

Summary

Masaryk's realism and philosophy of positivism

There are many similarities to be found between a positivist approach and Masaryk's realism, but there are also many fundamental differences which simply can not be identified and classified without a more substantial exploration of the individual stages of development of Masaryk's thinking. This can be demonstrated in the extremely different statements among leading positivist researchers which evaluate Masaryk's philosophical position as well as of those philosophically oriented otherwise. In order to critically assess to what degree Masaryk's positivist approach is faithful to the traditional form of this school of thought, or whether his realism basically signifies a peculiar ideological stance that can be understood as Masaryk's legacy to modern Czech philosophical thinking, it was methodically necessary to approach the present study comparatively, specifically, in relation to the positivist approach with which Masaryk had the need to deal with the most thoroughly in the course of his intellectual development: the philosophy of Auguste Comte.

The present study points out certain fundamental differences between Comte's and Masaryk's conception of reality. The first major difference lies in their different noetic basis, despite Masaryk's active promotion of Comte's thinking and of the related English and French thinkers who always represented the possibility of moving away from the one-sided dependence on German intellectual resources and connecting to the wider world ideological stream. Comte approaches reality in a sensualistic and empirical manner; Masaryk remains a rationalist. This principled finding is already significantly reflected in Masaryk's "Fundamentals of Concrete Logic". Even though the classification of sciences was one of the major philosophical and scientific issues that Masaryk dealt with throughout his life, Masaryk surpasses Comte in emphasizing particular sciences and refining the relationships between individual sciences and the categories. This is presently confirmed by the numerous critical comments on the inadequacy

of Comte's noetic foundation which Masaryk mainly associates with a criticism of Comte's materially linear scale, respectively with his phenomenalism. The specificity and critical legacy for future generations of Czech philosophers lies in the principle position and the realistic objective of the book. This Concrete Logic should bring us to the last ontological bases – *to the things themselves*. Masaryk's own philosophical approach brings us to the essence of these things (for us), striving for an understanding of their meaning and value. In his concept of a scientific system, Masaryk is a culmination of "real scientific metaphysics" which Comte, from the principle of his philosophical attitudes, categorically rejects.

In this context, then, also it becomes clear why, when solving the problem of causality, Masaryk not follow Hume's psychological concept, and why he considered the method of probability (which Comte already described as "algebraic mania") to be an effective tool. Masaryk does not rule out the scope of habit, but suggests that causality in principle is not psychologically conditioned. The causal connection is always rational and logically justified. According to Masaryk, we first contemplate (observe) a necessary connection which the concept presents to us as a comprehensive functional unit. In this it resembles Brentano, who refuses to perceive Hume's understanding of cause and effect as two separate, time-consecutive events. Brentano approaches it from an Aristotelian concept of causal effect which has a certain temporal duration. In other words, because the cause and the effect last simultaneously, they establish a necessary connection, respectively a principled relationship (relational continuity) which can be understood as a unifying concept of *function*. Masaryk's logical and philosophical effort to overcome the classical mechanistic model of causality simultaneously recalls the philosophical efforts of Johann Friedrich Herbart (also a school of thought driving Czech philosophy in the 60's and 80's) with whose teachings Masaryk first encountered during his years in Vienna and later in Leipzig. Herbart, in the spirit of his realism, relativizes the concept of cause and effect in that he sees it as a complex of causes and a complex of effects, i.e. that the condition of change is not a causal nexus between cause and effect, but is a relationship of summarized cause and effect where none of the causes

occur in isolation; no reason is therefore alone, but contains within itself other contexts. Herbart's concept is therefore referred to as mechanical functionalism.

