

An Intercultural Reading of Patočka's Concept of Sacrifice

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Abstract

In this paper I argue Patočka's concept of sacrifice provides a phenomenological model for understanding the experience of sacrifice, as well as for criticizing its misuse for religious or political purposes. In order to appreciate Patočka's contribution to the philosophical inquiry regarding sacrifice, it is instructive to consider his thought within an intercultural context by comparing it to the perverted form of sacrifice found among Islamic terrorists and by drawing the example of Buddhist and Japanese practices of self-sacrifice. I maintain that Patočka's concept of sacrifice shows intercultural validity without being limited to the European or Christian context. His insight not only provides an unrelenting critique of the war experience in the last century but also delivers a timely critique of the unceasing terrorist attacks nowadays.

Keywords: sacrifice, mobilization, politics, community, intercultural philosophy

1. Introduction

The notion of sacrifice has been widely discussed by French phenomenologists like Levinas, Derrida and Marion in recent decades. (Levinas 1998, Derrida 1999, Marion 2011) As a contemporary of Levinas and Derrida, Patočka has often been overshadowed by the French phenomenologists, and his concept of sacrifice has only recently been given the attention it deserves. Some interpreters tend to associate Patočka's reflections on sacrifice with his religious thought (Koci 2017a, 2017b), while others tend to emphasize the political significance of his concept of sacrifice by situating it within the context of

the First World War and aligning it with other European thinkers who address the modern technical age. (Ucnik 2007, De Warren 2013, Dodd 2017, Sternard 2017 and Tava 2018) Although it is obvious that Patočka's reflections on sacrifice are connected to various strands of thought in his writings, one should not lose sight of the core experience of sacrifice, namely "man gains by a voluntary loss" in his formulation. (Patočka 1989, 336) Patočka intends to explicate such an experience in a phenomenological way without concealing its inherent paradoxes. In this paper, I attempt to reflect on the fundamental questions concerning sacrifice, namely what does it mean to sacrifice oneself? Is Patočka's concept of sacrifice still relevant in an intercultural context, such as the widespread terrorism in recent years? In what follows, I argue Patočka's reflections could be clarified more thoroughly from political, communal and spiritual perspectives with the hope of doing justice to the multifaceted implications of his thought for the twentieth century and nowadays. I argue further that my integrated approach has the merit of showing the intercultural validity of his concept of sacrifice. Indeed, Patočka does not limit his reflections to the geographical region of Europe in the twentieth century. He mentions twice the atomic bombing of Hiroshima in 1945 in his *Heretical Essays*, but it remains unclear in what way the Hiroshima experience is supposed to enrich his reflections on war and sacrifice. (Patočka 1996, 114, 132) In my paper, I argue that the Hiroshima bombing and the subsequent struggles of the Hiroshima people help illustrate Patočka's claim that the experience of sacrifice provides a new perspective to examine the political, communal and spiritual situation of our epoch. Having said that, I do not pretend to ignore Patočka's explicit reference to Christianity when he interrogates the meaning of sacrifice. (Patočka 1989, 339) I believe his attempt to "seek the fully ripened form of demythologized Christianity", which is not the primary subject of the present paper, should be duly understood within the broader context, namely his emphasis on the spiritual dimension of human existence in the technicized age. In his last study "On Masaryk's Philosophy of Religion", Patočka explicitly claims that his investigation of the problem of meaning exceeds the framework of Christianity and

this shows his intention to understand the universal human condition. (Patočka 2015)

In what follows, I attempt to employ an integrated approach to illustrate Patočka's concept of sacrifice in five steps. Firstly, I will give a sketch of Benslama's analyses of sacrifice with a special focus on Islamic terrorism. By highlighting the perverted experience of sacrifice as in terrorism, we can better appreciate Patočka's reflections as a critique of terrorist sacrifice nowadays. Secondly, I will give a sketch of Heidegger's concept of sacrifice that inspires Patočka as well as invites him to pursue a more robust concept of sacrifice in relation to human community. Thirdly, I will show that Patočka's concept of sacrifice entails a political critique that he launches against the state's appeal to sacrifice during war times, which further prompts him to argue for a sacrifice for "nothing." Fourthly, his ideas of sacrifice provide a new moral basis for rebuilding the community from within. Fifthly, his concept of sacrifice also reveals the spiritual dimension of human existence which is entirely eclipsed by the technological age. Finally, I will prolong Patočka's reflections with reference to the Hiroshima experience by drawing inspirations from Kenzaburo Oe's *Hiroshima Notes* in order to show that Patočka's concept of sacrifice not only anchors itself in the European experience of the World Wars but also finds its intercultural validity in the testimonies of the Hiroshima people. With their sacrifice and struggle, the Hiroshima people make themselves like combatant in the war confronting the age of distress.

2. Terrorist sacrifice

In order to evaluate the contemporary relevance of Patočka's reflections on sacrifice, it is instructive to pay attention to the much-debated issue of sacrifice in the midst of the terrorist attacks in Europe nowadays. The terrorist incidents have not only aroused psychic trauma of the victims, their neighbours and the general public, but also incited intellectual debates within various disciplines, such as sociology, international politics and psychoanalysis about the causes of terrorism. (Roy 2016, Kepel 2017, Benslama 2016) It

is interesting to note that Fethi Benslama, who has conducted psychoanalytical investigation of the Islamic terrorists in France, provides an illuminating account of the psychological motivations for a perverted concept of self-sacrifice inherent in the Islamic terrorism.¹ He coins the term “Super-Muslim” (*surmusulman*) to characterize the experience of self-sacrifice that motivates the Islamic terrorists and that inflames their “furious desire to sacrifice”. A “Super-Muslim” is defined by a “coercion” (*contrainte*) under which one is led to adjust oneself incessantly by the representation of an ideal Muslim. The person who suffers under the pressure of “Super-Muslim” always feels that he is being interrogated and ensnared by the fantastic idol of a perfect Muslim. In other words, the “Super-Muslim” is stripped of any freedom except to act in accordance with the demands of a perfect Muslim.

