



## KANTIAN AND POST-KANTIAN THOUGHT AS AN ILLUSTRATION OF AN IDEATIONAL FOUNDATIONS OF EUROPEAN INTEGRATION

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### Abstract

The European Union is in a grave crisis. The idea of European integration ceased to be a carrier and an important value for many European societies. It seems that the current crisis is primarily the result of a deep erosion of the idea of common Europe that has been uniting this region for the last decades. In addition to dynamic economic phenomena, globalization, social changes, including an migration crisis, decomposition in the sphere of ideas and values seem to be the key. It seems, therefore, that references to universal and rationalist views shaping the consciousness of Europeans are fully justified. The discussion on the new shape of the idea of European integration should, among other things, refer to well-established and grounded thoughts that for centuries have shaped European Civilization. The aim of the paper is to present the most important trend of philosophical and historiosophical thoughts of the Enlightenment - the philosophy of Immanuel Kant and his follower Johann Gottlieb Fichte - regarding their idea of creation a "Common Europe". The aim of the study is to participate in a scientific discussion on the fundamental issues of the European idea and to seek ideological inspiration for a new look at the integration of European societies. The article was prepared on the basis of the historical studies on European Enlightenment literature, especially the German "cultural field" as well as a contemporary studies of scientific literature in the field of history, philosophy and European integration.

### Key words

European integration, Kantian and Post-Kantian philosophy, European Union's crisis, Common Europe

## INTRODUCTION

*"For centuries, our civilization has been very interested in unifying tendencies. They are manifested in projects for whole or part of the world unification... [at the same time] Since modern times, an economic emphasis has started to be placed on almost all concepts of world political integration." (Chodorowski, 1972 p. 7).*

Most often the idea of a community of European nations is sought in the medieval concepts of universal monarchies, such as the "Carolingian Empire" or the idea of the Otto III empire. However, as Szymaniec notes, "it was only the

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destruction of European countries as a result of long and bloody wars in the 17<sup>th</sup> and early 18<sup>th</sup> centuries that became an impulse to intensify the discussion about the possibility of integration" (2011, s. 13-14). It seems that this discussion was inspired mainly by the intellectuals and philosophers such as, for example, Abbé de Saint-Pierre (1658 – 1743), Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712 – 1778), Emer de Vattel (1714–1767) Adam Ferguson (1723–1816), or the commonly recognised today as the most outstanding mind of those times – Immanuel Kant (1724 – 1804).

At the same time, the concepts of unification or rather creation of a community were inspired by theories and economic practice related to the mercantilist doctrine, and later – by tendencies to liberalise international trade (see: David Hume 1711-1776, Adam Smith 1723-1790). However, returning to the classical philosophical reflection, one can assume that the most popular and influential modern concepts were formulated by Immanuel Kant.

Kant's influence on modern philosophy and the science of Western civilization in general is undeniable. Perhaps even it can be assumed that "from the point of view of the history of philosophy, there are events that have played a special role in the development of philosophical thought. This peculiar "Copernican Overturn" concerned mainly issues related to the ways and possibilities of exploring the world around us (Bencivenga, 1987). As Noras points out, "cognition is not an acquisition of content existing in objects, but the creation of such content. Until now, cognition (in the ontological perspective) has been understood as a way of capturing the reality, now it becomes its creation" (2007, s. 27). At the same time, freedom is understood by Kant as "liberation from the laws of nature and obedience to the laws of reason, which are necessary because of their generality and universality" (Krajczok, 2009, p. 93).

It is worth noting that Kant's legacy includes not only "pure" philosophy most often associated with "Critique of Pure Reason" (Kant, 2001), but also works for the classification of scientific knowledge of various disciplines (Matlovič, 2006, p. 10). Kant's attempts to creatively solve contemporary for him social and political problems related to the age of wars and revolutionary chaos, by which Europe at that time was overwhelmed, are particularly important. It is also acknowledged that late eighteenth-century philosophy not only attempted to seek answers and recipes to the current situation, but first and foremost sought solutions for the future of Europe (Becker, 1995). In this context, as Kuźmicz notes, "Immanuel Kant is one of those great thinkers whose political philosophy is becoming more and more relevant, especially in the context of changes taking place in the modern world" (2015, s. 85). At the same time, the ideological message of Kant's political philosophy is often regarded as inspiring for modern man and political challenges that faces the contemporary European Union.



