

CARESSING A PLACE “IN-BETWEEN”: THE IMAGINATIVE AND CONCEPTUAL THOUGHT OF KAREL ČAPEK

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We face the world in which things are losing their firm contours and areas of life their static divisions. Therefore, we have to deal with the problem of how to re-think anew the relationships between chaos and order, continuity and discontinuity, unity and multiplicity, the relationship between concept and image being among of them. Many contemporary philosophers stress the importance of understanding the place where the mediation between two poles runs through, sometimes called a place “in-between”. The aim of this article is to propose a hypotheses that Karel Čapek, the 20th century Czech writer and philosopher, addressed the problem in question in his literary works and philosophy, and to analyze what kind of solutions he offered. The first part examines two short stories by the Čapek brothers in order to propose the idea that an imagination plays an important role in the connection with the problem in question. The second part is based on the idea that philosophy itself is a place “in-between” conceptual and imaginative thought, and this section is devoted to determining how the imaginative part of Čapek’s work is related to his pragmatic philosophical thoughts. The third part explores the particular linguistic phenomenon—the semi-colon—as an appropriate device to embody Čapek’s world vision *Weltanschauung*.

Introduction

We face a world in which things are losing their firm contours, and areas of life their static divisions. Therefore, we have to deal with the problem of how to re-think anew the relationships between chaos and order, continuity and discontinuity, unity and multiplicity, and also the relationship between concept and image.

In the second half of the 20th century, we witness an enormous increase of interest in the “in-between” phenomena in science, art and philosophy. In science, this tendency is called inter-disciplinary, cross-disciplinary or trans-disciplinary approaches; in art, it presents itself by crossing boundaries between art and life or multimedia art (crossing divisions between genres of art). In philosophy, new conceptions emerge within a massive critique of the Cartesian philosophical paradigm with its separation of subject and object based on the notion that subject is able to reach his/her own thoughts immediately. Amongst other results of this critique, the hermeneutic conception was developed stating that subject and object are inseparably intertwined: the subject’s self-understanding is mediated by the world,

and the world is mediated by the subject's understanding of it. Within that approach, the problem of the process of mediation (translation and interpretation) became of the highest importance. With a little exaggeration, we can state that one of the most pressing contemporary issue in philosophy is the problem of how to bridge different areas of world and life, and different capacities of human mind, and how to reformulate relationships between classical philosophical opposites. One of the most distinguished representative of this tendency is Michel Serres, well-known for his crossings of disciplinary and conceptual divisions, and exploring potential channels between them: he moves from information theory to myth, from politics to art, from mathematics and biology to social sciences, examining so-called "social universals" in religion, military, commerce and communication—to mention but a few examples. When M. Serres examines mediators between order and disorder, he "suggests that what happens *between* rather than *at* points is the source of complexity" (Brown, 6). He calls these mediators Protean in-between states (joker, third person, blank domino, white multiplicity, or quasi-object) and states that "spaces *between* are more complicated than one thinks" (Serres with Latour 1995, 70). The problem of "in-betweenness" is essential also in the conception of P. Ricoeur, especially in his notion of metaphor: the meaning of metaphor constitutes itself in the place "between" the two different interpretations of the metaphorical statement (Ricoeur 1997, 72), in the place of the tension between "is" and "is not". Z. Neubauer adds:

in the place of the tension of "is and is not", the potential of existence to become visible, understandable and expressible is offered; we understand being *as such*, truly and really, by its analogical realization in something different – in thought, in language, in creation. Being of existence lies in this act of transposition (Neubauer 2004, 159).

However, the question arises: what connection does this have to Karel Čapek? Do we not artificially ascribe these problems to him, the writer from the first half of the 20th century, and to his philosophical roots, pragmatism? The aim of this article is to look at Čapek's work through the lenses of "in-betweenness", and to offer an interpretation of his work based on hermeneutical methodology (Hroch 2000), concentrating on Čapek's imaginary (the symbolic and metaphorical aspects of his work) with an attempt to reveal the deeper level of what is visible on the surface of analyzed literary and philosophical texts.

The first part examines two short stories written by the Čapek brothers in order to document that the symbol of water, which plays an important role in their imagination, is connected with the problem in question. The second part is based on the idea that philosophy inhabits a special kind of a place, moving "in-between" the conceptual and imaginative thought. From this point of view, we analyze how the imaginative part of K. Čapek's work is related to some of his pragmatic philosophical thoughts and notions. The third part explores a particular linguistic phenomenon—the semi-colon—as a phenomenon of Čapek's style, serving as an appropriate device to bridge a place "in-between".

