

Rádl's Criticism of the Czech Individualist Inter-War Philosophy

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When the so-called “younger philosophical generation” surrounding the journal *Ruch filosofický* arose, their goal was to pose a philosophical and methodological challenge to the then-dominant positivistic approach in Czechoslovak academia, championed mainly by thinkers surrounding the journal *Česká mysl*.¹ In the broadest sense, it was a clash between, on one side, subjectivist irrationalism and individualism focused on the questions of metaphysics, and, on the other, positivist rationalism dealing with the questions of empirical science. Perhaps even before the positivist camp managed to react to the manifesto of the younger generation, the philosopher Emanuel Rádl had entered the intellectual ring. Rádl, although not an adherent of positivism, subjected the thinking and the philosophical position of the younger generation (whose members I will address below as “philosophers of individualism” for the sake of simplicity) to harsh criticism. A discussion between both sides followed, revolving around not only positivism, but also around the philosophies of Masaryk and Kant, and the relationship between philosophy and politics. Yet, to Rádl at least, the discussion had a deeper meaning than a simple disagreement on how to accurately define this or that intellectual position, or how to resolve the “old” dispute over Kant: what was actually being discussed here was the very essence and significance of philosophy, as well as the question of what role the philosopher should perform within society and the state.

It must be said that his criticism and the reactions of the philosophers of individualism that followed were not always delivered in an objective and factual manner, and instead were full of personal attacks, unjustified accusations and rash conclusions. I will try to avoid this aspect of the dispute and

1 Pauza, M., Introductory Study (Úvodní studie). In: Jirásková, O. (ed.), *A Collection of Texts Published in Czech Philosophical Journals of the 20th Century, Vol. 2 (Soupis příspěvků v českých filosofických časopisech 20. století 2)*. Praha, Filosofia 2008, p. XII–XIV.

rather focus on illustrating the intellectual basis and justification of Rádł's sharp criticism aimed at the new and different way of thinking that was beginning to gain ground in post-war Czechoslovakia. My interpretation is thus one-sided, since its objective is, in addition to that already stated, to introduce some theoretical perspectives against which the philosophy of individualism – the topic to which this collection of studies is dedicated – had taken a stand either consciously or unconsciously. Furthermore, the goal of this study is not to determine whether the expressed objections were justified or whether or not they were directed at the right people. Instead, these objections will be used to reveal Rádł's stance towards individualism, a stance which stems from the philosophical and methodological anchoring of his philosophy, therefore mainly from realism. My interpretation will be based on the hypothesis that Rádł's definition of realism, which determined his noetic, methodological and practical-philosophical standpoint, went through a certain development during the First World War, which resulted primarily in a new stance towards (Kant's) rationalism. I believe that understanding the reasons why Rádł stepped out to defend Czech positivism and embarked on criticism of the members of individualism during the interwar period is essential for understanding this change in his stance, as his pre-war texts had much in common with this school of thought.

Rádł's Realism

In the following section, I will aspire to explore and explain Rádł's stand on realism, bearing in mind the aforementioned assumption that the conclusions of such explanations are essential for understanding the significance of Rádł's objections against the philosophy of individualism during the interwar period. Nevertheless, explanation is hampered by the two following issues. Firstly, the term "realism" itself is ambiguous: it encompasses different schools of thought or mental paradigms; it defines a certain methodological approach towards the world and delimits the possibilities of knowing it, but it also signifies a certain attitude towards life, carrying with it certain practical and moral consequences.² The question that is fundamental for the presented study is how Rádł himself understands the term and how realism determines and defines his philosophical and political standpoint. Secondly, interpretation is made more difficult by Rádł's distinctive way of thinking and by the fact that he went through a certain philosophical evolution,

2 For different types of realism in Rádł's approach, see Rádł, E., *Modern Science: Its Essence, Methods and Results (Moderní věda: její podstata, metody, výsledky)*. Praha, Čin 1926. Knihovna české mysli, p. 108–109.

especially in his relationship towards Kant's rationalism. The following text will show how this change of stance played an important role in respect to his stepping out against the philosophers of individualism.

Rádl's realist standpoint can be in fact divided into two phases: pre-war and post-war. The nature of Rádl's *pre-war* realism is expressed mainly in his article *Philosophical Realism (Filosofický realism)*, first published in 1913 in the magazine *Wednesday (Středa)*, and a year later in the book *Philosophical and Scientific Meditations (Úvahy vědecké a filosofické)*.³ In this text, Rádl reveals, among other things, that his mentor and primary source in this field is Masaryk, from whom he adopts the term *realism* itself.⁴ The fundamental aspect by which realism is to overcome both rationalist and positivist approaches is *lived experience* of the subject, that is, the possibility of direct experience of "pure" reality.⁵ "Objective" positivist science – which Rádl attributes to F. Krejčí in his book *Philosophical Realism* – works with the concept of experience which is derived, reflected and grasped using reason and, in this sense, never gains access to actual knowledge of the reality of the world.⁶ This noetic approach of positivist natural science is based on – in Rádl's eyes – the false assumption that the surrounding world (nature) is an object independent of the knowing subject, that it is perceived by the subject and that these perceptions are then processed using reason.⁷ Rádl counters this with the approach of an "intuitive empiricist", i.e. a realist who does not accept such assumptions or at least calls them into question and understands knowledge as the direct experience of reality.⁸

Realism's direct experience, this "living knowledge", arises during the process of the "organic" fusion of the knowing subject and the known object, while this object is not just inanimate nature, but being as such.⁹ Realism,

3 Rádl, E., *Philosophical Realism (Filosofický realism)*. In: *Philosophical and Scientific Meditations (Úvahy vědecké a filosofické)*. Praha, Grosman & Svoboda 1914, p. 141–162.

