To Play Like Napoleon. Klíma's Egosolism as a Call to Active Participation in the World

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A Demon at Play

With his philosophy of *egosolism* or *ludibrionism*, Ladislav Klíma is unique in Czechoslovak philosophy not only in terms of his work, but also in terms of his eccentric lifestyle, in which he actively and inventively applied his worldview to himself, which eventually proved fatal for him, since he died before reaching the age of fifty. In order to prove (mainly to himself) that man is nothing else than consciousness and God at the same time, and that all phenomenal, *secondary* perceptions in the subjective mode of being are but results of filtration of universal consciousness[1] through the imperfect human cerebral apparatus – i.e. not only has human life no value whatsoever in itself, but it is solely "my own mental state",[2] and therefore exists purely as

1 Klíma uses the concept of universal consciousness in the same context as Schopenhauer and Nietzsche do when they speak of universal will to live or will to power. From Schopenhauer, he mainly adopts the principle of the existentially indifferent multiplicity of the phenomenal world situated within the unity of the world-in-itself and the will to live. The works of Ladislav Klíma generally offer themselves to a comparison to these and other names of European philosophy. The necessary comparison of Klíma to other apparent influences on which he builds his philosophy of egosolism is deserving of a separate paper which would clearly show that Klíma's thinking does not "spring out of nowhere". The phenomenon of playing a game could be compared to Heraclitus and Eugen Fink. For reasons of restricted space, this paper does not enter into such a comparison and, furthermore, I believe that such an extensive comparison might not necessarily bear the desired fruits, as this paper aims at an independent interpretation, driven by an accent on *experiencing* Klíma's philosophy. However, it is important to note that Klíma's synthesis of Kant, Nietzsche, Schopenhauer, and others, is undoubtedly one of the most original creations of Czech thought of the first half of the 20th century, for it puts forward a philosophy which goes beyond anything that was considered "standard" discourse in Klíma's day.

2 Klíma, L., *The World as Consciousness and Nothing* (*Svět jako vědomí a nic*). Praha, Štorch-Marien 1928, p. 23; further cited as *The World* (*Svět*).

the given consciousness – Klíma used to sleep naked in the snow and to expose himself to various other extreme bodily and spiritual ordeals, through which, in his own words, he induced hallucinations,[3] in order to escape his body and overcome the limits of the physical world, if only for a short time.

Klíma takes these states to be nothing less than "flashes from the 'world beyond'".[4] It is precisely in the dissolution of the distinction between the subject and the object – in the merging of the will of individual consciousness with the universal will – that the crux of Klíma's philosophy lies. If all experience is simply a mental state, then all that we regard as human life is a mere fiction, a dream. But Klíma goes even deeper in this denial of the phenomenal world: the claim that we "dream that something exists"[5] must be subjected to an additional step of critique. Hence, according to Klíma, we dream that we dream that something exists, yet, in reality, nothing exists, and this nothing is identical to consciousness. The realisation of this fact constitutes the first step in the attainment of an egosolistic state of existence, where the phenomenal world is constantly being created by the individual, or more precisely, where the self becomes an unlimited actor perpetually immersed in the act of playing. This perspective opens up a possibility of a specific liberation of consciousness from its phenomenal form, not dissimilar to Schopenhauer's ideas on contemplation. However, unlike Schopenhauer, who remained at the level of theory, ethics, and aesthetics, and did not aspire directly to a practical attainment of nirvana (*contemplation*, for Schopenhauer, means liberation from the phenomenal aspect of being through an intuitive "comprehension" of the eternal Platonic Ideas), in *The World* Klíma aims at a practical application of his worldview.

