

Transformations and controversies in ethical and moral thinking in Slovak philosophical thought in the 1950s and 1960s

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Abstract

The aim of the present paper is to examine ethical and moral philosophical thinking in Slovakia in the 1950s and 1960s, with particular emphasis on the content of the journal *Filozofia* published by the Slovak Academy of Sciences and Arts (SASA). This study analyses how political and social transformations, especially after February 1948, influenced philosophical discourse, paying particular attention to the development and reformulation of ethical and moral concepts. The main hypothesis of the paper is that, despite the dominant influence of Marxist-Leninist philosophy in the period under study, efforts to criticize and reinterpret this ideology gradually emerged in the 1960s, while alternative approaches began to take shape. The first part of the study focuses on an analysis of the journal *Filozofia* from its beginnings in 1946 to the end of the 1950s. The second part examines how the authors gradually revised the dogmatic principles of Marxist-Leninist philosophy, criticized Stalinist distortions, and opened the way for new ethical and moral approaches. The controversies that arose in this context reflect an effort to overcome ideological limitations and find new ways of philosophical thinking in a period of fundamental socio-political change.

Keywords: anthropological thinking, Marxism, Leninism, humanism, Slovak philosophy, socialist man, ethics, morality

Introduction

The aim of this article is to reconstruct the picture of philosophical thinking focused on moral and ethical issues in the 1950s and 1960s, with a specific emphasis on the journal *Filozofia*, published by the Slovak Academy of Sciences and Arts (SASA) in Czechoslovakia since 1946. This journal, published under various titles, served, among other things, as a platform for anthropological thinking, which included topics such as the nature of man, social being and human existence, human existence in the context of technology, the relationship between nature and man, culture and society, and man and knowledge. In the period under analysis, these themes were discussed in the journal *Filozofia*. Andrej Kopčok (1998) also tried to reflect the nature of the journal *Filozofia* during the 1950s and 1960s. However, so far there is no study that analyses in detail the anthropological background of moral and ethical issues in this period.²

For this reason, the present study focuses on an analysis and the nature of ethical and moral concepts in the period under study. The analysis covers the journal's volumes 1–23 (1946–1968). The aim is to show how political and social transformations after February 1948³ influenced philosophical thinking in Slovakia in the field of ethical and moral philosophical thought.

The present article examines philosophical issues of an ethical and moral nature discussed from the beginning of the journal's publication until February 1948. It then analyses the main dimensions of philosophical thought oriented towards ethical and moral issues in the 1950s, while also attempting to highlight new methodological approaches in the context of ethics and moral thought. This aspect allows for a better understanding not only of the theoretical

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² The process of philosophical thinking in the 1950s and 1960s, as well as the influence of contemporary authors, has been the subject of several publications (Mihina et al., 2023; Kollár et al., 1998).

³ In 1948, a political upheaval (known as *February 1948*) took place in Czechoslovakia, with the Communist Party taking power in Czechoslovakia. This coup marked the beginning of a totalitarian regime that had a significant impact on social and cultural life. This was followed by the sovietization of society, in which philosophical discourse, including ethical and moral issues, had to be adapted to Marxist-Leninist principles. This ideological transformation affected all spheres of public life and influenced philosophy for decades.

foundations but also of the practical implications that these methods bring to the social sciences and their impact on moral and ethical thinking. In the second part of the article, ethical and moral thought is approached and how the authors have redacted, reformulated, and rejected dialectical materialism and the foundations of materialist morality since the early 1960s is analyzed.

At the outset, it is worth highlighting two methodological aspects. In this article, the terms *ethical*, *moral*, and *ethics and morality* are used without explicitly differentiating between them, because these terms often overlap in meaning and, in the context of the present analysis, these overlaps do not have a substantial impact. A characteristic feature of the period under study is that most authors use these terms without explicitly differentiating between ethical and moral issues. This approach was also related to the fact that, after the social changes, philosophical thinking had to focus on the social interpretation of man without emphasizing his individual aspects. Secondly, the journal *Filozofia* has undergone several name changes since its inception, but the volumes have been numbered continuously. Therefore, in the text the title *Filozofia* is used throughout, although it may have had a different name in different periods. The citation references retain the original titles of the journal as they were given in the period.

