

Czech philosophy of the interwar period

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Abstract

The present paper focuses on the development of Czech philosophical thought during the period of the First Republic. It is a time of remarkable diversity in this important part of spiritual culture. Many modern philosophical trends also developed during this time. Here we also encounter a change in the institutional security of theoretical and educational work (the creation of new universities, the publication of journals and monographs, and the organization of a world philosophical congress). This development had a discursive character. The question of the social involvement of philosophy in new political conditions was raised. This concerns one aspect of the discourse on the role of theoretical thought (philosophy, ethics, science) in the development of a program of real humanity within the framework of a democratic society. The so-called “struggle for the freedom of Czech philosophy” represented an intergenerational conflict, reflecting the broader issue of interpreting Czech history and its meaning. This article thus attempts to provide a brief perspective on intellectual diversity as the outcome of this discourse. It illustrates, through a specific historical period, the view that, in Czech philosophy and ethics, many thinkers and ideas can be found which are so original that they may serve as a remarkable source of inspiration even for the present day.

Keywords: philosophy, ethics, bioethics, science, historiography, interwar period

If we consider philosophy as a significant part of spiritual culture, the attempts for historiographical evaluation of the changes of its form in time and the context of social situations are also meaningful. We can perceive the interwar period as one of significantly remarkable and, in its present form, also inspirational phases in the history of Czech philosophical thinking. The present study contributes to the effort for a better historiographical understanding³ of Czech philosophy at the time through reflections on the conceptual discourse on, or argument for, the role of philosophical thinking in the life of emancipating society. We suppose the argument for the position of philosophy position and associated tasks within the mentioned social conditions (the establishment of the Czechoslovak State) has been the most significant source of the remarkable diversity of philosophical movements characterizing the interwar period.

The development of philosophical work in the interwar Czechoslovakia

When looking at the interwar development of Czech philosophy, it is elementary to stand for and defend the overall positive quality evaluation and many original philosophical works,

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³ Among contemporary attempts to provide a comprehensive account of the history of Czech and Slovak philosophy, we can mention Josef Král’s original summary work *Československá filosofie. Nástin vývoje podle disciplin* [Czechoslovak philosophy: An outline of development by disciplines] (1937), Samuel Š. Osuský’s monograph *Nástin vývoja slovenského myslenia filozofického* [Outline of the development of Slovak philosophical thought] (1929), and Jiřina Popelová’s work published shortly after World War II *Studie o současné české filosofii* [Studies on contemporary Czech Philosophy] (1945). In the postwar period, two versions of summarizing anthologies were produced (in the 1960s and 1980s). After 1989, there was a marked shift, resulting in a series of comprehensive works and individual studies. Notably, we can highlight the publication of *Slovník českých filozofů* [Dictionary of Czech philosophers] (1998, edited by Jiří Gabriel) and *Dejiny filozofie na Slovensku v 20. storočí* [The history of philosophy in Slovakia in the 20th century] (1998, edited by Andrej Kopčok, Karol Kollár, and Tibor Pichler).

which consistently included the consideration of axiological and ethical questions as an integral part. It is mostly characterized by a diversity of coexisting movements and philosophical schools of thought due to the systematic effort of many significant personalities.

It was important to provide professional and educational work at the institutional level in modified social conditions. In 1919, two new universities were established – Masaryk University in Brno and Comenius University in Bratislava. Both institutions established departments (called philosophical seminars) at their Faculties of Arts.⁴ They also created new professional journals.⁵ The quantitative increase in published philosophical works brought higher quality and originality to their papers. The change wasn't observed in philosophy only, but it is also a developmental characteristic of the entire modern Czech science as well as its spiritual culture. That was the phase considered to be the period when modern Czech and Czechoslovak thinking (including philosophy) (Mácha, 1989, pp. 105–116)⁶ had evolved into an appealing/varied and internally differentiated form⁷ and proved its legitimacy, viability, and creative potential. It was also been internationally recognized – Czech authors took part in international philosophical conferences and congresses, the 8th International Philosophy Congress⁸ took place in Prague in 1934 and was to be the manifestation of a global philosophical community for preserving democracy and standing against fascism (Znoj, 1990, pp. 87–98).

At present, the efforts to retrospectively evaluate are also about whether we are not the subject of an extensive idealization in observing the Czech past. With its present experience and knowledge, we can see how that period ended up being positively evaluated. We now know how the tragic and contemporary inconceivable form of historical turn had been initiated and how devastating the period that followed was. When reading contemporary texts these days,⁹ we realize that their authors couldn't imagine something similar could happen in the modern civilized age.

However, to present a more objective view of the interwar period, some contemporary authors didn't always share much optimism. We can read about certain levels of skepticism and conviction about the Czech philosophy crisis: "It's been a long time ago when every scholar

⁴ In Brno, the leadership of this department was gradually passed from Otakar Zich, Mihailo Rostohar, Vladimír Hoppe, to Josef L. Fischer (in 1938–1939 jointly with Josef Tvrď) (Gabriel, 1993, pp. 8–11). In Bratislava, Czech philosophers such as Bohuslav Tomsa, Josef Král, and Josef Tvrď initially held positions, and from this school emerged the first generation of modern Slovak philosophers. At Charles University, the philosophical seminar was led by František Krejčí before World War I, and from 1928 onwards by Jan B. Kozák. At the newly established Faculty of Science in Prague, a seminar on the methodology and history of natural and exact sciences was founded in 1922, where Emanuel Rádl (head of the department of methodology and natural sciences) and Karel Vorovka (head of the department of logic and philosophy of exact sciences, later replaced by mathematician Václav Hlavatý after Vorovka's death) served as directors (Gabriel et al., 2010, pp. 63–64).

⁵ "Their profile and focus gradually took shape: to the positivist-oriented *Česká mysl*, the 'idealist' *Ruch filosofický* was added in 1921, followed by *Filosofie* in 1927, and the neo-Thomist *Filosofická revue* in 1929. Other journals addressing philosophical issues included *Na hlubinu*, *Sociologická revue*, *Sociální problémy*, *Index*, *Akord*, *Řád*, *Přítomnost*, *Tvorba*, *Křesťanská revue*, and *Kritický měsíčník*, among others" (Gabriel et al., 2010, p. 64).

⁶ The complexities of forming an authentic modern Slovak philosophy during the interwar period are explored in several works, particularly by the Slovak author Vladimír Bakoš, who also evaluates the influence of Czech philosophers and their role in promoting the "Czechoslovakism" program (Bakoš, 1991, pp. 3–30).