Watering a Place “In – Between”: the Story *System*

The short story *System*, written by Karel Čapek at the beginning of his career as a writer together with his brother Josef and signed simply “the Čapek brothers“, was originally entitled “*Sea, System, Woman*” (Schneider 2000, 111). In fact, it was first printed under the title *System*. The question of why the Čapeks changed—that is shortened—the previous title, leaving only one of the three elements representing the semantic axis of the story, might never be answered. Nevertheless, there is a more important task to be completed, and that is to interpret the symbol of the sea (connected with that of woman) and system, and the relationship between them.

The story begins with the situation when two men have boarded a ship without knowing that the ship has in fact been rented by a religious group. As soon as the members of the group realize that there are unwelcome elements on board, they throw the two men into the sea. After a while a third man joins them because of his protest against their expulsion. So far, the situation is metaphorically clear—the ship represents the space with borders (confined), which serves the passengers as the “stable point“ of their existence, similarly to their religious belief. People who can jeopardize that safety by their different ideas are expelled and sentenced to a term in the water. Since almost the whole story takes place on the water (the idea of the system is only mentioned as information about something existing outside) we can conclude that the sea carries a meaning, which the Čapeks oppose to that of the system. From the point of view of the passengers of the ship, however, the throwing of the two men into the water could be understood as an act of self-purification (expelling the dirty elements of the ship). Thus the sea, as a symbol of infiniteness and openness, is seen negatively by the religious people. However—and this is one of the crucial points for our interpretation—the men thrown into the water see their new environment differently.

After finding themselves in the water, a paradoxical situation emerges. It is somehow predictable that men should fear this dangerous environment—it should threaten them by its coldness and by the fact that they have found themselves in a unknown place, not knowing where to go and where to find the land. This environment should evoke anxiety in them, and the desire to reach the shore as quickly as possible. However, the image the Čapeks offer us is totally different. The three men feel quite comfortable, as if at home in the water, letting themselves be drifted by waves while discussing the serious problem of the labor force. They listen to the explanation of the third man, the businessman Ripraton, of how he solved that particular problem in his own company.

The businessman wanted to build his company as an ideal, rational and systematic environment which was to draw the most effective performance out of the workers. This project included the consideration that women, as non-rational and non-systematic creatures, should be excluded from the company. From the point of view of the businessman, woman is considered negatively as “an enemy of any system“, as a creature which “provokes aesthetic, family, ethic, social, romantic, poetic and generally cultural emotions” (Čapkovi 1982a, 21).

Unfortunately, the effort of the businessman to exclude women from the system proves to be impossible. In accordance with Freud's principle of the "return of the suppressed", women enter into the system during the night, and finally destroy it by invoking in the workers the desire for personal happiness. The story *System* ends in a scene when two men visit Ripraton and find him in a situation where he has just learned about the destruction of his factory and the death of his wife and children, killed by the rebelling workers.

It is not by chance that the Čapeks connect water and woman by placing these elements at the beginning and at the end of the first version of the title. Water and woman have been connected in the human imagination from the very beginning of humankind within the archetype of the Great Mother (Neumann 1963). Ancient goddesses such as the Hindu Kali or the Egyptian Isis were considered to be an equivalent of the chaos (water) existing before the beginning of the world and foreseen coming in the form of a deluge as the cause of the end of the world. Water and woman represent on the one hand chaos, which enables the system (order) to emerge, but on the other hand something, which is dangerous for it. We can find K. Čapek's view on women in several of his works. Women, like deep water, are the keepers of secrets, as we can read in his sketch *Secret*:

On the contrary, only women have a sense of secrets... It is not true that they infringe secrets. The truth is that they pass it on intact, allowing it to keep all its pollen and beauty of its secret (Čapek 2000c, 122).

As with the continuity of water, women "connect" things, as we can read in the sketch *Woman and Profession*:

From woman you expect something general and connecting, which will join you with the more general relations of social life. It is her task to balance the one-way character of your professional interests, simply to keep the culture of society or the better society of culture among you narrow and hard-minded specialists (Čapek 2000d, 102).

