

Gnóthi seauton

or the Fragments from the History of Classical Studies
at the Faculty of Arts, Masaryk University, Brno

Gnóthi seauton (γνώθι σεαυτὸν), or “know thyself” is a maxim that was read by all those who entered the famous Temple of Apollo at Delphi. And it still serves its purpose nowadays as a motto of this exhibition which aims at the students of the Department of Classical Studies. The goal of this exhibition is to make the students familiar with the history and significant figures of the field they chose to study. Nevertheless, not only the students of Classical Philology will find interest in the history of Classical Philology in Brno, as we will see that it is deeply intertwined with the fate of the whole Faculty of Arts, as well as with the turbulent political events of the 20th century.

The exhibition was organized by the members of the Student Society at the
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What Is Classical Studies?

Classical means literally first-class; however, if a scientific field bears this name, it denotes that it is interested in the age of antiquity. Philology, in general, refers to the science concerned with language; Classical Philology then focuses on the two main languages used in antiquity – Ancient Greek and Latin – as well as, in broader sense, on anything associated with these languages.

Where Does Classical Philology Come from?

The roots of Classical Philology date back to the times of Homer who was not only a Greek poet, but also gave the first impulse for a philological research. In the age of Hellenism (323-30 BCE), libraries became the centres of education. The most famous library in Alexandria was the place where so-called *grammatici* gathered, examined, and commented on the manuscripts of Homeric eposes, Iliad and Odyssey, as well as provided them with scholarly interpretation. Also other texts of Greek authors were and still are treated in this way, but nowadays the scholars are called classical philologists.

Unfortunately, the ancient texts are only very rarely extant in the original manuscripts. The monks in medieval monasteries copied the manuscripts to teach and study Latin language. Thus, we owe them a debt of gratitude for the preservation of the ancient literary legacy, although saving ancient pagan texts was certainly not their primary goal.

Later on, letterpress printing replaced monks in scribal *scriptoria* in the job. But the invention brought with it problems, too. The question arose which of the versions of the text should be printed. Of course, the ideal version was the one which was supposed the closest to the original text. Therefore, the Humanist scholars working in printing manufactories searched for such texts, which laid the foundations of modern Classical Philology.



Printing press 1877.



Friedrich August Wolf

But Classical Philology as an independent science came into existence only many centuries later. In 1795, German philologist Friedrich August Wolf (1759–1824) published the work in which he doubted the identity of Homer and his authorship of both eposes and, thus, raised the so-called Homeric Question. This was a huge breakthrough in the history of Classical Philology.

The beginnings of Classical Philology in Bohemia date to 1873 when it was established as an independent study field at the Charles University in Prague. The first professor teaching in Czech here was Jan Kvičala (1834–1908). The foundation of two new universities in Bratislava and Brno (both in 1919) contributed to a successful development of the field, whereas Classical Philology was one of the first study fields offered to the students at the time.

And Finally – Who Is a Classical Philologist?

The beginnings of a classical philologist are always those of a zealous amateur, a reader of Ancient Greek tragedies, a fan of Olympic pantheon, an adorer of all ancient and noble, etc. Either by coercion or from one's own conviction, these necessarily lead to the struggle with Latin tenses and cases, even Greek accents. After starting to actually like reading the original texts of Virgil and Homer, there is no coming back. The classical philologist is overwhelmed by the fascinating culture of immortal orators, military leaders, poets, politicians, playwrights, and artists. The aim is clear – to ensure that they remain immortal.

Founding Fever 1919—1939

Nowadays, we can only hardly imagine the modest beginnings of Classical Philology in Brno. In the first years of the Seminar for Classical Philology, the whole curriculum was taught only by two to three people.

The first, initially the only, scholar working at the Seminar was František Novotný, a recently appointed professor at the time, who was followed very soon by professors Karel Svoboda and Václav Petr. The proper teaching started in the winter semester of 1920 in the premises of a former municipal orphanage in the Gorkého Street No. 14 (Falkensteiner's Street then); from 1927, the lecturing took place also in Gorkého Street No.7 (Siroťčí Street then).

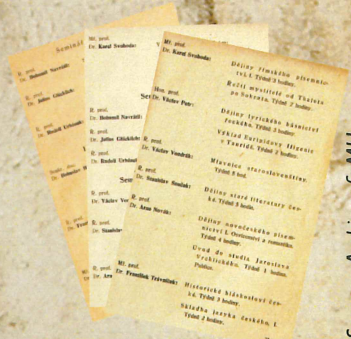


Brno. Chlapecký sirotčinec ve Falkensteinerově ulici.

Source: www.fotohistorie.cz

Youth Forward!

The brand new Masaryk University tempted promising young scholars – just think of the professors Novotný and Svoboda who, at the time of their beginnings at the university, were less than 40 years old! It was their initiative that made other experts come to the university, whether we speak of the young scholars from Prague or the new graduates from Brno. The most significant figures working at the university were Vladimír Groh, a professor of Ancient History, Gabriel Hejzlar, a classical archaeologist, the Indo-European linguists Václav Machek and Karel Janáček, and especially the even younger professors of Classical Philology Ferdinand Stiebitz and Jaroslav Ludvíkovský. This new generation brought with it new approaches and study fields, as well as negotiated the first contacts with the classical philologists all over Europe and established university's involvement in the social and cultural events of the city.