⁷ This process gradually included the creative adoption of modern trends in world philosophy, such as pragmatism, structuralism, neo-Thomism, phenomenology, etc. In this context, we can recall the entirely unique and singular achievement in Czech philosophy: Karel Vorovka's *Americká filosofie* [American philosophy] from 1929.

⁸ At this congress, the Czech-German *Cercle philosophique de Prague pour les recherches sur l'entendement humain* was established, which marked a significant shift in the reception of Edmund Husserl's phenomenology in the Czech context and contributed to the preservation of Husserl's manuscripts.

⁹ For example, reviews of German philosophical-ideological production, such as those written for *Česká mysl* by the young Jan Patočka.

had to share his ‘elaborated world view’; it’s more about not knowing and not willing to know anything about philosophy now” (Rádl, 1933, p. 20). This issue of the form, position, and philosophy opportunities was perceived consensually even through the various focus of each author and their distinctive polemic opinions on particular philosophic topics. There was a consensus for the philosophical needs within the spiritual culture and thus, the need for overcoming the crisis: “We cannot let ourselves be discouraged by general aversion. It is temporary only. We must hold up, overcome the fatigue, and who persists the longest, wins” (Rádl, 1933, p. 21). However, the discourse issue is what place and role philosophy should take in social life, to what direction should we pay attention and effort to.

The first conceptual disagreement in the history of Czech modern philosophy and its interference

The aim of the present paper is to set the characteristics of Czech philosophy in the first republic period. Better understanding is needed of the resources of the crisis considering the weakening of philosophy significance. We can relate this crisis to an increase in the sensitive perception of the crisis of situation in civilization itself (the sphere of economy, politics, and the continuously growing threat of new war awareness).¹⁰ We can consider the reflections and polemics on the issue of the status of philosophy as one of the significant impulses of diversification of Czech philosophical thinking.

To understand internal development and discursive refinement, we must first pay at least brief attention to the preceding period or developmental phase – its foundations, inspirations, and both positive and polemical continuities. Modern Czech philosophy is sourced *in peripetias* and arguments of the national emancipatory effort of the 19th century. The former revivalist-motivated polemic of the 1840s on “being or not being of German philosophy in the Czech Lands” (Mácha, 1987, pp. 54–74; Čupr, 1847) spilled over into the dispute on philosophy itself. It was about whether philosophy is or isn’t significant for the unit of developing spiritual culture. Radically arguing protagonists of national emancipation (Karel Havlíček Borovský, Vilém Gabler) refused any philosophy (not just the German one) and suggested its replacement with “common sense”.

Later, within the circumstances of the strengthened regime (Alexander Bach’s so-called *absolutism*), after the revolution failed in 1848, the acceptance of apolitical Herbartism seemed to be a possible solution. It played a significant argumentation role in the country in favor of acknowledging philosophy’s significance. Johann F. Herbart’s philosophy in the Czech Lands also prepared the soil for acceptance of positivism. It’s been considered (for instance by Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk)¹¹ as a modern European form of theoretical work as a resource for overcoming provincality (including the dependence on German science and philosophy only). Consequently, positivism significantly impacted the form of Czech philosophy and science for a long time.

We can deduce from this retrospective that the interwar period of Czech philosophical development can be characterized as a period of a critical ‘settling up’ with the dominant version of Czech positivism in many spheres (from science through ethics up to religious issues). Czech positivism went through a development from initial residual Herbartian references on the

¹⁰ Briefly noting this, philosophical reflections on these symptoms of crisis are connected, for instance, with the reception of works by Theodor Lessing and certain Russian exile philosophers (e.g., Nikolai Berdyaev); among domestic authors, the problematic nature of the time was initially reflected by thinkers associated with Catholicism and Neo-Thomism (Jan Čep, Jaroslav Durych, Rudolf I. Malý).

¹¹ Masaryk was also critical of positivism for its abstract and thus dehumanized scientific perspective, which he considered ethically sterile.

situation abroad through the most distant “dogmatic” state (related to František Krejčí) to the form pushed mostly by Josef Tvrď¹² with his innovative opinions.

The establishment of the First Republic belongs to the above-mentioned “dogmatic” period of significant dominance of positivism in the Czech philosophical and scientific scene. Stronger aversion against this supremacy brought this group of various non-positivism focused authors together in the so-called “fight for the freedom of Czech philosophy”. This group of authors established the second Czech professional philosophical journal – *Ruch filosofický* in 1920.¹³

Second conceptual dispute – philosophical tasks in a new situation

The effort to critically overcome the present supremacy of positivism in Czech philosophy can be found within the reflections on the position and the role of philosophy in its new social situation. The question was: What does philosophy need in the newly formed independent Czechoslovak state? Emanuel Rádl's¹⁴ formulation of the answer to this question (Rádl, 1922b, pp. 2–23; 65–71) has become the source of the entire subsequent internal dispute. Rádl represents the view on the requirement of philosophy to join the program of cultivation of humanity and overall nation enlightenment. Philosophy is, for him, also a tool to open itself to the world, it is generally a necessary element for cultural growth. Rádl emphasized his understanding of the role of philosophy with “...a significant ‘mobilization’ tone: Czech philosophy should be Czech mostly by reflecting the philosophical (world-view) problems of the Czech or Czechoslovak society. Masaryk's work has been the model of its realization for Rádl” (Gabriel et al., 2010, p. 70).

As has been shown with opponents' reactions (the group of authors of *Ruch filosofický*), the entire discourse, again, generated forms of dispute regarding the meaning of philosophy itself. Therefore, Ferdinand Pelikán warned against similarities with the above-mentioned dispute on German philosophy in the 1840s in his extensive study (Pelikán, 1925, pp. 65–84; 129–144; 283–288). Pelikán mostly refused the “service” role of philosophy (national, patriotic, local) and called for freedom and “pure” philosophy from his viewpoint. Other members of the group of authors shared the same conception (Vorovka, 1926).

The whole dispute can be simply characterized as an attempt to defend the right to grow “pure” uncommitted philosophy.¹⁵ From the point of view of the rebellious authors, it was an attempt to be extricated from the dependency on the dominant positivism (or the so-called

¹² Czech positivism, in a certain sense, followed its own path. Its individual representatives reflected, with varying degrees of intensity, the influences of empiriocriticism (e.g., Jiljí Jahn) and neopositivism. However, its work is generally characterized by an openness to incorporating insights from other philosophical traditions (e.g., Tvrď was also inspired by vitalist ideas), and thus they cannot be considered direct adherents of empiriocriticism or neopositivism. Critically, it can be noted that they often attempted to return to the original sources of positivism (August Comte, Herbert Spencer) (Král, 1937, pp. 58–62).

