

A Picture of Professor France Veber in Slovene Literature

In the period between both World Wars professor France Veber was a central personality at the University of Ljubljana. His picture of an exceptional lecturer and an exceptional man is shown also in the memories of the writer Vladimir Bartol (Demon and Eros, The Masked Troubadour, Dr. Jug's Ethical Views). Vladimir Bartol, philosopher, psychologist and master of word, was attending also lectures of professor Veber and at the same time he was a friend of Veber's assistant Klement Jug, a legendary alpinist, who lost his life in August in 1924. In Bartol's literary works, which are also of memoirist nature, there appears, beside memories on his dead friend, also a picture of professor Veber.

In his record "Dr. Jug's Ethical Views" Vladimir Bartol described Jug's dilemma between art and science. He chose philosophy and so he was given a precious mentor France Veber. In their philosophical conceptions they differed many a time, but professor Veber highly appreciated his student's self-confidence and mind of his own. Also Jug's book Ethics which remained unfinished, was written as a result of his reply to Veber's ethics with which Jug disagreed in some views.

A memoir note "The Place of a Severe Trial" represents the last meeting of Vladimir Bartol with Klement Jug. Jug who bears in him a presentiment of death, remembers professor Veber with great love and care. He feared that professor would remain without the determined friend who would defend him and his scientific work against "philosophical dilettantes".

Professor Veber, on the other hand, remembers his dead friend and assistant in the necrology "Dr. Jug's Thoughts". He named his student a teacher and patron. As teacher he taught him to believe in mankind, in young people, who would set up a new ethical image of Europe with a vigorous action. As patron Klement Jug enriched Veber's scientific work with new cognitions as well.

In his writing "Jug's Ethical Views" Vladimir Bartol began by focusing attention on Jug's search for life determination when he was wavering between art and science. Bartol states that he needed a guide for his decision. So France Veber, a university professor, became Klement Jug's guide. Bartol writes down: "It is with an unbelievable lightness how his youthful, flexible spirit adapted itself to abstract analyses of our philosopher, the spirit which not long ago had still been searching for outbursts in poetry and art. Soon he became his first student." There was a close bond of friendship between the professor and the student and also a big joint research work. Sometimes there aroused also disputes between them, but professor Veber, as an exceptional scientist and pedagogue, understood and appreciated the individualistic way of his student. In scientific aspect they differed in ethical matters, because Klement Jug did not agree with Veber's ethical starts. In no way he accepted Veber's emotional "perfection or imperfection" and in this connection he said the following: "A man who in emotional sense would act as perfectly as possible, could not for a long time arouse my respect. I asked my sister, who has a fine instinct, unspoiled from theories, if she could love a man which would be in every respect "perfect" in Veber's sense. And when I precisely explained to her how I thought, she denied it definitely, saying that she prefers a man who has mistakes, but is in a certain moment senselessly good and who is perhaps far away from the man which is Veber's ethical ideal...."

The difference between logical, correct and good is infinite! The human heart however asks for good and not for correct..." For this reason Klement Jug was writing his own book on ethics, but it remained unfinished because of Jug's tragic death.

The literary and biographical story "The Last Eve" tells us about the last meeting between the writer Vladimir Bartol and the philosopher Klement Jug. Both friends met at Aljažev dom below the Triglav mountain. Klement Jug was preparing himself for his most challenging climbing tour, for which he deeply felt to be his last one. On the eve before Jug's departure for the rock-wall from where there was no return, both friends, Jug and Bartol, were talking late into the night about Jug's personal and national tragic nature. Jug was defeated as ethical reformer and he lost confidence in mankind. He trusted to his friend as follows: "How do you think I feel after I came to know that any endeavour for improvement and rise of humanity is

only an unnecessary waste of strength? After it, when I had believed in it for such a long time? I loved my nation too much and I struck too deep roots that I could stand such a disappointment. Those to whom I devoted my heart and soul, were the first ones who spat upon them. It is only now that I correctly understand Cankar and his despair in humanity. It is only now that I can correctly deem his courage when he threw himself into that fight "without hope for victory"... For whom shall I live, since I lost faith in humanity?" From that Jug's disillusion with the nation, there rises only one bright figure and this figure is the one of professor France Veber, from whom Jug takes leave with big grief. He trusts to his friend Bartol the following: "I really feel sorry for my teacher. In what a friendly way he took my side. He opened me the way to scientific thinking, he showed me the meaning of a scientific work and aroused in me longing for knowledge, for truth which will not extinguish as long as I live. You yourself know that sometimes we got in conflict in our debates. Perhaps you remember how in his zeal of temperament he did wrong to me sometimes or even offended me. After such an event he always came to me and excused himself. I tell you: a splendid teacher! How we have been glad just in recent time to be cooperating! In many a matter I came even further than he. When I told him my conclusions, we discussed about them. If he saw that I was right, he was always courageous enough to withdraw his statements with sincerity. I fear that there will appear philosophic dilettantes and start to rummage through his work. It will be with an impudent gesture that they will appropriate his doctrine, took it into their impure whirl and even lost from their eyes those bright goals of free comprehension, for which we struggled together. I would be sorry if at that time I could not be at his side. When you come to Ljubljana, convey him my best regards. "The next day, on 11th August 1924, Klement Jug lost his life in the north rock-wall of the Triglav.

The death of his friend and assistant hurt professor France Veber very much. He took leave from his friend with the obituary with the title "Dr.Jug's Views". First professor Veber recalls a memory on a student of the first term, who after a lecture stepped in a flurry to the professor and asked him to clarify some problems which had excited him. During a friendly walk they talked about many a thing and at that time professor Veber found out the following: "Like by a mere chance I met a man, who, though young, had bitter experience and whose inexorably sharp intellect united with a child's tenderness of heart. He chose the truth as his life

guideline and he remained faithful to it till his death, so faithful that because of the truth all his personal interests got darkened. He became the leader among those young people without which also my work would be merely a building on sand." After review of Jug's scientific work, France Veber returns to the friendship linking the professor to his student. He writes down the following: "He liked to name me his teacher and benefactor. Now I may admit that he was my teacher and benefactor alike. My teacher: with a real life he taught me to firmly believe in mankind, especially in youth. My benefactor: the hours I spent with him belong to the most beautiful hours of my life. Only this consoles me: I met him in searching for goals, he left me when the goals had already passed into his flesh and soul. And yet: who can describe my grief when I laid a wreath on his grave and in vain tried to speak up my last salutation... Oh, mountains, you however do not know what you have taken to me and to my nation! A young man pure in feeling, a perfect man in mind and will. Give him back at least to the memory and to all the good youth which was so near to his heart."

After the tragic death of Klement Jug the writer Vladimir Bartol revived, in his literary works, the picture of his friend, philosopher and alpinist Klement Jug. In these literary works a special place is dedicated also to professor France Veber. In Slovene literature the figure of professor Veber remains permanently noted down as an exceptional personality in scientific and cultural life in the period between both World Wars and above all as a figure of an outstanding man.