The distinctive tone of Klíma's philosophy, further strengthened by his image of a romantically idealised, decadent and self-proclaimed madman, may, at the first sight, evoke the impression that his philosophy necessarily leads to the crudest type of individualism: to nihilism and to the assumption of a thoroughly passive stance in which the philosopher eventually encloses himself in his own inner world and keeps himself in there by training his will and ingesting narcotics. This impression is, however, false. It may be assumed that precisely the "twist" that we will discuss below is what differentiates Klíma from these nihilistic stances. Such stances were held in low esteem by most of Klíma's Czechoslovak philosophical contemporaries and were thor-

3 Klíma, L., My Own Autobiography (Vlastní životopis). In: *Strange Stories* (*Podivné příběhy*). Praha, Česká expedice 1991, p. 5–16.

4 *The World*, p. 139.

5 Ibid., p. 22.

oughly denounced by them around the time that the newly created Czechoslovakia was gaining shape. However, Klíma was highly respected among his contemporaries, especially in his later life, although it does not seem that he ever belonged or wanted to belong to the "official philosophers" of the time or that they ever regarded him as a colleague. Nevertheless, Klíma's death resonated strongly through the philosophical world of the First Republic; dozens of obituaries were published, acknowledging the deceased philosopher as a truly unique *phenomenon* of Czechoslovak thinking.[6]

Klíma's philosophy in *The World* is, in fact, essentially *practical* – as far as practical life is concerned, it could even be described as *anti-nihilistic* – and, as we will see, the philosopher abandons the Kantian tradition to a far lesser extent that one would expect, given his "rebellious" reputation. In the end, his dissolution of the subject-object distinction and the fulfilment of *egosolism* are nothing else than the consciously and thoroughly habituated ability of the human will to *strongly* want what one *can* want – this is the core of Klíma's conviction of the *purely* fictive, phenomenal difference between the individual and universal consciousnesses; egosolism is a practical reconciliation of these two subsets of the same whole – it is a reconciliation of the difference between the inner, wanted world, and the external world, as it is in its phenomenal existence.

Klíma, usually portrayed as a philosophical extremist, ceases to appear so demonic when viewed from this perspective. We eventually find out that his scepticism, bile, and bitterness are purely *methodical*. They do not express disdain for the world itself, but rather disdain for the way the *lowly people*[7] live in the world. With his odd method, Klíma leads us to a conclusion that is much more prosaic than a reader of *The World* would expect: to pleasant – not easy, but pleasant – being. The joy of the game into which the world of the egosolist transforms itself is ultimately the only thing that matters in phenomenal being. This leads to an active approach towards life: life ceases to be insufferable thanks to the strength of the egosolist's will to *want what can be wanted* – it is, thus, primarily a matter of *deep* self-knowledge – and it turns into a continuous game, the result of which, moreover, *is irrelevant* (and in this indifference lies the liberation of consciousness): the only thing that can be done in life is to play – precisely for the reason that nothing whatsoever is important, everything is identical to everything, all differ-

6 See Dominika Lewis's paper.

7 In Klíma's view, virtually everybody is a lowly person except for several unique personalities, such as Napoleon or the Prussian king Frederick the Great, whom he both names in *The World* often and gladly. Klíma links lowliness with weakness of will, passivity, and cowardice in various places in *The World*.

ences are found only in the cerebral apparatus (i.e. in sensory perception), and therefore everything can be subordinate to play, and the *subjective joy* it provides is the only thing capable of making one's stay in this world more pleasant.

Due to the unfortunate fact that man finds himself in this world involuntarily, without his own intent, but, at the same time, is usually incapable of ending his own phenomenal existence (through suicide), there is no other option left than to approach life as a game – this is the only way to be *free*. The nihilist takes life to be, at best, a necessary evil. Klíma overcomes this stance by turning it on its head in the aforementioned "twist", whereby he understands this necessary evil precisely as an opportunity to play and be entertained by the existential game. Should one aspire to become a strong spirit deserving of Klíma's admiration, that is, a spirit of the magnitude of Napoleon or Frederick the Great, one's game must be colossal, and one's playing of it must likewise shake the foundations of the whole world.

