

which was later to have a significant influence on the German philosophy of history on the turn of the 18th century, he himself could not see the consequences following from his own theory. The latter, one of the most eminent historians of British Enlightenment, when he attempted to generalize the history of the cultural development of mankind, he never went beyond an ascertainment that it is determined by cyclical repetitions of irrationalistic tendencies in it.

The negative evaluation of history by the outstanding personalities in the 18th-century philosophical thought has two aspects. On the one hand, it concerns the value of historical knowledge, which they could not accept because their age was dominated by the mirage of knowledge that was universal, ultimate and logically necessary. Historical cognition could not, obviously, fulfil this condition. On the other hand, the consciousness, already emerging in the Renaissance, of the entirely new situation of man through the practical consequences of human cognition and the oppositional character of resulting self-consciousness towards tradition and its values, prompted a negative evaluation of the past rather than supported the idea of historical development.

And yet the thought of at least Descartes and Bacon contained distinct premises upon which the thought of the Enlightenment was to find new principles of historical continuity and formulate a conception of the positive valuation of history as a process where values are realized. The negative evaluation of the past was for them ultimately just one more justification of their conviction that if we undertake and realize the idea of a great arrangement of science and if the new method comes to be accepted as the basis of a cognitive programme, then the future of mankind, determined by the achievements of human cognition and their practical applications, will hence be a gradual realization of higher and higher values for it will follow the progressing mastery of man over the forces hitherto alien and hostile. And it is this idea that will become, in the thought of the Enlightenment, the basis of spreading a theory of historical progress, permeated with distinctly evaluative, axiological contents. From the Baconian and Cartesian tradition, and from the guiding principles of the Royal Society in Britain, this theory drew the vision of the future as a state where new human possibilities will be realized through the development of cognition freed from its hampering barriers. At the same time, however, the fact that the Enlightenment, especially in France adopted the cumulative model of cognition in the form outlined by Locke's empiricist psychology, and transformed it into a theory of non-individual, social cognition, permitted to break the former opposition between the past and the future. Its consequence was the recognition that the whole of history so far is one great process of historical progress, underlying which is the scope of human knowledge that widens generation by generation and the greater and greater range of its practical effects.

Thus formulated, the idea of historical progress is one of the most essential elements of the thought of the Enlightenment, which introduced distinctly axiological contents into the then reflection upon the history of philosophy. But the contents clearly went beyond the range of evaluations characteristic of cognition regarded as the driving force of historical development. On the one hand, admittedly, the central epistemological categories - the concepts of truth and falsity - are transformed into the basic categories of history of philosophy. The former into a creative principle of progress, which determines successive, ever higher stages of human development; the latter - into the

antinomy of the former: a negative force responsible, especially as a cognitive error institutionalized into fallacy and subordinated to the interests of the ruling groups, for all forms of historical stagnation and regress. On the other hand, to these primarily epistemological evaluations there were added evaluations drawn from outside cognition. Following the long tradition of ethical intellectualism, the idea of truth was conjoined with the idea of moral good. That is why the Enlightenment theories of historical progress connect the development of cognition with a conviction that it is accompanied by the perfection of the individual's moral status and of the social conditions in which the moral ideal is realized in the public life. This conviction reflected therefore a belief that in history there takes place a progressive process of perfecting the human nature which is gradually purified of defects generated by the deforming imperfections of social life and that this process is accompanied by the formation of social relations that are more and more rational and in accordance with man's real nature. Following the assumption that the human nature, not contaminated or constrained by external, alien forces, contains dispositions to realize positive moral and cognitive values, the Enlightenment theory of historical progress formulated a corresponding political ideal, which was at the same time to be the goal of historical process. This was a vision of political liberalism based on a conviction that a possibly maximum reduction of factors that constrain the individual's free and spontaneous activity, including economic activity, will lead in co-operation with other people to initiate the social mechanisms of general egalitarianism. This, in turn, was to be the condition of realizing universal happiness based, according to the doctrine of utilitarianism, upon reciprocal advantages derived from co-operation by people who act in accordance with their real and rational nature. For the essence of this nature is to strive after happiness, which was believed to be true only when in accordance with general happiness. And even those theories which, like Mandeville's ideas, did not share the delusions about the altruistic character of man and saw in him – after Hobbes – a being selfish by nature, followed the conviction that co-operation between people, even when they are pursuing their self-interests, leads to the common good.