## OBJECTIVES AND METHODS

The aim of the study is to present Kant's approach to the idea of "integration of Europe" together with an outline of the evolution of post-kantian thought, especially from the point of view of J. G. Fichte's thought, in the context of contemporary European disintegration processes. This paper is of theoretical character and attempts to synthesize the most important threads of Kant's political philosophy regarding challenges and discussion on the future of European integration processes.

The study has been prepared on a basis of interdisciplinary literature studies. In addition to the introduction, the paper includes section entitled "The idea of European integration by Immanuel Kant as an example of early modern period thoughts" dedicated to the presentation of the thinker's main opinions, especially those based on the thesis entitled *Zum ewigen Frieden*. The next part „*Philosophy after Kant and German Grossraumwirtschaft doctrine*“ („Large-area economy“, „*Économie de grand espace*“) represents a brief outline of German "unification" concepts associated with „Large-Area Economy" idea. The study is concluded with a summary.

## THE IDEA OF EUROPEAN INTEGRATION BY IMMANUEL KANT AS AN EXAMPLE OF EARLY MODERN PERIOD THOUGHTS

Kant derived his thoughts from the rationalistic philosophy of late Enlightenment (Matlovič, Matlovičová, 2015, p. 53-55, Szymaniec, 2007, p. 29), while believing in power of a human mind that could influence the political reality of the time, shape it and even increase its morality regarding to the values and laws (comp. Matlovič, Matlovičová, 2015, Becker, 1995, Zahn, 1994, and others).

Simultaneously, "Kant granted priority to the norms of natural law, but in its system it was understood in a specific way – not as a reflection of the order of things, but as an a priori creation of consciousness" (Stępień, 1995, p. 252).

Kant's most important achievement in the field of political philosophy is the study from 1795 *Zum ewigen Frieden ein philosophischer Entwurf* (Perpetual Peace: A Philosophical Sketch). This study is very deeply related to the spirit of pure philosophy. As Brandt (1995, p. 82) emphasizes, it is "a fragment of a pure theory, a practice inspired by theory and a truly anthropological experience". It also proves that Kant tried to face the greatest problem of the "practical philosophy" of his time and that he was not just a passive bystander of the war chaos in Europe. His study "Perpetual Peace: A Philosophical Sketch" has a specific form that resembles a diplomatic treaty or an international agreement. (Błaszke, 2013, p. 101). In his dissertation, Kant proposes the establishment of a specific international pact aimed at definitively ending all armed conflicts in Europe and establishing an "eternal



peace". The philosopher calls this European pact "the Peace Union (*foedus pacificum*) suggesting that it should differ from the classic peace treaty (*pactum pacia*) thank to its power to end "all wars once and for all" (Kant, 2011, p. 345).

At the same time, "Kant rejects an ethnic concept of the nation, because only concepts independent of cultural differences – "cosmopolitan", can be treated as proper ideas of a pure practical reason. From this perspective, Kant recommends implementation of a "republican" system based on a principle of representation as the best of all existing systems, and proposes creation of a federation of countries to be a guarantee of eternal peace between nations" (Szymaniec, 2007, p. 32). Thus, the philosopher raises a significant issue – the idea of federalism understood as the creation of an association of different countries – "creation of such association is not only a matter of empirical practicality, but also a postulate of reason, which dictates moral law" (Błaszke, 2013, p. 104). Simultaneously, while constructing international law based on federalism, Kant calls for mutual agreements instead of forceful solutions based on "merging" all weaker countries by a single "world power" (Kant, 1995, p. 75).