A Strong Will

Let us stop for a while to inspect the great figures that Klíma admires. Evidently, he only looked up to the greatest spirits in history. What kind of spirit must he have seen himself to be to claim in the third paragraph of his debut work *The World as Consciousness and Nothing*, published anonymously and at the author's own expense and at only 26 years of age, that Nietzsche was generally weak? According to Klíma, Nietzsche remained soft, sentimental, loving, and poetic. In the very same Nietzsche who formed the cornerstone of Klíma's own philosophy and to whom he ascribed "the greatest willpower among philosophers", Klíma finds a weakling incapable of making the step up to the *Übermensch*, a man drowning in his own passions and artistic states.

So what is this willpower according to which the greatness of one's spirit can be evaluated? For Klíma, it is the unique capability of an individual to consciously recognise his maximum potential, to actively set out to develop it, and to incessantly attack the limits of that potential in an effort to overcome them. The nobility of one's spirit is thus not determined by one's social status, education, or employment, but solely by the degree to which one is able to accurately pinpoint one's own potential and embrace it by starting to realise it actively in one's own life. Such behaviour is a testimony of a *strong will*. However, only those potential abilities that can be developed in a given phenomenal time-space and amidst given individual intellectual capabilities are beneficial; in other words, the slave cannot become a master if he is also a slave inside and is incapable of freeing himself in practice: then it

is only appropriate for him to accept his role, to reconcile the *wanted* with the *possible*, and to be a "good slave". Action derived from this position is *virtuous*.[8]

Although Klíma's egosolism does not operate with the concept of the *Übermensch*, his idea of the ego as the agent constituting the phenomenal world correlates to a certain degree with Nietzsche's famous conception of the *Übermensch*. Nevertheless, it differs from it in its ethical and practical conclusion. While, for Nietzsche, the "über-" quality of the *Übermensch* involves establishing one's ego as an imperative defining morality and ethics, an imperative which is thus unilateral, Klíma's conception of a virtuous man is more synthetic. Nietzsche's principle seems generally destructive-creative, with the *Übermensch* demolishing the current social order, human civilization as a whole in its ontological totality, in order to build a new one out of the rubble; the principle of Klíma's egosolism, however, lies rather in considering how to harmonise the desires stemming from one's consciously recognised potential with the "real" state of affairs in the phenomenal world. Klíma's liberation from earthly life therefore does not lie in the transformation of the whole world according to my own will – it does not lie in the reduction of the world to *my* own specific principle; he does not deny the (albeit fictive) subjectivity of other consciousnesses (that is why Klíma rejected the accusations of solipsism raised against him by those who did not understand his philosophy).[9] It lies in seizing one's own unique life mission with one's highest potential and realising this potential – a virtuous spirit therefore does not strive to change the *whole* world according to his will; he changes only what leads him to his own *rightly* determined calling: this is the kind of action that reflects the willpower of a particular, individual consciousness. There is no greater comedy than a lowly man bursting with ambition realisable only by a strong will; there is no greater atrocity than a strong will recoiling from itself and shrinking into lowly ambition.

According to Klíma, Napoleon, who is most often cited as an example in *The World*, knew exactly at every moment of his life what he had to do to fulfil the potential bestowed upon him that he was capable of realising in any given situation, albeit in the most difficult of circumstances. Had Napoleon done less than he had to, he would never have risen from an impoverished Corsican nobleman to the master of the whole Europe. On the other hand, had he done more – overestimating his potential, which he eventually

8 Further comparison can be made to Aristotle's *Politics* and the concept of *courage to oneself*, in which the core idea is the effort to erase the contradiction between one's practical life and one's calling.

