

Stephan Tichy on Incorporating Kant's Philosophy into University Education at the End of the 18th Century

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Abstract

The paper deals with Stephan Tichy, the very first Slovak scholar who dealt with Kant's philosophy in his work *Philosophische Bemerkungen über das Studienwesen in Ungarn*, anonymously published in 1792. In this work Tichy openly advocates incorporating Kant's philosophy into university education, with an emphasis on the significance of Kant's philosophy to the educational system and the total independence of philosophy as such. The paper also compares Kant's method of teaching philosophy introduced in the *Announcement of the Programme of Lectures for the Winter Semester 1765—1766* with Tichy's ideas on how to teach philosophy at universities.

Key words

Education, Kant, Slovakia, Stephan Tichy, Teaching Philosophy.

1. Kant at the End of the 18th Century in the Region of Today's Slovakia

This paper focuses on the first reflections of Kant's philosophy in the region known today as Slovakia at the end of the eighteenth century – a period of significant political and social change. In the first part I briefly sketch the academic environment in the Slovak region in

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the era, in the second part I focus on Stephan Tichy's¹ work *Philosophische Bemerkungen über das Studienwesen in Ungarn* that provides the first complex reaction to Kant in the region, and in the third part I point out the parallels between Kant and Tichy in their methods on teaching philosophy.

The region I deal with in this paper is today's Slovakia and one should bear in mind that Slovakia (or Czechoslovakia) did not exist as a state (states) at the end of the 18th century. Slovakia was a part of the Habsburg Monarchy, later its Hungarian part and the new history of Czechoslovakia as a state started only in 1918.

The analysis of the first philosophical reflections of Kant's philosophy in the Slovak region should take into consideration the difficult conditions of strong religious conflicts and political censorship in that time. Kant was first mentioned in academic debates in the Slovak intellectual environment during the first half of the 1790s. Ondrej Mészáros speaks about Slovak teachers from around 1790 (Štefan Fábry, Johann Samuel Fuchs, Žigmund Karlovský, Samuel Žigmondy), mainly from evangelical colleges, who in their lectures and textbooks either partially or fully supported Kant's positions and he adds that according to historical-philosophical sources, it is clear that Kant was discussed among Slovak scholars even before the so-called dispute about Kant in Hungarian philosophy that started at the turn of the eighteenth century and continued until the end of the nineteenth century (Mészáros 2010, p. 967).

Kant was also discussed among catholic thinkers – Johann von Delling (1764–1838), Anton Kreil (1757–1838) or Stephan Tichy (1760–1800). Kreil from Pest and Tichy from Kaschau were both dismissed in 1795. Teaching Kant's philosophy was also forbidden in this year at all types of schools (Mészáros 2010, p. 968) because Kant's philosophy was interpreted as a dangerous system that aims to destroy religion and morality, and as a way of teaching students to become atheists and enemies of religion (Oravcová² 1986, p. 588–589). It means that the philosophers who wanted to deal with Kant (and who often became familiar with Kant's philosophy during their studies at German universities) could not spread their ideas freely. S. Lapointe adds that “[i]n Austria, being accused of ‘Kantianism’ was not unusual and often served as a pretext to oust detractors of the State (Lapointe 2011, p. 11).

The authors like Štefan Fábry (1751–1817), Johann Samuel Fuchs (1770–1817), Žigmund Karlovský (1772–1821), or younger generation represented by Michal Greguš (1793 – 1838) and Andrej Vandrák (1807 – 1884) were familiar with Kant's philosophy, which inspired them in their works, although they could not spread their ideas openly. Some of the works were thus published anonymously, e.g. Stephan Tichy's work

¹ The Slovak transcription of his name is “Štefan Tichý”.