A characteristic feature in the Enlightenment vision of historical process in the form that was most clearly manifested in the thought of Turgot and Chastellux, of Condorcet and Helvetius, was thus a conviction that in the past there was a gradual realization, and in the future there will be the ultimate one, of certain interconnected values. These include: rationality, that is freedom of reason from ignorance and fallacies and the subordination of all forms of human behaviour to its requirements; man's mastery of nature, whose laws and structures will become penetrable to human thought and open to human action; and the revelation of the real human nature, which, under the conditions of freedom and social equality tends to strive after its own good identical with the common good.

It is not difficult to demonstrate the extent of social experience and the social origin of the tendencies generalized in the Enlightenment conception of history as realizing those values. The idea itself of the cumulative progress of human Spirit throughout history, crowned with a vision of the forthcoming achievement of the goal, contains the acceptance of the past as the time whose essential structure is determined by the accumulating achievements and successes – consecutive conquests of the human mind in the service of human enterprise that widens the scope of man's freedom both towards nature and in

social life. This acceptance is obviously only partial because the past is also made up of ignorance, evil, spiritual and political coercion – all that to which the human mind was to refer the conquests forming positive history. The Enlightenment idea of progress is also the acceptance of the present, which, admittedly needs to be overcome in its current form since it is a state of rationality not yet fully realized and not satisfying all the requirements of the moral and social ideal, yet which is already loaded with forces discovered by human thought and capable of forming the new future, and with the conscious goals, in which the moral and social ideal will be fulfilled.

This evaluative structurization of the historic time as the time measured by its accumulated achievements has its underlying foundations not only in the theoretical consequences stemming indirectly from the philosophies of Bacon, Descartes and Locke. For it is primarily a generalization on a scale of the whole of history – and even more than history since history does not comprise the future – of that form of human practice which gradually began, already from the Renaissance, to become more and more significant in the social dimension and bring success to a larger and larger group of people as well as open the prospects of the future successes. It is in the activities of artisans and merchants, of travellers and bankers, of sailors and entrepreneurs, that reason, reduced to the arguments of common-sense calculation and freed from prejudices, including the social ones imposed by traditional social structures, revealed its power to create values and to secure success. It is also reason that dictated the conditions of the future successes and demonstrated that all that hampered human enterprise was in conflict with reason and needed to be destroyed. This ultimately gave rise to new values deriving from *Liberté*, *Egalité*, *Fraternité*. However, this was to be freedom from feudal bonds only; equality, yet excluding possessions; and brotherhood understood only as general membership of the abstract mankind rather than a real community.

Both for their origin and the special constraints they are subject to, the values derived from the Enlightenment theory of progress can be easily identified as manifestation of the experiences and the awareness of the needs of the bourgeois who discovered the prospects of creating the world by the standards of their own desires, which are also a manifestation of delusions. They are revealed in the conviction that the universal and general human needs are similarly expressed by values essentially subordinated to particular social interests, such as timeless and absolute rationality, or the concepts of good, equality and freedom, devoid of further specifying definitions determined by possession and distribution of goods.

This identification of the axiological system of the Enlightenment theory of historical progress is corroborated by one more evidence. The theories, which admitted the negation of the ultimate argument of the bourgeois reason, that is the principle of private ownership, did not likewise accept the idea of historical progress. Admittedly in the writings of communist utopians – Deschamps, Morelly or Mably – there is expressed a vision of a new, magnificent reality, where mankind will be freed from possessions which they regarded as the source of all possible and impossible evil and that following the paradigm of that epoch, that future was to be formed by the human mind, which has discovered the ultimate truth and what remains is only to spread it and apply in social life. However, unlike the theories about the idea of historical progress, that future dramatically breaks the continuity of history for the plebeian utopians, history is not so

much a process of creating and accumulating values as a course of the degenerating changes in relation to the idealized primitive state, where there was no ownership and which was therefore more in accordance with man's natural needs.

