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## JAN PATOČKA AND THE GLOBAL SOUTH: LATIN AMERICAN DISSIDENCE AND CZECH PHENOMENOLOGY

### Jan Patočka e o sul global: dissidência latino-americana e fenomenologia checa

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**Resumo:** Este artigo argumenta que a filosofia fenomenológica de Jan Patočka é relevante para a compreensão de casos de dissidência política no Sul Global. Em particular, examina três fenômenos relacionados à dissidência latino-americana para mostrar essa relevância: o movimento contra o feminicídio em 'Ni Una Menos', o frequente assassinato de ativistas ambientais em defesa da floresta amazônica e a experiência histórica do ativista e psicanalista Felix Guattari narrada na obra *Revolução Molecular no Brasil* (1982). Esses três fenômenos são analisados usando a obra de Patočka, incluindo seu conceito de 'solidariedade dos abalados', sua estrutura dos 'três movimentos da existência' e à luz de sua crítica da tecnologia e da matematização no que se refere a 'viver em verdade'. Em geral, argumenta-se que, quando as ideias de Patočka são desterritorializadas em diálogo com esses fenômenos do Sul Global, a relevância de suas ideias para a compreensão dos aspectos existenciais da historicidade e do engajamento político se mantém através do tempo e do lugar, afirmando seu legado como um filósofo que pode inspirar tanto a contemplação quanto a ação.

**Palavras-chave:** Jan Patočka, fenomenologia, filosofia política, sul global, solidariedade dos abalados, historicidade, Felix Guattari, América Latina, ativismo ambiental, feminicídio, políticas existenciais.

**Abstract:** This paper argues that the phenomenological philosophy of Jan Patočka is relevant for understanding cases of political dissidence across the Global South. In particular, it examines three phenomena related to Latin American dissidence in order to show this relevance: the movement against femicide in 'Ni Una Menos,' the frequent murder of environmental activists defending the Amazon rainforest, and the historical experience of activist and psychoanalyst Felix Guattari chronicled in *Molecular Revolution in Brazil* (1982). These three phenomena are analyzed using Patočka's oeuvre, including his concept of 'solidarity of the shaken,' his framework of the 'three movements of existence,' and in light of his critique of technology and mathematization as it relates to 'living in truth.' Overall, it argues that when Patočka's ideas are deterritorialized in conversation with these phenomena of the Global South, the relevance of his ideas for understanding the existential aspects of historicity and political engagement holds up across time and place, affirming his legacy as a philosopher who can inspire both contemplation and action.

**Keywords:** Jan Patočka, phenomenology, political philosophy, global south, solidarity of the shaken, historicity, Felix Guattari, Latin America, environmental activism, femicide, existential politics.

"It is not by means of an exegetical practice that one could hope to keep alive the thought of a great thinker who has passed away. Rather, such a thought can only be kept alive through its renewal, by putting it back into action, reopening its questioning, and by preserving its distinct uncertainties—with all the risks that this entails for those who make the attempt."

It is risky to imagine Jan Patočka, a Czech philosopher with firmly European roots who died in 1977, gazing upon the present situation of dissident political life in any Latin American context. Would not his philosophical categories be too Eurocentric? Could his Cold War experience translate to the present-day complications of the Global South? Is his phenomenology transcendent enough to rise above time and place, but not so universalist as to obscure important differences? Can his concepts effectively illuminate a world far away from his own, and do so without being condescending? One could imagine many more similar questions, not all of which can be fully answered. Acknowledging the riskiness of these questions, and the limitations of possible answers, I am nonetheless going to proceed, wagering that the rewards might outweigh the risks. The above inspiration from Felix Guattari, who wrote this passage while trying to reflect upon the significance of Michel Foucault shortly after his death, is useful because he was also expressing a general suspicion about whether or not posthumous homages to philosophers could be intellectually and culturally significant on their own. He wanted to emphasize that the actions taken with philosophical thought, and the questions generated by thought and action being put together, were more important to the historical gaze of the future than any particular exegesis. This epigraph, then, also risks offending an academic audience of philosophers, as it asks philosophy to do more than philosophers are usually comfortable doing in our present age.

Felix Guattari, however, a French philosopher and psychoanalyst, was no enemy of philosophy, and was also quite politically engaged, drawing significant inspiration from the people of Latin America. He took an extended trip around Brazil in 1982, just when the country was emerging from dictatorship and public democratic life was reactivating. This geographical and intellectual journey resulted in a compilation of interviews and essays more recently translated as *Molecular Revolution in Brazil*, co-authored with Suely Rolnik, a Brazilian psychoanalyst.<sup>2</sup> This text, while tracing conversations with communities in Brazil, also frequently engaged with the unfolding situation in Poland as the *Solidarnosc* movement gathered momentum and an international reputation in the 1980s. It also closely post-dates Guattari's engagement with the Czech literary work of Franz Kafka in his *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature* (with Gilles Deleuze).<sup>3</sup> If a French philosopher-activist-psychoanalyst could travel Brazil thinking about East-Central Europe's literature and politics, the wager here is that the philosophical thought of Patočka might be kept alive through the reopening of his questions in the context of Latin American politics, extending his East-Central European background into a set of global questions. This journey can be made richer, and avoid some potential gaps, if it is accompanied by reflections on Guattari and his ideas as well. Guattari directly participated in many political and dissident situations in both Brazil and in Europe, which influenced his development (with Gilles Deleuze) of philosophical-political concepts that are still widely used today in discussions of social movements and dissident politics, including 'rhizomes,' 'assemblages,' 'machinic unconscious' and 'micro-revolution.' These concepts, as well as his political experience, therefore compliment Patočka, offering comparisons as well as important substantive differences with revealing contrasts.

As I have done in my other work on Patočka, the aim here is to put his concepts and ideas into conversation with other philosophers, as well as reflecting on how specific dissident discourses relate to the global relevance of his ideas.<sup>4</sup> At a time when dissident

<sup>1</sup> Felix Guattari, (2009) *Soft subversions: texts and interviews 1977-1985*. ed. S. Lotringer, trans. C. Wiener and E. Wittman (Semiotext(e)). p. 279.

<sup>2</sup> Felix Guattari & Suely Rolnik. (2007) *Molecular Revolution in Brazil*. Semiotext(E)

<sup>3</sup> Gilles Deleuze & Felix Guattari. *Kafka: Toward a minor literature*. Vol. 30. U of Minnesota Press, 1986. Félix Guattari & Gilles Deleuze, *Kafka: Pour une littérature mineure*. Éditions de Minuit, 1975.

