

Slovak philosophical generations: From the middle of the 19th to the middle of the 20th century

Rudolf Dupkala¹

Abstract

The leitmotif of the article is an analysis and interpretation of disputes about the nature of Slovak philosophy in the contexts of the formation of individual philosophical generations from the middle of the 19th to the middle of the 20th century. In the content core of the article, the dispute is about the nature of Slovak philosophy in the first generation of its representatives, which was represented by the followers of the so-called “Štúr School”. As a follow-up to this dispute, the article analyzes the ideological confrontations of followers of *religious* and *secular* philosophical thought in Slovakia during the first Czechoslovak republic. It is a dispute between followers of classical (European) positivism and, partly, Masarykism with the representatives of contemporary religious philosophy in Slovakia. At the end of the paper, the trend of disputes about the nature of Slovak philosophy is outlined even in the period after the *Stalinist*, and, later, the so-called *normalization* indoctrination of Slovak philosophy.

Keywords: man, God, philosophy, knowledge, faith, science

Instead of an introduction

The terminological connections “philosophical thought in Slovakia” and “Slovak philosophy” are not synonyms. We can talk about a more broadly focused *philosophical thinking*, on the territory of today’s Slovakia, since the second half of the 9th century, when the term “philosophy” appeared here – as part of the Christianization mission of the Thessaloniki brothers Constantine (Cyril) and Methodius in Great Moravia. It is worth remembering that, according to the contemporary Moravian-Pannonian legend *Life of Constantine – Cyril*, to the question: *what is philosophy?* Constantine answered: “The knowledge of divine and human things, insofar as a person can approach God, teaches a person to become by his own actions the image and likeness of the one who created him” (Žitie sv. Konštantína, 1990, p. 4).

If we consider “Slovak philosophy” to be only philosophy that already “speaks Slovak” and is presented exclusively by *Slovak scholars*, then its origins date back to the middle of the 19th century, when it can be encountered in the work of *philosophizing* representatives of the Štúr generation, among whom are included Ľudovít Štúr, Jozef M. Hurban, Milan M. Hodža, Andrej Sládkovič, Samuel B. Hroboň, Peter K. Hostinský, Ctiboh Zoch, and others.² It is noteworthy that probably the first (*expressis verbis*) application of the terminological combination “Slovak philosophy” can be found in the editorial note of Hurban in the journal *Slovenskije pohľady* [*Slovak Views*], where – among other things – he wrote: “we are all called Hegelians by our opponents... however, we are convinced that *even Slovak philosophy cannot be perfectly understood by anyone who does not know Hegel’s system and does not swim the sea of philosophy with him*” (Hurban, 1847, p. 32).³

¹ University of Prešov (Slovakia); rudolf.dupkala@unipo.sk; ORCID: 0000-0002-6036-571X

² Despite the fact that none of the representatives of this generation can still be considered a “professional philosopher” (*professionally* they were mainly theologians, teachers, writers, poets, linguists, etc.), they influenced at least two other generations with their philosophical activities of – humanitarian and nationally oriented – Slovak educated people.

³ This is Hurban’s short note to Eugen Gerometta’s article *Slovanov náklonnosť k slobode: Slovo k potupníkom našim* [*Slavs’ affection for freedom: A word to our slanderers*], in which Gerometta stated that Hegel writes in such a way that no one understands him (Gerometta, 1847, p. 32). I express myself in detail about Hurban’s opinion in my monograph entitled *Štúrovci a Hegel* [*The followers of Štúr and Hegel*] (Dupkala, 2000, pp. 38–46).

The leitmotif of the present contribution is presented in the form of the disputes about the nature of Slovak philosophy in the period from the middle of the 19th to the middle of the 20th century. These controversies are exemplified by the work of representatives of three generations working within Slovak philosophy. The first generation is represented by the already mentioned *Followers of Štúr*. The representatives of the second generation are Slovak *promoters* of classical positivism, Masarykism, and religious (Catholic and Protestant) philosophy. The third one is the rising generation of the first *professional* Slovak philosophers and academics, who were involved in the “Association for Scientific Synthesis” and in the spirit of the logical positivism of the time, working from approximately 1937 until 1948.

The dispute about the nature of Slovak philosophy within the Štúr generation

The Štúr generation was philosophically heterogeneous since the time of its inception – in the middle of the 19th century – which was also reflected in its internal disputes about the nature of *Slovak* philosophy. Its ideological-philosophical differentiation occurred soon after – its dominant representative – Štúr (1815–1856) postulated his understanding of poetry as “an embrace of matter and spirit in words”, adding that “poetry must contain spirit and matter, but it must be connected to the spirit in such a way that it is independent, but matter serves it, and is essential” (Štúr, 1987, p. 29).

Despite the fact that Štúr in this program thesis expressed the need for the unity of *spirit* and *matter* (i.e. in Štúr’s concept of *nature*, or *objectivity*), the generation he was addressing gradually differentiated itself according to whether it preferred an orientation to *spirit* or to *matter* instead of the desired unity. Thus, two ideological-philosophical lines gradually formed in the Štúr community: *pragmatic*, or “Hegelian rationalist” (Štúr, Hurban, and others) and *messianic* or “anti-Hegelian irrationalist” (Hodža, Hroboň, and others).

While the pragmatist line strove for a *dialectical* understanding of the relationship between *spirit* and *objectivity* (accentuating the priority of *spirit* while preserving *objectivity*), the messianic line tended to “absorb” any *objectivity* by an “all-embracing” *spirit* on the basis of “panspirituality”. The pragmatic line was philosophically inspired primarily by Hegel, or Old Hegelism (Julius Schaller, Karl Rosenkranz, etc.). The Messianic line found its ideas mainly in the anti-Hegelian *argumentation* of the late Schelling.