To understand the way in which Benslama’s concept of “Super-Muslim” operates amongst the Islamic terrorists, it is crucial to highlight three points, which will also serve to prepare our discussions of Patočka’s reflections on sacrifice. First, Benslama argues that the “Super-Muslim” involves a temporality of existence that, contrary to our everyday experience, does not point to an anticipation of possibilities that lies in the future except his death. His death leads rather to the glorious past to which every perfect Muslim should return. More precisely, the subject captured by the “Super-Muslim” is not a subject in the proper sense of that term. Instead, the subject is unceasingly embroiled into the past which is not the past he has actually lived through, but a past that has already been dictated by the Islamic ancestors. The “Super-Muslim”, writes Benslama,

is requested to identify himself with an exemplary Muslim, the Prophet and the ancestor (*Salaf*), to make their past lives into a present and his own life a past life. The imperative of the ‘Super-Muslim’ is not ‘To become!’ but ‘To Return to the past!’ because for him the Good has already taken place, the promise has already realized, he only has to rediscover them in the past, in waiting for the end of the world, or better: to hasten it. (Benslama 2016, 93)

The “Super-Muslim” characterizes precisely the psychic mechanism of the terrorists like the Kouachi brothers who committed the terrorist attack on the *Charlie Hebdo* offices in

Paris in 2015 while shouting "Allahu akbar". (Benslama 2016, 55) In that case, the murderers of the victims seem not to be the Kouachi brothers themselves but the holy warriors who incarnate in them. The future towards which the "Super-Muslim" leads his life is no longer an open field of possibilities; it is nothing other than a repetition of the distant past.

Second, Benslama suggests that the "Super-Muslim" seeks to unify himself with God by sacrificing his own life. What the "Super-Muslim" achieves in launching the terrorist attack is not the arousal of concern for the injustice that Muslims suffer in Europe with hope of securing justice for them in the future. Rather, the "Super-Muslim" believes that his terrorist act is itself an act of justice. In other words, the death of the terrorists in kamikaze attacks already signifies the coming of justice or of God on earth. As a result, there is no separation between the terrorists and God in the terrorists' self-sacrifice. With the union of the person and God, Benslama remarks that "[t]he self-sacrifice to which the youths are driven is a real projection of their bodies in the imaginary body of the absolute Other (*l'Autre absolu*), who is the tyranny much more terrible than the human tyrant." (Benslama 2016, 131) In this regard, the indivision between human beings and God engenders nothing other than the destructive self-sacrifice, which leads merely to death.

Third, the self-sacrifice of the terrorists reflects the anxiety over the destruction of their community. According to Benslama, the radicalization of some Muslims originates in the phantasy in which the enemy intrudes into their communities and even into their bodies. In order to maintain the purity of their own bodies and their communities, the radicalized Muslims are tempted to take violent reactions to their enemies. (Benslama 2016, 144-145) The violent confrontation has to do with the idea of an organic and pure Muslim community which has long been regarded as being in opposition to the political community of a nation-state. (Benslama 2016, 146-147) The terrorist attacks aim at rebuilding a purely Muslim community on the basis of religion rather than the modern principle of laws, the idea of laicity for example. For the terrorists, the success of the kamikaze attack lies precisely in the self-sacrifice

of the terrorists and the death of the enemies, which serves to establish the ideal community.

However, one must not understand the idea of “Super-Muslim” as belonging to any serious Islamic philosophy. Instead, it is a psychic coercion that commands certain Muslims to act under phantasies. Referring to the great theoretician of woman emancipation Tahar Haddad, Benslama reminds us that freedom in the Islamic tradition does not lie in the desire of breaking the chains of life but to remove the “petrified phantasies which surround it (freedom)”. (Benslama 2016, 148-149) The “Super-Muslim” perfectly represents one of these “petrified phantasies” that turn the radicalized Muslims into self-sacrificial warriors barring them from asking the meaning and prospects of their self-sacrifice. In order to evaluate the perversion of the “Super-Muslim,” it is necessary to put forward a theoretical model that clarifies the experience of sacrifice without conflating it with the phantasy of death and the ideal community. From this perspective, I argue that Patočka formulates a robust concept of sacrifice in the phenomenological manner. Before I turn to Patočka, I will give a sketch of Heidegger’s reflection on sacrifice which exerts a clear influence on Patočka. However, I will demonstrate in what way Heidegger’s concept of sacrifice is inadequate in avoiding the trap of “Super-Muslim.” Via the detour to Heidegger, we will see more clearly that Patočka’s attempt can be regarded as a way to overcome Heidegger’s shortcoming and shed away the illusion of the “furious desire to sacrifice” in the “Super-Muslim”.

3. Heidegger on Sacrifice

Heidegger conceives of sacrifice as a self-sacrifice that, on the one hand, discloses the most authentic relation of man to his being and, on the other, reinforces his relation with other members of the community. Although Heidegger has not thematized the concept of sacrifice in the same way as Patočka, he discusses it in various texts in relation to the phenomena of death and community. In *Being and Time*, Heidegger emphasizes the importance of sacrifice in manifesting man’s most authentic way of Being-in-the-world. On Heidegger’s account, being authentic is not simply to choose what one

wants, but more precisely, to recognize what one chooses to be most wanted amid the imminence of death. One thus becomes individuated, as self-irreplaceable by any others, distinguished from the loss of oneself in the undifferentiated everyday existence. For this reason, Heidegger writes that “[a]nticipation (*Vorlaufen*) discloses to existence that its uttermost possibility lies in giving oneself (*Selbstaufgabe*), and thus it shatters (*zerbricht*) all one’s tenaciousness to whatever existence one has reached.” (Heidegger 1962, 308; Heidegger 1967, 264)² In anticipating to give up (*aufgabe*) his life, he breaks with his adherence to the everyday existence and finds his existence groundless, as if he was thrown into nothingness. Later Patočka evokes almost the same idea when he highlights the possibility of human existence being shaken by death in an unprecedented scale caused by the devastating weapons in the First World War and thereafter.

Heidegger further suggests that self-sacrifice is significant for building a new community with a stronger solidarity. Through a collective engagement to sacrifice, man’s death is no longer a personal issue. For Heidegger, the death of a group of men will gain a new meaning as a powerful act to take charge of the destiny of their community and their people (*Volk*). Heidegger writes a cryptic paragraph in *Being and Time* to emphasize the necessity to fight for freedom by alluding to sacrifice.

Only in communicating and in struggling does the power of destiny become free. Dasein’s fateful destiny in and with its ‘generation’ goes to make up the full authentic historizing (*geschehen*) of Dasein. (Heidegger 1962, 436; Heidegger 1967, 384)

