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Enlightenment and Social Progress – Back to the Enlightenment*

Abstract: The world today operates in a highly fragmented manner and in constant motion. The question of social progress is tempered. Morality does not determine the direction of social development and social interest. Scientific schematizing of our social reality and education is done intentionally in order to achieve maximum profits and success in the sciences, whose justification is questionable under the influence of meeting the requirements of the time. It is therefore necessary to review the issue and return to the roots of reflection on the meaning of enlightenment and progress, hence the Enlightenment. Kant and Rousseau are very specific philosophers within the Enlightenment. In many issues they are different from the other philosophers of the Enlightenment. In many ways Kant overcomes the Enlightenment and both think about the question of social progress differently from their contemporaries.

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People are allured by the idea of wealth and economic prosperity in all their various connotations. Their aim is to use it for their social profitability but it requires long periods of time. People usually want to avoid the burden imposed on their everyday life. The idea is developed by Kant in the so-called *Kraków fragments* published in *The Contest of Faculties*, in the section *A Renewed Attempt to Answer the Question: Is the Human Race Continually Improving?* It suggests a new perspective of raising awareness on the Enlightenment in the scope of modern day thinking – the sciences do not naturally lead to progress or moral improvement. They lead to decay and barbarism. What sequence can progress be expected to follow? The answer is: not the usual sequence *from the bottom upwards*, but *from the top downwards*.¹ The modern approach presented by Kant was already presented by Jean-Jacques Rousseau, the first great diagnostician of the modern age, and he implicitly pointed to the idea in his work *Discourse on the Sciences and Arts or On this Question proposed by the Academy: Whether the restoration of the Sciences and Arts has contributed to the purification of morals*. Rousseau states: “While the cultivation of the sciences is harmful to the martial qualities, it is even more so to the moral qualities. From our very first years a senseless education adorns our mind and corrupts our judgement”.² Rousseau sees the solutions of many societal problems in two areas: the Enlightenment and good will. Social improvement might change for the better but it also might change from the better to the worse. Therefore, the above-mentioned method from the top down is duly justified. “For we are dealing with freely acting beings to whom one can dictate in advance what they ought to do, but of whom one cannot predict what they actually will do”.³ The “advantages of state” is the normative regime, legal standards, the mechanism of non-personal institutional control but these are created for the usage of the most cogent tool of our

¹ Immanuel Kant, “The Contest of Faculties. A Renewed Attempt to Answer the Question: Is the Human Race Continually Improving?”, in: Kant, *Political Writings*, 2nd Edition (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 188.

² Jean-Jacques Rousseau, “Discourse on the Sciences and Arts or First Discourse”, in: Rousseau, *The Discourses and other early political writings* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 22.

³ Kant, “The Contest of Faculties. A Renewed Attempt to Answer the Question: Is the Human Race Continually Improving?”, 180.

social reality – (political) power. “There is no question that the [sic] civilised behaviour came hand in hand with the social oppression”. We must forsake many pleasures to be civilized, cultured and educated.⁴ The time when man will not need a master in the social environment is far away, not even in the foreseeable future. The problem with the enlightenment of education, upbringing, religious teaching and culture in general must be of social, not individual character, to reduce the mass fanaticism and infatuation in society which make enlightenment impossible. It is a demonstration of enthusiasm and the concept is mentioned several times by Kant in the above-mentioned fragments of *A Renewed Attempt to Answer the Question: Is the Human Race Continually Improving?* We must bear in mind that the term ‘culture’ is not to be modified or degraded in the way it is done today. Today’s conception of ‘culture’ is that “the [sic] culture is not an omnipresent element of real life, it has a special place”. Culture “is not one of the man’s diverse activities areas, it is its nature. Man proves his humanity only in culture and through culture...”⁵ The system of rules and management must step into the process, so ultimately the state should bear the education expenses, not the people, because the consensus is, in the long term, applied through state institutions.

In the case of enlightenment, the most influential institutions are schools and their teachings. Schools’ models, methods and expectations do not take into account one’s reason for maturity in their teaching and, therefore, there are various illusions about the wisdom and its occupier in society. A person with mature reasoning acquires experience and judgements and they naturally get to the concepts. The concepts lead them further to reason which does not allow one to fall into the snares of hoary know-it-alls’ intentions which are rotten with the illusion of wisdom, infatuation and pretentiousness.⁶ Within the framework of the strengthening structures of civil society, Kant pointed to the importance of upbringing and education which are

⁴ Victoria Camps, Salvador Giner, *Pohľady na občiansku kultúru* (Bratislava: Kalligram, 2000), 29.

⁵ Karel Kosík, *Předpotopní úvahy* (Praha: Torst, 1997), 144.

