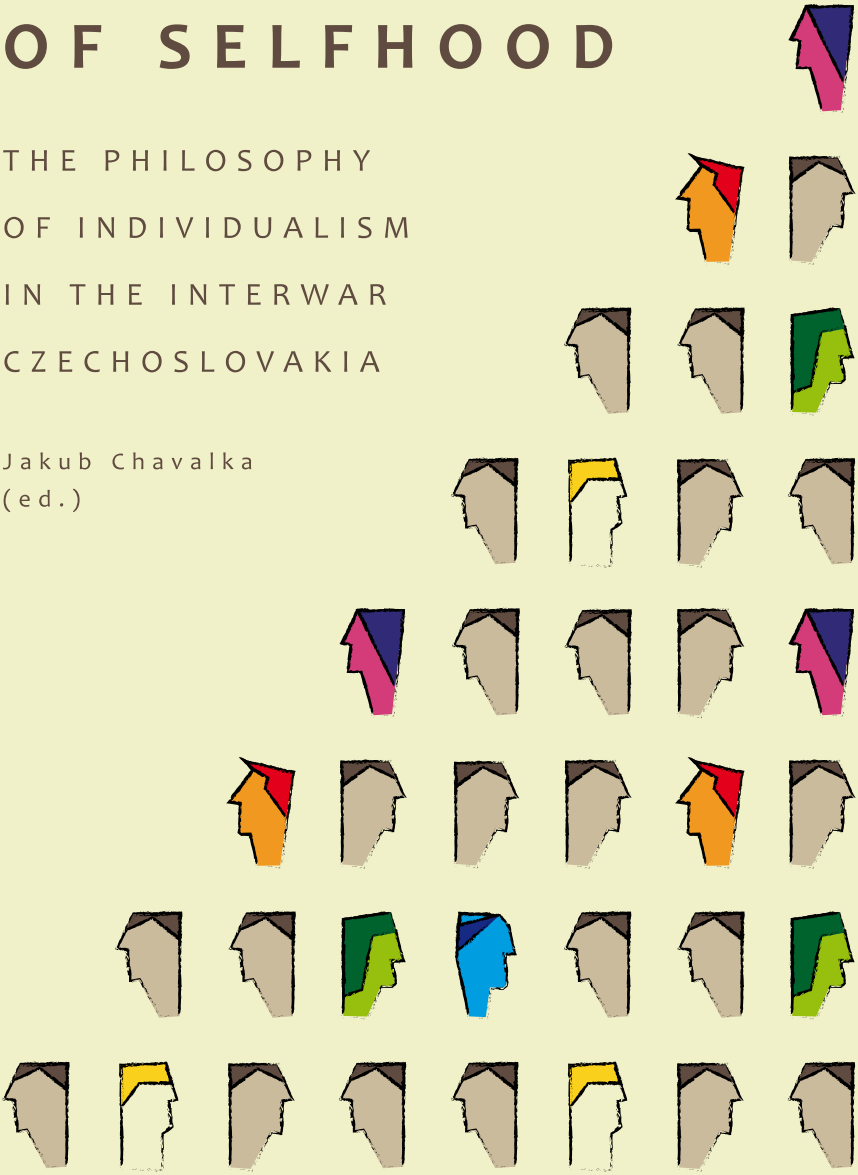
THE SPECTRES OF SELFHOOD

THE PHILOSOPHY OF INDIVIDUALISM IN THE INTERWAR CZECHOSLOVAKIA

Jakub Chavalka
(ed.)



Filosofický časopis, Special Issue 1/2021

Published by the Filosofický časopis and the FILOSOFIA
Institute of Philosophy of the Czech Academy of Sciences,
Prague 2021

Special Issue
Filosofický časopis
2021/1

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The Philosophy of Individualism in the Interwar Czechoslovakia

Edited by
Jakub Chavalka

Prague 2021

The volume was published thanks to the support
of the Czech Academy of Sciences.
The publication was supported by the funds of the 2020
Specific University Research of the Faculty of Humanities
at the Charles University, VS 260 609 05.

All the papers passed through a standard peer-review process
of the Filosofický časopis.

Edited by Jakub Chavalka

Publisher: Filosofický ústav Akademie věd České republiky,
Praha 2021

Filosofický časopis
ISSN 0015-1831 (Print)
ISSN 2570-9232 (Online)

FILOSOFIA
ISBN 978-80-7007-677-4 (print book)
ISBN 978-80-7007-713-9 (e-book)
DOI 10.47376/filosofia.2021.1

Contents

A Word from the Editor

The texts compiled in this collection first came into existence as a series of lectures delivered by most of the authors at the *Philosophy, Education, and Culture in the Challenges of the Contemporary World* (*Filozofia, vzdelanie, kultúra vo výzvach súčasnosti*) conference held by the Slovak Philosophical Association of the Slovak Academy of Sciences in October 2019 in Košice, Slovakia. The organizers, led by Ondrej Marchevský and Andrea Javorská, were so kind as to reserve an independent panel for us and even attend the lectures along with their other colleagues according to their time availability. On the behalf of myself and all the authors, I would like to thank them wholeheartedly. This anthology would not be made possible without their help and effort.

The collection was made possible also thanks to the gracious support of *The Philosophical Journal* (*Filosofický časopis*). The willingness to accept the topic of individualism in the Czechoslovak interwar philosophy was decisive for the work on each text. Namely, I would like to highlight our co-operation with the journal's editor Olga Baranová, who took the project under her wing and always showed willingness to advise and help. Our co-operation with the journal's editor Jana Pechmanová was equally beneficial to us. Last, but not least, I would like to voice my appreciation for the consultations with the editor-in-chief of *Filosofický časopis*, Milan Znoj.

As to the work on the texts themselves, they came into existence in their embryonical form at the aforementioned conference. After the topic was accepted into a special issue of *Filosofický časopis*, all the texts were re-worked into the form of academic papers. The final form of each text was then subjected to standard peer review by *Filosofický časopis*. At this point, I would hereby like to express my gratitude to all the reviewers who took the time to carefully analyse our texts and thus contributed to elevating the level of each of them.

A special thanks goes to those who translated the texts into English and paid attention to the linguistic side of each paper – Tatiana Badurová (who was also responsible for translations coordination), Marek Vodička, and Dominika Lewis. Exceptionally important for the final form of the linguistic side of the whole collection was the proofreading work by Ewan A. M. Lewis. His comments and adjustments from the position of a native speaker and an experienced translator helped to refine each article even more and thus guarantee their high quality.

The work on finalising the form of the publication was also assisted by Jana Křížová and Jakub Šenovský.

Finally, the support of the Faculty of Humanities at the Charles University in Prague should be highlighted. Thanks to it, we were able to participate at the conference in Košice, invite language experts to co-operate with us, and polish each article into its final form. Several of them (they are mentioned in the introductory remark) were also sponsored by The Czech Science Foundation (GA ČR).

Jakub Chavalka
editor

Political and Philosophical Individualism. A Brief Introduction to the Problem*

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The title of this collection of texts may be taken as provisional in a positive sense. None of the thinkers who are discussed here ever explicitly proclaimed themselves to be an individualist, nor did any of them proclaim their thinking was centred on individuality. Perhaps this was a result of Masaryk's rejection of radical individualism, which, in his view, was personified in Stirner and Nietzsche. Nevertheless, Masaryk himself is a good example of where the core of the problem of individualism lies. In 1930s, a certain intellectual atmosphere gradually established itself, in which Masaryk was reproached for putting too much emphasis on the individual, while ignoring specifically social issues. Thus, it seems that the problem of individualism or individuality is itself provisional – its thematisation and solution would change over a relatively short period, always in direct relation to a given conception of intersubjectivity and its moral imperatives that transcend the individual.

Nevertheless, let us get back to Masaryk and his ambiguous view of individualism. His hesitation is best expressed in his *Social Question* (*Otázka sociální*), when he calls himself an individualist, yet is quick to add that individualism is not to be confused with egoism.[1] Elsewhere, he criticises radical individualism for tearing one away from the company of other people and the influence that others necessarily have on one, either through education or simply by engaging in discussions. Masaryk pictured an individualist as

* The text is part of the Czech Science Foundation grant project (GA ČR) *Individualism in the Czechoslovak Philosophy 1918–1948*, No. 19-14180S.

1 "The fact that I cannot see absolute antagonisms between an individual and a society does in no way imply I accept absolute collectivism; on the other hand, just because I strive for a strong conception of one's own individuality, I do not support absolute egoism, for individualism and egoism are not identical." Masaryk, T. G., *Social Question* (*Otázka sociální II*). Praha, Čin 1936, p. 226.

a man who falsely abstracts himself from such influence and, psychologically speaking, wants to be left alone. This is why, for Masaryk, an individualist is a mere Philistine who just privately indulges in daydreams about his own heroism. Stirner's case served him as the best example – Stirner, full of anarchism, was all about atavism of the state apparatus, yet he did not participate in the revolution when it broke out in 1848. A touch of reality can easily prove such an individualist guilty of being a poser. It is a merely declarative individualism which, in fact, is completely indifferent to everything but one's own self, the sole place where one retreats from the rest of the world.

Despite this interpretation of radical individualism, Masaryk did openly support individualism:

> "A normal political and social state of society cannot be realised without strong individualism, i.e. without the free initiative of individuals, which basically implies a regime that allows for development of diverse individualities, born with different physical and mental talents. Each individual's situation in society is unique, and so is his social environment; an individual knows best how to use his own potential as well as the potential of his environment according to his own judgement. If one man decides about another and has leadership over him, there is danger that the leader will fail to use the full potential of his subject appropriately. This is to be seen everywhere and also politically in all forms of government with strong centralism; and precisely communism is centralist."[2]

It is clear that Masaryk talks about an individualism that founds political freedom and serves as a prerequisite to democracy. Masaryk detests the kind of individual who cowardly crawls inside himself to hostilely peer at the whole world outside, just as much as he detests the kind who gives oneself up for something bigger than oneself. Thus, Masaryk's idea of individualism is a search for the middle ground between two extremes, subjectivism and collectivism. He is wary of both for their destructivity and uncontrollability. For him, democracy can be built only on strong individualities.

In the same year that Masaryk published his *World Revolution* (*Světová revoluce*), another sworn democrat, Ferdinand Peroutka, wrote the following lines:

> "Nothing good for humanity can come out of the suppression of individuality. A solid base for everything is to be found only in a harmo-

2 Masaryk, T. G., *World Revolution During and In the War 1914–1918* (*Světová revoluce za války a ve válce 1914–1918*). Praha, Čin 1936, p. 203.

niously developed personality. Those who ask of you to cast aside your personality are but false prophets who then demand of you, ridded of your own personality, to succumb to the laws and likings of their own personalities."[3]

Peroutka cannot be suspected of enthusiastic support for any of the excesses that were ascribed to individualism at that time. It is more than characteristic of him that the presented quotation stems, just as in Masaryk's case, from a polemic against socialism that explicitly names Lenin. There is no better way to express the sober and crystal-clear awareness of the danger posed by suppression of one's own personality.

It seems that democratic thinking was supportive of individualism. However, a glimpse into the books and philosophical journals (especially *Česká mysl* and *Ruch filosoficky*) published in 1920s and 1930s reveals a completely different situation. The individual and personality are not dealt with in a political context – on the contrary, heated discussions raged over the permissibility of linking individual creativity with science and philosophy, whether the concept of intuition secretly postulates mysticism, and whether introspection means returning back to the long-surpassed individualism of German idealism. Generally speaking, Czech philosophy was much more suspicious of the individual than anywhere else in Europe. Following Masaryk's lead, it aimed at establishing a state-forming programme,[4] yet it drew ever further away from Masaryk's emphasis on a strong and high-principled individuality. For a long time, Czech philosophy maintained the tendency of objective retreat from reality and was not ready to realise that it is precisely this approach that distances it from the life of the particular man whose future it wanted to plan. The moment anyone tried to get closer to this particularity/man and contemplate it/him in its/his uniqueness, one was immediately rejected and proclaimed to be an adherent of theosophy, spiritualism or a dilettante wishing to lose himself in the world process. It was only after a long dispute that the two sides slowly started to balance out.

All of this makes it very difficult to give a short summary of what individualism in Czechoslovak interwar period was. The goal of this special issue is to

3 Peroutka, F., *The Struggles for Today* (*Boje o dnešek*). Praha, Fr. Borový 1925, p. 22.

4 "This was attempted by our revivalists [...] which is why they based their national programme from the very beginning on the philosophy of history and philosophy. In philosophy they found the mirror that both our past and future seems to be to us. Philosophy connects us to the best of efforts of all nations, yet it also teaches us that the goal of our best national efforts was the same goal of all nations. Philosophy offers us as a sense of our national life: the humanist ideal, it offers us this ideal as our own, Czech ideal." Masaryk, T. G., *Our Contemporary Crisis* (*Naše nynější krize*). Praha, Ústav T. G. Masaryka (The Massaryk Institute) 2000, p. 180.

examine how the question of individualism was reflected upon and what life stances it led to in the thinking of various and, admittedly, lesser-known philosophers of the time. A reason behind this minimal familiarity with most of these thinkers lies principally in the fact that they did not originally determine the concept of man on the basis of his social relations[5] (in all possible senses), but based on man's relation and access to that which we could call "Transcendence". A human being, for them, is not grasped in its entirety if described only in terms of experience, i.e. embedded in reality, with everything one needs to live, know and act given by and through experience. For these philosophers, a human being is founded far deeper, it can even be said that a human being creates reality and is autonomous to it. What all of the presented thinkers have in common is their approach towards this autonomy of the human being or the person and their contemplation over consequences that such autonomy brings with it.

Naturally, the ways how these philosophers came to terms with these demands on thinking and actions to which it leads, i.e. intersubjectivity, differ greatly. It would be incorrect to say that those thinkers represented some united philosophical movement; after all, that was not the point of their endeavour. Nevertheless, since they loosely congregated around the journal *Ruch filosofický*, they were perceived by the public and especially by their opponents as a "generation", a generation revolting against dogmatic identification of philosophy and science, and so against Masarykean realism. This is the source of the key objections against them: that they neglect science and ignore Masaryk. The following papers show how these allegations were dealt with. The efforts to determine and delimit human autonomy and the struggle against positivist-realist diffusion of the limits of free individuality – in its metaphysical, noetic and political meaning – soon afterwards turned into a struggle for freedom of Czechoslovak philosophy, or, as Alfréd Fuchs put it, a struggle for the freedom of philosophical criticism.

The close connectedness of this struggle with the struggle of the newly formed republic for self-determination is more than evident. All the presented philosophers significantly influenced the cultural, spiritual and intellectual atmosphere of the new republic. After all, some of them understand nation or state as a sovereign individual, albeit collectively shared. The provisionality of the title of this collection of texts will be fulfilled, or perhaps surpassed, if the presented papers help to better understand how the problem of individuality formed our history.

* * *

5 This is why in 1948 they were erased from the history upon the impulse from the Marxist-Leninist historians.

Let me write a few words to the thematic composition of the individual papers. The first three articles are focused on historical context and examine the conditions of possibility of the birth of the philosophy of individualism in Czechoslovakia. Already at the beginning of the century, František Mareš, a physician and physiologist, introduced a "Kantian alternative" into Czechoslovak thinking and used it to criticise the positivism of František Krejčí. He was later dubbed the mentor of the "younger philosophical generation" whose thinking lies at the core of this whole publication. Mareš's thoughts on character and personality, although drawing heavily from physiology, did not exclude a synthesis in a spiritually understood "self", and gradually inclined more and more towards Schopenhauer's concept of innateness. For Mareš, the key principle of individuality is feeling, which, in the end, must be extended into a universal consciousness of a moral being. František Mareš is dealt with also in the second paper, which focuses on Henri Bergson, the significant influence of his thinking and the reception of his concept of intuition in Czechoslovak philosophy. Although Bergsonism was received critically, for instance by Tomáš Trnka, it did have an implicit, positive or negative influence on every philosopher of the time. This is evidenced by the third contextual paper, as Emanuel Rádl did not criticise only Bergson, but also the entire "younger philosophical generation". Rádl was a typical opponent of the philosophy of individualism, as he was personally very close to its adherents due to his being a Chairman of *Jednota Filosofická* that all the younger philosophers were gathered around. Moreover, Rádl published a book full of explicit criticism and later on, through *Jednota filosofická*, led a dispute which initiated the aforementioned struggle for the freedom of Czechoslovak philosophy.

The second thematic part of this publication is dedicated to the cardinal representatives of "the younger philosophical generation" loosely gathered around the journal *Ruch filosofický*. The paper on Ferdinand Pelikán, its founder and a long-time editor, focuses on his conception of personality, which was supposed to offer a cure to fictionalism, as introduced into modern philosophy by Hume and Kant. In this respect, Pelikán's individualism is more akin to personalism, yet, when he turns to the concepts of intuition, pluralism or imagination, building on Bergson whose crucial book *The Creative Evolution* he translated, Pelikán explicitly speaks of the birth of a new individuality. Karel Vorovka, the second long-time editor of *Ruch filosofický*, is the key figure of the following paper which interprets his philosophical confession in *Scepsis and Gnosis* (*Skepse a gnóse*). Vorovka's understanding of individualism was highly specific, tending towards the possibility of a harmonious interconnectedness of an individual with the whole cosmos, or, better yet, towards a perspective which would allow for thinking about such

harmony. Conviction and the subsequent act of faith are the central motifs of the presented interpretation. The second motif brings us to the next paper on Vladimír Hoppe. The author of the article successfully shows how Hoppe's transcendental self relates to Kierkegaard's understanding of individuality, thus widening the context of thinking about individualism. As far as Tomáš Trnka, the last of the key thinkers of the "younger philosophical generation", is concerned, for pragmatic reasons, we chose to publish the original text accompanied by a commentary. It is meant as a kind of a refreshing break from the interpretational style of other papers, as it builds on an original text which has been translated into English for the very first time.

The third thematic part is especially valuable, for it deals with two significant thinkers of Slovak philosophy. The paper on Svätopluk Štúr warns against the dangers of individualism, as identified by Štúr in the consequences of German philosophy of the will. Interpretation of Gejza Vámoš is focused on the concept of the "reality argument" and its impact on life of an individual as well as on life of the society.

The following part is composed of three hermeneutic commentaries on one single philosopher. Undoubtedly, Ladislav Klíma does deserve such "loaded attention", for he was the purest thinker of individualism at that time. Klíma intensified his understanding of the individual into seemingly exalted positions interpreted by the first two papers; Klíma's solipsism on the one hand, his egosolism on the other. The third paper aims at assessing the reception of Klíma's allegedly extravagant philosophy by his contemporaries, based on thorough archive research. The paper concludes that Klíma was acknowledged and highly valued by most of them.

The remaining two studies summarise, to a certain extent historically, the philosophy of individualism in Czechoslovak intellectual milieu. The paper dealing with the discussion of existentialism in the journal *Listy* describes one of its last breaths. Soon afterwards the term "individual" was cursed. The prophecy uttered by Masaryk and Peroutka, who hoped to be wrong, turned out to be correct, very painfully so. This is why the last paper is dedicated to their successor, in the presidential office as well as in the sense of a democratic politician – Edvard Beneš. The interpretation builds on Beneš's little known and as yet unpublished dissertation *On the Origin and Development of Modern Political Individualism* (*O vzniku a vývoji moderního politického individualismu*), which is further supported by better known texts that Beneš wrote on the problem of individualism.

To sum up, the philosophy of individualism shaped the relatively short period of freedom between the two world wars. Politically, it served as a strongly based alternative to a more and more proliferating collectivism, which intoxicated the masses and usually turned away from the individual.

Philosophically, it stirred intensive interest in the question of the appropriate source for strengthening one's character and morally consistent stance. These two aspects were linked together by the problem of human freedom, so urgent amidst the rapidly changing modern world. Hopefully, the authors were successful at unveiling the life struggle for freedom of the individual in the interwar Czechoslovakia.

Will and Feeling. Individualism in the Philosophy of František Mareš*

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We shall begin with a thinker who may rightfully be considered a pioneer and restorer of idealism in the Bohemian lands, which, at the turn of the 20th century, still strongly inclined towards scientific and therefore supposedly politically indifferent philosophical reflection that could thus somehow ensure independence. František Mareš was a physician and a professor of physiology. The nature of the profession naturally brought him close to human individuality, at least to the extent to which a sickness individualises, in that it prevents the sick from satisfying some of their desires. This precisely matches Mareš's concept of consciousness that "lights up" the very moment a drive meets an obstacle.[1] In a situation where a drive remains unsatisfied, consciousness begins to feel the resistance of something that lies beyond its control, is heterogeneous to it, challenging and defiant. In this *feeling* of consciousness (*pocit vědomí*), where consciousness itself is not taken by Mareš to be "a special faculty or essence", but rather to be "like light",[2] consciousness encounters its own exteriority and experiences this encounter as its own schism: part remains with the exteriority and starts to postulate it as an object, and part returns inside itself, albeit in a different form. Now it knows about its own delimitation posited by the outside, by the object. In relation to this object, consciousness acquires a new dimension, since at the

* The text is part of the Czech Science Foundation grant project (GA ČR) *Individualism in the Czechoslovak Philosophy 1918–1948*, No. 19-14180S.

1 "A *drive* operates without any awareness of the goal towards which it strives; it operates instinctively, i.e. in spite of any possible individual experience, without any knowledge. Man, too, is driven by his organic needs to unconsciously strive to satisfy them. Consciousness then lights up when this striving encounters an obstacle." Mareš, F., *Physiology, Vol. IV, Part 1. Physiological Psychology. The Foundations, Subject, Feelings and Efforts* (*Fysiologie. Díl IV. Část I. Fysiologická psychologie. Základy, subjekt, city, snahy*). Praha, Jos. Springer 1926, p. 250.

2 Ibid., p. 41.

same time it also relates to itself, becoming self-consciousness, consciousness of the self. What at first posed itself as an obstacle now loses its urgency, because from now on consciousness has the ability to withdraw into itself and leave the object be. In other words: it is now able to not want it. In this refusal of the object, consciousness experiences freedom, which it then can eventually extend to all objects. Through overall withdrawal from the world of objectivity, consciousness enables itself to concentrate, have control over itself, to feel as a person thereby becoming a self-conscious individual.

A self-conscious individual does not reject relating to objectivity in any way, yet he maintains a distance from objects, thus preventing himself from being overwhelmed by them and getting lost amongst them. For Mareš, this is the entry point into the sphere of moral dignity:

> "Thus … […] a *human person* rises above the things of this world. The spontaneity, autonomy, self-determination, *freedom* of the human person is the essence of his *moral dignity*."[3]

The ability to maintain critical distance is attributed to every self-conscious individual and thus creates a vision of society based on the principle of spiritual recognition of the dignity of all persons. Such a society would therefore be essentially supra-individualistic, but the self-conscious individual would, nevertheless, still constitute a condition of its birth.

After this exposé, let us turn to Mareš's concept of science, or rather of the figure of the scientist and his approach to the objective world. In a certain paradoxical sense, the scientist renounces the world, since he stops halfway up the path and remains caught up in the midst of things without taking a step back from them. His whole visual field of consciousness is filled by the object of his interest and so, instead of elevating himself to a position from which attaining knowledge becomes possible for him, he enters the centre of the object and becomes engrossed in it. Eventually, he becomes unable to set himself free from this passion for the object, except by inducing an illusion of impartiality, which he can achieve only by depersonalising the object of his study: "the scientist refuses everything that is personal and accepts only *impersonal science*, whose *dreadful truth* makes personal consciousness crumble."[4] The dreadfulness of scientific truth lies in the very fact that it does not involve man. Science turns the image of man into an apathetic, disinterested being, an object among objects. Science does not just depersonalise man, but, much worse, it makes him purely material.

3 Ibid., p. 286.
4 Ibid., p. 27.

Such a view of contemporary science well explains Mareš's consternation over medical practice of his day:

> "Half a century ago, we stopped paying attention to the mental (*duševní*) state of an ill *person* and started to give importance only to the objective, bodily symptoms of the *illness*. Healing methods, too, have begun to rely solely on physical and chemical treatment, ignoring the complaints of the ill and their mental anxiety. Such a purely objective orientation of approach has surely enriched medicine with important knowledge and skills, but it has also weakened its effectiveness because of the damage it caused to the spiritual (*duševní*) relations between the ill and their doctor, which are built on trust, hope and will to life."[5]

Mareš believed that physiology, due to its focus on the connection between the bodily and mental aspects of man,[6] could bring metaphysics back to medicine and possibly other sciences as well, and could thus restore Hippocrates' idea that "the physician-*philosopher* is like god".[7] In this sense, it is possible to liken Mareš's conception of physiology to modern philosophical anthropology. A man of medicine should not be a mere administrator of the knowledge of illness; he must instead base his practice on a well-justified image of mankind.

František Mareš's professional focus was undoubtedly influenced by the fact that he was a sworn Kantian. This had its own historical significance, as Kant did not rank among the profoundly influential philosophers of the Czech and Austrian intellectual milieu of the turn of the century. Yet, Mareš's first philosophically significant book, *Idealism and Realism in Natural Science* (*Idealism a realism v přírodní vědě*) was built on Kantian premises, which is why it stirred up a "dispute over Kant", where Mareš met with opposition from Masaryk, Krejčí and Rádl. Nevertheless, it is a different aspect of Mareš's Kantianism that is of much bigger importance to us. This aspect explains the aforementioned fact that Mareš definitely cannot see individualism as an answer to the problem of man. He would more likely see it in the "transcendental subject" of a moral person, which is supra-individual by definition.

5 Ibid., *Prologue* (*Předmluva*), p. VI.

6 "And so physiology finds itself in the middle of the feud between realism and idealism and is expected to provide a solution to the main point of this feud, that is, the mysterious relation between the physical and the psychical." Mareš, F., *Idealism and Realism in Natural Science* (*Idealism a realism v přírodní vědě*). Praha, Fr. Řivnáč 1901, p. 1.

7 Mareš, F., *Physiology, Vol. IV, Prologue* (*Fysiologie. Díl IV, Předmluva*), p. VI.

As the name of the "ground-breaking" book *Truth within Feeling* (*Pravda v citu*) suggests, Mareš began gradually to turn away from the orthodox interpretation of Kant primarily because of his dissatisfaction with its strict refusal of "intellectual intuition"; his new point of departure becomes an autonomous thematisation of *emotion* (*pocit*) as the deepest and original source of "autogenous spontaneity" of the human subject.

I shall now attempt to show why this distinctive understanding of emotion could be the essence of what it means to be an individual for Mareš.

When *Idealism and Realism in Natural Science* was published in 1901, the main objections raised against Mareš's method presented in it (except for its Kantian basis) concerned its "dark mysticism" (Masaryk)[8] and the attunement of scepsis (*náladová skepse*; Rádl).[9] These objections probably stemmed from two key passages where Mareš's "idealistic" standpoint begins to take shape. The very first page of the book reads:

> "These two points of view on reality have been struggling against each other since the beginning of time, and never will their feud find settlement; for it is not reasons and knowledge that can settle it, but rather man's character and will."

A similar diction is repeated in the second half of the treatise:

> "The feud between idealism and realism as an expression of antinomy of the human mind is insoluble. The interests of man's will decide which side he shall choose; the knowing intellect shall succumb to the will and find reasons to suit its liking."[10]

Both passages touch upon man's character or will and both "principles" are taken to be decisive moments of existential metaphysical choice. For Mareš, to be an idealist or realist means to choose an ontological perspective whose prism is then applied to the world, man and society. This choice is therefore fateful, and the whole book describes the consequences that follow from siding with either of the antipoles. The idealist recognises the primary autonomy of feelings, desires and efforts, whereas the realist considers genuine reality to consist of matter in motion and extending bodies – things, in other words.

8 Masaryk, T. G., Prof. Mareš's Idealism and Realism in Natural Sciences (Prof. Mareše „Idealism a realism v přírodní vědě"). *Nová doba*, 8, 1900–1901, No. 9, p. 704.

9 Rádl, E., On the Attunement of Scepsis (O náladové skepsi). *Česká mysl*, 3, 1902, No. 5, p. 324 to 333; No. 6, p. 422–431.

10 Mareš, F., *Idealism and Realism in Natural Science*, p. 371.

We have already seen that elementary and inevitable ontological choice is not made by reason, but comes prior to all knowledge, expressing the deepest level of being of a given man. For this reason, in a certain interpretative light, we could understand it as a fundamental sign of individuality.

Will and character are at the core of how we, as humans, posit the world. For a long time, Mareš stuck to this conviction without managing to clarify it any further. More precisely, he clarified it indirectly, by way of analogy to how natural events play out, which, in his view, is organised by an "organic agent" that is at work prior to all causality, and which designates a goal that consequently determines every cause-effect relation. The notion of necessary recognition of such an organic agent working in the obscure interior of nature was inspired by the biology of the era that had amassed a huge amount of evidence pointing towards it. Typical examples of such evidence include the formation of an embryo and a foetus from a germ cell, and Driesch's experiments in which he split an animal embryo into two parts, which subsequently evolved into two separate, complete individuals. For Mareš, this proved that despite the absence of a conscious, rational element in the embryonic phase of human development, the whole process still takes place exactly as it should. That is why, twenty-five years later, he writes:

> "The organism is a *cohesive whole* composed of different parts that are made possible only thanks to the whole. All physiochemical bodily processes are but *means* organised to meet the *goal* of growth, preservation and prosperity of the organism. It is only this goal that gives physiochemical bodily processes their quality of organic performances."[11]

It is this overall organic bond that gives meaning to all organic processes taking place under the governance of the law of causality, albeit unconsciously. And it is precisely this overall organic bond that forms the basis of individuality:

> "The organic whole contains both bodily and mental (*duševní*) individuality, which is different from other organic wholes. The connection and unity between the bodily and the mental in an organism is a genuine fact proved by all experience. To penetrate by knowledge the mode of this unity means to penetrate by knowledge the wonder of all life; it is necessary to recognise and admit this unity as a fundamental fact."[12]

11 Mareš, F., *Physiology, Vol. IV, Prologue*, p. XVI.
12 Ibid., p. 93.

Human individuality is constituted by the overall organic bond within which, in Mareš's words, one's "internal being" manifests itself. This "internal being" does not enter consciousness, yet we must presume it is at work within every act of consciousness, for it provides continuity to our experience. The entire fourth volume of *Physiology* can thus be read as a phenomenology of the overall organic bond forming the individuality of man. For the purposes of this phenomenology, we must abstract concrete mental phenomena from our unitary and continuous flow of experience and analyse them in order to demonstrate the original spontaneous efficacy of the overall organic bond which rules those phenomena.

In Volume IV of *Physiology*, Mareš suggests classifying mental events into emotions (*pocity*), feelings (*city*) and effort (*snažení*). What is original about this is Mareš's interpretation of these events, along with his effort to define the process due to which these events interact with each other and come to form a unified experience.

Emotion (*pocit*) is brought about by objective correlation. Although it has a subjective aspect (i.e. it is felt), it also has a specifically objective aspect, since it comes to be as a result of the work of something outside of consciousness. Therefore, emotion causally mediates the outer world, and in this respect, it is more or less identical with what Kant calls affect. Mareš's objection against realism, and so against Masaryk as well, is that it reduces all mental activity to this primary "mechanism" of emotion, from which it then tries to construe the whole structure of subjectivity, all the way to its crossing step into transcendence. From the causality of emotion, realism tries to trace the chain of causes and effects that inevitably leads to values and ideals. Therefore, the fundamental flaw of realism lies in an unreflected leap which it takes when it rashly mistakes causality of emotion for causality in the categorical sense; realism holds that there exists a smooth transition from emotion to understanding and intellect. It is this very smoothness of transition which Mareš questions as a hypothesis that renounces metaphysical agency, but itself inadvertently falls into metaphysics due to the confusion of two different causalities. For realism or naturalism, there is only consciousness with objective correlation, it does not accept the notion of an original inner agent, and that is why it reduces the soul to a seeming causality of conscious states:

> "The ban on speaking about the soul in psychology has led to the use of 'consciousness' instead of the soul; wanting to avoid a metaphysics of the soul led to falling into a mysticism of 'consciousness'".[13]

13 Ibid., p. 203.

If emotions (*pocity*) were all there was to mental activity, we would experience only a present in which individual moments would constantly change without any relation to each other. Emotions thus cannot be a core element of sensual perception, although they mediate it. In an introspective thought experiment, it is possible to picture emotions without the presence of an object that would elicit them. A representation of an emotion is not identical to the emotion as such. In representation, an emotion related to an object becomes independent and can be connected to other representations, desires or wishes. The representation of an emotion elicits an *impression* that does not relate anymore to the objective correlation, but to the subject having the impression. Put briefly, it is thanks to impressions that the subject learns how he "is doing" and, in this self-experience, he is able to react spontaneously and autonomously, without outer stimuli, to his own attunement that is being announced by his impressions. In the reaction to his own attunement, the subject experiences *feeling* (*cit*), which is therefore a more fundamental agent of mental life than emotion. The subject experiences himself, attributes value and sets his own goals through feeling. In short, feeling is the place of preliminary structuration of the way in which emotions turn towards the outer world.

Emotions, due to their dependence on objects, are mostly passive; they provide experience with mere chaos of sensations; their relations are determined by the intellect. In fact, Mareš remains a Kantian as far as his notion of intellect is concerned, at least in the sense that he subordinates the intellect to categorical principles that create the transcendental subject. With respect to individuality, this means that a vast majority of people agree on emotions, which is why emotions, as is the case with the intellect, cannot bear individual differentiation. Although the intellect transgresses emotions and gives unity to them as an expression of its creative activity, it itself nevertheless serves the "impetus of life". Therefore, this impetus is more fundamental and primary in the projection of experience. The limited nature of the intellect or reason lies in its foundation in consciousness. Reason can synthesize only conscious content – i.e. emotions that reach such intensity that they cross the threshold of consciousness. However, for Mareš, consciousness in no way accounts for all mental activity. He speaks of "the strait of consciousness" which, conditioned by memory, allows only the results of deeper activity, taking place without the participation of consciousness, to enter rational reflection. In Mareš's view, the majority of mental activity is thus unconscious – reason or intellect cannot choose the "matter" they synthesize. The emphasis on unconscious mental processes can undoubtedly be considered to be the most significant development of Mareš's philosophy on man's overall organic bond.

In his earlier books on unconsciousness, Mareš speaks with certain reservation about the impossibility of proving it. However, in the Volume IV of *Physiology*, unconsciousness is accepted as a necessary prerequisite of a conscious life. The particular contents of consciousness, elicited by emotions and synthesized by reason, lie in experience too far away from the crucial moment of the passage from unconsciousness to consciousness. In order to get closer to this point, which is absolutely decisive in the context of the issue of the soul, we must turn to consciousness as such that is given to us in feeling:

> "*Feeling* (*cit*) is… *an impression*, which a subject has not only from his *emotions*, but from the entire content of his consciousness; because *how the subject himself is doing* during his diverse experiences, how he *feels*, is characterised by *feeling*… *The value* of particular experiences for the subject is characterised by feeling, feeling *appreciates* (*oceňuje*) and *evaluates* (*hodnotí*). Finally, feeling awakens the *effort* that relates back to objects, accepting the pleasant and refusing the unpleasant."[14]

Only content that has been identified by feeling as being worthy of attention can pass through the strait of consciousness. Man is organically embedded in the world through feeling; feeling lets him see what his whereabouts in the world are and provides him with options for possible goals of his action. In feeling, man also comes to experience the echoes of his inner being (his individual self-consciousness); through feeling, he experiences the overall organic bond of his own personality.

Originally, the evaluating aspect of feeling in its attunement comes before a conscious choice between motives. An act of will decides even before reason, reason only supplies the will with the means of enacting what has already been decided. This *fiat* that resonates in the prior decision of an act of will therefore lies deep in the unconsciousness, from which then stem the motives between which it is possible to make a rational choice.

> "*We do* what we want, but will is in what we want and that we want it. The decision-making process of will does not follow from rational consideration of motives like a logical consequence from a premise. Thinking is not wanting. It is not sufficient to think: I should do this and not do that. It does not suffice to know one's duty in order to also do it; it is not enough just to *think*: now I want an act to follow this. Action requires a special *act of will*, which, however, remains in the

14 Ibid., p. 191.

> unconsciousness. It is not enough for people to understand and accept certain goals, to declare them, in order to want them. People's *conviction* and *faith*, not just their intellect, must be awoken and their *inner being itself* must be moved in order for people *truly* to want, i.e. for them to act in accordance with these ideals."[15]

Mareš's phenomenology of the overall organic bond is not dialectical, but archaeological. It begins with the surface layer of the consciousness and gradually digs its way to the deeper bedrock of spiritual life. This bedrock can only be deduced retrospectively from what has passed through the strait of consciousness. Feelings (*city*) constitute the moment of passage from unconsciousness to consciousness and are often mixed with emotions (*pocity*) – that is why Mareš looks for something he calls a "pure feeling" that would be independent of emotions. Aesthetic feeling serves as a model for pure feeling, for beauty contains an evaluating aspect that differentiates emotions that were originally undifferentiated.

This archaeological descent allows for the emergence of two absolutely elementary, pure feelings: the feeling of one's existence and the feeling of activity. If we now turn our focus to will, which is the conscious wanting of a goal, we see that the first act of will is attention – which Mareš calls apperception. Attention is selective and therefore evaluating; it structures, somewhat beforehand, the focus of our attention. The feeling of activity is already functioning within it, and it is precisely this original apperception that points to the deepest substratum of the soul, which Mareš calls selfhood or self. At the beginning, we talked about the fateful decision between idealism and realism. Now we see that this decision in fact concerns where our apperceptive attention will be focused – whether on external objects or on our own subjectivity. It is about the primal act of will taking place in the unconscious self that points to the focal point of one's life. This is what defines one's individuality. It is one's pivotal perspective on the world and on oneself. Yet, Mareš did not quite surpass his Kantianism, either in himself, or in his specific concept of feeling (*cit*) that touches upon man's selfhood or self (*Selbst* in German). On the one hand, he says that:

> "Thinking is *wanting*, whose goal is to know the outer world. The goal of this primal wanting is the *development of one's own individuality*, the development of all both mental and bodily capacities, all *faculties* useful for fulfilling one's potential in the world".[16]

15 Ibid., p. 252.
16 Ibid., p. 255.

It all therefore seems to suggest that individuality is the final goal at which the act of the self's will is aiming. Nonetheless, the Kantian in Mareš objects:

> "Man's proper spiritual being is *unconscious* in the sense that it exists (*bytuje*) and works beyond individual consciousness in which it cannot be encompassed. This ideal being is a subject of moral law and the feeling of freedom (*cit svobody*); but it is also a creator of rational categories, is endowed with reason, thinks, remembers, invents, has a character. Solely the *results* of its activity are reported to consciousness, but the activity itself takes place beyond consciousness. This *spiritual agent* (*duchovní činitel*) is *the foundation* of the empirical, individual personality, and self-conscious self, but is itself *supra-personal* (*nadosobní*)."[17]

Therefore, an individual thinks and develops his faculties, and thus implements his original wanting, but is himself founded much deeper in the transcendental self or selfhood that can be accessed only through the feeling of freedom and the intuition of the creative organic principle of the overall organic bond of his "soul".

I believe that this discrepancy largely follows from Mareš's concept of character. He takes it almost word for word from Schopenhauer and so it is almost innate and constant for him. Although it is clear that the selfhood of a particular man is announced in his character, they both remain hidden somewhere in the depths of spiritual unconsciousness and the character can be inferred to only subsequently from particular acts or deeds. So, for Mareš, an individual can never really know himself and therefore never quite achieves self-mastery. Everything has always been decided for him in the transcendental sphere of his selfhood. Mareš's anthropology does not refute individuality; instead it attributes individuality an irreplaceable role in spiritual affairs. However, on the deepest level of the soul, an individual does not decide in matters concerning himself and must submit to moral law through which freedom can only then be achieved.

* * *

The papers that follow show what paths were taken by Czechoslovak philosophers in order to fill in the gap that had been introduced to Czech thinking by Mareš's Kantianism. Mareš himself gives inspiration for such reading when, in the Volume IV of *Physiology*, he directs appreciative attention to many thinkers, some of whom the following papers address.

17 Ibid., p. 127.

His hope that the younger philosophical generation would endorse his conceptions of the soul and freedom, is introduced by these words:

> "The question: freedom or necessity; subordination of the physical to the psychical, or the psychical to the physical; primacy of the spirit or primacy of matter, has been answered by our empirical and realistic philosophers always favouring the second option. Our younger psychologists and philosophers favour the first option, the spiritual path."[18]

Immediately after, he applauds Ferdinand Pelikán and the book is concluded with praise for this author.

As for Vladimír Hoppe, Mareš appreciates his differentiation between an empirical and a transcendental subject, his overcoming of Kant's concept of intuition, and his introduction of the concept of selfhood. Mareš says about Karel Vorovka that:

> "with full conviction he paves the way for a type of knowledge, gnosis, whose indispensable condition is *mystical feeling* (*mystický cit*) that must be stimulated; every gnosis must begin with auto-gnosis, with an attempt at self-knowledge." He adds: "This path is taken especially by Hoppe."[19]

Tomáš Trnka and Ladislav Klíma probably diverged too much from Mareš, which makes the papers dealing with their solutions to the same questions all the more interesting.

It is surely evident that the expressions "organic agent", "life as a creative force" and similar have their origin in vitalism, especially in Bergson. The paper on Bergson's vitalism reveals this link between all the thinkers discussed. On the other hand, Masaryk and Rádl may be taken as Mareš's opponents and thus as pointing towards discrepancies and gaps in his thinking.

The loosest relation is probably between Mareš and the Slovak philosophers of the time. Nevertheless, even in this case some unexplored possibilities of at least a personal influence can be traced. In fact, Gejza Vámoš began his university studies at the Prague Faculty of Medicine in 1918, and therefore must have met Mareš as a professor. A paper on the cruelty principle and the reality argument will at least indirectly tell us to what extent Mareš's thinking shaped Vámoš's ideas.

18 Ibid., p. 284.
19 Ibid., p. 250.

Mareš's physiological anthropology forms the cornerstone of all the following papers. New nodes of sense and meanings that will be tied in a net so knitted will certainly reveal the predicament of individualism in Czechoslovak interwar philosophy.

A Dead End of Modern Philosophy? The Reception of H. Bergson's Philosophy in Czechoslovak Thinking*

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"'Aller en Bergson' (and sometimes just taking a peek into his auditorium) was, for a long time, fashionable in Paris – but studying Bergson is, to this day, an imperative for every modern thinking human."

Ferdinand Pelikán, Portraits of the Philosophers of the 20th century[1]

In 1924, Tomáš Trnka published a book titled *A Dead End of Modern Philosophy (Moderní filosofie ve slepé uličce*). In it, he tries to describe a crisis of contemporary philosophical thought which, in his opinion, stemmed from the fact that philosophy had reached two of its peaks: one through the sceptical "philosophy of *As If*" of Hans Vaihinger, and the other through the intuitive irrationalism of Henri Bergson. According to Trnka, modern philosophy thus blindly ends up either in an intuitionism of illusion, or a nihilism of scepsis.[2]

The Bergsonian tradition, with its "militant tendency against intellectualism and against materialism",[3] is heavily reflected in Czechoslovak interwar philosophy: the adherents of Krejčí's positivism[4] and Masaryk's realism[5] mostly assume a critical stance towards it,[6] whilst the "young generation"

* This article was made possible thanks to the scholarship provided by the Hus Foundation.

1 Pelikán, F., *The Portraits of Philosophers of the 20th century* (*Portréty filosofů XX. věku*). Praha, Jednota československých matematiků a fysiků 1931, p. 47.

2 Trnka, T., *A Dead End of Modern Philosophy* (*Moderní filosofie ve slepé uličce*). Praha, Aventinum 1924, p. 9.

3 Ibid., p. 53.

4 Krejčí, F., *Philosophy in the Last Pre-War Years* (*Filosofie posledních let před válkou*). Praha, Jan Laichter 1918; *Positive Etics* (*Positivní etika*). Praha, Jan Laichter 1922.

5 Masaryk, T. G., *The Path of Democracy II* (*Cesta demokracie II*). Praha, Ústav T. G. Masaryka 2007. See also Pojar, M., *T. G. Masaryk and the Jewish Question* (*T. G. Masaryk a židovství*). Praha, Karolinum 2019, p. 191–192.

6 Emanuel Rádl and Rudolf Malý were amongst those who held an academic admiration, while also directing negative criticism towards Bergson. Rádl, E., *The History of Philosophy II* (*Dějiny*

associated with the journals *Ruch filosofický* and *Filosofie* draws inspiration from Bergson's irrationalism, intuitivism and his emphasis on the individual.[7] In this paper, we wish to focus on how (or whether at all) Henri Bergson's philosophy is reflected in Czechoslovak philosophy of the period, and how (or whether at all) Trnka's "dead end" manifests itself in it. With regard to Trnka's criticism, we shall try to grasp how the aforementioned aspects of "Bergsonism" were reflected in Czechoslovak philosophy and to subsequently demonstrate this reflection using the example of two other philosophers of the period, František Mareš and Vladimír Hoppe.

Where Bergsonism Lost Its Way

In the book *A Dead End of Modern Philosophy*, Trnka attempts to conduct his own critique of Bergson, the philosopher to whom he dedicated his whole life. He shows how both Vaihinger and Bergson began from the right departing point, i.e. the noetics of British Empiricism, ranging from Berkeley and Hume through Kant to a certain type of pragmatism, and how they both eventually deviated from the "right path". Trnka believes that, as a successor of Kant, Hume and Berkeley, Bergson "rightly" concerned himself with the relationship between knowledge and reality in his first two books (*Time and Free Will, Matter and Memory*). According to Trnka, Bergson initially analysed the key aspects of his philosophy, i.e. the problem of time, movement and reality, from the position of dualism of knowledge and reality; and in his first two books, he implicitly dismissed this dualism. In his first essay, *Time and Free Will*, Bergson begins to contemplate the temporal flow of consciousness, which he bases on the continuous movement of time, on an indivisible pure duration (*durée pure*).[8] By doing so, he necessarily runs into the problem of causality, which he grasps in a fundamentally different way

filosofie II). Praha, Votobia 1999, p. 553–556; Malý, R. I., *Seeing Clearly* (*Jasnýma očima*). Praha, Alois Srdce 1920, p. 63–88.

7 Of the "younger generation" of philosophers, Karel Vorovka and Ferdinand Pelikán openly professed themselves to drawing inspiration from Bergson's philosophy; see Vorovka, K., Physics and Philosophy (Fysika a filosofie). *Venkov*, 14, 1919, No. 142, 148, 153, p. 2; *Scepsis and Gnosis. A Philosophical Confession* (*Skepse a gnóse. Vyznání filosofické*). Praha, G. Voleský 1921; The Philosophy of Bergson and Einstein (Filosofie Bergsonova a Einsteinova). *Národní listy*, 62, 1922, No. 57, p. 9–10; *Polemos. The Disputes of the Czech Philosophy in 1919–1925* (*Polemos. Spory v české filosofii v letech 1919–1925*). Praha, Sfinx 1926; Pelikán, F., *On Intuiton* (*O intuici*). Praha, B. Kočí 1920. F. Pelikán also co-worked on the translation of Bergson's *Creative Evolution*, where he wrote the preface to Bergson's essay *Life and Consciousness*, published in the journal *Živa* in 1922. Miléč Čapek elaborated a thorough analysis/breakdown of Bergson's philosophy in 1939; see Čapek, M., *Henri Bergson*. Praha, Nakladatelské družstvo Máje 1939.

8 Bergson, H., *Time and free will: an essay on the immediate data of consciousness*. London, George Allen and Unwin 1959.

from his predecessors: in Bergson's approach, no two moments in consciousness are identical, thanks to the flow of time and to our individual memory. What Bergson is trying to say is that each moment is always enriched by its own past, which makes each moment unique and individual. Therefore, it is impossible to talk of the same causes and the same effects in the way causality has been thought about so far.

Thus, from a certain "individualist" position, Bergson substitutes Hume's relationship of causality between two events with the causality of pure duration. In his first essay he analyses the mind in this very way. However, in his second book, *Matter and Memory*, he broadens his focus towards the whole mind-body composition of the human.[9] In this sense, both books consider duration to be reality itself. Thus, an intuitive fusion with pure duration give rise to an identity of the knowing subject and reality, an identity of reality and truth, and an identity of reality and knowledge. As Trnka claims, this early philosophy of Bergson's removes the noetic subject-object dualism, which had been prevalent in philosophy up to that time.

Trnka points out that here Bergson explains the causality of time in a new and striking way. He adds, however, that Bergson did not concern himself in any way with the causality of space, or with the pure duration of spatial relations. Yet again this makes Bergson a dualist in Trnka's eyes: Bergson now creates a dualism between pure duration and space, thus actually returning to a belief in dualism of spirit and matter. Bergson, Trnka thinks, made a mistake when, especially later on, in his book *Creative Evolution*,[10] strayed from his original noetic or noetic-critical path and set out on a metaphysical path. In other words,

> "instead of the problem of dualism of knowledge and reality he tries to solve the absurd question of the reality of the body vs. the reality of the spirit",[11]

i.e. spirit vs. matter. According to Trnka, Bergson lost his way because (similarly to the Czechoslovak "young generation" associated with *Ruch filosofický*) he tirelessly fought against intellectualism on the one hand, and materialism on the other. That is how Bergson's metaphysics was conceived: battling against materialism, Bergson begins to ascribe existence to this "pure duration". He attempts to answer the "complex" question of *what* time

9 Bergson, H., *Matter and Memory: An Essay on the Relation of Body and Spirit*. New York, Zone Books 1988.
10 Bergson, H., *Creative Evolution*. London, Macmillan 1911.
11 Trnka, T., *A Dead End of Modern Philosophy*, p. 53.

and movement is, what the spirit and the body is – a question which, according to Trnka, makes no sense (without considering their mutual relationship). In doing this, Trnka thinks, Bergson is in fact returning to the old belief that it is cognition itself that attains knowledge of reality, and not, as his earlier essays suggested, that cognition and its object are in unity thanks to their being founded in pure duration. Thus, Bergson reaches a dualism of *dual knowledge*.

If we take a look at Bergson's later books, *Creative Evolution* and *An Introduction to Metaphysics*, we can see that he distinguishes two types of cognition: intellectual cognition, linked to space and matter, and intuitive cognition. Here Bergson attributes only a relative noetic capability to intellect or his "cinematographic thinking": we cannot access "pure duration" through intellectual analysis.[12] Bergson therefore searches for a second, opposite pole to intellect, that of *absolute* knowledge. Even though in the beginning Bergson had a tendency to acknowledge one sole source of knowledge (i.e. knowledge that is neither absolute, nor relative, but is reality itself) he now changes his question and, according to Trnka, deviates from his original path and declines into irrationalism and romanticism. This is how Bergson, and subsequently the whole of philosophy based on Bergson, comes to a dead end with no means of escape, to the point where, as Trnka writes, "a collapse transpires".[13]

Difference of Knowledge as a Dead End of Philosophy

What does Trnka's criticism mean? It is important to note that Bergson's problem, which Trnka tries to outline, does not by any means lie in emphasising *intuition* itself. On the contrary, Trnka himself was definitely an advocate of intuitivism, in the three areas of noetics, logic, and ethics; he understood intuition as the most active part of philosophical reflection.[14] The problem,

12 Similarly, a certain state of the spirit does not equal the arithmetic total of its elements: it is not the plurality of analytically divisible parts, but the original unity, the "*individuum*". See Jankélévitch, V., *Henri Bergson*. Paris, Presses Universitaires de France 1959, p. 20.

13 Trnka, T., *A Dead End of Modern Philosophy*, p. 67. See Trnka, T., *The Movements of Contemporary Philosophy* (*Proudy v současné filosofii*). Praha, F. Topič 1924, p. 148–179.

