

Kantian Research in Slovakia

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Abstract

The paper focuses on the state of the research on Kant's philosophy in Slovakia, particularly at the University of Prešov. In the first part the authors describe the situation of Kantian research between the 1850s and 1963 as a period during which there was almost no interest in Kant and his philosophy in the region. The main part of the paper deals with the revival of Kantian philosophy, presented by a group of scholars approximately twenty years ago, that gave rise to a series of successful research projects on Kant supported by the Slovak Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport. The paper outlines the series of five successive research projects that have been realized since 2004 focusing mainly on Kant's practical philosophy and its relevance for contemporary society. It summarizes the achievements based on the international cooperation in the research and describes the main events and publications realized so far.

Key words

Kant. Kant's practical philosophy. Prešov. Research projects. Slovakia.

The reflections of Kant's philosophy in the region of today's Slovakia were present from the turn of the 18th century to the first half of the 19th century. It was later followed by a strong reflection of Hegel's and Marx's philosophy represented by a "silent period" in connection with Kant that lasted more than a century. Kant had not appeared as a relevant author in the Slovak philosophical environment until 1963 when the work *Zum ewigen*

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Frieden was translated as the first of his works into Slovakian language. Occasionally, and usually only at some of Kant's anniversaries, there were published some short papers or translations of his works. Social and political changes and the persistent lack of freedom in the society until 1989 meant that Kant was not among the studied philosophers. After the WWII there was no one in this region who would systematically deal with Kant's philosophical legacy in this region. The situation in the Czech Republic was not much better, however, the number of translations was significantly higher.

The new wave of philosophical interest in Kantian research appeared approximately twenty years ago at the University of Prešov with first papers published on Kant's philosophy of history and political philosophy. In 2004 a group of scholars devoted themselves to a larger research project focusing on the legacy of Immanuel Kant (VEGA 1/1306/04 *Philosophical Legacy of I. Kant and the Present Day*) that was financed by the Slovak Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport as the very first scientific project on I. Kant in Slovakia.

In the three years of the project (2004–2006) the research team organized three scientific conferences with participants from Slovakia (Ľ. Belás, M. Marcelli, F. Mihina, O. Sisáková, V. Leško, R. Dupkala, J. Sošková, E. Andreanský, M. Ješič, A. Jurková, J. Pospíšilová, S. Malankievičová, A. Kvokačka, Ľ. Belásová, V. Fryk, J. Belás, M. Stachoň, K. Bosáková, S. Zákutná, S. Slováková, M. Škára), Czech Republic (M. Sobotka, J. Zouhar, J. Mácha, V. Ježková), Poland (D. Bęben, Cz. Głombik, A.J. Noras) and Russia (S.A. Nizhnikov, A.M. Orekhov), and published three collections of papers (*Kant a súčasnosť* [*Kant and the Present Day*] 2004, *Kantov odkaz v kontexte filozofickej prítomnosti* [*Kant's Legacy in the Context of Contemporary Philosophy*] 2005, *Sociálno-politická, etická, kultúrno-civilizačná a humanistická relevantnosť Kantovej filozofickej iniciatívy* [*Social-Political, Culture-Civilizational and Humanistic Relevance of Kant's Philosophical Initiative*] 2006) reflecting mainly Kant's practical philosophy and its relevancy for contemporary philosophical thinking.

After positive reception of the project results by the academic public in Slovakia and abroad, the research team continued in the activities during two successive projects VEGA 1/4691/07 *Philosophical Legacy of I. Kant and the Present Day II.* (2007–2009) and VEGA 1/0027/10 *Philosophical Legacy of I. Kant and the Present Day III.* (2010–2011). Kant's practical philosophy was reflected also from historical perspective and reflections of Kant's philosophy in German thought. The research team followed the tradition of organizing the annual conferences with new foreign participants from Germany (M. Forschner, M. Ruffing, U. Reitemeyer), France (M. Castillo), Poland (R. Kuliniak), Bulgaria (S. Babeva), a renowned Slovak philosopher T. Münz, P. Káša and young Slovak scholars P. Kyslan, O. Marchevský, M. Dercová and P. Sucharek. There were published five collections of papers (*Filozofia a kultúra* [*Philosophy and Culture*] 2007, *Filozofia a kultúra II.* [*Philosophy and Culture II*] 2008, *Filozofia a kultúra III.* [*Philosophy and Culture III*] 2009, *7. kantovský vedecký zborník* [*7th Kantian Scientific Collection of Papers*] 2010, *8. kantovský vedecký zborník* [*8th Kantian Scientific Collection of Papers*]

2011) to which contributed, except the abovementioned authors, also B. Dörflinger from University of Trier and L. J. Motorina from Moscow.

In 2011, four members of the research team published a monograph *Návraty tu Kantovi* [*Returns to Kant*] consisting of the parts “Kultúra, dejiny a politika vo filozofickom odkaze I. Kanta” [“Culture, History and Politics in Philosophical Legacy of I. Kant”] by Lubomír Belás, “Kant a škótske myslenie 18. storočia” [“Kant and 18th Century Scottish Thought”] by Sandra Zákutná, “Kant a modely filozofie vedy v 20. storočí” [“Kant and the Models of Philosophy of Science in 20th Century”] by Eugen Andreanský and “Aktuálnosť Heideggerovho kritického príspevku k axiologickému a antropologickému dedičstvu Kanta” [“The Topicality of Heidegger’s Critical Contribution to Kant’s Axiological and Anthropological Legacy”] by Oľga Sisáková.

