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Reformation, Counter-Reformation, and Baroque in European Literatures of the West and the East

Abstract

The author of the present study deals with the whole complex of religious, cultural and artistic phenomenon linked with the rise of the European Reformation with special regard to the situation of Central and Eastern Europe and in the Slavonic literary world. He attempts to demonstrate that there are some pre-reformation streams which came into existence in the period of the Hussite wars and had a much differentiated shape and structure. The roots of the Reformation process in its initial and ideological substance are interesting as typical phenomena of Central European social and religious thought inspired by various currents, often of Eastern origin, connected with buddhism, manicheism and zoroastrianism. Though the Reformation is sometimes understood as a phenomenon leading to disintegration of hitherto existing universal structures of European thought, it, on the contrary, led to a new attempt at the restoration and renovation of former unity of thought forming one cultural and artistic whole. In the centre of this interpretation there is Petr Chelčický as an inspirer of the Czech/Moravian Brethren, Comenius as a bishop of this first non-Catholic Christian Church in the world some 200 years later and his pansophy as an attempt at the synthesis and universal view coming into existence under the impact of the tragedies of European religious clashes and wars also reflected in his artistic creations. The Baroque art, initially the weapon of Counter-Reformation, was gradually becoming a synthetic style acceptable both by all the enlightened European intellectuals and by wider circles of Christian population as its folk type. We can hardly understand these phenomena without taking into consideration their different realisations in the West and in the East — from England to Russia — including the literature dealing with them.

Petr Chelčický, Comenius, universal approach, cluster of the Renaissance,
Western and Eastern area-cultural complex

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This modest contribution has a more or less untraditional, unusual character. It will not concern the Reformation in general, but rather its literary reflection in which the religious and political movement becomes part of culture in its widest sense in general and its literary expression in particular. The Reformation process is usually understood and grasped as a German or, at least, Western European phenomenon; in its context I would like to demonstrate that there are some pre-reformation streams which came into existence in the period of the Hussite wars and had a much differentiated shape and structure, very often contradictory. The roots of the Reformation process in its initial and ideological substance are interesting as typical phenomena of Central European social and religious thought inspired by various currents, often of Eastern origin, connected with buddhism, manicheism and zoroastrianism which gave birth to the so-called Christian heresies, originally part of early Christian teaching, later as marginal, even inimical thought the vestiges of which can be observed even in official gospels not speaking about unofficial apocryphal texts going back to Nag Hammádí manuscripts which then covered all Europe.

The second feature of this contribution is linked with the conception of the specific development of the Slavonic world in all its branches — Western, Southern and Eastern — very differentiated, but still keeping its common character, at least on its general level. Therefore this interpretation — though resigning from the complex vision of the Reformation as such — focuses on the specific Central European, Slavonic and, last but not least, Czech phenomena going back to the first half of the 15th century connected with the Reformation being its predecessors or alternatives.

As the third specific feature of this contribution I would like to point out the complex vision of all the processes the Reformation is part of forming one universal whole covering the Renaissance, Humanism, Reformation, Counter-Reformation, Baroque and Rococo and the final great return to classical heritage — Neoclassicism. Due to this conception the Reformation could be grasped only as part of these long processes revitalizing the lost medieval unity resigning from the narrow religious character and spread in space and time up to our times.

The great Reformation anniversary evokes a cluster of questions and reflections connected with the problem of the whole epoch the Reformation is just part of what we were just speaking about. The mentioned complex containing all the epochal currents from the