14 In the end, Bergson's struggle between the spirit and matter served Trnka as the basis for his own take on intuitive individualism. Trnka works with the idea of dynamism, or motion, which is the fundament of Bergson's entire philosophy. Trnka understands it as a sort of a *swing* which, constantly under tension, is continuously oscillating fore (in the sense of the spirit, life, creativity) and back (as it is held back by matter). Trnka's approach to the idea of motion thus shows that he, nevertheless, understood Bergson's position (the "question of the body and the spirit" mentioned in the introduction), and I believe correctly, as a *synthesis*, and not in the sense of contradiction and dualism. Therefore, "the core of Bergson's teachings is the mystery, [...] of how the mortal world emerges from the immortal, 'timelessly eternal' absolute; that is why

according to Trnka, lies in the *how* and the *what* of Bergson's philosophical inquiry. In the first two essays, intuition was, although not explicitly mentioned, a method of accessing pure duration, in the sense of Kant's pure a priori intuition. After the *Creative Evolution*, Bergson begins to speak of a dualism of cognition and reality and a dualism of cognition itself. In intuition, he seeks the font of absolute knowledge that could form the grounding for metaphysics – by doing so, Trnka believes, Bergson degrades such intuition to the status of a non-critical romantic notion.[15]

Nevertheless, it seems that precisely through this "deviation from the path", Bergson gives his successors his perhaps most powerful incentives. Precisely this dualism, or "difference in character",[16] to borrow Deleuze's term, which gives rise to *intuitive* knowledge in contrast to *intellectual* knowledge, seems to be crucial for many other philosophers of the era, including the Czechoslovak philosophers.[17]

We shall now focus on this gradual deviation from intellectualism to intuitive methods of cognition in connection to Bergson's philosophy. The emphasis on intuition, from various philosophical standpoints, appears in European philosophy around the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries: Schopenhauer, Nietzsche and Bergson especially are prime examples. It is rather difficult to

the core of Bergson's philosophy is the concept of 'duration'." This duration, the continuous *growth* between life and death, accessible only through intuitive insight, is, in the end, the basis of Trnka's approach towards the individual. In Trnka's opinion, the world consists of an amazing plurality of realities, containing things, animals, and individuals in the sense of family or humankind. All these individuals are defined by birth and death. These organisms merge together in the *desire for the individual*, and therefore necessarily also in the desire for a *dissolution* of the individual, for its death. The whole world is therefore a "unique ripple of non-individual individuality" – and individuality is, in its original sense, overcome for the first time. Trnka, T., The Secret of Death (Tajemství smrti). *Naše doba*, 24, 1917, No. 5, p. 358–364.

15 Trnka, T., *A Dead End of Modern Philosophy*, p. 56.

16 Deleuze, G., *Le bergsonisme*. Paris, Presses Universitaires de France 1966.

17 In *Ruch filosofický*, F. Pelikán talks of an "emotional reaction to the universe" aimed against positivism and the reign of matter, which do not allow for the metaphysics of spirit; see Pelikán, F., The Reign of Democracy in Philosophy (To our Program) – (Vláda demokracie ve filosofii /K našemu programu/). *Ruch filosofický*, 1, 1920–1921, No. 1, p. 1–5. According to Pelikán, intuition plays an important part in attaining knowledge of the world: it occurs when one is not led by either reason or logic, nevertheless it is not a kind of supernatural form of human cognition – intuition stems from the inner spiritual foundation of the human being. Pelikán tried to grasp the notion of intuition in a number of ways, notably, he understood intuition also as an intellectualized instinct. This was inspired precisely by Bergson's *Creative Evolution* and his claim that intuition is instinct that reflects itself. On the other hand, Karel Vorovka believed that for philosophy to be able to mediate an attempt at attaining knowledge reaching beyond everyday certainty and scientific experience, it must be based on gnosis: Vorovka understands this gnosis in the sense of intuition. Later in his book *Polemos*, rather than theoretically explaining this stance of a philosopher towards the world, he refers to the philosophy of H. Bergson himself. See Vorovka, K., *Scepsis and Gnosis. A Philosophical Confession*; Vorovka, K., *Polemos. The Disputes of the Czech Philosophy in 1919–1925*.

grasp the notion of *intuition* in Bergson's philosophy,[18] as he himself does not offer any definition of it. On the contrary, he sharply distances himself from such requests, since "definitions" fall into the area of intellect and concepts.

Nevertheless, if we attempt to grasp Bergson's intuition conceptually in some way, it will always appear to us as fundamentally *individual*, from the perspective of both the subject and the object. Firstly, Bergson claims that there is always at least one reality which we can all grasp from within by intuition and not by simple analysis, and that is *our own personality* as it is flowing through time, our self which endures.[19] Secondly, our intuition apprehends objects and the world in their pure duration, i.e. in their uniqueness, in an act of merging with their individuality.[20] Let us try to interpret such an approach to "intuition", in Bergson's sense, intuitively, and have a look at this moment, and the various ways it can be overcome, in the works of F. Mareš and V. Hoppe.

Emotion, Intuition and (Supra)individualism in the Philosophy of F. Mareš

František Mareš was undeniably influenced by Bergson's philosophy, and mentions Bergson explicitly in his work. Common to both is an intellectual tendency towards a certain type of vitalism and an emphasis on the spiritual, creative nature of all life processes. Nevertheless, it deserves to be mentioned that Mareš's article *On "Life" Force* (*O „životní" síle*) was published in Masaryk's revue *Athenaeum* already in 1884, i.e. five years before the release of Bergson's first work; not to mention that Bergson's *Creative Evolution*, where he explicitly developed the concept of life force (*élan vital*) for the first time, was not published until 1907.[21] Therefore it is important to

18 Regarding attempts of outlining several forms of intuition in Bergson's philosophy, see Hrdlička, J., On Intuition in Bergson (O intuici u Bergsona). In: Čapek, J. (ed.), *The Philosophy of Henri Bergson* (*Filosofie Henri Bergsona*). Praha, Oikoymenh 2003, p. 126–150. Hrdlička especially points out that Bergson understands the term "intuition" very differently from most other authors, and that in Bergson's approach this term has nothing in common with the notions of some kind of vague predictions or anticipations that are often associated with this word. Similarly, Milíč Čapek, who conducted a thorough analysis of Bergson's philosophy in 1939, states: "Bergson's intuition (the term which caused many misunderstandings), […] conversely means effort of thought." Čapek, M., *Henri Bergson*, p. 12.

19 Bergson, H., *Introduction to Metaphysics*. Transl. T. E. Hulme. New York – London, GP Putnam's Sons 1912, p. 9.

20 "Analysis, on the contrary [when compared to intuition], is an operation which reduces the object to elements already known, that is, to elements common both to it and other objects." Ibid., p. 7.

21 Mareš, F., On "Life" Force (O „životní" síle). *Athenaeum*, 1, 1884, No. 8, p. 234–239. *Time and Free Will*, Bergson's first essay, was not published in Czech until 1947 although the first Czech

emphasise that Mareš's original concept of the spiritual motivating agent of life processes, presented in his work *On "Life" Force* and still used in a cautious and moderate manner, draws inspiration rather from Schopenhauer and precedes Bergson himself.

Mareš was gradually giving more and more precision to his arguments, defending them with greater certainty and could not refrain from referencing Bergson in his later works.[22] Early Mareš, similarly to Bergson, grappled with the noetic question: according to Mareš, life as a creative force is not apprehended by means of the senses, or reason, but is *immediately* lived. In his article *On "Life" Force*, Mareš states that if this force is immaterial, then it is inaccessible to human knowledge. The article ends with a question whether the human spirit can ever attain knowledge of this basis of life at all.[23] Later, for instance in his inauguration lecture titled *Life – A Creative Force* (*Život – tvůrčí síla*), Mareš dares to go further: he believes that it is possible to attain knowledge of this force precisely by directing our focus inside ourselves, using intuition.[24] We can thus place Mareš's concept of creative life force, the *vis vitalis*, as historically preceding Bergson's *élan vital*. Nonetheless, Mareš's emphasis on intuitive knowledge is clearly inspired not only by Schopenhauer, but also by Bergson.

Mareš believes that emotion and intuition can lead us to attaining knowledge of this creative essence of life, as well as to the essence of the connection between people as spiritual beings through sympathy,[25] finally leading us to action and thinking according to truth. Here, similarly to Bergson, Mareš deviates from the noetic path; whereas Bergson first turns towards metaphysics, Mareš takes on the problem of truth as a question of ethics. Here too Mareš draws inspiration from the "later" Bergson (and partially Kant), the Bergson who "went astray" in Trnka's opinion. Truth, as Mareš shows in his 1918 book *Truth Over Reality* (*Pravda nad skutečnost*), is not identical with reality in the way Bergson suggested in his first two essays building on his concept of pure duration. Truth, according to Mareš, stands above all reality, cannot be achieved using intellect, but is recognised and

translation of *Creative Evolution* dates to 1919. Similarly, the works of Hans Driesch, who is considered to be the founder of modern vitalism, were not published until the 1990s.

22 For example, in Vol. IV of Mareš's *Physiology* (*Fysiologie*), Bergson's philosophy, this time from a different perspective, is given a considerable amount of space. See Mareš, F., *Physiology, Vol. IV, Part 1. Physiological Psychology. The Foundations, Subject, Feelings and Efforts* (*Fysiologie. Díl IV. Fysiologická psychologie. Část 1. Základy, subjekt, city, snahy*). Praha, Jos. Springer 1926.

23 Mareš, F., On "Life" Force, p. 234–239.

24 Mareš, F., *Life – A Creative Force* (*Život – tvůrčí síla*). Praha, Neklan 1992, p. 37.

25 See H. Bergson: "By intuition, we mean the kind of *intellectual sympathy* by which one places oneself within an object in order to coincide with what is unique in it and consequently inexpressible." Bergson, H., *Introduction to Metaphysics*, p. 7.

evaluated in our minds. Mareš believes that, due to its nature, scientific or intellectual knowledge cannot give answers to all questions, because it is one-sided, conditioned and relative – which is precisely what Bergson's argument was, as of his third book published in 1903.[26]

Mareš also puts emphasis on emotional and intuitive knowledge in his approach to his ethical standpoint. Although scientific knowledge, he says, uncovers reality, the truth is different from such "reality" – the truth is not only what is, but also what should be,[27] the absolute, the unconditioned, the *supraindividual*.[28] The path towards such truth begins deeply individually: in his book *Truth In Emotion* (*Pravda v citu*), Mareš states that the first aspect of truth is consciousness, the second aspect is self-consciousness and the person as an individuality *enduring* without change through the ups and downs of time. Yet, knowledge of the universally valid truth may be attained only through an accord of all thinking beings. Human individuality therefore necessarily develops through its relationship towards other individualities.[29] In this sense, the *individuality of an individual is overcome* and headed towards *knowledge of the supraindividual truth*: there is a certain overlapping of the individualities of both the subject and the object. The path to such truth (be it in Bergson's metaphysical sense or Mareš's ethical sense) is, however, always emotional and intuitive knowledge.

Beyond Intuition and *Beyond* Individualism in the Late Works of Vladimír Hoppe

In a way, Mareš reflects Bergson's position from the moment which Trnka already labels as a deviation from the path, i.e. from the moment of highlighting intuition as *absolute knowledge*, as opposed to intellectual and scientific knowledge. Mareš builds his own philosophical, noetic-ethical system on or, more accurately, *around* Bergson's position.

Bergson too faces the problem of ethics, albeit later on. In fact, he continues to be even more "daring" than how Trnka critically presents him – in 1934, eight years after Trnka's *A Dead End of Modern Philosophy* was published, Bergson publishes *The Two Sources of Morality and Religion*,[30] a work

26 Ibid.

27 Mareš, F., *Truth Over Reality* (*Pravda nad skutečnost*). Praha, Spolek českých mediků 1918, p. 125; Life and Science (Život a věda). *Naše doba*, 23, 1916, No. 8, p. 569. See also Pavličíková, H., *František Mareš. From Physiology to Philosophy* (*František Mareš. Od fyziologie k filosofii*). Praha, Epocha 2017, p. 149–160.

28 Or "overindividual" as in "going *beyond* the individual" (translator's note).

29 Mareš, F., *Truth in Emotion* (*Pravda v citu*). Praha, F. Topič 1922, p. 18–24.

30 Bergson, H., *Two Sources of Morality and Religion*. New York, Doubleday 1954.

already significantly deflecting from noetics, which dealt with questions of ethics, society, and religion. Its main argument is yet another instance of a "difference in character": against a static, collective, utilitarian religion, Bergson juxtaposes a dynamic religion, which he understands in the sense of mysticism and individual mystical experiences of exceptional individuals.[31] Always true to its theory, Bergsonian mysticism is attainable only through immediate intuitive perception. Bergson nevertheless still promotes the possibility of collaboration between philosophy and mysticism; a conclusion which Vladimír Hoppe, the last philosopher with whom we are going to concern ourselves here, no longer upholds in the last stage of his philosophical development.

Much like Bergson, Hoppe begins by dealing with pure noetics. Again in accordance with late Bergson, in his first book *The Essence, Scope and Value of the Natural-Scientific Knowledge* (*Podstata, dosah a hodnota přírodovědeckého poznání*), Hoppe differentiates between intuitive knowledge and mediated knowledge, dubbing the latter, conceptual kind of knowledge, *cinematographic*[32] (without mentioning that he adopted this name from Bergson's *Creative Evolution*, by the way).[33] According to Hoppe, conceptual thinking is marred by two fundamental errors: firstly, through conceptual thinking, we project our feelings as objects outside the sphere of our own perception and secondly, we endow fictitious and hypostatised objects with properties that are, again, merely our feelings. Hoppe's early noetics therefore more or less derives from the philosophy of late Bergson and F. Mareš.[34] Nevertheless, similarly to Bergson, Hoppe progresses in his second book *Nature and Science* (*Příroda a věda*) from noetic questions to those metaphysical, and he continues to deal with them in each of his later works with a growing tendency towards mystical insight, not dissimilar to Bergson's understanding of "dynamic religion".

31 Even in this book, focused on the issues and values of society, Bergson does not forget to emphasise the individuality of an individual and his role. This tendency is most evident in the examples of the great figures of mysticism who are worthy of following.

32 Hoppe, V., *The Essence, Scope and Value of the Natural-Scientific Knowledge* (*Podstata, dosah a hodnota přírodovědeckého poznání*). Praha, Řivnáč 1914, p. 19.

33 The reason behind the name "cinematographic knowledge" is that intellect tampers with reality much like a cinematographer does, through transcribing the continuous flow of change, or the duration, into rigid images following each other, one by one. In the introduction to his first book Hoppe states that the publication of Bergson's *Creative Evolution* brought just "mere confirmation of the author's (*Hoppe's* – KS) opinions". Nevertheless, we do not assume that the usage of the term was random and without inspiration, or that Bergson adopted his terms from Hoppe.

34 We clearly see the influence of Vaihinger's philosophy "Als ob". See Konečný, R., *Vladimír Hoppe: A Contribution to the History and Critique of Irationalism* (*Vladimír Hoppe: příspěvek k historii a kritice iracionalismu*). Brno, Univerzita Jana Evangelisty Purkyně 1970, p. 17–19.

Like Mareš, Hoppe too begins where, according to Trnka, Bergson lost his way – at the dualism of two types of knowledge, at the endeavour to find absolute knowledge as opposed to relative knowledge. Hoppe likewise highlights intuition, which he develops further and takes it far beyond Bergson's mysticism of *Two Sources of Morality and Religion*. When Hoppe speaks of intuition, he means a wide scope of ideas, ranging from empirical penetration of reality through visual images, bringing him closer to late Bergson, to the possibility of insight into what should or could be, bringing him closer to Mareš's ethics. Late Hoppe understands intuition as a mere momentary perception, inevitable, but insufficient: that is because it still contains seeds of sensualism. In his last two works, Hoppe goes beyond intuition: behind it, he sees an even deeper faculty that reaches beyond reason: contemplation. In his last book, *The Prerequisites of Spiritual Philosophy and Religious Faith* (*Předpoklady duchovní filosofie a náboženské víry*), he is no longer content with intuitive knowledge alone. Here, Hoppe abandons philosophy altogether and states that it is imperative to

> "sever any contact with both scientific considerations and reasonable philosophical considerations and walk the path of our own subjective experiences and findings, the path of faith".[35]

The contemplative and mystical path eventually solves both the noetic and the metaphysical problem for Hoppe. It embodies not only the possibility of reaching the *absolute truth*, but also the possibility of permanent, lasting contact with the absolute.[36] A contemplating being, Hoppe states, descends into the pre-experiential, extra-sensual content of the soul that leads one to an immediate contact with *absolute reality*. In this last phase, the individual is ridded of their consciousness of personality and their consciousness of the world; one's individuality, i.e. the subject, is expanded to encompass the whole universe.

Contemplation is the creator of the *supraindividual* sphere of personality; it is the intuitive method where thinking is identical to being.[37] Thus, in Hoppe's late philosophy, the distinction between the subject and the object disappears, along with the distinction between the knowing subject and the

35 Hoppe, V., *The Prerequisites of Spiritual Philosophy and Religious Faith* (*Předpoklady duchovní filosofie a náboženské víry*). Praha, Neklan 1922, p. 52.

36 Konečný, R., *Vladimír Hoppe: A Contribution to the History and Critique of Irationalism*, p. 127.

37 Hoppe, V., *The Natural and Spiritual Foundations of the World and Life* (*Přirozené a duchovní základy světa a života*). Praha, Miloš Procházka 1925, p. 519–525. See also Konečný, R., *Vladimír Hoppe: A Contribution to the History and Critique of Irationalism*, p. 125, 132.

object of knowledge, because through the act of creation one becomes a participant in the absolute.[38] What thus takes place is not only an *overcoming of the individuality of both the subject and the object*, but also their *fusion*.

The Noetic Danger of a Dead End?

On the one hand, it seems that late Hoppe goes further than Bergson's philosophy methodically. This happens in two ways. Firstly,

> "hats off to Hoppe, bearing in mind his fearless rigour, for going beyond Bergson and for not being afraid to think through in his own philosophy concepts which Bergson merely formulated as an agenda for his philosophical expectation;"[39]

i.e. areas that Bergson merely outlines as a solution in his *Two Sources of Morality and Religion*. Secondly, not only does Hoppe leave behind the intellectual analytical method, but the intuitive method as well, along with all of philosophy as such.

On the other hand, it could be said that in a way (not methodically, but somehow noetically) Hoppe returns to the original, early and, for Trnka, revelatory Bergson and his first essay, *Time and Free Will*. In it, Bergson, similarly to Hoppe, erases the dualistic difference between truth and reality, between the knowing subject and the examined object, or simply, between the subject and the object. Truth is identified with reality and knowledge; dualism is rejected. However, the methodical paths of Hoppe and Bergson are different, which raises the question whether Hoppe's philosophy could offer a relevant answer to the problem outlined by Trnka in his book *A Dead End of Modern Philosophy*, the problem of searching for a new path for philosophy, which had deviated during his lifetime from the "correct", noetic-critical path.

Trnka's commentary on the state of modern philosophy is plainly evident in the philosophy of František Mareš and Vladimír Hoppe. The concept, the intellectualist idol of positivist science, is recognised as a static symbol, inseparable from the material world, from the rigidity of surface, and from the "successivity" and differentiability of space. For Bergson's (and others') intuitivism, concepts are but rigid cinematographic images, dependent on limited options of expression. This poses a stumbling block in the form of

38 Konečný, R., *Vladimír Hoppe: A Contribution to the History and Critique of Irationalism*, p. 40.
39 Ibid., p. 123.

the problem of language, words and concepts: human words are either intellectual

> "magical boxes meant to conceal the truth, cinematographic symbols, fictions, or mere instrumental clay".[40]

Irrationalism, as we have seen, shies from words and concepts, and sets out on a path of its own, beginning with an individualistic descent into one's interiority and feelings of empathy with the essence of objects, and ending with supraindividual insight into supraindividual truths and the practice of extra-conceptual contemplation. This is how, according to Trnka, Bergson's dualism means that all modern philosophy ends up in absolute scepsis concerning the possibilities and groundings of human knowledge.[41] Or is this, in the words of Bergson, simply "knowledge of a new kind"?[42]

40 Trnka, T., *A Dead End of Modern Philosophy*, p. 67.
41 Ibid., p. 65.
42 Bergson, H., *La Pensée et le Mouvant.* Paris, Flammarion 2014.

Rádl's Criticism of the Czech Individualist Inter-War Philosophy

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When the so-called "younger philosophical generation" surrounding the journal *Ruch filosofický* arose, their goal was to pose a philosophical and methodological challenge to the then-dominant positivistic approach in Czechoslovak academia, championed mainly by thinkers surrounding the journal *Česká mysl*.[1] In the broadest sense, it was a clash between, on one side, subjectivist irrationalism and individualism focused on the questions of metaphysics, and, on the other, positivist rationalism dealing with the questions of empirical science. Perhaps even before the positivist camp managed to react to the manifesto of the younger generation, the philosopher Emanuel Rádl had entered the intellectual ring. Rádl, although not an adherent of positivism, subjected the thinking and the philosophical position of the younger generation (whose members I will address below as "philosophers of individualism" for the sake of simplicity) to harsh criticism. A discussion between both sides followed, revolving around not only positivism, but also around the philosophies of Masaryk and Kant, and the relationship between philosophy and politics. Yet, to Rádl at least, the discussion had a deeper meaning than a simple disagreement on how to accurately define this or that intellectual position, or how to resolve the "old" dispute over Kant: what was actually being discussed here was the very essence and significance of philosophy, as well as the question of what role the philosopher should perform within society and the state.

It must be said that his criticism and the reactions of the philosophers of individualism that followed were not always delivered in an objective and factual manner, and instead were full of personal attacks, unjustified accusations and rash conclusions. I will try to avoid this aspect of the dispute and

1 Pauza, M., Introductory Study (Úvodní studie). In: Jirásková, O. (ed.), *A Collection of Texts Published in Czech Philosophical Journals of the 20th Century, Vol. 2* (*Soupis příspěvků v českých filosofických časopisech 20. století 2*). Praha, Filosofia 2008, p. XII–XIV.

rather focus on illustrating the intellectual basis and justification of Rádl's sharp criticism aimed at the new and different way of thinking that was beginning to gain ground in post-war Czechoslovakia. My interpretation is thus one-sided, since its objective is, in addition to that already stated, to introduce some theoretical perspectives against which the philosophy of individualism – the topic to which this collection of studies is dedicated – had taken a stand either consciously or unconsciously. Furthermore, the goal of this study is not to determine whether the expressed objections were justified or whether or not they were directed at the right people. Instead, these objections will be used to reveal Rádl's stance towards individualism, a stance which stems from the philosophical and methodological anchoring of his philosophy, therefore mainly from realism. My interpretation will be based on the hypothesis that Rádl's definition of realism, which determined his noetic, methodological and practical-philosophical standpoint, went through a certain development during the First World War, which resulted primarily in a new stance towards (Kant's) rationalism. I believe that understanding the reasons why Rádl stepped out to defend Czech positivism and embarked on criticism of the members of individualism during the interwar period is essential for understanding this change in his stance, as his pre-war texts had much in common with this school of thought.

Rádl's Realism

In the following section, I will aspire to explore and explain Rádl's stand on realism, bearing in mind the aforementioned assumption that the conclusions of such explanations are essential for understanding the significance of Rádl's objections against the philosophy of individualism during the interwar period. Nevertheless, explanation is hampered by the two following issues. Firstly, the term "realism" itself is ambiguous: it encompasses different schools of thought or mental paradigms; it defines a certain methodological approach towards the world and delimits the possibilities of knowing it, but it also signifies a certain attitude towards life, carrying with it certain practical and moral consequences.[2] The question that is fundamental for the presented study is how Rádl himself understands the term and how realism determines and defines his philosophical and political standpoint. Secondly, interpretation is made more difficult by Rádl's distinctive way of thinking and by the fact that he went through a certain philosophical evolution,

2 For different types of realism in Rádl's approach, see Rádl, E., *Modern Science: Its Essence, Methods and Results* (*Moderní věda: její podstata, methody, výsledky*). Praha, Čin 1926. Knihovna české mysli, p. 108–109.

especially in his relationship towards Kant's rationalism. The following text will show how this change of stance played an important role in respect to his stepping out against the philosophers of individualism.

Rádl's realist standpoint can be in fact divided into two phases: pre-war and post-war. The nature of Rádl's *pre-war* realism is expressed mainly in his article *Philosophical Realism* (*Filosofický realism*), first published in 1913 in the magazine *Wednesday* (*Středa*), and a year later in the book *Philosophical and Scientific Meditations* (*Úvahy vědecké a filosofické*).[3] In this text, Rádl reveals, among other things, that his mentor and primary source in this field is Masaryk, from whom he adopts the term *realism* itself.[4] The fundamental aspect by which realism is to overcome both rationalist and positivist approaches is *lived experience* of the subject, that is, the possibility of direct experience of "pure" reality.[5] "Objective" positivist science – which Rádl attributes to F. Krejčí in his book *Philosophical Realism* – works with the concept of experience which is derived, reflected and grasped using reason and, in this sense, never gains access to actual knowledge of the reality of the world.[6] This noetic approach of positivist natural science is based on – in Rádl's eyes – the false assumption that the surrounding world (nature) is an object independent of the knowing subject, that it is perceived by the subject and that these perceptions are then processed using reason.[7] Rádl counters this with the approach of an "intuitive empiricist", i.e. a realist who does not accept such assumptions or at least calls them into question and understands knowledge as the direct experience of reality.[8]

Realism's direct experience, this "living knowledge", arises during the process of the "organic" fusion of the knowing subject and the known object, while this object is not just inanimate nature, but being as such.[9] Realism,

3 Rádl, E., Philosophical Realism (Filosofický realism). In: *Philosophical and Scientific Meditations* (*Úvahy vědecké a filosofické*). Praha, Grosman & Svoboda 1914, p. 141–162.

4 In the very introduction of the article, Rádl puts realism in connection with questions on the study of history, specifically the problem of the authenticity of the manuscripts. The article itself, two thirds of which are dedicated to the explanation of Masaryk's realism, is a comparison of the noetic-methodological approach of realism, which Rádl identifies with Masaryk and the positivist approach. Rádl, E., Philosophical Realism, p. 141–144, 148–159. See Hermann, T., *Consolation of Life. A Study on Emanuel Rádl's Works in Biology and Consolation of Philosophy* (*Útěcha ze života. Studie o biologickém díle a Útěše z filosofie Emanuela Rádla*). Dissertation. Praha, Přírodovědecká fakulta UK 2008, p. 77.

5 Rádl, E., Philosophical Realism, p. 146–148.

6 Ibid., p. 142–144.

7 Rádl, E., Revolutionary and Conservative Tendences in the History of Science (Pokrokové a konservativní živly v dějinách vědy). *Česká mysl*, 14, 1913, No. 1, p. 32.

8 Ibid., p. 32–35. Rádl, E., *Romantic Science* (*Romantická věda*). Praha, Laichter 1918, p. 84. See Hermann, T., *Consolation of Life*, p. 64–65.

9 Ibid., p. 154, 155, 157, 159.

in its most extreme form tries to suppress rationality which disrupts immediacy, thus standing against empirical, positivist science and overcoming it. Although Rádl does not advocate such extremity, he does come quite close, which is evident in the conclusion of his declaratory article *Abstract Science and Real Science* (*Věda abstraktní a věda reálná*) from 1914, where he states:

> "Indeed, our stance is extreme empiricism: it removes the logic of experience from wherever it can: experience, factum, direct knowledge is our motto and we set these principles against opinions and presumptions."[10]

It is evident in his exposition in *Philosophical Realism* that rationality is not suppressed entirely, as reason is present in direct experience itself and thus is inseparable from it.[11] It implies that direct, immediate experience somehow "understands" or "processes" reality.

From a noetic point of view, a significant aspect of Rádl's pre-war realism is that it stands against the positivist approach: T. Hermann notes that one of the prominent representatives of Czech positivism, F. Krejčí, regarded Rádl, whom he considered an adherent of irrationalism, to be the most consistent critic of the noetic-methodological standpoint of positivism.[12] Krejčí reacted to Rádl's article *Philosophical Realism* by publishing his *Commentaries on Contemporary Czechoslovak Philosophy* (*Glosy k nynější filosofii u nás*) in *Česká mysl* the following year.[13] The second regular critic of some aspects of Rádl's realism from the positivist perspective was the protestant theologian J. B Kozák.[14] Their purely intellectual dispute continued throughout the interwar period. Patočka even dubs this a lifetime "struggle" led by Rádl against positivism.[15]

10 Rádl, E., Abstract Science and Real Science (Věda abstraktní a věda reálná). *Česká mysl*, 15, 1914, No. 2, p. 129–130. Cf. Škorpíková, Z., *Rádl's Concept of Truth* (*Rádlovo pojetí pravdy*). Praha, Filosofia 2003, p. 57–59.

11 Rádl, E., Philosophical Realism, p. 152.

12 Hermann, T., *Consolation of Life*, p. 24–15, 108.

13 Krejčí, F., Commentaries on Contemporary Czechoslovak Philosophy (Glosy k nynější filosofii u nás). *Česká mysl*, 15, 1914, No. 1–2, p. 19–28, 142–158.

14 Hermann, T., *Consolation of Life*, p. 24–25; Kozák, J. B., Scientific Realism and the Concept of Truth (Vědecký realism a pojem pravdy). *Česká mysl*, 16, 1917, No. 5–6, p. 254–273.

15 Patočka, J., The Importance of the Concept of Truth in Rádl's Discussion with Positivism (Význam pojmu pravdy pro Rádlovu diskusi s pozitivismem). *Česká mysl*, 33, 1937, No. 1–2, p. 40, 52–53; in another print: Patočka, J., *The Czechs I. Complete works of Jan Patočka, Vol. 12* (*Češi I. Sebrané spisy Jana Patočky 12*). Praha, Oikoymenh 2006, p. 34, 49. Patočka shows that Rádl understood positivism (for which he used the term "objective science" during the Interwar Period) as a child of the natural-scientific Baconian-Cartesian rationalism and intellectualism of Western Philosophy, whose roots reach all the way to Greek philosophy. As already mentioned,

Under Masaryk's influence, Rádl's pre-war realism gains a peculiar, ambiguous relationship toward idealism: according to Rádl, Masaryk rejects idealism because it does not work with direct experience, but only with its reflection through reason.[16] However, at the same time he accepts Plato's teaching on ideas which he understands as *realist idealism*, where the subject does not gain access to ideas by means of reason, but through direct, lived experience.[17] Rádl's realism thus cancels the dualism of the subject and object and, simultaneously, gets closer to a mystical and intuitivist approach to the world.[18] In his interpretation of Masaryk's realism, Rádl himself refers to the representatives of modern Russian philosophy, hence to realism, mysticism and intuitivism (mentioning Berdyaev, Shestov, Dostoevsky and Lossky) and also talks about the possible inspiration that realism finds in the aforementioned Platonism, Neoplatonism, older scholasticism, or in some Renaissance thinkers.[19]

Patočka then highlights one more fundamental concept in Rádl's pre-war realism that distinguishes it from positivism. It is the concept of *personal truth*, which Rádl develops in his work *History of Biological Theories of the Modern Age II* (*Dějiny biologických teorií novověku II*) from 1905.[20] A full interpretation of Rádl's concept of personal truth would definitely require more space, but for the intents of this article it must suffice that we show where Rádl's conviction that every individual has and must take responsibility for his scientific and political activities comes from: personal truth may be understood as the revelation of the true nature of a given object, which arises when an immediate relationship between a person-individual and reality is established. Truth is therefore a constituent of the existing reality, which begins to *exist* at the moment at which the knowing subject experiences it immediately. According to Rádl, the truth of existing reality is present in every human, it is their inner conviction or belief, which precedes any theorisation

Rádl saw the main negative aspect of this school of thought in man's inability to experience directly and in positivism's effort to construct "objective" judgments and theories. According to Patočka, Rádl's criticism necessarily leads far beyond the borders of contemporary positivist philosophy. Patočka, J., *The Czechs I*, p. 34, 47.

16 Rádl, E., Philosophical Realism, p. 154; Hermann T., *Consolation of Life*, p. 78.

17 Rádl, E., Philosophical Realism, p. 154, 155, 159.

18 Ibid., p. 157.

19 Ibid., p. 149, 159.

20 Rádl, E., *The History of Biological Theories of the Modern Age II. The History of the Theories of Evolution in Biology of the 19th Century* (*Dějiny biologických teorií novověku II. Dějiny evolučních teorií v biologii 19. století*), ed. T. Hermann – A. Markoš – Z. Neubauer. Praha, Academia 2006, p. 408–410; Revolutionary and Conservative Tendences in the History of Science, p. 31–37; Philosophical Realism, p. 154–156; *Romantic Science*, p. 103; Patočka, J., *The Czechs I*, p. 38–40. Regarding Rádl's approach to truth see Hermann, T., *Consolation of Life*, p. 27, 66–72; Škorpíková, Z., *Rádl's Concept of Truth*, p. 232–237.

and reflection.[21] All other observations *about* reality, i.e. judgments, conclusions or theories that individuals consequently share with each other, are not "actual" truth, but are, on the contrary, dependent on personal truth, and could not have come into existence without it.[22] This prerequisite necessarily leads to a situation where each individual is responsible for the truthfulness of knowledge and the consequences resulting from it.

Rádl's *post-war* realist standpoint, which is especially apparent in his *The History of Philosophy* (*Dějiny filosofie*),[23] *On Our Contemporary Philosophy* (*O naší nynější filosofii*)[24] or *Modern Science* (*Moderní věda*), underwent some changes, while still retaining some key aspects that had been essential for his pre-war standpoint. In *Modern Science*, Rádl distances himself from the mystical and intuitivist aspect of realism, that is, from the idea of gaining lived experience of reality through the fusion of the subject and the object.[25] At a first glance, this may seem as a radical break from the position expressed in *Philosophical Realism*. Nevertheless, we can find the justification for this diversion already in the conclusion of this text. Here, Rádl describes his fear of the danger that *mystical* realism may pose: a human who experiences reality in this manner might actually become its prisoner, might surrender to it, or fall into a state of passive acceptance of reality. This happens when the role of reason – which, on the one hand, separates experience from the knowing subject, and, on the other, processes, identifies, and interprets experience so as to create a system according to which the individual makes decisions, orientates themself and finally acts – is cast aside or fully revoked.[26]

The dismissal of this role of rationality leads to a certain debilitation of man, to a "naive attitude to the world", passivity, faith in myths, in instinctive morality, and, consequently, even to a manner of behaviour that lacks moral ground and thus may be dangerous and violent.[27] The interpretation put forth in several of Rádl's post-war works[28] – which he claims corresponds to Masaryk's argumentation in his post-war work *Russia and Europe II* (*Rusko a Evropa II*)[29] – shows that these fears were and continued to be well founded.

21 Hermann, T., *Consolation of Life*, p. 66–70; Škorpíková, Z., *Rádl's Concept of Truth*, p. 232–237.
22 Patočka, J., *The Czechs I*, p. 39.
23 Rádl, E., *The History of Philosophy I* (*Dějiny filosofie I*). Olomouc, Votobia 1998; *The History of Philosophy II* (*Dějiny filosofie II*). Praha, Votobia 1999.
24 Rádl, E., *On Our Current Philosophy* (*O naší nynější filosofii*). Praha, Minařík 1922.
25 Ibid., p. 71. Further see Rádl, E., *On Our Current Philosophy*, p. 36–37.
26 Rádl, E., Philosophical Realism, p. 160.
27 Ibid., p. 160.
28 Rádl, E., Masaryk and Kant (Masaryk a Kant). *Realistická stráž*, 2, 1921, No. 14, 23. 7., p. 1–2; *On Our Current Philosophy*, p. 35–38.
29 Masaryk, T. G., *Russia and Europe: A Study on Spiritual Movements in Russia 1–2* (*Rusko a Evropa: studie o duchovních proudech v Rusku*). Praha, Ústav T. G. Masaryka 1996. On the Russian philosophy of history and religion (K ruské filosofii dějin a náboženství), Vol. I–II.

It is the experience and fear of the impact of Russian philosophy based on mysticism, intuitivism and idealism, or something that Rádl calls "philosophy without reason".[30] During the war, all of this proved itself to be a dangerous approach leading towards a political and cultural decline, careless morality and resignation and, finally, to total chaos and violence.[31]

However, Rádl does not reject the original concept of realism altogether, but thoroughly revises it.[32] In addition to criticism of the mystical approach, the manner in which reality is known not only changes, but the role of reason logically also grows in importance in the sense of critical rationality. The idea of lived experience is replaced by the idea of capturing the *content* of events, through which the knowing subject interprets given reality, the given object. Rádl understands such content (or purpose, goal) as an "idea" which is inserted into the given reality (object) by the knowing subject.[33] With respect to this, the truth is no longer a constituent of reality that presents itself to the knowing subject within the scope of lived experience, but is revealed only during the process of interpretation of experience through reason. Thus, the task of reason as a certain capacity of a subject, through which it steps away from lived experience and therefore makes (moral) decisions and acts, is gaining on importance.[34] This aspect of post-war realism is relevant for the interpretation proposed in this study, although it must be said that the whole matter of gaining truthful knowledge through observing and interpreting existing reality is not thoroughly explained and resolved in Rádl's work.[35]

As we have shown, Rádl's approach to realism went through a certain development during the First World War, as far as the relationship towards mysticism and the significance of rationality in the process of knowledge and action is concerned. Consequently, this led to the crystallization of the theme of moral responsibility in his philosophical position, which was supposed to

30 Rádl, E., *On Our Current Philosophy*, p. 36–37.

31 Rádl, E., Masaryk and Kant, No. 14, p. 1–2; *On Our Current Philosophy*, p. 35–38; Hromádka, J. L., *Don Quijote of the Czech Philosophy* (*Don Quijote české filosofie*). Praha, Laichter 1947, p. 35–36.

32 Patočka, J., *The Czechs I*, p. 43.

33 Ibid.; Rádl, E., *Modern Science*, p. 183.

34 Ibid. See also Škorpíková, Z., *Rádl's Concept of Truth*, p. 236–238. This problem – Rádl's relationship toward mystical realism and idealism – was also explored by an adherent of the younger philosophical generation, V. Hoppe (see Hoppe, V., The Philosophy of Em. Rádl /Filosofie Em. Rádla/. *Ruch filosofický*, 4, 1924, No. 1, p. 1–12). Hoppe calls Rádl's Post-War philosophy *rational idealism*, that is close to mysticism and gnosticism. I believe that Hoppe – although he correctly identified the presence of an idealist approach in Rádl's philosophy, which builds on Plato's teachings – overlooked or underestimated Rádl's divergence from mysticism and intuitivism.

35 According to Z. Škorpíková, the year 1918 is crucial in this context, for it is a milestone in Rádl's philosophical development. Since 1918 there is no further specification of the idea of truth. See Škorpíková, Z., *Rádl's Concept of Truth*, p. 9–10, 232–242; Hermann, T., *Consolation of Life*, p. 9; Patočka, J., *The Czechs I*, p. 50–51.

be supported by the rational interpretation of experience-based knowledge, and also led to the emergence of the theme of personal responsibility with respect to philosophical and political activity. Rádl warns against practising science or philosophy for personal gain, either political or other: the scientist, the philosopher, but also the artist must guarantee that their motivation is the purely philosophical interest of the pursuit of truth.[36] Therefore they must first prove themselves before their own eyes, removing any of their inner doubts. Then they must come out publicly with their truth, or knowledge, and present it, defend it and stand firmly behind it.[37] They must reveal a part of themselves and expose themselves to public criticism. At the same time, they should also ensure their knowledge is used for public and political benefit. Scientific knowledge must always have practical outcomes for life, for the future and should be the basis for political activity, too.[38] In Rádl's view, politics could never function without philosophy (science) and is therefore subordinate to it.

Rádl's post-war work also challenges Czech philosophy to become global and transnational, to focus on issues that transcend the borders of individual states, issues that are valid and also crucial for everyone at all times.[39] Thus, Rádl stands against efforts to define philosophy based on nationality or race, and yet again deals with the question of the purpose and task of philosophy. The "globality" of philosophy means rising above the confines of locality, nationality, language, but also the constraints of different opinions, prejudices and fears.[40] Philosophy should be judged by its thoughts; only on such a spiritual level can individual states and systems measure their power. Czech philosophy must become global in order to be an equal opponent or partner of other philosophies: it must be free, open to criticism, free of political influences, and primarily, it must be founded on reason, theorisation and thoroughly rational scepticism.[41] Such enforcement of the "conscious reign of reason over life" shows how much Rádl's approach to rationalism changed during the war and also what importance he ascribes to philosophy

36 Rádl, E., Less Politics! (Méně politiky!). *Realistická stráž*, 1, 1920, No. 10, 7. 8., p. 1–3.
37 Rádl, E., Less Politics! *Realistická stráž*, 1, 1920, No. 11, 21. 8., p. 1–2.
38 Rádl, E., Less Politics!, No. 10, p. 1–2; The Role of Philosophy in Czechoslovakia. A Ceremonial Speech for the Commemoration of the 40 Years of the Philosophical Union on November 29, 1921 (Úkol filosofie v československém státě. Řeč v slavnostní schůzi na paměť 40letého trvání Jednoty Filosofické dne 29. XI. 1921). *Česká mysl*, 18, 1922, No. 1, p. 17–23; No. 2, p. 65–71, esp. p. 66, 70–71. Following the spirit of this thesis, Rádl founded a scientific periodical *Nové Atheneum* in 1920, which was meant to serve as a platform for solving topical social questions by using scientific methods.
39 Rádl, E., The Role of Philosophy in Czechoslovakia, p. 67–68.
40 Ibid., p. 20–21, 69.
41 Ibid., p. 67–70.

in resolving social and political questions.[42] In fact, one of the main duties of philosophy for Rádl is to propagate the spreading of this "globality" within the Czech nation, to accentuate rationalist-critical thinking, and to promote confidence in the power of thought and truth.[43] The task of philosophy and every single philosopher is to

> "[…] make the Czech state a state that is humanistic, a state that is spiritual, a state founded on truth […]".[44]

What Rádl feared was moral and spiritual passivity, growing nihilist, irrationalist and nationalist tendencies in society and in the scientific community. "German rationality" was much closer to Rádl rather than "Slavic sentiment" which he believed was enforced by the younger intellectual generation.[45]

When Patočka talks of Rádl as of the only person who

> "[…] continued in what Masaryk had started and aspired to make it even more stringent and profound",

he meant precisely Rádl's aspiration to take Masaryk's idea of the state seriously, but also to critically review it and adapt it: Rádl called for the building of such a state that would not be nation-based, but would be democratic in the sense that all its nationalities would accept it.[46] At a time when nationalist tendencies were on the rise in Czechoslovakia as in the rest of Europe, he advocated a programme for his own type of state that would be open to all nationalities and whose stability would be guaranteed by reconciliation between Czechs and Germans, among other things.[47] No wonder that he was a thorn in the side of many contemporary thinkers and politicians. Especially when, in line with his sense of personal responsibility towards truth and society, he publicly criticised, lectured and sometimes provoked both his opponents and even his colleagues. However, his actions must be treated as an expression of philosophical activism, as an effort to prevent the

42 Ibid., p. 70. See Hromádka, J. L., *Don Quijote of the Czech Philosophy*, p. 33.
43 Ibid., p. 70–71.
44 Ibid., p. 69.
45 Ibid., p. 70.
46 Patočka, J., A Memory and Thoughts On Rádl and Masaryk (Vzpomínka a zamyšlení o Rádlovi a Masarykovi). In: *The Czechs II. Complete works of Jan Patočka, Vol. 13* (*Češi II. Sebrané spisy Jana Patočky 13*). Praha, Oikoymenh 2006, p. 326–329. Ladislav Hejdánek seconds this opinion in his epilogue to Rádl's book The War of the Czechs and Germans, viz Rádl, E., The War of the Czechs and Germans (*Válka Čechů s Němci*). Praha, Melantrich 1993. České myšlení, p. 276–280.
47 Patočka, J., *The Czechs II*, p. 328.

possible decline or demise of democratic society.[48] Our focus will now shift towards Rádl's criticism of the younger generation of philosophers, which I believe must be understood in the context of his philosophical development described above and in the context of the significance he ascribed to philosophy regarding political and social questions.

Rádl's Criticism of the Philosophy of Individualism

Identifying the genesis of Rádl's dispute with the philosophers of individualism is a formidable task, nevertheless we can date its first seminal appearance in Rádl's lecture in the Realist Club in April of 1921, which he developed further in the following month in a collection of five articles titled *Czech Philosophy Before and After the War* (*Česká filosofie před válkou a po válce*).[49] The articles were later published in the aforementioned book *On Our Contemporary Philosophy* – which also contained some of the critical answers of Rádl's opponents that followed – and were presumably a direct response to Vorovka's book *Scepsis and Gnosis* (*Skepse a gnóse*).[50] Vorovka's book was newly published, expressing the author's radical distancing from rationalism, countering by proposing different ways of gaining truthful knowledge – intuition, mysticism and faith. These articles may be regarded as a form of defence of positivism and the figure of Krejčí, who had come under attack by the philosophers of individualism surrounding *Ruch filosofický*. After all, it was not the first time that Rádl had defended this intellectual rival of his: in 1911 he stood up for him against E. Chalupný who valiantly criticised *The Philosophical Unity* (*Jednota filosofická*), an association led by Krejčí, and the journal *Česká mysl*.[51] In reaction, Chalupný declared a "Struggle for the Purification of Czech Science and Philosophy". When the first issue of *Ruch filosofický* was published in 1920, it was accompanied by another "Struggle for the Freedom of Czech Philosophy", or the struggle against the domination of positivism.[52]

48 For a study on Rádl's philosophical activism, see Hromádka, J. L., *Don Quijote of the Czech Philosophy*, p. 17–22, 53–57; Hermann, T., *Consolation of Life*, p. 7–11, 23, 35.

49 Rádl, E., Czech Pre-War and Post-War Philosophy (Česká filosofie před válkou a po válce). *Čas*, 31, 1921, No. 107, 8. 5., p. 8; No. 109, 11. 5., p. 4; No. 111, 14. 5., p. 4–5; No. 113, 15. 5., p. 10; No. 117, 21. 5., p. 2.

50 Vorovka, K., *Scepsis and Gnosis. A Philosophical Confession* (*Skepse a gnóse. Vyznání filosofické*). Praha, G. Voleský 1921.

51 Chalupný, E., Struggle for Purification of Czech Science and Philosophy Against F. Krejčí, E. Rádl and Others, 1911 and 1912 (*Boj za očistu české vědy a filosofie proti F. Krejčímu, E. Rádlovi & spol. r. 1911 a 1912*). Praha, Přehled 1912; Hermann, T., *Consolation of Life*, p. 22, 84.

52 Pelikán, F., The Reign of Democracy in Philosophy (To our Program) – (Vláda demokracie ve filosofii /K našemu programu/). *Ruch filosofický*, 1, 1920–1921, No. 1, p. 1–5. For Rádl's Post-War dispute with the philosophers of individualism, see Pavlincová, H., Rádl's Post-War „Dispute

Immediately after Rádl's reaction (the articles mentioned above), a meeting was held at *The Philosophical Unity* debating hall where a discussion between Rádl and the philosophers of individualism took place. The course of the discussion was written down and published in the 12th issue of the magazine *Realistická stráž*. The dispute, however, did not end there and then, and other philosophers from the younger generation took part in it: aside from Karel Vorovka and the other co-founder of *Ruch filosofický*, F. Pelikán, these included T. Trnka, V. Hoppe, J. L. Fischer, J. B. Kozák, and R. I. Malý. The dispute was later summed up by E. Čapek, who, alongside Rádl's five articles, also mentioned Vorovka's article titled *For a New Czech Philosophy* (*O novou českou filosofii*).[53] He did not omit to highlight, firstly, the fact that this exchange of views took place mainly in the daily press and during public speeches, making an objective assessment of the dispute rather difficult, and secondly, he noted that the dispute was not yet over.[54] In fact, echoes of the dispute were still resounding in Czechoslovak philosophy for many years to come.[55]

Yet again Rádl pondered over the nature and purpose of Czech Philosophy in his articles and his book *On Our Contemporary Philosophy*, and, in this context, tackled the question of whether the younger generation of philosophers had not deviated from the true purpose of philosophy. His criticism may be summed up in two key points: firstly, that they do not pay enough attention to the teachings of Masaryk, which testifies mainly to the apoliticism of their philosophy and its deviation from everyday life and its problems. Secondly, Rádl criticises their relationship to positivism and rationalism.[56]

The first line of criticism against the estrangement, apoliticism and amorality of the philosophy of individualism is delivered by Rádl from the position of realism. I believe that this criticism is analogical to one he delivered approximately three years earlier in his work *Romantic Science* (*Romantická věda*), which he directs against Kant's teachings and the German Philosophy of Idealism in general.[57] He begins with an analysis of the harmful consequences

over the New Czech Philosophy" (Emanuel Rádl a poválečný „spor o novou českou filosofii"). In: Hermann, T. – Markoš, A. (eds.), *Emanuel Rádl – A Scientist and Philosopher* (*Emanuel Rádl – vědec a filosof*). Praha, Oikoymenh 2004, p. 657–666.

53 Vorovka, K., For a New Czech Philosophy, Vol. 1–3 (O novou českou filosofii 1–3). *Národní listy*, 61, 1921, No. 277, 284, 291, 9.–23. 10., p. 9–11.

54 Čapek, E., The Struggles for a New Czech Philosophy (Boje o novou českou filosofii). *Ruch filosofický*, 2, 1922, No. 1, p. 23.

55 Krejčí himself began with a thorough criticism of the philosophers of individualism no sooner than in 1925, which launched a new phase of struggles that Rádl decided not to join. Pavlincová, H., Rádl's Post-War „Dispute over the New Czech Philosophy", p. 665.