Source: Archive of MU

The function of today's information system was then executed by the lists of persons and university lectures available to students in printed form.

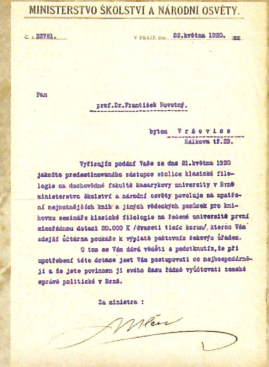
The Strange Case of a Chair-bed The Unceasing Zeal of Prof. Novotný

There is no doubt that the foundation of a brand new university could not do without many problems. The university lacked rooms for offices and classrooms, as well as the necessary administrative staff. Nevertheless, the correspondence of the founding professor František Novotný provides us with rare examples of a successful tilting at windmills. The letters document the gradual establishing of an institutional library, including the indispensable position of a librarian, furnishing of the offices, and the increasing amount of paper work which resulted in a request for a research assistant. This led to the employment of prof. Ferdinand Stiebitz in 1925 who also became a professor later on. The professional enthusiasm of prof. Novotný is also apparent from a request he made in the July of 1922, asking for the purchase of a chair-bed “so that the director (of the Seminar for Classical Philology) may pass the night at the university, until he is able to permanently live in the city, without any costs and with no further inconveniences”. Unfortunately, the documents are silent about whether the request was accepted or not.

See also a concept of prof. Novotný's letter from 1921: “...furthermore, I note that up to this day I am not able to submit any inventory, as I still do not possess any room where I could deposit the purchased books, nor a librarian who would... (the following text is crossed and replaced by a different formulation), as the Seminar for Classical Philology does not possess a room nor a librarian of its own up to this day.”

“The dean's office kindly asks you to inform us what tone of the furniture you would like in your office.” (from a letter addressed to F. Novotný, February 14th 1922)

“The dean's office provided Seminar for Classical Philology with two pieces of embroidered plush window draperies worth 380 Kč and four pieces of ordinary plush window draperies worth 600 Kč. The draperies are to be noted in the inventory of possessions (underlined in red).” (a supplement from November the 17th 1923)



The earliest preserved correspondence of the new Seminar for Classical Philology.

Source: Archive of MU

The Splendours and Miseries of Classical Studies

An academic year at the Department of Classical Studies (the original Seminar was promoted to Department in 1922) had quite fixed structure – during both semesters the students could attend lectures on normative grammar, Greek and Latin literature, mythology, religion, as well as on the history of Classical Philology. Moreover, there were regular seminars and preparatory seminars dedicated to the reading and interpretation of Classical authors. The content of these seminars changed each semester; thus, a student of Classical Philology had, in the course of four years, the opportunity to get acquainted with as many as 32 authors. However, only a few students could attend all courses offered, notwithstanding the particular student's skills and time options, as a charge was imposed on enrolment into these courses.

The incomplete list of ancient authors read in the courses

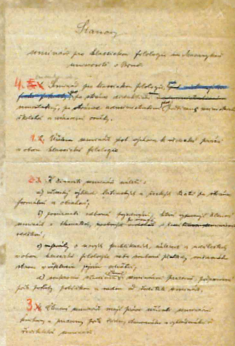
Aischylos, Apuleius, Arianos, Aristofanes, Aristotelés, Augustinus, Cato, Catullus, Cicero, Curtius Rufus, Ennius, Euripidés, Hésiodos, Horatius, Homér, Isokratés, Iuvenalis, Kallimachos, Livius, Lucretius, Lúkianus, Lysiás, Martialis, Menandros, Ovidius, Pausanias, Persius, Petronius, Platón, Plautus, Pindaros, Plinius ml., Plinius st., Plútarchos, Propertius, Quintilianus, Sapfó, Seneca, Sofoklés, Statius, Strabon, Suetonius, Tacitus, Terentius, Tertullianus, Theofrastés, Theokrités, Thúkydidés, Tibullus, Vergilius

František Novotný (1881–1964)

František Novotný can doubtlessly be regarded a founder of Classical Philology in Brno; however, he was also active outside his department. In 1930, he became a dean of the Faculty of Arts, whereas after the re-opening of Czech universities after the WWII in the summer of 1945 he was appointed pro-rector of the Masaryk University. He was a member of the Czech Academy of Sciences for over 30 years and, for 20 years, he also worked for the Polish Academy of Sciences in Krakow. He took part in the two conventions of Slavic classical philologists.



Source: Archive MU



The concept of the statutes of the Seminar for Classical Philology.

Source: Archive of MU

Nevertheless, he became famous especially as an editor and publisher of Plato's works. In 1906, he published his first paper on this Athenian philosopher. After that, he gradually translated all his works into Czech language provided with Latin commentaries, and, last but not least, he prepared an extensive, four-volume monograph on Plato. He spent half of his life in Brno researching, translating, and teaching. Although he was popular among his students, he was also much feared due to his renowned strictness. He taught all linguistic disciplines; students today know him especially as an author of the handbooks of Latin grammar and its development and a co-author of the most extensive Latin-Czech dictionary.

