

Why Max Dvořák did not become a Professor in Prague

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Figure 1 Max Dvořák, portrait photograph from 1903. Photo: Institut für Kunstgeschichte der Universität Wien.

Figure 2 Bohumil Matějka, portrait photograph from 1898. Photo: Archiv Národního muzea v Praze.

‘History has a fondness for certain topics’, wrote Max Dvořák (Fig. 1) in an early 1904 study, ‘in particular for events that excite our imagination’.¹ The quote comes from an article devoted to the Renaissance gentleman George of Lobkowitz, a close advisor to the Emperor Rudolf II who had been accused of a *lèse-majesté*, convicted in a suspiciously led trial and thrown in prison. Less than a decade after finishing the essay, Dvořák became embroiled in an affair which, though lacking all semblance of a novelistic adventure, is comparably exciting in the eyes of a historiographer of scholarship. In 1903, the Czech University in Prague proceeded to fill the vacant chair in Art History. The Philosophical Faculty chose the mediocre – and subsequently quite forgotten – Bohumil Matějka (1867–1909, Fig. 2), intentionally bypassing the clearly more competent Dvořák. The public learned about the episode only much later, thanks to Antonín Matějček’s obituary, as well as Jaromír Pečírka’s biographic essay which accompanied the Czech edition of Dvořák’s shorter works.² Pečírka reproduced an extensive quote from an embittered letter in which his former master had summarized a conversation between Professor Franz Wickhoff and the Minister of Education Wilhelm von Hartel: ‘Hartel told Wickhoff that, after an inquiry from the Ministry, the Prague faculty responded

¹ Max Dvořák, ‘Proces Jiřího z Lobkovic’, *Český časopis historický*, 2, 1896, 271–292, quote 271.

² Antonín Matějček, ‘Max Dvořák’, *Národní listy*, February 19, 1921, 1–2; Jaromír Pečírka, ‘Max Dvořák. Životopis’, in: Max Dvořák, *Umění jako projev ducha*, Praha: Jan Laichter, 1936, VII–XCII.

with a report assessing me as sub-par in my qualification – and on top of that a genuine crusade has been undertaken, with me being presented to the Minister as a real ass. I had no inkling a thing like that could happen. The place where I could fairly expect the highest recognition challenges my qualification for a university chair and makes my future more difficult even outside of the Czech lands'.³ Pečírka later completed this testimony by publishing other parts of Dvořák's correspondence, and for a long time these letters remained the main source of information regarding this lamentable event marking the beginnings of the academic career of the most famous Czech-born historian of art.⁴

It was only much later, from a great distance of time, that Klement Benda attempted to investigate the particular circumstances of Dvořák's rejection. In his seminal contribution to the 1986 *Chapters from Czech Art History*, Benda summed up the three facts that could be deduced from the archival materials of the Philosophical Faculty, and he also supplied the key passage from the committee report which had decided to choose Matějka. The committee had found it unacceptable 'that a *Privatdozent*⁵ (...) with a proven record, after six years of laborious and selfless teaching work, should be passed over in filling a Chair – thus being excluded for a long time, possibly forever, from any advance in academic career – for the sake of a candidate five years his junior in terms of teaching engagement, who, moreover, as a Lecturer at the Vienna University, has an incomparably broader gamut of paths to pursue'.⁶

Benda's explanation, while plausible and clear, is also quite brief and based on a relatively narrow basis of sources. Therefore, it provokes a series of questions. Was the number of years served the principal reason for Matějka's appointment? – or were there other factors, so far unconsidered? Did Dvořák have enemies among the faculty, as he believed himself and as was suggested by Pečírka in Dvořák's biography? Who initiated Matějka's appointment? Was Dvořák's transition from Prague to Vienna among the causes of the rejection? Was he, perhaps, seen as a renegade by the Czech nationalists? What was the opinion of the Prague professors regarding Dvořák's scholarly works and the methodological innovations which he had adopted from the Vienna School? What was the personal role of Matějka? And what kinds of expectations were invested in him by the Czech academic establishment? Here I will attempt to answer these questions and to set the facts of Dvořák's rejection as we have known them so far into a more plastic and broader context, based on so far neglected archival material – not only with the goal to complement Dvořák's intellectual biography but also to learn more about the functioning of the institutions of learning in the Hapsburg monarchy, and about the role of history of art in Czech national society.

³ Letter to Josef Šusta, February 1904; Pečírka, 'Max Dvořák', LIII.

⁴ Max Dvořák, *Listy o životě a umění. Dopisy Jaroslavu Gollovi, Josefu Pekařovi a Josefu Šustovi*, ed. Jaromír Pečírka, Praha: Vyšehrad 1943.

⁵ For convenience, the familiar German terms *Privatdozent*, *Habilitation*, *Habilitationsschrift* will be used throughout the text, even though the Czech sources use the Czech equivalents.

⁶ Klement Benda, 'Rozmach oboru v devadesátých letech', in: Rudolf Chadraba – Josef Krása – Rostislav Švácha – Anděla Horová (eds.), *Kapitoly z českého dějepisu umění*, vol. 1, Praha: Odeon, 1986, 197–211, quote 205.

Dvořák at the frontline of the younger generation of art historians

In order to understand the intellectual atmosphere surrounding the event, it is important to note that the Chair in Art History at the Czech University in Prague had been left vacant for as long as nineteen years. Its first holder, Miroslav Tyrš, died only a few months after his appointment in 1884, and it was only in the academic year 1894/95 that, after the hiatus, the school offered lectures in the discipline again. For the next nine years, the step-in lecturer was the musicologist Otakar Hostinský (1847–1910), whose honorarium for the class was 2,000 guildens per year and it appears rather clear that he was in no mood to miss out on the money.⁷ A glint of hope that the vacant chair could be filled started to loom only in January 1901, when Karel Chytil (1857–1934), a *Privatdozent* of art history and Director of the Museum of Decorative Arts in Prague, applied for the title of extraordinary professor. To assess the application, the school assigned a committee headed by Hostinský and with the historians Jaroslav Goll and Josef Kalousek as members. Upon their recommendation, the college of professors had unanimously approved the application and proposed Chytil as a candidate of professorship. However, the Ministry of Education in Vienna took its time, and when it did respond in February 1902, it required as a precondition that Chytil resign from his Museum post. The stipulation proved difficult to fulfill: the Museum Director was drawing the honorarium of 6480 crowns, whereas the academic post would only bring in 4440 crowns. Chytil applied to have the difference compensated by extra monies, and the school agreed, but the Ministry declined and asked for a new candidate. On January 29, 1903, the professors' college formally established a new committee, yet with the same chair and membership, and in its meeting on March 9 it unanimously agreed on proposing *Privatdozent* Matějka, whose habilitation had taken place shortly before. Once again, the Vienna bureaucracy complicated matters. In a letter of June 23, 1903, the Ministry required that the usual procedure be followed and the proposal of Matějka, instead of being submitted in isolation, go in pair with another suitable candidate; simultaneously, Dvořák was pointed out to the Faculty as a suitable second applicant.⁸ We can be certain that the referral stemmed from Wickhoff, offended by the Prague University's neglect of his most talented student.⁹

The failure to consider Dvořák was viewed in Vienna with particular suspicion due to the Czech University's claim that the long-term vacancy of the Art History Chair had been caused by a lack of qualified cadres. Dvořák was perceived as a rising star in the discipline, he had acquired a Vienna habilitation shortly before, and Alois Riegl saw him as a possible successor. Born in 1874, on June 24, in

⁷ The personal file of B. Matějka, The National Archives Prague, The Ministry of Religious Affairs and Education (Ministerstvo kultu a vyučování) funds, Inventory No. 9, Box 115; Rudolf Chadraba, 'Miroslav Tyrš', in: Chadraba – Krása – Švácha – Horová, 160–171; Benda, 'Rozmach oboru v devadesátých letech', 198.