² Marianna Oravcová was the first one who emphasised the importance of Stephan Tichy in connection with Kant's philosophy in Slovakia in her paper “Štefan Tichý – prvý stúpenec Kanta na Slovensku [Stephan Tichy – The First Adherent of Kant in Slovakia]”, *Filozofia*, 1986, vol. 41, no. 5. She also translated the second paragraph (“Philosophy”) of his *Philosophische Bemerkungen über das Studienwesen in Ungarn* into Slovak language in the same number of the journal *Filozofia*.

Philosophische Bemerkungen über das Studienwesen in Ungarn in 1792 or Kant's ideas were incorporated in the writings indirectly and used as a strong inspiration, e.g. in Andrej Vandrák's work *A philosophiai ethica elemei* in 1842. It can be said that philosophical research undertaken in the Slovak region at this time reflected the latest developments in German universities and the philosophers focused on developing actual philosophical discussions and using them as their starting point, however, not always was it possible to do freely.

2. Stephan Tichy and his *Philosophische Bemerkungen über das Studienwesen in Ungarn* as the Reflection of Kant's Philosophy

Stephan Tichy's case is a good example. He was the very first Slovak scholar who spoke for Kant – openly but, unfortunately, anonymously. He was a professor of mathematics at the Academy in Košice (Kaschau) and in 1792 he published a work called *Philosophische Bemerkungen über das Studienwesen in Ungarn*³. The book aimed to react to the educational system in Hungary and to the education reform introduced by Leopold II who ruled between 1790 and 1792. The work's title "Philosophical Remarks" indicates Tichy's effort to comment on the necessary changes in the character of education and to introduce ideas how to innovate the educational system. Tichy primarily focuses on the faculty of philosophy that had an important role in the university education because studying philosophy was compulsory for all university students. Tichy was aware of the important place of the faculty of philosophy and claimed that this faculty is an axis of the whole educational system because its sciences form a basis for other sciences and, moreover, they are the source of national enlightenment (Tichy 1792, p. 4).

The work is divided into twelve paragraphs: §1. *Über die ordentlichen Vorlesungen überhaupt*, §2. *Philosophie*, §3. *Mathematik*, §4. *Physik*, §5. *Geschichte*, §6. *Unterschied der ordentlichen Vorlesungen auf Akademien, und auf der Universität*, §7. *Zustand der Professoren*, §8. *Besetzung der erledigten Lehrstühle*, §9. *Doktorwürde*, §10. *Klassische Autoren*, §11. *Bücher – Zensur*, and §12. *Schema der außerordentlichen Vorlesungen der philosophischen Fakultät auf der Universität*. Tichy refers to Kant in the

³ The work was published anonymously in German language in Pest, Ofen (both are parts of today's Budapest) and Kaschau (German name for Košice, the second largest city in Slovakia) by Strohmayer in 1792. The book can be found also in German libraries, e.g., in its digitalized form in Niedersächsische Staats- und Universitätsbibliothek Göttingen and it is available at <<http://resolver.sub.uni-goettingen.de/purl?PPN657066885>>. What is interesting about the copy is that there is a handwritten name "Tichy, Franz", not Stephan and some sources and libraries use the wrong name, too. The book was reflected in German journals and books in a relatively short time after it was published, cf. *Göttingische Anzeigen von gelehrten Sachen*, Göttingen: Dieterich 1793, Band 51, pp. 156–157; *Allgemeine Literatur-Zeitung*, Jahrgang 1795, Band 3, Numero 258, pp. 628–632; Christoph Meiners: *Ueber die Verfassung, und Verwaltung deutscher Universitäten*, Band 1, Göttingen: Röwer, 1801, p. 127.

second paragraph devoted to philosophy and although he does not explain Kant's philosophy systematically, he works with it as an inspiration for explaining the innovative ideas in educational system, and as a source of the critique of reason (*Kritik der Vernunft*).