56 Rádl, E., *On Our Current Philosophy*, p. 8–13, 16–17, 23, 26.

57 Rádl speaks of "German Romanticism", and his list of representatives includes, besides Kant, also Hegel, Fichte, Schelling and Schopenhauer. Rádl, E., *Romantic Science*, p. 83, 102, 116–117.

of Kant's subjectivism, building on the critique contained in Masaryk's work *The Modern Human and Religion* (*Moderní člověk a náboženství*): Rádl claims that Kant's subjectivism leads to the knowing subject losing sight of the object, thus causing the subject to "become blind" to the things around them – things that are contingent, concrete, and tangible.[58] Instead, the subject focuses solely on the universal laws and principles that are found within reason. Empirical facts and experience serve only as a device for verifying the subject's theories.[59] In practice, science (be it philosophy or any specialized science) loses the ability to provide new discoveries and inventions, it ceases to be practical and serviceable to society.[60] Conversely, Rádl understands the world as concrete reality that can be understood through observation, interpretation, experience and subsequent methodical and focused organisation of knowledge.[61] What should attract the interest of the knowing subject are above all concrete, present, immediate, minor affairs. Only then is it possible to move on to theories, laws, and therefore towards truth.[62] In other words, what Rádl is saying here is that he blames German 19th century individualism for forcefully separating empirical, specialized science from speculative philosophy. According to Rádl, positivism was also responsible for this misconduct.[63]

Thus, Rádl begins the criticism of Kant's rationalism. In its radical form, this stance leads to the separation of the human from concrete reality, because it posits that true knowledge lies beyond space and time. The truth which this philosophical position seeks must be absolute, eternal and always valid.[64] In contrast to this, Rádl puts forward the approach of realists who find truth in dealing with the questions of everyday life, in solving concrete, specific problems – for them, any kind of knowledge gains value once it is transformed into action. In Rádl's opinion, the truth that this study addresses above is not of an absolute nature and cannot be grasped as such outside of the individual and their lived experience.[65]

According to Rádl, the aforementioned separation from reality, the focus on the "beyond" and "above" and the pursuit of false ideals are all characteristic of the philosophy of German Idealism and similar idealisms, among which

58 Rádl, E., Masaryk and Kant. *Realistická stráž*, 2, 1921, No. 12, 9. 7., p. 4–5; Masaryk, T. G., *The Modern Human and Religion* (*Moderní člověk a náboženství*). Praha, Laichter 1934.
59 Rádl, E., *Romantic Science*, p. 68, 73, 84, 91.
60 Ibid., p. 98, 107.
61 Ibid., p. 103.
62 Ibid., p. 98, 107.
63 Ibid., p. 287; Hermann, T., *Consolation of Life*, p. 81.
64 Rádl, E., *Romantic Science*, p. 124–134.
65 Ibid., p. 114–132. For a study on he question of truth, see Patočka, J., *The Czechs I*, p. 34–51; and Škorpíková, Z., *Rádl's Concept of Truth*.

he also assigns the philosophies of F. Mareš, J. Kratochvíl, or V. Hoppe.[66] In Rádl's view of history, such idealism is a reactive form of philosophy, a philosophy that intends just to stand against positivism and empiricism, but in reality leads to passionate nationalism, the assertion of political interests, or, at best, scholarly philosophy.[67] Yet again, Rádl counters this stance – although in a different text[68] – and puts forward a Masarykian and realist position, prioritising scientific (philosophical) knowledge over public and political speeches, and putting a strong emphasis on the responsibility of the author for the truthfulness of the knowledge they promote, while knowing that they answer not only to society, but primarily to themselves.[69] A political action is then the culmination of their practical efforts to help society and the world.[70]

In the conclusion of his analysis of Kant's philosophy, the focus has once again shifted toward individualism. Rádl's main effort is to show that Kant's teachings and the teachings of German Idealism (Hegel, Fichte) lead to the suppression of the concrete individual with his or her rights, needs and desires.[71] The value and significance of the individual rest solely in the fact that he or she participates in reason, the "world's lawgiver", the source of absolute truth and moral principles which all stand high above individual and concrete experience.[72] If it is truly possible to speak of individualism in relation to Kant, it is only *subjective individualism* or individualism that isolates the individual from the surrounding sensory, tangible world, as well as from society and other people. It is the suppression of intersubjectivity as such, and in consequence, the lowering of the significance of moral obligations, leading to amorality.[73]

We have shown the basics of Rádl's negative attitude towards a philosophical way of thinking which leads to a separation from reality, apoliticism and amorality, the consequences of which he recognizes in the school of thought of philosophers of individualism. The significance of the second line of Rádl's criticism concerning the stance toward positivism and rationalism may be understood through the analysis of his, or more precisely Masaryk's, attitude towards Kant. First of all, Rádl emphasises the need for a thorough analysis and critique of positivism, which are essential for sub-

66 Rádl, E., What is Idealism? (Co jest to idealismus?). *Realistická stráž*, 2, 1921, No. 7, 9. 4., p. 3.
67 Ibid., p. 1–3.
68 Rádl, E., Less Politics!, No. 11.
69 Ibid., p. 1–3; Rádl, E., *On Our Current Philosophy*, p. 23–26.
70 Rádl, E., Less Politics!, No. 11, p. 1–4.
71 Rádl, E., *Romantic Science*, p. 135–139.
72 Ibid., p. 135–139.
73 Ibid., p. 139–141.

sequently overcoming it, just as Masaryk did, according to Rádl.[74] Thus, the study of Kant may be used as an appropriate tool for overcoming positivism.[75] Furthermore, Rádl points out that some aspects related to the already obsolete positivism are reappearing in the philosophy of the younger generation, specifically Vorovka's and Pelikán's.[76] He tries to show the contradiction in the approach of the adherents of individualism: on the one hand they distance themselves from positivism (especially Krejčí's positivism), on the other hand, they maintain some positivist standpoints.[77] It must be said that some of Rádl's observations on positivism and on Krejčí made during this dispute left his opponents with the valid impression that, at least to a certain extent, he himself stands on the side of positivism.[78] I believe that this seeming discrepancy may again be explained by Rádl's fear of the irrationalist and nihilist schools of thought: on the one hand, he declares positivism an obsolete approach, on the other he praises its orientation toward empiricism and rationality.[79] Along with that, he also appreciates the certain scientific practicality, sincerity, or consistency of the positivists – aspects which are present even in his post-war approach towards realism – which is something he lacks in the philosophy of individualism.[80]

This also explains Rádl's criticism of the young philosophers' interest in irrationalist methods of thinking: mysticism, intuitivism and spiritualism. So far, our interpretation has showed Rádl's negative relationship towards Kant's philosophy and its consequences. However, in the previous part of the study we showed that during the First World War, Rádl came to the belief that if Europe and the rest of the world were to become spiritually liberated, morally organised, safe and, above all, democratic, then what was needed was rationalism, specifically Kant's rationalism with its endeavour to gain knowledge correctly and with certainty (i.e. methodically and without prejudice), with its critical approach to the world, to man and to knowledge, and also with its principle of *conscious living according to a regular programme*.[81] Here we can see clearly Rádl's departure from mystic realism, intuitivism and the scientific method based on direct experience of being. In other words, Rádl was now completely distancing himself from a specific part of his pre-war approach to realism, which he most explicitly set out in

74 Rádl, E., Masaryk and Kant, No. 12.
75 Ibid., p. 2.
76 Rádl, E., *On Our Current Philosophy*, p. 19–22.
77 Ibid., p. 17–22.
78 Čapek, E., *The Struggles for a New Czech Philosophy*, p. 24.
79 Rádl, E., *On Our Current Philosophy*, p. 19.
80 Ibid., p. 13, 19.
81 Ibid., p. 35–38; Masaryk and Kant, No. 14, p. 2–3.

his 1913 book *Philosophical Realism*. Rádl admits to this in the epilogue of his book *On Our Current Philosophy*, where he deals with Vorovka's and Trnka's criticism, and lists the reasons that led him to his change of stance, reasons that have already been mentioned in this study: his experiences during the First World War and his fear of the effects of the kind of thinking that, in his opinion, led to the demise of Russian democracy. All this is why he gained faith in reason and in strictly methodical and theoretical knowledge, and why he started to attack that part of Czech post-war individualism that were approaching or seeking inspiration in Russian Irrationalism.[82] It was the fear of the influence of the pessimistic and nihilistic schools of thought which essentially snuffed out any critical and moral responsibility of the individual and which posed a threat to the newly created state of Czechoslovakia. To counter these tendencies, Rádl puts forward a concept of a man who acts consciously according to their own reason, does not succumb to the world, takes responsibility for their actions, which they understand to be an expression of their knowledge and beliefs and also as a service to their environment.[83] Above all, such a man never loses sight of the real needs of everyday life, which they try to solve, while always propagating and spreading faith in the power of truth in society.[84]

Conclusion: Rádl's Challenges to the Philosophy of Individualism

The objective of the interpretation above was to show the nature of Rádl's realism and, based on that, to explain the philosophical position as well as the intellectual and methodological basis for Rádl's criticisms against the philosophy of individualism during the period following the First World War. The first part of the interpretation explicated the ontological-noetic significance as well as the demands and possibilities of the realist approach for the individual, which Rádl gradually formulated and accepted, influenced by the legacy of Masaryk. The First World War was a crucial period in Rádl's philosophical development as it marks the time that separates the formation of his two different approaches towards realism. Before the war, Rádl attempted to surpass the "objective science" of positivism by formulating his idea of lived experience of being (the direct experience of reality) and his conception of personal truth, which brought his philosophy much closer to Russian mysticism and intuitivism. After the war, however, an emphasis on reason

82 Rádl, E., *On Our Current Philosophy*, p. 36–37; Hromádka, J. L., *Don Quijote of the Czech Philosophy*, p. 32–36, 54–55.
83 Rádl, E., Masaryk and Kant, No. 14, p. 2; *Romantic Science*, p. 66.
84 Rádl, E., The Role of Philosophy in Czechoslovakia, p. 66, 71.

and methodical scepticism, both with regard to scientific knowledge and to political activity, became the fundamental characteristic of his philosophy. Rádl explains this turn-about, on a theoretical level, by the change in his stance towards Kant's rationalism which was motivated by his experiences with the unfortunate consequences of the schools of thought of irrationalism and nihilism. Nevertheless, his partial acceptance of Kant's rationalism (with the exception of his orientation on abstract matters) did not mean abandoning the critical standpoint against (Kant's) subjectivism and idealism formulated in Rádl's *Romantic Science*. And it definitely did not mean abandoning the realistic standpoint, which is evident in the nature of his first criticism against alienation, apoliticism and amorality of the philosophy of individualism.[85]

The second part of this interpretation was dedicated to Rádl's criticisms, presenting the aspects of his post-war realism that were set against the philosophy of the younger philosophical generation. This step should clarify the reasons that led Rádl to engage in such criticism and should also explain his ideological-political standpoint. His criticism of the philosophers of individualism may be understood in three distinctive ways: as an appeal to them to start accepting the findings of empirical science as knowledge that is processed and organised by reason; as an appeal to them to start devoting attention to the questions that directly concern Czechoslovak society, while, at the same time, there are questions that all nations face; and, finally, as an appeal to the young generation to begin philosophising in such a way that not only helps to form the politics and the cultural and moral development of society, but actually serves as its very foundation.

85 In the epilogue of his book *On Our Current Philosophy*, Rádl clearly states that he still maintains all of the key points he made in *Romantic Science.* Rádl, E., *On Our Current Philosophy*, p. 34–35.

Ferdinand Pelikán: The Philosophy of Personality as a Cure for Fictionalism

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Part One: The "Fictionalism" of Modern Philosophy

I decided to devote my paper to a major figure of Czech philosophy, one of the co-founders of the journal *Ruch filosofický*, Ferdinand Pelikán. Of all his works, we should first mention his 1929 text called *The Reign of Democracy in Philosophy* (*Vláda demokracie ve filosofii*).[1] As we shall soon see in this study, Ferdinand Pelikán could very well be taken for an individualist, despite the word "individualism" itself being rarely used in his works. I believe the reason for this elusion is that Pelikán wanted to avoid accusations of radical individualism, like those raised by Masaryk against Stirner.[2] Pelikán thus formulates his individualism rather warily, as he definitely does not want to be taken for an opposing force to Masaryk; that in itself would contradict the idea of the reign of democracy in philosophy.

And it is Pelikán's attempt at democratisation of philosophy which is, in fact, the undeclared topic of this paper. As I intend to show in the conclusion, the idea itself stems logically from Pelikán's lifetime work. However, I shall not get ahead of myself now and shall save this explanation for the concluding part of the article. For now, let us turn to Pelikán's habilitation thesis titled *The Fictionalism of Modern Philosophy, Particularly in Kant and Hume*

1 Pelikán, F., *The Reign of Democracy in Philosophy and Other Essays* (*Vláda demokracie ve filosofii a jiné essaye*). Praha, Unie 1929.

2 "I take every radical individualism to be folly. Simply because no man, no 'I', can ever exist on its own. Stirner's thought is false in its radicality. Man is not a god. How could he be, if every single one is born into a family and raised by society?! […] To be only an individual without any relation to other individuals is simply impossible. There is no 'I' on its own. Radical individualism fails both morally and theoretically in that it posits the 'I' as equal to god." Masaryk, T. G., *Humanistic Ideals* (*Ideály humanitní*). Praha, Domov 1919, p. 30.

(*Fikcionalismus novověké filosofie zvláště u Kanta a Huma*),[3] for it is here, in the concept of fictionalism, that all philosophical work begins.

If we were to say in a simple way what fictionalism means in Pelikán's work, we could safely say that it is a rejection of the "thing-in-itself". In his habilitation thesis, Pelikán describes how modern philosophy progresses and culminates in the works of I. Kant and D. Hume. However, he calls this progression the advancement of fictionalism. According to Pelikán, Kant crowned this whole process by denying man access to the thing-in-itself. Due to this, all post-Kantian philosophy is an expression of decadence and Pelikán proclaims that the time is now ripe for making a stand against fictionalism. This is possible, he says, through a democratisation of philosophical thinking. As the name of this paper suggests, the main method of this process of democratisation will be Pelikán's philosophy of personality.

Part Two: Pelikán's Affective Theory of Personality

Pelikán claims that all hitherto understanding of the concept of personality, i.e. the subject, has been deficient. Contemporary psychology, he claims, puts an emphasis only on the organic and pathological sides of personality. Historico-philosophical theories are effectively in the clutches of fictionalism. Against all other theories, Pelikán puts forward his own *affective theory of personality*, although he does not tell us exactly what it consists of. Rather than explicitly describe it, he illustrates it in three distinctive moments, or, shall we say, pillars of personality. He builds these pillars without any further explanation and so, for now, we can do nothing but to simply list them:

1) The I is the evaluating principle of all our mental states.
2) Emotions and affects are the basis of human personality.
3) Personality is understood dynamically since it is subject to constant evolution.[4]

These three statements conclude Pelikán's book *Fictionalism in Modern Philosophy, Particularly in Kant and Hume*. In order to understand what the author is hinting at here, i.e. what the three crucial moments actually mean, we need to look into his previous work and unravel the knowledge that led him to and formed his *affective theory of personality*. I will therefore move on from the habilitation thesis to an earlier work, an article serially published in the

3 Pelikán, F., *The Fictionalism of Modern Philosophy, Particularly in Kant and Hume* (*Fikcionalism novověké filosofie zvláště u Kanta a Huma*). Praha, Fr. Borový 1929.

4 Ibid., p. 187–189.

journal *Česká mysl* between 1915 and 1917. The article bears the name *Fichte on the Problem of Freedom* (*Fichte o problému svobody*). For it is J. G. Fichte to whom Pelikán turns for support in his stand against fictionalism. The problem of freedom is of particular interest to him. I will now cite a section from the appendix to the aforementioned article published in 1915 in *Česká mysl* bearing the name *Fichte. The Centenary of his Death* (*Fichte. Stoleté výročí úmrtí*).

> "On January 27 of this year we celebrate the centenary of the death of one of the most modern and currently most relevant of Kantians, Johann Gottfried Fichte, who put forward a philosophy of a truly new kind and who, through a powerful synthetic force of spirit, solved a question most pressing for man, that of moral conviction – which he established as a foundation of science. He was the first to show that all analysis must be preceded by synthesis and that we must stand by its result with our whole personality if it is to be true, i.e. if we are to be convinced of its truthfulness. By this, he emphasised the importance of the individual and of personality for the originality of thinking, where every act of conscience is to be an act of true reinvention of morality, and thus also of thought – a true rebirth in which, freed from external influences, we stop merely reproducing the opinions of others and begin to think for ourselves."[5]

From these words, we can see that Fichte's work represented a cardinal influence on the formation of Pelikán's thought. Let us now focus on one specific sentence from the appendix:

> "He was the first to show that all analysis must be preceded by synthesis and that we must stand by its result with our whole personality if it is to be true, i.e. if we are to be convinced of its truthfulness."

For Pelikán, this means the first step in taking a stand against fictionalism – the recognition of the primacy of practical reason over theoretical reason. According to Pelikán, Kant merely hinted at this. True recognition comes later, with Fichte. However, Pelikán is not alone in acknowledging Fichte's edge over Kant. The recognition of the primacy of practical over theoretical reason is generally accepted as a crucial turning point in the history of German idealism. In his philosophy, Fichte emphasised and thoroughly

5 Pelikán, F., Fichte. The Centenary of His Death (Fichte. Stoleté výročí úmrtí). *Česká mysl*, 15, 1914, No. 1, p. 109–110.

developed Kant's idea of the primacy of practical reason, as Břetislav Horyna describes in his *History of the Early Romantic Period* (*Dějiny rané romantiky*):

> "In Kant, the primacy of practical over theoretical reason is more of a result of mathematical calculation where the 'practical' is added to the 'theoretical' and is completed by it; in Rheinhold, such primacy is already partly constitutive of the whole system; in Fichte, the primacy of practical reason is a fully constitutive part of his philosophy of the subject."[6]

In order for Fichte to perform such a recognition, he must also, according to Pelikán, reformulate one more concept, or rather faculty of the intellect – that of judgment. Pelikán's opinion is that Kant ends his project with his *Critique of Judgment* and Fichte follows up on it and brings it to a new level. I will now cite from Pelikán's article *Fichte on the Problem of Freedom*:

> "For he was not content with a mere analysis of man's psychological functions, he wished to understand why the general function of reason manifests itself only in those three aspects of reason, emotion, and will, and thus explain the total organisation of the human mind = Kant's 'Bewusstsein überhaupt'. He therefore assumed the purely teleological position of Kant's third *Critique* and sees the most important function of the human mind, its true nature, in reflection, in the ability to assume a stance, to voice one's judgment, one's opinion, to subjugate the whole of nature, inner and external, to one's judgment according to the absolute principle of purposefulness."[7]

Acknowledging the primacy of practical reason over theoretical is only the first step, however. That is merely the path away from the decadence of fictionalism. If we are to understand human personality, we must move further, according to Pelikán, to analysing the faculty of judgment. Kant managed to achieve one thing. In his *Critique of Judgment*, he successfully localised subjectivity, which was a formative moment for both Fichte and Pelikán. It is in the faculty of judgment that Kant discovers the reflective principle constantly reflecting upon all sensations. And it does that in such a way that it

6 Horyna, B., *The History of Early Romantic Period: Fichte – Schlegel – Novalis* (*Dějiny rané romantiky: Fichte – Schlegel – Novalis*). Praha, Vyšehrad 2005, p. 66.

7 Pelikán, F., Fichte on the Problem of Freedom II. Evolution of Fichte's philosophy (Fichte o problému svobody II. Vývoj Fichtovy filosofie). *Česká mysl*, 16, 1915, No. 1–2, p. 11. See also I. *Česká mysl*, 15, 1915, No. 4, 10. 3., p. (337ff).

expresses our relationship to the representation of the object from which the sensation comes. Judgment is, according to Kant, "the capacity to think the particular as contained under the universal".[8] But how can it achieve such a thing?

Kant claims that the faculty of judgment is actually of a dual nature. First, it is the determining judgment which is itself determined by the understanding, and which thus subsumes the particular according to the general laws of nature. Second, it is the reflective judgment which merely reflects the particular and is supposed to be subsumed by determining judgment. The faculty of judgment thus does not impose law on the external world, but only on itself. What becomes universal here is pleasure and displeasure, which is nothing else than "my relation to the object".

"Our relationship to the object" is what makes every sensation ultimately subjective. In other words, we do not process raw data in the synthetic unity, but rather information already filtered through the faculty of judgement. We always assume a stance towards every reality, and we cannot know reality otherwise. The faculty of judgment is thus something absolutely fundamental for the understanding of the human personality. Both Fichte and Pelikán realise that.

Fichte made the decision to attempt to bring Kant's thought to its conclusion and to locate the grounding of subjectivity. However revelatory Kant's localisation is, Fichte feels that it is far from finished. I believe that it is precisely for this effort of trying to discover where human personality stems from that Fichte became Pelikán's role model par excellence. Together they strive to figure out how the faculty of judgement fulfils its function. On what basis the relationship towards the subject is determined and how it differs from the faculty of knowledge or reason. I shall now cite from a section of the same article that appears on the following page.

> "Thus, there exists a function of this reflecting principle which is wholly different from the two others and which is dependent, as was already hinted above, upon the capacity to judge natural phenomena according to their purposefulness, in the capacity to remember, to ponder, to have insight (Einsicht) into one's own spiritual nature."[9]

Along with Fichte, Pelikán then calls this "an insight into the absolute content of knowledge". Both thinkers seek the absolute together and both find

8 Kant, I., *Critique of Judgement*. Introduction IV, 5:179. Transl. W. S. Pluhar. Indianapolis, Hackett Publishing 1987.

9 Pelikán, F., Fichte on the Problem of Freedom, p. 12.

it here. Absolute knowledge is the well from which the faculty of judgment draws during the process of subjectification of all sensations. It is a kind of "totality of inner knowledge", which is partly being incessantly forgotten and partly held metaphorically in regard. This totality serves the faculty of judgment as a tool for never-ending assessment of all phenomena. And Pelikán goes even further by proclaiming that this insight into the absolute content of knowledge is actually an insight into the totality of one's own "I". The "I" is thus meant to be the original criterion of the faculty of judgment.

One perceives this assessment to be integral, one does not reflect upon it, but rather experiences it and this experiencing is what Ferdinand Pelikán ultimately call an "affect". Hence the name *affective theory of personality*, since the analysis of this reflecting principle is the main part of this theory. Let us now return for a brief moment to the aforementioned three pillars of Pelikán's conception of personality. We now see the reasoning behind his first pillar: "The I is the evaluating principle of all mental states."

Part Three: Intuition, Freedom and Creativity

The word "affect" in the name of Pelikán's theory of personality is thus an expression of how man experiences the never-ending act of assessment from the inside. If the I is the faculty of judgement, then all reflection, and therefore also all judging is affectual since it is directly dependent on the affect. What is important about the nature of this act of judging is that it happens randomly to a certain degree. How so? Pelikán claims that it is because we simply reflect on whatever we want. In other words, the combination of factors leading our affectual reflection is so complex that the result is in many cases completely random.

Consider this example. While I am standing here, the primary thing that is affecting me are my organic needs, such as if I am feeling well or ill, if I have slept enough or am tired, if I am depressed or happy. Secondly, there are things that are exerting an influence on my speculative knowledge, such as that I know I am at a conference right now, what speaking at it means for me, and what I am talking about. Last but not least, there could be factual factors, such as if the room lighting was too bright and was bothering me, or if a man suddenly burst into the room with firearms in his hands, then I would primarily reflect on that. All this complicated, unpredictable tangle of factors causes a randomness that is inherent not exactly in the manner in which one reflects, but rather in what is reflected.

Pelikán claims that if we want to find the origin of the absolute starting point, if we want to discover the inception of free will, we must look for it precisely here, in the principle of reflection. Only in this way can something

original and authentic come into existence. Only in this way can a new way of thinking arise. How? Through intuition.

> "Pelikán considers the first and fundamental characteristic of the Slavic way of thinking to be a certain naivety, emotionality, naturalness, and intuitiveness of the Slavic spirit, and in intuition, which he understands along with Bergson as intellectual sympathy, he sees the main discovering and progressive tool of knowledge, but refuses to identify it with mysticism."[10]

From this citation taken from a book by Pelikán's contemporary, Josef Král, we can see that Pelikán's understanding of intuition is indeed very specific. Although we have worked mainly with Kant and Fichte so far, our author now turns to Bergson. However, let this not confuse us, since Pelikán's interest in Bergson was certainly great. It is thanks to Ferdinand Pelikán that we can read *Creative Evolution* in Czech.[11] Just like Bergson, Pelikán sees intuition as a faculty, as a kind of intellectual privilege of man, an enrichment of instinct and intellect without which man would not be man. For comparison, I add the following quote from Bergson's book:

> "But it is the very inwardness of life that *intuition* leads us to – by intuition I mean instinct that has become disinterested, self-conscious, capable of reflecting upon its object and of enlarging it indefinitely."[12]

Let us return to Pelikán, however. For him, intuition is the yearned-for source of the new and the authentic. He uses these words to designate a situation in which all external and internal motives of reflection in man are silenced and the reflecting principle reflects upon itself for a single moment. In such a situation, the I which is reflecting upon itself can act in one way only – a way that leads "somewhere else". In what way? In such a way that the I expresses its own originality through its act. It will act in such a manner that will completely distinguish it from everything which it is not. The will in this moment becomes a full defiance of the world! The I becomes a negative – not-I –, and thus creates a new I. The faculty of judgment is not at this moment determined by an external stimulus, because it determines itself. Every individuality is thus a negation of reality and a creation of a new re-

10 Král, J., *The Czechoslovak Philosophy: An Outline of Development by the Disciplines* (*Československá filosofie: nástin vývoje podle disciplín*). Praha, Melantrich 1937, p. 242.
11 Bergson, H., *Creative Evolution* (*Vývoj tvořivý*). Transl. F. Pelikán. Praha, Jan Laichter 1919.
12 Bergson, H., *Creative Evolution*. Transl. A. Mitchell. New York, Random House 1944, p. 194.

ality. The fact that each person is different than the other is precisely what constitutes our freedom, what constitutes the sheer possibility of originality of thinking and acting.

Let us go over what we have covered so far. An individual affectually reflects on his surroundings and bases his acts on the result of this reflection. The phenomena offering themselves to reflection are, however, many. There are so many that we actually omit the majority of them. In order to know which phenomena we are going to reflect on primarily, we let ourselves be carried away by either an internal motive (I am hungry, I feel ill, I have nothing to lecture about) or an external motive (bright light, an armed man). But the tangle of the motives grows ever more complex and so, after a certain time, one gets into a situation where one cannot simply subject oneself to a given motive, but one still has to act, nonetheless. And that moment is precisely when the reflecting principle grasps onto absolute knowledge, i.e. to the totality of all internal knowledge, i.e. to itself, thanks to which the individual ceases to act in a pre-determined way and starts acting intuitively. This totality of internal knowledge is, however, incessantly being forgotten, remembered, and reminded of, just like the totality of external knowledge (i.e. the knowledge of speculative reason). The subjective experience of this process is then what Pelikán calls an affect. That is why the second point of his theory of personality states that: "Feelings and affects are the basis of human personality".

Part Four: Back to the Affective Theory of Personality

Let us move on. One more point of the author's affective theory of personality remains: "Personality is understood dynamically since it is subjected to constant evolution". In the first cited extract of my paper (taken from the appendix to the 1915 issue of the journal *Česká mysl*), Ferdinand Pelikán claims the following:

> "By this, he [Fichte – A. V.] emphasised the importance of the individual and of personality for the originality of thinking where every act of conscience is a act of true reinvention of morality, and thus also thought – a true rebirth in which, freed from external influences, we stop merely reproducing the opinions of others and begin to think for ourselves."[13]

13 Pelikán, F., Fichte. The Centenary of His Death, p. 109–110.

In Pelikán's philosophy, every act of conscience is not only supposed to be "a true rebirth", but it indeed must be one! If the basis of personality is a changeable affect and an evaluating principle of all mental states, which is forced to constantly regulate our actions, then there is no other option than to understand personality as subject to constant evolution.

And if personality is subject to change, if it is dynamic, then it must fall under the same laws of evolution as the individual and his body, which are subject to change in the same way. In other words, it needs to learn, grow, flourish, but also wither and age. Every act of conscience, every affect stemming from it, every act, every newly acquired piece of knowledge is a rebirth of personality, a never-ending updating of the totality of inner knowledge.

We have thus covered all three basic pillars of Pelikán's *affective theory of personality*. In it, the I is the evaluating principle of all mental phenomena. Such an I is undergoing constant evolution on the basis of everything it has experienced so far and through affectual reflection it provides practical reason with, figuratively speaking, material for the formulation of practical judgements. This affectual reflection is constantly underway, since action, too, is constantly underway. It finds itself in the grip of randomness caused by the complexity of all of the motives for reflection. At the moment when it is completely engulfed by this randomness, the reflecting principle of the I turns to itself, i.e. to the totality of itself, i.e. to the totality of all inner knowledge, and precisely at this moment the individual acts intuitively, and therefore freely and originally. The will becomes a defiance of the world and the world becomes something completely anomalous to the I. In this mechanism of free volition, Pelikán sees the essence of human freedom. And not only of freedom, but also of all human creativity. Since to create something new means here to create something that is one's own, and therefore original. What is unique here is unique not only in contrast to what is, but also to what was, and, as far as one can predict, also to what will be. Creativity, freedom, and intuition – these all make up the three sides of the same imaginary triangle.

Conclusion

In the concluding part of this paper, I intend to devote some attention to the topic of the self-creation of personality. Since everything that makes up a personality is subject to change, then it follows that personality itself must also: just like all living matter it falls under the laws of organic development. According to Pelikán, this development can be called a "living evolution" (*vývoj živoucí*). This "livingness" is, however, rather a metaphor

for "liveliness" since it emphasises the wild dynamism that is characteristic for the development of personality. The aforementioned totality of all inner knowledge is not some kind of fixed library of ideas, but rather a changing process in which some things are constantly being forgotten, others remembered. Its every action is its own rebirth. Thus, through its own self-actualization, personality is also self-creating. However, its self-creation can never be completed. Throughout the whole course of its existence it is an incessantly unfinished book of a single human life. And because of its being incessantly unfinished, it always exerts its influence only unconsciously. Affect is thus the only way in which it makes itself accessible to us.

The reason why the self-creating moment of personality is so important for Pelikán is because it proves that man participates on the creation of his own character. Alongside that it also proves that will is not the "Schopenhauerian" ruthless and all-encompassing will to life, but rather that it is purely individual and stems from affect. According to Pelikán, Kant's antinomies, due to which man loses himself in the relativity of all purposes, merely prove that speculative reason does not need clear evidence for positing its theoretical judgments. Yet practical reason, which acts on the basis of the faculty of judgment, always draws from absolutely clear evidence. This evidence is provided by emotion and affect, since it is precisely through inner experience of affectual reflection that we obtain it. We are internally convinced of the truthfulness of a given valuation and that is why we make it true and real.

Ferdinand Pelikán made personality the central point of his philosophy. His main goal was to promote a holistic understanding of personality which would account even for the "lower passions of the soul", as he calls them, such as affect and emotion. I believe he strove to fulfil the meaning of the word "individuality" in the literal meaning "in dividere", i.e. as an indivisible whole.

And as we have seen, this whole is constantly changing and evolving. As I understand it, Pelikán sees the central problem of his thinking as one of a long-term cultivation of this whole. If we were to ask him what the word "individualism" means for him, he would most certainly answer that it is the cultivation of the process of the creation of personality in its wholeness. We must cultivate our affectivity as well and not simply acquire knowledge. This standpoint is where Pelikán's criticism of positivism stems from, I believe. The position which positivism assumes consists in a one-sided cultivation of knowledge and speculation. Emotion is meant to be side-tracked as something purely unscientific – and that is where Pelikán strongly objects.

If Pelikán's main goal is the cultivation of personality in all of its aspects, then it is safe to say that the freedom of cultivation is of the same importance for him. In other words, if I am to educate my personality in a proper

way, it is necessary for me to be able to choose which type of education will be the best for me. And that is exactly what the reign of democracy in philosophy is supposed to secure. Because at the core of this thought of Pelikán's is nothing else than the desire for a plurality of theoretical approaches.

That is why Pelikán leads an open discussion not only with philosophers, but also physicians, psychologists, mathematicians, and other scientists. He actively publishes his theses. And not only that, he himself participates in their publication. He founds the journal *Ruch filosofický* in 1921 together with Karel Vorovka; and that is not the only journal to which he contributed. Active publishing is precisely the type of activity in which Pelikán sees the main way of democratizing philosophical thinking and of making a stand against the resignation leading to fictionalism.

Pelikán's philosophy of personality is the author's own way of overcoming the fictionalism that results from the approach purported by I. Kant. By accepting Fichte's conception of the absolute I, Pelikán breaks free from the rejection of the thing-in-itself, since he starts to view the I as constantly transcending itself through collision with the not-I. What Fichte illustrates for Pelikán is that we are actually much closer to the object than we think, that we even exist in an important, constitutive relationship with it. That is, however, only the first step. The second step is to accept Bergson's conception of intuition and affect. Fichte showed Pelikán what the relationship between the subject and the object is, but that is not enough, Pelikán is mainly interested in the way in which this relationship manifests itself in subjective experience. And this is where Bergson and his theory of affect come into play, since Pelikán most certainly adopts the conception of affect from him. This combination of philosophical positions then makes up the main creed of Pelikán's philosophy of personality.

Pelikán's goal is thus to re-examine the concept of personality and to show that affectivity is an absolutely indispensable component of it, and that it needs to be cultivated just as purposefully as our process of acquiring knowledge. And since every personality requires a different way of cultivation, a plurality in the possibilities of cultivation is of utmost importance. A democratisation of philosophical thinking is necessary. I believe that Pelikán was united in this opinion with Karel Vorovka. All of my research until now leads me to the conclusion that the founding of *Ruch filosofický* is a clear causal effect of this type of philosophical thinking.

Individualism in Karel Vorovka's *Scepsis and Gnosis*

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Karel Vorovka (1879–1929), a Czech mathematician and philosopher, was one of the central figures of the young generation of Czechoslovak philosophers that arose in the 1920s, and a co-founder of the philosophical journal *Ruch filosofický*. His character as a thinker could be likened to a "philosophising mathematician" who initially only dealt with questions of exact science, but gradually transferred to metaphysics and religion. One of the main "driving forces" behind this intellectual transformation was apparently his opposition to the positivism of František Krejčí, a then-dominant philosophical paradigm and celebrity of Czechoslovak academia. Krejčí's positivism was a strictly scientific, materialistic philosophy, which, however, postulated the existence of certain transcendent aspects of reality, such as a "first cause", i.e. that to which religion ascribes the name "God", but denied man the capability of attaining knowledge of these aspects of reality (as opposed to, for instance, the positivisms of Ernst Haeckel or Wilhelm Ostwald, which deny transcendence altogether – Krejčí was not as "radical" in this sense as they were). Thus, religion is impossible in positivism, but Krejčí was adamant that his version of positivism sufficiently supplants religion, because it also had its own God, which was nothing other than the unknowable Transcendent. The assumption of a first cause is, according to Krejčí, a necessary requirement and, at the same time, a consequence of a truly scientific method – science, however, merely states the impossibility of attaining knowledge of this first cause. As Krejčí writes:

> "… science also has its own god, which, however, differs from God and other gods of various religions in that it is unknowable."[1]

This conclusion was unacceptable for Vorovka, though.

1 Krejčí, F., *Philosophy in the Last Pre-War Years* (*Filosofie posledních let před válkou*). Praha, Jan Laichter 1918, p. 59.

The agnostic position that Krejčí assumes in his stance means that God is a mere "assumption" whose existence is based on a certain degree of probability – it is a god who is "merely possible". If one retains this positivistic view, one has simply *no way* of finding out, whether this assumption is true or not. According to Vorovka, this type of god is but a caricature of the religious god, since it completely lacks any effect on human action. It is a mere logical assumption, which has no way of stimulating the heart of man, and thus fails to motivate moral action.[2] For the idea of God to be effective, it has to evoke emotions in man, it needs to have psychological power. And in order for it to have this power, one has to *believe* in it, which is in itself an *irrational* exercise of spirit – one has to overcome rational scepsis, uncertainty, and the pure probability of knowledge, and make an emotional act of faith, thus making an existential turn and identifying oneself with the idea of God once and for all. Positivism does not allow for this existential turn and, for this reason, Vorovka condemns it by saying that

> "there is a dangerous slope leading from positivism all the way to the depths of agnosticism and austerity".[3]

If one feels a growing metaphysical need, positivism merely acts like a cage. It is evident from his writings that Vorovka felt this need and perhaps it was his experience with the limitations of the scientific view of the world which forced him to write a remarkable work such as *Scepsis and Gnosis: A Philosophical Confession* (*Skepse a gnóse: Vyznání filosofické*).

In this very personal work, Vorovka attempts to find his own philosophical and religious conviction. He eventually finds it in a position that he describes as a theistic panpsychism, i.e. the world is the work of a divine Spirit, which is the embodiment of the highest values of Good, Truth, and Beauty, and which pervades and surrounds all reality including individual consciousnesses and the physical world.[4] The focus of this study, however, is not on Vorovka's theistic panpsychism, but rather his concept of conviction in itself. As the argumentation of the study shows, this concept is the greatest and most prominent individualistic aspect of Vorovka's thinking. It is precisely in the concept of conviction (which, in Vorovka's eyes, has all the characteristics of a 'living faith' – faith built in the core of one's individuality, not simply absorbed from the outside) that he finds a way of overcoming scepticism and determining his identity as a man, philosopher, and scientist once and

2 Vorovka, K., *Scepsis and Gnosis. A Philosophical Confession* (*Skepse a gnóse. Vyznání filosofické*). Praha, Dybbuk 2017, p. 26.
3 Ibid., p. 65.
4 Ibid., p. 215.

for all. The concept of 'conviction' therefore represents a path to individual, autonomous self-determination, and a way through which an individual can differentiate himself from the rest of the world and freely determine who he is for himself.

This concept assumes the utmost importance in Vorovka's thinking. Although he never explicitly states why, Vorovka is adamant in maintaining that there comes a day when every philosopher must overcome scepticism and firmly decide to believe in something – that a philosopher cannot remain a neutral, disinterested critic forever (as is the norm in today's world, for example). A philosopher must eventually make their 'act of conviction', their philosophical choice, as authentically as possible, meaning that the choice must be in line with who the philosopher is, which requires a certain degree of self-knowledge.

A second problem to be examined is the concept of *gnosis*, which comprises Vorovka's determination to continuously *attempt* to attain knowledge by both rational *and* irrational means (for example, by intuition, introspection, or empathising with others). Vorovka uses the concept of gnosis to explain *how* a philosopher can break through scepsis and start forming their own conviction. The goal of this study is to portray Karel Vorovka as a thoroughly individualistic thinker for whom the ancient mottos "know thyself!" and "think for thyself!" are imperatives of the highest importance, and also to point out some aspects in which Vorovka differs from 'radical individualism', as described by Masaryk in his *Humanistic Ideals* (*Ideály humanitní*).[5]

The Concept of Conviction

As we have already stated above, Vorovka understands conviction as *faith* or, more precisely, as a set of many separate *acts of faith*, through which a philosopher freely decides to identify himself with a given thought, and through which he begins to determine his own identity. Unlike faith, conviction is fundamentally active, exerting an influence on action, too.[6] Vorovka defines conviction as

> "…a lasting determination to actuate all of the consequences of that in which we believe, to seek out all reasons for and pillars of our faith, to identify one's faith with one's thought."[7]

5 E.g. "Stirner proclaims: No, I am god. The pantheistic god of Hegel is transformed by Stirner into an individualistic god. And the core and meaning of all radical individualism is: that I am god." Masaryk, T. G., *Humanistic Ideals* (*Ideály humanitní*). Praha, Domov 1919, p. 22.

6 Vorovka, K., *Scepsis and Gnosis. A Philosophical Confession*, p. 33.

7 Ibid., p. 33–34.

He cites Masaryk[8] as the most perfect example of a person who took great care to ensure that philosophy would always be a conviction and not merely "irresponsible academic theorising". He also cites Emanuel Rádl, who, in his view, realised this demand the most clearly, also publicly proclaiming this on many occasions.[9]

For Vorovka, conviction does not mean a mere acceptance of a given stance, but rather a faith in it, accompanied by a certain *enthusiasm*. As is the case with faith in God, conviction too is no rational enterprise, since it entails a very significant emotional, *irrational* element. For a person to be convinced of something, they must not be content to settle on a compromise or a simple acknowledgement of probability, which is where rational reflection always inevitably leads, according to Vorovka.[10] Vorovka illustrates the nature of conviction in the following manner:

> "Our faith, the strength of our conviction as a subjective mental state is something different from a calculated and constructed probability. The degree of convincedness is like the intensity of sensual perception: there is a threshold to it below which it is imperceptible. Just as a stimulus must attain a certain intensity for us to perceive it, so must probabilities rise sufficiently above zero for us to take them into account. Probability – that is a number pointing the way towards perfect objectivity; conviction – that is a subjective reaction, an action gushing from the individual personality and an ethical act in itself!"[11]

By categorising conviction as an *ethical act*, Vorovka shows that he understands it as an act of *self-determination*, which is (in an ideal case) autonomous and authentic, since Vorovka maintains that conviction must be a product of the philosopher's own personality and not merely adopted from external influences (for example, from political parties, churches, or through uncritical acceptance of science).[12] Vorovka applies this imperative not only to himself, but to every person with the ambition of calling themselves a philosopher, and possibly to every person in the world as well. As Ferdinand Pelikán, Vorovka's philosophical colleague and a fellow co-founder of *Ruch filosofický*,

8 For a study on Vorovka's relationship to Masaryk and his philosophical thinking see Pavlincová, H., Vorovka and Masaryk. In: Šmajs, J. (ed.), *The Bratislava Lectures* (*Bratislavské přednášky*). Brno, Masarykova univerzita 2002, p. 52–61.

9 Vorovka, K., *Scepsis and Gnosis. A Philosophical Confession*, p. 35.

10 Ibid., p. 30.

11 Ibid.

12 Ibid., p. 35.

writes in the posthumously published *Collection of Texts by Karel Vorovka* (*Vorovkův sborník*):[13]

> "Each person must first slowly and painfully fight their way towards their conviction, everyone is compelled to build their own 'truth' through a series of theoretical acts, and to make this truth inalienable, unlosable, and inseparable from their personality! This Fichtean intransigence, this individualistic demand for 'faithfulness towards oneself' never abandoned Vorovka; it was evident in his every action…"[14]

Vorovka observed with disappointment that, for the vast majority of people, conviction is not a result of individual intellectual labour, but rather something that "penetrates the soul from the outside until it permeates it and transforms it altogether, until the soul limits its own thinking just to the degree that it is still subordinated to thinking as a whole".[15] Vorovka is deeply disturbed by this widespread, casual resignation of intellectual autonomy, as he perceives the inner freedom of every person to be "the most precious estate not just of every person, but of every nation and humanity as a whole".[16] A philosopher must embody the ideal of this inner freedom – he or she must be the epitome of an independent thinker, a warrior against all intellectual orthodoxy, an individualist, for whom the imperative of "faithfulness towards oneself" is of the highest importance, and who, precisely because of that, cannot do otherwise than to incessantly try to find and to confess his or her authentic conviction. This, according to Vorovka, is what differentiates a philosopher from other people, who usually "belong to a fairly specific political or religious faith and are thus almost mechanically directed in all questions of both the ordinary and the eternal".[17]

On a side note, this point attracted criticism after the publication of *Scepsis and Gnosis* – criticism coming mainly from Emanuel Rádl,[18] who accused Vorovka of being apolitical (or more specifically of supporting "neither the Clericals, nor the Young Czechs, nor the Communists").[19] While it is true that

13 Pelikán, F., *Collection of Texts by Karel Vorovka. Dedicated to the Memory of a Czech Metaphysician* (*Vorovkův sborník. Na paměť českého metafyzika*). Praha, ČGU 1937.
14 Ibid., p. 1.
15 Vorovka, K., *Scepsis and Gnosis. A Philosophical Confession*, p. 35.
16 Vorovka, K., Science and Philosophy (Věda a filosofie). *Ruch filosofický*, 1, 1920, No. 1, p. 10.
17 Vorovka, K., *Scepsis and Gnosis. A Philosophical Confession*, p. 7.
18 Rádl, E., Czech Pre-War and Post-War Philosophy III. *Čas*, 31, 1921, No. 111, 13. 5., p. 4. Cf. *Of Our Contemporary Philosophy* (*O naší nynější filosofii*). Praha, Stanislav Minařík 1922, p. 14.
19 Ibid., p. 14.

Vorovka did not engage actively in contemporary politics, politics, but he did express his express his political views in *Scepsis and Gnosis* (although somewhat briefly). In answer to the question of what the ideal political organisation would be, he names a federation of nations based on a principle of cosmopolitan citizenship.[20] There is no future in the hegemony of one nation above another, according to Vorovka. Following the example of Masaryk, Vorovka maintains that a nation is a necessary step on humanity's path, however, it is a step that must eventually be overcome as a means of progressing towards the ideal of a panhuman brotherhood. Perhaps the most concrete formulation of Vorovka's political stance can be found in Pelikán's remark that Vorovka was "a determined *individualist* and *liberal* and remained them until the end of his life."[21] In *Scepsis and Gnosis*, Vorovka also denounces the Russian Revolution, socialism, bolshevism, and Marxist materialism.[22]

Nevertheless, Vorovka never became a member of any political party, since that would most likely mean submitting to a collective opinion, therefore discrediting his individual freedom of thought. This emphasis on the individual's intellectual autonomy and disdain for all "collective faiths" – a term which Vorovka applied both to churches and political parties alike (he himself called them "little political churches")[23] – is undoubtedly the most evident feature of Vorovka's individualism. In one passage of *Scepsis and Gnosis*, he even goes as far as to claim that:

> "Theoretically, it would be the most desirable that all faiths, except the faith in the brotherhood of all humanity, disappeared, and that all collective faiths were supplanted with individual ones."[24]

According to Vorovka, such collective faiths inherently pose the danger of large-scale conflicts, which can result in huge leaps, either forwards or backwards, for the whole of humanity. Their primary function is to increase society's stability, but they do it to an excessive degree, up to the point where society becomes too rigid and unable to undergo reform in a non-violent manner.[25] A society without collective faiths would be much more accessible

20 Vorovka, K., *Scepsis and Gnosis. A Philosophical Confession*, p. 182.
21 Pelikán, F., *Collection of Texts by Karel Vorovka. Dedicated to the Memory of a Czech Metaphysician*, p. 1.
22 Vorovka, K., *Scepsis and Gnosis. A Philosophical Confession*, p. 209.
23 Vorovka, K., For a New Czech Philosophy III (O novou českou filosofii III). *Národní listy* (*Vzdělávací příloha*), 61, 1921, No. 291, 23. 10., p. 1. Cf. Vorovka, K., *Polemos. The Disputes of the Czech Philosophy in 1919–1925* (*Polemos. Spory v české filosofii v letech 1919–1925*). Praha, Sfinx 1926, p. 19.
24 Vorovka, K., *Scepsis and Gnosis. A Philosophical Confession*, p. 36.
25 Ibid., p. 36.

to reform and also much more resistant to large-scale conflicts, since "a conflict of one whole against another would be impossible, as there would be only one whole – humanity".[26] The only "collective faith" that Vorovka is willing to support is the faith in the brotherhood of the whole humanity.

Let us now progress and focus on the second concept that is the focus of this study – the concept of *gnosis*. As the name of Vorovka's principal work already suggests, gnosis cannot be considered separately from its opposite, scepsis. We are thus going to have to take them into account together to show how they relate to the concepts of conviction and individualism.

Scepsis and Gnosis

As we have already stated, for Vorovka conviction means primarily an overcoming of scepsis. That does not mean, however, that Vorovka simply "denies" scepsis altogether. Scepsis, or philosophical doubt, he claims, has its proper place in certain types of philosophy, particularly in the scientifically oriented type, but it does not "suit" the type of philosophy that aims at the formation of conviction, since it actually works counter to this aim. In its most radical form, scepticism can become such a sophisticated analysis of our epistemological apparatus that it slides into agnosticism – the philosophical position that knowledge is impossible. Paradoxically enough, it is precisely in this position that Vorovka finds a way of overcoming scepsis for good. When radical scepsis is experienced in its most extreme form, it ultimately leads the philosopher to a choice between two epistemological extremes: either affirmation of agnosticism, which leads to boundless scepticism (this was the choice that, for example, Nietzsche had made, according to Vorovka), or to denial of agnosticism, which leads to an affirmation of gnosticism in the sense of a "heroic effort aimed at the expansion of the boundaries of knowledge beyond every limit, at free use of all resources that both experience and reason provide, and thus at the escalation of both empiricism and rationalism".[27] In *Scepsis and Gnosis*, Vorovka ultimately decides for gnosticism and, in doing so, makes his first philosophical choice through which he begins the formation of his own conviction.

Unlike scepsis, conviction is thus formed through singular acts of philosophical choices, or, more precisely, through "choices that surpass the certainties of daily or scientific experience".[28] Every attempt at such a choice is what Vorovka calls 'gnosis'. Gnosis is therefore precisely what brings about

26 Ibid.
27 Ibid., p. 57.
28 Ibid., p. 7.

the end of scepsis through an effort to attain faith.[29] In a certain sense, such faith constitutes a step into the unknown – for this reason, Vorovka often speaks about gnosis in romantic terms, comparing it to an "adventure", a "gamble", or a "conquistador's mission". Knowledge gained through gnosis can be a deep insight, otherwise unachievable by reason or sensory experience, or equally it could be a complete delusion. It is precisely this uncertain aspect of gnosis that requires the element of faith as a crutch. Gnosis is always a risky endeavour, although Vorovka firmly believes that the meaning of philosophy lies precisely here (or more correctly, the meaning of *gnostic* philosophy – the kind that Vorovka decides to endorse). In contrast to science, the goal of philosophy, according to Vorovka, is "to seek new heights of freedom for human thought through the exploration of its limits."[30] Gnosis is thus an expression of an epistemological stance where even the irrational capacities of the human mind, such as intuition, introspection or empathy are equally legitimate sources of knowledge as reason and sensory experience. The only difference is that it is "a gamble", as we mentioned above. Gnosis ultimately becomes Vorovka's method of gaining access to the metaphysical ideals of Truth, Beauty, and Moral Good, which allegedly help him in making intuitive decisions in matters of everyday life.

There is an important individualistic aspect to gnosis in Vorovka's understanding – it must always be preceded by *autognosis*, or an attempt at self-knowledge. For a philosopher to even be able to try and gain intuitive knowledge of the ideals of Moral Good, Truth, or Beauty, they must first be absolutely certain of their desire for this knowledge – meaning that they must, in a certain sense, already *know themself*. If they were in contradiction with themself, a risky endeavour such as gnosis would instantly fail, since the philosopher would quickly lose faith in themself. This "Emersonian *self-reliance*", as Vorovka calls it, lies at the heart of Vorovka's individualism. If the philosopher never attempts autognosis, they will never have enough faith in themself (or knowledge of themself) to believe in their own gnosis. And if they do not possess this faith, they will hardly ever find their own authentic conviction. Vorovka sees Jan Hus and Giordano Bruno as embodying the ideals of autognosis: unwavering trust in one's own authentic good will and knowledge.[31]

According to Vorovka, autognosis as a kind of knowledge stems from a combination of reason, experience, and mysticism. This attempt at unmediated

29 Ibid., p. 134.
30 Ibid., p. 57.
31 Ibid., p. 79.

knowledge of the self is described as a continuation of the divine act of creation, which "has not yet been exhausted" and still permeates all living and non-living matter and fuels their transmutations. By attempting autognosis, a person begins to participate in this incessantly creative metaphysical flux, since they cease to be determined by the external world and start to co-determine themselves and the world alike. Regardless of whether autognosis is correct or mistaken, it is always a *completion of every individual personality*, as Vorovka states.[32]

Vorovka's Individualism

As the last point of this article, we shall compare Vorovka's individualism with the two types of individualism that Masaryk describes in his *Humanistic Ideals* – i.e. with mild and radical individualism. Masaryk expresses his support for mild individualism which, in contrast to radical individualism, he considers to be truly philosophical and ethical, since it aims at "the creation of certain types, characters, and personalities in society through mutual effort and love."[33] I believe that here lies a possible common ground between Vorovka's and Masaryk's individualisms – Vorovka's emphasis on the formation of personal conviction seems to work precisely in favour of the creation of certain types, characters, and personalities in society. However, they differ on the manner in which these types are created. While Masaryk emphasises collective effort stemming out of love (an apparent sign of his Christian beliefs), Vorovka firmly espouses the "Emersonian *self-reliance*" mentioned above in the sense that the formation of conviction is a purely personal matter of each individual person which *must not* be influenced by any other person, since that would discredit the authenticity of such conviction. As we have already stated in the first section of this study, in order for a conviction to be truly authentic, it must be a product of the philosopher's soul – it must be created autonomously and not simply adopted from outside. Vorovka thus seems to be a somewhat more "radical" individualistic figure than Masaryk, but he nevertheless remains within the bounds of mild individualism and never crosses into radical individualism.

Radical individualism is a point of sharp criticism in Masaryk's *Humanistic Ideals*. This criticism had a profound influence on the reception of individualistic ideas in the interwar Czechoslovak academia and is possibly the main reason why virtually none of the philosophers gathered around the

32 Ibid.
33 Masaryk, T. G., *Humanistic Ideals*, p. 30–31.

Ruch journal ever openly associated themselves with individualism (from fear of seeming too radical), although most of them embraced individualistic ideas. The reason for this is that Masaryk identifies radical individualism with solipsism and extreme ethical egoism, naming Nietzsche and Stirner as their major proponents. Just like Masaryk, Vorovka criticises these two philosophers sharply – he calls them agnostics, who claim that the certainty of their will is the only real certainty, and that it inevitably leads them to solipsism and radical ethical egoism.[34] However, if Vorovka is *not* a radical individualist, then how precisely do his views differ from theirs?

Despite espousing a relatively radical subjectivism in his epistemology – "the self constitutes a metaphysical principle that all reality is derived from"[35] – Vorovka's subjectivism is, nevertheless, not solipsism because it relies on the existence of reality independent of the will of the subject: "Reality is an invariant of my will, it is all that does not depend on my will, but what, precisely by this definition and its practice, enters into a relationship or a relation with myself."[36] Furthermore, according to Vorovka, solipsism is negated by the very *first contact one has with another human being*, that is, in most cases, by the first contact with one's own parents. Such contact with another person instantly frees one from the immanent "game of subjective states" and leads one into transcendence, precisely to the moment at which one begins to *believe* that one's parents (meaning people other than oneself) also have their own mental life. Vorovka considers this moment "the beginning of metaphysics", since

> "Believing in spiritual realities, in superpersonal ideals of the one absolute truth, beauty, and moral good, is not in any way more metaphysical than believing in the mental life of one's own parents."[37]

This position enables Vorovka to evade ethical solipsism (egoism) and to affirm ethical realism:

> "If the tenets of immanent philosophy were true, then ethical solipsism would be true as well; every person would be their own judge, and if this judge were not capable of characterising their own act, their act would thus be excluded from any moral qualification. However, we have long since discarded the notion of immanence and acknowledged

34 Ibid., p. 40.
35 Vorovka, K., *Scepsis and Gnosis. A Philosophical Confession*, p. 120–121.
36 Ibid., p. 122.
37 Ibid., p. 123.

