

Summary

In quest of Czech philosophy: A collection of studies (Erazim Kohák, Jakub Trnka /eds./)

AN ENGLISH INTRODUCTION

This book is both a product of the revived interest in Czech philosophy and a response to it.

Yes, there is Czech philosophy. The cultural community of the Czech lands and of Czech language is one of the few that have a tradition of philosophic thought reaching to the closing decades of the fourteenth century. Jan Hus, whose death at stake in 1415 marked the end of the Middle Ages and a start of the Reformation, preached and wrote in Czech. So did most of his local contemporaries, his supporters as well as his opponents. Czech religious reformation was a cultural as well as a religious event. The cultural flourishing in the Czech lands in the sixteenth century involved not only the Latin and German speaking Imperial court, but also broad strata of Czech speaking population, lower clergy, farmers, burghers. The Czech system of basic schools, work largely of the (Protestant) Czech Brethren, helped make the Czech lands one of the most literate in Europe.

The forcible conversion to Catholicism that followed the defeat of the Czech Estates in the seventeenth century drove much of the culture in Czech language into exile, but did not extinguish it. Jan Amos Komenský, known to the world as Comenius, was only one of numerous exiled Czech intellectuals who helped sustain the continuity of Czech culture. At the

end of the eighteenth century, Czech language and culture experienced a revival in the Czech lands as well. By the second half of the nineteenth century, both Czech language and Czech culture, including Czech philosophy, were firmly established as an equal among European cultural communities.

By the twentieth century, philosophy in the Czech lands – now the Republic of Czechoslovakia – was no longer Czech in land and language alone. It became Slovak as well, as in fact it had been for several generations, with Slovak scholars sharing in the cultural revival. It was also beginning to bring distinctively Czech and Slovak motives to its universally philosophic concerns – and submitting distinctively Czech and Slovak concerns to an universally philosophic critique. The creative impetus of Czech and Slovak culture between the two world wars was to continue, albeit in enforced Marxist idiom, throughout the years of Communist rule.

It is especially this Czech and Slovak thought, revisionist, dissident and alternative, that remains least explored. It seemed exciting when forbidden, but then the intellectual iron curtain dissolved, the country split into Czech and Slovak republics and, most of all, the world rushed in. Now the very idea of *Czech* thought came to appear to many as both constrained and constraining. We all wanted to reach out to the world, and, after the stifled years of Communist rule, it was immensely stimulating.

Yet not all that glittered so brightly proved gold. Many Czech scholars, young but also those of earlier generations, are coming to appreciate anew their own philosophical heritage. It was to meet this new interest that we decided to convene a conference devoted explicitly to Czech philosophy, both in general and specially in the years of the cold war and its immediate aftermath. We did so under the aegis of the Centre of Global Studies in the Institute of Philosophy of the Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic, yet with fear and trembling. This was, for the most part, *terra incognita*. Czech philosophy had long been out of fashion. We were not at all sure what the response would be and our means were modest in the extreme. Yet we rushed in where angels feared to tread and convened our conference.

The response exceeded our hope, albeit in some cases more in enthusiasm than in mature scholarship. Papers came from all over the republic – and not only from the grand old veterans of Czech philosophic

struggles, but from young scholars with the print still wet on their PhD's. Yet new beginnings are necessarily like that and only so can a new generation of scholars arise. In any case, the conference, richly seasoned by older scholars and borne by the updrafts of enthusiasm of youth, proved both stimulating and gratifying. Czech philosophy did not displace global philosophic discourse, nor did we wish it to do so. We were content to introduce a new generation of scholars to Czech philosophy – and to add a Czech voice to philosophic discourse.

This volume grew out of that conference and bears all its marks. Yet thanks to the prodigious subsequent labours of both authors and editors, a book we think worth both printing and reading did emerge. It does not seek to be comprehensive like the earlier anthologies of Czech and Slovak philosophy prepared by the Institute of Philosophy of the (then) Czechoslovak Academy of Sciences. That work awaits its successor, Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic. Our volume is but an invitation to an overlooked area of our thought. Given the will and vigour of all who participated in bringing it to be, we believe it will be a welcome contribution. With that – and with the wise and generous counsel of the editorial staff of *Philosophic Journal* – we present this volume to our readers, not as a conclusion but as a step in that ongoing reflexion which helps transform an aggregate of readers into the cultural community we once called a nation.