In the paragraph on philosophy he focuses on the issue of metaphysics and says that its main themes are God, freedom and immortality. He considers it important to distinguish between *practical metaphysics* and *speculative metaphysics*; while practical metaphysics is based on *vernünftiges Glauben*, speculative metaphysics aims to bring universally valid, speculative judgements (Tichy 1792, pp. 16–17). According to Tichy, such a discipline does not yet exist. If it were possible, there would be no disputes in philosophy, as there are no disputes in mathematics, he continues. For him it only means that there are only unsuccessful attempts (*misslungene Versuch*) on speculative metaphysics (Tichy 1792, p. 18).

Tichy explains that in philosophy it is crucial to adequately distinguish between blind faith and knowledge and the first thing that must be done in philosophy is a complete differentiation between practical and speculative metaphysics. The only science able to investigate the nature of human abilities and knowledge a priori is the critique of reason – “*Kritik der Vernunft, oder Kritik des menschlichen Erkenntnisvermögens*” (Tichy 1792, p. 24). Tichy then asks whether there is such a critique of reason and here he refers to Kant as the only philosopher who aimed to bring this type of critique. Tichy calls him “*ein großer und tief sinniger Philosoph, der berühmte Kant*” (Tichy 1792, p. 25).

According to Tichy, Kant's role in the era's academic development was extraordinary; at the same time, however, he asks whether his critique of reason is the only true one – how could Kant or we be sure about it? Was it not just another unsuccessful attempt? Tichy suggests that it may have the same destiny as the previous critiques and says that only time would tell whether Kant's critique of reason would fulfil its aims and whether it really was the true one. If there are always some new attempts, it is a good signal that people are motivated towards a progress and in this way they develop their abilities and strengths of their spirit. Critique of reason would, however, always be speculative and its result must be either dogmatic or sceptical-speculative metaphysics. This means that Tichy calls the critique of reason, together with speculative metaphysics, a speculative philosophy (Tichy 1792, p. 28).

Tichy, as a mathematician, was calling for a critique of reason that provides a basis for true understanding and, according to him, Kant's attempt was a big step forward. Tichy's system is based on the significance of Kant's philosophy to the discipline and the total independence of philosophy as such. He openly advocates incorporating Kant's philosophy into university education, with an emphasis on liberating philosophy from theology. But not only theology.... Tichy warns that if something that accords with some ruling or privileged systems (“*herrschende und privilegierte Systeme*“) is regarded as philosophy, it means to dissolve all philosophy (Tichy 1792, p. 45). This can also be understood as an attack on the political regime, and it explains Tichy's choice to publish the work anonymously.

3. Kant and Tichy on Teaching Philosophy at Universities

In this part I will deal with particular ideas of both thinkers on the issue of teaching philosophy at universities. Firstly, it will be the method and the composition of the course of philosophy, and secondly, the role of the teacher in the process.

Kant in the *Announcement of the Programme of Lectures for the Winter Semester 1765—1766* explains a zetetic method how to teach students to gradually become men of *understanding*, men of *reason* and finally men of *learning* who can at the end help to enlighten the whole era. Kant calls it a *new way of teaching*, based on enquiring, investigating and exploring because university education should not only instruct students in the state of research in various fields of science, but it should help them to achieve enlightened understanding, which means on the one hand, self-understanding, and on the other hand, understanding of the world as such.