> the reality of other conscious beings apart from ourselves, and so here too we shall hold on to – so to speak – to ethical realism."[38]

This study can be summarised by the following statement: although Karel Vorovka is certainly a thoroughly individualistic thinker who puts a very strong emphasis on the utilisation of individual freedom of thought in the pursuit of autonomous self-determination through the formation of one's own personal conviction, he is, nevertheless, not a radical individualist, since he does not deny the existence of external reality and other consciousnesses. Vorovka is also, as described above, a gnostic who assumes the radical epistemological position that gives equal value to intuitive and rational knowledge. We have also shown that Vorovka's conception of gnosis plays a role not only in mystical attempts at knowing God, but also in practical attempts at attaining self-knowledge and empathic insights.

38 Ibid., p. 122. Cited according to the 2017 edition.

The Spiritual Essence of Man and the World in the Philosophy of Vladimír Hoppe*

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Vladimír Hoppe (1882–1931) liked to declare that his philosophy did not stem from theoretical study, but from spontaneous experiences of transcendence. He admitted to three such mystical experiences and it is arguable that it was his lifelong endeavour to understand them that stimulated his research and led him to formulate a specific figure of man as a transcendental[1] being:

> "Man, in fact, though he experiences one part of life through his physical organism, is by nature disposed to surpass his original *conditio humana* and enter a spiritual cosmos he himself created."[2]

The impact of Comte's positivism and the emphasis on empiricism still echo within Czechoslovak philosophy of the interwar period. Science understands man as a sort of a machine and reduces his soul to a cluster of nervous impulses and chemical reactions. Hoppe, together with other thinkers, belongs to the movement that vigorously refuses such reductionist thinking and offers alternative interpretations of both man and the world. Yet, Hoppe's radical idealism is rather outstanding even within the context of this movement.

The core of Hoppe's philosophy is built on the idea that all being is of one spiritual essence and that the materialistic interpretations of his contemporaries are but consequences of a general spiritual decline. In order to explain

* The text is part of the Czech Science Foundation grant project (GA ČR) *Individualism in the Czechoslovak Philosophy 1918–1948*, No. 19-14180S.

1 Hoppe always uses the term "transcendental", never distinguishing between "transcendent" and "transcendental" in the Kantian or Husserlian sense.

2 Hoppe, V., Spiritual Renewal as the Basis for the Renewal of the World (Duchovní obrození jako základ obnovení světa). *Naše doba*, 28, 1921, No. 6, p. 417–430, esp. p. 424.

his idea of the spiritual unity of man and the world, Hoppe must first demonstrate the insufficiency of the scientific and even the philosophical approach. His conclusion is that, in the end, man, the world and the spiritual are the subjects of religion and faith.

To Know and to Know Man

In one of his first books, *Nature and Science* (*Příroda a věda*),[3] with the subtitle *The Noetics of Natural Sciences* (*Noetika přírodních věd*; 1918), Hoppe carries out a detailed autopsy of the scientific approach, and especially of the image of man and the world that such an approach creates. Here he argues that abstraction and generalisation as the main methodological procedures of science are insufficient – they can never fully explain nature in all its diversity and variability. Though they promise to provide a true picture of reality, all they can offer, in fact, are but simplified schemes and mechanisms.[4] Moreover, the approach of exact science is being forced upon other disciplines, too.

This creates a serious problem, since philosophy and the human sciences are expected to proceed in the same manner as physics or chemistry – to formulate laws of human society and man's soul with mathematical exactitude, very much like astronomy.[5]

Although abstraction and generalisation cannot be avoided, and Hoppe does not reject them *per se*, it is important to note that such a noetic approach brings about two major complications. Firstly, because of their demands on the objectivity of knowledge, the exact natural sciences always necessarily retreat from the object of inquiry, at the same time ridding themselves of substance:

> "physics is a science about matter without matter, biology is a science about life without life, psychology is a science about soul without soul."[6]

The exceptionality of an object with all of its unigue details falls prey to abstraction whose goal is to produce a term, an image based on sensory perception that is related by reason to other objects and phenomena under scrutiny.

3 Hoppe, V., *Nature and Science* (*Příroda a věda*). Praha, Unie 1918.

4 Hoppe, V., What Philosophy Should Mean to Us (Čím nám má býti filosofie). *Naše doba*, 10, 1917, No. 24, p. 741–748.

5 "Astronomy, with its simplicity and harmony it introduced into the discord of phenomena, gave the sciences an archetype of ideal and simple science according to which not only all sciences but also philosophical systems should be built." Ibid., p. 44.

6 Hoppe, V., Spiritual Renewal as the Basis for the Renewal of the World, p. 424.

The so-called scientific discoveries are therefore but results of the subdivision of these terms to other terms, i.e. it is an unoriginal generation of quasi-knowledge, infinite chaining of relationism and relativism.

Does that then mean that breakthroughs in knowledge are impossible? Of course not – but their source must lie in intuition and imagination, not reason. According to Hoppe, only the two can unveil the qualities of an object, enabling us to see the substance of a phenomenon and, by extension, of the world and life as such. Through intuition and imagination, man's spirit can *tune in* (*vcítit se*) to the object of knowledge, and by doing so, perceive all its details at once, allowing the object to unveil itself on its own, and see it directly, unmediated, entirely, absolutely and in images. Thus, the object is not broken up into a countless number of relative aspects locked up in a rigid space-time grid. Images and insights that intuition and imagination provide are then systematised and processed by reason.[7]

Hoppe tries to demonstrate that intuition and fantasy are unjustly excluded from the noetic process, and for this reason, he distinguishes between two types of knowledge. *Mediated knowledge* is knowledge based on concepts and terms; it is "static" and corresponds to our understanding of scientific knowledge. Conversely, *intuitive, imaginatively immediate knowledge* constitutes direct penetration of reality through "living" images. This brings us to the second complication inherent to the positivist approach to knowledge. In Hoppe's view, an individual's personality, or individuality, is made up of many deep and interconnected layers, partially obscure and inaccessible by consciousness, which makes it impossible to be grasped entirely by traditional methods relying on reason. Most of what we do is motivated by irrational desires and incentives stemming from deep within that we ourselves do not understand. Not to mention that the spontaneous experiences we have of ourselves cannot be perceived through the senses, but only without their mediation!

The scientific approach construes a false image of man – instead of bringing him closer to his own essence, it merely deepens his self-alienation. Man's own sum and substance remain forever hidden to the analytical eye of science, because they are of a *spiritual* nature – they can only be accessed through intuition and imagination, by an immediately imaginative, intuitive kind of knowledge. This spiritual essence of man is the source of all qualities and ideals that form the fabric of the "sciences of the spirit" (*vědy duchové*). Not only do intuition and fantasy afford man access to his own essence, as well as to the world of ideals and qualities, but they also help him *actualise*

7 Hoppe, V., *An Introduction to Intuitive and Contemplative Philosophy* (*Úvod do intuitivní a kontemplativní filosofie*). Brno, Filosofická fakulta 1928, p. 20.

those ideals and qualities. This means that man must first, using intuition and contemplation, turn away from the mediated, relative and conditional part of himself to be able to concentrate his attention and inner sight, or inner "hearing", on the Divine Spark feeding his transcendental Self in order to draw from it deliberately.

And so, in addition to these two kinds of knowledge, Hoppe also distinguishes two world orders – the sensory world of quantities which is relative and conditional, and an unconditional, transcendental world of absolute qualities.[8] By analogy, man too is composed of two "personalities": a *sensory* personality that is accessible by empirical methods and *superior transcendental being* that encompasses feelings and superindividual, transcendental commitments. This transcendental being is the root of all subjectivity and individuality.

Spiritual Philosophy

Here we encounter one of the key motifs of Hoppe's thinking – the irrational. His critique of science that we have covered so far implies that the source of true knowledge, even the source of everything that exists, lies beyond reason, in fantasy and imagination, that is, in the sphere of the irrational.[9] A part of man's personality is subject to this sphere, too, and so man in his entirety is inaccessible by reason. Science's attempts to understand man postulate him as a sort of a complicated machine with plenty of components, but no spirit. No wonder, then, that the spirit is inaccessible by science and reason – they reject even the very possibility of its existence! The problem of man is thus of a *meta*-physical nature and falls within the competency of philosophy:

> "I see the task of philosophy precisely in this unique discovery of the great Self and in the turn towards the Self as the source of true, spiritual life. This turn towards the great spiritual Self is a turn towards aspects of eternity not only within ourselves, but also towards the same aspects of all historic development of human society."[10]

8 Evidently, Hoppe builds on the terms of German idealism (*mundus sensibilis*, *mundus intelligibilis*), somewhat transforming their original meaning.

9 "In this respect, intuition is the gateway to the irrational unconditional that neither life, nor cultural development of human society is possible without." Hoppe, V., *The Prerequisites of Spiritual Philosophy and Religious Faith* (*Předpoklady duchovní filosofie a náboženské víry*). Praha, Kruh přátel filosofie V. Hoppeho 1935, p. 2.

10 Hoppe, V., The Desiderata of the Czech Philosophy (Tužby a cíle české filosofie). *Národní listy* (*Vzdělávací příloha*), 63, 1923, No. 109, p. 9–10.

In other words, the task of philosophy is to research access to the transcendental Self that forms the centre of each and every individual. To know our true nature also means to unlock the door to knowledge as such. The "world of quantities" produced by science is nothing but a world of de-humanised qualities. True knowledge turns inside, is existentially interested and thus is the exact opposite of neutrality and objectivity (!) of science – it is *subjective* in the Kierkegaardian sense that will be explained in a moment.

Because man is a spiritual being, his individuality is based in his interiority. Spirit or soul (Hoppe does not distinguish between the two) is the true foundation of man and, consequently, of a healthy human society, too. The cultural niveau of a society, its values and ideals depend on the spiritual niveau of its individual members – not on technological and scientific progress. Put differently – the more spiritual the individual, the more spiritual the society and, vice versa, the more spiritual the society, the more spiritual its members. At this point we may bravely state that Hoppe understood the imperative "know thyself!" cosmically.

Science, Philosophy, Religion

Where exactly do science, philosophy and religion stand in this matter? In order to give the most precise answer possible, it should first be noted that, in addition to man's empirical and transcendental personality, Hoppe distinguishes between three layers with regards to consciousness – the subconscious, unconscious and conscious. The conscious layer is founded on and accessible by reason, with science being its product. The remaining two layers constitute the obscure substratum of the human soul which is the realm of both freedom and creativity, as well as irrational unconditionality. Philosophy and religion are dedicated to them. Both philosophy and religion reach out for infinity, both use intuition to do so, both postulate the soul as the key to the universe, and both strive to actualise pre-constructed ideals in both the individual and society. However, only religion builds on absolute qualities that are inaccessible by reason.

The deficiency of philosophy in comparison to religion lies in its inability to release the individual from his "conditional and natural existence to the free and spontaneous realm of the unconditional"[11] because it itself builds on a conditional basis of sensory knowledge. The rational basis of philosophy cannot take us any further than to antinomies and antitheses. In fact, our own consciousness is founded on contradictions and conflicts, functioning

11 Hoppe, V., *The Prerequisites of Spiritual Philosophy and Religious Faith*, p. 14–15.

in a dualistic manner. In Hoppe's view, when philosophy uses terms such as spirit or soul, they remain too abstract; redemption from the conditional to the unconditional is only possible in religion, as it deals with the deepest essence of an individual *in concreto*.

Science is concerned with sensory knowledge, while philosophy finds a solution in distiction between the sensory and the intelligible world (*mundus sensibilis* and *mundus intelligibilis* or *phenomenon* and *noumenon* – after all, Hoppe's division into the empirical and the transcendental personality is also precisely of this sort), but only religion is fully concerned with the sphere of interiority.[12]

Ultimately, it is the task of every single man to try and establish a relationship with transcendental being, to strive for a connection between the Transcendental Self and God. Here Hoppe refers to the First Epistole to the Corinthians 15:47 ("The first man was from the earth, a man of dust; the second man is from heaven.")[13] and the Gospel of John. The Tanscendental Self is the core of an empirical man. However, in order for him to even become aware of it, in Hoppe's eyes, he must experience a deep transformational moment that shakes the very core of his being, opening up this dimension to him. This powerful philosophical, religious or aesthetic experience brings man to the very limits of his personal being and causes his opinions, ideals, worldview to gradually change or even crumble completely. It even causes one's perception of time and space to change from the finite to the infinite and unlimited.[14] At the same time, it affords man a deep inner confidence in his own feelings and mainly in his own subjective values – it enables him to become an individuality that is indeed grounded in interiority.[15]

Hoppe adds that, upon revelation of this transcendental essence, man gains access to his innate ideas or ideals of how his relationships to other people and the world as such should be. The individual then grasps these ideals unmediated, and consciously strives to turn them into a new reality.

Identification with one's transcendental essence is a transformative act. Although transcendental experiences lead to the discovery of "a transcendental spiritual subject"[16] they alone are not enough for this newly found

12 "The truths that remain at an inaccessible distance to scientific knowledge, that philosophy does not find a satisfactory solution for, are reserved for religious inquiry: it is mainly the mystery of supernatural revelation; then the mystery of the redemption from the chains of man's natural existence and, finally, the problem of the determination of our soul." Ibid., p. 15.

13 New Revised Standard Version (NRSV).

14 Unfortunately, Hoppe does not deal with this temporal aspect and offers only a plain statement.

15 Hoppe, V., *The Prerequisites of Spiritual Philosophy and Religious Faith*, p. 44.

16 Ibid., p. 45.

subject to remain in the transcendental state, for the new transcendental reality to become his *everyday* reality. Moreover, as has been said above, philosophical contemplations are of no help here, because they are based on reason whilst here we are in the territory of the deepest interiority which is irrational.

Absolute unconditionality is irrational – no rational path leads there. The limits may be transcended solely through an absolutely subjective religious experience which then becomes the very substance of faith. At this point, Hoppe is greatly inspired by the philosophy of Søren Kierkegaard.[17]

The Spiritual Revival of the Individual

For Kierkegaard, the *desideratum* of all human endeavour is the deepening of interiority, intensification of one's subjectivity as interiority.[18] Briefly put, this intensification of the individual's spiritual essence is achieved by intensifying one's relation to transcendence and to God as the power that posited him. The emphasis lies on the term *individual* (*Individet* in Danish) as, ultimately, this relation cannot be mediated by anything or anybody else (with the exception of God himself, in whom this relation is posited). In other words, existential transformation is the result of individual's spiritual endeavour (with the assumption of God's grace).

For Kierkegaard, the apex of this spiritual endeavour is the moment of the individual's "absolute relation to the absolute" which is itself, however, paradoxical.

> "The paradox is that he [Abraham, T. B.], as the single individual, places himself in an absolute relation to the absolute."[19]

From the point of view of reason, it is impossible for a finite, conditional human being to have an *absolute* relation to the absolute – and if it is possible, than solely outside of reason. The paradox, specifically the paradox of faith that Kierkegaard has in mind, represents the very limit of reason, the limit

17 Hoppe fully accepts Kierkegaard's "Philosophy cannot and must not give faith, but it must understand itself and know what it offers and take nothing away, least of all trick men out of something by pretending that it is nothing." Kierkegaard, S., *Fear and Trembling*. In: Hong, H. V. – Hong, E. H. (eds.), Preliminary expectoration. *Kierkegaard's Writings VI, Vol. 6. Fear and Trembling/Repetition*. Princeton, Princeton University Press 1983, p. 33.

18 For a detailed analysis and interpretation of Kierkegaard's work within a Czechoslovak context, see Marek, J., *Kierkegaard. An Indirect Prophet of Existence* (*Kierkegaard. Nepřímý prorok existence*). Praha, Togga 2010.

19 Kierkegaard, S., *Fear and Trembling*, p. 62.

of the understandable, rational, and thus necessarily relative and founded in sensory experience. This limit is transcended by faith, "because faith begins precisely where thought stops."[20] Faith is the most subjective, innermost truth that pertains to that layer of the individual that can only be penetrated by religion. For Hoppe, faith thus determined by the moments of irrationality, absoluteness and transcendence constitutes the possibility to redeem oneself from conditionality by the power of the unconditional.

Thus, Hoppe formulates Kierkegaard's famous leap of faith as a leap from the objective to the subjective, from the conditional to the unconditional, from quantity to quality.[21] Up to this point it seems that Hoppe eagerly agrees with Kierkegaard's analyses. Yet, Kierkegaard would certainly be exasperated by Hoppe's conclusions. Hoppe takes things a step further and declares that man can and should merge with God – whereas Kierkegaard would never admit to this possibility. In this connection, which Hoppe describes using a metaphor of the fusion of the microcosmos and macrocosmos, not only is a direct relation of the individual to God established, but, what is more, the individual absolutely identifies himself with God and, by doing so, becomes a god-man.[22]

Man's spiritual development is completed in the figure of the god-man. On the one hand, the relation to his essence necessarily lifts him from the collectivity of society and allows him to emerge as a true individual. He is the subjectivity *par excellence*, absolutely surpassing all the "unawakened" people. On the other hand, this very individiduality is simultaneously surpassed in the figure of the god-man, as he is in a state of permanent union with the source of all life. It is this very union that gives him access to the knowledge of all creation, a spiritual wholeness encompassing all mankind and each individual human being. Thus, the nature of Hoppe's god-man is paradoxical.

Being a god-man, however, gives rise to new spiritual tasks. A god-man, fully endowed with spirit and in permanent communion with God, is supposed to help the rest of humanity to achieve the same spiritual niveau, to show others both the path and the destination.

> "Due to his purity from the slag of sense and self-transformation into the deepest spiritual elements – into a creative spiritual principle – a god-man shows the rest of humanity the path to a true, creative freedom, a path from fatal laws of matter that cannot be avoided, towards

20 Ibid., p. 53.

21 Hoppe, V., *The Prerequisites of Spiritual Philosophy and Religious Faith*, p. 46.

22 Hoppe finds support for his thoughts on god-manhood in the texts of V. Solovyov, the idea of the completion of history in the figure of god-man is based in Nikolai Berdyaev.

> a life-giving spiritual freedom and spontaneity. A god-man is thus not only the completion and goal of human history, but also an unrivalled example to all humanity, who will long for him as for a timeless model of their redeemer."[23]

The European Spiritual Crisis and the Spiritual Rebirth of Society

The spiritual rebirth of the individual at the same time brings about the spiritual revival of society from two points of view. The more the individual's spiritual niveau rises above the spiritual niveau of society, the stronger his bond to society becomes due to his spiritual mission – the mission is the conscious promotion of the spiritual development of society and all of its members. Hoppe's texts also imply a second aspect to this two-fold revival. If all people, regardless of the extent of their spiritual awakening, are of the same essence, then a spiritual development of one must inherently stregthen the whole structure. Put differently, the uplifting of one necessarily uplifts all. Yet again we encounter the dialectic relation of individuality and society with regard to spirit.

It would be a mistake to conclude that Hoppe's thoughts are but daydreams about the Kingdom of Heaven on Earth, deliberately turning away from the "real" world that is slowly recovering from the horrors of the First World War. On the contrary, Hoppe perceived the state of affairs with all its seriousness and weight, identifying the spiritual crisis that Europe found itself in. His ideas are no escapism, but are, in fact, his own proposal on how to overcome the crisis. If the collapse of society was caused by ignorance of spiritual values, a spiritual revival is the only way out – that is the point which all of Hoppe's texts lead to:

> "Therefore it will be necessary to change the spiritual structure of today's man from scratch, should the renewal of the world be successful."[24]

Such spiritual renewal is not possible without the re-education of new generations and without overall reform of society. Hoppe, much in the manner of Komenský,[25] calls for thorough education of all of society in spiritual matters

23 Hoppe, V., *An Introduction to Intuitive and Contemplative Philosophy*, p. 186.

24 Hoppe, V., Spiritual Renewal as the Basis for the Renewal of the World, p. 426.

25 The educational aspect of Hoppe's philosophy was strongly influenced by J. A. Comenius, whose teaching was widely spread at that time, see Floss, P., John Amos Comenius in the Czech Philosophy of 1930's (Jan Amos Komenský v české filosofii třicátých let našeho století). In: Gabriel, J. – Bretfeldová, H. (eds.), *The Czech Philosophy of 1930's (České filosofické myšlení ve třicátých letech našeho století)*. Brno, Univerzita Jana Evangelisty Purkyně 1989, p. 47–54.

listing the necessary steps – the publication of texts introducing the public to the spiritual sciences, libraries founded with the aim of spiritual enlightenment, and public education in the form of freely accessible lectures.[26]

Hoppe even suggests that those already aspiring to connect to their transcendental Self, this "spiritual elite", should found a university dedicated to the spiritual sciences and ways of achieving union with God. Apart from public lectures, this university would also publish an annual journal. One of the main tasks of this "Academy of Spiritual Life", as Hoppe calls it, would be to interpret the cardinal texts, principles and values of Christianity. As we have said above, what Hoppe has in mind here is not a sudden spiritual revolution, but a gradual transformation of society. The Academy would later be instrumental in forming a sort of spiritual brotherhood, the "League of Spiritual Peace". Ideally, the League would co-operate both spiritually and politically with the League of Nations (the "predecessor" of the UN). In the future, both leagues would ideally be capable of preventing the same bloodshed and destruction that humanity brought upon itself in the First World War.

The Individual as a Transcendental Being

Although Hoppe does not deal with the problem of individualism explicitly, it does emerge in his work in the form of the idea of a shared spiritual essence of man and the world. The goal of Hoppe's philosophical endeavour is to direct society back onto the path of spiritual life that it seems to have abandoned. He aspires to a rehabilitation of subjective experiences of transcendence in a material world led by strict positivism and the dictate of science.[27] In his view, the individual – although Hoppe rather prefers the terms "man", "person", "personality" – is not primarily a malign element disrupting the unity of the young Czechoslovak state. The essence of an in-dividual is indivisible from the essence of all life, it is the Transcendental Self that is the source of all qualities and values ("true", i.e. spiritual values). This Self can be mediated to man neither by science, nor philosophy, as these both depend on reason and sensory knowledge. Only religion is capable of transcending the limits of the conditional and disclose to man his essence, to liberate him to what he has always been – a god-man.

26 Hoppe, V., Spiritual Renewal as the Basis for the Renewal of the World, p. 505.

27 "Until now the spiritual experience and experiences were looked askance upon, rather unjustly, as these very experiences are the most certain and secure knowledge that man can attain in the field of morality. The same goes for religious experiences and the certainty these experiences can offer with regards to the noumenal sphere." Hoppe, V., *The Prerequisites of Spiritual Philosophy and Religious Faith*, p. 45.

If individuality is understood in the same way as Kierkegaard did in terms of subjectivity and interiority, then the god-man as the highest level of such individuality also represents the surpassing of individuality. According to Hoppe, each man is capable of achieving this state. He constantly emphasises that spiritually enlightened individuals have a responsibility to their neighbours in that they should serve as examples and use their experience and knowledge to help society towards an overall spiritual renewal – as has always occurred in the past, which Hoppe supports with reference to Jesus, Buddha, etc.

For Hoppe, the idea of god-man, as well as the establishment of the Academy and the League, are not merely theoretical contemplations, but very seriously meant proposals for an emendation of society. Let us remember that Hoppe himself had three transformative spiritual experiences and throughout his whole life practised his method of contemplation or meditation, taking a deep interest in spiritual texts and traditions of all cultures – he practised what he preached. Whatever our stance towards Hoppe's philosophy might be, we must admit that his radical idealism is, indeed, worthy of respect – Hoppe managed to maintain immense faith in the divinity of mankind, despite having witnessed with his own eyes the most horrific slaughter the world had ever seen. After Hoppe's death, the legacy of his lifelong work in philosophy was preserved by his closest colleagues and friends that founded the *Circle of Friends of Vladimír Hoppe* (*Kruh přátel Vladimíra Hoppeho*) in 1933. The *Circle* was instrumental in the publication and translation of number of Hoppe's texts.

Individualism Rules over Both Education and the Cosmos

(A Commentary to a Primary Source – Tomáš Trnka: The Principle of the Individuality of the World)*

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Each one of the thinkers that have been mentioned so far had in one way or another worked as a pedagogue. After all, it was a custom in the interwar years for full professors to teach at gymnasiums (this is where the addressing "Mr. Professor" common in today's gymnasiums comes from). In our case, this applies mainly to František Mareš, but Ferdinand Pelikán and Karel Vorovka had made their living by teaching in certain periods of their lives, too. That is why it can come as a surprise that none of them thought of projecting their experience with teaching into their own area of expertise and of approaching education from a philosophical perspective. This general tendency does not apply to Tomáš Trnka, however, since he devoted almost his entire life to educating the public. Moreover, he was also an idiosyncratic philosopher and as such, he formulated the grounding of what would later be called philosophy of education.

In his autobiography, Trnka speaks of two plates of a metaphorical scale, where

> "on one plate there is the philosophical and philosophical-pedagogical work, and on the other, there is the motivational and organisational work in public education, both of which must complement each other, balance each other out, and thus create a unified whole."[1]

Retrospectively speaking, one cannot elude the impression that the scales of Trnka's life have, in the end, shifted in favour of philosophy and theoretical

* The text is part of the Czech Science Foundation grant project (GA ČR) *Individualism in the Czechoslovak Philosophy 1918–1948*, No. 19-14180S.

1 Trnka, T., Autobiography (Životopis). *Filosofický časopis*, 17, 1969, No. 4, p. 567.

work. Nevertheless, in order to fully appreciate the complexity of Trnka's personality, we must not forget his remarkable achievements in the domain of public education.

He entered the Union for Public Education (*Svaz osvětový*) in January 1917 and remained loyal to it until September 1947. As his first contribution to the Union's cause, he organized a large fundraising aimed mainly at the establishment of a public university and financial support of local public libraries, the success of which earned him the full trust of the Union's head executives. After that, he devoted himself to supporting the expansion of librarian and cinematographic activities. This eventually led to the passing of the librarian law after the War, and Trnka was appointed by the Ministry of education to establish a library expedition. During the same time, Trnka advocated for a reform of film distribution, so that representatives of art, cultural, and public educational corporations could participate in it as well, and also started a rental service of cultural and educational films in the Union and encourages their development. Around the same time, he also initiated the filming of the experimental film *A Storm over the Tatras* (*Bouře nad Tatrami*), a visual adaptation of Vítězslav Novák's symphonic poem *In the Tatras* (*V Tatrách*). The film gained significant international attention and was even awarded a prize – a cup from the Venice Biennale. Later, Trnka established regular reviewing of all domestic and foreign films screened in Czechoslovakia and designated a special insert in the magazine *Česká osvěta* (*Czech Public Education*) devoted exclusively to these reviews.

Apart from his abundant practical activity, Trnka put perhaps even more effort into his theoretical work. His initial premise was as follows:

> "It was clear to me that Czech public education, if it is to continue evolving, must be given a firm philosophical and scientific-theoretical foundation, which it must find in connection to philosophy of culture, to pedagogy, psychology, and sociology."[2]

In this short commentary, we shall focus mainly on Trnka's work in philosophy of culture, since he was undoubtedly one of the greatest thinkers of the time in that domain.

The core idea of his philosophy of culture is quite peculiar. Against all assumptions, Trnka considers culture as something that is dead. Although it may sound as a paradox, his thesis is deeply connected to a question he was firmly resolved to answer. This question is also present in the title of

2 Ibid.

his philosophical trilogy *Searching for the Secret of Life* (*Hledám tajemství života*). Trnka can be considered one of the first Czechoslovak philosophers who approached the problem of death with all seriousness. To him, death was not simply the opposite of life; life itself always existed on the background of death and vice versa. When Trnka ponders about the meaning of life, he always ponders about the problem of death as well. He understands death as a completion of an individual life, a sort of a summary, but also as a mirror. Even though life completed by death is mute, it is also telling, it bears with it a certain message, which can be deciphered and shared only by the living. Trnka thus presents a vision of resurrecting a life completed by death in a generational sense. If life is to have any meaning, it must end with death; endless life could never have any meaning, according to Trnka, because it would essentially pour out into vast space and would never attain a solid shape. Death is thus the first precondition for a meaning of life. The final judgment on a life completed by death is, however, passed only in the moment when someone resurrects it by living according to the values which were established in that life. In this continuation, death is valuated by life and it is in this valuation where Trnka sees the highest possible form of justice.

In death, life is just towards itself, since it enables its own continuation through its own valuation of itself. In the book *Man and His Work* (*Člověk a jeho dílo*), Trnka formulates his thesis in the following manner:

> "And above the surface of the Earth where the groups of man live and work, loosely of more tightly bound, reigns the Justice of life, an eternal silence of dying and new arriving. Man comes, stops at the Earth, and just as he spots a glimpse of its horizons and lifts his eyes up towards the skies, he departs. Only his work and his death and his offspring stand face to face. […] Each one of these whole and unique units of the human species, taken by itself, emerges upon the surface of this world to give value to its life by living it all the way until death, and to give it a unique expression in their cultural work."[3]

This is the blueprint of Trnka's analysis of the meaning of culture. For him, culture is everything man-made, and because of that the majority of culture is comprised of something past. At the same time, cultural goods, values, and strategies are the result of the work of individuals. Only when one's work has its continuators does it attain meaning, in which the greatness of its creator is appreciated. If one's work is forgotten, it loses its meaning and goes

3 Trnka, T., Man and His Work, a Philosophy of Culture (*Člověk a jeho dílo, filosofie kultury*). Praha, O. Štorch-Marien 1926, p. 179–180.

to vain. At this point, we must note that one's life work has two poles – a living and a dead one. For Trnka, dead work is everything that the individual has imprinted into matter and moulded it by doing so. By living work Trnka means one's offspring. Both remain in existence after the creator's death and, generally speaking, the creator's life attains meaning when a synthesis of both of these poles of his life work occurs – that is, if his children follow up on their ancestor's creation. It is in such synthetic ancestry that Trnka imagines the durability of culture.

At this point, we must stop for a while at the question of how Trnka interprets the notion of the individual.[4] In accordance with his philosophy of culture and meaning of life, he refuses to understand the individual in a singularist manner, in which every individual unit "stands by itself", so to speak. In order for a life of an individual to have meaning, an evaluation of its justness must take place, but this evaluation can only be done by someone else. No individual, be it human or any other, can give meaning to themselves on their own. However, man, according to Trnka, differs from plants and animals in that he is permanently subjected to an evaluation of justness, since he is in the process of creating a life work to which other people can relate themselves. If this relationship is established, the meaning of the individual, who has offered themself through their work to this relationship, is thus sanctified. For Trnka, this settlement of justice is constantly occurring in the whole cosmos. Man has, nevertheless, the privilege of being able to assume a stance towards it. The process of making oneself capable of continuing the work of human culture is, for Trnka – education.

In order for us to have a better view of what education can and must offer, Trnka differentiates – in accordance with contemporary teachings – certain types and characters of people. Each person has a particular talent through which they differ from others. Once again, death plays an important role in this differentiation, since a typical or characteristic trait can only be highlighted when the rest of the features is deadened. It is life, however, which assumes control of the structure of the potential deadening – here, life means the development of one's own type or character. Of course, many people can miss their true calling in this situation. That is why it is precisely here where Trnka finds the correct definition of untruth. In contrast, truth, for him, is the concord of talent and life work. Education is then supposed to help find the intersection of both. However, it is, as we see, a life-long endeavour.

Its success or failure can only be evaluated by death, which for Trnka means: evaluated by the next generation which finds a model of its own life

4 A closer look at this problem is offered in the below-mentioned excerpt.

in the previous life finished by death. A just assessment of an individual's life comes from the future, which the individual alone can only offer their work to. The more differentiated and more specific one's character is, the more meaningful his life is.

Hopefully, this short commentary will help you, the reader, in understanding the excerpt included below. It is taken from the book *Man and World* (*Člověk a svět*).

The Principle of the Individuality of the World

Tomáš Trnka

Organic nature appears to the common man at first sight as a great summary of individual beings living independently from one another, living and experiencing their own lives only. From here stems the popular individualist view that humanity is composed of individual people. This is not, however, an individualist view, but in fact a *singularist* one: it separates and leaves alone every single person and animal and treats them as single units; and then it arrives at the whole of nature by adding up all these units. From this straightforward, simple-minded view stem also the principles of equal rights for all, the Christian straightforward teaching about brotherhood and sisterhood. Even some social reformers base their programmes on this singularist conception of human society. Finally, even philosophers dwell shallowly on this unit-counting view, which attains a dangerous form if it is presented, on the one hand, as a noetic-subjectivist consequence (as in Berkeley, Hume, solipsism), or, on the other hand, as an aristocratic, individualistic consequence in the ethical sense, purporting absolute wilfulness of the individual and extrication from all moral responsibility (as in, for example, Max Stirner).

Theory of knowledge also attains a wholly similar form, on the one side, in the doctrine of individual knowledge, corrected by other people's knowledge. Truth, then, is the agreement of all, a collective vote. On the other side, there is a belief in the individual's absolute intuition.

In short, this singularist view serves as an important foundation for various types of thought. If it is then used as an uncritical foundation for seri-

* *Trnka, T, Man and World* (*Člověk a svět*), Praha: Aventinum, 1929, p. 57–65.

ous cultural, social and national economic thinking, it becomes dangerous due to its consequences, either to the benefit of herd-like unit-counting, or demagogic and mystic appropriation of rights and faith in oneself, i.e. in the individual (egotism).

In his book *Was ist Individualismus* (1913), G. E. Burckhardt differentiates several types of individualism, according to the domain of thought in which the thesis about the individual human being is applied: the individual – a unit in the state regime; the individual in civic life; the individual – the artist's being; the individual – the subject in psychology; the individual in biology (the biological problem of individuality); the individual in noetics (personalism); the individual in history (Carlyle). But we could go on to extend this list with even more domains of human thought.

What is interesting is the far-reaching, but completely distorted meaning that language as a means of communication attains in the service of this singularistic individualism. And even in general, this view, that lacks any organic mastic with which to paste together singular individuals into a whole of humanity and nature, distorts the many, many expressions and elemental capabilities or functions of the human into artificial, mediating bridges between isolated individuals. Creative projects that are brimming with life are thus turned into schemata, into straps by which people bind themselves to one another. State laws, legal norms and so on and so forth become templates for binding, instead of expressions of a living spirit. Or, conversely, they become a mystical subjectivist illusion (an analogy to intuition): the individual withdrawing into himself, into his mind.

These completely one-sided biases or even dangers of singularistic individualism have given rise to two opposing worldviews: *energetic materialism* and *spiritualistic vitalism*. *Singularistic individualism* is, in fact, a naïve *pluralism*: it is a faith in a certain number of independent individuals and objects existing in the world. In contrast to that, the two opposing views represent a faith in a *unity of the world*, in a single foundation of the world: *monism*.

Both these worldviews seek the underlying reality behind individuals and objects, they seek the tape which forms and binds together the whole world. Energetic materialism considers matter and energy to be this tape. Everything in the world is conjoined into an indivisible whole, into a sea of creative matter. Although matter is of an atomistic-quantitative composition, it nevertheless houses a creative principle symbolized either by the laws of the mechanistic, deterministic flow of events and changes of matter, or by the cohesive force that holds particles together, so that none of the total sum of energy is lost, or it is symbolized by the creative movement with which matter is endowed. No materialism is thoroughly pluralistic-atomistic and quantitative. From the viewpoint of energetic materialism, all events in the world happen

according to the Spencerian principle of composition and decomposition. All individual beings and objects in the world are merely space-time constructs that have come into existence, that endure, and that will eventually decompose. The whole world is nothing else than this constant change, the constant creation of new and new forms. Perhaps there is a certain development and sense in this constant flow of events. But this development and sense is determined only to the sense of the existence of energy and matter. This energetic materialism culminates in the doctrine of the cosmic flow of events, of emergence and disappearance of cosmic worlds, and of stellar constellations.

The second monistic worldview is *spiritualistic vitalism*. It emerged from the dissatisfaction caused by the materialistic implication that human lives could potentially be nothing more than changes in matter, utilization of material energy, and that the highest moral principle could be simply to use energy as best and most economically as possible. Vitalism believes in creative spiritual life, in a cosmic spirit which manifests itself most evidently in the creative flow of life which maternally, parentally binds the entire organic world into one great family, and which also creates matter – its own opposite, as nourishment for its creation. Humanity stands at the top of this family of the organic world and the absolute spirit hidden within it creates as its best expression love and maternity on the one hand, and cultural property on the other. Life is a current which differentiates itself into individualities. Individual beings are waves on the surface of this current. According to this ancient view, there are, in fact, no individuals, no singular independent beings, not even independent human beings. The creative current of life as a whole is carried along by the desire to create an independent individual human being, which would be the fully rounded, enclosed, perfect, and finished image of God. It, however, manages to create only a tendency, a swirling whirl, a rising wave: thus, the individual beings emerge as mortal; only the current of life as a whole is immortal.

Both these views are postulates, theses; they are unprovable. And I would like to state that they are incorrect, as well. Incorrect, because both, as opposing views that emerged from the same reaction and from the same cause, disprove each other. One cannot explain life from matter, the other cannot explain matter from life, or spirit. And they both dwell upon the monistic idol, the unity of the world, and offer no explanation of its relationship to individualities, i.e. why and how that unity splits up and differentiates itself into individualities.

If we contemplate both of these worldviews, we see that energetic materialism tends to look for the solution to the riddle of the world not in nature as a whole, but rather in the atom, the electron, and such (dynamical-atomistic monism). Conversely, vitalism tends to *seek the solution in the indivisibility of*

the world as a whole, i.e. in the current of life as a whole. Both views, being two different reactions to singularistic individualism, thus find themselves on the opposite side of this view which caused them to appear and fail to apprehend the very foundation of individuality. And both these tendencies, the macroscopic and the microscopic, are incorrect since they do not, in fact, understand the substance of the world.

Let us set aside the world of the infinitely small, and the world of the infinitely large, and let us consider, for example, the lives of individual people and of humanity in the context of the organic realm. If we take individual beings as our point of departure, we must ask *what the connection between them is*, how they make up a whole. And so, we observe the bonding between man and woman, the creation of family, lineage, tribe, nation, race, humanity. It seems to us almost too evident that, *starting with the family, the progressively larger human wholes are not merely random conglomerations of individuals. It is similarly so with humanity as a species, in contrast to all other organic species.* Natural science speaks here of *evolution* and *differentiation*. No matter whether life on Earth emerged in a single place, or in several places at once, a typical characteristic of life from the very beginning was what we call *creative individual differentiation*. *Individual differentiation is a typical characteristic of life in the sense that life is delimited by birth and death. The thesis of eternal life is a fiction. There is no eternal life. Life is life only in the sense that it is born and that it dies.* If we consider the whole sum of life on Earth and we believe that somewhere else in the cosmos there also was, is, and will be life, it means that life on every dead planet, on every earth, dies just as naturally as it emerges from it. I believe it is indisputable that *eternal undifferentiated life does not exist anywhere*, and that, on the contrary, life is life only insofar *as it differentiates itself individually, and that this differentiation is enabled by being born and dying. The whole world of life is permeated, blessed by the principle of individuality.* Let us disregard history, the evolution of the organic world, and consider how not only individual beings, but all species and genera, as they have lived or presently live their unique individual lives, have emerged, continue to emerge, and are going to be emerging in the future, and, at the same time, how they have died, are dying, and are going to continue dying in the future. Living and dying permeates, blesses, gives value to all life: and living and dying – that is the principle of creative individual differentiation. Everything in the world is created individually. Only naïve singularistic individualism is so narrow-minded in its assumption that individuals are just singular beings. If this was the case, the world would break down into singular beings and objects and nothing could ever glue it back together, not even the miraculous vitalistic life force, not even the miraculous cohesive force of matter. Life is life in that it differentiates itself individually. And there lies

the root of the paradoxical mystery of reality; that it is not a simple reality, a being, a duration; nor is it of a static or dynamic nature.

The common notion is that it is life which creates itself individually, but that this principle does not apply to the *inorganic* world. I would like to correct this notion, too. Let us not speak anymore of individuality then and let us speak instead of *creative synthetic differentiation. Everything in the world and in the cosmos differentiates itself creatively and synthetically*, it attains form by developing boundaries, by delineating itself, by fulfilling itself through emergence and death. From this point of view, *the dualism of matter and life disappears and re-emerges only as differentiation.* Even planets in the cosmos then re-emerge as synthetic wholes, the basis of which is such that it differentiates itself into matter and life. We therefore cannot speak of eternal life or abiogenesis.

The essence of the world is thus created according to the principle of self-creation, but more importantly, the essence is ethical in nature, it appears – stated in anthropomorphic terms – as justice towards oneself. *God appears to me not as the director of the world, a ruler and master, but rather as a judge of himself, as a self-revaluating principle: that is how his creative synthetic differentiation of the world emerges, a differentiation which is, however, not a purpose for itself, but which differentiates, revaluates itself in its search for expression, or form, into which it etches, renders its existential meaning. From the human point of view, the peak of this synthetic differentiation is achieved in the individual differentiation of humanity: humanity creates self-differentiating individual wholes, which seek and find the meaning of their existence in their life and cultural works.*

Nowhere in the world, not even in the cosmos, is there a non-differentiated reservoir of substance, of life. Everything is formed in creative synthetic differentiation.

If we limit our view only to the organic kingdom on our Earth, overlooking its history, we must acknowledge this fact. Everything differentiates *itself* individually; it lives, experiences, forms an expression and a meaning to its life, and dies. There is no eternal life and no eternal undifferentiated matter. *Thus, the opposition between monism, pantheism, and pluralism disappears.* Everything is differentiated and *everything is absolute, not in its existence, but in its self-valuating, self-discovering, in projecting the meaning of its existence into its life work.* Since its inception, humanity has been this individual differentiating whole in its relation to other organic individual wholes or species, and will continue to be so until its extinction, all the while finding and embodying the meaning of its life in its human work. Analogically, every human whole also differentiates itself, delimits its life according to this principle of individuality: races, racial wholes, national wholes, the na-

tion, the tribe, the lineage, the family, and each individual, too. All life attains form in accordance with the principle of individualising differentiation.

I would like to present and show you now the whole world as organised into such individual or synthetic differentiation. But that is impossible, or at least immensely difficult. I shall say at least that it would be a mistake to think that there is more individuality in humanity as a whole than in a single person, and vice versa; it would also be mistake to speak of parts and a whole.

Individuality is the uniqueness of life; uniqueness and, at the same time, indivisibility, wholeness, oneness. We must not, however, understand uniqueness and oneness as insularity.

The old monadism that aimed at capturing the world in dynamical terms is incorrect in the same respect in which spiritualistic vitalism is incorrect: in that it projects features of the absolute into *small* individuals, that it depicts the microcosm as an *image* of the macrocosm, that it paints the human as the image of God, that it postulates individualities as reflections of the absolute. A more correct path could possibly be trodden by dynamical atomism which states that the constellation of atoms is a small version of the solar system, of the cosmic system. Although Monadism may be trying to get a correct understanding of the world in dynamical terms, nevertheless, it understands the world only from the outside. Let us, in contrast, try to understand the whole world from the inside. If the subject of my inquiry is an individual, I must understand him from the inside as an absolute value of individual life and his relationship to the world is a relationship of upward growth. If the subject of my inquiry is the whole humanity and its relationship to the individual, I am assuming the perspective of the heart of life of humanity and this relationship is a relationship of inward growth.

The principle of the individuality of the world is, in short, synthetic differentiation, *self-regulation, self-demarcation into boundaries of the forms of one's own life*, it is, therefore, growth, living, and dying from the inside. Individuality, synthetic differentiation is thus, on the one hand, a kind of enclosure into the confines of form, it is a process of becoming independent, and, on the other hand, a process of experiencing of one's own unique life, solely one's own. Here already you can see the ethical, supra-ethical character of all natural events: unique living at the cost of regulation and dying. We, therefore, cannot speak of any kind of absolute or any relativeness in the world.

Everything in the world is individually, synthetically differentially formed: everything grows from the inside and that precisely is living and dying, duration and cessation of existence. To understand the world means to understand this principle of individuality. *This principle of individuality as yet says nothing about the essence and meaning of the world. It is, however, a path leading us to this meaning, bringing us closer to it.*

Criticism of Individualism in *German Will to Power* by Svätopluk Štúr*

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In his book *The German Will to Power* (*Nemecká vôľa k moci*), published in 1967, Svätopluk Štúr (1901–1981), one of the core representatives of Slovak academic philosophy of the 20th century, blamed German naturalism for the formation of Nazi ideology and for the horrors of the Second World War, which resulted directly from this twisted ideology. The goal of this study is to examine the role that Štúr ascribes to individualism in his criticism of naturalism as the main ideological source of Nazism.

The book *The German Will to Power*, one of the best-known texts by Štúr, is part of his "war trilogy", a series of three books written during the greatest worldwide conflict in human history. "While the remaining two parts (*Rozprava o živote*, 1946, and *Zmysel slovenského obrodenia*, 1948) are published shortly after the war, The German Will to Power which was originally written first under a different title – *German Perversion of All Values* (*Nemecké zvrátenie všetkých hodnôt*) – was published last with a great delay, not until 1967. There are two reasons behind this delay – because of his opinions, Štúr was not allowed to publish during the war and, as he mentions in the prologue of the book, the original manuscript together with all the copies were lost when Štúr crossed the front. When his notes to the second and the third chapter of the book were found more than twenty years later, Štúr decided to write the book anew and publish it.[1]

Since the book is essentially a reaction to specific historical events, a question quickly emerges: what is the purpose of its publication so many years

* The text is part of the Czech Science Foundation grant project (GA ČR) *Individualism in the Czechoslovak Philosophy 1918–1948*, No. 19-14180S.

1 See Štúr, S., *The German Will to Power. Thought Bases* (*Nemecká vôľa k moci. Myšlienkové základy*). Bratislava, Obzor 1967, p. 7.

after these tragic events? The author answers this question in the prologue, proclaiming the book is still a very topical text which is why it makes sense to publish it even after all these years.[2] The book is fundamentally a philosophical coming to terms with Nazi ideology. Unlike in most post-war studies, the focus of Štúr's text is not on the analysis of historical, political, economic or social causes behind the Second World War, but on the uncovering of the thought bases and philosophical sources of this ideology that eventually led to expansionist and genocidal madness. As Štúr attempts to show, the problem of the influence and responsibility of German philosophy has not yet been sufficiently and systematically analysed.[3] Therefore, the book can be considered an indictment of German philosophy of the 19th century and the first half of the 20th century. Already in the prologue, Štúr openly reveals the decisive role that German philosophical naturalism played in the emergence of Nazi ideology:

> "In it [the book – M. P.], I showed the far-reaching share of the blame that German philosophy has for the bloody events of our century, and that even the ideology of Nazism was nothing compared to what the naturalistic movement within German ideology had uttered long before. The Nazis merely implemented it with the most perverted form of brutality."[4]

But before we turn to particular examples from the history of German philosophy that are the target of Štúr's sharp criticism, we must first take into account the specific nature of Štúr's understanding of history and society. Štúr's philosophy of history is idealistic, because it builds on the premise that material conditions, i.e. economic, social and geographic conditions, are not a decisive factor in human history. On the contrary, it is ideas that move the world:

> "The social life of humanity is not governed by natural laws, however much we are confined by them, but rather by leading ideas, both ethical

2 Ibid., p. 8.

3 Ibid., p. 7. In this respect, Štúr considers G. Lukács' book *Die Zerstörung der Vernunft* (1955) to be the only exception. According to František Novosád, however, this gives proof of "the author's isolation from the philosophical context of his time", rather than of the results of Štúr's own research – in the second half of the 1960s, there was already a considerable number of texts published which analysed the philosophical background of Nazism (see Novosád, F., The Will to Reason Against the Will to Power /Vôľa k rozumu proti vôli k moci/). *Filozofia*, 56, 2001, No. 9, p. 631–635, esp. p. 632.

4 Štúr, S., *German Will to Power. Thought Bases*, p. 7.

> and gangsterish, depending on which ideas are assigned this leading role by the majority of people in the society."[5]

Summed up in the words of Tibor Pichler, one of the most prominent contemporary commentators of Štúr's work: "Svätopluk Štúr was convinced that life is governed by ideas. Its quality depends on the quality of ideas that man and society decide to adhere to."[6] In other words, Štúr ascribes historic power mainly to the producers of ideas: philosophers, thinkers, scholars. But since it follows that the greater the power, the greater the responsibility, Štúr accordingly places also the biggest burden of responsibility for the course on history on their shoulders. This key aspect of Štúr's work should be borne in mind especially when reading *The German Will to Power*.[7]

Štúr's investigation of the philosophical sources of Nazism begins at the turn of the 18th and 19th century. He sees the spiritual situation of the period as a culminating stage of Enlightenment rationalism and classical philosophy:

> "Kant and Herder articulated their monumental humanist credo in Germany at the end of 18th century in an especially spectacular manner – 'in the spirit of global citizenship'; after that Schiller, Goethe, Beethoven at the beginning of 19th century in a similar spirit of all-humanness."[8]

However, Štúr, who himself openly supports the humanistic ideals of the Enlightenment and critical rationalism, also notes that especially the German-speaking world shows signs of gradual decline of humanistic and universalist ideals of the Enlightenment and the high classical philosophy during the whole of 19th century and the first half of the 20th century, meaning an ever steeper descent of the spirit into the darkness of naturalism, materialism, sensualism, animality, and nihilism.

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5 Štúr, S., *A Discourse On Life* (*Rozprava o živote*). Bratislava, Filozofická fakulta Slovenskej univerzity 1946, p. 28, note 23.

6 Pichler, T., Svätopluk Štúr and the Politics of Ideas (Svätopluk Štúr a politika ideí). *Filozofia*, 56, 2001, No. 9, p. 601–606, esp. p. 601.

7 Elena Várossová bears witness to the fact that this indeed was the fundamental idea for his understanding of society and history: "Professor Štúr rightfully taught us that the very basis of all conflicts and tragedies of humanity are ideas that have the potential to dynamise themselves […] into twisted forms, even world conflagrations." Várossová, E., The Place and Importance of Svätopluk Štúr in the Context of Slovak Philosophy of the 20th Century (Miesto a význam Svätopluka Štúra v kontexte slovenskej filozofie 20. storočia). *Filozofia*, 56, 2001, No. 9, p. 594 to 600, esp. p. 599.

8 Štúr, S., *German Will to Power. Thought Bases*, p. 9.

This is exactly what Štúr has in mind when, in reference to an observation made by the Austrian writer, Franz Grillparzer, he states that Europe is now going through a shift from humanity through nationalism to bestiality.[9] Nationalism, along with naturalism, is the second root of Nazi ideology, as Štúr identifies them in his book. However, what he means is not an ordinary nationalism in the sense of an idea of a national consciousness or a natural love for the nation, but an exaggerated, exclusive nationalism that elevates the given nation over all others, i.e. the form of nationalism which was originally called chauvinism. Therefore, it would be wrong to understand Štúr's criticism of nationalism in *The German Will to Power* as a condemnation of nationalism (*nacionalizmus*, *národovectvo*) in general. On the contrary, nationalism as a consciousness of national identity and a positive relation to one's own nation does have an important place in the harmonious and "natural composition of life", as Štúr himself saw it.

Štúr's conception of life can be introduced in brief in a summarising interpretation by T. Pichler: Štúr

> "acknowledges a pyramidal structure of life, the lower levels of which are completed, not lost in the higher, superior levels. He is convinced that the universal growth of life depends on its development towards bigger, more complex units, starting from the individual and progressing through family to nation, Slavism and, finally, to humanity."[10]

Thus, for Štúr, nationalism has not just its historical justification, it also has a value for life. However, it becomes unacceptable when it starts to be taken as the greatest goal and highest value of a nation and ceases to be governed by the principle of all-humanness and humanity, as Štúr writes in *A Discourse On Life* (*Rozprava o živote*)[11] or in his last book *Struggles and Wrong Directions of Modern Man* (*Zápasy a scestia moderného človeka*), where he even mentions a "humanistic nationalism".[12]

Aside from historical events (Napoleonic wars and the reactionary restoration movement), Štúr sees the beginnings of the exaggerated form of nationalism in romantism, especially in the philosophy of Johann Gottlieb

9 Ibid.

10 Pichler, T., Critical Realism of Svätopluk Štúr (Kritický realizmus Svätopluka Štúra). In: Kopčok, A. – Kollár, K. – Pichler, T. (eds.), *The History of Slovak Philosophy in the 20th Century* (*Dejiny filozofie na Slovensku v XX. storočí*). Bratislava, Filozofický ústav SAV 1998, p. 238.

