

Summary

The publication *The Czech Question and Modern Times* (*Česká otázka a dnešní doba*) is the proceedings of the eponymous conference “Česká otázka a dnešní doba” which took place in November 2015 in Pardubice on the occasion of the 125th anniversary of the publication of T. G. Masaryk’s *Czech Question* (1895). The purpose of the conference was to reflect on Masaryk’s legacy and its contemporary relevance. The book is divided into three basic sections that unite the individual articles by theme. The first section entitled *Masaryk and Today* is introduced by Otakar A. Funda’s article “Masaryk’s Philosophy of Czech History as seen through Popper’s Critique of Historicism”. Funda considers Masaryk’s philosophy of the meaning of Czech history from the position of Popper’s later critique of all historicism and messianism, be it either as an Abrahamic messianism of a chosen God’s people, or of the culmination of history in Christian eschatology or in a secularized fiction of history’s happy ending as primarily held by totalitarian regimes. Even though Funda himself admits that one may speak of a certain intended direction of short-term historical periods, he understands history and human life as a movement, a process, events: they are a *complexity of complementarity of components in correlation, continuity, and context*. In Jan Svoboda’s article entitled “Masaryk’s Czech Question and Natural Science”, he reflects on Masaryk’s classification of individual scientific fields and emphasizes his understanding of the importance of the natural sciences for society. Svoboda points out that the interconnection of scientific disciplines is at the core of interest of current world scientific literature, and that a sense of their complementarity should be an essential part of any responsible policy decision today. Jakub S. Trojan, in his article entitled “T. G. Masaryk and our Modern Day”, deals with the challenge of the positive integrity of the individual in society. According to Trojan, the unity of life in Masaryk is the response to the rising specialization of education that prepares the individual to be able to pursue diverse human activities. Trojan, together with Masaryk, places life *sub specie aeternitatis* against the vola-

tility and diffuseness of the mind and of the life orientation of contemporary man; the realization of life, today the same as in the past, necessarily presupposes the intrinsically rich inner life and spiritual and moral orientation of the individual. Miloš Dokulil, in his article “Is There a Satisfactory ‘Czech’ Response Today to the ‘Czech Question?’”, ponders the legacy of the *Czech Question* at a time when national questions have ceased to play most of their roles. Does the Czech question therefore remain relevant, even if we are not adequately interested in it, and if we, as responsible citizens of the Czech Republic, do not actively engage in humanity and a socially more acceptable environment? This question is relevant not only on the domestic scene, but also within the European confederation as well as in the rather sensitive, problematic, and “globalizingly” framed world context. Robert Kvaček addresses the issue of “Modern Czech Statehood” as a living historical theme in relation to Europe. He points out the necessity of a stronger awareness of a national identity within a unified Europe. In the article “From the *Czech Question* to the *New Europe* and the Washington Declaration”, Václav Pavlíček points to the fact that Masaryk’s *Czech Question* was a result of his work as a scientist, summing up his historical, sociological, and constitutional concepts as well as a politician with working experience from the Vienna Chamber of Deputies. Václav Bělohradský, in his article “The Anti-Political Nation in Bohemia and Moravia” shows that Masaryk’s anti-political concept of humanity as “the essence of the nation”, which we must accept as the sense of national life and be its heralds and guardians, is a mystifying completion of the past and is one of the keys to the political catastrophes of modern Czech statehood. It also highlights the consequences of the hegemony of anti-political national essentialism. Jan Zouhar refers to “The Czech Question and the Problem of a Small Nation”. While it is obvious to Zouhar today that the *Czech Question* can not be a guideline or a program of our national and social life, he places the question in its historical context of how relevant it is for small nations in today’s globalizing world. Miloš Havelka, in his article “*The Czech Question, Czech Thoughts, Letters of a Political Heretic* – Three Perspectives of Czech Political Self-Reflection at the Turn of the 19th and 20th Centuries and the Forms of

its Historical Establishment”, points out that the end of the 19th century was the culmination of a long process of the ascending Czech ethnic identity and its transformation into a modern, albeit stratifyingly incomplete, Czech nation. This is associated with the attempts to create new philosophical foundations for Czech policy and is evidenced by three attempts to evaluate the self-reflection of its previous development: The *Czech Question* of T. G. Masaryk, *Czech Thoughts* by Josef Kaizl and the *Letters of a Political Heretic* by Albín Bráf. Zdeněk Novotný examines “Masaryk’s Philosophical Patriotism”, which is incompatible with mere patriotism. Regardless of what kind of sharp contradiction to Masaryk’s concept of patriotism the frequent attitudes of today’s Czech politicians are today, love for the homeland, in Novotný’s opinion, should primarily mean respect for man and humanity in general. Eugen Andreanský, in his article “A Critique of Masaryk in Slovakian Traditionalist Philosophy (the first half of the 20th century)”, notes the controversy that traditionalist and conservatively-oriented Slovak philosophers held with Masaryk’s philosophical teachings in the first part of the 20th century.

