

## SUMMARY

The book presented here is the first collective monograph which sets itself the target of conceptually grasping the most significant aspects of Bondy's theoretical and in part also his artistic work, and reflecting upon them critically. Both the structure of the monograph itself and the structure of the team of Czech and foreign authors of various professional specialisations, incorporating philosophers, Orientalists, political scientists, historians and scholars of Czech language and literature, are adapted to this aim.

The monograph focuses primarily on an examination of Bondy's *theoretical* analyses, even if in the final section it also examines the significance of his artistic output. It critically reflects upon the most significant areas of Bondy's theoretical works and analyses their significance for contemporary theoretical thought. We have divided these areas into four sections:

The first section analyses Bondy's own philosophical conception, namely his nonsubstantial model in ontology, its progressive modifications, its connection with ethics, its overlaps with theological and axiological issues and its connection and relationship to various physicalistic approaches. This theme is dealt with in the first section by the philosophers Petr Kužel, Petra Macháčková, Jan Černý, Vít Bartoš and Ladislav Hohoš.

In the opening chapter, *Petr Kužel* characterises nonsubstantial ontology as it was conceived especially in Bondy's early works, namely in *Questions of Being and Existence* (1967) and *The Consolation of Ontology* (1967). Kužel deals among other matters with Bondy's critique of determinism, teleology and reductionism, and at the same time with certain objections which were raised with regard to Bondy's model. (For example, he takes issue with the approach, represented in the book by Vít Bartoš, which advocates a substantive approach in ontology). In the concluding part he then examines the issue of the creation of the "ontologically new", and the connected question regarding the possibility of freedom, ethics and values, and the significance of man in the nonsubstantial ontological model.

These themes are subsequently developed upon in the chapter “The Ethical Dimension in the Work of Egon Bondy” by *Petra Macháčková*. In this she starts out primarily from Bondy’s *Julie’s Questions* (1970) and elaborates Bondy’s thesis that an ethical dimension shall be fully affirmed only in the case that the biological, and the limits imposed by the biological burden, are transgressed. Macháčková analyses the philosophical, in particular the axiological consequences which ensue from such a stance, and engages with the question of the meaning of existence.

The issue of the meaning of existence in Bondy’s ontology is also focused on by *Jan Černý* in his contribution “The Nonsubstantial Ontology of Egon Bondy and the Issue of Meaning”. In this he outlines the metamorphoses of Bondy’s nonsubstantial ontology with regard to the axiological problematics. He demonstrates how the progressive modifications of Bondy’s ontological model also influenced the transformation of his understanding of the category of meaning. Although he briefly records Bondy’s entire philosophical development from *The Consolation of Ontology* to *Story about a Story*, he places special emphasis on an enhancement of Bondy’s ontology with theistic and theological concepts during the period from approximately the end of the 1970s to the mid 1980s.

*Vít Bartoš* subjects Bondy’s conception of objective values to criticism. He adheres to the view that Bondy’s ontology and axiology is in conflict with certain fundamental laws of physics, and on this basis rejects his nonsubstantial conception, inclining toward the concept of the substantial.

The final chapter in the section devoted to nonsubstantial ontology is composed of a text by *Ladislav Hohoš*. Similarly to Macháčková, Hohoš in his contribution also touches upon Bondy’s thesis concerning the transgressing of the biological, but simultaneously links this together with Bondy’s concept of the *ontological field*, and incorporates Bondy’s work within the paradigm of holistic thought.

The second section analyses Bondy’s history of philosophy. From the immensely extensive work which Bondy devoted to the history of philosophy, we have selected only those parts which we regard as most expedient to address, and which appear to have the most lasting

value. This above all concerns Bondy's elaboration of the history of Indian, Chinese and Islamic philosophy. In this section the reader will find contributions from the Sinologists Olga Lomová and Marina Čarnogurská, the Arabist Peter Púčik, the scholar of Buddhism Jiří Holba and the philosopher Lubomír Dunaj.

The second section opens with an extensive and comprehensively elaborated text by *Jiří Holba*. In this chapter the author analyses Bondy's history of Indian philosophy, focusing on the history of Buddhist philosophy, as well as on Bondy's monograph on *Buddha*. He also deals with the question of how Buddhist concepts are projected into Bondy's own philosophical output, including his later work, in particular *Story about a Story* or *Post-Story*, in which Taoist influences also appear. Holba focuses partially on the actual sources which Bondy elaborated upon, which is valuable since Bondy himself did not as a rule refer to these sources, and he compares Bondy's interpretation of Buddhist philosophers with the interpretations of contemporary scholars of Buddhism. He also deals with an examination of the philosophical influences of Buddhist philosophers on Bondy's work, referring especially to the influence of Nagarjuna and his conception of *emptiness*.