9 Explicitly stated in the preface to the second edition from 1928 in *The World*, p. 7–12.

did – perhaps his campaign would have ended much sooner. Here, however, Klíma's point re-emerges: none of this actually matters! What Klíma appreciates the most in Napoleon is his will to play again and again, constantly to challenge his fortune and to strive to overcome the insurmountable. Napoleon incessantly attacked the limits of what was possible for him and had his last hearty laugh in the face of failure with his Hundred Days. Such ambition undoubtedly suits a strong will such as his, since it shows itself to be essentially *active* in practical matters.

Klíma, however, generally despised other people. There was only one group of people for which he had a few good words: the workers. He considered the look in their eyes and their faces to be noble and strong; while almost everybody else – especially anthropologists, philosophers, and scholars in general – had dull, expressionless stares, their faces looking depressed and hollow. It is the face of the worker that reflects the inner strength of the spirit residing within him, resulting from the harmony of his inner and humble outer world. Perhaps precisely because the worker actively creates and produces – and does not think much – Klíma values him more than all intellectuals. Man's problem in general lies in the dissonance between his subjective need and the activity which *has to be* done. In this respect, a worker is more virtuous than any philosopher.

Klíma's "Übermensch-like" quality lies in a synchronous negation and affirmation of the phenomenal world. In this way, consciousness enters a state in which any activity becomes so indifferent that there is no reason to refuse it, no matter how much suffering it causes us – after all, these are just fictive states of the soul. Conversely, since this activity stems from one's potential, it must be developed actively, without regard to its usefulness for society or something similarly "un-Klíma-like", but rather with regard to the enjoyment of play, into which the egosolist's activity has been transformed. Back to Napoleon: the reason why he achieved all his great successes was not because he was a brilliant military commander – that was merely a particular manifestation of his strong will. Napoleon achieved his success because he did not flinch in the face of death or failure, but instead kept on playing the game; this is another aspect that inspired Klíma to proclaim that precisely this kind of daredevil character – one who sees through the fictive difference between life and death and therefore understands life to be a mere individual dream floating in an infinite, irrational, universal consciousness – is a *great* character. In other words, the fact that the lives of Napoleon's soldiers, along with the lives of everyone who died in the conflicts he started, did not matter to him in the slightest makes Napoleon one of the most distinguished spirits in human history. Why?

We emphasise that, as in all of Klíma's works, demand for activity is still present here: a demand for a complete rejection of a passive approach to life which is so typical of the ordinary man, whom Klíma despised because of his living only outside of himself.[10] However, it is in this rejection that man distinguishes himself from animal – only an action which is not driven by necessity is valuable and truly active,[11] since it exceeds the purely passive, "suffering" mode of existence. Napoleon did not *have to* become emperor; he could have remained an impoverished nobleman and profited from his lands or from commerce. To become emperor was not *necessary* for his survival. Napoleon *had the opportunity* to become emperor. If he was *forced to* become one, he would not have been any different from a calf that was forced by its natural growth to become a cow or a bull. All he did for the development of his potential, in fact, exceeded the sphere of the immediate need.

When reading Klíma's texts, it becomes apparent that Klíma considered precisely this kind of activity, the kind that is not directly linked to the survival and reproduction of the life of an individual consciousness, to be so much more superior to all *necessary* activity – this is why he himself liked to risk his own life in an effort to prioritise this "unnecessary" type of activity to the very limit of sustainability. This is the existential drive of the game. It is in this risky preference for the "unnecessary" that the game becomes serious, noble and entertaining. A game that does not leave the protagonist's life hanging by a thread is *weakness* – fear of losing one's life – and is therefore still an imperfect, lowly state of consciousness.

10 "Do you want to form a correct conception of the lowly man? –: Think of your lowly, ridiculous traits, which you are repelled by, just as you are by your excrements, *multiply them by twenty*, add maybe a *hundredth* of your higher traits… , – and you have the lowly man in all its splendour!… – All that functions wholly unconsciously and *mechanically*, like clockwork. When people think about themselves, they do it solely from the impulse of some completely unconscious instinct…: everything in the lowly man actually happens *outside of himself*…" *The World*, p. 149.

