

SLOVAK ACADEMIC PHILOSOPHY: ITS ORIGINS, DEVELOPMENT AND CURRENT STATE

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Abstract: The paper introduces the foreign reader to the main factors associated with the emergence of Slovak academic philosophy as well as to the ways in which it has developed, and also to those factors that have complicated or delayed its progress since 1921 when the Faculty of Philosophy, along with its Philosophical Seminars, began functioning at the newly-founded University of Comenius (1919), up to the present day.

Keywords: Slovak academic philosophy; Czech philosophy; Catholicism; Marxism; Comenius University; Slovak Academy of Sciences; philosophy journals; philosophy departments; philosophical society.

Introduction

The paper that follows aims to introduce the foreign reader—philosopher—to the main factors associated with the emergence of Slovak *academic* philosophy, to the ways in which it has developed, and also to those factors that have complicated or delayed its progress. Slovak academic philosophy, like that of other central European nations, underwent a “pre-natal” stage. Traces of early attempts to philosophize can be found in the works of great writers, the rare Slovak-oriented priests, teachers or clerks from the preceding centuries. A key role was played in this early period leading up to the development of philosophy by the “school” philosophy found in Upper Hungary, as recorded expertly by Ondrej Mészáros (2008). This issue, however, remains beyond the scope of this paper.

Slovak Philosophy in the 1920s and 1940s

The origins of the development of Slovak academic philosophy are linked to 1921, the year when the Faculty of Philosophy, along with its Philosophical Seminars, began functioning at the newly-founded University of Comenius (1919). The emergence of this institution as an educational foundation stone in the maturing of Slovak philosophy should be seen more in terms of its being prerequisite to the future activities of Slovaks rather than the true beginnings of Slovak philosophy. After all, the only professors at this faculty were Czechs, who were associated with the Czech philosophical tradition. The most highly regarded of them were Josef Král (1882–1978), an adherent of Czech positivism, and

Josef Tvrđý (1877–1942), who perished in a concentration camp. The latter described his philosophical standpoint as that of “critical realism”. They were both strongly influenced by the ideas of Tomáš G. Masaryk and like their colleagues they attempted to awaken an interest in philosophy in Slovakia and contribute to its development. They trained dozens of Slovak philosophy teachers for Slovak secondary schools, some of whom at least hinted at a desire to continue in their academic interests in philosophy once they had graduated. However, this flourishing period was brought to an end by the turbulent years of 1938–1939 that led to the dissolution of pre-World-War-II Czechoslovakia. This period also saw the demise of the Czech professors at the University of Comenius. They were accused of propagating pro-Czechoslovak and pro-Masaryk ideals. It was the first serious manifestation of the impact of ideology on the life of Slovak philosophy. It should be added that what bothered the ascending luddite-fascist regime about the views of the Czech professors (and the fact that their Czech thinking was being disseminated in Slovakia at all) was that their ideas were shaped by liberalism and a careless attitude towards religion and Catholicism, in particular.

The departure of the Czechs, however, did not mean the end of the Faculty of Philosophy. In other words, the institutional basis for teaching and developing philosophy was maintained even during what is referred to as the war-time Slovak state (1938–1945). For some time, the faculty operated under temporary staff. In 1942, a Russian émigré philosopher was sent to the department from Prague Nikolaj O. Losskij (1870–1965), who, at that time, was already 72 years old. When he was still in St Petersburg, Losskij had created his own style of realism based on Orthodoxy (“intuitive realism”), which had received international acclaim. He did exactly what was expected of him and ensured that the Christian spirit of Slovak philosophy was supported. The not insubstantial nature of his ideas, however, encouraged some of his colleagues to be more discriminating in their approach to philosophical issues. His post at the university came to an end with the fall of the regime in 1945.

While the department did not cease to exist as a consequence of these political changes, an interim period of ideological tension and conflict settled over the cultural sphere in 1945–1947, just as it did over the rest of Slovakia.

This manifested itself in a particularly interesting way in the emerging Slovak academic philosophy and is worth briefly outlining here. The period in question concerns several years, beginning during the war and coming to a head in 1946/1947, when, for a short while at least, Slovak philosophy experimented with one of the mainstays of philosophy: that of the polemic. In order to understand why the polemic should appear almost a quarter of a century after the foundation of Slovak academic philosophy, we need to comment further on what has been outlined so far.

