

*A conference was held in Prague, Czech Republic, in November 2002 that was entitled "Issues Confronting the Post-European World" and that was dedicated to Jan Patočka (1907-1977). **The Organization of Phenomenological Organizations** was founded on that occasion. The following essay is published in celebration of that event.*

Essay 16

Jan Patočka and the Phenomenological Research Program¹



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Abstract

In his book, *Plato and Europe*, Jan Patočka questions the connection between philosophy and the idea of Europe in order to assess the prospects for a culture based on "care of the soul." Patočka identifies phenomenology -- the inquiry into manifestation as such -- as the most advanced representative of the philosophical impulse and defends it against misunderstandings in the hope that a philosophical Europe might prove to be a vital alternative to the imperialistic Europe in which Patočka found himself. The present essay examines Patočka's hope from the point of view of how phenomenology is currently inscribed in the self-consciousness of what, in America, is called "Continental philosophy." Is phenomenology a limited chapter in the history of Continental philosophy, superseded by movements such as hermeneutics, deconstruction, or poststructuralism? Or does it remain the vital core of contemporary philosophical practice, thus justifying the hopes that Patočka placed in it?

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§1. Patočka's Question

Any proposal to found a new philosophical organization ought first to ponder, with eminent seriousness, the question that Jan Patočka raised in his 1974 lectures, now translated into English as *Plato and Europe*. Noting that “today, philosophy is something playing an ever-diminishing role in spiritual reality,” Patočka wonders whether philosophy can still “mean” something, can again “bring ferment into reality” (Patočka 2002,129), as it did at its origin. Like Husserl, Patočka linked this question – without illusion, yet decisively – to the destiny of “Europe,” that is, to a certain geography that made geography irrelevant, a certain culture that was culturally “transparent,” a tradition that transcended tradition into “history” (221). I know of no one other than Patočka who has so emphatically championed Husserl’s now rather unfashionable view of Europe as defined essentially by philosophy: if it is “usually said that European life stands upon two fundamentals, on the Jewish and the Greek, this applies only conditionally, so long as the Jewish element passed through Greek reflection” (128). Europe so understood is less a cultural tradition than a commitment to what Patočka calls “looking in” (*nahlednuti*), to “seeing what-is” by way of a “moment of insight” – in short, what Husserl called “ultimate philosophical self-responsibility” (89, 129). Because of this, Patočka can say that the secret history of Europe – that is, of history as such, as opposed to cultural myth-and-story telling – is “care of the soul.” The question of whether philosophy can still “bring ferment to reality” thus turns on whether “Europe” still exists.

In the Prague of 1974, Patočka’s invocation of philosophy, and of Europe, was a *cri de coeur* in the face of a reality that appeared hopeless. The Europe defined by “care of the soul” had long since given way to “something that might be deemed a concern, or care about dominating the world” (89). Patočka was no less attuned to the imperialistic tendencies of Europe than are today’s cultural critics, but unlike them he did not blame the drive toward world domination on Europe’s commitment to philosophical universality. Deriving from a commitment to a life based on clarity, such universality promised that “given certain circumstances, man could make at least the human world a world of truth and justice” (36). It meant, furthermore, that one need not immerse oneself in particular cultural traditions to understand European civilization: “Everyone understands European civilization, because the principle of European civilization is – roughly spoken – two time two equals four” (221). There are, then, really two Europes: the first is just like any other culture based on tradition: when such a culture gets “generalized” it signifies “the swallowing up of all the other [cultures] by a particular tradition” (221). This is the Europe of world-domination. But there is

the second, philosophical or universal Europe based on “insight into the nature of things,” and here the “generalization” is built in, as it were, and therefore necessarily and only freely chosen. However – and this sounds the mood of Patočka’s whole reflection – the emergence of European political and economic hegemony “contains the germ of what has taken place before our very eyes: Europe has disappeared, probably forever” (89).

In 1974 in Prague it would have been difficult to imagine the ironies of a conference such as the present one: representatives from all over the world meeting together under the aegis of phenomenology – and to that extent as citizens of philosophical “Europe” – while the “traditional” Europe is struggling to construct itself, beyond the conflict of autonomous states and cultures, into a more universal form that can compete in a global market whose principles reflect its history with a kind of “alienated grandeur.” In such a situation, have we a right to believe that philosophical Europe has not in fact disappeared, that philosophy can, once more, “mean” something? For us gathered here, it will not be difficult to pick up the thread of this question precisely where Patočka left off – namely, with the conviction that it was in phenomenology that the project of the “care of the soul” reached its highest form to date. A brief look at why he held this view might be useful.