The second section, *Individuality and Order*, begins with an article by Miloslav Bednář entitled “The Philosophical and Historical Validity of Masaryk’s Czech Question in the Light of the History of the Idea of the Czech State”. Bednář reminds us that Masaryk’s concept is supported by the fundamental thought continuity that begins with the idea of a Czech nation from the end of the 10th century, leading through the activities of Charles IV, the Hussite state reformation, Comenius’ thoughts and their reception by the German enlightenment up to the mainstream of the Czech national revival, and up to Masaryk and Patočka’s philosophical-political considerations. Vlastimil Hála points out the topic “Masaryk and the Moral Significance of Secularism”, first characterizing two of Masaryk’s criticized world-views: conservatism and liberalism. He then confronts Masaryk’s basic idea origin with various aspects of the current situation. Emanuel Pecka and Lubomír Pána in their joint article address “Masaryk’s Realism and the Formation of Czech Political Culture”. They emphasize that Masaryk did not understand the *Czech Question* in a political sense, but as a sociological analysis, and thus formulat-

ed the principles of political realism in these intentions. In the *Czech Question*, Masaryk emphasized education, emotionality, and democratic values as the foundations of a political culture. Vlastimil Zátka, in his article entitled “Masaryk’s Idea of an Enlightened Humanism (Herder, Rousseau, Kant) and His Critique of Romantic Historiography”, deals with the relationship between Masaryk’s concept of enlightened humanism and his critique of the romantic historiography of Czech history of the 19th century. Humanism and the “humane idea”, in Masaryk’s concept, served as a heuristic guideline in the search for a higher metaphysical “meaning” of Czech history. Aleš Prázný presents the topic “The World Politics of a Small Nation: The Czech Question as an Educational Task”, focusing on Masaryk’s concept of democracy as the heiress of the humanist ideals of Western humanity. These ideals, according to Masaryk, are based on antique philosophy, Christianity, and the Enlightenment. Prázný shows that to Masaryk, democracy is a task that has not yet been fully realized, and therefore upbringing and education are the primary political task in Masaryk’s view. Jan Svoboda, in his article “The Idea Origins of Masaryk’s *Czech Question* and their Actualization”, emphasizes Masaryk’s original ideological sources, especially his specific approach to conceptualizing Plato and traditional positivism. Masaryk’s realism, growing up from the permanent tension of a benefiting subject and the co-reflexive reflection of the givenness of the objective order of things, leads to a concept of a “real ethic” – the ethic of everyday life, which, in its highest manifestations, becomes the coveted guarantor of all positive practice. Michal Kotrba turns to “The Nature of Masaryk’s Ideas”, showing that Masaryk worked predominantly with an enlightened (psychological) concept of ideas. This, however, contradicts the eternity of ideas from the perspective of Masaryk’s personal beliefs. According to Kotrba, therefore, Masaryk’s two concepts of ideas are revealed: eternal and hypothetical (regulatory), as is a dual theism (personal belief and scientific hypothesis). This contradiction is perceived in terms of the dynamics of Masaryk’s spiritual search and the struggles of faith, taking into account his rejection of a morally unencumbered subjectivism. Róbert Stojka presents for consideration “Patočka’s Critique of Masaryk’s Philosophy of Czech

History”, which he considers on two levels: in the *historical-political* and *philosophical*. He focuses on Patočka’s critique of the continuity of the significance of history as a humanitarian ideal, the connection of positivism and the religious basis of Masaryk’s philosophy, which Patočka does not accept from his position in the historically open sense. Michal Trčka, in his article “The Social Question and Spirit of Enlightenment in T. G. Masaryk’s *Czech Question*” highlights Masar’s emphasis on the necessity of resolving the social question. The author addresses the relevance of this question given the re-evaluation of the development of the application of human rights, specific social policies, the current form of dominant neo-liberalism, and the realness of being directed towards the ideals of humanity. Jiří Vogel focuses on the theme of “Masaryk and Hus – Masaryk’s Interpretation of Hus’ Ecclesiology in the Context of Human Ideals” and contemplates Jan Hus in Masaryk’s concept of religion in the context of Masaryk’s concept of Czech history as well as of Masaryk’s interpretation of Hus’ doctrine of the Church. It is an attempt to place the figure of Jan Hus into Masaryk’s concept of religion, point out the context of Masaryk’s grasp of Hus’ contribution to the significance of Czech history, and, in particular, to assess Masaryk’s interpretation of Hus’ doctrine of the Church. Kateřina Šimáčková thematizes “Solidarity as an Ethical Command”, considering the usability of the ideas of the *Czech Question* at the beginning of the 21st century, especially with regard to Masaryk’s approach to the social question.

