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Hermeneutics in the Czech Context
(F. X. Šalda, Václav Černý, and Dimitrij Tschižewskij [Dmytro Chyzhevsky])

There are several reasons that suggest the position of literary critic and literary historian Frantisek Xaver Šalda as the most important exponent of the hermeneutical method in Czech literary history in the first third of the twentieth century. Firstly, in his critical essays of 1904 he already overcame the strict separation of content and form in favor of the idea of a reciprocity between the two components within the charged relationship of material and creative act. Secondly, and most importantly, he designed his hermeneutics of ‘poetic individuality’ in an emphatic connection with Nietzsche’s notion of tragedy and Wilhelm Dilthey’s hermeneutics of life and experience. Oleg Sus expressly points to the meaning of Dilthey’s psychology and his life-philosophical structuralism – along with Friedrich Theodor Vischer’s and Johannes Volkelt’s theory of symbols – for Šalda’s concept of aesthetic experience (Sus 1968, 43–45). Reconstructing the genesis of Šalda’s ‘prestructural aesthetics’, Oleg Sus, a student of Mukařovský’s, closely analyses the references of Šalda’s ‘structuralism sui generis’ to the aesthetic concepts of German art philosophy of the 1880s and 1890s (Sus 1968, 37–66) and stresses the importance of Dilthey’s “life-philosophically founded structural semantics” for structural art studies in general and for Czech aesthetics in particular (Sus 1968, 50). In the second half of the nineteenth century the universities of Prague and Vienna evolved into two centres of Austro-Bohemian Herbartism. In Prague, Robert Zimmermann, a student of Bolzano’s, became the main exponent of Herbartian aesthetics; his Czech student Josef Durdík became the official vernacular exponent of Herbartian aesthetics at Prague University, yet undivided between German and Czech speakers. Along with the line of action leading from Herbartian aesthetic formalism (concerning the Herbartian genealogy of Prague structuralism, see the introduction to Vodička by Jurij Striedter 1976, XII) via the Prague acknowledgement and reception of the Russian formalist school to the development of the Prague school of literary structuralism there is another parallel hermeneutical line, which began with Šalda’s comprehensive essay “Synthetismus v novém umění” (1891–1892, “Synthetism in the New Art”), and which was modified and continued later by some of his students, especially by Václav Černý (1905–1987). The Germanist and Bohemist Vojtěch Jirát (1902–1945) may also be mentioned here.
The ‘pathic’ hermeneutics of poetic individuality (F. X. Šalda)

With “Synthetism in the New Art”, Šalda, in a parallel to Dilthey’s idea of poetry as an ‘expression of life’, already attempted to demonstrate artistic work as a synthetic and synthesising process whose ideal goal lay in unifying art and life, expression and character (i.e., form and content), and in deducing a holistic worldview (Šalda 1952, 52–54).

However, Šalda’s path to Dilthey’s hermeneutics of an ‘inner life-nexus’ was informed by the idea of ‘tragic art’ and artistic work as “Kritika patosem a inspiráci” (1973d [1905], “Criticism as Pathos and Inspiration”), the title of his essay of 1904/1905. Šalda’s ‘pathic’ idea of art, which he developed in his literary- and art-critical essays from the volume Boje o zítřek (1973a [1905], Fight for Tomorrow), shows surprising points of contact with the simultaneously formulated thesis of ‘pathos formulas’ developed by art historian Aby Warburg. Like Warburg, Šalda understands artistic work as an archaic-libidinal and unconscious ‘psycho-energetics’ that externalises itself in the work of art, as it were. The work of art, whose potency expresses itself as “artistic and dramatic pathos”, thus becomes the medium of “discharge” (“vybití”) of these “energetics” (Šalda 1973b [1905], 160–163). In the essay “Umělecký paradox” (1973b [1905], “The Artistic Paradox”) Šalda foregrounds the category of life as the actual “fabric” (“látka”) and the actual substance of art, since artistic work is “a dramatic and pathetic, but not an ethical state. A poet or any other artist indeed creates a new ethos – but only through a new pathos” (Šalda 1973b [1905], 163–164). In the essays of his Fight for Tomorrow the literary critic develops an almost psychopathological symptomatology of psychic conditions which, according to Šalda, accompany the creative process and the genesis of the work of art as extreme conditions and inner, affectively charged reactions to outside events. This “criticism through pathos and inspiration” (Šalda 1973d, 183) clearly finds its expression in Šalda’s famous essay on Edvard Munch, “Násilník snu” (1973c [1905], “Rapist of the Dream”, on the occasion of the extensive Munch exhibition in Prague in the spring of 1905). As a “man of dramatic pathos and spasm”, Munch is seen as a “rapist of the dream” because, as an “artist of unreal colour pathos [...], he forcefully realises dramatic affects artistically – passion, jealousy, anxiousness, or revolt” (Šalda 1973c, 175). As the title of the Munch essay suggests, Šalda connected the violent creative energy of Edvard Munch’s art with the notion of an inner, unconscious, and latent energy which may enable the eruption of “dark formative powers” leaving a trace of a “passionately violent gesture” (Šalda 1973c, 173–174), which is supposed to be deciphered by the spectator-critic. Yet not only the artist, but also the art critic
(or art interpreter) is supposed to be a “rapist of his dream”; for both of them, art remains tied up with passion and pain, and “criticism has to become painful for the critic” (Šalda 1973d [1905], 193).

