

DISCUSSION ON NATIONALISM IN THE PHILOSOPHICAL ALMANAC IN 1943

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The aim of the Philosophical Almanac, as the first Slovak journal, was to fill the gap in the cultural life at that time, to bring expert solutions to different philosophical questions, to inform and contact the readers with modern European philosophical streams. The journal also proclaimed the effort to direct not only intellectuals, culture, and science, but also the Slovak nation. The characteristic feature of the Almanac was the plurality of opinions based on different approaches to philosophical work itself, closely connected with the political standpoints of individual authors. The problems discussed in the journal covered the area of closely specified philosophical issues, articles based on natural sciences, philosophy, logic, the history of Slovak philosophy, sociology, psychology, etc.

The most frequent ideological-philosophical themes discussed in the Philosophical Almanac were disputes about nationalism, its ideological and political function and its relation to humanism. The summit of these efforts was the discussion on nationalism published in the third issue of the fourth volume. The reason for its inception was the need to clarify attitudes to nationalism and racism in relation to national views and humanism. The active contributors to this discussion were Professor Dr. A. Jurovský, Dr. A.J. Šurjanský, Dr. A. Hirner and Dr. J. Dieška.

The author gives a review and interpretation of the discussion.

The Philosophical Almanac appeared for the first time in 1940 as a quarterly edited by Matica slovenská (MS). It was published regularly for four years, but the fifth volume contained only three issues. The first editor of the Almanac was Štefan Polakovič who described its aims as follows: “The Philosophical Almanac as an ideological guide of the Slovak nation cannot let in the Trojan horse, with the enemies of the Slovak nation hidden inside: this would be treason to the nation. Anyone who disturbs Slovakia’s Christian tradition, who intends to spread immoral opinions with unpredictable consequences and intends to disseminate philosophical idea causing disintegration within society is a direct or indirect enemy of the nation” (1, 6).

After the establishment of the Philosophical Department of MS on April 30, 1941, the Philosophical Almanac became “the official journal of the Department” and, from December 1941 (or from the third volume of the journal) onwards, Alexander Hirner was appointed editor of the Almanac. According to Andrej

Kopčok, A. Hirner was the initiator and organizer of the criticism of Polakovič's activities in the Philosophical Almanac. In his article (Crooked ways to the plurality of philosophy and knowledge of it published in *Filozofia* 51, 1996, No. 6, p. 401), Kopčok presented the political, philosophical, and ideological objections of A. Hirner against Š. Polakovič. The first concerned Blondel's philosophy, uncritically presented by Polakovič as the most excellent current philosophy. The second objection was directed to Polakovič's attitude towards the criticism published in Philosophical Almanac "Criticism was possible but only ideologically acceptable criticism" (2, 126). The third objection concerned his relation to non-religious philosophy. At first, Christian, or Catholic, philosophy was promoted in the Philosophical Department. "There was quite a variety of opinions inside the mostly religiously motivated philosophy, different degrees of philosophical realism and rationalism, different sociological perspectives as well as a non-uniform support of government ideology relating to e.g. the issues like relation between nationalism and fascism, nationalism and humanism, nationalism and socialism, nationalism and racism, etc. (3, 369). The works of I. Hrušovský, S. Felber, later L. Bakoš, J. Mikleš, etc. as representatives of the so-called lay philosophy brought a change.

More or less hidden propagation of the ideas of the totalitarian fascist regimes was typical of the first two volumes of Philosophical Almanac; however, objectively speaking, the polemic with this ideology was raised, mostly indirectly, emerging particularly in an attempt to connect nationalism and Christian philosophical principles and traditions. Controversies about nationalism, its ideological and political function, its relationship to humanism appeared relatively often in the Philosophical Almanac. In the first volumes mainly reviews on the books of Tiso, Tuka, and Polakovič as well as articles or essays by Š. Polakovič, M. Chladný-Hanoš, A. Jurovský were published. The third volume brought contributions on nationalism and its practical implementation in politics, strictly avoiding the practical side of nationalism. More attention was devoted to the issue of intuitive realism rather than to the above-mentioned questions (which was a signal of the break of the journal with the representatives of the official ideology, who went to *Slovenské pohľady*).

