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**The review of the habilitation dissertation *Klasická sociologie ve střední Evropě: mezi centrem a periferií* by Dušan Janák, 270 pp.**

The habilitation dissertation written by Dušan Janák deals with the Central-East European (in the author's terminology: Central European) sociology of the period between the world wars. The work is comprised of introduction, three main chapters, conclusion, as well as bibliography, annexes and the name index. Over twenty pages long introduction forms an important part of the writing, presenting the key theoretical concept and ideas of his dissertation. The first of them is the very idea of "Central Europe". Janák distinguishes two general approaches to its (supposed) regional specificity: the geopolitical and the cultural one. He himself decides to combine both approaches, although the cultural idea of Central Europe, defined as the lands which used to belong to the Habsburg Empire, seems to play a more important role in his analyses. Furthermore, this cultural area is divided into two entities, the German-speaking Western, and the mainly Slavonic (and Hungarian) Eastern Central Europe. The actual ways in which Janák delimits the region vary, as in the various sections of his work he deals with slightly different, wider or narrower zones. Surprisingly, this incoherence serves his work well, enabling him to put his analyses in diverse, yet mostly appropriate comparative contexts, including the broader, all-European ones. Another key idea employed by the author is the distinction between the discursive and the institutional dimension of science. The concept of institution employed by Janák is narrow and simple, and it includes formal institutions only, and not the whole fabric of established social and intellectual practices.

Another matter discussed in the introduction is the issue of academic universalism versus particularism, i.e. universal intellectual projects versus attempts to build regional and national sociologies. The author also touches upon the relation between the center and the peripheries of the international social science, conceptualizing them mostly in the discursive

level. The last subject of the introduction is the idea of classical sociology. Dušan Janák's notion of classical sociology is not entirely clear. He is aware that the canon of classics is a contemporary construct, belonging to the present-day social theory and used as symbols of various, current theoretical concepts and ideas. Nevertheless, he declares that it makes sense to use and develop their original ideas to produce viable theories, which would help to solve contemporary theoretical issues. Such a view, albeit popular among some theorists, is far from being obvious for a historian. Furthermore, it would require some more intellectual effort to prove why one should include any Polish or Czech scholars of the interwar period to the already established pantheon of sociological classics.

In my personal opinion the first chapter of the work, which deals with the institutional development of sociology, makes the most valuable part of it. The author does not limit his scope to the successor countries of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. First and foremost he describes the institutional development of the discipline in Hungary, Bohemia, Slovakia and Poland, but compares it with the establishment of sociological institutions in Austria, Romania and Yugoslavia. Finally, Janák briefly compares the expansion of social science in Central Europe with the rest of the continent. All this enables him to present the rise of Central European sociology as a part of broader development processes. What is interesting, Janák's analysis shows that compared to other countries, such as Great Britain, they were by no means belated.

As I already indicated, Janák's concept of institution is a narrow one, and he does not offer (or apply) any broader theory of the institutional development of science, although he could have borrowed some ideas of the more or less contemporary science and technology studies, which would possibly help to analyze the depth of institutionalization – the formation of a professional public, demarking the disciplinary limits (e.g. Latour, *Science in Action*, Barnes, Bloor, Henry, *Scientific Knowledge*), or the ability to reproduce disciplinary cadres. Some of the author's conclusions would possibly require a few corrections, had he employed such a concept. For example, I am not sure whether the supposedly higher number of research/academic sociological institutions in Poland reflects any real difference between the institutionalization level of the discipline in this country, compared to Czechoslovakia. Nonetheless, the author deals with the whole range of phenomena related to the institutional development, from informal groupings through formal scholarly societies, the formation of academic institutions, sociology teaching to academic sociological journals. On the whole, the range and scope of detailed information offered by Janák on the institutional development of

Central European sociology is exceptional and provides the reader with a comprehensive view of the discipline in the region.

To identify various types of institutionalization Janák introduces a useful distinction between the institutionalization from below and from above. The first one was typical for France and Germany, while the second one for most Central European countries. In fact, it turns out that the course of the actual development of sociology in most cases included both forms (i.e. United States). According to Janák, the factor that influenced the early or belated establishment of sociology in this part of Europe was the nature of local political regimes. What is interesting, Janák rejects the widely believed idea (or myth) that the non-liberal, undemocratic polities suppressed the development of sociology. In fact, while under some authoritarian regimes (Hungary) the discipline was treated suspiciously, in some others (Poland, Romania) it literally flourished (p. 83).

I believe that despite a relatively simple concept of institutionalization, the first chapter of the dissertation is a remarkable contribution not only to the Czech, but to the international literature on the history of Central European sociology. I would add just two comments regarding Polish sociology. First, I believe that the author exaggerates the scale of the institutional success of Polish sociology, which remained a marginal part of the interwar Academia, barely able to survive and to reproduce its academic cadres. This possibly indicates that the bare existence of research institutes or university studies is not a sufficient indicator of the institutional stability, not to say maturity. Second, most published sources are silent about any activities of the first Polish Sociological Association (Polskie Towarzystwo Socjologiczne), which existed in the 1930s (the second, the “proper” one, was a product of the post-Stalinist “thaw” of late 1950s), and probably it did not function at all. The organization of the two first national sociological congresses should be probably attributed to the Polski Instytut Socjologiczny, and not to the association (p. 55). Unfortunately, both the congresses and the association were rather obscure episodes of the development of Polish sociology, and it is impossible to obtain any comprehensive information from the published sources only. As far as I know, there is not any data about them in the archives either.

