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Deceptive eights and *The Czech Question*: Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk's writing strategies

“(..) já z nepříjemností ani nevyhlídám”
T. G. Masaryk in a letter to J. S. Machar¹

There was no shortage of important, momentous dates in Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk's life, including those finishing with the number eight, regarded as significant in Czech history, which could serve as the basis for a story of his life, oeuvre, or political activity. Such a story could start with the year 1878, when shortly after his studies at Leipzig University Masaryk sailed for the United States to obtain Rudolph Pierre Garrigue's blessing for the engagement with his daughter Charlotte, and finish with 1918, when independent Czechoslovakia was finally established, with Masaryk as its first president. Rather than concentrate on these dates, however, I would like to suggest a slightly different approach to the myth of “fateful eights”, focusing instead on *The Czech Question*, one of the most important works in Masaryk's oeuvre. In this way I would like to adopt the specifically Czech attitude to dates finishing with the number eight in order to demonstrate its Janus-faced nature.

The myth of “fateful eights” is a particularly strong, but at the same time a deceptive interpretative filter which transforms historical discourse into a narrative about landmarks

¹ “(..) I cannot get out of my troubles” (Masaryk & Machar, 2017, p. 101). Unless indicated otherwise, all translations by Maria Fengler.

and turning points. On closer examination, however, the ground-breaking changes turn out to be a result of dispersed processes developing over prolonged periods of time. The deceptive charm of eights is particularly visible in studies of the life and oeuvre of Tomáš Masaryk, in which *Česká otázka* (The Czech Question)² (Masaryk, 1948), one of his most important works, takes a particularly interesting place.

The corpus of sources forming the object of my study includes Masaryk's own works: primarily *The Czech Question*, but also the slightly later *Naše nynější krize* (Our Present Crisis) (Masaryk, 1948) and his correspondence with the poet Josef Svatopluk Machar from the period of writing both books, as well as the latest critical commentaries concerning the influence and present relevance of Masaryk's thought expressed in the works mentioned above. In this article, I would like to focus on two questions: the way the myth of "fateful eights" functions in this particular case, and the writing strategies employed by Masaryk. I will also suggest what conclusions can be drawn from such an analysis, including the usefulness of the myth of "fateful eights" as an interpretive filter applied to Czech history.

The fate of Czech history and *The Czech Question*

In the case of "fateful eights", "fateful" – deriving from the Greek concept of *fatum*, the tragic lot which cannot be avoided – is connected with the belief that in a given year something momentous simply must happen. As the Czechoslovak philosopher Milan Šimečka mockingly put it at the beginning of his journal *Konec nehybnosti* (The End of Inertia), he had to start recording events, not because of some higher need, but because the year 1988 had come and so no one knew what was going to happen (Šimečka, 1990, p. 1). This call for a re-examination of the myth of Czech eights prompted me to consider the motivations and writing strategies employed by authors in this context. In the case of Šimečka, it was a slightly mocking strategy of adapting to the circumstances in the situation when something momentous "might happen". What is it like in Masaryk's case?

At this point, I owe the reader an explanation of what I mean by "writing strategies". Such strategies include the constant elements of an author's thought and conduct reflected in his works. In Masaryk's case, his writing strategies were connected with the vision of Czech

² For the benefit of the reader, after introducing the titles in the original language, their English translations are used throughout the rest of the article.

history that he proposed, a vision in which what was general (the idea of *humanita*)³ was explained by means of what was particular, i.e. the history of the Czechs. *Humanita* should be an individual's moral compass, not an abstraction (Svoboda, 2017a, p. 19). If "the Czech question" does not lead to a more complex answer that involves man as such (thus becoming "the world question"), it has no *raison d'être*. Masaryk's views may also be seen as a corrective to the usual approach to Czech history (Zátka, 2017, pp. 258–259), although some scholars claim that he took his vision of Czech history from František Palacký (Činátl, 2011, p. 265). It should be mentioned here that Masaryk's writing strategies are characterised not only by this practical philosophy. Their other characteristic features are connected with the stage in the writer's life, the context of his epoch and the challenges that it posed, as well as the author's own character and the genre of his writings. All those elements will be analysed in the present article.