Before February 1948

In order to make a proper comparison of the changes in the understanding and interpretation of ethical and moral issues after 1948, it is necessary first to analyze the approaches of the authors in the journal to these issues before February 1948.

During this period, there were studies that examined the relationship between society and the individual. Some authors argued that society as an abstract collective concept has neither autonomous consciousness nor individual sentience. Its regulatory mechanism over the individual is inherently impersonal and serves only as a mirror to the moral and cognitive processes of individual consciousness (Štefánek, 1946).⁴ Other authors have also reflected different conceptions of morality based on the actions of man and his primary influence on society (Štúr, 1946; Topol'ský, 1946a, p. 153).

Space was also devoted to an analysis of Freud's theory of the unconscious, which divided mental processes into conscious and unconscious. This theory was interpreted by one author as a concept of censorship of moral and ethical norms, while the anthropological dimension of Freud's theory emphasized how cultural and social norms shape the psychic structure of individuals and influence which psychic acts come into consciousness (Pardel, 1946, p. 160). However, the author did not link this theory to materialist or collectivist conceptions of morality.

On the pages of the journal *Filozofia*, a discussion also developed about the book by Svätopluk Štúr, in which he presents a theory of ethical action, according to which ethical values must be based on practical and real life conditions. Knowledge and intellect, according to him, are the tools for their discovery and application. Intellect without practice is empty, just as practice without intellect is blind. Michal Topol'ský (1946b, pp. 242–244), in his review, situates Štúr's theory in a relationally and materially oriented morality, but he does not use terms referring to the principles of historical or dialectical materialism.

From an analysis of the publications in the journal before February 1948, it is clear that the relationship between the individual and society was mainly analysed in this period. The authors contributing to the journal examined moral and ethical issues primarily from the perspective of individual action and its impact on society. Although some theories emphasized the influence of cultural and social norms on the psychological structure of individuals, the authors did not link these concepts to materialist or collectivist approaches to morality.

⁴ Anton Štefánek is critical of the collectivist understanding of morality, since the collectivist paradigm fails to recognize the inherent value of the individual.

New methods in the social sciences

After the February 1948 coup d'état, Czechoslovakia experienced a dramatic turn in political and social life, which fundamentally affected the social sciences. After the Communist Party took power, society was subjected to intensive Sovietization, which meant the application of the Soviet model in all spheres of public life. In the social sciences, these changes manifested themselves above all in the strict ideologisation and politicisation of research and education. The Czechoslovak Academy of Sciences (1952) and later the Slovak Academy of Sciences (1953) were established to ensure the consistency of scientific research with Marxist-Leninist doctrine. Research institutions and universities were subjected to the control of the Communist Party, which determined the direction and nature of scientific research.

In the new social and political conditions, all social sciences had to submit to new methodological and theoretical approaches to the knowledge of man and society. The analysis of methodological and theoretical approaches in the social sciences was to be based on the materialist-Leninist doctrine, which formed the basis for the study of man and society. The social sciences had to accept the historical-materialist understanding of personality and society, which represented a new approach to life, the nature of human existence, morality, and ethics.

From a theoretical point of view, the main argument of historical materialism is the claim that the emergence and development of human consciousness are conditioned by the laws of the development of the mode of production of the material life of society. That is, changes in the forces and relations of production also determine changes in human consciousness and action (Ananiev, 1947/1948, p. 237; Sirácky, 1950, p. 75).⁵ These theses are based on Bukharin's theory according to which 'technology' and 'economy' represent two mutually influencing aspects of society, the development of one determining the nature of the other. In other words, technology conditions all other social relations. The contradictions between them and their constant balancing are the source of society's movement and development. Thus, according to this interpretation, the development of technology causes changes in moral and legal norms. In Slovak philosophical discourse, Zhdanov's book, which was based on Lenin's *Materialism and empiriocriticism*, played a particularly important role in the recognition of these principles (Ždanov, 1950, pp. 105–146).