The second chapter deals with the sociological journals – two Czechoslovak, two Polish and a Hungarian one. Their history is described in a detailed way in the first chapter of the work, and the second contains a comparative, quantitative analysis of their content. Janák does not deal with their subject matter only, as he starts his study by showing the differences between proportions of various genres and types of material published in different countries.

Possibly the analysis of individual titles would be more fruitful. Nonetheless, he points out the exceptionality of the *Sociologická revue*, which published unusually high number of reviews of sociological works issued both at home and abroad, including the Central European ones. The author also traces the origins of the scholars who published in the journals, which varied from almost purely local Polish publications to the virtually international *Sociologická revue*, with a high number of texts (albeit not necessarily articles) written by foreign authors. As for the subject matter, the author has identified thematic centers typical for the social science in various countries. They included sociology itself (which was much more popular in Poland and in Czechoslovakia than in Hungary), country/village (less eminent in Czech social science than in the neighbor countries), nation (topic considered less important in interwar Poland) or (economic) crisis. Janák does not try to find any general explanation of the distinctive features of local sociological discourses, but attempts to describe the typical ways of dealing with a range of issues, relating them to the various development stages of local sociologies and the broader social and political context. All in all, his analysis is adequate and his text, albeit lacking some broader conceptual scheme and not attempting at any bolder generalization, is the pioneering work in the field of comparative history of sociology. It provides the reader with the substantial knowledge about less known and rarely compared (due to its relative peripherality and the linguistic inaccessibility) Polish, Czechoslovak and Hungarian (!) sociology.

A logical step in the course of the Janák's analysis would be of course an attempt to offer an in-depth analysis of the actual Central European sociological discourse. The thematic centers he identifies could have been used to select a sample – or rather, to identify a limited number of cases – of local texts that deal with them. This would enable him to overcome the confinement of his quantitative methodology, which obviously limits the depth of his analyses of sociological journals, which does not deal with any of ideas actually published in the papers. The most logical way to do so would be deepening their study by selecting a limited number of papers and putting them under a detailed scrutiny (in other words, actually **reading them**). Another possibility is, of course, to leave out the papers published in scholarly journals and instead to study the book monographs which dealt with those central issues. Such an analysis would have required overcoming the linguistic barrier, but translation of a limited number of Hungarian articles could be a workable solution.

Unfortunately, Janák does not take any of these steps. Instead, in the final chapter of his dissertation he changes his perspective from history (no matter institutional or intellectual) to

grand theory, attempting to achieve two goals. In the opening subchapter he tries to grasp the specific nature of Central European social theory by analyzing the elements which are typical for the two approaches – the functionalist and the culturalist one. In the second part of the chapter Janák uses Inocenc Arnošt Bláha's theory of "critical realism" as an instrument to bridge the gap between methodological individualism and holism in contemporary sociology. As for the first task, the distinction between the functionalism and the culturalism, although an anachronic one, makes an analytical instrument which could be applied to the interwar social theory in a relatively successful way. However, one may ask whether it would not be more fruitful for a sociology historian to study the ideas and concepts without taking them out from the original social and intellectual context. For example, the opposition between the positivist and antipositivist current in sociological thought, which according to Janák overlapped with the distinction between the functional and culturalist sociology did not seem to be that important in the first half of the twentieth century! In general, even the discussion on the general theory might have been a bit more historical and empirical, and less speculative one. Of course, one cannot ignore the European influence on Znaniecki, but it seems strange to ignore his affinities with the American social and philosophical thought, which definitely was one of his inspirations (the very notion of „humanism“ was most likely adopted from a British pragmatist philosopher, Friedrich C.S. Schiller!). Possibly Bláha might have been indeed inspired by Neo-Kantians and Dilthey (p. 170), but if so, why did he write with such a disrespect about the German "verstehende Soziologie" (for example, in his discussions with Emanuel Rádl)? Would not it be useful not only to discuss the theoretical sources of evaluative judgments in sociology, but why not analyze how sociologists actually did so in their writings (pp. 169-190)?

As for the second part of the last chapter one may of course ask, what sense it makes to use some obsolete theories to solve problems which could be addressed with recent theoretical instruments in a much more adequate way? In other words, the very question of the classical status of the peripheral theory is by no means obvious and requires a detailed and comprehensive answer.

Even though many theorists and perhaps even some historians may consider the style of analysis employed by Dušan Janák legitimate, there is another serious problem with the third chapter of his dissertation. In fact, this part of the work only partly deals with the Central European theory. As representative Polish sociological theorists, the author has selected Florian Znaniecki and Bronisław Malinowski, who spent all professional life in Great Britain,

and highly valuable contribution to the study of social science in the region, but to some extent repeats what the author had already written in his previous publications. Furthermore, despite the sketchy and provisional character of his remarks on the dependent development and the peripherality of Central European sociology, Janák's work enters a new research field and opens a new way of discussing the nature and identity of the Czech sociology. Therefore I assume that despite serious reservations, the dissertation written by Dušan Janák deserves a positive opinion and qualifies as a habilitation dissertation and could become the basis for further work of the respective Habilitation Commission at the Palacký's University in Olomouc.