For all the differences in theoretical premises and for the entirely different conception of the subject of cognition — and of cognition itself with the consequences permeating also the whole ontology of historical process, which is still treated as derivative of its development — the conception of history in the classical German philosophy in its rationalist trend essentially retains the axiological contents typical of the thought of the Enlightenment. Although each entirely different, the theories of Kant, Fichte and Hegel are no less acute than the philosophy of the Enlightenment in considering history as the process of constituting the highest values. Even in Kant, who excludes the possibility of any ontology, history, when treated in the global, universal dimension, becomes a progressive and purposeful process that tends to realize the highest moral values in the future. Although the ideas of progress, sense and purpose of history and the prospects of their ultimate realization in the future have, in the Kantian thought, only a status of postulates of the historical reason in the sphere of the most general historical cognition, rather than the character of empirical ascertainties, which the philosophy of the Enlightenment sought to give to those concepts, yet in Kant's intentions and according to the internal consistence of his theory, it is therein that lay the *a priori* and moral necessity of recognizing them as the highest principles of understanding social life and its sense.

However, what for Kant is merely a necessary yet exclusively subjective moral condition of the theoretical integration of the image of the historical world, it is transformed, in Fichte's ideas, into an ontological system, where moral postulates are not only the ways of understanding historical variability but primarily the objective forms of its development. Fichte's glorification of the freedom of man as the moral subject, who fulfills his inner obligation through action, leads to the revelation of culture regarded by the author of the *Sittenlehre* as the historically developing objectification of human freedom. It is man who thus creates a specific form of his existence, wherein gradually developing freedom and rationality, the feeling of mutual moral bond and of the state of general weal, also prepare the future as a new era of the ultimate realization of gradually developing values. And despite the different involvement of those ideas in a new theoretical context and the different type of justifications, they all make up one axiological system not altogether too distant from the positive valuation of historical time in the thought of the Enlightenment.

The case was not at all different with the philosophy of Hegel. Admittedly, the moral aspect recedes into the background overwhelmed by a vision of the supreme goal, which is the development of the Absolute's self-consciousness striving to achieve full consciousness. But although this development reaches consecutive stages through human activities, which, as the often-adduced example of Napoleon, are not necessarily actions with a positive moral value, being more often simply selfish, yet the ultimate goal of this process tending towards the Absolute's achievement of the full consciousness of its generality, freedom and rationality, has a distinctly moral character. For the objectification of this absolute self-consciousness in the rational state, into which a society of citizens is to be transformed, will be the basis of moral community permeated with the idea of general and mutual good.

The most essential differences in understanding history as a way of realizing values between the bourgeois history of philosophy of the Enlightenment and the later German thought derive from the different position of man as the subject that creates these values. For the Enlightenment thought, value-forming factors are found directly in man himself – in those dispositions constituting the stable nature of a human being that only require that proper conditions be created, including social ones, in order that they might be fully revealed. Thus, the process of history understood as a process of creating new values, and at the same time being a process of man's realization of the consequences of the rational character of his nature, was manifested as fully accessible to cognition capable of predicting its future course. As a result and in view of the fact that his course was to be determined by the requirements of the same reason that underlies practical behaviour, the future of mankind became the possible object of purposeful action tending towards consciously realizing in it the unfulfilled ideals. This was so much the easier since both the conception of rationality as a state that could be potentially exhausted in the idea of absolute and ultimate truths, and the non-historical understanding of human nature as a suprahistorical and invariable being, offered deceptive prospects of the final completion of the processes treated as the moving force of history. Even the values like good, freedom, equality – regarded as derivative of human nature and rationality thus conceived – acquired the equally unequivocal status and seemed ready to be finally realized the moment the mind discovered their fundamental principles in itself.