From this principle of the conditioning of consciousness by social being, social scientists were to derive the class and historical character of human consciousness and psychic processes. This approach assumed that social consciousness is genetically linked and constitutes a major aspect determining the development of human consciousness. Although this argument emphasizes that, although material conditions are a crucial factor, they are not the only factor for social scientists to take into account (Hrušovský, 1949, p. 60).⁶ Nevertheless, the method of dialectical and historical materialism⁷ rests on the assumption that contradictions exist in the very nature of things and phenomena, which should be accepted by every scientist as a general philosophical principle (Hanzel, 1950, pp. 94–95).

⁵ Under the influence of the events of February 1948, the 1947 edition of the journal was not published during 1948, as was the case with the first edition of the journal. As a result of this situation, the journal had to be redesigned, and the 1947 and 1948 editions were forced by the editors to be merged and not published until 1949. However, when citing a reference, we give the year that corresponds to the year designation, rather than the actual year of publication, in order to maintain continuity and consistency in the journal's annual structure.

⁶ Yet the interpretation of moral and ethical issues has been characterized primarily by a materialist interpretation.

⁷ The application of the methods of dialectical and historical materialism in different contexts – philosophical, political, social, economic and others – in contemporary texts often led to their intermingling, misapplication, and failure to distinguish between them. This phenomenon was also observable within texts that dealt with issues of ethics and morality.

Within philosophical thought, there was to be a rejection of metaphysical approaches in favour of a practical and scientific approach to knowledge. Metaphysical conceptions were considered to be the cause of stagnation in thought because they relied only on abstract and fanciful concepts. On the contrary, the practical and scientific approach was supposed to ensure the dynamic development of philosophical discourse, enabling the effective solution of real-world problems through empirically verifiable and applicable knowledge. The basic principles of knowledge were based on the Leninist-Stalinist theory of reflection, according to which knowledge of nature and society begins with living insight – an active process of interaction between man, his sense organs, and the external environment (Hanzel, 1953, pp. 47–48). Philosophical thinking was, thus, to be oriented rather towards the issues of human cognition and the formation of new logical systems (Münz, 1952).

The nature of ethical and moral thinking in the 1950s

The principles of dialectical and historical materialism were also to be applied to philosophical thought, not excluding questions of an ethical and moral nature. The first principles of moral and ethical thinking after February 1948 are formulated in Igor Hrušovský's review of Andrej Sirácky's book. According to Sirácky, morality should be evaluated in a historical-social context, otherwise it loses its meaning and becomes a static and empty scheme. Moral action is that which is in accordance with the vital interests of society and its conscious belonging to the whole. Humane and moral action cannot be based on absolute principles or transcendental morality, because a society can set itself only such moral goals as are appropriate to its intellectual, character, technical abilities, and material conditions (Hrušovský, 1947/1948, pp. 276–277). Hrušovský develops the theses of Sirácky in another article, where he defends the claim that the elimination of capitalism will change the freedom of the individual and bring about a revolutionary transformation of thought. This transformation of thought is to be manifested in man's responsibility towards society and in a change of attitude towards work. Man's ability to work enables him to continually improve his living conditions as he consciously and deliberately strives to change society and nature in his own image (Münz, 1949, p. 134) and at the same time to develop personal abilities – collective solidarity, industriousness, or self-discipline (Sirácky, 1953). The prerequisite for this transformation of human nature is that man will no longer feel himself to be an exploited being, thus reinforcing virtuous action (Hrušovský, 1949, pp. 55–56). Furthermore, this was to promote the emergence of a new morality – a classless morality in which the principle of exploitation of man by man would not be present (Hrušovský, 1950, pp. 27–28).