4 In the very introduction of the article, Rádl puts realism in connection with questions on the study of history, specifically the problem of the authenticity of the manuscripts. The article itself, two thirds of which are dedicated to the explanation of Masaryk's realism, is a comparison of the noetic-methodological approach of realism, which Rádl identifies with Masaryk and the positivist approach. Rádl, E., *Philosophical Realism*, p. 141–144, 148–159. See Hermann, T., *Consolation of Life. A Study on Emanuel Rádl's Works in Biology and Consolation of Philosophy (Útěcha ze života. Studie o biologickém díle a Útěše z filosofie Emanuela Rádl)*. Dissertation. Praha, Přírodovědecká fakulta UK 2008, p. 77.

5 Rádl, E., *Philosophical Realism*, p. 146–148.

6 *Ibid.*, p. 142–144.

7 Rádl, E., *Revolutionary and Conservative Tendencies in the History of Science (Pokrokové a konservativní živly v dějinách vědy)*. *Česká mysl*, 14, 1913, No. 1, p. 32.

8 *Ibid.*, p. 32–35. Rádl, E., *Romantic Science (Romantická věda)*. Praha, Laichter 1918, p. 84. See Hermann, T., *Consolation of Life*, p. 64–65.

9 *Ibid.*, p. 154, 155, 157, 159.

in its most extreme form tries to suppress rationality which disrupts immediacy, thus standing against empirical, positivist science and overcoming it. Although Rádl does not advocate such extremity, he does come quite close, which is evident in the conclusion of his declaratory article *Abstract Science and Real Science* (*Věda abstraktní a věda reálná*) from 1914, where he states:

“Indeed, our stance is extreme empiricism: it removes the logic of experience from wherever it can: experience, factum, direct knowledge is our motto and we set these principles against opinions and presumptions.”¹⁰

It is evident in his exposition in *Philosophical Realism* that rationality is not suppressed entirely, as reason is present in direct experience itself and thus is inseparable from it.¹¹ It implies that direct, immediate experience somehow “understands” or “processes” reality.

From a noetic point of view, a significant aspect of Rádl's pre-war realism is that it stands against the positivist approach: T. Hermann notes that one of the prominent representatives of Czech positivism, F. Krejčí, regarded Rádl, whom he considered an adherent of irrationalism, to be the most consistent critic of the noetic-methodological standpoint of positivism.¹² Krejčí reacted to Rádl's article *Philosophical Realism* by publishing his *Commentaries on Contemporary Czechoslovak Philosophy* (*Glosy k nynější filosofii u nás*) in *Česká mysl* the following year.¹³ The second regular critic of some aspects of Rádl's realism from the positivist perspective was the protestant theologian J. B. Kozák.¹⁴ Their purely intellectual dispute continued throughout the interwar period. Patočka even dubs this a lifetime “struggle” led by Rádl against positivism.¹⁵

10 Rádl, E., *Abstract Science and Real Science* (*Věda abstraktní a věda reálná*). *Česká mysl*, 15, 1914, No. 2, p. 129–130. Cf. Škorpíková, Z., *Rádl's Concept of Truth* (*Rádlovo pojetí pravdy*). Praha, *Filosofia* 2003, p. 57–59.

11 Rádl, E., *Philosophical Realism*, p. 152.

12 Hermann, T., *Consolation of Life*, p. 24–15, 108.

13 Krejčí, F., *Commentaries on Contemporary Czechoslovak Philosophy* (*Glosy k nynější filosofii u nás*). *Česká mysl*, 15, 1914, No. 1–2, p. 19–28, 142–158.

14 Hermann, T., *Consolation of Life*, p. 24–25; Kozák, J. B., *Scientific Realism and the Concept of Truth* (*Vědecký realism a pojem pravdy*). *Česká mysl*, 16, 1917, No. 5–6, p. 254–273.

15 Patočka, J., *The Importance of the Concept of Truth in Rádl's Discussion with Positivism* (*Význam pojmu pravdy pro Rádlovu diskusi s pozitivismem*). *Česká mysl*, 33, 1937, No. 1–2, p. 40, 52–53; in another print: Patočka, J., *The Czechs I. Complete works of Jan Patočka, Vol. 12* (*Češi I. Sebrané spisy Jana Patočky 12*). Praha, Oikoymenth 2006, p. 34, 49. Patočka shows that Rádl understood positivism (for which he used the term “objective science” during the Interwar Period) as a child of the natural-scientific Baconian-Cartesian rationalism and intellectualism of Western Philosophy, whose roots reach all the way to Greek philosophy. As already mentioned,

Under Masaryk's influence, Rádl's pre-war realism gains a peculiar, ambiguous relationship toward idealism: according to Rádl, Masaryk rejects idealism because it does not work with direct experience, but only with its reflection through reason.¹⁶ However, at the same time he accepts Plato's teaching on ideas which he understands as *realist idealism*, where the subject does not gain access to ideas by means of reason, but through direct, lived experience.¹⁷ Rádl's realism thus cancels the dualism of the subject and object and, simultaneously, gets closer to a mystical and intuitivist approach to the world.¹⁸ In his interpretation of Masaryk's realism, Rádl himself refers to the representatives of modern Russian philosophy, hence to realism, mysticism and intuitivism (mentioning Berdyaev, Shestov, Dostoevsky and Lossky) and also talks about the possible inspiration that realism finds in the aforementioned Platonism, Neoplatonism, older scholasticism, or in some Renaissance thinkers.¹⁹

