

the views of philosophers about soul and its stages of being should also be studied and analyzed. Therefore, recognition of soul and its stages should be considered as one of the most important objectives of the education system of a society.

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## EUROPEN MAN AND CRISIS AT J. A. COMENIUS AND JAN PATOČKA

**David Krámský** (Prague, Czech Republic)

*Abstract.* *There are considered the issues of human existence and crisis on the basis of ideas of J.A. Comenius and Jan Patočka.*

*Key words:* *Crisis, human being, redemption, spirituality, phenomenology.*

## ЕВРОПЕЙСКИЙ ЧЕЛОВЕК И КРИЗИС ПО Я. А. КОМЕНИУСУ И ЯНУ ПАТОЧКЕ

**Давид Крамский** (Прага, Чешская республика)

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**David Krámský** – Department of Social studies,  
Faculty of pedagogy, University of Charles  
**E-mail:** david.kramsky@seznam.cz

**Давид Крамский** – кафедра социальных  
исследований, Педагогический фа  
культет, Карлов Университет.

**Аннотация.** Рассматриваются вопросы человеческого бытия и его кризиса на основе идей Я. А. Коменюса и Яна Патоčka.

**Ключевые слова:** Кризис, человек, искупление, духовность, феноменология

There are certainly several ways how to philosophically interpret Comenius's thinking, and each way considers different aspects. The approach, which is, in my opinion, relatively expressive in the contemporary Czech philosophical environment, is the phenomenological approach, or more precisely the so-called Patočka's approach. I would like to try to outline at least some of the chosen philosophical points of departure, which seem to be a determinant for Patočka's interpretation of Comenius, and which – similar to other points of departure – prefer one interpretation to another.

It is necessary to relate Patočka's individual interpretation of Comenius's work mainly to his personal philosophical production. This brief contemplation proposes to show those philosophical motives in Patočka's philosophical interpretation of Comenius's thinking that substantially determine the character of Patočka's actual interpretation of Comenius. I would like to especially highlight those motives, which Patočka draws from Husserl's late work (The Crisis of European Sciences), and specifically the exposition of natural world problems, the crisis of the world and humanity and its possible redemption.

There is no doubt that, in connection to Husserl's analysis of The Crisis, Patočka also understands his contemporaneity and experiences it as the crisis of humanity. We are not able to say anything about the value and meaning of human existence. According to Patočka, we no longer live in "the only world", our natural world is becoming the derivative world. The world we daily experience is different from the one which is a part of the objective description. The responsibility and decision to return to the original natural world which is, however, given to us before the entire objective description, is in its character bound to a similar teleological requirement (but not explicitly theological), found by Patočka in Comenius's educational- reformative intention.

### **Crisis of the era and universal redemption**

According to Patočka, even Comenius knows well that this crisis can be overcome through the universal transformation of the human being. One of the ways is a universal and methodical revision of single knowledge. Comenius places emphasis on practical knowledge – knowledge used for life and experience; there is the difference compared to F. Bacon. This practical and methodical knowledge is described by the Greek term *chrésis* (usage, demand, behaviour). Methodical *chrésis*, according to Comenius, should become the basis of each our cognition. Based on the naturalness, it is necessary to feel, "search through", taste and touch the world all the time. Only such education, where all our cognitive senses participate, can be pronounced as the real education.

Still another expressive motive related to this leads Patočka to so-called Husserl's interpretation of Comenius's work, and that is the methodical character of these educational-reformative efforts. Just as we experience Husserl's task connected with the very humanity, the task to perform methodical universal *epoché* and return to clean and original knowledge of the world on the basis of this new method, that way Patočka also highlights the Comenius's methodical universal intentions, drawing his foundation naturally from many period motives. In this respect Patočka notices, in particular, the influence of Bacon<sup>1</sup> upon Comenius. Bacon in an effort to "return heavenly freedom and 'all-governance' through technique" projects the inductive science. The method – organon – will enable to multiply forces of the human spirit and strengthen its control over itself and over nature. The human mission is to be the master of nature and this domination should ensure the knowledge. That way knowledge must be methodically reformed. Next to Bacon is also Campanella<sup>2</sup>, according to Patočka, who in a certain way entered the Comenius's intellectual scheme. Right from Campanella, Comenius draws his topics for transformation and revival of knowledge that should be useful for life in unprecedented purpose. According to Campanella, this transformation is necessarily linked to an overall renascence of society, as to a systematic reformation of all sectors of human knowledge. That way Comenius's project *Via lucis* – 'Way of Light' also develops from Campanella's close ideological environment.

