

## STRUGGLES, SWINGS AND WRONG WAYS

† Svätopluk ŠTÚR

Svätopluk Štúr (1901-1981) is definitely one of the most penetrating modern Slovak thinkers. His philosophical work bears evidence of an exceptional intellectual activity of immense erudition interconnected with analytical insight into the core of problems, where theoretical conclusions were always developed in collaboration with the reflection of value aspects inclusive of the omnipresent moral consequences. Štúr was a philosopher of modern society, a sensitive diagnostician of the periods of crisis of his times, a witness, able to recognize the historical lines of tensions and controversies in immediate shocks. Štúr was a man of high moral principles and therefore it was not a coincidence that his career as a university professor of philosophy was interrupted by implacable conflicts with totalitarian regimes. Only today do we have an opportunity to look at his message in a more comprehensive manner and to evaluate it. We find that in spite of the limited possibilities to publish he had to face during long decades, his works (*Problém transcendentna v súčasnej filozofii*, 1938, *Rozprava o živote*, 1946, *Zmysel slovenského obrodenia*, 1948, *Nemecká vôle k moci*, 1967, etc.) are connected by a remarkable developmental continuity.

His work *Zápas a scestia moderného človeka* (*Struggles and wrong ways of modern man*), published only recently for the first time, clearly reflects all the basic features of his philosophizing. Against the background of the development of European philosophy, Štúr explores how the modern crisis developed from unsuccessful attempts to integrate particular aspects and human being leading to the absolutization of some of its determinations. In the period of pressing need for a global approach to economic and social processes, the ideas of S. Štúr again become topical. Two samples from the book are published here.

Miroslav Marcelli  
Department of Philosophy,  
Philosophical Faculty of Comenius University,  
Gondova 2, 818 01 Bratislava, Slovakia

### A. The supremacy of the subject over the object

It is primarily a noetic problem, which I have to touch on at least fleetingly; since life forms a unity, this issue passes through all its regions in diverse variations and modifications.

Kant, a preeminent predecessor of our times had to face a great critical and creative task: to put forward, after Hume's scepticism, a new synthetic levelling off and cementing of the currents of thought of his period, particularly rationalism of the great continental systematics – British empiricism and Rousseau's irrational-

ism. He was rather successful in the idea of a priori synthetic judgements, approaching our deepest knowledge, that is particular universality incorporating and encompassing both sides of reality, the individual and the universal, parts and wholes.

Unfortunately, Kant failed to grasp his own greatest inventive idea and, standing on his foundations, he probably could not have understood it anyway. Then it happened that he realized his greatest asset, after his successful defence and establishment of the full rights of the subject in the constitution of science against depersonalized and deadening eighteenth-century objectivism, with such an emphasis and in such an overabundance that he disturbed the harmonious correlation between subject and object, again unilaterally, in favour of the subject. This was then vehemently continued by idealistic philosophy in the first third of the nineteenth century, which opened the door wide to complete subjectivism.

But, instead of long accounts of this matter, let us read at least two places from his "Critique of Pure Reason", where Kant shows us his correct way out and his turn-about, which was far less useful and beneficial than that of Copernicus:

"There is no doubt that all our knowledge is based on experience since, what should encourage the cognitive faculty to be active if it were not the objects stirring our senses, stimulating both our visions and our rational faculties in order to compare, join or disjoin them, and so to process the raw material of sensory impressions for knowing the objects, called experience? As for time, there is no knowledge prior to experience and all knowledge begins with it.

If, however, all our knowledge begins with experience, it does not mean that everything has an origin in experience. (!) – There is at least a question..., whether there is any knowledge independent of experience and of all sensory impressions. Such knowledge is called "a priori" and we distinguish it from empirical, whose origin is a posteriori, that means in experience.

We shall not understand under a priori knowledge the knowledge we acquire independently of any experience but of all experiences as a whole."

Kant does not want his critique to be a criticism of books and systems but of the "rational faculty" as a whole with regard to all knowledge for which it struggles independently of all experiences..."