In the essay collection Duše a dílo: Podobizny a medailony (published between 1903 and 1912, and as a book in 1913, Soul and Opus: Portraits and Medaillons) containing studies on individual Czech (Mácha, Neruda, Němcová, Vrchlíky, Sova, Březina, etc.) and foreign authors (Rousseau, Flaubert, Zola, Huysmans, Ibsen), Šalda takes the main points of his Fight for Tomorrow a step further, yet the focus shifts from the logics of the paradoxon (logika paradoxu) as the basic creative principle of ‘pathic’ and passionate artistic work to the principle of integration and “wholeness of life” (životní celistvost); from the idea of a dramatic-passionate “creative action” (tvůrčí čin) to the idea of the “singularity of the literary-historical event” (jedinečnost zjevu literárně-dějinného) (Šalda 1937, 6–7). In the preface to Soul and Opus Šalda emphasises as the main goal of his essay collection the endeavour to “descend to the psychic primordial experiences of my poet-creators” and to demonstrate these as the foundation of the “inner workings of their soul, their dramatic tension” (Šalda 1937, 6). With his idea of the work of art as an expression of the inwardness of the individual, Šalda comes close to the hermeneutics of poetic individuality developed by Wilhelm Dilthey in the four essays of his volume Das Erlebnis und die Dichtung (1910 [1906], Poetry and Experience). As Šalda would later, Dilthey assumes a close connection between life and the poetic creative process. Dilthey defines this connection in his Goethe essay from Poetry and Experience: “Poetry is the representation and the expression of life. It expresses an experience and it represents the outer reality of life” (Dilthey 1910 [1906], 177). The experience represents the concrete unity of the ‘history of life’, which Šalda calls “the history of the poet’s own soul”, i.e., his “outer life” (Šalda 1937, 6). Yet Šalda is not only interested in the knowledge of the ‘inner workings of the soul’ and the outer ‘history of the soul’, but mainly in the reconstruction and understanding of the integration of these two components of the creative personality. “Integration” Šalda sees as “spiritual typicality” concentrating the outer surface and condensing it to a construct of personal objectivity (Šalda 1937, 7). The principle of integration conceptualised by Šalda as an alternative to the “deductions and descriptions of [literary] evolutionism” (Šalda 1987 [1931], 463) is, as the essence of creative singularity (jedinečnost), one of the central terms of Šalda’s literary hermeneutics. As an energetic process and as a certain form of “inner tension and exertion” (Šalda 1937, 39) integration aims at the achievement of dynamic wholeness – or, in Dilthey’s terminology, of the “spiritual nexus” (“Zusammenhang des Seelenlebens”, Dilthey 1994 [1887], 169), whose highest expression is poetry. Therefore, for Dilthey, not only poetry, but art in general becomes knowledge: knowledge about the meaning of life. At the beginning of
the 1930s Šalda still emphasised the great importance of Dilthey’s philosophy of the humanities as studies of creative life that objectifies itself through the intellect (Dilthey 1992 [1910], 177–178), and his life-philosophically founded hermeneutics of art from the wholeness of life:

Germany was lucky that Wilhelm Dilthey was active at the same time as positivism but worked against it. Throughout his youth he was a part of the Romantic movement, and he carried the message of romanticism into the new positivist era like a fertile seed of future transformations. Poetry and Experience was the first, albeit not the perfect attempt to liberate literary history from the prison of blandness and ‘literatiness’ and to show certain personalities as cultural-vital forces. [...] Dilthey was the first to make a collective literary history possible, namely, the dramatic interaction of life forces driven by the inner will to crystallisation typicality. (Šalda 1987 [1931], 463)