The text by *Peter Púčik* analyses Bondy's history of Islamic philosophy. It refers first of all to the practical problems which Bondy encountered upon writing this part of *Notes on the History of Philosophy*, for example the deficiency of source literature, as well as the practical problems in connection with the publication of his *Notes* or the transliteration of certain realia and names. However, he then immediately proceeds to an interpretation of Bondy's history of Islamic philosophy itself. Here he concentrates primarily on Bondy's interpretation of Islamic theology and Sufism, and of eminent names focuses on Bondy's interpretation of Al-Ghazali, Ibn Rushd and also Ibn Khaldun.

Bondy's history of Chinese philosophy is dealt with by *Olga Lomová*. She characterises Bondy's path to Chinese philosophy, points to the genesis of the publication of his *Notes* in samizdat, and also describes his contacts with contemporary Sinologists and examines the influences of the interpretative tradition which Bondy absorbed

in his own work in the *Notes*. At the same time, she demonstrates how Bondy goes beyond these influences and in a distinctive manner attempts to overcome the separation of the European and Chinese philosophical traditions. The manner in which this overcoming and interconnection of both traditions is conceived is in her view “unique on a worldwide scale”.

Bondy's interest in Chinese philosophy is also dealt with in the contribution by *Marina Čarnogurská*, who above all introduces the theme of their common endeavour over several years to translate the *Tao Te Ching*, which took place from the beginning of the 1990s and culminated progressively in three different versions of this translation. She also elaborates upon Bondy's further penetration into Chinese philosophy and the *Tao Te Ching*, in which Bondy was able to identify, beneath a mire of words often considered merely an unsystematic mishmash of random philosophical observations, a distinctive and stimulating ontological conception, and subsequently to reconstruct it. Marina Čarnogurská's contribution, like that of Peter Púčik for example, is based not only on an analysis of the finished form of the investigated texts by Bondy, but also provides an account of the circumstances and process of their creation, Bondy's living engrossment in the given issue and the process of searching and grappling which is necessarily connected with every instance of recognition.

The last contribution on Bondy's reflection on Chinese philosophy is from the philosopher *Lubomír Dunaj*, who similarly to Čarnogurská engages primarily with Bondy's later “Bratislava” period. He interprets Bondy as one of the first Czech philosophers to aim for an intercultural dialogue within the framework of a globalised society. This dialogue, together with the endeavour to understand China and its place within a globalised world may lead to a cultivation of the critical potential of both traditions, and contribute and aid the advancement of emancipatory processes.

Dunaj's contribution is naturally followed on from by the third section of the book, which is devoted to Bondy's intellectual activities within the sphere of political thought.

The historian *Jan Mervart* in his contribution sets Bondy's personality, as well as the radical Marxist current which he represented,

within the broader contexts of the history of political thought, in which he rightly points to the fact that this current has frequently been overlooked in intellectual history. Mervart focuses on Bondy's activities in the 1960s, on his political texts and lecturing activity during this period, the establishment of the Opinion Association of the Left, on Bondy's interpretation of Maoism and his promotion in student circles. He presents Bondy as an intellectual who saw a way out of the crisis of "real socialism" (or "real capitalism") by means of the autonomous organisation of society. Within these contexts Mervart presents Bondy's programme of democratic self-management of society and his analysis of reform communism.

Mervart's chapter is followed by a text by *Petr Rohel*, who deals with Bondy's extensive book *Working Analysis* (1969), which in fact concludes and summarises Bondy's political philosophy, his attitudes and opinions from the 1960s. In this Bondy presents an analysis of the degeneration of the Soviet Union since the 1920s, and analyses the character of society of the Soviet type, which he refers to in this text as "state capitalism". In his text Rohel examines this analysis in detail, as well as the concept of "councils of working people", which forms a substantial part of *Working Analysis*.

Bondy engaged with the character of the regimes of the Eastern Bloc also in the 1970s and 80s. He summarised them in a further social-political analysis entitled *Unordered Soliloquy* (1984). In this he revised a range of conclusions made in his *Working Analysis*. Bondy's analyses of real socialism and capitalism from the period of the 1970s and 1980s are dealt with here by the German political scientist and historian *Dirk Dalberg*. In addition to *Unordered Soliloquy*, Dalberg takes as his basis also Bondy's prose texts, in which Bondy articulated a range of his political stances and observations. Dalberg focuses primarily on one characteristic which according to Bondy is common to both the capitalist and so-called "socialist" social system of the time, namely "manipulative etatism".