11 A parallel with Marx's conception of labour offers itself here. According to Marx, truly human work is only that which is not driven by material necessity, since man shares the need to fulfil material needs with animals and does not differentiate from them if he himself is the immediate consumer of his passions and needs. Klíma also sees as noble only such activity which exceeds the level of pure necessity. He who works merely to assure his survival, who does not work for the joy of the activity itself, but only for the sake of his own reproduction, can in no way aspire to become a strong character. Klíma's joyful individual of the phenomenal world does only that which brings him joy – and he rejoices from that which he can do. The main "twist" in Klíma's thinking is located precisely in the fact that the egosolist ultimately turns everything he does into an act of playing which brings him joy, be it high intellectual work, world conquest, lathing wood, or slaving away in a quarry – in this sense, he is, understandably, quite distant from Marx. I added this note simply to accentuate Klíma's concept of work, since my primary subject of study is the philosophy of *Bildung* in Hegel and Marx.

It is entirely *unnecessary* to play Russian roulette. But one can play it; all the more when one realises that life is indifferent, and so one might even have some fun playing it! What else is there to do other than to play? What are the meaningless little "lives" of men compared to Napoleon's courage and will to fulfil his phenomenal potential through play? And he who at the outset refuses to play, gives up, or loses, he who lets himself be dominated, enslaved, or defeated by someone like Napoleon – by this extremely concentrated, goal-conscious consciousness – deserves nothing but oppression. However, the way Napoleon played the game made him virtuous. The soul's affect actively manifested in a game shaking the phenomenal world is the highest attainable virtue.

Play is chiefly a joyful affirmation of the manifestation of the nothingness of the world which Klíma derives from his conviction that the world is a totality of a finite number of material atoms endowed with spirit, whose mutual interaction – collisions of singular fragments of universal consciousness – *appears* to man through his cognitive apparatus as real, lived existence. In this enclosed system, atoms cannot disappear nor can new ones be added: the result of winning one game is thus merely a loss somewhere else. Each win must be balanced out by a loss, each success must be balanced out by failure, each joyful experience of the spirit by suffering – the imaginary resultant of the world is therefore a constant zero. That is why the world is identical to Nothing and has no meaning. The acceptance of this stance opens up an unlimited field of play, where what matters is neither winning nor losing, but playing itself – actively *experiencing* it and participating in its co-creation; thus, affirmation of the game means affirmation of unlimited will and irrational consciousness.

What, then, is egosolism? It is *my* ability to transform the world according to the rules which *I* myself set and which *I* take as my own – this proclamation, however, entails an unspoken affirmation of how the rules *in this place* were already set before *me* by the laws of nature – I, the egosolist, have, nevertheless, prevailed over the constraints of external rules: I have realized what must be achieved within their limits and have accepted them – *gladly!* – as my own and to such a degree that I can make a game out of overcoming them, since, at the same time, I understand and am constantly reminded of the fact that any activity in the phenomenal world is ultimately indifferent in its consequences, and is only valuable when being experienced during *active consumption of the world*. My world is my dream, my dream is my world – the attainment of absolute harmony between individual and universal consciousness through the affirmation of active participation in phenomenal being, based on the recognition of the ultimate meaninglessness of existence.

The Last Metaphysician

The world, according to Klíma, is an interplay of one's own subjective mental states. However, in addition to one's own consciousness, which is the result of constant filtration of the world in itself, the world is also composed of of what Klíma calls *extra-cerebral matter*. The point of Klíma's "psychoatomism" is that this extra-cerebral matter is, in fact, consciousness itself as well – which, however, means that it is *nothing*, too. Thus, it seems that the primary world is created by interactions of atoms of matter, every one of which is a singular consciousness in itself – a single particle of absolute consciousness. Universal consciousness is comprised of a finite number of atoms, every single one of them containing a whole, i.e. the principle of universality in the form of potentiality for various forms of phenomenal appearance. Therefore, extra-cerebral matter is one's own consciousness, just as all other consciousnesses of all beings and things are. All of these, along with one's own subjective mental states, are atoms bouncing off each other, entering into interactions that make up phenomenal reality. Here we see another instance of Klíma's dissolution of the subject-object distinction. The notion of a difference between one's self and another self is merely the result of a deficiency of the human cerebral apparatus.