At the same time, Kant believes that a specific guarantee of the idea of unification and eternal peace cannot be based on contemporary institutions or particular leaders, but rather transcendental ideas of reason. For example, French philosopher Abbé de Saint-Pierre postulated creation of the European Association as an international agreement guaranteeing "eternal" peace (*Projet pour rendre la paix perpétuelle en Europe*), but in Kant's opinion this concept, shared also by another famous French philosopher Jean-Jacques Rousseau, was too strongly related to current political reality. Thus, it cannot guarantee its foundation in the sphere of values, including Christian values. Kant refers directly to the idea of the Kingdom of God by writing "obstacles of a political and social nature, which occasionally may result from its spread, shall rather make the unification of minds around good even more passionate" (2011, p. 119). At the same time, "the conscious goal of the nature and, therefore, the goal of the history is to build the rule of law in the form of a "cosmopolitan universal state" as a "world republic" subordinated to the general coercion of the law". (Kuźmicz, 2015, p. 107).

## **PHILOSOPHY AFTER KANT AND GERMAN *GROSSRAUMWIRTSCHAFT* DOCTRINE**

The German philosopher Johann Gottlieb Fichte (1762 - 1814) is considered to be the most outstanding and most famous successor of Kant's work, (Noras, 2007). It seems, however, that Fichte's approach from the point of view of European "community" ideas includes primarily a creation of the ideological foundations for the so-called *Grossraumwirtschaft* doctrine. It is assumed that Fichte "was the first German researcher who proposed the creation of a large economic area in central



Europe" (Eberhardt, 2011, p. 466). The starting point for Fichte's considerations (1996, pp. 153-155) was the concept of the so-called closed commercial state (*Der geschlossene Handelsstaat*), based on assumption that "the goal of the state is to be a closed commercial space, just as it is closed as an area in which a single legal system applies" (Szymaniec, 2011, p. 29).

Fichte's concept derives from the social and economic situation in Germany in the second half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. The division of Germany into a number of smaller states with a limited territory prevented creation of independent economic areas within their borders. At the same time Fichte's idea was based on the concept of complementarity, which he approached very extremely and pushed to the limits of complete autarky. His reasoning was based on the assumption that the economic area to be closed has its own resources. Fichte points out that the countries emerged from the break-up of the early medieval, unified Europe had not their natural borders, i.e. borders in which a closed territory forms an economically independent and self-sufficient area (Chodorowski, 1969). The space enabling self-sufficient and independent existence of its inhabitants should be a great space in comparison with the economic areas of European countries known to Fichte.

When Europe shall become a collection of closed, self-sufficient trade states, the reasons for wars will disappear. However, in order to achieve self-sufficiency, states must have "natural borders", i.e. gain sufficient access to resources (land, raw materials). Fichte's ideas, as a radical development of the concept of sovereignty, have contributed to the formation of German nationalist tendencies based, among other things, on the *Grossraumwirtschaft* doctrine.

German scientists, especially geographers, in the 19<sup>th</sup> century continued to develop the *Grossraumwirtschaft* concept. In other words, "on the basis of observations of economic processes, they came to the conviction that small political entities lose their *raison d'être*, so the aim should be to integrate, unite and form larger and larger territorial units" (Eberhardt, 2011, p. 456). *Grossraumwirtschaft* was essentially a macroeconomic doctrine – its assumptions concerned economic phenomena in a large scale. The doctrine was a vision of a new order in international economic relations and the integration of individual national economies into a single economic area under German leadership. This, combined with Germany's achievements in the field of national and state theory, created the ideological foundations of expansionism. It should be noted that in the 19<sup>th</sup> century the territory of Germany was divided into smaller areas (provinces) with political and economic independence and a relatively strong attachment of the inhabitants. Therefore, the idea of a large area was also a result of unifying aspirations, that were consequently realised under the leadership of Bismarck in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.



It should also be noted that as the result (as it later turned out) of the concept of the "Large area" was the tendency to recognise neighbouring nations (especially the Slavs) as ones that should naturally submit to the dominance of Pangermanism in the context of the European economic area (comp.: Ernst Moritz Arndt, 1769-1860, Friedrich List 1789-1846, Paul de Lagarde 1827-1891, Constantin Frantz 1857-1891, Gustav Schmoller 1838-1917). The supporters of the doctrine believed that "the industrially, technologically and organisationally advanced German nation was destined to construct and control the European region beyond German border" (Smith, Stirk, 2016 p. 88).