Around the time the involvement of the Czech philosophy professors was coming to an end, two figures, who would later contribute substantially to the professionalization of Slovak philosophy, began their doctorates under the supervision of Josef Tvrđý. The first was future professor Svatopluk Štúr (1901–1981), who formulated his philosophy in the spirit of Masaryk’s humanism and Benedetto Croce’s neo-Hegelianism and who focused on the values of life and was against any kind of totalitarianism whatsoever. On account of the values he held, he was forced to leave the university and disappear from public

life.¹ The second figure was Igor Hrušovský (1907–1978), who, despite studying philosophy in Bratislava after completing his natural science studies in Prague, had been heavily influenced by the neo-Positivists in Vienna, known for their structuralist methodology. He was also noted for some of his Marxist views. Neither of these figures was associated with religious ideas.

However, we find ourselves in a period when Catholicism dominated both ideologically and politically in Slovakia. It was from this environment that several figures, who had also studied abroad, joined the ranks of academic philosophers.² For that matter, there were also some ambitious students of the afore-mentioned Czech lecturers, who later became secondary school teachers and also a handful who were self-taught but specialized in this area. As is evident, the emerging Slovak academic philosophy scene was curiously pluralistic at that time.

During the Second World War, all these philosophers were unexpectedly presented with the opportunity to publish their views on a wide array of philosophical questions within the *Filozofický zborník Matice slovenskej* (*Matica Slovenská Philosophy Volume*), which was published between 1940 and 1948 (except during the Slovak National Uprising and the Front). The volume was published by the cultural organization, Matica slovenská, which, following the publication of the first issue and the founding of the Matica slovenská Philosophy Department, drew together those interested in philosophy.

The pages of the *Filozofický zborník Matice slovenskej* were home to discussions on various themes (including the intuitive realism of Nikolaj Losskij). Some of these themes have long since lost their relevance to contemporary society; while others have survived, taking on a new form. The issues may have been discussed freely, but there was an unavoidable aftertaste of the ideological emulation of the period and as a result intellectual reasoning was also under threat. Even so, this period of the beginnings of academic philosophy represents a small miracle. Stretching from one totalitarian system (luddite) to the next (communist), with the booming of the battleguns from the front serving as the backdrop, this period was home to a group of philosophers who wielded not weapons but intellectual arguments.

Slovak Philosophy in the 1950s–1980s

The communist party takeover of state power in February 1948 signified the end of the first glimmers of a truly academic philosophy in Slovakia. The end of the 1940s and the beginning of the 1950s were characterized by the rapid expansion of the coarse dogmatic Marxist-Leninst ideology into all spheres of life. Philosophy was not only one of the first victims of this expansion, but it was also one of its tools (this was true of its most prominent

¹ Thus Svetopluk Štúr did not participate in the aforementioned polemics. His academic career was also negatively affected by political changes taking place in the post-war period. In 1950 he had to leave the Faculty of Philosophy in Bratislava for a second time and in 1970 (after having been there for not quite two years) he had to leave for a third time. In each case it was for political reasons.

² To a lesser extent, this was also the case for some protestant theologists involved in philosophy, who also engaged in polemic, despite being out of favour with the regime.

representatives, lecturers and academics). While for some (for example, Igor Hrušovský) this involvement was simply a temporary state, for others it became a long-term condition.

In an attempt to step up their efforts, the party organs were strengthened in places where philosophy was conducted. This was particularly true of the universities. The Philosophy Faculty at the University of Comenius was expanded to include an additional department, with the aim of propagating dialectic materialism, not only amongst the philosophers but throughout all the other departments. In 1952 new, so-called “general education departments” (also involving the members of the philosophy department) were opened at all the universities. Their emergence meant that, in practical terms, the institutional basis of philosophy was substantially expanded, nevertheless, its mission was seen first of all in ideological terms, and only then as a specialist academic subject.

The growth in the number of staff working in philosophy both at universities and at the Institute of Philosophy of the Slovak Academy of Sciences (SAS) was accompanied by a gradual increase in publishing in the area of philosophy. Thus, instead of the annual *Philosophica Slovaca* (which had been published since 1945), the Institute of Philosophy of the Slovak Academy of Sciences began to produce the quarterly *Slovenský filozofický časopis* (*Slovak Journal of Philosophy*), which has since been transformed into *Filozofia (Philosophy)*, issued ten times a year. As time passed, the Department of Philosophy at Comenius began publishing an annual volume entitled *Philosophica* and during the 1980s and 1990s, various other higher education institutions began producing publications.