Given its topic and its language, the reach of this volume is inevitably limited. Yet one of our contributors did write to us in English, from far-away California. That encouraged us to add to the Czech text the English summaries prepared by individual authors, presented here in the order the book itself follows. We hope they will provide our Anglophone friends with an overview of what goes on behind the screen of our language and let them decide what of it warrants the cost and effort of translation. As for us, we think ourselves richly repaid by the philosophical vistas and the friends and colleagues to which and to whom the work introduced us. We wish as much to all our collaborators and readers.

SUMMARIES

I. Reflections on the meaning of Czech philosophy**Erazim Kohák, *In quest of Czech philosophy***

The author inquires into the legitimacy of ethnically specific philosophy. He defines philosophy as casting doubt on fact and tracing lines of meaning in being as consciousness. Such questioning and seeking can claim ethnic specificity when it focuses on the lot and task of a given community of pilgrims through history. Precisely by inquiring into the meaning of history, if any, and the task of a given community within it – again, if any – philosophic reflection helps constitute a particular set of dwellers of a land and speakers of a language into a community we are accustomed to call a *nation*. The author completes his study by sketching the way three Czech thinkers of the second half of the twentieth century who won European recognition – Jan Patočka, Karel Kosík, Milan Machovec – approached this task.

Key words: ethnically specific philosophy, philosophy as self-constitution, prof. Josef Durdík

Karel Skalický, *Early supporters and opponents of Masaryk's realism*

The author points to a duality in Masaryk's immensely influential thought between his scientistic positivism and the spiritualism of his human longing for God. The partisans of Masaryk's scientific emphasis (F. Krejčí, F. Drtina and especially Josef Tvrđý developing conceptions of induction, emergent evolution and humanism) needed to overcome the limitations of Masaryk's positivism. That was also the task for Masaryk's philosophical opponents who drew on Driesch's neovitalism and Bergson's intuitivism (Kantian F. Mareš, transcendental idealist V. Hoppe, personalist F. Pelikán) the author offers an overview of such authors, emphasising especially the neognosticism of Karel Vorovka as an important contribution to the overcoming of positivism. The author considers the negative attitude against all things catholic then

prevailing in Czech society as the common obstacle to a fruitful dialogue between the opponets of positivism with Masaryk's religiously open-minded supporters as E. Rádl and J. L. Hromádka. Only much later is an increasingly ecumental openness helping overcome that obstacle.

Key words: Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk, Masaryk's critics, Karel Vorovka

Tomáš Hermann: *Metamorphoses of the conflict over the freedom of Czech philosophy*

Study analyses public philosophic debate in 1844–48 in which topic of distinctively “Czech philosophy” was first articulated and discussed as a “debate about the being and non-being of German philosophy in Czech lands”. Author acquaints reader with intellectual context of arising Czech philosophy in first half of 19th century, based on conceptual influence of Herder, Hegel and Herbart. Starting point of that discussion was role of philosophy as academic subject at University and as part of literature and culture generally. In an analysis of the debate and of positions of chief participants (K. Havlíček, V. Gabler, F. Čupr, A. Smetana, K. B. Štorch) study shows that as subject of reflection the discussion included problems of philosophy in Czech language, place and role of philosophy in the Czech lands, of special traits of Czech “national” philosophy, its limits and possibilities, of reception of German classical philosophy and finally even meta-philosophical question of what philosophy is or ought to be in general. Two examples of the way this debate was recalled and updated in the 20th century in quite different situation of the period between the wars (F. Pelikán) and after the wars (K. Kosík) – in the twenties and in the fifties – show subsequently the transformed contexts and problems of modern Czech philosophy. Analysis of the debate and its heritage are placed within the overall discussion of what Czech philosophy is from linguistic, territorial, national and factual viewpoint.