In the context of post-war Germany, it is not at all unexpected for the German readers to understand immediately Heidegger’s allusion to the self-sacrifice of veterans in the First World War. In using the terms *Mitteilung* (notice) and *Kampf* (combat), one might suspect that Heidegger is deliberately evoking the war experience of the Germans, including the death notification sent to the families of the soldiers and the prevalent talk of preparation for death in the frontline as well as in the home front.³ Heidegger’s remark on sacrifice in his lectures on *Germania* in 1934 and 1935 can be regarded as a further explication of the above idea. He claims that the

comradeship of the soldiers on the frontline “lies in the fact that the nearness of death as a sacrifice (*Opfer*) placed everyone in advance into the same nothingness (*Nichtigkeit*), so that the latter became the source of an unconditional belonging to one another.” (Heidegger 2014, 66; Heidegger 1999, 73) It is through the confrontation with nothingness that a common destiny befalls the soldiers putting them under an anxious anticipation of the unpredictable and perilous future. In this regard, death not only individuates each soldier, but also renders them reunited to each other forming a community in struggle. In other words, the sacrifice in wars reveals a deeper and closer relation between men which is absent in the ordinary social experience. That potential comradeship appears only in the collective sacrifice and hence escapes any organization, manipulation or calculation in advance. (Heidegger 2005, 236) In this context, it seems that Heidegger’s concern about comradeship is only applicable to the soldiers fighting in the name of the same nation. It remains doubtful whether Heidegger’s concept of sacrifice extends to include the possibility of solidarity among the soldiers across the frontline and even human beings across the national borders.⁴ One could say that Heidegger’s delineation of sacrifice is so narrow that it cannot evade the problem of the “Super-Muslim” for in the latter case it is precisely the terrorists’ fascination with death that makes them united together, including their predecessors and their successors. Therefore, it is necessary to inquire into the meaning of sacrifice more in detail and raise the question whether a collective anticipation of death is adequate to strengthen the solidarity among human beings without any vision on the community to come. It is my opinion that what the “Super-Muslim” and Heidegger’s concept of sacrifice lack in common is precisely a robust reflection on the dynamic relations between sacrifice and community, which Patočka does not hesitate to pursue in his writings.

4. Sacrifice as a political critique

In this section, I attempt to show that Patočka elaborates his concept of sacrifice in relation to his political critique, namely a critique of the “total mobilization” that

reaches its climax in the two World Wars and continues in the post-war era.⁵ He claims that under total mobilization, all human beings as well as natural life are deployed to serve the war and so manipulated by the governments' political, social and economic planning. Patočka claims that

It was this war that demonstrated that the transformation of the world into a laboratory for releasing reserves of energy accumulated over billions of years can be achieved only by means of wars. (Patočka 1996, 124)

In consequence, men are sacrificed in return for the forces that strengthen the power of the states and this in turn eradicates the possibility of genuine sacrifice among human beings. The force that manipulates the world is like a bulldozer which flattens everything on the earth by destroying all the disparities. (Patočka 1990, 344) On the contrary, an act of self-sacrifice would counter such a flattening, for it is an act freely taken by the subject to renounce any assignment imposed to him. In this regard, Patočka's concept of sacrifice can better clarify the experience in question in distinction from its perverted form precisely because he puts into doubt the so-called act of sacrifice that serves a certain purpose, be it religious or political or both.

Almost from the beginning of his philosophical thinking, Patočka paid attention to the manifestation of human freedom in the form of negative experience. As early as in "Life in Balance and life in Amplitude" in 1939, Patočka highlighted the importance of suffering in pursuing the meaning of life. In this short text, he contrasts between two attitudes towards living, namely a life lived in balance and a life lived in amplitude. Living in balance is to arrange one's life in view of practical success and seek satisfaction from within. On the contrary, living in amplitude is to break with the hedonism inherent in the life in balance. Therein one becomes aware not only of "physical pain, misery, oppression, guilt and death" but also of his pursuit of higher value that calls him to suffer thus bringing his life out of balance. (Patočka 2007b, 39) For Patočka, the suffering is revelatory to human beings in a twofold manner. On the one hand, it reveals man's "inner boundary" and the depth of his life which cannot be touched by

hedonist successes and failures. As long as man is willing to suffer the unsurpassable finitude of his existence in longing for good and justice, his suffering outweighs his desire for security and a life in balance. On the other hand, life in amplitude means struggling to live for meaning and even to stand on the boundary of life and death without retreating to the life in balance or believing in the compensation beyond the boundary. As Patočka says, “living in amplitude means a test of oneself and a protest.” (Patočka 2007b, 39) It requires man to resist seeking comfort in life and to protest against mundane gratification without resorting to any “paradise” or otherworldly consolation. In the eyes of Patočka, Socrates is the cardinal example of life in amplitude, for Socrates sacrifices his life not in exchange for anything but to manifest his freedom of practicing philosophy even against the *polis* at the risk of his life. His sacrifice is nothing but a protest against the illusion of a prosperous life enjoyed by the Athenians showing that life in amplitude is the way to freedom.⁶ Patočka’s description of the life in amplitude in relation to the shattering of the seemingly balanced life is worth citing.

He, who takes such a possibility upon himself, is free in a profound sense, He frees himself of the mere seeming that nails us to deep weakness, to futile hopes. The awoken freedom revealed what seemed to be as seeming and in accepting the danger acquired only now its full safety, acquired for Man a life out of his own roots, out of his own foundation. Because in this, in the struggle for freedom, in the struggle with himself, Man took possession of himself, of the deepest that he has in himself or that he is able to reach. In this spark this new life appears to him. (Patočka 2007b, 40)

The life in amplitude constitutes a subject who cannot gain autonomy without dispossessing oneself. Such a subject is uprooted from the familiarity with the world and the dispossession lets one hang on nothing except oneself. This provides the first sketch of the experience of sacrifice before his later elaboration of the concept.

Only after the Second World War, Patočka attempts to associate the term sacrifice with the political situation of Europe in launching his political critique. In his “Ideology and Life in Idea” in 1946, Patočka writes, not without bearing the horrible memories of the war in mind, that “the resolution to

win was not less and demands on the *sacrifice* of the individual for the society were almost unlimited.” (Patočka 2007b, 40)⁷ In this text, he elaborates two dimensions of the phenomenon of sacrifice, denoted by the Czech term *oběť*, which were monstrously demonstrated by the two World Wars, namely human beings as sacrificial victims of the war and human beings as self-sacrificing war heroes.⁸ On the one hand, the World Wars embody an ideology that summons people to sacrifice their lives for their nations and thus turns men into sacrificial victims of the powerful nations. The need to sacrifice forces innumerable men to be enlisted for the war and their deaths at the front were then glorified by the State. The war heroes in the “mass graves” are indeed nothing other than the victims of belligerent politics. Even at the home front, “shortages, hunger and epidemics” become widespread during the war and in consequence incalculable number of civilians were sacrificed. Patočka denounces the terror of war ideology as a form of dehumanization when he writes that “[w]e all experienced and are experiencing how far man is in our world a mere object of forces that extend beyond him.” (Patočka 2007a, 95) For man is regarded as a disposable object by the war ideology, the so-called sacrifice or “die for their country” (*mort pour la patrie*) contributes more to the accumulation of forces than the dignity of a combatant dead or alive. In addition, the war ideology not only objectifies man but also arouses the “irrational impulses of xenophobia and racial and national origin.” (Patočka 2007a, 92) The tides of racism and nationalism originate, theoretically speaking, in man’s identification with a collective unity that differentiates itself from others and claims its superiority over them. Man must put aside his individuality in order to merge with the seeming unity of racial or national collectivity. However, Patočka insists that the dissolution of an individual into a whole reflects precisely a “false collectivism” (Patočka 2007a, 91) because it deprives of his freedom of individuating oneself from the collectivity and the economic, nationalistic or military forces that mobilize him for certain purposes. Patočka argues that a man cannot be said to be free if he is unable to put into question his identification with a collectivity at any moment and take the responsibility of

acting like an individual, i.e. recognizing the fact that his actions are nothing collective but his individual choice.