Herbart's claim, however, that the content of feeling is an intellectual activity, i.e. that feelings and will both emerge as somehow secondarily from a mutual interaction of ideas, is of course rejected by Masaryk. Like Hume, he approaches it from a primacy of emotion, which has a significant implication for Masaryk's concept of ethics or practical philosophy. It is precisely in a further theoretical-cognitive context (with Concrete Logic and especially with its later addition in the clarifying article "On the Classification of Sciences") that we find direct evidence of the peculiarly conceived new (descriptive) theory of the court in ethics that comes from a rationalist and, in the spirit of its concretism, a directed notion of faith or the conviction of the judge. Despite the actual residue or yield of this specific non-predicative concept of the ethical court, it does not appear in an Augustinian consequent sense in general, let alone (relative to conventional immediate experience) meaninglessly. Masaryk does not understand value as something that is a principle part of the structure of the universe that could be converted (reduced) in the last practical consequence and subsequently as a positive residue identified with being. In this he resembles Brentano who, in his specific creative way, proceeds along the path of a rigorous logical analysis of statements without even primarily questioning the adequacy of evidence and existence. Masaryk, however, also approaches it from a sociological analysis, i.e. in terms of general (hierarchical) necessity, but also from his sense for concretism, favoring socially oriented and a strictly ethical conducted *life* (public) as its creative dynamic component. Masaryk's "intellectual" or moderately rationalist conception of ethics must therefore provide a realistic, thus actual, positive basis for our participation in everyday social life, the essence of which is faith or a belief in a permanently lived and concrete implementation of the idea of humanity which, in its most authentic and most proven functional political form, is found in democracy as a coveted possibility of a new epoch of history, to consistently and responsibly work for one's fellow man, for the good of all.

Another significant difference appears in Comte's and Masaryk's concept of crisis. Crisis, according to them, is based primarily on a lack of consensus in society, on the inability to effectively satisfy the necessary harmony between the primary objectives of "spiritual" power and the needs of the rest of society. While both believe that social progress lies in the spread of scientific knowledge, they conclude that scientific knowledge alone is not enough to overcome the crisis, but it is necessary to introduce a new religion of humanity. Their visions, of course, are diametrically opposed. In order to consistently develop and programmatically cultivate a positivist morality, Comte's vision of the organization of a positive church in the service of the state formally takes over the cult power structure of the Roman Catholic Church with its typical hierarchy. This, however, is not a religious vision that holds to the Christian creed of revelation. God is replaced by the "Great Being" (*Grand-Être*), which we, as a summary of all humanity, should adore. Masaryk professes belief in a personal God, whom he considers a genuine moral bearer and guarantor of our humanity. He does not seek to create any church organization. He seeks personal faith in emotion, with an emphasis on conscience. He is concerned with personal religious beliefs, a personal rationally justified truth, a moral and responsible sense of life of each individual. Masaryk, then, unlike Comte, does not perceive crisis solely as an objective phenomenon that can be explained from a global developmental legality (stage law). Masaryk conceives crisis primarily as a crisis of the subject, i.e. in the personal-individual sense. Crisis is basically the indecision of each individual, the inability to act in a situation which we did not create, a situation which has its objective component but for which each of us is still responsible.

The philosophical approaches of Auguste Comte and T. G. Masaryk are fundamentally different in their perception of the philosophy of history. Comte was faced with the dismal conditions of post-revolutionary France. He spoke out critically against the French pre-revolutionary philosophy of enlightenment from which the intellectual roots of the French Revolution emerged. He then also spoke out against all the core ideological slogans of the Revolution. For Comte, the rights of man, his freedom, or equality between people are simply meta-

physical abstractions which can never serve as a basis for social order. Individual rights are not an expression of altruism, but are an expression of a malicious personal egoism. The focal point of his concept of politics and religion, therefore, are not rights, but social duties. In this context he also evaluates Protestantism: it brought individualism into society, and therefore runs counter to the creation of a desired positive society (Comte also identifies Protestantism primarily with the pre-revolutionary philosophy – the “delusions of reformation” are a precursor to the metaphysical “sophists and rhetoricians”). Masaryk respected the French Revolution. He was convinced that the roots of democracy, i.e. liberty and equality, grow in the Czech sense from the Hussite movement, primarily from its radical component and, along with the humanistic idea of fraternity, form the legacy of the Czech reformation. Masaryk thus found the origin of the idea of equality in Christianity and associates the idea of freedom (albeit hearkening to the ancient world) with the Hussite reformist effort. He saw global revolution in a culmination of enlightenment emancipation efforts.

All these essential findings that have resulted from the above-indicated comparison of these two thinkers show that Masaryk does not fit into the traditional line of positivist thinkers. They are divided not only by a different approach to solving basic philosophical questions, but also by their specific ideological outcomes.