11 Štúr, S., *A Discourse On Life*, p. 45.

12 See Štúr, S., *Struggles and Wrong Directions of Modern Man* (*Zápasy a scestia moderného človeka*). Bratislava, Veda 1998, p. 140–141, 197.

Fichte, whose Berlin lectures from 1807, published under the title *Addresses to the German Nation* (1808), represent "the first significant nationalist credo" of the German nation. Indeed, clear signs of romantic nationalism can be traced back to the end of the 18th century, to Herder, for example – but for him, the idea of a nation was always subordinate to the spirit of universal humanity. However, nationalism was not peculiar just to German thinkers and the German nation alone. Nationalism in the form of an awakening of national awareness and identity is an important part of romantic movement, and so at the beginning of the 19th century they emerge hand in hand in other countries as well (England, Italy, Slavic areas), slowly penetrating the whole Europe. Yet, nationalism in its extreme form of "exclusive nationalism" emerges for the first time in the philosophy of J. G. Fichte, as Štúr notes. Moreover, ever since Fichte, this twisted and extreme exclusiveness "was systematically and persistently fostered solely in German nationalism",[13] with only a few rare exceptions that came later.

To paint the whole picture, it should be added that Štúr also appreciates more reasonable aspects of Fichte's *Addresses* that clearly testify to the fact that in many respects Fichte is an heir to the ideals of the Enlightenment and Classicism. Štúr especially accentuates Fichte's ideas on new German education towards humanity that would eventually lead to a universal and complete development of all aspects of man and to an overcoming of egoistic individualism:

> "Fichte's education is most critical of selfishness, always bearing in mind the collective good to which individual interests must be subordinate. Unlike Kant and Herder, with whom he shares the same intellectual and moral grounding, Fichte's teaching puts an even greater emphasis on responsibility, productivity, activity and will."[14]

On the other hand, Štúr also pinpoints moments in the *Addresses* that reveal the twistedness of Fichte's exclusive nationalism, fanatic chauvinism even, that had a harmful influence on later generations of the German nation – for instance, the superiority of the German nation that Fichte justifies by the superiority of the German language over others, or the predetermination of the German nation to "dominate the world".[15]

Due to space constraints, I shall cite just a short extract from the *Addresses* that accurately illustrates Fichte's belligerent chauvinist nationalism and

13 Štúr, S., *German Will to Power. Thought Bases*, p. 10.
14 Ibid., p. 11.
15 Ibid., p. 18.

reveals the germination of one of the key Nazi concepts, the "living space" (*Lebensraum*[16]):

> "A people that has remained true to nature can, if its territories have become too narrow, desire to enlarge them and gain more space by conquering neighbouring lands, and then it will drive out the former inhabitants…".[17]

Štúr is openly sarcastic in his exposé of Fichte's *Addresses* and shows how much Fichte moved away from the ideals of the French Revolution that he had admired so much before, and also from his original idealism which, under the influence of this exaggerated nationalism, turns into its very opposite – harsh naturalism:

> "So this idealist uses his higher patriotic love, heaven and eternal bliss to justify a completely naturalist right of the 'original people' to plunder, kill and conquer."[18]

In conclusion, Štúr observes bitterly the malignant influence that the *Addresses* have had on the subsequent spiritual development of the German nation:

> "*Reden an die deutsche Nation* became the bible of German nationalist sentiment and in this chauvinist form it fully saturated the blood in the Germans' veins."[19]

16 To be more precise, Štúr does not mention the idea of *Lebensraum* (i.e. the idea of territorial expansion of the German nation through the conquest of other nations) specifically in connection with Fichte, nor with any other authors he identifies as and analyses for potential philosophical inspirational sources of Nazi ideology. The idea of Lebensraum itself emerges in Germany no sooner than at the turn of the century. Moreover, it is only later that the idea takes on the meaning of conquest of the territory of Slavic nations all the way to the Ural Mountains – note that this sense of Lebensraum becomes the key idea of Nazi ideology leading to the outbreak of the Second World War. On the other hand, Štúr starts with Fichte in his analysis of the work of German thinkers in search of those elements that formed the philosophical substratum for the idea of Lebensraum. These elements are: praise of belligerence and conquest of foreign lands, praise of expansive politics and imperialism, celebration of war and militarism, the myth of blood and soil or "politics of space". Yet, Štúr explicitly mentions the idea of living space only with regards to key representatives of Nazi ideology: Adolf Hitler (ibid., p. 204) and especially Alfred Rosenberg (ibid., p. 217–219) and their books *Mein Kampf* and *Mythus des 20. Jahrhunderts*, the main point of which, according to author's resumé, was to "gain soil at the expense of the Soviet Union and Poland". Ibid., p. 222.

17 Fichte, J. G., *Addresses to the German Nation* (*Reden an die deutsche Nation*). New York, Cambridge University Press 2009, p. 167.

18 Štúr, S., *German Will to Power. Thought Bases*, p. 18.

19 Ibid.

Thus, Štúr used the example of Fichte to show that every case of exclusive nationalism leads to a perverse accentuation of peculiarities, to superiority of national individualism over universal humanity.

The idea of a total subordination of an individual to some greater unit such as nation or state, already present in Fichte's famous *Addresses*, is later intensified in Hegel's philosophy and his statism. In contrast to Fichte and especially Hegel's statism, Max Stirner, a young Hegelian, publishes his main work *The Ego and Its Own* (*Der Einzige und sein Eigentum*, 1844), as an expression of the most radical individualism ever to be formulated to that date. While Štúr sees Fichte's *Addresses* as a bible of exaggerated national egoism, he considers Stirner's book to be a "bible of the most drastic egoism and anarchism".[20] The core of Stirner's book is the idea of an intangible and undefinable Self as a "creative nothing" that frees itself from anything that it could be exceeded or limited by, so that it can shape itself in its own uniqueness. Since freedom itself is without substance, however, it is only a negative delimitation of this task – the positive being possession. Thus, the Self feeds on appropriation:

> "I secure my freedom with regard to the world to the degree that I make the world my own, i.e. 'to gain and conquer it' for myself, using any power required (*Gewalt*)…"[21]

Therefore, power/violence is the primary method of appropriation – an individual can choose any means to gain and maintain ownership, including swindling, theft, or any other crime.

According to Stirner, all social institutions and universal concepts such as morality, law, religion, marriage, family, nation, state, but also the very concept of man, are but inimical forces threatening the egoist and his autonomy, which is why he must set himself free from them to stand any chance of self-realisation:

> "This thorough solipsism, and especially fanatic aversion to everything spiritual, are symptoms of a malignant illness plaguing European humanity that will gradually spread and intensify and will therefore inexorably lead into an abyss of nihilism with logical inevitability".[22]

20 Ibid., p. 38.

21 Stirner, M., *The Ego and Its Own*. Ed. David Leopold. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press 1995, p. 149–150. Štúr decided to differ from Czech translation of Stirner's book and translates Stirner's key concept of "Gewalt" – that in German has the meaning of both power and violence – as violence. Thus, Štúr accentuates naturalistic and barbarian consequences of Stirner's individualist-anarchic philosophy.

22 Štúr, S., *German Will to Power. Thought Bases*, p. 50.

Thus, Štúr depicts Stirner in his egoistic hatred towards anything spiritual as a thinker who opens wide the door to naturalism and therefore also to nihilism.

In light of two great tragic world conflicts of the 20th centuries, the following words of Max Stirner seem very prophetic and also cynical: "and, even if I foresaw that these thoughts would deprive you of your rest and your peace, even if I saw the bloodiest wars and the fall of many generations springing from this seed of thought – I would nevertheless scatter it."[23] And yet, Štúr softens the weight of Stirner's words he quotes when he writes that, to be fair, Stirner could not fully "imagine that such a monster could be born who would use his teachings against the whole civilisation with the same ruthless and cynical viciousness!"[24] Interestingly enough, despite its absurdness, Stirner's thinking took root in the German nation and his ideas of egoistic individualism found their way into German nationalism and thus became "the official ideology of German national solipsism."[25] What Štúr probably means by this observation is that a certain synthesis took place within the German nation – that of Stirner's egoist individualism and exclusive nationalism which was sown in the soul of German nation by Fichte:

> "Because national solipsism too is but a modification of individual solipsism, the only difference being in kind and scale."[26]

After a thorough criticism of national individualism (represented by Fichte) and egoist individualism (represented by Stirner), Štúr now turns to the third form of radical individualism, more precisely the "naturalistic individualism" advocated most notably by Friedrich Nietzsche. The term "naturalistic individualism" is not used by Štúr himself, but can be deduced from his main argument, according to which Nietzsche radicalises "neo-romantic individualism" through a "naturalistic philosophy".[27] Despite the fact that Štúr centres his criticism on Nietzsche's naturalism (dedicating one whole chapter out of the three in his book to it) and deals with his individualism only sporadically, we shall attempt to show at least the main points of this so-called "naturalistic individualism", which Štúr formulates more implicitly than explicitly.

Štúr sees Nietzsche primarily as a passionate denier, who, in the name of life, demolishes and overturns all values upon which the European ethos and

23 Stirner, M., *The Ego and Its Own*, p. 263.
24 Štúr, S., *German Will to Power. Thought Bases*, p. 49.
25 Ibid., p. 39.
26 Ibid., p. 46.
27 Ibid., p. 67.

culture stand. For Štúr, Nietzsche is "the first distinctive intermediary" of the modern philosophy of life (*Lebensphilosophie*). Although Štúr dedicates some space in *The German Will to Power* to an analysis of Schopenhauer's voluntarism, he perceives Schopenhauer as a mere predecessor of vitalism – it was Nietzsche who "consciously and with full noetic gravity, was the first to put life in opposition to knowledge, giving life supremacy over knowledge."[28] It is this supremacy of life over knowledge, reason and spirit that Štúr identifies as the core principle of the transvaluation of all values. Thus, according to Štúr, transvaluation of all values is a consequence of "noetic nihilism" that Nietzsche formulates in the early stages of his work – when he understands truth as a "useful lie", an "illusion" or an interpretation always dependent on a given perspective – and that culminates in his mature period in the maxim: "Nothing is true, everything is permitted."[29] Nietzsche, who on the one hand did his best to destroy and unmask the Christian myth and myth of morality, on the other hand largely contributed to the creation of a new myth, "the myth of the philosophy of life" that would pose "the most serious threat to European culture, since, in fact, it means its conscious denial",[30] as Štúr bitterly notes.

Building on ethical universalism and not on any kind of religious perspective, Štúr strongly objects against Nietzsche that it was the philosophy of life itself, not morality, that diminished and impoverished life – "What Nietzsche and all other naturalistic philosophers call 'life' is but a life reduced to the merely instinctive, *vital* area, i.e. a life that is significantly impoverished in its being deprived of its variability".[31] Štúr argues:

> "only on the basis of this naturalistically compressed and narrowed-down concept concept of man and his tasks could Nietzsche then equate 'life' with the *will to power*. Indeed, it is solely the firm will to power that saves his life from nihilism, to which in noetic terms he has already completely succumbed."[32]

But how does Nietzsche define life and what does it mean that life is will to power? Štúr answers this question by quoting a key passage from Nietzsche's *Beyond Good and Evil* (1886):

28 Ibid., p. 72.
29 Nietzsche, F., *On the Genealogy of Morals. A Polemical Tract*. Transl. I. Johnston. Arlington, Richer Resources Publications 2009, p. 125.
30 Štúr, S., *German Will to Power. Thought Bases*, p. 82.
31 Ibid., p. 90.
32 Ibid., p. 93.

> "life itself is *essentially* a process of appropriation, injury, overpowering of strangers and the weak, oppression, harshness, imposition of one's own forms, incorporation, and at least, to use the least extreme possible word, exploitation…"[33]

Thus, Nietzsche exposes life in all of its naturalistic roughness, cruelness and ruthlessness and, at the same time, makes it the highest criterion of morality. Naturally, this is why Nietzsche in his moral philosophy "beatifies selfishness, healthy, overflowing selfishness, because the selfish pleasure of such bodies and souls is known as a 'virtue'. He preaches the holy and the healthy Self!"[34] This is the base on which Nietzsche formulates the morality of strong individuals, the so-called "noble men" who affirm life exactly by cultivating their own egoism and amplifying the feeling of power – as Nietzsche himself writes: "egoism is component to the essence of the noble soul."[35]

Although historians of philosophy refuse to compare Nietzsche to Stirner and even though Nietzsche denied taking inspiration from Stirner's work, we can identify some common ground in their thinking:

> "Let us not deceive ourselves: Stirner's solipsist Self and Nietzsche's fundamental text *homo natura* or *Raubmensch* are brothers born to the same family."[36]

Despite the fact that Štúr finds great similarities between the two authors especially with regards to individualism (and partially in naturalism, too), the fundamental differences between Stirner's egoistic individualism and Nietzsche's naturalistic individualism are not to be ignored. Firstly, both individualisms build on different premises: while Stirner places the solipsist Self against the rest of the world, Nietzsche works with an overall naturalistic concept of life. Secondly, on a social level, Stirner's individualism is anarchistic, while Nietzsche's individualism is aristocratic. Thus, politically speaking, Stirner can imagine at most just a kind of "union of egoists" that would function as a loose and voluntary group of egocentric individuals. Contrary to this is Nietzsche's understanding of society as stemming from the fundamental principle of life, the will to power; he postulates an elitist

33 Nietzsche, F., *Beyond Good and Evil*. Transl. J. Norman. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press 2002, p. 153.
34 Štúr, S., *German Will to Power. Thought Bases*, p. 106.
35 Nietzsche, F., *Beyond Good and Evil*, p. 162.
36 Štúr, S., *German Will to Power. Thought Bases*, p. 96.

division of society into two classes: a ruling caste of noble individuals and an obedient herd of the mediocre.

In the end, Štúr considers Nietzsche to be not only a noetic nihilist, but also a "moral nihilist",[37] regardless of the fact that Nietzsche himself tries to warn against nihilism and to overcome nihilism by creating a new morality built on a narrow naturalistic understanding of life.

> "Power, violence, cruelty – that is the fundamental 'victorious' idea of Nietzschean thinking".[38]

All of this can be justified by referring to the intensification of life and its essence, the "will to power", but only inasmuch as the individual breaks away from universal bonds of humanity and the criteria of reason. Such individualistic breakaway from the universal consequently allows Nietzsche to acclaim even crime, after all, "all great men were criminals on a grand style"[39] and to dream of war because war is purportedly "the father of all things good"[40] – "Indeed, war becomes the final and only meaning of Nietzsche's philosophy"[41] concludes Štúr with horror.[42]

37 Ibid., p. 104.
38 Ibid., p. 122.
39 Ibid., p. 121.
40 Ibid., p. 117.
41 Ibid., p. 124.
42 Commentators of Štúr's work usually agree that his criticism of Nietzsche is quite unjust – they reject Štúr's accusations of Nietzsche's responsibility for Nazi's misuse of his ideas. František Novosád points to the pamphlet-like, popular and non-scientific character of Štúr's book, whose goal was not a serious research into the philosophical roots of Nazism, but to "address a larger audience, the political public, to immunise it against Nazism" (Novosád, F., The Will to Reason Against the Will to Power, p. 631). This contrasts with Erika Lalíková's view, who sees the book as "highly qualified", and at the same time accessible due to its documentary-like format (Lalíková, E., Inspiring Imaginary Meetings with Svätopluk Štúr /Inšpiratívnosť imaginárnych stretnutí so Svätoplukom Štúrom/. *Filozofia*, 56, 2001, No. 9, p. 662–665, esp. p. 663). Theodor Münz even thinks that today, in retrospect, Štúr himself would revise some of his positions (Münz, T., The Philosophy of Life of Svätopluk Štúr /Filozofia života Svätopluka Štúra/. *Filozofia*, 56, 2001, No. 9, p. 618–619). This opinion is rather difficult to agree with – Štúr wrote his book twice, with a gap of almost thirty years between editions, so he had plenty of time to re-assess his original thoughts. Moreover, Štúr was familiar also with different interpretations of Nietzsche that were more open, metaphoric and symbolic. However, Štúr deliberately focuses on a "literal interpretation", rather than a mere free, "literary interpretation". His hermeneutic method could therefore be expressed by the motto: "To the text itself!" František Novosád aptly describes Štúr's method of literal interpretation of philosophical texts: "As far as F. Nietzsche is concerned, his texts are oftentimes understood as 'sacred' and we tend to 'explain away' the numerous barbarisms. Svätopluk Štúr refused this 'allegorical' interpretation, he refuses to 'cleanse' the texts of German philosophers of barbarianisms and instead opted for 'hermeneutic highlighting' – he reads German philosophers 'literally' and refuses to explain

Here we come to an issue that emerges in various forms and extents not only in the work of all three philosophers that we have discussed so far, but slowly and with growing intensity also in broader circles of the German intelligentsia of the 19th century and the first half of the 20th century – militarism, i.e. the praise and idealisation of war. Probably the most significant expression of militarism can be found in texts by Max Scheler, a phenomenologist and the founder of philosophical anthropology, published during the First World War. In his book *The Genius of War and the German War* (*Der Genius des Krieges und der Deutsche Krieg*),[43] published in 1914, Scheler offers an ethical, metaphysical and even religious justification of the need of war – which, for Štúr, is a mark of its "unforgettable perverted despicability."[44]

With regards to individualism, Štúr mentions yet another German author, Alexander Tille, a commentator and translator of Nietzsche's work. Tille looks up to Nietzsche as "the most consequential evolutionary philosopher of ethics" and, at the same time, the most significant representative of individualism, "the defender of greater freedom of action" than the attitude of that era allowed. In his 1895 book *From Darwin to Nietzsche* (*Von Darwin bis Nietzsche*),[45] Tille delivers a prophecy that is especially interesting in the context of the historical events that followed:

> "Cultured humanity is heading towards progressively greater freedom of thought and action, and before us there lies an unforeseeably long period of unlimited individualism with a huge degree of differentiation between individuals, which, provided the culture does not spread throughout humanity, could lead to the creation of a new species within the human species of today. Should this go on, we would then face another period of further intensification of national contrasts, i.e. further development of particular national figures, which would mean

their thoughts ',allegorically'. His goal is literally to underline points in their works indicating a potential slipping into brutality." Novosád, F., The Will to Reason Against the Will to Power, p. 634. On the other hand, such literal, "superficial" interpretation of Nietzsche's thoughts and concepts might be seen as "problematic, even misleading" (see Korená, K., Nietzsche in the Works of Svätopluk Štúr /Nietzsche v prácach Svätopluka Štúra/. In: Lalíková, E. – Szapuová, M. /eds./, *The Forms of Philosophising Yesterday and Today*. /*Podoby filozofovania včera a dnes*/. Bratislava, Iris 2009, p. 217–228, esp. p. 223). However, it is not the aim of this study to decide whether and to what extent Štúr's criticism of Nietzsche and the other authors analysed in the *The German Will to Power* is justified or unacceptable. Moreover, such a task requires considerable space and could itself make for a separate study.

43 See Scheler, M., *Genius des Krieges und der Deutsche Krieg.* Leipzig, Verlag der Weiszen Bücher 1917.

44 Štúr, S., *German Will to Power. Thought Bases*, p. 146.

45 See Tille, A., *Von Darwin bis Nietzsche, ein Buch Entwicklungsethik*, Lipsko, Naumann 1895.

> that individualism within a nation and nationalism among nations would play the biggest role in future developments; a ruling figure and a ruling nation would then represent the apex of human development with the virtues of the future being nobleness, health, sharpness of thought, and inclination to power."[46]

To reach this goal, to achieve the installation of a ruling personality and a ruling nation, Tille needs to deal with Nietzsche's aristocratism by propounding his own vision of a social-aristocratism which would be accessible to everybody:

> "That is why he objects to Nietzsche's aristocratic individualism: after all, the European worker too is a factor of power."[47]

Thus, Tille wants to "collectivise and nationalise" Nietzsche's naturalistic and aristocratic individualism", which for Štúr is already "an echo of the methods of the new century".[48] And so, despite their own disdain of nationalism, but due to the individualistic legacy of their work, Nietzsche and Stirner become intrinsic to German chauvinistic nationalism.

However, it would be outwardly wrong to interpret Štúr's critical remarks on individualism in *The German Will to Power*, as well as in his other works, as a sign of disrespect for individuality and distinctiveness on the part of the author. For Štúr, individuality (both of a person and of a nation) has an important place in the harmonious, synthesising architecture of life. Yet, Štúr considers individualism in itself, and likewise its opposite, abstract universalism, to be extreme and unilateral, and therefore in conflict with the harmonious order of life. All things unilateral disrupt the fundamental balance of the constituents of life, according to Štúr's concept of life. This is why in all his works he sharply criticises anything that is purely unilateral, since it reduces life to just one of its constituent parts.

In his last, posthumously published book, *The Struggles and Wrong Directions of the Modern Man*, Štúr also warns against the dark side of the opposite extreme, i.e. universalism that leads to an unacceptable and dangerous dominance "of object over subject and generality over everything individual, specific and distinctive".[49] He illustrates this extreme using the example of Auguste Comte's social philosophy:

46 Štúr, S., *German Will to Power. Thought Bases*, p. 132.
47 Ibid., p. 134.
48 Ibid., p. 135.
49 Štúr, S., *The Struggles and Wrong Directions of The Modern Man*, p. 68.

> "Comte, this original pioneer, in the end resembles the realism of the Middle Ages which similarly declared intolerant supremacy of generality over individualistic nominalism."[50]

Interestingly enough, Comte understands humanity, or humanness, as a universal idea that should unite the whole of society. However, as Štúr's concept of life implies, a humanism which one-sidedly suppresses individuality and disrespects the peculiarities of its elements cannot be a true ethical humanism, since it necessarily leads to inhumane consequences. Because one-sided universalism that gobbles up its individual constituents turns out in the end to be totalitarianism. Comte's sociological and humanistic totalitarianism, Hegel's panlogic and statist totalitarianism, Marx's collectivist and economic totalitarianism – these are all examples of the malignant one-sidedness that is opposed to individualism, and Štúr warns against this, just as he warns against the one-sidedness of individualism:

> "…European freedom that must fight its way into the social arena through these extreme positions is permanently threatened by individualistic anarchy on the one hand and collectivist totalitarianism on the other."[51]

In conclusion: Three kinds of extreme individualism may be identified in Štúr's critique of the sources of Nazi ideology: egoist, nationalist, and naturalist individualism. According to Štúr, every type of individualism is extreme by its own nature since it is, in fact, an accentuation of "one-sidedness". At the same time, every type of individualism is also exclusive by nature, since it represents a breaking away from higher universal bonds and relations. Thus, individualism fundamentally disrupts the harmonious architecture of life, turns values upside down, and has the tendency sooner or later to lead to naturalism or even nihilism, and so in practice, to human and historical tragedies.

That is why Štúr's legacy, deriving from his criticism of individualism in its various, twisted forms, is the following: it is not individualism, but a suprapersonal, universal, ethically founded humanity which does not suppress, but rather cultivates the individuality of each person, that should become the key motive of our actions and the highest goal of our both individual and social life.

50 Ibid., p. 80.
51 Ibid., p. 81.

The Reality Argument and Its Impact on the Individual Through the Eyes of Gejza Vámoš

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"For people always treat you the way you educate them to."[1]

Gejza Vámoš (1901–1956), a medical doctor and philosophising author of prose, often dubbed a rebel of his times, rarely comes to the public attention today, and if so, then it is mainly as a writer. Nevertheless, many attentive readers and researchers took notice of the philosophical side of his writings, too.[2] Yet, his only officially philosophical works include the dissertation thesis *The Cruelty Principle* (*Princíp krutosti*), subtitled *A Microbe and a Human* (*Mikrób a človek*), and a short essay *The Reality Argument* (*Argument skutočnosti*) which I believe could be the key text to a deeper understanding of Vámoš's literary work. Both texts date back to 1930s. This paper traces the argumentation line of the aforementioned essay with a focus on the problem of individualism. I shall deal neither with the circumstances that led to the creation of the essay, nor with a broader perspective on the relation of the essay to other works by Vámoš. The focal point of this paper is the essay alone.[3]

1 Vámoš, G., A Hypochondriach (Hypochonder). In: *A Half-Man and Other Works of Prose* (*Pol-človek a iné prózy*). Bratislava, Kalligram 2016, p. 15.

2 Especially Dagmar Kročanová, Erika Lalíková and Milan Zigo.

3 In Vámoš's correspondence with his teacher and friend Josef Tvrdý, we can read that Vámoš understood this essay as a kind of return to (academic) philosophy. He himself writes that he expects to be encouraged to write more and already has plenty of ideas for many other texts of a similar character. The correspondence is kept in Vámoš' personal archive in the Literary Archive of Slovak National Library. The circumstances that led to the creation of the essay are analysed through the perspective of the "Scandal in Bahnany" (*bahnianska aféra*), as it is called, in the book by Lalíková, E., *Reality and Philosophy in Slovakia: Ján Lajčiak, Gejza Vámoš and Svätopluk Štúr* (*Realita a filozofia na Slovensku: Ján Lajčiak, Gejza Vámoš a Svätopluk Štúr*). Bratislava, IRIS 2010.

> "Even the most absurd lie and fabrication can become the argument of reality, provided they are served to people with the sufficient oratory zeal."[4]

This is the phenomenon that Gejza Vámoš draws attention to in *The Reality Argument*, whose title is also the term of the new concept that he introduces in it. Vámoš does not explicitly create a typology of individuals. It seems that he is *warning against* individualism, especially if fostered in the wrong hands or if misunderstood.

The introductory reflection of the essay deals with two interconnected phenomena which, according to Vámoš, are part of man's *conditio humana*. On the one hand, we desire to shed light on the mechanisms of both the world and life in their entirety; on the other hand we would prefer to find the explanation in a simple principle applicable to everything. On the one hand, we are searching for a universal principle, while on the other hand, we are willing to see it in every coincidence and are capable of justifying it and rationalising it retrospectively.

> "We seem to have a desire to introduce mathematical certainty into the apparent anarchy and unpredictability of a phenomenon."[5]

Attempts to (re)organise the world, to find new perspectives on life usually take the form of a search for one or several key principles to build on. These principles tend to be very general and also as old as the world itself. But their meaning is explained in a new way, filling them with new content; put simply, their *value is transvalued*. If this goes well, these principles will then lead people (groups or individuals) for some time to a shared understanding of society, world or life or other more concrete *realities*.

Particular Accentuation of Ideas

I understand the reality argument as evidence of or a *reason for reality*. People as percipients of reality require evidence or reasons to understand it; we need somehow to justify reality. However, the human mind is fragmented and so we can never see the whole,[6] we can never encompass reality absolutely, which is why we justify reality by accentuating particular terms or ideas.

4 Vámoš, G., The Reality Argument (Argument skutočnosti). In: *The Cruelty Principle* (*Princíp krutosti*). Bratislava, Chronos 1996, p. 144. This is the only publication of Vámoš's dissertation thesis and essay *The Reality Argument*.

5 Ibid., p. 130.

6 Ibid., p. 131.

The reality argument is based on particular *accentuation*, i.e. *partial emphasis* of an idea that might look random or insufficiently thought over, when looked at *a posteriori*.[7] Nevertheless, whatever is thus accentuated is also ridded of its context. That is why Vámoš says that an idea (or a feeling, a thought) has *been "just overly* accentuated."[8] When such particularly accentuated idea becomes a cornerstone of a system, the system becomes unhealthy; it stands and falls together with the idea. And the only thing that can at least postpone, if not halt such a fall is if a particularly accentuated idea remains "the main propeller of the community's worldview", unassessed and unreflected any further.[9] Vámoš's concept brings to mind Nietzsche's words on the creation of truth and forgotten metaphors.[10]

Paradoxically, a merely *partially accentuated* phenomenon then becomes an empty concept that can be filled with anything as needed, thereby also becoming a concept that is exaggeratedly overloaded with meaning. The whole problem is hidden in the very name: *particularly*, therefore not completely, and *accentuated*, which means emphasised, but not fully grasped and understood. Thus, every particular accentuation creates a new concept; an imperfect version of the accentuated.

Particular accentuation of an idea is an initial stage and a means used in an effort to create order by intuitive, random "extraction" of one part of a chaotic whole, elevated to the principle governing organisation of the whole.

A Particularly Accentuated Idea as a Reality Argument

However, a particularly accentuated idea is often as persuasive as an idea that is grasped completely. Both of them can act as a *reality argument*. A reality argument functions beyond good and evil, it functions when it is *sufficiently powerful and persuasive*. Its validity and invalidity, correctness and incorrectness, usefulness and harmfulness play no role in its mechanism. On many occasions, Vámoš points this fact out and warns against it.[11] Later in

7 Vámoš often uses the umbrella term "idea" to refer to a thought, an emotion, a feeling, a phenomenon or a thing. It seems that in the essay *The Reality Argument*, an "idea" designates anything that can be particularly accentuated. Loose use of terms as well as a somewhat hesitant building of argumentation line is noted by Lalíková, E., *Reality and Philosophy in Slovakia: Ján Lajčiak, Gejza Vámoš and Svätopluk Štúr*, p. 54.

8 Vámoš, G., The Reality Argument, p. 132–133.

9 Ibid., p. 133.

10 Nietzsche, F., On Truth and Lies in a Non-Moral Sense. In: Nietzsche, F. – Geuss, R. – Speirs, R., *The Birth of Tragedy and Other Writings*. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press 1999, p. 139 to 154.

11 E.g. the example involving a physician, see Vámoš, G., The Reality Argument, p. 143–144. This motif appears on multiple occasions also in his two-volume novel *The Atoms of God*. See Vámoš, G., *The Atoms of God* (*Atómy Boha*). Bratislava, Dilema 2003.

this article, we will also deal with Vámoš's proposal of a "correct" handling of the reality argument, as well as with its educational aspect.

Love, for Vámoš, is an example of an ancient particularly accentuated idea in society.[12] Due to particular accentuation, this feeling has been ripped from the intricate complex of human feelings.[13] Love has become a "great organising and unifying idea of very large human groups."[14] Love has been artificially prioritised over other feelings through particular accentuation. The other, unaccentuated feelings were pushed aside, paralysed and slowly engulfed by it. Despite its "original" intention, love thy neighbour, in fact, conceals fear and violence within it. "It was believed that love is the power that all must succumb to."[15] Particular accentuation pays no attention to the importance of mutual interdependence of phenomena. Due to particular accentuation, a phenomenon begins to absorb subordinated phenomena, thus negating itself and emptying itself to make it all-encompassing.

However, particular accentuation of love has not always played the only role in unifying the groups. Fear, sexuality, the idea of the immortality of the soul or of an afterlife, powerful natural phenomena – these were all particular ideas forming "society, worldview, religions and lifestyle."[16]

Vámoš admits that particular accentuation of an idea can serve as the first solid foundation for the creation of a system – in that case, however, its choice must not be *random*. The selection of a phenomenon that can aspire to the role of the keeper of order in a system must be thoroughly thought through, and the depth of its meaning maintained. In the case of love, according to Vámoš,

> "the innate or malicious obtuseness of an individual for whom moral laws mean nothing… [and the fact that love]… is not only helpless, but it itself has a tendency to back down to an evildoer, or even worse, create a privileged positions for him was deliberately omitted."[17]

The particular accentuation of love allows for an evildoer, because it is able to stand against him only at the expense of its own position. On the other hand, an evildoer is capable of destroying it without leaving his position at all.

12 Vámoš, G., The Reality Argument, p. 131.
13 Ibid., p. 132.
14 Ibid.
15 Ibid., p. 133.
16 Ibid., p. 134.
17 Ibid., p. 133–134.

The Difference between the Reality Argument and Habit

Let us return to the preliminary attempt at finding new perspectives on life and the world. Such efforts require us to try to "stop and think about phenomena… that are *hidden from us by habit* and *forced on us* – by the reality argument."[18] Habituation conceals that to which we are accustomed; that which has thus become a matter-of-course to us. The reality argument foists on us that which proves its own reality the most forcefully, thus overshadowing all other possibilities of perceiving reality. The reality argument always readily *justifies* reality in a somewhat one-sided, biased manner.

Vámoš attempts to demonstrate the difference between habit and the reality argument using an example of an ideal society whose functioning is suddenly interrupted. In such circumstances, the people would rebel and would only calm down once their society managed to establish an order that would remind them of the "original state of affairs". Although, of course, a quick reaction depends on knowledge of what a functional, ideal situation is, *the abruptness of change* of circumstances would be an inevitable impulse for a thorough reform of the standards that the world has suddenly lost. However, if the destructive change was slow and lengthy, even spanning several generations, it would be *habit* that would obstruct prompt efforts at reform.[19]

What Vámoš tries to demonstrate here is that although we would probably ascribe such apathy to habit, its true cause lies in the reality argument, as it concerns things to which it is impossible to become accustomed. While a habit concentrates on one specific, long-term aspect without overshadowing others (i.e. its sphere of influence is limited), the reality argument overshadows everything for the sake of one thing (i.e. its sphere of influence is unlimited).[20] The consequence of this overshadowing is that an individual is able to perceive only the most pressing issues that push themselves upon him "thanks to their bare essence", by power of the argument of *their* own reality.[21]

It is "a morphine that numbs into absolute stupor… [and] does not need duration, or repetition […] silencing resistance at once […]. It frequently works against habit and does this so efficiently that it soon gives rise to phenomena that suffocate agility and even the mere intention to resist."[22] Vámoš

18 Ibid., p. 136.
19 Ibid., p. 139.
20 Ibid., p. 140.
21 Ibid., p. 141.
22 Ibid., p. 140.

often proclaims in a Nietzsche-like manner that a human being is capable of bearing suffering so great that no animal could withstand, simply because he is able to give his suffering a meaning. *The role of the reality argument is to justify suffering, to justify reality.* Under its burden, people are able to remain silent even about things to which it is impossible to become accustomed.

The pressure of the reality argument often relativises established rules. When, for example, impertinence or a lie is so uninhibited and inventive that it becomes "exciting", it becomes impossible to fight against them and soon they are accepted with a kind of a "benevolent awe." In this case, that which would usually be reproved and condemned, thanks to the rhetoric of a magnetic personality or due to a sudden and unexpected event, begins to daze us when presented as a reality argument.[23] As Vámoš writes,

> "even the most perverse suspicion and the most vulgar lie will find their way into the minds of people, provided they are uttered boldly and with a blind determination that has respect for nothing."[24]

The Influence of the Reality Argument on an Individual and on a Group of Individuals

The reality argument can influence both an individual and a group of individuals. People live under its powerful influence and there is hardly an individual that succeeds in cutting himself off from his own reality arguments. It is all the more difficult to set oneself free from a collective reality argument. As far as the influence on the individual is concerned, Vámoš furnishes us with examples of particularly accentuated ideas. Many of them can be found in Vámoš' works of prose, but there is not enough space to deal with them properly in this paper. However, we shall have a look at a few of them at least. In *The Reality Argument*, Vámoš describes the particular accentuation in the context of the individual as a certain form of *stereotype*.

The first example involves an individual living under the influence of *his own lifelong efforts and individual desires. He has become absorbed by the pursuit of his own particularly accentuated success and particularly accentuated individual uniqueness.* Another example is a life lived under the influence of a reality argument regarding one's own *physical prowess*, *beauty* or *ugliness*. Vámoš writes of an exceptionally physically indisposed and disfigured Italian singer cast in the role of a Wagnerian hero. When he stepped on the stage, the audience was so disgusted and shocked by his appearance that the singer

23 Ibid., p. 144.
24 Ibid.

could not contain himself and persuaded them to listen to and judge his singing, rather than immediately turn away from his hideousness.[25] The example demonstrates that the audience succumbed to the ugliness of the singer so quickly and eagerly that it became blind even to the possibility that there might be something beautiful about him, perhaps his singing.

Last but not least, age can also be an all too powerful factor in quick and unreflected judgements, provided it is particularly accentuated.

The reality argument on an individual scale is the most common reason for self-conviction about one's own exceptionality or insignificance, which is why it is a great threat to the sense of collective belonging. Vámoš hopes that the sense of collective belonging can serve as a cure to harmful particular accentuations in an individual's life by clearing "the clouds of the argument of one's reality."[26]

When we speak of influence on the life of human groups, it is important to note that masses accept any reality argument much more easily than an individual, because individuals within a mass are surrounded by a matter-of-fact acceptance of the reason for the given reality.

> "The masses take a miserable life as something given and silently bow before a reality argument, i.e. before the fact that they live a life full of suffering. They are capable of suffering to much greater extremes that any animal. An animal would have long ago died as a result of the living standard that a man sees as a matter of fact. In the case of the masses, it is especially true that the power of a reality argument grows along with the intensity and boldness of its presentation."[27]

It is hard to say what could not become a reality argument. People need common ground, or a common *mentality*, as Vámoš says.[28] Be it convincing ideals, empty words, messianic acts or acts of hate – people are willing to suppress their basic needs in the belief that they are helping towards a common goal. *When people are given a suitable reality argument, their sense of collective belonging is reinforced. However, if an individual lives under an overly heavy reality argument relating to his individual life, such a reality argument is useless for reinforcing common goals. It seems that the power of a reality argument lies in a kind of rigid and hidden matter-of-factness and credibility, as well as a subliminal insistence. One needs to feel assured which is why one needs to justify reality by any available means.*

25 Ibid., p. 148–149.
26 Ibid., p. 150.
27 Ibid., p. 152.
28 Ibid., p. 151.

Reality Argument(s) and the Role of the Philosopher

Only few will question an argument of (given) reality, as it is very difficult to notice and even more difficult to "grasp"; it is important to find a way in which to explain it to help it *to be accepted without creating a commotion*. Once a reality argument has been identified, we can begin to fight against it, although we still remain under its influence. Vámoš illustrates this fight by pointing to how science copes with past approaches to knowledge.[29] The need to tackle superstitions and dogmas proves that science is not yet fully free from them and still bears the burden of the reality argument. Yet another consequence of the effect of the reality argument is that it is so difficult to unveil or even discuss social taboo.[30] In short, what truly makes any change so difficult is the power with which the given reality is justified, the power of its reality argument.

Vámoš pictures his new concept as a "lantern bringing light into the ignored and invisible areas where phenomena interconnect,"[31] or as a guide that helps to see through or at least become aware of the fact that such a thing as a reality argument exists, as well as where and what kind of particular accentuation is at work. The new concept helps to give a name to a phenomenon that had no name before, as well as to study its forms. Nevertheless, it would be a Herculean task to introduce the concept in a way that the masses would understand its principles, as it is already difficult to communicate this to a contemplative individual. As Vámoš remarks,

> "exceptional expertise is in no way sufficient – this facilitates only a one-sided perception, but the ability to 'see' and 'recognise' requires an almost poetic, innate talent and a specially developed sense of direction. It is naïve and pointless to expect something like this from the masses."[32]

A strong individual is the one who is able to *see and recognise* (but also to *create*) a reality argument – a person who is able to step back for a moment from the ordinary course of life and "glimpse the truth".

> "Every time we attempt to find a new perspective on an old issue, we do so hoping that this new perspective, albeit artificial and speculative,

29 Ibid., p. 154.
30 Vámoš's literary work came to the attention of public mainly thanks to him opening many taboo topics.
31 Vámoš, G., The Reality Argument, p. 141.
32 Ibid., p. 157.

> will help us sharpen our sight and make us stop and think about burdensome matters which are hidden from us by habit and forced on us by the reality argument. Let us make sure that this perspective will not suffer too much from the diseases of similar perspectives."[33]

How can a reality argument be beneficial at all? Vámoš relies on the possibility of an *educational element existing in a reality argument*. A *specific* strong individual can accentuate it and use it as a means of education. His "specific" quality lies in him being a teacher and a "good leader", assuming roles for the benefit of all. His power lies in understanding the reality arguments that have been at work thus far and in being able to produce them himself. However, this can very easily become dangerous in the wrong hands. Vámoš writes about a vision of a single methodical and leading will that would charm the masses and guide them towards a material and spiritual boom.[34] He dreams about a kind of a *universal reality argument* that does not need to be reduced to a particularly accentuated phenomenon, nor does it require an arrogant and coarse declaration of its facticity to assume power. A universal reality argument that would be of real service to humanity should be persuasive purely on the basis of the power of its content founded on the right principles, undeniable by reason. The question is whether something like this is possible at all. What would ensure that the masses, in the end, do not decide to follow a random particularly accentuated phenomenon? Understandably, this question remains unanswered.

True to the "spirit of his time", Vámoš also deals with the issue of democracy.[35] He does so only briefly and in connection with the reality argument.[36] At the end of the essay, Vámoš questions the authenticity of a democracy that functions under the pressure of various reality arguments. It is not the people who decide, but the diverse particular accentuations of reality that influence them. Democracy is not the rule of "the people, but rather of extremely sophisticated electoral mechanisms and of methods used by wily egoists to mislead the people into voting for any of a wide range of political parties."[37] Yet, if the reality argument is "applied justly", the masses do not have to live

33 Ibid., p. 136.
34 Ibid., p. 158.
35 The problem of democracy in the cultural and intellectual milieu of the time when Vámoš took his studies and published his works is analysed, for example, in the article by Pauza, M., Two Ontologies of Czech Democracy: T. G. Masaryk and J. L. Fischer (Dvě ontologie české demokracie: T. G. Masaryk a J. L. Fischer). *Filosofický časopis*, 63, 2015, No. 2, p. 233–245.
36 I shall not attempt a thorough contextual analysis of G. Vámoš's thought, as neither the extent, nor the focus of this paper allows for that. For this reason, the problem of democracy is also dealt with only within the limits of *The Reality Argument* essay.
37 Ibid.

in a dictatorship-like subservience – the reality argument can educate and *lead them towards democracy*.[38] For a democracy to be a real democracy, the people who participate in it must learn how to think and make decisions; otherwise they rule only *de iure*, but *de facto* are ruled by those who know how to use reality arguments for their own benefit.

If a human life is in all cases influenced by many different reality arguments, why not instead give people a single universal, panhuman and universally just *meta-argument of reality that would not be based on (random) particular accentuation?* The reality argument can be beneficial only in its most noble form and in this form alone; according to Vámoš, it can "educate the masses towards conscious democracy."[39] It seems to me that this wish of Vámoš's can be illustrated by a verse by Novalis:

> "The people is an idea. We are to become one people. A perfect human being is a people in miniature. True popularity is the highest goal of humanity."[40]

The education of the people towards democracy should take the "form of a panhuman, universally just reality that supports the weak and tames the powerful."[41] Education can turn a mass of weak and self-centred individuals into a kind of "collective individual", an indivisible, unified society governed by rules common to everyone, achieved through common education and guidance.[42]

The idea of a beneficial and unifying argument of reality is amongst the last thoughts presented in *The Reality Argument*. Unfortunately, its description is understandably rather schematic. The reality argument can be used for a common good, but it can also be easily abused. According to Vámoš, if anybody then only *a philosopher* is capable of working with a reality argument on an individual scale for the benefit of all, because the philosopher is indeed a *specific* and strong individuality. And so, the philosopher is bound by a duty towards humanity as well as to the reality argument. The philosopher is supposed

38 Ibid., p. 159.
39 Ibid., p. 160.
40 Stoljar, M. M., *Novalis: Philosophical Writings.* Transl. and ed. M. M. Stoljar. New York, State University of New York Press 1997, p. 31.
41 Vámoš, G., The Reality Argument, p. 159.
42 My understanding of the terms "indivisible and unified society" and "collective individual" is based on the etymology of the word *individual*, which comes from Latin *in-dividere*, i.e. indivisible. By this I also point to the organic aspect of society.

> "to see it, uncover it everywhere and not ignore it, but to intentionally search it out and fight against it. To make out a single tree in the forest."[43]

To turn the ordinary into the extraordinary, the commonplace into the startling, to liberate enslaved minds from their chains.[44] To educate and lead in the right direction. The responsibility for the public good that Vámoš places on the philosopher's shoulders is fully in line with philosophical tradition.

The reality argument is beneficial only in its most noble form, when it educates the masses towards a conscious democracy and is therefore acceptable only as long as it is educational.[45] It helps people to become individuals, because democracy can function properly only when it is built by individuals – however, not the egocentric kind, but somehow "collective individuals". However, ideally they need to be cultivated very carefully by a strong individual, otherwise they would turn into a mere mass again.

The question remains whether it is feasible to get shake the (not completely admitted) habit of justifying reality particularly. In the introduction of his essay, Vámoš writes about the inability of man to encompass the totality of reality; this is why the need to "help oneself out" using particular accentuation emerged. Bearing this in mind, it is very difficult to envision Vámoš's "noble" reality argument. It might be of help that, according to Vámoš, it is something that does not need particular justification, particular accentuation. On the contrary, it should be built on a painstaking effort to *see* and understand reality in its contexts, even though they can never be fully grasped.

43 Vámoš, G., The Reality Argument, p. 160.

44 On many occasions in his texts, Vámoš attempts to link natural sciences (especially medicine) with sociology and philosophy that were in their infancy at that time. His lifelong goal was to become a versatile educator with literature being at the core of the education of society. He probably wanted to become the philosopher of the kind described in the *Reality Argument*. In his literary remains we read: "I would consider it to be an insult if I were but a stable and steady wheel in the clock mechanism of today." Vámoš, G., *The Grammarians* (*Pravopisári*). Literary Archive of the Slovak National Library, sign. 72 AB 9.

45 Vámoš, G., The Reality Argument, p. 160.

The Solipsism of Ladislav Klíma*

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In the Preface to the second edition of his debut work *The World as Consciousness and Nothing* (*Svět jako vědomí a nic*; 1904), written in January 1928 and therefore one of his last texts, Ladislav Klíma describes the main content of his "metaphysical production" as the positing of and probing into two fundamental possibilities:

> "Either the 'external world' is *in itself* consciousness, or it does not *in itself* exist at all."[1]

Thus, in his view, the world is either a dynamical plurality of beings, each of a mentalistic character, but manifesting themselves materially, or it is a mere semblance of "my" consciousness, that is, the only consciousness that exists. In the Preface, Klíma further notes that, in contrast to all his subsequent works, in his debut work he concerns himself almost exclusively with the first of the two alternatives, not devoting any space to the thought of absolute subjectivism, theoretical egoism, or, in his later terminology, *egosolism*, until in the eleventh paragraph of section eleven of the book.[2]

Nevertheless, Klíma outlines the theoretical foundation for both alternatives already in the tenth paragraph of *The World as Consciousness and Nothing*, immediately before introducing the idea of absolute subjectivism.[3] The point of departure is an emphasis on the phenomenal nature of all available reality pointing to the experiencing consciousness. In this respect, Klíma's

* The text is part of the Czech Science Foundation grant project (GA ČR) *Individualism in the Czechoslovak Philosophy 1918–1948*, No. 19-14180S.

1 Klíma, L., *Collected Essays III. The World, etc.* (*Sebrané spisy III. Svět atd.*). Ed. E. Abrams. Praha, Torst 2017, p. 15; further cited as Klíma, L., *Collected Essays III*.

2 Ibid., p. 15.

3 Ibid., p. 25.

book carries on an important modern intellectual tradition, most famously explicated in Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason*, only achieving its own originality in the author's radical formulation of this thought:

> "'The external world' is but a part of the inner world, Sirius is a part of 'my' consciousness just as the concept of 'change' is; nothing exists for 'me' apart from 'my' consciousness…"[4]

With regard to the overall tone of the book, it might seem plausible to claim that the quotation marks around the words "I" and "my" refer to the plurality of experiencing consciousnesses, each expressing their own experience in the first person. However, the quotation marks here more likely signify the questioning of the legitimacy of the concepts "I", "my", and "the subject", and Klíma's text that follows just goes to confirm this: "There is neither 'subject', nor 'object' – no childish fictions based on the illusions of 'I' and 'the whole', exist – there are only *mental states*."[5] What Klíma is denying here is not the thought of consciousness as always somehow relating to itself, but rather the conception of the subject as a correlate of an object that is thus being determined by that object. Klíma rejects the idea of the I as always being situated, in one way or another, in a multitude of particular beings, the I which is being determined[6] by this situation.

In the eleventh paragraph, Klíma commences his thought process with a radical claim, where he refers – partly critically – to one of his most important inspiring figures:

> "That *absolute 'subjectivism'* – 'theoretical egoism' – is irrefutable, was acknowledged even by Schopenhauer, who considered it a thorn in his side."[7]

4 Ibid. – Of the authors representing the above tradition, most often designated by the name "phenomenalism", Klíma gives praise mainly to George Berkeley. "His" Berkeley, however, is rather a model example of the "dogmatic idealist" of Kant's polemic in *Critique of Pure Reason*, proclaiming space and all objects in it as mere fictions, than the real author of *A Treatise Concerning the Principles of Human Knowledge*. The term "Berkeleyism", which Klíma sometimes uses to denote the phenomenalistic character of his own philosophy, is thus, before all, a provocative reference to Klíma's own extremism in following this tradition. (For Kant's explication of Berkeley's philosophy compare to Kant, I., *Critique of Pure Reason.* Transl. P. Guyer – A. W. Wood. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press 1998, p. 326, B 274–275.)

5 Klíma, L., *Collected Essays III*, p. 25.

6 With the intention of breaking free from the limitations of the subject-object correlation, Klíma surprisingly agrees with contemporary adherents of speculative realism, however different their general aims may be. Compare to e.g. Meillassoux, Q., *Aprés la finitude. Essai sur la nécessité de la contingence.* Paris, Éditions du Seuil 2006, p. 18ff.

7 Klíma, L., *Collected Essays III*, p. 25.

However strange the statement about the irrefutability of subjectivism may be, it can come as no surprise, since it is merely a consistent conclusion of the thesis that the world is 'my' own subjective mental state, as developed in the tenth paragraph. If the material exterior is refused, then the plurality of subjects mutually relativising each other can be refused as well. What is consequential here is the author's sharp critique of Schopenhauer, who, in the context of his theory, could not come up with a single argument against solipsism and remained content with an appeal to common sense.[8] Therefore, nothing prevents Klíma from reinforcing his own conception of subjectivity with the idea of the world as a complex interaction of dream-like fictions, concluding with the deification of the thus-understood self:

> "Absolute subjectivism is the most uplifting, tempting and positive philosophical possibility: making the individual *everything*, a 'god' – pleno sensu, leaves the field free for all the possibilities, e.g. the attainment of ultimate 'bliss'…"[9]

Perhaps the most surprising thought of the paragraph is therefore its last statement: "Absolute subjectivism will remain an *open question* for 'us'."[10]

Continuing on his explication in *The World as Consciousness and Nothing*, Klíma throws himself "into the embrace of the first possibility, a mild and decent girl"[11] – proving that "that which is hidden behind all matter, [is] identical to that which is hidden behind the brain: consciousness."[12] The answer to the question of why Klíma abandons the tempting position of absolute subjectivism (although he does not reject it completely, either) is quite

8 Compare to Schopenhauer, A., *World as Will and Idea.* Transl. R. B. Haldane – J. Kemp. London, Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner & Co. 1909, p. 133–136. – Arthur Schopenhauer not only directly inspired Klíma' phenomenalism (even Klíma's understanding of Kant and Berkeley is mediated by the presentation of their philosophy in Schopenhauer's work), but also strongly influenced Klíma's rejection of the traditional conception of will as being fundamentally servient, governable by reason. His conceptions of "freedom" (*volnost*) and "liberty" (*osvobozenost*) are, however, created mainly in confrontation with the conception of the "will to power" of Friedrich Nietzsche, the most important philosopher to cope with Schopenhauer. (For Klíma's relationship to Nietzsche, see especially Heftrich, U., *Nietzsche in Bohemia /Nietzsche v Čechách/.* Transl. V. Koubová. Praha, Hynek 1999, p. 54ff.)

9 Klíma, L., *Collected Essays III*, p. 26.

10 Ibid. The very first reviewer of *The World as Consciousness and Nothing* (*Svět jako vědomí a nic*) Emanuel Chalupný, attributes a solipsistic conclusion to it. Exactly speaking, Chalupný was quite wrong about it, but, nevertheless, he succeeded in portraying the inner dynamic of the work: "The world is only the consciousness of the subject. I am the subject. The world is merely my fiction – I am all, I am god." Chalupný, E., The World as Consciousness and Nothing. Written by L… (Svět jako vědomí a nic. Napsal L…). *Přehled*, 4, 1906, No. 37, 38, p. 658.