It was characteristic of the *pragmatic* line in the generation of the Followers of Štúr that it leaned towards understanding philosophy as a specific concept of “faith-science”. The representatives of this line held the opinion that Hegel’s philosophy is not only a *speculative construct*, but that it can also be a highly functional “ideological tool”, which – if it is also applied to the program of the Slovak national revival – fulfills not only an important methodological, but also a social, even a *political* function. Moreover, they could also rely on the positions of Hegel himself, which this *giant* of European philosophy expressed in his *Phenomenology of the spirit* with the words: “Besides, it is not difficult to see that our own epoch is a time of birth and a transition to a new period. Spirit has broken with the previous world of its existence and its ways of thinking; it is now of a mind to let them recede into the past and to immerse itself in its own work at reshaping itself” (Hegel, 2018, p. 83).

Taking into account the mentioned facts, it can be concluded that the Štúr Hegelians understood philosophy as “knowledge” about the manifestations of the spirit in nature and in human society, which is necessary both for the life of an individual person as well as for entire nations. In relation to the Slovak nation, Jozef Miloslav Hurban (1817–1888) expressed it with the words: “philosophy is the *knowledge* that is most necessary for everyone, but especially for our newly awakening Slovak nation, with its help, the nation gets closer to the knowledge of what is to be its own spirit by penetrating its destiny. Without philosophy, the various voices

appearing in all aspects and sides of the nation cannot unite into one song of life, into one great meaning” (Hurban, 1972, p. 13).

The primary ambition of the Štúr Hegelians was to justify and present philosophy as a specific “faith-science”, i.e. a *spiritual power* that “bridges” Christian theism with Hegel’s idealistic monism. This can be exemplified by Štúr’s and Hurban’s understanding of the basic concepts of Hegel’s philosophy. The terms “absolute spirit”, or “absolute idea” are interpreted by Štúr as having a content-semantic unity with the term “God”. In other words: Hegel’s “absolute idea”, i.e. – according to Štúr – “incompletely expressed God”, “the spirit is what creates itself”, while it exists in three forms: “in the subjective as a person... in the objective as a nation... in the absolute as God” (Štúr, 1981, pp. 542–543). Hurban also applied the basic concepts of Hegel’s philosophy, especially Hegel’s philosophy of history, in a similar way (cf. Hurban, 1981, pp. 498–503).

The struggle for the character of Slovak philosophy in the Štúr generation took place against a background of disputes about the character of “Slavic science”⁴, whose basic (philosophical) principle was supposed to be – according to Hurban – the principle of the so-called “visions”. As an introduction to this issue, it is necessary to note that Hurban certainly does not understand the mentioned principle as a synonym for sensory perception. It is presented as a synthesis of all spiritual-cognitive dispositions of a person, which are realized through reason, *inner senses*, feelings, faith, etc., while the *main tool* of these dispositions is the so-called “spiritual eye” (in the language of Hurban: “oko duchovnuo”).

It seems that even the mentioned understanding of the principle of “vision” could have been inspired by the views of contemporary German philosophers, especially Jakob Fries and Johann Gottlieb Fichte. Specifically, Fries’s emphasis on the cognitive value of *feeling* and Fichte’s definition of *reason*, *faith*, and *conscience*. In any case, Hurban was convinced that “in Slavs it is the *spiritual eye* that no nation living before it had, and with which he clearly *sees* the pillar of truth dressed in the robe of faith” (Hurban, 1846, p. 11).

The reaction of the Followers of Štúr to Hurban’s idea of the principle of “vision”, from which not only the contemporary characteristics of “Slavic science”, but also *Slovak philosophy*, was derived, was obviously heterogeneous. While Zoch expresses several objections to it, Hostinský presents himself as its open apologist.

Zoch, for example, accused Hurban of isolating both “Slavic science” and *Slovak philosophy* from previous philosophical (especially German) systems. He claims that it is inadmissible, because “in order for us (Slavs – author’s note) to be able to know the *whole*, we must first know, as the Germans do, *sequentially*” (Zoch, 1847, p. 412). It seems that the mentioned objections of Zoch are unfounded in the given context, because Hurban certainly did not isolate himself from Western, and especially German, systems. On the contrary, he claimed that “the Slavic spirit and the educated Slovak must ford all the *rivers of knowledge*, including those contained in foreign systems... because only in this way will the vision of the Slavic vision be sharpened” (Hurban, 1846, p. 11). It can also be fully applied to Hurban’s – initially positive – relationship with Hegel.⁵

Despite this, Zoch continued his attacks against Hurban and his philosophical principle of “vision” and, even after admitting that Hurban did not isolate himself from German systems,

⁴ Hurban was convinced that “Slavic science” – in contrast to English, German, or French “science” – is realized through all the spiritual activities and abilities of a person. It is “a clear and distinct knowledge of what is in us, around us, in the spirit and in nature, in heaven and on earth... With us, faith is not trampled on by science, but calls us to life and deeds, it is transformed into a *vision* of certainty and truths” (Hurban, 1846, pp. 1, 4).

⁵ However, at least as a sidenote, it should be stated that after the suppression of the national movement of the Followers of Štúr in 1849, after the onset of Bach’s absolutism, and, above all, after the death of Štúr in 1856, Hurban increasingly identifies with theology and reevaluates his original relationship to Hegel and philosophy in general from a theistic position. Religious thinking – as Vladimír Mináč points out – will gradually “defeat even the highest philosophical consciousness of the world, namely Hegel and Hegelianism” (Mináč, 1974, p. 124).

he interpreted Hurban's entire understanding of "vision" only as a modification of the German *Weissagung*, or *Anschauung*, i.e. prophecies, visions, etc.