It is customary to undertake certain research problems around the time of important anniversaries: in the case of Czech history these may be the dates finishing with the number eight or centenaries; hence, for example, the publication of the collection of articles on *The Czech Question* entitled *Sto let Masarykovy České otázky* (A Centenary of Masaryk's *The Czech Question*) (Broklová, 1997). However, Masaryk's own remarks suggest that the first edition of his work, published in the "unfateful" year 1895, did not meet his expectations. In his letters to the poet Josef Svatopluk Machar, residing in Vienna, he wrote: "When I had the book in front of me – I wasn't satisfied. What is missing, I think, is an explanation of the work of Kollár. I got rid of several things here and there, etc. – all in all, a hangover" (Masaryk & Machar, 2017, p. 234).⁴ But it was not only the "writer's hangover", the subjective sense that he had not put a sufficient amount of work into his book, that troubled Masaryk: more importantly, he was upset about the limited response to the publication. He mentioned his happiness at receiving a letter from Josef Fanderlík, member of the Czech National Party (*staročesí*), who saw the ideas put forward in *The Czech Question* not as theoretical philosophising, but a practical proposal to be implemented in social life (Masaryk & Machar, 2017, p. 247). Fanderlík's opinion was among the very few which persuaded Masaryk that he had been understood (Masaryk

³ The Masarykian term *humanita* has usually been translated as "humanity" or "humanism", sometimes also as "humanitarianism"; for problems of translating this and other terms used by Masaryk, see Antonie van den Beld, "Humanity: An analysis of the key concept of Masaryk's social and political philosophy", in Antonie van den Beld, *Humanity: The political and social philosophy of Thomas G. Masaryk*, trans. Peter Staples, The Hague: Mouton, 1976, pp. 38–47, particularly p. 40 n. 11 (translator's note).

⁴ "Když jsem knížku měl před sebou – nebyl jsem spokojen. Schází v ní, tuším, výklad Kollára. Tu i tam všelico vynecháno atd., zkrátka kocovina."

& Machar, 2017, p. 247). Later, he would write explicitly about his surprise that his next book, *Our Present Crisis*, met with a more positive reception, wondering why this was so (Masaryk & Machar, 2017, p. 319). This indifferent response – or a response below the writer's expectations – prompted Masaryk to write his next books, above all *Our Present Crisis*, an immediate continuation of *The Czech Question*. It not only sold much better, but also boosted the sales of its predecessor, fuelling more interest in its ideas (Masaryk & Machar, 2017, p. 293).

But why do I take the dates from Masaryk's life and oeuvre which finish with the number eight as my starting point? Such significant dates include the year 1908, when the second edition of *The Czech Question* was published, and 1898, to be mentioned later in this article as the year of the publication of a polemic with Masaryk's work by the historians Jaroslav Goll and Josef Pekař (it was also a centenary of the birth of František Palacký, a historian featuring prominently in Masaryk's works); or the year 1928, the continuation of the dispute by Pekař. Why not start with the year 1895, when *The Czech Question* was first published?⁵ Before answering these questions, let us analyse the circumstances which accompanied its composition.

In the context of the present article, it is the date 1882 (incidentally containing two eights) that seems particularly relevant. In that year Masaryk moved with his family to Prague to take up a position at the Czech part of Charles-Ferdinand University. Stanislav Polák, the author of a monumental biography of Masaryk, suggests that this change was responsible for Masaryk's decision to abandon the plan of writing a more extensive book systematising the achievements of sociology, and instead take up a more current and "local" subject, i.e. Slavic studies (Polák, 2004, s. 84). He did not, however, lower the level of his ambition: the analysis of particular Slavic nations was to serve as the basis for the development of solutions that could be applied not only to the Czech nation, but also world problems in general. Incidentally, this is a typical Masarykian strategy: to solve a general problem posed *in abstracto* by explaining it at the level of particular detail, *in concreto* – as he did in the case of his vision of Czech history, mentioned above. These plans were checked by the demands of reality: instead of creating one original work, carefully composed and thought through from start to finish, Masaryk became engaged in solving numerous pressing problems to which he devoted successive smaller, quickly published studies, responding vigorously to current developments (Polak, 2004, p. 84).

⁵ Miloš Havelka entitled the collection of essays devoted to a debate about the meaning of Czech history *Spor o smysl českých dějin 1895–1938*. Thus the volume, which contains the most important responses to Masaryk's works, takes the publication date of the first edition of *The Czech Question* as the starting point of the discussion (Havelka, 1995).

