

ON THE DEVELOPMENT AND CHARACTER
OF SLOVAK PHILOSOPHY I.
(From early times to the nineteenth century)

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An overview of the main features of the development and the character of Slovak philosophy from early times to the nineteenth century is provided. The authors stress the European and Christian cultural context of Slovak philosophical thought. The development of culture in the territory of what is today Slovakia gives safe evidence of the tradition of philosophy existing there. Slovak philosophers have always had knowledge of and scholarship in Western philosophy which they not only accepted but also interpreted in their own way and used for their own purposes.

Introduction

Philosophy is always a component of culture whether in its centre or on its periphery. Slovak philosophy¹ had also been established historically and developed as part of the culture of the Slovak nation. Slovak culture itself was shaped (and

¹ The concept “Slovak philosophy” is used only to denote the tradition of philosophizing in Slovakia, which covers the corpus of writings of the authors professing their cultural and linguistic membership of the Slovak ethnic group. The tradition of philosophizing in Slovakia, which also encompasses the works of non-Slovak authors living in Slovakia, is named “philosophy in Slovakia”. Similarly, for example, Marcus G. Singer differentiates between “American philosophy” and “philosophy in America” and concludes that there is something like “national philosophy” ([23], 11). This national philosophy is rather “lived” than academically articulated, created by certain ideas, principles, values, approaches, etc., which are, within a particular community, generally taken for granted and traditional. Philosophy understood in this way is an organic part of national culture although it is not easy to “get it out” of

formed) only as a component of the culture of linguistic and cultural community against the multiethnic background: the community was represented by the Slavs, i.e. the predecessors of present-day Slovaks, Czechs, Poles, Russians, Ukrainians, etc. on the one hand and the specific multicultural setting of the historic Kingdom of Hungary or Austria-Hungary on the other hand. Slovak culture (and philosophy) was not created in isolation and autonomy; external influences, even pressures were often so massive that almost all strength was exerted to work it out and not much energy remained for their own production (except for folklore). The fact of Slovakia's cultural membership of the European context is significant and indisputable: Slovak students studied with success at Czech and Polish Universities but also in Germany and Italy and their intellectual life was lived in the same world of thought as that of their colleagues; some Slovak graduates were even offered posts as Professors at those universities and their work was highly appreciated (e.g. Ján Jesenius worked also as rector of Charles University in Prague). Philosophical and theological discussions held in our intellectual conditions were the same as in other European countries, e.g. the strife between nominalism and realism, disputes about Cartesianism, etc. The first more radical articulations of the issues concerning our cultural identity appeared in the nineteenth century as part of the struggle for the nation's being and its own standard language. The efforts of the Slovaks to gain nation-state identity were completed in the twentieth century. The examination of the nature or the spirit of Slovak philosophy and its contribution to Slovak culture is a topic to which we still owe quite a lot in spite of the fact that whole generations of Slovak philosophers have investigated the history of Slovak philosophy (see synthetic historical works, e.g. [1], [2], [3], [4]).

The Ancient Slavonic Era

From the perspective of ideological historical preconditions for the emergence of philosophical thought in the territory of current Slovakia, the existence of Slavonic mythology and the intensive Christianization of what was then the Slavonic territory (i.e. the area around the confluence of the Morava and Danube rivers), the area where the first state formation of the Slavs was created in the ninth century, known as "Magna Moravia" (Great Moravia), were of primary importance. Slavonic mythology probably represented the oldest product of spiritual and practi-

it; it can also express the needs of the particular nation, its development, stability, or transformation. Philosophy is thus an active as well as a critical component of a particular culture – being not only its expression but also its interpretation (hence the organic connection between philosophy and the education of a nation). It is a certain characteristic way of thought of the members of the particular (national) community and thus also the way of philosophizing (hence the place and function assigned to philosophy in the particular culture).