Renaissance up to Rococo and Neo-classicism is realised in a different way in the so-called West and the East. The East of Europe or South-East Europe may be sometimes identified with Central or, as the Germans like to say, East-Central Europe (Ostmitteleuropa). Though the term “Westmitteleuropa” is not very frequently used, its range is hardly identifiable or at least its boundaries are more or less vague. The decisive solution could be found in the book *Literature of the Slavs* (*Slovesnost Slovanů* 1928, reedited 2012, German translation: *Literatur der Slawen*, Peter Lang: Wollman 1927, 2012, 2003) first published many years ago, the author of which is a Czech slavist Frank Wollman (1888–1969) who thought of the Mediterranean as a real cradle of all our civilization going back to the old civilizations and cultures of the Far, Middle and Near East with the outpost in ancient Mesopotamia and Egypt. The division into the West and the East was regarded as a mere innovation in connection with the split of the Roman Empire into the Pax Romana and Pax Orthodoxa, the Western Roman Empire which was later transformed into the Holy Roman Empire, and again later completed by “the German nation”, and the Byzantine Empire which came to an end in the 15th century, finally in 1453. The contemporary usage of the West and the East when speaking about Europe is linked with the cold war and iron curtain policy after the Second World War. It is a sad fact that this division is being used even nowadays, even in the circles of the EU, but sometimes substituted by more euphemistic expressions such as postcommunist or new countries of the EU. The paradoxical character of this modern or rather postmodern usage of the West and the East could be demonstrated by the fact that according to this political division Prague is situated in the East while Helsinki in the West. Nevertheless, we should admit that this division has a real core: it was comparatively a long process of splitting starting from the division of the Roman Empire into two halves, later through the church schism and different historical events which determined the development of various European areas. The Reformation with its complex, holistic character was not present everywhere in Europe if we consider it as a real complex process not just a religious movement but as a global attack, a prolonged impact linked with politics, economics, culture, arts and literature. We could imagine this comparing it with the conditions in, say, chemistry in which we are used to speaking about highly reactive substances on the one hand and inert substances on the other. Thus the fluent evolution of arts and literature, for example, in the Eastern part of Europe reminds us of a dot-and-dash line, a torn net of currents some of them are absent or present only as a tiny spring or a streamlet of meanings. This situation concerns, mainly, more or less the complexity of Slavonic cultures, arts and literatures. There were several historical events which divided not only the whole European community, but also the Slavonic language and cultural complex as such. The first was the process of Christianization — the roots of which were related not only to Rome and Bavaria, Saxony or Saxony-Anhalt (Sachsen-Anhalt) with the centres like Regensburg and Magdeburg, but also Ireland and finally Byzantium. I have in mind, of course, the period of the so-called Great Moravian Empire and the mission of Saint Cyrill and Methodius coming to this territory in 863 with a newly invented artificial language based on South Slavonic dialects, two graphic systems derived most probably from old Greek alphabets — major and minor — glagolitsa, Glagolitic script, and Cyrillic script. This mission was so important that it strengthened the cultural consistency of all Slavs, but mainly that of the Southern and Eastern. Probably it might not be surprising for you to hear that modern Russian is nearly totally based on the

grammatical structure of the artificial language invented by Cyril/Constantine from old Slavonic dialects of Southern Macedonia, now North of Greece (Thesaloniki/Thessalonika), but not only grammar was borrowed, but also almost fifty percent of its vocabulary completed by the original East Slavonic lexems, so that we could call Russian rightly and precisely a South-Slavonic language. The incorporation of the Crown Lands of Bohemia, Moravia and Silesia into the Holy Roman Empire, its influence upon the Kingdom of Poland and Hungary and the separate development of Southern and Eastern Slavs created a big gap in the Slavonic ethnic and language community and led to a much bigger differentiation demonstrated by the absence or presence of some of the common epochs we are speaking about. The absence of the Romanesque and Gothic styles — with the exception of some of their traces — in the territory of Eastern Slavs and substantial part of Southern Slavs — separated them from the West Slavonic cultural model connected with Western traditions. For example, the incredibly rapid expansion of the Gothic style in Central Europe could be demonstrated at the basilica in the West Moravian town of Třebíč: the same builders having come from France through Germany began to build here in the Romanesque style and finished in the Gothic in the course of 20 years (1240–1260).