According to Kant, the method in philosophy is very specific, nature of philosophy is different from other types of knowledge as in philosophy there is no common standard and, in addition, it will never adapt itself to market or fashion (V-Anth/Fried, AA 25.2: 308). Based on this, he proposes his programme of lectures in philosophy on metaphysics, logic, ethics or moral philosophy and physical geography. Kant explains that *metaphysics* should be taught at the end of the course as it is the most demanding discipline. After a brief introduction he suggests beginning with empirical psychology which is a metaphysical science of man based on experience, then continuation with corporeal nature – which is drawn from cosmology, then inorganic things, differences between mental and material beings and at the end rational psychology (V-Anth/Fried, AA 25.2: 308–309). *Logic* represents a science of two kinds for him: the critique and canon of *sound understanding* and the critique and canon of *real learning* (V-Anth/Fried, AA 25.2: 310). *Ethics* has, according to Kant, a special fate: it resembles a science and enjoys the reputation for being thoroughly grounded and it does it with even greater ease than metaphysics – despite the fact it is neither of them. The reason for this appearance is that the distinction between good and evil in actions, and the judgement of moral rightness, can be known, easily and accurately, by the human heart through what is called sentiment, and that without the elaborate necessity of proofs. His method here is based on the explanation and considering historically and philosophically what *happens* before specifying what *ought to happen*. Then he focuses on *man* by whom he means the unchanging *nature* of man, and his distinctive position within the creation (V-Anth/Fried, AA 25.2: 311). Another part of this course is the subject of *physical geography* because students, according to Kant's previous experience, lacked any adequate knowledge of historical matters probably due to their lack of experience. Geography is a very wide term, so he has decided to use the term physical geography but this does not deal only with physical features of the earth but also with other parts of the subject, which he considers to be of even greater general utility. The discipline then covers *physical, moral and political*

geography and he concentrates on the features of nature, man, and states and nations throughout the world (V-Anth/Fried, AA 25.2: 312–313).

Tichy suggests that university education at the faculty of philosophy (providing philosophy lectures for all university students) should include lectures on *logic*, *moral philosophy* and *practical metaphysics* (Tichy 1792, p. 33). Only these subjects are necessary for standard education, and he suggests that speculative philosophy as “*höhere Philosophie*” could be taught only as a special and selective course for the most talented students who have the natural talent to speculate and who want to become scholars in the future (Tichy 1792, p. 33). Metaphysics as a standard discipline for all students should be thus reduced to its practical part. He adds that the lectures on moral philosophy and (practical) metaphysics should also include lectures on natural and state law because they represent philosophical problems derived from reason and they are universally valid and useful for everyone – because everyone is a man and a citizen and should know his rights and duties as a man as a citizen (Tichy 1792, p. 34). To be familiar with the issues of right is a natural part of knowledge of every enlightened man and citizen and thus, of every university student with no exception, Tichy adds.

In connection with speculative metaphysics, Tichy says that it should be taught as it is: not as an already “finished” science but as a *problem* on which the future scholars will participate by their attempts in using speculative reason. Because there is nothing finished in this science and its aim is to educate young men to be able to use their own understanding and contribute to solving the big problem of speculative reason by their own contribution (Tichy 1792, p. 37), the method of teaching cannot thus be dogmatic, it must be historic, however, none of the previous systems can be taught as the only correct one and the teacher must not present any definite judgements.

Talking about the role of the teacher, Kant warns that while instructing young people, teachers do not wait for their understanding to become mature, but they want to give them knowledge which can be, by normal circumstances, understood only by minds which are more practised and experienced. Teachers want students to learn something they are not prepared to understand, so teaching philosophy should follow a different path. Kant derives it from the natural progress of human knowledge, he advocates the process that should be based on developing understanding by experience first (to attain intuitive judgements and then concepts), followed by employing reason (to understand the grounds and consequences of the concepts), and finally, understanding these concepts as parts of a whole by means of science (V-Anth/Fried, AA 25.2: 305). It is the role of the teacher to develop in his student the man of *understanding*, then the man of *reason*, and finally the man of *learning* (V-Anth/Fried, AA 25.2: 305). Even if the student is usually not able to reach the final phase and become the man of *learning*, this process has an advantage, because the student will still have benefitted from his instruction – Kant says he will become more experienced and more clever – and adds that if not for school, then at least for life.

According to Kant, the teacher, or the instructor, should not to be regarded as the paradigm of judgement but he should be taken

as the occasion for forming one's own judgement about him, and even, indeed, for passing judgement against him. What the pupil is really looking for is proficiency in the method of reflecting and drawing inferences *for himself* (V-Anth/Fried, AA 25.2: 307).

