

Patočka and Modernity

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Abstract: This thesis deals with the work of Jan Patočka (1907–1977), probably the most important Czech philosopher of the twentieth century, and with his understanding of modernity. More precisely, the thesis focuses on Patočka’s work from the perspective of contemporary civilizational analysis, which leads our attention especially to Patočka’s dialogue with the work of the German sociologist Max Weber (1864–1920). The thesis is divided into three parts. The first part introduces Patočka’s work in general; it summarizes the situation of Patočka’s heritage, subsuming existing findings and future challenges. The second part discusses the perspective of civilizational analysis, a subdiscipline of contemporary historical sociology, and explains the link between this field of research and Patočka’s work. Finally, the third part presents an interpretation of Patočka’s work which emphasizes the very perspective of civilizational analysis: the focus is on Patočka’s dialogue with Weber’s work, which is most notably expressed in the philosopher’s idea of “rational civilization”. In this way, the thesis contributes to the existing interpretations of Patočka’s work as well as to the discussions of the theoretical concept of civilizational analysis.

Key words: Jan Patočka; Max Weber; Civilizational Analysis; Modernity; Civilization; Rationality; Rational Civilization