The specific development of Slavonic literatures led me to the conception of the so-called pre-post effect or paradox. It concerns more the Eastern Slavs, among them more Russians than Ukrainians or Byelorussians, and Southern Slavs, at least Bulgarians, Macedonians and Serbs rather than Western Slavs. The problem consists in the fact of the imperfect imitation of Western models. The history of so-called Western Europe was a complicated process and there is hardly any parallel which might correspond to the contemporary understanding of the East and the West. The dividing line between Western and Eastern Europe led along the line Kiel — Trieste/Triest/Trst, Prussia as the heart of Germany's unification was situated in the area from Berlin up to Königsberg and further in the Baltic area, so that the united Germany was split into two halves. The imperfect imitation of the poetics of the evolutionary patterns derived from mainly French and English literatures opened a new window of unexpected development bringing innovations with it; therefore in the so-called Golden Age of Russian classical literature there appeared such anomalies as *Eugene Onegin*, *A Hero of Our Times*, *Dead Souls*, *War and Peace* or *Crime and Punishment* not speaking about the grotesque-absurd dramas and novels by Mikhail Saltykov-Shchedrin or Alexander Suchovo-Kobylin which provoked the Western reader and used neat, elegant, well organized and arranged structures of Western literary patterns. The Czech phenomenologist, aesthetician and literary scholar Zdeněk Mathauser spoke about the two stages of artistic creation: *habilitas/hability*, *superhabilitas/superhability* and *metahabilitas/metahability*. Only the last with its imperfect shaping and structural disorder may open a new window to other angles and corridors of poetological development.

Though the Reformation is sometimes understood as a phenomenon leading to disintegration of hitherto existing universal structures of European thought, it, on the contrary, led to a new attempt at the restoration and renovation of former unity of thought forming one cultural and artistic whole.

The next question concerns the existence of the Reformation literature. Does it really exist? Is there anything like the Reformation belles-lettres? We could compare the situation of Reformation literature with that of Humanism which is closely linked with the concept of Renaissance literature but is more concentrated on scholarly writings, encyclopaedias,

on the more or less non-fiction, professional literature. Comparing, for example, the Czech and Polish literatures of the 14th–17th centuries, we may state that while in the Gothic period Czech Gothic literature represented the peak of European literature and was comparable with English 14th century literature, then due to the Hussite wars the evolution of the Czech Renaissance was stopped or limited and Polish literature in the Renaissance — Baroque concept aesthetically surpassed Czech literature which developed just on the basis of scholarly humanism of non-fiction. The literature of the Reformation was based on the expurgated poetics of the Renaissance and represents a conglomerate of philosophies and concepts from natural sciences up to humanities. It would be, of course, possible to search for and find the characteristic features of Reformation literature as a specific poetological entity, e.g. moral purity, rigidity, contemplativeness, sense of consolation, simplicity, resistance to ornamental, decorative art, return to early Christian thought etc., but it is hard to proclaim all this as a specific aesthetic quality. Nevertheless, the Counter-Reformation fought against the Reformation and its spirituality with the help of Baroque imagery coming into existence as early as the 16th century in Italy and later all over Europe, in Central Europe; the end of the Baroque epoch might be determined as the 1730s, the time when in England sentimentalism, at least in poetry, began to flourish, not speaking about the preceding rococo and Neo-classicism. So, the Reformation was — speaking about arts — rather a poetic impulse, a complex poetological entity and a specific poetic machinery. This impulse evoked similar or, more frequently, contradictory poetological forces which accentuated just the opposite: decorativeness, ornamental character of arts and literature, return to Gothic piety, but even more the strengthening of religious beliefs through ecstasy, emotion, eroticism (the cult of the Virgin Mary).

The conflict in the Reformation which gave birth to various protestant denominations is partly still alive: executions, imprisonments, persecution of opponents, destroying churches, icons and vestments. One example: though the Catholic Church in the figure of the contemporary Pope participated in Luther's celebrations in Lund, especially in the Swedish university town in Skåne, even towards the end of the 20th century there is a certain tension between protestants and catholics. Another example: the name of the Kralice Bible is derived from the name of a small West-Moravian village about 40 kilometres north-west from Brno. The church was originally Catholic in the Middle Ages, then belonged to Czech or Moravian brethren. In this very village the bible was printed as the archeological excavations in the 1960s documented. At that time all the rich frescos were covered by a coat of paint and later revealed again when the church returned to the hands of Catholics after 1627, the year when the Renewed Land Regime was issued by the Habsburgs.

What the Restoration gave to humankind is widely recognized: interiorizing of religious feelings, individualism, common sense together with the restoration of medieval eschatological ideas. And moreover: the tendency to particularism, individualism, and the translations of sacral texts into national languages might have led to the awakening of national consciousness. The Reformation might stand at the beginning of European national revivals. Professor Matija Murko (1861–1952) demonstrated it in his book on the Reformation with Southern Slavs, especially Slovenes. (Murko 1925; Murko 1926; Murko 1927).