⁶ More about this problem see Marek Stachoň, “Kant a vyučovanie filozofovania na univerzite” [*Kant and teaching philosophy at university*], in: Ľubomír Belás (Ed.): *Kantov odkaz v kontexte filozofickej prítomnosti* [*Kant’s legacy in the context of philosophical presence*] (Prešov: Faculty of Arts, University of Prešov, 2005), 167–174.

the necessary suppositions for its functioning and progress. He paid special attention to the term *Bildung*, or education, but the term was explained in a wider meaning as *forming*. P. Kyslan argues that “Kant, in connection to small philosophical-historical and philosophical-legal writings, emphasizes the importance of good law for the future of humanity. Kant considers the Faculty of Law to be responsible for social and thus historical progress. This faculty has dispositions and authorities through the education of the state apparatus and mainly through the creation of laws and regulations to guide society and the people on the path of necessary progress”.⁷ Equally valid is the following: the more advanced civil society is, the lower the risk of recurrence, or the reverting back to humans’ natural state – human arbitrariness. The risk is lower if a human being is able to do what he wants to do in a society as long as he accepts the social standards as a result of the social contract. The behavior and the manners of an individual are due to personal, and even more so, to civil liberties which are socially beneficial and are able to keep society running independently of the government. Kant expressed his thoughts about it in his essay *On the common saying: That may be correct in theory, but it is of no use in practice* where he asks “if [sic] the gifts of human nature are based on which we can assume that the human race will be continually improving...?”. This is his reaction to Moses Mendelssohn’s idea that “an individual makes progress, but humanity constantly vacillates between fixed limits” and “it maintains in all periods of time roughly the same level of morality”. Kant is of a different opinion: “since the human race is constantly advancing with respect to culture (as its natural end) it is also to be conceived as progressing toward what is better with respect to the moral end of its existence, and that this will indeed be interrupted from time to time but will never be broken off”. Kant’s argument is the innate duty, “the duty of every member of the series of generations – to which I (as a human being in general) belong and am yet not so good in the moral character required of me is I ought to be and hence could be – so to influence posterity that it becomes always better [...] and to do it in such a way that this duty may be legitimately handed down

⁷ Peter Kyslan, “Spor fakúlt a úloha filozofickej fakulty” *Studia Philosophica Kantiana* (Prešov: Filozofická fakulta Prešovskej univerzity v Prešove, 2019), vol. 9, nr. 1, 67.

from one member (in the series of) generations to another”.⁸ The question for previous and present generations is: What is your point? Kant analyzes the situation of the individual and he is convinced that we might be more acquainted with ongoing processes because they are in our hands, we give the direction of how these processes should fulfill our aims. Society must be constructed to preserve “a germ of enlightenment that developed further through each revolution and this prepared [us] for a following stage of improvement”, even after many epochal revolutions.⁹ Kant declares that whereas a man wants to achieve higher goals, the hope for improvements in the social condition is still present and, also, that progress that achieves an unmeasurable degree will not only depend on what we do but also upon “what human will do in and with us” and then we might “expect an outcome that is directed to the whole and from it to the parts”.¹⁰ The advantage of citizenship is that it is always ready for renovation or reform, for progress to the higher level of social relations. It might be achieved not only by means of legal assurance (by harmonization or by imposing equality of rights) but also through the strengthening of the moral qualities of social relations. We identify with these qualities because in our human nature, “in which respect for right and duty is still alive”.¹¹ The sequence of the progression, mildness or naturalness of the changes and the elimination of mistakes and prejudices is, for Kant, more plausible and he accepts it into his enlightenment concept. His concept differs from those of other French philosophers especially after he witnessed the results of the French Revolution. The improvement of oneself is done by means of education, enlightenment and the confirmation of one’s maturity under the aegis of the principles of reason.¹²

⁸ Immanuel Kant, “On the common saying: That may be correct in theory, but it is of no use in practice”, in: Kant, *Practical Philosophy*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 305–306.

⁹ Immanuel Kant, “*Idea for a Universal History with a Cosmopolitan Aim*”, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 22.

¹⁰ Kant, “On the common saying: That may be correct in theory, but it is of no use in practice”, 307.

¹¹ Ibidem, 309.

¹² For more about this issue, see; Norbet Hinske, *Kant als Herausforderung an die Gegenwart*, (Freiburg/München: Karl Alber, 1980), 38.

