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RECENZE

A Philosopher's View of Some Fundamantal Questions and Tasks of Historiography

(Marginal comments on Milan Machovec's book Josef Dobrovský, published by Svobodné slovo, Prague, 1964, pp. 252)

There are books which the reader lays aside without receiving any more profound impression from them and without their arousing in him the slightest desire to investigate the matters and problems of which they inform him. There are also books whose theme is most topical and contemporary, while the feeble and uninteresting treatment can only make it remote for the reader, or even antagonize him. And there are books which the reader picks up again and again, not only with pleasure but even with a certain inner compulsion, although they deal with question relating to times already far removed from us, with people, who would appear to belong only to history, with struggles long ago finished and done with. Such books, again and again arouse us to personal creative activity in thought and life, inspire, excite, and — even alarm us. Among such books, which do not spring from the eroded soil of imaginative and scientific literature in any very great number, we must undoubtedly place Milan Machovec's *Dobrovský*.

The author's manuscript does not conceal the fact that this monograph on Dobrovský did not arise merely from professional interest or to order. On the contrary it betrays at first sight that it is a labour of love, and rather than a scientific study, it is a conversation with someone who is intimately close and dear to the author, it is a tribute to a master and a friend, who, to be sure, spoke to the author only through his works, and yet we are left with the feeling that the door has just closed behind someone who will shortly return. Even this is a great advance and a very rare thing at the present time; how many publications see the light of day without having anything of the vital bond between the authors and the men, their struggles, ideas, etc., about whom they write, how many books appear which are inwardly cold, lacking in warmth, lacking in enthusiasm, and which only further extend this inner coldness and lack of enthusiasm, this coolly rational professional outlook among the ranks of their readers.

Nevertheless Machovec's monograph does not conceal that it was written by an erudite philosopher with an intimate knowledge of Dobrovský, his work and times. Machovec has already to his credit well-founded shorter studies on Dobrovský (e.g. in the volume *Josef Dobrovský, 1753—1953* and in the *Filosofický časopis (Philosophical Periodical)*, 1954, 1, 2, so that he has been studying Dobrovský for long and very thoroughly. For this reason he has been able to present the public with a book which is a serious scientific contribution to the literature dealing with the Czech Enlightenment and which thus rather differs from the series of other works published in the *Svobodné slovo* edition *Odkazy pokrokových osobností naší minulosti (The Heritage of Progressive Personalities of Our Past)*, the great majority of which so far merely had the aim of serious popularization. (The work is accompanied by the author's own complete bibliography of Dobrovský's publications in a chronological survey, and supplemented by the author's own translation of some parts of Dobrovský's Latin and German works, which thus become available for the first time to a wider circle of those interested.)

The trend of the work is naturally determined by the trend of the author's interests, as he is first of all a philosopher and considers Dobrovský, his work and his legacy from the point of view of his own discipline, and that especially from the point of view of the history of philosophy. Thus it is not a question of a study which intends to give an expert opinion on the whole problem of the very many-sided activity of Dobrovský, to take a stand with regard to his works in the field of Slavonic Studies, Bohemian Studies, literary history, etc., even if it does take into account the whole of Dobrovský's work and even if it includes valuable perceptions which enrich the results to date of the research of linguists, literary historians and historians on Dobrovský. But philosophy itself has obviously much to say about the personality and legacy of the "blue abbé", even although he did not devote

himself to it independently and saw that the field of his life-long endeavours lay elsewhere . . .

The contents may be summed up thus: the first part (p. 15—62) concentrates on explaining the Czech Englightenment before Dobrovský. The characteristic features of Catholicism in the period after the Battle of the White Mountain are analysed, along with its contradictions, further the author follows the origin and growth of the Jansenite opposition to the Jesuits, analyses the so-called "Catholic Enlightenment" of the Theresian period and finally explains the problems of the Josephine period. The second part (p. 63—128) is devoted to the life and work of Dobrovský. Machovec follows his entry into social activity at the end of the reign of Marie Theresa and then his activity under Joseph II, gives a detailed account of the fundamentals of Dobrovský's Enlightenment, his relation to religion and questions of philosophical outlook and finally describes Dobrovský's wide activities as the founder of national and of Slav science. The third part (p. 129—173) completes the description of the fate of Dobrovský's life work, when the great scholar brought it to an end and presented it to his nation. First of all we can follow here the legacy of Dobrovský in the development of the Czech national liberation movement during his own lifetime, then in the "struggle of the generations" after his death and finally the author, in the chapter "History and Ourselves", considers what Dobrovský and his legacy have to say to us, the people of the second half of the 20th century.