Paradoxically the tendency to individualization, intrinsic grasp of religious beliefs, the return to genuineness and to original eschatological ideas led to the rise of tolerance and ecumenism and to a new attempt at the universalism through the universal Baroque art

though not everywhere it bore the same name. And moreover: in the Czech environment the Baroque art which at the very beginning was being rejected by the majority of protestant believers, adopted Baroque poetics in its folk, national form — statuettes made by folk artists, holy pictures and calvaries at nearly each country forks, folk poetry documented the Baroque style as a holistic poetological pattern which unified the impulses of the Reformation consisting in the restoration of religious piety, genuineness, and truthfulness with the emotional impact and ecstasy of newly awakened Catholicism covering all Europe from Britain up to Muscovy. It could be investigated how the Reformation enriched the lives of people and artistic creations in each country, but more productive in the sense of contemporary, topical state of things will be the complex view of the synthesis of all the contradictory impulses in the Baroque style as philosophy, art and way of life and emotional perception of the world.

Now let us return to a more remote past some hundred years before Luther's appearance in 1517. The predecessors of this movement are connected with the Hussite wars — I have not the intention to interpret Luther's relation to John Huss and hussitism in general. There is a more important link leading to the history of Czech or Moravian Brethren who as the first non-Catholic Christian denomination in the world came into existence in the uproar of Hussite wars proclaiming the passive resistance, doing good and the restoration of eschatological ideas of early Christians. Petr Chelčický was twice quoted by Leo Tolstoy as one of his inspirators though at first he rejected it, lying that he had never read a single line by this South-Bohemian lower aristocrat who lived in the 15th century. The existing link Wycliff–Huss–Petr Chelčický represents a real chain leading to the complicated processes of the Reformation which resulted in Luther's proclamation. The Bohemia of the 15th–16th centuries gave the world quite a lot of significant personalities who formed not only the background of the Reformation and its ideological, theological and artistic impulses, but I would say the second centre of the Reformation thought leading to an attempt at a new huge synthesis of arts and sciences embodied in the work of Comenius (Jan Amos Komenský).

Besides Petr Chelčický and his writings, e.g. *Siet' viery pravé, O boji duchovním, O trojím lidu* going back to the 1620–1640s mentioned above there are some representatives of the Czech Brethren, e. g. Jan Blahoslav with his nearly Renaissance polemic with the opponents of arts, iconoclasts reminding us of Philip Sidney's *Defence of Poesy*, 1583, written much later after Jan Blahoslav's *Filipika proti misomusům* (1567). His *Gramatika česká* (1571) contains the first complete artifact in the genuine Ukrainian language and the national genre — duma. In 1517 Prague became the place where another East Slav Franciscus/Francišak Hëorhij Skaryna (baptised as an Orthodox and Catholic at the same time) published the first volume of the translation of the Bible with the title *Bivlija ruska* which the Byelorussians refer to as the first complete work written in the language reminding us of modern Byelorussian.

Komenský's research went through several stages, now we can see its restoration and renovation and its new boom. In Poland itself one of the centres of this research is the University in Siedlce in cooperation with German and other comeniologists. One of the examples of these international projects is represented by Manfred Richter's book.

The author demonstrated that under the impact of the universal Baroque style and the tragic results of religious wars Comenius came to the conclusion that there was the necessity of the universal approach towards the world's problems including religion/Christianity, philosophy as well as education, the ecumenical conception of religion and *Weltanschauung* in general, the holistic grasp of all the sciences — pansophy (pansofia). Thus, his work in its complexity became an object of contemporary multidisciplinary research of philologists, cultural historians and anthropologists, educationalists, philosophers and specialists in religious studies. Comenius as a bishop of Czech/Moravian Brethren preserved all the positive features of the universal medieval world outlook, as well as a new attempt to overcome the disintegration of post-Renaissance knowledge. Richter's book seems to be a traditional biographical work divided into several sections dealing with Comenius' life focused on his stay in Poland where his universalism developed greatly and led to the ecumenical dialogue (Leszno, Elbląg, 1645–1656, Colloquium Charitativum in Toruń and his stays in Sárospatak, Siebenburgen, Sweden, England, and the Netherlands including his nebulous dialogue with Cartesius/René Descartes). Though the author does not deny the Czech-Hungarian roots of Comenius (as Comenius puts it on his dedication to the Universal Reformation of Homeland/Všenáprava vlasti — 31 March, probably 1670: „Dedikací. Milé matce mé Vlasti, zemi Moravské jeden z věrných synů jejích — Jan Amos Segeš Nivnický. Po otci nazvaný Komenský — Navracení k milosti boží a dřevnímu květu i prospěchu...srdečně vinšuje“). Nevertheless, his main stress is laid upon the German–Polish link of his life and his Latin works.

