Criticism of Individualism in *German Will to Power* by Svätopluk Štúr*

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In his book *The German Will to Power* (*Nemecká vôľa k moci*), published in 1967, Svätopluk Štúr (1901–1981), one of the core representatives of Slovak academic philosophy of the 20th century, blamed German naturalism for the formation of Nazi ideology and for the horrors of the Second World War, which resulted directly from this twisted ideology. The goal of this study is to examine the role that Štúr ascribes to individualism in his criticism of naturalism as the main ideological source of Nazism.

The book *The German Will to Power*, one of the best-known texts by Štúr, is part of his "war trilogy", a series of three books written during the greatest worldwide conflict in human history. "While the remaining two parts (*Rozprava o živote*, 1946, and *Zmysel slovenského obrodenia*, 1948) are published shortly after the war, The German Will to Power which was originally written first under a different title – *German Perversion of All Values* (*Nemecké zvrátenie všetkých hodnôt*) – was published last with a great delay, not until 1967. There are two reasons behind this delay – because of his opinions, Štúr was not allowed to publish during the war and, as he mentions in the prologue of the book, the original manuscript together with all the copies were lost when Štúr crossed the front. When his notes to the second and the third chapter of the book were found more than twenty years later, Štúr decided to write the book anew and publish it.[1]

Since the book is essentially a reaction to specific historical events, a question quickly emerges: what is the purpose of its publication so many years

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1 See Štúr, S., *The German Will to Power. Thought Bases* (*Nemecká vôľa k moci. Myšlienkové základy*). Bratislava, Obzor 1967, p. 7.

after these tragic events? The author answers this question in the prologue, proclaiming the book is still a very topical text which is why it makes sense to publish it even after all these years.[2] The book is fundamentally a philosophical coming to terms with Nazi ideology. Unlike in most post-war studies, the focus of Štúr's text is not on the analysis of historical, political, economic or social causes behind the Second World War, but on the uncovering of the thought bases and philosophical sources of this ideology that eventually led to expansionist and genocidal madness. As Štúr attempts to show, the problem of the influence and responsibility of German philosophy has not yet been sufficiently and systematically analysed.[3] Therefore, the book can be considered an indictment of German philosophy of the 19th century and the first half of the 20th century. Already in the prologue, Štúr openly reveals the decisive role that German philosophical naturalism played in the emergence of Nazi ideology:

> "In it [the book – M. P.], I showed the far-reaching share of the blame that German philosophy has for the bloody events of our century, and that even the ideology of Nazism was nothing compared to what the naturalistic movement within German ideology had uttered long before. The Nazis merely implemented it with the most perverted form of brutality."[4]

But before we turn to particular examples from the history of German philosophy that are the target of Štúr's sharp criticism, we must first take into account the specific nature of Štúr's understanding of history and society. Štúr's philosophy of history is idealistic, because it builds on the premise that material conditions, i.e. economic, social and geographic conditions, are not a decisive factor in human history. On the contrary, it is ideas that move the world:

> "The social life of humanity is not governed by natural laws, however much we are confined by them, but rather by leading ideas, both ethical

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2   Ibid., p. 8.

3   Ibid., p. 7. In this respect, Štúr considers G. Lukács' book *Die Zerstörung der Vernunft* (1955) to be the only exception. According to František Novosád, however, this gives proof of "the author's isolation from the philosophical context of his time", rather than of the results of Štúr's own research – in the second half of the 1960s, there was already a considerable number of texts published which analysed the philosophical background of Nazism (see Novosád, F., The Will to Reason Against the Will to Power /Vôľa k rozumu proti vôli k moci/). *Filozofia*, 56, 2001, No. 9, p. 631–635, esp. p. 632.

4   Štúr, S., *German Will to Power. Thought Bases*, p. 7.

and gangsterish, depending on which ideas are assigned this leading role by the majority of people in the society."[5]

Summed up in the words of Tibor Pichler, one of the most prominent contemporary commentators of Štúr's work: "Svätopluk Štúr was convinced that life is governed by ideas. Its quality depends on the quality of ideas that man and society decide to adhere to." [6] In other words, Štúr ascribes historic power mainly to the producers of ideas: philosophers, thinkers, scholars. But since it follows that the greater the power, the greater the responsibility, Štúr accordingly places also the biggest burden of responsibility for the course on history on their shoulders. This key aspect of Štúr's work should be borne in mind especially when reading *The German Will to Power*.[7]

Štúr's investigation of the philosophical sources of Nazism begins at the turn of the 18th and 19th century. He sees the spiritual situation of the period as a culminating stage of Enlightenment rationalism and classical philosophy:

> "Kant and Herder articulated their monumental humanist credo in Germany at the end of 18th century in an especially spectacular manner – 'in the spirit of global citizenship'; after that Schiller, Goethe, Beethoven at the beginning of 19th century in a similar spirit of all-humanness."[8]

However, Štúr, who himself openly supports the humanistic ideals of the Enlightenment and critical rationalism, also notes that especially the German-speaking world shows signs of gradual decline of humanistic and universalist ideals of the Enlightenment and the high classical philosophy during the whole of 19th century and the first half of the 20th century, meaning an ever steeper descent of the spirit into the darkness of naturalism, materialism, sensualism, animality, and nihilism.

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5 Štúr, S., *A Discourse On Life* (*Rozprava o živote*). Bratislava, Filozofická fakulta Slovenskej univerzity 1946, p. 28, note 23.

6 Pichler, T., Svätopluk Štúr and the Politics of Ideas (Svätopluk Štúr a politika ideí). *Filozofia*, 56, 2001, No. 9, p. 601–606, esp. p. 601.

7 Elena Várossová bears witness to the fact that this indeed was the fundamental idea for his understanding of society and history: "Professor Štúr rightfully taught us that the very basis of all conflicts and tragedies of humanity are ideas that have the potential to dynamise themselves […] into twisted forms, even world conflagrations." Várossová, E., The Place and Importance of Svätopluk Štúr in the Context of Slovak Philosophy of the 20th Century (Miesto a význam Svätopluka Štúra v kontexte slovenskej filozofie 20. storočia). *Filozofia*, 56, 2001, No. 9, p. 594 to 600, esp. p. 599.

8 Štúr, S., *German Will to Power. Thought Bases*, p. 9.

This is exactly what Štúr has in mind when, in reference to an observation made by the Austrian writer, Franz Grillparzer, he states that Europe is now going through a shift from humanity through nationalism to bestiality.[9] Nationalism, along with naturalism, is the second root of Nazi ideology, as Štúr identifies them in his book. However, what he means is not an ordinary nationalism in the sense of an idea of a national consciousness or a natural love for the nation, but an exaggerated, exclusive nationalism that elevates the given nation over all others, i.e. the form of nationalism which was originally called chauvinism. Therefore, it would be wrong to understand Štúr's criticism of nationalism in *The German Will to Power* as a condemnation of nationalism (*nacionalizmus*, *národovectvo*) in general. On the contrary, nationalism as a consciousness of national identity and a positive relation to one's own nation does have an important place in the harmonious and "natural composition of life", as Štúr himself saw it.

Štúr's conception of life can be introduced in brief in a summarising interpretation by T. Pichler: Štúr

> "acknowledges a pyramidal structure of life, the lower levels of which are completed, not lost in the higher, superior levels. He is convinced that the universal growth of life depends on its development towards bigger, more complex units, starting from the individual and progressing through family to nation, Slavism and, finally, to humanity."[10]

Thus, for Štúr, nationalism has not just its historical justification, it also has a value for life. However, it becomes unacceptable when it starts to be taken as the greatest goal and highest value of a nation and ceases to be governed by the principle of all-humanness and humanity, as Štúr writes in *A Discourse On Life* (*Rozprava o živote*)[11] or in his last book *Struggles and Wrong Directions of Modern Man* (*Zápasy a scestia moderného človeka*), where he even mentions a "humanistic nationalism".[12]

Aside from historical events (Napoleonic wars and the reactionary restoration movement), Štúr sees the beginnings of the exaggerated form of nationalism in romantism, especially in the philosophy of Johann Gottlieb

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9   Ibid.
10 Pichler, T., Critical Realism of Svätopluk Štúr (Kritický realizmus Svätopluka Štúra). In: Kopčok, A. – Kollár, K. – Pichler, T. (eds.), *The History of Slovak Philosophy in the 20th Century* (*Dejiny filozofie na Slovensku v XX. storočí*). Bratislava, Filozofický ústav SAV 1998, p. 238.
11 Štúr, S., *A Discourse On Life*, p. 45.
12 See Štúr, S., *Struggles and Wrong Directions of Modern Man* (*Zápasy a scestia moderného človeka*). Bratislava, Veda 1998, p. 140–141, 197.

Fichte, whose Berlin lectures from 1807, published under the title *Addresses to the German Nation* (1808), represent "the first significant nationalist credo" of the German nation. Indeed, clear signs of romantic nationalism can be traced back to the end of the 18th century, to Herder, for example – but for him, the idea of a nation was always subordinate to the spirit of universal humanity. However, nationalism was not peculiar just to German thinkers and the German nation alone. Nationalism in the form of an awakening of national awareness and identity is an important part of romantic movement, and so at the beginning of the 19th century they emerge hand in hand in other countries as well (England, Italy, Slavic areas), slowly penetrating the whole Europe. Yet, nationalism in its extreme form of "exclusive nationalism" emerges for the first time in the philosophy of J. G. Fichte, as Štúr notes. Moreover, ever since Fichte, this twisted and extreme exclusiveness "was systematically and persistently fostered solely in German nationalism",[13] with only a few rare exceptions that came later.

To paint the whole picture, it should be added that Štúr also appreciates more reasonable aspects of Fichte's *Addresses* that clearly testify to the fact that in many respects Fichte is an heir to the ideals of the Enlightenment and Classicism. Štúr especially accentuates Fichte's ideas on new German education towards humanity that would eventually lead to a universal and complete development of all aspects of man and to an overcoming of egoistic individualism:

> "Fichte's education is most critical of selfishness, always bearing in mind the collective good to which individual interests must be subordinate. Unlike Kant and Herder, with whom he shares the same intellectual and moral grounding, Fichte's teaching puts an even greater emphasis on responsibility, productivity, activity and will."[14]

On the other hand, Štúr also pinpoints moments in the *Addresses* that reveal the twistedness of Fichte's exclusive nationalism, fanatic chauvinism even, that had a harmful influence on later generations of the German nation – for instance, the superiority of the German nation that Fichte justifies by the superiority of the German language over others, or the predetermination of the German nation to "dominate the world".[15]

Due to space constraints, I shall cite just a short extract from the *Addresses* that accurately illustrates Fichte's belligerent chauvinist nationalism and

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13 Štúr, S., *German Will to Power. Thought Bases*, p. 10.
14 Ibid., p. 11.
15 Ibid., p. 18.

reveals the germination of one of the key Nazi concepts, the "living space" (*Lebensraum*[16]):

> "A people that has remained true to nature can, if its territories have become too narrow, desire to enlarge them and gain more space by conquering neighbouring lands, and then it will drive out the former inhabitants…".[17]

Štúr is openly sarcastic in his exposé of Fichte's *Addresses* and shows how much Fichte moved away from the ideals of the French Revolution that he had admired so much before, and also from his original idealism which, under the influence of this exaggerated nationalism, turns into its very opposite – harsh naturalism:

> "So this idealist uses his higher patriotic love, heaven and eternal bliss to justify a completely naturalist right of the 'original people' to plunder, kill and conquer."[18]

In conclusion, Štúr observes bitterly the malignant influence that the *Addresses* have had on the subsequent spiritual development of the German nation:

> "*Reden an die deutsche Nation* became the bible of German nationalist sentiment and in this chauvinist form it fully saturated the blood in the Germans' veins."[19]

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16 To be more precise, Štúr does not mention the idea of *Lebensraum* (i.e. the idea of territorial expansion of the German nation through the conquest of other nations) specifically in connection with Fichte, nor with any other authors he identifies as and analyses for potential philosophical inspirational sources of Nazi ideology. The idea of Lebensraum itself emerges in Germany no sooner than at the turn of the century. Moreover, it is only later that the idea takes on the meaning of conquest of the territory of Slavic nations all the way to the Ural Mountains – note that this sense of Lebensraum becomes the key idea of Nazi ideology leading to the outbreak of the Second World War. On the other hand, Štúr starts with Fichte in his analysis of the work of German thinkers in search of those elements that formed the philosophical substratum for the idea of Lebensraum. These elements are: praise of belligerence and conquest of foreign lands, praise of expansive politics and imperialism, celebration of war and militarism, the myth of blood and soil or "politics of space". Yet, Štúr explicitly mentions the idea of living space only with regards to key representatives of Nazi ideology: Adolf Hitler (ibid., p. 204) and especially Alfred Rosenberg (ibid., p. 217–219) and their books *Mein Kampf* and *Mythus des 20. Jahrhunderts*, the main point of which, according to author's resumé, was to "gain soil at the expense of the Soviet Union and Poland". Ibid., p. 222.

17 Fichte, J. G., *Addresses to the German Nation* (*Reden an die deutsche Nation*). New York, Cambridge University Press 2009, p. 167.

18 Štúr, S., *German Will to Power. Thought Bases*, p. 18.

19 Ibid.

Thus, Štúr used the example of Fichte to show that every case of exclusive nationalism leads to a perverse accentuation of peculiarities, to superiority of national individualism over universal humanity.

The idea of a total subordination of an individual to some greater unit such as nation or state, already present in Fichte's famous *Addresses*, is later intensified in Hegel's philosophy and his statism. In contrast to Fichte and especially Hegel's statism, Max Stirner, a young Hegelian, publishes his main work *The Ego and Its Own* (*Der Einzige und sein Eigentum*, 1844), as an expression of the most radical individualism ever to be formulated to that date. While Štúr sees Fichte's *Addresses* as a bible of exaggerated national egoism, he considers Stirner's book to be a "bible of the most drastic egoism and anarchism".[20] The core of Stirner's book is the idea of an intangible and undefinable Self as a "creative nothing" that frees itself from anything that it could be exceeded or limited by, so that it can shape itself in its own uniqueness. Since freedom itself is without substance, however, it is only a negative delimitation of this task – the positive being possession. Thus, the Self feeds on appropriation:

> "I secure my freedom with regard to the world to the degree that I make the world my own, i.e. 'to gain and conquer it' for myself, using any power required (*Gewalt*)…"[21]

Therefore, power/violence is the primary method of appropriation – an individual can choose any means to gain and maintain ownership, including swindling, theft, or any other crime.

According to Stirner, all social institutions and universal concepts such as morality, law, religion, marriage, family, nation, state, but also the very concept of man, are but inimical forces threatening the egoist and his autonomy, which is why he must set himself free from them to stand any chance of self-realisation:

> "This thorough solipsism, and especially fanatic aversion to everything spiritual, are symptoms of a malignant illness plaguing European humanity that will gradually spread and intensify and will therefore inexorably lead into an abyss of nihilism with logical inevitability".[22]

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20 Ibid., p. 38.

21 Stirner, M., *The Ego and Its Own*. Ed. David Leopold. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press 1995, p. 149–150. Štúr decided to differ from Czech translation of Stirner's book and translates Stirner's key concept of "Gewalt" – that in German has the meaning of both power and violence – as violence. Thus, Štúr accentuates naturalistic and barbarian consequences of Stirner's individualist-anarchic philosophy.

22 Štúr, S., *German Will to Power. Thought Bases*, p. 50.

Thus, Štúr depicts Stirner in his egoistic hatred towards anything spiritual as a thinker who opens wide the door to naturalism and therefore also to nihilism.

In light of two great tragic world conflicts of the 20th centuries, the following words of Max Stirner seem very prophetic and also cynical: "and, even if I foresaw that these thoughts would deprive you of your rest and your peace, even if I saw the bloodiest wars and the fall of many generations springing from this seed of thought – I would nevertheless scatter it."[23] And yet, Štúr softens the weight of Stirner's words he quotes when he writes that, to be fair, Stirner could not fully "imagine that such a monster could be born who would use his teachings against the whole civilisation with the same ruthless and cynical viciousness!"[24] Interestingly enough, despite its absurdness, Stirner's thinking took root in the German nation and his ideas of egoistic individualism found their way into German nationalism and thus became "the official ideology of German national solipsism."[25] What Štúr probably means by this observation is that a certain synthesis took place within the German nation – that of Stirner's egoist individualism and exclusive nationalism which was sown in the soul of German nation by Fichte:

> "Because national solipsism too is but a modification of individual solipsism, the only difference being in kind and scale."[26]

After a thorough criticism of national individualism (represented by Fichte) and egoist individualism (represented by Stirner), Štúr now turns to the third form of radical individualism, more precisely the "naturalistic individualism" advocated most notably by Friedrich Nietzsche. The term "naturalistic individualism" is not used by Štúr himself, but can be deduced from his main argument, according to which Nietzsche radicalises "neo-romantic individualism" through a "naturalistic philosophy".[27] Despite the fact that Štúr centres his criticism on Nietzsche's naturalism (dedicating one whole chapter out of the three in his book to it) and deals with his individualism only sporadically, we shall attempt to show at least the main points of this so-called "naturalistic individualism", which Štúr formulates more implicitly than explicitly.

Štúr sees Nietzsche primarily as a passionate denier, who, in the name of life, demolishes and overturns all values upon which the European ethos and

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23 Stirner, M., *The Ego and Its Own*, p. 263.
24 Štúr, S., *German Will to Power. Thought Bases*, p. 49.
25 Ibid., p. 39.
26 Ibid., p. 46.
27 Ibid., p. 67.

culture stand. For Štúr, Nietzsche is "the first distinctive intermediary" of the modern philosophy of life (*Lebensphilosophie*). Although Štúr dedicates some space in *The German Will to Power* to an analysis of Schopenhauer's voluntarism, he perceives Schopenhauer as a mere predecessor of vitalism – it was Nietzsche who "consciously and with full noetic gravity, was the first to put life in opposition to knowledge, giving life supremacy over knowledge."[28] It is this supremacy of life over knowledge, reason and spirit that Štúr identifies as the core principle of the transvaluation of all values. Thus, according to Štúr, transvaluation of all values is a consequence of "noetic nihilism" that Nietzsche formulates in the early stages of his work – when he understands truth as a "useful lie", an "illusion" or an interpretation always dependent on a given perspective – and that culminates in his mature period in the maxim: "Nothing is true, everything is permitted."[29] Nietzsche, who on the one hand did his best to destroy and unmask the Christian myth and myth of morality, on the other hand largely contributed to the creation of a new myth, "the myth of the philosophy of life" that would pose "the most serious threat to European culture, since, in fact, it means its conscious denial",[30] as Štúr bitterly notes.

Building on ethical universalism and not on any kind of religious perspective, Štúr strongly objects against Nietzsche that it was the philosophy of life itself, not morality, that diminished and impoverished life – "What Nietzsche and all other naturalistic philosophers call 'life' is but a life reduced to the merely instinctive, *vital* area, i.e. a life that is significantly impoverished in its being deprived of its variability".[31] Štúr argues:

> "only on the basis of this naturalistically compressed and narrowed-down concept concept of man and his tasks could Nietzsche then equate 'life' with the *will to power*. Indeed, it is solely the firm will to power that saves his life from nihilism, to which in noetic terms he has already completely succumbed."[32]

But how does Nietzsche define life and what does it mean that life is will to power? Štúr answers this question by quoting a key passage from Nietzsche's *Beyond Good and Evil* (1886):

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28 Ibid., p. 72.
29 Nietzsche, F., *On the Genealogy of Morals. A Polemical Tract.* Transl. I. Johnston. Arlington, Richer Resources Publications 2009, p. 125.
30 Štúr, S., *German Will to Power. Thought Bases*, p. 82.
31 Ibid., p. 90.
32 Ibid., p. 93.

> "life itself is *essentially* a process of appropriation, injury, overpowering of strangers and the weak, oppression, harshness, imposition of one's own forms, incorporation, and at least, to use the least extreme possible word, exploitation…"[33]

Thus, Nietzsche exposes life in all of its naturalistic roughness, cruelness and ruthlessness and, at the same time, makes it the highest criterion of morality. Naturally, this is why Nietzsche in his moral philosophy "beatifies selfishness, healthy, overflowing selfishness, because the selfish pleasure of such bodies and souls is known as a 'virtue'. He preaches the holy and the healthy Self!"[34] This is the base on which Nietzsche formulates the morality of strong individuals, the so-called "noble men" who affirm life exactly by cultivating their own egoism and amplifying the feeling of power – as Nietzsche himself writes: "egoism is component to the essence of the noble soul."[35]

Although historians of philosophy refuse to compare Nietzsche to Stirner and even though Nietzsche denied taking inspiration from Stirner's work, we can identify some common ground in their thinking:

> "Let us not deceive ourselves: Stirner's solipsist Self and Nietzsche's fundamental text *homo natura* or *Raubmensch* are brothers born to the same family."[36]

Despite the fact that Štúr finds great similarities between the two authors especially with regards to individualism (and partially in naturalism, too), the fundamental differences between Stirner's egoistic individualism and Nietzsche's naturalistic individualism are not to be ignored. Firstly, both individualisms build on different premises: while Stirner places the solipsist Self against the rest of the world, Nietzsche works with an overall naturalistic concept of life. Secondly, on a social level, Stirner's individualism is anarchistic, while Nietzsche's individualism is aristocratic. Thus, politically speaking, Stirner can imagine at most just a kind of "union of egoists" that would function as a loose and voluntary group of egocentric individuals. Contrary to this is Nietzsche's understanding of society as stemming from the fundamental principle of life, the will to power; he postulates an elitist

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33 Nietzsche, F., *Beyond Good and Evil*. Transl. J. Norman. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press 2002, p. 153.
34 Štúr, S., *German Will to Power. Thought Bases*, p. 106.
35 Nietzsche, F., *Beyond Good and Evil*, p. 162.
36 Štúr, S., *German Will to Power. Thought Bases*, p. 96.

division of society into two classes: a ruling caste of noble individuals and an obedient herd of the mediocre.

In the end, Štúr considers Nietzsche to be not only a noetic nihilist, but also a "moral nihilist",[37] regardless of the fact that Nietzsche himself tries to warn against nihilism and to overcome nihilism by creating a new morality built on a narrow naturalistic understanding of life.

> "Power, violence, cruelty – that is the fundamental 'victorious' idea of Nietzschean thinking".[38]

All of this can be justified by referring to the intensification of life and its essence, the "will to power", but only inasmuch as the individual breaks away from universal bonds of humanity and the criteria of reason. Such individualistic breakaway from the universal consequently allows Nietzsche to acclaim even crime, after all, "all great men were criminals on a grand style"[39] and to dream of war because war is purportedly "the father of all things good"[40] – "Indeed, war becomes the final and only meaning of Nietzsche's philosophy"[41] concludes Štúr with horror.[42]

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37 Ibid., p. 104.
38 Ibid., p. 122.
39 Ibid., p. 121.
40 Ibid., p. 117.
41 Ibid., p. 124.
42 Commentators of Štúr's work usually agree that his criticism of Nietzsche is quite unjust – they reject Štúr's accusations of Nietzsche's responsibility for Nazi's misuse of his ideas. František Novosád points to the pamphlet-like, popular and non-scientific character of Štúr's book, whose goal was not a serious research into the philosophical roots of Nazism, but to "address a larger audience, the political public, to immunise it against Nazism" (Novosád, F., The Will to Reason Against the Will to Power, p. 631). This contrasts with Erika Lalíková's view, who sees the book as "highly qualified", and at the same time accessible due to its documentary-like format (Lalíková, E., Inspiring Imaginary Meetings with Svätopluk Štúr /Inšpiratívnosť imaginárnych stretnutí so Svätoplukom Štúrom/. *Filozofia*, 56, 2001, No. 9, p. 662–665, esp. p. 663). Theodor Münz even thinks that today, in retrospect, Štúr himself would revise some of his positions (Münz, T., The Philosophy of Life of Svätopluk Štúr /Filozofia života Svätopluka Štúra/. *Filozofia*, 56, 2001, No. 9, p. 618–619). This opinion is rather difficult to agree with – Štúr wrote his book twice, with a gap of almost thirty years between editions, so he had plenty of time to re-assess his original thoughts. Moreover, Štúr was familiar also with different interpretations of Nietzsche that were more open, metaphoric and symbolic. However, Štúr deliberately focuses on a "literal interpretation", rather than a mere free, "literary interpretation". His hermeneutic method could therefore be expressed by the motto: "To the text itself!" František Novosád aptly describes Štúr's method of literal interpretation of philosophical texts: "As far as F. Nietzsche is concerned, his texts are oftentimes understood as 'sacred' and we tend to 'explain away' the numerous barbarisms. Svätopluk Štúr refused this 'allegorical' interpretation, he refuses to 'cleanse' the texts of German philosophers of barbarianisms and instead opted for 'hermeneutic highlighting' – he reads German philosophers 'literally' and refuses to explain

Here we come to an issue that emerges in various forms and extents not only in the work of all three philosophers that we have discussed so far, but slowly and with growing intensity also in broader circles of the German intelligentsia of the 19th century and the first half of the 20th century – militarism, i.e. the praise and idealisation of war. Probably the most significant expression of militarism can be found in texts by Max Scheler, a phenomenologist and the founder of philosophical anthropology, published during the First World War. In his book *The Genius of War and the German War* (*Der Genius des Krieges und der Deutsche Krieg*),[43] published in 1914, Scheler offers an ethical, metaphysical and even religious justification of the need of war – which, for Štúr, is a mark of its "unforgettable perverted despicability."[44]

With regards to individualism, Štúr mentions yet another German author, Alexander Tille, a commentator and translator of Nietzsche's work. Tille looks up to Nietzsche as "the most consequential evolutionary philosopher of ethics" and, at the same time, the most significant representative of individualism, "the defender of greater freedom of action" than the attitude of that era allowed. In his 1895 book *From Darwin to Nietzsche* (*Von Darwin bis Nietzsche*),[45] Tille delivers a prophecy that is especially interesting in the context of the historical events that followed:

"Cultured humanity is heading towards progressively greater freedom of thought and action, and before us there lies an unforeseeably long period of unlimited individualism with a huge degree of differentiation between individuals, which, provided the culture does not spread throughout humanity, could lead to the creation of a new species within the human species of today. Should this go on, we would then face another period of further intensification of national contrasts, i.e. further development of particular national figures, which would mean

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their thoughts ',allegorically'. His goal is literally to underline points in their works indicating a potential slipping into brutality." Novosád, F., The Will to Reason Against the Will to Power, p. 634. On the other hand, such literal, "superficial" interpretation of Nietzsche's thoughts and concepts might be seen as "problematic, even misleading" (see Korená, K., Nietzsche in the Works of Svätopluk Štúr /Nietzsche v prácach Svätopluka Štúra/. In: Lalíková, E. – Szapuová, M. /eds./, *The Forms of Philosophising Yesterday and Today. /Podoby filozofovania včera a dnes/*. Bratislava, Iris 2009, p. 217–228, esp. p. 223). However, it is not the aim of this study to decide whether and to what extent Štúr's criticism of Nietzsche and the other authors analysed in the *The German Will to Power* is justified or unacceptable. Moreover, such a task requires considerable space and could itself make for a separate study.

43 See Scheler, M., *Genius des Krieges und der Deutsche Krieg.* Leipzig, Verlag der Weiszen Bücher 1917.

44 Štúr, S., *German Will to Power. Thought Bases*, p. 146.

45 See Tille, A., *Von Darwin bis Nietzsche, ein Buch Entwicklungsethik*, Lipsko, Naumann 1895.

that individualism within a nation and nationalism among nations would play the biggest role in future developments; a ruling figure and a ruling nation would then represent the apex of human development with the virtues of the future being nobleness, health, sharpness of thought, and inclination to power."[46]

To reach this goal, to achieve the installation of a ruling personality and a ruling nation, Tille needs to deal with Nietzsche's aristocratism by propounding his own vision of a social-aristocratism which would be accessible to everybody:

> "That is why he objects to Nietzsche's aristocratic individualism: after all, the European worker too is a factor of power."[47]

Thus, Tille wants to "collectivise and nationalise" Nietzsche's naturalistic and aristocratic individualism", which for Štúr is already "an echo of the methods of the new century".[48] And so, despite their own disdain of nationalism, but due to the individualistic legacy of their work, Nietzsche and Stirner become intrinsic to German chauvinistic nationalism.

However, it would be outwardly wrong to interpret Štúr's critical remarks on individualism in *The German Will to Power*, as well as in his other works, as a sign of disrespect for individuality and distinctiveness on the part of the author. For Štúr, individuality (both of a person and of a nation) has an important place in the harmonious, synthesising architecture of life. Yet, Štúr considers individualism in itself, and likewise its opposite, abstract universalism, to be extreme and unilateral, and therefore in conflict with the harmonious order of life. All things unilateral disrupt the fundamental balance of the constituents of life, according to Štúr's concept of life. This is why in all his works he sharply criticises anything that is purely unilateral, since it reduces life to just one of its constituent parts.

In his last, posthumously published book, *The Struggles and Wrong Directions of the Modern Man*, Štúr also warns against the dark side of the opposite extreme, i.e. universalism that leads to an unacceptable and dangerous dominance "of object over subject and generality over everything individual, specific and distinctive".[49] He illustrates this extreme using the example of Auguste Comte's social philosophy:

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46 Štúr, S., *German Will to Power. Thought Bases*, p. 132.
47 Ibid., p. 134.
48 Ibid., p. 135.
49 Štúr, S., *The Struggles and Wrong Directions of The Modern Man*, p. 68.

> "Comte, this original pioneer, in the end resembles the realism of the Middle Ages which similarly declared intolerant supremacy of generality over individualistic nominalism."[50]

Interestingly enough, Comte understands humanity, or humanness, as a universal idea that should unite the whole of society. However, as Štúr's concept of life implies, a humanism which one-sidedly suppresses individuality and disrespects the peculiarities of its elements cannot be a true ethical humanism, since it necessarily leads to inhumane consequences. Because one-sided universalism that gobbles up its individual constituents turns out in the end to be totalitarianism. Comte's sociological and humanistic totalitarianism, Hegel's panlogic and statist totalitarianism, Marx's collectivist and economic totalitarianism – these are all examples of the malignant one-sidedness that is opposed to individualism, and Štúr warns against this, just as he warns against the one-sidedness of individualism:

> "…European freedom that must fight its way into the social arena through these extreme positions is permanently threatened by individualistic anarchy on the one hand and collectivist totalitarianism on the other."[51]

In conclusion: Three kinds of extreme individualism may be identified in Štúr's critique of the sources of Nazi ideology: egoist, nationalist, and naturalist individualism. According to Štúr, every type of individualism is extreme by its own nature since it is, in fact, an accentuation of "one-sidedness". At the same time, every type of individualism is also exclusive by nature, since it represents a breaking away from higher universal bonds and relations. Thus, individualism fundamentally disrupts the harmonious architecture of life, turns values upside down, and has the tendency sooner or later to lead to naturalism or even nihilism, and so in practice, to human and historical tragedies.

That is why Štúr's legacy, deriving from his criticism of individualism in its various, twisted forms, is the following: it is not individualism, but a suprapersonal, universal, ethically founded humanity which does not suppress, but rather cultivates the individuality of each person, that should become the key motive of our actions and the highest goal of our both individual and social life.

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50 Ibid., p. 80.
51 Ibid., p. 81.