Such "pure" knowledge, independent of all experiences would only be possible on the assumption that we would separate the subject from the rest of reality and the whole of reality would be reduced merely to knowing the subject; since this is not possible without a violent and artificial split of the entire reality, everyone has to reach a reversal of the real nature of the cognitive process. This was accomplished by Kant and still more evidently by his followers:

As Kant says elsewhere in the Critique, "There has so far been an opinion that knowledge has to be directed according to objects; but all experiments to learn something about them through the concepts a priori, which would proliferate our knowledge failed under this condition. Let us try then whether we shall not cope

with metaphysical problems if we accept the fact that 'things must conform to our knowledge', which agrees better with the required possibility of their a priori knowledge, which should say something certain about objects before they are given to us. (!) This is like the first ideas of Copernicus, who, when there was no progress in the explanation of heavenly motion, if he adopted the idea that the whole crowd of the stars circle around the observer, he made an experiment whether it would not work better if he would let the stars stand and the observer circle. A similar experiment can be done in metaphysics with the aperception of objects. If this aperception should conform to the nature of objects, I do not perceive, how could we learn about it a priori; if the object (as the object of senses) conforms to the nature of our aperception faculty, then I can see it quite possible"!<sup>1</sup>

Understandably, a priority, which enabled the placing of such a unilateral accent on the subject and sometimes led in idealistic philosophy to complete subjectivism and mysticism, particularly in ageing Schelling, had to invoke a general reaction, which unfortunately made an opposite mistake, that is by breaking the correct correlation subject-object, it laid an exclusively unilateral emphasis on the object, which took place in the following currents of thought of positivism, materialism, and naturalism.

It was thus the task of the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth century to correct these evident unilateral swings and to seek the lost balance and a stronger harmony of the subject and object, parts and the whole, the individual and the collective, nationality and internationality, freedom and limitation, democracy and authority, individual enterprise and social purposefulness, etc. since it was clear enough in all areas that life cannot thrive on these one-way swings. None of these great human problems had been successfully solved by then, and both fundamental extremes reiterated in both idealistic a priority and material objectivism, leading to heavy crises and disturbances of our century, and not only noetic.

Seemingly, Kantian a priority and the subjectivism inferred from it might have been acquired only from a romantic way of thinking. But transcendental idealism (formed at the turn of the centuries chiefly in Germany under the motto "Back to Kant!" and later spread to almost all countries) – often in terms of the natural sciences – elevated this speculative and artificial a priority to a still greater exclusiveness, whether it was the Marburg School or the Baden School, phenomenology or metaphysics of all types. Kant's ideas – this being the greatest deficiency – had not been creatively developed but the other way round, only narrowed and made still more one-sided.

The transcendental method of Hermann Cohen, the distinguished representative of the Marburg School and neo-Kantianism placed the rational principles as a priori

---

<sup>1</sup> KANT, I.: *Kritik der reinen Vernunft*. I quote according to the Czech translation by Prof. F. Krejčí, Praha, Česká Akademie 1930, pp. 7, 14, 27.

‘before all experience’, which turned the cognitive process upside down. Cohen simply identifies being with pure thought, saying that only by pure thought in itself and exclusively for us, can we acquire pure knowledge.<sup>2</sup> But thinking is only a part of being – as important as it may – and a “pure thought” that would not depend as a part on the whole of being, simply does not exist and could be artificially speculated on, if all would have been reduced to the pure subject, which was indeed done by neo-Kantianism.

“We begin with thought” – Cohen says. “Thought must not have any origin outside of itself...” and only on the basis of this inadmissible reduction, could Cohen come to the completely wrong conclusions that “thought creates the essence of being”<sup>3</sup> and this thoroughly follows from his deviant concept of the cognitive process. It is not surprising that in this method of mathematical natural science based on idealistically transcendental grounds, “the reality of objects had to dissipate into the world of ideal, chiefly mathematical relations”.<sup>4</sup>

The Baden School of the philosophy of values with W. Windelband and H. Rickert at the head drowned in this neo-Kantian a priority with unilateral and prevailing accentuation of the subject. Its noetic foundations do not hold water although these representatives were highly educated and generous spirits. Rickert’s transcendental norm ‘Sollen’ and the sense of its recognition are logical presuppositions of the given real being and, as concepts, they are older than immanent reality. ‘Sollen’, that is what ought to be, what should be done, the value “is logically original and not the real being”.<sup>5</sup>

All similar axioms that thought would create the essence of being or that transcendental norm would belong to logical presumptions of the given real being would be conceptually earlier than immanent reality and logically original, and not that which really exists, contradict the overall composition of our reality, they are scientifically unjustifiable and nonprovable; they could speculatively be reached by wrongly placing the lynchpin and the criterion of all on merely the subject and reducing it merely to the subject, which means that we would overestimate the function of the subject unilaterally to the detriment of the objective reality and without any regard for it.