From this point of view Comenius is a leading figure of the processes which started in the 15th century in Bohemia and later continued in the German Reformation integrating the universal elements of Counter-Reformation, mainly in its cultural and artistic shapes — Baroque in its complex form with all its national, both aristocratic and folk features. So, the processes of the Renaissance, the Mannerism, the Baroque, the Reformation and the Counter-Reformation form an indivisible unity leading — in their best representatives and after overcoming all obstacles — to a universal image of the world.

The main problem of Richter's book is the partial absence of Czech comeniology both of the past and the present including Josef Dobrovský, Josef Vašica (1884–1968), Antonín Škarka (1906–1972), Amedeo Molnár (1893–1990), Milan Kopecký (1925–2006), his daughter Michaela Hashemi pour Soleiman and others. Some of them edited Comenius' work (Škarka, Molnár), some others manifested its wider contexts of Humanism and Baroque (Kopecký aj.). Škarka wrote about Comenius' spiritual hymns, edited his *Labyrint světa a lusthauz srdce* (*Labyrinth of the World and the Eden of the Heart*) and his sermons, Milan Kopecký co-edited *Acta Comeniana*, wrote about Czech Humanism, Baroque (in two waves: towards the end of the 1960s and since the 1990s), about Friedrich Bridel and Comenius himself, not speaking about a thematic work of a younger generation of Czech comeniologists *Slovesné baroko v středoevropském prostoru* (*The Literary Baroque in Central European Space*; Škarka 1969, 1971; Kopecký 1962, 1988, 1992; *Slovesné baroko...* 1995).

There is quite a lot of comparatively new literature published in Czech about the Reformation and this is closely connected with its cultural and spiritual influence. A significant figure of the religious movements of the 16th century Karel starší ze Žerotína, a Czech brother who was — surprisingly — a supporter of the Habsburgs, is analysed in the brilliant book by Tomáš Knoz (Wernisch 2011; *Mezi Baltem a Uhrami...* 2000; Boubín 2005;

Knoz 2008; Válka 1995). This is closely connected with the world and European literature devoted in recent several decades to the problems of the Renaissance — Mannerism — Baroque — Reformation and Counter-Reformation complex (Sypher 1955; Greenblatt 1980; Procházka and Čermák 2008).

The Baroque is regarded as a direct opponent of the Reformation though the most radical protestants adopted its impulses and formed a peculiar synthesis, i.e. the synthesis of the Reformation impulses and Catholicism in England in the puritan John Milton's *Paradise Lost* and *Paradise Regained*, who similarly to Comenius, a Moravian brother and bishop of the Unity of Brethren (*The Labyrinth of the World and the Eden of Heart*) became a Baroque writer. To more deeply understand and better grasp the kernel of the Reformation movement also means to take into account this phenomenon in all possible national forms and its synthetic structures.

The Reformation did not exist in the territory of Eastern Slavs — there was just a Church reform in the 1660s — the Orthodox priest Avvakum Petrov and his former friend, the patriarch of the Orthodox Church Nikon, later enemies — former school-mates from the Orthodox seminar. It is significant that the result of the Russian reform of the Orthodox Church was an anti-reformist autobiography/hagiography of the strongest opponent of the reform — Avvakum, the first Russian proto-novel. The Reformation was influential in Russia in the course of several centuries along with Catholicism — due to the famous Russian freedom of choice — the result of the reformation was an anomaly as in Russia always — Uniats, Graeco-Catholics, Orthodox Church theatre, it would demand a separate, more detailed research. The cultural importance is connected with Baroque art through the so-called Western Rus/Russia from Poland. In Byelorussia, even the beginnings of national literature were connected with Polish protestants, e.g. Symon Budny and Vasyľ Ciapinsky.