<sup>4</sup> A. Brinton, *Confronting totalitarian minds: Jan Patočka on politics and dissidence*. Charles University, Karolinum Press, 2021.

politics in the Global South often influence global political dynamics more generally, this method can bring Patočka's philosophy into urgent contemporary conversations, connecting past to future, South to North, and East and West. To do this, I will discuss here not only Guattari's historical text about Brazil, but two contemporary cases of dissidence in Latin America: the recent social-political movement known as 'Ni Una Menos,' which began in Argentina and spread throughout Latin America in efforts to raise awareness about femicide, and the long-known but more recently documented homicide rates of environmental activists and the defenders of the Amazon rainforest. Putting femicide together with homicide is not an accidental pairing, as it is when groups of people face death together that Patočka's philosophical ideas might be most cross-culturally relevant and most able to provide an axis of mutual recognition about the precarity and promise of human engagement with political life.<sup>5</sup>

### 1. Patočka's solidarity: towards an existential politics

If one is facing off against one's own inevitable human death, and asking questions about the vulnerability and possibility death creates, one place of resource in Patočka's oeuvre is the last section of *Heretical Essays in the Philosophy of History*. Here he evokes the image of a soldier in the trenches of World War One, where the war has made him face death with proximity and certainty, and according to Patočka, the soldier comes to understand the world at a deeper level as a result of this situation.<sup>6</sup> Yet this deeper understanding is not only about his individual knowledge of a coming personal death, but also about how he has come to understand this 'shaking' of the world intersubjectively, together with others. This common situation of near-death experience helps create what Patočka calls 'solidarity of the shaken.' In this state of solidarity there is recognition of both physical mortal vulnerability, but also an epistemological transformation becomes possible, as those who face death together in solidarity know more and can overcome and shake apart prejudices and traditions through their new understandings of the world. The body's shaking and vulnerability helps the mind shake apart its reified structures, also letting new knowledge enter the thought-space, and the renewed understanding in turn helps the human being face death with greater perspicacity, if not also with the possibility of a bit more courage, while finding solidarity together with others in a similar situation.

Dissidents and activists confronting injustice have many things to worry about, and being killed for their choices and actions is usually present in their consciousness, albeit to varying degrees depending on the situation. 'Solidarity of the shaken' as an idea, then, can help us understand groups of people facing death together, dissidents included. Such proximity to death makes dissidence a phenomenon of 'existential politics' in a two-fold sense. Firstly, dissent and protest can endanger life and put one's very existence at stake, particularly when the act of protesting causes the adversary to become an existential threat willing to kill someone in order to silence them. Secondly, dissidence can sometimes be a kind of 'existential politics' in the sense meant by existentialism as a philosophical method, whereby existence can precede essence, and dissidents come to understand that existing in a state of political confrontation through dissidence *recreates* their essence as a person and reappropriates the agency and autonomy taken away from them by the repressive situation. Perhaps their situation is an authoritarian political regime, an unjust policy impacting their lives, or another experience of powerlessness

<sup>5</sup> While there is some risk of offending an audience of philosophers with political discussion when they are expecting only an exegesis of Patočka's philosophical concepts, there is also a risk of offending experts on the politics of Latin America and the Global South with this approach. There is not enough space here to both explain two philosophers while also offering a detailed analysis of the sociological and cultural history of these two movements, so these will be only evocatory representations to help explain the philosophical concepts. This does not pretend to be thorough expert analyses of what these movements have done or what has been said about them.

<sup>6</sup> Patočka, *Heretical Essays in the Philosophy of History*, trans. Erazim Kohák (Open Court, 1996) 129-130.

created by culture, machines, or technocratic systems—but whatever it is, the situation has denied their freedom and therefore undermined their humanity in some way. Becoming a dissident by opposing such situations and engaging in existentialist politics means consciously choosing to *be* differently, perhaps becoming a different type of non-passive being by protesting, perhaps also risking one's ability to live into the future.

The reassessment of one's own being-in-the-world when confronting being-toward-death would normally take us on a straight course to Heidegger's work as a philosophical resource, but if we let Patočka direct our path of thought instead, he might acknowledge Heidegger is lurking there within this formulation, but he would also remind us that 'solidarity of the shaken' is intersubjective, about groups of beings, and is not just about individual Being, which was Heidegger's primary interest. Solidarity of the shaken also depends upon a non-relative morality where there are some who understand, and some who do not, some who are vulnerable, some who are not, and transcendent categories are needed to judge which is which and who is who. Heidegger's stance on metaphysics would make these moral categories more difficult to nail down. Even though Patočka worked with many Heideggerian terms, he did not accept all of them as fully correct, and his critiques of Heidegger's inability to account for intersubjectivity and morality matter here.<sup>7</sup>

Patočka's conception of existence-as-movement also employs the idea of a horizon, and the horizon is much less complete and not as final as any individual death, as the horizon includes history and the engagement of politics within history in perpetual motion onward into time and the future.<sup>8</sup> In Patočka's vision, one can still exist after one's death through participation in history, an idea that motivates many activists and dissidents as well. Guattari's comment about Foucault in the epigraph also speaks to part of this issue: the death of an individual (the author) in no way stops that philosophy from being read and put into action long after the death of the philosopher's mortal body, and so the horizon extends far beyond individual death, especially when the ideas stimulate action that in turn stimulates history. The motion of human existence and life toward a horizon, following Patočka's ideas, when carried onward by politics and history, can surpass death. The fact that we are here writing about Patočka in this journal so long after his death is itself evidence of this.

## 2. Lessons from Brazil: assemblages, micro-revolution, and machines

Evoking the work of Felix Guattari on this axis of existential politics is meant to show both parallels and contrasts to Patočka to better understand what Patočka is and is not. Guattari is the full picture of a philosopher *engagé*, a person who integrated politics and philosophy through both his lived existence and his philosophical work, much of which was done in co-authorships with Gilles Deleuze. His *Molecular Revolution in Brazil* was one of the few he coauthored with someone else, Suely Rolnik, who lived and worked in Brazil. Patočka rarely worked with co-authors or traveled, as visas were strictly controlled in communist Czechoslovakia, and his exposure to other places included only European countries, where he went either to study or to speak. He corresponded with authors in other countries, however, and his letters show engaged conversations about philosophical issues that touched up against political issues as the Cold War affected everyone around the globe.<sup>9</sup> Patočka's ability to teach at the universities in his home

<sup>7</sup> Lubica Učnik, "Esse Or Habere. To Be or To Have: Patočka's Critique of Husserl And Heidegger," *Journal of the British Society for Phenomenology*, 38, no. 3 (October 2007): 297-317; Lubica Učnik, *The crisis of meaning and the life-world: Husserl, Heidegger, Arendt, Patočka* (Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 2016); Gregory Fried, *Heidegger's Polemics: From Being to Politics* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2000).

<sup>8</sup> Patočka, "A few remarks on the concept of World History," (1935) in Jan Patočka, *The Selected Writings of Jan Patočka: Care for the Soul*. Bloomsbury Publishing, 2022.