In the first analyzed story, the water-woman element is ambiguous: interpreted as chaos, it is found to be dangerous by the passengers on the ship (the religious system) and also by the businessman (the capitalist system). On the contrary, both the men thrown into the sea and the workers seem to welcome them. The businessmen and the religious group represent an attempt to deal with chaos by creating a strong order to protect themselves. However, according to the Čapeks, these ways of dealing with the uncertainty and complexity of life are not the most successful or advisable ones available. The short story *System* suggests—on the contrary to the final version of its title—that we would do well to see the vast waters as a proper environment in which to live (water as an archetypal symbol of life). However the Čapeks do not present the problem in a dualistic way. On the contrary, we can reveal the strategies they use to stress the interdependence and cyclical rhythm of both sides: water/woman (chaos) and system (order), life and death.

The Story *The Shining Depths*

Some years later, in the story entitled *The Shining Depths*, the Čapeks used the symbolical potential of the sea and the ship image once again. In this story they focus on the relationship between depth and surface, the hidden and the visible (and life and science, represented by technical devices). The story deals with the destruction of the Oceanic (allusion to the Titanic), the ship considered the safest of all in naval history yet still ending up in the depths of the sea.

Here the sea serves as a symbol of the depths—the depths of the human soul where the soul's desire is located, and the depths of the sea where the Oceanic sank. The first aspect reveals itself in a situation where the storyteller meets the girl, the look in whose eyes he never forgets. We can interpret her eyes as a light, which will remain hidden forever because according to the story the man will never meet the girl again. The second aspect, represented by the sunken ship itself, is connected with the question of how far humankind can go in its desire for improvement, technical development and speed. The Čapeks answer:

If human deeds are miracles, they will always be liable to the miracles of destruction. However, that relationship is nothing like the law of destruction, because if that were the case, human beings would be able to control it, and they are not (Čapek 1982b, 171).

The storyteller witnessing the sinking of the Oceanic feels

deadly emptiness horrified by the confusion from the fact that I cannot see any cause of this meaningless destruction, an emptiness which penetrates into my life, life without a meaning, feeling pain today and being a bottomless black hole tomorrow (Čapek 1982b, 171).

Here—contrary to the previous story—the sea functions as an image of destruction causing the feeling that life is meaningless (water as an archetypal symbol of death). Though this aspect in some way prevails throughout the story, the Čapeks do not limit themselves to this particular result of the encounter with the destruction and death. They supply us with another solution: the depths can send their light to the surface. In order to evoke that remarkable image in our imagination, the Čapeks not only put the message into the title of the story, but also repeat many descriptions of the ship as shining (“young women shining on board”, “shining parties”, “the ship jetting out colored lights”, “the shining phantom of the ship up on the sea”, etc.). By doing this, they somehow balance the dreadful aspects of the story. Even the lost (non-present) girl and the look in her eyes are able to evoke in the young man a never-ending feeling of love for her.

Nevertheless, water is a very apt symbol for the fullness, ambiguity, and circularity of life (being an archetypal symbol of life as well as death). Water as such is not easily divided into parts: “And the sharpest knife has no effect. As soon as the knife slices in, they (elles) cure up unvaryingly, and the blade leaves not a trace”, writes L. Irigaray (1991, 46). Čapek chose water to serve as the

symbol for the shining fullness of the human life (from which other partial activities and areas are taken: remember that the whole story in *System* takes place in the sea). Water is apt to fill each hole as soon as possible, thus connecting the both poles of “in-betweeness” and making the unified sense of life possible. By touching and caressing the human body, water can make us feel an organic part of the wider environment (water constitutes about 75% of our bodies). Water can caress wounds and make them less painful; it can smooth and soften hard and sharp stones, dissolve firm substances and melt them into fluid and moving ones – and take them away. By an image of water, Čapek connects us on one side with our biological and bodily experience, and on the other with the cosmic cycle of life and death.

Theorizing a Place “In-Between”

For a long time, philosophy was considered a field where pure conceptual thinking is at work, the metaphors, images and other rhetorical devices being prohibited (or criticized) to be used there. Nowadays, more philosophers are inclined to accept an idea that conceptual and imaginative thought are closely connected even in philosophy. To analyze different theories explaining the function of imaginary in philosophy is a topic for another essay; let us restrict ourselves here to quoting two of them: M. Le Doeuff and Z. Neubauer. M. Le Doeuff considers “the metaphor as a dialectical presupposition of the theory” (Le Doeuff 1989, 16). In *The Philosophical Imaginary*, she states that “imagery and knowledge form, dialectically, a common system. Between these two terms there is a play of feedback which maintains the particular regime of the discursive formation” (ibid., 19). According to her theory, “each panel needs the other to express its own meaning” (ibid., 52). However, according to M. Le Doeuff, when used in philosophy, images indicate the points of tension within philosophy itself, trying to do the work which has to be done, but which philosophy is not able to do by itself.