¹³ The first journal of positivism was *Česká mysl*, which began publication in 1900.

¹⁴ Emanuel Rádl (1873–1942) was one of the most prominent figures in Czech philosophy. His original profession as a biologist (physiologist) influenced his affiliation with the vitalist line of philosophy. He focused on the critical reflection of the development of evolutionary thought, the philosophy of science, as well as religious and ethical issues. Rádl was a strong supporter of Masaryk and actively engaged in contemporary debates. He was one of the principal organizers of the Prague Philosophical Congress.

¹⁵ It is remarkable and somewhat inconsistent that Pelikán characterizes the new generation of philosophers as possessing “... youthful open-mindedness and receptiveness to everything healthy and alive in modern times, a childlike imagination that maintains a healthy relationship to reality and human society, with an explicitly social and democratic nature of modern thought” (Pelikán, 1925, pp. 287–288).

realism)¹⁶ and be engaged even in metaphysical questions which positivism principally rejected.¹⁷

The critics of these “younger” or “idealistic” philosophers used to find faults in particular non-acquaintance of the rejected form of positive philosophy (Rádl, 1922a, p. 17) and aversion (found, again, in non-acquaintance) to be inspired by Masaryk and his philosophical works (Rádl, 1922a, p. 22). They also argue with “the insufficient Czechness”¹⁸ or – in the toughest form of criticism – dilettantism.¹⁹

Generally, the critical reaction to standing “for the freedom of Czech philosophy” is taken with the caveat that authors usually promise more than they can accomplish. They are satisfied with a very vague form of results expressed through dimmed exaggerated phrases and speculations about abstract questions (Rádl, 1922a, p. 13).²⁰

The dispute on the character of Czech philosophy persisted throughout the whole inter-war period (Rádl, 1934, pp. 71–79)²¹ and got embroiled in embarrassing and grotesque forms of personal offenses and court trials. However, at the same time, the real shape of Czech philosophical life was also determined by another generation (Jan Patočka,²² Jiřina Popelová) and new stimuli and inspirations (phenomenology, neo-scholastics and science development and new philosophical topics related to it). Let us now complement our attempt at a comprehensive characterization of Czech philosophical discourse in the interwar period with a brief overview of ethical reflections, followed by an examination of philosophical responses to developments in the natural sciences.

Notes on the development of Czech ethical thinking

From the perspective of the history of Czech ethical thought, an early significant contribution can be identified in the journal article by the Catholic author Vincenc Zahradník titled *Rozjímání o některých stránkách praktické filozofie* [Reflections on some aspects of practical philosophy] (Zahradník, 1818, pp. 421–461). However, the first comprehensive ethical work written in Czech is František M. Klácel's *Dobrowěda* (Klácel, 1847). In the subsequent period, influenced by Herbartianism, the approach of Josef Dastich is noteworthy. He conceived ethics as an integral part of philosophy, albeit falling under a broadly defined notion of aesthetics (Dastich,

¹⁶ This has been a common description of Masaryk's philosophy – and indeed his politics (see, for example, the so-called ‘Realist Group’ co-founded by Masaryk, for which he was elected to the Imperial Council of the Vienna Parliament in 1891).

¹⁷ “... numerous misunderstandings in discussions of realism were also caused by the intertwining of different conceptions and approaches—not just epistemological, artistic, and political realism... Naturally, the main tension arose from the opposition between realism and ‘idealism’” (Zouhar, 2000, p. 129).

¹⁸ “For Czech philosophy to have meaning as Czech philosophy, it is insufficient for it to be an accidental collection of even the most original interpretations” (Rádl, 1922, p. 34).

¹⁹ “... it is a group of young malcontents who blame older philosophers for both their personal and scholarly failures and their thwarted plans” (Krejčí, 1928, p. 332). Krejčí is even harsher in his other study (Krejčí, 1925).

²⁰ It is interesting to note that a similar critique later appeared in Ladislav Rieger's critique of phenomenology and Jan Patočka, published in *Česká mysl* in 1935–1936.

²¹ A comprehensive assessment of Rádl's position is offered by Jan Patočka, who, as a younger author, stood apart from this debate (Patočka, 1937, pp. 40–54).

²² In the aforementioned work on Rádl, we find the following formulation of Patočka's philosophical creed, which is conceived in a timeless manner and beyond adherence to any particular philosophical movement or school: “... the essential tasks of human life, which philosophy must attempt to address, remain the same in all times, and the dangers it must face are the same in various guises. Precisely in its solitude, philosophy works for society, not as an exponent of the ideology of a particular social class, but as its individual conscience it must function” (Patočka, 1937, p. 42). However, aware of the real threat, Patočka later reconsidered this position: “It must serve as a warning to us that Germany, ‘the land of poets and philosophers’, completely eradicated philosophy as an independent discipline... and consigned it to extinction... Philosophy, the science of perspectives, is therefore an indispensable part of our national renewal, and philosophy must participate in this work if we are to have even a spark of hope” (Patočka, 1939, p. 47).

1863). Additionally, the Herbartian scholar Gustav A. Lindner contributed to the formation of ethical theory. His work, originally written in German in 1868, was only translated into Czech in 1931 under the title *Záhada štěstí* [*The enigma of happiness*] (Lindner, 1931). Lindner's approach, rooted in psychology, in some respects, anticipated the positivist conception of František Krejčí. Lindner's so-called "eubiotics" is a eudaimonistic-oriented version of ethics, striving to establish harmony through the regulation of desires and passions by reason.

Undoubtedly, one of the most influential thinkers was T. G. Masaryk. For Masaryk, ethics formed the core of his entire philosophy. He believed that morality is founded on religion, though not in a dogmatic sense. Rather, in line with his Protestant beliefs, it represents human participation in divine work. Morality, as conceived by Masaryk, is the realization of humanity through the principles of freedom, equality, and love for others, and it closely aligns with the concept of democracy. These ideas permeate Masaryk's extensive body of work, perhaps most comprehensively presented in *Ideály humanitní* [*The ideals of humanity*] (Masaryk, 1901). This text, along with others such as *The Social Question*, also includes Masaryk's critical analysis of alternative ethical theories, such as utilitarianism, Darwinism-inspired approaches, and socialist conceptions of ethics. Additionally, Masaryk wrote extensively on concrete issues and their ethical dimensions, including issues related to family life, the status of women in society at the time, alcoholism, and philosophical-ethical reflections on human labor. His work *Česká otázka* [*The Czech question*] (Masaryk, 1895) is a particularly poignant expression of his humanistic perspective on the relationship between humanism and nationalism, within the context of the contemporary discourse on national emancipation.