The above-mentioned growth in philosophy during the 1950s and 1960s, in terms of its institutional basis and faculty requirements, together with the expanded publishing opportunities, meant that the conditions had been fulfilled for philosophy to become a fully-fledged academic and professional field. However, it was constrained by the concurrent limitations placed on its ability to exercise that which is fundamental to philosophy—freedom of thought. Fortunately, the fluctuations in the governing regime mitigated this negative manifestation and made it possible for intellectual creativity to seep through the armour of the ideological dictates.

Generally, it can be said that, during the period discussed above, conditions were comparatively better for the development of two philosophical disciplines: logic and the history of philosophy. Indeed, it is really only these two disciplines that can be positively written up in the annals of this period.

In 1953, when philosophy was experiencing its deepest decline, Vojtech Filkorn (1922–2009) published his *Predheglovská Logika* (*Pre-Hegelian Logic*), which adopted an original approach, combining the history of science with the history of philosophy to trace the development of logic from classificatory, relational and causal logic to dialectical logic. His *Metodológia vied* (*The Methodology of Science*) was published some three years later in 1956 and was followed by further works up until the present day. In 1962 Vojtech Filkorn established the Department of Logic and Methodology of Science, which was the first of its kind not only in Slovakia, but also in the whole of Czechoslovakia. Here he built up his own school of logic and methodology (Augustín Riška, Pavel Cmorej, Václav Černík, Jozef Viceník and others). At the same time, the beginnings of analytical philosophy in Slovakia were starting to emerge here. The ensuing decade, however, was not conducive to its taking root.

While Filkorn's logic and methodology succeeded above all because of the scientific quality of his conception, the historians of philosophy (especially, Elena Várossová and Teodor Münz) experienced greater difficulties. They fought against the proponents of "Zhdanovist" dogmatic charts for their place in the history of philosophy in Slovakia with the courage of researchers and with erudite polemics on the methodology of their writing.³ In a battle that would last several years (taking place mostly between 1954 and 1956), they were able, through the strength of their arguments, to overshadow the "objections" of the more dogmatic professors and thus to introduce a new methodological basis for research into national philosophy. This was then later applied to the entire research project up to its synthesis, tracing its development from the beginning through to the 1980s. It was published in 1987 under the guidance of Ján Bodnár, reader in philosophy, and was entitled *Dejiny filozofického myšlenia na Slovensku I. (A History of Philosophical Thought in Slovakia I)* (with both of the authors mentioned above collaborating). Naturally, research into the history of philosophy in Slovakia, did not come to an end with this synthesis, but continued successfully in creative collaboration with Czech partners.

Contributions to the development of research into the history of philosophy in Slovakia were also made by those who were engaged in the history of world philosophy. They produced work that was not designed to enrich existing research, but rather to plug, at least to some extent, the great deficit in Slovak national culture in the translation of the literature of world philosophy. At the beginning of the 1960s, Igor Hrušovský had the idea of publishing a ten-volume *Antológia z diel filozofov* (*Anthology of Philosophical Works*), which would include excerpts of the works of the most well-known philosophers from antiquity to the mid-twentieth century. The anthology succeeded in its aim to plug the gap and ensure that the most well-known philosophical texts were now available in Slovak. Thousands of students and others interested in philosophy have assisted in this work (and indeed continue to do so). The volumes first began to appear in the blossoming of the Prague Spring (1966) and the last one was published during the harsh period of "normalization" (1977).

Four years prior to that, however, (in 1973) the first volume of a series entitled *Filozofické odkazy* (*The Philosophical Heritage*), which was loosely connected to the *Anthology* referred to above, appeared. For more than a quarter of a century, the series has provided Slovak readers with comprehensive translations of a majority of the classic works of world philosophy. Alongside the philosophy of the older generations, which was contained within the *Anthology*, the generation that was at its peak during this period was also involved in this series (in providing translations, preliminary studies and scientific editorials). The following is a random selection from *The Philosophical Heritage*: the works of Plato, Aristotle, Greek Stoicism, Nicholas of Cusa, Spinoza, Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason*, a selection from Fichte, Hegel's *The Science of Logic*, as well as the works of Weber, Dilthey, Whitehead, Wittgenstein, Kuhn, Foucault etc. The last volume, published in 1990, was symbolically Kant's *A Critique of*

³ Andrei Zhdanov (1896-1948) was a Soviet communist, responsible for the "Zhdanov Doctrine", which outlined his socialist realist ideals for the cultural sphere of the Soviet Bloc, part of which included the use of "dogmatic charts".