On the other hand, Patočka suggests that in reality human beings do not cease to experience their “resoluteness” to act amid the menace of death that comes from every aspect of life. Massive fleeing and unremitting resistance during the wars show that man is capable of individuating oneself from any collective identities to manifest his individuality. Interestingly enough, the extreme brutality of the two World Wars not only exposes the fragility of human beings but also their unrelenting resoluteness in combat as well as survival. For Patočka, this makes the wars somehow “meaningful” to man in the way that they push man to the limit of survival and reveal the “inner core” (Patočka 2007a, 95) of human existence of which neither an ideology nor a person can deprive. In standing at the limit of life, man discovers the fact that what lies in his “inner core” is never any collective identity or ideology but freedom as such. Patočka conceives of freedom less as a subjective capacity to choose than a fundamental possibility of self-comprehension that hinges on the disengagement of man’s concern for any external objects. By withdrawing from his engagement in any objects, a man can no longer be influenced by any ideology or forces that intervene in his dealings with objects. In Patočka’s terms, man then breaks with “such a force, controllable from without as well as from within.” (Patočka 2007a, 93) The resoluteness of man reveals to him the most unshakable principle of his being, i.e. freedom, which escapes any seizure by ideology and indeed elevates his life to the height of the Idea. The Idea is not anything sensible or objectifiable but that which turns a man’s regard away from his concern for satisfaction and towards that which is in principle un-accomplishable, beyond any hope of satisfaction.

Therefore, it is no coincidence that Patočka emphasizes for the first time in “Ideology and Life in Idea” that sacrifice is the very act that manifests the freedom of human beings.⁹ Such kind of freedom is simultaneously a loss and a gain. Loss because his life is exposed to risks, gain because he amplifies his life by surpassing his egoism and elevating his life in pursuit of the Idea. Patočka emphasizes so much the

importance of living according to the Idea as he remarks in the following.

[T]o the logic of the Idea belongs the consciousness of the responsible, in that they do not want privileges for themselves; to the logic of the Idea belongs the inner significance of the highest sacrifice; the fact that what is a sheer loss from an external viewpoint, can be inner fulfilment (regardless of all external purposes). (Patočka 2007a, 94)

It is important to note that for Patočka living up to the Idea does not lead to man's unification with it as in the case of the "Super-Muslim" in which the radicalized Muslims intend to unite with God via his sacrifice. Patočka even rejects the use of violence against others to "realize" the Idea, for it is contradictory for a man to give up his egoism and to subject the other under his will. (Patočka 2007a, 94)

In his "Seminar on the Technical Era" in 1973, Patočka arrives at a more specific definition of sacrifice which shows his novel thinking on the topic.

A person who sacrifices himself, must go to the end. He is 'abandoned' precisely so that there is nothing (*rien*), nothing (*aucune chose*) to which he can still cling to. (Patočka 1990, 311)

For Patočka, the person who sacrifices oneself must hold on to nothing, i.e. nothing substantial like God or a certain nation. Even if the sacrifices intends for peace or justice, one must not regard this act as the means to actualize the Idea of justice itself. For that would turn the act of sacrifice into a reification of the Idea which is precisely what makes the terrorist pathological from Benslama's perspective. Yet, Patočka is not claiming that one sacrifices oneself arbitrarily. What he suggests is that one must not take one's sacrifice as a means to achieve an end, even if the end is noble enough to be proclaimed in front of others publicly. In the eyes of Patočka, the experience of sacrifice indicates that nothing other than the act of renouncing one's dependence on oneself could constitute the being of the person who sacrifices oneself. Such an idea of sacrifice cannot but be a negative experience that it does not produce or accomplish anything other than the carrying out of the act itself.

Patočka's concept of sacrifice as a political critique becomes more developed in his later texts such as *Heretical Essays*. In the Sixth Essay of his *Heretical Essays*, Patočka reiterates what he means by sacrifice must be distinguished from the sacrifice that is summoned by the State. The meaning of the sacrifice promoted by the state is merely relative, i.e. dependent upon the way the State mobilizes the sacrificial victims. For the state wants to maintain "peace" by mobilizing people to enter wars; the people who are sacrificed are then commemorated as heroes. In this way, peace is pursued by means of war and in fact becomes the reason for starting wars. Patočka criticizes the relative sacrifice as nothing other than a justification for the continuation of more wars. On the contrary, what Patočka draws our attention to is the absolute sacrifice, which he believes enables us to think about peace. Unlike the relative sacrifice which aims at acquiring certain territories, resources, power, etc., the absolute sacrifice is precisely a sacrifice that does not aim at acquiring anything. Rather, it involves a radical rupture with the logic of acquisition by confronting face to face the finitude of human beings. The man who sacrifices himself realizes fully that "something is not the means to anything else, a stepping stone to..., but rather something above and beyond which there can be nothing". (Patočka 1996, 130) The meaning of absolute sacrifice is not about the augmentation of force but the recognition of human finitude, of which no projects of the State can dispose. Such a self-understanding is important for it puts into doubt any political propaganda of the states that pretends to maintain peace by mobilizing their people to war. For the veterans, if the State continues to vaunt their contribution to peace, it could bring about a double misrecognition of the war experience. On the one hand, the state would misconstrue the frontline experience (*Fronterlebnis*) as a collective and heroic one while neglecting the individual confrontation of death that the veterans still suffer even after their demobilization. On the other hand, the state would overstate the meaning of combat among the veterans who have indeed suffered from "struggle and death" (Patočka 1996, 131), unpredictability and meaninglessness to the extreme on the frontline. The political