As previously mentioned, Masaryk's attitude toward positivism was simultaneously appreciative and critical to a certain degree. Masaryk was convinced that morality requires a foundation in religion, and thus, he found attempts to conceptualize ethics as a purely theoretical discipline. However, positivists (including Czech positivists) offered such attempts to formulate scientifically grounded ethics (Bláha, 1947). These authors endeavored to derive ethical principles from human nature, understood in terms of humanity's biological and psychological constitution.²³ The most prominent figure of positivism during its dominant phase in Czech philosophical circles was František Krejčí, who was deeply engaged with psychology and integrated this interest into his ethically oriented works. His most comprehensive exposition can be found in *Positivní etika* [*Positive ethics*] (Krejčí, 1922). However, this theme runs throughout many of Krejčí's works.²⁴ Krejčí referred to his ethics as "natural," by which he meant that ethics should be independent of theological and metaphysical assumptions and instead be purely empirically based. It is rooted in the instinct of self-preservation and the notion that every living being (including humans) primarily seeks happiness. Human morality, however, in its development, should evolve from individual benefit toward utility and the common good, aiming to establish a balance between egoism and altruism. Krejčí was inspired by Spencer's ideas, as well as Friedrich Nietzsche's thoughts on the role of instincts and impulses, and Tolstoy's humanism.

Another positivist-inspired work worth mentioning is Jiljí Jahn's attempt at a so-called "superhumanist" philosophy. His work *Stříbrný svět* [*The silver world*] (Jahn, 1931) reflects the author's interest in empiriocriticism in a remarkable way. The text depicts the universe as a cold, empty space without meaning or purpose. Yet, human solitude in a godless, indifferent world is not a source of existential despair but rather a motivation to fight for life and strive for happiness.

²³ František Čáda also adopted a biotic approach to his ethics, with "life" as its central category (Šeracký, 1920).

²⁴ For example, *Svoboda vůle a mravnost* [*Freedom of will and morality*] (1907), *Filosofické základy mravní výchovy* [*Philosophical foundations of moral education*] (1920), *Moderní člověk a mravnost* [*The modern man and morality*] (1921), *Politika a mravnost* [*Politics and morality*] (1932).

Josef Tvrđý, a thinker who sought to transcend the limits of traditional positivism, in his *Nová filosofie* [*New philosophy*] (Tvrđý, 1932), grounded his thinking in the social origins of moral values. Similarly, Inocenc A. Bláha, as previously mentioned, focused on sociology in his ethics (in line with the positivist tradition). His ethics aimed to be a science of morality, striving for objectivity (Sedlák, 1996).

The positivist attempts to develop a scientifically based ethics (and an autonomous conception of morality) elicited significant criticism, particularly from religiously oriented authors. In addition to Masaryk, others such as Jan B. Kozák and Emanuel Rádl, also responding from a Protestant perspective, contributed to this discourse. These authors posited the existence of an objective moral order grounded in the existence of God (Kozák, 1930; Rádl, 1946). A unique version of ethically-founded spiritual utopia was created by the Protestant pastor Ján Maliarik, who eclectically combined various influences (Plato, the Vedas, Christianity, theosophy, etc.) in his vision of an ascetic totalitarian society – *Celozemský univerzální stát* [*The universal state of the Earth*] (1925) – as a path to the salvation of humanity.

Regarding Catholic-oriented authors, it can be noted that their attempts to develop more comprehensive ethics generally remained within the boundaries defined by theological doctrine (neo-Thomism). “...their works are more pastoral than theoretical in nature” (Král, 1937, p. 106). However, it is interesting to observe the broader orientation of Czech Catholic philosophy in its historical context. Its representatives (e.g., Jan Čep, Dominik Pecka, Metoděj Habáň) expressed concern over the contemporary orientation of society (not only Czech society). They warned of the loss of meaning in modern civilization and dehumanizing tendencies in global development. They interpreted the crisis in politics, economics, and morality as a consequence of the modern rejection of Christian values.²⁵ The solution, they believed, lay in a return to the traditions of a religiously grounded, healthy, and uncorrupted way of life.²⁶ However, they also advocated for replacing the allegedly dysfunctional democratic order with a return to a corporatist society.²⁷

Briefly, in this survey of the philosophical and ethical thought of the interwar period, we should mention the relatively rare but emerging focus on topics that, from today’s perspective, might be seen as bioethical issues. Mostly, this reflection involved traditional anthropological themes (human health, sexuality, death, etc.), often within moralizing treatises on family life, prostitution, alcoholism, and the like.²⁸ However, as an interesting example of a new theme – ethical reflection on biological research – the debate on vivisection can be mentioned. As part of a broader discussion on the ethics of science, this topic first resonated internationally at the 1909 Congress of the World League for the Protection of Animals in London. In the Czech context, the debate was initiated by Pavla Moudrá, who, in 1904, criticized the cruelty of physiological and anatomical experiments.²⁹ Even Tolstoy responded to this issue by sending a critical letter to one of the leading figures in Czech natural sciences (and a vitalist philosopher), František Mareš. Initially, Mareš countered with a brief article (Mareš, 1909, pp. 1–3), but the vivisection issue eventually became the subject of a broader polemical study, where he defended

²⁵ It should be noted that Masaryk, in his 1881 dissertation, interpreted the rising rate of suicides as an expression of a value crisis.

²⁶ This approach also inspired literary ruralism, which celebrated rural life. In this context, it would be interesting to analyze the possible influence of Martin Heidegger’s philosophy.

²⁷ The Russian émigré philosopher Nikolai Berdyaev also served as an inspiration here.

²⁸ A typical example of low-quality moralistic pamphlets can be found in the various minor works of Vavřín Brumovský.

²⁹ This author also linked animal protection with feminist issues in a manner typical of the time. However, her arguments against vivisection drew from outdated and otherwise problematic sources (e.g., theosophy), which elicited a weak and mostly negative response (Jastrzemska, 2017).

experimental methods within a wider axiological and ethical framework concerning humanity's moral relationship with animals (Mareš, 1910).

This issue was also addressed, in a broader sense and with inspiration from Eastern thought, by Ján Maliarik, as previously mentioned, who opposed the consumption of meat for ethical reasons. Anna Pammrová offered a more comprehensive reflection on this topic. From today's perspective, Pammrová could be considered an ecofeminist. She interpreted the devastation of the world, the exploitation of animals, and the oppression of women as consequences of the masculine orientation of civilization (Pammrová, 1917).³⁰ She saw the solution in a mystic sexual asceticism to break free from the cycle of reproduction, which perpetuates unnecessary suffering among living beings.