Practical Reason.⁴ It was of particular benefit not only to Slovak philosophy but also to the wider public. It focused the creative capacity of the philosophers on meaningful work and helped increase the prestige of their activities during a difficult period. At the same time they sought to implement these techniques in their own original work.

By concentrating on logic and the history of philosophy we have bypassed the 1960s, an exceptional era characterised by the struggle for “socialism with a human face”. It is quite understandable that this period served to mobilise philosophy, however, besides the highly needed shift towards analysing the problems of man, it produced no findings of any real significance. The exception was Miroslav Kusý’s concept of the “institutional revolution”,⁵ which was rather more oriented towards political science (as anchored in *Praxis* philosophy).

Slovak philosophy (in contrast to Czech philosophy) was not sufficiently developed to enable it to resolve theoretical issues relating to anthropology. This was a consequence of its historical development. The positivist ideas of the Czech professors, Hrušovský’s neo-positivism and the more recent Marxist influenced scientism had rendered it more scientific. “Humanism”, which we have not yet encountered, also had scientific roots, to some extent, particularly that which had been derived from the liberalist premises of Svatopluk Štúr. Its other trajectory had stemmed especially from the traditions of Christian humanism. The development of Slovak philosophy thus far had lacked the supporting pillar of phenomenology (and the associated theories of existentialism and hermeneutics). The appearance of numerous specialist and non-specialist publications by Czech philosophers, some of whom had been brought up on this tradition, awakened an interest in these topics amongst some Slovak philosophers. During the 1960s, this interest burgeoned with the growing influence of existentialist thinking, particularly that of Sartre. This is well documented in a collective volume *Existencializmus a fenomenológia* (1967) (*Existentialism and Phenomenology*) as well as in the eight-volume of *Antológia* (1969) (*Anthology*), both edited by Ján Bodnár, and in a number of studies in the journal *Filozofia* (*Philosophy*). The 1920s saw more systematic and in-depth research being conducted into phenomenology and existentialism. Thus, discussions on the need for and the possibility of introducing “socialism with a human face” were conducted on the theoretical basis of noteworthy philosophical contributions, which included, alongside those of a phenomenological provenance, an increased interest in the work of the young Marx in particular; the other non-orthodox ideas of western Marxists (Garaudy, Fischer and others); and the philosophy of man as understood by Adam Schaff and others.

⁴ It appeared, as had the first *Critique*, in translation by Teodor Múnz, who displayed exceptional translation skills in both the *Anthology* and *The Philosophical Heritage*.

⁵ Professor Kusý, like many other philosophers, had to leave academia as a result of the Soviet occupation. Up until November 1989 he was actively engaged in dissent. He returned to academic life after November 1989, as did many others likewise afflicted. The fates and publishing activities of those involved in dissent have been documented for several years now by an institute named after one of the more significant representatives of philosophical dissent—Milan Šimečka (The Milan Šimečka Archive. A documentary and analytical centre for the research of social philosophical thinking between 1969 and 1989).

We shall now consider the results of the scientific endeavours of Slovak philosophers, as reflected in articles in the journals and volumes published in the 1950s to the 1980s. If we separate the wheat from the chaff and disregard the quarter (roughly) that constitutes the editorials, the amateurish attempts at dogmatic schematic “studies” etc., then we can surmise that the general trend has been for a gradual improvement in the writing, in terms of the content, literary style and technical aspects. Author independence has been growing slowly but surely. The dominance of the first polemics with their flawed dogmatism gradually gave way to perceptive studies of various kinds, which in turn led to more specialized studies dealing with premises (and their own approaches). In the second half of the 1980s in particular, these studies began to appear far more frequently than previously. At the same time, this period saw an exceptional number of independent or collectively authored books being published. Even then it was clear that this was a signal that innovative changes were taking place within Slovak philosophy.

The characteristics described above also applied to writing produced more or less in accordance with the principles of Marxism. However, it would be a disservice not to include two of the most well-known achievements undertaken within the framework of Marxism-Leninism during this period in Slovakia. Especially given that they both relate to the most fundamental areas of philosophy: ontology and gnoseology (and their related methodologies).

The first is associated with the name of Igor Hrušovský. In trying to protect Slovak philosophy from the spiritless prefabricated templates, from the outset he emphasized the significance of researching the philosophy of categorization (in connection with the development of science). He inspired many and he himself was an enthusiastic participant. It was in the mid-1960s that he laid the first foundations of his dialectical structuralism, dedicating the rest of his life to elaborating his theory. He began by considering the most fundamental concepts, especially the concept of being. His first outline was published in *Dialektika bytia a kultúry* (*The Dialectics of Being and Culture*) (1975). The second, which was related to it, was published posthumously in *Dialektika bytia* (*The Dialectics of Being*) (1990).