In this sense, several texts in the journal were formulated in which the authors tried to demonstrate that the morality of capitalism was inferior to that of socialism, basing the arguments in the texts on a vision of an ideal society where the removal of economic and social barriers should automatically lead to general cultural and personal development (Hanzel, 1950; Felber, 1952, pp. 40–41). This mode of argumentation caused the authors to devote a great deal of space to the critique of idealist morality, but they devoted minimal space to the nature of the new socialist morality itself. If some traditional moral concepts – justice, equality, solidarity – were mentioned, the authors did not develop them in detail. This is the reason why the reader has to derive many of the theses on socialist morality for himself on the basis of the critique of idealist philosophy that the authors provide (Sirácky, 1950, pp. 73–75; Hrušovský, 1949, p. 41; Sirácky, 1953, pp. 102–105). The authors applied the principles of dialectical materialism, which was reflected in their focus on the interpretation of the contradictions of social relations and ethical norms. Dialectics was meant to reveal the internal tensions and dynamics of ethical categories, as well as their historical conditioning. Nor was it conducive to the recognition of a new socialist morality that the editors of the journal refrained from developing philosophical

thinking focused on moral and ethical issues in the context of the social climate. For example, in the 1951 journal, no study was devoted to issues of morality and ethics.

Moral conceptions of a humanist nature and cosmopolitanism were rejected because their foundations were based on abstract premises and did not reflect the results of concrete historical and material conditions (Sirácky, 1953, pp. 131–139). Therefore, it was necessary to transform the principles of humanism from an abstract and individualist form to a collective approach that would reflect the interests of the exploited classes and fight against class exploitation. As Hrušovský argues, “striving for the humanistic education of an individual without considering the fundamental societal issues, such as the exploitation of one class by another, is not only an illusion but directly contradicts the true meaning of the concept of humanity. Promoting the abstract freedom of the individual in fact distracts attention from class exploitation and militaristic imperialism” (Hrušovský, 1949, p. 75). This transformation of the perception of humanism was to be essential in achieving genuine moral reform in society, since cosmopolitanism only serves the interests of the ruling class (Jurovský, 1950, pp. 50–51).

In the 1950s, in some articles in the journal, the authors dealt with historical-philosophical materialist conceptions of morality. The authors of these articles were usually inspired by the works of materialist thinkers such as La Mettrie, Diderot, Holbach, and Helvétius, who developed a systematic vision of the world and man without metaphysics and without God. Morality was understood as a science based on experience, reason, and human nature, with pain and pleasure as the key motives (Garaudy, 1950). Apart from these conceptions, no detailed analysis of classical philosophical works on morality and ethics was developed in the journal. There were no in-depth studies of the works of major ancient, modern, or contemporary authors who analyzed these aspects. If any articles did appear, they contained many inaccuracies, tendentious assertions, and reflected the methods of strict dialectical and historical materialism (Hrušovský, 1954, pp. 28–29).

Not all authors dogmatically adopted the theses of dialectical and historical materialism. One way to avoid using dialectical and historical materialism was to first criticize idealist principles in the introduction and state why idealism is abstract, socially useless, and dangerous. In the main body of the text, however, some authors do not use the principles of historical materialism and sometimes openly emphasize the positive aspects of idealist philosophy, such as the ethical and humanitarian foundations of the Slavic nation (Bakoš, 1947/1948, pp. 121, 144; Segéňová, 1952, pp. 29–30).

In the second half of the 1950s, critical opinions gradually appeared in relation to the neglect of research into moral and ethical issues in philosophical thinking, criticizing the superficiality of analyses or the definition of the new nature of socialist man (Kánský, 1958a, pp. 84–85). Critics pointed out that the insufficient attention given to ethics and morality hindered the development of a comprehensive theory of socialist morality. In this context, Kánský notes that “the lack of literature on scientific ethics is understandably an obstacle to a deeper examination of this issue, but it also serves as an impetus to quickly address this deficiency and thereby effectively promote communist morality and, consequently, a scientific worldview” (Kánský, 1958b, p. 130). Despite these warnings, the journal provides no space for articles reflecting on ethical and moral issues or developing an ethical or moral conception.