Patočka then highlights one more fundamental concept in Rádl's pre-war realism that distinguishes it from positivism. It is the concept of *personal truth*, which Rádl develops in his work *History of Biological Theories of the Modern Age II (Dějiny biologických teorií novověku II)* from 1905.²⁰ A full interpretation of Rádl's concept of personal truth would definitely require more space, but for the intents of this article it must suffice that we show where Rádl's conviction that every individual has and must take responsibility for his scientific and political activities comes from: personal truth may be understood as the revelation of the true nature of a given object, which arises when an immediate relationship between a person-individual and reality is established. Truth is therefore a constituent of the existing reality, which begins to *exist* at the moment at which the knowing subject experiences it immediately. According to Rádl, the truth of existing reality is present in every human, it is their inner conviction or belief, which precedes any theorisation

Rádl saw the main negative aspect of this school of thought in man's inability to experience directly and in positivism's effort to construct "objective" judgments and theories. According to Patočka, Rádl's criticism necessarily leads far beyond the borders of contemporary positivist philosophy. Patočka, J., *The Czechs I*, p. 34, 47.

16 Rádl, E., *Philosophical Realism*, p. 154; Hermann T., *Consolation of Life*, p. 78.

17 Rádl, E., *Philosophical Realism*, p. 154, 155, 159.

18 *Ibid.*, p. 157.

19 *Ibid.*, p. 149, 159.

20 Rádl, E., *The History of Biological Theories of the Modern Age II. The History of the Theories of Evolution in Biology of the 19th Century (Dějiny biologických teorií novověku II. Dějiny evolučních teorií v biologii 19. století)*, ed. T. Hermann – A. Markoš – Z. Neubauer. Praha, Academia 2006, p. 408–410; *Revolutionary and Conservative Tendencies in the History of Science*, p. 31–37; *Philosophical Realism*, p. 154–156; *Romantic Science*, p. 103; Patočka, J., *The Czechs I*, p. 38–40. Regarding Rádl's approach to truth see Hermann, T., *Consolation of Life*, p. 27, 66–72; Škorpíková, Z., *Rádl's Concept of Truth*, p. 232–237.

and reflection.²¹ All other observations *about* reality, i.e. judgments, conclusions or theories that individuals consequently share with each other, are not “actual” truth, but are, on the contrary, dependent on personal truth, and could not have come into existence without it.²² This prerequisite necessarily leads to a situation where each individual is responsible for the truthfulness of knowledge and the consequences resulting from it.

Rádl's *post-war* realist standpoint, which is especially apparent in his *The History of Philosophy (Dějiny filosofie)*,²³ *On Our Contemporary Philosophy (O naší nynější filosofii)*²⁴ or *Modern Science (Moderní věda)*, underwent some changes, while still retaining some key aspects that had been essential for his pre-war standpoint. In *Modern Science*, Rádl distances himself from the mystical and intuitivist aspect of realism, that is, from the idea of gaining lived experience of reality through the fusion of the subject and the object.²⁵ At a first glance, this may seem as a radical break from the position expressed in *Philosophical Realism*. Nevertheless, we can find the justification for this diversion already in the conclusion of this text. Here, Rádl describes his fear of the danger that *mystical* realism may pose: a human who experiences reality in this manner might actually become its prisoner, might surrender to it, or fall into a state of passive acceptance of reality. This happens when the role of reason – which, on the one hand, separates experience from the knowing subject, and, on the other, processes, identifies, and interprets experience so as to create a system according to which the individual makes decisions, orientates themself and finally acts – is cast aside or fully revoked.²⁶

The dismissal of this role of rationality leads to a certain debilitation of man, to a “naive attitude to the world”, passivity, faith in myths, in instinctive morality, and, consequently, even to a manner of behaviour that lacks moral ground and thus may be dangerous and violent.²⁷ The interpretation put forth in several of Rádl's post-war works²⁸ – which he claims corresponds to Masaryk's argumentation in his post-war work *Russia and Europe II (Rusko a Evropa II)*²⁹ – shows that these fears were and continued to be well founded.

21 Hermann, T., *Consolation of Life*, p. 66–70; Škorpíková, Z., *Rádl's Concept of Truth*, p. 232–237.

22 Patočka, J., *The Czechs I*, p. 39.

23 Rádl, E., *The History of Philosophy I (Dějiny filosofie I)*. Olomouc, Votobia 1998; *The History of Philosophy II (Dějiny filosofie II)*. Praha, Votobia 1999.

24 Rádl, E., *On Our Current Philosophy (O naší nynější filosofii)*. Praha, Minařík 1922.

25 *Ibid.*, p. 71. Further see Rádl, E., *On Our Current Philosophy*, p. 36–37.

26 Rádl, E., *Philosophical Realism*, p. 160.

27 *Ibid.*, p. 160.

28 Rádl, E., *Masaryk and Kant (Masaryk a Kant)*. *Realistická stráž*, 2, 1921, No. 14, 23. 7., p. 1–2; *On Our Current Philosophy*, p. 35–38.