cal activities of the old Slavs.² The first presentations of philosophical thought in our territory – documented by written sources – are also associated with the Christianization of the area of Great Moravia, particularly with the historic Byzantine mission of Constantine and Methodius in Great Moravia. Particular attention should be directed towards the work ‘The Life of Constantine’, one of the authentic written sources of that period, which contains the first “draft” of philosophy written in the language of the old Slavs. It tells us that the Byzantine missionary Constantine, who had been one of the greatest experts on ancient and early Christian philosophy at the Constantinople Academy even before his arrival in Great Moravia (863), understood philosophy as “knowing human and divine matters, how close can man approach God because he teaches man how to become an image of the one who created him” ([5], 18). We think that Constantine’s understanding of philosophy was primarily inspired by the analogous attitudes of the Stoics and Plato. He might also have been influenced by a – popular in his time – textbook of dialectic (i.e. Porphyry’s “Isagoge”) and numerous commentaries, e.g. the commentary of the Byzantine author David. According to him: “philosophy is the knowledge of both divine and human matters how to become similar to God according to human abilities” ([6], 78–79). This does not lower the standard of Constantine’s philosophical thought. During his stay at the Constantinople Academy, he not only obtained the so-called “teacher’s chair” (i.e. the right to teach philosophy to both native people and foreigners) but was also awarded the honourable title of “Philosopher”.

Constantine can be described as a creative religious thinker who, in addition to theological defence of Christianity, also pursued the philosophical interpretation of the Bible. He particularly emphasized the importance of knowledge of the language of the liturgy (inclusive of the liturgical language of the old Slavs, i.e. Old Slavonic, which is considered to be the beginning of the national scholarship of the Slovaks, Czechs as well as other Slavonic nations, e.g. Bulgarians, Russians, Poles, etc.

The Renaissance and Protestantism

No significant philosophical initiatives have been registered in the territory of present day Slovakia from the fall of Great Moravia in the tenth century until the advent of the European Renaissance. Two of the representatives of the Slovak Renaissance humanism showed a relatively high standard of philosophical thought: Ján Sambucus (1531–1594), born in Trnava, obtained the first degree in Philosophy

² Slavonic mythology is ideologically of a syncretic character. Polytheism is intertwined with monotheism, deism, pantheism, anthropomorphism with zoomorphism, magic with experience, etc. Religious dimension merges with cognitive dimension, the ethical and aesthetic elements manifest themselves through the cultural-practical dimension, etc. (see [24]).

from the Paris University in 1551 and Martin Rakovský (1535–1579), a pupil of Philip Melanchthon from the University of Wittenberg. Sambucus, who was influenced by ancient philosophy, particularly by Plato, alerted to its relevance for the revival of European culture and learning while Rakovský's writings were primarily of a socio-political character.³

Leonard Stöckel (1510–1560) and Ján Duchoň (1596–1637) were two of the most significant representatives of Protestant philosophical thought in Slovakia (from the middle of the sixteenth to the middle of the seventeenth centuries). Both were exponents of Protestant Aristotelianism. Stöckel's letters to Philip Melanchthon and Duchoň's work "Vestibulum philosophiae" (The Vestibule of Philosophy) can serve as evidence; the latter work describes Aristotle as "the great king of all philosophers...sent from heaven to earth to reveal the art of philosophizing" for God's glory and the salvation of people ([7], 249–250).

Early Modern Times: Prešov Evangelical School

From the second half of the seventeenth century to the advent of the Enlightenment, philosophical thought was cultivated in Slovakia in two centres: at the Evangelical College in Prešov and at the Catholic University in Trnava. Both colleges played a dominant role in the cultural life of seventeenth and eighteenth-century Slovakia. The instruction of philosophy was an appreciable asset, which helped to maintain contacts with the most significant trends in Western European thought.

The most erudite doctors of philosophy of the Prešov Evangelical College were: Ján Bayer (1639–1674), Izák Caban (1638–1707) and Eliáš Ladiver (1633–1686). J. Bayer was a Slovak exponent of Bacon in the seventeenth century.⁴ While his views on the issues of knowing presented him merely as the follower of Francis Bacon, in his opinions concerning the issues of being he was a relatively independent thinker. What is particularly interesting, is his understanding of the light (lux) as a "mediator" between matter and the spirit, which he defines as: "Lux est substantia inter massam et spiritum media" ([8], 159).