The second contribution is the work of Václav Černík (born in 1931), which began with his modest *Dialektický vedecký zákon* (*Dialectical Scientific Law*) (1965), where he distinguished between factual, idealized and (most of all) immanent scientific laws. On further developing the ideas in this book, he outlined his perspective on the various different types of scientific rationality in a collective work co-written with Jozef Viceník and Emil Višňovský, entitled *Historické typy racionality* (*Historical Types of Rationality*) (1997). More work was to follow in which he developed his ideas on the applicability of the methodological consequences of this conception within the social and human sciences.

Philosophy in the 1950s to 1980s was conducted as a means of expanding Marxist-Leninism. This created the impression of an undifferentiated, tired monotony of what was in fact a destructive totalitarianism. At the end of the 1980s and towards the early 1990s, the first analyses of the development of Slovak philosophy were undertaken by František Novosád, who was not one to conceal his criticisms of the accusations of the “monolithic past” of Slovak philosophy and argued that there were in fact ten different programmes in the 1960s. A brief list follows: 1. orthodox dialectical and historical materialism; 2. “open”

Marxism; 3. the modernization of dialectical thinking; 4. the structuralist initiative; 5. scientism, which was regarded as being “potentially the strongest”; 6. dialectical holism; 7. Croce’s philosophy of life; 8. existentialist phenomenology; 9. critical realism; 10. the schools of theological philosophy, although quite understandably these developed outside “official philosophy”.⁶ This list clearly casts doubt on the idea that philosophy was homogenous during this period and it also enables us to explain the most fundamental issue: were these contradictory forty years able to create the potential for truly creative philosophy in the period that ensued? The answer is unequivocal: not only were they indeed able to create such potential, they did in fact do so. Of course, they could not do so completely nor without the need for considerable innovation.

From the 1990s to the Present Day

By the end of the 1980s, Slovak philosophy had achieved the attributes of academic philosophy in terms of its institutional and staff base, its publishing opportunities, in terms of the academic nature of many of the journals and books published and the fact that they were distributed on the foreign market (at least in socialist countries). Its full development was hindered by the lack of one of the prerequisites of philosophy: there was limited space for the freedom and plurality of thought. Removing this barrier was made possible by the changes that took place in Czechoslovakia towards the end of 1989, known as the “Velvet Revolution”.

The Transformation of Slovak Philosophy after 1989. In the field of philosophy, the revolution was not always so “velvet”, particularly given the fact that the ideological ties—both real and feigned—between philosophy and the former regime were so closely intertwined. Experiences differed between the various philosophy departments as did the ensuing consequences. The worst affected were the smaller philosophy “departments” at the technical universities, medical universities and colleges etc. For the most part, these were completely disbanded, or reduced to a bare minimum, often for ideological reasons. With the passage of time, however, many of them, to a certain extent at least, have reappeared in a new format in conjunction with the requirements of the “Bologna Process”.

The Department of Philosophy and the History of Philosophy at the Faculty of Philosophy of the University of Comenius, Bratislava, was in many respects prepared for this change. A forward-thinking group of lecturers, mid-way through their careers, had already drawn up a proposal for a new study programme with a preliminary curriculum etc. At the same time this group had also utilized the contacts it had with non-conformist Czech and Austrian philosophers, inviting them to cooperate and had developed working relations with Western university centres. It is not surprising therefore to find that it had commissioned, through the Ministry of Education of the Slovak Republic, a series of three-semester innovative courses for all university-level philosophy lecturers in Slovakia. Lectures were given by some Slovak philosophers and various renowned professors from the

⁶ Discussions arising from the Extraordinary Plenary of the SFS, 9 January 1990. See *Filozofia*, vol. 45, 1990, no. 4, p. 463.

Czech Lands and abroad. Their inspiration was emblematic of the plurality of philosophy. We should also mention that this was the first time in the history of the oldest philosophy faculty in Slovakia that the institution and staff were maintained despite the break with the previous way of thinking. Moreover three of the five lecturers who were forced to leave in 1970 for political reasons returned to the department.

The Faculty of Philosophy in Prešov (founded in 1959), another faculty to have provided tuition in philosophy under the former regime, survived as a result of the foresight displayed by some of the members heading the faculty there. As mentioned above, it was later that noteworthy research activities began to develop.