Paradoxically, Hostinský, who was originally involved in the *philosophical camp* of Štúr's anti-Hegelians, or in the *messianic* line, came to the defense of Hurban. He expressed his support for Hurban's principle of "vision" in the journal *Slovak Views* in 1851. Among other things, he emphasized here that Zoch is very wrong when he understands Hurban's word "vision" only in the sense of *prophecy*, or *visionary insight*. In his second (*open*) letter to Zoch, he wrote: "Hurban's principle of *vision* is not a prophecy... but it is a condition of immediate and comprehensive knowledge... it contains all ways of knowledge... not only reason and senses, but also faith... and glory to Hurban for leading us to the *center* from which we *see* and know everything" (Hostinský, 1847, pp. 468, 476). Despite the fact that German *metaphysics* and French-English *physics* bring only "moments" of truth, Hostinský does not reject them. On the contrary, in the spirit of the principle: *qui bene conjungit, bene docet*, he emphasizes that "these partial moments are a bridge to the land of Slavic truth, in which neither the *senses* and *sensuality*, nor the spirit and *reasonableness*, are the principle, because its principle and center is *vision*" (Hostinský, 1847, p. 476).

To conclude this part of the paper, it is necessary to add that the task of Štúr's "philosophy of vision" is – at the level of "new spirituality" – to unite the initiatives of German *metaphysics* and French-English *physics* into such a form of *reflection* of everything that exists, thanks to which philosophy will be able to *know* the "whole", the "complete truth", i.e., the world of nature, man, and God. In connection with the dispute about the nature of Slovak philosophy in the work of the Followers of Štúr, an important question arises: did this dispute also affect the next generation of Slovak philosophers, or did it only affect the *atmosphere* in Slovak philosophy in the second half of the 19th century? The following chapter will try to answer this question, in which the dispute about the nature of Slovak philosophy in the first half of the 20th century will be analyzed.

On the issue of the disputes about the nature of ethics in Slovak philosophy of the first half of the 20th century

After the creation of the First Czechoslovak Republic and the founding of Comenius University in Bratislava (1919), philosophy began to develop as an independent *scientific field of study* in Slovakia as well. Thanks to the Czech professors working at this university (Josef Tvrďý, Bohuslav Tomsa), not only was the first generation of philosophy graduates trained here, but also the most influential initiatives of Czech and European philosophy of the time were reflected here. In the atmosphere of *pluralism* of philosophical trends, *new* disputes about the nature of Slovak philosophy began to emerge. The core of these disputes, right after the creation of the First Czechoslovak Republic, was a positive or *critical* connection to the understanding of the philosophy and ethics in the work of Tomáš G. Masaryk (1850–1937).

It is known that part of Masaryk's philosophical conception was also a specific understanding of ethics, which undoubtedly influenced both the character of the contemporary *religious* and secular Slovak philosophy. The starting point of Masaryk's reflections on ethics is the general conviction about original place of ethics in philosophy. Masaryk molded his views on ethics and morality based on a critical review of such ethical-philosophical concepts as: Marx's and Engels' *socialism*, Bentham's *utilitarianism*, Schopenhauer's *pessimism*, Darwin's *evolutionism*, Nietzsche's *subjectivism*, etc. In contemporary Slovak philosophy, both religious and secular, Masaryk's views on *socialism*, *collectivism*, *hedonism*, *utilitarianism*, and related various forms of relations between *morality* and *politics*, *morality* and *religion*, *morality*, and *science*, etc., were widely recognized.

He criticizes Marx's understanding of *socialism* for its anti-individualist orientation, one-sided materialism, and economism. In this context, he claims that for Marx, "the real person is

not the individual, but the proletarian mass... the consciousness and conscience of the individual means nothing here, only the consciousness and conscience of the collective mass is important” (Masaryk, 1990, p. 16). He particularly critically evaluates Marx’s and Engels’ teachings on the so-called “class character” of morality, which admits “class violence” or even revolution, which is literally incompatible with his idea of morality. He is equally critical of the “evolutionary ethics” of Charles Darwin. According to Masaryk, the dark side of this ethics is the “illusory belief in progress”, which is understood only as an “inevitable consequence of natural selection”, justified by the fact that “the stronger has the right to destroy the weaker, because nature also destroys the weak”, etc. (Masaryk, 1990, p. 46).

Against the background of such a reconciliation with contemporary philosophical-ethical concepts, Masaryk also formulates the main principles of his (*own*) “project” of philosophical ethics, which he defines and designates with the terminological combination “humanitarian ethics”. In this context, he applies two approaches: 1) an approach from the position of *a person as an individual*, because in the end, a person’s thinking and actions are always individual; 2) an approach from the point of view of *eternity* (“sub specie aeternitatis”), because only from this impersonal perspective can “the code of ethics” that is binding for every individual, be drawn.

From the point of view of the reflections of Masaryk’s “humanitarian ethics” in contemporary Slovak philosophy, his views on the relationship between morality and religion were of particular importance. Even in this case, however, he applies two approaches to the definition of the mentioned relationship: 1) he expresses the belief that “true ethics” (and morality) can only be contained in “true religion”; 2) he points out that not every religion is – from the point of view of his understanding of ethics – a “true religion”. In other words: Masaryk does not consider “religion that is ecclesiastical”, *formal-cult*, and *dogmatic* to be a “true religion”. In this context, he wrote: “I want to have morality on a religious basis of a religion other than the one that is officially given... religion is the objective attraction of man to God. Morality governs the relationship between people. Morality and religion are not identical” (Masaryk, 1923, pp. 8, 17).

According to Masaryk, the solution to the relationship between morality and religion is a synthesis involving morality and religion in the form of a “humanistic ideal”, in which the “moral contribution of the gospels” and the humanitarian dimension (and *legacy*) of progressive philosophy have their place. True morality should not “oppose” either *free* and *responsible* philosophical knowledge, or “pure” and *self-sacrificing* love. To this, Masaryk also adds that everyday, *conscious*, practical activity is also necessary, without which – after all – even the most humane *ideals* would forever remain just that, *ideals*. “We don’t need morality *in abstracto*, in systems and books, but in life, in economy, and in politics. Ethics is not intended to be theoretical. All actions and thinking should be subject to the norms of ethics” (Masaryk, 1923, p. 41).