2 The creative process as aesthetic-artistic ‘self-liberation’ (Václav Černý’s personalism)

The romanist and comparatist Václav Černý (1905–1987), a student of Šalda’s and his successor at Prague’s Charles University, took Šalda’s critical method as a constant endeavour to discover the creative personality “at the moment of creative uplift, the greatest effort of self-realisation”; according to Černý (1992b [1938], 131), this is also where Šalda’s “heroic personalism” was founded. The relation of personality and creative process as aesthetic-artistic self-creation and self-liberation, as breakthrough of personality in self-representation is at the centre of Černý’s critical and literary-historical personalism.

Černý interprets the shaping of (creative) life based on the conscience of personality as an “intellectual liberation” (“duchovní liberace”, Černý 1992d [1939], 40). Like Šalda and the hermeneutics of the Dilthey school (such as Georg Misch (1878–1965), a Goettingen philosopher and Dilthey’s son-in-law), he sees this as the actual core of occidental-European self-determination: “Like every creative opus, personality means liberation” (Černý 1992d [1939], 40). For Černý, ‘creative self-liberation’ appears unthinkable without the ethical dimension. With reference to the idea of poetic creation formulated by Paul Valéry (for Černý, the paradigm of ‘self-creative’ artist-man), Černý emphasises: “The ethics of artistic form simultaneously and most of all stand for the ethics of the individual, a moral discipline of life as such” (Černý 1992d [1939], 38).

Even though Černý starts from Bergson’s theory of intuition, Ortega y Gasset’s philosophy of art, and Emmanuel Mounier’s existential personalism, one can also detect relevant parallels to (German) life-philosophical hermeneutics in
his concept of personalism. In his large-scale treatise *Ideové kořeny současného umění: Bergson a ideologie současného romantismu* (Černý 1992a [1929], *Intellec­tual Roots of Contemporary Art: Bergson and the Ideology of Contemporary Romanticism*), in which Černý reconstructs the meaning of Bergson’s theory of poetic intuition for the development of modern poetry (of Italian futurism and French surrealism), he refers to the idea of self-transcendence of life from Georg Simmel’s posthumously published *Lebensanschauung: Vier metaphysische Kapitel* (1918, *The View of Life: Four Metaphysical Chapters*) right at the beginning and extensively discusses Bergson’s aesthetics, e. g., with reference to Schelling’s aesthetics (Černý 1992a [1929], 303–310).

In this early treatise there is already a hint of the keynote of Černý’s herme­neutics of creative personality and artistic work: The idea of free creative vigour which integrates the past as development and growth and is permanently directed at the increase of freedom. The compatibility of freedom with (artistic) creation and personal moral responsibility is also the main theme of Černý’s last essays from the 1970s. At the end of the treatise *Nástin básnické osobnosti Jiřího Koláře: Pokus o genetiku básníka abstraktního* (Černý 1992c [1974], *A Sketch of Jiří Kolář’s Poetic Personality. Essay on the Genesis of the Abstract Poet*) he emphasizes:

As a poet of the insurrection of the moral conscience Kolář evolved under the pressure of the times from the position of the poet of patriotic and social protest to the ontological feeling of the problem of humanity and freedom, and all contradictions and inconsistencies of this development are compensated and covered by the excellent unity of his will and by the moral integrity of his endeavour [...]. His works represent an uninterrupted apotheosis of human freedom in all its shapes and forms. At the very moment when he felt the problem of freedom in its ontological scope, Kolář reached the highest level of Czech poetry and its most famous achievement: Even though he was unmusical and unmelodic, he followed in the glorious tradition of Mácha. (Černý 1992c [1974], 895)

Václav Černý is not only regarded as the key figure of modern Czech comparative literary studies, but also as one of the most significant representatives of Czech culture from the 1930s to the 1970s. Among other things, Černý was an internationally acknowledged expert on the Baroque period. During the Prague Spring of 1968 he was allowed to return to Charles University for a brief time, but was forbidden any public activity for the second time in 1970. In 1976/1977 Václav Černý, together with Václav Havel and Jan Patočka, initiated the opposition civil rights movement Charta 77. Černý’s 1967 essay “Dostojevskij a jeho Běsi” was published in English translation, “Dostoevsky and his Devils”, in 1975.
3 Antinormative style and an antithetical image of the world (Dmitrij Tschizewskij’s studies of Czech literature)