And indeed, Rickert understands consciousness as a ‘supranatural factor’, which allegedly cannot be taken as a part of nature;<sup>6</sup> thus he artificially and scientifically

---

<sup>2</sup> COHEN, H.: *System der Philosophie I.; Logik der reinen Erkenntnis*, Berlin 1902, pp. 11, 12, 14.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., pp. 11, 18.

<sup>4</sup> CASSIRER, E.: Introduction to the three-volume work *Das Erkenntnisproblem in der Philosophie und Wissenschaft der neueren Zeit*, IIIrd edition, Berlin 1922.

<sup>5</sup> RICKERT, H.: *Der Gegenstand der Erkenntnis*, 6th edition, Tübingen 1928, pp. 328, 350.

<sup>6</sup> RICKERT, H.: *Die Grenzen der naturwissenschaftlichen Begriffsbildung*, Freiburg 1902, p. 174.

inadmissibly tore the subject out of the framework of reality and placed it as an unlimited ruler over it. Only on the basis of such violent speculative interventions and assumptions that consciousness is a supranatural factor and is not a part of nature, that cognition means recognition of the absolute, a priori norm, that the reality of the world is dependent on the realm of ideal values, etc., could Rickert have arrived at his radical “Copernican” turnabout that the cognitive subject has to ‘circle’ not around reality to become theoretically valuable, but that it must be a theoretical value that is at issue if it wants to know reality.<sup>7</sup>

Noetic mistakes and wrong ways are probably evident enough here. We have to know first, and only then does knowledge lead us to a certain assessment and only the knowledge leads us to certain values. This means that the evaluation assumes knowledge and not the other way round, as in Rickert, who accepts a priori the “transcendental norm (Sollen)” at first and wants to know on its basis. This “transcendental” a priority is of no scientific value to knowledge, but it also splits reality into two artificial and abstract worlds: the unreal world of absolute values and the world of real being, which, however, depends on the unreal world – and its reality should therefore be only shadowy: if the reality of the Marburg School is dissipated into a world of ideal, chiefly mathematical relations, the Baden School admits through Rickert’s saying that to him “the world is not identical with the real world”.<sup>8</sup> This artificial split of our reality is possible and always takes place where the subject is given inadequate power to create fictitious worlds, whether on the basis of abstract mathematical relations or a priori values.

The phenomenology of the Husserl School might be mentioned in the third place, where the reduction to the subject is evident and is even on the agenda of this trend, with the literal suspension of the rest of the world. According to phenomenology, there must be genuine philosophy freed of all prejudices, necessarily orientated ‘subjectively’, because philosophy must allegedly be an autonomous science realized on the basis of the latest evidence deduced from the subject itself and finding in this evidence its unconditioned justification.

To a meditating phenomenologist, existence is allegedly not a matter of course but only a naked phenomenon; and not only the physical nature, but the whole of the concrete world that surrounds me, that is not for me the existing world any more, but merely a phenomenon of existence which claims the right to being. According to phenomenology, I can either assent to this claim or refuse it or I am free to abstain from judgement. (!) The possibility of this abstention rests allegedly with the possible ambiguity of the ego and with the freedom of the attitude towards this right to being. In phenomenology, the phenomenological ego occupies the place of an uninterested viewer, which has a possibility to abstain from each judgement with regard to the right of the world to existence. (!)

---

<sup>7</sup> RICKERT, H.: *Der Gegenstand der Erkenntnis*, Tübingen 1928, p. 205.

<sup>8</sup> RICKERT, H.: *System der Philosophie I*, Tübingen 1921, pp. 174, 175.

Phenomenology assures us, however, that this general suspension of the external world and of all attitudes, we can take towards the objective world, this “phenomenological epoché”, this bracketing of the objective world does not confront us with the naked nothing, but that the meditating subject will have pure living with all its pure experiences. (!) This means that epoché is to phenomenology a universal and radical method through which I can take possession of my pure ego with the life of my pure consciousness. And this is transcendental phenomenological reduction.<sup>9</sup>

This is the most radical, but also the most unilateral and most absurd reduction to naked, non-living and non-existing subject of all reductions that has ever been done in modern thought! And although our subject cannot be so artificially isolated from the rest of the world, on which it depends with every breath and all perceptions, it cannot be doubled, it has no freedom to assent, to refuse or abstain from judging with regard to the right of the world to its existence, because it is still its inseparable part, yet phenomenology dreams of the idea that consciousness has sovereignty in itself, which, in its absolute essence remains intact by phenomenological suspension. Thus “phenomenological residue” will remain to us, as Husserl puts it, as an area of being with the principally peculiar character, which can become the basis of our new science – phenomenology.