This final chapter of the third part (p. 162 n.) forms the climax of the whole monograph and at the same time provides the key to the more profound comprehension of its wider meaning and purpose. Machovec here opens up several questions which at the present time are forcing themselves to be asked about a number of historical works and which here, although formulated in connection with Dobrovský and his work, nevertheless have a general validity.

There exist certain infallible symptoms which show that historical science today is losing not only much of its prestige, but also of its importance. At one time it really was the co-creator of the fate of the nation, a force which influenced not only small groups of experts, but also the wide masses of the people. The consciousness of history was the living conscience of the whole national public, even although it contained an admixture of many incorrect, unscientific ideas, prejudices, and illusions. How has it come about that historiography is ceasing to be the inspirer and nourisher of that consciousness of history, that in the thought of contemporary man it no longer strengthens the *living and life-giving contacts with the past,* even in a sense weakens and disrupts them? Is history capable at all of still arousing interest in people long dead, making contact with their thoughts and opinions, with the psychological atmosphere of the time which they formed with their work and their struggles? How should historiography proceed, what means should it use and what aim should it seek to attain in order to present the past to modern man not as a stage of development hopelessly buried by the sands of time, but to reveal it as a rich source of knowledge which can help us to understand the present better and to fight now for a better future?

This is what Machovec asks at the conclusion of his work and this is obviously what he asked, too, when he adopted the idea of writing a book about Dobrovský. For there is such a gulf between the latter's time and modern man, that we are obliged to enquire sceptically whether the problems of that time can interest us today, as "people of an epoch completely different in dozens of aspects" (p. 171), if the struggles of Dobrovský can tell us anything, if we can "live with Dobrovský, as with other highly individual and thoroughgoing personalities of the distant past who were such finely developed human beings . . ." (ibid.); if contemporary man can still find a living spark in the ashes of long-forgotten conflicts among the various representatives of Catholicism in the baroque period, if he can become excited over the quarrel about the non-existent Saint Jan Nepomucký, the notorious and again largely forgotten question of the forged manuscripts; if he can find in all this a fragment of vital truth, true even for today, *a fragment of that truth which is absolutely necessary for the more profound and versatile comprehension of himself and his own position under circumstances which are completely different,* to find "his human countenance and character, the meaning of his individual contribution to the common human tasks of today" (ibid.).

And Machovec has shown in his Dobrovský that it is possible and that historical science can help him considerably here. It suffices to read carefully his exposition of Catholicism after the Battle of the White Mountain, of its representatives, who more or less realized that by the monopolization of man and his spiritual life by a ruthless power politics involving the impossibility of any exchange of views within the Church, or between the Church and currents of thought outside the Church, victorious Catholicism was digging its own grave. It suffices to read thoughtfully the chapters in which Machovec describes the development

of Dobrovský's thought in connection with the situation of that time within the nation and in the movement of national awakening, in which he describes how the opposition against the baroque spirit had — as in the case of Dobrovský — its real fighters, enthusiasts with all their being for truth, freedom and progress, really dangerous fighters against obscurantism and obscurantists, and alongside them the "Schöngeiste", shallow, superficial exquisites who therefore offered no danger to the forces of reaction, although they mouthed the phrases of radicalism and it appeared as if their loftily progressive, aesthetic sneers must nip the obscurantism of the Church in the bud. It suffices to consider Machovec's interpretation of the position and purpose of Dobrovský in the process of establishing national science in this country, to consider his interpretation of the well-known conflict between Dobrovský and Jungmann (or the Jungmannites) regarding the supposed ancient Czech manuscripts, his analysis of the danger lying hidden for the whole of the future national development in the faults of Czech nationalism and the Czech nationalists of the Jungmannite generation, to understand the question at a glance.