Václav Černý shared the hermeneutical research interest for the intellectual structures of the Baroque period and Romanticism with Dmitrij Tschizewskij (1894–1977), slavicist, historian of ideas, and longtime fellow member of the research group Poetics and Hermeneutics. During his years of exile in Prague (1924–1931) Tschizewskij developed singular literary and culture-philosophical hermeneutics, whose originality was based on the sophisticated combination of (religio-)philosophical as well as psychologic-‘ideological’ and phenomenologic-anthropological approaches (e.g., in the treatise “Zum Doppelgangerproblem bei Dostojewskij”, “On the Doppelganger Problem in Dostoevsky”; Tschizewskij 1931, 19–50). Tschizewskij’s hermeneutical approach can be demonstrated with three terms or figures of thought that take over an idea-historically as well as literary-aesthetically outstanding position in his treatises on Czech literature of the Baroque and the Romantic period: worldview, negative theology, and antithetics.

The collection Torso a tajemství Máchova díla (The Torso and the Secret of Mácha’s Works) was published in 1938 under the editorship of Jan Mukařovský; Tschizewskij contributed the long treatise “K Máchovu světovému názoru” (1938, “On Mácha’s Worldview”), originally written in German. The publication of Tschizewskij’s essay on Mácha in the collection of the Prague linguistic circle may appear a bit astonishing: Tschizewskij, who lived in Prague from 1924 to 1931, was a member of that circle, but his Mácha interpretations had nothing to do with structuralism. Its title rather suggested its proximity to the philosophical hermeneutics of the Dilthey school, yet, most of all, to Jaspers’ hermeneutics of Weltanschauung (worldview).

Tschizewskij interprets Weltanschauung as a specific intellectual position chosen within the world by artistic man and confronting it – on the other hand – as a kind of general term for the world views constituted by the poet in his work. According to Tschizewskij, the essence of Mácha’s worldview is founded on the manifestation of the plurality of contrasting life forms; in his works the Czech romantic Mácha strove for their unification (in the sense of plurality in singularity), albeit in vain. Yet this endeavour simultaneously appears as the momentum of a dynamic process representing an essential component of the dialectic of life; a process that produces contrasts, paradoxes, and bold antitheses that lie at the base of Macha’s worldview and can “by no means be explained within this poetic context as a simple coexistence of heterogenic elements” (Tschizewskij 1972b, 283–284). According to Tschizewskij, “antithetics to us are an essen-
tial trait of Machá's thinking and not a testimony of the various influences on him” (Tschižewskij 1972b, 284). Tschižewskij connects the dynamic character of Mácha's worldview (Weltbild), his perception of being, and his worldview (Weltanschauung) directly with the Baroque tradition of the paradoxical ‘veiling’ of being in non-being (Tschižewskij 1972b, 261). Much like Jaspers, Tschižewskij understands worldview as a dialectic-dynamic attitude towards the world in which the life of the intellect realizes itself (Jaspers 1925 [1919], 230). Yet, according to Tschižewskij, for Mácha the dynamic had quite another meaning than for Hegel, even though “Hegelianism perhaps helped Mácha to perceive the general dynamic of being” (Tschižewskij 1972b, 257). This is because “Mácha does not see general movement as the rational self-development of the intellect” (Tschižewskij 1972b, 258); to him, as to some Baroque thinkers, the world rather looked like an aimless, senseless process.

With his Mácha interpretation Tschižewskij deconstructed the Mácha reading of Roman Jakobson which had been totally adopted by the Czech surrealists: namely, Mácha as a poet “of romanticism of the proud and destructive revolt, of revolutionary romanticism”, as Jakobson (1935, 158) asserted in his treatise on the poet of the Czech Biedermeier period and Mácha's antipode Karel Jaromír Erben (1811–1870), “Poznámky k dílu Erbenovu: I. O mythu” (1935, “Notes on Erben's Work: I. On Myth”). Tschižewskij shows that, on the contrary, for Mácha's literary figures a conflict-evading, passively-resigned attitude is characteristic, adding:

> With this we have stepped out of the circle of romantic Byronism; a wanderer turning his back on the world and trying to distance himself physically from it leads us back to early romanticism, in part to its religiously tinted aspects – because “wanderer”, “pilgrim” and “hermit” are among their favourite characters – and back from early romanticism to the poetry of Baroque, which in many respects shares an inner relationship to it. (Tschižewskij 1972b, 249)

Holt Meyer (2000, 51–62) discusses Tschižewskij’s remarks about the relationship between (negative-theological) Baroque mysticism (Angelus Silesius), Mácha’s poetry, and the debatable aspects of his methodological approach in his important treatise on the apophatics of Mácha's narrative “Pouť krkonošská” (1836, “Pilgrimage to the Krkonoše Mountains”).