Bondy engaged in social-political analyses of the contemporary system also in the period following the Velvet Revolution. He summarised these in his book entitled *On Globalisation* (2005). At the same time he formulated his political opinions, as in previous

years, also in his literary works, of which we may name for example *Cybercomics* or *A Week in a Quiet City*. Bondy's political analyses from the 1990s and later, in which his critique of economic globalisation and neoliberalism or capitalism as such appears in particular, are examined by the political scientist *Jaroslav Fiala*. In many respects Fiala appreciates the perspicacity of certain of Bondy's insights from the 1990s, especially with regard to the genesis and role of the financial oligarchy in the contemporary world, the oligarchisation of politics, the increase in inequality and the generation of "superfluous" people (from the perspective of the capitalist system of production). Fiala confronts Bondy's visions of the future with current political-economic trends.

The fourth section of the book reflects upon Bondy's literary output, and represents the essence of Bondy's contribution to Czech literature in asserting a certain new aesthetics and poetics. The recent critical collective publication of Bondy's lifelong poetical work provides a very good opportunity for this reflection. This literary section is opened by a contribution from *Martin Machovec*, who was the editor of these composite poetical volumes. Bondy's early poetry work underwent a number of creative phases, and Machovec in his contribution identifies three such stages (1947-1952, 1952-1958, 1958-beginning of the 1960s). According to Machovec, the first period stands entirely within the intentions of the avantgarde, in particular surrealism. He characterises the second period as a return to traditional poetry and the poetics of the pre-avantgarde, and finally the third as a period in which Bondy presents a different conception of anti-poeticism from that which is linked with total realism or embarrassing poetry - an anti-poeticism that could be conceived as "philosophical". In this period an intertwining takes place of philosophical considerations with traditional poetics.

The early phase of Bondy's poetic output is dealt with also by the Viennese scholar of Czech literature *Gertraude Zand*. Specifically she focuses on Bondy's poems written in German, and on the role which German plays in his work of this period. Here she distinguishes four functions: 1) the playful, 2) the absurd, 3) the myth-creating and myth-destroying and 4) the provocative. In her text Zand works also with Bondy's German written diaries from 1943 and 1944. These

diaries were never published, and it is thus interesting for the reader to become acquainted with their content at least in this mediated form.

Bondy's poetry collection from 1971 entitled *Diary of a Girl who is Looking for Egon Bondy* is dealt with in a further contribution by *Oskar Mainx*. He examines this in detail, accentuates new forms of stylisation, hyperbole, playfulness and the mystical dimension. At the same time he points to the fact that with this collection Bondy embarked upon a new creative phase, manifested in an inclination toward the epic, which in the 1970s is subsequently fully developed upon in his prose texts.

The final contribution of this section and of the whole book is by the Czech literature scholar *Martin Pilař*. Pilař focuses on the issue of how Bondy became acquainted with the Buddhist and Taoist tradition, and how this tradition was projected into his literary work. However, he does not limit himself merely to explicit mentions of the concepts of the Taoist and Buddhist tradition, but sensitively seeks signals of Oriental inspiration also in collections where they would not be expected on first impression, and points to certain formulations which upon closer examination are akin to the aphorisms contained in the *Tao Tè Ching*. This relates for example to the collection *Für Bondys unbekannte Geliebte* (from 1951), as well as to a range of Bondy's later prose works, for example *Mníšek*, *Hatto*, *Severin*, *Gottschalk*, *Krates*, *Jao Li*, *The Valley*, *Unnamed* etc., and a range of later collections and prose works.

With Pilař's contribution, which deals with the repercussions of the philosophical considerations and Buddhist and Taoist motifs in Bondy's literary output, we again partially return to the first and second sections of the book, and at the same time to a reminder of the close linkage of all the above-mentioned areas of Bondy's work, as well as a linkage of all the sections of the book.

The individual authors have focused on various aspects of Bondy's work and examined it from different perspectives, as a result of which the interpretations and evaluations of Bondy's conceptions and approaches necessarily vary. The objective of the monograph was not to eliminate these interpretative tensions and diversity, but on the contrary to present Bondy's work as a living work, which raises

a range of questions, stimulates discussions and thus leads to diverse interpretations. It provides the reader with the opportunity to become acquainted in detail with Bondy's immensely intellectually abundant work. It may also serve the reader who is not hitherto substantially familiar with Bondy's output as an initial insight into his thought and creative work.