For reasons that shall become apparent below, I want to emphasize that for Patočka phenomenology is a unique and distinctive mode of inquiry, one that does justice to what he calls “manifesting” or “showing” as such, an “unreal region of the universe” (33). It is in this “unreal” domain – unreal in the sense that it is not a distinct region of objects or “realities” – that all “existence” comes to show itself. For that reason, “manifestation” is the very basis on which something like truth and error make sense. Phenomenology seeks to cultivate this terrain of showing by means of an epoche in which our tendency to focus on things (and thereby to overlook the showing of things) is overcome; it does not transport us into another world or reduce us to a domain of mere semblance but rather brings us back to that through which the world is given. According to Patočka, manifesting can be the object neither of “actual knowledge” (that is, some positive science) nor of “conceptual analysis” (26). It can become thematic only for phenomenology. Phenomenology is thus a research program distinct from other forms of science. But it is also distinct from what Patočka calls “metaphysics.” It is, on his view, metaphysically neutral. This point is of absolute importance. Phenomenology as such wants only to “analyze phenomena as such” – an “autonomous unreal region of the universe, which though it is unreal, in a certain manner determines reality.” Phenomenological philosophy, on the other hand, “wants to derive results from this; ... results that are metaphysical”(33). That is, it wants to say that the

phenomenon is “really just” subjectivity, life, experiencing, or something else along these lines, to determine the “relation between the phenomenon and existence” (33). For Patočka, this tendency – one that Husserl himself fell victim to – is already “a kind of not understanding, or a kind of slipping away from the proper problem of the phenomenon as such” (33). And for him, the destiny of Europe is tied up with maintaining one’s eye on that “proper problem.” For it pertains to the “care of the soul” that manifesting be appreciated for just what it is – a task that is made all the more difficult because the entity, “man,” is the site at which “manifestation” breaks through in the universe, and as such it is tempting to “philosophize” about some kind of “immanent teleology” in manifestation that singles man out, some kind of “real factor that the phenomenon would realize with some kind of immanent purposiveness” (33) – in short, to turn the inestimable and unique inquiry into phenomena into yet another “positive science,” the metaphysics of man. The challenge in 1974, then, was to retain hold on the terrain opened up in Husserl’s thought so that its implications for the project of the “care of the soul” could be exploited in the changed circumstances of Europe.

Have things changed since then? One thing must be admitted: in 1974 there was far more consensus on the question of what phenomenology is, and its role within the philosophical scene, than there is today. Thus before we can in good conscience pick up where Patočka left off we have a preparatory task to accomplish: namely, to identify whether there really is something that can be identified as an investigation into the “unreal region” of manifestation, something that can in principle be carried on by generations who follow each other in a common project, something distinctive about this way of philosophizing that makes it more than a loose “tradition” and authorizes its claim to universal significance. Hence I would like to devote a few reflections here to the question, “Is there a phenomenological research program?” In order to give a certain direction to this broad question I will raise it from a particular vantage point – namely, from the point of view of my position as Co-Director of the Society for Phenomenology and Existential Philosophy, which is the largest philosophical organization (with over 2000 members) devoted to the study of so-called “Continental Philosophy” in North America. This is by no means strictly a “phenomenological” organization; it has grown into a home for philosophers who identify with many other directions of thought – hermeneutics, deconstruction, post-structuralism, critical theory, feminism, and so on – and for just this reason a look at the conflicting ways in which the role of phenomenology is perceived or constructed by the members of this Society can be very instructive for understanding whether, and to what extent, Patočka’s judgment about the world-historical significance of phenomenology must be modified.