Masaryk’s stated views on ethics and its relationship to philosophy and religion received an apparently *ambivalent* response in Slovakia. They resonated in Slovak religious philosophy and were reflected differently (or even not reflected at all) in Slovak secular philosophy. Certain interpretive divergences are also registered on the soil of Slovak religious philosophy itself. While some representatives of contemporary Slovak Catholicism (e.g. Štefan Polakovič and Maximilián Chladný-Hanoš) had reservations about Masaryk’s “project” of ethics, several representatives of Slovak evangelical philosophy (e.g. Samuel Š. Osuský and Emil B. Lukáč) had significant understanding for this project. A similar situation existed in contemporary Slovak philosophy of secular provenance. A representative of critical realism, Svätopluk Štúr, literally “followed up” on Masaryk’s concept of ethics, but the followers of the scientific focus of contemporary Slovak philosophy, who were grouped around the “Association for Scientific Synthesis” paid almost no attention to this concept.

Both followers of Slovak Catholic and Slovak Evangelical thought agreed with Masaryk on the opinion that ethics should be the “core” of Slovak philosophy and should be intrinsically connected with the Christian religion. Certain parallels in their understanding of Masaryk’s concept of “humanistic ideals” and in their rejection of the Marxist (*Bolshevik*) interpretation of ethics, its *class*, or *collectivist* nature, can be found.

To illustrate the character of Slovak *Evangelical ethics* and its “connection” with Masaryk’s concept of “humanistic ideals”, the opinions (and works) of Miloš Hodža, Samuel Štefan Osuský, Rudolf Košťal can be mentioned (Hodža, 1922; Osuský, 1938; Košťal, 1946). All these authors perceived and presented the “social question” – in the spirit of Masaryk – as a “moral, religious, and philosophical question”; they all rejected morality that advocates “class struggle”, violence, and revolutions; they were all convinced that social problems can only be solved on the basis of the “moral principles” of the Gospel of Christ, and the like.⁶

Reflections on Masaryk’s understanding of ethics and its place in philosophy have a different character in the work of the Slovak representative of critical realism, who was Svätopluk Štúr (1901–1981). He devoted himself to the mentioned issue mainly in his works: *Rozprava o živote* [*Discourse on life*] (1946), *Nemecká vôľa k moci* [*German will to power*] (written in 1944, published in 1967), and *Smysel slovenského obrodnia* [*The purpose of the Slovak revival*] (1948).

He expressed his views on ethics and morality as part of his conception of the philosophy of life, while emphasizing that “he does not accept either materialistic, biological, intuitionistic, or irrationalist motives of vitalism” (Štúr, 1946, p. 177).⁷ Štúr’s reflections on the issue of morality and ethics are an integral part of his “organistic conception of life”, or “the concept of hierarchical gradation of spiritual-practical functions”, the leitmotif of which is *the idea of the order of life*. The basis of this concept is Štúr’s conviction that the structure of life includes two basic spheres of human activity: one is the sphere of *spiritual activities*, which manifests itself through the field of knowledge, specifically through science, philosophy, and art; the second is the sphere of *practical activities*, which is mainly represented by the activities realized in economics and ethics.

Štúr situates the domain of ethics above the domain of – the above-mentioned – knowledge, because: “in the structure of life, ethics constitutes the highest level of activity of the human spirit... for its realization it presupposes all previous levels... it represents the order and the highest engagement of all human life” (Štúr, 1946, p. 44). It already follows from the above-stated that ethics in this concept, i.e., in the “concept of hierarchical gradation of spiritual-practical functions”, is not defined traditionally, as a doctrine of morality, but (more or less) *functionalistically-pragmatically*, i.e., as a way of achieving “higher life unity”, or even as a source of creating a “superpersonal order of life”. Apparently, in the given context, this is also indicated by Štúr’s definition of ethics as “a desire for the universal”, or “the realization of the universal spirit” (Štúr, 1946, p. 120).

Due to this fact, a person is (or can be) *moral* at every level of *the structure of life* by engaging himself for the universal goal through his own goals, that is, through his individual creation. Symbolically, it can be stated that the entire fourth chapter of the *Discourse on life* is accompanied by Štúr’s effort to find (and present) such a definition of ethics that will enable its understanding as “forms of practical knowledge”, or the most important “life function”.

⁶ Vasil Gluchman analyzes and interprets this issue in detail – in his work – as evidenced by, for example, his works: *Angažovanosť, solidarita, zodpovednosť* [*Commitment, Solidarity, Responsibility*]; *Slovak Lutheran Social Ethics*; *K dejinám slovenskej evanjelickej etiky v prvej polovici 20. storočia* [*On the History of Slovak Evangelical Ethics in the First Half of the 20th Century*] (Gluchman, 1994; 1997; 1998, pp. 118–132).

⁷ In this context, it should be mentioned that he was particularly critical of Friedrich Nietzsche’s version of the philosophy of life and his concept of vitalism, which is the leitmotif of Brice D. Cantrell’s original study entitled *Svätopluk Štúr’s criticism of Nietzsche’s vitalism* (Cantrell, 2023, pp. 105–114).

According to Štúr: “we must take care that all individual specific functions underlying it are penetrated by ethics... because... the overall construction of life must always be directed towards moral goals” (Štúr, 1946, p. 111).

At the same time, Svätopluk Štúr also completely openly alludes to the problem of the *usefulness* of our actions, without which even our individual acts cannot be *moral* in the true sense of the word. “It is impossible to act morally” – he writes in the *Discourse on life* – “so that we do not have to act usefully (economically) at the same time. Ethics that would not simultaneously act usefully would be merely formal. Economics is the gateway and prerequisite for ethics, just as imagination is the prerequisite for a concept. Ethics is the highest level of the entire spiritual hierarchy and its highest binding principle” (Štúr, 1946, pp. 43–44).

Thus, Štúr did not identify with the contemporary religious definition of ethics, nor with its traditional understanding as a *general* doctrine of morality. He did not respect the opinions about its *transcendent* origin, nor its so-called “class character”. Considering the *functional diversity* of human life, he also understands ethics as the most important “life function”, or as the “realization of the spirit in the universal”.⁸

There is no doubt that even these disputes about the nature of ethics significantly influenced the direction of Slovak philosophy in the first half of the 20th century. In this way, they contributed to the formation of the subsequent generation of representatives of Slovak philosophical and ethical thinking. The direction and character of Slovak philosophy were also strongly influenced by the noetic controversies that culminated on the grounds of this philosophy in the 1940s.