The classical German philosophy departs from the Enlightenment myth of the stable human nature. It also abandons the Enlightenment idea of rationality as a state which is fulfilled through a simple cumulation of the "progresses of Human Spirit" which gradually approaches absolute truths. For that reason, although neither Kant nor Fichte nor even Hegel deny that man is the direct maker of history and values that constitute it, it is man who is exclusively the direct maker. For in his endeavours to achieve his aim, he does not realize that through actions motivated by his own needs, he participates in a process, unknown to him for its real course and ends, of the development of collective consciousness, freedom and moral good. Since its principle was still to be the development of cognition, this process had to find some other subject than particular human consciousness. This resulted in Hegel's conception of the Absolute Spirit as the real and universal subject of history and in the idea of "cunning reason" as the mode of becoming of its consecutive stages and the formation in them of new, more mature and fuller values. As a consequence, their real source and depositary was no longer man understood as an autonomous human individual. This role was taken over by the idea of general totality, such as the absolute thought governed by its own laws of universal development or the State which overcomes particular aspirations and motivations of individuals in the interest of their common good of which they themselves are not aware. This change in the status of the individual in the plan of the historical realization of values was reflected in political thought in the transition from liberalism dominant in the Enlightenment to the glorification of the State as the result of the development of collective consciousness and the indispensable guarantee of the realization of general interests in social life. This tendency will be so strong in the German thought that even the outlooks of the Hegelian Left, reverting in many respects to the theoretical stereotypes of the Enlightenment, will retain the idea of the State as a general being, where the developing "self-consciousness" will find "in the future, the necessary embodiment of universal-human reasons".

The German absolutization of the self-development of idea as the origin of values formed throughout history had one more significant consequence. If history was formerly presented as the complete chaos of accidental events dependent, for example, on Cleopatra's nose, then knowledge about them could not fulfil the requirements of being scientific. The more so that valuable cognition was supposed to supply the general character and logical necessity of judgments formulated by science. In the conception, however, whose culmination was Hegel's dialectic of historical changes, historical events, or, more precisely, value-making historical events that made up the consecutive stages of the development of consciousness of freedom – for only those deserved recognition as historically significant facts – were subordinated to categorical and necessary laws. In Hegel – even to the laws of specifically understood logic. History thus conceived was no longer derivative of an entirely different being but was transformed into reality subject to its own development. Knowledge about history, was no more, as it used to, a discipline with a very doubtful cognitive status and reputation but it became, with Hegel and Hegelians, the most important of disciplines: it showed being in its internal development and values in the process of their formation. This was, however, absolutization of history at the expense of its annihilation. The reduction of its object to the self-developing idea that gradually acquires consciousness of its real rationality, generality and freedom, effectively eliminated the real object of history from the domain of its research, while transforming history itself into a history of philosophy and into philosophy itself – a speculative philosophy.

The two versions – the French and the later German – of considering the history of mankind as a process of realization and development of values were later continued in the 19th-century thought. The former influenced the early positivistic reflection on social progress, where the progress of empirical cognition and its practical applications will bear fruit in the increasing scope of rationality of public life, freedom and moral excellence. Especially the English thought inspired by John Stuart Mill will pursue the Enlightenment-derived hopes in accordance with the spirit of liberalism and utilitarianism that the progress of cognition is followed by the spread of good in all its dimensions and that it is a foundation of perfection of both man and social life.

The other version will, apart from other consequences, provide, especially in the German cultural circle, the premises for a conception, which, although not unprecedented mainly in Fichtean thought, will significantly reverse the hierarchy of values contained in this version. In its extreme forms it will lay grounds for a conviction that the good of the State as a specific totality based on the community of irrationally understood destiny, race or blood is the supreme and independent good, to which all particular values of its citizens must be subordinated. But this will be the negation of the essential axiological contents, which characterized the bourgeois thought when the class which was its subject were only beginning to see the prospect of arranging the world according to their own needs and when their particular aspirations assumed the appearance of universal aims whose realization guaranteed general good.

At the close of the 19th and in the 20th centuries there was hardly anything left of the earlier interpretations of historical process that arranged historical variability in a scheme of the progressive development of cognitive (truth), moral (good), and social (freedom and equality) values, full of optimism and expecting that the nearest future

would fulfil the requirements whether of human reason or of the absolute idea developing in time. The earlier belief, shared by the followers of Hegelian idealism, that historical cognition is endowed by a special value for it concerns the essence itself of the developing spiritual was also shaken. The turn of centuries in the bourgeois thought therefore questioned the axiological contents formerly attributed to both historical knowledge and to historical process itself.

The fact of revaluation, or even devaluation, on the two planes is the more symptomatic that it occurred independently in highly differing philosophical trends where it stemmed from various premises. We shall be concerned only with the most important, without a detailed presentation or analysis.

