

Translators' Preface

Matyáš Moravec and Jan Potoček

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Translators' Preface

Matyáš Moravec and Jan Patočka

- 1 The three texts translated here offer an important insight into Patočka's views on Bergson, Bergsonism, and their position in twentieth-century philosophy. The texts are arranged chronologically. The first is Patočka's review of *Bergson* by Vladimir Jankélévitch, published in *Česká mysl* in 1931. *Česká mysl* (the first Czech philosophical journal) was the central platform for publications, reviews, and discussions on philosophy, psychology, sociology and religion. Patočka was a member of the editorial board between 1937 and 1947 (with the exception of 1938-1940 when the journal was not published). The second text is Patočka's introduction to Václav Černý's translation of *The Two Sources of Morality and Religion*, published in 1936. The last text is an entry on Bergson in *Pedagogická encyklopedie* ("The Encyclopedia of Paedagogy"), an encyclopedia published in several volumes between 1938 and 1940.
- 2 It is worth noting that—though not included in the translation published here—Patočka's encyclopedia entry is followed by a shorter passage on Bergson's role for paedagogy written by Oskar Epstein (1888–1941).¹ Epstein is more critical of Bergson than the preceding text by Patočka translated below, but he does highlight the significance of Bergson's philosophy for educational theory. Epstein situates Bergson in the context of his predecessors (Émile Boutroux, Félix Ravaisson) and followers (William James, Édouard Le Roy). He also mentions Proust, Sorel, and a summary of Bergson's philosophy by Höffding. The entry closes with a list of secondary literature by Bergson scholars including Wheeler, Thibaudet, Chevalier, Le Roy, Maritain, Jankélévitch and two Czech sources on Bergson and paedagogy by J. Hendrich and Epstein himself.
- 3 Our translation attempts to convey Patočka's original rhythm of language while producing a translation that is idiomatically coherent and that also makes sense to present-day readers of Bergson. As a result, we have had to take some decisions regarding the translation of Patočka's prose as well as some decisions of purely editorial nature. They are as follows:
- 4 As much as possible, we tried mapping Patočka's own terms onto those in the available translations of Bergson into English. Furthermore, in most instances, we translate the

term “*duch*” as “spirit” and the term “*duše*” either as “soul” or as “mind” depending on the context; we particularly opt for the second translation in the case of “*duše*” where Patočka discusses Bergson’s views on the mind-body relation. In cases where this is not adhered to, or in other ambiguous cases, the original terms are provided in Czech in square brackets. The term “*životní proud*” is translated as “*élan vital*”—while this diverges from the Czech original (“stream of life”), it is clear that in the relevant passages Patočka is talking about Bergson’s “*élan vital*.” As regards other terms that are either difficult to convey in English without losing their full meaning or connotation in Czech, we have included these in square brackets.

- 5 Where Patočka quotes the original French, the text is left untranslated. In the one location where Patočka quotes a lengthy passage from Simmel in German, we quote the Andrews & Levine translation in a footnote. The passages from Jankélévitch’s monograph that Patočka translates into Czech are either taken from the Schott translation or, where they differ significantly, translated anew with Schott’s translation provided in a footnote. All footnotes in the three texts are ours.
- 6 We are grateful to Nils Schott for many useful comments on this text and to the Jan Patočka Archive (Ivan Chvatík in particular), the copyright owners for the Czech originals, for their kind permission to publish these translations.

NOTES

1. For more information, see https://encyklopedie.brna.cz/home-mmb/?acc=profil_osobnosti&load=10486