⁸ The National Archives Prague, B. Matějka's personal file; Charles University Archives, The Philosophical Faculty, K. Chytil's and B. Matějka's personal files, Inventory Nos. 324 and 474; Benda, 'Rozmach oboru v devadesátých letech', 198.

⁹ Dvořák, *Listy o životě a umění*, 115.

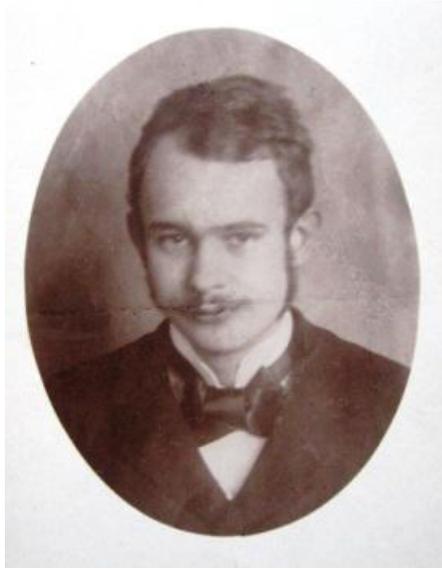


Figure 2 Max Dvořák, portrait photograph from 1896. Photo: Institut für Kunstgeschichte der Universität Wien.
Figure 3 Max Dvořák, portrait photograph from 1897. Photo: Institut für Kunstgeschichte der Universität Wien.

Roudnice in Central Bohemia, he started reading art history in 1892 at the Czech University in Prague. (Fig. 3 and 4) Two years later he transferred to the Institut für österreichische Geschichtsforschung (Institute for Austrian Historiography) in Vienna, and after a one-year introductory curriculum he matriculated there as a regular student. However, he did maintain contacts with the school in Prague and published quite often in the newly established *Český časopis historický* (Czech Historical Review), edited by Dvořák's teacher, the prominent medievalist and founder of Czech positivist historiography Jaroslav Goll (1846–1929). In his first article on a historical topic, published in 1895, Dvořák presented an analysis of the privileges of Kaspar Schlick, the High Chancellor of the Emperor Sigismund of Luxemburg, and demonstrated many of them to be falsifications.¹⁰ In 1896, besides the above-mentioned article on the conspiracy headed by Georg von Lobkowitz, he also published a number of reviews and shorter essays, mostly focused on early medieval history.¹¹ Dvořák's doctoral thesis on Cosmas of Prague, the author of a medieval Bohemian chronicle, was successfully defended in Vienna in March 1897 – although at the time, Dvořák already pursued an intense interest in history of art.¹² As is well known, the interest had been spurred by meeting Wickhoff and reading his Introduction to the scholarly edition of the Vienna Genesis. Dvořák's first publication in art history was a review of this 1896 edition, co-edited by Wickhoff and Hartel, the later government minister. His assessment of Wickhoff's

¹⁰ Max Dvořák, 'Hrabata Šlikové a jich archiv v Kopidlně. Příspěvek k dějinám české šlechty', *Český časopis historický*, 1, 1895, 298–307. For a subsequent and expanded German version see Max Dvořák, 'Die Fälschungen des Reichskanzlers Kaspar Schlick', *Mitteilungen des Instituts für österreichische Geschichtsforschung*, 22, 1901, 51–107; and cf. the review of Gustav Friedrich, *Český časopis historický*, 7, 1901, 222–224.

¹¹ Max Dvořák, 'Příspěvek k životopisu sv. Vojtěcha', *Český časopis historický*, 4, 1898, 62–63.

¹² Pečírka, 'Max Dvořák', XVIII.

Introduction was that it 'is the most significant text produced in art history over the last several years'.¹³

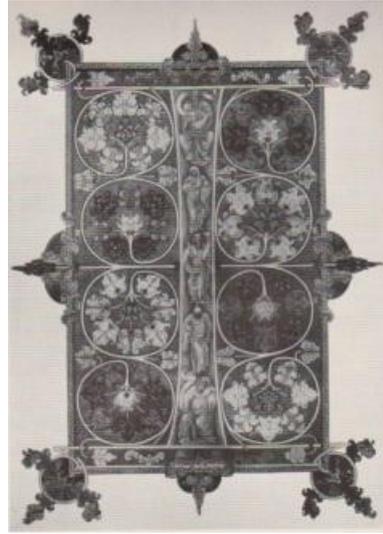


Figure 5 Gospels of John of Troppau, fol. 149. Illustration from Max Dvořák's book *Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Kunstgeschichte*, Munich, R. Piper & Co. Verlag, 1929.

In the Institut für österreichische Geschichtsforschung, Dvořák was charged with researching the miniatures contained in the Evangelium of John of Troppau (Johann von Troppau/Jan z Opavy), held by the Imperial Hof-Bibliothek. Consequently, for several years, the focus of his professional interest was book illumination in 13th and 14th century.¹⁴ (Fig. 5) In Summer 1897 he received a stipend for a stay in Paris, and after his return to Vienna, Wickhoff took him up as research assistant. The next year he took a study trip to the South of France; in subsequent years, he also undertook two stays in Rome, each lasting several months.¹⁵ In the officially submitted curriculum vitae, Wickhoff wrote that Dvořák's first publication in art history was his treatise on the Byzantine influences on Italian *trecento* book illumination¹⁶ – yet Dvořák's production was far broader, and by 1900 he had already published several articles in art history in Goll's historical review. The first among them, an essay 'On the History of Bohemian Painting During the Reign of King Charles' from 1899, presented a critique of the analyses provided by the German-Bohemian art historian Josef Neuwirth. Dvořák argued against some conclusions of his senior colleague, such as the assignment of a number of Karlštejn paintings to Tomas de Mutina, as well as the claim that the so-called Karlštejn

¹³ Max Dvořák, 'Ein bahnbrechendes Buch', *Politik*, November 11, 1896: 'Diese Einleitung ist gewiß das Bedeutendste, was seit Jahren in der Kunstgeschichte geschrieben wurde.' Cf. Pečírka, 'Max Dvořák', XVII.

¹⁴ Cf. Hans Aurenhammer, 'Max Dvořák and the History of Medieval Art', in: *Journal of Art Historiography*, 2, June 2010, accessible at https://arthistoriography.files.wordpress.com/2011/02/media_152487_en.pdf.

¹⁵ Franz Wickhoff, 'Curriculum vitae des Dr. Max Dvořák', Archiv des Instituts für Kunstgeschichte, Universität Wien, Max Dvořák's papers.

¹⁶ Max Dvořák, 'Byzantinischer Einfluss auf die Miniaturmalerei des Trecento', *Mitteilungen des Instituts für österreichische Geschichtsforschung*, 6, 1900, Ergänzungsband, 792–820.

