**Research Project "The Local Contexts of Global Philosophies"**

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# ETHICAL THINKING OF THE PAST AND THE PRESENT

The development of ethical thinking in Slovakia has undergone enormous changes from the 19th century to the present. It was largely influenced by the real conditions of the existence of the Slovak nation during this period. In the 19th century, the Slovak nation, as part of Hungary and the Habsburg monarchy, fought for survival under the pressure of Hungarianization, the aim of which was to create a unified Hungarian political nation with a dominant position of Hungarian language and Hungarians. This was reflected in the fact that throughout the 19th century, the dominant theme of Slovak philosophical and ethical thinking was the theme of the nation, the defense of its cultural, linguistic, social and political rights. After the establishment of Czechoslovakia in 1918, new topics came to the fore, which were largely related to the solution of social issues in society, but in addition, the topic of the nation and the position of Slovakia within Czechoslovakia was a topic that repeatedly appeared in the philosophical and ethical discourse of the time. After the Second World War and especially after 1948, when the Communists came to power, the topics arising from Marxist-Leninist thinking of the Soviet type were at the forefront of Slovak philosophical-ethical thinking. After 1989, there was a real development of independent philosophical and ethical thinking in Slovakia in many of its areas, including the history of ethical thinking, as exemplified by the tradition of international conferences organized at the Faculty of Arts of the University of Prešov in Prešov since 1996 as well as the rich publishing activity of the members of this department on the topic of the history of ethical thinking in Slovakia [Gluchman, 2016; 2017; 2018; 2019], [Kalajtzidis, 2017; 2018; 2019a; 2019b], [Komenská, 2019], [Švaňa, 2017], etc.

It is necessary to look into the past for a better understanding of the present and thinking within ethics and ethical theories in the 21st century. How was the thinking of individuals and looking at life? We could find answers to this and similar questions at an event organized by the Institute of Ethics and Bioethics of the Faculty of Arts, University of Prešov and the Ethica Civic Association in Prešov (Slovakia). They organized on October 15-16, 2020 22nd international conference *Ethical Thinking: Past and Present* entitled *Ethics in the 19th and 20th Centuries*. The online presentations focused on ethical thinking in Slovakia, the history of ethics in Europe and in the world, education

in history – their ethical and moral dimension, reflections on contemporary morality in literature and teaching the history of ethics at universities in the past and present.

Keynote speaker, professor Vasil Gluchman stated that the period in Slovakia can be defined by the gradual onset of philosophical and ethical thinking of the national revival, especially in the first half of the 19th century (Ján Kollár, Karol Kuzmány, Ľudovít Štúr and others), which was followed in the second half of the 19th century by new ideas and approaches (Ján Palárik, Jonáš Záborský, Pavel Hečko and others). According to him, the 19th century in the history of the Slovak ethnic group forms an important chapter of its development, because then the process of its self-awareness, the formation of national identity, the development of the national movement and national agitation began. An important role in the process of forming the national self-awareness of the Slovak ethnic group was also played by references to moral values, respectively moral qualities with which many authors wanted to increase the pride of its members for belonging to such a morally exceptional ethnic group. One of the main ethical and moral values shaping the national consciousness and self-awareness of the Slovak ethnic group was the nation as an expression of the best qualities of Slovaks. He researched in his paper *Nation as an ethical and moral value in Slovak philosophy and ethics of the 19th century* the opinions of three representatives of Slovak philosophy and ethics of the 19th century on the ethical and moral value of the Slovak nation. From the first half of the 19th century the author focused his attention on Ján Kollár, from the middle of the 19th century the opinions of Ľudovít Štúr were examined and from the second half of the century he devoted himself to Pavel Hečko and his perception of the nation as ethical, moral and religious values. In their work, these authors reflected the European trends of thinking concerning the definition of the role of the nation in the 19th century, also called the Spring of Nations, and in this context also ethically justified the national rights of Slovaks. The starting point for their thinking was mainly Herder's philosophy of history, but for example in Štúr's inclination towards Hegl also played an important role.

