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setzen (S. 91, Z. 25), wenn laut Bemerkung im kritischen Apparat die zweite Form bei Comenius kaum vorkommt; im *Repertorium vestibulare* wäre es besser *cohabitatio, is* auf *cohabitati-o, onis* korrigieren (S. 55, Z. 30), ähnlich *disPlicere, ui, tum* auf *disPlicere, ui, itum* (S. 74, Z. 43) statt *rectius* und *malimus* im kritischen Apparat zu setzen, weil die vorwiegende Form in analogen Stellen dazu völlig berechtigt (z.B. S. 56, Z. 16: *conci-o, onis*, S. 58, Z. 15: *divisi-o, onis*, S. 75, Z. 22: *praeberere, -ui, itum*).

Sonst ist der Band sorgfältig vorbereitet, an Tippfehlern und Versäumnissen finden wir nur wenig: *multorem* statt *multorum* (S. 23, Z. 13; in *ODO* steht richtig *multorum*) oder *caeterorum* statt klassischem *ceterorum* in der Liste der Abkürzungen (S. 507); hier könnte die Orthographie des edierten Autors gefärbt haben. Die Bearbeitung der originalen Graphik vermeidet die visuelle Zersplitterung und trägt zur Übersichtlichkeit des Textes bei, in dieser Hinsicht helfen dem Leser am besten die *Rudimenta*. Wenn der Benutzer aber pedantisch sein will, dann entdeckt er manchmal eine verschiedene Behandlung derselben Stellen, z. B. *sive* mal mit Kleinbuchstaben, mal mit Grossbuchstaben geschrieben (S. 50: *Repertorium vestibulare sive* x S. 103: *Sylva ... Sive, ODO* hat in beiden Fällen Majuskel), oder die wechselnde Form der Kapiteltitle in der *Grammatica janualis* (die Kapitel I-IV sind in Übereinstimmung mit dem Altdruck *De LITTERA* beschriftet, dann folgt die Form *De nomine* und ab dem Kapitel XI halten sich die Überschriften wieder an die Vorlage).

Diese kleinen formalen Inkonsistenzen mindern aber nicht den Wert des Buches. Es ist wichtig, dass jetzt allen, die sich für Comenius' Werk interessieren, eine solide und zuverlässige Edition mit allen relevanten Angaben und Informationen zur Verfügung steht. Neben dem kritischen Apparat findet man sie in den begleitenden Texten. Angesichts der umfangreichen und mannigfaltigen komeniologischen Literatur es ist vollkommen ausreichend, wenn die Einführung und der Kommentar die edierten Texte nur kurz behandeln, was sie treffend und übersichtlich tun. In der Einführung erfährt Leser das Wesentliche über die Umstände der Entstehung des Werkes, seinen Inhalt, Überlieferung und die jetzige Edition, die Kommentare verweisen auf die Quellen und die Werke der Zeit, so wie auch auf die Analogien in den anderen Schriften von Comenius. Es ist zu wünschen, dass die wissenschaftliche Gemeinde bald Gelegenheit bekommt, auch den nächsten Teil des 15. Bandes *DIAK* in Händen zu halten.

Zuzana Silagiová (Prag)

**Pavel Floss, *Meditace na rozhraní epoch* [Meditations on the Turn of an Epoch], Brno, Centrum pro studium demokracie a kultury 2012, 437 pp. ISBN 978-80-7325-286-1**

In 2012 the Brno Centre for the Study of Democracy and Culture (Centrum pro studium demokracie a kultury) published an anthology of studies, essays, conference papers and memoirs by Pavel Floss, under the title *Meditace na rozhraní epoch*.<sup>\*</sup> Editor Magdalena Milatová's care and attention has provided us with what is now the

second anthology by this leading Czech Comeniologist and historian of philosophy. The publication under review – which contains Floss's writings from 1971 to 2010 – is a loose continuation of the anthology of his articles published in 1998 under the title *Od počátku novověku ke konci milénia* (From the Beginning of the Modern Period to the End of the Millennium).<sup>1</sup> In the introduction Floss stresses his understanding of the concept *rozhraní epoch* – the turn of an epoch. It is his conviction that it has to be understood as the particular social and spiritual watershed taking place at the time these texts originated. Pavel Floss understands these watersheds or transitions not only as political and economic changes but also – at a historical and philosophical level – as the end of Modernism and the ascent of Post-Modernism, connected on the one hand with a search for new spiritual paths and on the other with “a critical coming to terms with the secularism of the modern period and the anti-metaphysical pathos of the post-Nietzschean era”.<sup>2</sup>

The publication is made up of four independent thematic groups. The first, called *Komeniologické studie a úvahy* (Comeniological studies and reflections), reminds us of Floss's classic Comeniological and historical/philosophical studies (a discussion of Jan Blahoslav; Comenius' relationship with antiquity and Patristics, as well as his anti-Socinian writings and his cosmology, etc.) and also of his texts of a disproportionately broad focus – thematic and chronological.