propaganda about war can never render justice to the war experience. As J. Glenn Gray writes in his memoir almost 15 years after his military service in the Second World War, “[t]he deepest dear of my war years, one still with me, is that these happenings had no real purpose.” (Gray 1998, 24) The glorification of the war heroes would serve nothing other than covering up the meaninglessness of the war and even tend to embellish the belligerent politics. In order to break with the political propaganda about wars, Patočka emphasizes the consciousness of the night that disrupts the consciousness of the day which aims at attaining peace by planned mobilization. On the contrary, the consciousness of the night implies an understanding of “the cosmic and the universal” (Patočka 1996, 130) via the absolute sacrifice such that that the man who sacrifices himself no longer regards himself as an autonomous subject who exchanges his life for something else but rather as a passive subject who lets his life encounter the uncertainty that overwhelms his own will. This entails an awareness that the absolute sacrifice alone can put an end to “the transformation of the world into a laboratory for releasing reserves of energy”. (Patočka 1996, 124) That means to say, the absolute sacrifice breaks with the logic of instrumentalization and calculation by restoring the uncontrollability and unpredictability into our understanding of the world. The consciousness of the night renounces to submit oneself under the order of power and energy that the deployment of war presupposes and strengthens. In such an experience, man confronts his finitude without evading it and even lets his finitude to expose to its limit without receding into self-preservation. In this regard, the absolute sacrifice as a sacrifice for nothing does not aim at attaining anything that the consciousness of the day would establish. On the contrary, it embodies the consciousness of the night that reminds human beings of that which remains uncontrollable and restless at the limit of human existence. As a result, the experience of sacrifice restores the proper relation between human beings and the world such that the man recognizes that his dignity lies in something beyond subsistence.

5. Sacrifice as a communal renewal

In this section, I attempt to show that Patočka's concept of sacrifice also involves the renewal of communal relations. He argues that although sacrifice aims at nothing, it embodies a new form of interhuman relations that remain curbed in the community under the total mobilization. Through this new form of solidarity, we will see more clearly in what way Patočka's thinking departs from Heidegger's concept of sacrifice and the "Super-Muslim".

In the Sixth Essay of his *Heretical Essays*, Patočka suggests that sacrifice "presents itself as the authentic transindividuality." (Patočka 1996, 131) I suggest understanding the term "authentic transindividuality" as a new form of communal relation that sacrifice aims at fostering between the person who sacrifices and his witnesses. Always under Heidegger's influence, Patočka conceives the everyday life as an anonymous existence in which man believes the world has been revealed in its fullness without any remaining mystery unknown to human beings. (Patočka 1996, 114.) Patočka is not making an anti-rationalist claim that the world is beyond the grasp of any rationality and that the scientific rationality must be rejected. What he actually suggests is that the experience of sacrifice discloses what the everyday life dominated by an instrumental rationality hides. That which remains uninstrumentalisable, proper to the being of human beings, is the act of bearing self-responsibility, i.e. not subjugating oneself to any ends. Patočka's notion of self-responsibility deserves a longer treatment which I cannot pursue in this context. It is important to emphasize that his concept of sacrifice should be understood in relation to his concept of self-responsibility. For Patočka, it is the calling of being responsible for oneself that motivates one to sacrifice and that calling remains ungraspable by the instrumental rationality. In the everyday existence in which human beings are frequently enslaved by work and everything is being regarded as a means to an end, man finds himself replaceable by others for everyone accepts the meanings that are given to him, such as socio-political organizations, values, traditions, etc. that pass through the previous generations and come down

to him. (Patočka 1996, 99) Once man puts into doubt the meanings given to him, he no longer merely accepts them without asking for their justification and he starts to find himself singularized from others through such questioning. As long as he realizes that he does not belong to the order of means and ends, it seems like he is being summoned to respond to his being, i.e. a free being. In this regard, he finds himself the unique person in being responsible for himself. That means to say, either he takes up the self-responsibility or evades it with a clear consciousness of what he denies. Patočka's self-responsibility is meant to describe giving responses to one's being, just as its German adjective form *Verantwortlich* suggests, being accountable to one's being, irreplaceable by any others. An action to self-sacrifice is a self-responsible action precisely because the actor is the only person accountable for his act. The self-sacrificial act does not obey any given orders but rather disobeys them. Therefore, it might disrupt any socio-political planning and others' expectations that affect him. The famous example that Patočka must have had in mind, though for some reason he never directly mentioned him, is Jan Palach. Palach immolated himself protesting the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1969. At first glance, it seems he has chosen to die alone without anyone else performing the same action. Such an immolation is by no means an act-in-concert (*Zusammenhandeln*) which, as Arendt suggests, constitutes the power of a political action. It is necessary therefore to inquire into the question in what sense the act of sacrifice involves a new type of interhuman relation.

Patočka's concept of "solidarity of the shaken" is meant to describe the interhuman relation embodied by the act of sacrifice. The solidarity of the shaken is not a solidarity that is built upon any nation, people (*Volk*) or group interests but rather a solidarity that originates in the people who share the experience of being shaken to death notable in the times of war. The experience of being shaken enables man to understand that he becomes free in the most profound sense of the word as long as he breaks with the order of force and refuses to be mobilized. In the case of Jan Palach, his immolation is certainly not an act-in-concert, but his self-sacrifice expresses his refusal to live

under the Russian occupation. More importantly, his action is not instrumental at all, by which I mean he did not believe his self-sacrifice would bring about a complete reversal of the occupation given the fact that the Warsaw Pact invasion of Czechoslovakia was the largest military action since the Second World War. In reality, one of his last letters reveals the motivation of his self-sacrifice as follows: Given the fact that our nations are on the verge of desperation and resignation, we have decided to express our protest and stir the sleeping conscience of the nation.¹⁰

What he does hope is to make everyone understand the urgency of the Russian occupation through his death and to prompt their actions. Nevertheless, even if his self-sacrifice did not succeed in ending the Russian occupation (in fact it did not, and it was all too naive to believe it would in 1969), the meaning of his self-immolation remains the same. In other words, success or failure, glory or shame are irrelevant criteria of evaluating the sacrifice. Rather, the meaning of sacrifice is manifest in shouldering the self-responsibility in the midst of external menace. Jan Palach's self-sacrifice makes him fully accountable to himself in rejecting to live with "desperation and resignation." He sacrifices himself not in order to overturn the Russian occupation but to remain self-responsible, for he no longer wants to deceive himself into thinking that he could tolerate the communist domination and the cynicism of silence that some of his Czech fellows had.¹¹ Jan Palach's funeral was attended by tens of thousands of Czech people, and his commemoration has lasted until the present day. Through his commemoration, a community is formed to mourn his death and reinforce the common will among the participants to stop military aggression. We can say that the self-sacrifice of Jan Palach, though remaining an individual act, fuels a form of the solidarity of the shaken because his death makes people gather together with the awareness of the threat of war and the utmost self-responsibility. In my opinion, Jan Palach's self-sacrifice is different from the sacrifice of the patriotic soldiers in the eyes of Heidegger or terrorists in the guise of the "Super-Muslim" insofar as Jan Palach by no means believes his self-sacrifice is the more appropriate way to overthrow the Russian

occupation. The dissidents of the Charter 77, though with different aims, form a community similar to the one that mourned for Jan Palach in 1969. They rejected the self-deception that the Czech Communist government promoted and protested against the violation of human rights in 1977. The dissidents take the responsibility in requesting that the government protects civil rights by risking the security of their livelihood and the prospects of their families. Although the causes of action for Jan Palach and the dissidents are different, what they share in common is the sense of self-responsibility at the risk of dispossession. No matter how high the price they must pay, every risk of loss puts their conviction to the test and makes them aware that they are irreplaceable in shouldering their self-responsibility.