The theoretical premises which underlay the devaluation of historical cognition and the abandonment of the conception of history as a value-making process were of different and often opposing nature. In the former case they resulted from methodological doubts in keeping with the epistemological orientation of numerous currents of modern thought. In the latter, they stemmed not infrequently from irrationalistic metaphysics tending to conceive history and culture as dynamic systems, which are not governed by any rational order and destroy the existing values rather than create new ones. However, the conclusions of the two attitudes, methodological and ontological, were close to one another and both can be regarded as manifestations on different planes of the same phenomenon: that of crisis of historical consciousness. Metaphorically speaking, history, treated hitherto with hope as a rationally recognizable way of realizing the needs and aims of mankind, began to show the other face of Janus: a succession of changes potentiating threat, restricting man's autonomy, destroying rather than cumulating values.

The earlier idea of the rational character of historical process was questioned most thoroughly and widely, and soon after the formerly widespread conviction that man can influence historical process in the desired direction. In a seemingly unexpected way, this was caused by positivistic philosophy, which, although developing a number of inspirations of the Enlightenment thought, including the idea of historical progress and the role of cognition and education therein, essentially had the effects that ultimately overthrew the former stereotypes. On the one hand, the attempt to construct a universal methodology of cognition based upon the establishment of universal laws by inductive generalizations led to the revelation of difficulties with the special character of humanistic cognition. This resulted either in a) endeavours to force humanistic cognition into the Procrustean bed of general (and vague) evolutionist schemes, where there was no room for the specificity of particular cultural phenomena; b) or, in view of this difficulty, in questioning — as Schopenhauer did — the scientific character of historical knowledge; c) or in a defence of it that rejects positivist claims to epistemological universalism and ends in victory, which is Pyrrhic because it is achieved, as was the case with Windelband, at the cost of reducing historical cognition to descriptions of single, unrepeated events. And of little use was H. Rickert's attempt to modify the idiographic character of the so-called *Geisteswissenschaften* by referring individual historical actions and cultural facts to general values, in view of the fact that he attributed to them non-temporal, that is non-historical and transcendental character.

On the other hand, positivistic philosophy shook many earlier convictions that man realizes his aims and values in history. This was a consequence of universalizing the laws

of historical development and blurring the borderline between historical and biological development. Already in Comte, but primarily in Spencer and his followers, the laws of history were reduced to a special case of the occurrence of universal development, which takes place according to analogous schemes and embraces the whole reality, having thus a non-human character for it is independent of man. This significantly restricted the scope of man's autonomy as the creator of moral and social values in history. In the age of fascination by the biological unity of nature even those values began to lose their importance as a distinguishing mark of the human world only. This fascination, apart from positivism itself, led, especially in German philosophy, to the absolutization of the concept of life as a category superior to other values. These tendencies gave birth to historical mythologies of Nietzsche and of Spengler. In the former, history was regarded as the ground where the will of power is realized, which, by breaking all traditional — and traditionally recognized — moral values, egalitarian tendencies and endeavours to rationalize the world, becomes the supreme principle of historical creation and the value for itself which is "beyond good and evil". In the latter, in Spengler's renowned work, we are dealing with a consistently biological treatment of historical process, where all values created in the stage of culture are subject to the biological necessity of degeneration and decay in the epochs of civilization which are their negation, while all historical subjects of historical variability so conceived, being subject to the necessary law of development and decay, are doomed to be annihilated.

An entirely different way of negating history as an objective process where values arising from man's social, cognitive, and moral needs were constituted and developed, was arrived at by various trends of existentialist philosophy.

This was a new consequence of a new conception of man. Absolutization of his autonomy, which was an understandable reaction to earlier attempts to place man in the non-human order of nature or to subordinate him to transcendental being or values, led to questioning the essential character of the ties of human existence with a historically variable social reality. This was manifested, among other things, by the entirely different content which existentialist and partly phenomenological thought gave to the concept of *Geschichtlichkeit*. Although, like in earlier, especially German, historicism, it still remained one of the key concepts describing human condition, yet, while this concept formerly expressed the relativization of all values towards the objective historical process where these values arise and change their content, this time it begins to denote a specific feature of an individual human being. *Geschichtlichkeit* is already a major characteristic of Heidegger's *Da-Sein*, which emphasizes that man constantly goes beyond the present: human existence is spread between the past and the future. However, historicity thus conceived is deprived of any reference whatever to historical process. Also, according to Gadamer, the concept of historicity will not predicate anything about the course of events but about the mode of man's existence, while Jaspers wrote that "*die Unvollendung des Menschen und seine Geschichtlichkeit sind dasselbe*".