The idea of ‘physical distance’, which Tschižewskij emphasises as one of the main features of Mácha's relation to the world, seems to be especially revealing with regard to Jaspers' thoughts on the freedom of the mind. According to Jaspers, the freedom of the mind is closely intertwined with the idea of the infinity of life, of the world, and of one’s own character. In Jaspers’ philosophical hermeneutics of worldviews, the infinity of the world and the infinite process of understanding form the basis of the world of ideas, of contrasts, and of dialectics (Jaspers
1925 [1919], 328–331). It is an intellectual attitude stemming from the sphere of emotional life and emotional knowledge, of feeling and instinct. This intellectual attitude, which, according to Jaspers, finds its anchor in infinity (Jaspers 1925 [1919], 149–150), is characteristic for the romantic type of man and creator. It is not universality and the objective that work as driving forces of the emotional sphere’s infinite extension, but individual fate, self-fulfilment, self-affection, and the acknowledging self-experience.

The antithetics Tschižewskij names as the essential trait of Mácha’s worldview at the same time appear as one of the main terms of his hermeneutic examinations of Czech literature in general and as a link between the terms of antithetics and world image. Antithetics permeate the looking-glass world of the allegorical novel Labyrinth světa a ráj srdce (1622–1623, Labyrinth of the World and Paradise of the Heart) by Jan Amos Komenský [Comenius], and an “ever-faster hurrying chain of antithetics” (Tschižewskij 1972c [1944], 235) also structures the hymnic poem “Co Bůh? Člověk?” (1659, “What God? Man?”) by Baroque poet Friedrich (or Bedřich) Bridel, in which Tschižewskij sees a “great expression of the antithetical worldview of Bridel and his era” (Tschižewskij 1972c [1944], 232). One might say that Tschižewskij consciously sets antithetics, asymmetry, anti-classicism, the irregular, the break with conventions, and the transgression and questioning of conventional ways of thinking in stark contrast to all manifestations of ‘classicism’, normativity, and ideologies. Tschižewskij’s fascination with oxymoronic-paradoxical thought appears to be one of the characteristic traits of his critical approach. At the high times of pseudo-classicism and artistically retrograde academism, the disconcerting aestheticisation of traditionalism in 1930s art (one need only think of the World’s Fair in Paris in 1937 with its downright pompously celebrated alliance of technocratic enthusiasm and totalising return to sanctioned-normative pseudo-classicism), paired with boundless belief in progress, Tschižewskij, through the prism of modernism, rehabilitated the antithetics of the Baroque era, antinormativity, the anticanonic, the principle of ambivalence and of disconcerting dichotomies, which he detected in Baroque and also in modern literature and thinking. The antithetics Tschižewskij discovered and reconstructed as the meaningful element in the works of the Czech Baroque poets and of the romantic poet Mácha seem to have had an antitotalising implication for his own thinking: Not only does life itself have deeply inherent antitheses, but thinking in antitheses is directed against a totalisation of meaning of any kind. At the end of his short treatise “Eine kulturpessimistische Utopie” (1972a [1937], “A Cultural-Pessimistic Utopia”) on the satirical-dystopian novel Válka s mloky (1936, War with the Newts) by Karel Čapek, Tschižewskij writes:
The author’s cultural scepticism apparently goes far beyond the usual boundaries of pessimistic utopias: Most of all he doubts that which is common to all economic, political, and social ideologies of the present – the belief that man can master history, and that mankind by its own efforts can determine at least single stages, however small. (Tschižewskij 1972a [1937], 312)

In his analysis of Bridel’s poem “What God? Man?” Tschižewskij assumes a close relationship between the antithetics typical of Bridel and the tradition of so-called ‘negative theology’, in which the hyperexistence of God that transcends man’s capacity for knowledge can only be expressed by negative statements, antitheses, oxymoronic constructions, paradoxical inexpressibility, and ‘namelessness’ of God’s majesty. It is the paradoxical rhetoric of the unspeakable that defines the apopathic mysticism of negative theology:

Bridel obviously follows the theological direction coming mainly from the so-called ‘areopagitica’ [...]. It shows that every part of the poem is based very methodically on antitheses, and that not only the linguistic devices, but also the composition of the entire poem clearly express the antithetical basic idea of inner contrariness of human and godly being and their mutual relationship. (Tschižewskij 1972c, 229, 232)

God remains the ‘unspeakable’, the ‘unfathomable’, for whom man has no name and whom he can only define with negative terms – “a sheer nothing”, “nowhere”, “night”, “darkness” (Tschižewskij 1972c, 229). In the tradition of negative theology the godly being has a “super-material” character, and thus can have no ‘shape’ or ‘form’.

