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Summary

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SUMMARY

The present monograph is a critical analysis of the work by the Czech philosopher Vladimír Hoppe (1882—1931), a prominent representative of irrationalism.

The author did not intend any criticism of Hoppe's work from the standpoint of one or another philosophy. On the contrary, he wanted to show its consistency or instability by an analysis of the work itself.

He therefore analysed all the works and opinions Hoppe's in their chronological order of development, especially Hoppe's conception of philosophy, his views on its substance and tasks as well as his noetics, conception of personality, the task of the subconscious etc.

He tried to fix Hoppe's place both in Czech and world philosophic thought.

He made a survey of Hoppe's opinions and Hoppe's criticism of his own. This procedure revealed several levels of fundamental conflicts in the work itself, it even disclosed them in problems which are decisive for scientific quality of any philosophic work.

A short survey of the results in my critical analysis of Hoppe's philosophic opinions is as follows:

The starting point but also the last and main argument for Hoppe's irrationalism is a direct experience of the absolute („an irrefutable metaphysical experience“), based on spiritual renaissance which Hoppe himself has put in the puberty period, when he was about fifteen. This experience (the date is given: 15th May 1897) is described in his „Natural and Spiritual Fundaments of World and Life“ (p. 67).

This subjective metaphysical experience represents for him an irrefutable proof of transcendental events in transcendental sphere, the great transcendental Self of ours, by which we are direct connected with the absolute-via intuition and contemplation.

The whole philosophic work of Hoppe is nothing but an attempt to back and defend this metaphysical experience by reflexions of his own and those of other authors.

Hoppe's philosophical development itself though consequently orientated towards the defence of metaphysical experience is nevertheless complicated.

If he wanted to defend the noetic validity of his metaphysical experience with success, Hoppe had to shake „the myth“ of scientific knowledge, overcome science, the approximativity, symbolism, hypotheticity and fictivity of which he tried to demonstrate. He first wanted to overcome it by philosophy, but at last he overcame it by religion: he suppressed reason in order to make place for faith. Looked at from this point of view Hoppe was not afraid of conceiving the consequences of what Bergson only dared to formulate as a programme of his philosophic hopes.

If we consider Hoppe's development concerning the substance and tasks of philosophy and ontological problems, his books represent the decisive stages of his development as well:

1. Podstata, dosah a hodnota přirodovědeckého poznání (1914)
(Substance, Range and Value of Scientific Knowledge):
denial of any possibility of the scientific view of life as a philosophical view.
2. Příroda a věda (1918)
(Nature and Science):
age of romanticism, naturalistic pantheism, dynamic irrationalism.

3. **Základy duchovní filosofie (1922)**
(**Fundaments of Spiritual Philosophy**):
oscillation between mystical pantheism and intuitive expressionism. Transcendental idealism.
4. **Přirozené a duchovní základy světa a života (1925)**
(**Natural and Spiritual Fundaments of World and Life**):
The conquering of transcendental idealism, oscillation between pantheistic and Christian mysticisms.
5. **Úvod do intuitivní a kontemplativní filosofie (1928)**
(**Introduction into Intuitive and Contemplative Philosophy**):
philosophy as a method in the services of Christianity.
6. **Předpoklady duchovní filosofie a náboženské víry (1935,**
posthumously)
(**Prerequisites of Spiritual Philosophy and Religious Belief**):
throwing away philosophy and acceptance of religious belief. About Hoppe's noetic views it can be said that in accordance with his opinions about substance and task of philosophy his noetics too tends towards conquering reason by faith.

In Hoppe's development two stages can be distinguished, the second of which divides into three distinct periods:

I. **Early Period (1907—1914):** the principal point is the substance, range and values of scientific knowledge. Here Hoppe is defeated and oscillates between probabilistic pragmatism and fictionalism and irrationalistic intuitionism (with emphasis too on the importance of experiment). The latter already carries indications of dogmatism (Intuition as an absolute knowledge through images).