Finally, the issue of humanity's relationship with animals and other bioethical topics leads us to one last point. In the interwar period, we find profound, philosophically grounded reflections on these issues among authors whose primary field was not theoretical work but literature (e.g., nature prose).³¹ One notable figure is Jiří Mahen, whose work offered a highly modern approach to environmental themes.³² However, it was Karel Čapek who most intensively engaged with bioethical topics in his writings. His novels, plays, essays, and columns vividly address a range of serious bioethical questions, including medical ethics, the value of human life, aging and death, the threat of dehumanized technological expansion, and humanity's relationship with nature, landscapes, and animals. Čapek addressed these issues attractively and provocatively, garnering international attention. Yet, his work has rarely been examined from a bioethical perspective.

Natural science as a philosophical topic

Considering the meaning and the long-term ongoing dominant position of positivism in Czech philosophical thinking, our attention is focused concisely on the topic of the issue of reflections on natural science in contemporary philosophy.³³ In this context, certain bioethical aspects will, once again, be touched upon.

The role in the overall growth of philosophical interest in science was undoubtedly influenced by the attention that the newly established state devoted to the development of scientific work: "... in the free state of Czechoslovakia suddenly more favorable conditions were set for growing sciences than before the war and when it was necessary to establish new natural-science societies and constitutions from prestigious reasons following other states and free cultural nations with special tasks..." (Kettner, 1931, pp. 13–14). Thematic exposition at the Exhibition of Contemporary Culture in the Czechoslovak Republic became a particular testimony to the meaning and role of science in the new state. This representative exhibition of

³⁰ Pammrová also translated texts by Theodor Lessing, who expressed similar disgust with modern civilization as the previously mentioned Catholic authors.

³¹ Incidentally, Leoš Janáček's libretto for the opera *Příhody lišky Bystroušky* [*The cunning little vixen*] contains this appeal for re-evaluating the relationship between humans and animals (Janáček significantly transcended the purely humorous content of Rudolf Těsnohlídek's literary source).

³² This author was also practically engaged in studying living nature (ichthyology, entomology) and conservation practices related to fishing. In his *Rybářská knížka* [*Fisherman's book*] (1921), he aligns himself with Bergson's philosophy and expresses the need for a complete re-evaluation of the human relationship with nature. This theme also resonates in some of his fairy-tale books.

³³ Regarding this thematic selection, it is important to note that various authors have explored additional areas of philosophical interest in their work. A few specific examples include Blahoslav Zbořil and Karel Engliš (axiology), Mirko Novák (aesthetics), František Weyr (philosophy of law), Inocenc A. Bláha and Emanuel Chalupný (reflections on sociological issues), Jan Mukařovský (structuralism), and Josef L. Fischer (a notable variant of so-called compositional philosophy, with applications in the political sphere), among many others. A comprehensive view of the philosophical discourse, its forms, and themes is provided by numerous works today (Zouhar et al., 2003; Gabriel et al., 2005).

the success of the first decade of the free republic took place in Brno in 1928 and made the first step to the architectural conception of the Brno Exhibition.

When we return to philosophy, we should realize that issues of natural science constituted a significant part of Czech philosophical creativity even in earlier periods. We can remember the philosophical side of the work of Jan Evangelista Purkyně, the evolutionist inspiration of Purkyně's assistant Eduard Grégr, the work of Karel S. Amerling, and Czech Herbartians (Josef Durdík, Gustav A. Lindner), Masaryk's emphasis on anthropological motivation of science and, finally, the effort of Czech positivists to create scientific philosophy and a scientifically based worldview (Svoboda, 2022, pp. 173–182).

A clear impulse for the interest reinforcement of (not only our) philosophy in scientific questions was the crisis of traditional science at the end of the 19th century. Primarily, with growing new physical conceptions, the issue of the possibilities of philosophical interpretations of scientific experimentally founded results arose. Methodological and world-view-sourced problems can be considered as an incentive for creating empiric criticism and for establishing the Vienna Circle, the inspiration for Émile Boutroux and Edmund Husserl's later criticism of European science fundamentals. This attention lasted in global philosophy for the entire inter-war period. Reflections on the issue of natural science was placed first in the program of the International Philosophy Congress in Prague.

In Czech contemporary philosophy, we can find natural science authors who became professional philosophers (Emanuel Rádl, František Mareš, Karel Vorovka) or at least "philosophizing" natural scientists (Josef Velenovský, Vladimír Úlehla, Ferdinand Herčík, and others). Researching the fragments of philosophical views in the work of special scientists can bring interesting findings because it is about the marginal and non-integrated aspects of their work, often marked with certain naivety or peculiar curiousness.

However, there is a paradox in our findings regarding Czech positivism itself. Firstly, we could expect that this philosophy will be most intensely engaged with natural science. However, if we look closer, we find that this assumption does not respond to the real form of Czech positivist thinking. Its representatives were interested in psychology mostly, which had been considered a necessary fundament of the cognitive theory by František Krejčí (while many non-positivist authors, on the other hand, criticized psychology in science and philosophy).

The issue of natural science was less inspiring for Czech positivists than for the authors of the opposing view (apparently, it is a case of, for instance, neovitalism). The subjectivist approach of these authors to philosophy and understanding of science had been formed in many works, e.g. the vitalist-oriented Emanuel Rádl. This prominent philosopher claimed his position in this dispute for "the freedom of Czech philosophy" that should be critical towards positivism; however, he didn't become aggressive and rejected negation as a sufficient program. In terms of scientific reflection, he warned against the necessity for solid awareness of the issue: "... only professionals are entitled to become natural philosophers. Only a biologist can deal with the question of the origin of life, only a chemist can deal with the question of substance content, and only a physician is competent to deal with the nature of disease. Thus, natural science is not out of natural philosophy. These scientists were and are philosophers; therefore, be good philosophers!" (Rádl, 1918, p. 287). He also remarks on his positivism:³⁴ "Positivism has been a famous period of natural science and reminded natural scientists of a great reformation task ... science should rule the world and this great postulate should become reality by stopping scientists from being observers of this world or attendants serving strangers" (Rádl, 1926, p.

³⁴ Rádl understood positivism in a rather broad sense – as a certain tendency that begins with modern empiricism and reappears in pragmatism, Einstein's physics, Darwinism, and more. In the first decade of the twentieth century, one of Rádl's major themes was a critical engagement with evolutionism – an approach that can be interpreted as his specific reaction to the contemporary crisis in science and as an expression of his critical view of positivism, which traditionally welcomed the influences of evolutionism (Spencer).