§2. Phenomenology Between Analytic and Continental Philosophy

Why do I raise this issue in the form of a question about whether phenomenology is or is not a research program? There are two reasons. The first concerns the relation between phenomenology and analytic philosophy. Though few would agree with his account in all details, it seems that Michael Dummett's view of this relation is widely shared: because analytic philosophy was able to make the "linguistic turn," it could establish itself as a viable program of research into meaning; because it was unable to make the linguistic turn, phenomenology could not. By adhering to its "twin axioms" – "the belief, first, that a philosophical account of thought can be attained through a philosophical account of language, and, secondly, that a comprehensive account can only be so attained" (Dummett 1993, 4) – analytic philosophy could get a grip on the non-psychological domain of "thought," otherwise unavailable for reasoned inquiry. Phenomenology, by contrast, followed Husserl in the generalization of the notion of Sinn from linguistic acts to all intentional acts – for instance, perception – and could not, therefore, take the linguistic turn, since "language can play no especial part in the study and description of these non-linguistic animators of non-linguistic mental acts" (Dummett 1993, 27). Though Dummett does not quite say so, his criticisms of Gareth Evans suggest that failure to take the linguistic turn condemns phenomenology to being a mere "tradition" – whose practitioners "[adopt] a certain philosophical style and [appeal] to certain writers rather than to certain others" – but not a research program (Dummett 1993, 4-5).² It is clear that Husserl would not have been pleased by such an assessment. But more to the point, if this assessment is correct Patočka's hope, that by cultivating the uniquely phenomenological inquiry into the "unreal region" of showing the philosophical impetus of European civilization might be sustained, will prove merely to be another moment of "myth" or story-telling, nothing more than non-generalizable "tradition."

The second reason for asking whether phenomenology is capable of being a genuine research program arises within so-called Continental philosophy. Of late there has been a flurry of writing devoted to telling the story of this hybrid genre, the narrative impulse here, as in the case of analytic philosophy, responding to anxieties about identity.³ Despite their many differences, these stories largely

² See especially Dummett (1993,137-143) for the critical discussion of Evans.

³ A partial list would include Kearney (1994), Kearney and Rainwater (1996), West (1996), May (1997), Critchley and Schroeder (1998), McNeill and Feldman (1998), Glendinning (1999), Brogan and Risser (2000), and Critchley (2001).

turn on how phenomenology is understood and how its impact on twentieth-century European thought is assessed. Though extensive review of this literature would take us too far afield, a glance at some of the issues will show what is at stake in our question.

One issue over which the narratives differ concerns the historical scope of the term “Continental” philosophy. Some writers – for instance, McNeill and Feldman, Critchley, Kearney, and West – stress a nineteenth-century genealogy. In West’s terms, Continental philosophy is “the outcome of a series of critical responses to dominant currents of modern western and Enlightenment philosophy” (West 1996, vii) – and to Kant in particular – such that the names of Schelling, Hegel, Marx, Kierkegaard, and Nietzsche loom large. In these narratives the question of whether phenomenology is a viable research program is rather incidental to the identity of Continental philosophy. Some may acknowledge that “the phenomenological movement . . . would radically transform and revitalize Continental philosophy” (Kearney and Rainwater 1996, 3), but it is no more central to its identity than is structuralism, for example. This approach can produce queer anachronisms, however – for instance, the claim that “Kant’s philosophy may be said to be the point at which so-called ‘Continental’ thought begins to diverge from Anglo-American analytic philosophy” (McNeill and Feldman 1998, 1), or that “it is with and after Hegel that it begins to make sense to speak of Continental and analytic” (West 1996, 3). Hence, a second set of writers – including Embree et al., Ihde, and May – locates the core of Continental philosophy’s identity in the twentieth-century. The term itself emerged in the United States in the 1970s as a way to identify the growing number of practitioners of a diverse cluster of contemporary philosophical styles generally arising in Europe – phenomenology, existentialism, hermeneutics, critical theory, deconstruction, and so on.⁴ And for this second group of writers, what holds Continental philosophy together lies in the relation, however critical, of all these various movements to Husserl’s phenomenology. Hence, on their view the question of whether phenomenology can be taken to be a research program, as Husserl proposed – and if not, why not – is central to the identity of Continental philosophy.

⁴ See especially Ihde (1986, 1-26) and Embree (ms). Critchley and Schroeder (1998, 4) gets the history of the term right: it is not used as a “professional self-description” before “the 1970s,” and it happened “in the USA before Britain.” Eventually in the “postwar period, Continental philosophy was for awhile broadly synonymous with phenomenology” in American universities. As an undergraduate at the University of California at Santa Cruz 1970-74, I recall that Maurice Natanson would teach Husserl, Heidegger, Sartre and others under the rubric “Recent European Philosophy.” The term “Continental philosophy” was not yet in general use. Embree (2003) claims that “I personally originated the current use of ‘Continental’ in 1978 when I became the first editor of the book series that the Center for Advanced Research in Phenomenology, Inc., sponsors at Ohio University Press” – dubbing it “Series in Continental Thought.”