Key words: Czech philosophy, philosophy and society, philosophy and ideology, Hegelianism, Herbartism

Martin Profant, František Palacký's conception of a nation

In the revolutionary years 1848–49 the Czech historian František Palacký was forced to re-formulate his response to the question *What is (the Czech) nation?* From starting points kin to German romanticism and to German national-liberal historiography in particular, he defines both *a nation* and *a (national) public* as well as the “*basic equality of nations in rights and dignity*” as necessary conditions of constitutional order. He elaborates an original solution of the relation between the cosmopolitan and the national cultures, of nation in a political and in a cultural sense, of the principle of self-determination and of shared sovereignty. He defends the thesis that in Palacký's individual texts in the spring of 1848 we can follow his testing of the suitability of individual pre-political projects of the nation for Czech policy within the framework of the shared Danube state. He stresses particularly his relationship to the tradition which sought to transform the territorial conception of the nation, including bilinguality, into a distinctive conception of a modern nation (Bolzano/Woltmann, *Young Čechie/Young Bohemia* [at the time the Czech and the German designation for the Czech lands]).

Key words: František Palacký, nation, „Landvolk“, revolution of 1848, liberal-national concept of nation

Miloš Matúšek, Miroslav Tyrš – a “philosophy” of active national life

Tyrš originally contemplated a scientific career in the field of philosophy but his theoretical interest gradually turned to aesthetics and plastic arts. The specific culmination of his activities was his role of a founder of the gymnastic association Sokol in this his theoretical experience focused in the form of a distinctive “philosophy of living”. The author of this essay seeks to show a deeper philosophic and aesthetic level which shaped Tyrš's Sokol idea. – Tyrš activism found a philosophic parallel in Schopenhauer's voluntarism. Darwin's conception of “struggle for survival” helped justify Tyrš's conception of an armed and culturally active nationalism. Tyrš was fascinated with the mature culture of ancient Greece and in his conception Sokol was to be an embodiment of classic values in modern conditions.

Key words: Miroslav Tyrš, Sokol, Czech philosophy, Czech aesthetics

II. New beginnings: Defying the age

Miroslav Pauza, *Individuality and Order: Masaryk's and Fischer's conception of democracy*

Czechoslovak republic was founded and grew as a parliamentary democracy whose theoretical ideological conception was Masaryk's idea of democracy. Masaryk was convinced that democracy, expressing the meaning of modern Western humanity, could not find itself in a crisis as such. Only democrats could fail. However, the factual development of the Czechoslovak state in the 1920's and 1930's manifested signs of a crisis. The question thus became one of sustainability of Masaryk's ideas. One of the serious attempts at their critical reflection is the structurally functionalist conception of crisis of democracy offered by Josef Ludvík Fischer, a sociologist and a philosopher, who saw the root of the problem in a structural pathology, not an individual failure. The crisis can be resolved, according to Fischer, by constituting a "composable society" which respects the order of reality. Masaryk and Fischer agree that democracy needs be built on a global understanding of what there is as a whole.

Key words: Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk, Josef Ludvík Fischer, democracy, individual, Order, crisis, structure

Petr Jíra, *Socrates' "uncomposable" philosophy: J. L. Fischer's interpretation of Socrates*

The author notes a lack of response to the work of J. L. Fischer and, using Fischer's interpretation of Socrates, shows that Fischer deserves critical attention. He first analyses Fischer's interpretation in terms of content. Fischer's approach stems from the Scottish school and his analyses can still be productive. However, his idea of a "psychological analysis", of Socrates proves rather problematic. The author goes on to analyse what Socrates means for Fischer philosophically, noting that fundamental premises of Socrates' philosophy are exact opposite of the "composable philosophy" Fischer advocates. For Fischer, this means philosophy which can be *composed* – built up – of discrete observations after the manner of a scientific theory, at least as positivist thinkers conceived of it. Socrates offers a rationalist defence of autocratic rule. The measure of all things is not the citizen but the expert. On such presuppositions,

a general assembly would make no sense. Thus though his study poses as purely historical, Fischer manages to work his way to his central motif, the crisis contemporary democracy challenged by dogma “scientific materialism” which can be neither analysed nor refuted. Socrates is presented as democracy’s enemy, in wholly contemporary terms. Fischer’s presentation of Socrates, rather like Popper’s reading of Plato, thus reflects the experience of the twentieth century.