This brings us back to the year 1895, the book publication of essays entitled *The Czech Question*. The majority of the texts collected in the volume had first been published in the periodical *Naše doba* (Our Times), of which Masaryk had been editor since 1893.⁶ Earlier, the philosopher had edited a magazine devoted to the popularisation of science entitled *Athenaeum*.⁷ The swift appearance and disappearance of periodicals, the dynamic changes of editorial boards or shifts in the role of long-established periodicals on the Czech political scene in the second half of the nineteenth century was a characteristic feature of the intellectual landscape of the epoch in question. Bearing this in mind during the analysis of Masaryk's writing strategies, I would like to stress that, as in the case of many other thinkers of the epoch, they partly resulted from the particular circumstances of the circulation of such texts. They were first published as journalistic pieces in periodicals, and later collected in books.⁸ In addition, periodicals of this epoch often served as political or ideological organs of political, artistic or activist groups with which they were closely associated (Doubek & Merhautová, 2017, pp. 9–10). Such conditions of the circulation of texts, combined with Masaryk's constant self-reflection and his understanding of philosophy as a practical science (as evidenced by his reaction to Fandrlík's letter), had a bearing on his professional development. At some stage, he considered abandoning his academic career in order to devote himself fully to journalism (Masaryk & Machar, 2017, p. 293). He must have felt that in this way he would elicit a prompter response to his ideas. It should also be pointed out that Masaryk saw journalism as a form of thinking. In *The Czech Question* he wrote that "journalism is to a large extent a modern form of intellectual work" (Masaryk, 1948, p. 156) and stressed that both Palacký and Karel Havlíček-Borovský, another Czech author greatly admired by Masaryk, were active as journalists. However, good journalism, according to Masaryk, was only possible when the person who engaged in it was well educated, so that he did not become simply a hack writer (Pechar, 2017, p. 474). I would also like to draw attention to the word "response" used above, for it is the key that I propose to use in the present interpretation of *The Czech Question*.

⁶ Even though for a long time Josef Kaizl and František Drtina acted as co-editors, Masaryk was responsible for the greatest share of work on the magazine (Drews, 1989, p. 160). For a complete list of co-editors see (pš, 2000).

⁷ From 1888 Josef Kaizl became another editor of *Athenaeum*; in addition the magazine had assistant editors in charge of different disciplines. In 1886–1888 Masaryk financed the publication himself; earlier he had cooperated with the publisher Jan Otto; later Kaizl became responsible for the funding, and in its last years the magazine was published by J. R. Vilímek (zp., 1985).

⁸ A comparison between the book version and articles that Masaryk published in periodicals at the time provides evidence of how dynamic the creative process was in the case of *The Czech Question* (Masaryk, 2017).

“The Czech question” – not as a title but the subject and content of Masaryk’s book – is not rhetorical and although it first had to be posed, and then constantly posed again and anew, it was not only finding the answer as such that was at stake. By posing the question, Masaryk wanted to start a discussion concerning the problems involved. It was thus a provocation, an attempt to let some “fresh air” into Prague circles in which he had been living for thirteen years and which he characterised as “stifling” (Masaryk & Machar, 2017, p. 85). In this way, provocation became not only an element of the author’s writing strategies, but came to be synonymous with his way of life.

Ohavný zrádce⁹

Masaryk’s opinion of his environment as “stifling” is also connected with his position in Prague circles. Despite the passage of time he was still an outsider. His arrival from Vienna in 1882 marked the beginning of his first longer stay in Prague; earlier he had been connected with the region Slovácko, where he was born, Moravia, where he went to secondary school, Vienna, where he studied, Leipzig, where he spent a further year at university, and New York, where he went to obtain the hand of his future wife Charlotte Garrigue, whom he had met in Leipzig. In this perspective, Masaryk’s life and academic career show him to be a man without any roots in the settled society in which he found himself.

His parents were members of a lower class than the bourgeoisie dominating in Prague: his father was a coachman, and his mother was first a housewife, and later started to work for the same landowner as her husband. Neither did Masaryk marry into established Prague society, a strategy used by František Palacký, who had also come from lower class background (Štaif, 2009, pp. 61–67). Masaryk’s wife was American, and like him a stranger in this new environment.

However, if in this period Masaryk can be regarded (as he regarded himself) as an outsider, it was not only because of his position in Prague society.¹⁰ It must be noticed that his persona (understood as a certain assumed role performed in public) did not have a fixed

⁹ “A disgusting traitor”, a phrase used to describe Masaryk in the periodical *Národní listy* in 1887, when he stirred the debate on the authenticity of supposed Old Czech manuscripts (Pechar, 2017, p. 473); see also note 11 below.