The physical proximity of atoms in the phenomenal world testifies of the proximity of spiritual atoms in consciousness. Particles in such a close proximity *vehemently affect* one another and the most vehement relationships then imprint themselves upon a person as his reflexes, through which he reacts to the proximity of certain atoms with an automatic, unintentional reaction – the purest example of this effect are sensory perceptions which result from absolute habituation of the cerebral apparatus to a static or negligibly variable distance between certain singular atoms of consciousness. However, the fundamentally limited nature of man gives rise to his continuing inability to determine once and for all what the relationship between pure consciousness and the phenomenal world is. According to Klíma, these two spheres may either be interconnected in some way, indirectly corresponding to one another, or their relationship may be completely random. The fact that we are unable to solve this problem, however, is purely due to the "unreadiness" of our thinking. There can be other, more perfect, perspectives than our human ones – and even these merely human perspectives are constantly being developed and perfected. Why, then, should not we be able one day to discover what the relationship between phenomena and reality is? Such is Klíma's metaphysical optimism.

In his philosophy, Klíma always takes care not to make man – or at least not the *good* man – a passive object of the course of history. In this sense,

he does not outright negate Nietzsche's concept of the eternal return of the same, but significantly weakens it – the concept is valid, according to Klíma, but its validity applies only to the phenomenal realm, and so the concept is rather the result of "falling back" within philosophy than a genuine description of being that would reach beyond phenomenality. On the level of the primary world, Klíma transforms the eternal return of the same into the eternal presence of the same (that which is identical, i.e. nothing, i.e. consciousness, cannot disappear anywhere, cannot change, and therefore has nowhere to return from). On the level of practical action in the secondary world, the eternal return of the same is rather a display of a bad mode of being – if the same always returns, then the *I* is merely a passive recipient and not an active agent – however, here again we come upon Klíma's special "twist": what the realization of the meaninglessness of the effort to be active actually represents is freedom of action, i.e. the virtue of doing something that has no meaning, which calls for unlimited activity. The fact that my action ultimately brings nothing, that it does not matter, is precisely the reason why I should act.

What the idea of active participation in the world precisely means still needs to be clarified; what is the action, to which we are called. During incorrect conduct of constructing a philosophy of consciousness, the most treacherous element of all comes into play, the greatest enemy of the ludibrionist, of the one who plays: nature's Trojan horse – and here we get to the crystalline form of the *true* source of Klíma's ultra-radical individualism – *reflection*. The absence of reflection is another specific characteristic of Klíma's Napoleon. Reflection, this flaw of nature, is the source of human weakness, since it makes one unable to acknowledge oneself as a god-like subject identical to universal will: that is the reason why all philosophy hitherto has, according to Klíma, "fallen back" in its thinking.[12] In its reflective quality, philosophy has always recoiled from its truly serious conclusions and consequences. This "falling back" can be well illustrated if we imagine a man determined to commit suicide by jumping from a height; he is so close to ending his own miserable existence, running, approaching the edge – and then at the last moment he stops. Only dirt and rocks fall into the abyss beneath him where he – the player – should have fallen, but instead, there he stands now, a repulsive creature full of angst, a slave to his own fear of the consequences of his actions – at the very last moment, reflection has defeated his will.