The Institute of Philosophy at the Slovak Academy of Sciences, the main (and indeed only) centre of research, which had links with other establishments of country-wide significance, implemented changes to the leadership of the department within the framework of the transition, shedding some employees and re-employing some of those who had had to leave as a result of the repression under the old regime—as was the case in other institutions. At the same time, it undertook a thorough assessment of its research programme in relation to the needs and demands of the emerging democratic system. Significant changes were implemented at the institutions statutorily linked to the Institute. Specifically, the scientific community engaged in philosophy at SAS and the journal of academic philosophy were affected.

One organization that had close connections to the institute was what was then known as the *Slovenská filozofická spoločnosť* (SFS) (*Slovak Philosophical Society*). It brought together all those working in the field of philosophy (including secondary school teachers). The SFS was founded, characteristically, at a time when restrictions were being relaxed: in 1964 to be precise. It sought to assist in the democratization attempts of the period and particularly to ease the ideological restrictions on philosophy. However, the Soviet intervention of 1968 (when the first congress was to have taken place) put an end to these efforts. For a while the institute became markedly pro-regime. Gradually, however, initiatives began to emerge for interdisciplinary cooperation between various scientific disciplines (such as astronomy, biology, etc). In 1988, influenced by the perestroika mood of the time, some of those lecturing there included a handful of those who would become the future representatives of the post-November political right.

At the SFS plenary held towards the beginning of January 1990, the Slovak philosophers unanimously decided to distance themselves from the totalitarian past. This was also expressed formally in the renaming of the SFS as the *Slovenské filozofické združenie* (SFZ) (*Slovak Philosophical Association*). The Association continues to function under this name today and it contributes, in particular, to the new trends in Slovak philosophy.

Both during the transition period and later, the SFZ, as an academic scientific association, offered a platform for the free exchange of ideas on the last fifty years of Slovak philosophy and on the new issues that are unfolding before us. In addition, it also provided an environment for visits from foreign philosophers and for the exchange of debate. The regular events it holds are also significant: the congresses, which occur every five years, the plenaries, which are held every second year, and the annual scientific conferences. The research programme, the results of which are published in various volumes, is representative of the progress achieved by Slovak philosophy during the time period given.

Another significant component of the Institute of Philosophy at SAS is the journal *Filozofia*. Following the radical overhaul of the editorial board and in keeping with its professional obligations, the journal has become an invaluable source of information on foreign contemporary philosophy through its extensive interviews with leading world philosophers, the published extracts from the work of those whose views have attracted the attention of the international philosophical community, and through the publication of texts that were not hitherto available in Slovakia. All this activity was warranted by the need to regain lost ground in the shortest time possible.

Another boon was the relatively systematic introduction to the work of foreign philosophers published in single-theme issues, where specific topics and methods for solving philosophical questions were addressed. For the most part these were quite different to our own. The volumes published between 1990 and 2008 included many such issues devoted to single themes. Philosophers of varying nationalities including American, French, Spanish, Hungarian and many others were showcased. Mention should also be made of the fact that while *Filozofia* aspires to publish issues centring on single themes, every final issue of the yearly volume is dedicated to the history of philosophy in Slovakia.

Amongst these first brave attempts to make full use of the new freedom of expression and further develop academic philosophy in Slovakia, we should include the initiative of Pavel Cmorej and his colleagues to establish a new journal entitled *Organon F*, which duly occurred in 1994. The journal is published by the Institute of Philosophy at SAS (although originally support was also lent by other organizations). A publishing sphere is being created for the Slovak logic and methodology community, but also for the development of analytical philosophy in particular (something that Filkorn's successors had already seen as inevitable). This mission is being fulfilled with great success, even beyond the Slovak border. Thus, since 2005 the journal has increasingly gained an international flavour and is now published in cooperation with the Institute of Philosophy at the Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic. The editor-in-chief, Pavel Cmorej, contributed exceptionally to the success of *Organon F*, particularly given that despite having had extremely limited publishing opportunities available to him for twenty years (for political reasons), he has evolved into an original and thought-provoking writer on logic and analytical thinking.

In an attempt not to disrupt the logical flow in describing the activities of the SFZ and journals such as *Organon F* or *Filozofia*, we have recounted their story from the transition period to the present. Now, we have little choice but to return for a moment to the transition era. For, if thus far we have primarily followed the internal events affecting the development of Slovak philosophy, we must now return once more (and for the last time in this paper) to the weighty external factors of its development.

