Will and Feeling. Individualism in the Philosophy of František Mareš*

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We shall begin with a thinker who may rightfully be considered a pioneer and restorer of idealism in the Bohemian lands, which, at the turn of the 20th century, still strongly inclined towards scientific and therefore supposedly politically indifferent philosophical reflection that could thus somehow ensure independence. František Mareš was a physician and a professor of physiology. The nature of the profession naturally brought him close to human individuality, at least to the extent to which a sickness individualises, in that it prevents the sick from satisfying some of their desires. This precisely matches Mareš's concept of consciousness that "lights up" the very moment a drive meets an obstacle.[1] In a situation where a drive remains unsatisfied, consciousness begins to feel the resistance of something that lies beyond its control, is heterogeneous to it, challenging and defiant. In this *feeling* of consciousness (*pocit vědomí*), where consciousness itself is not taken by Mareš to be "a special faculty or essence", but rather to be "like light",[2] consciousness encounters its own exteriority and experiences this encounter as its own schism: part remains with the exteriority and starts to postulate it as an object, and part returns inside itself, albeit in a different form. Now it knows about its own delimitation posited by the outside, by the object. In relation to this object, consciousness acquires a new dimension, since at the

* The text is part of the Czech Science Foundation grant project (GA ČR) *Individualism in the Czechoslovak Philosophy 1918–1948*, No. 19-14180S.

1 "A *drive* operates without any awareness of the goal towards which it strives; it operates instinctively, i.e. in spite of any possible individual experience, without any knowledge. Man, too, is driven by his organic needs to unconsciously strive to satisfy them. Consciousness then lights up when this striving encounters an obstacle." Mareš, F., *Physiology, Vol. IV, Part 1. Physiological Psychology. The Foundations, Subject, Feelings and Efforts* (*Fysiologie. Díl IV. Část I. Fysiologická psychologie. Základy, subjekt, city, snahy*). Praha, Jos. Springer 1926, p. 250.

2 Ibid., p. 41.

same time it also relates to itself, becoming self-consciousness, consciousness of the self. What at first posed itself as an obstacle now loses its urgency, because from now on consciousness has the ability to withdraw into itself and leave the object be. In other words: it is now able to not want it. In this refusal of the object, consciousness experiences freedom, which it then can eventually extend to all objects. Through overall withdrawal from the world of objectivity, consciousness enables itself to concentrate, have control over itself, to feel as a person thereby becoming a self-conscious individual.

A self-conscious individual does not reject relating to objectivity in any way, yet he maintains a distance from objects, thus preventing himself from being overwhelmed by them and getting lost amongst them. For Mareš, this is the entry point into the sphere of moral dignity:

> "Thus … […] a *human person* rises above the things of this world. The spontaneity, autonomy, self-determination, *freedom* of the human person is the essence of his *moral dignity*."[3]

The ability to maintain critical distance is attributed to every self-conscious individual and thus creates a vision of society based on the principle of spiritual recognition of the dignity of all persons. Such a society would therefore be essentially supra-individualistic, but the self-conscious individual would, nevertheless, still constitute a condition of its birth.

After this exposé, let us turn to Mareš's concept of science, or rather of the figure of the scientist and his approach to the objective world. In a certain paradoxical sense, the scientist renounces the world, since he stops halfway up the path and remains caught up in the midst of things without taking a step back from them. His whole visual field of consciousness is filled by the object of his interest and so, instead of elevating himself to a position from which attaining knowledge becomes possible for him, he enters the centre of the object and becomes engrossed in it. Eventually, he becomes unable to set himself free from this passion for the object, except by inducing an illusion of impartiality, which he can achieve only by depersonalising the object of his study: "the scientist refuses everything that is personal and accepts only *impersonal science*, whose *dreadful truth* makes personal consciousness crumble."[4] The dreadfulness of scientific truth lies in the very fact that it does not involve man. Science turns the image of man into an apathetic, disinterested being, an object among objects. Science does not just depersonalise man, but, much worse, it makes him purely material.