The responsible human as such, writes Patočka, is *I*; it is an individual that is not identical with any role it could possibly assume..... it is a responsible I because in the confrontation with death and in coming to terms with nothingness it takes upon itself what we all must carry out in ourselves, where no one can take our place. (Patočka 1996, 107)

Here, I take Patočka to mean that self-responsibility lies at the very heart of sacrifice. So-called self-responsibility does not foreclose its invitation for others to respond to their own voices. The solidarity of the shaken precisely refers to the voluntary association of the responsible individuals. It does not lead to a formation of any states or political parties but rather a community in which individuals voluntarily come together to protest against the order of forces, the national, the political or the religious etc. As Patočka remarks, “[t]he solidarity of the shaken can say ‘no’ to the measures of mobilization which make the state of war permanent.” (Patočka 1996, 135) That is a community that refrains from acting in favour of any particular interests shared by a group of people, a race, a class, or a nation. In this way, that is also a community that can extend its boundaries across national, racial and class antagonisms to include everyone. However, one should note that such a solidarity is fragile. The solidarity of such a community can be undermined as long as its members become less and less devoted to sacrificing themselves amid the risks. In order to

evade the risks, a withdrawal into the egoistic life could take place, which weakens the intention to associate with each other. In the post-war years, the glorification of war heroes seems to build up a form of solidarity among patriotic nationals but, from Patočka's point of view, it actually covers up the human finitude by mythologizing the national solidarity. Patočka's novel concept of solidarity of the shaken launches a critique of these patriotisms by putting self-responsibility at the basis of social solidarity.

In his "Supplement" to the early work *The Natural World as a Philosophical Problem* published in 1970, Patočka further elaborates the importance of devotion as an effort to renew a community, which seems to me essential to understanding the solidarity of the shaken. (Patočka 2016, 115-180) Although Patočka never uses the term sacrifice in his "Supplement", what he describes as the life in devotion is nothing other than sacrifice. From his perspective, life in devotion is a "life in self-surrender, life outside oneself, not a mere solidarity of interests but a total reversal of interest." (Patočka 2016, 178) Having his theory of the movement of existence in mind, he claims that the experience of devotion belongs to the third movement of existence, i.e. the movement of breakthrough. It suffices here to give a brief sketch of his theory of movement of existence that shows the existential-ontological foundation of the experience of sacrifice. With the first movement of existence known as anchoring, man anchors himself in the world by being accepted by the society since his birth, especially by his family, neighbours, friends, etc. The movement of anchoring is characterized by a lack of self-consciousness that man inevitably has conflicts with others in the world and can individualize himself from the society. With the second movement of existence known as self-extension, man finds himself situated in the world of instruments fabricated by human beings. He is absorbed by the world with the production in which struggles and conflicts are unavoidable. On the contrary, the movement of breakthrough radically breaks with the other two movements of existence in the way that for the first time man puts into doubt the "peace" that he enjoys with the community that accepts him and becomes aware of the

“night” of his existence, i.e. the unpredictability of his future and the groundlessness of his existence. (Patočka 1996, 74) In the life in devotion, man becomes aware of the fact that he cannot survive without the society that accepts him and he cannot avoid all those instrumental relations and conflicts of interests in a society. The movement of breakthrough motivates him to rise above the bondage to life in the movement of anchoring and the social antagonisms in the movement of self-extension by giving up himself and living outside himself, not obeying the divine command but listening to his determination to devote himself to a new form of community different from acceptance and antagonisms. Such a community with the devoted individuals would foster a new kind of solidarity surpassing the natural happiness resulted from the movement of anchoring and the endless conflict of private interests resulted from the movement of self-extension. That points to a community to come which does not enclose itself in the satisfaction of life and the expansion of production, but rather remains open to building stronger communal relations among its members. Patočka's describes the new form of community as one without domination and unification by a transcendent unity, be it a religious or national identity.

It (devotion) thus begets a community of those who understand each other in surrender and devotion, and, through the negation of separate centers, cement a fellowship of dedication, a fellowship in devoted service, which transcends every individual. (Patočka 2016, 179)

Although Patočka mentions God a few times in this context, he by no means confines the community of devoted individuals to the fellowship of Christians. Regarding the character of such a community, he says that “there is nothing ‘mystical’ about it.” (Patočka 2016, 180) It is not an unquestioned existing society but a community to establish through the devotion of its members in the future.

In short, Patočka's use of the expression “authentic transindividuality”, which I mentioned above indicates a community of individuals with their dedication to others. Sacrifice is not an individual engagement cut off from the community but an act that invites others to take up the self-

responsibility and dedicate oneself to building a new community, a community to come. Seen in this way, Jan Palach represents what Patočka suggests “[l]ife given in dedication is, in a certain sense, everlasting.” (Patočka 2016, 179) What makes a communal life everlasting is nothing other than the endless devotion of its members.

6. Sacrifice as spiritual authority

In this section, I will elaborate Patočka’s concept of sacrifice as a spiritual dimension of human existence. He claims in his *Heretical Essays* that the solidarity of the shaken “can and must create a spiritual authority, become a spiritual power that could drive the warring world to some restraint, rendering some acts and measures impossible.” (Patočka 1996, 135) One might ask why it is necessary to have certain spiritual authority or power in contemporary society. Does the term “spiritual” indicate any religious dimension of human existence? Some scholars like Jean-Luc Marion and Martin Koci try to give an affirmative answer to the above question. In what follows, I argue Patočka’s use of sacrifice expresses a more general concern for the “spiritual foundation” of contemporary humanity.

First, Patočka recognizes the religious origin of sacrifice, but he does not agree to confine the concept of sacrifice to its religious (or Christian) meaning. This point can be seen in his Varna Lecture in 1973. (Patočka 2015a, 20) He suggests that the concept of sacrifice can be demonstrated in a new way, different from the traditional theological way, in order to remedy the “spiritual crisis” of contemporary humanity. Neither naturalism nor socialism has provided satisfactory solutions to the spiritual crisis, for both currents of thought have never confronted the meaning of technology and human existence as radically as phenomenology. For Patočka, the “spiritual crisis” refers to the domination of technological thinking that results in a “draining away of meaning” in Husserl’s diagnosis and the “enframing” (*Gestell*) in Heidegger’s analysis. What is crucial is to give a new spiritual foundation to technological thinking via the experience of sacrifice without simply returning to the religious origin of sacrifice. Patočka gives so much importance to sacrifice because “sacrifices represent a

persistent presence of something that does not appear in the calculations of the technological world". (Patočka 2015a, 20) Sacrifice is nothing but a break with the ordering of beings (*Seiendes*) making us aware of the singularity of human beings and the truth of being (*Sein*). One can say that Patočka employs the idea of sacrifice to give an alternative answer to Heidegger's persistent questioning of the meaning of being (*Sein*).