24).³⁵ On the other hand, in his opinion, it is necessary to break the fictitious borders of knowledge set by positivism with its limitation to deal with metaphysics, it is necessary to return to researching the fundamentals (Rádl, 1926, p. 268).

This picture of Radl's thoughts on the meaning and direction of philosophical work³⁶ is accompanied by his specific scientific view. Radl refused the reduction of science to secure data and facts; creative activity of science is more essential to him; "The science is still subjective and objective at the same time similarly as poetry" (Rádl, 1909, p. 543). Science means, to Rádl, to build a relationship with the world and himself:

Kant, Darwin, Haeckel, Mareš, all of them are right. But the truth is not formulae we read in the books ... or the live truth is only what has led these scholars to their papers and their statements, the non-consciousness that sometimes and without human will enter the consciousness that leads a man in his/her acting. This all makes sense to all our lives. There is neither the truth on a paper, nor experiments, common sense, or a heart, it's only where all these elements exist. It is the most profound human task to know this truth because we cannot tell it to the world – only sharing it with our friends (Rádl, 1909, p. 551).

The opinions of individual representatives of non-positivist thinking oscillate around these conclusions depending on particular inspirational resources (science, religion), the rate of negative positivism (or realism) evaluation, and the assumption about the possibilities and promotion of theoretical knowledge (intuitivism vs. rationalism, contemplation, and obvious truth, etc.). We consider key to the distinct opinions of highly non-positivist authors, primarily, to be the criticism of reductionist tendencies which are mostly related to positivist tradition and uncritical acceptance of modern science results heading towards mechanism in many areas. The criticism of scientific mechanic (or biologizing) reductionism was considered by these authors as a philosophical defense. It is not a consideration for Rádl, and also Albína Dratvová, Vladimír Hoppe, Jan B. Kozák, or Josef L. Fischer. The work of authors who warned against the overly subjectivist nature of anthropomorphic teleologic interpretations of reality are the antipole of the authors' works. We can categorize the original positivist source as overlapping the so-called over dominant philosophy of Jiljí Jahn, or the so-called conditionalism of Vladimír Úlehla (rejecting Christian creationism).

More detailed research on the works of individual authors would overlap the frame of this study. Let's rather focus on the question of how the areas of natural-scientific research are represented by philosophical interest in more intense contemporary reflection.

Physics of biology as the main scope of the philosophy interest

We can deduct our summarizing view from several theses. It is worth mentioning that, although, Czech positivism played a key role in Czech philosophy at the beginning of the research period, however, it didn't adequately reflect the referred science crisis. It initiated a move toward the epistemological and methodological issues within European positivism (the possibility of cognition itself, axiomatic science fundamentals, formal aspects of theoretical work). Czech

³⁵ Regarding the new critics of positivism, Rádl notes: "I particularly do not believe that one has escaped positivism if one indulges in faith in hidden mysteries of life, which supposedly can be revealed through intuition" (Rádl, 1926, p. 7).

³⁶ A similar view on the relationship between philosophy and science was expressed by a member of the 'opposing camp' (authors of *Ruch filosofický*) – Karel Vorovka: "One of the most important tasks of philosophy is to liberate the human spirit from ecclesiastical orthodoxy, political orthodoxy, and scientific orthodoxy" (Vorovka, 1921, p. 10).

positivists preferred psychology and sociology topics or responded to some opponents by elaborating on the above-mentioned attempts at scientifically based ethics.³⁷

The second resource aspect of our view is the fact that from the wide spectrum of modern science, contemporary philosophy significantly preferred only certain thematic scopes. It was mostly about physics; its internal development was only one of the key moments establishing the science crisis in the middle of the century. Relativist and quantum physics set the field issues, which philosophy should reflect on, or they did not concern science theory questions only, its fundamentals, and methodologies. These issues changed the form of the overall view of reality significantly and thus, required revision of the worldviews with all their related consequences (including religious, axiological, and ethical questions). The second philosophically accepted science during this period was biology. This primarily involved areas of biological research that addressed the question of the nature of life and were thus again of significant worldview and ethical importance. The traditional physiological approach (which notably inspired, for example, neo-vitalists) was enriched by the newly emerging perspectives of biochemistry and biophysics. Another new source of inspiration was the developing field of genetics. The previously prominent discourse on issues of evolutionism was abandoned, as it seemed to some authors (such as Rádl) to be outdated and speculative.

The above-mentioned psychologizing trend in the works of Czech positivists³⁸ influenced reflections on both topics. What is particularly interesting here is the overall rejection of modern physics. Krejčí, for example, rejected Albert Einstein's theory primarily due to its lack of empirical grounding (Krejčí, 1923, pp. 257–273; 321–331). At that time, this was a unique stance, as other texts on physical questions only appeared in *Česká mysl* in the 1930s, by which time debates on this topic in the country were already fading.³⁹ These texts vary significantly in quality; for example, the eclectic article by Vladimír Mandl has notably amateurish features, and in conclusion, he states: “Einstein's no-ethical primitivism likely does not even have the significance of heralding a new era of scientific research” (Mandl, 1935, p. 210).

Compared to *Česká mysl*, *Ruch filosofický* responded to issues of physics more flexibly. In its very first volume, the journal sparked the first discussion on the topic. Many authors published in the journal, and several were supporters of relativist physics. Some of them even attributed the emergence of this physical concept to the inspiring influence of philosophy on science.⁴⁰ Overall, *Ruch filosofický* took on the task of defending Einstein's physics as a significant form of modern science that holds deep philosophical importance. This stance was aptly articulated by Karel Vorovka, who also participated in subsequent discussions in defense of relativist physics against amateur interpreters (Vorovka, 1923, pp. 77–80). Hugo Szántó published numerous texts (articles and reviews) on the subject, complemented and corrected by physicist František Nachtikal. This professor from the University of Technology in Brno was, in fact, probably the most prominent scientific authority in the field of physical theory during

³⁷ The demand for increased attention in other sciences, as well as in epistemological and methodological issues, was significantly delayed within the positivist circle (Rieger, 1944, pp. 133–143).

³⁸ In this regard, *Česká mysl* was contrasted by the journal *Filosofie*, founded by Vorovka, which also placed considerable emphasis on psychology (and psychiatry), though not in a positivist spirit.

³⁹ Similarly delayed were the few texts published by the Catholic *Filosofická revue*. The journal *Filosofie* also published only two texts on the matter.