Izák Caban brought the spirit of Democritus-Epicurean atomism into philosophical thought in Slovakia. He studied in Wittenberg and he was particularly strongly impressed by the opinions of Pierre Gassendi, with whom he identifies himself in the elementary definition of atoms as "physical" (and not mathematical)

³ It is documented e.g. by his works written in Latin: "Libellus de partibus rei publicae et causis mutationum regnorum imepriumque" (On stratification of the inhabitants and the causes of coups d'état, Vienna 1560) and "De magistratu politico, libri tres" (On public authorities, Leipzig, 1574).

⁴ It is documented by his works "Ostium vel Atrium naturae" (The gate to nature) and "Lux mentium" (The light of thought).

“points” (a document *Existentia atomorum*, 1667). However, Caban did not accept all Gassendi’s opinions. His contemplations on empty space can serve as illustration: he places emphasis on the relativity of empty space in contrast to Gassendi’s understanding of vacuum as absolute emptiness. Caban’s atomism led to an interesting philosophical strife at the Prešov College which gradually turned into public polemic with E. Ladiver. The central topic of the strife was the issue of the existence or understanding of atoms.

Ladiver’s objections to Caban’s atomism can be summed up into two arguments: if Caban understands an atom as a “physical point” or as “the material principle of the natural body” (*atomus principium corporis naturalis materiale est*) it should be, according to Ladiver, perceivable by the senses. If, however, according to Caban, atoms disappear because of their “minuteness” from our sight (they are not perceptible by senses), Ladiver concludes this issue by arguing that atoms can only be understood as “mathematical points” or ideal entities; 2. if atoms are, according to Caban, indivisible, they cannot, according to Ladiver, combine and create unity or compose wholes; 3. if the existence of atoms assumes according to Caban an empty space, which, however, does not exist according to either Thomas Aquinas or Aristotle, Ladiver’s conclusion is that atoms do not exist or cannot exist either.

The polemic between Ladiver and Caban proves the existence of the two different ways of philosophizing at the Prešov College in the seventeenth century: one – represented by Caban (and partly also by Bayer) – inclined to the traditions of nominalism of western Europe, the second – cultivated by Ladiver – almost identified itself with the position of realism of the Middle Ages.

Early Modern Times: Trnava Catholic School

The philosophical thought at the Trnava Catholic University established in 1635 was of a similarly ambivalent character. This was the first opportunity to cultivate philosophy in Slovakia on the level of university studies. The first Slovak philosophers (similarly as e.g. in the USA) were priests, theologians. Philosophy was taught at a special faculty of arts and its dean was usually a theologian. The basic philosophical disciplines taught at the university as early as in the seventeenth century were metaphysics, logic, ethics, and physics. The most prominent Trnava professors of philosophy were: Vavrinec Tapolcsáni (1669–1729), František Kéri (1702–1768), Andrej Jaslinský (1715–1784), and Ján Baptista Horváth (1732–1800).

A characteristic feature of the writings of Trnava professors was their effort to “overcome” controversies between theology and natural history; this was reflected in the sphere of philosophy as the search for such a way of philosophizing which would satisfy both the demands of scholastic theism and the ambitions of modern deism. Trnava philosophers were, on the one hand, exponents of Newton’s physics and Copernicus’ heliocentrism and, simultaneously, they did not reject the interven-

tion of supernatural forces in the events of the world and were ready to recognize the existence of miracles, demons, ghosts, etc. Their starting position was the Thomistic principle: “*philosophia ancilla theologiae*”, through which they also reflected the most important conceptions of current Western European philosophy, primarily Descartes and Kant. For instance, in his “*Academicus ens naturale*” (Academic discourse on natural things), Professor Tapolcsáni completely rejected Descartes’ philosophy and denoted Descartes’ “shameless atheism” as entirely unacceptable ([9], 9–10). Professor Kéri’s approach to Descartes was more moderate. In his works “*Dissertatio physica de corpore generatim deque opposito eidem vacuo*” (Physical discourse on the body in general) and “*Dissertatio physica de motu corporum*” (Physical discourse on the body motions) he looked for a *modus vivendi* between Neo-Scholastic Aristotelianism, Newtonian physicalism and current Cartesianism. He argued that natural bodies exist in a reality, that is outside our sensory perceptions. Kéri did not agree with Descartes’ opinion that “senses deceive”. Simultaneously, however, he rejected the unilateral absolutizing of sensualism of G. Berkeley. He propagated “synthesis” of sensualism and rationalism because he thought that the “creator of things (God) gave us senses and reason to know things properly, organized with necessary certainty. Perceptions, which our senses gain from bodies, transfer, thanks to their ability if nothing is in their way, into our brain and intellect truthfully and always, when stimuli are stronger, also evoke more vivid visions of things” ([10], 278–279).