For people of the second half of the 20th century it cannot of course be at all helpful to keep repeating to them that feudalism was a system of exploitation, that the Church was one of its main supports and that the ideology of the Church was the instrument of oppressing the peassants. In relation to what people today are experiencing and what they are endeavouring to do, such facts may be completely irrelevant, and a history, which more or less successfully can do *no more than this*, i.e. state at the most general level that there are certain objective laws of social development, etc., passes its own sentence of uselessness. People however cannot only pass by on the other side, if history clearly shows them that in the past, even in the comparatively very remote past, there existed situations and problems were dealt with which were *by no means unlike the situations and problems of the time they live in or which were only recently dealt with and not without some difficulty.*

After all, in the very recent past, which is still affecting our present life, in the period of the personality cult, we also met with tendencies and attempts to achieve a monopoly of power — of course, attempts which were doomed to failure — over the inner, spiritual life of the people, namely in the attempts and tendencies to annul the individual pole of human life, to reduce the human individual to a *fated product of given social conditions* (class relationships), in attempts to replace the discussion among those devoted to socialism by an obedient trust in a truth discovered and preached by a chosen individual. We also witnessed attempts to ensure the acceptance of tendencies to canonize within socialism the principle that the end justifies the means, that it is only a question of *what* will further socialism, and to a lesser degree or even not at all, of *what means* are used to attain successes in the advance of the socialist revolution, in the construction of a socialist society. This, as we know, had tragic consequences, whose sinister echo will still remain with us for long before it can be gradually and patiently silenced by honest work motivated by and directed towards humanity, which alone can correspond to the humanist basis of Marxism.

A historical science, which wishes to introduce and affirm such a vital and life-giving link with the past, must naturally understand mankind not merely as the executor of objective social laws, not only as a being brought into life to be moved by some kind of abstract historical principles (how close this apparently orthodox Marxist conception is to idealism!), but as *the creator of his own human history,* as a being objectively conditioned and at the same time free, enlarging by his activity the horizon of mankind under given circumstances, as a social being, but at the same time as an individual, unique and incapable of being completely reduced to these given circumstances, in the sense that we cannot ignore the *activity of man* (human practice of all kinds), which *also* moulds these circumstances. Fundamentally it is merely a case in which history would fully renew the teaching of the Marx-Leninist classics, to the effect that people themselves mould their history in certain objective given circumstances, that history should not cut out the subjective pole of history, which is equally as important as the given reality, from which people mould their history and which naturally gives in equal measure a certain character to the works of man, and integrates their aspect.

It is one of Machovec's greatest services that he has in his book on Dobrovský held up a mirror to historiography in which can be seen what a hopeless and unsatisfactory part would be played by history, from which all the psychological activity of people would be eliminated, and also what history must do in order to become a useful instrument for setting contemporary man on the right track to a realistic humanism, in which he would feel full personal responsibility for himself and for his comrades. The need for such books is incalculable, for there may occur a situation in the field of science in which a warning must

be uttered for a particular discipline, lest cold professionalism, technical perfection and slickness, a soulless though highly-polished routine, should transform the vital creation of living spiritual values into a purely intellectual mechanism, producing perhaps in its own way remarkable works, but leaving the human heart indifferent and painfully empty...

It is of course also the duty of the reviewer to indicate places in the work reviewed which appear to him to be arguable or which might even lead to interpretations not in accord with the aim and purpose of the author himself. Yet in Machovec's book on Dobrovský there are indeed very few such places. In the first and second parts there is practically nothing which could give rise to disagreement or objections. In the second part, apart from one or two remarks which could be added to the evaluation of T. G. Masaryk in his relationship to the problems of the national awakening and to Dobrovský in particular (Machovec in our opinion, so far as he refers to Masaryk in connection with Dobrovský, rates the former too high, for Masaryk's negative attitude towards Jungmann and the Jungmannites is not so much the expression of his correct assessment of Dobrovský, as rather the expression of Masaryk's cosmopolitanism, which had much in it not acceptable for us), we may hesitate over some statements and formulations in the final chapter "History and Ourselves" (p. 162 n.) whose key position and significance in the book we have already explained.