Prof. Bartoněk about František Novotný: “I respected Novotný very much and I did not have to be afraid of him, as there was not a moment in his classes when someone would not make fool of himself.” (see the interview from 2014)

Karel Svoboda (1888–1960)

Karel Svoboda was employed by the university in 1920 and stayed in Brno for another 15 years until 1935, when he moved to Prague. He taught his students the History of Greek and Latin literature, ancient philosophy, as well as fine arts (reliefs, statues, ceramics, small decorated items of everyday use, etc.). Just like all classical philologists of the time, he was well versed in all the sub-disciplines of Classical Philology. However, his focus was on the aesthetic values of literary works, history of Classical Philology, and the ancient tradition in the European and Czech cultural contexts. His interest in the philosophy of Ancient Greece led to the publication of the monograph *Zlomky předsokratovských myslitelů* (The Fragments of pre-Socratic thinkers, published in 1944). One of his greatest contributions to the field is also the extensive catalogue of Czech and Slovak bibliography dealing with antiquity.

“...although in the spring the ministerial board ordered all state accounting departments and cash desks to pay off the accounts of sole traders without any delay, it has remained the habit to negotiate matters in the old-fashioned indolent way, i.e. once in a blue month. (...) Dear esteemed prof. Novotný, if it is in any way possible, please, push forward the matter in the places concerned...” (a letter from a bookseller to F. Novotný, January the 24th 1924)

World War II and... 1939—1945

Preparations for the academic year 1939/1940 were made with expectations and worries about the future. There was a tension between students and professors who were, together with the rest of the nation, shocked by the recent betrayal of the western allies, surrender of the bordering Czechoslovak regions and the formation of a protectorate Böhmen und Mähren. The former rector of the faculty and a literary historian Arne Novák, who was encouraging the whole academia until the very last moments, provides us with the testimony about the contemporary atmosphere.

“I promise by my own name, by the name of academic senate and of every professor, that we will protect the integrity of our high education with all force.”

--- from the speech of Arne Novák, October 13th 1938

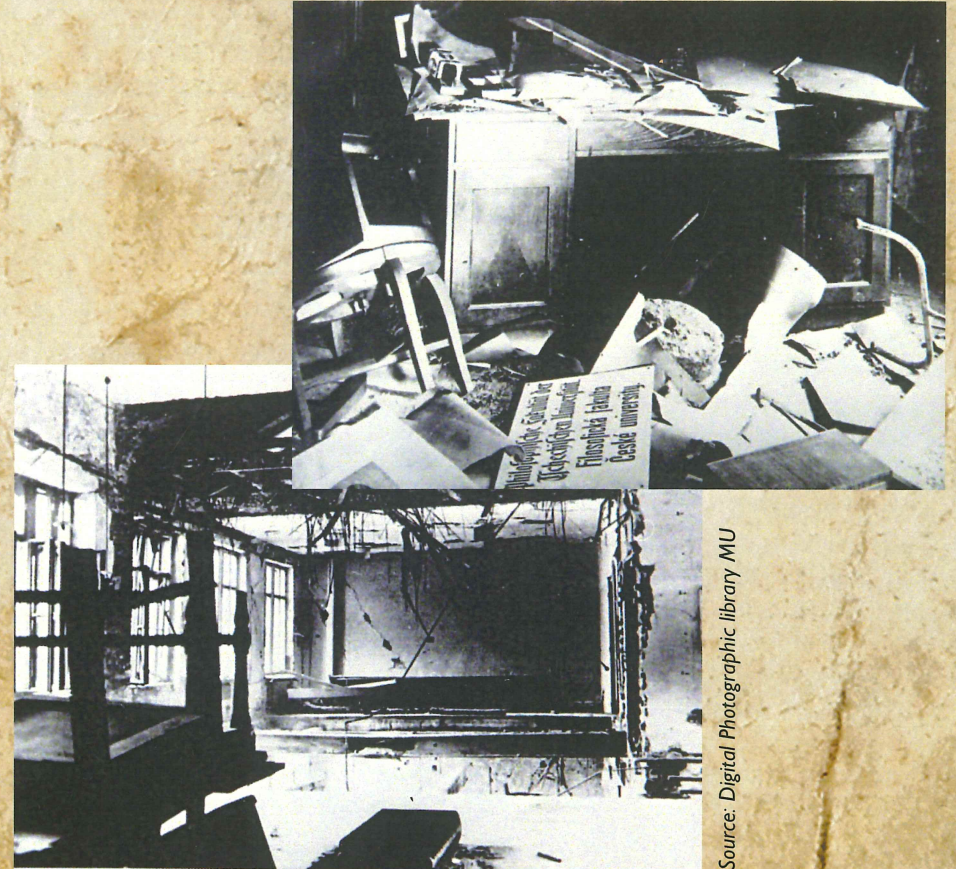
Shortly before the beginning of the war the professor staff of the Department of Classical Philology was reinforced by Jaroslav Ludvíkovský who, after the formation of a fascist Slovak State, was expelled from the university of Bratislava, where he had worked since its founding. He was appointed the head of the department right after his arrival to Brno but he did not get to teaching, as on November 17th 1939 all Czech universities were closed. Moreover, Masaryk University was supposed to be regarded as if it never existed.