A second issue that divides the identity-narratives of Continental philosophy concerns whether the narrative is constructed as “development and progress” or as “decay and decline.” In the former (not surprisingly, more common) sort, Husserl’s phenomenology generally plays the role of a terminus a quo whose liberatory potential must be freed from its scientific prison. Todd May (1997, 18-20) judges Husserl’s project to be “essentially the same” as Descartes’, and his story emphasizes the departures from this project, culminating in the structuralist inversion of it – the “primacy of structure over consciousness” – that “characterizes Continental philosophy today.” Brogan and Risser (2000, 2-3) speak of a “turn from pure phenomenology in the direction of hermeneutic phenomenology,” and finally of “a shift from phenomenology to poststructuralism.” Kearney (1994, 1-3) holds that “many concerns of Continental thought culminate in a radical anti-foundationalism,” though some, “like Husserl,” find this renunciation of “the metaphysical quest for absolute grounds” regrettable. A corollary of this narrative is a rejection of the very notion of a philosophical research program as “scientific.” Continental philosophy is “more an art than a science” (Kearney 1994, 2). It is a “style of philosophizing” that proceeds “historically” and works “beyond the perspective or objective of obtaining eternal truths” (McNeill and Feldman 1998, 2). In its critique of Enlightenment rationality, it is “the distant relation of those metaphysicians, moralists, and believers so caustically dismissed by Hume, . . . unwilling to abandon the concerns and insights animated by these modes of experience” (West 1996, 4). Critchley and Schroeder (1998, 12-13) get to the heart of the matter here: Continental philosophy recognizes “the complicity between scientific culture . . . and nihilism” and thus seeks to preserve philosophy’s indigenous concern with meaning.⁵ The very idea of a philosophical research program – of “normal science” – is antithetical to philosophy since the latter is essentially critical: “the responsibility of the philosopher . . . is the production of crisis” (Critchley and Schroeder 1998, 12). The philosopher should rather, in Kearney’s words, take risks to “say the unsayable” with an “inimitable voice” (Kearney 1994, 4).

Nevertheless, before moving on to the second sort of narrative it should be noted that even at a moment when Continental philosophy is largely given over to post-structuralist concerns and issues, the term “phenomenology” can still serve as a marker of legitimation. Why, for instance, has there been such heat generated around the question of a “theological turn” in French phenomenology – with Dominique Janicaud arguing that philosophizing about the “unapparent,” the “radically other,” and so on, transgresses the boundaries of phenomenology, while

⁵ See also Critchley (2001), where this view is thoughtfully elaborated in terms of the “two cultures” and the idea that philosophy strives not for knowledge but for “wisdom.”

Michel Henry, Jean-Luc Marion, or Emmanuel Levinas insist that such inquiries remain “phenomenological”?⁶ Here it would seem that a certain authority inheres in phenomenological investigation, an authority that elevates the “inimitable voice” beyond a mere “style or manner of inquiry” to something like rigor. No doubt this clinging to the term “phenomenology” signifies, in part, the uneasiness that someone who defines philosophy as revelation or transgression must feel in the confines of an academic career. But there is more to it than that, as can be seen by considering an example of the second sort of narrative, which tells a story of decay and decline. In our present context, such narratives provide us with a set of challenges to which phenomenologists must (and I believe can) respond if something like Patočka’s hope – and the underlying motivation for an Organization such as is being debated here – is to be justified.

Acknowledging that there are “large and contentious debates about its core ideas,” Robert D’Amico nevertheless believes that analytic philosophy has “remained . . . a philosophical movement, whereas the continental tradition has largely ceased to be one.” (D’Amico 1999, 253). His reasons for this judgment are several, but central is the claim that phenomenology was not able to constitute itself into a genuine philosophical research program – what D’Amico calls a “philosophical tradition.” What distinguishes a philosophical tradition from traditions in general and makes talk of a “research program” plausible here are the normative features D’Amico attributes to it: First, as a kind of inquiry a philosophical tradition “requires constraints. Others must be able to arrive . . . at the same conclusions on these topics in such a way that those conclusions follow, in some fashion . . . from either defended or broadly uncontroversial assumptions.” Otherwise one has merely “a single thinker’s personal vision.” Second, a philosophical tradition “requires an open horizon of issues, problems, and possible clarifications. It cannot consist of only the ‘founding’ texts.” Third, it “must also be clear how to go on and do what the ‘founding’ texts did.” On all counts the promising beginning made by Husserl has been abandoned, replaced by a Continental “philosophy” whose “intent is to be against the possibility of philosophy” – that is, to be free “from the constraints of necessity, generality, and universality, which, once discredited, allow a thousand flowers to bloom” (254).