The intellectual ability is corrupted by the delusion of wisdom – there are people who have studied a lot but display little understanding. This was something Kant warns against when saying that academies send more people out into the world with their heads of inanities (*abgeschmackte Köpfe*) than any other public institution (V-Anth/Fried, AA 25.2: 306). The question is how to change it by the means of philosophy. Kant's suggestions are:

- it is not *thoughts* but *thinking* which the understanding ought to learn. The understanding ought to be *led*, if you wish, but not *carried*, so that in future it will be capable of *walking* on its own, and doing so without stumbling." (V-Anth/Fried, AA 25.2: 306)
- [t]he youth who has completed his school instruction has been accustomed to learn. He now thinks that he is *going to learn philosophy*. But this is impossible, for he ought now *to learn to philosophise*" (V-Anth/Fried, AA 25.2: 306).

Kant says that students learn what may be assimilated. But teaching philosophy (i.e. philosophising) in this way is impossible because, as Kant says, there is no book saying "look, here is wisdom or knowledge you can rely on" (V-Anth/Fried, AA 25.2: 307) and he is talking about a betrayal and deception of the trust of students. In this context Kant emphasises the role of teacher who must be a master of the field. The role of teacher is crucial in developing understanding and cultivating the character of students and the zetetic method of teaching provides a challenge for teachers who shall stimulate students in *thinking for themselves*.

Tichy presents a similar point of view. He warns against the danger which he observes at schools – it is dogmatism in the speculative use of reason that is the real source of intolerance, disputes, and accusation of heresy (Tichy 1972, p. 42). This way of thinking influences young people who are taught to judge everything very quickly, to think that they are always right, and to label everyone who thinks something else as someone who does not understand, as someone who is stubborn or malicious (Tichy 1972, p. 43). The problem is that teachers often prevent students from free thinking and they limit their potential. For Tichy it is unacceptable to teach philosophy in this way, especially speculative philosophy, in which it is necessary to think about the future and be ready for the new attempts. If any system of speculative philosophy is taught at schools dogmatically, it means that schools teach errors and they do it publicly, which means, that they directly participate on spreading the errors. According to Tichy, people themselves should decide what they consider to be right and what they consider to be wrong: "*Lasst doch die Menschen erst sich vereinigen über das, was Wahrheit und Irrthum ist!*" (Tichy 1792, p. 43).

Speculative philosophy should be a discipline for professional scholars, not for everyone. Tichy points out a problem when saying that the educational system in the country wants to have professional scholars of everyone, but only a few have the talent and abilities for it (Tichy 1972, p. 32). The reality is that most of the students want to learn for their practical vocation, either for business or for work in administration offices, and speculative philosophy is not for them. It is very similar to Kant's argument that only a few students are able to become men of *learning* and the teachers should, first of all, aim to develop in them men of *understanding* and men of *reason*. Speculative philosophy is not only inappropriate but also useless for most of the students, because they are assigned to *act*, and not to *speculate*, writes Tichy (p. 33).

Tichy warns against one more thing, he says that the ruling system of theology has been almost the only touchstone of truth of any philosophical system that was allowed to be lectured at schools. He complains that school philosophy is always limited by this viewpoint and it has to adapt to it. Philosophy is not free at all, and Tichy, or rather, his anonymous voice, tries to say aloud that we cannot rely on the Bible in the progress of understanding, and that we need an independent system in philosophy.

Kant and Tichy shared the ideas concerning the issue how to teach philosophy. They both also agreed that the progress of society depends on independent individuals who are able to use their own understanding, who are able to think for themselves, because only these people, if they can use their understanding freely in philosophical, political, and religious topics, can move the era towards the enlightenment. The role of educational system and especially of philosophy and teaching philosophy in this *process of enlightenment* was crucial – people like Kant and Tichy, who both worked also as lecturers, showed how it could work if teachers tried to educate young people according to the principles of freedom. But we shall add that it was a complicated and demanding task in the era that was not fully ready for freedom of speech or freedom of religion, and that philosophy and philosophers had to oppose dogmatism, authoritarianism (both in thinking and government), and censorship.

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