The philosophy of I. Kant was also considered at Trnava University from the positions of Thomism and neo-Scholastic Aristotelianism (as early as towards the end of the eighteenth century). It was chiefly thanks to Professor Horváth. His work “*Declaratio infirmitatis fundamentorum operis Kantiani ‘Kritik der reinen Vernunft’*” (Clarification of the insufficiency of the principles of Kant’s ‘Critique of Pure Reason’ brought to Slovakia not only Kant but also the spirit of German classical philosophy although merely as an object of critical reflection. Horváth criticized Kant’s subjectivism, phenomenalism, and agnosticism. He disagreed with the arguments that “external objects (bodies) are only phenomena” or “pure visions”. According to him “bodies exist outside us, they are spacious, have certain shape and are objects of our knowing” ([11], 287). He argued particularly sharply with Kant’s spacial-temporal limits as a priori forms of approach. As one of the first theistic critics of Kant in the old Kingdom of Hungary, Horváth rejected not only Kant’s teaching about non-knowability of ‘*Dinge an sich*’ but also all his efforts to criticize the old metaphysics.

Enlightenment

With the advent of the so-called “Josephin reforms” (after 1780, when Joseph II became Austrian emperor) the spirit of French Enlightenment started to be pro-

moted in the philosophical thought of Slovakia. Voltaire's and Rousseau's socio-political opinions met with significant response in our environment; on the one hand there were the unambiguous critical reactions of M. Institoris-Mošovský, but they were accepted by others (S. Fuchs). The most numerous group of Slovak thinkers unanimously rejected French "free thinking..."

Philosophical issues were enriched by the thematization of freedom, the state and civil society, etc. under the influence of the French Enlightenment. It is for instance illustrated by the reflections of socio-political views of Voltaire and Rousseau in the writings of the Slovak historian of the Enlightenment Ján Feješ (1764–1823). Feješ was a historian and an advocate of human progress: his work was based on Rousseau's arguments that humans originally lived in a state of nature and only gradually created social forms of life which resulted in a state. But, in contrast to Rousseau, Feješ did not idealize the state of nature (see [12], 362–363). The state guarantees to man as a citizen all civil and human rights, among them (according to Feješ) the right to life ("right of man to the self"), the right to property ("right to all earthly crops"), the right to profit gained by one's own work, the rights to education, religious faith, etc.⁵ Equal rights belong to all citizens since there is natural equality and equality before law. The natural or "reasonable" equality of the people consists, according to Feješ, in the fact that every man can freely exercise his human abilities, which he "possesses" within society not because he is a member of a particular status but because he is human. Human freedom is also the result of this development. It is not reached in the state of nature (i.e. in the infant age of humankind) but only within a state, which is a symbol of human maturity. Since freedom follows from human nature, and the need of humans to assemble and live within society also belong to human nature, the state must guarantee human freedom by all possible means because there is no free state or real civil society without free citizens.

In spite of the fact that Feješ regarded the state as the most perfect form of social organization, he did not idealize the emerging civil society. By contrast, he criticized, along with Voltaire, Leibniz's opinion that the existing world is the best of all possible worlds. According to Feješ, our world is "the best only from the perspective of the aim for which God created it but it is not the best from among all possible worlds" ([13], 353–354).