Key words: Josef Ludvík Fischer, Socrates, composable philosophy

Petr Bláha, *Individual in the labyrinth of power: Josef Šafařík’s conception of the paradox of human emancipation*

Josef Šafařík’s philosophising reflects an important stage in our nation’s cultural development. The article seeks to trace the distinctive trait of his reflections, his positing of contrasting polarities. Such polarities present not only the motivational contrasts of human behaviour but also the possibility of application to the chronology of history. It is precisely this context of historical interpretation – presented most fully in Šafařík’s life-work, *On the Way to the Last* – which may in retrospect offer an insight into the very nature of the polar articulation of Šafařík’s thought.

Key words: Josef Šafařík, human emancipation, power, history

Aleš Prázný, Božena Komárková: *On the way to human liberation*

In Czech thought, Božena Komárková personifies the struggle to set humans free. She developed the problems of freedom with specific reference to human rights. Those were for her not of purely theoretic interest, but rather a principal condition of human progress and dignity. She followed the development of human rights as a specific western unfolding of the Christian idea in confrontation with philosophy. The source of rights cannot refer to humans alone without a reference to transcendence. She based her political philosophy on the analysis of community in Plato and in his Christian heir, Augustine. Her life story testifies to her commitment to humanitarian ideals, confirmed particularly by her civic courage in the time of totalitarian regime. In that spirit, too, she became a signatory of Charta 77. Together with a theological foundation, the philosophical tradition of the first Czechoslovak republic, influenced primarily by the humanistic perspective of T. G. Masaryk, grew in her thought into

a powerful educational ethos which remained with her from Nazi prison through subsequent Communist persecution.

Key words: philosophy, philosophy of human rights, humanity, democracy, responsibility, politics, freedom.

Josef Krob, Rádl, Fischer and Rieger on physicalist and cosmological evidence

Drawing on the views of three selected Czech philosophers – Rádl, Fischer and Rieger – on questions of physics and their possible philosophical reflection, the author conjectures how these thinkers, consistent with their original views, might respond to currently discussed contemporary questions. Specifically, at the time of the conference, it was the then current problem of neutrinos and of their speed, which apparently had been measured at more than the speed of light. At issue are primarily methodological postures, views concerning the proper range of philosophy on the basis of which we can, given appropriate speculation, derive a highly probable stance which the selected philosophers represented and, more generally, their probable approach to contemporary issues.

Key words: demarcation, philosophy and natural science, methodology, theory of relativity, speed of light, neutrino, speculation

III. Rebirth of hope: Reforming philosophy in official institutions

Jan Zouhar, *The history of philosophy as philosophy*

The work on the history of Czech philosophy received an important impetus in the late 1950s by the proceeding and the results of the national conference on History of Czech Philosophy on April 14–17, 1958 in Liblice. The main speakers were Karel Kosík (“History of Philosophy as Philosophy”) and Milan Machovec (“Problems of the History of Czech Philosophy”). Karel Kosík considers history of philosophy a subordinate component of philosophy as well as part of doing philosophy. The starting point and aim of investigation is, according to Kosík, the text, the philosophical work. In his theory he rejects simplifying economic determinism in the interpretation of philosophical views, the reduction

of philosophy to a reflection of class struggles and political stands of philosophers, as well as the positivist idea of the history of philosophy. He places philosophical work in a social context and social context in philosophical work, which, in his view, makes it possible to reveal its new aspects and structure.

Key words: history of Czech philosophy

Jan Mervart, *Kosík, Kalivoda, Sviták and the Czechoslovak spring of 1968*

Present study is conceived as a contribution to the development of Czech humanistic Marxism and is devoted to the philosophers Karel Kosík, Robert Kalivoda and Ivan Sviták during the Czechoslovak spring of 1968. The author considers their philosophical positions, their social critique and their vision of a future democratic socialism as well as their distinctive political commitment inseparable from their philosophical development. For all three, those were long term concerns culminating in the political thaw of 1968. The study deals with their successive texts, written intentionally as contributions to a society-wide discussion or even as programmatic proclamations, showing the moments with which they contended at the time and what goals they followed. At the same time it points to quite evident difference between the thought of I. Sviták on the one hand and K. Kosík and R. Kalivoda on the other, while also attempting a more detailed sketch of differences in their views as well as of the agreements not evident at first glance.