I should mention first the study called *Postmoderna inspiruje komeniologii?* (The Post-Modern inspires Comeniology?) and subtitled *Sloterdijkova koncepce cynismu a kynismu a Komenského hra* (Sloterdijk's concept of cynicism and *kunikos*, and a play by Comenius). Floss, through a very original and remarkable thought process, proceeds to compare Peter Sloterdijk's *Kritik der zynischen Vernunft* with Comenius' play *Diogenes cynicus redivivus*, and ends by drawing significant parallels between the two works. On one side stands Sloterdijk's sharp and indiscriminate criticism of the functionalisation of man, of his alienation from his authentic self, originating in the Enlightenment approach to science and increasing in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries as a contribution to the theoreticians of Marxism, Fascism and racism, and likewise to the proponents of liberalism, to Neo-Conservatism, and to the consumer lifestyle. This cynicism culminates in the cynicism of knowledge represented by Goethe's Faust, hungry for the unlimited (and therefore unscrupulous) power of knowledge and the cynicism of power, embodied for the most part in Dostoyevsky's Grand Inquisitor defending the “programmatically amoral knowledge of power”.<sup>3</sup> According to Sloterdijk, Floss continues, the only way to repudiate cynicism is by the revival and enlargement of the ancient tradition of *kunikos*, of an attitude of life focused on the search for the authentic human being. Although Sloterdijk himself speaks of the resurrection of *kunikos* in the sixteenth and

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<sup>1</sup> Pavel FLOSS, *Od počátku novověku ke konci milénia*, Brno 1998.

<sup>2</sup> Pavel FLOSS, *Meditace na rozhraní epoch*, Brno 2012, p. 5.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 71–73.

seventeenth centuries – when its flowering was seen especially in the ideas of Renaissance Sensualism, Humanist criticism and Protestant radicalism – according to Pavel Floss he overlooks one of the key thinkers: Comenius, who becomes the other centre of interest of Floss's study.<sup>4</sup> Floss poses the question, what led John Amos to the irrefutably out-of-the-ordinary appreciation accorded to Diogenes in the play? In his opinion it is plain from a philosophic and literary-historical analysis of its text that this eccentric classical thinker is placed higher than the *very Christian* thinker of the Ancient World, Plato, and the *philosophus magnus*, Aristotle. (Floss reminds us that in *Clamores Eliae* Diogenes is the only one of the pagan philosophers to be placed on a level with the Old Testament prophets). As an explanation Floss makes reference to the closeness of the philosophic and educational practices of Diogenes and Comenius: both seemed to follow the imperative *omnes, omnia, omnino*. Both seemed to reject the Platonic elitarianism connected with the thesis that it is primarily those who will govern who need to be educated.<sup>5</sup>

“Diogenes trampled on Plato's pillow, thus demonstrating his resistance to Plato's loftiness. What is the author of the play trampling on, when he incorporates this episode into his piece and dramatizes it? And in any case – what is the point of Comenius including a description of Diogenes Laërtius in his play, in which Diogenes of Sinope ridicules Plato's logic, in fact, that which is most valuable in it, the art of definition?”<sup>6</sup>

According to Floss, Comenius thus implicitly agrees with Diogenes' criticism of classical intellectualism. In his reaction (not only) to the Baconian and Cartesian concept of the recognition of, and relationship to, nature, he warns against too much emphasis on science and on faith in the advance of scientific knowledge and its quality as a panacea. In this light Floss then polemicalises with Sloterdijk, convinced that the foundations of modern cynicism were not laid by the empiricist and realist knowledge of the Enlightenment, but born as early as the seventeenth century. Looked at from this point of view, Floss adds, John Amos and his work can be immensely topical even for the contemporary reader who worries about the crisis of ecology and of civilisation in general.<sup>7</sup>