3 Ibid., p. 286.
4 Ibid., p. 27.

Such a view of contemporary science well explains Mareš's consternation over medical practice of his day:

> "Half a century ago, we stopped paying attention to the mental (*duševní*) state of an ill *person* and started to give importance only to the objective, bodily symptoms of the *illness*. Healing methods, too, have begun to rely solely on physical and chemical treatment, ignoring the complaints of the ill and their mental anxiety. Such a purely objective orientation of approach has surely enriched medicine with important knowledge and skills, but it has also weakened its effectiveness because of the damage it caused to the spiritual (*duševní*) relations between the ill and their doctor, which are built on trust, hope and will to life."[5]

Mareš believed that physiology, due to its focus on the connection between the bodily and mental aspects of man,[6] could bring metaphysics back to medicine and possibly other sciences as well, and could thus restore Hippocrates' idea that "the physician-*philosopher* is like god".[7] In this sense, it is possible to liken Mareš's conception of physiology to modern philosophical anthropology. A man of medicine should not be a mere administrator of the knowledge of illness; he must instead base his practice on a well-justified image of mankind.

František Mareš's professional focus was undoubtedly influenced by the fact that he was a sworn Kantian. This had its own historical significance, as Kant did not rank among the profoundly influential philosophers of the Czech and Austrian intellectual milieu of the turn of the century. Yet, Mareš's first philosophically significant book, *Idealism and Realism in Natural Science* (*Idealism a realism v přírodní vědě*) was built on Kantian premises, which is why it stirred up a "dispute over Kant", where Mareš met with opposition from Masaryk, Krejčí and Rádl. Nevertheless, it is a different aspect of Mareš's Kantianism that is of much bigger importance to us. This aspect explains the aforementioned fact that Mareš definitely cannot see individualism as an answer to the problem of man. He would more likely see it in the "transcendental subject" of a moral person, which is supra-individual by definition.

5 Ibid., *Prologue* (*Předmluva*), p. VI.

6 "And so physiology finds itself in the middle of the feud between realism and idealism and is expected to provide a solution to the main point of this feud, that is, the mysterious relation between the physical and the psychical." Mareš, F., *Idealism and Realism in Natural Science* (*Idealism a realism v přírodní vědě*). Praha, Fr. Řivnáč 1901, p. 1.

7 Mareš, F., *Physiology, Vol. IV, Prologue* (*Fysiologie. Díl IV, Předmluva*), p. VI.

As the name of the "ground-breaking" book *Truth within Feeling* (*Pravda v citu*) suggests, Mareš began gradually to turn away from the orthodox interpretation of Kant primarily because of his dissatisfaction with its strict refusal of "intellectual intuition"; his new point of departure becomes an autonomous thematisation of *emotion* (*pocit*) as the deepest and original source of "autogenous spontaneity" of the human subject.

I shall now attempt to show why this distinctive understanding of emotion could be the essence of what it means to be an individual for Mareš.

When *Idealism and Realism in Natural Science* was published in 1901, the main objections raised against Mareš's method presented in it (except for its Kantian basis) concerned its "dark mysticism" (Masaryk)[8] and the attunement of scepsis (*náladová skepse*; Rádl).[9] These objections probably stemmed from two key passages where Mareš's "idealistic" standpoint begins to take shape. The very first page of the book reads:

> "These two points of view on reality have been struggling against each other since the beginning of time, and never will their feud find settlement; for it is not reasons and knowledge that can settle it, but rather man's character and will."