⁴⁰ However, not Vladimír Hoppe, who rejected the possibility of a scientifically inspired philosophy. According to him, true philosophical knowledge is attainable only through intuitive or contemplative means. The results of scientific knowledge, he argued, are merely anthropomorphic reductions of the world's image, serving only as instrumentally applied conventions (Hoppe, 1919). Standing outside the circle of *Philosophical movement* authors and also outside of positivism, Rádl, on the other hand, feared the dehumanizing consequences of modern science – specifically, the uncertainty introduced into the relationship between humans and the world by relativist physics (Rádl, 1933, p. 617).

that period. He also utilized his knowledge in the first Czech professional monograph (Nachtkal, 1921).

Another philosophically reflected area was the modern form of biology. As we have suggested, there was already a gradual shift away from the original central issue of evolution during the previous period. This was replaced by an effort to find a more precisely grounded answer to questions about the nature of life processes. The more traditional approach (especially among Czech neo-vitalists – František Mareš, Eduard Babák, Josef Velenovský) was primarily based on the results of functional-structural (physiological-anatomical) research, which, however, did not yet penetrate deeply into the inner workings of living organisms. A somewhat more modern variant was represented by the effort to adopt a holistic approach to organisms. In the Czech context, this tendency can be particularly associated with the work of Jan Bělehrádek, who sought to overcome the one-sidedness of both vitalism and mechanism through holism (Bělehrádek, 1928). For a time, even the founder of Czech biophysics, Ferdinand Herčík, was strongly influenced by holism (and Alfred N. Whitehead's philosophy).

Physiological grounding was often the basis for attempts at a biologizing interpretation of psychological functions.⁴¹ This approach was not limited to the afore-mentioned neo-vitalists but also included authors with a positivist orientation. For instance, in *Česká mysl*, out of the relatively small number of contributions on biological issues, the majority were focused precisely on this way.

In comparison, *Ruch filosofický* was again much more diverse in its focus. For example, it featured serialized excerpts from Jindřich Uzel's then unpublished book *Příroda evangeliem* [*Nature as the gospel*].⁴² Among other noteworthy texts, we can mention the published inaugural lecture by Eduard Babák, in which the author highlighted the unique position of biology among the sciences and the irreducibility of the interpretation of the essence of life to merely physical and chemical processes (Babák, 1925, pp. 1–12). Additionally, the journal includes genetics-focused texts by Karel Černocký (again, with a focus on psychological issues). Another geneticist, Jaroslav Kříženecký, offered a remarkable essay appreciating feminism from an evolutionary perspective (Kříženecký, 1921, pp. 201–207; 243–251).

The growing contemporary interest in genetics can be understood primarily as one aspect of modern biology's effort to seek a more concrete and non-speculative answer to the question of the nature of life. This represented a significant paradigmatic shift in the development of biology, and Czech authors successfully contributed to this research. Genetics (particularly eugenics), however, also attracted attention due to its ethical significance, as it appeared to offer a key to solving many pressing issues (crime, health, social problems).

At that time, genetics was globally regarded as a field with significant application potential, particularly in eugenics. However, in some countries, this led to a markedly dehumanized approach to attempts at practical implementation. With the rise of German Nazism, anti-racist⁴³ statements by Czech authors became particularly important. Jaroslav Kříženecký (1940), for example, warned against the misuse of science, and among anthropologists, notable figures

⁴¹ There are also attempts to interpret parapsychological and spiritualistic phenomena (Babák, Velenovský, Vorovka). In this context, the so-called four-dimensional model of life, created by Herčík with the mathematician Otakar Borůvka, can be considered a completely original endeavor (Borůvka & Herčík, 1943, pp. 164–175).

⁴² The author attempted to transcend the original form of vitalism with the pantheistic concept of a Cosmic Spirit, providing a teleological interpretation of reality (Uzel, 1926).

⁴³ A significant editorial contribution to this topic is considered to be the anthology published in 1934. However, one can already notice a certain Eurocentric inconsistency in its rejection of racial concepts from the title: *Rovnocennost evropských plemen a cesty k jejich zúšlechťování* [*The equality of European races and ways to their improvement*] (Weigner, 1934).

include Aleš Hrdlička,⁴⁴ a prominent advocate against racism, and Hugo Iltis (1935), a German anthropologist and geneticist working in Brno.

Our overview certainly does not exhaust all the scientific fields that were intertwined with philosophical or worldview reflections. It may be appropriate to briefly note that, aside from the mentioned areas of physics and biology, other scientific disciplines were significantly less represented in contemporary philosophical reflection. In connection with Vorovka's initial scientific focus, we can point out that *Ruch filosofický* also paid more attention to mathematics. The influence of relativist physics was reflected in several texts on geometry and the philosophical reflection on space, as well as in a rare essay on cosmology (Dittrich, 1924, pp. 177–192). Despite the evident importance of these topics from a worldview perspective, they did not attract greater interest.

Neo-scholastic philosophy also paid some attention to questions of natural science, though these authors primarily sought to achieve interpretative alignment with official Church doctrine (Habán, 1937, pp. 161–165). It is worth noting that this issue has been most recently examined in Ctirad V. Pospíšil's monograph, which, however, focuses on a theological rather than philosophical circle of authors (Pospíšil, 2017). An undeniably interesting finding is that the Czech neo-scholastic philosophy of this period is strongly characterized by a rejection of modern civilization and democratic society, observing growing signs of a general crisis and impending disintegration. These authors identified the roots of the crisis in a departure from original religious values and saw the solution in the restoration of the original order.⁴⁵

In summary, we can now state that scientific issues were a significant topic of discussion in Czech interwar philosophy, garnering attention, particularly about the question of the future directions of philosophical work in the country. This is why we find such diversity of opinions, with different authorial circles of that time understanding the prospective development of philosophy's role in various ways: as a continuation of engaged national emancipation and educational work, in the construction of a modern worldview, in a humanist orientation, in free and uncommitted research, in the critical rejection of scientific reductionism and restrictive traditions (such as so-called realism), or conversely, in mutual methodological enrichment with science and other areas of spiritual culture.

Conclusion

Philosophical thought is a fundamental area of spiritual culture and plays a significant role in society by striving for a holistic understanding of the world and humanity's place within it. It draws attention to questions of values and motivations within the contexts of societal development's complexities. Philosophy also serves as a forum for refining ideas, and thus, it is a site of debates and controversies. These disputes concern specific topics within individual philosophical disciplines, the methodology of theoretical work in general, and, of course, the crucial question of the overall conception and direction of philosophical thought about considerations of philosophy's role in society.