The supporter and close collaborator of Ľudovít Štúr was Jozef Miloslav Hurban. Ján Kalajtzidis outlined Hurban's philosophical focus and his relation to philosophy as such in the paper *J. M. Hurban – ethical-philosophical thoughts.* On the other hand, the text focused on specific social-ethical issues that Hurban was aware of and considered necessary to address. In his understanding the revival of the Slovaks is possible only in accordance with the knowing of thyself. Such understanding has a strong social and ethical component. In this aspect Hurban did not exceed contemporary framework of thinking and focused mainly on the issues of alcohol, usury and Jews. Even in the case of J. M. Hurban, it is true that he was one of the important representatives of the Slovak national revival and his work corresponded to the main trends in European thinking and real socio-ethical problems of his time, especially when it came to problems concerning the Slovak nation. Like other representatives of this period among the Slavs, he also relied on the views of J. G. Herder.

Human morals reflect the inner world and thinking of a man. Katarína Karabová stated that tractates, scientific dissertation addressing moral philosophy as well as simple questions of conscience may present us an image of human morality. The author attempted to present the concept of contemporary ethics and its wider context in her paper *Trnava University press on moral philosophy as an image of contemporary ethics.* She tried to do this on the basis of detailed analysis of publications from the production

of Trnava press, which have been ignored to this date as well as to reflect moral philosophy with an aim to define analysed topics from philosophia moralis.

The subject of the research was also the thematization of social moral qualities expressing the relationship of man to community or vice versa, community to man. Gabriela Mihalková in her paper *The socio-ethical dimension of Samo Bohdan Hroboň's messianic poetry* analysed the incidence, frequency and relevance of the motives of social moral characteristics at the level of a person's relationship to the individual person (marital and family relationships) and especially to the wider community determined in terms of nationality (Slovak, Slav). She examined ethical formulations in that part of Samo Bohdan Hroboň's work which were originated in the 1850s and 1870s and formulates messianic messages. Hroboň's messianism was largely a reflection of the strong tradition of Polish messianism, especially in the work of A. Cieszkowski.

Slovak uprising in 1848–1849 was a consequence of revolutionary ideas and attitudes, that were presented in the whole European space in the 19th century. It also reflected the desire of a nation for autonomy, freedom and putting an end to social and political oppression in Austria-Hungary monarchy. *Value syncretism in the Slovak Uprising of 1848–1849* was approached by Lukáš Švaňa. He stated that even though we have an idea of his political motivation and social aspects, there is still no philosophical-ethical reflection on these events, which are extremely important for the Slovak nation.

Pavol Krištof in his presentation *Launer's conception of non-romantic nationalism and the idea of responsibility for the development of the nation* set out to analyze the thinking of the author of the original concept of non-romantic nationalism – Štěpan Launer (1821–1851). The author compares his political-philosophical conception with Jonáš Záborský's thinking, which shows certain interesting parallels. Although he was a student of Ľudovít Štúr, he rejected his romantic nation-building program, particularly his idealization of folk culture. Several selected Slovak and Polish short proses (M. Kukučín, J. G. Tajovský, B. Prus, H. Sienkiewicz), which were published in other decades of the 19th century were analyzed and compared by Peter Káša in *Social collisions and ethical intentions of the author's gesture in realistic short prose (Slovakia – Polish context).* In the interpretations he focused on various forms of artistic presentation of social collisions (tensions, conflicts), which left significant or hidden "moralistic" traces in the author's artistic gesture, which can also be called the author's moral attitude or ethical intention in the artistic text.

Medicine as a universal social institution, as an art, as well as a science has been the subject of philosophical and ethical reflection since ancient times. Júlia Polomská in her presentation *Philosophical-ethical message of Albert Škarvan in his work Notes of a Military Doctor* tried to present and analyse major ethical problems that are reflected within his work. This includes the issues of freedom, human dignity and its violation and many others. Similarly, Andrea Klimková approached *Excursion into the history of ethical thinking and philosophy of medicine of the 19th century in Central Europe.* In the article, the author offered a mosaic of three variations of Slovak, Czech and Polish philosophical and ethical thinking in the medicine of the second half of the 19th century in Central Europe. Going back in time is not just a description of the intertwining of the past, and of various ethical and philosophical-medical thinking.