<sup>9</sup> See for example: Eugen Fink und Jan Patočka. *Briefe und Dokumente 1933-1977* Heitz and Nessler, B. eds. (München: Karl Alber, 1999) and J. Patočka, *Correspondance avec Robert Campbell et les siens, 1946-1977*, E. Abrams (éd., prés.), Grenoble, J. Millon (Krisis), 2019.

country was curtailed by the political authorities multiple times, so his existence was constantly politicized in one way, but he did not openly protest until late in his life, so did not have anything equivalent to Guattari's extensive on-the-streets dissident experience influencing his writings. Patočka's open political-dissident engagement with Charter 77 led to a brutal police interrogation, and shortly thereafter, to his death, so he was not able to write extensively about his political experience as Guattari did. Since his death, Patočka has been identified and critiqued by some readers as Eurocentric, given that he did in fact understand the Greek philosophical inheritance and Christianity as the main cornerstones of European civilization.<sup>10</sup> While not denying those readings, the attempt here is to add another set of questions about whether such Europeanness can be transcended at all, for any philosopher, and to be more specific by asking *which* parts of his work transcend and translate globally, which is also indirectly acknowledging that the answer is, in fact, that *not all of it translates*.

With this in mind, it is important to also state that if on the level of basic existence these two people lived very different sorts of lives, on the level of language and terminology, they also engage different vocabularies. The terms used by Deleuze and Guattari in their philosophical writings owe some debt to French postmodernism, but many terms are intentionally novel, including coinages and new usages, where renewing vocabulary was an act of renewing understandings of the world. Patočka also sought to renew understanding, but largely drew upon German philosophical vocabularies of Husserl and Heidegger, as well as relying on Aristotelian and Platonic categories from classical philosophy. What is noteworthy, however, is the potential alignment of the thematics when one asks how their concepts might apply to contemporary cases of dissidence and activism. The task of application itself reveals commonalities that are more difficult to see on the level of abstract words. This will become evident by using examples from contemporary Latin America, where both of their vocabularies help us understand why dissidents risk their lives, how they create choices where no choices seem to exist, and how new kinds of collective understanding of time, history and political phenomena can come into being as a result of their thinking and acting. One paper is not enough space to cover all the important terms in the oeuvres of both authors in all applications, so here the focus will be on Deleuze and Guattari's 'assemblage' as it relates to Patočka's ideas about 'solidarity of the shaken' and the 'three movements of existence,' and how Deleuze and Guattari's notions of 'integrated world capitalism' and the 'machinic unconscious' relate to Patočka's ideas of technoscience and mathematization.

Even given these limitations, there is also hardly enough space enough to merely weigh in on all of the issues that arise in trying to define just Deleuze and Guattari's notion of 'assemblage,' including significant translation issues from the French '*agencement*.' As these issues have been taken up elsewhere,<sup>11</sup> however, it will suffice to say that a Deleuze-Guattari 'assemblage' is quite a lot more than is suggested by the more common term 'assembly,' as it connotes not only a gathering together of ideas, concepts, ways of speaking, and modalities of understanding through particular settings and situations, but also the deployment of all that into the world of action. It is an in-motion zone of understanding that, like the French original suggests more clearly, has enough *agency* to be the prelude to the creation of events, those events being significant for their rhizomatic propagation of ideas through a society, culture, or global convergence of understanding.<sup>12</sup> Deleuze and Guattari developed this notion initially via literary analysis, and one of the clearest articulations of the term's scope is in *Kafka: toward a minor literature*. In the final

<sup>10</sup> Ritter, Martin. "Towards a Non-Eurocentric Analysis of the World Crisis: Reconsidering Patočka's Approach", *Research in Phenomenology* 47, 3 (2017): 388-405. Koci, Martin. *Thinking Faith After Christianity: A Theological Reading of Jan Patočka's Phenomenological Philosophy*. State University of New York Press, 2020.

<sup>11</sup> Thomas Nail, "What is an Assemblage?." *SubStance* 46, no. 1 (2017): 21-37.

<sup>12</sup> The discussion of rhizomes and their application to social movements is now too extensive (itself rhizomatic) to cite with specific examples, but it was originally theorized by Deleuze and Guattari in their longer works, especially: Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari. *A thousand plateaus: Capitalism and schizophrenia*. Bloomsbury Publishing, 1988.

chapter, “Qu’est-ce qu’un agencement?”, they define it as a two-faced element of a novel that is both a ‘collective annunciation’ and the ‘machine of desire.’<sup>13</sup> A ‘collective annunciation’ is a group-based form of language use and semiotics, and a ‘machine of desire’ draws on Deleuze and Guattari’s psychoanalytic work, where they map out how structures of power manipulate and rearrange the structures of human desire. Kafka matters for the development of these concepts, and the ‘machinic’ becomes a major theme in Guattari’s work, where conglomerates of social, material, cultural and historical power combine to create unconscious desire.<sup>14</sup> In some instances in Kafka’s stories, machines quite literally inscribe words of punishment onto the human body (as in “The Penal Colony”), and where in bureaucratic dystopias like *The Castle*, the machine aims to police basic human desires with the tentacles of power stretching indefinitely into all aspects of human life and language. ‘Machinic desire’ can be both a deceptive and all-powerful, rearranging the world through rearranging language, sometimes for the worse, sometimes for the better. In their work on Kafka, it becomes clear that Deleuze and Guattari’s later political analyses owe much to a reading of Kafka and his view from his Prague underground. A Czech writer’s ‘agencements,’ then, became one foundation of French post-modernist political analysis. Written in 1975, the book on Kafka was very much inside Guattari’s mind and influencing his views of what he saw in Brazil in 1982, and the trip seemed to solidify the transfer of ‘assemblage’ beyond the novel and literary analysis to the political world. ‘Assemblage’ entered into the complications of the moving social-political world of a country trying to transition from one collective annunciation (the language and thought of dictatorship) into another assemblage of understanding in the democratic life-world.