Apocalypse is original in composition and motifs, and the notion that the architectural plan of the Karlštejn Castle was formed upon the example of the Papal Palace in Avignon. Still, Dvořák's diction sharply different from the style usual among Czech historians and publicists, who, unequipped with the pertinent instruments of scholarship, judged the writings of German scholars through the prism of nationalist preconceptions. Unlike them, Dvořák did not hesitate to express his appreciation of Neuwirth and to admit that 'it was he who established a firm foundation for any further study of the landmarks of Bohemian monumental painting of the Luxemburg era by virtue of making the material publicly accessible in an exact way and by providing its initial scholarly analysis'.¹⁷ Neuwirth's tendency to make light of the contribution of the Slavic element was confronted by Dvořák's sober statement that 'passages such as these are, in a scholarly work, a manifestation of personal taste'.¹⁸

Having been charged with compiling a complete list of Bohemian medieval book illuminations, Dvořák published in 1900, as a partial output, an article on the illuminated manuscripts held by the Augustinian monastery in Roudnice, his birthplace. On the basis of an analysis of this representative set, he strove to describe the genesis of the style which dominated in Bohemian painting in the initial decades of Charles IV's reign. The style – claimed Dvořák – is especially characterized by decorative motifs, in particular foliage ornamentation in vivid colours. Dvořák was convinced that the decoration had developed under French influence and was mediated *not* by migration of the artists themselves but rather by the circulation of French manuscripts.¹⁹ Thus, this piece particularly demonstrated Dvořák's connoisseurship and his capacity for stylistic criticism, whereas his article on 'The Classical Origins of Medieval Illuminations', from the following year, had a more theoretical focus. Here, Dvořák demonstrated the roots of the ornamentation of old Christian manuscripts in the classical tradition. However, he perceived this genetic continuity not as a necessary part of immanent development but rather as a conscious concession of the illuminators to the art-loving public, used as it was to the formal abundance of the older manuscripts, and unwilling to let go of it. The artists, claimed Dvořák, had no other possibility but to 'appropriate a habitude impossible to suppress' and 'endow the old, established forms with new content'.²⁰ This is why the illuminations of old Christian manuscripts lacked a direct link to the Christian doctrine and liturgy; instead, they maintained a narrative mode and presented the Biblical happenings in the manner of classical heroes' stories.

Also theoretical was the focus of the long article on 'The Last Renaissance', wherein Dvořák considered the methodological changes of the historiography of art in the late 19th century. He particularly highlighted Carl Justi's monograph on Velasquez, Heinrich Wölfflin's book on the Renaissance and Baroque, Wickhoff's

¹⁷ Max Dvořák, 'K dějinám malířství českého doby Karlovy', *Český časopis historický*, 5, 1899, 238–248, quote 248.

¹⁸ Dvořák, 'K dějinám malířství českého doby Karlovy', 245.

¹⁹ Max Dvořák, 'Knihovna Augustiniánského kláštera v Roudnici. Příspěvek k dějinám malířství miniaturního', *Český časopis historický*, 6, 1900, 118–131.

²⁰ Max Dvořák, 'Antické počátky středověké ilustrace', *Český časopis historický*, 7, 1901, 13–30, quote 19.

edition of the Vienna Genesis and Alois Riegl's *Die spätrömische Kunstindustrie*. While the selection may surprise, we can observe that Dvořák emphasizes books which have contributed to an emancipation of his discipline from historical positivism, with its exclusive production of 'descriptions and lists', as well as from the hegemony 'of a certain a priori and absolute aesthetic standpoint'.²¹ In contrast to it, Dvořák advocated an unprejudiced 'ability to read from the monuments themselves' and an aesthetic relativism, which avoids proclaiming verdicts of 'decline' and admits a plurality of artistic tasks in the various epochs. Whereas in the previous text he stated that the task of the discipline is to differentiate the several stages of a continuous genetic development of art, now he demands the discovery of its 'guiding artistic problems'.²² Apart from the works mentioned above, he also referred to the writings of the Danish art historian Julius Lange and the Viennese classical archaeologist Emanuel Loevy. Dvořák appreciated the former author for having considered the relationship between artistic forms and the *Weltanschauung*, the latter for his idea of a cyclical development in the history of art, guided by psychological laws of artistic activity: 'Evolution proceeds from a mental image to a physical one, from a memory to an image upon the pupil, to an objective cut out of Nature with all its singularities and contingencies.'²³ While the central topic of the study was the reception of classical art, we find in the text a number of ideas which Dvořák subsequently developed in his later work. Besides the idea of an oscillation between idealism and naturalism, there is an anticipation of his upcoming revision of the model of autonomous evolution especially in his scepticism with regard to Riegl's excision of 'decadence' from the history of art. In a confrontation with the views of his own master, Dvořák pointed out the breaks and discontinuities caused by historical circumstances or changes in the social function of art, as, for instance, in the early Middle Ages: 'What else is happening here, if not social disintegration of the Roman Empire going hand in hand with barbarization?'²⁴

The four articles written in Dvořák's mother tongue and published in the single most important Czech historical review were overlooked not only by Wickhoff but also, in fact, by entire international research on Dvořák. Yet these texts outline the journey pursued by the young scholar from the material and antiquary fundamentals all the way to a critical reflection on the then current theoretical models and research issues. Dvořák's familiarity with the methodological problems of the contemporary historiography of art was absolutely exceptional in the Czech context. A mutual comparison of these early attempts and their confrontation with Dvořák's later writings also demonstrate the author's capacity to inquire and progress.

At the time of the Prague affair, Dvořák's production had already included also the first study written in German, as noticed by Wickhoff; the article was devoted to the complex interactions of the tradition of Italian painting with French

²¹ Max Dvořák, 'Poslední renaissance', *Český časopis historický*, 8, 1902, 30–51, quote 31–32.

²² Dvořák, 'Poslední renaissance', 35.

²³ Dvořák, 'Poslední renaissance', 48.

²⁴ Dvořák, 'Poslední renaissance', 48.



Figure 6 Liber Viaticus of John of Neumarkt, fol. 261. Illustration from Max Dvořák's book *Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Kunstgeschichte*, Munich, R. Piper & Co. Verlag, 1929.

and Byzantine models.²⁵ However, the most significant outcome of Dvořák's research into book illumination was an extensive monograph on the illuminators working for John of Neumarkt (Johann von Neumarkt/ Jan ze Středý). (Fig. 6) The subject matter of the monograph was a group of manuscripts in the possession of the former Bishop of Litomyšl, and Dvořák's brilliant analysis demonstrated a link between Bohemian art of the mid-14th century and French and Italian productions. The book was published in 1901 in Vienna and one year later Dvořák submitted it as a Habilitationsschrift.²⁶ Apart from the exceptional length of the text, printed on 91 folio pages, Wickhoff in his report lauded Dvořák's innovative approach. 'This is the first rigorously scientific demonstration of the significance of the papal residence in Avignon for the development of European art', he wrote in the evaluation. 'By virtue of this monograph, Dr. Dvořák has established himself at the frontline of the younger generation of art historians, and he easily measures up to the best cadres of Germany, such as Arthur Weese of Munich or Vöge of Berlin – both of whom, however, he surpasses by his deep erudition and vast knowledge of the entire field of art history.'²⁷ When introducing his protégé to the readership of the *Neue Freie Presse* a year later, Wickhoff praised both the 'exquisite talent of the young scholar' and his extraordinary diligence: 'while still quite young, he has achieved (...) what would normally require generations of scholars'.²⁸

²⁵ Dvořák, 'Byzantinischer Einfluss'.