A similar diction is repeated in the second half of the treatise:

> "The feud between idealism and realism as an expression of antinomy of the human mind is insoluble. The interests of man's will decide which side he shall choose; the knowing intellect shall succumb to the will and find reasons to suit its liking."[10]

Both passages touch upon man's character or will and both "principles" are taken to be decisive moments of existential metaphysical choice. For Mareš, to be an idealist or realist means to choose an ontological perspective whose prism is then applied to the world, man and society. This choice is therefore fateful, and the whole book describes the consequences that follow from siding with either of the antipoles. The idealist recognises the primary autonomy of feelings, desires and efforts, whereas the realist considers genuine reality to consist of matter in motion and extending bodies – things, in other words.

8 Masaryk, T. G., Prof. Mareš's Idealism and Realism in Natural Sciences (Prof. Mareše „Idealism a realism v přírodní vědě"). *Nová doba*, 8, 1900–1901, No. 9, p. 704.

9 Rádl, E., On the Attunement of Scepsis (O náladové skepsi). *Česká mysl*, 3, 1902, No. 5, p. 324 to 333; No. 6, p. 422–431.

10 Mareš, F., *Idealism and Realism in Natural Science*, p. 371.

We have already seen that elementary and inevitable ontological choice is not made by reason, but comes prior to all knowledge, expressing the deepest level of being of a given man. For this reason, in a certain interpretative light, we could understand it as a fundamental sign of individuality.

Will and character are at the core of how we, as humans, posit the world. For a long time, Mareš stuck to this conviction without managing to clarify it any further. More precisely, he clarified it indirectly, by way of analogy to how natural events play out, which, in his view, is organised by an "organic agent" that is at work prior to all causality, and which designates a goal that consequently determines every cause-effect relation. The notion of necessary recognition of such an organic agent working in the obscure interior of nature was inspired by the biology of the era that had amassed a huge amount of evidence pointing towards it. Typical examples of such evidence include the formation of an embryo and a foetus from a germ cell, and Driesch's experiments in which he split an animal embryo into two parts, which subsequently evolved into two separate, complete individuals. For Mareš, this proved that despite the absence of a conscious, rational element in the embryonic phase of human development, the whole process still takes place exactly as it should. That is why, twenty-five years later, he writes:

> "The organism is a *cohesive whole* composed of different parts that are made possible only thanks to the whole. All physiochemical bodily processes are but *means* organised to meet the *goal* of growth, preservation and prosperity of the organism. It is only this goal that gives physiochemical bodily processes their quality of organic performances."[11]

It is this overall organic bond that gives meaning to all organic processes taking place under the governance of the law of causality, albeit unconsciously. And it is precisely this overall organic bond that forms the basis of individuality:

> "The organic whole contains both bodily and mental (*duševní*) individuality, which is different from other organic wholes. The connection and unity between the bodily and the mental in an organism is a genuine fact proved by all experience. To penetrate by knowledge the mode of this unity means to penetrate by knowledge the wonder of all life; it is necessary to recognise and admit this unity as a fundamental fact."[12]

11 Mareš, F., *Physiology, Vol. IV, Prologue*, p. XVI.
12 Ibid., p. 93.

Human individuality is constituted by the overall organic bond within which, in Mareš's words, one's "internal being" manifests itself. This "internal being" does not enter consciousness, yet we must presume it is at work within every act of consciousness, for it provides continuity to our experience. The entire fourth volume of *Physiology* can thus be read as a phenomenology of the overall organic bond forming the individuality of man. For the purposes of this phenomenology, we must abstract concrete mental phenomena from our unitary and continuous flow of experience and analyse them in order to demonstrate the original spontaneous efficacy of the overall organic bond which rules those phenomena.

In Volume IV of *Physiology*, Mareš suggests classifying mental events into emotions (*pocity*), feelings (*city*) and effort (*snažení*). What is original about this is Mareš's interpretation of these events, along with his effort to define the process due to which these events interact with each other and come to form a unified experience.