Kant also discusses the unquestionable plan of nature as a part of the solid teleological construction of the history of philosophy where nature is presented as the source of the impulse of our sociability. He ponders as much over society as about history, he observes the past, concludes the actualities and veracious realities and contemplates about the meaning of organization of people and its progression. It is the living critical social view of life of current and future generations. He follows the basic need to respect people and therefore he directs his social philosophy on the request for the restoration of human rights. It is a challenge for us to know the power of nature through similar ability, how to organize and to design our world and the future. Kant's idea of a cosmopolitan society is a huge challenge for humanity in this direction. Reason ought to project the social environment in terms of natural perfection to the cosmopolitan society. Kant: "Thus on the cosmopolitan level, too, it can be maintained: What on rational grounds holds for theory also holds for practise".¹³ In this aspect, "the cosmopolis is a logical result of the cultural and historical (*Bildungsgeschichtlichen*) interpretation of human events where its development is not incidental. But it follows that the reason's plan which is drawing its elements from the [sic] purposively organized nature. It is true that teleologically organized nature is the same theoretical construct as the morally improving human race only without the purpose internally present in nature. In general, we cannot describe the human race as the history of education, formation (of human beings) and culture (*Bildungs-Kulturgeschichte*)".¹⁴ According to Kant, "not every culture is sufficient for this ultimate aim of nature".¹⁵ For this reason, some cultural forms perish. Kyslan adds that "moral progress requires a certain historical development and stage of culture, but this does not mean that it is generated by this process. On the contrary, as we have emphasized, moral potential is always universally

¹³ Kant, "On the common saying: That may be correct in theory, but it is of no use in practice", 309.

¹⁴ Ursula Reitemeyer, "Kantovskij kulturno-historičeskij nabrosok projekta vsemirmo-graždanskogo obščestva", in: Immanuel Kant: *Nasledie i proekt*, ed. V. S. Stepin, N. V. Motrošilova (Moskva: Kanon+, 2007), 382.

¹⁵ Immanuel Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), §83.

present”.¹⁶ Nature challenges us to make the leap to achieve social progress. There are many challenges and aims or accomplishments in society serving the continual improvement of people and society. Kant shifts away from the Enlightenment optimism which expected a prompt solution to social relations and finds many obstacles to achieving a just, civil society. He writes: “Confronted by the sorry sight, not so much of those troubles that oppress human beings from natural causes as rather of those that they themselves inflict upon one another, the mind is nevertheless cheered up by the prospect that matters could become better in the future, and indeed with unselfish benevolence, since we shall be long in our graves and shall not harvest the fruits we have helped to sow”.¹⁷ By these, but also by other, especially by ethical concepts with the categorical imperative on top, Kant overcomes positions of the Enlightenment and alongside gives its hard-wearing place in philosophy. Kosík draws attention to the mechanism of the modern age – it is a Cartesian model where morality is degraded on the instrument of ensuring the functioning of social mechanisms for the assurance of focusing on the benefit, comfort and industrial, technical operation. We accomplish scientism and informatization without reference to cognition and common sense which are qualities of social significance. Those are incidental. The second sign of social stagnation is the loss of criticality which led to “the transformation of the Enlightenment (*Aufklärung*) into shallow edification (*Aufklärerei* is Husserl’s taunting term) and Kant’s conceived architectonical reasons collapsed or were used as a one-sided dominance of technical reason (*ratio*) and as global rationalization”.¹⁸

It is necessary to avoid tendencies and experimentation with descriptive facts which might be distorting for socio-philosophical cognition. Kant carefully approaches the place of the individual in society because his previous analyses showed that even when the human being is, in general, the master of the Earth, it is still necessary to form and direct human expressions. He points out the problem of antagonism – unsocial sociability – as the basic

¹⁶ Peter Kyslan, *Fenomén kultúry vo filozofii Immanuela Kanta* (Prešov: Filozofická fakulta Prešovskej univerzity v Prešove, 2019), 84.

¹⁷ Kant, “On the common saying: That may be correct in theory, but it is of no use in practice”, 306–307.

¹⁸ Kosík, *Předpotopní úvahy*, 148.

definition of man's adjustment to society. At the same time, he sees in it various initial factors for the explanation of personal activities as the involvement in public or social matters. On the other hand, he reveals the changes (assimilation, refinement or sententiousness) of the individual based on social influence. "Good manners are an unmistakable sign of a civilized character".¹⁹ However, "if the [sic] morality is excluded and relegated to an inferior level or is transformed into some agreed rules of acting and behaviour, the modern age[']s achievements [such] as science and technology can play an opposite role and a decline in the level of barbarism and destruction".²⁰ We need to recognize the difference between natural and social, in the sense that we are getting to know the natural and we create the social (morally). It is not possible to apply the same methodology to both recognition spheres as it is done today. In that case, the odds are obviously against morality. We do not need such accuracy and acuteness of recognition in morality as in exact science and, moreover, it presents the same problems and permanently questions their solutions. We investigate if a minimum morality is sufficient for our comfort to support the blind social integrity necessary for the coordination of human aims. The Enlightenment is about independent thinking and education encouraging people to think independently. Thinking of this kind requires one more element to fulfill its mission, namely to influence mutual relationships in a way that society and the human race can achieve contentment and a peaceful balance. It is about progress, thus, progressive thinking. Such thinking will not be possible if we do not "unspell" our world, or how Jean-Jacques Rousseau might say, until we put away the masks we wear while following our aims in society or shaping some relationships in society and so on. Honneth claims that "Rousseau posed the theme of the examination of [the] moral quality of social life emphasizing the *anthropological* evaluation criteria".²¹ The oppression of independent and, therefore, progressing thinking and the support of 'mask wearing' enables the elimination of proper enlightenment and replace it with practices which allow for specific groups to control other groups. This control might be of economic character but also