²⁶ Max Dvořák, 'Die Illuminatoren des Johann von Neumarkt', *Jahrbuch der Kunstsammlungen des Allerhöchsten Kaiserhauses*, Band 22, Wien 1901, 35–127.

²⁷ Wickhoff, 'Curriculum'.

²⁸ Franz Wickhoff, 'Max Dvorak', *Neue Freie Presse*, September 16, 1905, 21–22: 'die glänzende Begabung des jungen Forschers ... leistete ein Mann in verhältnismäßig jungen Jahren ..., wozu sonst Generationen von Gelehrten benötigt werden.'

The meritorious Matějka and the logic of the career system



Figure 7 Bohumil Matějka, portrait photograph from 1905. Photo: Archiv Národního muzea v Praze.

Figure 8 Bohumil Matějka, family photograph from 1906. Photo: Archiv Národního muzea v Praze.

Bohumil Matějka, Dvořák's senior of seven years, was from the same region: he was born on June 11, 1867, in Litoměřice, mere 12 miles from Roudnice. (Fig. 7 and 8) Unlike Dvořák, who, strictly speaking, had no schooling in art history as a special field, Matějka chose the discipline as his major immediately after matriculating at the Czech University in 1886, and apart from Hostinský and Josef Durdík (also an aesthete), he attended Alwin Schultz's lectures at the German University.²⁹ He was awarded his doctorate in 1893 on the strength of a thesis on the *Miniatures of the Romanesque Era* and four years later he submitted a *Habilitationsschrift* on *The Reconstruction and the Decoration of the St Thomas Church in the Monastery of the Hermits of St Augustine in the Lesser Town of Prague*.³⁰ Whereas Dvořák at the time was busy with construing genetic series and resolving issues of art geography, Matějka was compiling the above-mentioned 'descriptions and lists', with art topography, dating and assignment of authorship at the centre of his attention. Hostinský's evaluation of Matějka's unpublished doctoral thesis makes clear that it provided the description of approximately fifteen historical manuscripts: the candidate, per the report, 'has described certain manuscripts whose art historical import has been, so far, either completely ignored, or else noted only in the most

²⁹ Benda, 'Rozmach oboru v devadesátých letech', 200. Alwin Schultz (1838–1909) graduated in History of Art at the University of Breslau/Wrocław, in 1882–1903 he was ordinary professor of the Charles-Ferdinand University in Prague.

³⁰ Bohumil Matějka, *Přestavba a výzdoba chrámu sv. Tomáše při klášteře poustevníků řádu sv. Augustina na Menším Městě Pražském. Příspěvek k dějinám Pražského baroka*, Praha 1896.

general terms'.³¹ The committee assessment of the *Habilitationsschrift* comes to a similar conclusion: the thesis 'provides a number of novel and valuable information concerning the particular church, especially with regard to its reconstruction and decoration, (...) and a great amount of biographic material'.³²



Figure 9 Hussite pavises, illustration from *Památky archeologické a místopisné*, 20, 1902, with Matějka's essay.

Matějka's relatively few articles, published in the Prague periodical *Památky archeologické* (Archeological Antiquities), were by-products of his cataloguing activity, and rather than scholarly erudition, they demonstrate his positivist interests and his parochial horizon. (Fig. 9) He also had several pieces accepted by the *Český časopis historický*. The first, from 1900, was called 'Contributions to the History of Medieval Architecture in the Czech Lands' and provided a survey of scholarly literature on the topic over the previous two years, the greatest attention being given to the publications of Ferdinand Josef Lehner, a Catholic priest who pursued his investigations with extraordinary industry and enthusiasm yet without sufficient specialized training. Matějka presented a serious polemic with Lehner, pointing out his mistakes as well as offences against the criteria of scholarly work. He also objected against Neuwirth's comparison of Karlštejn with the Avignon palace, emphasizing the different appearance of the two buildings, and only at the very end also referring to the difference in function.³³

In the following volume of the same periodical, Matějka published a study 'On the Origin of Bohemian Romanesque Rotunda', entering the course of discussion as to which region is to be seen as providing the models of the oldest recorded monuments of Bohemian architecture. Matějka joined the advocates of a dependency on Italian, rather than Byzantine, architecture, basing his claim (incidentally simultaneous in date to the publication of Strzygowski's *Orient oder*

³¹ O. Hostinský, evaluation of thesis, January 22, 1891, Charles University Archives, Philosophical Faculty, evaluations of PhD. theses from 1891, Inventory No. 1238.

³² Committee report on habilitation application, May 5, 1897, Charles University Archives, B. Matějka's personal file.

³³ Bohumil Matějka, 'Příspěvky k dějinám středověké architektury v Čechách', *Český časopis historický*, 6, 1900, 349–355.

Rom) upon the evidence of a single Italian landmark, the S. Maria Rotonda church in Lucca. (Fig. 10) It was Matějka's firm conviction 'that the demonstrated existence of a

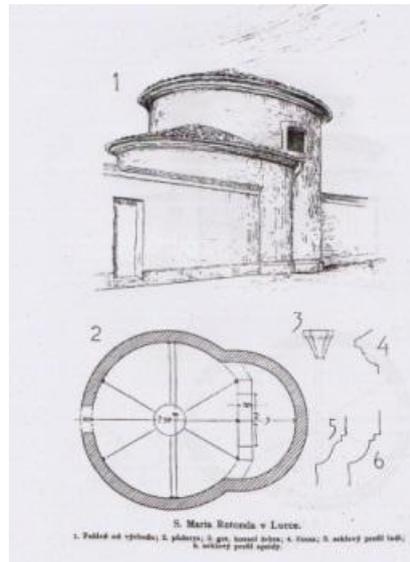


Figure 10 S. Maria Rotonda in Lucca, illustration from *Český časopis historický*, 7, 1901, with Matějka's essay.

single building so distinctly similar to Bohemian rotunda is sufficient for concluding that there is indisputable common origin'.³⁴ However, in contrast to numerous predecessors (including Lehner), Matějka did not attempt to demonstrate the autochthonous character of this type of building. As a matter of fact, it is worth considering whether the question as to the 'origin' of Bohemian architecture was not provoked by Dvořák's example. The extant correspondence suggests that the two 'rivals' had a cordial relationship. When corresponding with Prague, Dvořák would send friendly regards to his colleague, and it might have been due to him that Matějka in 1896 pondered the possibility of finishing his studies under Wickhoff's guidance.³⁵ Later, both scholars collaborated in compiling the list of historical valuables held at the chateau in Roudnice. However, the collaboration also gave evidence of a sharp difference in approach: whereas Matějka followed the commission, doing an honest yet routine work, Dvořák had decided to complement the inventory with a historical introduction which would lay out the social and cultural context of the assembling of the Roudnice collection. The ambition, though, put him in disagreement with the publishing institution, the Czech Academy of the Emperor Franz Joseph, which pointed out that 'considerations such as these exceed the framework of a list'.³⁶

³⁴ Bohumil Matějka, 'O původu českých rotund románských', *Český časopis historický*, 7, 1901, 416–426, quote 425.