The suspension of the rest of the world was needed in order to gain the ‘absolute or transcendently pure consciousness’ as a residue after its performance: the assignment of reality to this residue would be counter-sensory, as Husserl notes himself.<sup>10</sup> The world achieves all its universal and special meaning, all its existential validity only through my ‘cogitationes’ and consequently, the existence of the world, which is only the second-order authority, assumes as existence the preceding existence of the pure ego and its considerations.<sup>11</sup>

We could here mention Whitehead’s idea, who, recognizing also only one reality, says that all things and events are interrelated and that nothing is independent of any other, which is also naturally valid for our consciousness that is dependent on our bodily substratum as well as on the surrounding world. But it is probably evident enough from the above-mentioned ideas that similar reduction to transcendental subjectivity with pure consciousness, which is not a part of the world and should be non-worldly being, can only be achieved on the basis of the totally violent, speculative a priority, breaking reality into two completely artificial, non-living worlds, into a sort of external, abstract world of shadows which I can either recog-

---

<sup>9</sup> HUSSERL, E.: *Méditationes Cartesiennes*, Paris 1931, pp. 5, 17, 18, 28, 30; italicized by S. Š.

<sup>10</sup> HUSSERL, H.: *Ideen zu einer reinen Phänomenologie und phänomenologischen Philosophie I.*, 3rd edition, Halle 1928, pp. 57, 59, 107, 108.

<sup>11</sup> HUSSERL, E.: *Méditationes Cartesiennes*, Paris 1931, p. 18.

nize or negate and the world of the transcendental domain with a “principally peculiar nature”, the assignment of reality to which would be counter-sensory.<sup>12</sup>

The split of modern man emerged in the second half of the eighteenth and the beginning of the nineteenth century. But, instead of moderating these basic discrepancies by better understanding, levelled off in a more harmonious way, they were gradually intensified during the nineteenth century and twentieth century man brings them to the most painful extremes. This will not be any famous period of the first half of our century! And there is no doubt any more that such extreme thinking must have interfered with all areas and caused catastrophic disturbances in our lives – just because all the areas depend on each other. It is only this one-sidedness and nothing else that is the source of the crisis of the European spirit and its culture since these swings hindered the equal growth of life in its all-round development and engendered disturbances and chaos.

If such a one-sided and thus an artificially isolating emphasis was laid exclusively on the subject on the one hand, equally obstinate attempts at an opposite extreme, that is at the exclusive supremacy of the object and the universal over all the subjective, individual and, peculiar, was not lacking on the other hand. These are two essential antipodes, between which all struggles of modern man take place. The first swing leads in all its consequences to subjectivist, individualist, and thus also to social anarchy (which we are now witnessing for example in France); a contradictory proclivity to the supremacy of the universal over the individual must end with equal necessity in the collectivist totalitarianism.

---

<sup>12</sup> I gave a more detailed and critical account of these currents and of modern metaphysics in: *Problém transcendentna v súčasnej filozofii*, Spisy filozofickej fakulty Komenského univerzity, Bratislava 1938, Chapter II. Here I could only describe the core of the idea of this one-way swing.

## B. The supremacy of the object over the subject

Every great thinker made attempts to better define the reality and the overall concept of life – this is why there are more points of contact rather than differences among philosophers as is generally wrongly thought – and each of them means a certain positive asset. Auguste Comte, the founder of positivism, pursued, equally as German classical philosophy and its culmination Hegel in particular, high, generous aims, the universal philosophical unification and the total, at first rational, then ethical, and at last social, reorganization and renovation, of the most progressive population.<sup>1</sup>

After the theological and metaphysical historical epoch, Comte saw the essence of the overall reorganization of modern humankind in science. But Comte's work – like every human work – is subject to mistakes, inconsistencies, one-way swings and dangerous wrong ways. The supremacy is dangerous in Comte equally as partly already in Hegel's panlogism, since one-sided supremacy of the object over the subject and over all the individual, the particular, and peculiar is dangerous.

Comte brought into European thought a number of positive stimuli; it is not so much the best known famous theses on the realities and development, about three stages – theological, metaphysical and positivist, about the highest concept of humanity binding to everyone<sup>2</sup> and so on; after the preceding prolific impulses of the Renaissance and the Enlightenment of the idea of development and humanity, classical philosophy was fully established and only the lack of knowledge of the history of thought enabled positivism to regard them as its own discoveries. The divisions into three stages had already been done by Turgot in the eighteenth century and later by Saint-Simon, Comte borrowed it from him, and only then gave a wide historical account of it.

Further, it was not the ideas that were later adopted by historical materialism with all its inner discrepancies: that natural order and natural science are the pattern, even identical with social laws;<sup>3</sup> that being is superior to consciousness, the world of objects to the subject of knowledge: "Le monde d'abord, l'homme ensuite...", that economy should be studied first, and all conditions of human life

---

<sup>1</sup> COMTE, A.: *Sociologie*. Translation by R. Brejcha according to the excerpt by J. Rigo. Supplement and adaptation by E. Chalupný according to the original, Praha 1927, pp. 372, 401; where some ideas are not clear enough in this insufficient excerpt by Rigo, as already noted by E. Chalupný, I use the French original.

<sup>2</sup> COMTE, A.: *Cours de philosophie positive*, Paris 1908, Vol. VI, pp. 417ff; further abbreviated as *Cours*.

<sup>3</sup> That means, as formulated by Comte, that the basic principle of positive philosophy consists in the gradual submission of any phenomena, inorganic or organic, physical or moral, individual or social, to a strictly immutable law. *Cours VI*, p. 430; I mention the laws of spiritual functions in Chapter I; but, since the higher stages of spiritual activity cannot be reduced to the lower ones, these laws cannot be understood in terms of natural science but only spiritually.

are inferior to it, its phenomena being independent of human actions; that he added to the three stages: theological, metaphysical, and scientific, the stages of the economic development, also borrowed from Saint-Simon: slavery, serfdom (feudalism), free status of workers, which was later extended by historical materialism to five stages. Comte had wanted, like later Marxism, to make an end to the anarchy of a variety of opinions, and to establish stable authoritarian social institutions on the basis of scientific theory; the complete reorganization of society – which should naturally be the last and definite one (!) – should be done “sans dieu ni roi” under the only absolute dominance of social feeling. Comte sees the interconnection of all social phenomena – political, intellectual, moral, and physical; thus for example, the cultural state and the governmental form are correlative notions to him. Comte laid great emphasis on historicism in his positivism and overestimated the milieu and collectiveness to the detriment of the individual, as will be shown later. Comte also made a sort of re-appraisal of all values, so that art and science and other values lose their functional autonomy and are strictly subsumed in the service of an ideal social order. Many other substantial ideas were simply borrowed by historical materialism from Comte without mentioning it anywhere, but not forgetting a constant deluge with insults and deprecations.

But in addition to the fact that Comte strengthened the scientific standpoint by the fact that he saw in the science of all disciplines, in terms of the modern age, the chief and controlling principle for the overall reorganization of human society and he stood up against transcendental and metaphysical thought unambiguously and with historical justification – this being a vast progress with respect to idealistic philosophy – I would see his chief merit in his way of placing emphasis on the close interconnection between *theory and practice*<sup>4</sup> and how he focused his whole work on social life. After the one-sided idealistic growth, this was very beneficial to the philosophy of that period, but, it had both advantages and shadows in Comte's concept.

Although Comte welcomed the flourishing of industry, he emphasized the necessity for social organization to be popular, built on the close connection between the intelligentsia and the masses. He required aesthetic and scientific education for the wide public and rigidly reproves the higher society for shameful indifference to the education of the masses; this really became most fateful to Europe during the unusually rapid population growth in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

Comte saw very well into the emerging controversies between industrialists and workers, saying and warning that, unfortunately, there were many gaps in industrial organization. A still more complete discrepancy occurred between the interests of industrialists and workers. The dissemination of the anarchist efforts separated workers from masters and placed them under the leadership of rhetoricians and Sophists. This conflict between the head and the hands has to be ascribed to politi-

---

<sup>4</sup> Later also adopted by historical materialism.

cal misunderstanding, social carelessness and particularly to the short-sighted selfishness of entrepreneurs and the demands of workers. They did not try to protect workers from the enchantment by anarchist utopias by organizing public education but, quite the opposite, they were afraid of it. They replaced the feudal lords, but they did not inherit their noble-mindedness with respect to the lower strata. High industrial dignitaries used their political influence to seize important monopolies to the detriment of the public. They abused the power of capital to make the rights of the entrepreneurs dominant over the rights of the employees. Comte's warning came prior to Marxism, but unfortunately remained unnoticed in most countries: "The common people, who should be elevated by the higher classes, and who are kept in deep ignorance, threaten to intervene in their fate." The power of capital appeared to Comte to be too great as early as 130 years ago; therefore, "the duties of higher classes with respect to the people will not be regulated by the Christian principle of charity", but "they will primarily be formulated by a commitment to provide all with education and work and to ensure a more just daily pay". ... "It is therefore our duty to instruct the common people or to defend their interests, and their efforts will not be of an anarchist character any more."<sup>5</sup>

Although Comte had expressed his severe and progressive social comments long before Marxism, he could still remain an optimist true to the spirit of the Enlightenment since he believed in progress, that is in the increasing supremacy of rational and moral assignments and formulated it generously as follows: The result of the development consists not only in the improvement of the material situation of humans by constant expansion of their influence on the external world, but also in the fact that their highest capabilities develop through training and the power of physical desires are weakened, while social instincts are stimulated, the highest rational tasks are aroused and the influence of the mind on action increases. In these terms the individual development reproduces the main phases of social development. The aim of all this is to subject the satisfaction of personal instincts to the training of social instincts and to conform passions to the rules placed by the mind acquiring increasingly greater dominance.<sup>6</sup>

To be more precise, it was the faith of Comte's first period; in the second period the hierarchy of his assessment changed and he supported the supremacy of feeling over the mind, the heart over the head. Comte said about himself that his first main work, *Cours de philosophie positive* changed science into philosophy and that his second main work, *Système de politique positive*, changed philosophy into religion.

---

<sup>5</sup> COMTE, A.: *Sociologie*, Czech translation, pp. 358, 378, 390, 391, 392, 431.

<sup>6</sup> COMTE, A.: op. cit., p. 159. Precisely in this faith, which was a general denomination of the European intelligentsia from the Enlightenment, we can measure the decline of the first half of the twentieth century with the absolute supremacy of the instinct region over the rational and emotional regions in thought, actions, social institutions, and, particularly, in economic and power concepts and struggles!

And it was so indeed, particularly in relation to his second work. Comte was a split personality in spite of all his positive stimuli, the real son of the nineteenth century: that is why he had so many controversies within him – and a heterogeneous mixture of the progressive enlightenment and the backward romantic-restoration spirit. His vital mistakes and one-sided wrong ways are therefore seen in the noetic domain.

Comte highly valued mathematics, his first science and an archetype of the overall order, but he clearly saw its insufficiency for deeper philosophical approaches: he saw mathematical concepts as the source of everything positive, but, at the same time, as incapable of controlling the creation of universal philosophy; since mathematics provides an incorrect idea of the impact of the human mind and leads to the replacement of observation by prediction, abuse of excessively a priori considerations so that the one-sided cultivation of mathematics stimulates short-sighted demands on speculative lordship.<sup>7</sup>

Although Comte understood the insufficiency of the mathematical method for philosophy, he did not notice a similar danger in the method of natural science, which appeared to him as the only correct method also in the philosophical region; this must have necessarily led him to the natural scientific and naturalistic dogmatism, although his main work had not been done completely according to it and, because of the internal controversies of this method, it could not have been done either.

German classical philosophy showed, in contrast to the Enlightenment, that history does not fit into one framework with nature and natural history, that there are qualitative differences and contradictions between the realms of nature and culture although they are interconnected, that history also has necessity and certain laws, which are not identical with the laws of nature – and this is the greatest asset to and the solid foundation of modern historiography. Comte simply ignored these important and elementary distinctions as well as all the positive impetuses brought by Kant and Hegel.<sup>8</sup> By contrast, he saw, in a simplified manner, still in the spirit of the Enlightenment, the same laws in nature and in history, wrongly thinking that his historical analysis proved his basic theory of development as any other essential law of natural philosophy and that all phenomena, both inorganic and organic, physical and moral, individual and social, can be subordinated to immutable laws.<sup>9</sup> Of these noetic foundations and mistakes, the only model in his *Système de politique positive* is natural science, the concept of natural order being the basis of the whole real systematization of human acts, the method of natural science being the universal scientific method applicable equally both to nature and to history,

---

<sup>7</sup> COMTE, A.: *op. cit.*, pp. 402-404, 426 and in other places. This is valid till today for the whole of mathematical and formal logic.

<sup>8</sup> There is a simple reason for this, that he did not read anything else since his young years except the Enlighteners and restoration spirits.

<sup>9</sup> COMTE, A.: *Cours VI*, p. 300, Czech translation, pp. 371, 414.

moreover, history should be “elevated” into a natural science: therefore he called his sociology “social physics”.

This noetically wrong conception led Comte as well as all his followers in sociology and philosophy into the internally unresolved and insoluble controversies, which threaten in noetics till today; the absolute dominance of nature over man, being over consciousness, the object over the subject of knowledge (all this was adopted by historical materialism), which inevitably followed from this approach, but Comte goes further, establishing a complete supremacy of universality over all the individual and the particular, a supremacy still more comprehensive and harder than Hegel’s supremacy of the state over the individual, comparable to and earlier than historical materialism. And this was how Comte appeared in his second period: as a spirit of restoration, backward with respect to the Enlightenment and classical philosophy.

To Comte, universality is humankind, humanity. The chief achievement of modern progress consists in the fact that all approaches are directed towards the concept of humanity. To Comte, humanity is the highest notion, much more efficient where intensity and endurance are concerned, than the old theological concept of God.<sup>10</sup> And the moral accent which Comte placed on this ‘whole’ human species in his overall thinking is certainly correct, it has to arouse admiration and esteem and that is what we are also looking for. But this correct universality, towards which we always have to direct our steps, changes with Comte into almighty ‘totalitarianism’ on the other hand, which mercilessly swallowed all the individual and the particular; Comte thus committed an opposite extreme to subjectivism and individualism, that he finds everything valuable only in the milieu and the collective and establishes the absolute and fanatically intolerant supremacy of universality over the individual. It was not the twentieth century that began to efficiently help totalitarianism. ‘Immediately after Hegel’s panlogism, his logical and state totalitarianism, Comte established social totalitarianism, which was the chief source and the model for the economic totalitarianism, soon presented by Marx.’ This is in all cases an equally mistaken and inadmissible reduction to only one component of life, whose all-round growth is made impossible and is deformed. This must have been felt by people primarily on their own bodies and minds.

Comte constantly emphasizes that all individuals have to submit unconditionally to universality. Every individualism is to him egoism as a whole and each egoism or any resistance of an individual against universality is anarchism, since positive philosophy declares the supremacy of universal love, altruism over egoism and of society over the individual (amour-universel, vire pour autrui). That is why society cannot be derived from the character of the individuals, but the other way round, the individual can be understood only on the basis of the character of human society. Every stable social order requires dependence and complete submission of the indi-

---

<sup>10</sup> COMTE, A.: *Sociologie*, Czech translation, pp. 410, 452.

vidual to the universal and only with the aid of this submission can moral values be realized in society.

It never occurred to Comte that an individual could find him/herself in conflict with society – most often precisely for moral reasons – and that he might even be right; Comte did not feel that problem precisely because of his restoration-authoritarian thinking, he only saw that the consequences of individualism threatened every authority, and agreed with absolute spiritual anarchy, which would disturb the social order.

We see here an almost religious worship of humankind, where the individual lost, however, any sovereignty and legal independence and to which s/he must submit completely and in all singularities. This submission can, however, be done with the greatest individual self-denial, and Comte even ensured the sovereign and absolute supremacy of the whole over the part by going to the most extreme theoretical possibility, simply denying the individual. In his opinion, we must not think that the society consists of individuals; the so-called man is actually a naked abstraction, only humankind is real.<sup>11</sup>

And although society is certainly not a mere sum of individuals, yet, if the individual is an abstraction, then humankind, which willy-nilly consists of individuals, must also be a mere abstraction. Comte's schematic hierarchy of sciences, his schematization of history into three stages as well as his solid and hard bond of social order are merely products of his unreal, schematic, deductive, 'abstract' thinking, always losing concrete and therefore equally significant realities.

The individual is therefore completely worthless to Comte, he is only a produce of the milieu and history could, in his opinion, do without renowned personalities, heroes, and geniuses. In his order, therefore, Comte wants to watch carefully over how every individual thinks and therefore "no rational spirit can bring disgrace on the continuous control of the public mind".<sup>12</sup>

Moreover, if in his first period, Comte was for the freedom of speech and press, in his second period, he condemns the freedom of press, teaching and conscience, which are incompatible with the authority of the social order. And since he had not recognized individuality, Comte did not recognize law in public life, which might defend it, either. But Comte not only lacked the sense of individuality, he also lacked a sense of the special value of particular historical epochs (therefore his unsustainable schematization of history), even of national specialities which, however, proved his abstractly thinking spirit. Success in history is only what survived, and the demands of the European republic should voluntarily submit to the intellectu-

---

<sup>11</sup> COMTE, A.: op. cit., pp. 147, 410. Evidently, all one-sided reductions can only be done to the detriment of and negation of the other components, which always means the deformation of reality.

<sup>12</sup> COMTE, A.: op. cit., p. 421.

ally and morally most talented nation – in contrast to Hegel, now to the French one.<sup>13</sup>

It was still worse, although it was merely a consequence of the whole conception, that Comte's philosophy subordinated both art and science and even morals to the social standpoint, relating everything not to man, who is an abstraction, but to humankind.<sup>14</sup> The pontiff of humankind – a lay form of priestly hierarchy elaborated with a particular cult, prayers, etc. down to the smallest detail – should be the highest censor of science who should determine which sciences should be cultivated and to what extent, that is as long as they serve the best purpose of humankind. The way of understanding this best purpose of humankind is best seen in the fact that, according to Comte, the majority of scientific explorations should be repudiated as vain and infertile. Only one hundred books should have been chosen out of all the books that would be useful for human hierarchies (and not for science) and all the other should have been – 'burnt'. Animal and plant species without value to people should be exterminated; food should be weighed; the style and the length of paragraphs should also be regulated. These morals of "emotion" remind us strongly of Rousseau's equally "emotional" irrationalist attitude of the "Theses" of his youth and thus no further details need to be mentioned.

Comte is right to say that humankind is a mighty and eternal organism; but he understood this precious and multiform organism unilaterally as the 'mechanism' of iron regulation and subordination. If in his first period he tried to reach an equilibrium between the universal and the individual and took account of the individual, all was overshadowed by further development in his second period – true to the sources, which he drew on, namely to the neo-Catholic romanticism of Saint-Simon, De Maistro and Lamennaise – he appears to us as a fanatical restoration spirit with subordinate dogmatism.

If Hegel gave the strongest ideological stimuli to establish the proper equilibrium of the relation between subject and object by concrete universality, although he also often saw all the valuable only in the mistaken, abstract universality, Comte, the originally progressive man, reminds at last rather the medieval realism, which also declared the intolerant supremacy of universality over the individualistic nominalism. His social stratification, according to which he wanted to preserve only the classes of priests, bankers, and proletarians (as is typical of this restoration thinking Comte also wanted to liquidate the middle class!) also shows that Comte thought in these categories feudally rather than socially. Instead of the intellect, it is emotion that should now be the controlling institution, progress is replaced by strictly regulating law, absolute subordination as subservience replaces freedom. Thus our

---

<sup>13</sup> Cf. also MEHLIS, G.: *Die Geschichtsphilosophie Comtes*, Leipzig 1909; a rather difficult work, but it defines well this supremacy of the universal over the particular in Chapter IV, from which I also drew.

<sup>14</sup> COMTE, A.: *Sociologie*, Czech translation, p. 449.

struggles are often turned in the same being into quite the opposite. We definitely also want to serve generous, universal, suprapersonal values, but as we have seen, there is no guarantee that the goal of the whole – as with Hegel – which we should serve, will also be ‘good’.

All human life is seen here, and seized and regulated only from the outside and it is sacrificed not to the real concrete humankind but only to its abstraction. It is a great externalization, mechanization, and despiritualization of humans, which was intensified from the 1850s, reaching its climax after one hundred years. Noetic idealism performed an excessively one-sided and extreme reduction to the interior, to subjectivity, but here this reduction to the external, the object, is equally extreme. It is the establishment of the absolute supremacy of the abstract universal over everything subjective, individual and peculiar. And, proportionally to the noetic foundations, European freedom, which has to make its way in the social region in the middle of extreme opinions, is constantly under the menace of individualistic anarchism on one wing of the swing and of collectivist totalitarianism on the other, which is established by historical materialism with all its social consequences.