A Czech literary scholar, a specialist in the literature of the Middle Ages and that of the Baroque, a famous Czech literary theorist and critic and a connoisseur of French existentialism as well as of Czech 20th century interwar literature Václav Černý (1905–1987) edited his anthology of European Baroque poetry under the title *Kéž hoří popel můj* (*Let My Ashes Burn*) in 1967 (Černý 1967; Pospíšil 1994, 1998, 2004, 2005); it included England (metaphysical poetry, e. g. John Donne), Spain, Russia (the poets born in the territory of contemporary Byelorussia, formerly called West Russia, like Simeon Polotsky, Silvester Medvedev, Feofan Prokopovych, Karion Istomin who wrote “virshi”, in fact, Polish syllabic poetry typical of the languages in which the stress is laid upon a constant syllable — last but one in Polish, the last one in French — in Eastern Slavonic languages, on the contrary, the stress is dynamic and movable). Václav Černý also discovered a certain type of the Baroque in French literature which the French researchers themselves regarded as part of Neoclassicism.

Several years ago the author of the present study participated in the international conference held in Lodz (2007) dealing with gardens as a phenomenon of culture and contributed with a study of the park-garden emblem and alternatives of literary evolution on the material of English, Russian and Czech literatures (*The Park-Garden Emblem* 2008: 91–104). In the present context it might be considered a sort of a minimalist study illustrating the structures of art as a synthetic process connected with the Reformation-Baroque complex which the Reformation or the pre-Reformation started since the Czech 14th century.

So, the interest in the wide, integrational, syncretic vision of literature as part of human life, literature as part of all arts and philosophy in general goes back — in my opinion — to those very tendencies linked with the Reformation which provoked rich and radical reactions. Let me give you one example, a sort of a minimalist case study.

The famous Russian medievalist D. S. Likhachev in his monograph (Likhachev 1982) analyzes the meaning of the garden in ancient Greece, the Christian garden and the Renaissance and the Neoclassicist garden and park as a cultural and ideological space (garden as a specific library). He also warns against the loss of the art of “reading gardens”, i.e. the ability to decipher their cultural message: In the past, as Likhachev puts it, all human activities formed one unified entity; therefore the garden or park were, as a matter of fact, understood as part of nature as well as culture; the contradiction has come up later, but very gradually, since the Renaissance, though even the post-Baroque and Rococo periods still maintain the traces of the original unity of nature and culture, ethics and aesthetics, freedom and necessity or predestination. Thus, the topics of the spatial park-garden structure in literature represents certain fragments or remnants of older ideological structures or the evocation of what sometimes re-appears in the works of isolated amateur (Leo Tolstoy) or professional (Nikolay Berdyaev) philosophers as a conviction that the origin of art is religious and that religion itself formed the original, relatively stable framework of art; its later disintegration is represented as a tragedy for both mankind and art. While Leo Tolstoy in his treatise *What Is Art?* (1897–1898) criticized the French decadence including Charles Baudelaire for the split of ethics and aesthetics and also reconsidered Shakespeare as a mediocre playwright who had just imitated and deformed the works of his predecessors, Nikolay Berdyaev searched for the so-called Christian Renaissance (*христианское Возрождение*) which had preserved this unity of man and knew no alienation. The interest in the half-forgotten unity manifests, in my opinion, this desire for the lost paradise of original harmony which irreversibly disintegrated (*diseicta membra*). However, this topic has a wider context, causes and consequences; it also expressed the desire for the restoration of man's relations to the world as such or, in other words, for the intrinsic restructuring of human beings.

The period of Rococo which will be presented here as an example of the permeation of the park-garden and literary structures represents the post-Baroque and pre-Classical (or pre-Neoclassicist) cultural formations which are very sensitive to the destruction of this unity starting from the period of “hard Renaissance” that abandoned the former Christian complex of ethics and aesthetics up to the Reformation iconoclasm and expressive Baroque art as the attempt at the subjective and emotional renewal of the religiousness of man and his artistic creations and which was forced to face the immense dispersion of former values and the total disintegration of former intrinsic unity after long both religious and secular wars on the Continent, in England and in 16th-century Russia (Muscovy). The Reformation stood, therefore, at the very beginning of the great process of transformation of the whole of Europe, the profound changes in its national and religious structure and function. The Rococo epoch was, however, too short, too weak and less influential than it should be to overcome this disintegration by playfulness, elegance, formal perfection and embrace the balanced individual freedom, social sensitivity and sense of eternity.

