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## Stefan Harassek and the problems of contemporary philosophy

The influence of the national factor on philosophy is expressed in two models of the history of philosophy: the problem-oriented and the culturalist one. The culturalist variety of the history of philosophy includes not only the problems themselves, the ways in which they are solved and the reconstruction of the argumentation, but also the entire cultural context of a given philosophical *oeuvre*. Among factors influencing philosophy, the analysis also includes the national tradition in which the philosopher is situated. A culturalist history of philosophy requires a high degree of cultural competence and erudition. The researcher must be able to show the interrelationships of the various fields of human culture: philosophy, religion, science, literature, and visual arts. Writing a problem-based history of philosophy, on the other hand, requires the researcher to have developed analytical skills.

**Keywords:** Stefan Harassek, history of philosophy, metaphilosophy, nationality, cultural studies

### Introduction

The starting point for the present considerations is a dissertation by the Polish philosopher Stefan Harassek, *Piotr Duhem i Max Scheler o cechach narodowych nauki i filozofii* [Piotr Duhem and Max Scheler on the national characteristics of science and philosophy], published in two parts (in 1931 and 1932) in “Kwartalnik Filozoficzny” [Philosophical Quarterly], published in Kraków. It is immediately worth noting that the main issue of this dissertation was also subsequently undertaken by Harassek in the context of Bronisław Trentowski’s radical ‘national’ philosophy.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> S. Harassek, *Trentowski o filozofii narodów europejskich* [w:] tegoż, *Filozofia a ethnos*, foreword by S. Symotiuk, Wyd. UMCS, Lublin 1994, s. 99–196.

The problems addressed in the dissertation have not lost their relevance, which is because two fundamental concepts still clash over the influence of the national factor on philosophy. The first is of Enlightenment provenance, according to which, reason – philosophical reason, the reason of science – discovers the existence of universal laws. This concept assumes that it is possible to have a cognition that acquires results that are universally valid, and that the national factor in science is just a sediment, a sludge that only obscures the lens of the researcher. The second conception – which may be called Romantic, as it was most developed in this era – considers the national element as a positive multiplier of cognition. Ethnos here is a point of view similar to the stance taken during a conversation by an impressive debater. We do not disregard what the discussant wants to say; on the contrary, we are intrigued, curious, willing to ask questions and to discuss. More than that, the national factor is, in this conception, a kind of moral resource that motivates, supports and enriches a cognizing person and determines the uniqueness of their point of view. In more recent philosophy, the above issues have resurfaced in the argument between liberals and communitarians, especially in its section on historical explanation and moral resources.<sup>2</sup>

After presenting Harassek's views and showing the sources of the arguments, I will try to show their relevance for contemporary philosophical discussions. Already at this point I will signal that they are taken into consideration in disciplines such as the sociology of knowledge and the methodology of the history of philosophy. Sociology of knowledge examines the social conditions of human knowledge by analysing the relationship between the conditions of knowledge production and its content, and attempts to establish the conditions that generate certain types of thinking. The detailed analyses of the sociology of knowledge include the mentality of the epoch or social strata, the dominant ideologies and ways of thinking, and the tendencies of people to explain phenomena in one way rather than in another.<sup>3</sup>

Close to the sociology of knowledge is the social history of knowledge. It investigates the relationship between types of knowledge, including philosophy, and the social contexts of their birth and impact. It shows what types of environments, cities, institutions (e.g. universities, Scottish clubs or French salons) generate the emergence of certain types of thinking and philosophising, including forms and styles of scientific and philosophical writing. It differs from the

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<sup>2</sup> Zob. W.M. Nowak, *Spór o nowoczesność w poglądach Charlesa Taylora i Alasdaira MacIntyre'a*, Wyd. Uniwersytetu Rzeszowskiego, Rzeszów 2008, s. 56–84.

<sup>3</sup> Zob. R. Sojak, *Paradoks antropologiczny. Socjologia wiedzy jako perspektywa ogólnej teorii społeczeństwa*, Wyd. Uniwersytetu Wrocławskiego, Wrocław 2004. Zob. także *Mocny program socjologii wiedzy*, ed. B. Barnes, D. Bloor, Wyd. IFiS PAN, Warsaw 1993.

sociology of knowledge in its greater emphasis on showing real historical events and processes in their specificity rather than seeking regularities in social processes.<sup>4</sup> Another important context for the study of the history of philosophy is the history of science.<sup>5</sup> It is known that the links between experimental science and philosophy were particularly strong in the early modern period.<sup>6</sup> In this context, it seems interesting to examine the relationship of philosophy to institutions, including especially universities and research institutes.<sup>7</sup> Finally, a broad context of reference for the history of philosophy is constituted by the history of ideas. This contentious discipline, inaugurated in the 1940s in the USA by A. O. Lovejoy, deals with the study of ideas by extracting them from a variety of cultural texts, without preference for philosophical texts.<sup>8</sup>