Although we could say that also for existentialism and existentialist-inspired trends of philosophy values are underlain by the historical character of human existence, yet a reservation must be made that this "historical character" contained in the notion of *Geschichtlichkeit* is already reducible exclusively to the peculiarities of man's existence,

who, regardless of the actual historic time, is constantly realized in going beyond his own present, creating thereby values that determine his own existence.

Existentialist thought, while essentially not rejecting the traditional hierarchy of values, significantly altered their ontological status because it annihilated history as their origin for the reduction of value-making factors to the sphere of internal determinations of the isolated human monad. But this change of ontological foundations of values essentially changed their content as well. While in the earlier thought the notions like moral good, freedom and truth had clearly social or intersubjective connotations, this time the corresponding values, referred to experiences where an individual being is constituted, became nothing but a mode of realizing unique human existences. This fundamentally undermined the guiding idea of the earlier thought, according to which these values are subject to historical development and determine the directions of historical progress.

In this respect, existentialist thought, regardless of the assumptions from which it derived the theoretical destruction of history as a value-making process, agrees with many other trends of the present-day bourgeois philosophy. Although from different premises, they likewise reject the conception of historical progress. Most often they undermine the values themselves, upon which this conception has been constructed. The origin of these tendencies lies in the collapse of earlier optimism both towards the cognitive value of historical knowledge and towards historical process itself.

In the former case, the hope is questioned that historical cognition has an impartial objective value — that it is possible to cognize the most general laws that govern, as Hegel would have it, historical variability, or it is at least possible to satisfy Ranke's postulate that the goal of historical knowledge is to reconstruct and describe "what it really was like" in the past. The main manifestation of undermining objectivistic aspirations of historiography is a presentistic tendency. It arises from the otherwise right observation that all humanistic cognition reconstructs the past from the standpoint of current rather than past values, goals and needs, which, it must be added, are differentiated by the different contexts of social experience. This observation opens an extremely important cognitive prospect, already present in early Marxist thought, which concerns the social condition of historical knowledge, which need not, although in certain circumstances can, deform the value of cognition. Presentism, however, went in a different direction. Absolutizing these conditions, it entirely rejects the possibility of objective knowledge about the past in a conviction that evaluations that arise from current needs make impossible the cognition of the past reality.

In the latter case, which does not concern cognition but historical process, it became very frequent already at the close of the 19th century a) either to undermine the values themselves, on which the previous epoch set its hopes for historical process to take place, b) or to question the thesis that these values, cumulated or developed in history, determine the directions of its development.

If, as significant values, promoted by the thought of the turn of the 18th century as the guiding values marking the progress of mankind, we regard the cult of reason and a belief in its increasing capacities, the ideas of freedom and, on the social plane, the idea of common good, treated most often in utilitarian terms, then none of these values remained in their primary function in the bourgeois thought a hundred years later. The

form in which they were continued in Marxist philosophy was placed in an entirely different theoretical and ideological context.

The collapse of historical rationalism in favour of irrationalist conceptions has been discussed earlier. It was a manifestation of a more general phenomenon, which was not limited merely to reflection on historical process and cognition. For its consequences undermined the hierarchy of values developed on a rationalistic basis. The rationalized idea of good, connected with a conviction about man's altruistic character, was untenable as a value, around which the course of history was constituted, or at least its future turns could be prognosticated, in view of the consequent biological treatment of its nature. In the extreme cases, inspired by social Darwinism, traditional moral values, as in the philosophies of Nietzsche and partly of Spengler, had to be rejected in favour of vital values because the former embodied weakness and decline. This in turn was one, though not the sole, premise out of which grew the conceptions questioning the realization in history of the principle of equality. Therefore, instead of the principle of egalitarianism as a value, aiming at which shapes the course of history, there appeared differently justified elitistic conceptions. According to them, the form of social life, its assets and positive values are decided by idea-making and value-making élites while historical process consists in a constant formation of new élites and in conflicts between the values they represent. The threat to the process and to all "superior" values developed by these élites and cementing social life are egalitarian tendencies represented, in Toynbee's words, by the "cultural proletariat" or by the tendencies, bred by democracy and manifested in the "revolt of the masses", to lose one's own individual personality and the essential values in the anonymous and impersonal crowd. (Ortega y Gasset).