Assessing ethical and moral thinking in the 1950s

In the 1950s, questions of an ethical and moral nature were not at the forefront of general interest for several reasons. The first reason was that historical and dialectical materialism, by its very nature, excluded questions of an ethical and moral nature, since it focused primarily on the interpretation of economic, social, and historical relations within the material world. Ideas as a product of thought were irrelevant in these methods because man’s economic and social material status determined human nature. Furthermore, any ideas as part of the basic principles

of morality were considered abstract and for that reason there was no point in addressing them. However, this approach was too reductive because it ignored the subjective and spiritual aspects of human life, which are also important. Human action was often reduced to a passive observer, which led to an underestimation of the active and creative role of people in history. The third problem lay in the anthropomorphization of social events. All social life was interpreted as an external force, fate, or necessity working against people, instead of being seen as an integral process involving human action.

Significant events and regimes in socialist countries have often raised questions about the real fulfilment of the principles of socialist humanism and moral socialist principles. For example, the belief that the abolition of private property and the creation of a classless society would automatically lead to a new type of man and humanity was overly optimistic and unrealistic. The main problem with these arguments was the absence of concrete details of what such a system would look like, which allowed the authors to avoid making specific commitments while highlighting the shortcomings of other approaches. This rhetorical strategy became effective because it allowed the authors to emphasize the critique of existing approaches and to show their own approach as the only realistic and relevant one, without having to present specific solutions and details of their own system (solutions to traditional ethical and moral problems were often characterized by presenting general platitudes and quoting the classics of Marxism). Thus, many conclusions within ethical and moral thought seemed to be a confirmation of what the classics of Marxism – Marx, Engels, and Lenin – had said. Additionally, political figures like Stalin, Gottwald, Husák, and Jakeš were frequently cited in contemporary articles, though their contributions were more political than theoretical, reflecting the ideological atmosphere of the time. Historical experience has shown that changes in economic structures alone are not enough to create a perfect ethical and moral society. Moreover, reducing everything to historical and social conditions, without acknowledging the subjective factor and their interconnectedness and complex interaction, portended the danger of idealizing reality (according to the prospective political intentions or general speculation).

The application of dialectical and historical materialism as a method in the analysis of society simplified the understanding of social phenomena to the reality of contradictions. This one-sidedness was a flaw in the interpretation of social relations because it constantly emphasized the struggle and exacerbation of contradictions. This, among other things, theoretically promoted the idea of the exacerbation of the class struggle for socialism. This political perspective undoubtedly played an important role in the controversy and was one of the main determinants that did not allow new ethical and moral concepts to be developed and formulated on the basis of traditional philosophical concepts. Of course, this led to isolation – to a loss of contact with the international philosophical community, particularly with Western philosophical discussions. Another problem in ethics and morality lay in the mechanistic and utilitarian approach. The reduction of moral norms to technical rules of conduct abstracted social activities to the level of technical operations, thus losing the humanist and emancipatory dimension from the work of the young Marx, especially from the *Economic-philosophical manuscripts* of 1844.⁸

From the point of view of the social sciences, ethical and moral issues have become irrelevant, because these philosophical areas were under the considerable influence of Christian ethics before 1948 and were therefore automatically unacceptable. At the same time, the development of dialectical and historical materialism after February 1948 made it impossible to develop ethical and moral thought, since any scientific discipline was not allowed to rely on

⁸ Authors who referred to Marx in the 1950s often had little knowledge of his work, especially the young Marx and his work, the *Economic-Philosophical Manuscripts*. This work was not available in Slovak translation in the 1950s and 1960s, and, moreover, the linguistic abilities of many of these authors were severely limited, which made it even more impossible for them to know Marx in depth (Kocka, 1968, p. 517).

or start from the immaterial world – any object of research had to be empirical in nature. Within theoretical training, this implied that any research must abandon the normative part and pursue only the empirical domain. The field of ethics, even on this basis, became a field for untalented scientists who are unable to conduct practical and empirically based research. This was not helped by the educational policies of the state, which focused on the development of practical professions at the expense of humanities-oriented subjects, as could also be seen in other socialist countries. This process gradually led to the dehumanisation of the social sciences and to a complete disregard for the existential dimension of human existence.