## DISCUSSION

Analysing the views of Enlightenment thinkers, one cannot disregard the social and political situation of contemporary times. The philosophical and political thought of Kant in his epoch has been positively received by the nations of Central and Eastern Europe, that, most often, had not had their own statehood. "Kant's philosophical project was received quite unequivocally in Poland as a condemnation of the occupiers who ignored the sovereignty of the Polish state" (Marulewska 2005, p. 175). What is also noteworthy, Kant's opinions were then interpreted as an indirect condemnation of the partitions of Poland, "No state should interfere in other country system and governs with violence" (Kant, 2011a, p. 335).

At the same time, as Kupś notes, "there are still disputes to what extent the work *"Perpetual Peace: A Philosophical Sketch"* is an answer to the current events in politics, and to what extent it is only an expression of utopian thinking" (2015, s. 75).

The opinions and specific political or international concepts of Kant and other philosophers of the late Enlightenment, such as Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Abbé de Saint-Pierre, Adam Ferguson, explicitly emphasize the idea and necessity of building a community of European nations. And even more, as noted by Pojman, Kant's views regarding „international federation of states bound by international law brings him close to the idea of a republican form of world government". (p. 70)

In "these projects the idea of a Union – a federation of (European) states appears as a necessary premise for the establishment of lasting peace". (Błaszke, 2013, p. 93). It is generally recognized that the ideas of Kant, as presented in the work *"Perpetual Peace: A Philosophical Sketch"* constitute the ideological basis for the concept of the European Union (see: Brown, 2014, Salikov, 2015).

Nowadays, many researchers (see Brown, 2014, Harste, 2009, Salikov, 2015, Schwarz, 2017 and others) strongly emphasize the direct link between Kant's system of ideas for the future of Europe and the ideological foundation of the European Union, as a great political and economic project. "Kant's political writings have become 'classic' texts of contemporary cosmopolitanism" (Fine, 2003, p. 609).



But at the same time, as Behnke points out, Kant's views should be seen more as a "metaphysical and transcendental rather than political project" (Behnke, 2008, p. 513). Criticism of Kant's views can be based mainly on his idealistic approach to social, political and moral realities.

## CONCLUSIONS

In the field of post-kantian thought, one can notice the influence of the *Grossraumwirtschaft* Fichte's concept on other European international projects. In a certain way one can notice an inspiration with this idea in the Polish concept of *Intermarium*, where the integration ideas are focused on political or geopolitical aspects (Ištók, Koziak, 2009).

In this context, one should note a specific dichotomy and a specific "tension" between Western European countries and Eastern and Central European countries. This dichotomy is expressed in differences on the level of social and economic development conditioned especially by historical reasons. "Political and economic disintegration of Central European area did not start in 1918 but as soon as in 1867, by Austrian-Hungarian Settlement. In 1870s, both parts went their separate political ways. In the west, modernized and developed political system evolved, based on emerging civic society. In the east, the political system rather declined than evolved" (Gonéc, 2014, p. 78).

Apart from a more or less detailed analysis of both the history of the European Union and its legal and institutional system, it seems that in contemporary debates on the future of the European community it is possible to refer directly to the views of I. Kant and his successors, e.g. J.G. Fichte.

At this point it is worth emphasizing that Kant's ideas presented in the above mentioned work "Perpetual Peace: A Philosophical Sketch" were, at that time, in a certain way "visionary", or even "revolutionary". The perception of the world presented by the philosopher from the provincial Königsberg, located at the periphery of Western civilization, should have been rather significantly limited compared to the "global" consciousness of the contemporary Europe.

Similarly, Fichte's opinions related to the *Grossraumwirtschaft* concept influenced (not always positively, as in the case of German Nazism) the way of thinking about Europe and shaped the political and socio-economic scenarios of this continent. Pojman notes that „nationalism offers us a special form of personal relationship that is so vital for personal identity, some form of nationalism may always be part of the human psyche" (p. 70). What seems to be confirmed in contemporary political processes in European countries and with the USA.

At the same time, one should ask whether it is possible to preserve European Community and integration ideas in a post-modern times characterised by a loss of trust in a "great narration" and during disintegration of the European Union, sym-



bolically expressed by "Brexit" and a lack of solidarity in the face of the migration crisis. It seems that, nowadays, planning of future scenarios is becoming more and more risky.

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