Second, although Patočka claims that sacrifice marks the singularity of Christianity, he does refer to other exemplary figures of sacrifice such as Andrei Sakharov and Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn in his "Seminar on the Technical Era" in 1973. (Patočka 1990, 321) Sakharov publicly opposed the Soviet Union's (and the United States') "antiballistic missile defence" and called for a halt to the arms race in 1960s. Solzhenitsyn revealed Lenin's and Stalin's oppression of prisoners in *Gulags* (known as internal exile) in his novels such as *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich* and *The Gulag Archipelago* in the 1960s, which earned him international fame as well as expulsion from Russia. Both dissidents decide to break with the technological thinking that takes everything as a means to an end by being truthful to themselves. Being self-responsible does not prevent them from being persecuted by the Soviet regime. Despite the fact that Sakharov is not religious and Solzhenitsyn is religious, Patočka believes that the scientist and the writer manifest the same "freedom of the undaunted" (Patočka 1996, 39) in sacrificing their comfort and protesting against the regime's manipulation of human beings.

Third, Patočka argues that what motivates the dissidents' actions is their "spiritual" personality rather than their religious faith. In his "The Spiritual Person and the Intellectual" in 1975, Patočka characterizes the "spiritual person" as a person who understands the meaning of sacrifice and is capable of sacrificing oneself.

The spiritual person who is capable of sacrifice, who is capable of seeing its significance and meaning... The spiritual person is not of course a politician and is not political in the usual sense of this word... but he is political in yet a different way, obviously, and he cannot be apolitical because this *non-self-evident nature of reality* is precisely what he throws into the face of this society and of everything that he finds around himself. (Patočka 2007c, 63)

The spiritual person constantly problematizes the self-evidence of reality, just as Sakharov puts into doubt the technical progress of military armament that threatens the survival of humanity and Solzhenitsyn exposes the inhuman acts that the Russian communist government has committed in the name of emancipation of human beings. One might also think of the self-immolation of Buddhist monks in protest to the Vietnam War in the 1960s. When the Buddhist nun Nhat Chi Mai set herself on fire in Saigon in 1967, she put two statues in front of her, those of the Virgin Mary and Avalokitesvara Bodhisattva, with the intention to call for solidarity of different believers to fight for peace. (Chân Không 2007, 103) The meaning of her sacrifice is not to plead for an immediate unification of the Buddhists and the Christians, or North and South Vietnam but to show her rectitude in refusing to live under hate and violence. (Chân Không 2007, 106) From Patočka's perspective, she is certainly a spiritual person, though she is trained to be a Buddhist nun, for she understands the meaning of sacrifice and is capable of doing it. Patočka further suggests that a spiritual person is inherently political without the need of holding any particular stance in politics, like being a communist or liberal, republican or democrat. This is because he would always call into question what we have taken for granted in politics by refusing to regard politics as the servant of economy, security, and State power. We can see Patočka's concept of the political entails a critique of technological thinking in politics and a critique of politicians as technocrats, which later inspires Vaclav Havel's famous formulation of "anti-political politics." (Havel 1984).

7. Intercultural validity

In the last section, I attempt to extend Patočka's thinking of sacrifice to the experiences of non-European cultures, and I hope to demonstrate Patočka's concept of sacrifice retains its intercultural validity beyond the Christian context. Patočka mentions Hiroshima two times in his *Heretical Essays* highlighting it as a kind of frontline experience but he has not given an illustration of how the Hiroshima experience

can shed light on the solidarity of the shaken. (Patočka 1996, 114, 132) I suggest understanding the Hiroshima experience with the help of Oe Kenzaburo (大江健三郎) 's investigation conducted in Hiroshima and published in his *Hiroshima Notes* in 1965 in order to appreciate the intercultural validity of Patočka's thought.

Both Patočka and Oe emphasize the war experience of Hiroshima from the perspective of the sacrificial victims. As Patočka remarks, the Second World War represents a limitless enlargement of the frontline experience in the First World War such that the aerial and atomic bombing widely deployed in the Second World War "eliminated the distinction between the front line and the home front." (Patočka 1996, 132) Although the Hiroshima people did not choose to enlist in the War, they were sacrificed in the America's bombing which had been provoked by the Japanese attack. As a result, all the Hiroshima people become the sacrificial victims of the War. According to Oe's report, the spectre of death still haunts the inhabitants of Hiroshima even 18 years (in 1963) after the atomic bomb explosion. The deadly destruction caused by the atomic bomb not only resulted in more than 100,000 immediate deaths, but also numerous disfigured bodies, incurable diseases and enormous pollution of water and land. The continuous confrontation with suffering, physical and mental illness and death leaves the frontline experience to the Japanese long after the war stopped in 1945. Oe remarks that numerous women in Hiroshima have suffered from anxiety and shame after the bombing because the pregnant women worried about the health condition of their babies and the young women having atomic bomb disease were regarded as bringing bad luck to their future husbands. For these reasons, suicide among women in Hiroshima is not rare. Yet, the people of Hiroshima did not cease to resist the temptation to suicide brought by the frontline experience in Hiroshima. They acquired a specific attitude towards death which, absent in other regions of Japan, represents a moral struggle against the imminence of misfortune and death. As Oe notes, "I regain courage when I encounter the thoroughly and fundamentally human sense of morality in the Hiroshima people 'who do not kill themselves in

spite of their misery.” (Oe 1995, 84) Their survival involves a constant confrontation of death, which pushes their existence beyond the movement of anchoring and self-extension.

The frontline experience in Hiroshima renders the Hiroshima people “unsurrendered” rejecting the destiny of sacrificial victims. The spectre of death pushes them to sacrifice themselves in order to defend human dignity. Without any previous experience in curing the atomic bomb disease, the Hiroshima doctors worked days and nights trying many different methods to help alleviate the pain of the victims. The sacrifice of the doctors in Hiroshima is not celebrated by their success but their tireless struggle against the “enemies” (i.e. the diseases caused by the atomic bomb) and their “dedication” to the sacrificial victims of the war. Oe’s appraisal of the “undaunted” doctors demonstrates precisely that it is not the inherent goodness in the human nature that can save humanity from evil but the undaunted struggle itself that motivates man’s self-sacrifice and leaves the future open to drastic unpredictability. In Patočka’s terms, it is the movement of breakthrough that prompts human beings to confront the limit of their existence and calls them to take up their self-responsibility. Oe’s observation of the Japanese doctors in the following looks alike the frontline experience of the soldiers in the First World War that make them aware of their finitude.