Stefan Konstańczak presented *Critical analysis of 19-th century burgeois morality in the Polish play entitled "Niewinni" (The Innocent) by Aleksander Świętochowski.*

The play "Niewinni" (The Innocent), written in 1875, was the literary debut of Aleksander Świętochowski. This play influenced many authors to expose the hypocrisy of the contemporary elite who claimed to believe in ethical norms but did not follow them in their own lives. Symbolically, "Niewinni" also closed a period in the Polish positivism movement which was losing its expansive character of imposing new standards of morality and science, and instead was increasingly analysing the current situation.

*Ethical dimensions of the Ukrainian national revival of Halychyna in the second half of the 19th century: sources and problematics* was presented by Oresta Losyk. She stated that ethical thinking in the Halychyna-Ukrainian lands of the second half of the 19th century has not yet been the subject of monothematic researches by the Ukrainian and foreign experts. The ethical beliefs of Halychyna Ukrainians were in the circle of such conceptual challenges: How to interpret the historical past and heritage? With what to fill the cultural memory? What ideals should guide individual and collective vitality? Who decisively influences the destiny of a person and a community and is it possible to change it? What underlies national solidarity and consent? What is the meaning of enlightenment and the struggle for dignity? According to the author one of the characteristic personifications of the orientation of the Ukrainian ethical consciousness in this period was the theme of national revival. The initiatives related to its theoretical understanding and practical implementation of at least three generations of «Young Ukraine» (in the 1860s, early 1880s and the second half of the 1890s) raised the ideological and moral dilemmas of self-affirmation, freedom, choice, justice just as their like-minded peers in the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Slovenia, Croatia, Serbia, Bulgaria, and other stateless nations did. Oresta Losyk's contribution showed that global trends in European thought were largely identical in Ukrainian, Polish and Slovak ethical thinking of the 19th century, as they addressed almost identical problems that were typical of the oppressed peoples of Central and Eastern Europe.

Ondrej Marchevský focused on the Russian reflection of the work of Immanuel Kant at the beginning of the 20th century in his presentation *(How) can knowledge and morality be free? or L. M. Lopatin about the philosophical legacy of I. Kant.* According to him, the core becomes a critical assessment of the perspective of free knowledge and the formation of morality and the discovery of possible pitfalls of such formation in Kant's work. On the other hand, it can be seen in the case of the large and dominant nations of Europe that there was also more area for the development of philosophical and ethical thinking, such as Kantian or neo-Kantian ethics, while oppressed nations focused mainly on addressing issues related to the nation's existence.

*Ethics and education in the 20th century* was presented by Marta Gluchmanová. She dealt with the ethical and moral aspects of education in the 20th century. Her paper described the ethical issues of interactions between teachers and students, teachers and parents, as well as the responsibility of school management. She stressed the negative phenomena at schools as the result of irresponsible behaviour and also how young people perceive teachers and what importance they assign to teachers. Similarly, Paulina Dubiel-Zielińska in her paper *Identity crisis of adolescence in the face of contemporary social challenges* presented the ethical issues of the process of shaping one's own identity as the main developmental task of adolescence. According to the author, it takes into account the concept and types of identity, sources of one's own identity, rediscovering one's own identity in adolescence. It showed the diversity of moral assessments of young people (rigorism, forbearance) in relation to reference groups. Contributions

focused on the ethical issues of education are an example of the fact that ethical thinking in Slovakia and Poland after 1989 reflects the current problems of their country and time, but also current trends in the field of knowledge in the world.

The aim of the conference was to continue the current research of the history of ethical thinking in Slovakia carried out at the Institute of Ethics and Bioethics, Faculty of Arts, University of Prešov. The conference focused on the period of development of ethical thinking in Slovakia, Central Europe, but also other parts of the European continent and the world. In addition to the Slovak language, the negotiating language was also Czech, Polish, Ukrainian and English for the conference participants. Due to the pandemic situation of COVID-19 and the associated restrictions in relation to the organization of the event, the conference was held online.

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### Ethical Thinking of the Past and the Present

Report on the international conference *Ethical Thinking: Past and Present* entitled *Ethics in the 19th and 20th Centuries* (October 15-16, 2020, Prešov, Slovakia).

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### Етичне мислення у минулому й нині

Звіт про міжнародну конференцію *Етичне мислення: минуле й сьогодення. Етика в XIX і XX століттях* (15-16 жовтня, 2020, Прешов, Словаччина).

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