching.

However, at this point we need to recognise the abstraction, or formality, also mentioned in the passage, formality which is covered concisely in the Patočka's Warsaw Lecture (delivered in 1971).³⁰ There Patočka summarises Husserl's mature phenomenological position and its consequences, particularly the discovery of the significance of "indirect mathematisation" and the ongoing hypothesis that accompanies it: that there are formal, mathematical correlates to the full spectrum of subjectively experienced qualitative content.³¹

A curtailed, but very interesting analysis follows in this Warsaw Lecture, traversing the principal theme of Husserl's *The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology: An Introduction to Phenomenological Philosophy*,³² leading through a summary of Patočka's lengthy analyses of the life-world, and ending with the claim that a dynamic historicity, incorporating a fundamental situatedness and orientation to tradition, underpins our deepest philosophical account of human existence.³³ In this context, with European history ever-unfolding, ever-refolding and combining tradition with novelty in both familiar and unexpected ways, a nostalgic move (such as romanticism) becomes at once a signal and a trigger for initiating the kind of responsible "inner conduct"³⁴ that Patočka is advocating in these later works.

Nostalgic Movement

With the suggestion that there are varieties of nostalgia, and that nostalgic movements are somehow related to the formal structure of "Europe", an obvious question arises: how does this understanding help the phenomenological enterprise?

Further, how would following a nostalgic movement, however initiated, help to us to notice and understand the formal structure, the abstract regulation of European civilisation, and deal pragmatically with the consequences of this understanding? And further, how should the nostalgic movement be followed?

To once again clarify the claim that is being made here: Patočka's identification of the nostalgic motif—or, alternatively, his recognition of the continuous refolding of history—is part of a broader attempt by Patočka to establish a teaching. And as we'll see shortly, so is the recommended approach to following the nostalgic movement: adopting a certain "vigilance" (assuming a position of responsibility) to appraise matters for ourselves—we cannot just rely on tradition.³⁵

Consequently, in the context of this purported teaching, an initial challenge for the teaching, in terms of a desirable philosophical outcome, would be to recapture the significance of technologically-mediated cultural decadence, a central theme of Husserl's final writings.³⁶

Consistent with the challenge, the theme of decadence forms a significant portion of the lengthy and intricate argument that underlies *Plato and Europe*. Indeed, the book opens with the notion of

³⁰ Jan Patočka, "Edmund Husserl's Philosophy of the Crisis of the Sciences and his Conception of a Phenomenology of the 'Life-World' (Warsaw Lecture, 1971)", in *Jan Patočka: Philosophy and Selected Writings* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1989).

³¹ *Ibid.*, 229; see also Jan Patočka, "Cartesianism and Phenomenology", in *Jan Patočka: Philosophy and Selected Writings* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1989), 289.

³² Edmund Husserl, *The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology: An Introduction to Phenomenological Philosophy*, trans. David Carr (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1970).

³³ Patočka, "Edmund Husserl's Philosophy of the Crisis", 236.

³⁴ Patočka, *Plato and Europe*, 1, italics in original.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 77.

³⁶ See Husserl's 1935 "Prague Lecture", in Edmund Husserl, *Phenomenology and the Crisis of Philosophy*, trans. Quentin Lauer (New York, NY: Harper Torchbooks, 1965).

decadence—more specifically, decay—both in societal terms, and in scientific, thermodynamic, terms.³⁷

Again, consistent with the notion of establishing a teaching, prior to introducing this theme, Patočka establishes the ground rules of this philosophical encounter, outlines the essentials of a preferred pedagogy: he expresses a desire that the forum be conversational and dialogic; and also, foreshadowing the mode of inquiry, he requests that the dialogue be reflective³⁸—in combination, a prototype of philosophical responsibility.

Very soon, among the prevailing mood of decay, Patočka invokes the apocalyptic vision of the “Club of Rome”—that contemporary civilisation will outstrip the earth’s carrying capacity within the coming century³⁹—and announces the stalling of Europe’s ascent, asserts that we are somehow now its inheritors. Moreover, urges Patočka, this idea of decay combined with inheritance punctuates Europe’s history, with important precedents in the respective fates of Greek and Roman civilisations.⁴⁰

Patočka goes on to discern these precedents within the philosophical tradition itself, tracing how, earlier, on notable occasions, “care for the soul”—in differing configurations in the teachings of Democritus, Plato, and Aristotle—emerged as a specifically Greek (and ultimately European) response to the situatedness of Greek civilisation and the Athenian polis.⁴¹