### Stefan Harassek and his research method

Stefan Harassek was a historian of philosophy from Kraków. He was born on 28 September 1890. His father, Henryk Harassek, was a lawyer and held the position of a judge; his mother's name was Stefania Mydlarska. He took his maturity exam at St. Jacek Gymnasium in Kraków in 1909, and then studied philosophy at Jagiellonian University; in the meantime, he spent a year at university in Vienna. He belonged to the milieu of young people gathered around Ignacy Chrzanowski, a Polish philologist, who persuaded Harassek to study 19th-century Polish philosophy. This is where Harassek found inspiration for his doctoral thesis entitled *Kant w Polsce przed 1830 r.* [Kant in Poland before 1830], defended in 1915 and published in Kraków a year later. Ten years after receiving his doctoral degree, he published a monograph entitled *Józef Gołuchowski. Zarys życia i twórczości* [Józef Gołuchowski. An outline of life and works] and in 1925 completed the process of habilitation at the Jagiellonian University. Subsequently, at his home university, he gave lectures on the history of philosophy from 1926 to 1939, as well as classes in secondary schools in Kraków. On 6 November 1939, he was arrested by the Germans during a meet-

<sup>4</sup> P. Burke, *Spoleczna historia wiedzy*, transl. A. Kunicka, Aletheia, Warsaw 2016; zob. także R. Bod, *Historia humanistyki. Zapomniane nauki*, transl. R. Pucek, Aletheia, Warsaw 2013.

<sup>5</sup> Ch. van Doren, *A History of Knowledge*, Ballantine Books, New York 1992.

<sup>6</sup> *The Rise of Scientific Europe 1500–1800*, ed. by D. Goodman, C.A. Russell, Hodder & Stoughton, London 1991.

<sup>7</sup> D.W.F. Hamlyn, *Being a Philosopher. The History of a Practice*, Routledge, New York and London 1994.

<sup>8</sup> J. Cabaj, *A.O. Lovejoya filozofia i koncepcja historii idei*, Wyd. UMCS, Lublin 1989. In Baltimore at Johns Hopkins University, Lovejoy founded – together with Ch. Boas and G. Chinnard – the History of Ideas Club and “the Journal of the History of Ideas”.

ing between professors of the Jagiellonian University and the occupation authorities in Kraków and deported to the Sachsenhausen concentration camp. He returned from there in February 1940 and hid in Pilzno near Tarnów until 1945, being involved in secret teaching. After the liberation of Kraków, he resumed work at the Jagiellonian University, but soon moved from there to Lublin, where a new university was being established. At the Maria Curie-Skłodowska University, he headed the Department of Philosophy, and also lectured at the Catholic University of Lublin. In 1946, he was appointed full professor at the UMCS. He died in Lublin on 7 December 1952.

Harassek's research interests concerned the history of German philosophy (Kantianism) and the history of Polish philosophy. His German interests primarily concerned Kantianism; the Polish ones – the reaction of Enlightenment circles to the subjectivist consequences of Kantianism, and then the efforts of Polish national thought to resist the Pan-Germanism of neo-Kantian currents. Speaking of philosophy practised in Poland, Harassek deplored the “cult of foreign thought” prevailing in our country. The practicalism of Polish philosophy is striking: its focus on the problems of current social and political life. This feature is related to the existence of the Polish nation and state, which has been constantly threatened throughout history. The decayed and destroyed institutions and structures of this life had to be constantly rebuilt, and philosophy was used for this restorative role.

Let us look at the method of the Polish researcher. The author starts from an analysis of the content of concepts. Already at the beginning of his dissertation, Harassek considers the problem of the psyche of the nation.<sup>9</sup> National traits are brought out in individuals primarily by war, while in ordinary, peaceful times – the traits imprinted in people by their professions; after all, according to Nietzsche, one's profession is “the backbone of life”. Therefore: “we could certainly discover more traits in common in philosophers of all nations than we would discover in individuals of all professions and states of one nation” (transl. from Polish).<sup>10</sup> Following Müller-Freienfels, Harassek, in turn, assumes that the influence of time on the human psyche and on philosophy is stronger than the national factor. Hence, the philosophy of all European nations in the 18th century had more in common than French philosophy in the 13th and 17th centuries.

The importance of Harassek's reflections also lies in the raising of new momentous questions: he poses a whole series of them with reference to German authors – H. Leisegang, P. Barth, K. Jaspers, P. Wundt. Does the psyche of the

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<sup>9</sup> On the ontology of community, see M.M. Bogusławski, *Humanistyka z perspektywy ontologii kulturowej*, University of Lodz Publishing House, Łódź 2018, s. 87–115.