If an assemblage is not just an assembly as in a group of people in a place, but people also doing something and thinking together in a particular way in that place, the political potential of creating a new assemblage is at the core of the vision of activism within Deleuze and Guattari’s philosophy. In literary novels, assemblages are the underlying sets of habits and ideas out of which characters understand their relationship to the world, and they are marked and described when characters use motifs of thinking to advance the plot or deepen the meaning of the text. So dissident assemblages in the political world also do this: they advance the plot of the political situation by gathering people together to allow them to speak and act, creating what Guattari calls ‘collective annunciations.’ New collective annunciations (which often require creating and rewriting the old language of the situation) then give rise to new understandings of the world. While the definitions of ‘assemblage’ in each of Deleuze and Guattari’s works does in fact shift with the times as the assemblage around them also shifts and gives rise to new annunciations about what the term means, some sense of Kafka’s relationship to assemblages can be seen during an interview in Brazil when Guattari describes what Kafka does for him:

Kafka is my favorite author...Kafka creates a global, geopolitical cartography of affective investments, reactivated by a series of pieces of information. And then there is also Kafka as a kind of futurologist about what is going to happen in Prague: a bureaucratic perversion, the possibility of the development on the social level of a way of exercising semiotic control over populations. This is true for every great writer as an analyst of politics, of subjective formations, or unconscious drives. We should always reflect on this point, the invention of life.<sup>15</sup>

He portrays ‘Kafka the futurologist’ as capable of seeing what was coming for communist Prague and in turn Patočka’s life as a philosopher, where he was only allowed to do acts of “annunciation” in the private spaces of the underground, driven from public

<sup>13</sup> Félix Guattari & Gilles Deleuze, *Kafka: Pour une littérature mineure* (Éditions de Minuit, 1975) 145.

<sup>14</sup> Félix Guattari, *The machinic unconscious: Essays in schizoanalysis*. Trans. Taylor Adkins. Semiotext(e) 2010.

<sup>15</sup> Guattari & Rolnik, *Molecular Revolution in Brazil*, 191. Excerpt from an interview for *Folha de Sao Paulo*, September 5, 1982.

teaching and activity because of the ‘semiotic control over populations,’ or in other words, the official censorship of non-communist semiotics and language, including the critical language of philosophy and literature. Authors invent life, and the lives Kafka invented, as Deleuze and Guattari elaborate, became a collective announcement that changed the global assemblage. Today, at the Kafka Museum in Prague, the last placard before visitors leave the exhibition is an explanation of the word ‘Kafkaesque,’ defending it as both tragic and as a “strange incitement.”<sup>16</sup> This word arguably represents an assemblage and collective announcement unto itself about the sources of hope and despair in the contemporary world.

During Guattari’s trip around Brazil in 1982, his presence as a foreign psychoanalyst and philosopher itself created many gatherings and conversations that were later summarized and transcribed into the text *Molecular Revolution in Brazil*. These were both gatherings, where people came together to hear Guattari speak and ask questions, but in Guattari’s own account and in the reflections of co-author Suely Rolnik, the trip generated “assemblages” of people-processes-idea syntheses that lived onward into the future in other work and in the development of politics in Brazil, and held within them some sense of agency. The term ‘molecular’ in the title also accurately hints at how small and seemingly ‘insignificant’ these gatherings seemed on the surface, but also how fundamental it was to first change the molecules, the small groupings of atoms, before the whole entity or body could be moved toward change. Molecules in this context are metaphorically both singular people (more specifically, “singularized” people who have not had their subjectivity crushed by the dominant way of thinking) and probably words too, which must be reinvented, redefined, and sometimes made up from scratch. The difficulty of the language in Deleuze and Guattari’s writing for the casual reader is indicative and demonstrative of this core argument: if you talk about things in the same old way, the same old ways of thinking will remain, so the words (the semiotics) have to change as part of the micro or molecular revolution (both terms were used). Guattari tries to show Brazilians what he means using the example of the creation of small non-government radio stations in Italy (where all the media and newspapers were controlled by the government at the time):

In order to understand the proliferation of a phenomenon such as free radio stations, it is necessary to situate it as an intervention that takes place precisely at the level of the unconscious...[that is] questioning of the mode of collective semiotization in its relation with speech, information, and the ‘media’ interlocutor. What is being experienced in the very specific conditions of Brazil will not fail to have effects on entirely different situations. I believe profoundly in a kind of system of interaction, which I would venture to describe as unconscious at the social level, provided, of course, the concept of the unconscious is elaborated differently. What is taking place in Brazil interacts with what is happening in Poland, or Lebanon, and—why not?—in Europe too.<sup>17</sup>

Concepts have to be elaborated differently, collective semiotization has to change, and the media interlocutor has to be questioned, but according to this, if the correct shifts in language are used, the whole world will experience the unconscious effects of events that are geographically and culturally distant. In an interview with the then-emerging politician and head of the anti-dictatorship part (PT), Ignacio Lula de Silva, Guattari again cites the connections to Poland and the Solidarity movement, ending on the question of language:

<sup>16</sup> The exhibit placard reads: “Kafkaesque is an adjective that the contemporary world has chosen to represent itself. It is quick to apply the term to itself in intolerable or desperate situations. Yet Kafkaesque is also something more. The moment always comes when creation is longer conceived as tragic; it is merely taken seriously. And this is where we see a small light in the dark. That strange incitement which, spreading the realm of the possible, does not only lead to denial.” Kafka Museum, Prague.

<sup>17</sup> Guattari & Rolnik, *Molecular Revolution in Brazil*, 348.

Certain social problems tend increasingly to traverse countries and even continents. For me, Solidarity in Poland, the PT in Brazil, are kinds of experiences on a grand scale that try to invent new instruments of understanding and collective struggle and even of a new sensibility and a new political and micropolitical logic...In truth, this is happening all over the surface of the planet on all social and individual levels, beginning with the most immediate level of language.<sup>18</sup>

When he pointed out to Lula that he seemed not to be talking like other politicians, often ignoring the conventions of public language, Lula agreed that changing words was absolutely necessary to shake apart structures of given thinking.

In this interview, Guattari is speaking generally of the unconscious use of language and of unconscious desire, drawing on psychoanalytic categories for his political analyses. This statement emerged from the recurrence in his work of different analyses of the unconscious, including his 1979 book *The Machinic Unconscious*.<sup>19</sup> In this work he dedicates a section to the ‘molar and molecular existential micropolitics’ that arise from different conceptions of desire in the unconscious.<sup>20</sup> Given this fits into a complicated system with many unusual definitions, more intricate than ‘assemblages’ but also changing meaning given the context, the details are less applicable here than the general idea of ‘existential micropolitics’ as something that exists; there is, for Guattari, a modality of politics that exists inside a person, inside their unconscious. While the vocabulary around this is perhaps too abstract to adequately apply to a specific example, the formulation itself contains a question that Patočka also asks. He understands ‘care of the soul’ (referring to a form of interiority as well) as directly related to politics itself, were without attention to the warring elements of the soul, like in the Platonic formulation, no decent politics is possible. Guattari would probably respond that without proper *schizoanalysis* (his reconstituted form of psychoanalysis), no proper politics is possible either. Despite the different vocabularies, they are raising similar questions, though not answering in the same way. The question is about the human being’s relationship to the social and political environment, and the mutual constitution of the two. The person is made by politics and society, and the person makes politics and society, and there is a constant flow between these dynamics for both Patočka and Guattari. Ending this section he challenges Heidegger as Patočka might appreciate: “[b]eing-in-itself or being-for-itself are only relatively equivalent to being-for-praxis, being for assemblage.”<sup>21</sup> He seems to suggest that we are made by our practices and our assemblages of ideas, but does not, as Patočka might, suggest there might also be being-for-morality. In this section on existential micropolitics, rather, he is setting up what becomes a critique of ‘integrated world capitalism,’ the force and machinic process that he believes has destroyed human freedom.