Efforts for the scientific nature of Slovak philosophy in the initiative of the first generation of Slovak *professional* philosophers

The contemporary outcome of disputes between secular and religiously oriented philosophy in Slovakia (in the first half of the 20th century) were the noetic confrontations between the representatives of the logical-positivist Association for Scientific Synthesis (the association was founded in 1937) and the followers of the theistically modified philosophical intuitionism. Igor Hrušovský (1907–1978)⁹ and Nikolai Onufrievich Lossky (1870–1965)¹⁰ were the leading figures of the mentioned philosophical disputes.

In the aforementioned disputes, it was about whether the spirit of (logical-positivist) scientism, or a philosophically modified platform of theism, or even fideism should (at least) prevail in Slovak philosophy. The stimulus, or the *trigger* of the dispute was, on the one hand, Lossky’s *anti-scientist* views on the nature of “philosophical knowledge” and, on the other hand, his *intuitionistic* “theory of truth”. The so-called “Slovak contribution” to his noetics was the *Odpoveď Dr. Hrušovskému na jeho kritiku intuitívneho realizmu* [*The answer to Dr. I. Hrušovský to his critique of intuitive realism*] (1945/1996) and above all his original (Slovak) work *Absolútne kritérium pravdy* [*The absolute criterion of truth*] (1946).

⁸ I comment on this issue in more detail in the 9th chapter of my monograph *Pohľady do dejín etického myslenia* [*Insights into the history of ethical thought*] (Dupkala, 2020, pp. 179–196).

⁹ Igor Hrušovský presented himself in Slovak philosophy in the 1930s. He received his doctorate in philosophy in 1936 for the work *Invention and development*. In this period, he was mainly inspired by the scientific initiative of the representatives of the Vienna Circle (founded in 1929). He himself retrospectively draws attention to this with the words: “After completing natural science studies in Prague... and joining the services of the University of Bratislava... I paid close attention to the work of scientism-oriented thinkers such as M. Schlick, R. Carnap, Ph. Frank, O. Neurath, and others, who were organized in the Vienna Circle” (Hrušovský, 1965, pp. 174–175).

¹⁰ Lossky was originally a professor at St. Petersburg University. In 1921 he left St. Petersburg – on the well-known “emigrant ship” – and, via Szczecin and Berlin, came to Prague, where he worked until 1941. He became part of philosophizing in Slovakia between the years 1941–1945, when he worked as a professor at the University of Bratislava. Here he also presented himself with the concept of intuitive realism, with which he soon won not only the sympathy of his Slovak followers, but also the disapproval and rejection of his Slovak critics.

Lossky defines knowledge as a process in which two agents participate: 1) the subject of knowledge, i.e., the sphere of “I”, 2) the object of knowledge, i.e., the realm of the “not-I”. It is based on the assumption that “the object of knowledge – even if it is part of the external world – can enter the consciousness of the knowing subject and be known immediately in the original as it is, without being affected by the act of knowing”. In this context, he stated: “our theory of knowledge contains the belief that the world *’not-I’* (the whole world *’not-I’*, including God) is known as immediately as the world of *’I’*”. Lossky called the immediate viewing (perception) of the known object by the cognizing subject with the term *intuition*, because “intuition means *having an object in view immediately*, in the original, and not through copies, symbols, constructions, etc.” (Losskij, 2000, pp. 31–32).¹¹

In the given semantic context, Lossky explicitly points out that, by intuition, he does not understand either the “irrationality of the perceived object as Bergson does”¹² or “prophecy”, or such a way of thinking, which is accompanied by instinct, or a sudden flash of genius, etc. “My theory of intuition” – writes Lossky – “does not introduce any new or extraordinary methods of knowing: it is a new theory about old methods of knowing... about sensory perception, memory, imagination and thinking” (Losskij, 2000, p. 33). Apparently, taking this fact into account, Lossky distinguishes among three types of intuition: *sensory*, *intellectual*, and *mystical*, while only the third can *directly perceive* the essence of being (including the being of God). In other words: *Mystical* intuition transcends both sensory perception and rational knowledge. Lossky calls his position *universalist empiricism*.

Regarding the issue of truth, Lossky claims that its basic criterion is “the presence of the object in consciousness and the obviousness that is the self-evidence of the object of itself” (Losskij, 1946, p. 51). In this context, for example, he stated: “knowledge of the object, which is immanent in consciousness, is completely true, as it does not exceed the boundaries of what is present in consciousness and represents in itself the testimony of the object of itself... knowledge is not a theory of the object, it simply contains its object in itself originally as known” (Losskij, 1946, p. 29). Furthermore, he concludes this entire issue with the words: “the observing (and knowing) subject and the observed (and knowing) object of the external world represent a single whole” (Losskij, 1946, p. 38).

As already stated, Hrušovský spoke out against Lossky’s concept in Slovakia. This is evidenced by his articles *Kritika intuitívneho realizmu* [*Critique of intuitive realism*] (1945/1996a), *Losského teória pravdy* [*Lossky’s theory of truth*] (1946/1996b), and later he returned to the issue in the monograph *Dialektika bytia a kultúry* [*The dialectics of being and culture*] (1975). In a counter-position to Lossky’s theses about the “immediate” nature of intuitive knowledge, Hrušovský claims that the knowledge of the objects of the external world is always “mediated”, not only physically and by the senses, but also from the point of view of the necessary use of the conceptual apparatus and various inductive processes. In this context, he states: “understanding things without conceptual equipment is unthinkable, and all our statements about objective reality contain concepts that always show a certain degree of abstractness... Even the knowledge of an apple as a real object is mediated, as it depends on certain simple knowledge, control experiences, etc.” (Hrušovský, 1996a, p. 49).