¹⁰ He often mentions it in his letters to J. S. Machar; for example, in a letter of 17 February 1895 he writes “nerozumíme se s tím publikusem, a co tedy se darmo zdržovat?” (“we don’t understand each other, this public and I, why should I be troubled in vain?”) (Masaryk & Machar, 2017, p. 236). Also the picture of Prague that he draws for the benefit of his correspondent suggests that he felt isolated.

form, but evolved, from a “well-meaning patriot” (*vlastence dobré vůle*) to a politician (Doubek & Merhautová, 2017, p. 60). Also, his highly polemical character meant that Masaryk easily fell outside the confines of what was approved socially in his environment. His participation in the debate about the authenticity of Old Czech manuscripts discovered by Václav Hanka,¹¹ the opinions he expressed in the course of the so-called Hilsner Affair (*Hilsneriáda*)¹² and during many less known, but equally heated discussions, such as the ones about Czech modernism, the legacy of Bedřich Smetana, the František Šromota affair, the Omladina trial or the terrorist group of young Serbs and Croats – all of these made Masaryk a highly distinctive, but at the same time an uncomfortable figure.

He also had his own opinion about what “Czechness” was and what it should be. The stand he took was different from the dominating national attitude, defining a narrowly understood “Czechness” in the post-Jungmann spirit as something dependent solely on the language that one uses, and reducing “the Czech question” exclusively to the local level. At the very beginning of *The Czech Question* Masaryk observes that it is a mistake to rely primarily on linguistic criteria as those that should characterise the approach of Czech national revivalists. In the early period of the Czech National Revival the language was too weak to serve as the basis for the development of any national aspirations (Masaryk, 1948, p. 12). Instead, Masaryk points to the religious elements in the thought of the revivalists which in his view could establish the foundations of national identity. The philosopher bases his argument on the example of selected figures in the history of the Czech National Revival, chosen so as to create “a five-pointed star”: Dobrovský – Kollár – Šafařík – Palacký – Havlíček (Brabec, 2009, p. 23). While all five men were revivalists, they were selected according to

¹¹ Forged Old Czech manuscripts, supposedly discovered by the archivist and librarian Václav Hanka, were to prove the antiquity of Czech literature, apparently even older than German one. There were several manuscripts, the most famous of which, the *Zelená Hora* and *Dvůr Králové*, were assessed as authentic and, despite opposition, incorporated into the nineteenth-century cultural canon of the “reviving” Czech nation. Masaryk re-opened the discussion on their authenticity, attacking the standpoint of their defenders from various perspectives, supported by a group of other young professors of the Czech part of Charles-Ferdinand University, such as the historian Jaroslav Goll and the linguist Jan Gebauer. The scholars argued that from the perspective of different disciplines of science the manuscripts could not be genuine. The question stirred deep controversy, especially in conservative circles, who viciously lambasted Masaryk, accusing the group of treacherous intentions with respect to the young nation and sympathising with the imperial policy of Austria-Hungary (Opat, 1990, pp. 136–191).

¹² The Hilsner Affair (*Hilsneriáda*) refers to the 1899–1900 trial of Leopold Hilsner, a Jew from Vysočina, accused of a ritual murder of the young Czech woman Anežka Hružova. Hilsner’s guilt was determined on the basis of circumstantial evidence, and he was sentenced to life imprisonment despite the efforts of his counsel for the defence, Zdenko Auředníček. Masaryk took a stand on the case, arguing that there was no such thing as a ritual murder, and that sentencing a man to death on the basis of a folk superstition should not take place in a modern state. His articles led to the re-opening of the case, in which Hilsner was sentenced again, but this time for murder. Hilsner was released from prison after the amnesty in 1918 (Pojar, 2016, pp. 101–125).

peculiar criteria: the Masarykian pantheon of the Revival leaders disregards such traditionally included figures as Josef Jungmann, the author of the great Czech-German dictionary.¹³ In Masaryk's view, Jungmann represented an egoistic-national orientation, which failed to perceive "the Czech question" as part of a wider "world question".