<sup>10</sup> S. Harassek, *Piotr Duhem i Max Scheler o cechach narodowych nauki i filozofii* [w:] tegoż, *Filozofia a ethnos*, s. 19.

nation imprint its influence only on philosophy or also on the specific sciences? Is this influence equivalent in both cases? And also: “Would this influence concern the content of the statements on particular scientific and philosophical questions, would it reverberate in the results of research and deliberations, or would it rather imprint itself only on the ways in which these questions are framed and on the methods of investigation? Or does the psyche of a nation influence the emergence of certain issues? Perhaps it determines the degree of interest in them?” (transl. from Polish).<sup>11</sup>

The above questions are complemented by others, namely: whether the influence of the national spirit is strongest in geniuses or rather in the work of researchers in general? Can scientists and philosophers liberate themselves from this influence? Should the researcher allow himself to be ‘controlled’ by the national factor? Does such a possible influence enhance or diminish the value of his or her work?

There are more equally relevant questions as the differences between nations may concern not only the mental, but also the emotional and volitional aspects. After all, feelings may, seemingly, colour one’s views (e.g. *saudade* of the Portuguese), and a certain attitude of will may determine the solution to a philosophical problem (e.g. the American propensity to succeed).

## National philosophy and the philosophy of a nation

Let us stop for a moment at the notion and characteristics of Polish philosophy. Basically, we use this term to describe the achievements of philosophers who are Polish. Trentowski’s philosophy in Poland and Fichte’s in Germany were examples of national philosophy: “It thus shows that Trentowski’s conception of the mission of Slavic philosophy was only one, though undoubtedly the most important and significant link in a whole chain of analogous historiosophical constructs from Szaniawski, Mochnacki, Tyszyński and Krasinski through Trentowski, Libelt, Cieszkowski, Hoene Wroński into the hands of a whole plethora of imitators...” (transl. from Polish).<sup>12</sup> A certain characteristic set of issues can be ascribed to Polish philosophy. Questions: what is a nation and how does it exist? What is the role of Poland in history? What are the regularities governing the world and Polish history? The occurrence of these issues – historiosophical and religious – in the works of Polish thinkers has its source in the history of our nation and state, or more precisely in the fact that both these forms of existence were repeatedly threatened. Philosophical scholars in the Polish

<sup>11</sup> Tamże, s. 20–21.

<sup>12</sup> S. Harassek, *Trentowski o filozofii narodów europejskich*, s. 157.

tradition have, as a rule, acted as priests (to cite Kołakowski's typology from his essay written in 1959), and extremely rarely as jesters.<sup>13</sup> The jester Witkacy (S. I. Witkiewicz) is one of the exceptions in our philosophy.

Harassek notes considerable differences between the major European countries when it comes to referring to the idea of nation. French thought is the least preoccupied with the idea of national science, most strongly rooted in the Germans. Following Fustel de Coulanges, Harassek states: "French knowledge is liberal, whilst German knowledge is patriotic" (transl. from Polish),<sup>14</sup> which is most clearly evident in the study of history, where German history is framed as a panegyric. In contrast, comparing the thinking of the French and the English, Harassek agrees with the claims of Taine and Duhem that the former consider issues deeply and narrowly, unafraid of abstraction and generalisation, while the attitude of the latter is characterised by breadth and a tendency to induction on the basis of an exhaustive examination of cases. While the emblematic work for the French tradition is Descartes's *Discours de la méthode* (1637), for English thought it is Bacon's *Novum Organum* (1620). "Just as Descartes's mindset seems to pervade the whole of French philosophy, Bacon's imaginative capacity, his love of the concrete and the practical, his ignorance of and contempt for all abstraction and deduction, entered, as it were, into the blood of English philosophy" (transl. from Polish).<sup>15</sup> However, it is not French thought that is, according to Duhem, the greatest opposition to German thought, but the English one, which "by no means desires a strict reasoning that would bind judgements into a single chain; does not seek a systematic and artificial order; does not find a trace of that *esprit géométrique*; instead, it is an almost extraordinary ability to see clearly and distinctly an enormous number of concrete objects, combined with the ability to leave each of them in the place where it has been placed by a complex and moving reality. English knowledge is thoroughly intuitive" (transl. from Polish).<sup>16</sup>

Duhem was inclined to the view (found also in the American founder of the history of ideas as a research discipline, A. O. Lovejoy) that the works of great geniuses rise both above their time and above the nation. They represent the universal: "It may be expected, therefore, that the qualities of genius inherent in individual nations will appear most clearly in secondary works, in the

<sup>13</sup> L. Kołakowski, *Kaplan i błazen (Rozważania o teologicznym dziedzictwie współczesnego myślenia)* [w:] tamże, *Pochwała niekonsekwencji. Pisma rozproszone sprzed roku 1968*, foreword, selection and compilation by Z. Mentzel, vol. II, Annex, London 2002, s. 263.

<sup>14</sup> S. Harassek, *Piotr Duhem i Max Scheler o cechach narodowych nauki i filozofii*, s. 29.

<sup>15</sup> Tamże, s. 34.