Memorial plaque planted in the sidewalk of today's Grohova Street.

Six Years of War

Masaryk University suffered numerous losses during the six years of war. A part of its buildings was given to the German Technology Institute, other parts were distributed between German offices and army. Many of the buildings were also damaged during bombings. Most of the funds of the university libraries were plundered. However, the most painful losses were on lives – 45 teachers did not survive the war, including Vladimír Groh, a professor of ancient history and a member of the Sokol resistance, who was shot in September 1941 in the yard of Kounic student dormitories.



Post-war condition of the faculty buildings

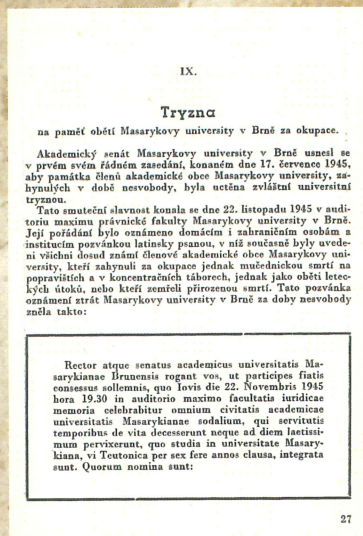
...Academic Wars 1945—1959

Post-War Restoration

Post-war enthusiasm was manifesting itself considerably during the works on the reopening of the university and its return to the pre-war condition. Many of the students were spontaneously helping with cleaning the buildings after their occupation by Nazis, whereas the association of university officials and pedagogues was restored almost immediately. During May 1945, the state exams were taking place in the damaged classrooms, while the first graduation ceremony was held on June 7th of the same year. The Department of Classical Philology returned to the building on the Siroťčí Street. Its newly appointed professors were Ferdinand Stiebitz and a classical archeologist Gabriel Hejzlar.

The Rising of Communism

Freedom of the Czechoslovak universities was violated again with the rise of the Communist Party to power in February 1948. This was demonstrated both in personal and financial spheres – politically unacceptable teachers were warned to adapt to the new worldview, they were deprived of all important positions, and watched diligently. Among classical philologists, this applied to professors Novotný and Ludvíkovský whose cadre reviews were stained by the case of a historian Bohdan Chudoba – both professors stood up for this anticommunist rebel, when his habilitation was being obstructed by the committee.



Invitation to a commemoration of war victims. Yearbook of the Masaryk University in Brno, 1947.

“The department's secretariate reviewed the current activity of prof. Novotný, especially in political terms. (...) Comrade prof. Novotný explained his opinions: when recruitment to ROH was taking place, he was told that everyone had to join. However, Prof. Novotný then asked KOH and found out that the membership was voluntary. His refusal to join was to serve as a proof that membership indeed was voluntary. (...) Concerning the refusal to sign the declaration about atomic bomb, he said that he had a very refined sense for style and did not want to sign a declaration clearly composed in a hurry and, thus, unacceptable for his sense of style.”

--- from the report about the function of the department, 1951

“Purification” Era

The short period right after the war was overflowing with numbers of students interested in studying at the restored universities. This high demand was one of the reasons for establishing the admission exams. The second reason was the so-called “assessment of national and political reliability of the university students”. Besides students' knowledge, a cadre review was equally important for his/her acceptance or rejection. In 1948, however, all candidates were accepted for the study at the Faculty of Arts. Among the members of the first faculty committee was professor Hejzlar; from the students, there were future professors Hošek and Češka.

Higher Education Reform

According to the school reform of 1948, gymnasia (higher grammar schools) were closed, which brought with it the end of the teaching of Classical languages in higher education, too. Thus, from the beginning of the 50s, the new university students of Classical Philology were unfamiliar with Latin or Greek. This, of course, influenced the course of teaching – classes of normative grammar and reading of authors were added. In a pre-war era, students knew these from their former high school studies. The whole curriculum was, therefore, spontaneously moving towards some kind of formalization.