Emotion (*pocit*) is brought about by objective correlation. Although it has a subjective aspect (i.e. it is felt), it also has a specifically objective aspect, since it comes to be as a result of the work of something outside of consciousness. Therefore, emotion causally mediates the outer world, and in this respect, it is more or less identical with what Kant calls affect. Mareš's objection against realism, and so against Masaryk as well, is that it reduces all mental activity to this primary "mechanism" of emotion, from which it then tries to construe the whole structure of subjectivity, all the way to its crossing step into transcendence. From the causality of emotion, realism tries to trace the chain of causes and effects that inevitably leads to values and ideals. Therefore, the fundamental flaw of realism lies in an unreflected leap which it takes when it rashly mistakes causality of emotion for causality in the categorical sense; realism holds that there exists a smooth transition from emotion to understanding and intellect. It is this very smoothness of transition which Mareš questions as a hypothesis that renounces metaphysical agency, but itself inadvertently falls into metaphysics due to the confusion of two different causalities. For realism or naturalism, there is only consciousness with objective correlation, it does not accept the notion of an original inner agent, and that is why it reduces the soul to a seeming causality of conscious states:

> "The ban on speaking about the soul in psychology has led to the use of 'consciousness' instead of the soul; wanting to avoid a metaphysics of the soul led to falling into a mysticism of 'consciousness'".[13]

13 Ibid., p. 203.

If emotions (*pocity*) were all there was to mental activity, we would experience only a present in which individual moments would constantly change without any relation to each other. Emotions thus cannot be a core element of sensual perception, although they mediate it. In an introspective thought experiment, it is possible to picture emotions without the presence of an object that would elicit them. A representation of an emotion is not identical to the emotion as such. In representation, an emotion related to an object becomes independent and can be connected to other representations, desires or wishes. The representation of an emotion elicits an *impression* that does not relate anymore to the objective correlation, but to the subject having the impression. Put briefly, it is thanks to impressions that the subject learns how he "is doing" and, in this self-experience, he is able to react spontaneously and autonomously, without outer stimuli, to his own attunement that is being announced by his impressions. In the reaction to his own attunement, the subject experiences *feeling* (*cit*), which is therefore a more fundamental agent of mental life than emotion. The subject experiences himself, attributes value and sets his own goals through feeling. In short, feeling is the place of preliminary structuration of the way in which emotions turn towards the outer world.

Emotions, due to their dependence on objects, are mostly passive; they provide experience with mere chaos of sensations; their relations are determined by the intellect. In fact, Mareš remains a Kantian as far as his notion of intellect is concerned, at least in the sense that he subordinates the intellect to categorical principles that create the transcendental subject. With respect to individuality, this means that a vast majority of people agree on emotions, which is why emotions, as is the case with the intellect, cannot bear individual differentiation. Although the intellect transgresses emotions and gives unity to them as an expression of its creative activity, it itself nevertheless serves the "impetus of life". Therefore, this impetus is more fundamental and primary in the projection of experience. The limited nature of the intellect or reason lies in its foundation in consciousness. Reason can synthesize only conscious content – i.e. emotions that reach such intensity that they cross the threshold of consciousness. However, for Mareš, consciousness in no way accounts for all mental activity. He speaks of "the strait of consciousness" which, conditioned by memory, allows only the results of deeper activity, taking place without the participation of consciousness, to enter rational reflection. In Mareš's view, the majority of mental activity is thus unconscious – reason or intellect cannot choose the "matter" they synthesize. The emphasis on unconscious mental processes can undoubtedly be considered to be the most significant development of Mareš's philosophy on man's overall organic bond.