Even now, writes Oe, there is no evidence that the human goodness which served the hapless victims has gained the upper hand over the human evil which produced the atomic bombs. People who believe, however, that in this world human order and harmony eventually recover from extremity, will perhaps take courage from the twenty-year struggle of the Hiroshima doctors – even though it cannot yet be said that they have won the battle. (Oe 1995, 132)

The strong anti-nuclear mobilization in the period of Oe’s visit to Hiroshima in the 1960s embodies a community built upon the solidarity of the shaken. From a global point of view, the frontline produced by the atomic bombing not only divides the world between the Japanese and the Americans during the Second World War but also between those who take seriously the nuclear threat to humanity and those who employ the nuclear technology to strengthen the force of the State. Oe remarks that the people of Hiroshima dare to speak out about

the atomic bomb to other parts of the world in spite of the miseries and the shame of their defeat in the Second World War. Their witness to the history of the war from the perspective of the sacrificial victims puts into question the glorification of the veterans by the State.

People who continue to live in Hiroshima, instead of keeping silent or forgetting about the extreme tragedy of human history, are trying to speak about it, study it, and record it. (...) The people who stick by the city are the only ones with a right to forget it and keep silent about it; but they are the very ones who choose to discuss, study and record it energetically. (Oe 1995, 112)

Anti-nuclear mobilization is built upon the solidarity of the people who truly understand the risk of nuclear energy and are willing to “say no” to the planning of more nuclear power plants by the Japanese state. Although the anti-nuclear community exerts certain political pressure in Japan in raising concerns for the use of nuclear power, the underlying solidarity points to something more than the aggregation of interests, namely anti-nuclear power. That is a solidarity inseparable from the lived-through experience of the atomic bombing in the memories as well as in the bodies of the survivors in Hiroshima. More precisely, it is the traumatic experience that interrogates the subjects making them aware of the imminence of total destruction and thereby propelling them to request a suspension of power that has already been exerted upon them by economic and political decisions. Such a solidarity in its nature does not aim at conquering more and more power and even competing with the State, but rather aims at expressing their non-integration with the State and their refusal to the technological and political manipulation of life. Oe believes that the Hiroshima experience should be made known to the whole world as it shows the Hiroshima people confront with death in an “undaunted” manner. In my opinion, this long struggle of the Hiroshima people reflects precisely their interruption with the ordinary life, i.e. the movement of breakthrough in Patočka's terms. Through this interruption, they rework the solidarity of the community from within without being integrated into the any political parties or the State.

8. Conclusion

I conclude by recapitulating my main arguments. I hope to have shown Patočka's concept of sacrifice provides a critique of the pseudo-sacrifice manifest in the "Super-Muslim" because his formulation "sacrifice for nothing" avoids objectifying the goal of sacrifice. In passing from Benslama's discussions of the "Super-Muslim" to Heidegger, I do not pretend to claim that the Heidegger's concept of sacrifice has the same problem as the "Super-Muslim". What I want to point out is that Heidegger, as an innovative thinker who formulates the idea of sacrifice in the phenomenological manner, cannot provide a theoretical model in rethinking the relation between the person who sacrifices and others who witness. The common destiny of a people resulted from their collective act of sacrifice in Heidegger's view becomes precisely what is problematic in Patočka's view. One can suspect that Patočka is well aware of the insufficiency in Heidegger's thinking of sacrifice due to the fact that Patočka is much more critical of the problem of nationalism and racism than Heidegger in the times of war. Patočka agrees with Heidegger that sacrifice reflects a form of freedom to get rid of the bondage of life thus turning the subject into a self-abandoning subject. However, what Heidegger has not thought through is precisely the question in what way the experience of sacrifice can fundamentally refashion the communal relations of a given society. For this reason, Patočka looks for an alternative theory that enables us to critique the State's mobilization of the sacrificial victims and that contributes to thinking about new communal relations and spiritual dimension of contemporary humanity.

Drawing on Oe's studies of the aftereffect of the Hiroshima bombing, I argue that Patočka's concept of sacrifice is not confined to the European or Christian context. In Oe's view, the dignity of human beings cannot be manifest without the determination to combat under the shadow of death and this is essential to the experience of sacrifice in the frontline experience of the Hiroshima people. My view is that Patočka's formulation "sacrifice for nothing" is apt in capturing the experience of sacrifice in a non-religious manner that is present in different cultures. In sacrificing oneself for nothing, the

subject is able to initiate a break with the order of means and ends, resulting in his life exposed to risks without the promise of redemption. In consequence, a community composed of devoted individuals is a community that remains open to the reconstruction of its solidarity that is less based upon the national, religious or cultural ties than every individual's dedication to others.

NOTES

¹ Neither Benslama nor the author of this paper has the intention to identify terrorists with Muslims.

² See also Marx Crépon's discussions on this point. Crépon 2013, 11-25.

³ I refer to the following studies on the relation between Heidegger and the war experience. Altman 2012, 169-194. Losurdo 2001, 55-61.

⁴ Sallis's commentary has not addressed this problem. Sallis 1990, 139-167.

⁵ Patočka adopts the term *totale Mobilmachung* from Ernst Jünger. Patočka 1996, 114. Ernst Jünger 1993.

⁶ Patočka prolongs his meditation on Socrates in his *Socrates* in 1946 where he writes that "[t]he awakening of the soul is an unending struggle, a struggle in which the awaken struggle for his proper person and which, nothing more than other moral struggle, is never definitely won, as long as he remains a breath of life." Patočka 2017, 187.

⁷ My emphasis.

⁸ I take the term "sacrificial victims" from Ucnik 2007.

⁹ Heidegger also affirms that sacrifice reflects human freedom though he formulates the idea in a way very different from Patočka. Heidegger 2005: 236.

¹⁰ From Palach's letter to the Union of Czechoslovak Writers on 16 January 1969. Access date 6 Sep 2018. <http://www.janpalach.eu/en/default/jan-palach/priprava>

¹¹ I refer to Speech of Pastor Jakub S. Trojan at Jan Palach's grave on 25 January 1969. "In this cynical century in which we are often scared by others and others are scared by us, in a century in which we are often startled at our own small-mindedness, he made us ask a question that can make great people of us: What did I do for others, what is my heart like, what is my aim, and what is the highest priority in my life?" Access date 6 Sep 2018. <http://www.janpalach.eu/en/default/jan-palach/pohreb>

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