The larger implication, then, for a scene of political change, is that in a context where Guattari would say that one needs to start with a micro-revolution at the psychological and linguistic level in order to change the way one thinks to set the stage for the creation of new assemblages of general understanding, and only then can one create the rhizomes of action that lead to a wider revolution that can confront ‘integrated world capitalism,’ it is likely that such a context could also be described and interpreted by saying (in Patočka’s terms) that one must first care for the soul and balance the warring elements of the soul in order to change the way one thinks, and this will set the stage for the solidarity of shaken to change both intersubjective and epistemological frameworks of understanding, which in turn can change the way groups act together and understand each other—whether soldiers, dissidents, or philosophers—whereby they can confront the crisis of meaning represented by technoscience and the mathematization of the world.

<sup>18</sup> Guattari & Rolnik, *Molecular Revolution in Brazil*, 289.

<sup>19</sup> Guattari, *The machinic unconscious: Essays in schizoanalysis*. (Semiotext(e), 2010). Trans. Taylor Adkins.

<sup>20</sup> Guattari, *The machinic unconscious*, 149-159.

<sup>21</sup> Guattari, *The machinic unconscious*, 159.



In other words, if Patočka's care of the soul is like a micro-revolution, and solidarity of the shaken is the beginning of what can become an assemblage, and Guattari's elaboration of 'the machinic' forces that drive social and political life reflect similar concerns to Patočka's worries about 'technoscience' and mathematization, there is common ground where they both fear the automated processes driven by power and money that will undermine our ability to form bonds of solidarity, where the movement and existence of the human being and our ability to give meaning to our lives will be undercut. One vision comes from an activist who was described as 'a leftist,' another from someone persecuted by the communist 'left' in his own country, but both shared worries about how the forces of modernity created human subjects that were not fully human and facing existential threats both literally and figuratively. To show this in application, we now turn to some of the ways these parallels both intertwine and diverge within two cases of existential politics in Latin America.

### 3. Ecocide and homicide: the movement to save the Amazon

In the introduction to a report on the murders of environmental activists around the world in 2021, activist and researcher Vandava Shiva wrote about the experience of trying to defend the natural world from human destruction:

We were confronting a whole viewpoint – a way of seeing nature as something not to be cherished and protected, but to be conquered and subdued. This is a viewpoint with its roots in the Western industrial revolutions of the 19th century, or even further back in the scientific theory of the Western so-called 'Enlightenment'. It matters that this viewpoint originated in the West. As this report shows, nearly all of the murdered environmental and land defenders are from the Global South, and yet it is not the Global South that reaps the supposed economic 'rewards' of all this violence.<sup>22</sup>

The report goes on to document how and where 200 land defenders and environmental activists were killed in 2021. This is the organization's tenth year of counting these deaths in this way, and "over three-quarters of the attacks recorded took place in Latin America. In Brazil, Peru and Venezuela, 78% of attacks took place in the Amazon."<sup>23</sup> Before this organization started this project, most of these deaths were not named as such; rather, the deaths were unsolved missing persons cases, disappearances, and murders that garnered little local attention and often no international attention. This annual international report has been trying to change the world's understanding of these deaths to reveal them as a cross-cultural global phenomenon related to environmental activism and climate change. By pointing out the phenomenon of the repeated homicide of environmentalists in the Global South, the larger truth is revealed that capitalist companies not only continue to exploit the earth and the natural world for Western profit, but they do so also at the expense of powerless and vulnerable people.

This is a case of existentialist politics in the two senses outlined above, where environmental activists both fear for their lives, but continue to engage in activism as a form of resistance against the way the capitalist exploitation has imposed upon them categories of existence, selfhood, and subjectivity. Instead of agreeing to be willingly subjected to the forces of the dominant economy, they engage in activities that protect the natural world but undermine the attempts by powerful companies to engage in economic exploitation. In Guattari's vocabulary, this could be seen as a pushback against what he calls 'integrated world capitalism,' and environmentalism could probably be considered to be a new assemblage coming into being in the 1980s, a new form of collective thinking and agency. On Patočka's terms, the act of researching and publishing this report would

<sup>22</sup> Vandava Shiva, Global Witness, "Decade of Defiance," p. 6 (Sept. 2022) <<https://www.globalwitness.org/en/campaigns/environmental-activists/decade-defiance/>>

<sup>23</sup> "Decade of defiance," 2022, p. 10.

be a case of solidarity of the shaken, where a new community of understanding has arisen through gaining knowledge and sharing the common experience of death's proximity. The continued action of the environmentalists in the face of death can in part be explained by this kind of solidarity, where they now can see themselves in light of a larger context, a cross-cultural and global community of meaning where they formulate their own subjectivity and existence through resisting the dominant technoscience of industrialization.

Patočka's overall relevance to environmental philosophy and in turn environmental activism might on the surface seem to be because his first book was entitled *The Natural World as a Philosophical Problem*. Yet this is only a small part of a larger cosmic vision that questions how technology, science, capitalism, and what he calls 'technocratic civilization' are capable of dehumanizing us by destroying both our souls and our habitats. In fact, *The Natural World as a Philosophical Problem* mostly focused on an analysis of Husserl's philosophical concept of the 'natural world' as the human condition that precedes reflection and philosophical thinking, where what was 'natural' was what came before self-conscious analysis. Later reflections and addendums to this dissertation-based text added descriptions of how Patočka's 'three movements of human existence' related to 'the natural world,' integrating an analysis of nature that was related to *physis*, which was Heidegger's way of referring to the entirety of the non-human world.<sup>24</sup> Patočka's later writings in the 1970s, not unsurprisingly, contain more contemporary conceptualizations of 'the natural world' as related to what we would call 'environmental problem,' and in *Heretical Essays* he evoked the dangers of technology and science because of their ability to plunder the earth:

The humans of the industrial age are incomparably more powerful and have at their disposal a far greater reservoir of energy than humans of earlier ages...They live in an incomparably greater social density and can make use of it to intensify their attack on nature to force her to yield ever more of the energy they intend to integrate in the schemata of their calculations.<sup>25</sup>

Here he means 'nature' much like how we now use the term 'environment' or 'the earth,' and "schemata of calculations" is a reference to an established theme in his writing where he builds a critique of how science and mathematics turn everything human into a utilitarian calculation, obliterating the substance of humanistic meaning.<sup>26</sup> For Patočka, the two processes work together, where science bolsters industrialization, capitalism, and industry to exploit the earth for more resources, and the general attack on nature then helps perpetuate a crisis of meaning.