11 Klíma, L., *Collected Essays III*, p. 15.

12 Ibid., p. 27.

simple. Klíma is not primarily interested in speculation, making conclusions on the basis of accepted premises, but rather in making decisions in life. He simply cannot accept egosolistic egodeism because of his awareness of his own self-evident, mostly unthematised, but nevertheless strong faith in the existence of the world and the things in it. However, the thought of egosolism and self-deification, *egodeism*, does not abandon Klíma and, several years later, it finally firmly establishes itself in his work. Klíma poetically describes this acceptance of his own solitary divinity in a letter to Antonín Pavel of March 14, 1914:

> "1909, Friday, August 13 […] so it happened, in the forest of 'Kamýk', under a sun at half past four which was covered in a thin, white veil of a bleak, sultry gleam, there it shone out of me, after 2 years of endeavour, the boldest, most appalling, most noble of all thoughts that man ever gave birth to: *to be, from now on, in this life, essentially, truly, and fully a Deus, a creator omnium!* Here and now, to *act*, just as He acts in his most pristine state! – and along with that, the knowledge that this goal […] is wholly self-evident and attainable in terms of my […] egosolism."[13]

"Spiritual exercises" figure at the beginning of Klíma's conversion, the purported goal of which was an attainment of peace of the soul, of imperturbability towards the outside. Their actual outcomes are, however, ecstatic, mystical states in which Klíma experiences his own singularity, sovereignty, divinity. Although the external world does not disappear for him, it loses its pressing quality and begins to seem unreal, dependent on the consciousness of the observer.

Klíma eventually fails in this egodeistic practice of his – the ecstatic states that he learned to induce grow weaker or do not arrive at all, and so the hitherto practising mystic stands before a difficult life choice. Klíma describes this situation in a gripping manner in a letter to his friend Miloš Srb of November 4, 1917, first published under the title "I am the Absolute Will".[14]

13 Klíma, L., *Collected Essays II. Hominibus* (*Sebrané spisy II. Hominibus*). Ed. E. Abrams. Praha, Torst 2006, p. 58; further cited as Klíma, L., *Collected Essays II.* Compare to the author's diary entry from August 13, 1909. Klíma, L., *Collected Essays I. Mea* (*Sebrané spisy I. Mea*). Ed. E. Abrams. Praha, Torst 2005, p. 21–22.

14 The title was given by Jiří Němec, who published the letter in 1977 in a samizdat edition Expedition. See Machovec, M., *The Influence of the Literary and Philosophical Work of Ladislav Klíma on Life and Work of the Czech Underground Authors* (*Ohlasy literárního a filozofického díla Ladislava Klímy v životě a tvorbě českých undergroundových autorů*). In: Gilk, E. – Hrabal, J. (eds.), *Eternity is Not a Pocket With a Hole So That Something Could Fall Out of It. A Collection of Essays Dedicates to Ladislav Klíma* (*Věčnost není děravá kapsa, aby se z ní něco ztratilo. Soubor studií věnovaných Ladislavu Klímovi*). Olomouc, Aluze 2010, p. 9.

> "I have had many and beautiful victories; one great victory did not shine through: the transformation of thunderstorms into a lasting sun. With both extreme effort and energy, with the fiercest fury, for three years I attacked, using hundreds of means: thought and action, inaction and waiting, dreaming, fighting, defiance, roughness, mildness, with many, newly created methods and mental and physical tricks, using ascesis, continuous self-discipline, leaps, heroism… […] In the end, the entire practice turned into a furious raping of the whole psyche; I was running mindlessly, headfirst like a ram against the walls of an eternal city, waving incessantly with beast-like paws against distant cloudy visions. Growing pale, they faded more and more, becoming more and more grotesque, until they lost almost all resemblance to what they used to be […] Three paths now lay ahead of me: one of carrying on as thus far: at its end stood grotesquely grinning Stupidity; absolute heroism and Indifference to the *act*: at its end stood a black Death; and a provisory return to the human. I decided for the return to the human."[15]

He found the loss of the ability to attain mystical ecstasies extremely troubling. Longing for a return to the divine states, Klíma suffered for a long time, as evidenced by his numerous texts. For example, in a letter to Miloš Srb of August 29, 1916, he admits that "for transcending human nature, one suffers the – completely natural – revenge of all human instincts, which begin a most horrendous disintegration" and in a letter to Antonín Kříž of September 20, 1916, he writes about his inability to come to terms with the provisionally accepted external world:

> "I am […] terribly unfocused. In my inner situation, every little disturbance from the outside cuts too far and deep and vehemently; in my external situation, almost everything that is around me disturbs me – even that which is inside me; now I will never again properly return to myself."[16]

The loss of sovereign singularity, however, opened the door to philosophical work in its own right. Despite all the hardships caused by his new state, Klíma, who experienced a god-like state (in this human, imperfect life), returns and can now use his experience as working material, as a perspective from which he can relate to the human world, developing both his experience and his newly adopted situation in discourse.

15 Klíma, L., *Collected Essays II*, p. 293.
16 Ibid., p. 177 and 181–182.

From this point onwards, Klíma's philosophical orientation in the world is motivated by the polarity grounded in the contradiction between the consciousness of his own egosolistic divinity, legitimised by prior experience, and the natural, matter-of-fact acknowledgement of the existence of the external world and of other people, and thus also the acceptance of his own humanity. A reference to this polarity can be found in the basic scheme of Klíma's egodeism, in the tension between the poles of *deoessence* (or *deessence*) and *panrealisation*. Briefly, but cogently, Klíma introduces the first pole, being God in this life, in the aforementioned letter of November 4, 1917. He arrives at the idea of being God through a radicalisation of the idea of "liberty" (*osvobození*), or "freedom" (*volnost*):

> "…to attain Freedom (*Volnost*) means to become God. It is, however, necessary to discern between two things, when one has attained Freedom: A.) Understanding and penetration of the thesis – penetration of the thesis 'I am Free, Absolute', strongly enough for it to become a fundamental, unshakable conviction 'ideally' governing the whole soul, setting its key tone, her rotation axis, its home port. B.) A real, wholly serious; *practical* control of the idea over the whole psyche, harmonious, equanimous, and complete obedience to its imperatives. I have attained the first; not the second. The first can be attained in a few months, if one sets out on the right path. The second takes centillions of years – yet, in a certain, very restricted sense, and under very favourable circumstances, already in this life."[17]

The core of being God in human life – the core of deoessence – lies therefore in explicit acknowledgment of the absence of any ontologically relevant correlate to one's own subjectivity, of anything not derived from it,[18] and this very being is an incessant self-affirmation of the subject, who is conscious of himself in his own truth: that he is the *absolute wanting* of himself, which can be expressed in the motto "I am the Absolute Will" – and which may be and is desirable to be *evoked* by this motto.[19]

An explanation of the seeming plurality of beings and its related finiteness and variously-experienced dependence – animal-like nothingness – of the human subject is provided by the "cosmogonic" idea of *panrealisation*, developed and expanded by the ideas of *ludibrionism* (or *ludibrism*), *oneirism*

17 Klíma, L., *Collected Essays II*, p. 283–284.
18 See ibid., p. 296–297.
19 Ibid., p. 284.

and *illusionism*.[20] In a letter of November 4, 1917, Klíma, the egosolist, introduces this thought as an appeal to the recipient of his letter. Here, he ascribes divinity paradoxically not to 'himself', but to 'you' or 'You':

> "Your current existence is a God's Dream; a sublimely ludibrionist Dream of the all-willing God. The knowledge of egodeism is the Great Awakening. With this in mind, you can do away with the truly horrendous contrast between the absoluteness of Your Ego and that which Your being seems to be 'in the light of empirical reality': a mere animal, completely determined, a milieu fully moulded and fabricated, a molecule in the Immeasurable… – The object of God's willing can only be Everything; in his eternity, God desires to become everything that is thinkable, thus even Your existence today, – an illusion of Yours and a dream-like autosuggestion that he is small and dependent and one of many; precisely the special illusion that Your existence currently represents. If he wanted to become that, he had to become that; what else could this Divine metamorphosis possibly be *other* than *You*? But this very logical argumentation irrefutably disproves the most popular, seemingly most powerful and, in reality, the most trivial objection against egosolism. That on which it relies immediately disproves it: the colossal paradox of the matter: its divine ludibriosity, the condescencio of the Highest towards the lowest, disguising Everything as nothingness – a rebellious self-deceit, the most spiritual game of hide-and-seek with oneself, a sublime tumult. All this reflects terribly fundamental mischievous confusion of Everything, that it itself is the proof – the foundation – of egosolism."[21]

In Klíma's opinion, in his own *wanting of everything*, God transcends even his own singularity and absoluteness, and becomes everything, thus also becoming "me", "a rational animal", "a mortal"… At the same time, however, God in his omnipotence remains God *pleno sensu*, and his fall into determinedness is thus merely God's game, through which he plays, deceives and lulls himself to sleep. Nevertheless, even in his oneiric being as a "mere animal", God still retains his inward tendency: his wanting of everything encompasses also wanting Himself as God – a contrary tendency to self-forgetting. An appropriate expression of *this* wanting is

20 The term ludibrionism is derived from the Latin word *ludibrium* (a toy, a game, a play), the term oneirism comes from the Greek word *oneiros* (a dream).

21 Klíma, L., *Collected Essays II*, p. 297–298.

> "the position of egosolism – an ascent to an illusionist viewing of the world – that views everything in *victorious* contempt *beneath oneself…*".[22]

Thus, Klíma's abandonment of his endeavour to attain deoessence and his return to the human world mean an explicit acceptance of a dual approach to empiric reality. On the one hand, an illusionist viewing of the world as a pure semblance, where "being tricked is a natural law par excellence",[23] a ludibrionistic game involving everything that the world offers, and in unity with that an oneiristic dissolution of the boundaries between perception and dreaming, while, on the other hand, there is the human – for Klíma, all-too-human – faith in the existence of things and other people, although more or less modified with regard to his own egodeity. From now on, deoessence remains in his life as an unattained – or perhaps merely unmastered – pole of Divine self-embracement in the process of panrealisation, as the ideal of God's victory over his own self-deceit.

Any interaction with other people – be it during personal meetings, in correspondence, or in the occasional addressing of the reader in texts meant for publication – can thus always be interpreted by Klíma as explicit participation in the illusionistic play of the world, or perhaps even as temporary submission to the universal illusion, but at the same time it is also interaction, entry to the interpersonal dimension, even for him. And perhaps it was this, Klíma's paradoxical duality that captured the attention of his contemporaries and his readers – none of them became a neophyte of egosolism, but they were, nevertheless, attracted by his combination of a lived and planned denial of the world with his engagement in it. It is as if, for them, this only living egodeist was an embodiment of an extreme level of the human capability to transcend all empirical reality – and, in unity with that, was also a living example of its limitations.

In an article dedicated to Klíma's second book *Tractates and Dictates* (1922), the philosopher Karel Vorovka, who was always sympathetic to Klíma, renounces any entitlement to critique or review of Klíma's texts and makes the decision to treat the author's egosolism "as fearfully" as if one were "mixing nitric acid with glycerine."[24] He gives the highest praise not to the content of the work itself, but rather to the "spectrally and inhumanly strong selective tendency" of its author – Klíma's love for the noble in man.[25] According to

22 Ibid., p. 290.
23 Ibid., p. 183.
24 Vorovka, K., Ladislav Klíma: The Tractates and Dictates (Ladislav Klíma: Traktáty a diktáty), a review. *Ruch filosofický*, 2, 1922, No. 8–10, p. 73–74.
25 Ibid., p. 75.

Tomáš Trnka, an intellectual fellow of Vorovka, Klíma's importance for the future of Czech philosophy lies in his demonstrating that to philosophise means to "truly think, to agonise over mysteries, or to at least realise the existence of mysteries", but "as for the content of his ideas" he does not expect any future influence.[26] Julius Fučík, a young Marxist journalist, also agrees with the main points of these two thinkers of the intellectual circle around Ruch filosofický. In his opinion, Klíma is a "hundred-percent metaphysical poet, whose consciousness encompassed the whole world and whose magical words penetrated all the way to the depths of the inexpressible", however, he thinks that "the development towards intellectual independence and greatness, which has only just begun in our lands," is following a path wholly different from that of "the philosopher of the *Tractates and Dictates* and *The World as Consciousness and Nothing*."[27]

Of all of Klíma's contemporaries, it was F.X. Šalda who took the deepest dive into the nature of the "earthly mission" of the Czech egosolist. He proclaims Klíma to be "the freest philosophical figure that we have today," and emphasises that he turned himself into this figure "for us and for our sake."[28] He calls his readers to:

> "…forcefully break free for a day from your offices, shops, banks, counters, factories and workshops, schools, hospitals, laboratories, and enter the solitude of your spirit with a book by Klíma. And come back out of it at the end of the day. No doubt you will come out *different than you entered*. True, you will eat, sleep, work, count, read your newspaper, natter with your neighbour as before. But still! You will be *different*!"[29]

It most likely does not come as a surprise that, in his text, Šalda does not linger very long on the contentual side of Klíma's philosophy, and that he also, understandably enough, warns (referring to Descartes) of the danger of delving too deep into metaphysical inquiries, which can make one's "casual, active life" seem rather dull and can cause one to turn away from it.[30] From Šalda's perspective (and also from the perspectives of the above-cited authors), Klíma may be characterised as a man who, in his egocentrism, unwillingly sacrifices himself for the benefit of others (he created himself "for our

26 Trnka, T., The Philosopher Ladislav Klíma (Filosof Ladislav Klíma). *Národní listy*, 68, 1928, No. 111, p. 9 (signed F. Trnka).
27 Fučík, J., Ladislav Klíma Died (Zemřel Ladislav Klíma). *Kmen*, 2, 1928, No. 4–5, p. 80 (signed Karel Vávra).
28 Šalda, F. X., *The Work of F. X. Šalda, 9. Timely and Timeless* (*Dílo F. X. Šaldy 9. Časové i nadčasové*). Praha, Melantrich 1936, p. 435.
29 Ibid., p. 438.
30 Ibid.

sake"!) and who is then consciously sacrificed by these very people – through their boundless admiration and warm yet reserved acceptance.

A modest proof of this aspect of Klíma's influence can be found in the philosophical work by one of the aforementioned recipients of Klíma's letters, Miloš Srb. In his only monograph, published twelve years after Klíma's death,[31] Srb deals critically with the legacy of his old friend, where he not only refuses his solipsism, but also distances himself from Klíma's thoroughly idealistic philosophy, since Srb understands the whole of reality as "something simply given, primary, irreducible to anything else…"[32] But even in this book, passages can be found where Klíma's influence is thought of as wholly positive:

> "Only that which *empowers* life is good and right and healthy. 'To always stand tall and undefeated, to feel above everything' – is the most important hygienic rule. To accept all that is and that happens as given, and to see it beneath oneself, to stamp it with one's own seal of sovereignty. Whatever the situation may be, however I may try to deal with it, whatever success or hardships I may encounter along the way – it is always necessary to feel *above* this situation, to feel deeply independent, unperturbed, absolute."[33]

In place of Klíma's acknowledgement of "the self" as the only true reality, always guaranteeing absolute superiority over urgency from the outside, Srb posits the autonomy of the finite, human subject, with his ability to *be himself* even in a situation where he is ontically overwhelmed by acknowledged external reality. However, Srb remains faithful to Klíma in the experience and description of his own freedom – he feels (although only very deep down) independent, *absolute*.

In his texts written after his turnabout in August 1909, Klíma himself is an almost strict egosolist, interpreting all of the paradoxicality arising from a solipsist's active living in human society in the context of his oneirism and ludibrionism. Nevertheless, even in his writings some symptomatic hesitation may be found. For instance, in a letter to Emanuel Chalupný from May 2, 1912, he notes: "and yet, egosolism is not paradoxical enough for it to finally

31 Srb, M., *A Living Reality. A Philosophical Perspective on Life and the World* (*Živá skutečnost. Filosofický pohled na život a svět*). Praha, Orbis 1940. – At the end of his, to a certain extent, critical review, Jan Patočka notes: "A book testifying of a truly philosophical life, shaming the pride of many of the so-called 'experts'." Patočka, J., Srb, M. A Living Reality. A Philosophical Perspective on Life and the World (rec.). *Česká mysl*, 35, 1941, No. 1–2, p. 92.

32 Srb, M., *A Living Reality. A Philosophical Perspective on Life and the World*, p. 140.

33 Ibid., p. 129.

become true!"[34] Yes, it is not egosolism itself which is paradoxical, but rather the real presence of a living egosolist among people, along with his dialogue and synergy with them.

More evidence of Klíma's uncertainty may be found in the above-cited Preface to *The World as Consciousness and Nothing*: while comparing the explicit pluralism of his debut work with his later philosophy of egosolism (the core thought of which is already present in this, his debut work), Klíma surprises the reader with a proclamation that is syntactically odd in Czech language : "To this day, the reconciliation of both has obviously not been attempted. (*„O smíření obého se zjevně dosud nepokuseno."*)"[35] In the notes to the third volume of Klíma's *Collected Works* (*Sebrané spisy*), Erika Abrams includes the original, deleted form of the sentence: "Obviously I have not, to this day, attempted the reconciliation of both."[36] The need to change the original formulation of the thought, to make it impersonal, may be a sign of the author's indecision – on the one hand, an awareness of a deficiency of egosolism is apparent, even though this awareness does not lead to its complete rejection. On the other hand, he feels a foreboding of his own incompetence to surpass egosolism.

It was beyond Klíma's powers to utter the whole truth of what it was like for a convinced egosolist to live among other people, among "us" – however, not even his friends or readers are competent enough to formulate it. Each one of them can only point to a certain aspect of it, conditioned by their own perspective, and not even the sum of such perspectives – which is essentially unlimited, because dialogue with Klíma is not just a thing of the past even in today's age – can bring us to a definitive conclusion regarding his legacy. And perhaps that is where the value of Klíma's life and work lies.

34 Klíma, L., *Collected Essays II*, p. 33.
35 Klíma, L., *Collected Essays III*, p. 15.
36 Ibid., p. 697.

To Play Like Napoleon. Klíma's Egosolism as a Call to Active Participation in the World

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A Demon at Play

With his philosophy of *egosolism* or *ludibrionism*, Ladislav Klíma is unique in Czechoslovak philosophy not only in terms of his work, but also in terms of his eccentric lifestyle, in which he actively and inventively applied his worldview to himself, which eventually proved fatal for him, since he died before reaching the age of fifty. In order to prove (mainly to himself) that man is nothing else than consciousness and God at the same time, and that all phenomenal, *secondary* perceptions in the subjective mode of being are but results of filtration of universal consciousness[1] through the imperfect human cerebral apparatus – i.e. not only has human life no value whatsoever in itself, but it is solely "my own mental state",[2] and therefore exists purely as

1 Klíma uses the concept of universal consciousness in the same context as Schopenhauer and Nietzsche do when they speak of universal will to live or will to power. From Schopenhauer, he mainly adopts the principle of the existentially indifferent multiplicity of the phenomenal world situated within the unity of the world-in-itself and the will to live. The works of Ladislav Klíma generally offer themselves to a comparison to these and other names of European philosophy. The necessary comparison of Klíma to other apparent influences on which he builds his philosophy of egosolism is deserving of a separate paper which would clearly show that Klíma's thinking does not "spring out of nowhere". The phenomenon of playing a game could be compared to Heraclitus and Eugen Fink. For reasons of restricted space, this paper does not enter into such a comparison and, furthermore, I believe that such an extensive comparison might not necessarily bear the desired fruits, as this paper aims at an independent interpretation, driven by an accent on *experiencing* Klíma's philosophy. However, it is important to note that Klíma's synthesis of Kant, Nietzsche, Schopenhauer, and others, is undoubtedly one of the most original creations of Czech thought of the first half of the 20th century, for it puts forward a philosophy which goes beyond anything that was considered "standard" discourse in Klíma's day.

2 Klíma, L., *The World as Consciousness and Nothing* (*Svět jako vědomí a nic*). Praha, Štorch-Marien 1928, p. 23; further cited as *The World* (*Svět*).

the given consciousness – Klíma used to sleep naked in the snow and to expose himself to various other extreme bodily and spiritual ordeals, through which, in his own words, he induced hallucinations,[3] in order to escape his body and overcome the limits of the physical world, if only for a short time.

Klíma takes these states to be nothing less than "flashes from the 'world beyond'".[4] It is precisely in the dissolution of the distinction between the subject and the object – in the merging of the will of individual consciousness with the universal will – that the crux of Klíma's philosophy lies. If all experience is simply a mental state, then all that we regard as human life is a mere fiction, a dream. But Klíma goes even deeper in this denial of the phenomenal world: the claim that we "dream that something exists"[5] must be subjected to an additional step of critique. Hence, according to Klíma, we dream that we dream that something exists, yet, in reality, nothing exists, and this nothing is identical to consciousness. The realisation of this fact constitutes the first step in the attainment of an egosolistic state of existence, where the phenomenal world is constantly being created by the individual, or more precisely, where the self becomes an unlimited actor perpetually immersed in the act of playing. This perspective opens up a possibility of a specific liberation of consciousness from its phenomenal form, not dissimilar to Schopenhauer's ideas on contemplation. However, unlike Schopenhauer, who remained at the level of theory, ethics, and aesthetics, and did not aspire directly to a practical attainment of nirvana (*contemplation*, for Schopenhauer, means liberation from the phenomenal aspect of being through an intuitive "comprehension" of the eternal Platonic Ideas), in *The World* Klíma aims at a practical application of his worldview.

The distinctive tone of Klíma's philosophy, further strengthened by his image of a romantically idealised, decadent and self-proclaimed madman, may, at the first sight, evoke the impression that his philosophy necessarily leads to the crudest type of individualism: to nihilism and to the assumption of a thoroughly passive stance in which the philosopher eventually encloses himself in his own inner world and keeps himself in there by training his will and ingesting narcotics. This impression is, however, false. It may be assumed that precisely the "twist" that we will discuss below is what differentiates Klíma from these nihilistic stances. Such stances were held in low esteem by most of Klíma's Czechoslovak philosophical contemporaries and were thor-

3 Klíma, L., My Own Autobiography (Vlastní životopis). In: *Strange Stories* (*Podivné příběhy*). Praha, Česká expedice 1991, p. 5–16.

4 *The World*, p. 139.

5 Ibid., p. 22.

oughly denounced by them around the time that the newly created Czechoslovakia was gaining shape. However, Klíma was highly respected among his contemporaries, especially in his later life, although it does not seem that he ever belonged or wanted to belong to the "official philosophers" of the time or that they ever regarded him as a colleague. Nevertheless, Klíma's death resonated strongly through the philosophical world of the First Republic; dozens of obituaries were published, acknowledging the deceased philosopher as a truly unique *phenomenon* of Czechoslovak thinking.[6]

Klíma's philosophy in *The World* is, in fact, essentially *practical* – as far as practical life is concerned, it could even be described as *anti-nihilistic* – and, as we will see, the philosopher abandons the Kantian tradition to a far lesser extent that one would expect, given his "rebellious" reputation. In the end, his dissolution of the subject-object distinction and the fulfilment of *egosolism* are nothing else than the consciously and thoroughly habituated ability of the human will to *strongly* want what one *can* want – this is the core of Klíma's conviction of the *purely* fictive, phenomenal difference between the individual and universal consciousnesses; egosolism is a practical reconciliation of these two subsets of the same whole – it is a reconciliation of the difference between the inner, wanted world, and the external world, as it is in its phenomenal existence.

Klíma, usually portrayed as a philosophical extremist, ceases to appear so demonic when viewed from this perspective. We eventually find out that his scepticism, bile, and bitterness are purely *methodical*. They do not express disdain for the world itself, but rather disdain for the way the *lowly people*[7] live in the world. With his odd method, Klíma leads us to a conclusion that is much more prosaic than a reader of *The World* would expect: to pleasant – not easy, but pleasant – being. The joy of the game into which the world of the egosolist transforms itself is ultimately the only thing that matters in phenomenal being. This leads to an active approach towards life: life ceases to be insufferable thanks to the strength of the egosolist's will to *want what can be wanted* – it is, thus, primarily a matter of *deep* self-knowledge – and it turns into a continuous game, the result of which, moreover, *is irrelevant* (and in this indifference lies the liberation of consciousness): the only thing that can be done in life is to play – precisely for the reason that nothing whatsoever is important, everything is identical to everything, all differ-

6 See Dominika Lewis's paper.

7 In Klíma's view, virtually everybody is a lowly person except for several unique personalities, such as Napoleon or the Prussian king Frederick the Great, whom he both names in *The World* often and gladly. Klíma links lowliness with weakness of will, passivity, and cowardice in various places in *The World*.

ences are found only in the cerebral apparatus (i.e. in sensory perception), and therefore everything can be subordinate to play, and the *subjective joy* it provides is the only thing capable of making one's stay in this world more pleasant.

Due to the unfortunate fact that man finds himself in this world involuntarily, without his own intent, but, at the same time, is usually incapable of ending his own phenomenal existence (through suicide), there is no other option left than to approach life as a game – this is the only way to be *free*. The nihilist takes life to be, at best, a necessary evil. Klíma overcomes this stance by turning it on its head in the aforementioned "twist", whereby he understands this necessary evil precisely as an opportunity to play and be entertained by the existential game. Should one aspire to become a strong spirit deserving of Klíma's admiration, that is, a spirit of the magnitude of Napoleon or Frederick the Great, one's game must be colossal, and one's playing of it must likewise shake the foundations of the whole world.

A Strong Will

Let us stop for a while to inspect the great figures that Klíma admires. Evidently, he only looked up to the greatest spirits in history. What kind of spirit must he have seen himself to be to claim in the third paragraph of his debut work *The World as Consciousness and Nothing*, published anonymously and at the author's own expense and at only 26 years of age, that Nietzsche was generally weak? According to Klíma, Nietzsche remained soft, sentimental, loving, and poetic. In the very same Nietzsche who formed the cornerstone of Klíma's own philosophy and to whom he ascribed "the greatest willpower among philosophers", Klíma finds a weakling incapable of making the step up to the *Übermensch*, a man drowning in his own passions and artistic states.

So what is this willpower according to which the greatness of one's spirit can be evaluated? For Klíma, it is the unique capability of an individual to consciously recognise his maximum potential, to actively set out to develop it, and to incessantly attack the limits of that potential in an effort to overcome them. The nobility of one's spirit is thus not determined by one's social status, education, or employment, but solely by the degree to which one is able to accurately pinpoint one's own potential and embrace it by starting to realise it actively in one's own life. Such behaviour is a testimony of a *strong will*. However, only those potential abilities that can be developed in a given phenomenal time-space and amidst given individual intellectual capabilities are beneficial; in other words, the slave cannot become a master if he is also a slave inside and is incapable of freeing himself in practice: then it

is only appropriate for him to accept his role, to reconcile the *wanted* with the *possible*, and to be a "good slave". Action derived from this position is *virtuous*.[8]

Although Klíma's egosolism does not operate with the concept of the *Übermensch*, his idea of the ego as the agent constituting the phenomenal world correlates to a certain degree with Nietzsche's famous conception of the *Übermensch*. Nevertheless, it differs from it in its ethical and practical conclusion. While, for Nietzsche, the "über-" quality of the *Übermensch* involves establishing one's ego as an imperative defining morality and ethics, an imperative which is thus unilateral, Klíma's conception of a virtuous man is more synthetic. Nietzsche's principle seems generally destructive-creative, with the *Übermensch* demolishing the current social order, human civilization as a whole in its ontological totality, in order to build a new one out of the rubble; the principle of Klíma's egosolism, however, lies rather in considering how to harmonise the desires stemming from one's consciously recognised potential with the "real" state of affairs in the phenomenal world. Klíma's liberation from earthly life therefore does not lie in the transformation of the whole world according to my own will – it does not lie in the reduction of the world to *my* own specific principle; he does not deny the (albeit fictive) subjectivity of other consciousnesses (that is why Klíma rejected the accusations of solipsism raised against him by those who did not understand his philosophy).[9] It lies in seizing one's own unique life mission with one's highest potential and realising this potential – a virtuous spirit therefore does not strive to change the *whole* world according to his will; he changes only what leads him to his own *rightly* determined calling: this is the kind of action that reflects the willpower of a particular, individual consciousness. There is no greater comedy than a lowly man bursting with ambition realisable only by a strong will; there is no greater atrocity than a strong will recoiling from itself and shrinking into lowly ambition.

According to Klíma, Napoleon, who is most often cited as an example in *The World*, knew exactly at every moment of his life what he had to do to fulfil the potential bestowed upon him that he was capable of realising in any given situation, albeit in the most difficult of circumstances. Had Napoleon done less than he had to, he would never have risen from an impoverished Corsican nobleman to the master of the whole Europe. On the other hand, had he done more – overestimating his potential, which he eventually

8 Further comparison can be made to Aristotle's *Politics* and the concept of *courage to oneself*, in which the core idea is the effort to erase the contradiction between one's practical life and one's calling.

9 Explicitly stated in the preface to the second edition from 1928 in *The World*, p. 7–12.

did – perhaps his campaign would have ended much sooner. Here, however, Klíma's point re-emerges: none of this actually matters! What Klíma appreciates the most in Napoleon is his will to play again and again, constantly to challenge his fortune and to strive to overcome the insurmountable. Napoleon incessantly attacked the limits of what was possible for him and had his last hearty laugh in the face of failure with his Hundred Days. Such ambition undoubtedly suits a strong will such as his, since it shows itself to be essentially *active* in practical matters.

Klíma, however, generally despised other people. There was only one group of people for which he had a few good words: the workers. He considered the look in their eyes and their faces to be noble and strong; while almost everybody else – especially anthropologists, philosophers, and scholars in general – had dull, expressionless stares, their faces looking depressed and hollow. It is the face of the worker that reflects the inner strength of the spirit residing within him, resulting from the harmony of his inner and humble outer world. Perhaps precisely because the worker actively creates and produces – and does not think much – Klíma values him more than all intellectuals. Man's problem in general lies in the dissonance between his subjective need and the activity which *has to be* done. In this respect, a worker is more virtuous than any philosopher.

Klíma's "Übermensch-like" quality lies in a synchronous negation and affirmation of the phenomenal world. In this way, consciousness enters a state in which any activity becomes so indifferent that there is no reason to refuse it, no matter how much suffering it causes us – after all, these are just fictive states of the soul. Conversely, since this activity stems from one's potential, it must be developed actively, without regard to its usefulness for society or something similarly "un-Klíma-like", but rather with regard to the enjoyment of play, into which the egosolist's activity has been transformed. Back to Napoleon: the reason why he achieved all his great successes was not because he was a brilliant military commander – that was merely a particular manifestation of his strong will. Napoleon achieved his success because he did not flinch in the face of death or failure, but instead kept on playing the game; this is another aspect that inspired Klíma to proclaim that precisely this kind of daredevil character – one who sees through the fictive difference between life and death and therefore understands life to be a mere individual dream floating in an infinite, irrational, universal consciousness – is a *great* character. In other words, the fact that the lives of Napoleon's soldiers, along with the lives of everyone who died in the conflicts he started, did not matter to him in the slightest makes Napoleon one of the most distinguished spirits in human history. Why?

We emphasise that, as in all of Klíma's works, demand for activity is still present here: a demand for a complete rejection of a passive approach to life which is so typical of the ordinary man, whom Klíma despised because of his living only outside of himself.[10] However, it is in this rejection that man distinguishes himself from animal – only an action which is not driven by necessity is valuable and truly active,[11] since it exceeds the purely passive, "suffering" mode of existence. Napoleon did not *have to* become emperor; he could have remained an impoverished nobleman and profited from his lands or from commerce. To become emperor was not *necessary* for his survival. Napoleon *had the opportunity* to become emperor. If he was *forced to* become one, he would not have been any different from a calf that was forced by its natural growth to become a cow or a bull. All he did for the development of his potential, in fact, exceeded the sphere of the immediate need.

When reading Klíma's texts, it becomes apparent that Klíma considered precisely this kind of activity, the kind that is not directly linked to the survival and reproduction of the life of an individual consciousness, to be so much more superior to all *necessary* activity – this is why he himself liked to risk his own life in an effort to prioritise this "unnecessary" type of activity to the very limit of sustainability. This is the existential drive of the game. It is in this risky preference for the "unnecessary" that the game becomes serious, noble and entertaining. A game that does not leave the protagonist's life hanging by a thread is *weakness* – fear of losing one's life – and is therefore still an imperfect, lowly state of consciousness.

10 "Do you want to form a correct conception of the lowly man? –: Think of your lowly, ridiculous traits, which you are repelled by, just as you are by your excrements, *multiply them by twenty*, add maybe a *hundredth* of your higher traits… , – and you have the lowly man in all its splendour!… – All that functions wholly unconsciously and *mechanically*, like clockwork. When people think about themselves, they do it solely from the impulse of some completely unconscious instinct…: everything in the lowly man actually happens *outside of himself*…" *The World*, p. 149.

11 A parallel with Marx's conception of labour offers itself here. According to Marx, truly human work is only that which is not driven by material necessity, since man shares the need to fulfil material needs with animals and does not differentiate from them if he himself is the immediate consumer of his passions and needs. Klíma also sees as noble only such activity which exceeds the level of pure necessity. He who works merely to assure his survival, who does not work for the joy of the activity itself, but only for the sake of his own reproduction, can in no way aspire to become a strong character. Klíma's joyful individual of the phenomenal world does only that which brings him joy – and he rejoices from that which he can do. The main "twist" in Klíma's thinking is located precisely in the fact that the egosolist ultimately turns everything he does into an act of playing which brings him joy, be it high intellectual work, world conquest, lathing wood, or slaving away in a quarry – in this sense, he is, understandably, quite distant from Marx. I added this note simply to accentuate Klíma's concept of work, since my primary subject of study is the philosophy of *Bildung* in Hegel and Marx.

It is entirely *unnecessary* to play Russian roulette. But one can play it; all the more when one realises that life is indifferent, and so one might even have some fun playing it! What else is there to do other than to play? What are the meaningless little "lives" of men compared to Napoleon's courage and will to fulfil his phenomenal potential through play? And he who at the outset refuses to play, gives up, or loses, he who lets himself be dominated, enslaved, or defeated by someone like Napoleon – by this extremely concentrated, goal-conscious consciousness – deserves nothing but oppression. However, the way Napoleon played the game made him virtuous. The soul's affect actively manifested in a game shaking the phenomenal world is the highest attainable virtue.

Play is chiefly a joyful affirmation of the manifestation of the nothingness of the world which Klíma derives from his conviction that the world is a totality of a finite number of material atoms endowed with spirit, whose mutual interaction – collisions of singular fragments of universal consciousness – *appears* to man through his cognitive apparatus as real, lived existence. In this enclosed system, atoms cannot disappear nor can new ones be added: the result of winning one game is thus merely a loss somewhere else. Each win must be balanced out by a loss, each success must be balanced out by failure, each joyful experience of the spirit by suffering – the imaginary resultant of the world is therefore a constant zero. That is why the world is identical to Nothing and has no meaning. The acceptance of this stance opens up an unlimited field of play, where what matters is neither winning nor losing, but playing itself – actively *experiencing* it and participating in its co-creation; thus, affirmation of the game means affirmation of unlimited will and irrational consciousness.

What, then, is egosolism? It is *my* ability to transform the world according to the rules which *I* myself set and which *I* take as my own – this proclamation, however, entails an unspoken affirmation of how the rules *in this place* were already set before *me* by the laws of nature – I, the egosolist, have, nevertheless, prevailed over the constraints of external rules: I have realized what must be achieved within their limits and have accepted them – *gladly!* – as my own and to such a degree that I can make a game out of overcoming them, since, at the same time, I understand and am constantly reminded of the fact that any activity in the phenomenal world is ultimately indifferent in its consequences, and is only valuable when being experienced during *active consumption of the world*. My world is my dream, my dream is my world – the attainment of absolute harmony between individual and universal consciousness through the affirmation of active participation in phenomenal being, based on the recognition of the ultimate meaninglessness of existence.

The Last Metaphysician

The world, according to Klíma, is an interplay of one's own subjective mental states. However, in addition to one's own consciousness, which is the result of constant filtration of the world in itself, the world is also composed of of what Klíma calls *extra-cerebral matter*. The point of Klíma's "psychoatomism" is that this extra-cerebral matter is, in fact, consciousness itself as well – which, however, means that it is *nothing*, too. Thus, it seems that the primary world is created by interactions of atoms of matter, every one of which is a singular consciousness in itself – a single particle of absolute consciousness. Universal consciousness is comprised of a finite number of atoms, every single one of them containing a whole, i.e. the principle of universality in the form of potentiality for various forms of phenomenal appearance. Therefore, extra-cerebral matter is one's own consciousness, just as all other consciousnesses of all beings and things are. All of these, along with one's own subjective mental states, are atoms bouncing off each other, entering into interactions that make up phenomenal reality. Here we see another instance of Klíma's dissolution of the subject-object distinction. The notion of a difference between one's self and another self is merely the result of a deficiency of the human cerebral apparatus.

The physical proximity of atoms in the phenomenal world testifies of the proximity of spiritual atoms in consciousness. Particles in such a close proximity *vehemently affect* one another and the most vehement relationships then imprint themselves upon a person as his reflexes, through which he reacts to the proximity of certain atoms with an automatic, unintentional reaction – the purest example of this effect are sensory perceptions which result from absolute habituation of the cerebral apparatus to a static or negligibly variable distance between certain singular atoms of consciousness. However, the fundamentally limited nature of man gives rise to his continuing inability to determine once and for all what the relationship between pure consciousness and the phenomenal world is. According to Klíma, these two spheres may either be interconnected in some way, indirectly corresponding to one another, or their relationship may be completely random. The fact that we are unable to solve this problem, however, is purely due to the "unreadiness" of our thinking. There can be other, more perfect, perspectives than our human ones – and even these merely human perspectives are constantly being developed and perfected. Why, then, should not we be able one day to discover what the relationship between phenomena and reality is? Such is Klíma's metaphysical optimism.

In his philosophy, Klíma always takes care not to make man – or at least not the *good* man – a passive object of the course of history. In this sense,

he does not outright negate Nietzsche's concept of the eternal return of the same, but significantly weakens it – the concept is valid, according to Klíma, but its validity applies only to the phenomenal realm, and so the concept is rather the result of "falling back" within philosophy than a genuine description of being that would reach beyond phenomenality. On the level of the primary world, Klíma transforms the eternal return of the same into the eternal presence of the same (that which is identical, i.e. nothing, i.e. consciousness, cannot disappear anywhere, cannot change, and therefore has nowhere to return from). On the level of practical action in the secondary world, the eternal return of the same is rather a display of a bad mode of being – if the same always returns, then the *I* is merely a passive recipient and not an active agent – however, here again we come upon Klíma's special "twist": what the realization of the meaninglessness of the effort to be active actually represents is freedom of action, i.e. the virtue of doing something that has no meaning, which calls for unlimited activity. The fact that my action ultimately brings nothing, that it does not matter, is precisely the reason why I should act.

What the idea of active participation in the world precisely means still needs to be clarified; what is the action, to which we are called. During incorrect conduct of constructing a philosophy of consciousness, the most treacherous element of all comes into play, the greatest enemy of the ludibrionist, of the one who plays: nature's Trojan horse – and here we get to the crystalline form of the *true* source of Klíma's ultra-radical individualism – *reflection*. The absence of reflection is another specific characteristic of Klíma's Napoleon. Reflection, this flaw of nature, is the source of human weakness, since it makes one unable to acknowledge oneself as a god-like subject identical to universal will: that is the reason why all philosophy hitherto has, according to Klíma, "fallen back" in its thinking.[12] In its reflective quality, philosophy has always recoiled from its truly serious conclusions and consequences. This "falling back" can be well illustrated if we imagine a man determined to commit suicide by jumping from a height; he is so close to ending his own miserable existence, running, approaching the edge – and then at the last moment he stops. Only dirt and rocks fall into the abyss beneath him where he – the player – should have fallen, but instead, there he stands now, a repulsive creature full of angst, a slave to his own fear of the consequences of his actions – at the very last moment, reflection has defeated his will.

Therefore, reflection, this highest form of confusion of a singular consciousness in its existence, must be bypassed. Activity in the world equals

12 First mentioned in *The World*, p. 16.

a negation of reflection and, conversely, absolute reflection equals absolute passivity of the will, a passivity where will is wholly suspended by fear of the consequences of active deeds. In the case of the suicidal man, his strongest act of will is to overcome reflection, the daring, instantaneous, unreflective step after which there is no turning back.

An idea, always immediately contaminated by doubt, must be purified and clarified by eliminating reflection. If reflection is a mere illusion of impossibility through which we are deceived by nature in the external world, then we must rid completely ourselves of such deceit. Without reflection, and thus without any limitation from the external world, everything that a strong will wishes is right and feasible. For the same reasons, both logic and causality must also be eliminated, since they are only nonsensical semblances created by the need of the imperfect human intellect to systematise concepts and perceive them in terms of time.

> "There are two kinds of logic: natural and artificial. Natural logic lies in every clear thought; it need not be sought, – or else we find artificial logic, which is just as ugly as her sister is beautiful."[13]

Put differently and clearly: *true* logic is not found in thought, in reason, in analysis – it is found in action and unmediated activity. Logic thus cannot be taught, it can only be experienced and lived. False logic, on the other hand, stupefies man and denies him the true and divine knowledge, which is egosolism.

However, this gives rise to the question of why, in that case, does Klíma philosophise at all? Why did he not remain a strong, purely active spirit? Why did he begin to write in the first place? The answer to this question is also the answer to the question of what the goal of philosophy is. Klíma states, laconically:

> "TO DO WHAT CAN BE DONE: TO DECONSTRUCT our erratic thought in the most detailed way possible, – to uncover the densest darkness in our darkness or, equally, the brightest light in our light."[14]

Doubt and the hardships it causes to the soul must be replaced by methodical and pro-active negation of reflection. Reflection happens through reason; that is why Klíma straightforwardly gives preference to *activity* over reason. Reason is here only to deceive us, to force us, through its own imperfections,

13 *The World*, p. 13.
14 Ibid., p. 18.

to create abstract concepts, whose real existence we then struggle to justify philosophically and whose validity or invalidity becomes the subject of passionate debate.

For Klíma, the traditional concepts of philosophy, such as being, the world, or substance are simply fictions of the intellect.

> "That we think that something exists is proof that nothing exists; if we did not think so, – then something would exist!"[15]

proclaims Klíma. To put it differently: that which exists is so evident that it need not be conceptualised using reason; and if our world is formed by so many concepts that we simply cannot help but conceptualise using reason, this is the proof that our world is nothing, that it does not exist; that all the world which we take to exist is merely a filtered manifestation of consciousness into which we desperately try to instil meaning within our own miserable constraints. By doing so, we limit ourselves; this artificial meaning, thanks to which we think we understand the world better, immediately begins to deteriorate into reflection, once it is established as a norm of conduct. Action then loses its active component, since when something becomes established as a norm, it is doomed to repetition, to an eternal recurrence of the same on a phenomenal level, and the irrational cycle involving the relationship between the primary and secondary world begins anew. The world thus ultimately has no meaning and this meaninglessness is precisely its most valuable quality, since it calls man to freedom. Klíma's philosophy of egosolism is therefore a philosophy of action par excellence for all – and none.

Concerning Method and Style

In this paper, I have strived to present my own interpretation of egosolism as an individualistic philosophy calling to active participation in the world through play. In the concluding part of this paper, I consider it important to make several more remarks on the topic of Klíma's method and style, through which he leads us to a *correct* grasp of his central thoughts which are otherwise often expressed in almost cryptographic proclamations.

Already in the introduction to *The World*, Klíma openly declares that he is irritated by all the false logic and systematicity[16] that permeates and devalu-

15 Ibid., p. 21.

16 It, however, must be noted that the concluding section of *The World*, titled "The Society" („Společnost", p. 156–189), is relatively systematic and provides evidence of Klíma's knowledge of contemporary political and cultural matters, of which it is very difficult to write "unsystem-

ates all philosophy. As if he were asking: Is it really the case that thinking is a continuous process? Klíma maintains that linking thoughts into large, unitary wholes is a symptom of simple-mindedness, of inability to think, live and act in an unmediated way. Everyone who has nothing to say writes a thousand pages; mastery in writing lies, on the contrary, in the art of expressing a thought aptly – so that it communicates the necessary content (which, however, is never completely possible, since language itself is a crucial source of confusion, always informing somewhat "roughly", leaving the recipient to ascribe *his* own mental states to the information communicated). Klíma's *The World* absolutely excels in its "unsystematic systematicity" and is worthy of recognition for that, if nothing else. Klíma's style is inimitable. He truly abandons any kind of logic and structure – he writes sentences and words haphazardly, just as they occurred to him; he often changes topic in the middle of a sentence, frequently accompanied by a wild use of punctuation; sometimes he even abandons sentence structure completely and communicates his thoughts to the reader using multiple infinitives or short sentences. Other passages are, conversely, verging on the dramatic and are evidence that Klíma was not just talented as a thinker, but also as a writer.

Nevertheless, despite its openly declared disdain for systematic narration, *The World as Consciousness and Nothing* (*Svět jako vědomí a nic*) gradually builds up to a climax. In the last paragraphs of the penultimate section, titled *The Individual*, the reader can literally feel the peak drawing so, so near; not in the sense of a plotline ending, but rather in the sense of an emotional climax, as Klíma's skills in imparting subjective impressions makes reader suddenly feels much closer to Klíma than they would have been willing to admit before. The passage cited in this study, where he speaks of flashes from the "world beyond", is one of the finest in *The World* – when reading the passage one's heart rate begins to race, urging one to read on. I myself was overcome by an intense feeling of "something great" approaching, some "final revelation". However, Klíma has nothing of the sort in stall for us. The final part of the book is dedicated to social questions. I believe that this revelation manifests itself somewhere inside the reader later on, after one has had time to process *The World* properly. It is hard to describe this revelation in any other way (apart from attempting to impart or describe the impression itself) than through a short presentation of the ways in which Klíma arrives to his philosophical positions, of the "mechanics" of consciousness and its elevation, as I have attempted to show in this study.

atically". This section is among several other places in Klíma's works where it is apparent that Klíma still had a lively interest in public affairs and that he never became a complete "philosopher-hermit".

I believe it is correct to read Klíma precisely in *this* way. Since he himself despised scholarly attempts at analysis and problematisation, which, he thought, led to nothing more than academic "chatter", it can be assumed that he would not take favourably to the reading of *The World* purely out of *scientific interest*. Klíma is one of those philosophers who demands that the reader read his texts using something else than just reason, which, as we have shown, he criticises sharply. His literary style, sentence structure, book structure, the words he chooses, the mood he builds – with all this Klíma invites us to *experience* rather than to *understand* the essence of egosolism. What one can carry away from Klíma is not what is written in the text, but rather that which remains within us after we forget the text altogether – all that is *behind* the text, all that lies in how we *feel* Klíma's words affecting us.

If my approach to reading Klíma is correct, then there is nothing left but to indulge in one last praise of his work. Through his philosophy, he purposefully leads us not to be passive, but to act. Action is always mediated by experience. It is thus not actually surprising that the message of *The World as Consciousness and Nothing* is, in the end, much more to be *experienced* than to be *understood*. Just as a virtuous man possessing strong will lives his life actively, instead of contemplatively and incessantly falling back due to attacks of reflection, so must we approach Klíma's philosophy head on: it needs to be experienced, or else it cannot be grasped. It is for this reason that I purposefully avoided comparing my interpretation with, say, Patočka's interpretation of Klíma. I did not aspire to provide a comparative compilation of interpretations, nor a commentary to a previous interpretation. I wanted to *experience* Klíma and to describe him – before even I fall under the merciless blade of reflection.

The Philosopher Ladislav Klíma in the Eyes of his Contemporaries

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This paper reflects upon the reception of Ladislav Klíma by his contemporaries. The main emphasis is put on the so-called younger generation of philosophers gathered around the journal *Ruch filosofický*. Their attitudes towards Klíma echo the opinions of other philosophers and academics, as well as a number of famous writers such as Jaroslav Seifert, F. X. Šalda, Karel Čapek and Otokar Březina. The sources for my study are primarily reviews of Klíma's works along with his correspondence, while other rich sources include obituaries or occasional anecdotes written by his friends.

Ladislav Klíma was considered predominantly to be a philosopher by his contemporaries.[1] In addition to articles for periodicals and newspapers and one theatrical comedy, he only published three books during his lifetime – *The World as Consciousness and Nothing* (*Svět jako vědomí a nic*), *A Second and Eternity* (*Vteřina a věčnost*), and *Tractates and Dictates* (*Traktáty a Diktáty*) – all of which are philosophical works. He did, of course, write literary works as well, although rather for the sake of his own interest, entertainment, and, as he confesses to his good friend and patron Emanuel Chalupný,[2] and also

1 In a letter to Emanuel Chalupný, Ladislav Klíma writes: "It is wholly true that I am no belletrist…" Klíma reacts here to Chalupný's criticism of his "romanettos". Chalupný read them in manuscript form and wrote to Klíma telling him that he is a philosopher, not a belletrist. Klíma, L. – Kabeš, J. (ed.), *A Spiritual Friendship: Mutual Correspondence of Ladislav Klíma with Emanuel Chalupný and Otokar Březina* (*Duchovní přátelství: vzájemná korespondence Ladislava Klímy s Emanuelem Chalupným a Otokarem Březinou*). Praha, Jan Pohořelý 1940, p. 106. In another letter to Chalupný, Klíma writes: "My 'belles lettres' are, first and foremost, philosophical works, and only in a secondary sense are they literature; their literary qualities stand subordinate to their philosophical ones and they desire to be judged accordingly!" Ibid., p. 48.

2 "– In the past two years, I have churned out for my own entertainment and recuperation a cartload of 'bel' lettres, ten times more realistic and filthy than Zola, 10 times more fantastical than Hoffmann, Baudelaire, 10× more cynical than Grabbe, 10× more paradoxical than Wilde, 10× coarser than Havlíček, 10× more effective means for the induction of vomiting than 'The

to Alois Friedler, as a sort of self-therapy.[3] All his literary work was, however, published only posthumously and in the form of unfinished texts which Klíma's partner, Kamila Lososová, attempted to organise and partially finish writing herself. Nevertheless, Otokar Březina saw that as a deep offence to Klíma's legacy and therefore objected to their publication.[4]

In this study, I aim to present the most comprehensive view possible of how the philosophy of Ladislav Klíma was received in his time. Some may be surprised by the quantity of positive responses to Klíma's persona and work, which, in fact, vastly outnumber negative reviews and attitudes.

Klíma in His Own Eyes

When Klíma published his debut work *The World as Consciousness and Nothing* in 1904, it did not, at first, elicit any reaction whatsoever. It was not until seven months later (20 May 1905) that Klíma received the first feedback[5] in a letter from Emanuel Chalupný, who writes that Otokar Březina has drawn his attention to a very intriguing treatise, written by Klíma and that he is eager to discuss several of the ideas presented in it with Klíma himself.[6] Klíma replies to Chalupný two days later, excited by the attention of Otokar Březina, whom he considers to be "the only great Czech writer […] and a man of wholly extraordinary, truly deep mind".[7]

The correspondence continued and a friendship was soon forged between the two thinkers. Chalupný sends his *Introduction to Sociology* (*Úvod do sociologie*) to Klíma along with a few words about why, in his opinion, Klíma's first work had gone unnoticed. According to Chalupný, Klíma himself was the root of this failure since he had not promoted the book enough. Chalupný had only found out about it through Březina, and when he had recommend-

Labyrinth of the World and the Paradise of the Heart,' in short, a non plus ultra of indecency, villainy, and madness." Ibid., p. 41.

3 "…just this year have I written about 250 coherent pages in German, about a quarter of a novel, […] – By the way, it's a pity that I did not continue in this endeavour, that I could not devote myself fully to it. It was very pleasant living entirely in those faerie regions, very healthy for me; it might have even saved my life or at least my sanity […]." Ibid., p. 99.

4 "It is a morbid book; merely an unfinished sketch of something that has yet to be written, […]. Klíma's reputation will suffer severely (from the book's publication), since (his enemies) will draw conclusions from it and will see in it merely the consequences of disease and alcoholism." Chalupný, E., *Letters and Opinions of Otokar Březina 3* (*Dopisy a výroky Otokara Březiny 3*). Praha, Fr. Borový 1931, p. 180.

5 "Your letter is the only reaction to my book that I have received, – soon it will be 7 months since its publication." Klíma, L. – Kabeš, J. (ed.), *A Spiritual Friendship*, p. 12.