Alexander Pope (1688–1744) is often remembered as the greatest poet of the English Enlightenment; less frequently he is quoted as a thinker or even philosopher. It is not only by chance that the poet was born as a son of an Anglican vicar, who later converted to Catholicism; the fate of these sensitive men has always been connected with lability and “softness”, on the other hand with the ability to feel several cultural and religious environments — the result was the overcoming of the obstacles of a specific faith or denomination and the formation of a new synthesis or, at least, the attempt at doing so. His profound knowledge of Greek and Latin languages and literatures was one of the necessary preconditions; the return to Classics (English translation of Homer’s *Iliad* and *Odyssey*) also meant the search for reformulating his position in the world. Pope’s understanding of literary criticism expressed in his famous essay (*An Essay on Criticism*, 1711) is a certain return to the original classical concept of harmony (“good nature and good sense must ever join”) supported by satire, travesty and sense of beauty; the next attempt at the reintegration of man’s inner forces is represented in his *Essay on Man* (1733–1734): the way to the restored happiness of man leads through the restoration of broken relations into the other world; man must not be alone. The essay contains Pope’s criticism of action which was the dominant, often adored core of Shakespearean artistic vision so sharply criticized by Leo Tolstoy (Pospíšil 1992, 1993). Pope’s return to pastorals on the one hand, and to comic or satiric position on the other symbolized his ability to synthesize the two aspects of life, the two visions of literature and its genres (Morris 1984; Aldewereld 1986; Quennell 1968; Mack 1969). *Windsor Forest* (1713) manifests the dominant pastoral tendency in his didactic, descriptive poetry (*Pastorals*, 1709). At first he tried to overcome the split of epochs and project his readings onto the surface of the nature and culture of his time; the disintegration is being overcome by this very projection of ancient mythology and epic which cast a new light on the *disiecta membra* of the modern human.

The similar tendency of the park-garden structure as the overcoming of the inner disintegration of man can be observed in the poetic works of Gavril Romanovich Derzhavin (1743–1816).

To sum up:

1. The Reformation as a wide cultural current covering the aspects of theology, philosophy, philology, political science, economics, arts and literature may be understood and grasped only as part of a huge complex of phenomena sometimes called “different stages of the Renaissance style”; some others speak of different stages of the Reformation itself — the first or the second. I would prefer to use all the usual terms like the Renaissance and Humanism, Mannerism, Baroque/metaphysical art, roccoco and Neo-Classicism as one complex continuing phenomenon.
2. This complex in which the Reformation often played the role of the synthetic framework or just an impulse towards differentiation, particularism, disintegration, individualism paradoxically led to new attempts at universalism, synthesis, unification, ecumenism; the Czech example going back to Petr Chelčický and Comenius is quite illustrative.
3. We can hardly understand these phenomena without taking into consideration their different realisations in the West and in the East — from England to Russia — in-

cluding their literature dealing with them. We sometimes suffer from isolation, our research often represents isolated dispersed entities and closed discursive groups. It is therefore inevitable to overcome the language barriers also in this sense.

4. We would not understand the place of the Reformation between the years 1400–1700 without the area-cultural approach due to its acceptance and reception which concern concrete language, cultural, artistic, and literary communities.
5. We could hardly identify a complex cluster of clear and evident Protestant art as a system; the same could be said about the Protestant or Catholic arts and literature. It rather represents a chain of impulses which enriched the arts in general and provoked opposite activities leading to the revitalization of Christian belief through emotions, ecstasy, eroticism, and, finally, to the attempts at a new synthesis, at the holistic vision of the world like in Comenius' pansophy. This standpoint was expressed in the works of the prominent Czech specialist in the Reformation and pre-Reformation Amedeo Molnár (died 1990) in all his studies including the synthesis called *On the Boundary of Ages*.

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