These disputes and polemics always reflect and characterize the historical context of their time. Their retrospective analysis is an essential part of understanding the very purpose of philosophical endeavors. They provide a valuable contribution to the historiography of

⁴⁴ This author based the rejection of racism on the belief in the unified evolutionary origin of humanity (Hrdlička, 1924).

⁴⁵ An ontological and axiological interpretation of this order can be found in Jaroslav Durych (1931, pp. 49–61). For some authors, the philosophy of Nikolai Berdyaev was also inspiring in these matters. However, the primary foundation should always be, above all, the philosophy of Thomas Aquinas.

philosophical development and the overall historical and social context and characterization of the era.

When we view the history of Czech philosophy in this light, we may observe that this “arena” of ideas was not always a place of gentlemanly conducted debates. In the context of specific historical events and external ideological pressures with totalizing tendencies, one can consider the complexities of the development of Czech and Slovak thought from the Second World War until the late 1980s. However, the interwar period, which we reflect upon here, can be considered a time of growth for democratic society in the newly established independent state, even though this period was not without certain personal animosities.

In retrospect, reflections on the philosophical discourse of that time can be characterized by referencing two crucial points in the struggles over the direction of Czech philosophy. These involve conceptual disputes and, particularly in the second case, to some extent, generational conflict.

To understand the reflection on the first of these conflicts, we must delve deeper into history – to the mid-19th century. In the context of national emancipation efforts (and the political situation following the revolution of 1848), the question of the very purpose of philosophical thought was raised. This question emerged from the inquiry into which foreign influences should guide future national development. The politically motivated shift from Hegel (whose ideas were banned after 1848) to Herbart ultimately led to the triumph of positivism. Positivism offered not only sobriety, an intense interest in science, and respect for facts but also, in the truest sense, opened windows to Europe by facilitating contact with non-German-speaking philosophical and scientific environments. This intellectual movement dominated Czech philosophy for a long time, serving as a key source for critically engaging with the past and its interpretation. More broadly, the issue of how to relate to the past was expressed by one of the representatives of poetic decadence, Arnošt Procházka wrote

[O]ur fathers instilled in us a general sense of the decline of the Czech people by depicting our nation’s past in our national pedagogy as a radiant, sunlit ideal, and the present as weak, faint, and miserable. Thus, what have we been taught to feel about our past, if not as decadent? All the more so because the current state – its battles, disputes, and struggles, leading nowhere, fruitless, uncertain, futile, the entire political situation – is dismal, oppressive, and undermining. We walk with our heads turned backward, our gaze fixed on the past. Can we imagine a greater decadence – without a future? And this political moment is closely tied to the social state: the same subjugation, the same unfinished business, the same backward-looking perspective, the same fragmentation (Procházka in Svozil, 1987, p. 133).⁴⁶

As a more concrete example of the refinement of ideas about how to continue the project of national emancipation, we can mention the so-called Manuscripts controversy. (Following the earlier questioning of the authenticity of these texts by Josef Dobrovský in the 1850s, a new discussion about possible forgery was opened in 1886 by the Masaryk-edited journal *Athenaeum*).

The second conceptual dispute arose during the early years of the newly established republic and concerned the role of philosophy in the changed social conditions following the now-realized, rather than merely anticipated, emancipation.⁴⁷ From a generational perspective, this conflict reflected the younger generation’s efforts to break free from the lingering dominance of positivism. This program (articulated at the founding of the journal *Ruch filosofický* as a “struggle for the freedom of Czech philosophy”) sought to transcend the boundaries that

⁴⁶ The excerpt is from 1896.

⁴⁷ An analogy can be drawn here with the very emergence and orientation of the original (Comtean) positivism, which can be understood as an expression of a fundamentally de-ideologized “post-revolutionary positivity”.

positivism had imposed on philosophical (and all theoretical) thought in its resistance to speculation and metaphysics. The younger generation called for a return to metaphysical questions, for the recognition of the legitimacy of approaches that extended beyond empirical foundations towards intuition, introspection, and contemplation, and for the rejection of attempts at objectivism. However, these authors also coupled their demands with a broader call for cultivating “pure” philosophy, unburdened by contemporary issues and social expectations. They rejected the idea of philosophy’s engaged participation in social affairs. In the early stages of their efforts, they did not offer much concrete content, for which they received justified criticism.⁴⁸ The strongest criticism came from supporters of Masaryk’s pursuit of a realistically oriented philosophy of practical humanity (albeit religiously grounded). Emanuel Rádl, in particular, emerged as a spokesperson for the view that philosophy needed to be engaged in the concrete needs of society - especially in terms of value-based cultural cultivation.

In a somewhat schematic simplification, we can conclude this attempt to interpret the development of Czech philosophy by noting that, while the first conceptual dispute was won by positivism as a modern, pragmatic approach that was useful in the fields of education and enlightenment (including the realization of a modern national program), it represented a variant of European thought rather than one of national *origin*.

The subsequent (and more generational) dispute was understandably provoked by the prolonged dominance of positivism, which had nearly transformed into a “school philosophy” that imposed untenable limits on the development of theoretical work through a certain dogmatism. The debate or discourse on the future meaningful direction of Czech philosophy can be interpreted as a direct source of the internal diversification of Czech philosophical thought during the relatively short subsequent period of the independent state’s existence. This promising development was violently interrupted and distorted by historical events – a pattern that has, unfortunately, recurred in Czech history.⁴⁹

This study aims to provide insights into two questions. The first involves a form of apologetics – specifically, the defense of the view that Czech philosophy has not been, and is not, an outsider in the realm of philosophical thought, and that its representatives are not merely imitators of more famous authors and movements. In every period of its development, we find remarkable and original works. Rediscovering and critically examining these works can offer valuable inspiration even today.⁵⁰ This leads to the second question: the true meaning of the historiography of philosophical thought lies precisely in the inspiring connection between the past and the present.

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⁴⁸ In response to criticism, a gradually evolving and internally diverse area of philosophical production emerged, characterized by remarkable diversity and non-scientistic foundations (this included, for example, the idiosyncratic subjectivist-voluntarist philosophy of ludibrionism by Ladislav Klíma, the religious-intuitivist philosophy of Vladimír Hoppe, and the thought of Czech Neo-Scholastics as well as Protestant-oriented authors, among others).

⁴⁹ This dynamic can be observed in the tragic post-White Mountain period, where, due to ideological reasons, the intellectual elite of Czech society found themselves in antagonistic positions.

⁵⁰ See, for example, the aforementioned “new reading” of Karel Čapek, which provides an impetus for evaluating the possible influence of phenomenology on the work of our Catholic authors, or the highly relevant themes of critical reflection on modern civilization and its crisis.

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