Program přednášek a cvičení letovníku 1949/50

100.F. stibitiz	Antická bibliografie	13	semprae.	Stiebitz	9,30-10
110.F. stiebitz	Antická bibliografie	16	semprae.	Stiebitz	9,15-10,45
111.F. stiebitz	Antická bibliografie	12	semprae.	Stiebitz	10 - 11,30
112.F. stiebitz	Antická bibliografie	13	semprae.	Stiebitz	11,30 - 13
113.F. stiebitz	Antická bibliografie	16	semprae.	Stiebitz	11 - 12,30
114.F. stiebitz	Antická bibliografie	6	semprae.	Stiebitz	17,30 - 19
115.F. stiebitz	Antická bibliografie	6	semprae.	Stiebitz	15,30 - 17
116.F. stiebitz	Antická bibliografie	6	semprae.	Stiebitz	11 - 12,30
117.F. stiebitz	Antická bibliografie	6	semprae.	Stiebitz	17,45-19,20
118.F. stiebitz	Antická bibliografie	6	semprae.	Stiebitz	17,45-19,20
119.F. stiebitz	Antická bibliografie	6	semprae.	Stiebitz	11,30 - 13
120.F. stiebitz	Antická bibliografie	6	semprae.	Stiebitz	11,30 - 13
121.F. stiebitz	Antická bibliografie	6	semprae.	Stiebitz	11,30 - 13
122.F. stiebitz	Antická bibliografie	6	semprae.	Stiebitz	11,30 - 13
123.F. stiebitz	Antická bibliografie	6	semprae.	Stiebitz	11,30 - 13
124.F. stiebitz	Antická bibliografie	6	semprae.	Stiebitz	11,30 - 13
125.F. stiebitz	Antická bibliografie	6	semprae.	Stiebitz	11,30 - 13
126.F. stiebitz	Antická bibliografie	6	semprae.	Stiebitz	11,30 - 13
127.F. stiebitz	Antická bibliografie	6	semprae.	Stiebitz	11,30 - 13
128.F. stiebitz	Antická bibliografie	6	semprae.	Stiebitz	11,30 - 13
129.F. stiebitz	Antická bibliografie	6	semprae.	Stiebitz	11,30 - 13
130.F. stiebitz	Antická bibliografie	6	semprae.	Stiebitz	11,30 - 13
131.F. stiebitz	Antická bibliografie	6	semprae.	Stiebitz	11,30 - 13
132.F. stiebitz	Antická bibliografie	6	semprae.	Stiebitz	11,30 - 13
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134.F. stiebitz	Antická bibliografie	6	semprae.	Stiebitz	11,30 - 13
135.F. stiebitz	Antická bibliografie	6	semprae.	Stiebitz	11,30 - 13
136.F. stiebitz	Antická bibliografie	6	semprae.	Stiebitz	11,30 - 13
137.F. stiebitz	Antická bibliografie	6	semprae.	Stiebitz	11,30 - 13
138.F. stiebitz	Antická bibliografie	6	semprae.	Stiebitz	11,30 - 13
139.F. stiebitz	Antická bibliografie	6	semprae.	Stiebitz	11,30 - 13
140.F. stiebitz	Antická bibliografie	6	semprae.	Stiebitz	11,30 - 13

V Brně dne 13. dubna 1950.

List of the lectures and classes in the spring/summer term of 1950.

Vladimír Groh (1895–1941)

Classical philologist Vladimír Groh started to teach students of Masaryk University Greek and Roman history in 1931. He was well known for his precise work with sources (he translated Livius) as well as for his applying the knowledge from different disciplines in his work (e.g. archaeology, papyrology, geology, climatology, etc.). In 1936, he was appointed the dean of the Faculty of Arts; during the war he joined the Czech resistance network. In February 1941, he was arrested and in September of the same year executed for the preparation of high treason. Nowadays, the street adjacent to the area of his home faculty bears his name.



Source: Archive of MU

Vladimír Groh in "Sokol" garb.

Ferdinand Stiebitz (1894–1961)

Ferdinand Stiebitz is famous primarily for his numerous translations. He is said to have acquired the first salary for translating Latin as soon as he was 18 years old, which he used to buy a bicycle. Even today, the readers of ancient tragedies and comedies are familiar with him, as he translated these with unusual taste for spoken language and Greek dialects – e.g. he used various dialects of Czech as well as Slovak language. With his charisma and sense of humour he managed to win over both his students and the general public. Nowadays, students still use his textbook on the history of Greek and Roman literature (*Stručné dějiny řecké a římské literatury*).



Source: Archive of MU

Ferdinand Stiebitz at the end of the 50s.

"He gave lectures on ancient literature in a fascinating and irresistible way (...) his voice was mesmerizing."

--- from the interview with Jana Nechutova, Kontexty 4/2009

Radislav Hošek (1922–2005)

Professor Hošek dedicated 20 years of his life to Classical Philology in Brno; he was both its graduate and later a teacher. In 1965, he left for Charles University in Prague. He was interested in religion, history, and epigraphy – together with Josef Češka he translated the Roman inscriptions found in Slovakia. He also witnessed the beginnings of the Ancient Library book edition on which he cooperated with translator Rudolf Mertlík. His own translating was focused mainly on Plato.

6

Posluchačovo jméno (studijní nomen): *Radislav Hošek* Rodiště (locus nat.): *Brno*
židovské běh stud. roku *1945/46* Fakulta (Facultas): *filosofická*

(Semestre) ani (...)