29 Masaryk, T. G., *Russia and Europe: A Study on Spiritual Movements in Russia 1–2 (Rusko a Evropa: studie o duchovních proudech v Rusku)*. Praha, Ústav T. G. Masaryka 1996. *On the Russian philosophy of history and religion (K ruské filosofii dějin a náboženství)*, Vol. I–II.

It is the experience and fear of the impact of Russian philosophy based on mysticism, intuitivism and idealism, or something that Rádl calls “philosophy without reason”.³⁰ During the war, all of this proved itself to be a dangerous approach leading towards a political and cultural decline, careless morality and resignation and, finally, to total chaos and violence.³¹

However, Rádl does not reject the original concept of realism altogether, but thoroughly revises it.³² In addition to criticism of the mystical approach, the manner in which reality is known not only changes, but the role of reason logically also grows in importance in the sense of critical rationality. The idea of lived experience is replaced by the idea of capturing the *content* of events, through which the knowing subject interprets given reality, the given object. Rádl understands such content (or purpose, goal) as an “idea” which is inserted into the given reality (object) by the knowing subject.³³ With respect to this, the truth is no longer a constituent of reality that presents itself to the knowing subject within the scope of lived experience, but is revealed only during the process of interpretation of experience through reason. Thus, the task of reason as a certain capacity of a subject, through which it steps away from lived experience and therefore makes (moral) decisions and acts, is gaining on importance.³⁴ This aspect of post-war realism is relevant for the interpretation proposed in this study, although it must be said that the whole matter of gaining truthful knowledge through observing and interpreting existing reality is not thoroughly explained and resolved in Rádl's work.³⁵

As we have shown, Rádl's approach to realism went through a certain development during the First World War, as far as the relationship towards mysticism and the significance of rationality in the process of knowledge and action is concerned. Consequently, this led to the crystallization of the theme of moral responsibility in his philosophical position, which was supposed to

30 Rádl, E., *On Our Current Philosophy*, p. 36–37.

31 Rádl, E., Masaryk and Kant, No. 14, p. 1–2; *On Our Current Philosophy*, p. 35–38; Hromádka, J. L., *Don Quijote of the Czech Philosophy (Don Quijote české filosofie)*. Praha, Laichter 1947, p. 35–36.

32 Patočka, J., *The Czechs I*, p. 43.

33 *Ibid.*; Rádl, E., *Modern Science*, p. 183.

34 *Ibid.* See also Škorpíková, Z., *Rádl's Concept of Truth*, p. 236–238. This problem – Rádl's relationship toward mystical realism and idealism – was also explored by an adherent of the younger philosophical generation, V. Hoppe (see Hoppe, V., *The Philosophy of Em. Rádl /Filosofie Em. Rádla/ Ruch filosofický*, 4, 1924, No. 1, p. 1–12). Hoppe calls Rádl's Post-War philosophy *rational idealism*, that is close to mysticism and gnosticism. I believe that Hoppe – although he correctly identified the presence of an idealist approach in Rádl's philosophy, which builds on Plato's teachings – overlooked or underestimated Rádl's divergence from mysticism and intuitivism.

35 According to Z. Škorpíková, the year 1918 is crucial in this context, for it is a milestone in Rádl's philosophical development. Since 1918 there is no further specification of the idea of truth. See Škorpíková, Z., *Rádl's Concept of Truth*, p. 9–10, 232–242; Hermann, T., *Consolation of Life*, p. 9; Patočka, J., *The Czechs I*, p. 50–51.

be supported by the rational interpretation of experience-based knowledge, and also led to the emergence of the theme of personal responsibility with respect to philosophical and political activity. Rádl warns against practising science or philosophy for personal gain, either political or other: the scientist, the philosopher, but also the artist must guarantee that their motivation is the purely philosophical interest of the pursuit of truth.³⁶ Therefore they must first prove themselves before their own eyes, removing any of their inner doubts. Then they must come out publicly with their truth, or knowledge, and present it, defend it and stand firmly behind it.³⁷ They must reveal a part of themselves and expose themselves to public criticism. At the same time, they should also ensure their knowledge is used for public and political benefit. Scientific knowledge must always have practical outcomes for life, for the future and should be the basis for political activity, too.³⁸ In Rádl's view, politics could never function without philosophy (science) and is therefore subordinate to it.

Rádl's post-war work also challenges Czech philosophy to become global and transnational, to focus on issues that transcend the borders of individual states, issues that are valid and also crucial for everyone at all times.³⁹ Thus, Rádl stands against efforts to define philosophy based on nationality or race, and yet again deals with the question of the purpose and task of philosophy. The "globality" of philosophy means rising above the confines of locality, nationality, language, but also the constraints of different opinions, prejudices and fears.⁴⁰ Philosophy should be judged by its thoughts; only on such a spiritual level can individual states and systems measure their power. Czech philosophy must become global in order to be an equal opponent or partner of other philosophies: it must be free, open to criticism, free of political influences, and primarily, it must be founded on reason, theorisation and thoroughly rational scepticism.⁴¹ Such enforcement of the "conscious reign of reason over life" shows how much Rádl's approach to rationalism changed during the war and also what importance he ascribes to philosophy

36 Rádl, E., Less Politics! (Méně politiky!). *Realistická stráž*, 1, 1920, No. 10, 7. 8., p. 1–3.

37 Rádl, E., Less Politics! *Realistická stráž*, 1, 1920, No. 11, 21. 8., p. 1–2.

38 Rádl, E., Less Politics!, No. 10, p. 1–2; The Role of Philosophy in Czechoslovakia. A Ceremonial Speech for the Commemoration of the 40 Years of the Philosophical Union on November 29, 1921 (Úkol filosofie v československém státě. Řeč v slavnostní schůzi na paměť 40letého trvání Jednoty Filosofické dne 29. XI. 1921). *Česká mysl*, 18, 1922, No. 1, p. 17–23; No. 2, p. 65–71, esp. p. 66, 70–71. Following the spirit of this thesis, Rádl founded a scientific periodical *Nové Atheneum* in 1920, which was meant to serve as a platform for solving topical social questions by using scientific methods.