Lossky responds to Hrušovský’s rejection of the thesis about the “immediate” nature of knowledge with the words: “it is clear that Dr. Hrušovský did not properly account for the

¹¹ The differences between Lossky and Losskij in this text based on different transliteration rules of the Cyrillic in English and Slovak languages. In the text, I use the English version of his surname (Lossky), and in references, the Slovak version (Losskij), as I am working with Slovak editions of his texts.

¹² As a side note, I would like to add that Lossky’s and Henri Bergson’s understanding of intuition is really not identical. Lossky does not place intuition in such a strict counter-position to the intellect as Bergson does, who in this context, for example, states: “intuition and intellect are two completely opposite directions of conscious activity. Intuition goes in the direction of life itself, intellect in the opposite direction and is therefore quite naturally controlled by the movement of matter” (Bergson, 2014, p. 218).

meaning of the word immediate in my noetics. He changed my concept of the immediacy of knowledge to the concept of such knowledge, which takes place without any conditions. Naturally, I never claimed such nonsense. If you like, I will show, in addition to physical-physiological stimuli, a number of other means necessary for cognition, e.g. intentional acts of attention, discernment, directed at the object. It goes without saying that these means do not hinder, but help knowledge to be immediate in the sense of our view of the original, living reality itself" (Losskij, 1996, pp. 57–58).¹³

Against Lossky's opinion on the criterion of truth, which culminates in his conviction that knowledge about an object that is present in consciousness is true as a result of the "self-knowledge" of the object of itself, Hrušovský puts forward the postulate of practical verification of the truth of knowledge, which he expressed, for example, in these opinions: "the central problem of truth turns out to be the problem of perfect adequacy of our knowledge with actual reality. We will not capture this perfection of adequacy through self-witness or obviousness, but only through verification by scientific practice" (Hrušovský, 1996b, p. 288).

In another place in his article on Lossky's theory of truth, however, Hrušovský admits that even the verification of knowledge by "scientific practice" does not have the value of "absolute approval" and that the *validity* of such verified knowledge can be at most hypothetical. In the analyzed polemic with Lossky, he expressed it with the words: "verification by practice... can only guarantee degrees of probability of our empirical knowledge. That is why we say that they do not apply apodictically, but only hypothetically, conditionally" (Hrušovský, 1996b, p. 288).

However, Lossky, despite Hrušovský's reservations, insists on his belief that knowledge has an "immediate" character, that it enables the attainment of *absolute truth*. In the already cited article *Odpoveď Dr. Hrušovskému na jeho kritiku intuitívneho realizmu* [The answer to Dr. Hrušovský] he wrote: "when I say that the object in its entirety can be known by us, I mean that there is nothing fundamentally unknowable¹⁴ in the object ... knowledge of a certain part of the world, which can be achieved through attention and discernment, aimed at the object itself in the original is the absolute truth, i.e. the truth eternally binding for every subject, knowing this part of the world" (Losskij, 1996, p. 60).

Considering the above facts, it is not surprising that Hrušovský's noetic dispute with Lossky resulted in their divergent reflections on the phenomenon of contemporary *rationality*. While Hrušovský – following the positions of logical positivism – accepts *rationality* only in its scientific (anti-metaphysical) form, Lossky also has an understanding for *rationality* in an intuitive-metaphysical and religious context. A strictly scientific position led Hrušovský to formulate conclusions that bordered on Russellian, or Carnapian agnosticism. (For example: "the ontological quality of the cognizable object is unknowable"... etc.).¹⁵ This intuitionistic

¹³ In another place, Lossky adds to this: "Hrušovský understands my intuitionism as an irrationalist noetics, rejecting the necessity of concepts for knowledge... however, I completely agree with the necessity of concepts for knowledge... my intuitionism clarifies logically and consistently, from where our reason *extracts* concepts" (Losskij, 1996, p. 59). Despite this, Hrušovský rejected Lossky's thesis about the "immediate" nature of knowledge even after thirty years, when he wrote in the work *The dialectics of being and culture*: "in my pamphlet *Critique of intuitive realism* from 1945, I emphasized that our knowledge about the objects of the external world is the result of the specific activity of our subject, oriented towards empirical objects and the specific properties of these objects mediated by the subject... we know real objects in their internal formation only indirectly, using the given conceptual apparatus and various inductive procedures" (Hrušovský, 1975, pp. 142–143).

¹⁴ Lossky objects here "against Carnap and his idea that knowing the essence of an object is a metaphysical goal that cannot be realized at all" (Losskij, 1996, p. 60).

¹⁵ One of the contemporary interpreters of this noetic dispute, Andrej Kopčok, states in this context: "since I. Hrušovský did not give up the idea according to which the ontological quality of the external object is unknowable even during the periods of his proclamations of loyalty to Marxism... he actually contributed to the continuation of the epistemological dispute (which he caused with his philosophical activity in the 1940s) in the following decades, except that he went through a certain metamorphosis: he remained by himself on one side, while his

concept allowed Lossky to postulate not only the “absolute criterion of truth”, but also *mystical intuition* as the qualitatively *highest* cognitive disposition of a person.

For the sake of completeness, it is necessary to add that Slovak followers of Lossky, especially Jozef Dieška and Peter Gula, actively participated in Hrušovský’s noetic dispute with Lossky. This is evidenced, for example, by Dieška’s works *Kritický či intuitívny realizmus: k sporu o bezprostredné poznanie skutočnosti v súčasnej noetike* [*Critical or intuitive realism: on the dispute over immediate knowledge of reality in contemporary noetics*] (Dieška, 1944) and *Problém noetického realizmu v Leninovom diele „Materializmus a empiriokriticizmus“* [*The problem of noetic realism in Lenin’s work “Materialism and Empirio-Criticism”*] (Dieška, 1946), with the subtitle “*Controversy with critical realist Igor Hrušovský*”, has the character of a clear apology of Lossky’s concept.