Some of Machovec's conclusions might, especially in readers less familiar with questions of historiography, give rise to the impression that the aim and purpose of historic science is not to discover and fix the laws of history (p. 167), since these laws had already — with the appearance of Marxism — been discovered. Historical science, like every other science, has however as its aim really to seek out and find the laws of the phenomena, the sum of which form its subject of study. It would be a misunderstanding if we were to suppose that this aim had already been attained for historiography with the appearance of historical materialism. For it is not a question merely of the most general laws of history; it is above all also a question of the *specific laws governing individual socio-economic formations,* which have by no means yet been explained in such a way that historiography can consider its task as completed in this direction, and also a question of the *specific laws of historical movement of individual spheres of the culture-forming activity of mankind in the individual socio-economic formations,* which historiography largely has not yet approached (what, for example, has been said of importance since the time of Marx about the irregular development of art, although the explanation of these laws would undoubtedly throw more light even on the contemporary discussions, polemics and arguments which are being carried on as to the conception of modernity, etc.?). Here we must state that the task of historical science is not only to reveal and formulate laws, but also to show *how* these laws, as laws fundamentally different from the laws governing natural phenomena and happenings, are applied, a question of exceptional interest — and one to which unfortunately historical science — also for the reasons Machovec has indicated — has so far paid little or absolutely no attention.

The second difficulty in the way of the reader with no profound acquaintance with problems of historiography is the way in which Machovec uses analogies. Analogy undoubtedly plays a large part in his book and certainly has its significance in historical science in general as a means of revealing truth, as one of the means of enlivening the exposition of a particular question and — let us admit — even as a means of inspiration; it helps us to discover connections which would otherwise escape our notice, to penetrate more profoundly into the past and into the meaning of past events by comparison with similar phenomena of our own day and thus again to recognize the present more clearly by means of its own roots in the past. However we must realize that analogy *is not a scientific method* of historiography (or of any other science), that its role is indeed *only that of an aid,* that apparently completely similar phenomena at different levels of time and of the historical process are only approximately similar and analogy permits only their more or less similar recognition.

Thus anyone who would consider Machovec's method of arousing the reader's interest and directing it by means of excellent and well-chosen analogies to be a scientific solution and scientific exposition of the problems dealt with would fail completely to understand Machovec and would perhaps impute to his expositions something which is not there. Such scientific solutions and expositions of course do exist in Machovec's intellectually rich book, but of course not in the analogies, which play only a secondary part, though not one without importance. Machovec is a Marxist philosopher and scientist, and not at all a representative of "presentism" in historiography. He explains the past more profoundly by shining the light of the present on its struggles, but he does not confuse it with the present, just as

he does not expound the present by fusing it with the past, as a *simple* analogy of something, which had already existed in only a slightly different form. His great service is that by means of happily chosen analogies he has found a means of *speeding up and intensifying the circular movement of acquiring knowledge, so as to express more adequately the actual spiral movement of historic reality,* in order to integrate relative truth more rapidly in an absolute truth. This is the only possible way in which to understand Machovec, if the reader is to combine his pleasure in the delightful text with his pleasure in the profound truth, which was undoubtedly Machovec's first concern in his *Dobrovský* — just as it was the first concern of Dobrovský himself.

Jiří Loukotka
(Translated by Jessie Kocmanová)

Ernst Fischer, **Probleme der jungen Generation**

Zu den heute am meisten diskutierten Fragen gehören ohne Zweifel die Probleme des Lebens und der Gesinnung der Jugend. Eine der anregendsten Diskussionen über Fragen des Charakters der jungen Generation von heute stellt in der marxistischen Literatur die in der Zeitschrift „Otázky míru a socialismu" (Fragen des Friedens und des Sozialismus) im Jahre 1961 (Nr. 5, 10, 11) und 1962 (Nr. 1 u. 2) zum Abdruck gelangte Aussprache dar.