39 Rádl, E., The Role of Philosophy in Czechoslovakia, p. 67–68.

40 *Ibid.*, p. 20–21, 69.

41 *Ibid.*, p. 67–70.

in resolving social and political questions.⁴² In fact, one of the main duties of philosophy for Rádl is to propagate the spreading of this “globality” within the Czech nation, to accentuate rationalist-critical thinking, and to promote confidence in the power of thought and truth.⁴³ The task of philosophy and every single philosopher is to

“[...] make the Czech state a state that is humanistic, a state that is spiritual, a state founded on truth [...]”.⁴⁴

What Rádl feared was moral and spiritual passivity, growing nihilist, irrationalist and nationalist tendencies in society and in the scientific community. “German rationality” was much closer to Rádl rather than “Slavic sentiment” which he believed was enforced by the younger intellectual generation.⁴⁵

When Patočka talks of Rádl as of the only person who

“[...] continued in what Masaryk had started and aspired to make it even more stringent and profound”,

he meant precisely Rádl's aspiration to take Masaryk's idea of the state seriously, but also to critically review it and adapt it: Rádl called for the building of such a state that would not be nation-based, but would be democratic in the sense that all its nationalities would accept it.⁴⁶ At a time when nationalist tendencies were on the rise in Czechoslovakia as in the rest of Europe, he advocated a programme for his own type of state that would be open to all nationalities and whose stability would be guaranteed by reconciliation between Czechs and Germans, among other things.⁴⁷ No wonder that he was a thorn in the side of many contemporary thinkers and politicians. Especially when, in line with his sense of personal responsibility towards truth and society, he publicly criticised, lectured and sometimes provoked both his opponents and even his colleagues. However, his actions must be treated as an expression of philosophical activism, as an effort to prevent the

42 Ibid., p. 70. See Hromádka, J. L., *Don Quijote of the Czech Philosophy*, p. 33.

43 Ibid., p. 70–71.

44 Ibid., p. 69.

45 Ibid., p. 70.

46 Patočka, J., A Memory and Thoughts On Rádl and Masaryk (Vzpomínka a zamyšlení o Rádlovi a Masarykovi). In: *The Czechs II. Complete works of Jan Patočka, Vol. 13 (Češi II. Sebrané spisy Jana Patočky 13)*. Praha, Oikoymenth 2006, p. 326–329. Ladislav Hejždánek seconds this opinion in his epilogue to Rádl's book *The War of the Czechs and Germans*, viz Rádl, E., *The War of the Czechs and Germans (Válka Čechů s Němci)*. Praha, Melantrich 1993. *České myšlení*, p. 276–280.

47 Patočka, J., *The Czechs II*, p. 328.

possible decline or demise of democratic society.⁴⁸ Our focus will now shift towards Rádl's criticism of the younger generation of philosophers, which I believe must be understood in the context of his philosophical development described above and in the context of the significance he ascribed to philosophy regarding political and social questions.

Rádl's Criticism of the Philosophy of Individualism

Identifying the genesis of Rádl's dispute with the philosophers of individualism is a formidable task, nevertheless we can date its first seminal appearance in Rádl's lecture in the Realist Club in April of 1921, which he developed further in the following month in a collection of five articles titled *Czech Philosophy Before and After the War (Česká filosofie před válkou a po válce)*.⁴⁹ The articles were later published in the aforementioned book *On Our Contemporary Philosophy* – which also contained some of the critical answers of Rádl's opponents that followed – and were presumably a direct response to Vorovka's book *Scepsis and Gnosis (Skepsa a gnóse)*.⁵⁰ Vorovka's book was newly published, expressing the author's radical distancing from rationalism, countering by proposing different ways of gaining truthful knowledge – intuition, mysticism and faith. These articles may be regarded as a form of defence of positivism and the figure of Krejčí, who had come under attack by the philosophers of individualism surrounding *Ruch filosofický*. After all, it was not the first time that Rádl had defended this intellectual rival of his: in 1911 he stood up for him against E. Chalupný who valiantly criticised *The Philosophical Unity (Jednota filosofická)*, an association led by Krejčí, and the journal *Česká mysl*.⁵¹ In reaction, Chalupný declared a “Struggle for the Purification of Czech Science and Philosophy”. When the first issue of *Ruch filosofický* was published in 1920, it was accompanied by another “Struggle for the Freedom of Czech Philosophy”, or the struggle against the domination of positivism.⁵²

48 For a study on Rádl's philosophical activism, see Hromádka, J. L., *Don Quijote of the Czech Philosophy*, p. 17–22, 53–57; Hermann, T., *Consolation of Life*, p. 7–11, 23, 35.