Therefore, reflection, this highest form of confusion of a singular consciousness in its existence, must be bypassed. Activity in the world equals

12 First mentioned in *The World*, p. 16.

a negation of reflection and, conversely, absolute reflection equals absolute passivity of the will, a passivity where will is wholly suspended by fear of the consequences of active deeds. In the case of the suicidal man, his strongest act of will is to overcome reflection, the daring, instantaneous, unreflective step after which there is no turning back.

An idea, always immediately contaminated by doubt, must be purified and clarified by eliminating reflection. If reflection is a mere illusion of impossibility through which we are deceived by nature in the external world, then we must rid completely ourselves of such deceit. Without reflection, and thus without any limitation from the external world, everything that a strong will wishes is right and feasible. For the same reasons, both logic and causality must also be eliminated, since they are only nonsensical semblances created by the need of the imperfect human intellect to systematise concepts and perceive them in terms of time.

> "There are two kinds of logic: natural and artificial. Natural logic lies in every clear thought; it need not be sought, – or else we find artificial logic, which is just as ugly as her sister is beautiful."[13]

Put differently and clearly: *true* logic is not found in thought, in reason, in analysis – it is found in action and unmediated activity. Logic thus cannot be taught, it can only be experienced and lived. False logic, on the other hand, stupefies man and denies him the true and divine knowledge, which is egosolism.

However, this gives rise to the question of why, in that case, does Klíma philosophise at all? Why did he not remain a strong, purely active spirit? Why did he begin to write in the first place? The answer to this question is also the answer to the question of what the goal of philosophy is. Klíma states, laconically:

> "TO DO WHAT CAN BE DONE: TO DECONSTRUCT our erratic thought in the most detailed way possible, – to uncover the densest darkness in our darkness or, equally, the brightest light in our light."[14]

Doubt and the hardships it causes to the soul must be replaced by methodical and pro-active negation of reflection. Reflection happens through reason; that is why Klíma straightforwardly gives preference to *activity* over reason. Reason is here only to deceive us, to force us, through its own imperfections,

13 *The World*, p. 13.
14 Ibid., p. 18.

to create abstract concepts, whose real existence we then struggle to justify philosophically and whose validity or invalidity becomes the subject of passionate debate.

For Klíma, the traditional concepts of philosophy, such as being, the world, or substance are simply fictions of the intellect.

> "That we think that something exists is proof that nothing exists; if we did not think so, – then something would exist!"[15]

proclaims Klíma. To put it differently: that which exists is so evident that it need not be conceptualised using reason; and if our world is formed by so many concepts that we simply cannot help but conceptualise using reason, this is the proof that our world is nothing, that it does not exist; that all the world which we take to exist is merely a filtered manifestation of consciousness into which we desperately try to instil meaning within our own miserable constraints. By doing so, we limit ourselves; this artificial meaning, thanks to which we think we understand the world better, immediately begins to deteriorate into reflection, once it is established as a norm of conduct. Action then loses its active component, since when something becomes established as a norm, it is doomed to repetition, to an eternal recurrence of the same on a phenomenal level, and the irrational cycle involving the relationship between the primary and secondary world begins anew. The world thus ultimately has no meaning and this meaninglessness is precisely its most valuable quality, since it calls man to freedom. Klíma's philosophy of egosolism is therefore a philosophy of action par excellence for all – and none.

Concerning Method and Style

In this paper, I have strived to present my own interpretation of egosolism as an individualistic philosophy calling to active participation in the world through play. In the concluding part of this paper, I consider it important to make several more remarks on the topic of Klíma's method and style, through which he leads us to a *correct* grasp of his central thoughts which are otherwise often expressed in almost cryptographic proclamations.