¹⁹ Camps, Giner, *Pohľady na občiansku kultúru*, 25.

²⁰ Kosík, *Předpotopní úvahy*, 141.

²¹ Axel Honneth, *Das Andere der Gerechtigkeit* (Frankfurt am Main: Shurkamp, 2000), 15.

of control character of personal actions and the control of decision making and thinking. The Enlightenment, however, is restricted to the propagation of arts, i.e. dance, singing, music, etc.

The Enlightenment enables us to believe in ourselves but it requires clarity. If we do not mind that there are things, relationships, and aims in society that are vague and we allow ourselves to appease a false sense of being needed as a full-valued citizen or a respected labor force, a false sense of uniqueness and necessity (other than the labor force) underpinned in various ways, through media, schools, family or politics, if it is sufficient for us to be able to buy something the next day so the hidden totalitarianism engrains itself, the awakening will not be pleasant. An independent enlightenment can be executed only in a civil society. "Civil culture is the minimal applicable framework in which we can satisfactorily solve many chronic coexistence conflicts or reduce the damage they inflicted [...] Civil culture based only on the exchange of pleasantries and hypocritical phrases between people [...] we would not recommend".²² We do not want to appeal to people in fashion as suggested in Rousseau's *Discourse on the Sciences and Arts*. Civil culture requires civil society. In the context of Kant's and Rousseau's philosophy, civil society is a difficult and long term project. Human emancipation is crucial reflection of oneself as an autonomous and at the same time social being, ability to think independently and critically. The constitution of civil society imposes some requirements and the main requirement is mentioned in Kant's essay *An Answer to the Question: What is Enlightenment?* where he clearly formulates a social heritage:

Enlightenment is the human being's emergence from his self-incurred minority. Minority is inability to make use of one's own understanding without direction from another. This minority is self-incurred when its cause lies not in lack of understanding but in lack of resolution and courage to use it without direction from another. Sapere aude! Have courage to make use of your own understanding! is thus the motto of enlightenment.²³

²² Camps, Salvador Giner, *Pohľady na občiansku kultúru*, 85.

²³ Immanuel Kant, "An answer to the question: What is enlightenment", in: Kant, *Practical Philosophy*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 17.

Courageous and assertive presentation is one of the Enlightenment's requirements but it must be allowed from above. It is a necessary ability to think independently and critically really apply. It is concerned mainly with speaking and writing. It also requires – and here Kant appears to be a true Enlightenment philosopher – the moral formation of man and the development of moral and practical judgement through upbringing and education (in a wider sense) (*Bildung*) so the mechanical history of nature can change into dynamic cultural history. We define it by means of transcendental deduction from the categorical imperative.²⁴ Our carelessness of self-improvement and of going beyond our limits or our determination stands against the institution of moral and civil duty. Man believes the idea of freedom and individualism more than is necessary or advisable and therefore he is passive and swallowed up by the growing trend of “private life and life in intimacy which means [an] even bigger oppression of spontaneousness”.²⁵ We talk about the inauthenticity or even the inability of social cooperation. We pretend that we are beside the point of this modern age because there are always some restrictions and orders. And at the same time, we are absorbed by an alien rationality – others are thinking on our behalf and we perceive it as a non-personal or uncertain aim or even as a lie. Reason desires progress and happiness and therefore it is reasonable to act and think independently with respect to others because the actions of others influence me. The reason is always unsatisfied and it is our duty not to be satisfied with age or attribute the condition to age, but to always go against it. Marquard draws attention to the fact that our age has many titles: the age of industry, late capitalism, scientific and technical civilization, the atomic age and modernism or postmodernism. “This polyonymy is an indirect anonymity: our age and our world are also – as it seems to be – in an identification crisis...”.²⁶ Marquard refers to our age as the age of the “strangeness of world” (*Weltfremdheit*). The Enlightenment soaked with false and heterogeneous (from various perspectives of the denotations

²⁴ Reitemeyer, “Kantovskij kulturno-historičeskij nabrosok projekta všemirmo-graždan-skogo obščestva”, 382.