Amongst the pivotal writers who influenced Comenius's work, Patočka particularly considers Descartes and Kusánský. This comparative interpretation of their work not only forms one of the fundamental centre lines of the third part of Patočka's Comeniological studies, but they reveal Comenius's production in quite new philosophical contexts. According to Patočka, Comenius together with Descartes<sup>3</sup> shares both scepticism towards cognition and cognizance *cogito* as the certainty of our existence and resource of knowledge.

In Jan Patočka's view, Comenius lives in a rough era of total transformation of spirituality. The expression of this transformation is mainly a revision of relations between human beings and the world. Together with such a spiritual transformation, redemption of the society devastated by the Thirty Years' War also becomes important subject matter.

- 1 See e.g. *Náčrt Komenského díla ve světle nových objevů*, In Patočka, J.: Comeniological studies I. Prague: OIKOYMENH, 1997, pg. 99–100, *Bacon Verulamský a Komenského Didaktika*, Ibid., pg. 151–160; *Komenský a Bacon*, In Comeniological studies III., pg. 542–583.
- 2 See e.g. *Základní filosofické myšlenky J.A. Komenského*, In Comeniological studies I., pg. 272–274; *Základní filosofické myšlenky J. A. Komenského v souvislosti se základy jeho soustavného vychovatelství*, In Comeniological studies III., pg. 153–157 or *Campanella a Komenský*, Ibid., pg. 584–585.
- 3 See e.g. *Descartes a Komenský – jejich vztah ve světle nových nálezů hallských*, In: Comeniological studies III. pg. 334–364.

Comenius's describes the world as fallen and vain<sup>4</sup> in his writings that Patočka dates to so-called consolatory moralistic period (Centrum securitatis and Labyrinth of the World and Paradise of the Heart). The world has a false and monstrous face. Its harmony and balance are only ostensible, in reality only delusion rules the world. It is impossible to live in this "perverse" world, so there is no choice but to return to the depth of safeness, to the heart. This, in some measure, resigned posture immediately reflects Comenius's destiny of life linked with tragic loss of his family, homeland and his own work.

Crisis, which is a source of absence of "pure rationality" in all areas of human behaviour, a source of "intolerable indefiniteness of human beings about their own existence and about their endless objectives"<sup>5</sup>, is also the guiding motive of late Husserl's texts, where Husserl reminds, that exactly the critical self-reflexivity as the effort of the human spirit becomes something irrelevant, despite all its significance. Mind, that should be in good form – i.e. critical, suffers according to Husserl.

That crisis in Husserl's opinion collocates with, let us say, replacement of our natural experience – the world of our natural life (*Lebenswelt*) – for the vicarious world. We frequently experience things presented to our opinion. These things, which we feel instantly, are here before they are named by scientific definitions, by all sorts of preliminary judgments.

Although this world is vicarious, it often appears as quite peculiar and original. As the world of life does not coincide with any piece of knowledge mediated by science, sciential idealizations in particular intervene more and more intensely in human life. The comprehension of the world, as developed by some sciences, means that the human world is reduced to „cold objective reality“, which has no relation to human beings any more. In this new understanding the world has become something external and distant for human beings. Husserl in his Crisis even talks about „the collapse of spiritual humanity“<sup>6</sup>. The urgent task facing human beings is to refer to a human spiritual origin; it is the *universal renaissance* of humanity in the nature of a critical and self-reflecting spirit. "Only if the spirit of a naive focus on the outside returns to itself and stays with itself, it can be self-sufficient."<sup>7</sup> The significance of what in general is called the humanity, is according to Husserl "Europeanism" understood as the universal challenge of the theoretical questioning the presumptions of our natural experience, the common and universal human horizon, which is conceived here as the infinite claim of a critical understanding to ourselves.

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4 See e.g. *Literární plány a díla J. A. Komenského*, In: Comeniological studies III. pg. 45–46; *Cusanus a Komenský*, In Comeniological studies I., pg. 59–85.