<sup>16</sup> Tamże, s. 44. The English scholar thus corresponds to the fox in the typology of minds presented by I. Berlin in his work *Jez i lis. Esej o pojmovaniu historii u Tolstoja*, transl. A. Konańrek, K. Tarnowska, H. Krzeczkowski, Aletheia, Warsaw 1993.

works of minor thinkers; the great masters often possess a mind in which all the powers and faculties are so harmoniously aligned that their doctrines, completely perfect, have no stamp of individual or national character” (transl. from Polish).<sup>17</sup> Harassek rightly accuses Duhem of not specifying whether the source of national traits is an innate, inherited factor or that which is acquired under the influence of the environment, the inspiration of books, upbringing, etc.<sup>18</sup> After all, it can be inferred from some of the French scholar’s statements that he leaned towards the first answer, assuming that national traits are characterised by constancy and immutability.

### Max Scheler on the sociology of philosophy

Duhem was a physicist and philosopher of science with an enormous body of work, which is somewhat forgotten today. The opposite is true of Scheler – a philosopher who applied the phenomenological method to questions of the philosophy of culture and religion and whose influence is still powerful. Scheler was a versatile innovator, and is regarded not only as one of the founders of philosophical anthropology, but also as a pioneer of the sociology of knowledge, right next to Mannheim,<sup>19</sup> from whom, however, he differs in his recognition of the logical primordiality of the claims of epistemology in relation to socio-cognitive claims.

Scheler claims that the social affiliation (state, class) of the thinker seems to be very important for the development of metaphysics. Basically, while *homines religiosi* came from the low social strata, the creators of metaphysical systems represented the enlightened and possessing strata. A second important circumstance in the development of metaphysics is marked by the opposition of rural and urban. In Indian metaphysics, for example, direct contact with nature, immersion and empathy related with it, and a metaphysical-democratic conviction of the unity of all living beings is noticeable. Meanwhile, the metaphysics of the West is a product of urban thought, which has the effect of capturing man in separation from nature and even granting him power over it.<sup>20</sup> We know today how much havoc has been wreaked on the environment based on inspiration by such views.<sup>21</sup>

<sup>17</sup> S. Harassek, *Piotr Duhem i Max Scheler o cechach narodowych nauki i filozofii*, s. 47.

<sup>18</sup> Tamże.

<sup>19</sup> Zob. S. Czerniak, *Socjologia wiedzy Maxa Schelera*, PWN, Warsaw 1981; J. Niżnik, *Socjologia wiedzy. Zarys historii i problematyki*, Książka i Wiedza, Warsaw 1988.

<sup>20</sup> M. Scheler, *W kręgu socjologii metafizyki*, transl. A. Węgrzecki [w:] tegoż, *Problemy socjologii wiedzy*, translated by the team of translators, with an introduction by S. Czerniak, A. Węgrzecki, PWN, Warsaw 1990, s. 139.

<sup>21</sup> Zob. E. Bińczyk, *Epoka człowieka. Retoryka i marazm antropocenu*, PWN, Warsaw 2018; A. Marzec, *Antropocień. Filozofia i estetyka po końcu świata*, PWN, Warsaw 2021.



In different countries, says Scheler, science and philosophy was practised by representatives of different social classes. The Middle Ages were uniform in this respect; after all, ecclesiastical scholasticism was practised mainly by monks. In modern times, the situation has been diversified.<sup>22</sup> In France, philosophy is now the work of the enlightened nobility, and is thus worldly, non-academic and non-pedantic. Such qualities make it accessible to the entire educated world. In Italy, too, philosophy was created by the nobility (mainly patrician). Situation was different in Germany, where we immediately see the intense contrast between the noble castle and the bourgeois city. German philosophy was created by the educated Evangelical bourgeoisie, often by pastors; hence its inaccessible, pedantic form, repellent terms and school-like constructions. This genesis also explains some of the substantive aspects of this philosophy, e.g. negligible contact with mathematics and the natural sciences, apoliticality and contemplativeness. It differed from French philosophy, which valued radicalism, by its programmatic moderation. German philosophy differed from English philosophy (the work of the rich bourgeoisie) in its separation from the problems of industry and technology.<sup>23</sup>

In Scheler we find the view (also defended by the Italian scholar Rignano) that the efforts of science and philosophy by individual nations should complement each other and that only the thoughts of nations complied together can provide a complete picture of reality. Harassek rightly points out that in no other philosopher will we encounter such a strong emphasis on the positive role of the national factor in the formation of knowledge. This is remarkable given that the phenomenological method rejects all *a priori* constructions, relying instead on getting to the very sources of experience and aiming to give the most accurate account of its course.

