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In Memory of Antonín Kolář*

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Antonín Kolář was born on 28 September 1884 in Prague (Smíchov) into the family of a tailor.[1] Between 1890 and 1903, he completed his primary and secondary education there, attending a boy's general school, the *Realgymnasium*, and subsequently a higher grammar school. From 1903 to 1907, he studied classical philology and philosophy at the Faculty of Arts of the Charles-Ferdinand University in Prague. On 5 June 1908, he obtained his qualification degree to teach Latin and Greek. Later that year, on 5 November 1908, he was awarded the degree of Doctor of Philosophy on the basis of his dissertation *Nový pokus o datování Platonova Lysida* (*A new attempt to date Plato's Lysis*).

He began his academic career at the Academic Grammar School in Prague, where he served as an assistant professor during the 1908–1909 school year. He subsequently taught at the *Realgymnasium* and the higher Grammar School in Nový Bydžov from 1909 to 1917. During this period, his bibliography already included a substantial number of works. His studies addressed a wide range of topics within classical philology, from reviews, brief reports and articles, with which he contributed to the journal *Listy filologické*, to pedagogically oriented publications such as *A selection from the biographies of Cornelius Nepos* (*Výbor z životopisů Cornelia Nepota*, 1911), *Laelius de amicitia* (1913), and *Latin reader from Cornelius Nepos and Q. Curtius Rufus* (*Latinská čítanka z Cornelia Nepota a Q. Curtia Rufa*, 1920). His scholarly studies focused on various topics in classical

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philology (e.g., *Who is the author of the poem Ciris?* [*Kdo je skladatelem básně Ciris*, 1909]; *On the relationship of Roman elegy to Greek elegy* [*O vztahu elegie římské k elegii řecké*, 1911–1912]; *On the significance of newly discovered papyri of Plato's Phaedrus* [*O významu nově objevených papyrů Platonova Faidra*, 1912]). In 1913, he also produced a translation of Plato's dialogue *Phaedrus*, which was met with favorable critical reception.

Seeking closer contact with the university milieu, he returned to Prague in December 1917, where he once again took up a post at the Academic Grammar School. By this time, his scholarly interests had shifted toward Greek comedy, with particular emphasis on Menander. This focus resulted in several specialized studies, e.g., *On pauses in Menander's verse* (*O pausách ve verši Menandrově*, 1915); *Fragments of Menander's new comedy* (*Zlomky nové komoedie Menandrovy*, 1916); *The year of Menander's birth and death* (*Rok narození a úmrtí Menandrova*, 1918), as well as a popularizing publication entitled *Greek comedy* (*Řecká komedie*, 1919). Following the successful defence of his thesis *Contributions to the knowledge of New Attic Comedy, especially Menander's* (*Příspěvky k poznání nové komoedie attické, zvláště Menandrovy*) and a habilitation lecture delivered under the title "Menander's view of life" ("Životní názor Menandrův") at the Charles University in Prague, he was appointed "Privatdozent" in 1919.

At the end of 1922, Antonín Kolář was offered an opportunity for further career advancement within the academic sphere at the newly established Comenius University in Bratislava, whose Faculty of Arts had commenced its activities in October 1921. He accepted the offer and, without prior service in the position of extraordinary professor, was appointed *professor ordinarius* of classical philology on 29 December 1922. Kolář began lecturing at the Comenius University in the summer semester of the 1922/1923 academic year.

The core of his teaching comprised instruction in language and literature; alongside this, he also lectured on topics closely aligned with his scholarly research, such as Greek and Roman metrics, Latin stylistics, and the relationship between European culture and classical antiquity. At the Comenius University, he founded the Classical Seminar, which he headed in the periods 1924–1932 and 1934–1935. During his tenure, he educated the first generation of professionally trained teachers of Greek and Latin in Slovakia; until 1928, he conducted all lecturing and teaching activities entirely on his own. He was also instrumental in building up the seminar library, which came to be ranked among the best at the Faculty.

In Bratislava, he began to devote himself to two new thematic areas. The first involved highlighting the legacy of classical antiquity in the modern world, within which he produced three studies: *Impact of the classical culture on European society* (*Působení antické kultury na kulturu evropskou*, 1924), *Social question in Ancient Greece and Rome* (*Sociální otázka ve starém Řecku a Římě*, 1927), and *Relations of European culture to Antiquity* (*Vztahy evropské kultury k antice*, 1929).