The vision of Czech history proposed by Masaryk demanded a careful choice of not only arguments, but also the form in which they were to be presented. What then should the genre practised by Masaryk be called? It is relatively difficult to define. *The Czech Question* is a collection of previously published articles, hence it may at times surprise the reader who, out of the blue, is informed that he or she is still reading a study of the thought of Ján Kollár (Masaryk, 1948, p. 151), even though the author of *Slávy dcera* (The Daughter of Sláva) has long ceased to be the leading protagonist of the book. This "messiness" may seem unexpected unless one takes into account the writing strategies employed by Masaryk. As Stanislav Polák remarks, "there was no time for prolonged preparations of [the book's] composition" (Polák, 2004, p. 85). Polák also calls the process of preparing the book a "literary improvisation" (Polák, 2004, p. 85), the result of which its author did not find fully satisfactory, even though he considered it useful. However, Polák's observations concerning the way *The Czech Question* was composed do not explain everything. They are more contextual and show the realia of the epoch in which the book was written. Yet Masaryk's works – like all writing – involve also a volitional aspect, which Polák's account disregards.

Perhaps the key to answering this question may be found in the answer to another question: why did Masaryk write? In order to exert an influence on the reader. A special type of reader, we should add. As Petr Hlaváček asserts with regard to Masaryk's later works, their author knew how to use political journalism to influence readers from western Europe and the United States (Hlaváček, 2017, p. 446). The wide range of Masaryk's works may only be surprising if one does not take into account this aspect of his writing strategies: he treats a local problem as the starting point for an analysis of a more general question. Masaryk balances between academic and journalistic style; hence the proposal to call this genre "an eschatological essay" (Hlaváček, 2017, p. 446).

¹³ However, drawing on the reflection of the philosopher Jan Patočka, Luděk Sekyra points out that Masaryk may have found inspiration for his vision of Czechness in a synthesis of Bolzano's thought on nationality defined on the basis of the place of residence (*zemské vlastenectví*) and Jungmann's idea (deriving from Herder) of nationhood based on culture and language (*národní a jazykové vlastenectví*); in this case the synthesis is very strongly language- and text-centred (for more, see Macura, 1995; Sekyra, 2017, p. 13).

The impossibility of “non-response”

“The Czech question” demands finding an answer, it summons one who hears it to look for such an answer: in this, it is similar to Christ’s gospel exhortation to “follow me”, at once a call and a task to undertake: “I would wish these studies to offer a detailed explanation of our situation and provide a stimulus for further reflection and work for those who partly or fully agree with them” (Masaryk, 1948, p. 230).¹⁴ As such, it is performative in nature. What do I mean by that?

Performativity, i.e. the ability of language to create a new state of affairs, was first observed by John Langshaw Austin (Austin, 1975). Although Austin was not born until 1911 – three years after the second edition of *The Czech Question* analysed here – his conception perfectly describes the case under discussion. In the terms proposed by Austin’s theory, Masaryk’s “Czech question” may be characterised as an illocutionary act, i.e. a speech act which has a certain conventional force, included in the very content of the utterance. This force, which also derives from the socially sanctioned convention, produces a particular social effect of such an utterance.

Austin’s theory of speech acts makes it possible to interpret writing as a type of activity: both deeds and words are forms of communication. In this context, it does not matter which kind of texts has a smaller or greater illocutionary force; rather, the point is that speech in general is treated as action. From this point of view the differentiation between types of texts with regard to their illocutionary force is of secondary importance; it is therefore not necessary to consider separately the type of text analysed in this way. The language that Masaryk used and the ways in which he formulated the questions he dealt with have already been analysed (Jakobson, 1988; Mukařovský, 1932; Voisine-Jechová, 1989). In view of the limitations of space and the chosen subject of the present paper, I leave the relationship between the kind of text and language outside the scope of the discussion as a separate question to be examined in future.

The force mentioned above is subject to certain conditions, included implicitly in the illocutionary act: the procedure which it concerns must be carried out appropriately, with the subjective thoughts and emotions of the person participating in it also taken into account. If the first condition is not met, the illocutionary act misfires; flouting the second condition leads to abuse.