Das dringende Bedürfnis, die Probleme der Jugend sowie der Jugendbewegung systematisch zu studieren, führte bei uns unter anderem zur Bildung einer selbständigen Kommission für das Studium der Jugendbewegung beim Institut für Geschichte der KPTsch in Prag, die dem wissenschaftlichen Studium dieser wichtigen Problematik dienen soll. Über die Aufgaben dieser Kommission ist in der historischen Zeitschrift „Beiträge zur Geschichte der KPTsch" (Jg. 1964, Nr. 4, S. 637—639), referiert worden. Probleme der sozialen Altersgruppen der Jugend sowie Fragen der Generationsbeziehungen bildeten das Verhandlungsthema der 3. Sektion unserer — in der Zeitspanne nach dem XX. Parteitag der KPdSU — im Juli 1964 in Hrazany abgehaltenen Ersten soziologischen Konferenz [Vgl. D. Cahová, K významu biosociálních skupin v sociální struktuře společnosti (Zur Bedeutung der biosozialen Gruppen in der sozialen Struktur der Gesellschaft), Demografie, 7. Jg., Nr. 1, Praha 1965].

Aus diesem Grunde hat Ernst Fischers Buch „Probleme der jungen Generation" (Europa-Verlag Wien—Köln—Stuttgart—Zürich 1963, 180 S.), in dem sich der bekannte österreichische Schriftsteller und marxistische Theoretiker mit der Stellung und Gesinnung der jungen Generation in den industriereifen kapitalistischen Ländern befasst, verständlicherweise auch bei uns ein verdientes Interesse erregt. Eine umfangreiche instruktive Rezension über dieses Buch schrieb Alexej Kusák in die Kulturní tvorba (25. Juli 1963). Die Zeitschrift des Jugendverbandes My 64 brachte in ihren ersten drei Nummern die Übersetzung von drei ausgewählten Abhandlungen aus E. Fischers Publikation und in demselben Jahre erschien das ganze Buch in slowakischer Übersetzung (Mladé letá, Bratislava). Wir wollen uns daher mit ihrem Inhalt nicht im Einzelnen beschäftigen, sondern unser Augenmerk mehr auf die Art und Weise richten, mit der der Autor an die Jugendproblematik herantritt.

Bevor wir jedoch auf Fischers Betrachtungen über die Probleme der heutigen jungen Generation zu sprechen kommen, erscheint es uns angebracht, auf den Platz hinzuweisen, den sein Buch unter den zahlreichen, in westeuropäischen Ländern erscheinenden Publikationen über die Jugendproblematik einnimmt. Eine Teilübersicht davon bringt — wenn auch ohne gegenseitigen Vergleich und tiefere Einschätzung — Dušan Rovenský in seinem Artikel „Beat Generation" in My 64 (Nr. 6). Es handelt sich durchwegs um soziologische Arbeiten, die sich auf breite empirische Fakten gründen. Unter den nichtmarxistischen Soziologen liefert unserer Ansicht nach Helmut Schelsky in seiner Arbeit „Die skeptische Generation. Eine Soziologie der deutschen Jugend" (Diederichs Verlag Düsseldorf 1958, 520 S.) die wissenschaftlich fundierteste Analyse der Problematik der heutigen Generation. Eine ausführliche Information über die französische Jugend brachte Jacques Duquesne in seinem Buch „Les 16—24 ans", Paris 1962, in dem auf 248 Seiten (einschliesslich Tabellen und Graphen) die Ergebnisse einer breiten soziologischen Forschung verarbeitet sind, die im April 1962 vom L'Institut Français d'Opinion Publique unternommen wurde.

Im Unterschied zu den obenerwähnten Arbeiten ist E. Fischers Studie Probleme der jungen Generation im wesentlichen ein soziologischer Essay. Diese Art Bearbeitung soziologischer Probleme hat ohne Zweifel bedeutende Vorteile: das Buch ist ungemein fesselnd