On June 5, 1943, a meeting of the Philosophical Department of MS took place in Nitra. The main topic of the discussion was "Nationalism as ideology". The topics and the theses were submitted by Anton Jurovský (at A. Hirner's instigation). The contributions delivered there are worth noticing and worthy of deeper analysis.

A. Jurovský tried to justify whether and why "nationalism is possible as an ideology, i.e. as part of the worldview of humans, as their personal, practical philosophy with which they are identified, and which therefore determines their thinking and actions" (4, 171). Although nationalism was officially declared as an ideology on the one hand, it raised doubts on the other, particularly (as Jurovský says) among some members of the intelligentsia, who saw the usefulness of nationalism but only as a political slogan, not as an ideology. "...as part of our worldview it is not needed, even incorrect and dangerous. Particularly in connection with the issues of the Jewish

people, war, with sharper interventions on the side of politics or public administration in the life of individual it is pointed out that nationalism is something mean, inhuman, which especially contradicts the principles of Christian worldview” (4, 127). It was precisely these contradictions that stimulated discussion.

Jurovský analysed fairly well the individual concepts with which he worked. He indicated that we face nationalism in two forms, firstly as a programme of political activities – usually of a political party or a group standing against the politics of other parties. The second aspect is the use of nationalism as a political slogan “associating people into political activities in favour of the nation on evidently and consciously national grounds” (4, 196), in contrast to non-nationally or internationally focused programmes. According to the author, nationalism is predetermined, and able to become an ideology. Ideology was understood as a psychological phenomenon.

“Every individual, normally talented, living at a certain cultural level and in normal life conditions creates his/her own worldview throughout his/her life” (4, 170). Although humans accept strange worldviews during their lives, they gradually identify with them, adopt them as their own. He considered this as “subjective philosophy of humans”. In his opinion, it is precisely practical subjective philosophy that is called ideology. He emphasized the principal difference between the worldview as such and subjective philosophy, i.e. between philosophy and ideology. From the philosophical point of view, he placed ideology on a lower level than a philosophical worldview, he even argued that a certain way of thought is possible merely as ideology, not as a worldview, other ideologies can complement or specify the worldview. They can never develop into an independent philosophical worldview. If inner conflict arises between the theoretical worldview and the ideology – according to which particular individuals live – this, in a better case, could lead to hypocrisy, in the worse case, to mental abnormality.

These initial considerations led the author to the essence of the problem. He submits his opinions as a starting point for discussion. “1. Nationalism as an ideology is not only possible, but also necessary for the behaviour of an individual, of larger social groups as well as the whole human society in practical life” (4, 172). We have already said how Jurovský understood the concepts of nationalism and ideology. There are various ideologies (class, association, social, artistic...), from which he inferred that it is absolutely obvious that ideology is formed with the “givens” of the nation. He characterized the category of “nation” according to W. Hellpach and he took from him four attributes of a nation: nation is a community of people sharing a common origin, language and spirit, and living in a common territory. He maintained that nations are not given of their own accord, they are created on the basis of spatial competencies. “Consciousness” of one’s national identity is not obvious in everybody, humans have to experience it in themselves, and only then can they become part of the nation, and find their place in its worldview. He gives Slovakia as a common example where the individual incorporates the ideology of nationalism into the whole of the – Christian – worldview.

His attitude to the question of whether nationalism is needed as ideology was positive. He explained it by his opinion that “in an appropriately built national ideology, the human spiritual structure is provided with a very important element which is denoted as sociability or the social feature in human character” (4, 173). If this element were absent, humans would not be able suppress their tendencies towards egoism, own utilitarianism and coordination of their interests with the interests of society would not be possible. The author considered that this social feature made nationalism necessary. If the idea of nationalism is correctly understood and if humans are identified with it, they are able to direct their action within the area of social phenomena “towards higher aspirations and towards services in favour of the whole”. Nationalism is a moral challenge to the individual which enhances the moral standard and human dignity as well as the social groups existing within a nation” (4, 175).