The book's second thematic group, *Články k dějinám myšlení* (Articles on the history of thought), is borne in the mind of a broader historical and philosophic focus. In the study *K typologii renesančního myšlení* (The typology of Renaissance thought) Floss turns to the period of the Renaissance, its limitation with regard to the preceding and subsequent epoch and its key concepts. He considers these to be primarily the term *spatium* introduced by the Renaissance philosophers of nature, and the metaphysical deepening of the perception of light and its roles in the gnoseological process (when sight is spoken about not only as one of the senses but also *visum mentis intellectuale*). Among the no less important contributions of the Renaissance to the development of philosophical knowledge are, according to Floss, the Renaissance theory of quali-

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., pp. 73–75.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., pp. 75–79.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., p. 79.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., pp. 81–83.

ties, the deepening of scholarship about the macrocosm and the microcosm, and the change in the perception of the value of the individual. The importance of this essay, first published in 1987 in the journal *Studia Comeniana et Historica*,<sup>8</sup> is however rendered by Floss's effort to deal with the simplifying historiographical approach to the Renaissance; an approach which more or less understands it on the one hand as a mere rebirth of Antiquity and on the other as a refutation of the Middle Ages – an attitude we unfortunately still come across three decades later in varied intensity: “In reality however [the Renaissance] was something much more; not the rebirth of something that had already existed, but the birth of something new and original – and indeed obviously – the birth of vision.” Floss thus symbolically distinguishes the Renaissance, whose centre of attention is the eye and vision (sensory and spiritual), from the Modern Period of the seventeenth century with its characteristic emphasis on reason and thought.<sup>9</sup>

Let us add, finally, that the inclusion of this study in the anthology enables the author to remind us of the pioneering years of Czech research into the Renaissance, which registered and still registers its academic flowering thanks to his important achievement. As a reminder we quote from Floss's autobiographical essay *Skica jednoho života* (A sketch of one life):

“When I left the position of rigorous Thomism I stopped looking at the Renaissance through the prism of those of its representatives whose books I read, and in the 1970s, through a deeper knowledge of Renaissance philosophy, science and art, I came to the view that the Renaissance cannot be understood as an early Modern Period in which man, smitten by a mystical vertigo from life on this earth, abandoned the values and ideals of Mediaeval and scholastic spirituality, secularised and paganised himself, and began to go astray spiritually. I began to understand too that the Renaissance is not just some period of transition between the Middle Ages and the Modern Period, but rather a separate and distinct epoch whose specific quality, distinguishing it both from the Middle Ages and from the Modern Period (beginning in the seventeenth century), I began to research at this time.”<sup>10</sup>

The issue of the concept of isomorphic space, which replaced the previously traditional term *locus*, is likewise questioned in the essay *Příspěvek k chápání pojmu struktury v 17. století* (A contribution to understanding the concept of structure in the seventeenth century). Here however the author devotes his main attention to a description of the historical development of the concept *structura*, which he maps from its late Classical beginnings (when the term expanded from use in architecture through literature to other branches of knowledge) to its revival in the late Renaissance of the seventeenth century. Particular attention is devoted to Comenius who – according to Floss – in his late writing (*Janua rerum, Lexicon reale pansophicum*) placed the category of structure on the level of the category of substance: “Comenius [created] an extensive network of non-substance and system concepts which further clarify and deepen his concept of things as structures. To these concepts belong primarily terms such as *completum, conglobatio*

<sup>8</sup> See Pavel Floss, *K typologii renesančního myšlení*, SCeH 17, 1987, No. 33, pp. 26–39.

<sup>9</sup> Floss, *Meditace na rozhraní epoch*, pp. 119–132.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., p. 352.

and *conexio*.<sup>11</sup> So in the case of Comenius the term *structura* does not just have a partial meaning but should rather show an undeniable ontological relevance.<sup>12</sup>

The second chapter concludes with studies reflecting the history of the philosophical concept of light in the context of Western tradition and with analyses of the statutes and role of the mathematician in the philosophy of Nicholas of Cusa.

The third part of the publication opens a window to Floss's attitude to the spiritual struggles of society. The first piece is a contribution to a very lively discussion concerning the existence or non-existence of free will and the consequences of this. Floss completely refutes extreme determinism, as proposed for example by the Australian sociologist John Carroll, with its possible applications in the moral and legal field. A thorn in the eye for Floss is above all the tendency of determinists to connect total determinism with full responsibility. In so doing, he is convinced, they return not only philosophy but even jurisprudence to the times before Peter Abelard, when the intention of an action played no role from the point of view of the moral and legal assessment.<sup>13</sup> Floss eventually points to the unsustainability of this concept by taking the results of a clear-cut determinist standpoint *ad absurdum*. A no less serious question which he believes to be so far unsolved is opened in connection with the following philosophical problem: To what extent have contemporary thinkers, instead explicitly using the term *free will* or *free decision-making*, resorted rather to the use of the concept *responsibility*? Ultimately Floss offers for reflection the history of the concept of responsibility, especially in terms of the ethical concepts of the twentieth century.<sup>14</sup>