Slovak Enlightenment thought was internally controversial. It vacillated between the ideology of the rising civil society and the doctrine of decaying feudalism. It struggled against prejudices and miracles, simultaneously preserving not only a pro-theological orientation but often also a clearly religious form. Such a charac-

⁵ Feješ e.g. wrote: "The state's goal is security: without it one cannot enjoy human and civil rights and property, no contact between people and no betterment of humankind, i.e. no welfare is possible... Development and recognition of human rights is a characteristic feature of humankind... the state strengthens these rights and protects them by power" ([12], 364).

ter of Slovak philosophical thought was preserved until the second third of the nineteenth century, when representatives of the Slovak national revival – people fighting for the ethnic and linguistic sovereignty and identity of the Slovak nation – entered the cultural, political, and philosophical scene.

The Slovak national movement in the nineteenth century

The leading personality of the rising generation of intellectuals was Ľudovít Štúr (1815–1856) and the whole group and movement is known under his name. This generation had a fundamental influence on the coming history and development of the culture of the Slovak nation. This concerned not only the legal and grammatical codification of the Slovak language but also a series of acts which constituted the Slovaks as modern nation. Štúr's supporters followed the works of older Slovak revivalists, chiefly Ján Kollár (1793–1852) and Pavol Jozef Šafárik (1795–1861) who – under the influence of Herder and Fichte – brought into Slovak philosophizing an idea of the nation and thus pointed indirectly to the need for a philosophical justification of the prepared “nation-forming act” of the Slovaks. ‘Indirectly’ means that instead of the sovereignty of the Slovak nation, both promoted the ethnic identity of the linguistically akin community of the Slavs. For instance, Štúr's proponents fully identified themselves with Kollár in that “each nation which makes its way through from the mechanical pressure of depressing circumstances to independent activities and wants to take part in the spiritual life of humankind, primarily has to rise to a clear (philosophical) outlook on the world organization in order to look from there as if from an elevated point down at its position within the whole and with respect to other nations, at its role imposed by that era for the future and thus to get to know its predestination” ([14], 146). It was precisely the influence of Kollár and Šafárik that made Štúr's followers understand philosophy not only as part of “national ideology” but also as a specific instrument for the development of the programme of the nation's emancipation. They together leaned on Herder's credo that “philosophy should serve the people and therefore the people should be placed in the centre of its problems even if it changes its standpoint to such an extent as Copernicus had done in relation to the Ptolemaic system. The prolific possibilities of philosophy will appear after philosophy has become anthropology” ([15], 86). Štúr and his adherents (although not all on an equal footing) rejected philosophy apart from life. They thought that primarily Hegel's philosophy is not a “merely” theoretical, speculative construction but the most functional “ideological vehicle” which, if it would be projected into the programme of national awakening, could also participate in the formation of social reality.

A sort of ambivalence or split probably belongs to the fate of Slovak life and culture. Soon after the shaping of Štúr's group into a specific generation or “school”, two relatively compact ideological-philosophical platforms (conceptions)

were profiled within the group: 1. Štúr's variant of Slovak Hegelianism (L. Štúr, J.M. Hurban, A. Sládkovič, etc.) and 2. Štúr's variant of Slovak anti-Hegelianism (M.M. Hodža, S.B. Hroboň, P. Kellner-Hostinský, etc.). Štúr's Hegelians stressed that philosophy makes sense only when it serves life or if it would serve in terms of social practice.⁶ Štúr's anti-Hegelians understood philosophy as a part of spiritual activities in a broader sense of the terms (e.g. sym-philosophy, dia-sophy, etc.) or as part of an ideological-theoretical project covering wider issues (e.g. Slavonic science or 'vidboslovia') which has a primarily contemplative-meditative character. The most characteristic features of both variants of Štúr's philosophy can be reconstructed against the background of the reflections of Hegel's philosophy in the writings of L. Štúr and Samo Bohdan Hroboň (1820–1894). The Hegelianism of L. Štúr can be illustrated by his understanding of the spirit as ontologically-substantial principle, by the theory of state and the specific philosophy of history. Štúr uses the concepts of "absolute spirit", "God", "absolute idea" to denote the ontological basis of all existence. The absolute idea is a dynamic essence of the world, which creates itself and the whole reality through self-motion. Štúr also accepted Hegel's opinions about the state and civil society in an intensive way and confronted them critically with the conceptions of Hobbes, Locke, and Rousseau. He held, together with Hegel, that "in global history we can speak merely about nations that are organized into states" ([16], 45–46). His development gradually passed, however, from federalist Austroslavism through radical or revolutionary democratism to conservative Pan-Slavism (Pan-Russism).