The objection to which Jurovský reacted unambiguously, concerns the harmfulness of nationalism within international relations. In contrast to opponents, he saw in nationalism the best device regulating the coexistence of several nations. It is difficult to agree with his opinion that at the time when humankind had not yet reached the level of nations, there was much more hatred and wars among families and tribes than among conscious nations... We see particularly in nations organized into states how careful is their approach to the issue of war; war being more or less the last instrument for the defence of the nation’s being, that wars among nations are never waged just for the pleasure of the tribal chief or because of the personal craving of a tribal prince or king for fame as they often were in the Middle Ages... Even a sort of humanization of wars occurs when wars are waged by nations and not by tribes or kings” (4, 176).

The second approach from which he inferred his contemplations, is the argument that nationalism as an ideology is found in “all actual nations in the past and at present” (4, 176). The first signs of nationalistic ideology were observable as early as among the Greeks and the Romans, but “the evident beginning” dates back to the period of the enlightenment. “Only at that time did the majority of European nations become clearly mature as nations and their national ideology was clearly created, and began to urge them on to great common deeds” (3, 177). Our national ideology was formed towards the end of the 18th century. According to Jurovský, its result is that it helped us achieve national freedom and state sovereignty. This is only part of the positive asset: national awareness and growth in the national consciousness of the Slovak people is important. Jurovský denounced the voices of those who argued that nationalism is something mean and immoral, belonging to the family of proverbial contemptible “isms”.

The third and final question is concerned with the argument that nationalism as an ideology does not contradict the Christian worldview. The ideology of nationalism determines “thinking, feeling, and desire of humans with respect to the “givens” of a nation, with respect to the relation of an individual to the nation as

a whole, the relation to members of one's own nation and other nations, with respect to labour and enterprise leading to the preservation and promotion of the nation in political, cultural, economic, social, etc. areas" (4, 178). Nationalism is not a worldview, but Christianity is. Within the Christian worldview it is possible to speak about nationalistic ideology, as a sort of supplement. Christianity as a worldview is not based on the nation, but it does not deny it either. According to the author, there is no place in our history where national ideology would contradict Christian worldview. If somebody would attack nationalism, he/she would make place and space for "anational" ideologies, which, according to Jurovský, included liberalism, socialism, communism. This is the theoretical side of the particular question. In the opinion of the author, no example of collisions between nationalism and the Christian worldview are encountered in practice. Nationalism allegedly makes Christians into people of "high character and unprecedented moral value in terms of both their religion and their nation" (4, 179).

In conclusion, Jurovský warned against anti-national ideologies and he set the task of propagating, promoting, and nurturing nationalism as a primary task of the Christian worldview.

In his monograph, A. Hirner reproached Jurovský for his underestimation of the expected standard of discussion and extemporizing his presentation in terms of the contributions from volumes I and III of the Philosophical Almanac. He alerted to the fact that Jurovský's and Šurjanský's "contributions to discussion published in the third issue of volume IV of Philosophical Almanac were reworked versions of the contributions actually delivered" (2, 134).

Anton Ján Šurjanský joined the discussion with his contribution "Patriotism as a constituent part of the worldview". Like the preceding author, he began with the definition of basic concepts, arguing with Jurovský's opinion. The word ideology was defined as "a summary of ideas which create an outlook on a certain section of values as a basis and, in a sense, also as a driving force for a certain way of action" (6, 180). He did not consider ideology to be something less valuable than a philosophical worldview, he did not agree with the practical philosophy of man. The difference between ideology and worldview consists, in his opinion, in the extent and the contents. Ideology is usually confined to a narrower section of the life of things and phenomena. However, both have to be based on true and reliable ideas. We cannot say that an ideology would finally be "less valuable" than a worldview, but rather non-integral and incomplete, usually covering the narrower region of the values of life. All this led the author to his definition of "patriotism as a constituent part of the worldview" (6, 178).

