

# Interview with Professor Karel Skalický about Czech Exile Journal *Studie*

**Karel Skalický** (interviewee)

**František Štěch** (interviewer)

**František Štěch (onwards FŠ):** Dear Mr. Professor, first, let me thank you, that you agreed to give this interview for the brand-new journal Theology and Philosophy of Education (TAPE). TAPE is arising from a desire to provide shared space for theologians and philosophers (not exclusively) who search for meaning, source, and aim of education (including self-education). You alone stood at the beginning of the exile journal *Studie*. That's why the first question relates to your motivations of that time. Why have you started to publish the *Studie* journal?

**Karel Skalický (onwards KS):** The *Studie* journal started to be published by Karel Vrána in cooperation with František Planner. And they did it because some contributions they received exceeded the possibilities of the *Nový život* (*New Life*) journal, especially in terms of their extent.

*Nový život* was a magazine which was founded in times when the first immigration wave came, primarily to England, where the *Catholic action* came into existence. Its intellectual part named itself *Křesťanská akademie* (Christian Academy) and started to publish *Nový život*, which had its own dimension of course. But they kept receiving contributions which they were unable to place in their journal. And so, Karel Vrána together with František Planner founded *Studie*. As a matter of fact, Karel Vrána was the one in charge. And František Planner, who served as secretary of the Christian academy at that time was helping him. All that started in 1958. Since then, *Studie* was published occasionally, depending on contributions received from editors of *Nový život*. But when Cardinal Beran came (to Rome) in 1965, the idea to have an independent, regular journal came up. Thereafter, one fine day of 1966, Karel Vrána came to me and asked whether I would not mind taking over his editorial office of *Studie* journal. Of course, I said yes, and that's how it all started.

**FŠ:** All right, it means that the primary motivation to found *Studie* was simply the need to find a place for texts which were too extensive for being published in *Nový život*. After we have learned, who were people around you, those who helped to give birth to *Studie*, I would like to ask, who were the addressees of *Studie*?

**KS:** Well, I do not have a clear idea about those readers. It is because on the one hand, *Studie* was distributed to Paris to Pavel Tigrid, and on the other hand to Vienna, from where the journal was distributed further. So, in the first years, I did not have any feedback from my readers. It was like when a shipwreck survivor puts the message simply into the bottle and throws it into

the sea with the hope that some ship will find the bottle and eventually takes care about rescuing the castaway. It was like this during the first years. But progressively some reactions begin to arrive. If I should now reply to the question of who had been my first co-workers, I need to mention Benedictines from Norcia. At that time a good group was formed there. The main figures were Vojtěch Engelhart, with roots in Nepomucenum, Cyril Stavěl and Abbot Maurus Verzich. They printed *Studie* to have an extra activity besides developing the business they did for a living. But as time went on, Vojtěch Hrubý took over this task, when he became secretary of Velehrad. And he was a Salesian. The Salesians prepared a few full brothers named Pro. And those brothers, three of them if I remember well, founded a printing company. And thus, Father Hrubý redirected the printing of *Studie* to the printing office Pro. We stayed with them practically until the end of the journal's existence.

**FŠ:** When you took over the editorial job for *Studie* journal, what was the most difficult job for you?

**KS:** It is hard to say. The most difficult thing was perhaps to keep the journal alive. Of course, the first thing I saw clearly was that I need to have authors. And if I don't have authors, who are worth something, I won't be able to do anything. And so, the first thing I took to heart was searching for authors. That later became almost my professional deformation. Whomever I met I asked if he or she would not mind contributing to *Studie*. But this initial effort – to find contributors – if it was the hardest thing, I don't know, I was not thinking about it like that. In short, if I was supposed to break through with that journal, I needed to procure contributions, and these contributions I needed to get from someone, and so I had to get in touch with authors. Of course, the first generation of authors were theologians, church historians, in general, and all those who dealt with religious issues. Such a purely academic, theological-philosophical focus lasted until 1968. Before I got to Czechoslovakia. Until that time we did not have any practical exchange with Czechoslovakia. We had just authors who were in exile. I can mention Erazim Kohák at this place. He is a typical example of how I searched for contributors in exile.