In D’Amico’s narrative of decay and decline, then, phenomenology once more serves as the terminus a quo, this time for movements that have abandoned what was distinctively philosophical about it. But for our question it is important to note that the developmental perspective – whether of progress or decline – can be empirically and historically accurate enough without thereby demonstrating

⁶ See Janicaud’s ground-breaking essay, “The Theological Turn in French Phenomenology,” and other texts collected in Prusak (2000).

that the development reflects a necessary consequence of the phenomenological beginning. That (some) post-phenomenological Continental philosophers reject the idea of a philosophical research program does not mean that phenomenology must fail to be one. On the contrary, the fact that serious phenomenological work is being done around the world strongly suggests that D'Amico's pessimistic judgment on phenomenology (leaving aside the question of Continental philosophy) may be an artefact of his narrative perspective.⁷ It will be useful, then, to examine where D'Amico thinks phenomenology went wrong – namely, in the transition from Husserl to Heidegger.

On D'Amico's account, Husserl's phenomenology aimed to be a research program that would contribute to the "inextinguishable task" of philosophy, whose "core" lies in certain metaphysical and epistemological questions (254, 2-3). Above all, Husserl held that philosophy was an autonomous form of inquiry that could not be superceded by results in other sciences. This is expressed philosophically as a sharp distinction "between what is empirical and what is a matter of apriori necessity," and phenomenology stands as a counter-current to all movements that blur or reject this distinction – that is, as a counter-current to what Husserl called "naturalism." Husserl was not content merely to offer arguments against "epistemological naturalism" – a "theory of knowledge masquerading as empirical science" (7). Rather, he sought "a methodology of philosophical research" that, employed in the spirit of communal investigation and mutual criticism, might succeed in clarifying the terrain that epistemological naturalism approached so obscurely – namely, "intentionality." Once Husserl saw through the impasses of Brentano's approach and recognized the importance of meaning (Sinn; later the "noema"), he designed the phenomenological method specifically for its anti-naturalistic exploration.

According to D'Amico that method consists of three central elements. There is, first, an epoche or reduction in which all "theoretical claims, hypothetical explanations, or philosophical special pleading" are to be bracketed in favor of what Husserl calls Evidenz. The grasp of Evidenz, the "seeing" of phenomena as they give themselves from a first-person stance, is the second element in the method (17). Husserl held that an epoche of theories, together with a commitment to unprejudiced evidential description – the principle of phenomenological neutrality or "presuppositionlessness" – could lead to agreement and so adjudicate disputes "in much the way that strictly empirical evidence resolves scientific disputes." Because of its neutrality regarding explanatory hypotheses

⁷ Embree et al. (1997) provides ample evidence for its claim that "given its spread into other disciplines as well as across the planet, phenomenology is arguably the major philosophical movement of the 20th Century."

and its reflective first-person stance, D'Amico labels Husserl's strategy an "epistemological internalism," yet he is aware that it is no psychological internalism since the Evidenz of phenomenology does not consist exclusively in matters of fact but includes "essences," or apriori necessities. The third central element in phenomenological method is thus the procedure for grasping these essences. D'Amico objects to Husserl's designating this procedure "eidetic intuition," or seeing, since it appears to be "pure conceptual analysis," that is, nothing more than grasping "abstract matters of conceptual and logical necessity" (15, 17). Be that as it may, on this basis phenomenology can have an indirect impact on the philosophical disputes about which it otherwise remains neutral, since the necessities involved are constraints on possibility and thus can demonstrate that "some philosophical positions [such as naturalism] are epistemologically idle" (17, 23).

Before moving on to see what becomes of the method in Heidegger's hands, we should note that D'Amico judges that already Husserl's version fails to be a distinctive research program. For while Husserl's claims about essential structures of experience may indeed be correct, they do not seem to "require, let alone actually emerge from," his method; phenomenological intuition "neither establishes nor defends such conclusions any more securely than does ordinary, pedestrian conceptual analysis." Further, to speak of "intuition" here is highly misleading, since "to 'see' a conclusion as inconsistent or a claim as incoherent is to grasp the reasoning involved." To invoke intuition has the unsalutary effect of implying that once the essences are exhibited in this way "one is thereby absolved from any further defense or argument" (250). Clearly, then, if we are to address this rejection of phenomenology's claim to being a viable research program – an assessment that echoes Dummett's – we will have to provide an account of the relation between argument and intuition and ask whether phenomenology's eidetic method is indeed distinct – as Patočka believes but many deny – from conceptual analysis. First, however, we must see how Heidegger fits into the story.