49 Rádl, E., *Czech Pre-War and Post-War Philosophy (Česká filosofie před válkou a po válce)*. *Čas*, 31, 1921, No. 107, 8. 5., p. 8; No. 109, 11. 5., p. 4; No. 111, 14. 5., p. 4–5; No. 113, 15. 5., p. 10; No. 117, 21. 5., p. 2.

50 Vorovka, K., *Scepsis and Gnosis. A Philosophical Confession (Skepsa a gnóse. Vyznání filosofické)*. Praha, G. Voleský 1921.

51 Chalupný, E., *Struggle for Purification of Czech Science and Philosophy Against F. Krejčí, E. Rádl and Others, 1911 and 1912 (Boj za očistu české vědy a filosofie proti F. Krejčímu, E. Rádlvi & spol. r. 1911 a 1912)*. Praha, Přehled 1912; Hermann, T., *Consolation of Life*, p. 22, 84.

52 Pelikán, F., *The Reign of Democracy in Philosophy (To our Program) – (Vláda demokracie ve filosofii /K našemu programu/)*. *Ruch filosofický*, 1, 1920–1921, No. 1, p. 1–5. For Rádl's Post-War dispute with the philosophers of individualism, see Pavlincová, H., Rádl's Post-War „Dispute

Immediately after Rádl's reaction (the articles mentioned above), a meeting was held at *The Philosophical Unity* debating hall where a discussion between Rádl and the philosophers of individualism took place. The course of the discussion was written down and published in the 12th issue of the magazine *Realistická stráž*. The dispute, however, did not end there and then, and other philosophers from the younger generation took part in it: aside from Karel Vorovka and the other co-founder of *Ruch filosofický*, F. Pelikán, these included T. Trnka, V. Hoppe, J. L. Fischer, J. B. Kozák, and R. I. Malý. The dispute was later summed up by E. Čapek, who, alongside Rádl's five articles, also mentioned Vorovka's article titled *For a New Czech Philosophy (O novou českou filosofii)*.⁵³ He did not omit to highlight, firstly, the fact that this exchange of views took place mainly in the daily press and during public speeches, making an objective assessment of the dispute rather difficult, and secondly, he noted that the dispute was not yet over.⁵⁴ In fact, echoes of the dispute were still resounding in Czechoslovak philosophy for many years to come.⁵⁵

Yet again Rádl pondered over the nature and purpose of Czech Philosophy in his articles and his book *On Our Contemporary Philosophy*, and, in this context, tackled the question of whether the younger generation of philosophers had not deviated from the true purpose of philosophy. His criticism may be summed up in two key points: firstly, that they do not pay enough attention to the teachings of Masaryk, which testifies mainly to the apoliticism of their philosophy and its deviation from everyday life and its problems. Secondly, Rádl criticises their relationship to positivism and rationalism.⁵⁶

The first line of criticism against the estrangement, apoliticism and amorality of the philosophy of individualism is delivered by Rádl from the position of realism. I believe that this criticism is analogical to one he delivered approximately three years earlier in his work *Romantic Science (Romantická věda)*, which he directs against Kant's teachings and the German Philosophy of Idealism in general.⁵⁷ He begins with an analysis of the harmful consequences

over the New Czech Philosophy“ (Emanuel Rádl a poválečný „spor o novou českou filosofii“). In: Hermann, T. – Markoš, A. (eds.), *Emanuel Rádl – A Scientist and Philosopher (Emanuel Rádl – vědec a filosof)*. Praha, Oikoymenh 2004, p. 657–666.

53 Vorovka, K., *For a New Czech Philosophy*, Vol. 1–3 (*O novou českou filosofii 1–3*). *Národní listy*, 61, 1921, No. 277, 284, 291, 9.–23. 10., p. 9–11.

54 Čapek, E., *The Struggles for a New Czech Philosophy (Boje o novou českou filosofii)*. *Ruch filosofický*, 2, 1922, No. 1, p. 23.

55 Krejčí himself began with a thorough criticism of the philosophers of individualism no sooner than in 1925, which launched a new phase of struggles that Rádl decided not to join. Pavlincová, H., *Rádl's Post-War „Dispute over the New Czech Philosophy“*, p. 665.

56 Rádl, E., *On Our Current Philosophy*, p. 8–13, 16–17, 23, 26.

57 Rádl speaks of “German Romanticism”, and his list of representatives includes, besides Kant, also Hegel, Fichte, Schelling and Schopenhauer. Rádl, E., *Romantic Science*, p. 83, 102, 116–117.

of Kant's subjectivism, building on the critique contained in Masaryk's work *The Modern Human and Religion* (*Moderní člověk a náboženství*): Rádl claims that Kant's subjectivism leads to the knowing subject losing sight of the object, thus causing the subject to "become blind" to the things around them – things that are contingent, concrete, and tangible.⁵⁸ Instead, the subject focuses solely on the universal laws and principles that are found within reason. Empirical facts and experience serve only as a device for verifying the subject's theories.⁵⁹ In practice, science (be it philosophy or any specialized science) loses the ability to provide new discoveries and inventions, it ceases to be practical and serviceable to society.⁶⁰ Conversely, Rádl understands the world as concrete reality that can be understood through observation, interpretation, experience and subsequent methodical and focused organisation of knowledge.⁶¹ What should attract the interest of the knowing subject are above all concrete, present, immediate, minor affairs. Only then is it possible to move on to theories, laws, and therefore towards truth.⁶² In other words, what Rádl is saying here is that he blames German 19th century individualism for forcefully separating empirical, specialized science from speculative philosophy. According to Rádl, positivism was also responsible for this misconduct.⁶³