The collapse of the Enlightenment idea of general equality in favour of elitarianism, regardless of whether it is a political programme or an exclusively descriptive theory, is directly connected with the revaluation of the idea of freedom as well. For freedom can be regarded as one of the supreme values only when we assume the mutual equality and equal rights of men and, together with it, either the general spread of the altruistic motivations of human actions, or, that regardless of subjective motivations they all lead to the common good. If, however, these assumptions are questioned, freedom reveals a dangerous force by means of which a majority that uses it can destroy the supreme social and moral values, which are, in keeping with the spirit of elitistic conceptions, always a product of the creative minority. It is therefore not accidental that this trend is present in the thought of all the leading theorists of elitarianism.

It is, however, very symptomatic that the representatives of liberal thinking, like J. St. Mill or de Tocqueville, also observed in their analyses of the functioning of freedom in democratic societies the factors destructive for the idea of freedom and quality, the processes that threaten with new despotism. For all its difference in theoretical justifications, this idea is also the main theme of Fromm's *Escape from Freedom*. The revelation of such consequences of freedom and equality, entirely unexpected and antinomic towards the hopes the earlier thought set on them, is at least a signal of the internal conflicts between these concepts in this context which can be led back to as far as the Enlightenment traditions.

The devaluation of values on which the former bourgeois reflection on historical variability set a conviction about its progressive character also undermined the founda-

tions of the previous theoretical visions of historical continuity, because those negated values were at the same time to be the principles of continuity and perfection of human world. That is why the previous tendency for a monistic treatment of history, manifested in such general terms as *mankind* or *human race*, is replaced in the modern thought by a clear tendency to differentiate – and oppose to one another – independent subjects of historical existence. They are the specific and unique cultural monads, each one possessing characteristic values. For all the specific and unique cultural in the number of distinguished cultures, in the reconstructions of the inner dynamisms of their formation, growth and decay, this feature unites so diverse theories of history and social life, like of Spengler's and Sorokin's, of Toynbee's and Boas' and his followers in the field of cultural anthropology.

We have investigated in a rather general way a certain theoretical process which took place in the European bourgeois thought of the last two centuries. It consisted in the rise and then collapse of the primarily rationalistic reflection, imbued with optimism and with rationalist-derived axiological contents, on the nature of historical variability and the conditions of its cognition. This process can have different interpretations.

1. Firstly, it can be analyzed in class terms as a manifestation of determining the collective consciousness of the same social class by different social experiences, aims and needs in different moments of its historical existence. In one, in which it entered the historical scene as a destructor of the existing social and theoretical structures, and in the other, when the new structures corresponding to its aspirations were already realized. In the former case, there was formed a prospectivist and activist attitude connected with the struggle for the future realization of its own ideals, which, at the same time, assumed the form of universal, categorical and absolute values. In the latter case, we are dealing with state of social life, the confrontation being in general rather dramatic. The more so that it reveals a discrepancy between the earlier ideals and the degree of their fulfilment, and the unexpected threats to the new social order by the new, universal needs that undermine it.

2. Secondly, this process is underlain by more general social and civilization factors. The historically developing social reality has proved far more complicated than it was assumed by rather simple and too one-sidedly optimistic theories of the turn of the 18th century, which tended to ignore the diversity of human world in their endeavours of universalization. Meanwhile, the development of methodological consciousness revealed a number of hitherto unnoticed problems concerning the specificity of historical cognition, whereas the development of society and civilization, in addition to the prospects of further progress, laid bare the obstacles on the way of its realization and, besides the possibilities of further development, it also signalled the real prospects of a total nuclear catastrophe.