Název přednášky i jméno přednášejícího (Index scholarum et nomina magistrorum)	Počet hodin (Quot per habetur, horae)	Svržení kvotového o sjezdu o zaplacení kolokviu soub osvobození (Exemptio, nomen et solvendi solutio aut immunitatis testatoris quatuor)	Svržení přednášejících o zápisu (Receptum nomen testatoris magistrorum)	Potvrzení návštěvy před- nášek (Scholarum frequentatus testatoris magistrorum)	Poznámky (Adnotata)	
<i>Mirko Novák: Vývoj novověké filosofie</i>	3		<i>Novák</i>	<i>Novák</i>		
<i>Josef Drozdaček: Úvod do obecné pedagogiky</i>	3		<i>Novák</i>	<i>Drozdaček</i>		
<i>František Novotný: Věda o latinském slohu</i>	3		<i>F. Novák</i>	<i>F. Novák</i>		
<i>František Novotný: Platon</i>	2		<i>F. Novák</i>	<i>F. Novák</i>		
<i>Ferdinand Stiebitz: Římská literatura doby pozlaskice</i>	3		<i>Stiebitz</i>	<i>Stiebitz</i>	<i>Stiebitz</i>	
<i>Ferdinand Stiebitz: Řecký svět ve III. a IV. stol. před. Kristem</i>	1					
<i>Ferdinand Stiebitz: Latinský proseminář činná úprava Curtia Rufa</i>	(2)					
<i>Jaroslav Loprický: Řecký proseminář činná úprava Platónovy apologet.</i>	(2)		<i>Loprický</i>	<i>Loprický</i>		

7

Excerpt from the university index of the later professor
Hošek. 1945.



Source: Archive of MU

“Well... better not cruising for a bruising” 1960—1988

During the 60s there was a huge increase of those interested in studying at the University (which was for political reasons renamed to The University of J. M. Purkyně). This was apparent at the Department of Ancient History, too, which offered three fields of study to the post-war students – Classical Philology, Classical Archaeology, and Ancient History.

Golden Sixties

At the Department, this decade is marked by passing the torch to the younger generation – Ancient History was undertaken by Josef Češka, Classical Archaeology by Oldřich Pelikán, and Classical Philology by Antonín Bartoněk and Antonín Hartmann. The politically looser, more favourable atmosphere at the end of the 60s brought forward a quick academic progress, which resulted in the young associate professors Češka, Bartoňek and Hoška becoming the professors. The presence of the historically first female members of the academic staff was understood as a ground-breaking change – these were a postgraduate Jana Nechutová and a research assistant Daša Bartoňková.

Normalization

Reconsolidation after August 21st 1968 had a huge impact on the University. Just like in the spring of 1948, cadre reviews of students and teachers were made. Nevertheless, the Faculty of Arts was affected the least of all and the classical philologists in Brno were fortunate enough to be spared from these practices. Josef Češka was appointed the head of the Department, and he tried, according to the motto “well... better not cruising for a bruising”, to avoid any problems beforehand, which he sometimes did more carefully than necessary. During the next twenty years, the academic life at the university appeared to be “frozen in time”, an academic promotion was practically impossible and the Faculty of Arts became the Faculty of postgraduates. In this era, the education was subordinate to the regime more than ever and completely centralized – there were detailed study plans obligatory to all universities.

“In 1970/73 the university management emphasized the importance of the ideological impact of pedagogic work in all its extent.”

--- from the university yearbook, 1968–1975.

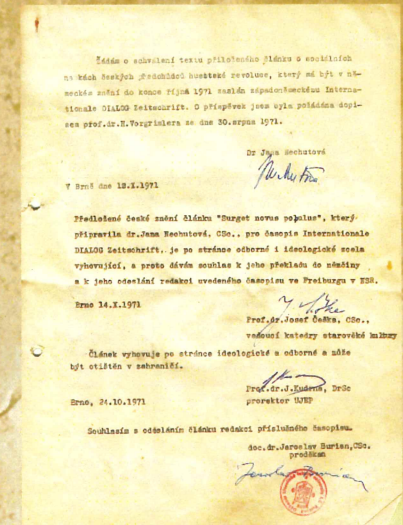
Latin Is Dead, Long Live Latin!

Not even the uneasy atmosphere could have stopped the diverse and vigorous activities at the Department. Professor Bartoněk and Dr. Prutký undertook an almost guerilla operation, when they secretly monitored the state of Latin education at Moravian high schools, pretending to be shielded of the Ministry of Education. Later on, this led to the nowadays traditional meetings of Latin teachers. Latin students even organized the evenings of poetry or performed plays with ancient motives. A society for the supporters of the living Latin was created by Jan Šprincl. He was an extraordinary figure also when it comes to translating. Unlike his colleagues, he was translating from Czech to Latin and Greek, not recoiling even from the works of Otokar Březina. The following example, however, comes from another Czech poem. Can you guess which one?

Decessit mater, in sepulcrum data,
manserunt orbi pueri.
Vadebant quoque mane, luce grata,
quaerentes matrem miseri.

Κάεθανε μήτηρ, γῆ κρύφθη, τύμβον
θέσαν ἀμφί,
ἄθλια νηπιάρχους κάλλιπεν ὀρφανίους.
Πρῶι δ' ὑπὸ τοῖσι φοῖι των διζήμενοι αἰεὶ
μητράριον σφετερόν αἰὲν ἐφήμεριοι.

It is from the collection *Kytice (A Bouquet of Folk Legends)* by Karel Jaromír Erben.