Thus, Rádl begins the criticism of Kant's rationalism. In its radical form, this stance leads to the separation of the human from concrete reality, because it posits that true knowledge lies beyond space and time. The truth which this philosophical position seeks must be absolute, eternal and always valid.⁶⁴ In contrast to this, Rádl puts forward the approach of realists who find truth in dealing with the questions of everyday life, in solving concrete, specific problems – for them, any kind of knowledge gains value once it is transformed into action. In Rádl's opinion, the truth that this study addresses above is not of an absolute nature and cannot be grasped as such outside of the individual and their lived experience.⁶⁵

According to Rádl, the aforementioned separation from reality, the focus on the "beyond" and "above" and the pursuit of false ideals are all characteristic of the philosophy of German Idealism and similar idealisms, among which

58 Rádl, E., Masaryk and Kant. *Realistická stráž*, 2, 1921, No. 12, 9. 7., p. 4–5; Masaryk, T. G., *The Modern Human and Religion* (*Moderní člověk a náboženství*). Praha, Laichter 1934.

59 Rádl, E., *Romantic Science*, p. 68, 73, 84, 91.

60 *Ibid.*, p. 98, 107.

61 *Ibid.*, p. 103.

62 *Ibid.*, p. 98, 107.

63 *Ibid.*, p. 287; Hermann, T., *Consolation of Life*, p. 81.

64 Rádl, E., *Romantic Science*, p. 124–134.

65 *Ibid.*, p. 114–132. For a study on the question of truth, see Patočka, J., *The Czechs I*, p. 34–51; and Škorpíková, Z., *Rádl's Concept of Truth*.

he also assigns the philosophies of F. Mareš, J. Kratochvíl, or V. Hoppe.⁶⁶ In Rádl's view of history, such idealism is a reactive form of philosophy, a philosophy that intends just to stand against positivism and empiricism, but in reality leads to passionate nationalism, the assertion of political interests, or, at best, scholarly philosophy.⁶⁷ Yet again, Rádl counters this stance – although in a different text⁶⁸ – and puts forward a Masarykian and realist position, prioritising scientific (philosophical) knowledge over public and political speeches, and putting a strong emphasis on the responsibility of the author for the truthfulness of the knowledge they promote, while knowing that they answer not only to society, but primarily to themselves.⁶⁹ A political action is then the culmination of their practical efforts to help society and the world.⁷⁰

In the conclusion of his analysis of Kant's philosophy, the focus has once again shifted toward individualism. Rádl's main effort is to show that Kant's teachings and the teachings of German Idealism (Hegel, Fichte) lead to the suppression of the concrete individual with his or her rights, needs and desires.⁷¹ The value and significance of the individual rest solely in the fact that he or she participates in reason, the “world's lawgiver”, the source of absolute truth and moral principles which all stand high above individual and concrete experience.⁷² If it is truly possible to speak of individualism in relation to Kant, it is only *subjective individualism* or individualism that isolates the individual from the surrounding sensory, tangible world, as well as from society and other people. It is the suppression of intersubjectivity as such, and in consequence, the lowering of the significance of moral obligations, leading to amorality.⁷³

We have shown the basics of Rádl's negative attitude towards a philosophical way of thinking which leads to a separation from reality, apoliticism and amorality, the consequences of which he recognizes in the school of thought of philosophers of individualism. The significance of the second line of Rádl's criticism concerning the stance toward positivism and rationalism may be understood through the analysis of his, or more precisely Masaryk's, attitude towards Kant. First of all, Rádl emphasises the need for a thorough analysis and critique of positivism, which are essential for sub-

66 Rádl, E., What is Idealism? (Co jest to idealismus?). *Realistická stráž*, 2, 1921, No. 7, 9. 4., p. 3.

67 *Ibid.*, p. 1–3.

68 Rádl, E., *Less Politics!*, No. 11.

69 *Ibid.*, p. 1–3; Rádl, E., *On Our Current Philosophy*, p. 23–26.

70 Rádl, E., *Less Politics!*, No. 11, p. 1–4.

71 Rádl, E., *Romantic Science*, p. 135–139.

72 *Ibid.*, p. 135–139.

73 *Ibid.*, p. 139–141.

sequently overcoming it, just as Masaryk did, according to Rádl.⁷⁴ Thus, the study of Kant may be used as an appropriate tool for overcoming positivism.⁷⁵ Furthermore, Rádl points out that some aspects related to the already obsolete positivism are reappearing in the philosophy of the younger generation, specifically Vorovka's and Pelikán's.⁷⁶ He tries to show the contradiction in the approach of the adherents of individualism: on the one hand they distance themselves from positivism (especially Krejčí's positivism), on the other hand, they maintain some positivist standpoints.⁷⁷ It must be said that some of Rádl's observations on positivism and on Krejčí made during this dispute left his opponents with the valid impression that, at least to a certain extent, he himself stands on the side of positivism.⁷⁸ I believe that this seeming discrepancy may again be explained by Rádl's fear of the irrationalist and nihilist schools of thought: on the one hand, he declares positivism an obsolete approach, on the other he praises its orientation toward empiricism and rationality.⁷⁹ Along with that, he also appreciates the certain scientific practicality, sincerity, or consistency of the positivists – aspects which are present even in his post-war approach towards realism – which is something he lacks in the philosophy of individualism.⁸⁰