²⁵ Camps, Giner, *Pohľady na občiansku kultúru*, 29.

²⁶ Odo Marquard, “Zeitalter der Weltfremdheit? Beitrag zur Analyse der Gegenwart”, in: Hans-Ludwig Ollig, *Philosophie als Zeitdiagnose*, (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1991), 81.

of age) interpretations is the circumvention of human rights and the right to know the social reality; therefore, it is difficult to uncover those actions and relationships harmful to society. It is difficult to determine the method and the aim of implementing social progress in such situations.

Kant sees the problem of progress in the context of historical relations, he sees the effect of history on the human race as crucial and fulfillment of the historical plan as necessary and therefore his question is: “how is it possible to have history *a priori*? The answer is that it is possible if the prophet himself occasions and produces the events he predicts”.²⁷ If the social reality is not clear, we cannot predict what will happen nor what the real consequences of our actions and our intentions will be. The constant reproduction of social values is only barely achievable and the place for self-fulfillment is lost. What and how it should look like, what is expected and what and how to do it is determined beforehand. Considering this, he speaks about our descendants – furthermore the praiseworthy profoundness in which our judicial history is written, however, must naturally lead everyone to pause on how our future generations will undertake the burden of history left behind by us in a couple of centuries. Kant’s social philosophy does not require nor can act as an ordinary prognosis (prophecy) and his position is expressed in this sentence: “One age cannot bind itself and conspire to put the following one into such a condition that it would be impossible for it to enlarge its cognitions (especially in such urgent matters) and to purify them of errors, and generally to make further progress in enlightenment. This would be a crime against human nature, whose original vocation lies precisely in such progress”.²⁸ Is it even possible to regulate such a thing as social progress? “The utilization of nature by means of instrumental reason brings various risks. Man manages – thanks to discipline, cultivation and civilization – to get out of the grossness of the natural state – but it is still not sufficient to attribute a higher status to human history in comparison with evolution history. Reduced to a technical and pragmatic perception, the power of human judgement, in comparison with the judgement of an animal, exhibits itself only as

²⁷ Kant, “The Contest of Faculties. A Renewed Attempt to Answer the Question: Is the Human Race Continually Improving?”, 177.

²⁸ Kant, “An answer to the question: What is enlightenment”, 20.

a quantitative rather than a qualitative acquisition (*Mehr*), also according to Rousseau. For the reformation of human history from naturally developing into proceedings according to a plan something bigger than just an evolution jump is needed".²⁹ In this respect, Max Weber carefully formulated his theses about progress and differentiates technical and other forms of progress, more concretely, aesthetic and, ultimately, ethical progress.³⁰ He, more or less, does not overcome the theses that the challenges of Jean-Jacques Rousseau's *Discourse on the Sciences and Arts* or *On this Question proposed by the Academy: Whether the restoration of the Sciences and Arts has contributed to the purification of morals*. Kant maintains different position. If we do not register any social or moral progress it does not mean that it "will never happen". This negative assumption reminds Kant that it "does not even justify abandoning a pragmatic or technical purpose (for example, that of flights with aerostatic balloons), still less a moral purpose that, if only it is not demonstratively impossible to effect it, becomes a duty. Besides, a good deal of evidence can be put forward to show that in our age, as compared with all previous ages, the human race as a whole has actually made considerable moral progress".³¹ It is about character and quality of cooperation and also about whether any common expectations exist. Without cooperation, the development of social relationships and alteration is almost impossible to execute. On the other hand, the stagnation might cause the maturing of desires, the discovery of new horizons and the understanding of social needs. The revaluation of the Enlightenment message includes the uncovering of the issue of the ability to react sensibly to social challenges. Ultimately, the Enlightenment supports progress which might look different in various stages of history but its ultimate and, for us, the most difficult challenge is to create a moral society.

Not only young people, but also adults, often have doubts about different things, intentions and facts. The more doubt there is, the more it can affect

²⁹ Reitemeyer, "Kantovskij kulturno-historičeskij nabrosok projekta všemirmo-graždan-skogo obščestva", 382.

³⁰ More in: Max Weber, "The Meaning of "Ethical Neutrality" in Sociology and Economics", in: Weber, *Methodology of Social Sciences*, (New Brunswick, London: Transaction Publishers, 2011).