In what way can “the Czech question” be seen as an illocutionary act? In posing it (both as a query and as an issue to resolve), Masaryk wanted to create a space for a dis-

¹⁴ “Přeju si, aby tyto studie naši situaci se všech stran objasnily a aby těm, kdo s částí nebo s celkém souhlasí, byly pohnutkou k dalšímu přemýšlení a pracování.”

cussion about the vision of Czech history. He was not the first person to undertake this subject: indeed, the problem of Czech identity had been a recurring question throughout the whole nineteenth century, asked before in various versions; for instance, by Hubert Gordon Schauer in his classic text *Naše dvě otázky* (Our Two Questions) (Schauer, 1886, pp. 1–10). In this sense, posing the question as such is part of a certain social convention: it is acceptable to ask about “our Czechness”; it is the answer given by Masaryk that is unconventional and therein lies the problem. The procedure that Masaryk performs is “correct” in the sense that is not entirely new in the Czech context; what is different, however, is the writing strategy employed by the philosopher who decides to base his answer not on Czech history as such, but on its latest stage, which in his view has not been sufficiently examined so far: the history of the Czech National Revival. For Masaryk the revival process is not finished and will be completed only when the equality of rights of all members of the society becomes a fact. From this point of view, Masaryk divides the National Revival into four phases, locating its last, fourth phase in contemporary times. The asking of “the Czech question” as an illocutionary act has its sources also in the subjectivity of the one posing this query/issue. This aspect is even better visible in the series of successive questions-answers following it. For *The Czech Question* indeed did open the space of discussion, so desired by Masaryk. However, this did not happen immediately.

In this sense, the first edition from 1895 is, to use Austin’s terminology, more of a misfire. However, it is a perfect illustration of Masaryk’s writing strategies. When the first edition of his book did not gain the kind of publicity he wanted – although the polemic of Josef Kaizl (Kaizl, 1896), his old friend from the circle of the realists, was published relatively quickly – Masaryk embarked on further stages of writing. Thus, contrary to the opinion of some scholars, the book did not meet with an immediate reaction (Neudörflová, 2017, p. 528). Considering that after Kaizl’s polemic and several reviews, no other responses were published for three years, it is difficult to judge the reaction prompt or satisfactory, especially in view of the realities of the epoch, when, as mentioned above, speedy response to new publications was of prime importance.

The second part of *The Czech Question, Our Present Crisis*, was published soon after, followed by *Jan Hus*. For Polák, *Our Present Crisis* is a companion to *The Czech Question*, similarly composed and “directly responding to current problems” (Polák, 2004, p. 85). In my view, the role of the book was different. As I have already pointed out, references in Masaryk’s letters from this period suggest that the origins of the book may have been more complex. In their essence,

the books share the same nature: they are a call for discussion, a provocation aimed at the academic, political and cultural circles of Masaryk's social environment. This is how he describes the way he wrote *Our Present Crisis* to Machar: "(...) I wrote as if in a fever. Or at least I did not sleep for a few nights and it was at that time that I was writing it" (Masaryk & Machar, 2017, p. 291).¹⁵ Thus "the Czech question" is not an abuse in Austinian terms, since Masaryk treats it extremely seriously; the intention to act is also present: "These studies are only an introduction, or more precisely a call to [formulate] a possible programme and establish such a party" (Masaryk, 1948, p. 230).¹⁶ In this programme, as Jan Svoboda and Aleš Prázný observe, what is democratic must be synonymous with what is humanistic. This entails politics that should be conducted for the good of all the community by individuals who are responsible and aware thanks to their education and critical attitude (Svoboda & Prázný, 2017, p. 19). For a politician, in Masaryk's view, is someone who embraces Platonic ideals: such a person must know first and foremost what he/she is doing and why he/she is doing this (Svoboda, 2017a, p. 291). As the authors of the introduction to the volume of Masaryk's correspondence with Machar observe, this attitude may partly have stemmed from Masaryk's own experience: he entered politics as a man with an academic background, and he wanted to transfer practices he knew from the academic world to the political one (Doubek & Merhautová, 2017, p. 17).

How is everything that has been said above linked with the issue of "fateful eights"? If *The Czech Question* is seen in the terms that I propose, i.e. as an Austinian misfire, then it was only in the year 1908 that it was introduced as an illocutionary act to the scene of the discussion about the meaning of Czech history. Signs that this development was to take place, however, had appeared earlier.

"Fateful eights" and Masaryk's writing strategies

Before 1908, a significant "eight" in the history of *The Czech Question* was 1898, the year of the publication of a polemic with Masaryk's ideas, penned by his ally from the times of the manuscript debate, Jaroslav Goll, and later by Josef Pekař (Kohn, 1945, p. 105). Both scholars were historians, and from this standpoint they accused Masaryk of creating a historical reality. A large part of Masaryk's answer to "the Czech question" can indeed

¹⁵ "(...) jsem psal téměř v horečkovém záchvatu! Alespoň jsem několik nocí nespál a v nich to [i.e. *Our Present Crisis*] napsal."