³⁵ B. Matějka's letter to O. Hostinský of January 31, 1896. Ethnological Institute of the Academy of Sciences, O. Hostinský's papers, Box 18.

³⁶ Dvořák, *Listy o životě a umění*, 120; cf. Max Dvořák – Bohumil Matějka, *Soupis památek historických a uměleckých v Království českém*, vol. 27: *Politický okres roudnický*, part 2: *Zámek roudnický*, Praha: Archaeologická kommise při České akademii císaře Františka Josefa, 1907.

The Czech academic establishment treated Matějka in a very friendly manner. In considering his appointment to extraordinary professor, the report presented by the triumvirate with Hostinský at the helm focused not on the scholarly qualification of the applicant but rather on the merits he attained as a co-organizer of the 1891 General Land Centennial Exhibition, a corresponding member of the Vienna Central Commission for the Preservation of Monuments, the acting secretary of the Archaeological Committee of the Czech Academy, and a Lecturer in Art History at the Academy of Fine Arts and the Czech Technical University in Prague. Business trips were included in the survey of his laudable achievements, and the top spot in his list of publication was occupied by a registry of monuments of the Louny district. The committee report repeated what it had already stated, with the same membership, during Matějka's *Habilitation* in 1897: it is 'a mere inventory, programmatically excluding all original critical and historical considerations, yet the diversity of the matter, including as it does all technical branches of art, as well as all epochs and their styles, surely demands a substantial amount of knowledge and experience'.³⁷

Still, Dvořák was mistaken in fearing that in choosing Matějka for the Prague professorship, the faculty put the other candidate's achievements in doubt. The committee stated that it 'knows [Dvořák's] works in the area of art history, and values them very highly', and it had laudatory words for Dvořák's form analysis as well as for his use of historical sources. The main virtues of Dvořák's research were seen in 'the way he consistently points out the links of our own art with the global mainstream' and in the detailed knowledge of material 'which he is able to exploit by means of a suitable comparative method and perspicacious insights'. Dvořák's scholarly qualifications, however, could not outbalance Matějka's merits. The committee considered it improper 'to seek a candidate of professorship outside of the faculty, when a fully reliable colleague has been among its own *Privatdozenten* for the length of full eleven terms'. Given this attitude, the ground for rejecting Dvořák's candidacy was the implacable logic of career regulations, applied in Austria both in public service and in academia: 'Surely, only in very rare and quite exceptional cases, especially if there is no other suitable candidate who has been already giving classes for some time, does it happen that calls to professorial chairs are addressed to lecturers who have hardly finished a couple of terms of teaching'. Apart from this argument, cleverly chosen in order to eliminate any further pressure by the Ministry in Vienna, the committee also cited the 'peculiar circumstances' of the only Czech university, which, allegedly, make it prohibitive to 'do anything that might dispirit the young promising scholarly cadres, aspiring to the academic profession, and discourage them from pursuing this career choice any further'. In conclusion, the committee made a show of its consensual approach by expressing the pious wish 'that, in time, Dr. M. Dvořák will be gained for the Czech academia' – as soon as the unfavourable situation changes.³⁸

³⁷ Committee's report on the application to be assigned extraordinary professor, March 9, 1903, Charles University Archives, B. Matějka's personal file.

³⁸ Committee's report of October 10, 1904, Charles University Archives, B. Matějka's personal file.

The instigator of Dvořák's setback

Dvořák's interest in the Prague chair was completely serious. Given that, as long as Riegl stayed at his post in Vienna, he could not expect an offer from there, he saw in this other opportunity not only the symbolic step of launching of an independent



Figure 11 Otakar Hostinský, portrait photograph from 19th C. From the book Miloš Jůzl's, *Otakar Hostinský*, Praha 1980.

academic career but also and primarily the source of existential certainty, necessary for founding a family.³⁹ This is why the young scholar took the rejection of the Prague faculty as a hard hit. 'Either I fail to see my weaknesses and am quite mistaken as to my own qualification, or else I lack a single friend in the whole college of professors of the Prague faculty', wrote Dvořák in April 1903 to the historian Josef Šusta.⁴⁰ 'I am not smug and I am well aware of the limits of my capacities, but I do think (and this is only between the two of us) that my publications, when measured up against Matějka's, quite outweigh those few terms extra he's been lecturing longer than I', he added in March of the year after.⁴¹ Dvořák had no idea who stood behind the setback; all he learned for sure was that Jaroslav Vrchlický (the nom-de-plume of Emil Frída), the poet, scholar in Romance literatures, and at the time the Dean of the Philosophical Faculty, spoke to Dvořák's disfavour with the Minister Hartel.⁴² The archive sources examined for this analysis make it absolutely clear that the prominent role in the whole affair was played by Hostinský. (Fig. 11) His colleagues recalled him as 'firm, mindful of the truth he has

³⁹ Following a relationship of several years, Dvořák married immediately after acquiring the Vienna tenure.

⁴⁰ Letter of April 3, 1903; Dvořák, *Listy o životě a umění*, 115.

⁴¹ Letter of March 10, 1904; Dvořák, *Listy o životě a umění*, 134.

⁴² Dvořák, *Listy o životě a umění*, 134.

attained in his research, and yet gentle, mild as a chick',⁴³ but in his charge of submitting the committee report regarding the appointment procedure to the college of professors – a position which allowed him to pull all the strings – he was far from impartial. He backed Matějka in his effort to find a salaried position at the Faculty already in 1899, and in 1902 he appealed to the Ministry in Vienna in order to secure for Matějka a lectureship at the Prague Technical University.⁴⁴ From his own notes we know that this intercession was preceded by Matějka's August 1902 visit to Hostinský's country mansion in Mukařov and the professor used the occasion to prepare the arguments to be used in approaching the authorities.⁴⁵ Matějka himself then confirmed to Hostinský the impact of the intervention: 'Sektionschef Mr. von Stadler was excellently informed and right at the beginning of the interview he mentioned your letter wherein, as he put it, you had presented my work in the best possible light and recommended me in the warmest manner.'⁴⁶ After the Ministry suggested Dvořák as second candidate for the professorship, Hostinský sought to resist the demand by appealing to Antonín Rezek, a fellow-Czech in the Austrian government and for a number of years a colleague at the University. Rezek, however, refused to meddle in internal university matters: 'Both Matějka and Dvořák would make a good Professor and it is the exclusive affair of the faculty (...) to make a choice.'⁴⁷ Still, Hostinský did find a much more congenial audience for his intercessions among his Prague colleagues, members of the appointing committee: 'As regards Matějka, we are in full accord, and I am sure Kalousek's view will be no different', wrote Goll in a personal letter.⁴⁸

Hostinský's motives for supporting Matějka were mostly personal: there was a close bond between the professor and his own student, and the young scholar rightly perceived Hostinský as his patron. In long letters, Matějka reported to Hostinský his plans and his trips abroad whose funding had been secured with the help of Hostinský. In personal correspondence, he adopted the humble stance of a 'most devoted pupil' addressing his 'teacher and master'⁴⁹ who had 'always inspired him to idealistic strivings, elevated above the common course of life', and by his 'fatherly decisions' had guided him towards an academic career.⁵⁰ It is fair to

⁴³ Marie Gebauerová, *Rodinné vzpomínky na Jana Gebauera*, díl 1, Kladno: J.Šnajdr, 1926, 268–269; quoted in Miloš Jůzl, *Otakar Hostinský*, Praha: Odeon 1980, 172.