Gula’s article: *On the 75th birthday of N. O. Lossky*, as well as his review of Lossky’s work *The absolute criterion of truth*, in which he states, among other things, that “in this work, Lossky does not lower himself to clarify objections arising from ignorance of his system. Even if they have appeared in Slovak criticism, they remain politely unanswered here. He mainly discusses the questions of the noetic method and compares the basic teachings of intuitionism with important noetic currents... with Anglo-American neorealism, Kant’s criticism... etc. Lossky’s noetics appears here as a step further, and a significant step at that” (Gula, 1946, p. 286).

With the passage of time, it should be stated that the noetic dispute between Hrušovský and Lossky contributed to the development of the contemporary way of philosophizing in Slovakia and, above all, to the formation of a meaningful pluralism of philosophical interpretations. Finally, if philosophy is inherently *dialogical* in its historical (Socratic-Platonic) nature, then it does not exclude conflict (as a manifestation of the activity of the human spirit); on the contrary, it presupposes it, because it is precisely in this that it realizes the interpretive openness of its meaning, and thus the need for constant self-reflection.

In every ideological dispute, one risks getting *stuck* in the snares of one-sidedness in an effort to assert his own position. It seems that this also applies to Hrušovský’s noetic dispute with Lossky, in which – *sui generis* – both the position of contemporary scientism and the reinterpreted concept of intuitionism were unilaterally absolutized. Despite this, the said dispute had its significance: on the one hand, it contributed to the deepening of the continuity of Slovak philosophy with its contemporary currents, or concepts of European philosophy, and, on the other hand, it created a space for pluralism of philosophical interpretations, which, however, could – in full – manifest itself in Slovakia only fifty years later, i.e. after 1989.

Conclusion

After the period of 1945–1948, when the atmosphere of pluralism of philosophical currents and interpretations faded, there was a period of harsh indoctrination of philosophy. The original plurality of philosophical directions of secular and religious provenance was “eliminated by power” and replaced by the monopoly position of Marxist-Leninist philosophy. The Stalinist-dogmatic model of Marxism began to be gradually *overcome* in philosophy throughout in the 1960s, and especially in the atmosphere created in society by the so-called “Prague Spring”. After 1971, however – as a result of the so-called “normalization” – Slovak philosophy also found itself in the ensnared by indoctrination. Any attempt at a plurality of philosophical initiatives was forcibly negated and destroyed.

Only after the fundamental political and social changes in Czechoslovakia after 1989, were the conditions for a plurality of philosophical currents and interpretations again created in Slovakia. Thanks to this plurality, Slovak philosophy is once again *presenting* itself as part of

opponents and critics on the other side ... became the representatives of orthodox Marxism-Leninism” (Kopčok, 1996, p. 305).

the European ideological-intellectual *space*. It should not be a *space* that is neither “completely new” nor “completely unknown” for it, and therefore it should not “lose its way” in it.

Acknowledgements

The paper is an output of the project VEGA 1/0394/23: *Generations of Slovak Philosophy: generational and contemporary impulses in the ideological kinetics of Slovak philosophy of the 20th century*.

References

- BERGSON, H. (2014): *Creative evolution*. In: *The Henri Bergson megapack* [Kindle]. Wildside Press LLC, pp. 20–302.
- ČAPEK, K. (1969): *Hovory s T. G. Masarykem* [Conversations with T. G. Masaryk]. Prague: Československý spisovatel.
- CANTRELL, B. D. (2023): Svätopluk Štur's criticism of Nietzsche's vitalism. In: *Ethics & Bioethics (in Central Europe)*, 13(1–2), pp. 105–114.
- DIEŠKA, J. (1944): *Kritický či intuitívny realizmus: k sporu o bezprostredné poznanie skutočnosti v súčasnej noetike* [Critical or intuitive realism: On the dispute over immediate knowledge of reality in contemporary noetics]. Bratislava: Slovenské nakladateľstvo.
- DIEŠKA, J. (1946): *Problém noetického realizmu v Leninovom diele „Materializmus a empiriokriticizmus“* [The problem of noetic realism in Lenin's work “Materialism and Empirio-Criticism”]. Turčiansky Svätý Martin: Neografia.
- DUPKALA, R. (2000): *Štúrovci a Hegel (K problematike slovenského hegelianizmu a antihegelianizmu)* [The followers of Štúr and Hegel (On the problem of Slovak Hegelianism and anti-Hegelianism)]. Prešov: ManaCon.
- DUPKALA, R. (2009): K problematike počiatkov filozofického myslenia Slovanov (Prvá „definícia“ filozofie v jazyku Slovanov) [On the problem of philosophical thought of Slavs]. In: J. Dudášová (ed.): *Slavistika v premenách času (Štúdie z jazykovedy a literárnovednej komparatistiky)* [Slavic studies throughout time]. Prešov: Vydavateľstvo Prešovskej univerzity, pp. 79–85.
- DUPKALA, R. (2020): *Pohľady do dejín etického myslenia, 3. prepracované, doplnené a rozšírené vydanie* [Insights into the history of ethical thought, 3rd revised, amended, and expanded edition]. Prešov: Expres Print.
- GEROMETTA, E. (1847): Slovanov náklonnosť k slobode: Slovo k potupníkom našim [Slavs' affection for freedom: A word to our slanderers]. In: *Slovenskje pohľady*, 2(1), pp. 29–44.
- GLUCHMAN, V. (1994): *Angažovanosť, solidarita, zodpovednosť* [Commitment, solidarity, responsibility]. Prešov: Universum.
- GLUCHMAN, V. (1997): *Slovak Lutheran social ethics*. Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen Press.
- GLUCHMAN, V. (1998): K dejinám slovenskej evanjelickej etiky v prvej polovici 20. storočia [On the history of Slovak evangelical ethics during the first half of the 20th Century]. In: K. Kollár, A. Kopčok & T. Pichler (eds.): *Dejiny filozofie na Slovensku v XX. storočí* [The history of philosophy in 20th Century Slovakia]. Bratislava: Infopress, pp. 118–132.
- GULA, P. (1946): N. O. Losskij, Absolútne kritérium pravdy (recenzia) [N.O. Lossky, The absolute criterion of truth]. In: *Filozofický zborník (Časopis filozofického odboru MS)*, 6–7(4), pp. 285–288.
- HEGEL, G. W. F. (2018): *The phenomenology of spirit*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- HODŽA, M. (1922): *Evanjelická cirkev uprostred sociálneho sveta* [The Evangelical Church in the midst of the social world]. Turčiansky Svätý Martin: Knihtlačiarsky účastinársky spolok.
- HOSTINSKÝ, P. K. (1847): Druhý otvorený list p. Ctibohovi Cochiusovi [The second open letter to Ctibor Cochius]. In: *Orol tatranský*, 2(78), pp. 468–476.