Furthermore, Scheler emphasises originally that the sciences are least dependent on national elements, to a greater extent this dependence is apparent in the humanities, while the greatest dependence remains in philosophy. "This dependence increases the more complex the object of study is, the more our endeavours aim at the ultimate cognition of things and the higher the value we attach to the object studied" (transl. from Polish)<sup>24</sup> – Harassek reports on Scheler's view. This influence, however, concerns not so much the cognitive results as the methodology: the choice of research subjects and the ways in which they are approached, as well as the styles of writing, in which the subject is approached and the results presented.

<sup>22</sup> D.W.F. Hamlyn, *Being a Philosopher. The History of a Practice*, s. 42 n.

<sup>23</sup> M. Scheler, *W kręgu socjologii metafizyki*, s. 140–142.

<sup>24</sup> S. Harassek, *Piotr Duhem i Max Scheler o cechach narodowych nauki i filozofii*, s. 73.



Scheler argues that metaphysics, of all philosophical disciplines, is most intertwined with the personality of the thinker and with the national element (the rationale for this thesis being as follows: “For the totality of the world, as such, is accessible theoretically only to the totality of a person. Metaphysics is always something personal, it is always dependent on all the essential forces of the human personality. Also its results always remain only hypotheses, unlike the hypotheses of the positive sciences; they are valid only for those who sympathize spiritually in their essence with the essence of the metaphysician” (transl. from Polish)<sup>25</sup>). The excerpt concerns the metaphysical role of a person and individuality in the universe; the person is, after all, *nomen dignitatis*. Therefore, the moments that define philosophical cognition and distinguish it from other kinds of cognition are: development in large leaps, the influence of the philosopher’s personal conditions and national character.

In the history of philosophy, the national element did not immediately come to the fore. In the final part of his treatise *In the Circle of the Sociology of Metaphysics*, Scheler suggested four phases in the history of metaphysics. The basis for distinguishing between them is to take into account their main creators and bearers of their metaphysical ideas. Thus, we have, firstly, the scholastic phase, when such bearers are priests and monks; it is an ecclesiastical, supranational philosophy, expressed in Latin terms; mysticism and humanism occurred in opposition to it and then – “the proper philosophies of the modern nations as movements with a national tinge (Telesio, Campanella, Bruno, Descartes, Bacon)” (transl. from Polish).<sup>26</sup> The second phase consists of the philosophies of the young European nations – from Cusack to Kant – although coloured by the myth of the nation and expressed in the languages of these countries, not really oriented towards the national as such, but having a sense of cosmopolitanism (without realising that it is really only a disguised Europeanism). The third phase encompasses a philosophy not only tinged with nationalism, but national in intent. This is the philosophy of the nineteenth century, which acted, especially in Germany, as a stimulator of national consciousness. And the fourth phase is the slowly developing cosmopolitan world philosophy (*Weltphilosophie*), within which the discussion is co-created by thinkers of the extensive cultural areas.<sup>27</sup>

Scheler’s reflection brings another important idea, rooted in the thought of J. W. Goethe. According to this idea, an adequate picture of the world cannot be provided by the philosophy of just one nation, but only by humanity as a whole.

<sup>25</sup> Tamże, s. 74.

<sup>26</sup> M. Scheler, *W kręgu socjologii metafizyki*, s. 142.

<sup>27</sup> Tamże, s. 143. Scheler credits the Germans with initiating *Weltphilosophie*, which was due to the inclusion of Indian wisdom in the discussion by authors such as F.W.J. Schelling, A. Schopenhauer, P. Deussen and E. von Hartmann.

Only the totality of national images of the world can provide an adequate picture of things – they are all complementary, and no one nation can be replaced by another. The national element is by no means something that – as the Enlightenment thought – obscures and limits our cognition. On the contrary, it is its powerful motivator and effective multiplier. It is a factor that enriches and strengthens general human reason.

### Philosophy and nations today

In the perspective creatively outlined by Scheler, it is worth looking at other philosophical traditions. The formation of a national idea and a kind of maximalism is inherent in the tradition of Russian philosophy. Russian philosophers pose ultimate questions and do so very often directly, in a manner alien to Occidental philosophy. Russian philosophy is also characterised by a strong tradition of anti-rationalism and a lack of strict separation between philosophy and religion, on the one hand, and philosophy and fiction on the other. The great Russian writers – L. Tolstoy, F. Dostoevsky – are at the same time great Russian thinkers. Moreover, religious inspiration and elements of mysticism are manifest in their works.<sup>28</sup>

French philosophy remains open to innovative stylistic forms unlike any other; it has long been unconcerned with the demarcation between philosophy and literature; it is interested, above all, in problematic and stylistic innovation, in the ability of the text to open up the reader's imagination and in unfettered writing freedom.<sup>29</sup> It surprises by chiselling the style and by introducing hybrid forms of writing. We will notice them, for example, in the works of M. Foucault, and after him in the works of J.-L. Nancy, M. Henry or M. Serres. Prose of remarkable philosophical value is cultivated by P. Quignard, an expert on antiquity.<sup>30</sup> E. Cioran is considered a master of the style of French philosophical prose.