Šurjanský's propensity to dissociate himself from extreme manifestations of the Slovak nationalism is evident. The word patriotism seems to him more proper than nationalism, which he, like M. Chladný-Hanoš, characterized as active love of nation. In the concept of nationalism he saw personification of a state-political movement, which places the cultural and material welfare of one's own nation on

a pedestal of values to the detriment of other nations and to the detriment of higher non-material values. In his approach, the position of this concept has recently been discredited. He introduced the concept of patriotism and he also used it in his work. Although he eliminated the question what is nation from the discussion, he defined Slovak patriotism as “active love of the Slovak nation, the community of people, which we, Slovaks, regard as our nation” (6, 182). He built the active love of nation on solid foundations of stimulating, determining, even apologizing ideas. He labelled the summary of these ideas the ideology of patriotism.

The core of this study is a reaction to the questions raised during the discussion. He strictly refused negotiation about totalitarian nationalism. He primarily proved the presence of patriotism as an ideology in all real nations in the past and at present. The first nation, where one can speak about patriotism is that of the Hebrews (he relies on Ricciotti, A. Gottfred). He argues that national consciousness in ancient nations, like Egyptians, Babylonians, Greeks, Romans was attenuated (in contrast to Jurovský, who saw the first real signs of nationalism in the Romans and Greeks). The period of the Enlightenment witnessed a turn by 180 degrees: the idea of nationalism came significantly to the fore. But, according to Šurjanský, only the last decades raised an urgent need for transforming the “national” (and state!) idea into a more concrete shape, a stronger structure, which would correspond to the existential structure of Slovakness” (6, 184).

Šurjanský agreed with Jurovský’s thesis that correctly understood patriotism as an ideology is possible and useful. He studied the issue of the need, elevated it to moral necessity, following from the normal life cycle of human society, which brings individuals and the whole society various rights and obligations, law and order, which have to be respected.

He considered patriotism to be natural for the individual as a member of society on the one hand but, on the other, he tried to prove its complexity. It does not contain only rational but also irrational – emotional components, which often complicate it. Elimination of either of them is impossible, it would be negatively reflected on the attitude of humans.

The whole study confirms efforts to support patriotism by Christian ethics. There is no doubt that Šurjanský as theologian based his attitude on neotomism going on to the solution of problems raised. He pointed to the primary role of Christian education, thanks to which we can approach an ideal of pure humanity, which is of particular importance to patriotic ideology. He warned, however, against a wrong understanding of this issue, which might result in chauvinism. In contrast to Jurovský, he submitted a vision of a time when the national view would be overcome by the universal, of course, historically recognizing difference in nationalities, which he placed higher. However, he left to the divine will, when and how would this happen.

He felt the need to introduce patriotism as an ideology in the position of a necessary, vital agent in the life of nations and individuals, applying it to the Slovak nation. He underlined the importance of the development of material, but particu-

larly spiritual needs, science, the arts – applied to the Slovak situation – enriched by the Slovak spirit and Slovak national traditions. He alerted to the shortage of original Slovak scientific works, which would specify and could help to solve weaknesses of the Slovak national character.

As it is evident that the nation and also national consciousness are natural “givens”, national ideology, which reflects the life of the nation as a whole, is also natural. “The Nation and its corresponding ideology has its right and place in each worldview, i.e. also in Christianity” (6,189).

God is the creator of nations, national values, national feelings and thought. He controls them, elevates them and builds supernatural values on them. He perceives patriotism as a virtue to all intents and purposes.

Šurjanský pointed out that in Christian ethics, and not only therein, little attention is paid to the issue of moral justification and the commitment of patriotism. This is well-known since the overwhelming majority of sovereign nations have their state structure. The differentiation between nation and country is more or less alien to them. But it is very important to such a small nation such as the Slovaks, who had been governed by other nations and had no independent state structure of their own for centuries.

Too much influence of nationalism, overestimation of the limits of its destination and moral order can be harmful. The promotion of positives, priorities and rights, giving preference to the particular position of one nation over the others brings more harm than good. It leads to a sort of destruction, not excluding the fact that it contradicts the principles of Christian morals. This property is, according to him, alien to the Slovaks. In spite of all this, the author mentions it and warns against it.