Starting from a dialectic understanding of the relation between the universal and the individual, Štúr required respect and power not only for state and society but also guarantees of all civil rights and freedoms for every individual. Štúr held to this position until about the years 1848/49. Later he modified it in his writing 'Slovanstvo a svet budúcnosti' (Slavdom and the world of the future) unambiguously in favour of the universal, i.e. the state, arguing that "the state directs its attention more towards the universal than towards singularities and by far it need not agree with the opinions, demands and interests of all. A united state cannot take particular account of the individual, it requires more self-sacrifice" ([17], 48).

In connection with Hegel, Štúr also realized the internal controversies of the rising bourgeois society and criticized it. However, his aim was not its negation – he evidently supported capitalization of the backward society of the old Kingdom of Hungary – but its "improvement" (reformation) in terms of the principles of the revival approach to the social ethics of the Christian religion and traditions of the Slavonic way of life with the dominant position of the family, communities, etc.

⁶ Štúr wrote in this connection: "Our formulations and dry theories do not help if they are cut off from life, but actually hinder us... Therefore, we have to be careful when introducing something to the world, whether it is necessary for life, whether it is suitable just now, whether it will be useful in the future" ([25], 40).

After the 1848/49 revolution Štúr came to the conclusion that the civil society in the so-called constitutional countries of the West is “sick” and without a future because it is based on the division of what necessarily belongs together – division of the highest uniform whole including legislative power, belonging to the people, and the executive power, belonging to the government. Such a separation of powers engenders permanent tension and exposes the state to severe danger of a coup or revolution. Štúr came to an almost apocalyptic conviction that “from the political perspective the West passes from absolutist monarchies to constitutional states, which change into political and ultimately into social and communist republics, where everything ends in the decomposition of humankind... there is neither order nor constancy... one revolution will follow the other and the situation of western nations will deteriorate with each revolution” ([18], 113–114). Another reason for Štúr’s rejection of civil society of the so-called constitutional states in the West was their inability to remove social injustice, inequality, and poverty. He sees a solution for Europe in the orientation towards a new idea of the arrangement of society, in the life (and the world) of the Slavonic East. The Slavs known for their love of peace, moral purity, sense of justice, etc. from time immemorial, can fulfil (and realize) this idea when their social life is realized through the historically verified institutions like the family, community and county and when they show a better sense of the state as the highest social and moral organism.⁷ Štúr presented himself as a pragmatist and realist in the greater part of his political life, he rejected both extreme radicalism and strict conservatism. Towards the close of his life he inclined to the so-called “reform conservatism” and he cast doubt on, even negated, several progressive standpoints and ideas which he had held or promoted earlier. He contributed to the “swaying” of cultural-political position of his whole generation (and not only theirs). It was seen as a vacillation between pro-Western and pro-Eastern orientations, as a search for their “own” position within the European geopolitical area, as an effort to pave “the third way” between an open and closed society, etc.

This fact is also reflected in Štúr’s “philosophy of history” which he cultivated with particular attention directed towards the history of the Slavs. He used the Hegelian scheme of the completion of history for his vision. In the historical devel-

⁷ “The Slavs,” Štúr wrote, “have never been able to take the proper step from counties to states. This step consists in the fact that the whole state power is vested in the state without any limitations... accordingly, everything that is beyond counties, the sphere of the burghers’ society in particular, belongs to the state, that means that legislative, executive and supreme judicial powers belong to the state and the state thus assumes power adequate to its role. Its role is to do its best to create unity, a whole within the state... ensuring its independence. This is monarchy which is called absolutist in the West. We need such a monarchy precisely with respect to the great mistakes made by our tribes in their state-forming. There is not such a monarchy in Russia, therefore, it should be put in harmony with democratic institutions adapted to the spirit of our nation. This would solve the question of the need of further state development as a whole and interminable revolutions would be put to an end” ([16], 166–167).