Given that science, technology, and industrialization are, in Patočka's mind, destroying the earth and the meaningfulness of human existence simultaneously, it seems consistent that he would turn to 'solidarity of the shaken' as one way out of this kind of problematic existence:

The solidarity of the shaken is the solidarity of those who understand. Understanding, though, must in the present circumstances involve not only the basic level, that of slavery and freedom with respect to life, but needs also entail an understanding of the significance of science and technology, of that Force we are releasing.<sup>27</sup>

<sup>24</sup> "The movement of anchoring or sinking roots, which grounds the other two [movements], is, however, most suitable to remind us of this supremacy of *physis* [nature] in the whole of life. In fact, all of our actions, including precisely work and struggle, take place solely on the basis of this instinctive-affective prime motion, which constitutes so to say the ostinato of life's polyphony." Patočka, *Natural World as a Philosophical Problem*, 165.

<sup>25</sup> Patočka, *Heretical Essays*, 95.

<sup>26</sup> Ľubica Učnik, *The crisis of meaning and the life-world: Husserl, Heidegger, Arendt, Patočka* (Ohio University Press, 2016).

<sup>27</sup> Patočka, *Heretical Essays*, 134-136.

He provides, then, not only a critique of the problem of industrialization within his work, but in linking this problem to the solidarity of the shaken, there is an opening to say that the work of environmental activists could be considered both a response to the crisis of the earth's destruction, but also to the crisis of human meaning in the age of technology's supremacy.<sup>28</sup> In an addendum to *The Natural World as a Philosophical Problem* written for a new translation in 1970, he discussed the relevance of the three movements of human existence for our relationship to earthliness, or living on earth as mortal beings:

In the last movement, the true movement of existence, the point is to see myself in my ownmost human essence and possibility— in my “earthliness” which is, at the same time, a relationship to being and to the universe...And this presence of the world is what makes it possible too for us to see ourselves in the world, to see our connection and our dependence, the “part” we play in the world. Human life thus experienced in festive rapture retains a glint of the suprahuman, the divine. In this light, it is then easier to take up our lot, which is an indispensable part of the world, though the most arduous and most finite of all— the lot of a mortal being.<sup>29</sup>

This seems to be a description of facing mortality by thinking through the connections and dependence we have with the rest of the world and the beings in it, and to ‘take up’ some sort of action to find festive rapture instead of bleak despair. In an age of climate disaster and genuine despair, this is a formulation about finding our ‘earthliness’ in order to find ourselves in an existential sense.

The Brazil that Guattari experienced in 1982 was a more hopeful place than the Brazil of today that is struggling to stop the forces of industrialization from plundering the Amazon. In conversations with people at meetings, Guattari and Rolnik did not find themselves discussing the Amazon as they might have now, as scientific understandings of carbon sinks, global warming, and the importance of the rainforests in preventing climate change were only ideas in their infancy. They discussed instead the existence of meaningful work, how to develop new systems of education and health care, how worker's cooperatives might help build community and hold back the exploitative aspects of capital's promulgation, and how to liberate the news and media at the end of the dictatorship. In more academic settings, they also discussed the relevance of Deleuze and Guattari's ideas to the local situation. Politics in Brazil now, however, in part hinges on debates about whether the capitalist economy and industrialization should be further stimulated by activities that involve cutting down the Amazon's trees, or whether further policing and regulation can prevent the destruction of this vast phenomenon of nature whose existence helps the entire earth and its populations as a carbon sink. It is into the jaws of this rather nasty debate and conflict where environmental activists sometimes go to die; those who are trying to ‘prevent economic progress’ and protect the environment are targeted, persecuted, and sometimes killed. The Global Witness report that tracks this form of death as a regular statistic, however, is part of the effort to change the semiotics of the global understanding of environmental activism, and to change what is seen and said. It is a collective annunciation that shows how ‘integrated world capitalism’ has a machine-like momentum that penetrates both the grandiose and mundane aspects of human life, and so the report adds to the effort to create a new ‘assemblage’ that leads to action.

If Guattari were to talk about today's Amazon as an environmental ‘assemblage’ to update his work on Brazil, Patočka in doing the same might understand such a report as the disclosure of a hidden war, a conflict raging on, previously unseen by international media, but now unconcealed as evidence of how science, technology, and industrialization can destroy meaningful human life—not just locally in Brazil, but globally through climate

<sup>28</sup> I have written in greater depth about this elsewhere. See: Brinton, *Confronting Totalitarian Minds*, 2021.

<sup>29</sup> Patočka, *Natural World as a Philosophical Problem*, 175-176.

change, affecting everyone and their earthliness. He might also see the report as an example of how solidarity of the shaken can provide a way out of this situation, as “[t]he means by which this state [of war] is overcome is the solidarity of the shaken; the solidarity of those who are capable of understanding what life and death are all about, and so what history is about.”<sup>30</sup> In a literal contemporary sense, what history is about now, ‘the force’ that is being released to destroy both the Amazon and the activists trying to save it, is CO<sub>2</sub>. In a larger metaphorical sense, the Force is everything that leads to that the release of the gas that warms the planet, including the assemblage of ideas, world-views, political institutions, capitalist machines, and consumerist desires. A new understanding, however, could motivate people in new ways, largely because death has been understood in a new way, and the deaths of environmental activists are integrated and inscribed into history as the actions of “those who are capable of understanding.” This may sound like a somewhat elitist philosophical idea, to engage directly with history, but it now has broad applicability in an age where the changing climate will be responsible for millions of coming deaths. The gaze of the future’s historians will look back on us asking what happened why nothing was done to slow the destruction.

#### 4. Femicide: death as a patriarchal project and ‘Ni Una Menos’

While Patočka’s discussion of ‘the natural world’ in his very first book was not specifically about the human destruction of the natural world, and was instead concerned with the perception of the ‘natural world’ prior to philosophical understanding, in his later work and essays he began taking up the critical themes of ‘technoscience,’ the ‘mathematization of the world,’ and the exploitation of the earth for economic gain. These were turns of thinking that made his ideas relevant to today’s very different sense of ‘the problem of the natural world’ as human-caused environmental destruction. In a similar vein, if we ask whether there are resources for looking into how Patočka might draw parallels between his phenomenological approach to embodiment and the problematization inherent in trying to understand the history of the relations between the sexes, there are a couple short essays which take on the question, but we also have to look to larger thematic structures to draw parallels between his ideas of corporality, the movements of existence, and political engagement. In asking about Patočka’s relationship to feminist ideas, Natalie Depraz turns to the preface and postscript to a Czech edition of Simone de Beauvoir’s works that Patočka wrote, showing how he defended Beauvoir’s argument as an important contribution to the philosophy of history, as well as stating how Beauvoir demonstrated the “indivisible humanity” that transcends the masculine and the feminine, including statements about how relations between the sexes could be transformed by new understandings of the relationship between immanence and transcendence.<sup>31</sup> Patočka validated Beauvoir’s stance, then, while also (less progressively) giving her collaboration with Jean-Paul Sartre significant credit for developing these ideas. Other than these essays, Patočka’s work lacks significant lengthy discussion about the question of the sexes elsewhere, but this shows a conceptual opening where he would not be unsympathetic with the attempts by both activists and scholars to question the problems of corporality and culture that undermine a sense of common humanity across gender categories.