In his earlier books on unconsciousness, Mareš speaks with certain reservation about the impossibility of proving it. However, in the Volume IV of *Physiology*, unconsciousness is accepted as a necessary prerequisite of a conscious life. The particular contents of consciousness, elicited by emotions and synthesized by reason, lie in experience too far away from the crucial moment of the passage from unconsciousness to consciousness. In order to get closer to this point, which is absolutely decisive in the context of the issue of the soul, we must turn to consciousness as such that is given to us in feeling:

> "*Feeling* (*cit*) is… *an impression*, which a subject has not only from his *emotions*, but from the entire content of his consciousness; because *how the subject himself is doing* during his diverse experiences, how he *feels*, is characterised by *feeling*… *The value* of particular experiences for the subject is characterised by feeling, feeling *appreciates* (*oceňuje*) and *evaluates* (*hodnotí*). Finally, feeling awakens the *effort* that relates back to objects, accepting the pleasant and refusing the unpleasant."[14]

Only content that has been identified by feeling as being worthy of attention can pass through the strait of consciousness. Man is organically embedded in the world through feeling; feeling lets him see what his whereabouts in the world are and provides him with options for possible goals of his action. In feeling, man also comes to experience the echoes of his inner being (his individual self-consciousness); through feeling, he experiences the overall organic bond of his own personality.

Originally, the evaluating aspect of feeling in its attunement comes before a conscious choice between motives. An act of will decides even before reason, reason only supplies the will with the means of enacting what has already been decided. This *fiat* that resonates in the prior decision of an act of will therefore lies deep in the unconsciousness, from which then stem the motives between which it is possible to make a rational choice.

> "*We do* what we want, but will is in what we want and that we want it. The decision-making process of will does not follow from rational consideration of motives like a logical consequence from a premise. Thinking is not wanting. It is not sufficient to think: I should do this and not do that. It does not suffice to know one's duty in order to also do it; it is not enough just to *think*: now I want an act to follow this. Action requires a special *act of will*, which, however, remains in the

14 Ibid., p. 191.

> unconsciousness. It is not enough for people to understand and accept certain goals, to declare them, in order to want them. People's *conviction* and *faith*, not just their intellect, must be awoken and their *inner being itself* must be moved in order for people *truly* to want, i.e. for them to act in accordance with these ideals."[15]

Mareš's phenomenology of the overall organic bond is not dialectical, but archaeological. It begins with the surface layer of the consciousness and gradually digs its way to the deeper bedrock of spiritual life. This bedrock can only be deduced retrospectively from what has passed through the strait of consciousness. Feelings (*city*) constitute the moment of passage from unconsciousness to consciousness and are often mixed with emotions (*pocity*) – that is why Mareš looks for something he calls a "pure feeling" that would be independent of emotions. Aesthetic feeling serves as a model for pure feeling, for beauty contains an evaluating aspect that differentiates emotions that were originally undifferentiated.

This archaeological descent allows for the emergence of two absolutely elementary, pure feelings: the feeling of one's existence and the feeling of activity. If we now turn our focus to will, which is the conscious wanting of a goal, we see that the first act of will is attention – which Mareš calls apperception. Attention is selective and therefore evaluating; it structures, somewhat beforehand, the focus of our attention. The feeling of activity is already functioning within it, and it is precisely this original apperception that points to the deepest substratum of the soul, which Mareš calls selfhood or self. At the beginning, we talked about the fateful decision between idealism and realism. Now we see that this decision in fact concerns where our apperceptive attention will be focused – whether on external objects or on our own subjectivity. It is about the primal act of will taking place in the unconscious self that points to the focal point of one's life. This is what defines one's individuality. It is one's pivotal perspective on the world and on oneself. Yet, Mareš did not quite surpass his Kantianism, either in himself, or in his specific concept of feeling (*cit*) that touches upon man's selfhood or self (*Selbst* in German). On the one hand, he says that:

> "Thinking is *wanting*, whose goal is to know the outer world. The goal of this primal wanting is the *development of one's own individuality*, the development of all both mental and bodily capacities, all *faculties* useful for fulfilling one's potential in the world".[16]

15 Ibid., p. 252.
16 Ibid., p. 255.

It all therefore seems to suggest that individuality is the final goal at which the act of the self's will is aiming. Nonetheless, the Kantian in Mareš objects:

> "Man's proper spiritual being is *unconscious* in the sense that it exists (*bytuje*) and works beyond individual consciousness in which it cannot be encompassed. This ideal being is a subject of moral law and the feeling of freedom (*cit svobody*); but it is also a creator of rational categories, is endowed with reason, thinks, remembers, invents, has a character. Solely the *results* of its activity are reported to consciousness, but the activity itself takes place beyond consciousness. This *spiritual agent* (*duchovní činitel*) is *the foundation* of the empirical, individual personality, and self-conscious self, but is itself *supra-personal* (*nadosobní*)."[17]

Therefore, an individual thinks and develops his faculties, and thus implements his original wanting, but is himself founded much deeper in the transcendental self or selfhood that can be accessed only through the feeling of freedom and the intuition of the creative organic principle of the overall organic bond of his "soul".

I believe that this discrepancy largely follows from Mareš's concept of character. He takes it almost word for word from Schopenhauer and so it is almost innate and constant for him. Although it is clear that the selfhood of a particular man is announced in his character, they both remain hidden somewhere in the depths of spiritual unconsciousness and the character can be inferred to only subsequently from particular acts or deeds. So, for Mareš, an individual can never really know himself and therefore never quite achieves self-mastery. Everything has always been decided for him in the transcendental sphere of his selfhood. Mareš's anthropology does not refute individuality; instead it attributes individuality an irreplaceable role in spiritual affairs. However, on the deepest level of the soul, an individual does not decide in matters concerning himself and must submit to moral law through which freedom can only then be achieved.

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The papers that follow show what paths were taken by Czechoslovak philosophers in order to fill in the gap that had been introduced to Czech thinking by Mareš's Kantianism. Mareš himself gives inspiration for such reading when, in the Volume IV of *Physiology*, he directs appreciative attention to many thinkers, some of whom the following papers address.

17 Ibid., p. 127.

His hope that the younger philosophical generation would endorse his conceptions of the soul and freedom, is introduced by these words:

> "The question: freedom or necessity; subordination of the physical to the psychical, or the psychical to the physical; primacy of the spirit or primacy of matter, has been answered by our empirical and realistic philosophers always favouring the second option. Our younger psychologists and philosophers favour the first option, the spiritual path."[18]

Immediately after, he applauds Ferdinand Pelikán and the book is concluded with praise for this author.

As for Vladimír Hoppe, Mareš appreciates his differentiation between an empirical and a transcendental subject, his overcoming of Kant's concept of intuition, and his introduction of the concept of selfhood. Mareš says about Karel Vorovka that:

> "with full conviction he paves the way for a type of knowledge, gnosis, whose indispensable condition is *mystical feeling* (*mystický cit*) that must be stimulated; every gnosis must begin with auto-gnosis, with an attempt at self-knowledge." He adds: "This path is taken especially by Hoppe."[19]

Tomáš Trnka and Ladislav Klíma probably diverged too much from Mareš, which makes the papers dealing with their solutions to the same questions all the more interesting.

It is surely evident that the expressions "organic agent", "life as a creative force" and similar have their origin in vitalism, especially in Bergson. The paper on Bergson's vitalism reveals this link between all the thinkers discussed. On the other hand, Masaryk and Rádl may be taken as Mareš's opponents and thus as pointing towards discrepancies and gaps in his thinking.

The loosest relation is probably between Mareš and the Slovak philosophers of the time. Nevertheless, even in this case some unexplored possibilities of at least a personal influence can be traced. In fact, Gejza Vámoš began his university studies at the Prague Faculty of Medicine in 1918, and therefore must have met Mareš as a professor. A paper on the cruelty principle and the reality argument will at least indirectly tell us to what extent Mareš's thinking shaped Vámoš's ideas.

18 Ibid., p. 284.
19 Ibid., p. 250.

Mareš's physiological anthropology forms the cornerstone of all the following papers. New nodes of sense and meanings that will be tied in a net so knitted will certainly reveal the predicament of individualism in Czechoslovak interwar philosophy.