opment of humankind he distinguished five periods: 1. the period of the Orient or oriental nations; 2. the period of the classical nations (i.e. ancient Greece and Rome); 3. the period of the Latin nations; 4. the period of the Germanic nations; 5. the period of the Slavonic nations; Štúr thought that Greco-Roman nations contributed to the development of the global spirit by realizing the ideal of beauty on an emotional basis. The Latin-Germanic nations realized the ideal of truth on a rational basis and the role of the Slavonic nations was to realize the ideal of good on the basis of the attachment of emotion, reason, and will. The Western nations had already fulfilled their historical mission. Their spirituality was exhausted and thus it is the turn of Eastern nations (i.e. the Slavs) whose spirituality is just waiting for its historical presentation and implementation.⁸ The Slav “nation” has not lived a higher historical life yet, since, as such, it has not undertaken to play a “higher” role in history. In order to be able to take the position in history, which it deserves in accord with its strengths and abilities, it has to “become free politically” and “independent as a state”. Štúr argues that there are three ways to achieve it: 1. creation of a Slav federation, 2. Austroslavism, 3. attachment of all Slavs to Russia. The only correct way is the third one and it has a future, because the Russians are the only nation from among the Slavs, who preserved their state independence. Štúr’s political vision is not full of the spirit of Western democraticism, it is afflicted by a sort of propensity to mysticism and relying on “great power”; in spite of that, it was the fruit of a creative and original spirit, the application of Hegel to the problems of Slovak-Slavonic cultural and national life. J. M. Hurban also draws attention to this fact in broader connections, when, he says, reacting to the Štúr’s reflection of Hegel’s philosophy, that Štúr was able to find an “example” (illustration) in the rich history of the Slav nations for each Hegelian category; he adds that also other “Western philosophers were exploited for higher aspirations of the spiritual development of the Slav nation, always bearing in mind what it (this nation – author’s remark) needs most” ([19], 175). From these points of view the Štúr’s reflection of Hegel’s philosophy appears to be interesting even after a lapse of time.

The tendency towards mysticism, visionarism, even irrationality is, however, much more evident in the philosophical message of the anti-Hegelian poet S.B. Hroboň. Hroboň’s struggle against Hegel was conducted under the banner of Christian theology, Schelling’s philosophy of revelation, Cieszkowski’s historiosophy, and Mickiewicz’s and Hodža’s messianism. It is documented particularly by his philosophical treatise “Slovo o Goethem a Hegelovi” (A word about Goethe and Hegel) in which he says that Schelling and Cieszkowski addressed him with their anti-Hegelian standpoint as early as during his study stay in Germany. According to

⁸ “Watch Europe and you can see annoyance in the West: some doubt everything, some call for help and others bury themselves in materialism. We, however, look at this sad performance from the side where this is not happening yet... we see encouragement for higher, spiritual interests among Eastern nations” ([26], 23).

Hroboň, Hegel's philosophy is built on two fundamental self-deceits. The first self-deceit is encompassed in the teaching about the "impersonal *vidma*" (i.e. absolute idea), which Hegel presents as active, alive, self-creating substance in itself. The outcome of this teaching is pantheism and the denial of a personal God associated with it. The second self-deceit follows from Hegel's understanding of antitheses in "unity" and hence that "good and evil are one and the same and are regarded as essentially one"; but "precisely here lies the basic self-deceit of all pagan and anti-Christian theories because the real good does not need evil as evil for its essence" ([20], 397). Hroboň devoted particular attention to the critical analysis of Hegel's understanding of God. According to him the real essence of the world or its substance is not Hegel's absolute idea but the triune personal God of Christian religion, which is simultaneously infinitely free, liberating all, spiritualizing, etc. He thereby precisely defined the fact that Hegel did not reach such a position even when he used in his philosophy of religion the terms of Christian theology (God – Demiurge, the Son of God, Trinity). Hegel's God is abstract and without love. He is the God of "mysloveda" – philosophy. By contrast, Hroboň's God is triune, personal, full of love, he is the God of Christian theology, which is both transcendent and immanent. Such a God is simultaneously above the world and in the world. Everything is in God and God is in everything (*Extra deum nihil est*). From this position Hroboň refuses "pure pantheism", which – identifying God with the world – does not recognize his transcendence, as well as "speculative deism", which – by isolating God from the world – denies his presence in the world (immanency).⁹ Hroboň's messianism was of a Christian-Slavonic character. He derived the idea of redemption from the saving mission of Jesus Christ, who suffered and died on the cross in order to open the door to salvation for all nations. Hroboň expected salvation of the Slavs as a "compensation" for their suffering in the past. Philosophically he relied on Hegel's and Herder's understanding of history, which he reflected through Cieszkowski's historiosophy. In agreement with Cieszkowski's division of the history into the thetic period (period of ancient nations), antithetic (period of medieval or modern nations) and synthetic (period of Slavonic nations) ([21], 109), he also led the vertical of the history and development from the Orient through Hellas and Christian-Germanic world to the world of the Slavs, where the "reborn humankind should appear in new (unforeseen) beauty and strength" ([22], 66).