So even though he was unlikely to be identified in his own embodied life as a ‘feminist’ or an ‘environmentalist,’ Patočka’s notions of corporality within the ‘three movements of existence’ do not preclude women from reaching the third movement of genuine engaged and self-conscious existence. His phenomenology has a general openness to the world and its problematization, and he praised Beauvoir for undertaking a project that did just that, examining history to reveal and uncover unacknowledged (and problematic) phenomena. Patočka’s framework, then, can contain the set of questions proposed here,

<sup>30</sup> Patočka, *Heretical Essays*, 134-136.

<sup>31</sup> Natalie Depraz, (2022) “L’enjeu d’une phénoménologie politique: Simone de Beauvoir et Jan Patočka,” in *Patočka la vie du monde*. Presses universitaires de Caen, 99-101.

which is to ask how a campaign against femicide is a case of both solidarity of the shaken and political phenomenology. A movement against femicide has come to exist in the world because it is, like the environmentalists facing near death experience for being who they are as political subjects, a gathering of human beings facing risks to their life. In this case, they face potential death for being born into a gendered world where women have insufficient power of self-defense, agency and autonomy.

Ni Una Menos first came into existence as a slogan and hashtag in 2015 in Argentina after Chiara Paez, a fourteen-year-old girl, was murdered by her boyfriend. Her death galvanized street protests, and eventually the various events cohered into an organization that continues to work to raise awareness about femicide throughout Latin America and the world. The phrase *ni una menos* means 'not one less,' and is a response to an environment where women are frequently killed and beaten for challenging male authority structures. While the risk of femicide has a long history and has endangered many women for a long time, because of the vulnerability of its victims, historically there has been little previous collective public vocalization against femicide and related practices in certain places. To point out how just being a woman puts one at risk of death is in itself an action that puts one nearer to death, nearer to the existential risk of losing the ability to exist as an autonomous agential being, or just losing life and the ability to exist at all. Femicide, therefore, has remained in many places a hidden phenomenon, even if hidden in plain sight at funerals and murder trials. As a solidarity organization, Ni Una Menos works to keep the issue of femicide in the public realm more continuously than these episodic stories about individual women and their murders, and does so by narrating a coherent and repetitive story. They have succeeded in making femicide appear as a phenomenon in the public realm both in Latin America and beyond.

By making something appear in the public realm as a social and political phenomenon that was previously an abstract murder statistic or a 'merely personal' experience of one family, Ni Una Menos, as a solidarity organization, engages in a task not entirely dissimilar to the task of phenomenology: it causes something to appear by naming it, defining it, and inquiring into the experience of those who observe it. 'Femicide' largely could not fully appear in public when it was individualized as single murders of disempowered and silenced women; now, with the help of Ni Una Menos, 'femicide' genuinely appears as a phenomenon. The organization, in turn, through its public activities, also gives women a new way to understand their own subjectivity in light of these categories. While not every woman who hears about Ni Una Menos will be able to entirely free themselves from patriarchal structures and become fully autonomous and liberated, because of the existence and availability of these public articulations of the experiences of femicide, anyone can listen and begin to think differently and see themselves in new light. This change in understanding of one's own subjectivity, including the self-awareness brought about by interacting with new ideas, creates social and political potential in how it allows one to distance oneself from the objectifying male control and male disciplinary power. It turns that male power into a contingent phenomenon, breaking apart the sense of it being inevitable, unquestioned, inherently good, and tacitly-accepted as a firm reality that has and will always control women. As male power has traditionally named, labelled, controlled and pacified the female body into a status of submissive ownership, Ni Una Menos seeks to transform the corporeal existence of women by changing their own relationships to their bodies and the way they think about themselves. Where the female body was once merely private, individually vulnerable, and powerlessly owned by men, under a different public gaze, it can become an affirmative existence within a collective (very much in the plural) of vulnerable bodies. This plurality and its attendant solidarity create an empowered subjectivity, overcoming subjugation and subjectification (in Guattari's terms).

The philosophical problem of agency and free will sits squarely within any investigation of the difference between an empowered subjectivity on the one hand, and on the other, the human attempt to face down the powers-that-be that subjugate others in order to make submissive subjects easier to control. The male patriarchy's attempt to

create and perpetuate gendered submissive femininity is but one example of a much larger perennial human problem of power, agency, and self-determination. Threatening someone with death is an attempt to take away all of this, and the threat does not have to be direct—it can be diffused throughout a society, culture, or other territory, where the general fear of death itself creates submissiveness. Totalitarian societies throughout history have long known and utilized this. Yet the solidarity that emerges in this context—against ignorance, against repressive traditions, against submissiveness, against forced death—is much like the ‘solidarity of the shaken’ in Patočka’s sense. Like the soldier at war he describes, it is a unique kind of solidarity that arises in communities facing death. In the case of *Ni Una Menos*, the community is comprised of vulnerable women, and they have indirectly already made the connection between war and femicide throughout their manifestos, but also in their research. For example, they featured an analysis on their website by Rita Segato, entitled “New forms of war and the body of women.”<sup>32</sup> It makes the argument that this title is not just a metaphor, and while initially inspired by discussions about the damage to women’s bodies during military conflicts, including using rape as a tactic of submission during invasions, the author goes further to say that there is a whole culture of war within societies, even within states not directly ‘at war’ with another state. By this argument, in the present age, the tactics of war are both imported and exported, where global conflicts and local conflicts are perpetuated throughout the whole culture by a “pedagogy of cruelty and a lack of empathy,” in Segato’s words.<sup>33</sup> What happens to the victims of femicide in their homes, in other words, is a prelude to, and directly related to, the rape and pillage of vulnerable bodies across the globe. Despite the grim conclusion, there are potentially some partial solutions to confront this violence. Segato ends with this note of hope:

The only State capable of reining in the expansion of the mafiosos is the one that returns the charter of power to the community and guarantees mechanisms of internal deliberation, a restorative State of community citizenship. Only those communities woven together by a strong social fabric, politically active, and blessed with the heaviness of a symbolic bond have the capacity to protect all their diverse members, maintain forms of economy based on solidarity and reciprocity, and give sense to life. When this option exists, death as a project is turned away.