In contrast, the criticism of German philosophy for its inaccessible, school-like character is valid with regard to its past. R. J. Hollingdale writes:

The defects of German philosophy are those of professionalism: a closed atmosphere, books instead of life, inability to communicate discoveries to the world at large, contempt for good style, inbreeding, lack of general culture, gruesome earnestness.<sup>31</sup>

<sup>28</sup> From more recent works see J. Krasicki, *Dostojewski i laboratorium idei*, Biblioteka „Więzi”, Warsaw 2020.

<sup>29</sup> Zob. I. James, *Nowa filozofia francuska*, transl. J. Bednarek, P. Juskowiak, PWN, Warsaw 2014.

<sup>30</sup> Zob. K. Rutkowski, *Artes Liberales. O nauczycielach i uczniu*, Wyd. Poznańskie, Poznań 2014, s. 404–466.

<sup>31</sup> For the Polish version, see: R.J. Hollingdale, *Nietzsche*, transl. W. Jeżewski, PIW, Warsaw 2001, s. 24. On German philosophy, zob. tamże, s. 63, 72–73, 77. Other philosophical traditions

It would be a mistake, after all, to overlook that more recent German philosophy has produced thinkers almost free of the cited defects, thinkers who are also masters of style, although it should be added that they were essentially active outside the universities (A. Schopenhauer, F. Nietzsche):

Nietzsche achieves a balance between these two types of mind and two styles of expression [German and French – W.N.]: he is profound but not obscure; he aims at good style but reconciles it with good thinking; he is serious but not earnest; he is a sensitive critic of the arts and of culture but not an aesthete; he is an aphorist and epigrammatist, but his aphorisms and epigrams derive from a consistent philosophy; he is the wittiest of philosophers, but he rarely succumbs to the temptation to sacrifice truth to a witty phrase; he has many interests but never loses sight of his main interests. He achieves, especially in his later works, a conciseness and limpidity notoriously rare in German writing: no modern thinker of a like profundity has had at his command so flexible an instrument of expression.<sup>32</sup>

Also newer authors such as O. Marquard, P. Sloterdijk or M. Sommer write works that are outstanding not only in content but also in literature, masterfully using irony and self-irony.<sup>33</sup> The Germans also provide examples of how philosophers often significantly develop national languages. In the past, this was done by J. W. Goethe and Nietzsche; in the present – for example by Marquard, whose contribution in this area has sometimes been acknowledged with awards.<sup>34</sup> It would be wrong to neglect this aspect of philosophical works; after all, still in the 18th century, the quality of the researcher's writing style was still very much appreciated.<sup>35</sup>

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also have their shortcomings: "The defects of the cultured philosophe are those of amateurism: too many interests, superficiality, the cultivation of good style as an end in itself, the sacrifice of truth to wit, lack of intellectual honesty, philosophizing but no philosophy, inconsistency" – tamże. On English philosophy, zob. tamże, s. 79.

<sup>32</sup> Tamże, s. 24–25.

<sup>33</sup> O. Marquard, *Szczęście w nieszczęściu. Rozważania filozoficzne*, transl. K. Krzemińska, Oficyna Naukowa, Warsaw 2001; P. Sloterdijk, *Krytyka cynnicznego rozumu*, transl. P. Dehnel, Wyd. Naukowe Dolnośląskiej Szkoły Wyższej, Wrocław 2008; M. Sommer, *Zbiornik. Próba filozoficznego ujęcia*, transl. J. Merecki, Oficyna Naukowa, Warszawa 2003. Sommer introduces into his argument, among others, parts of a fictional, slightly ironic dialogue with a logician, which shed new light on the discussed problems of collecting. Zob. G. Raulet, *Filozofia niemiecka po 1945*, transl. A. Dziadek, Oficyna Naukowa, Warsaw 2013, s. 1–19.

<sup>34</sup> In 1984, Marquard was awarded the Sigmund Freud Prize (Sigmund Freud-Preis) by the German Academy of Language and Literature. It was a prize for his achievements in scientific prose.

<sup>35</sup> Zob. W. Lepenies, *Niebezpieczne powinowactwa z wyboru*, transl. E. Nowakowska-Sołtan, Oficyna Naukowa, Warsaw 1996, s. 52–69. Lepenies analyses the "battle between science and literature", the first victim of which was the aristocrat of science, the naturalist Count Buffon (G.-L. Leclerc, 1707–1788), known for his excellent writing style. This style became a source of rebuke towards the end of the 18th century, as it was taken as evidence of writing *romances scientifiques*. Since then, style in science has generally not mattered: "'*Doctrina primus, stilo ultimus*' is an accusation that no scientist needs to fear today" – tamże, s. 55. However: "National