But precisely this relationship between imagination and rationality, that is between the unity of the insight on the one hand, and the process of making divisions, distinctions and determination within this unified territory, is the essence of the philosophical concept. According to Z. Neubauer, concepts “are distinctive by the very fact that we are thinking something by them, and at the same time—or *ipso facto*?—we are imagining something by them” (Neubauer 2004, 201). However, “the concept itself is neither thought, nor image. It is knowledge, comprising the possibility of both of them” (Neubauer 2004, 205). Imagination is the “basis” of philosophy in a sense that “philosophy reveals the sense by the way how it emerges from the line of similarities. It is done by self-transcendence of logos through imagination (Neubauer 2004, 207-8). Because philosophy tends to be a respectful thought, philosopher cannot limit him/herself to the “soft” image of imagination, but he/she has to work on explication of this “united general scene” by means of “hard”

rational work of distinctions, divisions and determinations between the inner parts of it. Thus, philosophy represents a unity of soft and hard work, unity, which is, however, never “here” before the philosopher finds the fragile balance between these two aspects. Thus, philosophical style can be understood as an expression of particular philosopher’s creation of the above mentioned balance.

Based on this view, we analyze the inner relation of soft and hard aspects within K. Čapek’s conceptual work. We claim that water in Čapek’s writings acts not only on an imaginative level as an archetypal symbol, but also as a metaphor concentrating these aspects of pragmatic philosophy, which stress the ontological priority of continuity, flux, change, and movement.

An interesting feature is, that we can find a metaphor of water also in the works of other pragmatist philosophers. For example, J. Dewey in his work *Art as Experience* describes the “wave-like” structure of aesthetic experience – as a model for the philosophical notion of experience—using an image of the sea:

All interactions that effect stability and order in the whirling flux of change are rhythms. There is ebb and flow, systole and diastole, ordered change... The proportional interception of changes establishes an order that is spatially, not merely temporally patterned: like the waves of the sea, the ripples of sand where waves have flowed back and forth, the fleecy and back-bottomed cloud” (Dewey 1934, 16).

W. James develops a similar idea on the epistemological level in a chapter in the *Principles of Psychology* called *The Stream of Thought*. He underlines that

words such as ‘chain’ or ‘succession’ are not the most precise to describe how consciousness works. It is not something which has been put together, but it flows. ‘River’ or ‘stream’ is the most natural metaphor to describe it. According to him, the idea of a discrete object is caused by a contrast of quality between successive parts of the stream of thoughts (James 1998b, 190).

However, there is a question of how K. Čapek relates these aspects of continuity with those of discontinuity, that is, what he places “in-between”?

The problem is addressed in another of Čapek’s stories dealing with the problem of the traces: *Footprint*, and *Footprints*, which represent two versions of the same theme. In the first one from the book *Wayside Crosses* the main character, Mr. Boura, and his companion called “snow-covered man” were both riddled by a “step on this road that lies before us and not to be able to follow it further” (Kussi 1990, 189). They were fascinated by this “hard and clear fact” and looked for its explanation. Their views represent two possible (and allegedly conflicting) interpretations of the fact: Mr. Boura explains the fact by his theory about “the solitaires in our experience”, allowing an existence of the things which have no connection to anything else; his fellow man, on the contrary, considers the footprint to be a part of wider connection. The story ends by the scene portraying two men departing into the opposite directions (the “snow-covered man” going to search for a so far missed connection) while the footprint is disappearing by being covered

with a new layer of snow. In the second version of the story, the main character Mr. Rybka, seeing a line of footprints which come to an end in the snow without continuing, calls the police station. Sergeant Bartošek, after examining the last footprint, summed the situation up: the man “didn’t go any further” (Čapek 1990, 192). Mr. Rybka, not satisfied with this answer, insists on finding some explanation to the mystery, asking: “Then where did he go” (Čapek 1990, 192)? But Sergeant Bartošek is not disturbed by the phenomenon and calms Mr. Rybka’s excitement, saying: “You don’t have the ghost of an idea how many mysteries there are in the world. Each house, every family is a mystery” (Čapek 1990, 193). He offers a different solution to the problem in question, an acceptance of the miracle, when he answers: “And I just let it go” (Čapek 1990, 196). (Bartošek uses the Czech word “*plavat*”, translated here as *to go*, which in fact means *to swim*.)