¹⁶ "Studie tyto (...) jsou jen úvodem, a vlastně vybidnutím k možnému programu a ustálení takovéto strany (...)."

be reduced to such terms, but it must be stressed that what Masaryk presented was closer to historiosophy than historiography. Thus criticism conducted strictly from the perspective of historical studies does not address the crux of the problem, which still remains the same: it is a continuing demand to find an answer to “the Czech question”. Such an answer cannot be provided, however, by correcting historical inaccuracies, of which the author was, at least partly, aware. He was so disappointed with the response to the first edition of *The Czech Question* because the same arguments featured prominently in Kaizl's polemic.

In this view, “the Czech question”, and Masaryk's reaction to the first reviews of his book, is also a question concerning freedom of thinking (Pechar, 2017, p. 473). It also demonstrates how all elements which I have identified as part of his writing strategies are combined together: (1) the moment in Masaryk's life as an author of a number of books, editor, academic and politician, (2) the context of the epoch and (3) the polemic character of the author. Masaryk did not engage in argument for argument's sake, however, but wanted to provoke dialogue, albeit understood in a specific way. As the authors of the introduction to the volume of Masaryk's correspondence with Machar observe (Doubek & Merhautová, 2017, p. 43), Masaryk did not understand a discussion or debate, which he mentioned frequently, as a dialogue between equal parties. Rather, he saw it as a kind of “asymmetrical dialogue”, in which, as Luboš Merhaut argues, “in one or another way, the participants express their strength, power and domination over each other” (Merhaut, 1999, s. 500). It was thus a type of polemic, conducted especially in print, in which within a certain period of time one published one's answer to the arguments and counterarguments of the opponent. In Masaryk's worldview, a polemic was not only an exchange of arguments with the other party, but also involved inviting a wider audience, e.g. through the medium of the press, and was connected with a search for what was ethically right (Kraus, 1994, pp. 56–57). And finally the last element of Masaryk's writing strategies: (4) the genre of his texts. For Masaryk was criticised not only for his approach to material provided by history. The French historian and Czech scholar Ernest Denis, Masaryk's contemporary, saw *The Czech Question* as a link between the history of earlier epochs and modernity. Denis suggested that Masaryk demythologised the nineteenth century, previously idealised and hagiographised (Pechar, 2017, s. 477). This throws an interesting light on the interpretation of another element of Masaryk's writing strategies: the “scientific” method masks here the shortcomings of historical methodology, of which Masaryk, who was not a trained historian, did not have an adequate command; certainly not at the level expected in the epoch.

Thus Masaryk appears again as an outsider, this time remaining outside the confines of the discipline from whose achievements he profited. In his academic competences, he was still a philosopher of history, and in this sense the method that he employed was scientific, except that it transgressed the narrow boundaries of the discipline in which some of his adversaries, such as Goll and Pekař, wanted to place it. The latter even called *The Czech Question* an exposition of a mythical and teleologic nature, accusing Masaryk of creating a certain vision of history instead of analysing the main factors of historical development which could then be identified as reasons for certain states of affairs (Pekař, 1995, pp. 500–516). Thus what met the scientific standards for some (Denis), for others (Pekař) bore the marks of charlatanry. Pekař was to return to the critique of the way Masaryk used empirical historical material in another year finishing with a “fateful eight”: in 1928.

However, if Masaryk's writing strategies were conditioned by the fact that he was not a historian, and did not aspire to this name, but a philosopher of history, then it is quite justified to ask how he understood philosophy. In *The Making of a State*, a late work, he would write that he was most interested in practical philosophy, which interest, as I have tried to demonstrate, can already be observed much earlier. Metaphysics did not satisfy him (Masaryk, 1927, p. 291); in his view it was ethics, sociology and politics that best captured what philosophy really was. The problem with Masaryk as a thinker transcending the boundaries of disciplines, also in his writings, is clearly visible here, since his understanding of his own discipline, philosophy, included three aspects of human activity, as we may call them. This broad understanding of philosophy meant that Masaryk freely drew on empirical material so far reserved for one discipline, which Pekař criticised him for from the perspective of a historian. Sociology, in turn, was for Masaryk a modern method of examining certain phenomena occurring in a community; this way of thinking stemmed the influence of Auguste Comte (Pecka & Pána, 2017, s. 231; Svoboda, 2017b, ss. 101–109). The practicality of philosophy, in turn, followed from the Brentanian legacy in Masaryk's thought. As a student of Franz Brentano, who postulated that abstract speculation in philosophy should be abandoned in favour of concrete solutions, Masaryk followed in his master's footsteps (Svoboda, 2017b, p. 80). As can already be seen in *The Czech Question*, he understood politics very broadly, in Platonian and Aristotelian tradition, as a sphere of direct human activity. For, after all, as Aristotle wrote, man is a “political animal”.