A natural part of this section consists of studies dealing with the secularisation of the divine and the divinisation of the secular, whose treatment as a theme and for philosophical and historico-philosophical reflection is one of Pavel Floss's invaluable achievements. Thoughts about aspects of the divinisation of the secular lead the author to a literary polemic with Richard Dawkins and his opinions, as presented in *The God Delusion*. In contention with Dawkins, Floss analyses and comments first on Anselm's "ontological proof" of the existence of God from the *Proslogium*, which he understands as a unique historical contribution to the acknowledgement of the power and ability of the human intellect, thus refuting Dawkins's attempt to discredit Anselm's meditation by over-simplifying it and making it appear infantile. According to Floss, Anselm and his work – in which he was capable, in addition to its "proof", of building his own faith too – are, on the contrary, proof of the invalidity of the still-surviving illusion about the *de facto* "anti-rationalist and intellectually dark and sterile Middle Ages."<sup>15</sup> Floss likewise refutes distorting (an adjective he considers mild) attempts to interpret *quinque viae Sancti Thomae* as philosophically vacuous. In his opinion, Dawkins is trying to ridicule Thomas Aquinas's Five Ways by radical simplification rather than making a legitimate attempt to come to grips intellectually with their philosophical seriousness: "What Dawkins completely lacks is a sense of the intellectual nobility of the authors,

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., pp. 134–139. For the quotation see p. 139.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., p. 140.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., p. 169–171.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., p. 173.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., pp. 280–283.

on whom he often expresses himself with anecdotal superficiality."<sup>16</sup> Floss included this text in the publication partly because he anticipates that an intensification of the confrontation with the phenomenon of militant atheism can be expected, especially in the field of philosophy.<sup>17</sup>

The publication concludes with a selection of the author's reminiscences and memories. While in the previous section the reader had the opportunity to take a look at the work and personality of Robert Kalivoda, in the fourth part of the book we find texts devoted to Zdeněk Horský, Miroslav Berka and Ján Letz. The autobiographical aspect is represented by the texts *Rozpomínání a meditace jednoho uherskobrodského muzejníka* (Reflections and meditations of a museologist from Uherský Brod) and *Skica jednoho života* (A sketch of a life), first published in the journals *Studia Comeniana et Historica* (the first-named) and *Aluze*.<sup>18</sup>

It is undoubtedly interesting from the historical and philosophical point of view to emphasise that in the last-named text Floss repeatedly expresses himself on the theme of philosophical thanatology, with which he was intensely involved, especially in the 1960s, in several unfortunately unpublished studies which deal inter alia with the transgressive possibilities of aspects of human beings, but especially aim at drawing attention to the moral, psychological, legal and social problems which the future development of science, technology and medicine, applied to man, could bring.<sup>19</sup> If Pavel Floss did not complete his philosophical works on aspects of this theme, he has at least tried to shape it in a literary and dramatic way in his play *Vítapereníkum*.<sup>20</sup> The literary extent of Floss's lifelong work is often marginalised, and it is good that the work under review reminds us of it.

Finally, the book also contains a complete bibliography of the author, including scripts and libretti that have been performed, as well as an English summary and an index of names.

The publication is as a whole interesting and beneficial not only for those interested in Comenius and the history of Mediaeval, Renaissance and Early Modern Period philosophy but also for those who are interested in contemporary history and contemporary philosophy. We add in conclusion that, from the point of view of a historian of philosophy, it is only a pity that some of Floss's remarkable and original insights have still not been developed more coherently from the research point of view (for example, the question of the place of the concept *structura* in Comenius' work), eventually remained in their full breadth unpublished (like the extensive work dealing with Peter Sloterdijk).

Jan Čížek (Olomouc)

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., pp. 287–289. For the quotation see p. 289.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., p. 6.

<sup>18</sup> See Pavel FLOSS, *Rozpomínání a meditace jednoho uherskobrodského muzejníka*, SCeH 28, 1998, No. 59–60, pp. 181–191 and Pavel FLOSS, *Skica jednoho života*, *Aluze*, 2003, No. 1, pp. 40–57; No. 2, pp. 73–91; No. 3, pp. 57–67.

<sup>19</sup> FLOSS, *Meditace na rozhraní epoch*, p. 380.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., pp. 381–385.