Italian philosophy is characterised by a sense of beauty and an intense sense of the mystery of the world. It is also characterised by its philological acumen, elegance of style and its appeal to an educated cosmopolitan audience. G. Colli (publisher, with M. Montinari, of a complete edition of Nietzsche's works) or R. Bodei are authors whose works provide apt examples of these qualities.<sup>36</sup> References to national ideas can also be seen in more recent Spanish philosophy. Here, the mental figure that has long focused the main philosophical and worldview positions remains that of Cervantes's Don Quixote. Its philosophical interpretation became the basis for the formulation of an innovative conception of subjectivity in the 'Quixotism' (*quijotismo*) of the so-called Generation '98.<sup>37</sup> To take another example closer to Poland geographically, let us add that a leading Czech philosopher in the 20th century, Jan Patočka made the question "who are the Czechs?" one of the central questions of his historiosophy.<sup>38</sup>

In addition to the national divisions of philosophical research, we have a very important and long-standing geographical division into Anglo-American philosophy and continental philosophy. The different philosophical styles of the two traditions are related not only to a different attitude to the past of philosophical research, but also to the perception of philosophy as a rather collaborative or individual work. Both traditions also have their 'cardinal sins'. For example, D. Smith, in his work on continental philosophy of technology (embedded in the thought of E. Husserl, M. Heidegger and M. Foucault), argues against the still persistent image of this philosophy among Anglo-Saxon philosophers as burdened by 'bad' continental tendencies (despite the 'empirical turn' that has since taken place in the philosophy of technology): lyricism, pessimism, and an erroneous and outdated view of technology as an autonomous, transcendental power to which humans are subject.<sup>39</sup>

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differences are important: the Germans will never be freed from the suspicion that the French, in banishing literature from science, are not doing so seriously. While, according to Taine, litterateurs had long treated naturalists as farmhands in the French Academy – and these farmhands were Lavoisier, Lagrange and Laplace – the Brandenburg Scientific Society by default included every Frenchman in the class of litterateurs – no matter if they were playwrights or physicists" (transl. from Polish) – tamże.

<sup>36</sup> Zob. G. Colli, *Narodziny filozofii*, translated and prefaced by S. Kasprzysiak, Wyd. Literackie, Kraków 1991; R. Bodei, *O życiu rzeczy*, transl. A. Bielak, Przypis, Łódź 2016.

<sup>37</sup> I. Krupiecka, *Don Kichote w krainie filozofów. O kichotyzmie Pokolenia '98 jako poszukiwaniu nowoczesnej formuły podmiotowości*, Foundation for Polish Science, Toruń 2012, s. 18–19.

<sup>38</sup> J. Patočka, *Kim są Czesi?*, transl. J. Baluch, International Women's Foundation, Kraków 1997. For the relationship between philosophy and the identity of Poles, see the volume *Jakiej filozofii Polacy potrzebują?*, selection and introduction by W. Tatarkiewicz, PWN, Warsaw 1970.

<sup>39</sup> D. Smith, *Exceptional Technologies. A Continental Philosophy of Technology*, Bloomsbury, London and New York 2018, s. 107–128.

## Conclusion

According to Scheler's arguments, the importance of which was recognised by Harassek, a philosophy that would consciously want to be national – as Trentowski or Libelt wanted to practice in Poland – is nonsense. Equally meaningless, said the Polish thinker, would be a programmatically international philosophy, for thinking must start from things and respect them. In other words, all thinking remains – as R. G. Collingwood claimed in his works – practical, that is, it is born out of a practical interest in things: it arises in specific conditions and is a reaction to them.<sup>40</sup> The goal to be pursued in cognition is to find a solution to a problem, not to strive strenuously for neutrality. Instead of striving for the most neutral possible – free of influences and values – it is better to engage forces in the problem, and to treat everything that motivates us in cognition, critically of course, as a reservoir of forces.<sup>41</sup>

Despite any reservations, the study of the influence of the ethnos factor on philosophy and science is important. The impact of ethnos is subtle and does not directly concern the substance of philosophical issues, but it shapes ways of thinking and influences the literary form in which thought is expressed. In particular, it is fascinating to observe how each national tradition of practising philosophy illuminates areas of reality that another has left in the shadows.

Philosophy, including Polish philosophy, is now more international than ever; a fact that may be linked to the cosmopolitanizing of contemporary culture. Knowledge and information nowadays circulate the globe just like fashion and advertising – the Internet has accelerated all transfer.<sup>42</sup> The modern researcher has gained access to a vast pool of digitally processed and recorded items of knowledge thanks to the world wide web, which is additionally accompanied by the ease of travel, the ability to visit universities, research institutes, archives, and libraries. All these changes have now also embraced philosophy. The national idiom is now being phased out, the style and content of practising philosophy (discussed problems, line of reasoning, references to literature) are becoming standardised. The advantage of the new situation is that the same problems can be addressed in different philosophical circles; their members live

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<sup>40</sup> R.G. Collingwood, *An Essay on Metaphysics*, revised and expanded edition, edited with an introduction by R. Martin, Oxford University Press, Oxford 1998, s. 88 n.