Jaroslav Ludvíkovský (1895–1984)

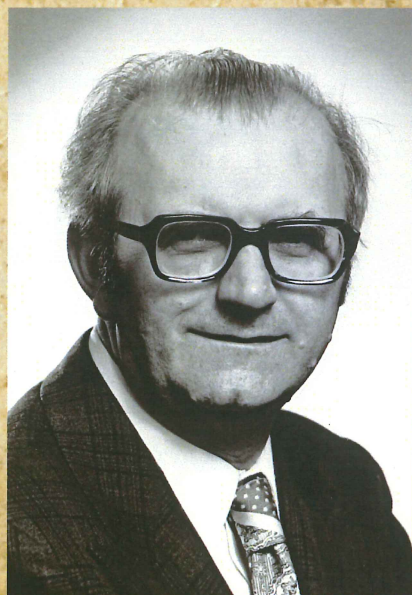
Professor Ludvíkovský worked in Bratislava, where he was dealing with Greek novels and the concept of humanity as it was viewed by the ancients. He arrived at the University of Brno in 1939, forced by the change of political conditions in Slovakia. Most of his research was dedicated to medieval Czech literature and together with the classical philologist Bohumil Ryba from Prague, he can be considered a founder of Czech Medieval studies. He is especially known as an editor and a translator of the so-called Legend of Kristian.

Josef Češka (1923–2015)

Josef Češka dedicated almost all his life to this university. At the beginning of the 70s he was appointed the head of the Department of Ancient Culture, while he also worked as a vice-dean several times. He primarily taught the ancient history, whereas in his research he focused on the late antiquity (his honourable successor in this field became Jarmila Bednaříková). In one of his publications, he analysed the relationship between Christianity and Roman Senate, to the students, he is well-known for his translation of Ammianus Marcellinus.



Professor Ludvíkovský



Professor Češka

Source: Archive of MU

“In him, the ancient tradition, education, and the Epicurean life of a fated “bon vivant” blended with the European Christian tradition in a very unique way. He was an absolutely wonderful man – an actual *homo humanus*.” --- from the interview with Jana Nechutová, Kontexty 4/2009.

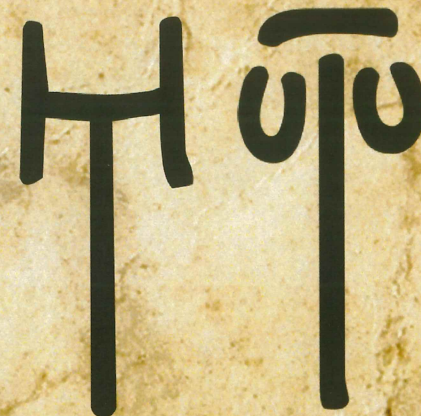
Antonín Bartoněk (1926–2016)

Many students vividly remember Professor Bartoněk because, despite his advanced age, he was still teaching at the Department of Classical Studies almost to the very last moment (from 1952 without any breaks). He taught the students of Ancient Greek and Latin, while scientifically, he was interested in the Greek dialects, especially the Mycenaean. In 1958, he provided the Classical Philology in Brno with a worldwide fame, when he published his renowned paper helping to decipher Linear B script. His friendship with a prominent British mycaeanologist prof. John Chadwick is notorious.



Antonín Bartoněk as a student of Latin and Ancient Greek.

Source: Archive of MU



Signs 8 and 25 of Linear B script, which are phonetically different, as pointed out by Antonín Bartoněk in his paper.

Rising from the Ashes 1989—2000

Although the events of November 1989 went forward with some delay in Brno, the Faculty of Arts certainly did not fall behind the revolutionary course of events. On November the 20th, students declared strike and, in the afternoon, a huge assembly was gathered at the forecourt of the faculty in Arne Nováka Street. A linguist Dušan Šlosar became the most active member of academic staff in these efforts. There were several students leaders, too, including Roman Švanda, a student of Czech and Latin languages today known as a committed poet and an a cafeteria owner.

As for the academic staff of the Ancient History Institute, there were no revolutionary activist except for PhDr. Zdeněk Zlatuška who took part in the copying of samizdat texts and, together with his wife, was in close contact with the dissidents in Prague.

However, the Democratic Forum of Communist Party, a newly founded association at the time, also gained its followers in academic staff, including doc. Jarmila Bednaříková who was then a fresh research assistant at the Institute. Although this political group endorsed the socialist ideals, it refused the rule of a single party and condemned Soviet occupation by the armies of the Warsaw Pact in August 1968; it also demanded the full rehabilitation of those citizens who were unjustly afflicted by the normalizing measures following the occupation.



Protest posters at the porter's lodge of the Faculty of Arts. November 1989.



Assembly of students and teachers at the forecourt of the Faculty of Arts. November 1989.

Source: Digital photographic library, MU

“We were all welcoming the November events and went for it right away, but not under the spotlight. We took part unostentatiously, as many others did...” (from the interview with prof. Jana Nechutová, autumn 2016).

The End of an Academic “Madhouse”: The Age of (Honorary) Degrees

At the beginning of 1990s, many scholars finally got the opportunity to finish their degrees, which were before unattainable to them because of their “inappropriate” political standing during the Communist era. Thus, the faculty administered by research assistants gradually became a place where higher degrees took the lead. The injustices suffered by many excellent scientists were, at least retroactively, compensated by granting honorary degrees. These ceremonies could not do without Latin speeches performed with splendour and elegance by prof. Bartoněk, the university's promotor.