³¹ Kant, "On the common saying: That may be correct in theory, but it is of no use in practice", 307.

the youth and at the same time bring about many negative consequences. Today's pluralistic world is a fertile ground for that. Nowadays, a lot of young people are enticed by world views, schools of thought, lifestyles and role models of various types. Naturally, looking for a place to fit in and explore the world is an integral part of youth. The philosophical view on this issue seems to be that of methodological incentive as well as the freest one as philosophy hands over the word "freedom" to criticism. In this regard, J. J. Rousseau wrote the work *Emile, or on Education*, in which, also according to a curious view of youth accompanied by expected answers, there is a very inspiring passage entitled *Profession of Faith of the Savoyard Vicar*. I. Kant addresses Rousseau with his reflections on educational training, socio-philosophical, historical-philosophical reflections and thoughts about upbringing. Their thinking was especially courageous at that time, but it still remains the same to this day. Uncertainty and doubts are brought into current society by R. Descartes in the context of seeking the truth. It is not important to believe the philosophical concept. What matters and what is also required by J. J. Rousseau is good judgement, known on the British Isles as *common sense* and by the Greeks as love of the truth. We are not speaking about infallibility because the vicar says that "if I am mistaken, it is undesignedly".³² Where did all those different thoughts and ideas come from? Rousseau claims that "I conceived that the weakness of the human understanding was the first cause of the prodigious variety I found in their sentiments, and that pride was the second".³³ Rousseau recommends that before we decide to embark on a journey of any faith, "it is necessary, therefore, to examine myself",³⁴ which is exactly what Socrates and Aurelius Augustinus called for as well. We are talking about a human soul, which fascinated I. Kant because of its ability to create a moral law. By using reflection and logical analysis, Rousseau comes up with the so-called three articles of faith. The first one says: "I believe, therefore, that a Will gives motion to the universe, and animates all nature".³⁵ The second one: "If from matter being put in motion I discover

³² Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Profession of faith of a Savoyard vicar* (New York: Peter Eckler, 1889), 13.

³³ Ibidem, 17.

³⁴ Ibidem, 21.

³⁵ Ibidem, 28.

the existence of a Will as the first active cause, the subjugation of this matter to certain regular laws of motion displays also intelligence”.³⁶ The third one: “Man is, therefore, a free agent, and as such animated by an immaterial substance”.³⁷ Education and social progress become a subject of observation concerning the development of the Enlightenment, in which we need to distinguish between its understanding as a historical epoch on the one hand and, what is more important, a historical and social project on the other. This is a project which should see to the fulfillment of human rights. The essential element to embrace enlightenment is to get rid of dependence on other ideas and thoughts. Education is realized in a public (common) place under the influence of enlightened reason. Its basic precondition is freedom, especially the free use of reason. Kant distinguished between common and private use of reason. He writes: “But by the public use of one’s own reason I understand that use which someone makes of it as a scholar before the entire public of the world of readers. What I call the private use of reason is that which one may make of it in a certain civil post or office with which he is entrusted”.³⁸ L. Belás points out that when “thinking about the wounds of mankind caused by society, he came up with a viewpoint according to which the guilt does not concern all forms of social associations but it depends on the association reviving will”.³⁹ Making an appeal on the watchword “back to nature”, Rousseau does not assume a return to the initial times of mankind. He is not a dreamer as he was considered to be by his peers. He understands that the wheel of history cannot be reversed and that “man is not able to return to the times of innocence and equality when he has moved away from them”.⁴⁰ We are dealing here with the issue of the authenticity of life and the fact that Rousseau expresses doubts about its fulfillment. He would like to draw attention to the children population as well. P. Druckerman analyzes upbringing and family life from the point of view of French thinking and culture and according to that she says that “letting children live doesn’t mean letting them out into the wilderness [...] It means realising that children are neither a storage for

³⁶ Ibidem, 31.

³⁷ Ibidem, 43.

³⁸ Kant, “An answer to the question: What is enlightenment”, 18.

³⁹ Lubomír Belás, *Dejinný rozmer filozofie osvietenstva* (Prešov: Manacon, 1998), 41.

⁴⁰ Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Schriften*, Band 2 (München: Carl Hanser Verlag, 1978), 569.

their parents' ambitions nor any projects. They are independent human beings with their own lives, moods, joys and life experiences". The said writer points to Rousseau's work *Emile, or on Education* writing that "another philosopher, the German Immanuel Kant, compares the importance of this work to the French Revolution [...] Education norms that were set by Rousseau are considered to be obvious by French parents".⁴¹