These stories express the view that continuity and discontinuity of the world represent two possible theoretical solutions of the problems found in our experience, and that they are transformed into the unified worldview by our interpretation of the place “in-between” them. It is significant that Čapek chooses as means for that mediation not water (because water is not able to create static and firm “things”) but snow: in snow, it is possible for a footprint to be seen as a certain shape; but, on the other hand, snow allows the problem to disappear “naturally” by being covered by another snow, or by snow melting again into water (snow representing an image of “in-between” the flowing and static aspects of the world, of the transmission of firm discontinuity into fluid continuity). The two versions of the story also show the development of Čapek’s approach toward this problem: while the man in the first story went to look for the rational explanation, Mr Rybka—though still puzzled by the unknown—is able to accept it, maybe “for belief or enjoyment.” Čapek himself wrote in the column entitled *Relative*:

Almost everything is relative. Everything is relative except some exceptions. And now, relativist, you have done a good job; you not only draw consequences from your standpoint but you also open up a nice view on things which are an exception in this relative world, of things which are not relative; of truths which are not deceiving; of beings which are perfect and infinitive. Definitive relativism tells you, and you try to evaluate the impact and pleasure of this truth: There are things which are not relative. In the world there is something absolute; we do not know how many percent of it exists, but it is present—for belief and enjoyment (*italics Z. K.*) (Čapek 1969, 114).

Thus Čapek not only suggests that two theoretical explanations of the “fact” of the footprint are both rooted in our full and complex human experience of the world, but also that the rational (scientific) explanation is just one among others; the one, which according to Z. Neubauer, aims at transforming the living experienced world into separate “objective reality” (Neubauer 2004, 168-9).

From that point of view, we can omit the infinite discussions about the problem if Čapek was relativist or not because they miss their target: Čapek never reduced “the world” into objective reality, which can be explained only by knowledge and

reasoning. He understood the problem of rationality from the wider perspective of the development of human experience:

There is the whole balance of life in it: that which some people do for the first time, with the wonder and enthusiasm of the pioneer, the others do for the hundredth time, silently, with dislike and with the routine of an old habit. A world where everything is done for the first time would be beautiful and foolish; a world put together from things done for the hundredth time would be trivial, eternally the same and *almost rational* (italics Z. K.) (Čapek 2000a, 112).

At this point, he is close to the hermeneutical view on “reality” and “world” as a result of subject’s living process and his/her understanding of the sense of life by its interpretations. This, however, does not mean that different “worldviews” are relative in the epistemological sense of the term; they are relative in a much deeper ontological sense. Z. Neubauer claims:

knowledge is necessarily always relative, because such is reality itself. My objection against the suspicion about the subjectivity of knowing, is that being *is* subjectivity. This grounds the relativity of all our existence: being relates itself to itself by revealing itself, that is by inner pointing to the wholeness of being. We experience that pointing as the *sense*. We experience “ontological relativity” with the confidence in meaningfulness of existence (Neubauer 2004, 145).

Thus, let us now leave the problem of relativism, and return to the problem of mediating in a case of another philosophical notion: “the self”. Čapek explains the self in the following way:

each person has inside himself a great number of different I’s. One, the strongest one, is of course he himself. Then comes his family I, working I, professional group I, national I, and so on... always ever wider circles, and still it is somehow our I, though more and more diluted (Čapek 2000b, 4-5).

This concept is later expressed by K. Čapek in the image of a pebble thrown into water creating ever wider circles around the center. From his “so on” we can conclude that we could go as far as to create a circle representing the universal (i.e. humankind). From his word “dilution” we can conclude that this largest circle will finally merge with something non-human (the water), and non-ordered (the chaos). This is the way in which Čapek connects the individual with the community and universality (or the absolute), which are all parts of the self but which lie at varying distances from the center. Their circles are connected by water, but at the same time gradually “diluted” by it. Čapek’s image creates the feeling of a calm coexistence of circles circling around a visible center; nevertheless, using the image of the pebble falling down into the depths of the water, there is an unknown at the bottom of the center (representing, paradoxically, “the strongest” part of the self). If we imagine more pebbles being thrown into water, we can think of different relations between the “selves” represented by different relations of the circles (ranging from

the two pebbles thrown into the same place with the same circles, through pebbles thrown into different places with their circles crossing the others, to the two pebbles whose circles do not cross at all). Čapek is interested in each circle of the self and its intersections with the other circles of other selves. This is in close coincidence with another aspect of Čapek's philosophy, his so-called realism. By realism Čapek means the approach toward life, based on "a sensible attention toward everything that exists" (Čapek 1991, 56). According to Čapek, such kind of realism represents the most respectful approach towards life.