Antonín Bartoněk grants a PhD doctorate. 1990.

Source: Photo archive ÚKS

Women Take Over the Reins

In 1992, prof. Jana Nechutová became the first female head of the department. Moreover, in 1995, she became the first, and up to now the only, female dean of the Faculty of Arts. However, it has to be mentioned that she followed in this function four distinguished men - F. Novotný, K. Svoboda, V. Groh, and F. Stiebitz. In 1998, another woman, Daša Bartoňková, took the reins as the head of the department.

„I do not think that there ever was any contempt for us because we were women. If we were treated differently, it was rather in a positive way.”

(from the interview with Jana Nechutová, autumn 2016).

Extension of the Study Offer

In 1993, the Department of Classical Studies came with a new study programme of Modern Greek. A key figure from its very beginnings of the programme has been Růžena Dostálová, a distinguished scholar and translator in the field of Byzantine Studies. Under the leadership of prof. Nechutová, the department's research got more involved in the editorial work with the Latin works produced in Czech lands. Already in the 1940s, prof. Ludvíkovský started to deal with Medieval Studies at the department; however, the isolation of the Eastern Bloc impeded the full development of the research. Only the return of freedom into the academic environment (and also elsewhere), this field started to become more appreciated.



Source: Archiv of MU

Jana Nechutová as a dean of the Faculty of Arts. 1995.

Medieval Studies = From Latin *medium aevum* – middle age. The science which deals with the Middle Ages and, as for philology, its literary heritage. Czech-Latin Medieval Studies focuses on the Latin literature produced in Czech lands.

Jana Nechutová (nar. 1936)

Professor Nechutová studied at the Faculty of Arts, Masaryk University, Brno, and, from 1961, she was working at the department as a postgraduate student. Together with Daša Bartoňková, she was one of the first women belonging to the academic staff of the contemporary department (The Ancient Culture Institute). She also became the first female head of the department and even a dean of the Faculty of Arts. She is a significant representative of Latin Medieval Studies in Czech Republic. For many, she has been inherently tied to the research on Czech Reformation and its main figure John Hus. Students are also well acquainted with her handbook on Czech-Latin medieval literature.



Jana Nechutová with her students at the Intensive Study Seminars. Penzion Smrad'avka, Buchlovice, 1993.

ÚKS today 2000—2016

Brand new study fields

Right after the start of a new millenium, the department extended its offer study programmes by including new fields of study. The Mediterranean Studies became the first of these brand new fields and it has provided students with a broader insight into the development of the Mediterranean cultural space from the antiquity up to nowadays. The students of Mediterranean Studies do not become familiar only with the classical languages and literatures, but also with Romance languages, Modern Greek, and newly also Arabic (in Master's level), including the national literatures and recent political situation of the particular regions. Moreover, Ancient History can now finally be studied as an independent study programme, which is also thanks to its long tradition reaching as far as to the First Republic. In the Master's level, a new specialization of Mediaeval Latin has been added to the curriculum.

Studying with Pleasure

The students ÚKS have the opportunity to take part in various study trips focused on ancient monuments – recently, these were e.g. trips to Budapest and Rome. In addition, each year the department conducts an intensive study seminar outside the University, which is full of intensive teaching as well as extracurricular activities. Since 2011, students can be active within their own Student Society at ÚKS whose aim is to put together students from various study fields. It organizes various cultural events, as e.g. the official welcoming of new students, Christmas parties, etc. Furthermore, the Society's amateur



Photo: Marek Meška

A view towards the bright future from the top of Castel Sant'Angelo, spring 2015.



Photo: Rudolf Šnajder

Master John Hus criticizes against indulgences in the play performed by Titivillus. Autumn 2015.

dramatic ensemble named Titivillus promotes the good reputation of the department by performing plays in Latin and Ancient Greek.

We are no dinosaurs!

One of the most significant projects completed recently by the department was the establishing of an extensive collection of electronic databases named *Litterae ante portas*. These databases make the research in the field of Classical studies, as well as in other academic fields, much easier, as they contain not only the digitalized Latin and Ancient Greek source texts, but also online versions of foreign encyclopaedias.

Migration of nations... and statues

Due to the extensive reconstruction of the former orphanage building of the Faculty of Arts, the Department of Classical Studies was compelled to move into the former buildings of the Faculty of Medicine in Komenského náměstí (building M). This included also the moving of the plaster copies of famous ancient statues which were obtained by the department from the collections of the cancelled German technical school. However, these did not return to the department's precincts after the reconstruction but were installed in the interior of the reconstructed buildings A and B to be admired by all. An attentive observer may also notice that the residence of the department was originally one floor higher.



Present academic staff of the department. Notice a significant gender transformation that took place at the department. Autumn 2016.



Celebration of prof. Novotný's 80th birthday. Standing from the left: Bartoněk, Janáček, Pelikán, Hošek, and Češka; sitting from the left: Ludvíkovský, Novotný and Hejzlar. 1965.