The Development of Philosophy at Universities. The decade following the “Velvet Revolution” was characterized by the emergence of new universities, including faculties devoted to the humanities, and of course philosophy was not lacking amongst these. To some extent, the humanities faculties (primarily of philosophy) at these universities filled their vacant positions from the pool of those who had been marginalized by the former regime (historians, linguists, specialists in literature and so on, however, they also employed some philosophers from the old “general education departments”). The appearance of new

philosophy faculties at the new universities also meant the emergence of new departments of philosophy, whose main role was to prepare students for the study of philosophy. This represented yet another not insignificant expansion of the existing academic basis of Slovak philosophy. This was despite the fact that the majority of graduates would not have an opportunity to work within the specialism they had studied.

Thus, the two departments already providing young people with an education in philosophy (Bratislava and Prešov) were gradually joined by seven more. In the first wave, departments of philosophy were established at Trnava University (formally linked to the Jesuit university of the 17th and 18th centuries, which was relocated to Budín in 1777), and in Banská Bystrica and Nitra. Some time later, a further university, with a philosophy faculty, was established in Trnava—the University of Sts Cyril and Method—to be followed by one in Ružomberok and recently also the Philosophy Faculty of P. J. Šafárik University in Košice. In the meantime, the first Hungarian university appeared in Komárno with its own philosophy faculty. All these educational institutes have gradually begun specializing in different areas of research, which is one of the fundamental roles of the university lecturer, and at the same time, effective participation in this area represents an important source of funding for the institution in question.

The Main Direction of Slovak Philosophical Research. As we have already described the main characteristics of the institutional basis of Slovak philosophy, let us now turn to the main direction taken by its research interests. In looking at their diversity and the fragmented nature of the organizational structure, we shall proceed by combining two approaches. Where there was already a research programme with a long history, we shall analyse the specific institution; where there was no such tradition (or a firm research core), we shall discuss only the research programme as implemented in several institutions.

If right from the beginning of this overview, we mention once more the Institute of Philosophy at SAS, it is simply because—as has already been indicated—it is the only centre dedicated exclusively to the scientific research of philosophy. In addition, it publishes both ISI ranked research journals (*Filozofia* and *Organon F*), which publish the most significant findings in philosophical research from all the Slovak institutions and provide information on scientific conferences, forthcoming publications etc, thus supplying basic information about all that is taking place in Slovakia in this field.

As far as the institute itself is concerned, one of its long-term research projects is a history of national philosophy. The project, led by the institute director Tibor Pichler, was expanded to include issues concerning the philosophical background of Slovak political thought (with particular consideration of the central European—thus both Slovak and Hungarian—context, and the inclusion of Slovakia in the EU). One of its most well-known undertakings was the publication of a volume titled *Dejiny filozofie na Slovensku v XX. storočí* (*A History of Philosophy in Slovakia in the Twentieth Century*) in 1998. Other significant projects have already been mentioned in the context of the journal *Organon F*. For many years, activity focused particularly on issues concerning the methodology of the social sciences and humanities. Later additions include the analysis of various questions regarding logic and an area that was neglected until recently—analytical philosophy

(involving the collaboration of researchers based at various universities, including the medievalists). The study of social, moral (particularly virtue ethics) and political philosophy led by František Novosád also occupies an important position in the research programme. Research has also developed within phenomenology and other projects.

The Institute of Philosophy at SAS, along with other academic institutions, has also dedicated considerable attention to the various philosophical aspects and the implications of cognitive science (philosophy of mind, action theory). University lecturers are also involved in this (and other) areas.

Naturally, the various different specializations may make it difficult for single-issue research groups to be established in university departments. However, as we shall shortly show, it is possible to overcome this problem to some extent. It is generally the case that university lecturers are often scattered throughout research teams at different institutions. Nonetheless, experience has proved that the departments may support research conducted in a variety of different directions, indeed, this has now become typical. Thus, for almost two decades now, some of the researchers based at the Philosophy Faculty of Comenius University in Bratislava have very successfully been dedicating their attention to feminist philosophy. In fact, the Centre for Gender Studies for the whole of Slovakia was established here. In addition, a group of philosophers, aestheticians, and others interested in semiotics emerged around Miroslav Marcelli. Of course, many other subjects are researched here, conducted in conjunction with other centres. It is as if the model situation regarding university research practice is being realized *mutatis mutandis* at every faculty.