As do many commentators, D'Amico construes Heidegger's embrace of ontology as a betrayal of central elements of Husserl's research program. Though he recognizes that Heidegger shared many of Husserl's convictions – for instance, that philosophy is nothing psychological or subjective; that it has to do with the apriori; that it is anti-naturalistic – his way of establishing these points was not phenomenological, according to D'Amico, but "metaphysical." When Heidegger introduced "Dasein" in place of Husserl's transcendental ego he broke with the central methodological tenet of phenomenological neutrality and opted for "simply another version of presuppositional philosophical debate." According to D'Amico, the feature that Heidegger finds distinctive of Dasein – that it is

essentially characterized by “understanding of Being” – is not the result of phenomenological analysis but a philosophical postulate (83, 59). Thus, while he sees virtue in Heidegger’s distinction between “ontic” (empirical) and “ontological” (apriori metaphysical) matters, he insists that it is “vastly underargued” in *Being and Time* and is, furthermore, “incompatible with its supposed phenomenological derivation” (pp. 252, 85). For later Continental philosophy, Heidegger’s break with phenomenological neutrality meant that “what Husserl attacked as the ‘bewitching routine of resurrected metaphysics’ would not only replace his dream of philosophy as rigorous science, but do so under his name” (43).

Ironically, the very same ontological move to *Dasein* had the effect of opening the door to “epistemological naturalism” as well. This is because *Dasein* is characterized as “factic” – historical being-in-the-world – rather than as a “transcendental” ego. Though for Heidegger this was not a rejection of the apriori, it had the effect of blurring Husserl’s distinction between fact and essence, a blurring that, according to D’Amico, later poststructuralists, textualists, historicists, and hermeneuticists would exploit into Continental philosophy’s own version of epistemological naturalism. The result was the now-familiar rejection of anything like an “autonomous” form of philosophical inquiry (254).

Finally, Heidegger’s style further exacerbated the rift between the purported method of descriptive seeing and the results obtained. D’Amico finds no discernable connection between Heidegger’s substantive claims in *Being and Time* and the analyses that supposedly yield them (67).⁸ After *Being and Time*, therefore, Heidegger supposedly drops this methodological pretense altogether and ushers in the current period in which “thought” becomes altogether a matter of “inimitable voice.”

This brief review of D’Amico’s narrative has yielded a framework, and a set of desiderata, for assessing phenomenology’s claim to being a philosophical research program. A crucial question has proved to be whether the transition “from” Husserl “to” Heidegger, from “transcendental” philosophy to “ontology,” can be understood as belonging to phenomenology without sacrificing the elements of phenomenological method (epoche, reflective Evidenz, eidetic intuition) that support its claim to be a research program. It is interesting to note that Patočka himself does not hold Heidegger’s ontology to be the metaphysical affair that D’Amico and many others make it out to be; rather, at least in intention

⁸ However, D’Amico’s almost unbelievably ill-informed interpretation of what these claims and analyses are is evidence enough that this part of his thesis is unsupportable. See his discussion of Heidegger’s distinction between *Befindlichkeit* and *Verstehen* (70-72), for a particularly glaring example.

it preserves the principle of phenomenological neutrality: For Heidegger, according to Patočka, “philosophy is always, even from the very beginning, really philosophy of showing itself, of the phenomenon. The problem of being then coincides with the problem of showing” and “Heidegger’s ontology is ... fundamentally different from ontology, let us say, in the scholastic sense” (Patočka 2002, 159) – that is, from metaphysics. If this is so – as I firmly believe it is – then it becomes possible for us to ask whether a different story can be told in which phenomenology continues to live up to D’Amico’s desiderata for a research program: that there be genuine constraints on what can be said, rather than just “personal visions”; that there be a common set of problems, not just “founding texts”; and that there be a clear method or sense of “how to go on,” normal science and not merely the “production of crisis.” But we cannot indulge ourselves here in the pleasures of telling such a story here. Suffice to say, in conclusion, that Patočka’s hopes for phenomenology, and for “Europe,” will be justified only if philosophers continue to consider these questions in critical confrontation with those who profess phenomenology as well as with those many who do not.

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