I would like to focus more intently on one more term that confronts freedom and that is "law". According to Rousseau, law is related to freedom as the base of all laws. A person's right to what belongs to them is determined and ensured by publicly mandated laws. It is a type of external law resulting clearly from the term "freedom" regarding external relationships among people, where Kant adopts Rousseau's theory. Do not, however, let this confuse you. Rousseau claims that the law has nothing in common with the purpose. However, Kant understands the purpose as an effort to achieve bliss. Thus, the law is not people's blessedness but it is for and coming from freedom. That is why he continues writing in his work entitled *On the common saying: That may be correct in theory, but it is of no use in practice*, especially in the part entitled *On the relation of Theory to Practice in the Right of a State* that "Right is the limitation of the freedom of each to the condition of its harmony with the freedom of everyone insofar as this is possible in accordance with a universal law; and public right is the sum of external laws which make such a thoroughgoing harmony possible".⁴² The civil constitution sets up the relation of free people governed by the law which is in force, which, however, does not violate the freedom of relationship to society. This results from reason itself. I am governed by the laws which I have determined on my own. However, when blessedness, which is not respected by reason, is taken into account, we are not able to draft a social principle or law that would be in accordance with everybody's freedom because everyone is searching for blessedness as they see fit. Nevertheless, this should be done according to the principle of freedom, equality and independence. Obedience must exist in every political association. Moreover, the spirit of freedom must be

⁴¹ Pamela Druckerman, *A dost! Francúzske deti nevystrájajú pri jedle* [orig. *Bringing up Bébé*] (Bratislava: NOXI, 2012), 85–86.

⁴² Kant, "On the common saying: That may be correct in theory, but it is of no use in practice", 290.

present so there is no possibility for reason to come into conflict with itself and so that no so-called secret associations are established. From this point of view, it seems that Kant overestimated the position of the head of state that has a right to any legal inducement. He did not recognize the common will of people to legal inducement even though he did not deny the inalienable human rights that cannot be surrendered even if one wanted to. A citizen of the state must be even entitled to speak out their opinion about which measures of the ruler they consider to be an injustice against the political association. Moreover, every subject must be able to recognize that it is not the ruler's intention to create injustice. According to Kant, the right to resistance against the ruler does not belong to this. He explains that if the constitution allowed a revolt it would need to be declared as a right, as well as the way in which it should be used. Kant understood the state as a moral person. This is where we should start searching for an explanation of the theses mentioned above and ask further. The sentence uttered by Frederick II that he would be *only the highest servant of the state* meets Kant's with astonishing agreement. The principles of Kant's conception of freedom and the attendant civil society can be confronted on the etymological level with historical development. At a deeper level of perception, we can reflect how these terms and their meanings were transformed and were made part of the constitution. In other words, to what extent is reality, or rather what is and what should be, legitimately and trustworthily affected by those terms. Moreover, we can retrospectively review, to what extent was Kant legitimately and realistically established in the mentioned issues.

What brings J. J. Rousseau and I. Kant together is their cautious approach to the question of human progress. They are also rather sceptical about other questions or, better said, more careful in comparison to their Enlightenment contemporaries. According to Rousseau's work *Discourse on the Sciences and Arts or On this Question proposed by the Academy: Whether the restoration of the Sciences and Arts has contributed to the purification of morals*, we can state that on the one hand, we detect significant progress in medicine, we have technological inventions which make our lives easier, we have rational organization that ensures general education, health care, social security for elders, ill and young people as well as for those who are looking for a job and have their roots in the ideas of the Enlightenment, but on the

other hand, technological inventions are being abused, the commercial use of biochemistry in agriculture causes hunger, malnutrition and bad health and the free market does not bring any exclusive benefits. Moreover, hospitals, clinics, schools have not ensured safety, health or education and in some respects, they even secured control, dictatorship and supervision.⁴³ The question of outlining the modernisms in life and experiencing this modernism remains open. Exploring human beings and human relations, Kant states that “[O]ne cannot resist feeling a certain indignation when one sees their doings and refrain on the great stage of the world and finds that despite the wisdom appearing now and then in individual cases, everything in the larger sphere is woven together out of folly, childish vanity, often also out of childish malice and the will to destroy; so that in the end one does not know, what concept to make of our species, with its smug imaginings about its excellences”.⁴⁴ Kant reacts directly to Rousseau’s works *Discourse on the Sciences and Arts* and *Discourse on Inequality* by writing that Rousseau “shows quite correctly the unavoidable conflict of culture with the nature of the human species [...] but in his *Emile*, his *Social Contract* and other writings, he seeks again to solve the harder problem of how culture must proceed in order properly to develop the predispositions of humanity as a moral species to their vocation, so that the latter no longer conflict with humanity as a natural species”.⁴⁵ Both Rousseau and Kant see the difficulties that are created by mankind, states and people. Moreover, according to Kant, man is made “out of such crooked wood as the human being, nothing entirely straight can be fabricated”.⁴⁶ That is why the greatest problem of man is his civil organization resulting in a specific historic role: The greatest practical problem for the human race, to the solution of which it is compelled by nature, is the establishment of a civil society, universally administering rights according to law... Hence, a society in which liberty *under external laws* may be found combined in the greatest possible degree with irresistible power, i.e. “a perfectly just civil constitution, must be

⁴³ Austin Harrington, “*Moderní sociální teorie*” (Praha: Portál, 2006), 66–67 [orig. *Modern social theory. An Introduction*].