**FŠ:** Actually, we can say that your readers as well as authors came from the context of exile.

**KS:** And here, I would be more specific: from the Czech exile.

**FŠ:** Czech? Not Czechoslovakian?

**KS:** The Czech and Slovak exiles did not cooperate on wider bases. There was no Czechoslovakian exile in practice. But the cooperation of concrete Czechs and Slovaks on topics of their mutual interest existed of course, but it was rather on personal bases. There were a few Slovak contributors published in *Studie*. Some anonymously, some by name, for example, Jozef Tomko, who later became a Cardinal.

**FŠ:** Ok, so Czech exile. And didn't it cross your mind at that time to publish your journal bilingually?

**KS:** No, it didn't. Even though my everyday life was trilingual at that time. I worked in Italian for Lateran University, in Czech for the Christian Academy and in Spanish for the Marist

Brothers. It really did not come to my mind to do *Studie* bilingually, because in Czech I did them already with my left hand or made them by makeshift means so to speak.

**FŠ:** I asked about it because today, we have a situation that in Czechia the journal in English is being published, so I wondered if it is a novum or if you already thought about it at that time. Well, what helped you to overcome difficulties? You have been editor in chief, but I suppose you cooperated with other editors.

**KS:** Yes, I had some co-workers. The first one was the poet Ivan Jelínek. He helped me till the year 1968. But then we grew apart from each other and Antonín Kratochvíl took over his job. But those were colleagues for literature. Later, Antonín Kratochvíl stepped down from his job and Jaroslav Pecháček came. He was a valuable colleague, although he had more interest in politics than literature. These were my non-theological colleagues, those three, one by one.

**FŠ:** So, the whole *Studie* was always a two-man show?

**KS:** No. As critiques were rising and opposition towards *Studie* was growing, the stable, editorial collegium was formed to prevent the objection that Skalický is a hegemon, hates collaboration, and promotes only himself and his own topics. Such an editorial board discussed each issue and was formed under heavy pressure to *Studie* in 1980. For the editorial board, I chose personalities who had been approved and no objections were made against them. For the executive editorial board, it was Josef Kolářek, Josef Benáček and Václav Steiner. Those three and I created *Studie* since then. Besides that, the broader editorial consisting of sympathizers (like Karel Říha, Karel Vrána, Jaroslav Škarvada, Tomáš Špidlík, etc.) was established.

**FŠ:** And what about the worst obstacles that occurred?

**KS:** They were based on denunciations. That I am a philo-marxist, that I cooperate with ex-communists, that I am open to liberation theology, that I am a progressivist, dictatorial, and that I am not able to cooperate with anyone, etc.

**FŠ:** Ok, the critique was connected more or less with slander. And what about joy? What was the most joyful on your editorial work?

**KS:** The most joyful moments were those when a letter or message came that this or that person liked our content. Or that our content helped someone. In short, it was each positive feedback. It gave us knowledge that our effort is maybe not useless.

**FŠ:** Let's move now towards the newly emerging TAPE journal. TAPE wants to perceive philosophy of education as philosophy, which is either (self)educational or is not philosophy at all. Similarly, theology of education expresses such questioning about the meaning of faith, which is either touching upon self-education and education, or it does not make any sense. The editors of TAPE consciously connect with a wish of Josef Zvěřina, which he expressed in his *Theology of Agape (Teologie agapé)*, which is pursuing change in which *theology* must broaden itself in *theophilia* (TA I, 5). Theologia and Theophilia must grow together “con-

cresco”, as Radim Palouš reminds us. Do you think that an academic journal focusing on theology and philosophy of education in this way, may serve contemporary people?

**KS:** Of course. I even think that it can serve people only when theology becomes theophilia. Theophilia is not only a word about God but love for God instead. Only there it is important, where something comes out not from cold reason alone, but from reason, which glows or burns by love (*filia*), that much as that reason itself becomes love. That of course sparks reactions, that cold reason alone cannot produce.

**FŠ:** When the journal is just about to be born, what would you recommend to its editors?

**KS:** Search for authors.

**FŠ:** What would you wish for the first TAPE readers?

**KS:** Deep interest.

**FŠ:** Thank you.

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