Ethical and moral thinking in the 1960s

Determining the demarcation line when dialectical and historical materialism was broken and rejected in the investigation of ethical and moral issues is difficult. Even during the 1960s, articles appeared that developed the original theses of dialectical and historical materialism. In this context, there are studies that interpret morality as a tool to legitimize and maintain the power structures of the bourgeoisie, although the language used is constructive, and the authors are much more concerned with arguing their own theses (Zigo, 1961, p. 59; Kánský, 1961; Bodnár, 1961, pp. 433–435; Kopčok, 1965, pp. 16–18). In the second half of the 1960s, articles appear that begin to focus on the analysis of some selected issues in ethical and moral thought. For example, one of the articles analyses moral obligation, basing its argument on a deontological ethics based on Kant's works (Pojezná, 1965). Nevertheless, most of the argumentation of Pojezná's article rather attempts to extend the principles of Marxist or socialist morality without using the premises of dialectical and historical materialism. Other authors have attempted to develop the authentic ideas of Marx, interpreting them not only in the context of the collective dimension but also in the context of the individual dimension. Within the new interpretive frameworks of Marxism, emphasis was placed on the individuality of the human being and, at the same time, on the acceptance of social norms and their application in human action. This approach involved an anthropological transformation of the human subject, which was to be based on the concept of the individual social being (Šima, 1967, pp. 397–398). Within Marxist theory, attempts to construct a Marxist axiology also began to emerge. Marxist axiology aimed to find a materialist answer to the question of the origin of values, to investigate the dialectic of the relationship between the subjective and objective sides of each evaluative attitude, and to analyze its general regularities (Kusý, 1967b, p. 431).

The first half of the 1960s is characterised by a retreat from high ideals, manifested, for example, in a critique of the understanding of the theses on morality hitherto promoted. The idealisation of work within the socialist system became the object of criticism because the realisation of the importance of work for society, voluntary work for society or concern for social welfare did not eliminate the negative human qualities that were supposed to be characteristic of capitalist societies. Egoism, the pursuit of profit, licentiousness and indiscipline, abuse of the system, and a patronizing attitude towards work in the formation of the new socialist man become the object of criticism and begin to be discussed as shortcomings of social life (Hlávek, 1961, pp. 345–352; Gluchman, 2020). The homogeneous view of the formation of morality also became an object of criticism. The dogmatic notion of unity in a socialist society, which was characteristic of the Stalinist era, began to be questioned because, for example, contradictions were manifested in the real interests of particular people and social groups, which, however, were problematic to intervene in directly in a directive manner (Strinka, 1963, pp. 444–447).

Interpretations of morality that refused to emphasize the material and economic aspects of life also emerged. On the contrary, in the texts, emphasis begins to be placed on psychological and moral balance, which was in contrast to the materialist approach (Zeman, 1964, pp. 457–458). As Zeman points out, psychological balance in both individuals and society is essential, as “the conflict between the social environment and individual interest disrupts psychological

equilibrium.” (Zeman, 1964, p. 457) The issue of philosophical anthropocentrism thus becomes a question of the fundamental starting point of philosophy, a question of its starting principle in the ontological plane, which presages its way of interpreting the relationship between man and the world.

Further changes in ethical and moral thinking also began to manifest themselves as the work of some Christian authors became the subject of debate, and possible overlaps between Christian and Marxist philosophies began to be discussed. For example, Christianity was portrayed as a movement that seeks to offer an alternative to Marxism by acknowledging its economic and social achievements, but at the same time criticizing it for its materialistic one-sidedness. Christianity was now described in a more positive light – universalism, dualism, and humanism were seen as positives (Kvasnička, 1966, pp. 295–297). Religion as one of the social institutions, however, was still considered a negative phenomenon of society. Ideas considered idealistic in the last decade are still labelled as such but are now interpreted in non-ideological and constructive language. Sartre’s philosophy, for example, was analysed and his basic ideas are presented in a constructive way. Sartre’s philosophy emphasizes that man is responsible for his actions and influence on his environment, even though his thinking and behavior are determined by original choice. Every human action requires moral interpretation, but there are no objective moral principles, suggesting the subjective and contextual nature of morality. Man’s fundamental relationship to others is conflict, but at the same time exists only in conjunction with others. These ideas show that the texts began to openly discuss some theses of moral and ethical action based on idealist philosophies (Bodnár, 1964, pp. 13–15; Bodnár, 1965, pp. 113–115; Kusý, 1967a, pp. 274–277).