In the second, he focused on the influence of antiquity on major figures of Europe's past, examining in particular the work of the Czech chronicler Cosmas (*Cosmas' relations to Antiquity – Kosmovy vztahy k antice*, 1925), the poet Vestonia (*Humanistická básnířka Vestonia*, 1926), the classical influences in the writings of Pavel Jozef Šafárik (1928), and the life and work of the professor of Greek Gregor Dankovský (1931).

A further shift in his scholarly orientation became apparent in 1932, when he began to concentrate intensively to Greek metric. In the years that followed, he produced a series of monographs focused on metrical problems, such as *Die Logaöden* (1933), *De dactylo-epitritis* (1935), and *The relationship between the rhythm and the song content in Greek choral lyrics* (*Vztah rytmu k obsahu piesní v gréckej lyrike sborovej*, 1940).

He was also actively engaged in discussions on the reform of secondary education, in which he advocated the teaching of classical languages at grammar schools and addressed methodological issues related to the instruction of Latin. He likewise participated in public lecture series in Bratislava and Trnava, where he delivered a number of lectures on various topics, including *The influence of Antiquity on European society* (*Vliv antiky na kulturu evropskou*, 1923), *Democracy in Antiquity* (*Demokracie ve starověku*, 1924), *The women's question in Antiquity* (*Ženská otázka ve starověku*, 1925/1926), *On the social question in ancient Greece and Rome* (*O sociální otázce ve starém Řecku a Římě*, 1928/1929), and *Ancient and modern democracy* (*Demokracie antická a moderní*, 1935/1936). In addition, he was a member of several scholarly societies, namely *Učená spoločnosť Šafárikova* (from 1939 *Slovenská učená spoločnosť*), *Královská česká společnost nauk*, *České akademie pro vědy a umění*, and *Jednota českých filologů*.

During his tenure at the Comenius University, he held a number of senior academic offices. In 1928–1929 he served as Dean of the Faculty of Arts, followed by the post of Vice-Dean in 1929–1930. He was appointed Rector of the University for the academic year 1934–1935 and subsequently served as Vice-Rector in 1935–1936 and again in 1938–1939. These positions involved an exceptionally demanding representational agenda, including numerous ceremonial addresses delivered on the occasion of the conferral of honorary doctorates, university anniversary celebration, milestone anniversaries of prominent figures in cultural and public life, as well as the opening of scholarly congresses and conferences.

His academic career came to an end on 12 March 1942, when for political reasons (under the regime of the Slovak State established in 1939) he was forced to leave the Comenius University. He was assigned by the Czech ministry to the personal staff of the Faculty of Arts of the University in Prague.

After his definitive return from Slovakia to the Czech lands in 1943, Antonín Kolář was no longer able to secure a position at an institution of higher education, even after they were reopened in 1945. Despite repeated assurances, his application

for an academic appointment remained unsuccessful, and in 1951 he was pensioned off. Nevertheless, he did not abandon scholarly work.

The most significant achievement of this period was the textbook on metrics written in Latin, *De re metrica poetarum Graecorum et Romanorum* (1947), which attracted attention both in the domestic scholarly community and abroad. In the following year he published the first Czech translation of Cicero's work *De natura deorum*. From 1954 onwards, he devoted himself to the preparation of a translation of *Lives of Eminent Philosophers* of Diogenes Laertius, a subject he also addressed in several studies. Until his death on 7 June 1963 in Benátky u Litomyšle, he remained actively engaged in scholarly work, which had constituted the focus of his life.

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Abstracts

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This opening chapter pays tribute to Antonín Kolář, a distinguished classical philologist of Czech origin, who spent 20 years of his academic career at the Faculty of Arts of the Comenius University in Bratislava. In 2024, we commemorate the 140th anniversary of his birth. In a concise manner, it outlines the milestones of his significant academic and scholarly career.

[Antonín Kolář in memoriam]

Úvodný príspevok vzdáva hold Antonínovi Kolářovi, významnému klasickému filológovi českého pôvodu, ktorý 20 rokov pôsobil na Filozofickej fakulte Univerzity Komenského v Bratislave a ktorého 140. výročie narodenia si pripomíname v roku 2024. Príspevok stručne načrtáva míľniky jeho významnej akademickej a vedeckej kariéry.