Tschižewskij similarly interprets the model of the labyrinth in Comenius’ Labyrinth of the World and Paradise of the Heart as an allegory of a “negative encyclopaedia”, a “world turned upside down” (Tschižewskij 1972e [1957], 141–142). Renate Lachmann notes that the labyrinth itself is this negative encyclopaedia (Lachmann 2007, 48). As one of the few authors of his time, Comenius used an original stylistic device that Tschižewskij termed “negative allegory” (Tschižewskij 1972e, 140) and whose function lay in negating any meaning and value of things. The demiurgic ‘bad world’ fallen from order is seen as a ‘world turned upside down’ from an ‘inadequate perspective’. Interestingly, Tschižewskij interprets this device in relation to modern literature in the sense of dystopia as in H.G. Wells, Evgenii Zamiatin, George Orwell, Karel Čapek, and others: “Their characteristic trait is the purposeful suppression of any meanings one may normally see in images emptied by allegorese” (Tschižewskij 1972e [1957], 142). According to Tschižewskij, with his world-labyrinth Comenius builds on the utopia of ideal societies (such as Thomas More’s [Morus] Utopia, or Tommaso Campanella’s City of the Sun), albeit only on the negative aspects of these utopias, which he presents as a wrong, negative world:
In Comenius, the allegory of the world as the ‘labyrinth’, or rather, of its single spheres (classes, professions, life forms) is, however, evaluated negatively, and in a special way, as it is known, e. g., from the world of antiquity seen through the eyes of a barbarian (the legendary Scyth Anacharsis). To these negatively-evaluating allegories belong the images of the meaninglessness of world affairs in the cynic, stoic, then Christian diatribe, and then also various allegories by poets of newer periods [...]. (Tschižewskij 1972e [1957], 141–142)

According to Tschižewskij, the confrontation of the ‘true’ and the ‘wrong’ world in Comenius’ novel lay in the great antithesis of labyrinth and paradise.

However, Tschižewskij goes one step further: In his essay “Bemerkungen zur ‘Verfremdung’ und zur ‘Negativen Allegorie’” (1972e [1957], 140, “Notes on ‘Alienation’ and ‘Negative Allegory’”) he brings this device together with the key concept of Russian formalism, with ostranenie. In his eyes it was the high artistic poeticity of literary language in Comenius’ novel from which emanated the ‘new view’ of the world and things. Things appear in a new, unexpected context, or they are combined as unusual montages rich in contrast. Tschižewskij asserts that Baroque artists are characterised by a very distinct premodern consciousness of the artistic in the sense of a radical questioning and alienation of the sensually perceptible reality through peculiar stylistic devices. From this perspective the Baroque era as a period of art was already a stilo moderno, as Tschižewskij has also shown in the literary works of Czech Baroque.

His reading of this period of Czech literature, of Bridel’s poetic ‘negative theology’, of Comenius’ labyrinth allegory, or of Mácha’s world feeling and worldview could pointedly be characterized as ‘lateral’, as opposed to the ‘frontal’ look (and interpretation), with its aspiration to see and discover the alleged ‘rightness’. The ‘lateral’ look allows seeing the deep structures, something that so far was believed to be concealed and ‘invisible’, like, e. g., deviating hyperbolic theological, moral, and aesthetic ideas and ways of thinking. According to Renate Lachmann (2009, 46–47), Tschižewskij developed a subtle attention for these ideas, an attention that he used for identifying and revealing them in literary texts. What appears under the surface are also unsettling deviations, caesura, rifts, antinomies, and paradoxes, whose perception and disclosure was always Tschižewskij’s main endeavour.

On the occasion of his seventieth birthday celebration in 1966 Tschižewskij noted in his reply to the toast:

When I look back on my achievements I believe that my works will most likely be estimated by Czechs: first, the discovery of the Comenius manuscripts, then the works on Church Slavonic literature on Czech soil, perhaps the interpretations of medieval Czech songs, and the works on Baroque poetry. (Tschižewskij 1966, 26)

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