<sup>41</sup> Let us consider psychological factors. We may be motivated to solve a research problem by a factor such as ambition, but also by a sense of being part of a community (professional, family, local, national) in the name of which and for the sake of which we are striving to find out the truth. To renounce such motivations would be to give up valuable energy resources.

<sup>42</sup> Zob. M.P. Eve, *Open Access and the Humanities: Contexts, Controversies and the Future*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 2014.

by the same issues and their erudition has a large common base. The negative side of the existing situation is the disappearance of diversity, i.e. the homogenisation of philosophical culture. This makes, for example, scholarly travel not as relevant as it was just a few decades ago. By losing its subtle rootedness in national genius and national language, philosophy is unnecessarily and even detrimentally becoming similar to a positive professional skill within which there is a division of labour.

To conclude, it is worth asking what use the questions posed by Scheler and Harassek have for contemporary historians of philosophy. Firstly, let us note that it is legitimate and useful to speak of particular national philosophies, for it brings order to the philosophical scene and does so on the basis of a natural criterion. Thus, just as we operate in the categories of continental philosophy and Anglo-Saxon philosophy, we can also meaningfully speak of Italian, Polish, German or Australian philosophy.<sup>43</sup> Secondly, a consequence of considering the influence of the national factor on philosophy is to distinguish two models of the history of philosophy: the problem-oriented model and the culturalist model. In the first model, the historian reconstructs the content of philosophical problems and examines the arguments used in the discussions – detaching both the former and the latter from the background of the epoch and all the factors constituting the context for philosophy (the nationality of the thinker, his psyche and personality, the environmental milieu, etc.). The culturalist variety of the history of philosophy goes in the opposite direction. Although it admits that it is often useful to detach the logic of a problem from the context of its formulation and the provision of possible solutions, it is not only interested in the problems themselves, the ways in which they are solved and the reconstruction of the argumentation. Instead, it is occupied by the entire cultural context of a given philosophical *oeuvre*.<sup>44</sup> Among the factors influencing philosophy, it also analyses the national tradition in which the philosopher is situated. A culturalist history of philosophy requires from the researcher a very high cultural competence and a comprehensive erudition; after all, they must be able to show the interrelationships of the various fields of human culture: philosophy, religion, science, literature, and visual arts. Writing a problem-based history of philosophy, on the other hand, makes it necessary for the researcher to have developed analytical skills. Both varieties of writing the history of philosophy have their proponents and outstanding examples. An excellent attempt to reconcile them is B. Russell's *A History of Western Philosophy*

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<sup>43</sup> See, for example, the entry *Australian Philosophy*, in *The Oxford Companion to Philosophy*, ed. by T. Honderich, Oxford University Press, Oxford 1995, s. 67–68.

<sup>44</sup> Zob. Z. Kuderowicz, *Przegląd metod historii filozofii*, PWN, Warsaw 1978, s. 14 n.



(1945).<sup>45</sup> Similarly, W. Tatarkiewicz, in his three-volume *Historia filozofii* [History of Philosophy] (1931), successfully combined a problem-based and culturalist approach.

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<sup>45</sup> B. Russell, *Dzieje filozofii Zachodu i jej związki z rzeczywistością polityczno-społeczną od czasów najdawniejszych do dnia dzisiejszego*, transl. T. Baszniak, A. Lipszyc and M. Szczubiałka, Aletheia, Warsaw 2000. Zob. tamże N. Smart, *World Philosophies*, Routledge, New York and London 2000; J.H. McClendon, S. Ferguson (red.), *African American Philosophers and Philosophy*, Bloomsbury, London 2019; F. Copleston, *Filozofie i kultury*, transl. T.A. Malanowski, PAX, Warsaw 1986, s. 13–34; T. Connelly, *Doing Philosophy Comparatively*, Bloomsbury, London 2015.



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## Stefan Harassek i problemy filozofii współczesnej

### Streszczenie

Wpływ czynnika narodowego na filozofię wyraża się w dwóch modelach historii filozofii: problemowym i kulturalistycznym. Kulturalistyczna odmiana historii filozofii obejmuje nie tylko same problemy, sposoby ich rozwiązywania i rekonstrukcję argumentacji, lecz także cały kulturowy kontekst danego filozoficznego *oeuvre*. Wśród czynników wpływających na filozofię analizuje się także narodową tradycję, w jakiej sytuuje się filozof. Kulturalistyczna historia filozofii wymaga dużej kompetencji kulturowej i erudycji. Badacz musi umieć ukazać wzajemne związki różnych dziedzin kultury człowieka: filozofii, religii, nauki, literatury, sztuk wizualnych. Natomiast pisanie problemowej historii filozofii czyni koniecznym, aby badacz miał rozwinięte zdolności analityczne.

**Słowa kluczowe:** Stefan Harassek, historia filozofii, metafizyka, narodowość, kulturoznawstwo