II. Idealistic-Mystical and Religious Stage (1918—1931):

1. 1918 — 1920: romantic subjectivistic idealism (psychocentrism) oscillating between spiritualistic monism and naturalistic monism (Nature and Science) is replaced in Fundaments of Spiritual Philosophy by objective idealism.
2. 1924 — 1927: age of ripeness (Natural and Spiritual Fundaments of World and Life, Introduction into Intuitive and Contemplative Philosophy): transcendental idealism (intuitive idealrealism) conquered by Christian mysticism (ideal of God-Man, God incarnate).
3. 1930 — 1931: religious stage of naive mystical realism (empirism) and mystical religious belief (Prerequisites of Spiritual Philosophy and Religious Belief).

The consequence of Hoppe's scepticism concerning the values of scientific knowledge was the Kierkegaardian leap — a mystical leap to faith. The circle was closed: Hoppe tried to strengthen the absolute validity of his mystical experience by the criticism of science, and through philosophy, conceived as a propaedeutics of religion, he reached a pure religious belief free both from science and philosophy. The sense of human existence, human history and human culture is the God-Man (God incarnate) stage, free from the fetters of sensuality and united with the divine principle as an everlasting condition of soul. The God-Man ideal has strong voluntaristic and social features. Hoppe did not therefore turn towards oriental but towards Christian mysticism. This also was the reason for his proposition of an Academy of Spiritual Life and a League of Spiritual Peace, institutions the task of which he saw in the preparation of a spiritual renaissance of human race and in a world reform based on spirit.

As for Hoppe's place in the history of Czech philosophy it can be said that he belongs to the group which has been fed by Christian religiosity or at least been troubled by metaphysical problems (Smetana, Vorovka).

We found a strong, direct influence of Comenius and of Mareš. The likeness between

Hoppe and Comenius (in spite of all principal differences) is so distinct that we did not hesitate to call Hoppe a real disciple and follower of Comenius. We realize of course too that among other personalities Comenius was a support for Hoppe, a support which he was looking for and which he gladly found in conformity with his own ideas.

If we distinguish in Czech philosophic thought two groups: *the sense of reality philosophy*, which is in principle religious, or metaphysical (idealistic) and *the philosophy of order, reality structure*, which is essentially positivistic (or later on materialistic), Hoppe must be put into the first group, characterised by names like Štítný, Chelčický, Comenius, Smetana, Palacký, Mareš, Vorovka, Masaryk, Rádl. Among these thinkers he has also formulated the problems of the sense of reality most keenly and in philosophic respect most consequentially.

If we try to find Hoppe's place in the development context of world philosophy, we see that it is determined by his attachment to Kant, corrected by Plato, and by the tendency towards Plotinus-Christian mysticism in his last years. Through Kant (Critique of Pure Reason) Hoppe's mystical experience became conscious philosophy. Plato's transcendental world of ideas, the concept of catharsis, the inborn truth before all possibility of sensual experience, Eros, who with Hoppe takes a form of contemplation, where it is just the aesthetic experiences that form a sort of entrance into transcendental sphere — all this is in accordance with Plato, who differs by his world of ideas existing outside of ourselves, whereas Hoppe, together with Kant (Critique of Practical Reason) and Plotinus, puts transcendency into ourselves. Of course, Hoppe cannot agree with Plotinus completely. He does not want to be only an occasional guest in the transcendental world (during his extatic states) but desires to be there at home. Plato and Plotinus show him the direction and the way how to get rid of the sensualistic conception of world and life, though they were themselves not able to get free from it. This liberating step was only made by Christianity which for Hoppe represents the summit in Man's efforts for the unity with the divine principle.

What philosophy needs is a daring Kierkegaardian leap to faith. If thought wants to conquer itself, it can do it only by the paradox of Christianity. Thus philosophy becomes a propaedeutics of religion — Man becomes God-Man. This thinking process made Hoppe study intensively the Russian thinkers who propagated the God-Man ideas (Solovjev, Bulgakov, Berdjajev, Losskij).