⁴⁴ A 1899 draft of a letter to the college of professors and an undated draft of a letter to the *Sektionschef* Stadler of the Ministry of Education, Ethnological Institute of the Academy of Sciences, O. Hostinský's papers, Box 18.

⁴⁵ Record of Matějka's visit in Mukařov, August 15, 1902, Ethnological Institute of the Academy of Sciences, O. Hostinský's papers, Box 18.

⁴⁶ B. Matějka's letter of October 15, 1902, Ethnological Institute of the Academy of Sciences, O. Hostinský's papers, Box 18. The reference is to *Sektionschef* Friedrich Stadler von Wolfersgrün.

⁴⁷ A. Rezek's letter of June 15, 1902, Bedřich Smetana Museum, Prague, Fund O. Hostinský.

⁴⁸ J. Goll's letter of September 10, 1903, Bedřich Smetana Museum, Prague, Fund O. Hostinský.

⁴⁹ B. Matějka's letters of January 31, 1896, and October 15, 1902, Bedřich Smetana Museum, Prague, Fund O. Hostinský.

⁵⁰ B. Matějka's letter of August 30, 1898, Bedřich Smetana Museum, Prague, Fund O. Hostinský.

guess that Hostinský had adopted the protector's role not only out of sympathy with a diligent disciple but also out of compassion with Matějka's challenging social and personal circumstances. Even though Matějka stemmed from the well-heeled family of a jurist, the situation turned precarious when the father, Associate Justice of the Land Court in Prague, died even before his youngest son finished grammar school and the widow had to take care of five children altogether.⁵¹ Moreover, at the time of the professorial concourse, Matějka was already married, with a two-year-old son, and shared the household with two unmarried sisters.⁵² Hostinský was explicit about the economic aspects of Matějka's candidacy for a salaried position in his 1900 letter to the college of professors: 'In consequence of the relatively high cost of the necessary literature and visual material, as well as of the necessary expense of trips abroad, the study of art history demands sacrifices which make the awarding of remunerated lectureship precisely in this field doubly founded.'⁵³ It is clear that the influential professor mainly sought to secure the future of his pupil.

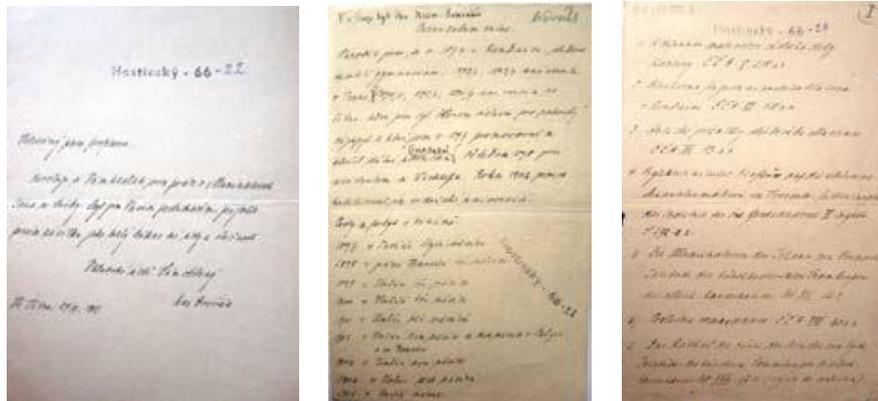


Figure 12 Max Dvořák, letter to Otakar Hostinský, November 29, 1901. Photo: Etnologický ústav Akademie věd ČR.

Figure 13 Max Dvořák, manuscript of Curriculum Vitae from O. Hostinský's papers, 1904. Photo: Etnologický ústav Akademie věd ČR.

Figure 14 Max Dvořák, manuscript of list of publication from O. Hostinský's papers, 1904. Photo: Etnologický ústav Akademie věd ČR.

Hostinský and Dvořák did meet while Dvořák was a student, but there was no personal relationship: in 1901, when the young scholar decided to send to the Prague professor an offprint of his article on the illuminators of John of Neumarkt, it seemed necessary to specify that he is a former pupil.⁵⁴ (Fig. 12, 13 and 14) It is rather doubtful that the wall of indifference could be broken thanks to Dvořák's publications and that the two researchers could find a shared point of interest in the methodology of art history. While the young Hostinský had spent a year attending the Munich lectures of Franz Xaver Reber, in his own teaching of art history in

⁵¹ 'Sterbefall', *Wiener Zeitung* 23. 2. 1885, p. 2. B. Matějka's brother was Jindřich Matiegka (1862–1941), a prominent Czech anthropologist; cf. The National Archives, Police Directorate I, conscription, Box 381, image 299.

⁵² The National Archives, Directorate of Police I, conscription, Box 381, image 293.

⁵³ A draft of a response regarding Matějka's application for a Lecturer's remuneration, October 1900, Ethnological Institute of the Academy of Sciences, O. Hostinský's papers, Box 18.

⁵⁴ M. Dvořák's letter to O. Hostinský, November 29, 1901, Ethnological Institute of the Academy of Sciences, O. Hostinský's papers, Box 17.

Prague he allegedly 'placed emphasis mainly upon the aesthetic aspect and the one presented by philosophy of history'.⁵⁵ Therefore, he represented precisely the attitude which served as a *negative* point of definition for the Vienna school, which – starting with Rudolf Eitelberger and Moritz Thausing – energetically promoted the method of historical criticism, based on research into written records and an immediate contact with the works of art.⁵⁶ In musicology Hostinský proceeded as a convinced empiricist, for whom aesthetics is a particular (and not a philosophical) discipline,⁵⁷ and he remained uninterested both in the inductive empiricism of art historians and in their ambitious theoretical models. The distance Hostinský would have felt vis-à-vis Dvořák's methodological arguments can be measured by the essays in which the doctrine of Gottfried Semper was made accessible for a broader public, and in particular, by his evaluation reports on theses submitted by art historians. In a detailed report on Chytil's *Habilitationsschrift*, he states explicitly that, for him, the 'correct method of scholarship' consists in the collecting of works, whether precisely dated or not, 'into natural sets'.⁵⁸

Goll's opportunism and groupthink



Figure 3 Jaroslav Goll, portrait photograph from 1879. From the book Miloš Jůzl's, *Otakar Hostinský*, Praha 1980.

In the entire affair Dvořák was the most deeply hurt by the fact that he did not gain – as he assumed he would – the support of his former teacher Goll. (Fig. 15) 'He should have already resisted the open injustice of me being neglected in the initial proposal', Dvořák complained in a letter to Šusta. 'That he failed to undertake the

⁵⁵ Dean Bohuslav Raýman's letter to the Ministry of Education, March 23, 1903, Charles University Archives, B. Matějka's personal file.

⁵⁶ Matthew Rampley, *The Vienna School of Art History. Empire and the Politics of Scholarship, 1847–1918*, University Park, Pennsylvania: Penn State University Press, 2013, 19; Georg Vasold, *Alois Riegl und die Kunstgeschichte als Kulturgeschichte. Überlegungen zum Frühwerk des Wiener Gelehrten*, Freiburg im Breisgau: Rombach, 2004, 85–92.