Šurjanský had to face the problem of moral justification or non-justification of the national liberation struggle. His two basic principles were:

a) the state does not have the right to suppress any of its nations.

b) Every individual or community (nation, family) has the right and sometimes also the duty to defend themselves, if necessary, even by force, against the violence of those who violate their natural inalienable rights. In such cases military resistance can be used, which, of course, contradicts the author’s conviction, since it is the most extreme solution. A number of factors should be taken into account, which might reverse such a status, constantly bearing in mind the laws of Christian ethics.

The placing of the national values against religious ones confirms insufficient religious and moral education and often also the egoism of an individual. The question of the sacrifice of either the faith or the nation is, according to the author, philosophical and theological nonsense. It could only arise in the case of brutal persecution of the religious faith or of nationalities. Here, however, according to him, it is better to sacrifice one’s life or in a better case property.

The true significance and mission of the patriotic ideology consists, then, in the fact that “national values are homogeneously ranked in the realm of other values

created by God. Therefore, they also have their existential justification in the Christian worldview, where they play an important role in implementing the law to the neighbour” (6, 192). Šurjanský tried to reach harmony between patriotism and universality, of course within the framework of a Christian worldview. He perceived the question more ethically than politically.

“Some remarks on nationalism as an ideology from the perspective of sociology” is the title of the shortest contribution to the mentioned discussion by Alexander Hirner. He disagreed with Jurovský’s thesis on the necessity to define nationalism as an ideology in terms of Jurovský’s presentation at the very beginning. He pointed out that it is necessary to understand nationalism as “one of the principles of sociability, which are secondary as principles, i.e. as a way selected by humankind for applying the principles of good, justice, truth and universal welfare in human society” (7, 193). Nationalism as a form of sociability occurs, in his opinion, between the two poles – from subconscious feelings of sympathy, trust, affection, etc., through the quoted slogan and the passively accepted practical consequences to the conscious targeting and programming in terms of self-sacrifice in favour of the nation.

His main problem, however, was the question of what characterizes nationalism as an ideology, what are its advantages and disadvantages in comparison with other ideologies. He subscribed to the opinion that socialistic ideology is often stronger than nationalistic ideology. The concept of socialism was evoked by the system which requires restriction of liberalism and guarantees equal rights to welfare also in the issues relating to private property. He was convinced that the Slovak question in the first Czechoslovak Republic was mainly of a social and socialistic character and the events at the turn of 1938 and 1939 were the reaction of the exploited people to the social injustice of the ruling power.

Hirner considered nationalism to some extent as a kind of egoism. Although it socializes a particular group of individuals (which he considered a heritage taken over by nationalism from other -isms), it remains at the level of the particular interests of a certain group which often contradicts the interests and realities of other nations or nationalities. He highlighted the necessity of a regulator within universal interests, which would direct national individuals. He disagreed, however, with the opinion that it should be the rule of one nation.

In the thesis on the possibility of the existence of nationalism as an ideology in the Christian worldview, he pointed to the equivocalness in defining concepts, their complexity, the coexistence of anti-Christian accompanying phenomena which can also occur in nationalism, e.g. chauvinism.

He emphasized that nationalism is mainly “the principle of sociability and that it occurs in cases where it is merely subconsciously experienced, to advanced characters, where it appears as a conscious regulator of individual thought, feeling, and action. Human life emanates, and we thank this form for realization of such phenomena as: speech, habits, customs, the arts, culture, and political difference. Socialism, communism, liberalism or, if we want to speak about the amendment of the relation be-

tween the individual and society: individualism, collectivism, and universalism (which is the system of K. Diehl in his work "Der Einzelne und die Gemeinschaft", 1940) follow other principles, which, in view of the fullness of human life are parallel with the principle of nationalism" (7, 195). A comparison of principles, and finding which of them is stronger is only possible on a scientific basis.

He concluded that nationalism as ideology is ethically possible, necessary and useful as part of the Christian worldview; it helps to implement "phenomena, speech, variety of habits, the arts, culture, politics, etc.", necessary for active life within a society.