If we sum up the results of our examination of philosophers who influenced Hoppe most, we can briefly say that Hoppe was conquering the influence of fictionalism, pragmatism and empiriocriticism (he criticizes scientific knowledge) by Kant, who stands at the very beginning of Hoppe's philosophical development. Hoppe corrected Kant by Plato and Plotinus and by the Neokantian philosophy as well (especially Fichte, Schelling, Schopenhauer, Hartmann), of which he declared himself that it was a preparation for mysticism. Through the Russian philosophers with their God-Man ideas and by the studies of Western and Eastern mysticism he was forced more and more to draw the last Kierkegaardian consequence: to throw away philosophy in order to make place for faith (Christianity).

As for the methods of knowledge there is to be seen a very strong influence of Meyerson (common sense), Bergson (intuition) and Underhill (contemplation).

When proving the insufficiency of scientific knowledge Hoppe relied and was completely dependent on Vaihinger's fictionalism, Mach's empiriocriticism, Poincaré's conventionalism, James' and Schiller's pragmatism and Boutroux's contingentism.

As his own contribution to world philosophy Hoppe considers (Přirozené a duchovní základy světa a života, p. 400) the attempt „to descend down to the deepest roots of our personality and by the analysis of its elements to try to win a warrant of a new method“ for a unity with transcendency.

In this stress on his own originality Hoppe was mistaken. The psychological theories of the subconscious that he thoroughly studied and knew (Janet, Charcot, Freud, Adler, Jung, Nancy School) and Hartmann's philosophy of the unconscious moulded Hoppe's theory of personality and especially his quite uncritical and indifferentiated belief in the subconscious. And as for the transcendental methods (intuition and contemplation) Hoppe found them in the mystical way of Christianity (via purgativa, illuminativa, unitiva). Neither his solutions nor his formulations of philosophic problems are so original as Hoppe himself thought them to be.

Finally, we will put two questions to Hoppe: What was your aim (did you reach it)? Did the methods you had chosen prove right?

Hoppe's aim was to reach the absolute, transcendental sphere and continually live in it „with all consequences for individual and social way of life“ (the ideal of God-Man and

God's community on spiritual basis). But Hoppe's conception of the absolute exhibits not only a total indistinction of concepts (the absolute = transcendental object = the unconscious = the subconscious = sphere of postulates and aims of the heart etc.), inconsequences and contradictions, but it also reveals the fact that a life-long struggle with the problem of the absolute has lost its sense when Hoppe is forced to confess that „problems solved on quality levels remain as much mysteries as they were before“ but that now we stand — in another relation — to them. Which means that Hoppe was forced to admit that the knowledge of the absolute was impossible, and (what is still more doubtful) that he understood it as — a postulate. Thus in the end philosophy is for him only a preparation for religious belief.

As for the methods of knowledge, especially those enabling a permanent contact with the absolute, Hoppe not only did change them, but he filled them with conceptual vagueness; in this respect his belief in and overestimation of the subconscious and its possibilities is especially striking.

And this is Hoppe's paradox: by trying to widen the possibilities of human personality — he narrows them. Soul for him is only a soul of sentiment. The promising tendency of the philosopher, who in „Nature and Science“ still realised the plurality of knowledge sources has narrowed down to the vague concepts of common sense, intuition and contemplation which as he thinks are able to raise us high above the contradictions of our world and life. But the irrational methods which ought to have been a reliable aid to the life in the absolute have proved to be insufficient; so much so that the absolute itself has narrowed down to — a postulate.

The paradoxical faith leap appears to have been therefore quite necessary: the abandonment of reason is the birth of faith. The metaphysical experience which existed at the very beginning, even before the start of philosophical thinking is also the end, because Hoppe was not able to demonstrate by science and philosophy that this experience was gnosologically and methodologically sound. He only confirmed Pascal's word: *Le coeur a ses raisons, que la raison ne connaît pas.*