<sup>34</sup>

This offering has thematic resonance with what Patočka writes when he describes the world where ‘Socrates does not have to die,’ and where humans can flourish and live meaningful lives:

[I]t is a world where we can live, live in a community in which we can find a place and be accepted, enjoying the protection which enables us to take on the concrete task of defense and of struggle against what threatens us in the context of humans and of things alike. It is the world of embodied living beings who work and struggle, who approach each other and draw back, living in mutual respect; who communicate with the world of others by word and understanding...Corporeity, reciprocity, concrete spatiality which includes both the familiar and the foreign, language—those are the constant structures of that world. Finding a place, growing close to others, and renewing protective bonds is one of its fundamental circular movements...<sup>35</sup>

<sup>32</sup> Segato, R. “Las Nevas Formas de la Guerra y el cuerpo de las mujeres,” 114. “New forms of war and the body of women,” <<https://niunamenos.org.ar/destacada-mediana-home/las-nuevas-formas-de-la-guerra-y-el-cuerpo-de-las-mujeres/>>

<sup>33</sup> Segato, “New forms of war and the body of women.”

<sup>34</sup> Segato, R. “Las Nevas Formas de la Guerra y el cuerpo de las mujeres,” 114. (My translation).

<sup>35</sup> Patočka, “Husserl on the Crisis of the Sciences and on Phenomenology of the ‘Life-world,’” in Kohák, *Jan Patočka Philosophy and Selected Writings*, 236.

To turn away death, one needs the solidarity of a community that is politically and socially engaged and that makes sense of life and allows for mutual respect. This is what solidarity organizations attempt to provide for people in contexts where they are dehumanized. This is, as Patočka notes, where “renewing protective bonds” is part of a fundamental circular movement of human life.

## 5. Conclusions

The political action-potential of a philosopher’s concepts and ideas must be understood as a different phenomenon than the biographical details of that philosopher’s sum-total lifetime political experiences. Jan Patočka, the embodied Czech man who lived from 1907 until 1977, would not fit into the category we know today as a “political activist” until perhaps the last years of life, when he became involved with Charter 77, which famously (and somewhat ironically) called itself ‘anti-political’ to try to avoid some of the inevitable negative political attention. These actions were a prelude to his own death that same year. Felix Guattari, on the other hand, was marching on the streets of Paris from a young age, long before he became a psychoanalyst and started writing influential philosophy books, and he fully understood himself as an activist. The philosophical questions that each engaged with, however, and the shared motivation to seek out the truth of the world by uncovering the realities of the phenomenological experience, probing the human encounter with the world in all its strangeness and problemat�icity, in both cases resulted in written works that included concepts and ideas that had enduring and cross-culturally relevant political action-potential. The kinds of questions these philosophers asked created a groundwork for genuine engagement with human pain and the injustices of the worlds we create for ourselves—micro or macro, large or small. The consciousness of injustice creates political consciousness in any circumstance, and Patočka’s ideas had a pre-political force: they laid the groundwork for future political action. In Guattari’s case, his ideas were post-political: first he was out on the streets, and later in life he abstracted from that experience (and from other things, like Kafka stories) to philosophize about the hope and despair of contemporary global politics.

The pre-political and the post-political complement each other, while also being different in terms of directionality. With ‘solidarity of the shaken,’ the unconcealment of mathematical modernity’s destruction of the natural world, rhizomes, assemblages, micro-revolutions and probing the machinic unconscious, both Patočka and Guattari sought a subversion of the established orders of thought, laying a groundwork and methodology towards which we all can turn to for help in times of political distress, no matter our particular place or culture. These concepts can help anyone in their struggle to uncover the truths behind global questions of injustice. Whatever else can be said of the embodied men in their actual lives, with all their historical, cultural and gender prejudices, some of (though not all of) the core ideas they wrote down in books nonetheless had qualities capable of inspiring dissidence against injustice. They show how the translation of existential threats into the existential recreation of human agency can sometimes occur in the act of dissenting.

Patočka’s WWI soldier in the trenches facing off against the technological armageddon of modernity,<sup>36</sup> Guattari’s underground Italian and French radio broadcasters facing down proto-fascist government media conglomerates,<sup>37</sup> the Brazilian teachers asking Guattari for advice on how to free their pupils from the thought-structure of dictatorship culture,<sup>38</sup> a woman facing murder by her own husband or brother,<sup>39</sup> environmentalists dying to save the trees so their children might be able to breathe on the

<sup>36</sup> Patočka, *Heretical Essays*, 129-130.

<sup>37</sup> Guattari, *Molecular Revolution in Brazil*, 145-191.

<sup>38</sup> Guattari, *Molecular Revolution in Brazil*, 212-213.

<sup>39</sup> Ni Una Menos, see above.

earth in the future,<sup>40</sup> the youth rock band Plastic People of the Universe that Patočka defended in Czechoslovakia facing prison in a totalitarian regime,<sup>41</sup> and maybe even Patočka himself being interrogated by the secret police at the very end of his life for speaking out against injustice: these are human beings subjugated to forces which have taken away or suppressed their own autonomy and agency, where they were unable to decide their own fate while embedded into systems that larger and more powerful than their collective ability to control them democratically, where their humanity is standardized into structures of mathematization-objectification that convert their singularity into mechanized, automatized, machinic routinization. Not all these forms of suffering are equivalent, and not everyone in these examples had the same options to confront their situation, but there is more than enough common ground for a conversation about injustice between them.

Philosophical concepts driven by the kind of problematicity and questioning inherent in Patočka's approach (and Guattari's as well) are themselves confrontations with the micro-fascisms (to use Guattari's term) generated by the darkness and imperfections of the human condition. Human ideas can spread like rhizomes, but can also be poured into concrete blocks, and humans are capable of doing both. When Patočka's ideas are deterritorialized, spread beyond his own time and place, they have the potential to rhizomatically encourage dissidents of all kinds everywhere who are asking questions and deliberately creating uncertainties in the face of injustice. Ultimately this kind of phenomenology is not Czech, the injustice is not Latin American, but the problem is global, in all meanings of the word—south, north, east, west, non-human, and human.

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<sup>40</sup> Global Witness report, see above.

<sup>41</sup> Patočka, J. "K záležitostem Plastic People of the Universe a DG 307" ["On the Matters of The Plastic People of the Universe and DG 307"]. In *Sebrané spisy* [Collected Works] vol. 12. Praha: Oikoymenth, 2006: 425-427. Translated by Paul Wilson as "The Planetary Game," *Ethos*, Vol. 2, Nr. 1 (1986): 15.



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