Key words: humanistic Marxism, Czechoslovak spring of 1968, Karel Kosík, Robert Kalivoda, Ivan Sviták

Pavel Žďárský, *Philosophical roots of Milan Machovec's Marxist-Christian dialogue*

The study maps the journey of Milan Machovec from Christianity to Marxism and on to the Marxist-Christian dialogue which Milan Machovec personified in the 1960's. In addition to the usual sources the study draws on unfamiliar juvenile texts, minor contributions in press and on his two dissertations at Charles University. – These sources show that his conception of socialism prior to the Communist coup and his first response to it did not conform to the ideology of the new regime.

Machovec rejected the role of “martyr for freedom” because he understood his life as a task. He joined the Communist party and adopted the idiom of the time, but continued to strive for joining socialist ideals with the democratic heritage of Masaryk’s republic as even Zdeněk Nejedlý promised. – These early texts also show that Machovec was concerned with the issues he later elaborated already as graduate student. They included freedom, humanity, morality, the meaning of the human lot, the relation of the individual and the whole, sacrifice, the role of religion in society, the role of personality in history and society, ways of working with historic material in relation to pressing problems. – While Machovec may have lost the religious faith of his youth he remained ever loyal to Masaryk’s ideals of humanity, especially the idea that the task of humans is growth to more mature humanity. Masaryk’s bequest never ceased to be a tangent of Machovec’s thought, helping to lay the ground rules by which he moderated the dialogue of Christians and Marxists. The task of the dialogue was not to be persuasion but rather grasping of a common task: Marxists and Christians could meet, each in his way, on the ground of this Masaryk-given task.

Key words: dialogue, Christianity, Marxism, Milan Machovec, Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk, Czech thought

Ivan Landa, *Kosík’s dialectics of concrete*

The paper deals with Kosík’s conception of dialectics. First section clarifies Kosík’s essentialism and lays out its normative implications. Second section sheds some light on Kosík’s understanding of reciprocity in connection with Hegel’s conception of interaction. Third section concerns the distinction between methods of inquiry and methods of explication.

Key words: atomism, economic structure, epistemology, philosophical anthropology, concrete totality, method (dialectical, m. of explication, m. of inquiry), labour, praxis, reciprocity, social ontology, structuralism, recognition

Josef Zumr, *Kalivoda's struggle for a Marxism free of superstitions and illusions*

The study is devoted to the philosophical bequest of the Czech philosopher Robert Kalivoda (1923–1089). Author fist evaluates his contribution to understanding a key period of Czech history, the Hussite movement. By analysing economic and ideological conditions in the 14th and 15th centuries Kalivoda shows, that the Hussite movement was the first European early bourgeois revolution, bringing about fundamental changes in the structure of feudal society by paralysing the economic and philosophic potential of the Church as a fundamental component of the social order. Philosophically the movement created, out of elements of mediaeval philosophic realism and of the views of various heretical groups, an ideology of emancipation, anticipating ideas of later revolutionary movements.

The second part of the study develops Kalivoda's conception of the aesthetic function, starting from the conceptions of Jan Mukařovský, and thinks through its consequences for the humanisation of humans and society. Subsequently, the study analyses Kalivoda's view of the so-called anthropological constant as the deepest layer of human existence and of its make up. Kalivoda starts from Marx's conception of a dialectical relation between hunger and sex and from their influence on the functioning of society. The author takes issue with Sigmund Freud's conception according to which the sublimation of sexual instinct into the sphere of the "Higher I" ("Über-ich") has solely an aggressive and repressive character and shows, that it involves non-aggressive sublimation as well, which – especially in the form of revolutionary activities – has a positive influence on social development.

Key words: Robert Kalivoda, Marxism, Hussite movement, Karl Marx, Sigmund Freud

IV. Between yesterday and today: Philosophy reaching into the post-revolutionary age

Tomáš Hejduk, *The realism of Ladislav Hejdánek*

The familiar division of political thinkers into moralists and realists leads the author to the question of how to classify Ladislav Hejdánek's unique yet ambiguous approach to public weal and matters politic. Does Hejdánek base his understanding of democracy and liberalism (and of liberties and rights thereunto appertaining) on morality (on philosophy or on system theory) or does he recognise the primacy of matters politic? Though in Hejdánek's writings moral appeals are frequent and fundamental, the author seeks to show that realism prevails. In the present text, the author delineates the specific realism of this Czech thinker more precisely by analysing Hejdánek's texts, especially his *Epistles to a Friend*.