These illustrations of individual variants of the Štúr's Hegelianism and anti-Hegelianism show that while the reception of Hegel's dialectic, his teaching about development, applicative modification of his philosophy of history was characteris-

⁹ Hroboň tried to cope with the problem of understanding God throughout his life. He tried for instance to form special Slavonic terms for expressing the Trinity which often led him into a labyrinth of neologisms. In spite of the fact that such activities did not get sympathy even from his closest friends, Hroboň cultivated them till the end of his life. We think that it was one of the ways of spiritual survival for him, which was finally projected into his overall romantic-messianic position.

tic of Štúr's Hegelians, Štúr's anti-Hegelians rejected Hegel's dialectic and his philosophy as a whole unequivocally. They perceived Hegel's panlogicism as speculative and thus a "futile" project with "la froid raison" (impartial rationality) at its beginning. They place Christian dualism and transcendentalism against Hegel's pantheism. They replaced Hegel's understanding of history by theological providentialism. Their basic priorities were: 1. priority of God over the world, 2. priority of the soul over the body, 3. priority of feeling and faith over reason.

Štúr's variant of Hegelianism prevailed up to approximately the revolutionary years of 1848/49. After the disappointment about the revolution, which completely failed from the point of view of the Slovak nation-emancipatory interests, the messianic anti-Hegelianism became dominant. Some questions emerge in this connection: How to assess the above-mentioned philosophical conceptions? Which of them had more prospects? Was it the one that accepted the Hegelian message of the absolute spirit or the one which subjected it to criticism and then rejected it? We think that in the history of Slovak philosophy there is a place for both Hegel's supporters and his critics. While the refusal of Hegel's pantheism was in that period meaningful from the perspective of the apology of Christian orthodoxy, acceptance of his philosophy of history was of irreplaceable significance primarily from the point of view of the formulation (and development) of the philosophical-historical self-reflection of the Slovaks. Štúr's adherents created an ideologically and intellectually non-uniform generation, but it was a real generation of "organic intellectuals" as social actors struggling for basic changes in the life of the Slovak nation; they based their practical and political efforts on their own philosophical activities and education. It was not a generation of academic philosophers but rather a generation looking for the meaning of the existence of its own national community by means of philosophy.

Conclusion

The development of culture in the territory of present day Slovakia gives firm evidence that there is, undoubtedly, a tradition of philosophy there. Even though Slovak philosophers and thinkers were not original creators of influential doctrines, they were not just epigons and eclectics either. They were in touch with current intellectual and philosophical movements, many of them studied with leading Western thinkers, mostly in Austria and Germany, and they all struggled with their ideas in their own attempts to incorporate them into Slovak culture. Slovak philosophers have always had knowledge of and scholarship in Western philosophy which they not only accepted but also interpreted in their own way and used for their own purposes. This has all been done mostly against the background of strong Catholic religion and beliefs, with some romantic features coming from Slavonic and rural culture. Thus some of the leading Western ideas could not find support within Slovak

culture (e.g. materialism) and for some of them a crucial struggle had to be conducted (e.g. Cartesianism and Enlightenment).¹⁰

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