The next research project VEGA 1/0291/12 *Philosophical Legacy of I. Kant and the Present Day IV. Philosophia et Res Publica* (2012–2014) brought three international Kant conferences and three reviewed scientific collections of papers (*9. kantovský vedecký zborník* [9th Kantian Scientific Collection of Papers] 2012, *10. kantovský vedecký zborník* [10th Kantian Scientific Collection of Papers] 2013, *11. kantovský vedecký zborník* [11th Kantian Scientific Collection of Papers] 2014). The participants from abroad who contributed to the “Res Publica” topic were H. F. Klemme (Halle), D. Hüning (Trier), M. Ruffing (Mainz), U. Reitemeyer (Münster), A. Falduto (Halle), M. Castillo (Paris), N. Sánchez Madrid (Madrid), G. Cavallar (Vienna), M. Želazny, T. Kupś (Torun), A. L. Zachariasz (Rzeszow), S. A. Nizhnikov, A. M. Orekhov (Moscow) and the new young scholars from Slovakia joining the research project were Š. Haško, E. Zelizňaková, K. Fábrová, K. Stacho and J. Lajčák.

Within the project L. Belás published the book *Kant a Machiavelli. Historicko-filozofická analýza a komparácia* [*Kant and Machiavelli. Historical-Philosophical Analysis and Comparison*] 2013. The book is based on the comparative analysis of Kant’s and Machiavelli’s understanding of state, civil society and rules that regulate relationships among people and shows how both of them are topical concerning the state of res publica. In 2013 S. Zákutná published the book *Kantova idea svetoobčianstva v kontexte politického myslenia Európy 18. storočia* [*Kant’s Idea of Cosmopolitanism in the Context of European Political Thinking in the 18th Century*] that introduces Kant and his project of cosmopolitanism as the culmination of his philosophy of history. Kant’s effort to introduce a model which would guarantee perpetual peace has been studied from various perspectives and the work concentrates on Kant’s inspirational impulses in the form of the philosophy of J. J. Rousseau and Scottish Enlightenment philosophers. The book also deals with contemporary philosophical thinking in the field of cosmopolitanism showing the topicality of the idea of Kant’s cosmopolitanism in today’s world.

The project *Philosophical Legacy of I. Kant and the Present Day IV. Philosophia et Res Publica* was an important step in the Kantian research in Slovakia due to the fact that the continuous activities of the research team and their international cooperation enabled the Institute of Philosophy of the University of Prešov to start issuing the peer-reviewed

journal *Studia Philosophica Kantiana* (ISSN 1338-7758) twice a year (the first issue was published in June 2012). The editorial board consists of twenty-five members from eight countries and the journal publishes papers in German, English and Slovakian language.

As the previous projects were assessed by the Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport as successfully finished with excellent results, the research team has continued with a new Kantian project. The latest research project VEGA 1/0238/15 *Kant's Ideas of Reason and Contemporary World* (2015–2017) has opened the space for a systematic approach oriented towards the exploration of the potential of Kant's practical philosophy for contemporary Slovakian reality. The aim of the project is to analyse the problematic fields of contemporary society on the basis of examining ideas and norms of Kant's thinking. Based on the research of Kant's practical philosophy there is – on the background of the critical potential of Kant's thinking – an effort to bring to public discussion an actualized philosophical argumentation based on answering the question to what extent philosophy reflects social, political, and cultural changes of contemporary society and what the relevance of Kant's practical philosophy in the present day is. Although, according to Kant, people are not equal in their cultural development or conditions, they are equal in humanity and dignity, the research team thus concentrates on studying the social phenomena as human dignity, human rights, freedom, equality and solidarity that are analysed in the context of problematic areas of today's social, political, or cultural reality (multiculturalism – cosmopolitanism, education – Bildung, etc.) as well as in the context of contemporary social and ethical theories.

The research team consists now of twelve research members from Slovakia: Ľ. Belás, S. Zákutná, E. Andreanský, J. Sošková, K. Bednárová-Gibová, K. Bosáková, M. Stachoň, P. Kyslan, E. Zelizňaková, Ľ. Belásová, K. Stacho and J. Lajčák. There have been organized two international Kantian scientific conferences with participants from Slovakia, Germany (B. Dörflinger, D. Hüning, M. Ruffing, U. Reitemeyer, S. Schlüter), Austria (G. Cavallar), Spain (N. Sánchez Madrid), Poland (M. Żelazny, T. Kupś, K. Kaškiewicz) and Russia (S. A. Nizhnikov, A. M. Orekhov) within the project so far.

All the activities have been based on the outcomes of the members of the research team and long-term cooperation with Kant-Forschungstelle at Johannes Gutenberg University in Mainz and other foreign university and research centres in Trier, Münster, Halle-Wittenberg, Erlangen, Paris, Madrid, Moscow, Katowice, Wrocław, Rzeszow, Torun, Shumen, Prague, Brno, Sao Paulo, Natal, etc. We hope that on this basis the team of Kantian scholars in Slovakia can further develop their research and orient towards new challenges. One of the future aims is to explore the traces of first Slovakian Kantians, who often studied and worked at German universities at the end of the 18th and in the first half of the 19th century, and study their approach to Kant's philosophy.