⁵⁷ Jůzl, *Otakar Hostinský*, 98–110.

⁵⁸ Response to K. Chytil's application for a *Habilitation*, March 16, 1897, Charles University Archives, K. Chytil's personal file.

smallest thing to protect my reputation, that he allowed himself to be pressured into passing a report where, in the best of readings, I am set in one line with Matějka, and let out a different opinion only in private conversations (...), all this is a proof that my disappointment and my frustration were well-founded.⁵⁹ We do not quite know why this had happened. Dvořák himself saw the cause of Goll's dereliction in his opportunism, indolence, or naiveté: 'He does not know people, he is incapable of judging real circumstances, he has never realized that in everything connected with art and literature he is merely a dilettante.'⁶⁰ From the extant documentation it is clear that Goll was under Hostinský's strong influence and that he put the friendly alliance with the colleague higher than any considerations he might have for his former pupil. The two professors had met already in the late 1860 in Umělecká beseda, a prominent club of Czech artists and intellectuals; they were then both sequentially active as editors of the *Lumír* literary review and from 1879 they co-directed the learned book series *Sbírka přednášek a rozprav*. Their friendship grew stronger as they both participated in the founding of the Czech University in Prague and then taught there. They both intervened as advocates of the syllabotonic system of prosody in Czech poetry, and in particular, they expressed their decisive scepticism – together with Professors Jan Gebauer, Josef Král and Tomáš Garrigue Marsaryk – with regard to the problematic authenticity of the Manuscript of Dvůr Králové and the Manuscript of Zelená Hora;⁶¹ this coordinated action had brought them substantial ill-will within the conservative wing of Czech politicians. However, in a letter to the philosopher and psychologist František Krejčí, Goll himself adopts a cautious stance to this agreement in views: 'Hostinský and I often went side by side – you yourself said so three years ago. However, that does not mean that we agreed overall and in everything; and even though we did often consult with one another, we did not hinder one another.'⁶² Yet, in the appointing of the chair in art history, the two colleagues did proceed in full cooperation, and the extant documentation confirms it. When, in August 1903, Dvořák sent to Goll a list of his publications to be included in the file for the committee of professors, Goll immediately passed the document over to Hostinský with a peculiar comment: 'The whole affair is among those few that spoil my vacations; it would probably be best if I took a trip to Vienna in the autumn.'⁶³ The intended goal of the intercession is clearly attested in the already cited letter of September 1903, where Goll swears his full allegiance to Hostinský's *protégé*: 'I respectfully ask you [...] to tell M. that my behaviour in the affair has been completely loyal. I think it best to take care of the matter as quickly as possible – meaning that you prepare the report so that it comes up at the very first meeting.'⁶⁴ When Dvořák received a chair in Vienna and the protest of the fanatical German students against his appointment had passed, Goll

⁵⁹ Letter to J. Šusta, March 10, 1904, cf. Dvořák, *Listy o životě a umění*, 134.

⁶⁰ Letter to J. Šusta, May 14, 1903, cf. Dvořák, *Listy o životě a umění*, 118.

⁶¹ Jůzl, *Otakar Hostinský*, 168–174; Petr Čornej, *Historiografie, historici a dějepis*, Praha: Karolinum 2016, 150.

⁶² Undated letter to F. Krejčí, Archives of the Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic, F. Krejčí's funds.

⁶³ J. Goll's letter of August 14, 1903, Muzeum Bedřicha Smetany, O. Hostinský's personal file.

⁶⁴ J. Goll's letter of September 10, 1903, Muzeum Bedřicha Smetany, O. Hostinský's personal file.

was relieved, as the trouble was over and one did not even have to consider the establishment of another chair in art history in Prague. 'It seems that the furor against Dvořák in Vienna has calmed down for good. Are we to submit the report at the very next meeting, or are we to wait?', wrote Goll to Hostinský, demonstrating his sedulity. 'I have wanted to ask you about it but I didn't catch you at home.'⁶⁵

The preference for the diligent yet intellectually limiter Matějka over the talented Dvořák who has already attained some reputation could seem to be a characteristic symptom of the 'alliance of the mediocre', described early by Arthur Schopenhauer and counted among the main pathological symptoms of the modern times by the cultural pessimist of the turn of the century.⁶⁶ However, Goll and Hostinský were no jealous and narrow-minded 'crowd men' who would hinder the entry of outstanding individuals in the Czech academia simply out of personal interest. It was largely thanks to them that in 1882 the Philosophical Faculty in Prague hired the young Masaryk, shortly before habilitated in Vienna – yet their friendship did not last long, allegedly due to Masaryk's unwillingness to adapt.⁶⁷ It is quite possible that the two professors wanted to spare themselves a similar experience with Dvořák. In social psychology today, the establishment of discriminating coalitions of this kind is called 'groupthink'. A society with infelicitious dynamics strives to maintain its coherence at all costs and will refuse to admit non-conformist individuals who either fail to follow the adopted norms or shatter certain expectations. Every such group also has its own 'guardians of thought' who protect it from outside influences that might impugn its effectivity or compromise its norms. Usually, this process negatively impacts the effectivity of the group.⁶⁸ Was, perhaps, the college of professors of the Czech Philosophical Faculty in 1903 a closed, immobile group of this kind?

The peculiar circumstances at the Czech University

An answer can be outlined by means of a comparison with the German branch of the University, which at the very same time invited potentially 'rivalizing types' from Vienna or from abroad and preferred them to local and well-trying cadres. In 1903, the Ordinary Professor of History of Art Alwin Schultz (1838–1909) retired and the faculty looked for a successor. The first candidate they approached was Julius von Schlosser, Director of the Arms Collection of the Kunsthistorisches Museum in Vienna.⁶⁹ The negotiations did not look promising and the next call went to the Swiss art historian Heinrich Alfred Schmidt (1863–1951), the successor to Wölfflin's former Chair at the University of Basel; Schmidt, however, chose Göttingen in 1911. The faculty then turned to Professor Hermann Egger of Graz and, later, to Gustav

⁶⁵ J. Goll's letter, no date (probably November 1905), Archive of the Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic, O. Hostinský's personal file.

⁶⁶ Gottlieb Guntern, *Maskentanz der Mediokratie. Kreative Leadership versus Mittelmaß*, Zürich: Orell Füssli Verlag, 2000.

⁶⁷ Jůzl, *Otakar Hostinský*, 173–174.

⁶⁸ David G. Myers, *Social Psychology*, New York 1993, 328–335.

⁶⁹ The National Archives, The Ministry of Religious Affairs and Education funds, H. Schmidt's personal file, Inventory No. 9, Box 119.