The last, *philosophical-historical*, part, opens with an article by Erika Lalíková entitled “Shocks of Humanity, or Shocks by Humanity?”. The author draws from Kollár and Masaryk and contemplates the timeliness of humanity in today’s changing Europe. Milan Znoj addresses the topic “The Czech Question and the Political Idea of the Federation”. It revises the idea of the *Czech Question* as a source of non-political politics and focuses on the concept of the federation, which is crucial for the Czech question. It emphasizes that for Masaryk, the demand for federalization becomes an internal condition for national emancipation. It is precisely the European federation of democratic nations that becomes a condition for the political freedom of the Czech nation. Martin Profant, in “The Czech

Nation in Masaryk's *Czech Question*", focuses on Masaryk's solution to the relationship of democratic citizenship and a pre-politically given nation. He rejects the solution by means of a sovereign nation state and shows the circuit of Masaryk's reflections on the Czech nation at the time of the *Czech Question* as distinctly different from the transformations of the concept of the nation in *The World Revolution* and occasional statements during the period of the First Republic. It presents the individual motifs of Masaryk's ethical conception of the state with the key concepts of conscious love, the ideal conscience of the nation, and the significance of national history. Petr Hlaváček, in his article "Czechs and their 'European Question': Contexts, Trends, Controversies" deals with, in addition to the "Czech question", our "European question", whose initiative figures also included Masaryk. During the dynamic "thirty years" of 1918-1948, the concepts of New Europe, Pan-Europe, respectively Contemplation of the Czech (Czechoslovak) role in Europe, Central Europe and the geopolitical dichotomy of West-East were fundamental topics of local discourse. Jiří Pechar, in his text entitled "On Masaryk's Concept of the Significance of Czech History", deals with the role that Masaryk's personality played in Czech society, when it created a basis for the question of the meaning of Czech history. A certain transformation in Masaryk's attitude to the problem of suicide is also mentioned, as are the questions that arise from his concept of World War I as a world revolution. Lenka Suchomelová-Žehrová's article presents "The Czech Question in the Polemic of Václav Havel and Milan Kundera". This is a polemic from the turn of the years 1968-1969 on the role of the Czech nation in world politics, on the status of a small nation among larger nations, on the attitude towards Czech history and implicitly on history as a whole, and on the significance of the Prague Spring of 1968. The author summarizes this polemic and supplements it with her views on the same topics concerning Patočka, Masaryk, and Pekař. Jiří Olšovský updates "Masaryk's Czech Question at the Beginning of the 21st Century". He states that Masaryk, in his time, found the possibility of rebirth in a return to the sources of our national life. Even today, this is nothing more than breathing a new impetus into national life. Marie L. Neudorflová, in her article entitled "The Po-

litical Roots of Masaryk's Philosophy of Czech History", asks what led Masaryk, as a non-historian, to start addressing Czech history. In the background stands the adoption of the Enlightenment concept of the "philosophy of history" and the conviction that efforts to improve the condition of human existence were a natural but often suppressed part of human existence. Kateřina Šolcová, in her essay "Karafiát's Response to the *Czech Question*", deals with the critical reaction of the Protestant priest Jan Karafiát to Masaryk's concept of Czech history. Karafiát consistently reminded Czech Protestants that their mission is primarily spiritual, that true leadership of a nation is not a political but a religious task. This was related to Karafiát's subsequent criticism of the ideas of liberal theology, which, according to Šolcová, Masaryk was the disseminator of in the Czech environment. Jiří Pintner analyzes "The Crisis of Modern Man in the Work of T. G. Masaryk" and points out that Masaryk dealt with crisis his entire life and that this topic determined the direction and method of his efforts. The theme of crisis, namely the crisis of modern man, is also significantly present in the *Czech Question*. Even though it was developed especially against the backdrop of national revival, Masaryk still always had the general human problem in mind. Jan Květina focuses on the topic of "Masaryk's Interpretation of Messianism: The Polish Question as an Alternative Purpose of National Existence", analyzing Masaryk's relationship to Polish messianism, towards whose principles Masaryk implicitly expressed. His evaluation, especially of Mickiewicz's and Krasieński's thinking, offers the opportunity to reflect on the underlying context of the Czech and Polish questions. Jana Stejskalová, in her article, addresses the Comenius topic of "Comenius, Masaryk, and their Humanitarian Ideals". She reminds that both Comenius and Masaryk worked diligently to unite and bring mankind together and to remedy the moral conditions of the entire world, with their "instructions" coinciding in many respects. The goal, towards which they both tirelessly strove, was the union of humanity in love and peace. Everyone, then, must be involved in the process of remediation, without distinction.