This also explains Rádl's criticism of the young philosophers' interest in irrationalist methods of thinking: mysticism, intuitivism and spiritualism. So far, our interpretation has showed Rádl's negative relationship towards Kant's philosophy and its consequences. However, in the previous part of the study we showed that during the First World War, Rádl came to the belief that if Europe and the rest of the world were to become spiritually liberated, morally organised, safe and, above all, democratic, then what was needed was rationalism, specifically Kant's rationalism with its endeavour to gain knowledge correctly and with certainty (i.e. methodically and without prejudice), with its critical approach to the world, to man and to knowledge, and also with its principle of *conscious living according to a regular programme*.⁸¹ Here we can see clearly Rádl's departure from mystic realism, intuitivism and the scientific method based on direct experience of being. In other words, Rádl was now completely distancing himself from a specific part of his pre-war approach to realism, which he most explicitly set out in

74 Rádl, E., Masaryk and Kant, No. 12.

75 Ibid., p. 2.

76 Rádl, E., *On Our Current Philosophy*, p. 19–22.

77 Ibid., p. 17–22.

78 Čapek, E., *The Struggles for a New Czech Philosophy*, p. 24.

79 Rádl, E., *On Our Current Philosophy*, p. 19.

80 Ibid., p. 13, 19.

81 Ibid., p. 35–38; Masaryk and Kant, No. 14, p. 2–3.

his 1913 book *Philosophical Realism*. Rádl admits to this in the epilogue of his book *On Our Current Philosophy*, where he deals with Vorovka's and Trnka's criticism, and lists the reasons that led him to his change of stance, reasons that have already been mentioned in this study: his experiences during the First World War and his fear of the effects of the kind of thinking that, in his opinion, led to the demise of Russian democracy. All this is why he gained faith in reason and in strictly methodical and theoretical knowledge, and why he started to attack that part of Czech post-war individualism that were approaching or seeking inspiration in Russian Irrationalism.⁸² It was the fear of the influence of the pessimistic and nihilistic schools of thought which essentially snuffed out any critical and moral responsibility of the individual and which posed a threat to the newly created state of Czechoslovakia. To counter these tendencies, Rádl puts forward a concept of a man who acts consciously according to their own reason, does not succumb to the world, takes responsibility for their actions, which they understand to be an expression of their knowledge and beliefs and also as a service to their environment.⁸³ Above all, such a man never loses sight of the real needs of everyday life, which they try to solve, while always propagating and spreading faith in the power of truth in society.⁸⁴

Conclusion: Rádl's Challenges to the Philosophy of Individualism

The objective of the interpretation above was to show the nature of Rádl's realism and, based on that, to explain the philosophical position as well as the intellectual and methodological basis for Rádl's criticisms against the philosophy of individualism during the period following the First World War. The first part of the interpretation explicated the ontological-noetic significance as well as the demands and possibilities of the realist approach for the individual, which Rádl gradually formulated and accepted, influenced by the legacy of Masaryk. The First World War was a crucial period in Rádl's philosophical development as it marks the time that separates the formation of his two different approaches towards realism. Before the war, Rádl attempted to surpass the "objective science" of positivism by formulating his idea of lived experience of being (the direct experience of reality) and his conception of personal truth, which brought his philosophy much closer to Russian mysticism and intuitivism. After the war, however, an emphasis on reason

82 Rádl, E., *On Our Current Philosophy*, p. 36–37; Hromádka, J. L., *Don Quijote of the Czech Philosophy*, p. 32–36, 54–55.

83 Rádl, E., *Masaryk and Kant*, No. 14, p. 2; *Romantic Science*, p. 66.

84 Rádl, E., *The Role of Philosophy in Czechoslovakia*, p. 66, 71.

and methodical scepticism, both with regard to scientific knowledge and to political activity, became the fundamental characteristic of his philosophy. Rádl explains this turn-about, on a theoretical level, by the change in his stance towards Kant's rationalism which was motivated by his experiences with the unfortunate consequences of the schools of thought of irrationalism and nihilism. Nevertheless, his partial acceptance of Kant's rationalism (with the exception of his orientation on abstract matters) did not mean abandoning the critical standpoint against (Kant's) subjectivism and idealism formulated in Rádl's *Romantic Science*. And it definitely did not mean abandoning the realistic standpoint, which is evident in the nature of his first criticism against alienation, apoliticism and amorality of the philosophy of individualism.⁸⁵

The second part of this interpretation was dedicated to Rádl's criticisms, presenting the aspects of his post-war realism that were set against the philosophy of the younger philosophical generation. This step should clarify the reasons that led Rádl to engage in such criticism and should also explain his ideological-political standpoint. His criticism of the philosophers of individualism may be understood in three distinctive ways: as an appeal to them to start accepting the findings of empirical science as knowledge that is processed and organised by reason; as an appeal to them to start devoting attention to the questions that directly concern Czechoslovak society, while, at the same time, there are questions that all nations face; and, finally, as an appeal to the young generation to begin philosophising in such a way that not only helps to form the politics and the cultural and moral development of society, but actually serves as its very foundation.

85 In the epilogue of his book *On Our Current Philosophy*, Rádl clearly states that he still maintains all of the key points he made in *Romantic Science*. Rádl, E., *On Our Current Philosophy*, p. 34–35.