Pazaurek, Director of the Landes-Gewerbemuseum in Stuttgart.⁷⁰ The offer then passed on to Heinrich Hammer, a lecturer at the University of Innsbruck, Herrmann Julius Hermann, a research assistant in the Kunsthistorisches Museum, and Hans Tietze, a lecturer at the University of Vienna.⁷¹ Only after all of them had turned the offer down, did the appointment go, in June 1915, to Alois Grünwald (1882–1931), a graduate of – and at the time already a lecturer at – the University of Prague.⁷² Yet Grünwald's personal file document the different approach of the German faculty to habilitation procedures, as well as to appointments: Grünwald's *Habilitationsschrift* was evaluated not by local professors in adjunct fields, as was the standard at the Czech faculty, but rather by specialists of international reputation, such as Wölfflin and Wilhelm Bode.⁷³

The German University of Prague substantially profited from its integration in a vast network of well-established academic institutions, far surpassing the territorial borders of the Hapsburg monarchy. The price it paid for it was the fluctuation of cadres: a substantial number of its hires went on to finish its careers at universities in the Imperial Germany, which allowed them to pursue 'pure' science, distant from practical goals, and claim high recognition as members of a spiritual aristocracy.⁷⁴ At the Czech University, the lack of famous figures had its positive side in a relatively high stability of the faculty. The institution had to draw on the resources of a small nation, forced to demonstrate its cultural creativity, consistently impugned by the Germans. Under such circumstances, one could not expect that Czech science and scholarship could enjoy any strong autonomy vis-à-vis ideology and politics. On the contrary, it was actively employed in the struggle for national emancipation as 'an attribute of the maturity of the Czech culture'.⁷⁵ This was the source of the well-founded fears of German-Bohemian politicians that the appointments of professors at the divided university 'will be directed more by nationality than by the scientific aptitude of the candidate'.⁷⁶ Hostinský's mention of 'peculiar circumstances' was probably meant as a reference to this political charge of the Czech academia. Even though Hostinský and Goll in particular resisted the subjection of scholarship to national interests, which put them in repeated conflict with the conservative wing at the University, it was impossible for them to completely step out of the nationalist framework. Max Dvořák, a cosmopolitan intellectual, devoted to pure research, would not fit very well in a collective such as this.

⁷⁰ 'Von der deutschen Universität', *Prager Tagblatt*, March 23, 1913, 4; 'Die Lehrkanzel für Kunstgeschichte', *Bohemia*, May 21, 1913, 7.

⁷¹ 'Von der deutschen Universität', *Prager Tagblatt*, August 3, 1913, 2.

⁷² The National Archives, The Ministry of Religious Affairs and Education (Ministerstvo kultu a vyučování) funds, A. Grünwald's personal file, Inventory No. 9, Box 112; 'Von der Prager Universität', *Neue Freie Presse*, September 19, 1915, Abendblatt, 1.

⁷³ The National Archives, A. Grünwald's personal file.

⁷⁴ Fritz K. Ringer, *Die Gelehrten. Der Niedergang der deutschen Mandarine 1890–1933*, Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1983.

⁷⁵ Jaroslav Marek, *Česká moderní kultura*, Praha: Mladá fronta, 1998, 203.

⁷⁶ 'Denkschrift', *Montags-Revue aus Böhmen*, February 16, 1880, 5–10, quote 7: 'so dass bei der Besetzungsfragen schließlich mehr die Nationalität, als die wissenschaftliche Tüchtigkeit des zu Berufenden den Ausschlag geben würde'.

Conclusion

The history of Dvořák's failed application for a professorship at the University of Prague is full of paradoxes and ambiguous attitudes. The individuals who put on the guise of 'guardians of thought', protecting parochial isolationism and conformity of views, were not naturally suited for the role, and the suppression of competition in academia had to be very disagreeable to them. The reason why the mediocre applicant was preferred to the more capable one was not some petty feelings of inferiority but rather social solidarity. The explanation is confirmed by the subsequent course of events. Once the appointment of Matějka to extraordinary professor was finalized, Hostinský and Goll kept their word and, in July 1905, launched talks about establishing a separate professorship for Dvořák⁷⁷ – who, however, had been recently appointed Riegl's successor at the University of Vienna;⁷⁸ therefore, the committee (with Matějka as the third member) proposed to end the talks, and the faculty accepted.⁷⁹ However, Matějka was not able to fulfill the expectations invested in him. In 1907 he was struck by a grave disease which first forced him to call off a research journey to France, Belgium, the Netherlands and England and then even precluded him from giving classes.⁸⁰ The faculty restarted negotiations about appointing Dvořák even before Matějka's early death on December 11, 1909; however, having received an ordinary professorship in Vienna, Dvořák was no longer interested.⁸¹ The deceased Matějka was remembered by his students as a dedicated and energetic teacher and scholar. 'He had no interests, no desire other than scholarly work, and in this striving he did not count hours or days', such was the recollection of Zdeněk Wirth:⁸² 'He was a born teacher, with a stirring force of expression, and he possessed the capacity to convince, persuade the student.'⁸³ Still, even Wirth did perceive the one-sidedness of Matějka's methodology, underestimating as it did the use of sources and secondary literature. Yet the obituary does not give a single hint as to whether Matějka's student was aware that, besides connoisseurship and stylistic criticism, an art historian also ought to ask why the works were made at all and what message they carry. This

⁷⁷ Brief submitted by O. Hostinský, J. Goll and B. Matějka to the college of professors of the Philosophical Faculty, July 1, 1905. Charles University Archive, B. Matějka's personal file.

⁷⁸ 'Der Nachfolger Hofrat Riegls', *Neues Wiener Tagblatt*, September 5, 1905, 5–6.

⁷⁹ Committee Report, November 30, 1905. Charles University Archives, B. Matějka's personal file; minutes of the meeting of the college of professors, November 30, 1905, Charles University Archives, Philosophical Faculty, Minutes of meetings of the college of professors, Inventory No. 24.

⁸⁰ Draft of B. Matějka's application for an exemption of teaching duties, November 5, 1907. Charles University Archives, B. Matějka's personal file; 'Profesor dr. Boh. Jar. Matějka zemřel', *Národní listy*, December 12, 1909, 3.

⁸¹ Proposal to appoint K. Chytil ordinary professor, January 5, 1910. Charles University Archives, K. Chytil's personal file.

⁸² Zdeněk Wirth, 'Vzpomínka na uměleckého dějepisce B. Matějku', *Národní listy*, December 24, 1939, 4.

⁸³ Zdeněk Wirth, 'Bohumil Matějka', *Časopis Společnosti přátel starožitností českých*, 18, 1910, 1–5; cf. 'Česká univerzita a výtvarné umění', *Volné směry*, XII, 1908, 155.

reference to a teacher and a pupil – an author and editor of a number of topographic publications – points us to a more general conclusion: even though Matějka's professorship was short in time, it did boost the tradition of topographies with 'descriptions and lists' – at the expense of interpretations – as the dominant activity of the Czech historiography of art. Such a conclusion might seem to be in disaccord with Wirth's remarkable doctoral thesis on 'the Baroque Gothic', defended in 1909 in front of Hostinský and Goll. But there we have to note who is acknowledged for personal assistance in the final note and who is cited in the key parts of the presentation: that person is Max Dvořák.⁸⁴

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⁸⁴ Zdeněk Wirth, 'Barokní gotika v Čechách v XVIII. a v 1. polovině XIX. Století', *Památky archeologické a místopisné*, 23, 1908, 121–156 and 201–220; cf. Viktor Kotrba, *Česká barokní gotika. Dílo Jana Santiniho-Aichla*, Praha: Odeon, 1976. – The author gratefully acknowledges the research assistance of Dr. Olga Mojžíšová (The Museum of Czech Music), Dr. Friedrich Poleroß (Institut für Kunstgeschichte der Universität Wien), Dr. Milada Sekyrková (Charles University Archive) and Dr. Marcela Suchomelová (The Ethnological Institute of the Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic).