

DISKUSIA

OBJECTIVE FACTS, CONSENSUS OPINIONS AND THE STUDY OF SLOVAK PANSLAVISM

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When the editors of *Historický časopis* kindly published my article *Suppressing the memory of Slovak Pan Slavism* in volume 71, number 2,¹ they added a “diskusie/discussion,” by Svorad Zavarský, titled *A Few Comments on Alexander Maxwell’s paper Suppressing the Memory of Slovak Pan Slavism: The Historiographical Misrepresentation of Kollár and Štúr*, hereafter Zavarský’s *A Few Comments*.² On 25 May 2023, the editors of *Historický časopis* also offered me the chance to publish an “answer/reaction” to Zavarský. I am grateful for the platform and appreciate their interest in my ideas.

Reading Zavarský’s *A Few Comments* brought to my mind an inspiring quotation widely attributed to Mahatma Gandhi: “First they ignore you, then they ridicule you, then they fight you, and then you win.”³ I wrote a chapter each on Pan Slavism and Štúr’s “Slovak tribalism” in my 2009 monograph *Choosing Slovakia*,⁴ a book which attracted interest from reviewers in Czechia,⁵ Germany,⁶

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- 1 MAXWELL. *Suppressing the Memory of Slovak Pan Slavism: The Historiographical Misrepresentation of Kollár and Štúr*. In *Historický časopis*, 2023, Vol. 71, no. 2 pp. 249-278.
 - 2 ZAVARSKÝ. *A Few Comments on Alexander Maxwell’s paper Suppressing the Memory of Slovak Pan Slavism: The Historiographical Misrepresentation of Kollár and Štúr*. In *Historický časopis*, 2023, Vol. 71, no. 2, pp. 349-362.
 - 3 For recent attributions to Gandhi, see: ANTAL. *Climate Church, Climate World*. London 2023 p. 23; BOYD. *I Want a Batter Catastrophe: Navigating the Climate Crisis*. Gabriola Island 2023, p. 185; SAITH. *Cambridge Economics in the Post-Keyneian Era*. Cham 2022, p. 30; GEERLING and MAGEE. *Quantifying Resistance: Political Crime and the People’s Court in Nazi Germany*. Singapore 2017, p. 172; STANFORD. *Living Sustainably*. Lexington 2017, p. 238.
 - 4 MAXWELL. *Choosing Slovakia: Slavic Hungary, the Czech Language and Accidental Nationalism*. London 2009, pp. 117-140.
 - 5 STEHLÍK. *Ojedinělý pohled na ojedinělé téma – Choosing Slovakia*. In *Občianska spoločnosť*, 2011, Vol. 5, no. 2, pp. 205-209.
 - 6 PUTTKAMER. *Review of Alexander Maxwell, Choosing Slovakia*. In *Jahrbücher für Geschichte Osteuropas*, 2013, Vol. 3, no. 1, pp. 4-5; BUGGE, Peter. *Review of Alexander Maxwell, Choosing Slovakia*. In *Bohemia: Zeitschrift für Geschichte und Kultur der böhmischen Länder*, 2012 Vol. 52, pp. 197-99; SZABÓ. *Review of Alexander Maxwell, Choosing Slovakia*. In *Zeitschrift für Ostmitteleuropa-Forschung*, 2012, Vol. 61, pp. 105-06.

Hungary,⁷ Russia,⁸ and the United States,⁹ but which has not, to the best of my knowledge, ever been reviewed in Slovakia. After being ignored by Slovak academia for so long, I am delighted to be ridiculed and fought at last.

Zavarský certainly found much to fight. He denounced my “historical-philological incompetence” and my “linguistic, and in particular Slavistic incompetence.”¹⁰ My remarks are “inept,”¹¹ and my conclusion “lacks real concrete, material existence.”¹² Perhaps his most telling reaction, however, was a cry for help: “what is he talking about?”¹³ Zavarský, it seems, did not understand my argument, evidently because he is unfamiliar with social constructivist approaches to the study of nationalism. As a response to Zavarský’s *A Few Comments*, therefore, this article argues that his positivist approach is inappropriate for historical research because it introduces anachronism.

Zavarský can perhaps be forgiven his unfamiliarity with social constructivist approaches to nationalism, since his expertise lies in other areas. According to his webpage at the Slovak Academy of Sciences, Zavarský works on “the intellectual history of the early modern era in Slovakia, especially the history of science and knowledge (*scientia*) in European contexts,” and “the field of Neo-Latin literary production in individual fields of knowledge (*artes et scientiae*) in Slovakia.”¹⁴ Zavarský thus claims no expertise in the nineteenth-century emergence of nationalism.

Nevertheless, I assumed when writing my article that readers of *Historický časopis* would already be familiar with the social constructivist approach to nationalism. Indeed, I anticipated that readers of a history journal would find a summary of the relevant historiography condescending. Social constructivist nationalism theory, after all, has been around for decades: the pathbreaking studies date back to the early 1980s. But since the baffled Zavarský sought to clarify my use of the term “nationalism” by consulting “Merriam Webster,

7 VARGA-KUNA. A Hungaroszlavizmustól a szlovák Törzsizig: A szlovák nacionalizmus iróniái. In *Kommentár*, 2010, no. 2, pp. 123-127.

8 SAMORUKOV. Отберите пулемет у Хмельницкого: Как появилась словацкая нация. In *Горький Медиа* (24 October 2017), URL: <https://gorky.media/context/otberite-pulemet-u-hmel'nitskogo/>

9 STOLARIK. Review of Choosing Slovakia. In *Austrian History Yearbook*, 2012, Vol. 43, pp. 221-23

10 ZAVARSKÝ, *A Few Comments*, p. 359.

11 ZAVARSKÝ, *A Few Comments*, p. 359.

12 ZAVARSKÝ, *A Few Comments*, p. 356.

13 ZAVARSKÝ, *A Few Comments*, p. 351.

14 Svorad Zavarský, PhD. Institute of History of SAS, URL: <https://www.history.sav.sk/indexenglish.php?id=svorad-zavarsky-eng>, accessed 30 July 2023.

Cambridge, and the American Heritage College Dictionaries” (!) instead of the canonical theorists,¹⁵ perhaps I would have done better to drop some names.

The social-constructivist approach to nationalism, sometimes described as “modernization theory,” analyzes nationalism as a form of political practice in which legitimacy derives from something called “the nation,” or some close terminological variant (e.g. “the people”). This “nation,” Benedict Anderson insightfully suggested, is a community imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign.¹⁶ The delineation of the nation’s inherent limits is subject to continual contestation, and historical actors proclaiming definitions of the nation form a productive site of analysis. Indeed, the competition between rival definitions of the nation so characterize nationalist politics that scholars of nationalism have long realized that scholarly debates about the “correct” or “true” definition of the nation do not facilitate understanding. Dictionary definitions of the “nation,” in this approach, are not authoritative scholarly authorities, but primary sources about the society that produced them.¹⁷

Analyzing how patriots imagine the nation implies studying the nation as a mental or rhetorical construct. Indeed, one notable volume from the social constructivist school has theorized how national traditions are “invented.”¹⁸ More recently, Rogers Brubaker has proposed the research strategy of investigating what makes “the nation-evoking, nation-invoking efforts of political entrepreneurs more or less likely to succeed,” equating the analysis of nationalism with the study of “appeals and claims made in the name of putative ‘nations’.”¹⁹

Those unfamiliar with the social constructivist approach sometimes take offence when they hear their nation described with adjectives such as “imagined,” “invented” or “putative,” and particularly by a foreign scholar. They may or may not take comfort from the assurance that their particular nation is not being singled out. The social constructivist approach doubts on principle the objective reality of all nations. At the same time, however, one should be aware that social constructivists, doubting as they do the objective reality of nations, will not find a patriot’s bruised national pride a persuasive argument for the objective reality of any particular nation.

15 ZAVARSKÝ, A Few Comments, 352.

16 ANDERSON. *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. London 1983, pp. 15-16.

17 For a fuller discussion of dictionary definitions and nationalism theory, see MAXWELL; ZÁHOŘÍK and TURNER. The Nation versus the ‘Not-Quite-Nation’: A Semantic Approach to Nationalism and Its Terminology. In *Studies in Ethnicity and Nationalism*, 2021, Vol. 21, no. 2, pp. 194-198.

18 HOBBSBAWM and RANGER, eds. *The Invention of Tradition*. Cambridge 2012.

19 BRUBAKER. Beyond Identity. In *Theory and Society*, 2000, Vol. 29, pp. 5, 16.

Nevertheless, even scholars motivated by curiosity rather than national pride may need some time to digest the social constructivist approach to nationalism. The social constructivist approach uncomfortably challenges beliefs scholars may have held unquestioned since early childhood. It also contradicts state-sponsored historical narratives. Naïve belief in the nation's primordial antiquity and objective reality is widespread, not least because it is ubiquitously taught in schools: as Jana Šulíková found in her study of Slovak history teaching, for example, "self-evident application of the primordialist narrative ... permeates all volumes of history textbooks."²⁰ Nevertheless, Brubaker rightly insists that "we need to break with vernacular categories and commonsense understandings,"²¹ since, as Ernst Gellner put it, "nationalism is not what it seems, and above all it is not what it seems to itself."²² Readers who are still skeptical or confused, however, must consult the relevant literature,²³ since this article can only sketch the constructivist approach in barest outline.

Zavarský, for his part, appears entirely unfamiliar with social constructivist approaches. When he argued that "to acknowledge the objective fact of the existence of the Slovak nation and language one need not have any special devotion to that nation,"²⁴ he erroneously assumed that the existence of a nation and a language can be an "objective fact." Such epistemological positivism, which in the context of nationalism theory is typically called "primordialism," is no longer taken seriously. Indeed, Rogers Brubaker implied that further rebuttal is beneath the dignity of nationalism specialists when he dismissed primordialism as "a long-dead horse that writers on ethnicity and nationalism continue to flog."²⁵ Even Anthony D. Smith, a harsh critic of social constructivism, speaks about the "explanatory failure of primordialism."²⁶

20 ŠULÍKOVÁ. Unintended Revelations in History Textbooks: The Precarious Authenticity and Historical Continuity of the Slovak Nation. In *Journal of Social Science Education*, 2016, Vol. 15, no. 3, 30.

21 BRUBAKER. Ethnicity without Groups. In *European Journal of Sociology/Archives européennes de sociologie*, 2002, Vol. 43, no. 2, p. 166.

22 GELLNER. *Nations and Nationalism*. Cornell 1983, p. 55.

23 The foundational studies are ANDERSON, *Imagined Communities*; GELLNER, *Nations and Nationalism*; notable recent works in this tradition include ZAHRA. Imagined noncommunities: National indifference as a category of analysis. In *Slavic Review*, 2010, Vol. 69, no. 1, pp. 93-119; BRUBAKER. *Ethnicity without Groups*. Cambridge 2006. Obviously, this bibliography is far from exhaustive. For a historiographical overview of theories of nationalism, see ÖZKIRIMLI. *Theories of Nationalism: A Critical Introduction*. New York 2000.

24 ZAVARSKÝ, A Few Comments, p. 352.

25 BRUBAKER. *Nationalism Reframed: Nationhood and the National Question in the New Europe*. Cambridge: 1996, p. 15.

26 SMITH, Anthony. *Nationalism: Theory, Ideology, History*. London 2013, p. 60.

Zavarský, furthermore, presented his primordialist assumptions as uncontroversial and self-evidently persuasive, suggesting that he has not so much rejected social constructivism but remained blissfully unaware of its very existence. If Zavarský first encountered the social constructivist approach reading my article, perhaps his bafflement and indignation are unsurprising. When Zavarský realized that I disbelieve in the “objective fact of the existence of the Slovak nation,” perhaps he felt the Slovak nation was being singled out? He may or may not be reassured to learn that my article analyzes not just the putative “Slovak nation,” but the putative “Slavic nation,” and indeed all putative nations as imagined communities, as mental constructs, as rhetorical devices evoked and invoked when political entrepreneurs make appeals and claims, and so forth.

My article takes a similarly constructivist approach to the “Slovak language.” My article discussed appeals and claims made in the name of putative “languages,” and, rather more unusually, analyzed appeals and claims made in the name of putative “dialects.” Treating both “language” and “dialect” as rhetorical constructs, I examined how the Panslavism of Šafařík, Kollár and Štúr interacted with the history of linguistic classification and taxonomy. The discussion focused particularly on terminologies based on the language/dialect dichotomy, a topic which has long held my fascination and recently become my primary research focus.²⁷

Though Zavarský did not follow my social constructivist reasoning, he apparently found my epistemological assumptions unsettling. He responded with positivist assertions about “facts.” He contended, for example, that it “is a generally accepted fact in Slavic linguistics that in Štúr’s time the process of the differentiation of the Slavic languages had long been completed,”²⁸ and spoke about accepting “the evidence of facts, as do many other specialists in Slavic linguistics worldwide.”²⁹ As noted above, he also presupposed “the objective fact of the existence of the Slovak nation and language.”³⁰

In the context of language/dialect dichotomy and other analogous linguistic taxonomies, however, the existence of the Slovak language is not an “objective

27 MAXWELL. Noam Chomsky and the Language/Dialect Dichotomy. In *Beiträge zur Geschichte der Sprachwissenschaft*, 2022, Vol. 32, no. 1, pp. 72-98; MAXWELL. The Dialects of Panslavic, Serbocroatian, and Croatian: Linguistic Taxonomies in Zagreb, 1836–1997. In *Journal of Nationalism, Memory and Language Politics*, 2023, Vol. 17 no. 1, pp. 1-33; MAXWELL and VAN ROOY. Early Modern Terminology for Dialect: Denigration, Purism, and the Language-Dialect Dichotomy. In *Contributions to the History of Concepts*, 2023, Vol. 18, no. 1, pp. 95-118.

28 ZAVARSKÝ, A Few Comments, p. 360.

29 ZAVARSKÝ, A Few Comments, p. 351.

30 ZAVARSKÝ, A Few Comments, 352.

fact.” The easiest way to understand why is to consider the issue epistemologically. To know that Slovak is a “language” and not a “dialect” presupposes the ability to distinguish a “language” from a “dialect,” which in turn presupposes generally accepted linguistic criteria differentiating “languages” from “dialects.” Are there any such generally accepted linguistic criteria? There are not.

On the contrary: numerous linguists from diverse linguistic subdisciplines have categorically denied that any such criteria are theoretically possible. Pioneering sociolinguist William Labov declared it “the general linguistic position that there is no substantive difference between language and dialect.”³¹ Henry Gleason’s textbook of descriptive linguistics insisted that “the problem of classification into such categories as language and dialect is intrinsically difficult or impossible. Several criteria can be proposed, no one of which is satisfactory.”³² Discourse analyst Igor Rodriguez Iglesias argued that the language/dialect dichotomy “transcends linguistic conceptualization” since it is “not based on linguistic criteria.”³³ Pedagogical expert Tove Skutnabb-Kangas insisted both that “there are no linguistic criteria for differentiating between a language and a dialect,”³⁴ and, four years later, that “there are no linguistic criteria for differentiating between a language and a dialect (or vernacular or patois).”³⁵ Cognitive linguist Ron Kuzar insisted in that “linguistic theory does not provide us with a clear definition of these terms. All attempts to base a clear classification of languages and dialects on objective criteria ... have failed.”³⁶ Polish sociolinguist Anna Korsak-Suska, in a study specifically devoted to the dichotomy, declared of “the concepts of dialect and language” that “there are no linguistic criteria to make a distinction between the two.”³⁷ Sociolinguist Leonie Cornips, finally, wrote that “all linguists are convinced that the distinction between a language and a dialect cannot be made on the basis of linguistic criteria.”³⁸ Cornips is mistaken about

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- 31 LABOV. *Principles of Linguistic Change, Volume 3: Cognitive and Cultural Factors*. London 2010, p. 389.
- 32 GLEASON. *An Introduction to Descriptive Linguistics*. New York 1961, p. 441.
- 33 IGLESIAS. *La lógica de inferiorización de las variedades lingüísticas no dominantes: Etnografía sociolingüística crítica del andaluz*. Berlin 2022, 84 (linguistic criteria), 116 (transcends linguistic conceptualization).
- 34 SKUTNABB-KANGAS. *Linguistic Genocide in Education, Or Worldwide Diversity and Human Rights?* London 2000, p. 7.
- 35 KLINE and MELLERSKI. *Issues in the French-speaking World*. Westport 2004, p. 85.
- 36 KUZAR. *Hebrew and Zionism: A Discourse Analytic Cultural Study*. Berlin 2001, p. 234.
- 37 KORSAK-SUSKA. Dialekt a język: Czynniki kształtujące rzeczywistość językową na przykładzie budowy statusu języka kastylijskiego. In *Białostockie Archiwum Językowe*, 2019, Vol. 19, p. 224 [205-224].
- 38 CORNIPS. *Eigen en vreemd: meertaligheid in Nederland*. Amsterdam 2012, p. 17.

“all linguists,” since a small minority are still trying, without much success, to differentiate on the basis of exclusively linguistic criteria.³⁹ Nevertheless, Cornips speaks for many linguists from diverse sub-disciplines.

Scholars skeptical of the language/dialect dichotomy might be described as taking an “agnostic” approach. Agnostic scholars conceptualize linguistic heterogeneity without reference to the binary language/dialect dichotomy. Since positing discrete and spatially-extended “dialects” implies a sharp delineation at dialectal boundaries, for instance, agnostics may prefer to posit the slow continuous change of a “dialect continuum.”

Fascinatingly, some agnostic scholars recognize the lack of linguistic criteria for distinguishing “languages” from “dialects” while simultaneously asserting strong opinions about language-hood or dialect-hood of individual varieties. For instance, the sociolinguist Peter Trudgill, a prominent scholar boasting five honorary doctorates, declared the impossibility of distinguishing “languages” from “dialects” with unusual eloquence:

Is Macedonian really a language? Is there a Bosnian language which is distinct from Croatian and Serbian? Are Moldovan and Rumanian the same language or not? Are Flemish and Dutch one language or two? Is Corsican a dialect of Italian or not? Is Swiss German actually a separate language? ... there is no way we can answer these questions on purely linguistic grounds. Ironically, it seems that it is only linguists who fully understand the extent to which these questions are not linguistic questions.

Yet the same Trudgill who agnostically insisted that “there can be no linguistic answer to whether Serbian and Croatian are one language or two”⁴⁰ later signed the *Deklaracija o zajedničkom jeziku* [Declaration on the common language], which asserted, among other things, that “a common language is used in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Montenegro and Serbia,” and that “the use of four names for the standard variants – Bosnian, Croatian, Montenegrin and Serbian – does not imply that these are four different languages.”⁴¹ Justifying his signature in the *New European* magazine, furthermore, Trudgill declared that “some nationalists” are “rather silly” for “pretending that BCSM, as some linguists now

39 MELINGER. Distinguishing Languages from Dialects: A Litmus Test using the Picture-word Interference Task. In *Cognition*, 2018, Vol. 172, pp. 73-88; TAMBURELLI. Taking Taxonomy Seriously in Linguistics: Intelligibility as a Criterion of Demarcation between Languages and Dialects. In *Lingua*, 2021, Vol. 256, pp. 1-20.

40 TRUDGILL. *Sociolinguistics: An Introduction to Language and Society*. Third edition. London 1995, p. 145.

41 *Deklaracija o Zajedničkom Jeziku / Declaration on the Common Language*, reproduced in KAMUSELLA. *Politics and the Slavic Languages*. London 2021, pp. 179-182

call it, is four separate languages,” insisting that “linguistic scientists are agreed that BCSM is essentially a single language.”⁴²

Epistemologically, Trudgill justified both his agnosticism and his assertion of languagehood on identical grounds: he invoked a putative consensus among professional linguists. Both “linguistic common sense” and “linguistic scientists,” according to the side-taking Trudgill, justify a common “language.” At the same time, the question of one language or two, according to the agnostic Trudgill, is something that “linguists” understand are “not linguistic questions.” I find such spectacular displays of cognitive dissonance fascinating, and have elsewhere explored in some detail their role in linguistics as a discipline.⁴³

If there are no generally accepted criteria for distinguishing “languages” from “dialects,” however, then there are no criteria for deciding any specific case. Consequently, there are no criteria for deciding the case of Slovak / Czechoslovak / Panslavic. Those who doubt on principle the existence of objective linguistic criteria for distinguishing dialects from languages, furthermore, will not find a patriot’s bruised national pride a persuasive argument for the objective existence of that patriot’s “language.”

In his *A Few Comments*, Zavarický adduced no linguistic criteria for distinguishing languages from dialects. Like Trudgill, he appealed instead to a putative linguistic consensus. He specifically invoked “modern linguistic scholarship” as articulated by “an authoritative handbook” and two “twentieth- and twenty-first-century experts in the field of Slavic philology.”⁴⁴ If Zavarický actually accepts consensus opinion as a reliable source of “objective fact,” he could actually have cited my earlier work in support: my 2015 study examining Taxonomies of the Slavic World since the Enlightenment, published in the journal *Language and History*, found that “since the Second World War ... the Slovak category has enjoyed a nearly universal support,” and specifically that 24 of 24 reference works published since 1950 recognized a “Slovak language.”⁴⁵ Zavarický instead chose to cite a mere three sources, and even then somewhat dishonestly concealed dissent in linguistic ranks. He quoted Sussex and Cubberly proclaiming: “According to a [sic] general consensus ... the real break-

42 TRUDGILL. Time to Make Four into One. In *The New European*, 30 November 2017, p. 46.

43 MAXWEL. When Theory is a Joke: The Weinrich Witticism in Linguistics. In *Beiträge zur Geschichte der Sprachwissenschaft*, 2018, Vol. 28, no. 2, pp. 263-292; MAXEWLL. Noam Chomsky and the Language/Dialect Dichotomy. In *Beiträge zur Geschichte der Sprachwissenschaft*, 2022, Vol. 32, no. 1, pp. 72-98.

44 ZAVARSKÝ, *A Few Comments*, pp. 349-350.

45 MAXWELL. Taxonomies of the Slavic World since the Enlightenment: Schematizing Perceptions of Slavic Ethnonyms in a Chart. In *Language and History*, 2015, Vol. 58, no. 1, pp. 37, 44-45.

up of Proto-Slavic unity began about the fifth century.” Sussex and Cubberly actually wrote: “According to general consensus *in what is still a controversial area* [emphasis added].”⁴⁶

A “general consensus,” however, implies popularity, not correctness. My previous article contradicts Zavarický’s positivism most clearly visible in a passage Zavarický chose not to cite in his *A Few Comments*. That passage runs:

If scholars mistake current fashions about how to classify the Slavic linguistic zone for a ‘scientific fact,’ if they mistake the Slovak language and/or nation for an objectively verifiable truth rather than a consensus belief, then they will struggle to understand historical actors who believed in other languages and/or nations.⁴⁷

Dialectologists or philologists seeking to justify some particular linguistic classification must outline criteria for their classification and provide relevant supporting evidence. An appeal to consensus is merely an appeal to groupthink.

The absence of any proper criteria separating “languages” from “dialects” manifests itself most visibly in the ongoing lack of agreement about the number of “languages.” The three authorities Zavarický cited, for instance, all proposed a different taxonomy of Slavic. Sussex and Cubberly posited both unified “Sorbian” and unitary “Serbocroat.”⁴⁸ Čejka and Lamprecht posited unitary “Serbo-Croatian,” but distinguished Lower Sorbian from Upper Sorbian.⁴⁹ Sorbian scholar Heins Schuster-Šewc, author of the relevant chapter in Zavarický’s “authoritative manual,” not only differentiated Upper Sorbian from Lower Sorbian, but offered a tripartite division of Serbocroat/Serbo-Croatian into “Serbian, Bosnian, Croatian (Serbocroatian).”⁵⁰ If, as Zavarický contends, “it is a generally accepted fact that the modern Slavic languages had completed their process of differentiation long before the nineteenth century,”⁵¹ and that differentiation enables objective and factual declarations of “language-hood” in the context of a linguistic taxonomy, then why do “experts in the field of Slavic

46 ZAVARSKÝ, *A Few Comments*, p. 350; cf SUSSEX and CUBBERLEY. *The Slavic Languages*. Cambridge University Press 2006 p. 20.

47 MAXWELL. Suppressing the Memory of Slovak Panslavism: The historiographical Misrepresentation of Kollár and Štúr. In *Historický časopis*, 2023, Vol. 71, no. 2, p. 268.

48 SUSSEX and CUBBERLEY, *The Slavic Languages*, p. 7.

49 ČEJKA and LAMPRECHT. K otázce vzniku a diferenciacie slovanských jazyků. In *Sborník prací Filozofické fakulty brněnské university, A, Řada jazykovědná*, 1963 Vol. 12, p. 10.

50 SCHUSTER-ŠEWC. Vorgeschichte der slavischen Sprachen und Sprachkontakt. In KEMPGEN; KOSTA; BERGER and GUTSCHMIDT, eds. *Die slavischen Sprachen: Ein internationales Handbuch / The Slavic Languages: An International Handbook*. Berlin: De Gruyter Mouton, 2014, p. 1154.

51 ZAVARSKÝ, *A Few Comments*, p. 360.

philology”⁵² still demonstrably disagree about how many Slavic “languages” exist?

Zavarský’s experts also failed to provide any satisfactory criteria for distinguishing languages from dialects. Neither Čejka and Lamprecht nor Schuster-Šewc provided any definitions at all. Sussex and Cubberly, however, offered the following: “In using the term ‘language’ we mean a defined variety with formal coherence and standardization, and some cultural and political status.”⁵³ These hopelessly vague criteria would require further elaboration before they could provide guidance for scholars seeking to apply them in practice. How much standardization, for instance, qualifies as “standardized”? Einar Haugen thought the standardization process had four main elements,⁵⁴ James and Leslie Milroy listed seven processes,⁵⁵ and John Joseph has theorized no fewer than nine.⁵⁶ Haugen, Milroy and Milroy, and Joseph, furthermore, all saw the writing of a grammar book as only a very early step in a long process of elaboration and dissemination among a target population: full standardization requires mass literacy, which in turn requires a school system to operate for a few generations. Since no mass instruction in standard Slovak took place in early nineteenth-century Hungary, therefore, it seems Šafařík, Kollár, and Štúr were right not to view Slovak as a “language”, at least according to this aspect of Sussex and Cubberly’s definition.

More importantly, however, note that Sussex and Cubberly defined the “language” using clearly extra-linguistic criteria. They even noted that “the label ‘language’ powerfully reinforces the ethnic sense of identity,”⁵⁷ thus linking language-hood to nationalist politics. That Zavarský’s “experts in the field of Slavic philology” defined the language with reference to “some cultural and political status” suggests they viewed language-hood a question of culture and politics, rather than philology. Since the Hungarian state in the era of Széchenyi and Kossuth refused to grant Slovak much “cultural and political status,” furthermore, it seems once again that Šafařík, Kollár, and Štúr were right to view Slovak as a “dialect,” at least according to this aspect of Sussex and Cubberly’s definition.

52 ZAVARSKÝ, A Few Comments, p. 350.

53 SUSSEX and CUBBERLEY, *The Slavic Languages*, pp. 3-4.

54 HAUGEN. Dialect, Language, Nation. In *American Anthropologist*, 1966, Vol. 68, no. 4, p. 927.

55 MILROY and MILROY. *Authority in Language: Investigating Standard English*. London 1999, pp. 22-23.

56 JOSEPH. *Eloquence and Power: The Rise of Language Standards and Standard Languages*. London 1987, pp. 6-7.

57 SUSSEX and CUBBERLEY, *The Slavic Languages*, p. 4.

When presenting their taxonomy of Slavic “languages,” however, Sussex and Cubberly actually ignored their own self-chosen criteria: they simply copied their taxonomy of Slavic languages from the Ethnologue database.⁵⁸ They neither considered the fraught questions of cultural or political status nor evaluated the degree of standardization, perhaps because they themselves argued that “the criteria relevant to language-hood also vary.”⁵⁹ But since Sussex and Cubberly copied their taxonomy from another linguistic authority, however, in the end they appealed merely to groupthink.

Only by drawing connections left unmade, only by replacing various lacuna with guesses and assumptions, can one just barely discern linguistic criteria for resolving the language/dialect dichotomy in the authorities adduced in Zavarský’s *A Few Comments*. Zavarský indirectly, perhaps unknowingly, yet repeatedly invoked lexicostatistics. A brief summary of lexicostatistics may feel like a digression, but will hopefully prove instructive.

The linguistic subfield of lexicostatistics involves comparing vocabulary items from two different varieties and measuring the similarity. Early lexicostatisticians counted cognates, but have adopted more sophisticated approaches since the advent of computers. Lexicostatisticians assume that the similarity/difference between the word lists, however calculated, reflects the similarity/difference between two varieties.⁶⁰ Several scholars, furthermore, have proposed defining the language/dialect distinction by applying a threshold value to lexicostatistical similarity measurements.⁶¹ Morris Swadesh, the American linguist who popularized lexicostatistics in the 1950s, suggested a language/dialect threshold of 81% similarity.⁶² Many other thresholds have since been proposed, of course, and the great diversity of such thresholds drove Kenneth McElhannon to conclude that “the distinguishing of dialects from languages is largely subjective.” McElhannon nevertheless characterized Swadesh’s 81% as one of “the standard percentages.”⁶³

58 SUSSEX and CUBBERLEY, *The Slavic Languages*, p. 7.

59 SUSSEX and CUBBERLEY, *The Slavic Languages*, p. 3.

60 For an introduction to lexicostatistical techniques, see EMBLETON. *Statistics in Historical Linguistics*. Bochum 1986; McMAHON and McMAHON. How Do Linguists Classify Languages? In McMAHON and McMAHON, eds. *Language Classification by Numbers*. Oxford 2005, pp. 20-49; HEGGARTY. Beyond lexicostatistics: How to get More out of “Word List” Comparisons. In *Diachronica*, 2010, Vol. 27, no. 2 pp. 301-324.

61 KORYAKOV. Language vs. dialect: A lexicostatistic approach. In *Voprosy Jazykoznanija*, 2017, Vol. 6, pp. 79-101.

62 SWADESH. Perspectives and Problems of Amerindian Comparative Linguistics. In *Word*, 1954, Vol. 10, no. 2-3, p. 321.

63 MCELHANON. Classifying New Guinea Languages. In *Anthropos*, 1971, Vol. 66, no. 1/2, p. 134.

Zavarský admittedly made no direct reference to lexicostatistical definitions. As noted above, he mentioned no criteria whatever for distinguishing languages from dialects. Nevertheless, Zavarský adduced Čejka and Lamprecht, whose study was openly lexicostatistical. Furthermore, Zavarský adduced Sussex and Cubberly, who copied from the Ethnologue database, which is in turn produced by the Summer Institute for Linguistics (SIL), whose classifications rely on lexicostatistical data. SIL was originally founded as a missionary organization dedicated to translating the Bible for all humankind. SIL researchers rely on lexicostatistical surveys to maximize the audience of their translations.

So what does lexicostatistics say about Slovak? SIL researchers do not agree on a lexicostatistical threshold separating languages from dialects: some accept Swadesh's threshold of 81%,⁶⁴ others round down to 80%,⁶⁵ and still others prefer the significantly lower threshold of 70%.⁶⁶ Yet Čejka and Lamprecht found that Slovak and Czech are 95% similar,⁶⁷ well above the 81%, 80%, and 70% thresholds at which SIL researchers variously acknowledge separate "languages." Indeed, according to one proposed set of SIL thresholds, Slovak and Czech do not even qualify as separate "dialects." In a 1987 paper about Indonesia, Laskowe and Laskowe proposed the status "one language, one dialect" for any pair of varieties sharing over 90% lexicostatistical similarity.⁶⁸ Applying Laskowe and Laskowe's thresholds to Čejka and Lamprecht's data, therefore, contradicts both Zavarský's claim that the existence of the Slovak language is an "objective fact," and Štúr's claim that Slovak is a "dialect" [*nárečja, dialectus, Mundart*]. Čejka and Lamprecht's data and Laskowe and Laskowe's thresholds apparently support instead Kollár's classification of Slovak as a "subdialect" [*podnářečí/Untermundart*].

Despite appearances to the contrary, I am not arguing that Slovak is "really" a subdialect. Lexicostatistics is unreliable. Indeed, in an article written in collaboration with a statistician, I have argued in the journal *Diachronica* that

64 CROWLEY and BOWERN. *An Introduction to Historical Linguistics*. Oxford 2010, p. 139.

65 GRIMES and GRIMES. *Languages of South Sulawesi*. Canberra 1987, pp. 12-13.

66 Language assessment criteria: Conference recommendations. In KINDELL, ed. *Proceedings of the Summer Institute of Linguistics International Language Assessment Conference, Horsleys Green, 23-31 May 1989*. Dallas 1990, pp. 27-29; see also BERGMAN. Rapid Appraisal of Languages. In *Notes on Scripture in Use and Language Programs*, 1991, Vol. 28, no. 6, pp. 3-11.

67 ČEJKA and LAMPRECHT. K otázce vzniku a diferenciacie slovanských jazyků. In *Sborník prací Filozofické fakulty brněnské university, A, Řada jazykovědná*, 1963 Vol. 12, p. 10.

68 Confusingly, Laskowe and Laskowe added that "values above 90% do not prove that there are not two dialects [emphasis in original]. LASKOWE, Thomas, LASKOWE. UNHAS-SIL Sociolinguistic Survey: Seko Area. In FRIBERG, ed. *Workpapers in Indonesian Languages and Cultures*. Jayapura 1987, p. 46.

sampling error undermines the validity of lexicostatistical classifications.⁶⁹ It is also my impression that few linguists take lexicostatistics seriously nowadays. I have here discussed lexicostatistics only because it informed two of the three studies Zavarský adduced as the “state of the art.”⁷⁰

My skepticism about lexicostatistical definitions of the language/dialect dichotomy extends to linguistic definitions generally. Dialectologists interested in linguistic diversity, I suggest, would do better to focus on individual linguistic changes and imagine the spatial dimensions of linguistic diversity in terms of dialect continua. The agnostic approach is correct: there are no reliable criteria for distinguishing “languages” from “dialects.”

This lack of reliable criteria, however, returns to my main point: any particular taxonomy of languages and dialects cannot be an “objective fact,” but only an opinion. A taxonomy may represent a consensus opinion, and may enjoy state sponsorship, but neither consensus nor state sponsorship is evidence of factual correctness. A consensus is instead a historical phenomenon to be explained, particularly when the historical record shows that today’s consensus opinion was not shared by previous generations. Insofar as such opinions become invested with nationalist significance, furthermore, they become interesting objects of study for historians of nationalism. As I documented in my article, Šafařík, Kollár, and Štúr once shared the consensus opinion that all Slavs spoke a single language, the “Slavic language.” Explaining the history of that consensus, or its collapse, is fundamentally a task for historians, not for linguists or dialectologists.

Dialectologists, in my experience, do not much enjoy being confronted with the limits of their discipline. After presenting my work on Panslavism, I often find the question-and-answer session derailed by a rhetorical strategy I call the “avalanche of trivia.” A certain type of linguist, perhaps offended because I treat their expertise as irrelevant to an analysis of linguistic nationalism, takes great pleasure in reciting irrelevant dialectological facts. What kind of facts? Čejka and Lamprecht provide some examples: the Central Slovak $\text{ъ} > \text{o}$ vowel shift occurred in the tenth century, and the consonant shift $\text{g} > \gamma > \text{h}$ in the twelfth or thirteenth century.⁷¹ Sussex and Cubberly similarly discussed whether “the determinate verb with the prefix *po-* provides the future of both aspects,” whether the “characteristic Slovak diphthongs *ie* and *uo* (orth. \hat{o}) are replaced by monophthongs,” whether “the vowel /ä/ may occur also after velars,” or whether

69 FELD and MAXWELL. Sampling Error in Lexicostatistical Measurements: A Slavic Case Study. In *Diachronica*, 2019, Vol. 36, no. 1, pp. 100-120.

70 ZAVARSKÝ, A Few Comments, p. 351.

71 ČEJKA and LAMPRECHT, K otázce vzniku a diferenciacie slovanských jazyků, p. 13.

“genitive singular masculine a-stems have -i,” (e.g. *gazdu* vs. *gazdi* ‘farmer’).⁷² Zavorský presumably alluded to such things with his repeated allusions to the “differentiation of the Slavic languages.”⁷³ Trained linguists can recite such facts at tedious length.

What are linguists trying to achieve when they present the avalanche of trivia in response to an analysis of linguistic nationalism? Insecure dialectologists might find comforting reassurance about the value of their discipline, or alternatively hope that the confident use of arcane linguistic jargon will intimidate non-specialists. The end effect, however, is to impede or prevent any discussion of the interplay between linguistic classification and nationalist rhetoric. Historians taking a social constructivist approach nationalism should interpret the avalanche of trivia as an effort to avoid an unwelcome conversation topic by steering the discussion to other matters.

Whatever significance linguistic facts may have in various linguistic subdisciplines, however, they are typically irrelevant to research into linguistic nationalism, because patriots invoking linguistic taxonomies in the service of national claims most typically justify themselves without reference to any linguistic analysis. In a handful of exceptional cases, individual isoglosses have attracted patriotic attention: the south-Slavic vowels descending from yat (ǫ) and the *ř > ř* shift supposedly distinguishing Slovak from Czech have both acquired symbolic importance. The emergence of these shibboleths, however, must itself be subjected to historical scrutiny. How and why does one isogloss acquire symbolic meaning, and not another?

Linguists indulging in the avalanche of trivia typically assume that the adduced facts speak for themselves. On the contrary, however, it is easily documented that the same facts are adduced both as evidence of similarity, and as evidence of difference. The difference between Serbian *hemija* and Croatian *kemija* (“chemistry”), for example, has been adduced as one of many “phonetic differences” demonstrating that Serbian and Croatian are “two recognizably different systems of two different languages,”⁷⁴ but also as evidence supporting a “Single Language Hypothesis” on the grounds that such differences “are lexically specified and do not represent any *phonemic* distinction.”⁷⁵ A list of similarities

72 SUSSEX and CUBBERLEY, *The Slavic Languages*, p. 443 (po-), p. 537 (ǫ), p. 539 (ǫ, a-stems)

73 ZAVARSKÝ, *A Few Comments*, p. 350.

74 KAČIĆ. *Hrvatski i srpski: zablude i krivotvorine*. Zagreb 1995, pp. 52, 125, cited from the English translation by SOČANAC. *Croatian and Serbian: Delusions and Distractions*. Zagreb 1997, pp. 55, 128.

75 BAILLYN. To What Degree are Croatian and Serbian the Same Language? Evidence from a Translation Study. In *Journal of Slavic Linguistics*, 2010, Vol. 18. no. 2, p. 193.

or differences means very little: scholars who seek evidence of difference find it, but scholars who seek evidence of similarity also find it. Linguists examining the Serbian/Croatian/Serbocroatian region have concluded both that “the phonological systems are essentially identical”⁷⁶ and that the “phonetic systems of the two languages ... are evidently different.”⁷⁷ Such disagreements suggest that the facts do not speak for themselves. Instead, interpretation is decisive.

A more productive analytical strategy therefore examines the motives of those scholars who argue for similarity, or for difference. When and why do polemicists, politicians, or other social or historical actors choose to seek similarities, or choose to seek differences? Or, since polemicists and politicians rarely bother with any actual linguistic analysis, when and why do they choose to assert linguistic similarity or difference? Why, to return to one of the specific figures discussed in my article, did Štúr choose to list differences between Slovak and Czech (Štúr 1846: 52-57), while simultaneously characterizing Slovak as “uniting all Slavic dialects [*všetkje nářečja Slovanskje spojújucim*]” (Štúr 1846: 33)? Why argue for difference from Czech, while simultaneously arguing for a fundamental similarity with all things Slavic?

The rhetorical and classificatory choices of historical actors reflect their social, and political circumstances, and thus must be considered in their historical context. The choices of Šafařík, Kollár and Štúr can thus only be understood after a careful study of the early nineteenth century Habsburg monarchy. Zavorský ridiculed me both for having “somehow got lost in the nineteenth century” and for being “so very much entangled in the nineteenth-century ideas of Kollár and Štúr.”⁷⁸ I suggest, however, that both comments actually praise my scholarship as a historian.

My insistence that Štúr’s original terminology be cited correctly, for example, reflects my concern that Štúr’s thought be analyzed in its nineteenth-century context. I think Kollár’s Pan Slavism is relevant, but in the article specifically emphasized Šafařík’s seven-layered linguistic taxonomy. Šafařík, I pointed out, divided human *howor* into *jazyky* [languages], a *jazyk* into *mluwy*, a *mluwa* into *řečí*, a *řeč* into *nářečí*, a *nářečí* into *podřečí*, and a *podřečí* into *různořečí*. Šafařík specifically imagined a “Slavic language [*jazyk slowanský*]” divided into four *mluwy*, which were in turn divided into seven *řečí*, in turn divided into fourteen *nářečí*.⁷⁹ After documenting the popularity of these terms among other nineteenth-century savants, I argued that Štúr thought in terms of Šafařík’s

76 BAILYN, To What Degree are Croatian and Serbian the Same Language?, p. 193.

77 KAČIĆ, *Hrvatski i srpski*, p. 122, cited from *Croatian and Serbian*, pp. 125-126.

78 ZAVARSKÝ, A Few Comments, p. 351.

79 ŠAFAŘÍK. *Slowanský Národopis*. Praha 1842, pp. 1:3, 1:5-6.

taxonomic categories, adducing as evidence that Štúr employed the terms *jazyk*, *reč*, *nárečja*, and *rozličnorečja*, which I suggest Štúr took from Šafařík.

Zavarský's *A Few Comments*, by contrast, analyzed Štúr's thinking not in terms of Kollár's legacy, or Šafařík's taxonomy, or in any other nineteenth-century context, but in terms of Zavarský's own linguistic understanding. Noting for example that Štúr wrote that Genuan and Paduan "are *rozličnorečja*, not *nárečja*"⁸⁰ and posited *rozličnorečja* in German and English, Zavarský adduced "the historical reality" known to "today's linguists," which he imagined not in terms of Šafařík's seven layers, but in terms of the binary language/dialect dichotomy:

Every linguist knows that, e.g., English is divided into dialects. And I suppose that no linguist would deny that English also was divided into dialects in 1846 when Štúr's treatise was published. Thus, it is obvious that the historical reality today's linguists call *dialects* was denoted by Štúr as *rozličnorečja*, not *nárečja*.⁸¹

The language/dialect binary, as noted above, is not a historical reality, given how many professional linguists reject it on principle. Even as mental construct, the dichotomy has long been characterized, as Raf Van Rooy showed in his outstanding study, by "terminological rather than conceptual continuity."⁸² But the main point is that Zavarský did not situate Štúr's comments in the context of nineteenth-century thought, but with reference to "historical reality" as "today's linguists" supposedly understand it.

Štúr probably took his terminology from Šafařík, and the labels Šafařík affixed to the various layers of his seven-tiered taxonomy, as I noted in my article, lack English equivalents. My original article confronted readers with the original Slavic terms. Since Zavarský appears so invested in the language/dialect binary, however, let us try to gloss Šafařík's labels into English using terms based on the dichotomy. As documented in my article, descendants of protoslavic *na + *řečъ (such as нарѣчїе, нарїччя, наречие, *narzecze*, *nárečj*, *nárečja*, etc.) can boast a long lexicographical tradition as equivalents for "dialect." So one might, as "option D" (for dialect) start from the assumption that Šafařík's *nárečí* = dialect, and translate Šafařík's other labels as "subdialects" and "superdialects." According to option D, Šafařík's *řeč* would be a "superdialect," and his *mluwa* a "super-superdialect;" Šafařík's *podřečí* would be a "subdialect," and his *různořečí* a "sub-subdialect."

80 ŠTÚR. *Nárečja slovenskuo alebo potreba písanja v tomto nárečí*. Bratislava 1846, p. 43.

81 ZAVARSKÝ, *A Few Comments*, p. 353.

82 VAN ROOY. *Language or Dialect? The History of a Conceptual Pair*. Oxford 2020, p. 299.

Zavarský, however, insisted that “Štúr’s *nárečja* cannot be translated by modern Slovak *nárečie*.”⁸³ So one might alternatively, as “option L” (for language), start from the assumption that Šafařík’s *jazyk* = language, and posit layered subcategories of the “language.” According to option L, Šafařík’s *howor* might be glossed as a “supercategory of a language,” Šafařík’s *mluwa* as a “subcategory of a language,” the *řeč* as a “sub-subcategory of a language,” the *nárečí* as a “sub-sub-subcategory of a language,” and so forth down to the *různořečí*, a “sub-sub-sub-sub-subcategory of a language.” Options D and L are summarized below as Figure 1.

Figure 1 – Two different translations for Šafařík’s taxonomic labels

Šafařík’s taxonomic categories	Štúr’s taxonomic categories	“Translation Option D” Šafařík’s categories under the assumption <i>nárečí</i> = dialect	“Translation Option L” Šafařík’s categories under the assumption “ <i>jazyk</i> = language”
<i>Howor</i>	–	Super-super-superdialect	Supercategory of a language
<i>Jazyk</i>	<i>Jazyk</i>	Super-super-superdialect (= Language)	Language
<i>Mluwa</i>	–	Super-Superdialect	Subcategory of a language
<i>Řeč</i>	<i>Reč</i>	Superdialect	Sub-subcategory of a language
<i>Nárečí</i>	<i>Nárečja</i>	Dialect	Sub-sub-subcategory of a lang.
<i>Podřečí</i>	–	Subdialect	Sub-sub-sub-subcategory
<i>Různořečí</i>	<i>rozličnorečja</i>	Sub-subdialect	Sub-sub-sub-sub-subcategory

The taxonomic labels in Figure 1 are very unwieldy, and confronting Šafařík’s original terminology is best. Forced to choose between Option D and Option L, however, if I prefer option D, since Option D can also be justified with reference to Štúr’s own translations. The passage shown below as Figure 2 was cited in my previous article, but Zavarský omitted any reference to it. Perhaps extra emphasis will drive the point home: Štúr translated *nárečja* into Latin and German as “*dialectus, Mundart*.” The former term is an obvious cognate of “dialect,” the latter a well-established puristic substitute for it.⁸⁴ If Zavarský really thinks that scholars would have “grossly erred had they translated [sic] it as *dialect* or *nárečie*,”⁸⁵ he should, I suggest, explain why Štúr erred so grossly when translating himself.

83 ZAVARSKÝ, A Few Comments, p. 354.

84 VAN ROOY and MAXWELL. Early Modern Terminology for Dialect: Denigration, Purism, and the Language-Dialect Dichotomy. In *Contributions to the History of Concepts*, 2023, Vol. 18, no. 1, pp. 106-108.

85 ZAVARSKÝ, A Few Comments, p. 354.

Figure 2 – Štúr's translations of *nárečja*⁸⁶

júcej, živosti a čerstvej hlbavosti národa. Kde v ktorom náro-
de kmeni sa nachádzajú, musja byť tam rozličnje spuosobi ho-
vorenja jedneho spoločneho jazika, ktorje rozličnje spuosobi
nárečjami (dialectus, Mundart) zovjeme, tím sa ukazujúce, že
tá sama reč v rozličných rečných formách nje len čo do sklo-

But let us return to Štúr's claim that Genuan and Paduan "are *rozličnorečja*, not *nárečja*" in light of these two translation options. Under Option D, Štúr claimed that Genuan and Paduan "are sub-subdialects, not dialects." Under Option L, Štúr claimed that Genuan and Paduan "are sub-sub-sub-sub-subcategories of a language, not sub-sub-subcategories of a language." Neither option, I suggest, supports "translating Štúr's *nárečja* as *language* or *jazyk*," nor Zavarský's contention that "what modern linguists call *dialect* or *nárečie* is *rozličnorečja* in Štúr's terminology."⁸⁷

Unwillingness to consider Štúr's ideas in the context of nineteenth-century Slavic thought also explains Zavarský's peculiar analogy made in defence of terminological substitutions:

It is as if a modern expert in astronomy rebuked his fellow colleagues for not acknowledging that celestial bodies are moved by angels, which was a generally accepted physical theory until the seventeenth century because Newton's laws of motion and gravitation were not yet known. ... Now, linguistics and dialectology, just like astronomy, biology and other scientific disciplines, have evolved considerably over the last two centuries. Therefore, it is no wonder that modern linguists describe linguistic reality with terms different from those employed by linguists who lived two hundred years ago.⁸⁸

Zavarský's metaphor about angels and Newtonian gravity fails because the classification of Slavic languages has never undergone the sort of paradigm shift

86 ŠTÚR, *Nárečja slovenskuo*, p. 10.

87 ZAVARSKÝ, *A Few Comments*, p. 354.

88 ZAVARSKÝ, *A Few Comments*, p. 351.

that Thomas Kuhn so influentially described as central to scientific revolutions.⁸⁹ Linguistic classification can boast no conceptual breakthrough analogous to Newton's achievement. Instead, linguistic taxonomies have gradually evolved.

Given that modern astrophysicists have since abandoned Newton to wrestle with Einstein, furthermore, I find implausible Zavaršký's assumption that secondary literature about angelic astronomy would hold much interest for "a modern expert in astronomy." Modern astrophysicists are interested in things like dark matter, gravitational waves, the cosmic microwave background, and data from the James Webb Space Telescope. Secondary literature discussing pre-Newtonian astronomy, I imagine, holds more appeal for historians of religion, historians of the Reformation, and so forth. The analysis of angelic astronomy is not a task for astronomers or astrophysicists, but for historians.

So let us imagine a historian of religion researching a pre-Newtonian work of angelic astronomy. Let us specifically imagine a historian studying Thomas Heywood's 1635 *The Hierarchie of the Blessed Angells*, which includes the passage:

The consonance and simpathie
Betwixt the Angels Hierarchie.
The Planets and Cælestiall Spheares
And what similitude appears
'Twixt one and the other.⁹⁰

I criticized scholars for misciting and mistranslating Štúr's *nárečja* as "language," but Zavaršký defended such lexical substitution on the grounds that "modern linguists describe linguistic reality" in different terms.⁹¹ So let us follow Zavaršký's analogy between linguistics and astronomy to its logical conclusion. Since "modern astronomers" understand the "astronomical reality" of gravity, Zavaršký would evidently approve if a historian were to cite Heywood, cite using quotation marks, as follows:

The consonance and sympathy
Between the force of gravity
The planets and celestial things
And what attraction brings
Between one and the other.

89 KUHN. *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*. Chicago 1962, p. 111.

90 HEYWOOD. *The Hierarchie of the Blessed Angells*. London 1635, p. vi.

91 ZAVARŠKÝ, A Few Comments, p. 351.

Zavarský's reasoning would also justify historiographic references to "Heywood's *Hierarchy of the Fundamental Forces* (in the terminology of the day, Blessed Angels)."

I suggest, however, that if the secondary literature on Heywood retroactively "corrected" passages or book titles with these sorts of anachronistic terminological substitutions, then historians would be well advised to stick to the primary sources. If Heywood believed in angels, then scholars describing his thought must acknowledge that he believed in angels, no matter how well-established the theory of gravity may be. Similarly, if Štúr believed that Slovak was a "dialect" of the Slavic "language," historians describing Štúr's thought must acknowledge it.

Indeed, the necessity of respecting the fidelity of quotations from primary sources does not require scholars to adopt a social constructivist approach. I have argued above that the language/dialect taxonomy is socially constructed, that no such taxonomy can ever qualify as either a "fact" or any sort of "reality," and that dialect taxonomies are best analyzed as opinions that can either conform to or contradict the consensus of their era. But let us imagine that I am wrong. Imagine that there actually is an objectively "correct" taxonomy based on some irrefutable foundation. Let us even imagine that the consensus taxonomy of 2023 is a "objective fact," as suggested by Zavarský's references to a "reality" known to "today's linguists," or by Zavarský's argument that

what Štúr denoted as Slavic *nárečja* (pl.) is in modern linguistics referred to as Slavic languages because it is a generally accepted fact in Slavic linguistics that in Štúr's time the process of the differentiation of the Slavic languages had long been completed.⁹²

Is it not "generally accepted" by "today's linguistics" that Belarusian and Macedonian qualify as "languages"?⁹³ Štúr's taxonomy of *nárečja* did not include them. Štúr did not mention Belarusian or Macedonian: his taxonomy omitted them entirely.⁹⁴ Since Štúr failed to acknowledge the "generally accepted fact" of Belarussian and Macedonian languagehood, his taxonomy of Slavic languages, according to "modern linguistics," was incorrect. But if Štúr was mistaken about Belarusian and Macedonian, why does Zavarský assume he was right about Slovak? Why does Zavarský not consider the theoretical possibility that Štúr might have been wrong?

Though Zavarský complained that I rebuked modern scholars "for not using the nineteenth-century terminology,"⁹⁵ I above all rebuked scholars for not citing

92 ZAVARSKÝ, A Few Comments, p. 360.

93 MAXWELL, Taxonomies of the Slavic World, p. 47.

94 ŠTÚR. *Nárečja slovenskuo*, p. 13.

95 ZAVARSKÝ, A Few Comments, p. 351.

correctly. All the passages I objected to were summaries of Štúr's thought, and several were presented as direct quotations. I find it hard to believe that readers of *Historický časopis* seriously question that words attributed to a historical figure in a direct quotation must be presented without any lexical substitutions. If they do, however, then Slovak scholarship has problems more pressing than the misrepresentation of Štúr's Pan Slavism.

As a final note on the importance of fidelity in citation, let me end with the revelation that the quotation with which I began this article does not actually come from Gandhi, but from the much less glamorous figure of Nicholas Klein, an American attorney and labor activist. Klein's actual text, furthermore, has less of a ring to it: "First they ignore you. Then they ridicule you. Then they attack you and want to burn you. And then they build monuments to you. And that is what is going to happen to the Amalgamated Clothing Workers of America."⁹⁶ The misremembered and misattributed quotation better suited my purposes in the introduction, but professional scruples oblige me to acknowledge that historical actors did not always say what subsequent generations might have preferred them to have said. The same lesson applies to Štúr's remarks about the "Slovak dialect" of the "Slavic language."

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96 KLEIN. Address of Nicholas Klein. In *Proceedings of the Biennial Convention of the Amalgamated Clothing Workers of America*, 1919, New York: p. 53.

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