6 Ibid., p. 11.

7 Ibid., p. 12.

ed it to his friends, none of them had heard about it either. Another aspect also damaging the book's chances of success, according to Chalupný, was its anonymous authorship (the cover of the book bears merely the initial "L."), while Klíma had been very keen on this feature, believing it would attract potential readers.

Klíma objected that he had never longed for immediate recognition and did not expect success or fame: "An audience is an audience, i.e. it is never any good."[8] However, he did expect a certain amount of attention thanks to the eccentricity or, as he says, strikingness (*frapantnost*) of the work. This, in his opinion, is evident throughout the whole book, both in the ideas expressed as well as in the overall composition – in their originality, paradoxicality, daringness, ruthlessness, and un-Czech nature… Klíma wanted to cause a sensation – some expression of disapproval, repulsion, scorn, ridicule. He believed that he would be branded a madman thanks to this book; perhaps he even wished it. It was a role which he often placed himself in – the role of a madman whom nobody understands, the role of a controversial, offensive figure. Klíma explains the fact that the book shocked nobody by declaring that the audience must be suffering from acephalia, a congenital defect characterised by the absence of the head.[9] His intention alone to make his work "an example of madhouse literature"[10] makes Klíma an extraordinary phenomenon of Czech philosophy of the first half of the 20th century.

Klíma's Philosophical Confession

More than twenty years later, a series of Klíma's articles titled *My Philosophical Confession* (*Moje filosofická zpověď*) was published in the journal *Nová svoboda*. At the request of the journal's editorial board, Klíma's long-time friend, Emanuel Chalupný, wrote the preface to the series. In the preface, he recounts how Ladislav Klíma has been brought up by his father to feel a "deep, belligerent Czech nationalism and hatred towards the Habsburg dynasty",[11] which resulted in his official expulsion from all the schools in Austria at the age of 17 and consequently devoted himself to self-study and developing

8 Ibid., p. 16.

9 "If just 100 people skimmed through the book, each for at least 15 minutes, they would find enough things that would deeply harm the moral sensitivity of those pachyderms; and given the blabbering of the generis humani, at least 2 expressions of indignation would certainly appear in the press, – and then simply *fama cresceret eundo*… , – this would most certainly happen if humanity was not afflicted with acephalia… " Ibid., p. 18.

10 Ibid., p. 16.

11 Klíma, L., My Philosophical Confession I (Moje filosofická zpověď I). *Nová svoboda*, 2, 1925, No. 20, p. 328.

his own philosophy.[12] The "impractical philosopher"[13] subsequently relied on the support of his admirers, who included Emanuel Chalupný and Otokar Březina, until his death.[14] Chalupný warns in his preface against Klíma's philosophy, which is "ostentatiously contemptuous of the democratic and social endeavours of the current age".[15] He adds that not one of Klíma's admirers agrees fully with his philosophy, but that they, nevertheless, endorse Klíma as a "thinker of the first order"[16] and one of the most daring contemporary metaphysicians precisely due to these qualities of his, "regardless of whether or not he sings along to our tune."[17] Chalupný also notes that history knows cases when a not entirely pro-democratic philosophy, an "aristocratic" philosophy,[18] gave rise to completely different movements and often had democratic effects.

Klíma was perceived by the public as an "oddity",[19] a "morbid phenomenon",[20] Seifert called him a "notorious philosopher and trouble-maker".[21] A philosopher par excellence living on the financial benevolence of his friends, employed just three times in his life, each time just for a few months.[22] "More carefree than Diogenes",[23] is how Karel Čapek remembers him in an obituary published in *Lidové noviny*. Klíma was not averse to these judgements about him; on the contrary, he helped stimulate them in his confession. He had decided as a teenager never to attend school and never to get a job[24] – in his own words: "(I wanted to) live without civil employment, freely, like a hermit, alone with myself".[25] His originality and, as they said at the time, queerness[26] attracted reviewers and readers. Many highlighted his authenticity as a philosopher, artist and individual.

12 Ibid.
13 Ibid.
14 Ibid.
15 Ibid.
16 Ibid.
17 Ibid.
18 Ibid.
19 Fischer, J. L., Ladislav Klíma: A Second and Eternity (Vteřina a věčnost). *Jihočeský přehled*, 2, 1927, No. 6, p. 172.
20 Krejčí, F., Ladislav Klíma. *Česká mysl*, 24, 1928, No. 3, p. 281.
21 Seifert, J., *All the Beauty of the World* (*Všecky krásy světa*). Praha, Eminent – Knižní klub 1999, p. 211.
22 Klíma, L., My Philosophical Confession I, p. 328.
23 Čapek, K., Ladislav Klíma. *Lidové noviny*, 36, 1928, No. 203, p. 5.
24 Klíma, L., My Philosophical Confession I, p. 328.
25 Ibid., p. 329.
26 "A loner, a queer." Pelikán, F., The Deceased Ladislav Klíma (Ladislav Klíma zemřelý). *Ruch filosofický*, 8, 1929, No. 2, p. 120. "In every way the 'queer and lunatic', Klíma has earned a secure place in the (albeit scant) history of Czech philosophical thought." Procházka, R., Ladislav

With his confessions, published in *Nová svoboda*, Klíma created a legend about himself, building on an idea of man who is no longer troubled by the sentiments of the soul,[27] who spent his entire childhood in the woods[28] avoiding contact with other people including his own parents and siblings, whose touch he despised,[29] a man who devoted his entire life to the endeavour of attaining egodeism.

Emanuel Chalupný, Discoverer and Patron of Ladislav Klíma

When, thanks to Březina, Chalupný discovered *The World as Consciousness and Nothing*, he wrote a review of it and submitted it for publication to the journal *Česká mysl*. The editor in chief of the journal František Krejčí rejected the review, commenting that

> "the work which Your article deals with consists of aphorisms, which are not bound by the cement of logic to form a coherent whole, and, in fact, impart nothing that would open up any new perspectives."[30]

Chalupný subsequently rewrote the article and Krejčí finally published it.[31] Chalupný points out in his review that Klíma "shows a great aptitude for observation",[32] and that "his thoughts are not merely formulated, but also lived and ruthlessly expressed".[33] In reaction to Krejčí's criticism of Klíma's aphoristic style, Chalupný states that

> "(Klíma) writes in aphorisms because he considers the subject of philosophy to be alogical, and the artificial implementation of logic in it to be absurd for noetic reasons."[34]

Klíma, the Philosopher of Paroxysm (Ladislav Klíma, filosof paroxysmu). *Lidové noviny*, 36, 1928, No. 208, 20. 4., p. 7. Etc.

27 Klíma, L., My Philosophical Confession I, p. 328–330.

28 Ibid.

29 Ibid.

30 Notes. See Zumr, J., Emanuel Chalupný – The Discoverer and Mecenary of Ladislav Klíma (Emanuel Chalupný – objevitel a mecenáš Ladislava Klímy). In: Gilk, E. – Hrabal, J. (eds.), *Eternity is Not a Pocket With a Hole So That Something Could Fall Out of It. A Collection of Essays Dedicated to Ladislav Klíma* (Věčnost není děravá kapsa, aby se z ní něco ztratilo. Soubor studií věnovaných Ladislavu Klímovi). Olomouc, Aluze 2010, p. 6. Available online at www: http://klimaladislav.sweb.cz/Klima_sbornik.pdf [cit. 25. 3. 2020].

31 Chalupný, E., The World as Consciousness and Nothing. Written by L… (Svět jako vědomí a nic. Napsal L…). *Česká mysl*, 7, 1906, No. 2, 1. 3., p. 143–144.

32 Ibid., p. 144.

33 Ibid.

34 Ibid.

Nevertheless, Krejčí could not resist adding a footnote:

> "Unless an author has already published other, systematic texts in which he attempts to justify his arguments, writing in aphorisms is always a flaw and also proof that the author merely scratched the surface and did not think his ideas through deeply enough."[35]

In his review, Chalupný also devotes some space to a topic in which Krejčí probably diverges from Klíma the most, i.e. the topic of metaphysics, which was wholly rejected by the contemporary philosophical community:

> "The author considers the loftiest of mental states to be artistic ones and the mental activity of the highest order to be that of metaphysics. He ascribes a low value to exact sciences and rejects systematicity in philosophy."[36]

At the time when positivism still dominated Czech philosophy, fifteen years before the wave of resistance spearheaded by *Ruch filosofický* rose up against its austere exactness, Klíma comes as a breath of fresh air into the Czech philosophical milieu.

Chalupný's article was the only reaction that Klíma's debut work[37] had elicited until 1911, when Karel Horký devoted a special issue of the magazine *Stopa* to the book. The issue ended with the note: "We shall reveal the name of the author of 'the book that nobody has read' and that inspired this special issue of 'Stopa' in the next issue […]."[38] The following (24th) issue with an editorial by Josef Kodíček, titled *The Author of the Unread Book* (*Autor knihy, která nebyla čtena*),[39] revealed Klíma's name, introducing him to the public for the first time. Josef Kodíček remained an adherent and friend of Klíma's and after his death wrote an obituary about him for the magazine *Literární svět*.

35 Ibid.
36 Ibid.
37 Apart from an article in *Přehled*, a magazine redacted by Emanuel Chalupný – an article identical with the one published in *Česká mysl*.
38 Klíma, L. – Kabeš, J. (ed.), *A Spiritual Friendship*, p. 97.
39 Kodíček, J., The Author of the Unread Book (Autor knihy, která nebyla čtena), [úvodník]. *Stopa*, 1, 1910–1911, No. 24, p. 711.

Otokar Březina

Emanuel Chalupný published the book *Letters and Opinions of Otokar Březina* (*Dopisy a výroky Otokara Březiny*) in 1931, that is, after the deaths of both Březina and Klíma. In the chapter "Ladislav Klíma", we learn that Březina regarded Klíma as the greatest Czech philosopher of all and that "Klíma is a sound that is essential for the symphony of our souls."[40] Elsewhere, Březina allegedly told Chalupný that

> "Once, I got annoyed at him for making fun of me for saying that man 'will take his place' among the princes of the cosmos; I meant it symbolically, of course; but what should one expect from others if one is misunderstood even by Klíma?".[41]

According to the testimonies of both geniuses, the first meeting of the two philosopher-poets was beautiful.[42] Friendship with Ladislav Klíma was, however, not always beautiful and was also often difficult. Whenever Březina, who spent most of his time in Jaroměřice and Luhačovice, came to Prague, he would stay with his good friend, the artist František Bílek. In a letter written to Březina in July 1920, Klíma proposes that they meet up when he next comes up to Prague to stay at Bílek's again, saying this would be the most practical solution for him. Bílek did not particularly like Klíma which, it seems, Klíma knew, and so he suggested meeting at another friend of theirs, a certain Mr. Srb, who lived ten minutes away from Bílek's house. Březina, however, tactfully apologizes later that he had spent only a short while in Prague and had time to meet up. Klíma did not reply until a year later in December 1921, when, in an obviously chaotic state, he asks for a financial loan.[43]

Both Březina and Chalupný had great respect for Klíma's judgment, as is evident in one of Březina's letters:

> "Dear friend, if you deem it proper, please, use my name and good word wherever it could be of benefit to our philosopher. For those who work

40 Chalupný, E., *Letters and Opinions of Otokar Březina*, p. 180.

41 Ibid.

42 They met only after many invitations and expressed wishes had exchanged hands: In a letter from Ladislav Klíma to Otokar Březina from 26. 7. 1915, in a letter from Březina to Klíma from 15. 8. 1915, in a letter from Klíma to Březina from 18. 8. 1915, Klíma to Březina 28. 9. 1915, Březina to Klíma 4. 7. 1920. See Klíma, L. – Kabeš, J. (ed.), *A Spiritual Friendship*, p. 65, 68, 69–71, 73–75, 90.

43 Ibid., p. 91.

> with their minds, however, this will not be necessary; for them, the work that our friend has done speaks for him in his stead. We cannot do more for him that he himself has."[44]

The concern of both writers for "their philosopher" is touching and we get perhaps the best picture of their relationship from a sentence written in an unsent letter from Březina to Chalupný:

> "If, however, I am ever graced with the opportunity to put forth my personal testimony of Klíma as a man who was good, strangely gentle in his soul, defenceless in the midst of this world whose power he celebrated and loved – with luck, a different, more appropriate occasion to do this will present itself one day."[45]

It is just a pity that Březina never had the chance to realise his intention, since he died shortly after writing this, less than a year after Klíma's death, on 25th March 1929.

Klíma's Literary Friends

In his book *All the Beauty of the World* (*Všecky krásy světa*), Jaroslav Seifert describes his meeting with Ladislav Klíma. One evening, Klíma and Seifert's mutual friend, the poet Arnošt Dvořák, accompanied Seifert to a wine bar called *U Šuterů* in the centre of Prague where Klíma, "the famed philosopher and trouble-maker",[46] was already waiting for them. Seifert recounts how the "at first lively and interesting conversation with this man turned into a drinking session, during which [Klíma] drank himself almost into oblivion."[47] In the end, Seifert had to walk the staggering Klíma home.

Earlier that evening, Seifert had allegedly managed to arrange a meeting between Klíma and one of Klíma's greatest admirers, František Halas, who grew up reading *The World as Consciousness and Nothing* and counted it among his most favourite books. Halas had supposedly been brought up at his grandmother's flat in Brno, in the poorest household that Seifert had ever encountered. In the squalid room where Halas slept, there was nothing but a straw mattress, a cage with a squirrel in it, and a small bookcase with *The Communist Manifesto* and Klíma's *The World as Consciousness and Noth-*

44 Chalupný, E., *Letters and Opinions of Otokar Březina*, p. 179.
45 Ibid., p. 127.
46 Seifert, J., *All the Beauty of the World*, p. 211.
47 Ibid.

ing in it. "That was the world where the young Halas began to live his life. Those were the pages that the poet leafed through when seeking inspiration for his first verses."[48] For some reason, Klíma never made it to that meeting, and died just a few months later. Seifert recollects "I found it touching that, just a few hours before his death, he remembered me and sent me two of his books, *The World as Consciousness and Nothing* and *Matthew the Honest* (*Matěj Poctivý*) with a friendly dedication".[49]

Another one of Klíma's Czech literary friends was F. X. Šalda. Klíma and Šalda knew each other well and had mutual respect for one another; they exchanged letters and Šalda even published some of Klíma's articles in the magazine *Tvorba*. There is a poem dedicated to the memory of Ladislav Klíma in the fifth part of *Šalda's Notebook* (*Šaldův zápisník*), which Šalda began to publish in 1928, continuing with it until his death in 1937.[50]

J. L. Fischer

Now, I move on from Klíma's personal acquaintances to reviews of his philosophy in the true sense of the word. In a study published in the journal *Naše věda*, Fischer embarks upon an interpretation of Klíma's philosophy, not refraining from including judgments on Klíma himself. This is a common feature in most reviewers of Klíma's work; Klíma's personality is so inseparable from his philosophy that reviewers often resort to *ad hominem* assessments of it. Fischer notes that two features are characteristic for Klíma: an immoderate rationalism and "an almost monstrous" hypertrophy of the intellect.[51] Intellect, will, and animality – those are, according to Fischer, the three pillars of Klíma's philosophy. Klíma went from his initial scepticism,

48 Ibid., p. 206.

49 Ibid.

50 "A somnambulist of beauty, towards your dream you have set forth, upright, steep,
called by the magnet of love, on the ledges of temples you walked,
[…]
From the stars, flying lightning fast, a great midnight butterfly is falling,
upon the hearts, mouths, lips he sits; closing and opening his wings
with a nervous, feverish tremble.
[…]
From your heart he has come to drink to regain new strength,
to gulp in new colours, so that he would enlarge his breadth
flowers' spectral silence and the abyss' heady exhale,
over darkness, a rainbow stretched, and over the frost, a smile."
Šalda, F. X., *Šalda's Notebook 5* (*Šaldův zápisník ročník pátý*). Praha, Otto Girgal 1928–1937; 5, No. 1, p. 230–231.

51 Fischer, J. L., Ladislav Klíma: The World as Consciousness and Nothing, The Tractates and Dictates, A Second and Eternity (Ladislav Klíma: Svět jako vědomí a nic, Traktáty a diktáty, Vteřina a věčnost). *Naše věda*, 9, 1927–1928, No. 8–10, p. 153.

metaphysically grounded in Schopenhauer's concept of the Will, amended by Nietzsche, to the idea of absolute nothingness as a logical consequence of the shadow play of notions in which we live. According to Fischer, this is the first logically sound intellectual area of Klíma's philosophy. The second area, the cult of physical force and power, is rife with "serious inconsistencies"[52] and these two areas conflict with each other:

> "One area knows only shadows and their play. The second knows only the wisdom of harsh individualism, whose cult of power is suppressed mainly by fundamentally aesthetic considerations."[53]

At the same time, however, these diverse, contradictory areas are "unified in Klíma's personality in a deeply paradoxical unity."[54]

In order to gain a better understanding of this assessment, let us look at Fischer's review of *Tractates and Dictates*, published in the magazine *Jihočeský přehled* just a couple of months earlier.[55] Klíma is viewed here as an oddity[56] whose eccentricity stems from his "unbridled cult of individualism",[57] through which he draws attention upon himself in "an age which is suffering from a catastrophic decline into individualism".[58] In Fischer's opinion, it is due to Nietzsche that individualism tended to be confused with some sort of rebellious cult of power, a typical expression of herd behaviour in its crudest form. However, individualism is, according to Fischer, an elemental reaction to this form of herd behaviour. This conflict between a cult of barbaric power and a clarified, pure form of individualism is, according to Fischer, reflected in Klíma. Klíma's indisputable and perhaps greatest achievement is that he brought the two-pronged problem of individualism back into the arena. Fischer writes that in Klíma's work there glistens a clear, clarified individualism which is always true to itself, always relying solely on itself.[59]

Tractates and Dictates

When *Tractates and Dictates* appeared, it stirred up the greatest wave of reviews that Klíma had ever experienced. A review of it by Dr. Alfréd Fuchs appeared in the magazine *Československá republika*. The book impressed him;

52 Ibid., p. 156.
53 Ibid., p. 157.
54 Ibid.
55 Fischer, J. L., Ladislav Klíma: A Second and Eternity, p. 172.
56 Ibid.
57 Ibid.
58 Ibid.
59 Ibid.

he describes Klíma as a unique thinker in the Czech milieu, a true philosopher:

> "A number of great thinkers have already featured in the history of the Czech nation, but not until now a single philosopher in the true sense of the word, that is, a man to whom thinking would be the same kind of passion, as creation is to an artist."[60]

Unlike other great Czech thinkers, who "subjugate their thought to practical wisdom"[61] and whose philosophy serves as a kind of hygienic agent, a tool meant to advance them towards certain national or social goals, Klíma dives headfirst into the depths of mysticism, Absurdity, the Absolute, without attempting to be of any use to anybody, without feeling the need to turn philosophy into a remedy for the ills of the Czech nation. Klíma's philosophy knows no boundaries; it is a genuine, pure philosophy without the admixture of psychology or sociology that was so common for philosophers of that era. Fuchs compares Klíma to Březina in whom he also sees "hints of this intellectual passion."[62] Fuchs notes:

> "Klíma has chosen his era very badly, since this is an era full of discussion and debate on how to bring people bliss through politics, socialism, and similar collectivist catchwords."[63]

Regular contributors to *Ruch filosofický*, members of the younger philosophical generation Karel Vorovka, Ferdinand Pelikán, Tomáš Trnka, and Vladimír Hoppe, also expressed their opinions on the book. Even the "main antagonist" in the conflict of the younger philosophical generation of idealists with the older philosophical generation, the most influential Czech positivist, František Krejčí, had expressed himself favourably towards *Tractates and Dictates*, saying "the book glistens with profound ideas".[64]

Karel Vorovka and Ladislav Klíma found such strong intellectual bond in the idea of free, unbound philosophising[65] that they became friends, ex-

60 Fuchs, A., Tractates and Dictates (Traktáty a diktáty). *Československá republika*, 243, 1922, No. 91, p. 6.
61 Ibid.
62 Ibid.
63 Ibid.
64 Krejčí, F., Ladislav Klíma: Tractates and Dictates. Philosophical Contemplations. *Česká mysl*, 18, 1922, No. 3, p. 180–181.
65 "However, I stand firmly behind the right of every person in the world to philosophise as they want, and to hold onto that specific philosophy and that manner of philosophical work that one likes, and to which one feels they have a natural disposition." Vorovka, K., Vorovka on the

changed letters, and frequently visited one another. Vorovka's life was starkly different from that of Klíma's – having successfully completed studies at *gymnasium* (grammar school), Vorovka went on to study mathematics and physics at university, and subsequently taught natural sciences at a secondary school. He found a liking in the philosophy of mathematics which he lectured at the Faculty of Science of Charles University in Prague.

Vorovka's book *Scepsis and Gnosis* (*Skepse a gnóse*; 1921) fascinated Klíma.[66] Vorovka and Klíma became acquainted thanks to *Ruch filosofický*, to which Vorovka frequently contributed, while Klíma contributed just one, *Absurdity and the Absolute* (*Absurdita a absolutno*),[67] where he introduced his philosophy, i.e. egosolism. Vorovka reacted to *Tractates and Dictates* with an article, the purpose of which was neither to be a critique or review of the book – the text was more an essay on Klíma himself than on his book. According to Vorovka, Klíma "cannot be cornered in the same way usually reserved for philosophers, that is, by proving him guilty of contradictions".[68] Vorovka understands that the shocking passages are written with humour and that even the serious passages "eventually turn out to be a lot of fun".[69] He appreciates Klíma's singularity and originality:

> "We are so much alike that it is almost disgraceful. All the more should we value the opinions of those who differ from us diametrically […]. Klíma is not just another of our singularities, he is the one and only singular."[70]

Vorovka sees in Klíma a man whose cynicism hides and masks his love for everything that is noble in man. Vorovka sees a geometrical exactness in Klíma's aphorisms: "often they are the very apex of thought reached through the shortest possible paths".[71] He also praises his style:

> "A grand prize could be given to the man who finds a clichéd comparison or hackneyed collocation in Klíma's work."[72]

Struggle for Freedom of Czech Philosophy (Vorovka o boji za svobodu české filosofie). *Ruch filosofický*, 8, 1929, No. 2, p. 128.

66 Ibid., p. 14–19.

67 Klíma, L., Absurdity and the Absolute (Absurdita a absolutno). *Ruch filosofický*, 2, 1922, No. 2–3, p. 1–7.

68 Vorovka, K., Ladislav Klíma, Tractates and Dictates. *Ruch filosofický*, 2, 1922, No. 8–10, p. 73.

69 Ibid., p. 74.

70 Ibid.

71 Ibid.

72 Ibid., p. 75.

In contrast to Vorovka, a rather critical reaction to Klíma came from Vladimír Hoppe. He begins his review of *Tractates and Dictates*, published in the magazine *Naše doba*, with the following words:

> "This bold and idiosyncratic book of Klíma's has to some extent been accepted with great praise by critics, as if it puts forth a wholly new view on life and the world."[73]

Hoppe does not identify with the critics' opinion and sees in Klíma a similar phenomenon in Czech philosophy as Max Stirner was in German philosophy, although in Hoppe's opinion Klíma does differ from Stirner in some aspects. Klíma's solipsism, his egosolism and egodeism, are, according to Hoppe, "a titanic reworking of the old subjectivist, Stirnerist principle of not acknowledging any worldview other than that inside of us."[74] Hoppe calls this "a superficially attractive egoism" sufficient only for a narrow view of life and for mere survival, due to which Klíma closes in on himself as if "into the narrow and stifling crypt of his own little Ego",[75] which, according to Hoppe, signifies a clear contradiction in Klíma's opinions. On the one hand, Klíma is absolute, he is God, on the other hand, he writes that "this world […] [is] a grandiose self-deceit, a sublime game of hide-and-seek that it plays with itself,[76] […]" which necessarily negates Klíma's own absoluteness. If Klíma is God, then, according to Hoppe, he is merely "[…] a lowly variety or rather a monstrosity of true God, with a complete lack of raison d'être: by his existence, he also brings about his own end."[77] Hoppe sees but a caricature of God in Klíma.

Hoppe also criticises Klíma's "strange philosophical erudition",[78] his "haughty attitude",[79] that has Klíma convinced that nobody before him had ever asked the philosophical question "Is there something else apart from my own ego?", and which forces Hoppe to assume that Klíma had not read Kant attentively enough and had not fully contemplated the problems Kant deals with in *Critique of Pure Reason*. Otherwise, as Hoppe claims, Klíma could not have come to the conclusions he presented in his book.

73 Hoppe, V., Ladislav Klíma: Tractates and Dictates. Philosophical Contemplations. *Naše doba*, 30, 1922, No. 3, p. 186.
74 Ibid.
75 Ibid.
76 Ibid.
77 Ibid.
78 Ibid., p. 188.
79 Ibid.

Ferdinand Pelikán wrote a review in the educational supplement of *Národní listy* titled *The Philosophical Illusionist and Ludibrionist* (*Filosofický illusionista a ludibrionista*). He finds Klíma's coarse language in *Tractates and Dictates* objectionable, and consequently the book "cannot elevate the force of thought to the mysterious beauty and sublimity which Klíma desires."[80] He also dislikes Klíma's self-abandonment and desire to fly high as a bird in the heights of "useless" philosophy:

> "Klíma's will is a mood, and a momentary one at that, which does not mean a cultural movement. […] no effort is made whatsoever at creating some stable cultural values, and all those gleaming contradictions and paradoxes dissolve at once into a silhouette of a careful philologist and journalist suddenly plummeting from the 'superstructure' that he had created for himself."[81]

Trnka's review was published in the magazine *Lumír*. In it, he calls Klíma his antipode[82] since, unlike Klíma, he believes that reality is justified, and he seeks an ethical principle grounded in reality. Klíma, Trnka writes, claims that "God is an endless succession of suicides"[83] and that all reality is an unjustified creation of existences that finds justification only in "a heroic suicide, in negation of oneself",[84] of course, only in the suicide of someone who has come to know nothingness and life perfectly. Trnka writes that Klíma will come inexorably to the conclusion of deifying his own "I", to egosolism and egodeism. Trnka states that "Klíma is the personification of the crisis in today's philosophy," and continues that

> "he is a necessary reaction to the static and dynamic conception of reality; he is a necessary negation of both. But he is only a negation."[85]

Trnka values Klíma's heroism in tearing down old norms upon whose ruins something new can be built. Nevertheless, he doubts that Klíma is capable of building anything.

80 Pelikán, F., A Philosophical Illusionist and Ludibrionist (Filosofický illusionista a ludibrionista). *Národní listy* (*Vzdělávací příloha*), 62, 1922, No. 118, p. 13.
81 Ibid.
82 Trnka, T., Ladislav Klíma: Tractates and Dictates. Philosophical Contemplations. *Lumír*, 49, 1922, No. 5, p. 275.
83 Ibid.
84 Ibid.
85 Ibid.

Obituaries

When Klíma died in April 1928, the daily press and magazines were flooded with obituaries. Most of them honoured the memory of the deceased and kept to the principle of speaking only good of the dead. The only exception was František Krejčí, who wrote his obituary for Klíma for *Česká mysl*.

"He was a diseased phenomenon in both social and literary life […]",[86] Krejčí writes already in the first sentence. He then claims that judging from how Klíma's friends remember him, it is clear that they were disconcerted by his works and public demeanour. In reality, however, most of the obituaries were actually heartfelt and favourable towards Klíma, as we will show below. According to Krejčí, Klíma's supporters were only blinded by his extravagance, and Krejčí himself attributes all peculiarities in Klíma's literary works to his "diseased organism"[87] and proclaims that Klíma was not a philosopher, but a poet who merely wanted to philosophise, to solve philosophical problems, but then solved them through poetry, which Krejčí does not consider a valid philosophical method. "My conviction is that a philosopher cannot be a poet,"[88] Krejčí concludes.

Another obituary was written by the aforementioned Josef Kodíček. He wrote to *Literární svět* about Klíma that "[…] his life is going to be a legend" and he was not far from truth. According to Kodíček, Klíma was a free, independent, brave man, tirelessly struggling to free himself from the human and heading towards the divine.[89] Kodíček sees the main value of Klíma's work in his walking the same path as his teachers and in that his work is "a true to life expression of personality, it is not something artificial or studied."[90]

Kodíček also speaks of Klíma's "being among people"[91] – he speaks of those who described Klíma as an unhappy, gloomy and pessimistic, failed, unemployed, and uneducated man – after all, he was not even a professor. But Klíma was not, according to Kodíček, unhappy, and he personally does not find any gloominess or pessimism in his work. "His concept of nothingness is

86 Krejčí, F., Ladislav Klíma, p. 281.
87 Ibid.
88 Ibid., p. 282.
89 "To him, who of all people came closest to being absolutely uncompromising, he who fought the greatest humanly possible fight to become something 'wholly'. That impossibility to be something *wholly*, to think *wholly*, to be free *wholly*, that tragical contradiction of every person, over which people smile because they have already given up before they even started fighting, that tragedy of all people of the most lofty type, whether their name is Christ, Tolstoy, Beethoven, Nietzsche, that impossible effort towards totality […]." Kodíček, J., Lad. Klíma. *Literární svět*, 1, 1928, No. 17, p. 1.
90 Ibid.
91 Ibid.

at the same time a concept of radiance."[92] Kodíček likens Klíma's "scolding of human traits"[93] to a fatherly reprimand that is meant to rouse one to become a better individual. He also speaks of Klíma's reclusion which, in Kodiček's opinion, does not lack purpose, but rather due to the necessity of "a spiritual worker"[94] to concentrate on himself. Kodíček ascribes Klíma's theoretical expression of disdain for everything human to a sense of humour.[95] "There was not a more gentle and charming man among us!"[96]

An obituary written by Klíma's long-time admirer, František Kocourek, for the magazine *Pestrý týden* captures accurately the duality of Klíma's personality: a brutal theoretician and a gentle man. Kocourek was "weaned" on Klíma – as a student, he read his *Tractates and Dictates*, and he found his literature "extremely appealing for its strength and spontaneity which can neither be hidden nor feigned".[97] Once a week, Kocourek held reading sessions at his home where he read books aloud along with other students, books that included Klíma's works as well. The author recounts how Ladislav Klíma captured the heart of his brother, who derided other philosophers and writers, and how he would even give his girlfriends the *Tractates* to read, saying "There is something to be learnt about life in this book."[98] Klíma appealed to young people, because he wrote about new things and because he wrote about old things in a new way. Because he was authentic and unrestrained and honest. He was "their" Klíma. "His bravery […] his folksiness […] his alienation in the world of philosophers and scholars"[99] made an impression on people. Dr. Kocourek eventually met with Klíma and was surprised. He had never seen a single photograph of him before and, because of his writing style and bold philosophy, he imagined him to be a big, strong man with and energetic face and a firm gaze. Instead, he was met by a slim, gentle man, full of humility.[100] Kocourek went to visit him on his deathbed in Prague's

92 Ibid.
93 Kodíček, J., Lad. Klíma, p. 2.
94 Ibid.
95 "Speaking of boxing, he expressed wonder at why boxers nowadays no longer fight with iron gloves and without any rules. However, when he once saw boxing in real life, he started shaking so much as the first punch landed that he had to leave the hall, forgetting his pipe and walking stick. Those who know what those two items meant for him will understand what shock must have overcome his stoic mind." Ibid.
96 Ibid.
97 Kocourek, F., To Ladislav Klíma (Za Ladislavem Klímou). *Pestrý týden*, 3, 1928, No. 18, p. 6.
98 Ibid.
99 Ibid.
100 "And at the table, there sat a slim man whose eyes gleamed in a flood of a sort of childlike gratitude, and beneath his rather reddened nose he had a wild beard. He seemed like a shoemaker and he spoke like a devoted servant, never forgetting to use titles while addressing people." Ibid.

Vinohrady hospital in March 1928. "On the blanket, there lay shrivelled hands. From his gaunt face, his eyes shone brightly and triumphantly."[101]

Karel Čapek's obituary for Klíma, published in *Lidové noviny*, radiates warmth and this is reflected also in its humorous tone.

> "With the passing of Ladislav Klíma we are losing one of the very few eccentric and bohemian people who are so rare in our sober lives. […] Poorer than a beggar at a church door, more carefree than Diogenes, this joyfully gloomy philosopher made his living by any available means: through his friends, by cleaning sewers, or by thinking up get-rich-quick projects, such as manufacturing a tobacco substitute or publishing pornographic novels."[102]

All the things that Čapek names here are known facts, but he did make a slight error – Klíma did not write pornographic novels, this false information arose on the basis of certain passages from his novels *Glorious Nemesis* (*Slavná Nemesis*) and *The Sufferings of Prince Sternenhoch* (*Utrpení knížete Sternenhocha*). But Čapek could not stop himself from moralising a little:

> "Diogenes, living in his empty barrel, was like a lord of the manor compared to Ladislav Klíma; at least, there is no evidence that he ever sold or drank away his barrel, or even took out a mortgage on it."[103]

Březina disapproved of Čapek's obituary especially due its emphasis on Klíma's relationship to alcohol: "He should not have written that. People are now going to connect this absurdly with his philosophy."[104] Čapek concludes his obituary by saying:

> "[…] in our moral environment, it was Klíma's originality that cost him all his respect, and perhaps even his life. Official philosophy did not recognise him. He lived as a bird of the heavens; and, as a bird of heavens, he should fall into some furrow where wild nature can flourish in all its beauty and nothingness from his decrepit remains."[105]

101 Ibid.
102 Čapek, K., Ladislav Klíma, p. 5.
103 Ibid.
104 Chalupný, E., *Letters and Opinions of Otokar Březina*, p. 179.
105 Čapek, K., Ladislav Klíma, p. 5.

Conclusion

Ladislav Klíma, a singular, philosopher, writer, artist, eccentric, a morbid phenomenon… sometimes overlooked by the eyes of his era, often misunderstood by his contemporaries, but never spurned. Contemporary sources show that although only a handful of people agreed with his philosophy – virtually nobody in academic and literary circles – the great majority of those who came into contact with his literature and philosophy, or with Klíma himself, respected him as a passionate philosopher – honest and original – and a gifted artist and author, regardless of whether they were casual readers or contemporary literary giants. Klíma, who tried to provoke not just with his philosophy but also with his appearance, ran into an obstacle which he had not foreseen – the indifference of the general public towards trouble-makers like him. His philosophy could not have spoken to everybody, and due to its spontaneity, often bordering on offensiveness and a tendency to make fun out of things that others take deadly seriously; it repels milder natures and, conversely, attracts those who want to play even in adulthood, those who are *homo ludens* just like he was.

Existentialism in the Journal *Letters* and the Following Debate of 1947–1948*

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The aim of the following paper is to present the third issue of the *Letters*, published by the Melantrich Publishing House on 15 February 1947, which reacted to the then growing popularity, especially in France, of a philosophical and cultural movement referred to as 'existentialism'. A special focus is placed on the nature of the thematic treatises that were intended to serve as an interpretation as well as an assessment of the aforementioned philosophical movement. In the Czech milieu, the corpus of existentialism was represented by new translations of the works of primary authors, mainly of German and French provenance, whose publication provoked wide debate concentrated around existential philosophy.

* * *

In 2013, Andy Martin, Professor of French at the University of Cambridge, published an article revealing a surprising discovery: the US Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) dedicated a considerable amount of attention to Jean-Paul Sartre and Albert Camus. The famous bureau began keeping files on both men as of 1945, and 1946 respectively, collecting information by means of wiretapping, surveillance and even theft of personal effects. The result of these espionage activities were at very least bewildering reports – Sartre did nothing to protect his privacy, quite the contrary, he reportedly acted as if he wanted to share all of the aspects of his private life with the wider public. Notebooks that were stolen from them also turned out for the FBI to be a very user-*un*friendly source of information, as they were kept completely in French. So, they had to be sent back to the headquarters to be translated. Once translated, a real investigation could be launched. However, instead

* The text is part of the Czech Science Foundation grant project (GA ČR) *Individualism in the Czechoslovak Philosophy 1918–1948*, No. 19-14180S.

of compromising material, Sartre's notes were – much to the despair of the American agents – full of ontological formulations.

Yet, the mission was clear: J. Edgar Hoover, the then director of the FBI, needed to know what this highly popular existentialism was all about; most of all, whether the whole movement was nothing but sophistically concealed Marxism. This led to the production of copious amounts of material from the pens of "philosophising agents" who faced the strenuous, almost Sisyphean task for an untrained man – to deconstruct Sartre's thought as put forth in his *opus magnum*, *Being and Nothingness*.[1]

This anecdote illustrates the climate of that time well: in a world that was still slowly recovering from the horrors of the Second World War and that was progressively descending into bipolar geopolitical orientation, it was necessary to establish clearly who stood on which side of the emerging Iron Curtain – be it an individual, a political party or a whole philosophical movement. A movement could, after all, easily become an instrument of political influence and mobilisation of the public, posing a challenge to official propaganda. The demand for the assumption of a clear stance towards the trend of existential philosophy was, understandably, also pressing on the other side of the notional barricades. Within the Czechoslovak milieu, it crystallised into the publication of the third issue of the *Letters* in February 1947, dedicated in its entirety to existentialism.

The horrendous task of "dealing with existentialism" fell, rather than to government agents, to members of the university and intellectual elites of the time: the whole publication was edited by Jindřich Chalupecký, an art historian, and the individual studies were written by Ladislav Rieger, a professor (*On the Importance of Existential Philosophy / O významu filosofie existenciální*), Václav Navrátil, alumnus of the Faculty of Philosophy of Charles University in Prague, Ministry of Culture and Information official, and representative of the Czechoslovak Republic at UNESCO (*Knowledge and Existence / Poznání a existence*), and the almost forty-year-old Jan Patočka (*The Doubts about Existentialism / Pochybnosti o existencialismu*). Their studies were supplemented by translations of texts by L. Shestov (*Potestas clavium*), M. Heidegger (*What is Metaphysics? / Co je metafyzika*), K. Jaspers (*The Reality / Skutečnost*), F. Kafka (*A Report to An Academy / Zpráva o akademii*, *The New Advocate / Nový advokát*, *Up in the Gallery / Na galerii*, *An Old Manuscript / Starý list*, *Jackals and Arabs / Šakali a Arabové*, *Clothes / Šaty*, *Reflections for Gentlemen-Jockeys / Na rozmyšlenou pánskému jezdci*, *A Message from the Emperor /* Císařské poselství), G. Marcel (*On Freedom / O svobodě*), J.-P. Sartre (*Existen-*

1 Sartre, J.-P., *Being and Nothingness: A Phenomenological Essay on Ontology.* New York, Pocket Books 1978.

tialism is Humanism / Existencialismus je humanismus, *Intimity / Intimita*), A. Camus (*The Myth of Sisyphus / Mythus o Sisyfovi*, *Hope and Absurdity in Franz Kafka's Works / Naděje a absurdnost v díle Franze Kafky*) and J. Wahl (*On Existence / O existenci*). The issue also includes texts that are not focused on existentialism, namely texts by J. Chalupecký (*Note on Cézanne / Poznámka o Cézannovi*, *Culture / Kultura*), and L. Kundera, a writer, translator and Germanist (*Slovak Surrealists / Slovenští nadrealisté*).

The first three of the above studies are especially worthy of attention, as they are meant to serve as a kind of initiation into existential philosophy and a hermeneutic key to the translations on the list that follow them. The goal and gravity of the whole enterprise is announced immediately in the prologue:

> "Existentialism is nowadays at the centre of the attention of both philosophers and writers. It is of no importance that it has also immediately become fashionable; nevertheless, it is certain that it is one of the most significant and most hotly debated tendencies of contemporary philosophy.
>
> Its echo has already reached us; so far mostly in the form of sporadic and brief negative appraisals of it. I believe that the reaction to existentialism, if conducted in this manner from the very beginning, is entirely pointless. Should we deal with this philosophy at all, one must acquaint oneself with it by studying the original texts; which is the main goal of this issue of the *Letters* that has assembled, in addition to several Czech essays, a set of texts by all significant authors that claim allegiance to this philosophical movement or of those authors who feel a sympathy towards it."[2]

Much in the same way as the American investigators approached the relationship between existentialism to Marxism, here, too, it is evident from the very beginning where the biggest potential threat lies. As the author of the prologue adds:

> "Let us just note the ominous re-emergence in existential philosophy of Kierkegaard's term, despite all the later attempts at its correction (Jaspers, Sartre), the term *det Enkelte*, the individual."[3]

2 Chalupecký, J., Editorial. *The Letters: a Quaterly Journal for Art and Philosophy* (*Listy: čtvrtletník pro umění a filosofii*), No. 3. Praha, Melantrich 1947, p. 323.

3 Ibid.

Already in the introductory commentary can we see the exposition of an interpretative feature that strongly resonates throughout both the whole publication and the academic discussions that takes place in the following months: existentialism is understood as a philosophical movement whose focus lies predominantly on the individual, who is determined precisely by various aspects of their own individuality, and who manifests himself in various respects. Along with placing this emphasis on the individual, the prologue also reveals another feature typical for the Czechoslovak reception of existentialism, which is summarised in Lenin's quote, vigorously warning against philosophical idealism as a path leading to "clericalism".

This extrapolation therefore sets a perspective through which the whole discussion may be viewed: if existentialism is to have any say in the conflict for the spiritual values of the time, it must find its place in a territory that is already occupied by Marxism, or rather dialectical materialism on the one hand, and by Catholic minded groups on the other. Moreover, both camps are sworn enemies which makes the position of existentialism all the more delicate, as it could at the same time furnish both groups with arguments. The tension can be felt in an article by Ladislav Rieger titled *On the Importance of Existential Philosophy:*

> "It was Kant, Kant the representative of the Enlightenment, the supporter of French revolution, of the rights of man and a friend of Rousseau's, who first [established – J. M.] man and his existence as the core problem. It is not until Kant that all the main questions of philosophy are centred into one: what is man? Kant's answer to the question of the last goal of man's existence is: morality [TN: *Sittlichkeit* in German],[4] the moral existence of man on Earth. Here is the root of his anthropocentrism: morality [TN: *Sittlichkeit*] is something that is essentially human; if it is to be 'pure', then it must not be founded upon a system of threats and promises of rewards, i.e. it must not build on any religious, theocentric or theocratic 'morality' [TN: *Moralität*]. In this sense, Kant is a philosophical founder of democracy – that is, of the moral [TN: *sittlich*] autonomy of man. Thus, for Kant, religion is not the foundation of morality [TN: *Sittlichkeit*]. Here lies the main difference from the previous idea of man. In morality [TN: *Sittlichkeit*], man submits to the

4 The Czech language, similar to German, recognizes two different meanings of the word "morality": the Czech words "mravnost" and "morálka" correspond respectively to the German words "Sittlichkeit" and "Moralität". Since both Rieger and Kant use this distinction in their writings, we include this note to avoid any confusion. – Translator's note.

> orders of conscience as something that stands above him (as above the subject – the individual).[5]

In the history of philosophy, it is not until Feuerbach with his anthropocentric theory that Kant's project finds a continuator. According to Riegel, the existentialisms of Kierkegaard, Heidegger and Jaspers, as well as all those French variations deriving from them, still echo "questions concerning the purely Christian issue of man's relation to God's transcendence – positively or negatively so."[6]

The same overtones are apparent also in the next study by Václav Navrátil, *Knowledge and Existence*. This study is intended as a philosophical probe into key existentialist terminology and the problems connected to it. Because of the very ambitious aim of the study – to deal not only with knowledge, but also the overall method and thematisation of individual motives of a great number of authors (Kierkegaard, Heidegger, Jaspers, Marcel, Sartre) – it evidently struggles with finding a common denominator for all the authors.

This results in two tendencies – firstly, the study tends to resort to statements that cannot be accepted as factually accurate with respect to the authors discussed.[7] Secondly, the discussion repeatedly turns towards the aforementioned point of reference, subjectivity, or individuality, and its role in existentialism. This assessment of existentialism thus turns into an assessment of a philosophy with an emphasis on human individuality and, consequently, into an assessment of how each given philosopher addresses it.

The difficulties associated with assuming a clear and coherent stance become even more apparent in the parts that deal with existentialism as a whole. These parts reveal the ideological overtones outlined above:

> "Yet, freedom in the existentialist sense, especially in the French understanding of existentialism, may be interpreted as a breaking away from social and cultural bonds, not only in the sense of a revolution of scepticism, so common in France, but also in the sense of a hopeless liberalism, a hopeless independence from this world."[8]

5 Rieger, V., On the Importance of Existential Philosophy (O významu filosofie existenciální). *The Letters* (*Listy*), p. 333.

6 Ibid., p. 334. Rieger considers Masaryk's humanism to be a possible way towards Feuerbach's and Rádl's concept of the "idea of man". Ibid., p. 335.

7 "In Sartre's understanding, nothingness is not a delimiting term, on the contrary, it is presented as a method of annihilating or interrupting existence." Navrátil, V., Knowledge and Existence (Poznání a existence). *The Letters* (*Listy*), p. 344.

8 Ibid., p. 348.

The danger of existentialism, according to the author, lies in the possibility of interpretation of its thesis centred on the question of human individuality in a manner approaching liberalism, which is, understandably, unacceptable. However, there was an even greater danger within the Czechoslovak context – the existentialist emphasis on human individuality could potentially serve as a path towards a hypostasis of human interiority and so towards a way of thinking inclined to Catholicism. This potential way of interpreting existentialist philosophy also had to be blocked:

> "Although the philosophy of existence begins with subjectivity, man is not posited here by *his own* subjectivity, his inner life, his unique self. Here, man is not a personalist expression. Existentialism at its beginning and at its end is not a personalist philosophy. Man exists in this world only as a species. And in all probability not as a special spiritual category in the world."[9]

Thus, existentialism was presented as being completely incompatible with the thought of the personalists then associated with the journal *Esprit*[10] – paradoxically enough, many significant personalist thinkers were absolutely crucial for the development of French existentialism, and G. Marcel, one of their main representatives, is on the list of authors whose translations were published in this particular volume of the *Letters* (*Listy*). However, the situation in the already occupied intellectual territory was merciless and, where existentialism was used as an instrument of criticism of religiously-minded authors, its relationship to dialectic materialism as its philosophical foundation also had to be proven. Thus, Navrátil concludes his article by saying:

> "Existence in the existentialist sense is not a biological, or moral history, but a transcendentalist *construct*. This term is created by *dialectical* means (it is construed using a/ negation, b/ paradox, and c/ speculation)."[11]

9 Ibid., p. 352.

10 The journal *Esprit* was founded in 1932 by a French philosopher Emmanuel Mounier, who was inclined towards Catholicism, with a group of likeminded friends. It provided a publishing platform for authors who accentuated the irreducible value of the human person and thus stood up against both individualist materialism connected with capitalism and collectivist materialism connected with communism. According to the personalists, both of these conceptions of man (and society) lead to anonymisation (and so to a suppression of personality) in the *milieu* of mass society. The personalists also vigorously stood up against false spirituality of fascism that leads the idolatry of race, authoritarian leadership, economy, etc. The Vichy regime banned the journal in 1941 for obvious reasons. Mounier resumed its printing in 1944 (after his short mobilisation and consequent imprisonment). The journal is still published to this day.

11 Navrátil, V., Knowledge and Existence, p. 359.

Thus, existentialism is presented as a school of thought which is wholly incompatible with Christian personalism (and, as such, relevant), but also as a school of thought that is empty and merely formal rather than advocating any concrete values – depending on how far it strayed from philosophical Marxism.

Patočka's study *Doubts about Existentialism*, the last thematic text contained in the *Letters*, significantly differs from the previous two texts in its conciseness and, most of all, in the absence of political pathos typical for the period. It deals with existentialism (unlike the two previous texts) purely philosophically. Patočka focuses especially on Sartre and on the very foundation of his thinking of that time, i.e. the foundation of subjectivity, or existence, using erudite phenomenological analysis. However, Sartre's philosophy, as presented and interpreted by Patočka, does not correspond in many important areas to how Sartre himself actually deals with the given problems in his texts that had been published until then. Nevertheless, Patočka identifies transcendentalist features in Sartre's philosophy and describes them as follows:

> "The transcendence of the Self, its superiority in regard to the world as well as its absence in the world are proven by the fact that the Self is always where nobody can search for it. Each search has that which is sought after at its end: the end is the goal, hence *finis*. However, the Self is always at the beginning and if one wanted to find it one would have to connect the beginning to the end: but doing that would make both disappear. After all, this is also why Cogito is the primum principium: it is impossible to go beyond it, every search has the Self at its apex, the Self is always the apex; the Self is the first truth that never disappears, just like a life vest always rises back to the water's surface, just like a roly-poly doll always stands up straight again."[12]

Yet, Sartre's text from 1936 reads: "[…] the Ego is neither formally nor materially *within consciousness*: it is outside, at large in the world; it is a being in the world, like the Ego of another".[13] Later he even says:

> "The World did not create the I, the I did not create the World, they are two objects for the absolute, impersonal consciousness, and it is

12 Patočka, J., Doubts about Existentialism (Pochybnosti o existencialismu). *The Letters* (*Listy*), p. 361.

13 Sartre, J.-P., *The Transcendence of the Ego*. Milton – London, Taylor & Francis – Routledge 2011, p. 12–13. And later he continues: "My I, indeed, *is no more certain for consciousness than the I of other men*. It is simply more intimate." Ibid., p. 111.

> through that consciousness that they are linked back together. This absolute consciousness, when it is purified of the I, no longer contains in any way a subject, nor is it a corpus of representations; it is quite simply a precondition and an absolute source of existence."[14]

Patočka's interpretation, unfortunately, continues in the abovementioned spirit and so the conclusions it reaches are not surprising:

> "Therefore, the condition of the possibility of consciousness is nothingness which does not exist, but, nevertheless, manifests itself by annihilating (néantising) and, in doing so, makes the difference between the subject and the object possible, indeed all differences in general."[15]

However, Sartre's texts that were available at that time suggest something quite different: Nothingness is not a condition for the possibility of consciousness, but consciousness itself.[16]

This consciousness which always necessarily relates to something is, moreover, exactly that to which Sartre ascribes the quality of existence.[17] And so, despite its philosophical depth and evident familiarity with the phenomenological background of the problem at hand, Patočka's text unfortunately misfired and in the end added to the substantial distortion of existentialism. Whereas the two previous texts succumbed to highlighting political

14 Ibid., p. 113.

15 Patočka, J., Doubts about Existentialism, p. 362.

16 " 'The being of consciousness,' we said in the Introduction, 'is a being such that in its being, its being is in question,' This means that the being of consciousness does not coincide with itself in a full equivalence. Such equivalence, which is that of the in-itself, is expressed by this simple formula: being is what it is. In the in-itself there is not a particle of being which is not wholly within itself without distance. When being is thus conceived there is not the slightest suspicion of duality in it; this is what we mean when we say that the density of being of the in-itself is infinite. It is a fullness. […] The in-itself is full of itself, and no more total plenitude can be imagined, no more perfect equivalence of content to container. There is not the slightest emptiness in being, not the tiniest crack through which nothingness might slip in. The distinguishing characteristic of consciousness, on the other hand, is that it is a decompression of being. Indeed it is impossible to define it as coincidence with itself." Sartre, J.-P., *Being and Nothingness*, p. 74.

17 "[…] Every conscious existence exists as consciousness of existing." Ibid., p. 54. "Consciousness is a plenum of existence, and this determination of itself by itself is an essential characteristic. It would even be wise not to misuse the expression 'cause of self,' which allows us to suppose a progression, a relation of self-cause to self-effect. It would be more exact to say very simply: The existence of consciousness comes from consciousness itself. By that we need not understand that consciousness 'derives from nothingness.' There cannot be 'nothingness of consciousness' before consciousness. […] If there is to be nothingness of consciousness, there must be a consciousness which has been and which is no more and a witnessing consciousness which poses the nothingness of the first consciousness for a synthesis of recognition. Consciousness is prior to nothingness and 'is derived' from being." Ibid., p. 56.

aspects, Patočka takes a sceptical stance towards existentialism on the grounds of a philosophical analysis which, nevertheless, leads him to similar assertions: the philosophy of existence is diagnosed with transcendentalism; for him, as one can say with a pinch of salt, it is "an acute inflammation of individualism" which this philosophy is incapable of curing on its own.