- HRUŠOVSKÝ, I. (1965): *Problémy, portréty, retrospektívy* [Problems, portraits, retrospectives]. Bratislava: SAV.
- HRUŠOVSKÝ, I. (1975): *Dialektika bytia a kultúry* [The dialectics of being and culture]. Bratislava: Veda.
- HRUŠOVSKÝ, I. (1945/1996a): Kritika intuitívneho realizmu. (Príspevok k teórii poznania) [The critique of intuitive realism (A contribution to the theory of knowledge)]. In: *Organon F*, 3(1), pp. 46–56.
- HRUŠOVSKÝ, I. (1946/1996b): Losského teória pravdy [Lossky's theory of truth]. In: *Organon F*, 3(3), pp. 282–293.
- HURBAN, J. M. (1846): Veda a Slovenskje pohľadi [Science and Slovak views]. In: *Slovenskje pohľadi*, 1(1), pp. 1–12.
- HURBAN, J. M. (1847): Poznámka k článku Eugena Geromettu Slovanov náklonnosť k slobode: Slovo k potupníkom našim [Note to Eugen Gerometta's article Slavs' affection for freedom: A word to our slanderers]. In: *Slovenskje pohľadi*, 2(1), p. 32.
- HURBAN, J. M. (1972): *Slovensko a jeho život literárny* [Slovakia and its literary life]. Bratislava: Tatran.
- HURBAN, J. M. (1981): Předmluva k Červenakovu „Zrcadlu Slovenska“ [The Foreword to Červenak's "Slovakia's mirror"]. In: *Antologie z dějin českého a slovenského filozofického myšlení (do roku 1848)* [Anthology of the history of Czech and Slovak philosophical thought (until 1848)]. Prague: Svoboda, pp. 498–508.
- KOPČOK, A. (1996): Na okraj jedného historicko-filozofického návratu. K filozofickému kontextu začiatku, priebehu a metamorfóze gnozeologických sporov v slovenskej filozofii v štyridsiatych rokoch [On the edge of one historical-philosophical return. On the philosophical context of the beginning, development and metamorphosis of epistemological disputes in Slovak philosophy in the 1940s]. In: *Organon F*, 3(3), pp. 298–307.
- KOŠTIAL, R. (1946): *Kresťanstvo a sociálna otázka* [Christianity and the social question]. Liptovský Svätý Mikuláš: Tranoscius.
- LOSSKIJ, N. O. (1946): *Absolútne kritérium pravdy* [The absolute criterion of truth]. Turčiansky Svätý Martin: Matica slovenská.
- LOSSKIJ, N. O. (1945/1996): Odpoveď Dr. Hrušovskému na jeho kritiku intuitívneho realizmu [The Answer to Dr. I. Hrušovský to his critique of intuitive realism]. In: *Organon F*, 3(1), pp. 57–61.
- LOSSKIJ, N. O. (2000): *Filozofia intuitivizmu* [The philosophy of intuitivism]. Poprad: Vydavateľstvo Christiana.
- MASARYK, T. G. (1923): *Mravní názory* (Vybral Zdeněk Franta) [Moral opinions (Chosen by Zdeněk Franta).] Prague: Státní nakladatelství.
- MASARYK, T. G. (1990): *Ideály humanitní* [Humanistic ideals.] Prague: Melantrich.
- MINÁČ, V. (1974): *Zobrané spory J. M. Hurbana* [Selected disputes of J. M. Hurban]. Bratislava: Pravda.
- MÜNZ, T. (1998): Novotomizmus na Slovensku v prvej polovici 20. storočia [Neo-Thomism in Slovakia during the first half of the 20th Century]. In: K. Kollár, A. Kopčok & T. Pichler (eds.): *Dejiny filozofie na Slovensku v XX. storočí* [The history of philosophy in 20th Century Slovakia]. Bratislava: Infopress, pp. 20–29.
- OSUSKÝ, S. Š. (1938): Filozofia bolševizmu, fašizmu a hitlerizmu [The philosophy of bolshevism, fascism, and hitlerism] In: *Štyri prednášky* [Four lectures]. Liptovský Svätý Mikuláš: Tranoscius, pp. 109–140.
- ŠTÚR, L. (1981): Přednášení historická [Lectures on history]. In: *Antologie z dějin českého a slovenského filozofického myšlení (do roku 1848)* [Anthology of the History of Czech and Slovak Philosophical Thought (until 1848)]. Prague: Svoboda, pp. 542–549.
- ŠTÚR, L. (1987): *O poézii slovanskej* [On Slavic poetry]. Martin: Matica slovenská.

ŠTÚR, S. (1946): *Rozprava o živote* [*Discussions about life*]. Bratislava: Filozofická fakulta Slovenskej univerzity.

ZOCH, C. (1847): Recenzia Hurbanovho článku „Veda a Slovenskje pohľadi“ [The review of Hurban's article "Science and Slovak views"]. In: *Orol tatranský*, 2(51), pp. 412–413.

ŽITIE SV. KONŠTANTÍNA [The life of St. Constantine] (1990): In: *Staroslovienske pamiatky. Pramene k dejinám sv. Cyrila a Metoda* [*Old Slavic heritage: Sources on the history of St. Cyril and Methodius*]. Prešov: Pravoslávna bohoslovecká fakulta v Prešove, pp. 1–32.