Key words: Ladislav Hejdánek, truth, selfishness, realism, moralism

Václav Tollar, *Panpsychist motifs in the philosophy of Ladislav Hejdánek*

The aim of this contribution is to introduce panpsychist motifs in the philosophy of Ladislav Hejdánek and to compare them with some other contemporary trends in the philosophy of mind, primarily that of David Chalmers. Hejdánek's system remarkably fuses a continental understanding for the theme of subjectivity with a critique of the objectifying approach to reality prevailing in the natural science. Hejdánek starts from original ideas of G. W. Leibniz, A. N. Whitehead, P. Teilhard de Chardin, and most of all E. Rádl. The article seeks to show that Hejdánek's considerations can even be inspirational for the contemporary global debate of this topic. In addition to the currently familiar texts, it builds on hitherto unpublished *Diary of Ideas* of Ladislav Hejdánek.

Key words: panpsychism, consciousness, subject, reflection, responsiveness

Jiří Šlégl, *Philosophy as a wise orientation of humans in the world according to Milan Machovec*

This contribution endeavours to show the substance of Machovec's philosophical thinking in the context of his time and the coordinates of his personal life. This we can best trace in the problems the seeking meaning in life. That is for Machovec a lifelong concern. He understands humans and their discovery of meaning in this world as a complex problem. Its core is a cultivated orientation of each individual in the world. As a "master of dialogue", Machovec shows the possibilities of seeking self-determination in this way.

Key words: meaning, human, dialogue, God, history, ecology, cosmos, work, system, future

Jakub Trnka, *Home and the world of humans: Between Kosík and Kohák*

Author focuses on conception of world as simultaneously constituted and lived by humans in the thought of Karel Kosík and Erazim Kohák. He seeks first an overall interpretation of the thought of Karel Kosík which would bridge the apparent gap between his early Marxist thought and his later essayistic critique of modern age. He comes to the conclusion that both phases of Kosík's thought share substantive traits and even that Kosík's later criticism of global capitalism is possible only on the foundations laid in his early works. Subsequently the author presents phenomenologically oriented thought of Erazim Kohák which in spite of differences in overall philosophical framework manifests numerous parallels with Kosík's thought. In Kohák's work the author traces the problem of values and of valuing in general. On that basis he then analyses Kohák's idea of home and offers it as a possible answer to the question of anchoring and orientating of lived experience in the dynamics of a world constituted by human being and living.

Key words: Erazim Kohák, Karel Kosík, home, world, dialectics, phenomenology

Diana Axelsen, *Metaphor in Erazim Kohák's works in English*

Author seeks to analyse crucial role of metaphor in Erazim Kohák's *The Embers and the Stars* and other works in English. She rejects conventional

interpretation of metaphors as deviant usage and examines Kohák's use in terms of the theories of Lakoff and Johnson, pointing out that Kohák purposefully uses metaphors to forge patterns of meaning which render experience intelligible. Thus he is able to interpret the experience of the sacred not as description of alternative reality but as encounter with transcendental meaning of ordinary experience.

Key words: Erazim Kohák, metaphor, nature as metaphor

Remembering Jaroslav Šabata

Jaroslav Šabata, *In the outer margin of Theological Tract*

The article is prefaced by a biographical note by Jan Zouhar, *Remembering Jaroslav Šabata*. In the article itself Šabata, “in the outer margins of Czesław Miłosz's *Theological Tract*”, offers a profoundly personal confession of lived dynamics of faith, be it Christian or Communist. He understands faith as a stance of willingness to measure oneself by more than personal interest. He speaks of an unconditional trust which makes for a historical catharsis. Rejecting neither the Communist nor the Christian ideal, he raises them to the level of a transformation of historical subjectivity intensified by the struggle for social transformation. Thus his confession transcends the seeming chasm between Christian and communist faith.

Key words: faith, Christianity, Marxism