Still, Patočka's purely philosophical interpretation remains unique due to it being apolitical, which continues to be a unique feature even in the following discussions that continued for several months. Two authors stand out amongst those who reacted to existentialism due to their contrasting stances expressed in their journal articles as well as in independent texts: according to Vlasta Tatjana Miškovská : "[…] the third issue of the *'Letters'* represents a significant source of information"[18] and she thought that "we ought not overestimate the importance of existentialism."[19] Václav Černý, on the other hand, was highly critical of his colleagues:

> "When translating a thinker who has not only invented something new, but also created new concepts for his new way of thinking by revisiting old ones, one must first get a good understanding of them; and right after that one needs to invent new and equally meaningful terms in one's own mother tongue as equivalents of those concepts. However, one cannot find such equivalents by simply substituting each word of the original text with the first definition that we find in the dictionary. If there was some darkness hanging above existentialism, this issue of the *'Letters'* did less than it could to disperse it."[20]

Both of these authors elaborate their analyses in the form of individual monographic studies in 1947 that are published a year later. While Černý describes existentialism in his *First Notebook on Existentialism* (*První sešit o existencialismu*)[21] as "a philosophy of pleasure, not of discourse" based on "subjective life reality, i.e. something that is especially varied",[22] Miškovská still advocates her dismissive stance in the essay *Existentialism Is Not a Humanism* (*Existencialismus není humanismus*)[23] and attributes "speculative

18 Miškovská, V. T., Existentialism in the *Letters* (Existencialismus v *Listech*). *Česká mysl*, 40, 1947, No. 3, p. 170–174, esp. p. 174.

19 Ibid.

20 Černý, V., Initiation into Existentialism (Zasvěcení do existencialismu). *Kritický měsíčník*, 8, 1947, No. 9–10, 30. 5., p. 249–251.

21 Černý, V., *The First and Second Notebook on Existentialism* (*První a druhý sešit o existencialismu*). Praha, Mladá fronta 1992.

22 Ibid., p. 25–56.

23 Miškovská, V. T., *Existentialism is Not a Humanism* (*Existencialismus není humanismus*). Praha, Kostnická jednota v Praze II 1948.

incapacity, lack of literary taste [and] a decadent tiredness of humanity" to Sartre.[24] Nevertheless, a surprisingly similar argumentation line runs through the cores of both authors' interpretations and revolves around several interconnected motifs – an emphasis on the indeterministic character of human action, the (non)existence of God, the burden of responsibility and the necessity of choice (i.e. the creation of one's own existence) and the relation of the individual to others.

The discrepancy in the resulting assessments becomes quite explicitly plain when we compare both authors' conclusions on "existential methodology". Miškovská concludes that "Sartre makes the same mistake of assuming an overly confident approach to the particularities of mental life, like those German existentialists who act almost as if they have just discovered introspection. However, he has only one thing in common with these self-declared pioneers: *the usage of fragmentary observations untouched by any method worthy of the name*".[25] By contrast, Černý, during his search for "existentialist techné", praises this common feature:

> "The phenomenology of Edmund Husserl, a native of Moravia […], served as a method for existentialism (Sartre, Marcel): Action is the phenomenologist's point of departure, it helps him avoid the dead end in which philosophy hopelessly finds itself after several centuries of disputes between materialism and spiritualism over the nature of being […]."[26]

The atmosphere in the following months as well as the nature of the debate over existentialism was perhaps best illustrated by Vladimír Tardy, a future professor, Chair of the Department of Psychology at Charles University, and Director of the Psychological Institute of the Czechoslovak Academy of

24 Ibid., p. 54.

25 Ibid., p. 36. Miškovská makes the same comment also elsewhere: "This circumstance, which is in itself seemingly marginal, is telling for one feature of existentialist thinking, present both in philosophy and literature: an almost complete loss of adherence to any method and thus also a loss of the prerequisite for self-discipline at interpreting somebody else's work and at attaining general knowledge of cultural life as such." Ibid., p. 14.

26 Černý, V., *The First and Second Notebook on Existentialism*, p. 17. *The Second Notebook on Existentialism*, dedicated to the analysis of Czechoslovak poetic and prosaic works that showed some traits of existential tones (especially Bednář, Orten, Blatný, Kainar, Hanuš, Březovský, Urbánek, Dvořáček and others), was supposed to be a continuation of the *First Notebook on Existentialism* and its third edition, as the first two editions were immediately sold out. This too can be taken as evidence and a partial explanation why Černý was much more "tolerant", in comparison to Miškovská, towards the plurality of opinions and methods of existential authors introduced in the first notebook.

Sciences.[27] In 1947, he published an article in the journal *Česká mysl* with the laconic title *Existentialism* (*Existencialismus*). It does not deal with the philosophical foundations, arguments or ambitions of the movement in question, nor does it offer a general overview of it. Instead, without further ado, it identifies existentialism purely with Sartre's thinking as represented in one of his public lectures. Tardy writes:

> "Sartre claims that when one is making a decision, one is all alone and cannot rely on anybody else. Today I can admire Russia, but who can guarantee that the proletariat will continue in my (!) work after my death? What fantastic egocentrism! The existentialist is anxiously deciding in favour of his own humanism and trusts nobody but himself. Since he takes himself to be the centre of the world, determining the fate of humanity, this distrust towards others is understandable. French individualism is intensified here to the point of being pathological."[28]

This evidently identifies the crucial problem due to which existentialism had to be excluded from the post-war struggle for spiritual values in Czechoslovakia: the freedom of choice that Sartre promoted so much crystallised out of various domestic interpretations into being the cardinal aspect of his thinking. Although the freedom to choose "beyond good and evil" in a world ridded of the metaphysical absolute and material predetermination could be used against personalists and other circles of pro-Catholic intellectuals, it could just as well be turned against the Marxists due to its emphasis on personal freedom and the necessity of choice. According to Tardy, the examples of particular human action that Sartre lists just go to "prove the unprincipled nature of existentialism. Each choice is meant to be strictly principled, yet I could choose love over morality just as well as, conversely, I could opt for Catholicism just as much as I can opt for communism."[29]

This clinging to the possibility of absolute ideological collaboration was thus highlighted as the twisted essence of existentialism that had to be publicly rejected. Tardy's claims sometimes come close to disgust:

27 A general context of the reception of existentialism in Czechoslovakia was summarised by Jan Zouhar. See Zouhar, J., Existentialism and Czech Philosophy 1945–1948 (Existencialismus a české myšlení 1945–1948). *Studia Philosophica*, 60, 2013, No. 1, p. 37–46. Further information is also to be found in the antology of texts on Czechoslovak individualism in 1918–1948 which is to be published in 2021 by Karolinum Press.

28 Tardy, V., Existentialism (Existencialismus). *Česká mysl*, 40, 1947, No. 3, p. 153–157, esp. p. 156.

29 Ibid., p. 156.

> "The extraordinary weakness of reason and the emotional corruptness of existentialism would be but an incomprehensible perversion were it not an expression of a whole social group […]."[30]

However, Tardy perhaps drew from Sartre's lectures more than he would have been willing to admit. In the following decades he underwent a radical personal and philosophical transformation and, despite his previous enthusiasm for Marxism, he became one of the first signatories of *Charter 77*.[31]

* * *

In the months that followed the Second World War, "existential philosophy" reached the peak of its popularity in France as well as in the rest of Europe. Through its most prominent representatives and their works, it offered the country, ravaged by the war, a chance for renewal in a variety of ways: firstly, it presented a certain unified, cohesive image of France, secondly, it provided individual segments of French society with vocabulary that helped to acknowledge and come to terms with the experiences of wartime, and thirdly, with its emphasis on personal responsibility, it was a suitable continuation of the *épuration légale*[32] which made it an appropriate means of healing the "cultural trauma" caused by the war.[33]

The intellectual climate of Czechoslovakia – whose situation was not dissimilar to that of France – was not, however, favourably disposed to existentialism. The presented examples of the domestic reception of existentialism clearly show the dismissive undertones pervading them, undertones of a prevalently socialist orientation in various intensities and, in fact, they can be taken to herald the approaching Communist coup d'état of February 1948. The function and role of human individuality with respect to ethical, social, religious and metaphysical questions turned out to be one of the key

30 Ibid., p. 157.

31 Císařovská, B. – Prečan, V., *Charter 77: The Documents 1977–1989, Vol. 1–3* (*Charta 77: Dokumenty 1977–1989. Svazek 1–3*). Praha, Ústav pro soudobé dějiny AV 2007, p. 1–5, esp. p. 24. – For the sake of objectivity, we should note that Sartre, too, went through an intellectual evolution in the following years, with the "trajectory" of his evolution being remarkably opposite: he builds his own Marxist position and describes its compatibility with his "earlier" existentialism, first, rather inconspicuously, in a 1957 article titled *Search for a Method* (*Questions de méthode*), and three years later in the book *Critique of Dialectical Reason* (*Critique de la raison dialectique*; in which the aforementioned article is included as the preface). Sartre, J.-P., *Questions de méthode*. Paris, Gallimard 1986; included in: Sartre, J.-P., *Critique de la raison dialectique*. Nouvelle édition. Paris, Gallimard 1985.

32 "Legal purge" – this term denotes the wave of official trials that followed the Liberation of France and the fall of the Vichy Regime.

33 Bearet, P., *The existentialist moment. The rise of Sartre as a public intellectual*. Cambridge, Polity Press 2015, p. 143.

issues as well as the unifying element of domestic publications. The February coup, however, caused a radical turn in academic orientation of many of those authors. Černý's *Notebooks on Existentialism* (*Sešity o existencialismu*) were confiscated and their publication was forbidden. Václav Navrátil and Jindřich Chalupecký were banned from publishing and Jan Patočka was forced to leave Charles University a year later. The interpretations of existentialism that were presented above thus reveal the specifics of a relatively short, albeit formative period of the Third Czechoslovak Republic, a period marked by its being wedged between two significant milestones of Czechoslovak history.

Philosopher on the Throne. Edvard Beneš and the Philosophical Foundations of Practical Activity*

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The following article is to be understood as a case study of political idealism. But what kind of idealism? Here, idealism is neither a philosophical position of the priority of self-consciousness in the Hegelian sense, nor any kind of trivial idealism of political naïveté or optimism. What we mean by idealism is the standpoint of a practical politician, a philosopher on the throne, who strives to actualise ideas in social life. The first Czechoslovak Republic was created in this idealistic manner as the philosophical project of the philosophers on the throne. I shall deal with the case of the lesser known member of the Masaryk and Beneš duo. I shall focus on how Beneš's political thinking builds on his understanding of individualism as freedom, as the self-actualisation of man as an autonomous and harmonious being, self-determined by reason.

As far as an assessment of Beneš's political activity is concerned, this study concentrates only on Beneš's views and stances: it is not for me to judge his particular political decisions. The analysis that follows offers evidence of the coherency of Beneš's political thinking, or rather it presents Beneš's own reflections upon his political activity. However, the study does not deal with how and in what sense these stances can be grasped as interpretive contexts, or even the reasons for Beneš's political standpoints. Due to space constraints, we will only focus on the period of the First Republic, prior to the Munich agreement.

Firstly, we shall study how the idea of a crisis of European humanity served as a point of departure for the political and philosophical thought of both Czechoslovak philosophers on the throne, Masaryk and Beneš. Second-

* The text is part of the Czech Science Foundation grant project (GA ČR) *Individualism in the Czechoslovak Philosophy 1918–1948*, No. 19-14180S.

ly, we will focus on Edvard Beneš's understanding of the crisis. Thirdly, I shall show that Beneš, at least in some cardinal aspects, had formed his interpretive position and worldview already before the First World War and that the opinions of later Beneš, the politician and stateman, can be traced back to his dissertation of 1909, *The Origin and Development of Modern Political Individualism* (*Původ a vývoj moderního politického individualismu*).[1] Finally, I shall conclude the study with a reflection upon the relationship between philosophy and politics, an idealistic relationship, in which a philosopher really *should be* on the throne, since, for Beneš, the crisis of European humanity is a crisis of ideals, and its solution thus lies in the actualisation of humanistic ideals, the implementation of moral education and, most of all, in working towards a new type of man, a harmonious individual.

A key role in the whole study is played by the thesis that Beneš's opinions, and even his philosophical stances, are consistent. Beneš the politician is determined by Beneš the philosopher, the sociologist. And as for his philosophical opinions, Beneš's dissertation of 1909 is of essential significance. In the interwar period, these principles of his thinking, which are the principles of his politics, are consistent. After all, Beneš himself declares this consistency publicly:

> "In such tremendously grave and deeply revolutionary circumstance, throughout my thirty years in public life I have proceeded steadfastly and without compromise and in accordance with my philosophical and moral attitude towards and belief in law and justice, spiritual progress and social good; never did I betray this […]"[2]

It remains to be seen whether his philosophical-political thinking really was consequential, maintaining a steady course; whether Beneš's political beliefs remain consistent throughout the period studied. Beneš's manuscripts from the Masaryk Archive were used to support this thesis.

1 Beneš, E., *The Origin and Development of Political Individualism in the History of Modern Philosophy* (*until French Revolution*) – (*Vznik a vývoj politického individualismu v dějinách moderní filosofie /až do francouzské revoluce/*), dissertation thesis, manuscript, 1909 (in the archives of the Masaryk Institute: EB IV/1, 123 R 10A/3 [R43], folder No. 12). Pagination taken from the manuscript in the Masaryk Institute Archive.

2 Beneš, E., *The World Crisis, Continuity of the Law and a New Revolutionary Law* (*Světová krise, kontinuita práva a nové právo revoluční*). Praha, V. Linhart 1946, p. 7. This is the speech Beneš gave at the official ceremony of accepting *doctor honoris causa* he was granted by Prague's Faculty of Law.

1. Patočka, Masaryk, Beneš and the European crisis

We begin with Patočka's early Masarykean studies. In them, Patočka highlights the idea of a deep European crisis as being in the centre of Masaryk's thinking. After all, Patočka himself, as well as his teacher Husserl and also, as we shall see, Edvard Beneš, to whom this paper is dedicated, are all diagnosticians of the European crisis. According to Patočka, the crisis is of historical origin, it is a crisis of the European man of the late Modern era. Masaryk's study of suicide is nothing else than his attempt at analysis of a critical condition, a symptom of which is suicidality.

So where does this crisis originate? Patočka claims that

> "Both Masaryk's sociology and his philosophy of history are mainly an analysis of the potential and real effect of ideas and beliefs on the individual and on society."[3]

What ideas and effects are we talking about in terms of the crisis? In Patočka's interpretation, Masaryk thinks that the origins of the crisis lie in secularism, rationalism – and a naïve faith in progress – of the 19th century. In other words, the methodism of the natural sciences and secularist thinking are *symptoms* of the critical condition. It logically follows that Masaryk's philosophical and political praxis will necessarily consist of efforts to put a renewed emphasis on the Christian foundations of Europeanhood and on the concept of providence and its role in history. In this way, Masaryk strives to motivate towards action, and rid people of scepsis and subjectivism. Because what man needs most is supraindividual support.

> "… [Masaryk] saw the crisis of modern man in scepsis and nihilism, i.e. in a malaise of a metaphysical character."[4]

And, to repeat Patočka's thesis, what is at question here is the effect of ideas on the individual.

We shall devote more attention to the theme of political idealism understood in this way in the second half of this paper. We begin with a closer look

3 Patočka, J., Masaryk's and Husserl's View of the Spiritual Crisis of European Humanity (Masarykovo a Husserlovo pojetí duševní krize evropského lidstva). See *The Czechs I. Complete works of Jan Patočka, Vol. 12* (*Češi I. Sebrané spisy 12*). Praha, Oikoymenh 2006, p. 23.

4 Patočka, J., Masaryk Yesterday and Today (Masaryk včera a dnes). See *The Czechs I. Complete works of Jan Patočka, Vol. 12*, p. 98.

at how Beneš approaches the crisis of Europeanhood, or the crisis of modern man. First of all, it is beyond doubt that the second Czechoslovak president occupies himself with the problem of deep crisis explicitly and repeatedly throughout the interwar period. We cannot claim that Beneš, unlike Masaryk, analysed the crisis in the pre-war period, on the other hand, however, we have evidence for his long-held standpoint that the crisis is "a world crisis of contemporary humanity in general".[5] Let us have a closer look at how Beneš specifies the nature of the crisis. He notices that it concerns the particular predominant worldviews of the time:

On the one hand, it is a crisis of nationalism. Beneš considers the nationalist movements proliferating in the interwar period to be ideological currents offering identity and an identification effect, similar to that previously provided by religion. What nationalism suppresses, however, is individuality. Yet, Beneš assigns a positive meaning to nationalism, too, insofar as national culture is in accordance with the ideals of humanity. Beneš is a supporter of cultural relativism, respect for other cultures, where no culture is superior to another.

Secondly, it is a crisis of democracy. Beneš notes that democracy was working as a destructive power, since it challenged the certainties of the old regime. Democracy will continue to retain this disintegrating effect unless we realise that "democracy is first of all a moral problem, and especially a problem of moral education guided by the philosophy of humanness."[6] Therefore "democracy essentially is, or at least should be, a regime of a true spiritual and moral nobility."[7]

Thirdly, it is a crisis of scientific socialism, i.e. a crisis of Marxism. Beneš refuses the simplifying Marxist interpretation of the antagonism of two classes, refuses the idea of the inevitable road to revolution, and, conversely, emphasizes the plurality of various social groups and classes, and the consolidation of the state.[8]

Fourthly, it is a crisis of science. What is meant here by crisis – and we can juxtapose Beneš's stance in this matter, for instance, to Husserl's famous account of the late 1930's – is a diminishing faith in reason. For Beneš, this is

5 Beneš, E., *Moral Crisis of the Afterwar World* (*Mravní krise poválečného světa*), manuscript, 1928, p. 9 (in the archives of the Masaryk Institute, EB IV/1; R 48/5A, 252 R 48/5a [R 67, R 68], folder No. 78). Pagination taken from the manuscript.

6 Ibid., p. 23.

7 Ibid., p. 25.

8 Here as well as in other instances of Beneš' comments and reflections of political movements or authors, we do not occupy ourselves with evaluation of adequacy of Beneš' interpretation. It is not the goal of the study to give an account of Beneš' qualities as a philosopher.

caused by the cold rationalism of positivism which, in his opinion, inevitably leads to materialism, moral neutrality or indifference, and utilitarianism. Science, as he says, should be "moralised", it should adopt

> "a new feature, an intuitive and emotional feature. This is what is at stake now. This is where the crisis of today's scientific worldview lies; this is the crisis of the same ideology that turned science into a fetish."[9]

The crisis of science leads to resorting to occultism, mysticism, but also to worldviews founded on nationalism and will.

> "Should [modern man] be an aristocrat of spirit, he must possess firmness, decisiveness and clarity of reason just as he should possess empathy, openness and tenderness of heart."[10]

Finally, it is the crisis of religion in the sense that – as Beneš says – instead of sincere and true religious sentiment we have a rash of sectarianism, mysticism and occultism.

It appears that the starting point of all these particular crises is the individual's relationship towards collective pillars, be it a nation, Church or political system.

> "… In all great social crises [we can see] the primordial struggle between two huge tendencies that exist within society, between an individual's analytical desire for freedom, and an effort to maintain the unity of society by exercising a certain degree of authority and collective discipline…"[11]

Due to the world war, Europe found itself at a crossroads. Beneš is not indifferent to this crisis, but he is a politician who practically implements his principles in political life. The crisis that we are discussing is the result of political and social development and at its core there lies, as I have said above, a conflict between two tendencies, individualist and collectivist. Beneš believes that he understands the crisis, for he studied the historical prerequisites for individualism as well as its relationship to the collectivities that

9 Ibid., p. 44.
10 Ibid., p. 47.
11 Ibid., p. 11.

form social cohesion. Therefore, his political activity can find support in this theoretical base.

Although Beneš assesses the crisis of modern man only in the interwar period, he builds on his basic opinions in his dissertation thesis on the origin and development of political individualism, to which we shall now turn our attention. Our aim here is not to discuss the problem of the development of political (or philosophical) individualism as such, but to focus solely on the emphasis that Beneš places on certain themes, through which he reveals his own standpoint.

2. Beneš's Dissertation on *The Origin and Development of Modern Political Individualism*

The interpretation Beneš offers in his dissertation thesis is historical, limited solely to a period of the European Modern Age of less than three hundred years, beginning with the Reformation and ending with the French Revolution. Beneš therefore speaks of *the origin* and *development* of individualism because, in his opinion, an individualist concept of humanity played no role at the beginning of the late Medieval Period. Beneš sees Christianity critically, as a denial of the Ancient Greek and Roman view of life, which was strongly individualistic. In his opinion, Christian morality is indeed "strongly anti-individualistic",[12] and indifferent towards injustice (render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, render unto God the things that are God's). It is even a type of mysticism, dogmatism, a monopoly on explanation of the phenomena of the world, i.e. an esoteric interpretation that must be relied on.

As I have said, here is the beginning of development culminating in practical implementation of individualism in political space. The starting point, according to Beneš, is in the development of science that furnishes man with reasons, explains the world around him, and thus founds in him a feeling of self-respect. This is the first turning point. The second is reformational schism within Christianity and the demand for freedom of religion, freedom of expression, and a right to criticism, which are all raised by Protestantism.

The next step of his interpretation deals with the concept of natural rights. He believes that natural rights are, to begin with, a result of theoretical thinking, and so their theoretical background comes years before their actual implementation in political space.

Beneš centres his analysis around the classic (and quite simplistically understood) Modern Age idea of the social contract that can be found in all

12 Beneš, E., *The Origin and Development of Political Individualism*, p. 5.

Modern Age political thinkers, almost without exception. A political community is founded only by a social contract and in this respect – as most of these thinkers believe – political rights are the result of a contractual state and are therefore positive, i.e. based solely on a shared agreement.

However, Beneš does not agree with this way of thinking about society and refuses the idea that one can just as easily be stripped of one's rights within the social space as one can be granted them. This is why Beneš appreciates Locke as the most thorough thinker as far as a clear formulation of natural human rights as something preceding the social contract is concerned. People enter these contractual relations[13] free and equal. Therefore, the contract cannot deny people their original and fundamental freedom and equality. Locke is certainly not the first thinker to address natural rights, but his elaboration is the most successful one in Beneš's eyes. He considers Locke's position to be one of "pure individualism", because Locke creates a basic spectrum of natural rights, such as the right to possession, since he defines property as the result of life-sustaining work and sustaining one's life is a natural right. Similarly, Locke ascribes individual rights also to children and the wife to combat domestic tyranny.

Civil society was created as a means of protection against the iniquity of strong individuals, and so society is, in fact, a third party in intersubjectivity. This third party is delegated with the resolution of conflicts. In this sense, the point of civil society is the defence of natural rights. The field of jurisdiction of natural law is delineated by the bounds of irrevocable natural rights.

We are dedicating such an amount of space to Locke (in Beneš's rendition, of course!) intentionally, because Beneš links his version of Locke with classical individualist liberalism while, at the same time, distinguishing it from the rejected and criticised liberalism of the 19th century.

Two things hold true for Beneš's interpretation of later individualism of the 18th century:

Beneš claims that this position is better than the liberalism of the 19th century. First of all, the thinkers of the period prior to the French Revolution believed that, paradoxically enough, it is impossible to safeguard individual rights without the power of the state. The moment that there comes a demand for complete emancipation and equality of individuals with respect to one another, the uncontrollable and exploitative liberalism of the 19th century will follow. The state is required as a guarantor of individual rights.[14]

13 Here *contract* is understood in analytical terms, not historical ones.

14 Such is the case with, for example, Adam Smith or Montesquieu. See Beneš, E., *The Origin and Development of Political Individualism*, p. 100.

Secondly, he shows, in the cases of the two most important political thinkers of the 18th century, how such a conflict leads to a situation where, for the sake of defending individual rights, an almost socialist conception of the state can emerge. Beneš considers Rousseau to be a socialist, because if the state is a political body that answers to the people, represents the people, then such a state is denying individuals of their rights. Instead of "I am the state" there is "the state is everybody and nobody" – after all, how could one protest against the government of the people that one is a part of? "In Rousseau, we can best see how close a practically absolutist idea of the state comes close to the idea of socialism."[15] Beneš passes a similar judgement on Kant as well.

The result is that "a society cannot be understood solely in socialist or individualist terms"[16] and Beneš's own position is somewhere around the moderate centre. It is an attempt at maintaining a balance and mutual co-dependence between the subjective and the supraindividual, collective aspects.

Now to ask the question more specifically: what, in the end, is individualism for Beneš?

3. The Concept of Individualism in E. Beneš

Now we are able to formulate Beneš's understanding of individuality and individualism more accurately. It is important to note that individuality is not understood here as an extreme position, but rather as a happy medium *between* two extreme alternatives. The first extreme is collectivism, i.e. allegiance to a group and its shared identity and to its system of values. The second extreme alternative is subjectivism in the sense of an emphasis on the individual's own self-determination, regardless of shared values. Collectivism is the absence of individuality, whereas the standpoint of subjectivism promotes formal, negative individualism in an almost Hegelian sense. Therefore, Beneš rejects them both and gives preference to his happy medium:

Beneš criticises the extreme of the absence of individuality, where one is a member of a collectivity within which it is unclear what the reasons for one's actions are. These reasons are mystical in the sense that they are given to the individual simply to believe in, and one then acts in accordance with this belief without actually (individually) participating in the decision-making. One is not free, as one has no control over the reasons for one's actions

15 Ibid.
16 Ibid., p. 115.

and is thus acting at the behest of somebody else's conviction. In this sense, one is not an individuality. Such is the case of the aforementioned religious or nationalist collectivities.

At the other end of the scale we have extreme individuality which Beneš links to Nietzsche and Stirner. To be more precise, Beneš talks of the "will to power" as a characteristic trait of modern man which expresses the desire of such man to be the sole ruler of his own free self-determination. However, such will has at its source simply individual wanting driven to its extreme, which means nothing more than "that's mine". In this sense, this extreme is subjectivism.

Nevertheless, Beneš avoids both extremes. Beneš himself establishes his own position in the centre as he strives for harmonious individuality, i.e. a rational, moderate, self-controlled individuality. What Beneš means by this is neither a dogmatic and, "obscurantist" person as this type of person is governed by irrationality, nor a purely individualistic, subjectivist person, whose only principle of action is his own particularity. Rational action is somewhere in between these two – on the one hand, it means submitting to rational reason, but it also means personal identification with the public, common reason. The key to the individual is will, i.e. freedom in the sense that man is to be the source of his own determination, man is to rid himself of obscure reasons and accept rational reasons that will help one to be the master of his own will and purpose.[17]

Thus, individualism for Beneš is the ideal of moderation, of "nothing in excess", as both extremes lead to repression of the individual, either by force or power, as is the case with extreme individuality, or by suppression and dissolution in the ideology to which that individual adheres.

Yet, individualism is not merely a negative position, a sort of "neither-nor". On the contrary, Beneš takes it to be the completion of man, his perfection

17 Beneš's vision of man's possibilities of self-determination is somehow "moderate" in the sense that, on the one hand, one should be the originator of one's own destiny, but such possibility at the same time reaches the external boundaries of global history that restrict the formability of individuality. He speaks of a "fatalism of historical development": "Thus, I do not preach a blind fatalism of unleashed social forces; after all, I did reject theories of Marxist historical materialism. On the contrary, I believe there is a certain logic in history, which is determined by human will, emotions, and endeavour. That is why I see leading individualities as significant agents that govern and deeply influence the direction of social development. However, the moment that social forces reach a certain intensity – a single individual's will ceases to be capable of controlling them. And it is in this individual action and free influence of individuals and masses that the logic of history unveils and often takes shape of historical justice, reward, and historical judgement…" Beneš, E., *The World War and Our Revolution: A Selection of Texts* (*Světová válka a naše revoluce: výbor z díla*). Praha, Společnost Edvarda Beneše 1994, p. 61.

and finalisation. What is man supposed to be? Beneš's advice to the members of the YMCA is:

> "…to transform oneself into a harmonious, even-tempered man, into a modern man of synthesis of both heart and reason."[18]

Let us name a couple of similar instances in other works and manuscripts written by Beneš. In his preliminary notes to a lecture on moral crisis, which we cited from above, Beneš drafts a version of new morality in points:

> "A calm, even-tempered man – the goal of today's struggle – the *struggle for individuality* in times of regimentation of the state and implementation of mass democracy and collectivism."[19]

In the same lecture, he speaks of a new, harmonious man, a new humanity that is "underpinned by metaphysics and religion." And finally: "what makes each great individuality great [?]," is the question Beneš raises in his lecture titled *Personality, Worldview, Politics* (*Osobnost, světový názor, politika*).

> "A great figure is great due to his distinctiveness of feeling and reason, a sophisticated harmony of both rational and emotional qualities, an indefatigable energy of will, and a fineness of intuitive knowledge of people and life's realities."[20]

I believe that it is on the basis of such formulations that Patočka claims Beneš was influenced by Herder.[21] Individuality is a singular, qualitatively unique actualisation of the rational and emotional basis of man. Although this basis is common to all humanity, its actualisation and harmonious completion is not. However, becoming a person is a human task and in this sense it is a task for humanity. Beneš's humanism, Patočka says,

18 Beneš, E., *The Conditions for a Successful Life* (*Podmínky úspěšného života*). Praha, Vydavatelské oddělení YMCA 1929, p. 12–13.

19 Passage 7. "The consequence is: *new morality*." („7. Důsledkem bude: *nová morálka.*"), point b) and c) of the manuscript notes to the lecture on moral crisis, in the Masaryk Institute Archives EB IV/1, 265 R 66–69 (R 57, 70), folder No. 102.

20 Lecture *Personality, Worldview, Politics* (*Osobnost, světový názor, politika*) delivered in Vinohrady theatre on December 15, 1929. In the Masaryk Institute Archives EB IV/1 247 R 48/3/1, folder No. 75.

21 Patočka, J., *Philosophical Prerequisities of Practical Activity* (*Filosofické předpoklady praktické činnosti*). See *The Czechs I. Complete works of Jan Patočka, Vol. 12*, p. 81.

"lies in the original, fundamental decision to achieve a specific, therefore irrational, content of life, whereas the Enlightenment retreats from it and hides behind abstract rational axioms and moral principles."[22]

4. A Philosopher on the Throne. On the Philosophical Prerequisites of Practical Activity

The goal of politics is to help actualise humanity. In this last step of my paper I will focus shortly on the problem of an idealistic understanding of history that was implied in Masaryk's case at the beginning of this paper, but that plays an equally important role in Beneš's thinking. It is the notion that ideas are the driving force behind history. The owl of Beneš spreads its wings at daybreak: "… public political and social institutions always lag behind the development of ideas…"[23] For instance, *the Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen* has been theoretically influencing political space for five centuries. It is the philosophers, the theoreticians who are the driving force of history. In case of the French Revolution, they even become actively involved: "All those philosophers are preachers, announcers of new life…"[24]

The shortcoming or one-sidedness of the aforementioned origin of individualist politics is that philosophers cared, first of all, for intellectual freedom – let's take Kant's *"An answer to the Question: What is Enlightenment?"* which locates freedom of the individual in the freedom of public scholarly speech, of rational criticism in the society of scholars. It is the following 19th century that brings with it the problem of *material* conditions of life.

In the end, it is the philosopher's job to make sure that humanity in the form of the "modern harmonious man who seeks his individuality in the synthesis of both reason and heart"[25] is actualised in political space. In Beneš's opinion, a politician must also be a philosopher, as well as an artist and sci-

22 For Beneš, the ideal of actualising a really great personality also entails the attainment of "*objectivity and the state of not taking things personally at every step of one's activity…*" (emphasis by JM). The quotation is from *Five Stages of Masaryk's Life* (*Pět fází Masarykova života*), a lecture that is part of a larger text titled *Masaryk's Struggle for Liberation. The Concept of Nation and Its Role* (Masarykův boj o osvobození. Pojetí národa a jeho poslání). In the Masaryk Institute Archives EB IV/1 259 R 57–61/a (R 66, R 67, R 69, R 70, R 91), folder No. 92–97.

23 Beneš, E., *The Origin and Development of Political Individualism*, p. 17–18. With allusion to Hegel's famous definition of philosophy that reflects the reality ex post, see Hegel, G. W. F., *The Elements of the Philosophy of Right*. Transl. H. B. Nisbet. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press 2003, p. 23.

24 Beneš, E., *The Origin and Development of Political Individualism*, p. 129.

25 Beneš, E., Rede an die Deutschen in der ČSR 1935. In: Werner, A. (ed.), *Edvard Beneš, Geist und Werk*, manuscript, 1935 (in the Masaryk Institute Archives, EB IV/1, 678 R 227B/7, folder No. 154).

entist, but first and foremost a philosopher, since after all his standpoint, i.e. that which serves as a foundation for his politics, is the ideality mediated to him by philosophy.

Beneš, the humanist, understands his task as a struggle for democracy, yet not a democracy reduced to liberal parliamentarism. Democracy is no specific "institutionalism, [but] a philosophical and moral attitude, [democracy] strives for actualisation of freedom, equality of rights, law, justice, and brotherhood…"[26] To be more precise, democracy involves the "problem of moral education of the masses and leaders",[27] democracy raises the question

> "how, by what political means and methods is it possible to maintain the highest level of individual freedom, and, at the same time, reconcile it with the collectivist tendencies of modern societies, states, and nations?"[28]

To conclude: Firstly, I claim that Beneš is a politician-philosopher in the sense that he declares his philosophical standpoints to be the ultimate motives of his practical activity. This means, most importantly, that Beneš respects the concept of individualism as a happy medium between two extremes, collectivism and subjectivism, and that this concept remains the fundamental conviction he keeps throughout the whole period of our focus. Secondly, I also claim that Beneš is convinced of the significant influence of ideas on history and therefore that ideas are the real battleground of politics, since they form human society. Finally, I claim that Beneš maintained his position constantly ever since writing his dissertation thesis on the origin and development of political individualism. In this respect, it is necessary to take into consideration his ideas drafted already in 1909 to be able to assess the principles and standpoints that form the context of Beneš's political work. In 1923, then Minister of foreign affairs and recently elected Prime minister of Czechoslovak government, Dr. Edvard Beneš said:

> "…humanist philosophy, which builds on the natural rights of man, is something absolute. Every other philosophy that gives different rea-

26 In an interview titled *Minister Beneš on Dynamics of Democracy* (Ministr Beneš o dynamičnosti demokracie). Manuscript, 1935 (in the Masaryk Institute Archives, EB IV/1, 259 R 57–61/a [66, R 67, R 69, R 70, R 91], folder No. 92–97).

27 From the already quoted manuscript notes in the Masaryk Institute Archives, EB IV/1, 265 R 66–69 (R 57, 70), folder No. 102 (The Moral Crisis of the Afterwar World).

28 From Beneš's opening speech at Prague's Philosophical congress, September 2, 1934. Manuscript in the Masaryk Institute Archives, EB IV/1, 258 R 55–56 (R 65, R 66, R 62, R 70).

> sons for national rights is relative. I shall hold on to the philosophy which has absolute value for me."[29]

His politics were guided by philosophy, it was a diagnosis of and a therapy for a deep philosophical-moral crisis[30] of the period. To end this study, I shall yield the floor to Beneš himself:

> "Everything I have said about the crisis of democracy is, in fact, the struggle for a new Europe, a new European, a new person. Therefore, the Czechoslovak ideal is the ideal of a new Europe."[31]

29 An article for journals *Prager Presse* and *Tribuna*, March 2, 1923, Beneš, E., Das Humanitätsideal und das Nationalitätsideal. *Prager Presse*, 3, 1923, No. 59, 2. 3., evening edition, p. 1.

30 Beneš talks about philosophical-moral crisis in an article prepared for *Prager Presse* journal, titled *The World Crisis and Its Solution* (Světová krise a její řešení). The manuscript is from 1923 and was never actually published in *Prager Presse*. In the Masaryk Institute Archives, EB IV/1, 247 R 48/3/1, folder No. 75.

31 From a lecture titled *The Crisis of Democracy and the Fight for Autoritative Regimes* (Krise demokracie a boj o autoritativní režimy) wich was delivered in Jihlava in 1935. Manuscript in the Masaryk Institute Archives, EB IV/1 259 R 57–61/a (R 66, R 67, R 69, R 70, R 91), folder 92–97.

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This bibliography lists all the works cited in the essays composing this volume. It has been divided for convenience into five sections: Younger Philosophical Generation, Political Individualism, Egosolism, Egodeism, Slovak Philosophy of Individualism and Metaphysics, Psychology, Physiology. The texts written in Czech and Slovak are listed in their original version with their English translation (as used in the papers) specified in the brackets. For the titles originally written in other languages, the English title is specified first (in case the original language of the text is not English, only the English title is given) and the Czech or Slovak translation is specified in the brackets.

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Summaries

JAKUB CHAVALKA

Will and Feeling. Individualism in the Philosophy of František Mareš

František Mareš, a physician and physiologist, was one of the first Czech thinkers to realise the potential of Kant' thoughts for the modern discussions about man. The article is focused on Mareš's specific concept of emotion which, at least to a certain extent, differs from the Kantian idea of the structure of human being, and attempts at a certain phenomenology of the "overall organic bond" that Mareš considered to be the cardinal expression of (not only) human life. The main goal of Mareš's endeavours is to found the individual's subjectivity, which presupposes a reform of the then medical and cultural praxis. Mareš was firmly convinced that the dominant scientific tendencies which ignored man should be replaced by respect for man's moral dignity.

Keywords: conscience, emotions, feelings, will, character, individualism

KATEŘINA SVÁČKOVÁ

A Dead End of Modern Philosophy? The Reception of H. Bergson's Philosophy in Czechoslovak Thinking

The philosophy of Henri Bergson was popular, almost fashionable in pre-war Paris. This article poses the question how and to what extent Bergson's philosophy was reflected in the years 1918–1948 by the Czechoslovak philosophers of the time (T. Trnka, F. Pelikán, K. Vorovka, F. Mareš or V. Hoppe). The influence of Bergson is evidenced by Trnka's book titled *A Dead End of Modern Philosophy* (*Moderní filosofie ve slepé uličce*, 1924), in which Trnka offers an independent evaluation of the state of philosophy of his time: Bergsonian intuitive irrationalism, Trnka claims, has led philosophy to a critical noetic peak, after which a collapse transpires. The goal of this paper is to shed light on certain tendencies of intuitivism, irrationalism and individualism in Inter-War Czechoslovak Philosophy; using as examples the two aforementioned authors, F. Mareš and V. Hoppe, we want to show how (and if) Trnka's "Dead End" appears in their philosophy, and how (and if) this "collapse" indirectly forms their philosophy.

Keywords: sentiment; individuality; intuitive knowledge; irrationalism

JAN POTOČEK

Rádl's Criticism of the Czech Individualist Inter-War Philosophy

A significant share of the "struggles" that took place within Czechoslovak inter-war philosophy lay in criticism raised by Emanuel Rádl, the representative of the realistic approach, against the adherents of individualism or the younger philosophical generation surrounding the magazine *Ruch filosofický*. From a philosophical and methodological point of view, the core of Rádl's critical position is philosophical realism. Rádl's realistic stance was gradually forming and developing during the periods running up to and following the First World War, while the experience and fear of the consequences of Russian philosophy based on mysticism, intuitivism and idealism, proved to be the tipping point. Besides that, the change in his stance towards Kant's philosophy, which consisted of highlighting the positive aspect of his rationalism, was yet another significant turnabout. From his post-war realist position, Rádl proceeded to criticise the alienation, apoliticism and amorality of the philosophy of individualism and the interest of its representatives in the philosophical approaches of irrationalism: mysticism, intuitivism and spiritualism.

Keywords: Emanuel Rádl, realism, rationalism, positivism, Ruch filosofický, Česká mysl

ADAM VOSTÁREK

Ferdinand Pelikán: The Philosophy of Personality as a Cure for Fictionalism

All hitherto development in philosophy has been nothing other than the development of fictionalism. According to Ferdinand Pelikán, fictionalism reaches its peak in the works of I. Kant and D. Hume in the form of their rejection of the thing-in-itself. Pelikán maintains that, from that moment on, philosophy has been in decadence. Understandably, it is essential to reverse this process. In order to do so, Pelikán puts forward his affective theory of personality in the belief that revisiting this concept could constitute the first step that will lead philosophy out of the clutches of fictionalism. Thus, Pelikán assumes the position of J. G. Fichte and, with his aid, sets out on a journey towards a new philosophy. Pelikán's emerging individualism can best be traced by following his publishing activity, primarily in journals such as *Ruch filosofický*, which he co-founded in 1921 along with his colleague Karel Vorovka.

Keywords: Affect, Bergson, Fichte, Fictionalism, Intuition, Personality, Freedom, Creativity

MAREK VODIČKA

Individualism in Karel Vorovka's *Scepsis and Gnosis*

The article traces elements of individualism in Skepsis and Gnosis, the main work of the Czech mathematician and philosopher Karel Vorovka (1879–1929). The goal is to describe the specific form in which individualism manifests itself in Vorovka's thinking and how it differs from radical individualism, as described by Masaryk in his Humanistic Ideals. For this purpose, the article presents an analysis of two main concepts of Vorovka's work – the concepts of conviction and gnosis. The purpose of conviction is to differentiate the philosopher from the rest of the society by creating his identity and "sealing it" in front of both himself and other people, and for this reason the author considers it an individualistic theme. Gnosis is Vorovka's method of how one can achieve an authentic conviction, which is by committing individual acts of faith and by attempting autognosis – mystic attempts at attaining self-knowledge. In the final section, Vorovka's individualistic position is analysed as diverging from the position of radical individualism, which Masaryk in his Humanistic Ideals practically equates with solipsism and ethical egoism.

Keywords: individualism, K. Vorovka, conviction, gnosis, skepsis

TATIANA BADUROVÁ

The Spiritual Essence of Man and the World in the Philosophy of Vladimír Hoppe

Hoppe identifies his era as a period of profound spiritual crisis that stems from Comte's positivism, materialism and technical worldview. Man thus understands himself purely as an object, fully renouncing any spiritual dimension. Hoppe argues that science offers nothing but an illusion of knowledge, since true knowledge is of metaphysical nature – to know truly means first of all to know one's spiritual essence. Hoppe's philosophical ideas fuse with his religious concepts and, towards the end of his philosophical endeavours, he turns more and more towards Søren Kierkegaard. Hoppe attempts to overcome the unbridgeable abyss between religion and science, object and subject, the knowable and unknowable using Kierkegaard's *leap of faith*. Hoppe's thematisation of man's abilities and fate results in a turn to Christianity, much inspired by Kierkegaard, with a specific formulation of the utmost goal – god-manhood.

Keywords: Vladimír Hoppe, spiritual crisis, intuition, contemplation, faith, subject, religion, the God-man, Kierkegaard

JAKUB CHAVALKA

Individualism Rules over Both Education and the Cosmos (A Commentary to a Primary Source – Tomáš Trnka: The Principle of the Individuality of the World)

The paper is an introductory commentary to the chapter *The Principle of the Individuality of the World* of Trnka's book *Man and His Work, The Philosophy of Culture.* First, it deals with Trnka's work for *the Union for Public Education* (*Svaz osvětový*) which transformed into *The Masaryk Institute for Public Education* (*Masarykův lidovýchovný ústav*) during the 1920's. Trnka was wholly committed to it for thirty years. The second part of the paper offers a short introduction to Trnka's philosophy which takes the concepts of life and death as the fundamental principles of assessment of the value and meaning of one's life. According to their genealogical dialectics, a life completed by death can be properly evaluated only by new life (offspring) which continues living the values of the previous life. This concept sheds light also on Trnka's understanding of culture and its importance for humanity.

Keywords: Education, Life, Death, the Union for Public Education, Values, Talent, Character

MILAN PETKANIČ

Criticism of Individualism in *German Will to Power* by Svätopluk Štúr

The paper deals with Štúr's critical assessment of German philosophy of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century. Štúr openly blames the ideas coming from this tradition for creating the breeding ground for a massive popularity of Nazi ideology in Germany in 1930s and 1940s. Štúr pays particular attention to the work of J. G. Fichte, A. Schopenahuer, M. Stirner, F. Nietzsche and others. A special focus of his criticism is placed on the role of individualism.

Keywords: vitalism, naturalism, individualism, individual solipsism, national solipsism, will to power

ALEXANDRA BROCKOVÁ

The Reality Argument and Its Impact on the Individual Through the Eyes of Gejza Vámoš

The goal of this paper was to explain the ideas contained in the essay *The Reality Argument* by Gejza Vámoš. Reality must be accounted for and justified, otherwise we are incapable of accepting it. If the reasons for a given reality are strong and convincing, it will be accepted. Many forgotten thinkers and figures that are inspirational to this day are echoed in Vámoš's work. The essay is a specific continuation of Vámoš's philosophical endeavours. Unlike in his other works, Vámoš abandons the biologising

contemplations of a philosopher-physician, dealing here with the question of the individual and society. Is the way in which a reality is accepted different for the individual than for the masses? The question emerges of how it is possible to modify reality in the minds of people using different justifications. Although the essay is in many respects an example of author's distinct free-thinking nature, this "socio-philosophical meditation", as Vámoš himself dubbed it, may be added to the list of Vámoš's efforts at being an educator and cultivator of society. He also emphasises the role of the philosopher and warns against the tendency of people to allow themselves to be controlled and, in many passages, he warns against various ways of manipulating reality.

Keywords: Gejza Vámoš, Slovak philosophy, 20th century, individualism, reality argument

RICHARD ZIKA

The Solipsism of Ladislav Klíma

Ladislav Klíma introduces the idea of solipsism – "theoretical egoism" – already in his debut work *The World as Consciousness and Nothing* and already here he connects it to the idea of the divinity of the singular, i.e. "my" own subject. Here, he, however, sets it forth as a mere "tempting notion" and proclaims it officially only several years later, after an involuntary termination of his practising of ecstatic states that lasted an entire year, during which he effectively experienced his own solitary divinity. What is extraordinary is not only the ingenious discourse (panrealisation, ludibrionism, oneirism) through which Klíma explicates his own paradoxical situation, but mainly the existence of a convinced solipsist in society – a living and productive dialogue caused by a rejection of intersubjectivity as such.

Keywords: Solipsism, egodeism, panrealisation, ludibrionism, dialogue

RADEK HOLODŇÁK

To Play Like Napoleon. Klíma's Egosolism as a Call to Active Participation in the World

Ladislav Klíma is the enfant terrible of Czechoslovak philosophy. His philosophy of *egosolism*, first developed in the work *The World as Consciousness and Nothing* (*Svět jako vědomí a nic*), contrasts sharply with the predominantly rationalist and scientific orientation of the philosophy of his time. The romanticised image of Klíma as a tortured intellectual remains alive mainly thanks to the widespread popularity of his "grotesque romanetto" *The Sufferings of Prince Sternenhoch* (*Utrpení knížete Sternenhocha*), which still resonates in Czech society to this day. His philosophy of egosolism or ludibrionism, however, remains shrouded in a veil of mystery; Klíma himself complained before his death that he was mistakenly interpreted as a solipsist. This paper offers an interpretation of egosolism in *The World as Consciousness and Nothing* as

a form of radical individualism, which, through a surprising "twist", calls for active participation in the phenomenal through play (*ludus*, from which the word *ludibrionism* is derived as a complementary term to egosolism), and which is essentially a practical philosophy for ordinary, everyday life. The focus falls on the concepts of the primary and secondary world, will, play and reflection; the goal of the study is to provide an original interpretation of Klíma's egosolism in *The World* without any reliance on previous interpretations. Klíma ascribes a special role to the method of subjective *experiencing* of his philosophy, which the he considers to be crucial to gaining the right impression and the correct grasp of it. The Klíma chose this method with the view of assuring the highest possible authenticity of the offered interpretation. The reasons for this choice are examined in more detail in the concluding part of this paper, which is dedicated to a methodical and stylistic commentary of Klíma's work.

Keywords: Ladislav Klíma, egosolism, deoessence, ludibrionism, game, subject, dream

DOMINIKA LEWIS

The Philosopher Ladislav Klíma in the Eyes of his Contemporaries

The article deals with the reception of Ladislav Klíma's work by his contemporaries, by the philosophers, academicians and authors, including Otakar Březina, Jaroslav Seifert, Karel Čapek, F. X.Šalda and Emanuel Chalupný, Klíma's patron. The focus is placed on the reception of Klíma by the philosophers of the "younger generation", such as Ferdinand Pelikán, Karel Vorovka, Vladimír Hoppe, and Tomáš Trnka. The article builds especially on the articles published in the then journals or on the commentaries in the then litterature. Although Ladislav Klíma was ignored by most of the "official" philosophy, the originality of his writing style and the uniqueness of his character gained him much appreciation, if not admiration, from most of the acclaimed academicians of the time. Even though most of Klíma's supporters and readers did not agree with his philosophy, they certainly respected him for the genuineness of his attempts at living his philosophy.

Keywords: Ladislav Klíma, individualism, obituary, egodeism, egosolism, Otakar Březina, Emanuel Chalupný

JOSEF MATOUŠEK

Existentialism in the Journal *Letters* and the Following Debate of 1947–1948

The third issue of the Melantrich *Letters* of 1947 became a notional epicentre of the reception of existentialism in Czechoslovakia. Along with a wide range of translations of various primary authors, it also provided the public with thematic studies written by prominent domestic philosophical authorities which serve as keys for interpretation as well as assessment of the cultural-philosophical movement that had gained

such popularity, especially in France. The presented paper highlights the characteristic traits of these interpretations where the central role is often played by thematisation and the function of human individuality, which is understood as an integral feature of existential thinking. The atmosphere of post-war Czechoslovakia and the forthcoming coup d'état of February 1948 had a significant influence on the general overtones of those studies as well as on the main streams of reactions that immediately followed.

Keywords: Existentialism, Czechoslovak Philosophy, Postwar Philosophy, J.-P. Sartre, Listy

JAKUB MAREK

Philosopher on the Throne. Edvard Beneš and the Philosophical Foundations of Practical Activity

The study deals with the political-philosophical standpoints of Edvard Beneš. The thesis of the study is that Beneš's declared political principles stem directly from his philosophical views, which he already partially formulated in the period prior to the First World War, especially in his dissertation thesis titled The Origin and Development of Modern Political Individualism (Původ a vývoj moderního politického individualismu). The study shows that the formulation of Beneš's political stances was strongly influenced by his analysis of the modern understanding of individualism. Beneš sides with 18th century contractualism, especially appreciating Locke. The study understands Beneš as a thinker and politician who reacted to the moral crisis of the first half of the 20th century, and who attempts to implement a renewal or educational process for the creation of a new Europeanhood. Beneš conceived his politics as an attempt to actualise ideas in a particular social situation.

Keywords: Edvard Beneš, Jan Patočka, T. G. Masaryk, political philosophy, democracy, political idealism, individualism.

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The Spectres of Selfhood
The Philosophy of Individualism in the Interwar Czechoslovakia

Visiting editor: Jakub Chavalka
© Translations: Tatiana Badurová (1, 2, 7, 9, 10, 14, 15), Marek Vodička (5, 6, 8, 11, 12, 13), Dominika Lewis (3, 4)
Translations coordinator: Tatiana Badurová
Proofreading: Evan Ap Michael Lewis
Copy editor: Jana Křížová

© Cover Gabriela Vičanová, Vojtěch Hyťha
Graphic postproduction: Studio Designiq
Typesetting: Matěj Kuruc, Dolní Beřkovice
Press: Tiskárna Nakladatelství Karolinum, Ovocný trh 560/5, Praha 1

Publisher: Institute of Philosophy of the Czech Academy of Sciences, Prague 2021

ISSN 0015-1831 (Print)
ISSN 2570-9232 (Online)

and

ISBN 978-80-7007-677-4

First Edition
Prague 2021

This publication can be ordered at the e-shop of the publisher: shop.flu.cas.cz

First e-book edition
Prague 2022

Individualism as a concept did not have a very good reputation in the interwar Czechoslovakia. Yet, already Masaryk and later on Peroutka made a significant appeal to the cornerstone of democracy – personality. The aim of the publication is to show how the thinkers with the biggest cultural and spiritual influence of the time dealt with the problem of creating a strong individuality, and what troubles they had to face. None of them (perhaps with the exception of Ladislav Klíma) declared individualism as the centre of their philosophical thinking. However, a closer look at their philosophy points to interconnectedness of the "struggle for individuality" with the struggle of the newly created Republic for its self-determination. After all, some of the thinkers understood nation or state as autonomous individual, albeit collective. The intentions of the authors of this collection of texts is to help better understand how the problem of individuality formed our own history.

ISSN 0015-1831 (Print)
ISSN 2570-9232 (Online)
ISBN 978-80-7007-677-4

E 4236

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