Already in the introduction to *The World*, Klíma openly declares that he is irritated by all the false logic and systematicity[16] that permeates and devalu-

15 Ibid., p. 21.

16 It, however, must be noted that the concluding section of *The World*, titled "The Society" („Společnost", p. 156–189), is relatively systematic and provides evidence of Klíma's knowledge of contemporary political and cultural matters, of which it is very difficult to write "unsystem-

ates all philosophy. As if he were asking: Is it really the case that thinking is a continuous process? Klíma maintains that linking thoughts into large, unitary wholes is a symptom of simple-mindedness, of inability to think, live and act in an unmediated way. Everyone who has nothing to say writes a thousand pages; mastery in writing lies, on the contrary, in the art of expressing a thought aptly – so that it communicates the necessary content (which, however, is never completely possible, since language itself is a crucial source of confusion, always informing somewhat "roughly", leaving the recipient to ascribe *his* own mental states to the information communicated). Klíma's *The World* absolutely excels in its "unsystematic systematicity" and is worthy of recognition for that, if nothing else. Klíma's style is inimitable. He truly abandons any kind of logic and structure – he writes sentences and words haphazardly, just as they occurred to him; he often changes topic in the middle of a sentence, frequently accompanied by a wild use of punctuation; sometimes he even abandons sentence structure completely and communicates his thoughts to the reader using multiple infinitives or short sentences. Other passages are, conversely, verging on the dramatic and are evidence that Klíma was not just talented as a thinker, but also as a writer.

Nevertheless, despite its openly declared disdain for systematic narration, *The World as Consciousness and Nothing* (*Svět jako vědomí a nic*) gradually builds up to a climax. In the last paragraphs of the penultimate section, titled *The Individual*, the reader can literally feel the peak drawing so, so near; not in the sense of a plotline ending, but rather in the sense of an emotional climax, as Klíma's skills in imparting subjective impressions makes reader suddenly feels much closer to Klíma than they would have been willing to admit before. The passage cited in this study, where he speaks of flashes from the "world beyond", is one of the finest in *The World* – when reading the passage one's heart rate begins to race, urging one to read on. I myself was overcome by an intense feeling of "something great" approaching, some "final revelation". However, Klíma has nothing of the sort in stall for us. The final part of the book is dedicated to social questions. I believe that this revelation manifests itself somewhere inside the reader later on, after one has had time to process *The World* properly. It is hard to describe this revelation in any other way (apart from attempting to impart or describe the impression itself) than through a short presentation of the ways in which Klíma arrives to his philosophical positions, of the "mechanics" of consciousness and its elevation, as I have attempted to show in this study.

atically". This section is among several other places in Klíma's works where it is apparent that Klíma still had a lively interest in public affairs and that he never became a complete "philosopher-hermit".

I believe it is correct to read Klíma precisely in *this* way. Since he himself despised scholarly attempts at analysis and problematisation, which, he thought, led to nothing more than academic "chatter", it can be assumed that he would not take favourably to the reading of *The World* purely out of *scientific interest*. Klíma is one of those philosophers who demands that the reader read his texts using something else than just reason, which, as we have shown, he criticises sharply. His literary style, sentence structure, book structure, the words he chooses, the mood he builds – with all this Klíma invites us to *experience* rather than to *understand* the essence of egosolism. What one can carry away from Klíma is not what is written in the text, but rather that which remains within us after we forget the text altogether – all that is *behind* the text, all that lies in how we *feel* Klíma's words affecting us.

If my approach to reading Klíma is correct, then there is nothing left but to indulge in one last praise of his work. Through his philosophy, he purposefully leads us not to be passive, but to act. Action is always mediated by experience. It is thus not actually surprising that the message of *The World as Consciousness and Nothing* is, in the end, much more to be *experienced* than to be *understood*. Just as a virtuous man possessing strong will lives his life actively, instead of contemplatively and incessantly falling back due to attacks of reflection, so must we approach Klíma's philosophy head on: it needs to be experienced, or else it cannot be grasped. It is for this reason that I purposefully avoided comparing my interpretation with, say, Patočka's interpretation of Klíma. I did not aspire to provide a comparative compilation of interpretations, nor a commentary to a previous interpretation. I wanted to *experience* Klíma and to describe him – before even I fall under the merciless blade of reflection.