⁴⁴ Kant, *Idea for a Universal History with a Cosmopolitan Aim*, 10–11.

⁴⁵ Kant, “Conjectural beginning of human history”, in: Kant, *Anthropology, History, and Education* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 169.

⁴⁶ Kant, *Idea for a Universal History with a Cosmopolitan Aim*, 16.

the overriding issue of nature for the human species. This issue is, at the same time, the most difficult and the latest to be solved by the human species”.⁴⁷ The impulse for such an action is the human need, the natural impulse, to make use of the endowment and instincts in order to develop humankind, because “[f]or nature has certainly not placed instincts and faculties in living creatures so that they might struggle with and suppress them. Thus its predisposition was not at all cut out for the moral condition, but merely for the preservation of the human species as an animal species; and the civilized condition therefore comes into an unavoidable conflict with the latter, which conflict only a perfect civil constitution (the uttermost goal of culture) could remove, while the space in between is usually taken up with vices and their consequence the manifold of human misery”.⁴⁸ It is possible to solve these miseries, including inequality among people only in organized civil system under the rule of civil law. That is why the question about a good citizen and citizenship as such is brought to the fore by both philosophers. In this context, Zákutná writes that “conflict is an essential part of progress, it is something constructive and positive [...]. It can be accepted if it leads to a virtuous aim, and to achieve it, every single individual has to participate on it by his activity. Man can cultivate himself only in society when he is doing his duties as a good citizen”.⁴⁹ Although man is a “crooked wood” he follows the “hidden plan of nature”, the realization of which is the history of mankind.⁵⁰ This history is accompanied by life’s strenuousness, which “in the future the troubles of his life will often elicit from him the wish for a paradise, the creature of his power of imagination, where he could dream or fritter away his existence in tranquil inactivity and constant peace. But between him and that imagined seat of bliss is interposed restless reason which drives him irresistibly toward the development of the capacities placed in him and does not allow him to return to the condition of crudity and simplicity out of which is had pulled him (Genesis 3:24). It drives him on nevertheless to take upon himself patiently that toil that he hates, and run after the bauble that he despises, and

⁴⁷ Ibidem, 14–15.

⁴⁸ Kant, “Conjectural beginning of human history”, 170.

⁴⁹ Sandra Zákutná, “Philosophy of History of Adam Ferguson and Immanuel Kant”, in: *Estudos Kantianos*, vol. 3, n. 1 (2015), 78.

⁵⁰ See more: Kant, *Idea for a Universal History with a Cosmopolitan Aim*, 19.

even to forget death itself which he dreads, on account of all those trivialities he is even more afraid to lose”.⁵¹

Conclusion

Man is the measure of everything and it is not possible to get rid of this role. He has the strongest influence on how we understand the phenomena in our world, especially social ones. Finally, as opposed to other sciences, “to understand social relations, it is equally important to know in what people believe will happen in the future, as to know, what really happens”.⁵² Social criticism is a heritage of the Enlightenment. It considers man to be legally incapable, self-alienated, not living his life authentically, not having it in his own hands from the point of view of his social fulfillment and sees him as a being who is the subject of business and calculation. Kant’s appeals are the challenges for cosmopolitan rationality or cosmopolitan reasonableness.

Both Rousseau and Kant are in favor of social progress and believe in it. However, their philosophical views and attitudes do not contain such great enthusiasm as can be seen by most enlightened people. And although Kant was largely inspired by Rousseau, the question of social progress is not perceived in the same way. Rousseau does not trust the civil society project overly; Kant is reserved for revolutionary projects as well as possibility of changes from below. Common matter is a certain degree of skepticism and reserve. With their reflections on society and its social progress, they both try to uncover the nature of man, human nature. But they both know that if they want to study a person and say something relevant about him, they have to study his social being, mutual interactions in an effort to follow his mood, his efforts, fulfillment of needs, his shifting in a historical perspective in organizing life and or the shift is improving in comparison with previous situation,

⁵¹ Kant, “Conjectural beginning of human history”, 168.

⁵² Robert Lawless, *Co je to kultura* (Olomouc: Votobia, 1996), 108 [orig. *The concept of culture: An introduction to the social sciences*].

so progress. Alternatively goes about exploration, if progress is lasting, but in some aspects of life the return is in danger of decay.

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