The following idea of Jozef Dieška as expressed in 1946 and cited below, might serve as the motto of the last contribution to the discussion on nationalism in the Philosophical Almanac entitled Philosophical principles of nationalism: "Political power and thus everyone, who, on its behalf, would like to channel violently the development of Slovak philosophy in some direction or other, should be prepared to face the organized resistance of Slovak philosophy which always understands its mission as apolitical, universal service to the spirit and the truth" (8, 278). According to Dieška, the basic characteristic of Slovak philosophy is its national background, it had always been in the forefront of problem solving closely associated with nation. That was the reason for Dieška's joining the discussion; he was convinced that philosophy could positively contribute to an efficient remedy where it is required.

Nationalism was discredited owing to some political regimes: it became a norm, an aim, and meaning of life as a whole. "Conflict of ideas which simultaneously evokes an exclusive or totalitarian understanding of nationalism, presses down on the soul of each impartially thinking human, and still more on individual philosophical thinking" (9, 196). This problem cannot be solved in a purely philosophical manner, cooperation with empirical sciences such as sociology, psychology, social psychology, ethnic sciences, etc. is necessary. However, the role of philosophy, the new philosophy of the nation, society, and state, in particular, is irreplaceable. Its standpoints are derived from the above disciplines, solving conflicts which are caused by differing understandings of the nation or patriotism.

The concept of the nation is not abstract, it has a corresponding characteristic feature in the concrete world, although definitions differ. But it remains indisputable that nation is a real "given" evoking some tendencies. Their summary is called nationalism, patriotism. There are various national tendencies, natural, exclusive, or totalitarian, as well as anationalism.

The role of philosophy is to solve conflicts, seek mistakes, which can emerge when the issue of nationalism is not discussed from the perspective of sociology or psychology, but when it becomes a focus of practical religious, political, and economic ideology. On the basis of the correct philosophy of values coming from the so-called ontological theory of values (each "given" has its value determined by the relation of the particular "givens" to the absolute value as the highest norm of as-

assessment), he places the value to the particular position: “It comes from the individual to nation, then to humankind as an aggregate of humans, and finally, we approach the absolute” (9, 198). As long as we work with the wrong philosophy of values, complications may occur, which Dieška touched in the part devoted to practical applications of the issues in that period.

The influence of foreign ideologies, which often did not interpret the issue of nation properly, stimulated the interest of our scientists and politicians, particularly after 1938. Before 1938, natural nationalism existed in our country as well, some political parties included it in their programmes. The main conflict arose, however, when totalitarian nationalism, which places national values above all others, started to be propagated. According to the Christian attitude, God is at the top of the hierarchy of values. This different understanding of absolute values became a source of conflicts. “The idea of totalitarian nationalism is in cardinal contradiction with Christian worldview and each attempt at reaching a compromise is vain (here I see the roots of the difficulties with preparing the conception of Slovak national socialism)” (9, 199). Dieška characterizes the concept of natural nationalism as an essential constituent of the Christian worldview, its relation to particular areas of life.

The main cause of the negatives, which are brought by nationalism in Slovakia, is the totalitarian or exclusive understanding of practical and theoretical nationalism. He rejects totalitarian nationalism as well as all other ideologies which regard the nation as the highest value.

Dieška ends his contribution with the question of nationalism as social egoism. According to him it is precisely totalitarian or exclusive nationalism with its indisputable feature of national egoism, which leads to chauvinism and racism. He alerted to the fact that it stands on the verge of military conflicts and disagreed with Jurovský’s opinion that there had been more wars before nationalism. He did not see the problem of the lack of national identity of the tribes fighting one against the other in this, but in the fact that the standard of their cultural development was lower.

“Nationalism represents, in our opinion, also the lower level of cultural development as humanity, and therefore, only getting over it in terms of humanity will stop wars” (9, 200). It is wrong to specify the question of war merely as a consequence of national problems. According to Dieška, there was a number of public people in the history of Slovakia who promoted the idea of humanity and nationalism since the higher sense of natural humanism is the Christian ideal of humanity. It is a primary role of all Slovaks to fight against tendencies which would eliminate the enhancement of humanity and Christianity.

A. Hirner and J. Dieška reached the farthest distance (in the above discussion but also in other works published in the Philosophical Almanac and elsewhere). Their contributions are stimulating in many respects, enabling a different look at particular problems from the positions of a modern philosophical approach deprived of the umbilical cord with the then philosophy of the Slovak state.

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