

Editorial

Ad lectorem! – Twenty years on

I feel truly privileged to be able to write the editorial for this issue as DTK journal celebrates twenty years of existence. If we look back at the resolutions made by the members of the first editorial board, as well as the first two executive editors, we can see that they were motivated by the desire to “reflect on the development of domestic historiography” after 1989.¹ These reflections were primarily based on the wish to make the theoretical grounding of historians’ academic texts common practice which would be in line and in dialogue with the current state of historical scholarship. Secondly, the first generation of scholars around the DTK strove to strengthen the critical and methodological reflection in Czech historiography and scholarly community: the first issues abounded in discussion pieces and insightful reviews of important books.

On the one hand, the systemic conditions for the practice of historical scholarship in academia and public research institutions remain – put bluntly – grossly inadequate in comparison to the old EU countries. Historians in the Czech Republic are expected to produce scientific results of internationally comparable excellence under funding conditions that are shamefully far behind the standards of the Euro-Atlantic academy or of the OECD countries in general. On the other hand, we can see that despite this fact, the innovative practice of historical research in the Czech academia and scholarly institutions has thrived substantially over the last 20 years. Among other things, thanks to the systematic efforts of many authors who have actively contributed to the DTK journal content, historical research in our country has become more theoretically ambitious and provides a methodologically vibrant and pluralistic spectrum of accounts of the past. In the past two decades, the Czech academic milieu has witnessed anchoring of several important paradigms of historical sciences, for example historical anthropology, historical sociol-

¹ MARTIN NODL, IVAN ŠEDIVÝ, *Ad lectorem!*, *Dějiny – teorie – kritika* 1/2004, pp. 5–6.

ogy, or oral history. In the pages of DTK and elsewhere, despite structural difficulties and systemic inequalities, we see a clear shift away from the self-contained and stagnant traditional historiographical approaches towards concepts and approaches that draw on the creative tensions arising at the boundaries between disciplines.

Thus, although we are subject to the problematic and often imposed paradigm of “catching up” (with Europe which we, in many ways, have never lagged behind – certainly not, for instance, in the fields of economic and social history), I dare write that “The Times They Are a-Changin’...” I do not, however, wish to sketch a picture of a certain linear teleological and optimistic development of the historical scholarship in Czechia. We can see from a number of recent controversies concerning the role of history in the public sphere that even today, for example retrogression in the sense of degrading historical sciences to the position of a servant of a particular political ideology, still represents a threat coming from various directions. However, if we revisit the resolutions taken by my predecessors in 2004, I think we can confidently state that their wish that “theory” and “criticism” become a vital and integral part of the historical research gradually gained ground thanks to the activities associated with the DTK journal (including the lectures of honorary guests of our journal). This optimistic view stems from the fact that the journal *History – Theory – Criticism* has a solid base at the Faculty of Humanities of Charles University and will continue to develop in the direction that its founders set out in 2004. Expressions of warm thanks also go to our faculty for the unstinting support shown to the journal.

The studies presented in this anniversary issue all concern the critical concepts of the history of medicine and related disciplines – the core topic of one of the sessions at the last Congress of Czech Historians (Ústí and Labem, September 2022). We are proud to bring you high quality texts by both Czech and international authors, which have also made it into this issue of DTK thanks to the collaboration with the external editor, Tereza Liepoldová.

Daniela Tinková’s introductory comprehensive overview study, which frames this entire issue, deals with the question of “madness” and the transformations of the human psyche as an object of historical science. The text captures the key tendencies of writing on the “history of madness”, particularly during the twentieth century, and is built on a contrast between explorations of the interpretation of disciplinary history written by specialists in psychiatry or psychoanalysis and concep-

tualizations coming from the humanities. This remarkable text is followed by a series of four case studies from the pen of David Tomíček who has written an extremely relevant text on the “grey zone” of medical care providers in the Early Modern period; and a text by Hana Jadrná Matějková focusing on how the respected Brandenburg court midwife and author of a book on obstetrics, Justina Siegemund, defended herself in court against challenges to her competence; followed by Jacques Joseph’s broader contextualizing text on the historical transformations of our understanding of the relationship between “magic” and “science”, and the bloc of studies concludes with an extraordinary text by Darina Martykánová, Ainhoa Gilarranz and Víctor M. Núñez-García, which analyses, in a South-Western European setting, the issue of the gradual masculinization of medicine in the medical professional discourse.

In this issue’s *Discussion and Disputes* section, we bring you a remarkable interview with Professor Hans Renders, Director of the Biography Institute at the University of Groningen in the Netherlands and editor of the Biography Series at the prestigious Brill publishing house. Professor Renders is the protagonist of the quest for a “third wave of microhistory”, this time tied to new concepts of critical interpretive historical biography, and in this sense, among other, he is working on a major new text together with authors such as Giovanni Levi and Sigurður Gylfi Magnússon.

In the *Reviews and Reflections* section, as usually, we present critical perspectives on important recently published volumes. I am very pleased that after a long time, our readers may read an excellent parallel (double) review, this time focusing on the latest monograph by Jana Osterkamp from the pens of Jiří Štaif and Jakub Rákosník. Another significant contribution, especially with regard to the discussion level of our journal, is the reflection from the side of a student of history, who takes a critical stance on Stellner’s recently published *Introduction to the Study of History*. This contribution has the ambition to represent one of the first texts that future historians and historians in faculties of arts and humanities will encounter.

I firmly believe that the anniversary issue of DTK will meet your expectations. The journal exists not only thanks to its founders, thanks to its editorial board headed by the renowned expert Professor Miloš Havelka who provides the journal with unquestionable patronage, but also thanks to the editorial staff – and here especially, thanks to my esteemed predecessors, Ivan Šedivý, Martin Nodl, Pavel Himl and Veronika Čapská. In this sense, I am above all grateful to Veronika, who

put a terrific amount of work into the journal and handed it over to me in an excellent condition. Our warm thanks also go to Tomáš Rataj whose excellent knowledge of DTP and extraordinary skills in typography have maintained our journal in a professional shape for many years.

Finally, DTK owes the greatest thanks to you, its readership. Thank you for your continued interest, for your support, for your critical feedback, in short, for everything that helps DTK to develop further. It is my sincere hope that DTK will continue to grow for the benefit of historical scholarship and the academic community. Long live our – and your – journal, long live critical thinking!

Petr Wohlmuth, Editor-In-Chief

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