Masaryk's philosophy of history is thus connected with a broad understanding of philosophy as such and a free attitude to the achievements of other disciplines. The problem

is however, that it was produced at the time of the emergence of specialised *Geistwissenschaften*, which quickly became entrenched within their newly established boundaries. Masaryk's free attitude may have irritated many, especially when his approach was interpreted as an attempt to reduce one discipline (in this case history) to the role of an auxiliary science of another discipline (in this case sociology).

The first Czech performer?

Masaryk, then, writes in order to produce change, to put forward proposals, and not simply to describe. In this sense Pekař's accusations that he manipulates empirical material do not do justice to the intentions of the criticised author. At the same time, Masaryk does not exclude himself from the circle of people to whom "the Czech question" is posed, for it is directed to everyone, and the fact that he has already given a certain kind of answer does not free him from the obligation to look for other ones. This approach also makes it possible to explain the reasons behind the production of further studies on this topic, *Our Present Crisis* and *Jan Hus*, or even the still later *Karel Havlíček*. What is more, the way Masaryk sees Czech history, not as a collection of events, but stories of particular people, demonstrates that behind abstract "history" one should always see the work of a concrete person.

The "fateful eights" in the history of *The Czech Question*, the years 1898, 1908 or 1928, can be seen as one way of interpreting the Masarykian vision of history and its criticism. The first, underrated edition of *The Czech Question* induced the author to write further studies on this subject, inviting polemic with the ideas expressed in them as part of a peculiarly understood dialogue. It is also directly connected with Masaryk's writing strategies, which I characterised as the constant components of his thought and conduct that are visible in his works and that derive from his character and social position as well as the context in which he worked. From this perspective the posing of "the Czech question" and looking for an answer is not so much a breakthrough as a process, whose final date cannot be easily determined.

In this way, using one interpretive filter ("fateful eights") as a starting point for the use of another filter (looking at writing strategies), I propose to read *The Czech Question* as an illocutionary act. This not only makes it possible to understand the role of the work better, freeing it from the weight of criticism conducted from the historiographic standpoint. Such a perspective also enables us to characterise Masaryk's activity more adequately,

since it is difficult to classify him as “only” a politician, philosopher or sociologist. He resists labelling. Perhaps, however, the category of “performer” could do justice to the author of *The Czech Question*.

Translated by Maria Fengler

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Złudne ósemki a Czeskie pytanie. Strategie pisania Tomáša Garrigue'a Masaryka

W artykule podjęta zostaje problematyka strategii pisania obecnych w dziele T. G. Masaryka, zwłaszcza w jego *Czeskim pytaniu*. Po pierwsze, autorka pokazuje jaki wpływ miało drugie wydanie *Czeskiego pytania*, opublikowane w 1908 roku, na dyskusję o sensie czeskiej historii. Po drugie, autorka analizuje strategie pisania Masaryka, pokazując, do jakiego stopnia chodzi w nim o kreację, a do jakiego o analizę czeskiej historii.

Słowa kluczowe:

Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk; strategie pisania; fatalne ósemki; czeskie pytanie; czeska historia; performatywna teoria języka; John L. Austin; akt illokucji

Deceptive eights and *The Czech Question*: Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk's writing strategies

This article concerns the writing strategies present in Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk's works, especially in *The Czech Question*. Firstly, the author shows the impact of the second edition of *The Czech Question*, published in 1908, on the discussion about the sense of Czech history. Secondly, she examines Masaryk's writing strategies, showing to what extent they involve creating and, on the other hand, analysing Czech history.

Keywords:

Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk; writing strategies; fateful eights; the Czech question; Czech history; theory of performative speech; John L. Austin; illocutionary act

Note:

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