Indeed, through his nuanced analysis, Patočka is suggesting that “care for the soul” remains relevant in important ways today. But he is at pains to point out, through sustained dialogue with the phenomenological philosophy of Husserl and Heidegger, and commentators on their works, that the moderns, despite their careful scrutiny of the philosophical tradition, nonetheless, have not adequately appreciated this notion of inheritance through decay; have not adequately appreciated that the European heritage has been (and still is) “kept alive” through ongoing catastrophes; have not adequately appreciated that fundamental responses, such as “care of the soul” in its variants, need to be taken up, again and again, following the example of Socrates, in new ways, with efforts always different.⁴²

Essentially, Patočka is arguing that the modern attempt to somehow re-establish the European philosophical tradition, with its nuances and problematics internalised and reconstituted through a novel methodological approach (lately termed phenomenology), that ultimately embodies the “truth” of the tradition itself,⁴³ is not a fully adequate means of grasping what is at stake here.⁴⁴ Nor is the approach Patočka attributes to the later Heidegger, labelled as “defeatism”;⁴⁵ an approach which asserts the incommensurability of distinct metaphysical systems, and, in effect, produces the “horror” of philosophy without dialogue.⁴⁶

Responsibility

Now that the idea of Patočka’s teaching is starting to emerge—that there is a need to reiterate, responsibly, in new ways, vital elements of the European inheritance—a second challenge for the

³⁷ Patočka, *Plato and Europe*, 3.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 1.

³⁹ Donella H. Meadows, et al., *Limits to Growth: The 30-Year Update* (White River Junction, VT: Chelsea Green, 2004).

⁴⁰ Patočka, *Plato and Europe*, 88-89.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 89; see also the fourth *Heretical Essay*.

⁴² See the epigraph.

⁴³ For example see G W F Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, trans. A. V. Miller (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 1977), 27-28; and Husserl, *Crisis*, 70-73.

⁴⁴ See Patočka, “Cartesianism and Phenomenology”.

⁴⁵ Patočka, *Plato and Europe*, 177.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 175.

teaching arises: how can the teaching help us to appreciate nostalgia in its varieties, help us to realise that consonant acts such as sacrifice can help disturb the *status quo*? Here, the *status quo* might be considered as the various collective responses to European tradition—including prominent, modernist insights into cultural-historical crises⁴⁷—but it also includes the accompanying inadequacies just mentioned: the horror, defeatism, decadence, the difficult political situation, and so on.

In his Varna Lecture on “The Dangers of Technicization in Science according to E. Husserl and the Essence of Technology as Danger according to M. Heidegger”,⁴⁸ Patočka concludes his discussion of Husserl and Heidegger’s respective diagnoses of the contemporary technological context with an unexpected analysis of sacrifice. Consonant with nostalgic movement, to be effective, sacrifice has a persistent, repetitive element to it, which, through the sacrificial act itself, brings to light hidden or obscured aspects of technologised manifestation, thereby confronting the cultural misunderstanding that is somehow misconstruing the human experience lying at stake.⁴⁹

At this point, we can recall the sustained passages from *Plato and Europe*, where Patočka spends considerable time explaining the significance of manifesting, and how this inquiry, too, is coupled with the history and inheritance of Europe.⁵⁰ Finally, after elaborate analyses, covering wide-ranging topics, including the centrality of myth and mythology,⁵¹ Patočka reaches the conclusion that, notwithstanding the phenomenological emphasis on the modalities of appearance, the manifold structures of manifestation have largely resisted the lengthy European tradition of metaphysical inquiry—in contradistinction to something showing itself within the reaches of subjectivity, or, alternatively, having pragmatic significance.⁵² The structure of manifestation remains something that we have to question, but question ourselves, without relying on tradition, but not ignoring tradition, either, given that it forms part of our cultural situatedness.⁵³

For example, in the Thirteenth Lecture of *Body, Community, Language, World*, Patočka speaks of a conversation between Husserl and Heidegger that never took place.⁵⁴ However, not letting this situation deter him, Patočka retrieves the conversation nostalgically, and uses Gerhard Funke as a foil to bring out a key element of his (Patočka’s) emergent curriculum: grasping the vital importance of reflection as practice, especially as a means to help us think through the philosophical tradition for ourselves. And this “practice of self-discovery”⁵⁵ is exactly what Patočka proceeds to demonstrate (or teach) by carefully reconstructing Husserl and Heidegger’s respective postures towards reflection.

As with the discussion on sacrifice and myth, Patočka’s sustained analysis becomes interleaved with the metaphysics of phenomena, which, once again, requires additional clarifying investigations, this time on the nature of the “world” as the horizon of responsible thinking. The result of this nostalgic movement of responsibility is the finding that Husserl, despite his intensive “drive to responsibility”,⁵⁶ and despite his repeated clarifications of the phenomenological reduction as the principle means of ultimately validating this responsibility, for all that, Husserl was unable to

⁴⁷ These insights would include fundamental contributions by Freud, Bergson, Lukács, Adorno, and Scheler.