Let us mention at least one more faculty, which has a relatively long tradition (at least in Slovak terms): the Institute of Philosophy at the University of Prešov. A very successful research programme in theories of history of philosophy (entitled “The Philosophy of the History of Philosophy”) was established here and prevailed for around ten years until both it and its head Vladimír Leško transferred to the newly established Faculty of Philosophy at the Šafárik University of Košice, where it continues today. At the initiative of Vladislav Suvák, the faculty at Prešov became the centre for ancient philosophy in Slovakia. International readers will perhaps be interested to learn that the faculty also dedicated considerable attention to the research and popularization of the heritage of the well-known Evangelical School in Prešov of the 17th Century (Ján Bayer, Izák Caban and others). This short outline is a far from exhaustive list of the variety of research programmes of this faculty and the other associated activities.

We should also at least briefly mention the expansion of ethics within Slovak education (introduced into both primary and secondary schools), which brought about the need for more teachers. Ethics is now studied not only at the philosophical faculty, but also at the faculties of education and theology. Research into this area has been particularly affected by the demand in areas outside education: ethics is now variously applied in business, management, etc. This seems to be an apt moment to mention the newly founded Centre of Bioethical Research at the University of Sts Cyril and Method in Trnava.

We shall not continue outlining the characteristics of the prominent features of the remaining philosophy faculties, however, it would be beneficial to once more emphasize that the groups of Slovak philosophers mentioned above, regardless of where they are based, were formed on the basis of their academic interests and this allows for the creation of new

informal, flexible links between them. Thus, the notion of cooperating in producing work takes on a new and deeper meaning.

Some New Phenomena and Some Old Problems. We have now covered the main important events that continue to influence Slovak philosophy. All that remains is to describe the newer events that have taken place in recent years. These are phenomena that have hitherto remained invisible in Slovakia. We are concerned here with the establishment of specialized scientific associations (for example, the Kierkegaard Society) and civic philosophical associations. The first of these, the Schola Philosophica, appeared in Slovakia a few years ago and in 2005 it began publishing a philosophical journal (the first online journal), a quarterly entitled *Ostium*. It was established by young doctors of philosophy from the two Trnava philosophical faculties, in cooperation with a wide circle of other Slovak and Czech philosophers, mostly from the same peer group.

Thus far we cannot look upon these times with joy and it is with a certain discomfiture that we look at the publication of philosophical literature since 1990. As far as the publication of original work is concerned, there is little problem (other than that of a financial nature). Three publishing houses in Bratislava—Kalligram (formerly Archa), Veda and Iris—publish most of the work produced. These and other publishers also produce a relatively high number of contemporary translations, particularly of the work of influential foreign authors today. All would be well and good were it not for the lack of classic philosophy mentioned above; that which is published does not suffice. It is, however, true that, just as in the past, we are aided by the work of Czech publishers, which is to be much admired. Nonetheless, Czech translations cannot replace those in Slovak. One of the main reasons for this is the necessity of perfecting and codifying Slovak philosophical terms, which the creators of *Antológia* strived to lay the foundations for half a century ago.

Conclusion

Despite having been in existence for almost a whole century, Slovak academic philosophy has yet to produce a thinker of the calibre or influence of Jan Patočka, Roman Ingarden or György Lukács, for example. Nonetheless, it has made clear progress. Notwithstanding all the difficulties, the hiccoughs in its development and more than one personal tragedy, the attempts to produce independent creative and original thinking have led to a growth in research from its rather bashful apprenticeship beginnings and the inescapable receptive period. Progress has been made in terms of themes, content and methodology. It is clear that this has occurred particularly during the last decade. The most convincing proof I can bring of this is in the form of two books by Teodor Múnz, *Listy filozofom (Letters to Philosophers)* (2002) and *Hľadanie skutočnosti (Quest for Reality)* (2008); the monographs by František Novosád on issues in contemporary social and political philosophy *Doba X (The Age of X)* (2004) and *Alchýmia dejín (The Alchemy of History)* (2005); and two further books, relating one way or another to semiology, *Prípad*

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Barthes (*The Case of Barthes*) (2001) and *Filozofi v meste* (*Philosophers in the City*) (2008), both by Miroslav Marcelli. These six publications do not by any means represent all that is both valuable and original in contemporary Slovak academic philosophy. If the current pace is maintained, we can hope that it will celebrate its hundred year anniversary in full bloom, documented by a new creative force that will be received by positive voices from the international philosophy community as well.⁷

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