Specifically, the kind of the articles were those that, after 1965, speak openly and critically about the issues of how this impacted society when issues of ethics and morality could not be analyzed. For example, individual responsibility for developing ethical and moral values at the individual and societal level dissipated into a utopian social responsibility that became an anonymous sovereign. Moral responsibility became vague, atomized, diffuse. Everyone was responsible for everything – and thus no one was responsible for anything (Strinka, 1966, pp. 86–87). Historical materialism misinterpreted the nature of individual responsibility because it emphasized social structures, and class struggles while ignoring individual differences and personal freedom. In addition, historical materialism underestimated the subjective dimension of responsibility, such as the individual’s capacity to be free and culturally developed (Hlávek, 1968, p. 376). Some articles focused on criticizing idealistic notions of socialist morality, which were manifested by the absence of analyses of various issues of social life – prostitution, alcoholism, and so on. Within philosophical thought, some authors criticized the inability of scientists to develop various specialized fields of ethical and moral thought – principles of professional ethics, scientific ethics, medical ethics, journalistic ethics, and so on (Kánský, 1966, p. 305; Holata, 1965, pp. 604–606).

In this context, the philosophical field began to discuss issues associated with the underrepresentation of philosophical workers in the field of ethics and morality, as well as the insufficient level of ethics education in universities. The lack of institutional support for ethics departments and literature on ethical and moral thought was also pointed out. These shortcomings were openly discussed at a Czechoslovak meeting of philosophers in 1966, where a proposal to establish a specialized department of ethics was adopted. The aim of this workplace was to coordinate ethical work at the national level and to promote the development of ethical and moral thinking.

Conclusion

Philosophical thinking in Slovakia in the 1950s underwent several significant transformations, which were also manifested in the field of ethics and morality. In the 1960s, there were efforts

in the Czechoslovak environment to reconsider the ideological heritage of the time, which was also reflected in the pages of the journal *Filozofia*. These efforts went in different directions. One approach was the reinterpretation of Marx's ideas, which, however, encountered practical and theoretical limits. Another direction was a critique of the distortions caused by the Stalinist version of Marxism, especially in the field of ethical and moral thought. A third current was inspired by so-called 'idealist' philosophy, especially existentialism but also the philosophy of praxis.

Marxist philosophy, which dominated after the communist takeover in February 1948, emphasized the collective aspects of human existence and defined morality in the context of socioeconomic conditions. This approach led to a rethinking of ethical norms and their application in the practical sphere, for example in the field of work ethics. Work was perceived as a fundamental form of self-fulfilment and the development of personal and social values.

Despite its attempt to be scientifically valid and to criticize bourgeois individualism, Marxist ethics often neglected the individual aspects of human existence. This led to the emergence of critical voices that focused on the limitations of ethical thought under the influence of Marxism. Philosophers began to explore questions of individual responsibility, subjectivity, and the impact of economic and cultural change on moral values. In the 1960s, efforts gradually began to emerge to rehabilitate ethics and morality as legitimate fields of philosophical inquiry (for example, efforts to establish a specialized department focusing on ethics).

However, the invasion of Czechoslovakia by Warsaw Pact troops in August 1968⁹ represented another historical turning point. The military intervention and the subsequent normalisation reversed this promising development and opened the way for the reassertion of dogmatism. Under the pretext of the fight against revisionism, any further reflection on the issues raised during the 1960s was blocked, which for a long period halted the progressive development of ethical and moral thought in Czechoslovak philosophy.

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⁹ In August 1968, Warsaw Pact forces invaded Czechoslovakia, violently suppressing the political and social reform movement known as the Prague Spring. These reforms aimed to bring about democratization and greater freedoms, but the occupation ended these efforts and restored strict communist rule in the country.

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