Writing a Place "In-Between"

They sent along detectives from the police station; you know, they searched everywhere but could not find any trace; they also looked for blood on the floor but there was nothing; so they sealed up the room (Čapek 1956, 191).

This randomly chosen sentence from Čapek's short story *The Disappearance of Mr. Hirsch* where there are three semi-colons is not an exceptional one. Čapek uses the semi-colon with great frequency. Almost all of his sentences include between one and five semi-colons. What is the reason for such a striking abundance? Has it something in common with our previous analyses? We think it has.

For the semi-colon is a linguistic device which does not divide the flow of speech into self-contained sentence units as the period/full stop does. It also implies no logical connection between the parts of the sentences or any hierarchy between the two sentences, as does the colon. The semi-colon enables us to understand the world as explained by W. James:

It is *possible* that some parts of the world are connected with others so loosely that they stick together only by a conjunction "and". They could even emerge and disappear without causing any inner change of the other parts. That kind of pluralistic view of the world as constituted through *addition* is something what pragmatism cannot omit from its serious considerations (James 1998a, 226).

The flow of the writing is on the one hand guaranteed, because the semi-colon allows it to flow on, but, on the other hand, there is no need to imply a strong logical relationship between the two, and thus import a strong rational order into the writing. The semi-colon thus makes it possible to accept the gaps between things, gaps which are not explained in and by the writing. It enables the next part of the sentence to follow on in relatively loose association with the previous part, or to turn the writing to different associations. The semi-colon expresses something "between" continuity and discontinuity, or an ambiguity, which enables both to exist (or to prefer one against the other in accordance to an interpretative framework of the reader). According to James, pragmatism means *meliorism*; its mission is to mediate between things and standpoints, to serve as a meeting point for extremes.

Conclusion

It may be quite unusual to connect Karel Čapek's thoughts with the problem of the sometimes hidden, uncertain, and ambiguous place "in-between". Such an approach seems to be in opposition to the claim Peter Kussi makes in his *Introduction* to the Karel Čapek Reader entitled *Toward the Radical Center*. He writes:

philosophically as well as politically, Čapek was a man of the center, but not in the sense used by hostile critics. The center he was aiming for was not a lukewarm middle ground between extremes. It was a radical center, radical in the original sense of the word: at the root of things (Kussi 1990, 13).

However, he continues: "At the root of existence is mystery, Čapek tells us, and no matter how much we feel at home in the world there is still something strange about it" (Kussi 1990, 14). If we take into account that the roots of the plants and trees are sometimes very deep and invisible indeed, so deep that they cannot be traced to their end, we can see that the concept we used to interpret Čapek's "philosophical imaginary" is not so far away from Peter Kussi's concept of the radical center. In fact, Čapek's place "in-between" is not so large and so deep as to swallow or totally overwhelm human beings. It is rather small, like a hollow in the water caused by a pebble or the gap in the flow of language caused by the function of the semi-colon. Nevertheless, this kind of a place can still cause miracles and mysteries because of the break within the visible and rational order and connections of the things. The later Čapek shows that "mystery is not a problem to be solved but something to be accepted as part of the human condition" (Kussi 1990, 17). To show that all of us can deal with mystery, Čapek uses water as a comfortable living environment for human beings (*System*), and as a source of light (*The Shining Depths*). Snow can allow the mystery to "disappear" by covering it with more snow or by melting into water, which can "let it swim" (*The Footprints*). Water can also connect the "hard" core of a self with ever wider and more "diluted" (soft) ones. And water in the form of the river flows really *between* the banks, with ambiguity about if connecting or dividing them.

If we exaggerate a little, we can say that Čapek accepts the uncertain and sometimes unexplainable place "in-between", filling and caressing it imaginatively by water, grasping it conceptually by pragmatist flux ontology and stream epistemology (being close to hermeneutic philosophy of understanding and interpretation), and expressing it stylistically by his abundant use of the semi-colon.

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