

FRANZ THOMAS BRATRANEK'S LIFE AND WORK

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The philosopher, aesthetician and literary historian Franz Thomas Bratranek (1815—1884) has quite unjustly been a neglected figure of Bohemian intellectual history. The son of a Czech estate official in southern Moravia (his mother was German), he entered the Augustinian monastery of Altbrunn as a novice in 1834. After completing his studies at the University of Vienna, he was a docent and private tutor in various places and then from 1851 to 1881, a Reader in German Literature at the University of Cracow.

Characteristic of Bratranek's life and intellectual orientation is the fact — conditioned by his origin and development — that he personified the social contradictions of his age rather than overcoming them. His lack of balance was evident in regard not only to the national question but also in his views on religion and social matters.

A full picture of Bratranek's philosophical universe will only be possible when all his works are accessible and have been assessed. The purpose of the present study is merely to deal with two of his works. The approach to philosophy of art in his first publication, „On the Development of the Concept of Beauty“, clearly places him in the world of German speculative philosophy, particularly its romantic phase, even though he was already approaching here Hegel's spiritual metaphysics.

As Bratranek saw it, Goethe's most mature poetic creations represented a major step beyond all the partial trends of the artistic development which had preceded it. This is why he undertook a philosophical analysis and interpretation of Goethe's *Faust* as well as his poem cycle „*Urworte. Orphisch*“. In the guise of an interpretation of Goethe's „*Urworte*“, Bratranek composed a little phenomenology of the modern spirit.