5 Ibid., pg. 364.

6 Husserl, E.: *The Crisis of European Sciences*, Prague: Svoboda, 1972. pg. 353.

7 Ibid., pg. 364.

Regarding the actual reformative effort, Patočka registers the turnover in Comenius's work at the beginning of the definition of pansophism, and explicitly in *Via Lucis*, published not until 1668, where Comenius starts to elaborate the subject of redemption through knowledge, through education, or more precisely through *universal* education towards *universal* knowledge<sup>8</sup>. Right here Patočka finds the ancient motive of classic Greek philosophy, which accepts the education as care for the soul, self recognition, as a way from fiction to existence, from an opinion to knowledge. This universal education is subsequently supposed to include everything and exist for all. That Greek *pan* is the constantly mentioned reference to inclusiveness and unity. To be pansophically well-educated means to be in harmony with the world, to be the reflection of entirety.

That way Patočka also reminds in references to Husserl, that the way from crisis, which is universal, must be the return to original humanity. So, according to Husserl it is necessary to ask for unity of the sense of humanity in the nature of "a historical task". It is questioning, which is not about to concentrate only on certain external description of the human sociality in spirit of an objective world-view, but questioning, which shall lead to a critical understanding of the overall unity of history, and regardless of the kind of sociality<sup>9</sup>.

Based on Husserl, the original sense of this spiritual unity has faded away over time and it is with the responsible philosophical work to find it again and bring it to evidence. "We are the functionaries of modern philosophical mankind, we are the heirs and the co-bearers of direction of the will that penetrates mankind and we are them from the first element of the philosophical purpose. There is the teleological origination and true genesis of European spirit in general."<sup>10</sup>, Husserl remarks.

Subsequently this task primarily focuses on our mind to be independent and responsible, i.e. a mind that finds the will in itself to get rid of all obscure "preliminary" (i.e. prejudicial) judgements, with a necessary decision on their acceptance yet to come. Afterwards, according to Husserl, "philosophy" is on behalf of this claim on the actual cogitation. "This truth identifies itself solely in evidence of a critical complex view, which can spot the harmony of a purposeful finality behind 'historical facts' of documentarily substantiated philosophy and behind their apparent wrestling and parallelism."<sup>11</sup>

Jan Patočka also understands the philosophy as care of the soul such as chances of *redemption* of society and fallen humanity. Is it a motive, which next to the instant life experience brings him the presence of Husserl's conception

8 See e.g. *Literární plány a díla J. A. Komenského*, In: Comeniological studies III., pg. 73; *Cesta světla, předosvícenská brána k osvíceným ideálům*, Ibid., pg. 464–478.

9 Ibid., The Crisis of European Sciences.

10 Ibid.

11 Ibid., pg. 95.

of crisis, and in connection with it also Comenius's philosophical proportion of thinking of the world crisis and its redemption.

### **Conclusion**

The analysis of the crisis of the human world and its possible redemption through the return to human nature can be shown as a methodical bolt between Jan Patočka's Comeniological and Husserl's research. It is necessary to somehow overcome such a crisis that Patočka not only feels through his personal experience with totalitarian regime, but also in studies of Husserl's texts. A certain resemblance can be seen in both, his personal life experience, and studied Husserl's and later on Comenius's texts. The possibility of redemption as heading out of the crisis is transformation of our human attitude towards the world, towards ourselves, the transformation expressing itself as a return to human naturalness, a return to comprehension of the original humanity in its responsibility and freedom.

In conclusion of my contribution I can perhaps formulate rather more explicitly the thesis that I wanted to outline here. It is with no doubt that reading Comenius's works with Patočka's eyes not only presumes superior knowledge of phenomenological points of departure to which Patočka elaborates in his intellectual contemplations.<sup>12</sup> Together with the knowledge of Patočka's philosophical and maybe also life motivation, the phenomenologist – "Patočkian", the interpreter of Comenius, must also be able to distinguish, which of these Comeniological interpretations are primarily from Patočka and his motivations and what comes from Comenius himself. What it is, that Patočka inserts in addition into Comenius's works as the interpreter – phenomenologist (in our short contemplation e.g. as the „Husserlian“), in which this inventory deposit presents the original Comenius's intellectual scheme and on the contrary, in what it places it to the back.

Why to be concerned with all this? Minimally because both these great Czech authorities – Jan Patočka and John Amos Comenius – certainly deserve such consequential distinction.

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<sup>12</sup> We particularly mention Husserl's terms „crisis“ and „natural world“ in connection with Patočka's analyses of Comenius's works in this text. Beside these terms this contemplation could also extend to another of Husserl's definition „common world“ as a primordial inter-subjective sphere.