3. Thirdly, and this is especially noteworthy, the collapse of such values as rationalism, the idea of common good, equality and freedom in the bourgeois philosophies of history is not only a social phenomenon, which requires not only a specio-genetic analysis referring to the mechanisms of social life, but also it is a theoretical phenomenon which

occurred in philosophy and concerned the concepts themselves involved in the unexpected historical vicissitudes. It can be observed that these concepts, in the form they arose and functioned in the philosophical currents under consideration, were burdened from the very beginning with a certain original sin. The values, with which the historio-philosophical axiology of both the Enlightenment and the classical German philosophy was imbued, were underlain by a very limited and one-sided conception of man. It reduced the essence of humanity only to psychical activity based exclusively on ideal abstraction regardless of whether it assumed the form of Human Reason or Absolute Spirit. The principle, thus articulated, of the exclusively spiritual identity of man was therefore the basis for deriving, as man's necessary attributes, the apparently self-realizing-in-history values that postulatively mark the past and the future forms of historical progress: the progress of cognition, equality and freedom, and the gradual moral improvement of mankind.

However, these conceptions either did not acknowledge, or only declared to do so, the fact that the reduction of man's subjectivity to psychical subjectivity only ignores the sphere of his practical activity. And this is the sphere where, unlike the former case, man not only thinks about his rationality, freedom and mutual equality etc. but also he actually realizes these values and verifies them in the form of the world of things he produces and subjects to his will and of the world of social relations in which the postulates can, though need not, be fulfilled which often arise from only formally recognized values, like, for example, freedom, equality, and social justice. If, however, they are not to remain empty ideas or propaganda catchwords without content, it is necessary to take into account the fact ignored both by the Enlightenment theory of man and by the later conceptions. And the fact is that it is not pure thinking or any other exclusively psychical activity but only practice and the material and social effects of this activity, connected with the division of labour and distribution of property, that ultimately decide about the real possibilities of the realization of these values on which the bourgeois thought first set its hopes, and the non-fulfilment of which became one of the causes of the collapse of the axiological system under discussion.

When this fact is taken into account, at least the canonical paradigm of the bourgeois thought must, however, be questioned, that is the principle of private ownership. Within this paradigm, the presented course of the history of ideas evaluating historical process seems to be unavoidable.

STRESZCZENIE

Artykuł jest poświęcony przemianom treści aksjologicznych w mieszczańskiej filozofii historii. Autor charakteryzuje najpierw system wartości leżący u podstaw refleksji nad zmiennością historyczną i warunkami poznania historycznego w myśli Oświecenia i w klasycznej filozofii niemieckiej, stwierdzając, że był on zorganizowany wokół takich idei, jak idea równości, wolności, dobra powszechnego oraz idea rozumu uznanego za czynnik kształtujący proces postępu dziejowego. Następnie artykuł dowodzi, że późniejsza myśl mieszczańska, od schyłku wieku XIX poczynając, jest przejawem załamania się pierwotnego systemu aksjologicznego i zakwestionowania wartości, które pierwotnie wiązały się z procesem historycznym.

Autor nie kwestionuje, że załamanie to miało pewne przesłanki klasowe i ogólnocywilizacyjne. Dowodzi jednak, że jedną z istotniejszych przyczyn kryzysu optymistycznych koncepcji związanych ze wspomnianymi wartościami był fakt, że w postaci, w jakiej one funkcjonowały, były konsekwencją koncepcji człowieka ograniczającej jego podmiotowość – także podmiotowość historyczną – do aktywności wyłącznie psychicznej.

РЕЗЮМЕ

Данная работа посвящена переменам аксиологических содержаний в мещанской философии истории. Автор сперва дает характеристику системе значений, лежащей в основе рефлексии над исторической изменчивостью и условиями исторического познания в мысли эпохи просвещения и в классической немецкой философии, определяя, что была она совокуплена вокруг таких идей как идея равенства, свободы, общего блага, а также идеи разума, как фактора определяющего процесс исторического прогресса. В дальнейшей части работы доказывается, что позднейшая мещанская мысль, начиная с конца XIX в. является признаком упадка первоначальной аксиологической системы и подвержением значения, которые первоначально связаны были с историческим процессом.

Автор не сомневается, что этот упадок имел некоторые классовые и общесцивилизаторские предпосылки. Он утверждает, что одной из существенных причин кризиса оптимистических концепций, связанных с вышеупомянутыми значениями был факт, что в таком виде как они функционировали, были последствием концепции человека ограничивающей его субъективность — также исторической субъективности — к активности, включая психическую.