⁴⁸ Jan Patočka, “The Dangers of Technicization in Science according to E. Husserl and the Essence of Technology as Danger according to M. Heidegger (Varna Lecture, 1973)”, in *Jan Patočka: Philosophy and Selected Writings* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1989).

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 338-39.

⁵⁰ Patočka, *Plato and Europe*, 42.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 43-49.

⁵² For more background, see Patočka “Fourteenth Lecture” from Patočka, *Body, Community, Language, World*.

⁵³ Patočka, *Plato and Europe*, 41.

⁵⁴ Patočka, *Body, Community, Language, World*, 109.

⁵⁵ This phrase is from the title of the “Thirteenth Lecture”.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 84.

produce a theory of reflection;⁵⁷ or at least, not a theory of reflection able to conceive of reflection as a responsible act (as opposed to revealing “truth”). Instead, Patočka sees merit in interpreting reflective acts via pragmata,⁵⁸ a thread to be further investigated with guidance from Heidegger.

The discussion of pragmata again raises the question of responsibility, a topic that is also covered (famously) in the fifth *Heretical Essay*,⁵⁹ and earlier in the second *Heretical Essay*, as a conclusion to Patočka’s meditations on the birth of history.

Conclusion

Indeed, recapitulating our analyses, with a growing understanding of Patočka’s pedagogy, of the nostalgic movement of responsibility in Patočka’s later teaching, we can see in this controversial, subsequent text the outlines of familiar pedagogical features.

The textual development of the *Heretical Essays* follows a rough schema that corresponds more or less to the three movements of human existence. In summary terms, the three movements of human existence comprise a profound and elaborate theoretical construct that is attempting to both criticise and re-establish the metaphysical tradition, especially as this concerns the nested problematic of manifestation in its human, worldly context.

Patočka does this by reanalysing some relatively unexplored clues lying dormant in Aristotle’s philosophy of movement, which, despite its faults, remains the most viable and potent account of movement in the European tradition.⁶⁰

Patočka’s chief goal here is to avoid, if possible, the notion of substrate underpinning Aristotle’s ontological approach, but this depends on further analysis of substantiality and objectivity, which further relies on clarifying investigations of manifestation, which (hopefully) in a virtuous circle, depends on greater understanding of dynamism, and so on.

With this tightly knit curriculum, with the study of movement at its heart, we can now understand why the three movements of human existence punctuate Patočka later writings; because they provide autochthonous transitions between the interdependent topics of Patočka’s philosophical curriculum: “care of the soul”, phenomenology of history, the concept “Europe”, and the metaphysics of phenomena (supported by clarifying investigations of the life-world). As we have seen, a dialogic pedagogy accompanies this curriculum, interleaving philosophical responsibility with sustained reflection. And underpinning this dialogism is the movement of nostalgia, which provides essential dynamism to the process of inquiry.

It is fitting, then, that *Plato and Europe* ends inconclusively, in situated, responsible dialogue that is self-reflexive and suggestive of ongoing, open-ended, thematic discussion.

To make this more explicit, it is important to understand that *Plato and Europe* is unfinished as a conversation. In the last thematic impetus, right at the point of introducing Aristotle as another, key philosopher recasting the Greek project of “caring for the soul”, and thereby strengthening Patočka’s interpretation of the European heritage, Patočka suggests that there is room for investigating the historical epoch once again, once again as inheritors, but not necessarily the way it has been invoked so far, by invoking “care of the soul”, which is the Greek motif, and which spawned Europe in its catastrophic problematicity.⁶¹

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 165.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 116.

⁵⁹ For an idiosyncratic interpretation of this essay, see Jacques Derrida, *The Gift of Death*, trans. David Wills (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1995).

⁶⁰ To further explore the range of these preparatory studies, see Jan Patočka, *Aristote, Ses Devanciers, Ses Successeurs*, trans. Erika Abrams (Paris, France: Vrin, 2011).

⁶¹ Patočka, *Plato and Europe*, 181.

To reiterate, in a way Europe as a formal concept has reached its end (this is explicitly stated);⁶² there is something else at stake now. Exactly what this might be is not taken up directly in *Plato and Europe*, but knowing something of Patočka's teaching, we can pursue the impetus in the *Heretical Essays* and elsewhere in various later writings. Nonetheless, Patočka gives a hint in the final discussion of Aristotle's unique contribution to "care of the soul", and this is where Patočka isolates the importance of movement as both a concept and a metaphor underpinning so much of the European philosophical tradition.⁶³ But, says Patočka, even more than metaphor, "our own life is movement".⁶⁴

Peter McDowell is Lecturer in Education at Charles Darwin University. He is a graduate of the University of Sydney (General Philosophy) where he studied phenomenology and wrote a prize-winning honours thesis on Bergson's philosophical method. His current research is in educational theory, centred on the topic of transdisciplinary pedagogies.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 9.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 197.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 193.