

## František Dryje

Although Vratislav Effenberger accepts the developmental concept of Teige – he, for instance, understands surrealism (among others) as a result of the evolution of post-Impressionist avantgardes – he refuses to see the future as a higher evolutionary stage, not because he would identify himself with Breton's notions of discontinuity, but because he saw the regressive stage of the civilizational process in the relatively short and more or less contemporary historical era: *“During the last hundred years the Atlantic civilization (which was Effenberger's approximate term for the Modern Age, FD) has risen to its peak. However, this rise was at the same time the reason of its decay. Science, which has contributed to an ever more profound understanding of the human physical micro- and macrocosm in order to understand life and the world in its totality, at the same time disintegrated this totality the more perceptibly, the deeper it progressed in its cognition. Political and economical science has revealed the laws of the conditions of production and associations of the distribution exchange, by which it has at the same time laid bare the social and psychosocial system, the integrity of which is founded on the value orientation of Christianity. Nevertheless, when revealing the fictitious character of such an integrative model, it was unable to replace it with another one...”* (V. Effenberger: *Republika a varlata / Republic and Scrota*, Analogon 3/1990)

In this view of history and its meaning we can also detect Effenberger's effort to re-evaluate the concepts of Breton and Teige. During the 1960s he subscribed to the theory of conflict, to the principle of conflict as a permanent source of a developmental dynamic of thought, creativity and – generally speaking – of existential and social processes. This approach opposes Teige's and Breton's model where both – according to Effenberger – in different ways presuppose an integrative perspective of their notions: Teige in the harmonizing vision of a Hegelian and Marxist “end of history”, when Man abandons the realm of Necessity and enters the realm of Freedom; Breton in the ethical postulates of a New Myth and in all perspectivist formulations. In 1947 Teige wrote: *“(...) a lot of it is correct (...) but now Breton (...) emphasizes ethics everywhere, which is from the perspective of dialectical materialism a nonsense”* (in a letter to Marie Pospíšilová). However, Effenberger – especially due to the influence of the historical distance – distinguishes the limits of Teige's notions: *“Breton, bound neither by Marxist rationalism, not very distant from a positivist one, nor by metaphysical irrationalism, recognized in the instinctive hunger a mythogenetic force, as destructive as organizing.”* (V. Effenberger: *Modely a metody/Models and Methods*)

It can be said that precisely this emphasis on the ambivalence of instinctive, unconscious sources of the human fate is characteristic of Effenberger's interpretation of Breton's surrealism. From this stems the aforementioned theory of conflict, in which – on a variety of levels – he saw a substantial component of surrealist ideas, and which he follows in his own concepts, that are, however, in many respects constructed and defined in a negative way. It is an approach – generally speaking – which leads to the preference of a noetic aspect of surrealism to Breton's emphasis on a surrealist ontology (only in the 1970s Effenberger formulated the project of a surrealist phenomenology of imagination, which is already not subordinated primarily to the opposing view of surrealist intervention as a “development of protest”).

[...]

Vratislav Effenberger follows Breton only in those instances, where the latter speaks of the conditional formation of a future system of values which can be made concrete – only on the basis of a rejection of traditional patterns of thought (crisis of causality and criteria). Nevertheless, his skepticism is thorough; he called for a revision even of the contemporary form of those functions and values, that should be reconstructed (revived), because he did not perceive them only in their anthropological dimension as constant dispositions of the human spirit and heart, but always as specific, variable psychological and social components: *“Freedom will not be freedom until all types and shades of non-freedom as well as all that which turns freedom into a formality or an abstract fiction will not be highlighted in the clearest way. The same goes for love, which realizes freedom in a relationship between a man and a woman. And poetry would again become only*

*lyrical literature, if it were to renounce in one way or another its deepest sources emanating from the conflict between man and that which limits, spiritually empties and physically destroys him.*” (V. Effenberger, *Negace negace není negativismus / Negation of Negation is Not Negativism*, in: V. Effenberger, *Surovost života a cynismus fantasie / The Cruelty of Life and Cynicism of Fantasy*, Orbis, Prague 1991). Effenberger’s seemingly negativist notions thus do not reject Breton’s approach, but on the contrary they proceed to formulate a legitimate surrealist concept of “absolute diversion” or a revision of all existing concepts. This intention is perhaps no less utopian or romantic than Breton’s, were we to understand these attributes in their relative function. However, nothing prevents us from reaching the conclusion that Effenberger (as much as Breton) strove to “capture the real function of thought” and that he did so in a consistent way “outside any aesthetic or moral considerations.”

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Transl. by Roman Dergam